

## EARLY TOWNS ON THE MENOMINEE IRON RANGE

[Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

### COMMONWEALTH, WISCONSIN

*History of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan Containing a Full Account of Its Early Settlement; Its Growth, Development and Resources; An Extended Description of Its Iron and Copper Mines: Also Accurate Sketches of the Counties, Cities, Towns and Villages, Their Improvements, Industries, Manufactories; Biographical Sketches, Portraits of Prominent Men and Early Settlers; Views of County Seats, Etc., Chicago, Illinois: The Western Historical Company, A.T. Andreas, Proprietor, 1883, page 505*

### COMMONWEALTH.

The town which bears this name was laid out in March, 1880, by the Commonwealth Mining Company, on the northeast quarter Section 28, Town 40, Range 18, in the wilderness, as it were. But previous to this, Capt. James Tobin, Superintendent of the mine, had his residence a short distance from the present town site. Close by the pioneer merchants C.H. Sloan & Co. had a temporary store in the vicinity. John Tobin has opened a farm on which he resided. The unprecedented size of the deposit of ore and the fine hardwood timbered land in the vicinity soon became widely spoken of, and the company decided to lay out a town site, which was accordingly done at the time mentioned above. It is located in a fine tract of hardwood forest, north and below the great Commonwealth Mine. The proprietors have been at great expense in clearing out and grading the streets. The ground is undulating, with a gradual slope in the direction of Fisher Lake.

The town is the natural outgrowth of the mining interests located here. The land on which the great hematite deposit is located was entered in the land office in 1863 by the late H.B. Tuttle, of Cleveland, Ohio. Previous to this, Col. Whittlesey, one of the United States Surveyors, while running the lines of the original survey, thought he discovered traces of iron, and as the

ground was covered with a fine growth of hardwood timber, he induced Mr. Tuttle with others to purchase a large tract of land in Sections 32, 33 and 34, in Town 40, Range 18, as he thought that if a marketable quality of iron was discovered on the tract the hardwood would be valuable for a charcoal furnace. In 1876, Horace A. Tuttle, a son of the former, engaged H.D. Fisher to explore the ground, which he did with a small force. He made the first discovery of the present bed the same year, on northwest quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 34.

The site of the town is most favorably located; numerous cozy and substantial dwellings sprinkle the hillside, and all branches of business are well represented.

It is so near Florence that the time may arrive in the not far distant future when both places may be blended in one fair-sized city.

### CRYSTAL FALLS, MICHIGAN

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The village of Crystal Falls was platted for George Runkel [sic – Runkle] and James H. Howe, by John Pumpelly, in August, 1881.

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*Etc.*, Chicago, Illinois: The Western Historical Company, A.T. Andreas, Proprietor, 1883, page 505

Crystal Falls is a bright little town hardly one year old, and possessed of a population of about nine hundred inhabitants.

It was laid out as a town by the Crystal Falls Iron Company during the summer of 1882 at the terminus of the Crystal Falls Branch of the Chicago & North-Western Railway.

The site of the village is on a sufficient elevation to afford a natural drainage and give it a prominent and desirable appearance. It is in the heart of the mining region familiarly called the Crystal Falls District, adjacent to a number of the more extensive mining properties recently developed.

All branches of business are successfully represented, and at this writing the town is growing rapidly in population, a large influx of people flocking to the new town, whose coming is urged by the favorable outlook for future prosperity that the newly discovered mines promise to bestow.

### FLORENCE, WISCONSIN

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### FLORENCE.

Among the growing cities of the Menominee Iron Range is the town of Florence, which is located near the

Menominee River and its tributaries. It is beautifully situated on the banks of a picturesque lake on a comparatively level piece of ground, originally covered with a dense growth of small timber. This lake was formerly called Loon Lake, but since the settlement of the town the name has been changed to Keyes Lake.

Its settlement and development were the natural outgrowth springing from the discovery of the great Florence Mine.

This mine, which has since developed into one of the most promising and valuable on the Menominee Range, was accidentally discovered by H.D. [Hiram D.] Fisher in October, 1873. He, in company with Nelson Halsey, both carrying heavy packs through the trails of the almost unbroken wilderness, left the old Indian trail near Spread Eagle Lake, and after passing through a cedar swamp came to the high hill situated in the location of the Florence Mine. Weary from his long tramp, Mr. Fisher sat down on the brow of the hill to rest and refresh himself. After lighting his pipe, he took his exploring pick, and while thus seated and meditating on the grandeur of the surrounding scenery, absent-mindedly struck it into the ground beside him. Upon removing it he was surprised to find the mark of hematite ore upon it, and it is recorded that his astonishment caused him to drop his pipe. He proceeded to explore the ground, and after stripping a spot hardly two feet square good ore was found.

His party spent the remainder of the afternoon locating the "find," and the next morning Mr. Fisher started for the land office at Menasha to effect a purchase. He christened it the Eagle Mine, in honor of Spread Eagle Lake.

The land was entered during the same month by H.D. Fisher and Abel Keyes. Mr. Fisher conducted the explorations as far as his limited means would permit, and succeeded [*sic* – *succeeded*] in developing the mine sufficiently to attract the attention

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of outside parties. In June, 1878, the Menominee Mining Company sent their mining engineer, Dr. N.P. *[Nelson Powell]* Hulst, who reported so favorably upon the property that the company took an option, and during the fall of that year purchased a three-quarter interest, and leased the remaining fourth to Mr. Fisher, in February, 1879. About this time, they commenced active mining operations, and shortly after the name of the mine was changed to Florence, in honor of the Christian name of Dr. Hulst's wife *[Florence (Terry) Hulst]*.

On the 12th of March, 1880, the Menominee Mining Company recorded a plat of the town, which covers the south half of Section 21, in Town 40, Range 18, and on the 16th day of the same month the company's agent, H.D. Fisher, Esq., settled on the site and commenced to sell lots. The sales for the first day amounted to over fifty, and ere three weeks had passed away every lot was sold on both sides of the main street, a distance of one-half mile. About this time, the Nasick Lumber Company erected and completed a saw-mill *[sic – sawmill]* close to the town site, on the lake, and notwithstanding the mill was run to its utmost capacity, it was still insufficient to supply the demand as fast as was required. Buildings of all kinds sprang up as if by magic, parties in many instances only clearing off sufficient spacer on which to erect their stores and dwellings. For a few months it seemed as if the famous lamp of Aladdin had been slightly touched, and for a strict observer to note the progress of the time it was necessary to make a tour of the paths and streets every day. It is thought by the writer that the honor of commencing the first building belongs to Peter Sheridan, of Fort Howard, Wis., although the construction of several buildings was begun at the same time. Before this period, Mr. Fisher had erected a building on the bank of the lake, which was subsequently known as Jack Armstrong's Spread Eagle Hotel. Messrs. S.A. McGraw & Co. were the

pioneer merchants, and had a temporary building erected some months before the first building-up of the town. The Menominee River Railroad was first completed to Quinnesec, which was the terminus for some time. Between this place and Florence wound one of the most atrocious roads to be found, and until the road was extended to Florence the traveling public experienced dire difficulty in reaching the latter town, particularly during the spring and early summer. Freights were, in consequence, enormous, and as a good team could haul only 800 pounds at a load, the tariff was placed at \$1 per hundred weight. These disadvantages were gradually overcome, and did not check the development of the town, seeming to stimulate rather than discourage. Meanwhile the railroad company was pushing the track westward, and it was extended to Florence in the fall of 1880, the first train reaching here September 12. This gave the town a new impetus, and its growth from this time on was simply marvelous.

The post office was established May 12, 1880, with H.D. Fisher as Postmaster. At the close of 1880, the population of the town was estimated to be 800. It has now reached 2,000.

Florence is unsurpassed in advantages as a point for the manufacture of iron and steel. Close to it are two of the largest iron mines in the region and within twenty miles are a dozen more comprising all qualities and grades of ore. Dense forests of hardwood timber surround it in every direction. If an unlimited water-power is needed, it can be had on the Brule River, distant one and a half miles. One railroad is completed – the Chicago & North-Western – with a well-appointed lake port for shipment at Escanaba and another – the Wisconsin & Michigan – is projected. One blast furnace is in successful operation, and the building of a second is contemplated.

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In 1880, the settlement of Florence formed a part of Marinette County. According to the census enumeration of that year, the population of the settlement was 267.

*Florence Furnace Company.* – The Florence furnace was built during the summer of 1881, and went into blast in October, making the first iron October 15, 1881.

The stock is an iron shell, with one foot ten inch boshes, forty feet in height. The machinery consists of one Wyman blowing engine, with forty-eight inch cylinder and twenty-four inch stroke, one eighteen-inch Wells pump and one Worthington pump, which supplies water for the stack.

The boiler is fed by a Wells pump. The machinery is operated by a 9x16 inch engine and the hoist by power transmitted over pulleys.

Charcoal is used, and the supply is furnished by thirty kilns, ten of which are located at Florence, and the balance at outside points. From twenty-one to twenty three [*sic – twenty-three*] tons of iron ore are made daily; range ores are used exclusively.

President of the company, C. Sprong; Superintendent, H.W. Jackson.

The first newspaper, the *Florence Mining News*, was established by James F. Atkinson, and issued its first number June 1, 1881. This journal holds a position in the front ranks of journalism, and through its medium the development of the town and surrounding country is largely due.

*Fire Department.* – The fire department was organized in May, 1882, after the projection and laying of the present system of water works. A network of pipes with hydrants is distributed through the town and a constant pressure of water is maintained by a large Knowles' steam pump, operated by steam obtained from the boilers of the Florence Furnace Company. These works are valued at \$7,000, and are most efficiently adapted for their particular labor, affording

the best protection against fire. The fire company consists of thirty volunteer members, officered as follows: Daniel Sprong, Chief of Department; W.W. Noyes, Foreman; H.A. Wood, First Assistant; J.A.W. Maloy, Second Assistant; F.R. Whittlesey, Secretary; A.K. Godshall, Treasurer.

The Catholic Church of Florence was founded through the efforts of Father John N. Brady in March, 1880, when the first services were held in the town. The site of the present church building was presented to the society by the Menominee Mining Company. The church was formally organized by Father George W. Brady in September, 1881, and the following November the church building was commenced, and the funds for construction were raised by Father G.W. Brady, who visited the lumbermen's camps and the mining camps of the range, gathering a little here and there, and also received liberal support from the non Catholic [*sic – non-Catholic*] population. Father Brady attended the mission until April, 1882, and since this date it has been supplied by different Pastors [*sic*]. The church property is valued at \$3,500, and the present membership of the society reaches 600.

*Presbyterian Church.* – The organization of this church took place in November, 1880, through the efforts of Rev. John H. Pollock, who became the first Pastor [*sic*], but remained at Florence for a short time only. The church secured its second pastor in December, 1881, in the person of Rev. H.P. Cory, who is still in charge.

The church building was erected during the winter of 1880-81, and was ready for occupancy May 1, 1881. It is valued at \$3,500; present membership, thirty-five.

The Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Church of Florence was organized with seventy-five members in March, 1882, by Rev. C. Olander.

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The church building was erected during the summer of 1882. It is supplied by visiting clergymen.

### HERMANVILLE, MICHIGAN

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### HERMANVILLE.

Hermansville is a small station of the line, rapidly building up and doing a good business. It has a population of about five hundred.

### IRON MOUNTAIN, MICHIGAN

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### IRON MOUNTAIN.

The laying out and building of the town of Iron Mountain followed the discovery and development of the far famed Chapin Mine. The site nestles at the foot of surrounding hills that attain quite an elevation. The immediate vicinity presents some beautiful scenery, and abounds in rich deposits of valuable iron ore.

In the summer of 1880, mining operations were commenced at the Chapin Mine, yet little was done until the season opened in 1881, when the value of the deposit was fully established, and the town sprang up as if the ground had been touched by a magic wand.

Its resources are found in its great mineral wealth, and the complement of business seen here is the same that is found in many little mining towns of the Menominee Range.

It has an estimated population of 4,000, and the monthly disbursements of the several mines amount to \$70,000. The Swedish Lutheran and Methodist Episcopal Churches have just effected organizations here, and erected neat frame church buildings. Iron Mountain is reached by the Menominee River Railroad, which furnishes shipping facilities for its mines to Escanaba and an outlet to all points.

### IRON RIVER, MICHIGAN

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The village of Iron River was laid out during the summer of 1882, by the McKinnon Bros., and is rapidly building up a good town. Several large stores have already been erected, and, from its favorable location and wealth of mineral treasures, it will soon become one of the more important villages of the iron region. A saw-mill [*sic* – sawmill] is also in successful operation, furnishing abundant building material.

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### METROPOLITAN, MICHIGAN

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The village of Metropolitan was platted in July, 1881, for the Metropolitan Mining Company.

### NORWAY, MICHIGAN

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### NORWAY.

Along [sic – Among] the other towns of the range located along the line of the Chicago & North-Western Railway, may be mentioned Norway, a bright little town that has sprung up adjacent to the Norway Mine. It has two good church buildings, several well equipped business houses, and enjoys a good trade for a small town.

### QUINNESEC, MICHIGAN

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### QUINNESEC.

Quinnesec is the oldest town on the Menominee Range and was laid out by John L. [Lane] Buell in 1877. Mr. Buel [sic – Buell] was a strong believer in the future prosperity of the range, and while it was still a wilderness, came here and cleared a portion of the town site and erected the first buildings, among others the Quinnesec House. For some time after the village was inaugurated, Mr. Buell was unable to find any one [sic – anyone] bold enough to cast their fortunes in it, and for a time it looked as if the new town must die alone. But after the valuable qualities of the iron deposits had been established and the advent of the railroad had been promised, the town grew up at once, and was for a long time one of the most successful business points during its lift as the terminus of the line. After the mines of the range began to develop and the line was extended, Quinnesec began to lose some of its resources, and a relax in business life was the natural result. To-day [sic – Today] it presents the appearance of a good, solid little business town with limited resources. Though unable to manifest the vigor and life of its pioneer days, it seems to pursue the even tenor of its way, and carry on a thriving trade. In the event of new iron discoveries, which is almost a foregone conclusion, the village will receive new resources and increase in wealth and population. The town is well laid out; has a good public hall, three church buildings – Swedish Lutheran, Swedish Methodist and Catholic.

### STAMBAUGH, MICHIGAN

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Quinnesec, has a population of about two hundred, well represented in business; also has quite a number of charcoal kilns.

The village of Stambaugh was platted in June, 1882, by John V. Snyder.

### THEODORE, MICHIGAN

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The village of Theodore was platted for the Lake Superior Ship Canal, Railway and Iron Company, by J.A. Van Clive, in June, 1881.

### WAUCEDAH, MICHIGAN

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Waucedah, a station on the Chicago & North-Western Railway Branch from Powers, a short distance from the village of