

A History of Wallace Lake
By Richard Klumb*

To set the scene, here is a brief overview of West Bend, Barton, Young America and Washington County:

First survey of the Town of Barton 1835

Washington County created in 1836

West Bend surveyed by Kilbourn, Wolcott, Vliet and Kneeland in 1845.

They purchased 720 acres of land from the government for \$900.

They name the area West Bend after the westward bend in the Milwaukee River.

Wisconsin became a State in 1848

Young America was settled in 1851

Barton Salisbury 32 years old settled and built a sawmill along the Milwaukee River and named the area Salisbury Mills in 1845, later the name was changed to Newark and then officially renamed Barton. He later moved to Newburg and started to build a sawmill and a hotel. During construction he fell from a rafter and died at the age of 36.

An early settler is Issac Verbeck (remember his name). He builds a home on Decorah Road in the mid 1840's. It is still standing and being lived in. It is now a Historical Records Property and is located approx. across from the West Bend High School Tennis Courts. He and his wife Mary have 5 children. One of his sons Anson Verbeck marries Hannah McDonald and their wedding is the first recorded wedding in this new territory.

The recorded history of Wallace Lake originally known as McHenry's Lake goes back in time to at least 1873 with reference to the Civil War. Mr McHenry was evidently the first land owner(settler) on this lake and named it after himself. However, the name McHenry disappears from the records and a new personality appears. His name is Comfort Babcock Wallard born in 1813 in Washington County, New York and came to Wisconsin in 1848. He build a school and church to serve the Freewill Baptist Community of the area. The cemetery of the church is the only thing left. It was called Wallard's Cemetery and now is Trenton Township Cemetery. Rev Comfort B Wallard acquires property on and around the lake and at that time the lake becomes known as Wallard's Lake. The 1873 – 1874 plat map of the Town of Trenton refers to it as

Wallard's Lake.

Many of Elder Wallard's flock were baptized in the Lake by ducking. In the Winter a hole was chopped in the ice for the ceremony.

The name was changed probably by Milwaukee summer guests that either heard or spelled the name Wallace. Later the DNR picked up the name Wallace and since 1930 all references are to Wallace Lake.

The Rev Wallard performed a marriage ceremony between Issac Verbeck's daughter Harriet Verbeck and Mr Andrew Bullard who very much was interested in having the lake name restored to Wallard.

Wallace Lake along with Brickyard Lake (now Paradise Lake) and Lake Lenwood were harvested of there ice during the early part of the 1900's A record harvest from Wallace Lake was 40,000 tons one winter. A railroad spur was created from the Barton Pond area to the North and Northeast through LacLauran to the 3 lakes. The spur ended slightly east of Waldons Supper club.

*References: Washington County Historical Society

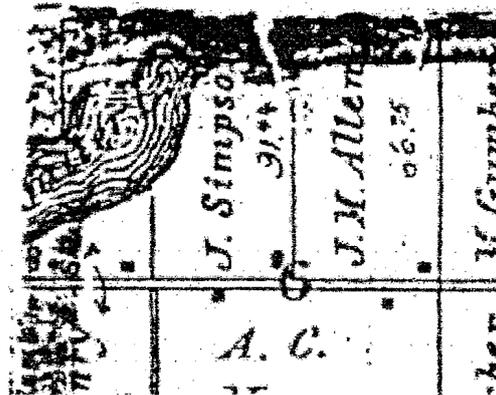
Wallace Lake or Waller's Lake?

Plat of
TRENTON
 Washington County
 1873-74
 Township 11 North Range 20 East



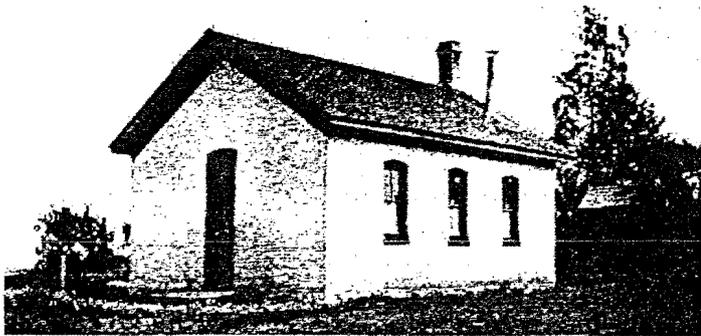
Ever think about Wallace Lake in Washington County, Wisconsin? There seems to be a mistake. When looking at the 1873-4 Plat Map of the Town of Trenton, the lake clearly shows "Waller Lake". What happened?

In 1922, the West Bend News printed a reminiscence of Andrew Bullard, one of the early residents of the Town of Trenton, regarding Wallace Lake. The article stated in its headline: "On the Name of a Lake: 'Waller's Lake' Should Be Restored for 'Wallace Lake'". (The full article is online through the Wisconsin Historical Society)



In 1933, the obituary of Lorenzo Waller from the West Bend News, a man born in the Town of Trenton in 1851, stated "Deceased was the son of the Rev. Comfort Babcock Waller, pioneer circuit rider of the Baptist church in this section of the state. It was this minister who held baptismal ceremonies at the lake which bears his name east of Barton. A common mistake in this section of the state is to call the lake by the misnomer, Wallace Lake, when it should be correctly referred to as Waller's Lake."

In 1976, for the Bicentennial of the Town of Trenton/Village of Newburg, the Bicentennial Committee stated in its book, "District No. 3 Gomber School: This school was located on the corner of what is now North Trenton Road and Wallace Lake Road, on the Barber Farm. Some older settlers remembered that it was once a church and the cemetery to the south of it would make it seem true... A teacher told how she would have to dismiss the children from school when there was a funeral service at the school... and how the coffin was taken in and out through a window because the entrance was too small to make the turn... Amongst the names on the gravestones are the names of some of these Trenton pioneers - Stewart, Waller, Widger, Young, Barber, Wescott and Ellis." Photo is from the same book.



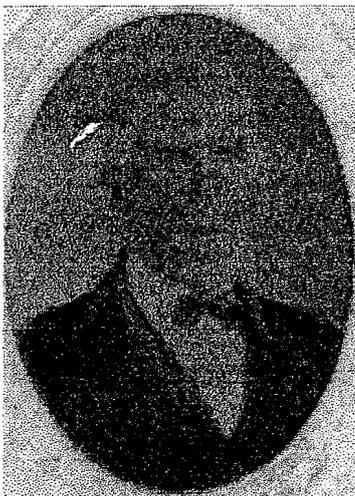
In 1980, Dorothy E. Williams illustrated this history a little deeper in her book "The Spirit of West Bend", "In the 1850's and 1860's the Free Will Baptists (not to be confused with any modern-day Baptists) proved among the more hardy, for they baptized their members in Waller's Lake (now Wallace Lake) where their minister lived. One winter 11 were baptized in water which had to be reached by chopping a hole through the thick ice, and then hurried to a tent wherein a roaring fire warmed the bodies to match their newly warmed hearts."

In 1997, Richard Driessel stated in his book, "A History: The Village of Barton" that "Reverend Waller appeared in Barton news about 1860... There was a Waller farm adjacent to Waller's Lake (later called Wallace Lake) and a Waller school house in the Town of Trenton during that time... There was a Sunday school picnic at Waller's Lake in 1887, a favorite place for religious and other picnics at that time." Ownership of the land by Reverend Waller can be confirmed on the 1859 Trenton Plat Map.

In 2001, the "Gazetteer of the Communities, Churches & Cemeteries of Washington County, WI 1840-2001" by the Washington County Historical Society, states "Waller's Lake in the townships of Barton and Trenton, Section 1 in Barton township and Section 6 in Trenton township... Waller Baptist Church, Trenton and Wallace Lake Road, Section 5, township of Trenton. This congregation is disbanded. The congregation used a school building for services. It no longer exists... Waller Cemetery, Trenton Road, Section 5, township of Trenton. This cemetery is correctly known as Trenton Township Cemetery."



The "mysterious" Reverend Comfort Babcock Waller was born in 1813 in Washington County, New York. He was converted to the Freewill Baptist faith who unlike their Baptist brethren, did not believe in predestination, but rather that free will and through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, anyone could be saved and go to heaven. Reverend Waller came to Wisconsin in 1848.



According to the "History of Washington/Ozaukee Counties", "the first [Trenton] town meeting was held on April 4, 1848 at the house of John Smith. The first town officers were: ... School Commissioners, Lazarn Sanford, Amhurst D. Tenant, Comfert [sic] B. Waller..." His dedication to schooling was not only reflected in raising the church/school structure with his friend and colleague, Reverend Alonzo Curtis, that in the 1860 Census, a school teacher was living in the Waller household.

Reverend Waller saw the Freewill community continue to grow in Washington and neighboring Sheboygan County. It was at this time, that he decided to start the Freewill Baptist church in the town of Scott in Sheboygan County. He then alternated services between Trenton and Scott on Sundays. However, after the Civil War, things slowed down and members disbursed elsewhere, including the Reverend Waller, who moved to Fond du Lac County; he died in 1891. Some of the former Trenton and Scott Freewills remained and reorganized as the Boltonville Freewill Baptist church in 1872.

As time has passed, the legacy of these Yankee pioneers who helped shape early Trenton and were trailblazers in every meaning of the word, have become forgotten and hidden like the old Trenton Cemetery. Misnomers and incorrect information has deviated Trenton from its heritage and led to incorrect information that has been recorded in the annals of Wisconsin history. The Wisconsin Freewill Baptist Historical Society believes this wrong should be "righted" and hopes that you will support the restoration of the name change of Wallace Lake to its rightful name to proudly reclaim and proclaim the community's unique history with Waller's Lake. Please visit our website (<http://freewillbaptist.wlhn.org/>) for more information. Thank you.

WASHINGTON COUNTY LAKES *

CONTINUED

SMITH LAKE in the township of BARTON.

This lake was also known as **DRICKEN'S LAKE**. It includes **LITTLE SMITH LAKE**.

WALL LAKE in the townships of KEWASKUM and BARTON.

WALLACE LAKE in the townships of BARTON and TRENTON.

Earlier known as **WALLER'S LAKE** and **MCHENRY'S LAKE**.

INFORMATION NOTES

* Millponds aren't listed separately, as they are usually located in one of the listed cities, villages or communities. Consult the listing of the community in which the dam is located. Numerous other small lakes and ponds are found in Washington County. Few, if any, of these have sufficient historical significance and most are privately owned.

IMPORTANT...A number of unincorporated communities are shown as in the **(OLD) TOWNSHIP** of GERMANTOWN. This is where they were originally established. However, they currently are a part of the **VILLAGE** of GERMANTOWN. Only a very small part of the old township still exists in 2000.

COMMUNITY and LAKE NAME SOURCE

The names of the communities and lakes listed here are compiled from various sources including old maps, plat maps, topographic maps, postal directories, documents, authored articles and local histories. Some misspelled names may have been overlooked. The use of the words "POST OFFICE" and "STATION" after a community name was common practice, in earlier years, to indicate that the community had a post office and/or a railroad station. This practice was discontinued in later years.

WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
WEST BEND, WISCONSIN, U.S.A.

ON THE NAME OF A LAKE

"WALLER'S LAKE" SHOULD BE RESTORED FOR "WALLACE LAKE."

This is a plea to retain, or restore, the original name of the best known of the Barton lakes. The lake lies about three-quarters of a mile northeast of Barton and about a mile and a half northeast of West Bend. It is shaped like an Indian spear head, with the point extending about half the length of the lake into the town of Trenton. Its northern shore comes very close to the town line of Farmington. The lake is less than half a mile long and less than a quarter of a mile wide. It is a shallow lake, but as it is spring-fed and has very clear water, it is quite attractive. Its deepest place does not measure more than forty feet. The lake has an outlet which flows into the North Branch of the Milwaukee river, after it joined another creek which is the effluent of Green Lake in the town of Farmington.

The lake of late years has come to be known as "Wallace Lake," although without the slightest reason. This name probably was attached to the lake by some Milwaukee summer guest staying at the lake, who made a mistake in spelling. It has since tenaciously clung to it and very recently the name even crept into an official document. So it is time to set things right.

The facts in this matter are that the lake never went by that name until in very recent years. In the old files in the News office, extending over sixty years, it is always spelled "Waller's Lake." From the old files it also is evident that a family by the name of Waller lived in the neighborhood in the fifties and sixties. It remained to Andrew J. Bullard of Oakland, Cal., who last summer visited his old home in the vicinity of that lake to furnish oral proofs of the most important sort, that the name "Waller's Lake" is the correct one. Mr. Bullard stated that it was the only name the old settlers of that vicinity knew it by. It received its name from a family by the name of Waller, who lived near its shore. The father was a Free Will Baptist minister, and his congregation met in the old school house about a mile east of the lake. Many members of his flock were baptized in the lake. And they

were not sprinkled with water either, but received a good ducking. Mr. Bullard recalls that one winter eleven people received baptism in this way, a hole being chopped in the ice and a tent with a fire being ready, so they could warm themselves after the vigorous ceremony. This was performed near the northeastern shore of the lake.

The same minister who was known as "Elder Waller" married Mr. Bullard to Miss Harriet Verbeck, a daughter of one of the first settlers of West Bend. She taught school in the school house mentioned above. The ceremony was very simple and unceremonious, both going to the minister one evening and having the ties put on. The old settlers acted quickly and directly. Mr. Bullard often bathed in the lake. His people, who came from Vermont, had a farm in the town of Farmington, and his father lies buried in the North Trenton cemetery. In visiting his grave, Mr. Bullard made the striking observation that the marble tombstone over the grave had retained its pure whiteness during all these many years, while other tombstones of the cemetery looked as if they had been tarred. The old cemetery is one of those Chas. D. Stewart speaks of in his "Essays on the Spot," in which the author describes the scenery of our moraines. It reminds that the country originally was settled by Yankees. Most of them have gone to the "other side," leaving nothing but their visiting cards on the tombstones of old graveyards.

Coming back to the Waller family, it should also be mentioned that two of the Waller boys served in Company D (West Bend Union Guards) of the Twelfth Wisconsin Regiment in the Civil war. One was Sergeant Harlo M. Waller, and the other was Private David M. Waller. They went through the entire war, and the latter was reported missing after the bloody battle of Atlanta, in which the regiment suffered the heaviest losses. Corporal Bullard belonged to the same company and it was this coincidence that led to the inquiry by the writer about the location of the Waller family and the part it played in the nomenclature of the lake.

The name "Waller's Lake" should by all means be restored, in justice to the sturdy pioneer minister whose name it bore through sixty or more years, and who had two sons in the northern army fighting valiantly in the Civil war. We should not, through mistaken notions or whims, change names of localities in the county, which have come down from the times of the settlements and whose identity with the original is established historically beyond a doubt. In the future let it be "Waller's Lake" again, as it was in the past.

WEST BEND NEWS
Wed, January 4, 1922

200,178

January 22, 2007

Washington County Historical Society
320 South 5th Avenue
West Bend, WI 53095

RE: Wallace Lake

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Wisconsin Freewill Baptist Historical Society. We are a non-profit group that was organized in 2006. It is the Mission of the Society to acquire, preserve, and disseminate information about Wisconsin's Freewill Baptist churches. Washington County, Wisconsin had six known Freewill Baptist churches between 1840 and 1911, the most well known was located in the Town of Trenton.

This group of people was started by early Yankee settlers who pioneered Washington County prior to Wisconsin becoming a state. They were unique to the "regular" Baptists and actually conducted baptisms in Wallace Lake.

The reason for this letter is to serve as an appeal to reinstate the original name of the lake to "Waller's Lake". Our group does not have any religious or political affiliation or agenda. We are historians who are looking for errors in Wisconsin's history to be corrected, embraced and taught to both the present and future generations. If it were not for these brave men and women, we would not be here now.

Enclosed is a flyer that documents the story of Waller's Lake, and cites primary resources dating back to at least 1873, with references back to the Civil War era.

We know this may be viewed as a major undertaking regarding changing maps, sanitation districts, et cetera, however, what is being used is incorrect and we believe it is important to share this unique history not only with the community, but also the state, as often, specific examples like this are not found. If someone else by the name of Wallace owned the land near the lake or had an influence on the name, this would not be an issue, but because it is clearly an error, we would like to address it.

Also, by restoring the name of Waller's Lake, our group would like to spearhead an effort to erect a Historical Marker at the site of the lake which could lead to more visitors and publicity, as well as a deeper appreciation of the area by the residents.

Your feedback is greatly appreciated. We look forward to hearing your feelings and thoughts and hope to work together with you to retell a great story about early Wisconsin.

Sincerely yours,



Jack B. Copet
President
Wisconsin Freewill Baptist Historical Society
<http://freewillbaptist.wlhn.org/index.html>