

## EARLY DAYS IN PINE CITY

On the banks of the Snake River, just where it enters Cross Lake, is the county seat village of Pine City. *Chengustana*

Today you see there a modern village with paved streets, modern schools, churches, and other public buildings. *Pine City*

Like and "Main Street" of Minnesota it has its Commercial Club, P.T.A., Study Club, and American Legion organizations. A weekly newspaper keeps us in touch with our neighbors and with the outside world.

Two parks are found within the village: The Robinson Park provided by an early settler, is a gathering place for everyone in summer and is used for band concerts each week.

The Wiseman Park is a lovely bit of landscaping with a granite monument placed there in memory of a beloved pioneer physician, Dr. R.L. Wiseman. *Library + City Hall (2007)*

The village has honored its soldiers in this war and the first World War by placing a monument on the court house lawn, bearing their names.

The 1800 inhabitants are of many national extractions; no one nationality predominates in the village, so it may truly be called a cross section on America.

This peaceful, modern community was not always like this! - In the early days the Ojibway Indians had lived and hunted in this territory. Before 1836 the only whites found in this territory were

those who had established trading posts on the shores of Lake Pokegema and Cross Lake.

At the point where the Snake emerges after Crossing Cross Lake, an Indian village had been located from time immemorial; this had always been a rallying point for Indians and traders; it was called Chengwatana which means "town of pines".

*Pine - wa - Tana  
Chag Tana near by.*

In the early days of the white men, the county was named after it, or after the extensive pine forests.

It may be interesting to hear the origin of some of our Indian names:

Pokegema means "the water which juts off from another water", applied to this lake because of its being close to Snake River.

Cross Lake, which in Ojibway is called Bemidji, is crossed by Snake River which in the Indian tongue is Kanabec.

The beginning of the White Man's Pine City can be traced back to 1936 when a Presbyterian Missionary came to the Pokegema Trading Post and established a mission for the evangelizing of the Snake River Band of Ojibway Indians.

To this mission Rev. Ayres brought the first printing press in the state of Minnesota to print literature in the Ojibway language.

*incorrect.*

Soon after the establishment of the mission, the Indians made a treaty with the government, selling all their lands between the Mississippi and the St. Croix. The Indians were gradually moved

onto reservations, and the mission was abandoned.

The land was then opened for settlement to the whites.

#### EARLY TRANSPORTATION

As in all pioneer territory, roads (or the lack of them) had a great to do with the development of the country.

Travelers long relied on canoe routes and portoges or over-land trails thru the woods to make the passage between the upper Mississippi and the Great Lakes; but in time these methods of travel became too slow, so the Territorial Legislature asked Congress for a roadway connecting the Mississippi and Lake Superior.

This request was granted for we read that in the 1850's mail was carried on this road from St. Paul to Superior once a week.

In the spring or fall the mail carriers, on foot, carried only letters, so papers were often a month old when they arrived.

We know the roads were still far from good in 1865, for it took a carrier a week to get thru with news that the Civil War had ended.

This early road had two branches: one following the St. Croix River from Pt. Douglas to Superior, the other a few miles farther west was called a military road. This branch passed thru Wyoming, Rush Seba, Chengwatana, Moose Lake and Carlton to Superior. This road was begun at both ends and there was much swampy road

*Rush Seba  
via  
Rush City.*

and hard construction. The part around Grindstone Creek was the last to be completed.

A few statistics may be of interest for they show us some of the trials of pioneer road builders:

10 bridges had to be built

2600 feet of corduroy road

much ditching and grading

The cost \$44,200

*interesting  
too bad were information  
was not cataloged.*

When we realize that they had no modern machinery nor any railroads to bring in supplies, we understand that it was ax and shovel plus hard work that did the job.

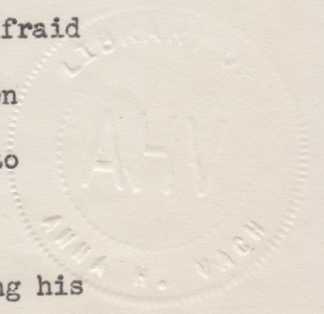
General Philip Sheridan<sup>?</sup> once came to Chengwatana to inspect this road.

Passengers paid ten dollars for one-way transportation by stage-coach- often a 36 hour trip- a far cry from that day to the train automobile or airplane of today.

A road had been hewn through the wilderness, but the following stories will show you that for comfort the new road left much to be desired:

One family left Duluth in 1860 for Red Wing. They were afraid of the roads, so took passage on a lake boat to Milwaukee, then overland by stage to La Crosse, and from there by river boat to Red Wing.-

Another Duluth resident advised a friend not to try to bring his wife and children by the post road, since part of it offered a



trying journey for any strong man.

One man described the western road as a "mud canal", explaining that the forest prevented it from drying between rains.

When the railroad began to-operate as far as Rush City, the stage routes degenerated.

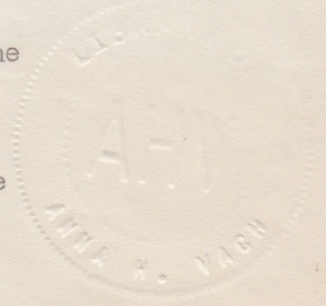
One Duluth editor writes of this period "The Moose Lake stopping place is too abominable for human occupancy, and the quarters at Cheugwataua are only a frifle now more comfortable and very little cleaner." "In fact", he says, "The road to Superior is the most damnable ever built in the universe."

#### LUMBERING DAYS

The first white settlers around Pine City were chiefly interested in getting control of the pine lumber; the land at that time being of secondary importance.

So a great logging town was developed; trees were cut down, and many logs floated down the Snake and St. Croix rivers to Stillwater; but several big sawmills sawed the logs right on the banks of the Snake.

From 1875-1890 the logging companies reigned supreme in the village which by now had been moved to the west side of Cross Lake to be near the new railroad, the Northern Pacific, and the name Cheugwatana had been changed to Pine City.



## FARMERS MOVE IN

About 1890 the government and the railroad company began to urge farmers to move in and settle on the cutover lands. But it was only after that great disaster, the Hinckley fire, struck this territory that a real campaign for bringing in permanent settlers was started.

Pine City was first settled by a group of Czechs or Bohemians under the leadership of Mr. Frank Karas; but soon other settlers, of Swedish ancestry came in also, they were followed by many of other nationalities.

These thrifty folks have made Southern Pine County a thriving farming community where dairying has supplanted lumbering.

Today we still bear the name Pine City, but the grand pine forests of the Indian days are missing.

Perhaps, if we really become conservation minded, the pines may be seen again on all our farms and on our village lawns, so that Pine City or Cheugwatana will be a true name for our community once more.

*Author Unknown.*

## Industries

From the 1883 sketch:

Railroad and a bridge over Snake River.

Depot and R.R. water tank, Elev. 12'

Windmill 20' wheel

Two churches:

Catholic (Roman)

Presbyterian

Courthouse and Jail: Location the present Nicolls Cafe

County Record : North of the Catholic Church, 5th Ave & 8th St.

School: Present courthouse block.

Buselmeier Brewery: on the west bank of Cross Lake.

Roads: South of eighth Street, known as the old Brunswick road.

Julius Neubauer blacksmith shop.

Hotels:

Lake View House.

Pioneer House and Hotel: Across the tracks on the corner of 2nd Ave & 3rd St

Brackett sawmill: On the south bank of Snake River. 2nd ave & 9th St.

VACH COLLECTION