

History of Long Lake

The first settlers arrived in Long Lake in early spring 1855. This early contact in Long Lake did not result in settlement but rather this group of Nova Scotians came down Watertown Road, walked to the lake, looked across the lake, and settled on the north side of the lake in what is now Orono. The first permanent settlement was established in May of 1855 with the arrival of the Flemings and the George Knettles family from Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. This first settlement was called Cumberland Town and consisted of a sawmill, general store, and schoolhouse. The platted area Cumberland Addition can trace its roots to this early period. The Knettles house became a favorite stop for travelers between 1855 and 1860 and is the location of the first public religious service in the community. The first post office was established in 1856, it was named Tamarack in recognition of the Tamarack swamps in the western part of the county.

A significant aspect of the early settlement of Long Lake was the relationship between the Dakota, the Chippewa, and the settlers. The origin of the Union Cemetery is found in this tripartite relationship. The area where the cemetery is located was called Teepee Hill in these early years. It served as an encampment for the Chippewa in 1859-1860. The Dakota were informed of the location of the Chippewa through two settlers in the area. This information prompted many of the Dakota to be in and around Long Lake. Although there was no fighting and the actual intentions of the Dakota were not clear, their presence in the area forced the Chippewa to vacate Teepee Hill. This area was acquired by Bradford Wakefield, most probably through squatter's rights, and purchased by the Union Cemetery Association in 1861. There was concern among the settlers that the Chippewa would return, so by establishing a cemetery (hallowed ground) it was unlikely that any Native American people would choose that site as an encampment, thus assuring the safety of the surrounding area.

During the middle to late 19th century, Long Lake developed like many other towns. A sawmill was erected (1866), the railroad reached Long Lake (1868), a school district was organized (1869), a general store was started (1870), the Freethinkers Hall was organized (1874), a flour mill was established (1875), and a hotel was added (1875). These institutions were all-important elements to early town development in the upper Midwest.

The late 1890's - early 1900s became known as the berry years in Long Lake. The Minnesota Fruit Growers Association was established in Long Lake in 1898 to focus on promoting strawberry and raspberry production. These products became a regional specialty with shipments going as far as Fargo and Grand Forks.

As the 19th century turned into the 20th, Long Lake continued to grow and change. A public library was started (1905), a canning factory was established (1906), and Long Lake was incorporated (1906) specifically to prevent the Great Northern Railway from moving the depot west and out of town.

During the period from 1916-1919, the First World War consumed Long Lake, like the rest of the country. In the 1920's, Long Lake saw construction of the Buckhorn Cafe which became an infamous community meeting place. It was during this time that the reduction of the role of agriculture in the Long Lake economy was evident by the transition from agriculturally oriented establishments (agriculture production facilities), to more consumer-oriented services (Buckhorn Cafe, car repair). In addition, Long Lake was serving as a summer destination for people in Minneapolis and St Paul who wanted to get away from the summer's heat. At that time, the City was accessible. It had a number of lakeside cabins and was a relaxing place to fish or swim.

It was not until the 1950s that Long Lake expanded to its current City limits. Up until the 1950s, the City limits were about the same as in 1898. The catalyst for the expansion of the City limits was a desire by Long Lake's neighbors to take advantage of the City's decision to install a sewer system. Those areas that wanted to be connected to the City sewer were annexed by the City.

About the Pioneer Museum

Established on August 8, 1907, by men and women who had settled in the area as early as 1855, the Western Hennepin County Pioneer Association (WHCPA) was founded to preserve the knowledge of family members, settlement lifestyles, and community events. To that end, these pioneers seeded the organization's collections with personal artifacts and family histories. They wanted future generations to remember their accomplishments in the face of adversity - conflict with native Americans, civil war, locusts, disease, weather, economic depressions, and decades of backbreaking labor and hard living.

For the past 100 years, the descendants of the founders have worked, generation after generation, to honor the wishes of their forefathers. For the first half-century, they collected artifacts and information in their homes until the sheer volume of accumulated materials finally justified a centralized facility and public display. That's when local banker Kenny Bollum, an active and devoted WHCPA member, provided space for exhibits in the basement of Long Lake State Bank. Shortly thereafter, with the help of Bollum and other local businessmen, the deed to the decommissioned District 50 schoolhouse in downtown Long Lake. This became the Pioneer Museum.

The Museum is now located at 1953 Wayzata Boulevard West, Long Lake, MN. For more information about the WHCPA visit [Pioneer Museum](#) or call [952-473-6557](tel:952-473-6557).