

## Christian Nelson Johnson Tribute



### **Christian Nelson Johnson**

Monday, July 7, 1856 - Wednesday, February 3, 1937

Age 80 years, 6 months, 28 days

Life of 29,431 days

Merrill News  
Friday, March 3, 1899

C.N. Johnson, editor and publisher of the Advocate, the official organ of the republican party in this county, was born in Drammen, Norway, July 7, 1856. He emigrated to this country when a boy of fourteen coming to Wausau where he began life for himself, doing chores for Mr. J.C. Clark of that place. From this he went to work in the saw mills in the summer time and in the woods in the winters continuing at this work up to 1889 when he in company with W.A. Dunn bought the News. This partnership continued until 1892 when Mr. Johnson sold his interest to his partner and bought his present property, the Advocate, which paper he has successfully conducted up to the present time. In 1897 Mr. Johnson was appointed postmaster by President McKinley and the same careful management that characterizes his own private affairs is shown in the conduct of Uncle Sam's business. Mr. Johnson is eminently a self-made man and whatever honor is due for the success that he has achieved belongs to himself.

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## C.N. Johnson as “The Mentor”



Hans V. Kaltenborn



Edward S. Jordan

Chris Johnson, owner and publisher of the Merrill Advocate Newspaper, had hired and mentored Hans V. Kaltenborn and Edward S. Jordan as young reporters. Both of these young Merrill men went on to make it big in the world and become very famous in their own right.

H.V. Kaltenborn became internationally famous and easily qualifies to be the most “favorite son” to ever emanate from the community of Merrill, Wisconsin. C.N. Johnson had hired H.V. Kaltenborn back in 1898. Mr. Kaltenborn attributes his early career success to the opportunity and mentoring that Chris Johnson provided him. He began writing weekly columns about Merrill’s Company F, during the Spanish-American war troop call-up. H.V. Kaltenborn enlisted in the unit and eventually. Both Chris Johnson and H.V. Kaltenborn were friends with “Popcorn Dan Coxen”, Merrill’s popcorn wagon vendor, who died during the sinking of the Titanic. At this time Chris Johnson was the Editor for W.B. & Joe Chilsen’s Merrill Daily Herald newspaper. H.V. Kaltenborn was the Dramatic Editor for the Brooklyn Eagle Newspaper. Both men exchanged correspondence attempting to ascertain information regarding the fate of their mutual friend. C.N. Johnson published many of these correspondence exchanges in the Merrill Daily Herald

Edward “Ned” Jordan went to attend the University of Wisconsin and while there, along with another Merrill boy, William T. Evjue were both employed part time at the Wisconsin State Journal Newspaper. William T. Evjue also did pretty well himself eventually founding and publishing the Madison Capital Times, the daily afternoon newspaper. Although Mr. Evjue had not worked for C.N. Johnson, he was truly an admiring observer of his newspaper business. Ned Jordan went on and became a reporter with the Milwaukee Journal newspaper and Cleveland Daily Press. After employment at this newspaper, he remained in Cleveland and worked for the National Cash Register Company. Crowell-Collier Company of Springfield, Ohio, publisher of Collier’s Magazine. Became associated with the Nash automobile went on and founded the Jordan Motor Car Company.

Passing on the newspaper publishing torch on to Walter Burt (W.B.) and Joe Chilsen. During and after the sale transition of the Merrill Advocate weekly to the Merrill Daily Herald, C.N. Johnson stayed on as an editor during a transition period in mentoring the Chilsen brothers about the business. From W.B.’s tribute to C.N. Johnson it is very apparent that the Chilsen boys had nothing but the deepest respect, admiration and highest regard for Chris Johnson as a mentor, friend, citizen and human being.

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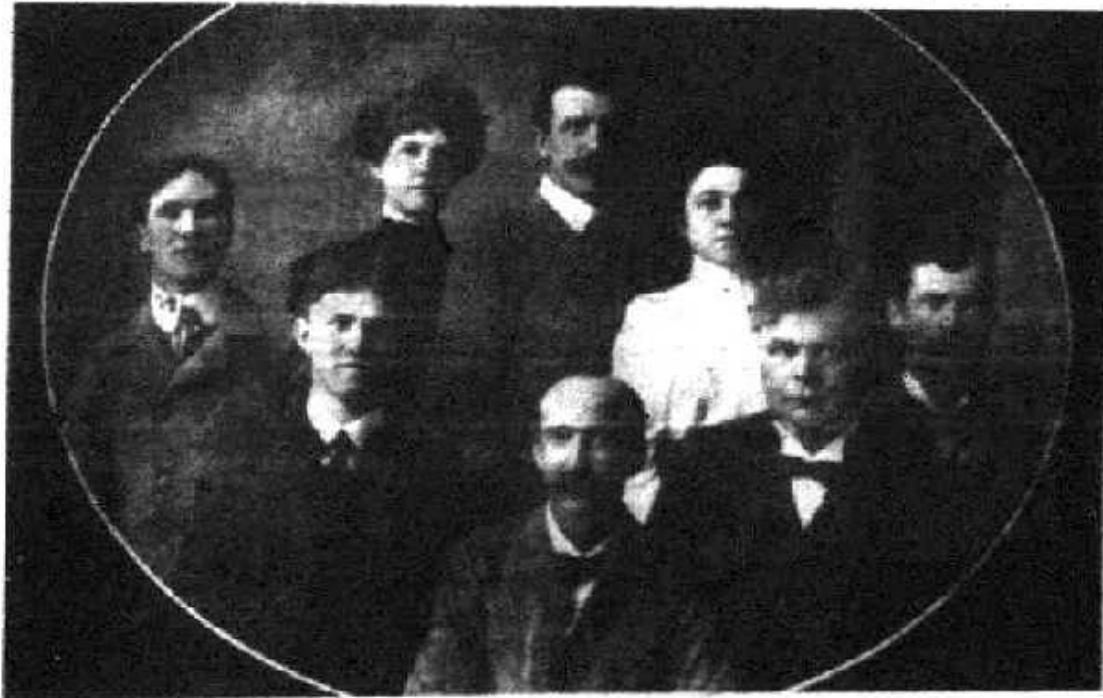
Merrill Daily Herald  
Chamber of Commerce Edition  
Wednesday, May 13, 1913  
Page 21, Column 4

### C.N. Johnson

There are few people known better in Lincoln county, and fewer still who have the state-wide reputation of C.N. Johnson, former editor of **THE HERALD**, and now a prosperous Lincoln county farmer.

Mr. Johnson is the original railroad booster and has argued long and earnestly for more and better railroad facilities. It begins to look as though his dream of an east and west line is about to be realized.

It has been often and truly said that "Chris" Johnson is the best and busiest booster in the county. When in the editorial chair the ink was never dry on a boosting article.



A picture of the employees of the Merrill post office, taken about 1900. They are: front, left, Ralph Collie, Jacob J. Hoffman and C. N. Johnson, post master. Back, left, Ervin Hamlin, Miss Nellie Olson, Henry Filastreau, Clara Hannemann and Herman K. Jaeger.

June 1947 - Centennial Edition - Merrill Daily Herald

## **CHRISTIAN NELSON JOHNSON**

### **A TRIBUTE**

**By W.B. Chilsen**

The Daily Herald Jubilee-Edition – October 1934

The observation of the Herald's anniversary would be incomplete without some tribute to a man who has had much to do with Merrill newspapers and ourselves who has been an outstanding promoter of upper Wisconsin, and who in an unobtrusive way has been as influential in Merrill affairs as any man. He is Chris Johnson, Lincoln county's outstanding journalist and historian of the pinery days.

C.N. Johnson has known us since we were practically a babe in arms—we remember him since our knee pants days. Our admiration for him, as an individual, comes not only from his ability as a writer and commentator on present and past problems that have been solved by humanity or that are still being debated, We admire him for his untiring energy. Most to the time that they are fifty years old and then there comes a slackening in their pace, but with Mr. Johnson, from our observation, it has been much different. His mind is more active; he takes a keener interest in world affairs and politics today than he did 25 years ago. He has often told us that a man dies like a tree (from the top down) and there is no evidence of any blight or falling leaves in him, who reminds us of a towering monarch of the primeval forest.

He has lived a pretty full life. Those who know, have told us that in the lumber camps he was the best liked and most excellent cook; then became a newspaper man and was an early tutor of men like Hans Kaltenborn and E.S. Jordan. He was no "slouch" as a farmer, when he operated his farm which is now owned by the O'Reilley's and the people at the County Home think that he has reached the height of his genius as superintendent of that institution.

Mr. Johnson played the game of politics quite successfully, having made a number of men delegates not only to the national convention, but was the first to suggest that Isaac Stevenson would be a good United States Senator. He made other men members of Congress. President McKinley appointed him postmaster, a position he filled for a dozen years or more, and like his other endeavors, he was known far and wide as one of the most courteous of public officials. He read or followed no rules, except that of serving his patrons.

Next to our parents, we fell that C.N. Johnson has been one of our finest influences, and our association has broadened our viewpoint of life. A cleaner living individual, it has not been our pleasure to meet—it is a homely phrase to call Mr. Johnson one of "nature's noblemen" but it is a phrase that cannot be improved upon—he is that.

So far as formal matters of day and date are concerned, Christian Nelson Johnson was born in the central part of Norway, near Drammen, on July 7, 1857. After attending Norwegian schools three or four months a year until he was fourteen years old he came alone to the United States, where his uncle, Anton Johnson, was a lumberjack working out of Stevens Point.

Mr. Johnson spent only a few weeks at the Point before he went to Wausau to work in the Plummor sawmill there, earning his own living by day labor at the age of fourteen. For four years Mr. Johnson stayed at the Plummor boarding house. His wages were small. There was no money in this country at all in those days, and the great panic of the early "70's was in full flurry, Part of the time Mr. Johnson had charge of the planning mill operated in connection with the sawmill.

The railroad came into Wausau in 1874, and with it came crude lumbering machinery. Shortly after that Mr. Johnson went out into the woods, where he cooked for various lumbermen.

In 1892 he took over the Lincoln County Advocate and remained in newspaper work until 1909, when he first went to his farm and later became superintendent of the County Home. This position he still holds.

One can hardly think of newspaper work in Merrill without considering C.N. Johnson. He on his part is to this day more than willing to offer generous help in any journalistic undertaking. He enjoys it. A born newspaper man, he will continue to be one through-out his life.

C.N. and I found our greatest pleasure in the companionship of trout fishing. It was not the fish we caught but the camp fire and feed followed by the corn cob pipes and Standard—the good old Wisconsin tobacco. We settled the problems of here and the hereafter. For twenty years we fished and visited at "The Elms," the old homestead on the Pine River.

Merrill Daily Herald  
Wednesday, February 3, 1937  
Page 1, Columns 1 & 2

## **Short Illness Fatal To C.N. Johnson Head of County Home Was Early Editor In City**

**Widely Known Political Observer And Writer Was Postmaster for 12 Years; Originated Box  
Number System**



C.N. Johnson, widely known superintendent of the Lincoln County Home and a former newspaper editor in this city, died at 4:43 o'clock this morning in the Lincoln hospital at the age of 80 years.

He slipped into what he so often in his writings referred to as the "great beyond" without resistance. In since last Friday, his death occurred, during a coma that began two day ago.

When he was taken ill he went to bed in his living quarters in the home, perhaps feeling that his condition was due only to an indisposition that would soon pass that speedily his condition became critical. He was moved to the hospital, but treatment was of no well.

Mr. Johnson had been in failing health since May, 1933. Then in his seventy-sixth year he submitted to amputation of his right leg to correct a condition caused by diabetes. With remarkable stamina and courage he fought off complications and recovered sufficiently enough from the shock so that within a few months, equipped with an artificial limb, he could have become active. He learned to walk with a cane and soon handled all of his duties in the home.

**Message From H.V. Kaltenborn**

The following telegram from H.V. Kaltenborn internationally famous news commentator and world traveler was sent in reply to this message to a message informing him of the death of C.N. Johnson, whose encouragement aided Mr. Kaltenborn in his rapid rise to fame:

**Brooklyn, N.Y., Feb. 3.**

W.B. Chilsen  
Merrill, Wis.

Deeply affected by the news Chris Johnson's death. He gave me first lessons in newspaper work. They were good lessons. I owe him much. His encouragement helped me as it has helped others. His hard work, ripe wisdom, sound philosophy, shrewd good sense more than made up his lack of formal education. For many years I have thought of him as Merrill's grand old man.

Imperative speaking engagements unhappily prevent my coming to Merrill now.

H.V. Kaltenborn  
9 Garden Pl

One of his first excursions on the “new leg” was to the Herald office where he was well beloved by every member of the staff and where he often came to visit and talk “shop.” W.B. Chilsen, with which he purchased the Merrill Daily Herald in 1910—the anniversary is February 5—greeted him with a remark that a man hadn’t need a leg to help him think or write, anyhow, and Mr. Johnson thereafter, it seemed, renewed his cheery outlook on life.

A contributor to the editorial columns for years, Mr. Johnson took a new interest in his correspondences and comments on the news of the day.

Mr. Johnson was probably best known as a political observer and commentator, he was a Republican, and his fervor for the party remained unbiased in print. He never withheld append the other side of an argument to his own opinion. As a writer he was concise and interesting.

Surviving him are his wife Helen and sisters, Miss Margaret Johnson Chilsen, Mrs. Harry Johnson Merrill, and a nephew, Carl Johnson, Elkhart Lake. He had no children. One brother in Norway (*Page 2 column 10*) also survives. Another brother Martin died at Glidden Jan 11 and his sister Mrs. Trina Hilstad died in Bemidji, Minn., about thirty years ago.

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Christian Nelson Johnson, as he was christened, was born in Norway on July 7, 1858. According to a short sketch of his own full life, written recently in his characteristic hand he arrived in this country in July 1871. Up until then, he wrote, “Never went to school long enough to learn the multiplication table.”

America was destined to become the school in which he found the opportunity, first, to live and enjoy life, then to study and learn for himself the things his missed in his early days. He traveled directly to Wausau because that city was near the center of the great lumbering industry which attracted Norwegians in legions.

For five years he worked in saw mills and shingle mills and later hired out as camp cook. In November 1889, he moved here. Meanwhile, during the years he worked in the mills, Johnson had developed his self-education to a stage where he had solid knowledge of the English language. Newspapers attracted him. He read them constantly in every spare moment and eventually became curious about the newspaper profession. He studied available references and then apparently sought and opportunity in the profession.

When he did enter the business it was by chance and more to protect a loan of \$1,000 than anything else. He became associated with E.A. Dunn in the publication of the Merrill News shortly after he arrived in this city. In February, 1892, Johnson became editor in his own right when he purchased the Lincoln County Advocate which he continued to publish until 1910. Fledgling reporters in his staff later were H.V. Kaltenborn, widely known commentator, and Ned Jordan, noted as an auto manufacturer.

Mr. Johnson, during the intervening years became, truly an outstanding member of the community and his newspaper became a leader in its weekly field. He had been appointed as Postmaster on Oct. 1, 1897, by President William McKinley and subsequently reappointed twice by President Roosevelt.

Before he retired from the postoffice on July 1, 1910 Mr. Johnson directed reorganization of the system here and established city deliveries in November 1900, one year before Merrill was eligible for this delivery system under the existing postoffice laws. The rural system in which he organized the now universal method of numbering boxes was established in 1902, with two carriers, Gottlieb Schroeder and Case Button. Their salary, Mr. Johnson recalled, was \$400 per year.

#### **Overseer of Poor for 20 Years**

Mr. Johnson wrote that he was a candidate for sheriff in 1916, but was defeated. On January 1, 1917 he was appointed superintendent of the poor and overseer of the Lincoln County House. A few years ago, when the depression hit this section, the distribution of relief was transferred to another department and Mr. Johnson's duties were devoted entirely to supervising the home.

As superintendent of the home, Mr. Johnson proved he was a practical and sound administrator of a public trust. Under him the home was efficiently and economically operated and always with just regard for the comfort of the aged residents. Without exception, too, these old people accepted Johnson not only as the superintendent, but an intimate friend, kindly and courteous, to whom they could confide their troubles. Between him and them there was a bond of solid understanding and friendship.

During these years at the home Mr. Johnson continued to write for the Herald although he had sold his interest in the paper many years before. He wrote always in long-hand, always with a corncob in his mouth.

As superintendent of the poor, Mr. Johnson was a foremost leader in the establishment of the present county hospital. He urged it as a necessary and practical adjunct of the home and for the county poor, and an addition was finally built to the home. The hospital was completed in June, 1920.

#### **Interested In Public Affairs**

Mr. Johnson always maintained a deep interest in public affairs. Following the year when he gave up his business interest in the Herald, he purchased what now is the O'Reilly farm in the town of Merrill and operated it until 1915, when he removed to the city. While a resident of the town in 1914, he served as supervisor on the county board.

Almost every session of the county board would find him present. Always on the first day of the session, he would appear personally to extend an invitation to the members to take a dinner at the home and inspect the county property.

He was married to Miss Helen Herbenson in June, 1883, Stevens Point.

The funeral probably will be held next Saturday afternoon, with services in the Presbyterian church. A definite announcement of the time and other arrangements will be published tomorrow.



Above is a picture of Mr. Johnson taken forty years ago.

Merrill Daily Herald  
Thursday, February 4, 1937  
Page 1, Columns 1

### **Friends Praise Late Superintendent of County Home And Former Editor as Outstanding Citizen**

Friends of the late C.N. Johnson, superintendent of the Lincoln county home and former newspaper editor in this city, praised him as an outstanding public figure.

Mr. Johnson, a resident of the community for nearly sixty years, died early Wednesday morning after a short illness. His passing at the age of 80 years brought forth expressions of deep regret in testimony of the position of esteem he had occupied.

Out of respect to his career in public office, flags on public buildings were at half-staff.

The funeral will be held at 2 p.m. next Saturday from the Taylor funeral home and at 2:30 p.m. from the Merrill Presbyterian church, the Rev Finch Clarke, D.D. officiating.

The body will lie in state at the funeral home until the hour of the funeral. The casket will not be opened at the church. Burial will be held in the Merrill cemetery.

Among those praising the memory of Mr. Johnson were:

**Mayor W.H. AuBuchon**—“The death of C.N. Johnson has removed from our midst one of our best citizens. Mr. Johnson possessed a kind disposition, big-hearted, always able to see plight of his fellow man—a quality so necessary in the work he was engaged in. It will be difficult to replace Mr. Johnson in the interest of our community, and we in Merrill, Lincoln county, and the Nation have lost a citizen of the first rank, one whose devoted work in the interest of humanity will long be remembered. His demise is a very great loss to the community.”

**T. Tillisch**—“Mr. C.N. Johnson was a humanitarian in the highest degree; his duty was to do good to his fellow men. His writings always left a deep impression on the reader. He saw the best in women and men and had a very soothing way of expressing his words when he many times wrote about the departed. I



always felt richer in mind after a conversation with Mr. Johnson. He certainly will be greatly missed among the members of our County Home.”

**C.H. Stange**—“Death, which in the end must come to all men, early yesterday claimed the life of Mr. C.N. Johnson, prominent citizen. Mr. Johnson is mourned by hundreds who knew him as a grand old gentleman, as a faithful friend, and as the beloved head of our County Home. His passing is a sad blow to his friends here. Keen minded, alert and firm to the day of his fatal illness, Mr. Johnson accomplished his ambition to lead a life of useful activity to the very end, and it is my opinion that the memory of Mr. C.N. Johnson will continue to live long with Merrill and Lincoln County.”

**Theo. Heldt**—“Mr. Johnson gained the respect and devotion of those with whom he came in contact. He was beloved by the residents at the Lincoln County Home and in his passing Lincoln County loses a capable, upright citizen who rendered a life-time of service to his community.”

**A.F. Petterman**—“I knew Mr. C.N. Johnson for 40 years. He was *(Page 8, Column 2)*

**City In Mourning For C.N. Johnson; Funeral Saturday** *(continued from Page 1)*

a fine, square gentleman. His passing is a great loss to the community. I extend my sympathy to Mrs. Johnson.”

**George Gibson**—“I came to Jenny in 1879 and knew Mr. Johnson since that time. I was his neighbor when he was operating his own farm. I was on the Poor Committee when he was the County Home. I have always found him an up-and-up square shooter. If the testimony of the residents of the Home who have been under his charge were taken it would be in his favor.”

**F.J. Smith**—“C.N. Johnson, or Chris’ as he was usually known, was a fine type of the vanishing element of north Wisconsin pioneers. A man of much ability and sterling worth, a clear thinker of honesty and purpose. He was an intelligent and forcible writer, particularly on subjects of interest in his part of the state. We have known Mr. Johnson for 40 years and have high respect for his genuine ability in working for the best interest of this community and state. A man of more than ordinary wisdom on political matters which he often displayed in keen editorials.”

**C.R. Livingston**—“C.N. Johnson will be missed in Merrill and Lincoln County. His genial manner and staunch support of this community won for him the respect of men. A personal loss has been felt in his passing from us.”

**George L. Gilkey**—“In the death of C.N. Johnson Lincoln county has lost one of its most able citizens. He was untiring in his service to his fellow man. His work has been, and will continue to be, and inspiration to others.

**The Rev. Herman Daib**—“I knew Mr. Johnson for many years and especially well while he was superintendent of the county home. He was a good honest Christian, always pleasant and accommodating.”

**Hall Brooks, Tomahawk**—“I shall remember C.N. Johnson as a strong rugged individual and as a great booster for Lincoln county. He always saw a bright future for this territory.”

**Attorney G.M. Sheldon, Tomahawk**—“When you knew C.N. Johnson you knew a man. He always made a sturdy defense of his friends and was kind to his enemies. I shall miss him as he was a frequent visitor to Tomahawk and to my office,”

**Judge Max Van Hecke**—“I was sorry to hear of Mr. Johnson’s death. As a kind sympathetic citizen and friend he will be greatly missed.”

**Dave Barden**—“Mr. Johnson was a fine old gentleman. He was always trying to do something for others. Out at the home he won the hearts of the aged by treating them with the utmost kindness at all times.”

**J.A. Emerich**—“C.N. Johnson was in every sense a true example of the self-made man of Merrill’s early building.

“Self-educated and self-trained, his ability brought recognition that has both exerted and left important influence in this entire county for many years.

“He possessed especially, the unusual ability to steer young men of this community that took his advice to success.

“His life is a record of ambitious effort serving in every capacity he undertook with credit both to himself and the community.

“”In his passing, the entire county suffers the loss of another of its strong character pioneer builders.”

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## That Man Johnson

"'Tis true, 'tis certain; man through dead retains  
Part of himself; the immortal mind remains."

A great Viking has lain himself down to his last sleep.

It is not an easy task for me to write an editorial eulogizing my friend, C N. Johnson.

All boys who have grown up in Merrill for the last fifty years knew curly headed Chris, who walked the streets summer and winter in his shirt sleeves. He was a friend to all of them.

About thirty-six years ago, we took our first job with him in the old Merrill Advocate, and it through his early training that we gained some knowledge of the newspaper business.

Not only did we gain a knowledge of the newspaper business, but we absorbed his philosophy of life. Mr. Johnson found little fault with any individual; he was willing to find excuses rather than to enlarge upon an individual's shortcomings.

One of his maxims was that man was made to work, and industry with him was a guiding star. He was a hard worker and he expected other people to follow his example - not a hard taskmaster to serve, but one who expected results.

Being Scandinavian we were probably a little more friendly, and that may be the reason that we formed a fishing companionship, spending hundreds of Sundays and holidays on the trout streams of Lincoln county. In this association we grew to know the man Johnson, who, though he appeared to be strong and sturdy, had not been a healthy man for many, many years. But he took as his life's motto - this a man. like a tree, dies from the top down.

Mr. Johnson was an ardent Republican, and it naturally follows that he was a strong protectionist. He believed firmly in the protective tariff, but when it came to buying trout flies each spring, or maybe it would be about this time of the year, he and I would gather in the Advocate or the Herald office, and go over the English catalogs and pick a supply of fishing tackle for the next season. I always got a kick out of that. "C.N." always said that if you wanted to find a real man, you had to pick out a fisherman. If a fellow was a good trout fisherman, he was a good citizen.

His life was an inspiration to us and also to everyone else with whom he came into close contact - men like Hans Kaltenborn of international fame, who gives Mr. Johnson considerable credit for his early training in the Advocate office. Kaltenborn wrote Mayor AuBuchon a year ago suggesting a sort of publishing proposition to friends, but Johnson would have none of it.

Consider what Mr. Johnson did in a short lifetime. He was a famous cook, and editor, a public official, a farmer, superintendent of the county home - and master at all. Let us take them up in their order.

"C.N." came to Wausau, a penniless youth who had hiked from Milwaukee to Ohill's Landing and from there had ridden on a wagon axle to his destination. He often said to us when discussing the old days, "I was as green as grass; so greener greenhorn ever landed in the pinery."

Well, maybe he was green, but how this unlettered newcomer changed! In a short time he became the best cook on the Wisconsin river, popular with the boys in the woods and on the river. The oldtime lumberjacks remember as a cook.

Mr. Johnson had little opportunity to gain an education. He never entered the door of an American schoolhouse as a pupil, but while a cook in the woods, he subscribed to the New York Sun, the St. Louis Globe-Democrat and Courier-Journal of Louisville, KY. These were his text-books. He also acted as a sort of correspondent, for whenever there was anything happening in the woods which he thought of importance, he promptly sent it on to the newspapers. That is how he gained his education.

Then by a strange quirk of Fate he entered the newspaper business. He had lent \$1,000 to the publisher of the Merrill News and to save his investment had to go into the business. Later on he purchased the Merrill Advocate. These papers as well known as any in the state of Wisconsin edited in a small town. He made political history with his newspapers. Even his most bitter political enemies (who might still be his personal friends) spoke highly of his pen and his writing ability. He was more than a small town character when it came to being a publisher and writer.

Then Mr. Johnson became postmaster as well as editor of the newspaper, and through Merrill has had many good postmasters, "C.N.'s administration of the office was outstanding. Later, Johnson and the writer acquired this newspaper, and if it has achieved any prominence or success, his early connection with newspaper is largely responsible.

Mr. Johnson at one time owned the O'Reilly farm, and in our opinion as well as some others we know became the best-posted farmer in these parts on registered cattle, their breeding and blood lines. He was equally well posted on other matters of farming; in fact, he could deliver an hour's lecture on alfalfa alone.

He made no money farming, but who has? "C.N." never made any real money; he knew how to spend what he had, and he was always generous with his purse. He had no passion for profit.

His final job was that of superintendent of the Lincoln County Home and Hospital. It was maybe a crowning effort, to his way of thinking. We have heard hundreds of old people from the County Home sing his praises. Old people are hard to handle, but for twenty years Mr. Johnson did an outstanding job at the County Home and Hospital.

On a Sunday a short time ago, we stopped at the Home for a little visit. It was just the hour for Sunday services, and "C.N." was ringing the bell calling in the worshippers. He made a fine picture in the doorway of the dining room calling his people to worship - a picture which prompts us to say a word about his religion.

A true Christian it was who launched his boat to journey to that shore from which no traveller returns. We know that this pilot entered the boat without fear, for often during the still watches of the night when we were camped at our fishing shack on Pine River, we discussed the here and hereafter, and what the future held for man.

At this shack Mr. Johnson and I spent many a happy hour, entertaining our friends and enjoying ourselves. (I always called the shack "The Homestead," but he called it "The Elms.") Now we recall one particular visit at The Elms; it was June, 1910 when Halley's Comet paid its last visit. There were some superstitious people who believed that when the Comet was closest to the earth, some great disaster should occur, possibly the end of the world. So Johnson packed up the water bucket with plenty of lunch, and told me to hitch up the broncos, and we went out to The Homestead. It was a beautiful night and one could see the comet distinctly. Sitting near an out campfire, watching one of nature's phenomena and studying the high heavens all naturally led one to talking of the hereafter. Mr. Johnson's conclusions were that it was no more remarkable for a man to live in this world than that he should live in a hereafter; that it was no more of a miracle to expect that there should be another universe of the departed souls than that we should be living here and now.

Johnson was a believer in God—a personal God. We don't know that he affiliated with any particular church, but he was still a Christian. He didn't believe in the higher criticisms of the Scriptures, but he believe, like Dwight L. Moody, that there was little sense in having a passion to let people know that there were Isaiahs when so many didn't even know that there was one.

Probably the most dramatic visit and talk we had with our departed friend occurred three years ago last May when the doctors told him it would be necessary, if he were to survive, to amputate his leg. Johnson didn't want the job done, because he felt losing a leg would be too much of a handicap at his age. We argued with for hours and finally won our point that it was best to have the operation performed.

We quoted one of his own sayings, that a man dies from the top down; he wasn't a foot-racer or a prize-winning walker. Johnson knew that if he didn't have his leg removed, he would surely die, and that it might be a pretty painful passing because of the nature of the infection, but he was unafraid. In fact, we sometimes think that he was a little bit anxious to solve the riddle of the universe - anxious to have life's greatest experience. He waited for the great event.

Many remarkable individuals have been raised in the pinery--strong, sturdy and steadfast men. Many of these men have left their mark, and it will be many years before their efforts are forgotten. And it is our opinion that the memory of C.N. Johnson will live with that of these giants of the pinery--a tribute which character such as his so richly deserves.

A Patriarch has passed - a great Viking has lain himself down for his last sleep. May his ashes rest in peace.

We have dreaded the day's when we should have to write this article and we now that our effort to describe the man Johnson as knew and honored him has indeed been poor.

*"Strange, is it not? - that of the myriads who  
Before us passed the door of darkness through,  
Not one returns to tell us of the road --  
Which to discover we must travel too."  
-- Omar Khayam*

W.B. Chilsen

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Merrill Daily Herald  
Monday, February 8, 1937  
Page 1

### **Hundred Brave Cold to Mourn At Johnson Funeral**

#### **Lincoln County Leader Laid to Rest After Final Rites In Presbyterian Church**

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Hundreds of mourners, including members of the Lincoln country board and other officials, braved below zero blasts Saturday to pay their respects to the late C.N. Johnson.

The Norwegian immigrant, who rose from humble beginning to place of leadership in this community, was buried in wind swept Merrill cemetery as the Rev. Finch A. Clarke, D.D., pastor of the Presbyterian church read a short ritual committing the body to its final resting.

Mr. Johnson, woods camp cook, editor, postmaster and finally superintendent of the Lincoln county home, was praised and eulogized as a man who place the welfare of humanity above all his earthly endeavors.

"It was his faith in God and man that permitted him to become such an outstanding humanitarian," said Dr. Clarke as he conducted the final rites of the church over the bronze, flower-decked casket. "He had no fears, no doubts, but only complete trust in the divine rule of helping his fellow men."

Judge G. M. Sheldon, tomahawk, life long friend of Mr. Johnson, in a brief oration on the life of the deceased, praised him simply as one who "loved his fellow men."

"He was not a professional social worker," said Mr. Sheldon, "but because of his practical knowledge and his humane temperament, he was nearly an ideal administrator. Many an unfortunate who as 'one of the least of these' was befriended by Mr. Johnson will bless his memory to his dying day."

The large church was nearly filled by the mourners. Seated in individual sections were employes of the county home and hospital, employes of the Daily Herald which Mr. Johnson to organize back in 1910 and officials and other friends.

Singing by the Presbyterian mixed quartet composed of Mrs. H.J. Mitbauer, Mrs. Winnie Bisbee, Ben Lagerbloom and Harold Anderson closed the services in the church and earlier in the Taylor funeral home.

Active pallbearers were George L. Gilkey, George A Schroeder, Gottlieb Schroeder, Clifford R. Livingston, Mayer W.H. AuBuchon and Otto Nienow. Honorary pallbearers were Herman Krueger, J.A. Emerich, John Brandt, Attorney Sheldon, Hall Brooks, Fred Smith, A.F. Peterman and Eugene Semling.

Out of town mourners included his nieces, Miss Margaret Johnson and Mrs. Minnie Johnson, Glidden, and Carl Johnson, Elkhart Lake, his nephew.

#### **Text Of Oration**

Text of Mr. Sheldon's oration is as follows:

"Many, many generations ago there flowed down the western coast of continental Europe a stream of people from the frozen north, and descended from that people was William the Conqueror who left his impression upon the British Isles.

“Today many a person of English decent is proud of his so called Anglo Saxon lineage, but fails to give due credit to the blood of the Northman flowing in his veins.

“Today the eyes not only of the nation but of the civilized world from New Zealand to Nova Scotia are on Wisconsin, Not because, as some of would-be aristocratic friends would have us believe, that Wisconsin is the experimental laboratory for all of the sermons and nostrums designed to cure social ills, but because Wisconsin is in the fore front of human progress.

“And apparently only the student of the matter has any adequate conception of the distinguished part the descendents of the Northman have taken in movement.

“Chris Johnson was justly proud of his race, and it would be his wish that if there is any reason  
(Continued on page 3, column 6)

### **Hundred Brave Cold to Mourn At Johnson Funeral**

(Continued from Page 1)

why his memory should be cherished, a major share of the credit should go to his parentage.

“Chris Johnson loved his adopted country. Perhaps too many of us with the backing of generation after generation of American born ancestors, are apt to look with more or less suspicion upon the foreign born. And it may be true that only those who know from experience the lack of liberty in the old world, really appreciate the blessings of democracy.

“It is perhaps doubtful whether any one in our locality was more versed in the political and economic history of our country. And this, knowledge came not for its own sake, but largely because of his veneration for the great men whose names adorn our history’s pages.

“Not only did Mr. Johnson love his adopted country, but he loved his adopted state. He loved its people. He loved her great outdoors, her lakes and streams, her sunshine and her solitudes. And above all, perhaps, he loved his country. No man during the past forty years or more has given more freely of his time and strength for the welfare of his county than did C.N. Johnson.

“Mr. Johnson’s service is perhaps well exemplified by his encouragement of the live stock industry, and particularly the breeding of blooded cattle. Mr. Johnson realized that the future of the county will depend largely upon the farms, and pure bred cattle form the basis for successful farming in this county.

“The results of his thought and effort are visible on every hand.

“Chris Johnson loved his fellow man. He was not a professional social worker, but because of his practical knowledge, and his humane temperament, he was an ideal administrator. Many an unfortunate who as ‘one of the least of these’ was befriended by Mr. Johnson, will bless his memory to his dying day.

“Dr. Wilfred Grenfell, that Nature’s Nobleman. Who spent his life in the Artic in the service of his fellow man, had perhaps truly said that when the final summons comes we shall not be asked ‘What did you believe,’ but ‘What did you do?’

“Theodore Roosevelt said: ‘I know not how philosophers may ultimately define religion; but from Micah to James it has been defined as service to one’s fellow men rendered by following the great rule of justice and mercy, of wisdom and righteousness,’ Chris Johnson could stand that test.

“And perhaps, in the final analysis, it will be asked: Is this world a better place in which to live due in part to the life of our departed friend? Those of us who knew him, feel assured of what the answer will be.

“Chris Johnson played the game. Not for the ephemeral satisfaction that comes from the noisy acclaim of our fellow men; not because of the belief that the life hereafter might be more secure, but because it was his creed to so live that when the final summons came, he might wrap the draperies of his couch about him and lie down to pleasant dreams; because of that inner consciousness that service to his fellow man would alone call forth the priceless words ‘Well done good and faithful servant’.”

## Tribute To Mr. Johnson

### C.N. Johnson of Merrill Dies

The Merrill Daily Herald yesterday recorded the death of C.N. Johnson and Walter Chilsen, who 36 years ago his first instructions in the newspaper business from him, in a very fine editorial entitled "That Man Johnson," paid high tribute to one of Lincoln county's outstanding characters. It was some 50 years ago that Mr. Johnson started the Merrill Advocate, a weekly paper that did much to promote the interests of Merrill and Lincoln county.

When the daily newspaper came into being in Merrill he retired from newspaper work, but during the years that he was engaged in it he left his impress upon it and upon those with whom he came in contact, particularly upon those in his own work. Among those who he started on a successful career was H.V. Kaltenborn, for some years editor of the Brooklyn Eagle and international famous news commentator and world traveler.

"Deeply affected by the news Chris Johnson's death. He gave me first lessons in newspaper work. They were good lessons. I owe him much. His encouragement helped me as it helped others. His hard work, ripe wisdom, sound philosophy, shrewd good sense more than made up his lack of formal education. For many years I have thought of him as Merrill's grand old man."

In the death of Mr. Johnson another of the few remaining pioneer newspaper men of this northwoods has passed on. As we call the roll few respond. There was in Antigo, John A. Ogden, the Millard Brothers, W. H. Dawley and Mr. Radcliffe. At Rhinelander there was George Bishop, and Gene Thayer of the old Wausau Pilot. Those men and others of the early days did much to pave the way for the development that has taken place since they were active. So it is with much regret that we note the passing of one of the few remaining of those pioneer newspaper men. Antigo Journal.

### FEW WERE LIKE HIM

Under the caption "That Man Johnson"—W.B. Chilsen pens a most beautiful tribute to the life and accomplishments of the late C.N. Johnson, a former editor of the Daily Herald and for a lifetime a prominent figure in the public life of the entire county.

No one could write a more fitting tribute to Mr. Johnson, than Mr. Chilsen, for although there was a big difference in their ages, they had been bosom friends for a lifetime.

And "Chris" is deserving of everything good that could be said about him. Plain, homely, with now "book learnin'"—yet he wielded a vast influence in public matters in Lincoln county. A poor immigrant boy, unable to read or write when he came to these friendly shores, he invested his spare time in getting a suitable working knowledge of his adopted land and he so progressed that his knowledge was far beyond that to be secured from the printed pages—for he mixed words with "horse sense" and with an optimistic view of his fellow man, he grew and waxed exceedingly well in all temperamental things.

Chris was a kindly man, willing to look over the faults of a man to discern his good qualities. His reasoning while simple, was uncanny. He built his reputation and character on a "golden rule" principle, and in his passing all will call him good.

Lincoln county has lost a true and trusted friend—a man who gave much during his more than half century of service. He leaves little of the this world's material things to posterity—but a life of good service that will long be remembered.—Tomahawk Leader.

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### ANSWER THE SUMMONS

Wm. T. Evjue, editor of the Capital Times, in his column, "Good After Everybody," paid tribute not only to Mr. Johnson, but to Jules Liebman, editor of the Milwaukee Sentinel.

Death continues to lay its hand upon men who have attained notable positions in the field of journalism in Wisconsin. Within the week, the final summons came to Jules Liebman, general manager of the paper,

Chris Johnson, a poor Norwegian immigrant boy, who, in his own words, “never went to school long enough to learn the multiplication table,” later became one of the best known editors of a weekly in northern Wisconsin.

This writer will always remember Chris Johnson with a great deal of affection. Mr. Johnson was always interested in young people and took great measure of pride on any Merrill boy who had gone out into the world to make good. H.V. Kaltenborn, the famous radio commentator, and Ned Jordan, who later became the manufacturer of the Jordan automobile, worked on the old Merrill Advocate in their fledgling days.

Mr. Kaltenborn sent this tribute to the Merrill Daily Herald on learning of the death of Mr. Johnson: “His hard work, ripe wisdom, sound philosophy and shrewd good sense more than made up his lack of formal education. For many years I have thought of him as Merrill’s grand old man.”

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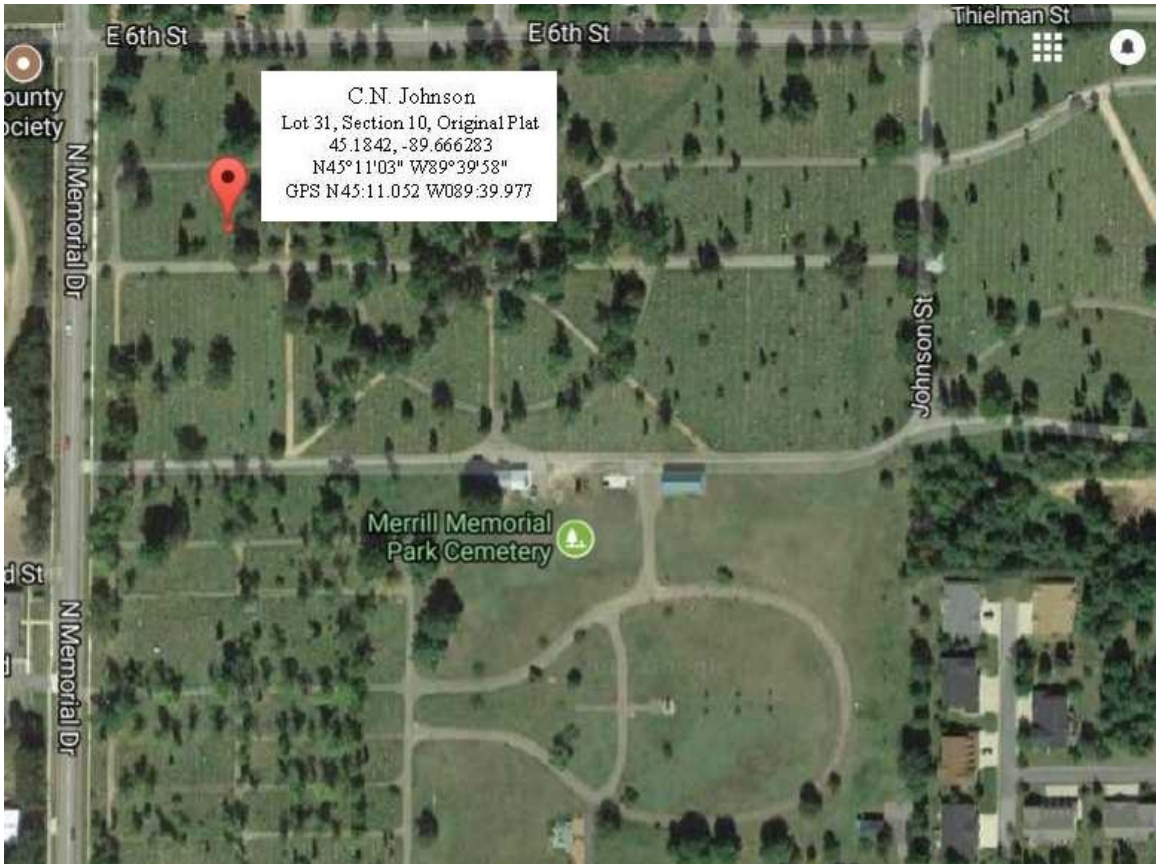
How eagerly we used await the old Merrill Advocate each week! As a boy of about 10 years and just becoming interested in newspapers, it was my job each Tuesday (I think that was the publication date) to get the Advocate. There was no free delivery in those days and people had to go to the post office to get newspapers and mail. Everybody was at the post office when the Advocate came out because there was always something in the paper that would stir up the town. In those days every town, no matter how would have two weekly newspapers,--one supported by the Republicans and the other by the Democrats. In Merrill the opposition Democratic paper was the Northern Wisconsin News. Chris Johnson was a loyal high-tariff Republican. There was little for the laws of libel. There was a constant personal journalistic duel between the editors of the rival papers and they abused and vilified each other to the limit



**Lincoln County Home and Hospital**

C.N. Johnson was the beloved Superintendent from January 1917 until his death on February 3, 1937  
Old State Highway 17 – Later County Highway G  
1900 to 1956 | Pine Crest Nursing Home replaced this facility







## **C.N. Johnson, Journalist, Was Historian Of The Pineries**

Editor's Note: -- The following article was written by the late C.N. Johnson in 1934 from interviews he had with early--day settlers. Mr. Johnson , former publisher of the Lincoln County Advocate and Merrill Daily Herald, farmer, and superintendent of the Lincoln County Home, was an outstanding journalist and historian of the pineries.

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On March 31, 1874, Chapter 120 of the Wisconsin Statutes creating Lincoln county was published. The chapter provides that all the territory of the County of Marathon lying north of the correction line on the southern line of Township 31 north, be detached from Marathon county, shall be known and called the County of Lincoln. Except that for judicial purposes it shall be attached to Marathon county.

Section 2 of the act, provided that the town clerk of the town of Jenny shall not later than the first of October, next, call an election for county officers. At this election a county supervisor and a register of deed shall be elected, who shall hold offices for two years, from the first day of January following; and they shall enter upon their duties as soon and qualified after their election.

Section 3, provided for the board of supervisors of Marathon and Lincoln Counties, for the proportions of all county property, monies, taxes appropriation, debts and liabilities.

Section 4, provided that Marathon county shall render an itemized bill for all expenses whatsoever for judicial purposes within said counties of Marathon and Lincoln. And the taxes for said expenses were to be assessed on all property in the two counties

### **First County Board**

The first meeting of the county board of supervisors for the new county of Lincoln convened October 21, 1874. The members were G.W. Strobridge, H.A. Kyes and Chas Sales. Mr. Sales was elected chairman. Among the first resolutions to be introduced and acted on was the designation of the county seat. Section 2, Town 31 range east, village of Jenny, was designated the county seat. Also another resolution naming all the territory outside the village of Jenny to be known as the town of Jenny. The board then adjourned to November 9. At the November meeting a committee to canvass the election the election returns was appointed. But no record of the election of the 1874 appears in the records of the county board. A finance committee to settle with Marathon county was also appointed. This committee was to consist of members of the county board, county clerk, county treasurer and register of deeds. The board at the meeting also fixed the salary of the treasurer, and county clerk at \$1,000 each per year. The salary of the county superintendent of schools was \$100 a year.

At this meeting the first bills were presented: Geo. Strickland & Co. \$167.55, for books and stationary; Ed Kluetz, justice fees, \$21.01; J.T. Adams, Blacksmithing, \$9.60. The board then adjourned to December 11. At that meeting a contract was entered into by M.H. McCord and county board, letting the said McCord use the back room of the county building as a printing office. The county building, or the court house, then in use was the second story of the T.B. Scott Lumber company's office ???ing located across the street which from where ??? is located the Citizens American Bank.

The committee to settle with Marathon county met on December 7, 1874, and adjourned to the next day.

The members of the Marathon county committee were Jacob Paff, D. D.L. Plummer, and A.N. Schmidt. The Lincoln county members were Chas. Sales, Z. Space, V.R. Willard, H.A. Kyes and T.P. Mathews.

### **First Officers**

The first county officers were Z. Space, county clerk, T.P. Mathews county treasurer; V.R. Willard, register of deeds.

During the winter of 1875, the county organization for Lincoln county was completed by the legislature, separating it from Marathon county for judicial purpose. And at the election, April 6, 1875, F.C. Weed was elected county judge and Chas. O'Neil was elected district attorney. A.D. Gorham was elected clerk of the court, and A.W. Crown was elected sheriff over J.T. Adams. A new county board was elected, On April 8,

the new county board met and organized. The new board consisted of D.A. Kline, and Frederick Riebe. At a meeting of the board June 6, 1876 a petition was presented to build the proposed new courthouse.

At the general election of 1874, party lines were evidently not drawn tight. W.R. Taylor, democrat, carried the county for governor, but A.S. McDill, Republican, carried the county for congress by 43 votes over G.W. Cate, the Democratic candidate; E.L. Bump had a majority of 52 over W.C. Silverthorn. Silverthorn was elected state senator from this district.

Lincoln county early showed its tendency to Democracy. In the presidential election of 1878, Tilden received 174 votes to Hayes 72 votes. Judge G.W. Cote, democratic candidate for congress, got 237 votes; T.C. Pound, Republican; 79 votes. There was no contest for county treasurer, T.P. Mathews was unanimously elected. So was A.D. Gorham, clerk of court, and David Finn, county superintendent of schools. There was a spirited fight for sheriff; J.T. Adams received 153 votes, John McInnis 75, Robert Truax 44, and Allan Space, 43. P.B. Champagne was county surveyor receiving 134 votes to D.A. Kline's 115. For county clerk Herman Rasch had 182 votes to 133 votes for Z. Space.

When Lincoln county was created, the territory extended from the south line of town 31 to the state line of Michigan and Lake Superior on the north, East and west it included ranges 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10; on the north line of township 41, ranges 2 and 3 were also included in Lincoln county.

In 1879, when Price county was erected by Chapter 106, we lost several townships. In 1883, by chapter 74, townships 41 and 47; inclusive, ranges 2 and 3 were attached to Ashland county. In 1885, we lost townships 31 to 35, inclusive, ranges 9 and 10 to Langlade county; chapter 136, laws of 1885. That same winter the County of Oneida was created and we lost all of that territory between the Michigan state line and township 36. In 1875, by chapter 60 we lost some territory to Taylor county.

#### **Richest Region**

The territory of the county, for its size, in 1874 was probably the richest region in the world, exporting the diamond region of the Transvaal. YOU HAVE NEVER THOUGHT OF THIS. HAVE YOU! Here stood the most magnificent pine timber region which ever grew under the sun. It's iron deposits in Ashland and Iron county region have already yielded millions of dollars worth of iron ore. How much iron ore or other minerals remains is unknown. The pine timber has been ruthlessly destroyed.

So far as the timber is concerned so great fortunes have been accumulated. The millionaires it made can be counted on your tow hands. This writer can count only six.

But we had have the cities of the Wisconsin valley, Wisconsin Rapids much of our timber was manufactured there; Stevens Point and Wausau likewise—the lumberman of Wausau invested most of the profits from our timber resources; as did the others cities in the valley—Merrill, Tomahawk, Rhineland, Mellen, Ashland and a great many villages and thrifty communities and a ?he region of farms, factories, and what not. This region is still in its early stage of development.

The town of Rock Falls was first called Skanawan. The name was changed to Rock Falls at meeting of the county board, April 14, 1877. At the April 23 meeting of the board, it was ordered \$2,000 be appropriated for the courthouse. At the May meeting \$25,00 was appropriated for plans and specifications for the court house, the cost not to exceed \$6,000. Later the planes and specifications of F. Dudley Allen were accepted, but for some reason the board paid Mr. Allen \$50.00.

At the meeting of the board June 30, 1877, the bid of M.H. McCord to build the court house for \$5,700 was accepted, and on July 7<sup>th</sup>, the contract with McCord was completed to build the new court hours, now the Lincoln County Normal school building. At the next meeting July 17, the board passed a resolution postponing the building of the court house for one year. Subsequently McCord sublet the contract to David Finn, who built it.

In the fall election of 1878 E.P. Ellis, of Milwaukee, Greenback candidate for governor, received 169 votes; Smith, Republican, 27 votes; Malory, Democratic candidate, 15. Though a Republican, T.B. Scott received 366 votes for state senator, against 18 votes for Richard Dewhurst. At that election L.C. Tyner was elected sheriff; W.H. Canon, district attorney; Herman Rusch, county clerk; V.R. Willard register of deeds; Tim O'Connor, county surveyor and Martin Kerwin, coroner.

Mr. Kerwin was a well known lumberjack, and was known by the name of John C. Heenan. Few if any voting for the lumberjack Heenan. He did not qualify for the office. H.B. Huntington who owned large tracts of pine timber in the town of Pine River, and David Finn, were candidates for superintendent of schools, Finn was successful.

### **Aid Railroad**

The first railroad aid voted by Lincoln county was to the Wisconsin Valley Railroad Co., on October 15, 1878. It was proposed to give the railroad \$50,000 in cash and \$60,000 in bonds to extend its road from Wausau to Merrill. The vote stood 307 for the railroad and 10 against it. For some reason the railroad never pushed the matter and the county never appropriated the money, nor issued the bonds. The record on this transaction is not very clear.

On June 20, 1879, another railroad proposition was submitted to the people of Lincoln county. This time it was \$55,000 in bonds. The vote on the question stood 319 for and 16 against. The \$55,000 of bonds were issued to Wisconsin Valley Railroad Company for \$55,000 of the company's stock.

This stock was sold to T.B. Scott, January 31, 1880 for \$4,700. Evidently the Wisconsin Valley Railroad company's stock was not worth much.

When Lincoln county was set off from Marathon county in 1874, in the financial settlement, Lincoln county was given \$17,400 worth of railroad stock of the same company. This stock Lincoln county sold first to H.B. Huntington for \$1,300, but later the resolution to sell the stock to Huntington was rescinded, and the stock was sold to M.H. McCord for \$2,700. About that time the St. Paul, Milwaukee & Pacific railway company took over the Wisconsin Valley Railroad Co.

The first poor farm the county bought was located at what is known as Donovan's corner, about five miles east of Merrill, On County Highway G. The county paid \$4,500 for it, and later sold it to John Dereg for \$1,500. John Robertson, member of the county board, was the man who sold the land for \$4,500 to be used as a poor farm.

The court house, now the Lincoln County Normal school building, was completed May 10, 1882.

### **O.B. Smith**

Mr. O.B. Smith, father of Fred Smith, 508 Spruce Street, is the first white man to come to this region and remain to help build up this section.

In an interview published many years ago in a local paper, when his mind was as clear as a bell, Mr. Smith said:

"No, I did not come in Merrill in an automobile or a Pullman palace car. I hoofed-it all the way from Chicago, and it wasn't the heat of hoofin' either. That was way back in 1844. I was working down in an Illinois town for \$8.00 a month. I threw up my job and started out alone and on foot for this country. It took me two weeks to make the trip, and what I lived on during that time wouldn't make a Sunday dinner for a small canary. When nigh came on I wrapped myself in a piece of bark and laid down beside a log." (Mr. Smith was born in Erie, Pennsylvania, September 10, 1819.)

"Wausau was little more than a logging camp. I struck a job with Peter Kelley at \$15.00 a month. That was in December, 1844. I worked for Kelley until next August. There were absolutely no houses here at that time. I made my headquarters at Wausau; where Merrill now stands was nothing but a wilderness.

### **Warren's Mill**

"In 1847 a man by the name of Andrew Warren built a mill on the site of the present electric plant. I helped him put in the dam. Later he erected a supply store and had his goods hauled here with horse teams from Milwaukee.

"Next year, 1848, some land was cleared and perhaps a dozen families had moved in. George Strowbridge had a small house where George Schroeder's saloon now stands. There were many Indians around here; large bands passed through here in spring and returned in the fall.

"From 1853 to 1857 quite a little village sprung up here, and it was called Jenny. A road was cut through to Wausau in 1855. After that the mail was carried here by team. Three small hotels were built about that time. Warren's small, up and down sawmill was completed in 1849."

Mr. Smith said that Z. Space built was called the Eagle House, which stood where now is located the Commercial college. Mr. Smith continued:

"The lumber cut at the mill was rafted into 'cribs,' 'rapids pieces' and 'rafts' and floated down the Wisconsin river and into the Mississippi river, and down to the lumber markets at Galena, Alton and St. Louis.

"A 'crib' was 16 feet on either end and sides, and '18 to 22 deep.' That means that 18 or 22 inch-boards were laid on top of each other. Seven of these square 'cribs' constituted a 'rapids piece.'

“Three of these ‘rapids pieces’ constituted a ‘raft’. Floating down the Wisconsin river from Merrill in ‘rafts’ this was call ‘three-abreast.’ The ‘rafts’ had to be separated at “Big Bull rapids (Wausau), ‘Little Bull’ rapids (Mosinee), and so on over all the rapids on the river. The last separation was at Kilbourn City.

“Arriving on the Mississippi, all the ‘rafts’ were tied into one big ‘raft’, called a “fleet’. This was done at the mouth of the Wisconsin river, near Prairie du Chien.

“When the ‘fleet’ was started down the Mississippi river it seldom stopped until it reached its destination,, whether it be Galena, Alton or St. Louis. The crew laid down near their oars, to be instantly on hand when called on by the pilot. On the Mississippi, there were always two pilots, one for day and one for night running.

“I built a house on the site of my present home, where the Hesterman home now stands, but it burned down some years later. Myron McCord came here in 1873. Cyrus Strowbridge built a store building where M.L.

Poirer’s saloon now stands.” (The American State Bank building stands on the site now). “That was the first store building erected in Merrill,” Mr. Smith said.

#### **Plover County Seat**

When Smith came here, there was no railroad west of Chicago, Galena, Illinois, and Janesville, Wisconsin, as well as Beloit, Wisconsin and Sycamore, Illinois were the supplying distributors to this section. The goods were transported by teams. A stage line operated to Gill’s Landing in the summer time.

In 1844, when Smith came here, all the territory north of Columbia County, to Lake Superior, belonged to Portage county; the county seat being Plover.

All this territory in 1850, was Indian territory. The Menominees came up as far as Wisconsin Rapids. The Chippewas’ hunting ground extended north from Wisconsin Rapids to Lake Superior.

Marathon county was set from county in 1850.

In the winter and spring of 1872, and epidemic of smallpox raged in Jenny. Nearly every family in the town fell victims to the disease, and many died. A “pest house” was built upon the Champagne hill, with William Averill in charge, but the pest house soon got too small and nearly every house in town became a pest house.

When the village of Jenny was organized in 1850, the people voted to appropriate \$1,000 to build a school, which was erected on land where now Avreson’s garage stands.

The taxpayers, O.B.A. Smith, George Strowbridge, Andrew Warren and Laut Norway were opposed to building the school house, as there were on two children of school age here, but the sawmill hands, who paid no taxes, voted for the school building.

The first school to start in this school house, was in the fall of 1860, with Kate Goodrich as teacher. The following are of the names of the children who attended that first Merrill school: William Averill, Chili Averill, Willa Averill, Alber Balwin, Helen Combs, Allen Space, Etta Space, who became Mrs. M.H. McCord, and Miss Sarah Strowbridge, who married Walter Alexander of Wausau.

Etta Space became a mail carrier between her and Wausau, traveling on horseback. Miss Space became an expert equestrienne.

#### **Early Settlers**

Among the settlers in this region in the early seventies can be named John T. Adams, W. Averill, Fred Baguhn, August Boettcher, Herman Boettcher, Mrs. Jon Borne -- nee Helen Combs -- Ed Bosworth, Sr., Frank Chartier, Mrs. Frank Chartier, Peter Combs, Fremont Combs, Horatio Combs, J.N. Cotter, Mrs. J.N. Cotter, Dennis Owen and John Dereg;

Geo. Doering, Mrs. Geo. Doering, Andrew Donovan, Henry Dudley, Mrs. Henry Dudley, Mrs. Alex F. Empey, Lou Edgerton, Chas Fuller, John Greene, Thos. Himes, Eugene Kathan, E. M. Kaiser, W.H. Kaiser, Mrs. Geo. Kollock, H.A. Kyes, Chas Kyes, Noel Kyes, Francis E. Mathews, Thomas J. Mathews, Timothy O’Connor, John Posey, Sr.;

Jule Posey, Sr., Jule Posey, Jr., Orin C. Russell, Mrs. Orin C. Russell, Henry Sales, Mrs. Henry Sales, George Sales, Fred Smith, O.B. Smith, Mrs. Sara L. Smith, Aug. Schuman, Ham Streeter, Chas. Snow, Robert Truax, Mrs. Robert Truax, Jacob Weber, Mrs. William West, Frank White, Clarence White, Miss Alice White, Gideon Young, Mrs. Gideon Young, Sam Young and Walter Young.