

# People in Evergreen Cemetery

(a.k.a. Discovering Alpena's Roots)

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## AT DAR (slide 001)

The roots of Alpena are planted firmly and deeply here on the banks of Thunder Bay River – the river the Indian called Anamakee. A town like Alpena has a life story which begins with these roots. They were planted by a handful of hearty pioneers who broke through the wilderness to start a new life – a new town.

How do you go about finding that life story of a town? How do you discover its roots? **(slide 002)** Oh, of course, there are a few books and documents – in the case of Alpena, very few. D. D. Oliver wrote a centennial history in 1876 and so did Billy Boulton. **(slide 005)** The old newspapers have been microfilmed and so preserved indefinitely. The courthouse has records, but the many fires in the early town destroyed the first of those records. **(slide 003)** Every town has someplace in its attics and library and its museum – if it's lucky enough to have one—**(slide 004)** letters and pictures, and journals and account books from which some of the history can be divined.

But there is one place that every town has, where its roots can be found – a place where all history ends. **(slide 006)** Where the events leading from these roots can be detected. And that place is the local cemetery. In the case of Alpena, it's evergreen Cemetery, out M-32 to the west, along the picturesque banks of Thunder Bay River.

Come along with us now and let's see what history we can discover, what stories we can be led to, from what we find in a quiet small town cemetery.

**(slide 007)** Here's a tall and obviously very old monument in the earliest part of the cemetery. Let's see what it says – Mary Lavinia Carter, daughter of Daniel and Sarah. Mary Carter our first school teacher. Mary

came to Alpena with her folks when it was still the village of Fremont, so named in 1856 because General Fremont was the Republican candidate for president that year and because his campaign flag was the only flag of any sort the founding fathers of this town had with them on the occasion of first arriving at and naming of the new settlement.

**(slide 008)** Daniel Carter was a timber cruiser for the Fletchers, lumber people from the East. He had come to the Thunder Bay country to look over the timber land for his boss, to see if it was worth buying as pinery for a lumber mill. That was in 1853. **(slide 009)** Fletcher, along with Lockwood, Oldfield, and Minor, did buy the land around the mouth of the river, and so Daniel Carter stayed on. Here we see the river as it was to look very soon now filled with logs every spring. Dan went back to Ohio only to fetch his wife and daughter. They moved into a crude unfinished building near the river, once used to house the whiskey supply a fur trader kept for his business with the Indians. But in 1859 **(slide 011)** Dan built his family a fine new home on what is now Chisholm Street. This house was torn down just before it reached its centennial mark, to make way for a shopping center.

Mary died a very young woman. Life was hard in the wilderness woods. Her parents' graves are nowhere visible – perhaps in some other part of the cemetery since they died much later – Daniel in 1897 and Sarah after the turn of the century.

**(slide 010)** And here rests Seth L. Carpenter, Alpena's first mayor. What a myriad of stories that name conjures. Stories like the infamous Baron von Molitor of Presque Isle County. **(slide 012)** Albert von Molitor, said to be the illegitimate son of William I of Germany, exiled to America and establishing a feudal barony in Rogers City, peopled with German and Polish immigrants. Von Molitor, who as supervisor from the unorganized county of Presque Isle, attached for political purposes to Alpena County – was caught with his hand in our county till – forcing us to

incorporate as a city in 1871, creating three new supervisors, wresting the voting power from Baron von Molitor and his henchmen.

The city needed a new mayor – the citizens chose Seth Carpenter, accountant and land dealer and sometimes lawyer. To Carpenter fell the honor **(slide 013)** of naming the first fire pumper. He chose Sagonaquado [or Sog-on-e-qua-do], after the Ottawa war chief who was living near Island Park when the settlers first came to Thunder Bay Country. Fire had long been the most persistent enemy of this little lumber town. Just before becoming a city in 1871, the entire north side of the town was wiped out one afternoon. That's when they decided to buy this new fire pumper. Little Sagonaquado [or Sog-on-e-qua-do] fought valiantly against the tragic fire which was to strike the south side business district the very next year – July 12, 1872. Sixty-eight buildings went up in smoke in just 2 ½ short hours that afternoon. **(slide 014)** The pumper's effectiveness was highly doubtful, but it made folks feel better to know that it was there.

Sagonaquado [or Sog-on-e-qua-do] was called upon, along with every other piece of firefighting equipment along the Michigan shore to help fight the great Chicago fire toward the close of 1871. She's home forever now, at the Besser Museum.

Chief Sog-on-e- **(slide 015)** qua-do's grave is somewhere in Evergreen Cemetery too – its location long since obscured. He was buried by his white friends in Indian fashion, sitting up with his favorite rifle beside him. A grave robber opened the grave that same night to steal the rifle. It's hoped that Reverend Barlow, who spoke the word over the chief, knew enough more about Indian custom to kill the rifle before burying it, so its spirit could accompany Sog-on-e-qua-do to the happy hunting grounds.

**(slide 016)** But here is another stone, one with a familiar name Potter, E. K. We're close to the location of the famous Old Potter Mill. It was on the bend of the river just below the cemetery --**(slide 017)** a quiet park now where the Canadian Geese feed peacefully. Once in the 1860's

until the demise of the lumber here, this was the location of one of the busiest mills in the town. A little tram track ran from the mill to the bay to carry the sawed lumber to the big schooners waiting at the long Potter Dock. The tram track is now our Campbell Street.

E. K. Potter was joined by his brother J. D. as the years went by and later they would open the towns leading hardware store and create a show farm for cattle breeding on the location of Alpena High School today.

[Note: No, It was at the corner of Bagley ST and M-32. North West Corner. Bob L.]

**(slide 018)** And they would build two magnificent mansions on Washington Avenue. One, gone now – would resemble a castle in its Victorian Architecture – complete with marble fireplaces and parquet floors and a huge circle staircase up to the third floor. It would be a landmark of our town for many years, inhabited by J. D. ‘s three daughters, who grew very old in its drafty halls. **(slide 019)** The triangular corner where Potter Castle stood looks like this now – grass-covered and empty. But visible across Washington Avenue, are some of the restored beautiful mansions of that by-gone era—including to the far right the other Potter house.

**(slide 020)** Here lies Sam Hitchcock – Deacon, as he liked to be called –church leader and land developer, a la 1860. Deacon Hitchcock came by a parcel of land here mighty cheap –it’s known now as Hitchcock’s first addition. It was one big frog pond then. Today it’s that part of Alpena including some of the downtown and State Street along the lake shore. **(slide 021)** Sam bought it for just a few hundred and got all that back by selling this block back to the city for a school. Thunder Bay Junior High sits on this same block today. It’s always been school here since 1868.

Another reminder of Deacon Hitchcock **(slide 041)** is the Centennial Building, built in 1876 – and given to the town for a court house with offices for Hitchcock and the third floor reserved for his lodge, the Odd Fellows.

**(slide 023)** Hilliard Broadwell now presides over this plot of ground near the river bank. Hilliard was one of the first to put a dam across that river. He came here from New York State with experience as a water mill man. **(slide 024)** Broadwell Dam, erected in 1859 with Alpena's first water-powered sawmill alongside – later became the Four Mile Dame that we see here today.

As we continue our walk through the old part of Evergreen Cemetery, **(slide 025)** we come across another stone – the name on which brings more memories. Duncan McRae, it reads, a Scotsman of many talents and interests. McRae combined forces with Henry Bolton and they opened the Bolton McRae general store. It was a large store and it stood staunchly on the corner of Fletcher and Dock -- **(slide 026)** that's North Second today – for many a year. The two dabbled in lumber, and through the years, ah, most everybody in Alpena was dabbling in lumber. One piece of the land though, Henry Bolton never allowed to be cut was Bolton Point out on Bell Bay still contains the only stand of virgin white pine outside of Hartwick Pines in the state. Today it's Besser Natural Area, a state park.

Duncan McRae built one of the show places in town -- **(slide 027)** his home on Washington Avenue. Later he gave this huge home to the city and it served us well as a hospital until in the 1940's, Alpena General was built. Today that same corner looks like this **(slide 028)** a quiet residential section in the intersection of Mirre Street with four good-sized homes replacing the old McRae Hospital.

**(slide 029)** Andrew Tighon – this burial place reflects a sad occasion. Andy worked at Island Mill – one of the earliest and best known of the sixteen or so sawmills that buzzed away on the banks of our river in town. It was unusual -- **(slide 030)** built as it was on the island in the river between Ninth Street and Second Avenue Bridges near the sorting gap of the old lumber days. This is the island today, now really a peninsula since some latter day owner saw fit to attach it to the shore. But in its heyday

**(slide 031)** Island Mill ran round the clock. As the shifts changed one afternoon, an eager workman poured cold water into the still hot boiler and the whole of Island Mill blew up. Andy Tighon and several others blew up with it. The mill was rebuilt—and it was the last to be closed. Its steam whistle screamed for the last time in 1926, officially closing Alpena's lumber days.

**(slide 032)** Persons is the name on this tone—Captain Persons of the Great Lakes steamers. John Persons came to Alpena as a child. His father was keeper of the lighthouse on Thunder Bay Island in the very early years. As a boy of fourteen, John was wandering on the shores of the island and gazing out over the evening waters of Lake Huron – he watched as two great steamers **(slide 033)** came together with a thunderous crash. The Meteor had rammed into the side of her sister ship the Pewabic as they were about to pass each other out there on Lake Huron, sending Pewabic and her rich cargo of copper and iron ore to the bottom, about 125 souls were lost in that sinking – and still more would be lost through the many years as attempts were made to salvage her cargo. **(slide 034)** This is the anchor from Pewabic – brought up when at long last just in 1974; her salvage was accomplished – some 109 years after the accident of 1865.

[music plays]

**(slide 035)** There are many more stories buried her in the old town cemetery. Here one of our researchers renews acquaintance with the long lost ancestor whose grave stone is almost obscured by the grass. Maybe we can come back **(slide 036)** this way soon and uncover more of those stories -- the tales that spring from the roots of our town.