

Recollections of Andrew Nejedlo
Wausaukee Centennial Aug 5, 1987

Andrew Nejedlo probably should have been born in Pembine instead of Wausaukee on August 4, 1909. When Joseph Nedjedlo, his father, came to the area from Kewaunee County in 1896, he intended to head farther north, but the fare to Amberg amounted to 26 cents and Joseph only had 19 cents in his pocket, Wausaukee became his new home. "I think for that reason I always had a soft spot in my heart for folks from Pembine", Andrew laughed.

Joseph liked the woods and worked as a small jobber, but already vast tracts of timber had been cut by big operators like Stephenson and Ludington. Joseph worked on a smaller scale, clearing out the 40's here and there that had been too small for them to bother with. In 1899 he took a wife, Mary, and by 1901 the couple had saved enough money to buy a farm south of Wausaukee on what is now known as Nejedlo road.

Most of the land had yet to be cleared, but potatoes and grain were planted between the stumps. Very little quack grass plagued farmers back then, Andrew recalled, but there was an abundance of red clover.

Andrew vividly recalls the Skidmore land boom, for the granary on the family farm was a highlight of tour conducted for prospective land buyers. "Skidmore's did a lot of advertising in Illinois, Indiana and Iowa. The passenger train would bring in a bunch of customers at six o'clock in the morning, and they'd have their surrey with the fringe on top down at the station to meet the customers. Then they take them to the hotel and treat them royally.

They always brought their bunch out to see our full granary. What they didn't tell them was that we had hardwood land you could grow things on, not a piece of blow-sand like they are trying to sell the people. Their customers were primed for fleecing, he added, because the fertile country they came from was sandy to. The difference was that their sandy fields had water just below the surface. Wausaukee stand most certainly did not. "One customer thought the whole deal was pretty fishy, so he went back to the hotel after the tour, but he sneaked out later to walk out to our farm to talk to my dad. You see when the groups came through, they hustled them right along so you didn't get a chance to talk to the people. Well dad told him the truth and that man went back to town and got right on the next train home. The next Christmas he sent my dad a big box of cigars", Andrew said.

Too many new settlers were forced to hang on by the skin of their teeth until a drought wiped them out completely. Andrew recalls visiting one of his father's friends between Amberg and Athelstane when he was a boy of eight. Of 15 acres planted in potatoes, not one plant came up. "If it wasn't for the fish and venison in this country, a lot of them would have starved", he added.

Andrew married Virginia Logerquisgt of Sister Bay after a seven-year courtship. The couple spent most of their married life farming on the Nejedlo road Olmsted and raise gay children.