

## History of Sleepy Eye

Sleepy Eye has come, in over 137 years, from a frontier village to a Star City. The early streets were platted on September 18, 1872, by Walter Brackenridge, a Rochester lawyer for the railroad, and Thomas Allison, a settler who had bought land from another man and was living near Sleepy Eye Lake.

Allison knew the railroad was heading for the Leavenworth area and wanted it to come to "his lake," so he went by horse and buggy to see Brackenridge whom he had known while living in Rochester. Early in the morning, September 19, they were at the Brown County Courthouse in New Ulm to register the plat.

Because Chief Sleepy Eyes had spent a lot of time near the local lake, the community was named for him. When the Civil War ended, many veterans came west, as well as many people from other nations. Norwegians settled in Hanska, Danes in Evan, Germans in New Ulm, and many from the British Isles chose Home Township.

Christian Emmerich built the first hotel, on the northwest corner of Main Street and First Avenue. Carl Berg built a hotel in 1899, on the southeast corner of Main Street and Second Avenue West. William Robinson had the first store, in 1872, on the southwest corner of First Avenue Northwest and Oak Street Northwest.

With the influx of settlers, there was need for a charter and officers. The first election was held on March 19, 1878. A total of 80 men cast votes. Trustees were Lauritz Hansen from Denmark, Tom Talbot who came from England as a boy, and Tom Murfin, whose ancestors were Irish. R.H. Bingham, an English man, was recorder, while Peter Ruenitz, a German man, was treasurer.

Francis Ibberson, a native of England who was a druggist, and then a farmer, became village president. He had been persuaded to come here by the first doctor, Jacob W.B. Wellcome, Sr., who with his son and namesake, served 60 years as doctors in Sleepy Eye.

At the bottom of a page of minutes, corners burned off, are the words "This book was rescued from the Bingham Fire." It later turned up in a storage place of the Dyckman Free Library, found by a later recorder.

The library was planned and built by F.H. Dyckman in 1900, a local banker who had come here from New Jersey. He started the town's first bank, later called the State Bank, in 1882. The First National Bank was opened the following year by C.D. Griffith and W.W. Smith.

The first school was constructed of logs, followed in 1874, by a two-story frame school, which quickly added wings for more classes.

The Sleepy Eye Flour Milling Company began operations in 1883. The big retired edifice still stands as the biggest rural flour mill in the country. It was closed in 1921, when the trademark moved to another state.

Several doctors and merchants arrived, and in 1878 photographer Dwight Bangs set up his cameras. Bingham rebuilt his lumber yard, and the Murfin brothers had downtown enterprises. One of the French Glatigny families built a greenhouse.

The fire department was organized by Frenchman M.H. Anstett on March 11, 1887, and was assisted by Hans Mogensen, a Danish resident.

