



succeeded, and on the twentieth of November, 1872, the first train of cars entered Stevens Point from Menasha, over what is now the eastern division of the Wisconsin Central railroad. Capital came; business revived; and, in three years, the population was nearly quadrupled. In 1873, the Green Bay & Minnesota railroad was built from Winona on the Mississippi, intersecting the Wisconsin Central at Amherst, and passing through Plover. In 1876, the southern branch of Wisconsin Central was completed, running from Portage City to Stevens Point, a distance of seventy-one miles. The middle and northern divisions of this railroad, connect Stevens Point with Ashland on Lake Superior; and by the Milwaukee division, the eastern and southern markets are reached.

The Wisconsin Valley railroad from Tomah to Wausau, crosses the northwestern part of the county and intersects the Wisconsin Central, not far south of the northern boundary of the county. Portage county voted one hundred thousand dollars to each of the eastern and southern divisions of the Wisconsin Central. That constitutes the entire bonded indebtedness of the county. The roads were built under many adverse circumstances, but are now highly beneficial to this whole region. Stevens Point is the headquarters of the manufacturing department of the Central railroad. Its round-house, turn-tables and machine shops employing nearly one hundred mechanics, are located within a mile of the court-house.

#### PLOVER.

This town was the first settled in the county. Many government entries were made, and several actual settlers located in 1841 on land including the present village of Plover. The necessities of commerce soon demanded the first tavern in the county, which was built at Plover in 1842, by Houghten & Batten. The first lawyer, James S. Alban, came in 1843, and was a prominent citizen until his death. He, with Jervis W. Carter, started the *Plover Herald* in August, 1856. H. G. Ingersol was the printer; he is present editor and proprietor. The paper has always been actively republican, and is now known as the *Plover Times*. The first warranty deed was given by Andrew Dunn to Andrew Mularky, and is dated October 2, 1845. James Wyatt, as deputy register of deeds, recorded the same on the 2d of December, 1845. The village was platted in 1846, having been for two years the seat of justice for an area which is now represented in eleven counties. Simon A. Sherman was an active pioneer of 1848, and has ever since been identified with the lumber interest. For a quarter of a century he has been proprietor of the mills at Conant Rapids, near Plover. The first grist-mill built north and west of Fox river was erected in 1851, by John R. Mitchel, at Springville, a little above Plover. The farming lands east and south of the village are well cultivated. Plover has a population of fully five hundred, and is quite a commercial center. It is the junction of the Stevens Point & Portage and the Green Bay & Minnesota railroads. It has a good school-house, two churches, five mills, several stores, shops and hotels, and was settled mainly by Americans.

#### VILLAGES.

Beside Stevens Point and Plover, there are the manufacturing or railroad villages of Buena Vista, Jordan, Almond, Eau Pleine, McDillville, Springville, and Amherst. The last mentioned is the largest. It is situated on the Wisconsin Central, and a junction is formed in the township with Green Bay & Minnesota railroad. In the population, the Norwegian element predominates. A good farming county surrounds Amherst. The population of the village is now only about three hundred. The fair grounds of the county agricultural society are located at Amherst. The officers of the society are William V. Flemming, president; H. S. Rood, vice-president; William Loing, treasurer, and A. J. Smith, secretary. The exhibitions are highly credible and well attended. In the village of Polonia, town of Sharon, the "Polish Felician Order" have erected a substantial stone convent, which accommodates two hundred students, and an elegant church is now being erected; the entire cost of these buildings is fully thirty thousand dollars; the township is settled mainly by Polanders.

#### GENERAL COUNTY ITEMS.

The surface of the county slopes gently to the south, with no mountains or deep valleys; Musquito Bluff, in the western part, is the highest point. Geologically, the county is on the lowest strata of Paleozoic formation, or the Potsdam sandstone; yet the general level is two hundred feet above Lake Michigan. By the census of 1875, the population numbered 14,857. There are eighty public schools in the county, with an attendance, in 1875, of 3,221. With more than half a million of acres in the county, there were, in 1876, only thirty-two thousand cultivated, exclusive of the grass lands. Originally, the county was an extensive timber-tract, mainly of pine, especially along the rivers, with a few oak openings in the southeast. Hay and cranberry marshes are not uncommon, and tamarack swamps are seen occasionally. The north is still covered with pine forests, and the northeast is quite bluffly. A strip about a mile wide, upon each side of Wisconsin river, is very sandy. On the east, it gradually changes to a fertile yet sandy loam; on the west, it soon becomes richer, with a clay sub-soil. Sandstone quarries of good building material, are found in different parts of the county. Granitic formation of azoic or metamorphic rocks, abound in and along the largest rivers.

The people in the county are about one-half Americans. The northeast part of the county is almost wholly Norwegian; the southwest is largely composed of Germans. The floating population comprise a large percentage of the workmen in the winter camps of the pineries. Many Indians continue to make Portage county their home. A few have settled upon farms, but most still lead a nomadic life, relying for subsistence upon fish, game, and berries of all kinds, which are found in abundance. Farming is remunerative, and must some time become the leading industry in the county. Sufficient wheat and other grain was raised last year in the county to supply the eight flour and feed mills. The farms, at present, are in the eastern and southern sections of the county. These farming communities, together with the "Point," constitute nearly all the permanent population. Hop raising is becoming an important interest in the eastern half of the county. In 1876, there were fully a quarter of a million pounds of hops shipped. This county was first settled by seekers after pine lands, and the lumber interest still overshadows all others. There are twenty-four saw-mills in the county, with a capacity for manufacturing 109,250,000 feet of lumber per year. The last season being uncommonly dull, only about 63,000,000 were manufactured. The twenty-one shingle mills of this county have a capacity of 140,000,000, but in 1876 only 51,400,000 were made. The value of all the pine products during the past year, is fully one million dollars, at present low prices.

The hardwood supplies are comparatively untouched. The season of 1877, has been remarkable for the early melting of snow, thereby preventing the transfer of logs from the pinery to the river or mills, and hence greatly diminishing the lumber products.

#### RACINE COUNTY.

The mouth of Root river, where Racine is now situated, was visited in 1699 by a fleet of eight canoes, ascending Lake Michigan. Four of these contained Francis Morgan de Vincennes, a French officer on his way to the Miamis, and his attendants. The others conveyed a party of missionaries, consisting of John Francis Buisson de St. Cosme, Francis Jolliet de Montigny, Anthony Davion, and Thamer de la Source on their way to the lower Mississippi, conducted by Henri de Tonty. They reached the mouth of the stream, now named Root river, on the tenth of October (old style).