DICKINSON COUNTY HISTORY – BREEN TOWNSHIP

[Compiled and Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

General History of Breen Township

BREEN TOWNSHIP: Organized March 16, 1877, embracing T39N – T40N – T41N of R27W – R28 W (then part of Menominee County); boundary changes: (1) E ½ of T40N of R27W detached February 27, 1890, and attached to Spaulding Township; (2) T39N of R27W – R28W and W ½ of T40N of R27W detached February 27, 1890, and included in Meyer Township as organized; (3) T42N – T43N – T44N of R27W and T39N of R28W attached May 21, 1891, to Dickinson County as organized; (4) T39N – T40N of R28W and S ½ of T41N of R28W set off March 9, 1892, and organized as Waucedah Township; (5) T43N – T44N of R27 W detached October 19, 1908, and included in West Branch Township as organized; named for Thomas and Bartley Breen, timber cruisers from Menominee.

BREITUNG AND BREEN TOWNSHIPS ESTABLISHED

Local Acts of the Legislature of the State of Michigan, Passed at the Regular Session of 1877, has Local Act No. 252, passed 3/16/1877, "An Act to organize the townships of Spaulding, Breen, Breitung, Stephenson, and Holmes, and to reorganize the townships of Cedarville, Ingallston, and Menominee, in the county of Menominee." Pp 49-51.

The Current, Norway, Menominee County, Michigan, Volume I, Number 29 [Saturday, August 22, 1885], page 1, column 4

THE CURRENT is informed that the **inhabitants of Breen township are anxious to have Norway township build a bridge across the Sturgeon river a short distance north of the railroad**. They say that if this were done they would have a **much better and shorter route by which to reach Norway** than they have at present. As there is considerable trade that might be secured from that direction*[,]* it might not be amiss for our business men *[sic – businessmen]* to look into the matter a little.

Calumet Mine

CALUMET MINE: Located in Section 8, T41N of R28W, mine shipped ore in 1882, 1883 and 1884; reopened in 1905 and active sporadically until 1914.

Calumet Mine Location: The mine was located in Section 8, Township 41 North, Range 28 West, and shipping began in 1882, by which time four shafts had been sunk. The mine shipped for two more years and then closed. The mine was reopened late in 1905 or early in 1906 by the Verona Mining Company, a branch of the Pickands-Mather. There was a double row of mining houses at this mining location in the early 1900's, as well as a schoolhouse.

Finntown

Finntown: Immigrants of Finnish descent settled in a neighborhood in Section 10 of Breen Township and the area became known as "Finntown." About seven or eight families were always in residence there, living close together and carrying out their Finnish traditions, using the Finnish language. The men were employed at the Morgan Lumber & Cedar Company Mill, did logging, jobbing or farming. Finntown had its own school for many years. Later the children were bused to the school in Foster City. [*Michigan's Breen Township, Dickinson County: The First Hundred Years 1878-1978*, pages 227-230]

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Fordville

Fordville: In the spring of 1933 five employees of the Ford Motor Company of Kingsford, Michigan, were given the opportunity, with the Ford Motor Company's assistance, to homestead in the Hardwood area. They were Matt Ronkko, Richard Sheldon, William Ottenhoff, Paul Newman and Carl Bergfelt. The company supplied tractors for plowing, drilled the wells and set up houses. The men performed a tremendous amount of work to open up this wilderness and set up future farms for their families. By late summer the families arrived to join their husbands and fathers. They, too, learned the meaning of hard work – clearing land, picking rocks, planting gardens. In the winter months, the five homesteaders worked at the plant at Kingsford to repay their debt to the company. It wasn't easy commuting that distance in those days. Roads were poor and chores had to be done at the farm when the day was done at the plant. [*Michigan's Breen Township, Dickinson County: The First Hundred Years 1878-1978*, page 231]

Foster City

FOSTER CITY: Established by lumberman Alonzo L. Foster in 1884 in Breen Township; post office established February 5, 1886, with Alonzo L. Foster, postmaster.

Hancock Location

Hancock Location: See Rideouts Location. In 1876 the Peninsula Iron & Lumber Company leased land in the northeast quarter of Section 30 from Henry H. Porter for $247,220.90. In 1881, the Hancock Mining Company paid $500,000 for a mining lease in the southwest and southeast quarters of Section 30, and a few months later another lease in the same area was for another half million dollars.

Hardwood

HARDWOOD: Established in 1884 by the Menominee Hardwood & Shingle Company; post office established July 23, 1891, with James H. Walton, postmaster.

Hungry Hollow

Hungry Hollow: Hungry Hollow was about five miles east of Hardwood proper, and a couple of miles down the road from Fordville. Times were hard in 1935, according to people who settled the area. It was during the Great Depression and the Ford Plant in Kingsford was down to one day a week. Unlike the homesteaders in Fordville, the settlers in Hungry Hollow were on their own. Jim Cousineau, Breen Township Board member (1978), explained that the name for the neighborhood was given by Bill Edens, who claimed that as he was walking down the hill he saw a hungry-looking dog chewing at a dead dog. "Boy, this is a hungry place!" he exclaimed, and the name "Hungry Hollow" took root. [*Michigan's Breen Township, Dickinson County: The First Hundred Years 1878-1978*, pages 233-237]

Hylas

HYLAS: Station on the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad in Breen Township named for the principal Greek victim of the water nymphs. Hylas was the son of Teodamus, the king of pre-Greek people settled on the island of Euboa. Heracles captured him because of his good looks. Although he became the hero's lover, and voyaged with him on the ship of the Argonauts, Hylas could not resist the

endearments of the water nymphs. When sent to fetch water, he was pulled into the pool and, despite the cries of Heracles form the shore, was never seen again.

Hylas: A spur or landing on the Chicago & Northwestern Railway Company where logs from cuttings were hauled, unloaded and stored. Later logs were unloaded right into railroad cars from the sleighs. John Louis DuFresne brought his family to Hylas around 1895, buying a forty of land and starting logging operations. He built a camp for twenty men who worked for him and a "cook camp" nearby where his family lived. He and his wife Delphine had fifteen children. [*Michigan's Breen Township, Dickinson County: The First Hundred Years 1878-1978*, pages 192-196]

Rideouts Location (Hancock Mine)

Rideouts Location: The Hancock Mine was located here. W.K. Rideout carried on a one-man mining operation at Hancock, hauling ore to a nearby railroad spur by horse and wagon and shoveling the rock into the gondolas. Rideout leased land in the northeast quarter of Section 30 in 1900 from the Peninsula Iron & Lumber Company. Rideout was a logger and lumberman. He operated a small mill a few miles from the Hancock Mine, employing a number of men. The location was named for him. One of Rideout's daughters married Dr. G.W. Moll and another married R.W. Pierce. Rideout is said to have invented signal lights used on railroad tracks.

Hancock Location: See Rideouts Location. In 1876 the Peninsula Iron & Lumber Company leased land in the northeast quarter of Section 30 from Henry H. Porter for $247,220.90. In 1881, the Hancock Mining Company paid $500,000 for a mining lease in the southwest and southeast quarters of Section 30, and a few months later another lease in the same area was for another half million dollars.

Ruprechts

RUPRECHTS: Julius Ruprecht, sheriff of Menominee County, established a sawmill west of Waucedah in Breen Township in late October or early November, 1880; moved his mill to Mastodon Junction in Marquette County (now Iron County) in late March or early April, 1883.

The Iron Port, Escanaba, Delta County, Michigan, Volume XI, Number 50 [Saturday, November 13, 1880], page 8, columns 1-2

RANGE ITEMS.

--**A man named Rupert *[sic - Ruprecht]* has started a sawmill near (west of) Waucedah.**

The Iron Port, Escanaba, Delta County, Michigan, Volume XI, Number 51 [Saturday, November 20, 1880], page 8, columns 1-2

RANGE ITEMS.

...

–"Sich is fame." THE IRON PORT says: A man by the name of "Rupert" is building a mill west of **Waucedah**, and **sheriff Ruprecht** was beginning to think he was getting quite noted. –Menominee Herald.

Cemeteries