## Historical Society hears stories, history of Big **Spring** By Kay James, Dells Events Jun 17, 2009 💂

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ig Spring, the land of permanent water, has had white settlers in the

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for more than 150 years, and Erwin Crothers recalled stories he knew of the area or had been told for the Dells Country Historical Society Tuesday evening.

Landt builds a dam

One of the early settlers was Henry Landt, who knew how to harness

### water power, and he built a dam on the Big Spring Creek to run a sawmill. Landt came after the 1842 with the Indians allowing

swap some lies."

By 1850, Big Spring had stores and a post office, which it does not have in the present. A newspaper man name Pierce also arrived in 1850, but did not start a newspaper. He did lay out a village and gave names to streets.

settlement north of Portage between the Fox and Wisconsin rivers.

shop on the Big Spring Creek near where Highway G and Golden Avenue intersect. A second mill was also built on the west side near where the currently named Golden Court (then called Mill Street) and 2nd Lane intersect. Later Preston Tucker operated a machine shop there,

After Landt, a man named Marshal built a foundry and machine

Crothers said, and he called him a wizard with mechanical equipment. Tucker and Crothers would get together and when he would leave, Crothers said Tucker would say, "come again and we'll

The first church in the village was a Methodist Church, which was built east of the Big Spring Cemetery. That church later burned and was not rebuilt. In the 1850s, the Baptists and the Congregationalists joined together to build and share a church. Crothers said the two congregations got along for a time, but then apparently one preacher was more longwinded than the other and one congregation accused the other of using too much oil. The Baptists withdrew from the church and went

to Dell Prairie to found another church.

corner of Golden Court and Highway G.

The cemetery was started about 1860, Crothers said. Before then people were buried on their own property. The cemetery has 74 veterans buried there including two from the War of 1812, and from

every war after that up through the bombing of the Marine Barracks

A number of those buried in the cemetery are Civil War soldiers, and

concerned when Indians massacred people in the town of New Ulm,

Minn. Folks in Big Spring, Crothers said, knew the local Native

American population kept in touch with those in Minnesota using

Native American Chief, Pretty Man. Crothers said the local leaders in

a meeting with Pretty Man promised that if he kept his tribe in order

runners and were concerned. Local leaders talked with the local

The Congregationalists retained the church which still stands at the

#### when that war started, many men from the community left to fight with the Union Army, Crothers said. Those who were left were

daughters of Pretty Man.

in Beirut, Lebanon.

Cemetery opened

and not cause fighting, they would see that Pretty Man's descendants would never want. Buy 1 get 1 50% off\* with... Save with Olay Premium Moisturizers weekly deals

For years, Native Americans stayed in the areas came to the area to

Native Americans would also take on the job of grubbing fields of

sell blueberries and other products, often mentioning that they were

timber, Crothers said. They would move to a site and live their for a year or two removing the trees. His Grandmother Clough, he said, was good friends with Susie Swan Redhorn. When he was a boy, he said, she asked to see her friend and he and his grandfather drove to the old Fort Dells site where the Indians were camped. They asked a young boy for Susie Swan. He left and a while later Susie Swan came to the car. His grandmother and Swan shared interests such as sick children and cooking.

Chief Prettyman lived his entire life in the Big Spring area, Crothers

said. The band had a cemetery on the hill south of the Big Spring

Cemetery. The graves had hutches over them and the Indians put

Whites take Indian land The Indian Cemetery was noted in a 1900 plat book, but the Indians did not retain it. In what Crothers said was a disgraceful move, the whites leveled a tax on the cemetery and when it wasn't paid, a man

bought the land. He then plowed the cemetery. "It shouldn't have

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happened," Crothers said.

tobacco in the hutches, he said.

dam, but then his son built a shop on the east end. Inglebert Armson ran a store where the current New Haven Town hall stands. Crothers said that was where he had his first taste of soda — raspberry soda. While the young Crothers drank his soda,

"Grandpa and Mr. Armson drank some and got more mellow."

The community also had several dairy plants where people made

butter and cheese. One was at the Ebert place and a cheese factory

In 1866, Bill Vliet opened a blacksmith shop on the west end of the

Besides mills, Big Spring had a hotel on the east side of the dam.

That hotel building was moved a few miles north, then renovated as

operated at the east end of "Sneak Street" (now Golden Avenue). The cheese factory operated into the 1940s. Crothers, a dairy farmer, said that 25 years ago, the town of New Haven had 75 farmers with

dairy herds. Today there are only four, "and this one wants out," he

Big Spring also had two machine shops from the 1920s into the

1960s and 70s. Lapp Brothers, Harley and Glenn, repaired

said adding that economics was causing the change.

little ways up the road, the Armsons also ran a machinery repair and sales business next to a store run by Preston Backhaus. Backhaus closed the store and became a school teacher in the Dells. \$205 for a school

Crothers also shared some information from a book of annual

meetings minutes of the local school board. In 1858, the school

\$16 to paint it. The rent on the land for the school was 1 cent per

In 1859, the school meeting approved building a fence and two

In 1855, Big Spring was the name for both the township and the

district's annual meeting agreed to raise \$205 to build a school and

year. The annual meetings also set the length of school terms, which

were a three-month winter school and a four month summer school.

village, but a couple of years later the township name was changed to

machinery and automobiles. They also were the local Case dealer. A

New Haven. The little community still retains its name of Big Spring. Crothers was introduced by society president John Campbell, who noted that when he was hired as a teacher for the Dells School

formed a thriving community.

District, Crothers was one of the school board members.

outhouses and "then broke up in disorder."

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Settlers were looking for three things when they came to Big Spring, and one

was water, which they found in creeks and springs. Other requirements were

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timber and stone for building, which the area also had in plenty.

Ever Before

Crothers, whose ancestors were among the early settlers of the area and who has

lived in Big Spring his entire life, talked of those early settlers, the Native

Americans who were there before the settlers and the businesses that once

comments

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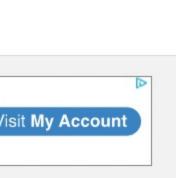
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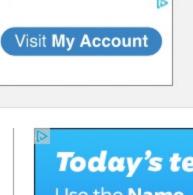
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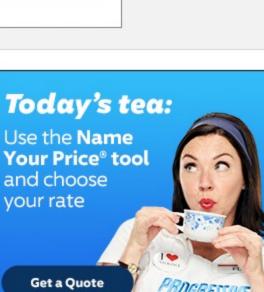
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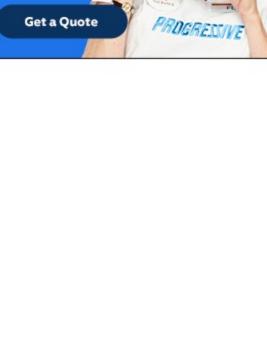
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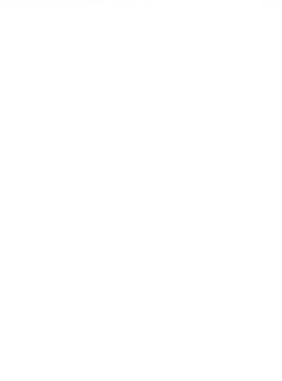
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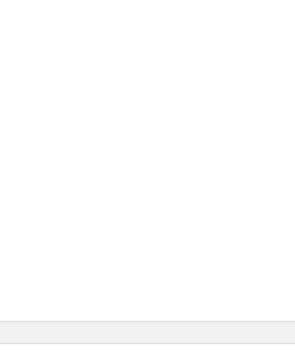




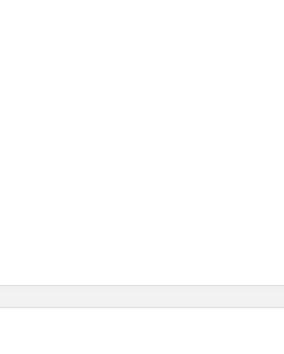


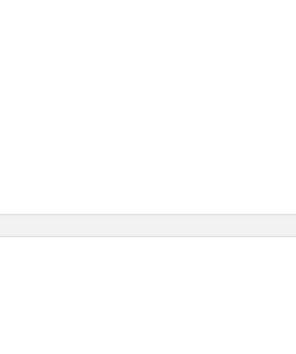


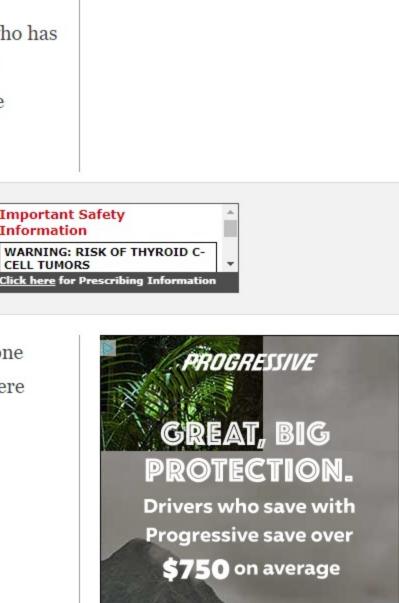












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