The History of the Town of Cutler

The township of Cutler was originated in 1895 under the name of Cranberry Center, it was formed from part of the Township of Necedah. In 1896 the name of the township was changed from the Township of Cranberry Center to the Township of Cutler. It was named after the late Charles Cutler who served as the first Juneau County clerk from 1857-1889.

However, there were people residing in the area that became the Town of Cutler well before its date of foundation. One of the first families to settle in the area of what is now Cutler was the Edward Cripps family. They settled in 1870. Many other families eventually settled in the area as well and in 1884 the local post office was established under the name of Duester. The name was changed to the Cranberry Center Post Office in 1892 and finally to the Cutler Post Office in 1913. The post office remained open until 1944.

Cutler was a very busy place in the late 1800s-1900s. Many people were employed by G.H. Kruschke at the local cranberry marsh. Over 200 people were employed each year to help with harvesting the cranberries that were shipped on the railroad line that ran through Cutler. A large fire destroyed the cranberry marsh in 1894.

Other families were growing cranberries in the area, this helped to maintain the history of the cranberry, which is still very important in Cutler today. One of those families was the Clark Treat family; in 1923 Guy Potter bought Treat's marsh, named it Cutler Cranberry Company, it still exists today.
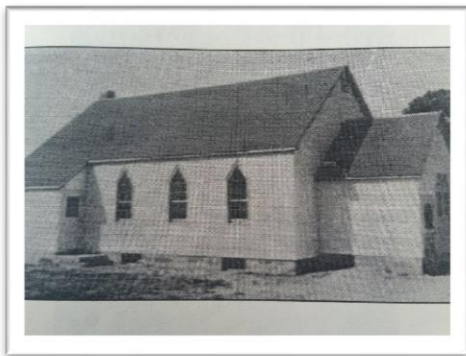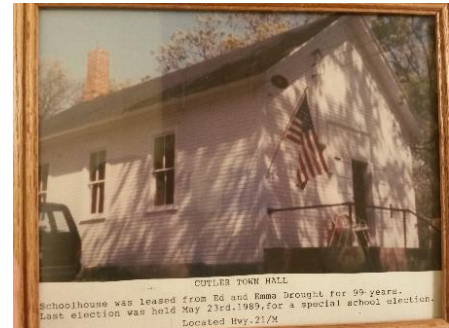
Wiregrass was another huge industry in Cutler in the late 1800s-early 1900s. Edward Drought headed wiregrass operations in Cutler. The high grass was cut, dried, stacked, bailed, and eventually shipped to Oshkosh, WI on the railroad to be made into mats. Mr. Drought employed Winnebago Indians as well as local residents to help with the grass harvest. All employees lived on the marsh during harvest in tents. In the early 1930s much of the wiregrass crop was destroyed because of hot weather and the Droughts left the business.

Farming became a huge part of Cutler in the early days. Many families had a farm and it became a livelihood for them. A creamery, owned by Otto Haukum, was built in Cutler. Farmers took their milk there to be made into butter. Cutler resident, Homer Georgeson, harvested ice on his pond and sold it to the creamery. When the ice was brought in, in the winter, it was packed in sawdust to prevent it from melting, so it could be used in the summer, to keep the butter room cool in the creamery. Farmers also sent their livestock by rail to be sold in big cities.

The town of Cutler in the early days was a booming town! Besides the post office (which was housed on Otto Haukum's front porch), there was a grocery store (on the Drought's front porch), a train depot, school house, some houses, and eventually when cars became more accessible, Cutler grew to include a gas station as well as a tavern and restaurant. Unfortunately, a large fire destroyed the town. All that remains today is the school house and a few homes.

At one time there was 7 different schools in what is today the Township of Cutler. One of those schools was Bear Creek School, located in the southwest corner of the township. It eventually closed in 1941, the remaining students were transferred to a school, in neighboring Orange Township. Another school, was the schoolhouse that is still standing on Cutler Road today. This schoolhouse was not just used for school but also as a church and town hall. When the small area schools consolidated into one big school, in Camp Douglas, the schoolhouse was leased to the Town of Cutler as their town hall until 1989, when the current town hall was built. Other schools that existed in the Town of Cutler included Jefferson School, Cranberry Center School, and Cleveland School. Today, residents of Town of Cutler reside in one of three local school districts; Necedah, New Lisbon and Tomah Area Schools are all part of this township.

At one time there was a Seventh Day Adventist church in the township of Cutler. Worship was held at the Charles Cady home until the Cleveland School closed. They then held services at the schoolhouse. The Bethel Baptist Chapel was established in 1896. Eventually in April 1946 Bethel chartered its own membership making it an independent congregation. Bethel Baptist Church is a small country church, average attendance of 70-80 on a Sunday Morning, but with a big heart. The focus of Bethel is the Lord Jesus Christ, His Word, and His people. The goal is to love people by helping them serve and grow in Christ through the reading and studying of His Word. There are programs and events for the whole family. Sunday school classes for all ages, Jr. Church (ages 4-8), and Sunday Morning and Evening services, as well as Wednesday night prayer and Bible study. During the school year Bethel conducts a Good News Club at the Camp Douglas Elementary School. They also have activities and classes for teenagers, VBS, and an Easter Passion Play. Their service times are: Sunday School - 9:30am, Morning Worship Service - 10:30am, Evening Worship Service - 6:30pm, Wednesday Prayer and Bible Study - 6:30pm.

In October 1982, the Cutler Volunteer Fire Department was founded. On January 13, 1984, they were certified as a Fire Department by the state of Wisconsin, and eventually incorporated into the Volunteer Fire Department we know today, on January 28, 1985. The first fire truck was purchased for $9,000, mainly with funds gathered through fundraising. Fundraisers included firewood and cookbook sales as well as a picnic fundraiser. The Town of Cutler is still served by

the Cutler Volunteer Fire Department today, consisting of approximately nineteen firefighters; a Fire Chief, two Assistants, five Captains, and one Safety Officer. The fire department received a high rating early 2018, allowing Cutler residents, within five miles of the fire station, to get a discount on their home insurance. In addition to the fire department, there is also a Ladies Auxiliary. Every year they work together to put on the "Cutler Fire Fest" fundraiser. People from the area gather together for a night of fun; there is live music, raffles and plenty of food. It is a great gathering for area residents to come together and support the fire department. Thank you, Cutler Fire Department for your years of dedicated service to the township and surrounding area!

The Town of Cutler is still flourishing and functioning as a close-knit community today. The current population is 331 people. One of the major highlights of Cutler Township is the cranberry industry. Cutler Cranberry Company is a family owned cranberry marsh operated by

4th generation growers Martin and Brian Potter. When the marsh was purchased there were 11 acres of cranberries. Today, Cutler Cranberry Company operates approximately 375 acres of cranberries in Cutler Township; as well as around 350 acres, in the Town of City Point, in Jackson County. Another much smaller cranberry marsh, along with many acres of tillable farmland, are allowing residents the privilege of living in a rural agricultural community. Families and visitors may experience the sights, sounds, and smells associated with a newly mowed hay field, watching the sprouting and growth (through harvesting) of corn, soybeans and other commodities, watching horses, cows, chickens, and pigs along with the migrating birds heading North and South, with the changing of the seasons. Something for everyone, every day!

Another highlight of the Town of Cutler is the Eagles Nest Flowage. The man made flowage was founded through work projects such as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the late 1920s the Great Depression era. The government provided all the labor means for the project, Guy Potter, Cutler resident, supplied all the materials needed to build the Eagles Nest Dam. After the dam was complete, Gert Crawford and Baldie sold minnows by the flowage, for fishing, and eventually started renting out boats and building cabins. That has now evolved into the Eagles Nest we know today. Currently, there is a restaurant with many spaces for people to purchase property, to have a home or a vacation space, as well as a campground. People also like to come to Eagles Nest to do some fishing; annually the Monroe County Rod & Gun Club hosts an Ice Fisheree, which is very well attended.   Many people enjoy Eagles Nest because of the close proximity to the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge. Nearly one third of the Town of Cutler is comprised of the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge which is very unique to a township. The refuge attracts many animals to the area such as the Sandhill and Whooping Cranes as well as the endangered Karner Blue Butterfly. The refuge also provides hunting opportunities to Cutler residents as well as visitors to the area!