

BUSINESS IN WAHKON FROM 1890 TO 1940

(NUMBERS CORRESPOND TO NUMBERS ON THE ATTACHED MAP OF WAHKON)

1. BLACKSMITH SHOP
2. CATHOLIC CHURCH
3. RESIDENTIAL AND SUMMER CABIN AREA OF WAHKON
4. SITE OF RESORTS:
 - A. GUY HILL'S
 - B. PAUL LANG'S
 - C. VOLLEY DEHN'S
5. MEDICAL OFFICE AND HOME OF DR. SWENNES
6. SITE OF:
 - A. METHODIST CHURCH
 - B. LIVERY STABLE
7. SITE OF:
 - A. REX HOTEL
 - B. WAHKON ENTERPRISE NEWSPAPER OFFICE
8. SITE OF:
 - A. SCENIC GARAGE
 - B. BUTCHER SHOP AND HARDWARE STORE
 - C. BAKERY
9. SITE OF:
 - A. BATTERY FACTORY
 - B. GARTHE'S CAFÉ AND HOTEL
 - C. TELEPHONE OFFICE
 - D. REAL ESTATE OFFICE
 - E/ GROCERY STORE - COBB'S
 - F. GROCERY STORE - THORSTAD'S
 - G. SOO STATE BANK
10. SITE OF:
 - A. POST OFFICE
 - B. PHARMACY AND CONFECTIONARY /BARBER SHOP STORE
 - C. BEZANSON'S HOTEL
 - D. GAS STATION
11. SITE OF:
 - A. KIBBEY'S SAW MILL AND BOX FACTORY
 - B. GEDNEY PICKLE PLANT
12. RR STATION
13. SITE OF;
 - A. STOCKYARDS
 - B. MORA ROAD
 - C. MCGRATH LOGGING SPUR
14. GRANITE POLISHING PLANT
15. BRIDGEMAN'S CREAMERY - ROBBINS BOAT WORKS
16. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
17. WAHKON HIGH SCHOOL
- 18/ SITE OF:
 - A. RAIL SPUR TO LAKE
 - B. WAHKON BOAT WORKS - GAME WARDEN
19. INDIAN CAMP GROUNDS
20. POTTS HOTEL AND RESTAURANT
21. LAWRENCE HOTEL

INFORMATION ON BUSINESSES IN WAHKON FROM 1890 TO 1940

(TO BE USED WITH MAP AND INDEX)

PREFACE - IT WAS IN 1907, 100 YEARS AGO, THAT THE SOO LINE RR BOUGHT THE LAND AND PLATTED THE TOWN OF WAHKON. TWO AREAS TO THE WEST OF WAHKON HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY PLATTED. POTTSTOWN WAS PLATTED IN 1901 BY T.E. POTTS. LAWRENCE WAS PROBABLY PLATTED PREVIOUS TO POTTSTOWN. BOTH LAWRENCE AND POTTSTOWN WERE INCORPORATED WITH WAHKON IN 1912

1. SAM VIVANT OWNED AND OPERATED THE BLACKSMITH SHOP. HE AND TWO OTHER BROTHERS OPERATED SHOPS ALONG THE SOO LINE RAILROAD. HE FORMED ALL KINDS OF METAL AND ALSO BOUGHT AND SOLD SCRAP METAL. THIS WAS A DELIGHT TO TOWN KIDS. MANY A JAW BREAKER WAS BOUGHT WITH MONEY FROM SCRAP METAL. SAM LATER OPERATED A RESORT AND BUILT ROW BOATS IN POTTSTOWN.

2. CATHOLIC SERVICES WERE FIRST HELD IN WAHKON IN 1910. AFTER CONDUCTING SERVICES IN RENTED QUARTERS, A NEW CHURCH WAS BUILT IN 1913. THIS CHURCH WAS MOVED AND IS STILL STANDING ACROSS FROM ITS RECENT NEW CHURCH. THE CHURCH HAS AN ACTIVE CONGREGATION SERVING THE SOUTH AND EAST SIDE OF MILLE LACS LAKE.

3. THIS RESIDENTIAL AREA WAS PLATTED AND LOTS SOLD IN THE 1890'S. FOR MANY YEARS, MOST THE RESIDENTS WERE SEASONAL IN RECENT YEARS, MORE PEOPLE ARE MAKING THEIR HOME A YEAR ROUND RESIDENCE.

4. GUY HILL RESORT. ONE OF THREE POPULAR RESORTS AT THE FOOT OF MAIN STREET. GUY RAN THE RESORT FOR THIRTY YEARS OR SO AND WAS HOME OF THE "ELLEN RUTH" NOW ON DISPLAY IN THE CITY PARK

PAUL LANG RAN A POPULAR RESORT FOR OVER 40 YEARS. AT THE TIME OF HIS RETIREMENT, HE WAS CONSIDERED THE MOST EXPERIENCED FISHERMAN ON MILLE LACS.

VOLLEY DEHN RAN A POPULAR FISHING RESORT IN THE 20'S AND 30'S/

5. DR. SWE3NNES CAME TO THE AREA IN THE EARLY 1890'S. HE SERVED AS DOCTOR FOR THE LUMBERMEN WHO SOMETIMES NUMBERED 350 DURING THE WINTER. HIS OFFICE ALSO SERVED THE OTHER PEOPLE IN THE AREA. HE WAS WELL KNOWN, WELL LIKED AND ADMIRER BY THE COMMUNITY.

6. THERE WAS A STRONG METHODIST CONGREGATION IN THE COMMUNITY STARTING IN 1905. A CHURCH WAS BUILT IN 1912 AND WAS MOVED IN 1921. THE CHURCH DISBANDED IN THE LATE 1920'S. THE BUILDING WAS EVENTUALLY MOVED AND SERVES AS A CABIN ON THE LAKE WEST OF TOWN.

A LIVERY STABLE WAS OPERATED IN THE 1890'S AND EARLY 1900'S. HORSES AND RIGS COULD BE RENTED OR STORED THERE. BY 1915, CARS WERE REPLACING HORSES AND THE STABLE FADED INTO DISUSE. THE BUILDING STOOD UNTIL THE LATE 1930'S AND WAS USED BY TOWN KIDS AS A PLACE TO PLAY.

7. THE REX HOTEL WAS BUILT IN THE TEENS AND WAS ADVERTISED AS "THE LARGEST HOTEL BETWEEN MINNEAPOLIS AND DULUTH ". THE BUILDING BURNED DOWN IN THE MID 1930'S. IT WAS A SAD DAY FOR THE TOWN. A WOOD BUILDING WAS BUILT ON THE FOUNDATION. IT WAS A BEER AND DANCE HALL AND HAD ROLLER SKATING DURING THE WEEK. ILLEGAL SLOT MACHINES OPERATED HERE, TOO. LATER, IN THE 40'S IT WAS CALLED WAHKON-A-G0-G0 AND DEVELOPED A REPUTATION

THE NEWSPAPER OFFICE WAS THE HOME OF THE WAHKON ENTERPRISE FROM 1907 TO 1923. THE EDITOR, MR. SLOAN SERVED AS EDITOR DURING THE ENTIRE TIME . MR. SLOAN WAS A TIRELESS WORKER FOR WAHKON AND WAS RESPONSIBLE, IN PART FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE TOWN DURING THIS PERIOD.

8. THE SCENIC GARAGE WAS OPENED FOR BUSINESS DURING THE LATE TEENS. CARS WERE SOLD AS WELL AS REPAIRED. AT ONE TIME DURING THE 20'S CARS WERE SOLD AT AN ALARMING RATE BUT FORD WITHDREW THE FRANCHISE BECAUSE THEY WERE BEING SOLD AT A PRICE BELOW THAT ALLOWED BY FORD. OWNER SWITCHED FRANCHISE TO OVERLAND CARS. SOME OF THE OWNERS WERE PRONOVOST, MCGEE AND RILLING. CLOSED IN THE EARLY 60'S. FOR THE NEXT 30 YEARS A TEMPORILY CLOSED SIGN STOOD IN FRONT OF THE BUILDING.

A BUTCHER SHOP AND HARDWARE WAS RUN BY BUTCH GOTLIEB. KIDS LOVED TO GET END OF BALONEY RINGS GIVEN THEM AFTER BUYING MEAT. ORIGINAL BUILDING BURNED DOWN DURING THE THIRTIES AND WAS REBUILT. PART OF THE NEW BUILDING STILL STAND TODAY.

EVERY SUMMER A MR. OLSON RAN A BAKERY SHOP.. HE WAS KNOWN FOR PRODUCING PLEASANT AROMAS.

9.A BATTERY FACTORY WAS STARTED IN BUSINESS BY LOCAL BUSINESS MEN IN THE MID 1930'S. FRANK WEIRS MANAGED THE BUSINESS WITH THE HELP OF 2 BROTHERS. THE FACTORY MADE CAR BATTERIES 4 DAYS A WEEK AND DELIVERED THEM TO DEALERS ON FRIDAYS.

GARTHE'S HOTEL AND RESTAURANT WENT INTO BUSINESS IN THE EARLY 1920'S AND WAS THE ONLY HOTEL AND RESTAURANT IN BUSINESS DURING THE 30'S. GARTHE HAD THE MISFORTUNE OF LOSING HIS FINGERS ON ONE HAND WHILE WORKING AT ROBBINS CARPENTRY SHOP. THIS PROBABLY RESULTED IN HIS GOING INTO THE RESTAURANT BUSINESS.

THE TELEPHONE BUILDING HAD A MANUAL SWITCHBOARD WHICH REQUIRED AN OPERATOR TO BE ON HAND AT ALL TIMES. TO PLACE A CALL, THE CALLER HAD TO TURN A HAND CRANK TO SEND A SERIES OF LONG AND SHORT RINGS OR RING THE OPERATOR AND HAVE HER PLACE THE CALL. TELEPHONE OPERATORS WERE AN IMPORTANT LINK IN THE COMMUNITY. THEY WOULD DIRECT EMERGENCY CALLS WHERE NEEDED AND KEEP TRACK OF PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY. EARLY OPERATORS WERE A MRS. PETERSON AND MRS. NORA PATTERSON. THE PHONE SYSTEM WAS AUTOMATED IN THE LATE 40'S

G.R. ZICKRICK HAD A REAL ESTATE OFFICE STARTING ABOUT 1900 AND CONTINUED IN BUSINESS FOR ABOUT 40 YEARS.

A MR. COBB HAD A GROCERY STORE HERE. A LIVE TARANTULA SPIDER WAS FOUND IN A CRATE OF BANANAS SHIPPED TO HIS STORE. THE SPIDER WAS BROUGHT TO SCHOOL AND PRESERVED IN FORMALDEHYDE TO BE SHOWN TO ALL STUDENTS.

J. N. THORSTAD HAD A GROCERY STORE IN WAHKON FROM THE 1890'S UNTIL 1940. THORSTAD OWNED SEVERAL FARMS IN THE AREA AND WAS A DIRECTOR IN THE BANK. HE STAYED IN BUSINESS FOR 40 YEARS AND SOLD TO WALT PATTERSON, WHO RAN THE STORE UNTIL IT CLOSED IN THE 50'S.

THE SOO STATE BANK WAS IN BUSINESS FROM 1900 TO 1925. IT WAS NEXT USED BY C. HALLGREN FOR THE POST OFFICE. LATER IT WAS USED AS A HOME FOR SENIORS.

10. THIS BUILDING WAS ORIGINALLY A STORE. IT WAS USED AS THE POST OFFICE STARTING IN 1932 BY TIM GARVEY. DURING THE LATE 50'S THE BUILDING WAS USED AS A OUTBOARD REPAIR SHOP.

H. B. EMERSON HAD A PHARMACY AT THIS LOCATION DURING THE EARLY YEARS. HE CLOSED THE PHARMACY MOVED HIS BUSINESS TO ONAMIA. THE BUILDING WAS THEN USED AS A BARBERSHOP AND CONFECTION STORE BY J.L. GERRISH. MR. GERRISH ALSO GREW GINSENG AT HIS HOME AND SHIPPED EACH FALL TO A BUYER.

J. L. BEZANSON HAD A HOTEL AT THIS LOCATION. THE BEZANSON BROTHERS WERE EARLY SETTLERS IN WAHKON AND SOLD THE LAND THEY HOMESTEADED TO THE SOO LINE FOR THE TOWN OF WAHKON. THE HOTEL WAS CLOSED BY THE 30'S BUT WAS USED AS A SUMMER HOME FOR JANE BEZANSON AND HER GRAND CHILDREN.

11. KIBBEY'S SAW MILL AND BOX FACTORY WAS STARTED IN 1912 AND OPERATED FOR ABOUT 50 YEARS. IT MADE PINT AND QUART SIZED BOXES AND WOOD CRATES FOR BOXES. DURING THE SUMMER HE EMPLOYED PART TIME HELP AND MANY OF THE KIDS IN WAHKON WORKED THERE. HE SHIPPED AS MANY AS 4 MILLION BOXES ANNUALLY. MOST WERE SHIPPED TO HOPKINS, MN. FOR RASBERRIES.

GEDNEY HAD A PICKLE PLANT NEAR HERE. THEY HAD THREE LARGE CYLINDRICAL TANKS THAT WERE FILLED WITH BRINE AND CUCUMBERS. PERIODICALLY THE CUKES WERE REMOVED AND SHIPPED FOR PACKAGING.

12. THE RAILROAD STATION WAS BUILT ABOUT 1900. IT HAD A PERMANENT STATION MASTER WHO ALSO WAS A TELEGRAPH OPERATOR. AFTER THE RAILROAD WAS CLOSED THE STATION WAS MOVED TO THE JUNCTION OF 169 AND 27. IT IS STILL THERE TODAY.

13. A STOCKYARDS WAS LOCATED HERE AND USED FOR SHIPPING AND RECEIVING CATTLE AND SHEEP. AFTER WW1, SEVERAL LARGE SHEEP RANCHES WERE STARTED SOUTH OF WAHKON. THE STOCKYARD WAS CLOSE TO THE LOGGING SPUR AND USED TO SHIP ANIMALS TO THE RANCHES.

THE ROAD THAT RUNS TO THE EAST WAS KNOWN AS THE MORA ROAD . IT WAS THE FIRST ROAD INTO THE AREA AND WENT FROM MORA TO LAWRENCE.

THE MCGRATH RR SPUR RAN SOUTH FOR ABOUT 9 MILES. IT WAS USED FOR HAULING LOGS FROM SOUTH OF WAHKON. TOWN HUNTERS USED TO TAKE HAND CARS AND HUNT GROUSE ALONG THE SPUR.

14. A GRANITE POLISHING PLANT WAS BUILT HERE IN THE MID 20'S AND WAS IN BUSINESS FOR ABOUT 5 YEARS. GRANITE WAS SHIPPED TO HERE BY THE RR SPUR FROM THE QUARRY SOUTH OF ISLE AND CUT AND POLISHED TO SIZE AT THE PLANT. AFTER THE PLANT CLOSED, LOCAL KIDS PUT UP A BASKET IN THE AREA WITH A CONCRETE FLOOR AND PRACTICED BASKETBALL. GORDON ADDINGTON, STAR BASKETBALL PLAYER FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA IN THE LATE 1930'S WAS CREDITED WITH HONING HIS SKILLS HERE.

15. SITE OF BRIDGEMAN'S CREAMERY. USED AS A CREAMERY FROM ABOUT 1910 TO 1920. FERRY BOATS CIRCULATED THE LAKE DURING THE SUMMER AND PICKED UP MILK FROM FARMERS AROUND THE LAKE AND DELIVERED IT TO WAHKON. PURCHASED BY O.A. ROBBINS IN 1921 AND USED AS A CARPENTRY SHOP AND FOR BUILDING BOATS. IN EARLY 20'S AS MANY AS 95 ROW BOATS WERE BUILT THERE IN ONE YEAR AND IN THE 30'S AND 40'S LAUNCHES UP TO 40 FEET LONG AND 16 FEET WIDE WERE ALSO BUILT THERE.

16. THE PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION WAS STARTED IN 1907. IN 1911 THE PRESBYTERIANS BUILT THE FIRST CHURCH IN WAHKON. THE BUILDING IS THE SAME BUILDING AS WAS ORIGINALLY BUILT BUT HAS RECENTLY BEEN ADDED TO. THE CHURCH IS GOING STRONG TODAY.

17. THE FIRST RECORD OF HAVING SCHOOL IN WAHKON WAS WHEN A TEACHER, MISS ALFREDA SANFORD, WAS CONTRACTED TO TEACH FROM JANUARY TO APRIL 1, 1894, IN LAWRENCE. A FEW YEARS LATER A SCHOOL WAS BUILT IN LAWRENCE. BY 1910, CLASSES THROUGH 8TH GRADE WERE HELD AND STUDENTS COULD GET AN 8TH GRADE CERTIFICATE. THERE WERE A TOTAL OF 70 STUDENTS ENROLLED IN PRIMARY SCHOOL AND GRAMMER SCHOOL. IN 1911 WAHKON HIGH SCHOOL WAS OPENED. THIS WAS THE FIRST SCHOOL WHERE A 12 YEAR HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA COULD BE ATTAINED. THE FIRST GRADUATE WAS CHARLES BEZANSON IN 1915. IN ALL, 170 STUDENTS GRADUATED BY THE TIME THE SCHOOL CLOSED IN 1938.

18. A RAIL SPUR WAS BUILT TO THE LAKE SO RAIL CARS COULD PICK UP LOGS FROM AROUND THE LAKE AND TAKE THEM TO A SAW MILL. STEAMBOATS WERE USED TO BRING THE LOGS TO THE DOCK AND SPUR FOR SHIPPING. PROBABLY ABOUT BY 1918 ALL THE AREA AROUND MILLE LACS WAS WELL LOGGED OFF.

THE SIGHT ADJACENT TO THE DOCK USED FOR LOG SHIPPING WAS THE HOME OF THE FIRST AND LONG TIME GAME WARDEN ON MILLE LACS. PAUL LUCAS ALSO MADE ROWBOATS HERE AND HIS BOAT SHOP WAS KNOWN AS THE WAHKON BOAT WORKS.

19. THIS AREA WAS THE SIGHT OF AN EARLY INDIAN CAMP. UNTIL IT WAS MOVED ACROSS THE STREET, THE TOWN BALL FIELD WAS LOCATED HERE. OCCASIONALLY, ARROW HEADS WERE FOUND.

20. SITE OF THE POTTS HOTEL AND RESTAURANT. THE BUILDING WAS BUILT IN THE EARLY 1890'S AND BURNED DOWN A FEW YEARS LATER. POTTS WAS A LEADER IN THE COMMUNITY FOR MANY YEARS. HE SERVED AS ASSESSOR, CENSUS TAKER, ON THE TOWN COUNCIL AND SCHOOL BOARD AND AS COUNTY COMMISSIONER.

21. THE FIRST STORE IN THE AREA WAS OPENED BY FRANK HOKANSON AND E. F. SARGENT IN 1891. THE FOLLOWING YEAR, 1892, E. F. SARGENT WAS NAMED POSTMASTER AND THE AREA WAS NAMED LAWRENCE. THIS ALSO WAS THE NAME OF THE HOME TOWN OF E. F. LAWRENCE IN MASSACHUSETTS. SHORTLY AFTER, THE LAWRENCE HOTEL WAS BUILT AND IS STANDING TODAY AND USED AS A RESIDENCE.