

PHOTOGRAPHS OF WEST BRANCH TOWNSHIP, DICKINSON COUNTY, MICHIGAN

[Compiled and Captioned by William John Cummings]

WEST BRANCH TOWNSHIP

Organized October 19, 1908, embracing T43N – T44N of R27W, set off from Breen Township, and E ½ of T43N – T44N of R28W, set off from Felch Township; named for the West Branch of the Escanaba River which passes through the area.

ALFRED: Established by the Lindsley Bros., cedar dealers in Menominee, as location for their shingle and post-splitting mill on the E. & L.S.R.R., then in Breen Township, later in West Branch Township; post office established December 8, 1903, with Andrew Kemmeter, postmaster; discontinued November 15, 1910; fire destroyed what little remained of Alfred May 17, 1914; probably named for Alfred Wells, son of John W. Wells, of Menominee, a lumberman operating in the area.

BRYDEN: Postal name for Ralph; post office established January 17, 1901, with Wallace M. Taylor, postmaster; changed to Ralph June 6, 1904.

KENTUCKY TOWN: Settlement of woodsmen established in West Branch Township in the northeastern corner of the county around March, 1911.

LARCH: Lumber camp near Alfred in West Branch Township; destroyed by fire May 17, 1914.

LINDSLEY: Station on the Escanaba & Lake Superior Railway in southern West Branch Township.

McRAE: Station on the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway between Alfred and Lindsley in southern West Branch Township.

RALPH: Lumbering settlement and station established on the Escanaba & Lake Superior Railroad in 1901; named for Ralph Wells, son of John W. Wells, of Menominee, a lumberman operating in the area; post office originally named Bryden and renamed Ralph June 6, 1904.

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Ralph, Looking North, ca. xxxx:

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Ralph, Looking South, ca. xxxx:

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Escanaba & Lake Superior Railway Depot, Ralph, 1915: The loading platform of the Escanaba & Lake Superior Railway Depot at Ralph was crowded with deer awaiting shipment to the homes of the hunters who filled their licenses in West Branch Township. Although this photograph was taken in 1915, similar scenes were common in Ralph during the first decade of the twentieth century as well. All five men are thought to be “outsiders.” *[Alice Farrell]*

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St. Mary's in the Pines Episcopal Church, Ralph, ca. 1920-1930: St. Mary's in the Pines Episcopal Church at Ralph reflects the faith and courage of a pioneer West Branch woman, Mrs. Hugh (Marie) Campbell. Campbell served as station agent for the Escanaba & Lake Superior Railway by 1905, also filling the job of postmaster. By 1913 he was running the store in Ralph. Before coming to Ralph, Marie Campbell had worked in hospitals in her native Canada. Naturally she took care of men injured in logging and also served as a midwife to the women. Shortly after her arrival Mrs. Campbell began holding Sunday school classes in her home. Her prayers for a missionary were answered when the Rev. William Poysear of Crystal Falls stopped in the area while making trips to lumber camps in about 1911. John Fendon, an old lumberjack who moved in with the Campbells after his wife died, left his cabin to the couple upon his own death. Mrs. Campbell's dream of a church in Ralph was realized when Fendon's cabin was converted into St. Mary's in the Pines Episcopal Church. The church probably operated informally for some time before it was officially dedicated in 1922. [Menominee Range Historical Museum]

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Ralph Lumber Camp, 1912: Postmarked Ralph, Michigan, February 5, 1912, a crew of lumberjacks posed in front of the cook house in a northeastern Dickinson County lumber camp for the photographer. Checked woolen shirts, suspenders, short pants and tall, caulked boots were typical and appropriate apparel for working in the woods. Note the man holding the double-bitted axe in the second row. One shanty boy holds a cat at the left end of the second row and another, second from the left in the first row, holds a dog, undoubtedly camp pets. Wearing an apron, the young cook's assistant – or “cookee” – holds a tin Gabriel horn. Such horns measured from 4 to 5 feet in length and were used to call the men at mealtime. *[William John Cummings]*

RUSSELL: Station on the Escanaba & Lake Superior Railway in southern West Branch Township.

WARD: Station on the Escanaba & Lake Superior Railway southeast of Ralph in West Branch Township.