

Street Scenes - Beardsley Street

Street Scenes is a regular feature of the CLHS newsletter. With hundreds of streets in Crystal Lake, we thought it would be interesting to learn how many of them came to be named.



Beardsley Street is located in downtown Crystal Lake just north of the railroad tracks. It is two blocks long, running east-west between Main Street and Illinois Street.

Several generations of the Beardsley family traveled together from New York State to McHenry County, arriving in 1835. They stopped briefly near our large body of water, and Ziba Beardsley exclaimed, "The water is as clear as crystal!" The family did not stay, but moved on to Naperville, IL. When they returned to Crystal Lake in 1836, they found Beman Crandall and his family had already established a home and were credited as the first settlers of Crystal Lake. The Beardsley's then became credited as the second family to settle in Crystal Lake.



*The Beardsley Brothers
Najah, William, Orsemus, and John*

The Beardsley family patriarch was Benajah Beardsley. Benajah and his wife Rachel had seven children: Abner, Ziba, Rachael, Gerta, Hannah, Fanny and Cynthia.

Hannah Beardsley was the first school teacher in Crystal Lake. She began teaching in 1838 in a one room log cabin that served as the schoolhouse, church, and town meeting room. This building was located at the northwest corner of Virginia Street and McHenry Avenue. Hannah married Franklin Wallace on March 10, 1840. This was the first recorded marriage in Algonquin Township. The marriage was performed by Beman Crandall, Justice of the Peace. After Franklin's death in 1842, Hannah married his brother, Columbus Wallace. With the help of stone mason, Andrew Jackson Simons, the Wallace's constructed a cobblestone home in 1851 that is still standing on Virginia Street (currently owned by Alcoholics Anonymous).

The first child born in Crystal Lake was William Beardsley on May 7, 1837. William was the

son of Abner and Mary Peck Beardsley. In September 1840, Abner Beardsley purchased 80 acres of land in Nunda Township for the whopping price of \$100. This property is located near the current location of Beardsley Street. However, when Abner Beardsley's family moved to Nunda Township in 1840, there was no railroad service, and the town of Nunda had not yet been formed. Abner and Mary Peck Beardsley had five children: John, Mary, William, Orsemus, and Najah.

The 1872 Combination Atlas of McHenry County shows Abner Beardsley's farm divided up among three of his sons: John, Orsemus and Najah. A few years later, the Beardsley farms in Nunda Township were sold, and the brothers moved out of the area. Abner's son William had already moved on to Moscow, Idaho. Orsemus also settled in Moscow, Idaho. John died in California, and Najah died in Michigan.

Many of the early Beardsley family members are buried at the Crystal Lake Cemetery (now known as Lake Avenue Cemetery).