

THE HISTORY OF ALPENA TOWNSHIP

During the years 1837 – 1839, hope and expectations were standing on tip-toe. Surveying parties employed by the state and United States could be seen moving in every direction and large districts of the state were surveyed and brought into market. At these sales, large purchases were made, sometimes as high as thirty thousand acres a day and everybody was speculating on land values.

In the spring of 1839, the state of Michigan hired Lewis Clason and Thomas Patterson of Cincinnati, Ohio who were sent to make subdivisions of townships 27, 28, 29 and 30 north and from range 4 east to Lake Huron. David D. Oliver, from whom I got this information from, was hired by Mr. Clason for eighteen dollars per month to carry the chains, which was considered fair wages in those days. The parties of Clason and Patterson left Pontiac in Oakland County in the early part of April, 1839. From there they traveled to Saginaw then to Bay City. After staying in Bay City a few days to let the ice move out, Mr. Clason chartered an open scow of about eighty ton burden to embark on his travels to Thunder Bay.

This was the first government survey made in Alpena County. It was concluded by the whole survey party that the entire tract that was surveyed was worthless ; that the government would never realize enough from the sale of the lands to pay for the surveying. Mr. Clason was so confident of this that he said, "I live in Cincinnati and am able to do what I agree and I will give any of you a good warranty deed of any township of land that we have surveyed for your wages and will bind myself to purchase the land of the government for you should the land ever become so valuable the government could sell it to other parties." Not one of the parties would accept Mr. Clason's offer.

Judge Campbell, in his history of Michigan, has the following: "The first necessity of the country was more people. In 1812, among other war legislation, an act was passed setting aside two million acres of land in Michigan as bounty lands for soldiers. As soon as the war was over and circumstances permitted, Mr. Tiffin, the surveyor general, sent agents to Michigan to select a place for locating these lands. Their report was such as to induce him to recommend the transfer of bounty locations to other parts of the United States. At the time the public surveys were made in Alpena, Presque Isle and Cheboygan counties, all that part of the peninsula was known as the Thunder Bay region and attached to Mackinac County for judicial purposes. In 1854 of 1855, the land district was divided and a land office was established at the village of Ducan City in Cheboygan County. Subsequently, these land districts were subdivided with offices at Traverse City, East Saginaw, Ionia and Detroit, Alpena County being in the Detroit district. In 1840, boundaries were made and names given to twenty-nine northern counties. One of these counties was named after an ancient chief of the Thunder Bay band of Indians "An-A-Ma-Kee" or Thunder. The name was changed to Alpena in 1843 but for what reason is not known to the writer but he thinks the name a phonetic rendering of the word "Aw-Pe-Na" which means Partridge in the Indian language.

The writer, Mr. David D. Oliver, one of the first white men to settle in Alpena County, had this to say on how Squaw Bay got its name. In the winter of 1850 or 1851, Robert McMullen was traveling across the bay and when about the middle of it, he discovered someone fishing through a hole in the ice. On approaching near, he found it to be Na-O-Tay-Ke-Zhick-Co-Quay, the daughter of the old chief Mich-E-

Ke-wis who was camped on Partridge Point. The Indian maiden was fishing with her head covered with a blanket and when she heard approaching footsteps, she bounded to her feet with a frightened look and without waiting for an apology from McMullen, she started for the point with the fleetness of the antelope. When McMullen told the writer of his adventure he said to him "We will call that bay Squaw Bay", and since that time it has been known by that name.

In 1853, Cheboygan County was organized and Montmorency, Presque Isle, Alpena, Oscoda and Alcona counties were attached to Cheboygan County for judicial and municipal purposes. In the spring of 1855, the first assessment of taxes was made in Alpena County. In 1856, the second assessment and first collection of taxes was made by Cheboygan County and which tax so collected, amounted to little over five hundred dollars.

These proprietors deemed it advisable to have a county organization for the success and convenience of their enterprise so in order to make a fair showing before the state legislature, these proprietors in 1856, came to Thunder Bay River bringing with them E. A. Breakenridge, a surveyor, to make a temporary survey of a village, to give it a name and ascertain where the two squares were that they intended to offer to donate to the county as a site for the county buildings in the event of and as an inducement for establishing the county seat at this place. This was in the year of the Fremont campaign and Messrs. Fletcher, Lockwood and Breakenridge, being "Fremont Men", and the Canada parties, Messrs. Oldfield and Minor, having no prejudices, they had resolved to the prospective village "Fremont". They had brought with them a Fremont flag which they raised on a pole when naming the town. Daniel Carter was one of the parties but being opposed to Fremont, he refused to help raise the pole declaring that he "would not help raise a flag that he would not support". He moved his family to Thunder Bay River in November of 1856 and the same fall obtained signers to petition for the organization of the County of Alpena.

In February 1857, through the energy of the proprietors and personal efforts of Hon J. K. Lockwood, the legislature passed the act, organizing the County of Alpena. This was approved February 7, 1857.

Alpena County was not divided into townships and therefore unable to elect a board of canvassers as provided for under section four of the new act which read: **Sec. 4** The board of canvassers of said county, under this act, shall consists of the presiding inspectors of elections from each township therein; and said inspectors shall meet at said village of Fremont, on the first Tuesday after the election and organize by appointing one of their number chairman and another secretary of said board and shall thereupon proceed to discharge all the duties of a board of county canvassers, as in other cases of election for county or state officers.

During the same session of 1857-1858, the legislature passed the following amendment to section four of the act: **Section 1.** The people of the state of Michigan enact, that is act shall stand in lieu of section (4) four of said act, and that Daniel Carter, Harvey Harwood and D. D. Oliver are hereby made and constituted a board of canvassers who shall act as inspector of election and said inspectors shall meet at said village of Fremont on the first Tuesday after the election and appoint one of their chairman and another secretary of said board and shall thereupon proceed to discharge all the duties of a board of county canvassers as in other cases of election for county and state officers and shall have the power to act as a board of supervisors in and for said county for the organization of townships therein and for

other purposes and shall hold their offices until there be three organized townships in said county and until other supervisors are elected and qualified and provided that from any cause a vacancy occurs in said board before any township is organized, the two remaining members of the board shall appoint. But, if there be one or more townships organized and supervisors elected, the vacancy shall be filled by said supervisor or supervisors. The compensation of said board shall be the same as that received by supervisors elected according to law. All acts and parts of acts contravening the provisions of this act, be and the same are hereby repealed. This act was approved February 14, 1857.

After being duly notified of their appointment and about the first of June, 1857, the members of the new board of supervisors for the County of Alpena met for business and organized by making Daniel Carter Chairman and having not county clerk, D. D. Oliver was made secretary. Mr. Hardwood soon moved out of the county and left the chairman and secretary to have it their own way. In September, 1857, Mr. Joseph Miller came to Fremont and was appointed to fill the vacancy in the board of supervisors made by the moving away of Harvey Harwood, Esq and now the board being full, was prepared to obey the organic law. Without observing technicalities, the board proceeded to organize the township of Fremont. This township was made to comprise the whole of Alpena County proper and all the territory attached to it for judicial and municipal purposes. The second act was to hold the first election on the first Tuesday of November, 1857.

The official records of the election read as follows: "in pursuance of notice for the first township election, posted according to law, in the Township of Fremont, in the County of Alpena, State of Michigan, held on the fourth day of November, 1857. Present, David D. Oliver, Joseph K. Miller and Daniel Carter, the board of inspectors, appointed by the supervisors, to hold said election. Chose David D. Oliver, chairman of said board and Joseph K. Miller, secretary and appointed Addison Fletcher, clerk; also, Isaac Wilson to officiate as constable for said election. Polls were opened and the following persons were elected to the several township offices:

Supervisor: James S. Irwin

Township Treasurer: Daniel Carter

Township Clerk: Addison Fletcher

Highway Commissioners: Daniel Carter, David D. Oliver, James Thomas

Justice of the Peace: Russell R. Woodruff, David D. Oliver, Lewis Atkins, Isaac Wilson

School Inspectors: David D. Oliver, George B. Melville

Constables: James Thomas, Robert Bowman, Willis Roe

Pathmaster: William Sherman

Signed,

David D. Oliver, Chairman

Addison Fletcher, Clerk

J. K. Miller, Secretary

The people becoming dissatisfied with the name of Fremont, petitioned the legislature to change it to Alpena and in February 1859, it was so changed by the following act: An act to change the name of the village Fremont in the County of Alpena.

Sec. 1 The people of the State of Michigan enact that the same of the Village of Fremont, in the County of Alpena and State of Michigan, be and the same is hereby changed to Alpena.

Sec. 2 This act shall take effect immediately. Approved February 29, 1859.

This information was gathered from two sources:

Centennial History of Alpena County, Michigan by David D. Oliver

Complete History of Alpena County by William Boulton.

Stan Mischley, Township Trustee

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