



## CLARK COUNTY, WISCONSIN, TOWN NAME ORIGINS

(There are presently 33 town in Clark County. Thirty-two townships are of standard size each covering thirty-six square miles. The Town of Foster includes two 36 square mile areas.)

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*Compiled in July, 2003, in observance of Clark County's 150th anniversary  
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**PINE VALLEY** - At Clark County's inception in 1853 the entire county was composed of one township and the name chosen was Pine Valley. The county was larger than today, including a portion of what is now southern Taylor County. Both valleys and pines were abundant. Pines were harvested but the valleys and the name remain. James O'Neill's lumbering activities were the hub of Pine Valley in its early years. The beginning of township division in the county occurred in 1856 when Pine Valley was divided into three townships; Pine Valley, Levis, and Weston. Other divisions followed as population increased until the 1920's when the last township was created leaving Clark County as we know it today.

**LEVIS** - In November of 1856 Levis Township was created by an order of the county board. The name was chosen to honor Mahlon and William K. Levis, brothers born in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, who located in the area in 1851. The Levis brothers arrived in Black River Falls about 1842 and erected a mill there and later built another at Morrison Creek, Jackson County, WI. They came to the area of Levis and ran a mill at this location for several years, until high water destroyed it, causing them to move out. William Levis then farmed in Alma Center and later kept taverns in Hixton, Trempeleau, and Osseo, WI. He purchased acreage 1-1/2 miles north of Osseo in 1867 that he developed into a fine 360-acre farm. William died at Osseo in 1897, brother Mahlon ventured to California in the 1870's. The first town meeting in Levis was held at the mouth of Wedge's Creek. Originally Levis Township contained all of Dewhurst, Washburn, and Sherwood Townships. It was left with its present boundaries in 1901.

**WESTON** - Weston Township was also created along with Levis in November of 1856. Originally this township was comprised of the entire county north of Pine Valley Township and also 10 townships in Taylor County. It was named for Samuel F. Weston who was one of the first settlers to register land at this location. Mr. Weston was born about 1808 in Sommerset County, Maine, and arrived in Weston Rapids, two miles north of Neillsville, in 1853 with several others from Maine who engaged in logging. He was one of the first local loggers in Clark County independent of mills along the Black River. He died in 1864 at Weston Rapids after a short illness that he acquired while working at one of his logging camps. Samuel Weston was buried at LaCrosse. He owned camps on the Black and Chippewa Rivers and was one of the largest landholders in Wisconsin at that time. Weston Township was left with its present boundaries in 1900.

**LYNN** - Lynn Township was created by an act of the county board on March 21, 1862 originally including Fremont and a part of Grant Township. On surveyor's field notes from the U. S. Government Survey, large numbers of basswood trees were shown in the area. Basswood trees were called Linden or Lynden trees by the surveyors, hence the name of Lynn.

**LOYAL** - The name of Loyal was given to this township to attest to the loyalty of the local citizens to the Union during the Civil War and their good citizenship. The township was organized in March of 1865. Originally Loyal consisted of much of the northeastern portion of Clark County and a part of Taylor County. In 1873 Loyal Township was left with its present boundaries.

**MENTOR** - An act of the County Board on the 17th of December 1866, created the Township of Mentor. The first town meeting was held in April of 1867. Honorable George W. King, a local resident, selected the name. Mr. King was a native of Ohio and lived at one time near Mentor, Ohio, home of President Haynes. George W. King was a prominent man in early days and held the offices of assembly, district attorney, sheriff, and county board clerk. The origin of the name, Mentor, Ohio, came from Greek Literature. Mentor was the tutor of Telemachus, son of Odysseus.

**GRANT** - The first town meeting at Grant Township was held April 7, 1868. Grant was named in honor of General Ulysses S. Grant of Civil War fame and later became president of our country. Two Post Offices served the township in 1890. Pleasant Ridge was located in the central part of the town. Maple Works was located in the North-Eastern part of this township one-half mile south of the village of Granton. Ulysses Grant died in 1885 at the age of 63.

**EATON** - On July 20, 1869, the Clark County Board ordered the creation of this township to take affect on March 1, 1870. Eaton was named for Elijah and Frederick Eaton, two of the town's earliest settlers. Born in New York, Elijah Eaton arrived in Clark County before 1855. He died in 1872, shortly after Eaton's organization, at the age of 64 and was buried in the Greenwood City Cemetery. The Eaton's established a saw mill and lumber industry in the township. At its creation Eaton covered 5 other present day townships in northern Clark County along with 10 townships in Taylor County. Eaton was left with its present boundaries in 1911.

**BEAVER** - The township of Beaver was created by an order of the county board on November 15, 1870 and the first town meeting was held in April of 1871. Beaver was named for the large number of beaver dams in the township. There was at one time a highway in the town known as Beaver Dam Road. Rock Creek, once hosting flood dams to aid in logging, flows through the southern part of the township and unites with the Black River. In 1874, Beaver was left with its boundaries of today.

**SHERMAN** - The first town meeting at Sherman was held in April of 1873. The township was named for General W. T. Sherman. Some residents of the town had marched with Sherman through Georgia during the Civil War, a march in 1864 that weakened and split the Confederate Army, aiding the war's end. During Grant's presidency Sherman was given command of the entire U. S. Army and retired from that position in 1883. W. T. Sherman died in New York City in 1891. Veefkind and Coles Corners were active communities during the logging days in Sherman Township.

**YORK** - The first meeting of York Township was held in April of 1873 as well. A number of early settlers were natives of New York, "York State", and named the township in honor of their home state.

**HIXON** - The Township of Hixon was organized in February of 1873 and its first meeting was held in April of 1873. Originally Hixon was composed of much of the northwest corner of Clark County along with several townships in Taylor County. It was left with present day boundaries in 1895. Hixon was named for Gideon Cooley Hixon, born in Vermont in 1827. He was a graduate of West Point Academy and later a wealthy lumberman of La Crosse. Hixon had large landholdings in the northern part of the township when it was organized. G. C. Hixon died in 1892 and is buried in La Crosse, WI, where a large memorial statue honors his memory.

**WASHBURN** - Washburn Township held its first meeting in April of 1873 and at that time also included Sherwood Township. It was named for C. C. Washburn, governor of Wisconsin at the time of its inception. Washburn had vast land holdings in Clark County with interests in logging. C. C. was a

native of Maine and from a very prominent family. He settled in Wisconsin in 1842 setting up legal practice in Mineral Point. At the onset of the Civil War Washburn organized a regiment of Cavalry for Wisconsin and was titled as Major General. He also served as a U. S. senator. In addition to his logging interests he formed a partnership with John Crosby to create the Washburn Crosby Flour Mill in Minneapolis, MN, that later became known as General Mills and the manufacturer of Gold Medal Flour. C. C. Washburn resided and conducted much of his business at La Crosse, WI, and was buried there in 1882. He was also known for his philanthropy.

**COLBY** - The county board created Colby in November of 1873 and its first town meeting was held in April of 1874. Colby was named for Gardner L. Colby (1810-1879) of Boston, Massachusetts. The township took its name from the Colby Railway Station on the Wisconsin Central Railway line that was built through the area shortly before the town's organization. Gardner Colby, of the Colby-Philips Construction Company, greatly funded and supervised building of 340 miles of railroad for the Wisconsin Central Railway extending to Lake Superior after retiring from a very successful business life in Boston. Colby's interests involved merchandising, shipping, and woolen enterprises. He was well known for his philanthropy, donating large sums of money to Colby College in Waterville, Maine. As a poor child he had worked in a potash factory at the age of 12 in Waterville near the college that now bears his name. His son, Charles Colby, was president of the Wisconsin Central Railway. Gardner Colby died a year after his completion of the railway.

**MAYVILLE** - At the same time as Colby's inception, Mayville was also formed. The township was named after Charles Sumner May, an early settler, who's house the first meeting was held at in 1874. Sumner May was born in Tioga County, Pennsylvania, in 1827 and lived in Illinois in 1860. He came to Wisconsin prior to 1872 with his wife and family. Mr. May died in Ingham County, Michigan, in 1903.

**UNITY** - Unity Township was created with present day boundaries in 1873. This Township took its name from another railway station on the Wisconsin Central Railway located within its borders named Unity. The village of Unity was started in 1873 when D. J. Spaulding erected a sawmill there.

**SHERWOOD** - Two names preceded the name of Sherwood in this township's beginning. The Township of Perkins was created by an order of the county board on January 8, 1874 with the first meeting held in April of 1874. Daniel Chapman Perkins and son Hugh Perkins resided in the township at its onset. A petition of town citizens to the county board requesting a name change from Perkins to Sherwood Forest was presented in 1876 and the board accepted it. The name Sherwood Forest was chosen by resident Elizabeth LaFlesh, wife of Capt. Thomas LaFlesh, as the area resembled her homeland in England and her literary interest. It was also suggested that C. C. Washburn influenced the naming. In 1900 Sherwood Forest citizens asking to shorten the name to Sherwood presented another petition to the county board and their wish was granted. The motive of the residents was to help promote growth in the township by dropping the notion that the area was nothing but unproductive forestland, that it was fast becoming a farm community where new settlers could prosper.

**FREMONT** - Fremont was created by an order of the county board on March 11, 1874. The township was named for Civil War Major General John C. Fremont. John Fremont was a first candidate of the Republican Party for President in 1856 and was well known for his denouncement of slavery during the Civil War. He was given the title of "The man who mapped the West". Fremont became governor of the Arizona Territory from 1878 to 1883 and a first senator of California. John Charles Fremont died in 1890. Early communities in the township of Fremont were Yolo and Snow.

**WARNER** - On November 14, 1874, the county board created the township of Warner. Warner's first meeting was held in April of 1875. The township was named for Mark B. Warner, one of the county's earliest settlers. Warner was a native of NY and first came to Black River Falls, WI, in 1855. He followed the logging business for 26 years, locating and estimating pine lands for others in summers and traveling as far as northern Wisconsin. Many adventures came his way including numerous encounters with Indians and hunting bear for sport. Mark Warner settled on his farm in Warner Township in 1871. He held positions as both town chairman and supervisor on the Warner Town Board. Mr. Warner died in 1898 and was buried in Greenwood City Cemetery. Warner Township was left with its present boundaries in 1915. It formerly included the towns of Butler and Mead also.

**HEWETT** - Hewett Township was created by an order of the county board on November 20, 1874, with its first meeting held in April of 1875 at the hotel of James Hewett, namesake of the town. Mr. Hewett came to Clark County in 1856 with lumbering interests. He built a mill on Wedge's Creek at Hewettville, in the township, which was destroyed by fire in 1886. Hewettville also had a hotel, store, storehouses, barn and other buildings. James Hewett aided in construction of the first railroad to Neillsville, donated land for the old furniture factory there, and built the first brick store in town - "Hewett & Woods". He cleared 63 acres which he added to the city of Neillsville and became its first mayor. James Hewett died in 1907. The community of Columbia is also located in Hewett.

**THORP** - The first meeting of Thorp Township was held in April of 1876, after its creation by the county board January 21, 1876. Namesake of the Town of Thorp was Joseph Gilbert Thorp Sr., a resident of Eau Claire, WI, who settled there with his family in 1857. Mr. Thorp, born in New York in 1812, was the constant president of the Eau Claire Lumber Company, which at the time of Thorp's organization had large interests in and around the township and a large farm within it. The Eau Claire Lumber Co. was incorporated in 1866 and merged with the Mississippi Logging Co. in 1887. Joseph Thorp also was active in building of early railways, president of the YMCA of Eau Claire, and served as a U.S. senator for Wisconsin. The Thorp family could be subjects of a very interesting life story. Joseph Thorp's son, Joseph Jr., married Anne Allegra Longfellow, daughter of the famous poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Joseph's daughter, Sarah, married Ole Bull of Norway, a champion violinist of the world. Ole, 40 years her senior, built a beautiful home for Sarah and their daughter on an island in Norway. The Boardman family members were early settlers in Thorp Township, arriving in about 1870. Thorp's present boundaries were secured in 1893.

**WITHEE** - Withee was created by the Clark County Board on June 11, 1879 and held its first meeting in April of 1880 at the Bernard Brown home. The township was named in honor of Niran H. Withee, a native of Maine born in 1827. Niran Withee came to LaCrosse County, WI, in 1852 and on to Clark County in 1870. He was heavily involved with lumbering in the Black River Valley. Withee served as county treasurer in 1875 and was in the assembly for 2 terms. Mr. Withee organized the Island Mill Lumber Company at La Crosse which he was head of until his death. He built a large farm, stave and heading mill, and cheese factory at Longwood, Clark County. Niran also owned a line of towboats on the Mississippi River. He died at his home in La Crosse in 1887.

**GREEN GROVE** - After a 7-year period, the county board acted again on November 18, 1886, to create the township of Green Grove. The first town meeting was held in April of 1887 at the Green Grove Post Office. Green Grove took its name from the post office that already existed in the northern part of the township prior to the town's creation. The name of the Post Office was given by settlers who gathered at William Zassenhaus' house, which had a grove of green trees nearby.

**HOARD** - The Township of Hoard was organized in 1889 being created from area taken from the Town of Mayville. The namesake of Hoard was Wisconsin ex-Governor, William Dempster Hoard. Hoard was born in Stockbridge, NY, and came to Wisconsin in 1857. He joined WI 4th Infantry at the onset of the Civil War and was stricken with break bone fever in 1862. Hoard re-enlisted in 1864 serving until the war's end. He was well known for creating the still existing national farm magazine at Fort Atkinson, WI, known as "Hoard's Dairyman" that had its beginning in 1885. In 1915 W. D. Hoard was named as Wisconsin's most distinguished citizen at the San Francisco World's Fair. Hoard died in 1918.

**RESEBURG** - Reseburg was created by the county board on May 13, 1893 and met the first Tuesday in April of 1894 at a schoolhouse on Zimmer's Corners. The township was named for William Reseburg, an early settler and member of the Clark County Board. Reseburg was born in 1845 in Pommern, Prussia and came with his parents to Wisconsin in 1856. He settled in Clark County in 1879 and began farming in what was then Withee Township, purchasing 200 acres. Mr. Reseburg was active early on in township politics.

**WORDEN** - At the same date of Reseburg's creation, Worden was also formed. The first town meeting was held at the Gorman schoolhouse. Ole Samulson was the first town chairman elected in the township. The township was named for Zephaniah Worden, an old resident and Civil War veteran who fought with Pennsylvania's 45th Regiment, Company F. Mr. Worden was born in New York and resided in what was then Thorp Township in 1880.

**MEAD** - The county board created the township of Mead on November 16, 1895, and the first meeting was held in April of 1896. Originally the township included the Town of Butler as well. It was named after William Henry Harrison Mead, a native of Pauldings, New York, better known as "Harry" Mead. Mead came to Jefferson County, WI, when 9 years old. He arrived in Clark County in 1865 first locating at what is now Greenwood. He invested heavily in timberlands for 20 years, farmed, and worked for Gates Land Company as agent. In 1902 he began farming 2 1/2 miles south of Withee and here prospered. Mr. Mead was one of the oldest settlers on the Black River in central Clark County. He served as town chairman and county board member. William Mead died in 1911.

**LONGWOOD** - The date of Longwood's inception was the same as that of Mead Township. Longwood had been formerly a part of Hixon Township and was named for the little hamlet in the township that got its name from a long stretch of woods in the vicinity. The Smith family of Rutland, Vermont, was one of the early settlers to the township arriving in about 1878.

**SEIF** - Seif Township was created by an order of the Clark County Board on November 17, 1900. It was named for Frederick J. Seif. Mr. Seif was born in Oshkosh, WI, in 1855 and came to Clark County at the age of 24. Newly married he purchased 80 acres in Sherwood Township, began farming, and spent 8 years at that location. He then moved to what is now Seif Township and helped organize the township, the school district, and acquired 280 acres of farmland. The first meeting of the town was held in April of 1901 and Mr. Seif was the first town chairman. Fred Seif moved to Neillsville in 1906. In 1908 he started the business, which came to be known as F. J. Seif & Sons, selling implement and auto supplies. He also served 2 years as mayor of Neillsville. Fred Seif came from humble beginnings and prospered through hard work and perseverance. He died in 1926 and was buried at Neillsville City Cemetery.

**DEWHURST** - On November 15, 1901 the County Board ordered the creation of the township of Dewhurst and the township first met in April of 1902. The name of the town was originally "Mound" but the name was soon changed to Dewhurst in honor of Richard Dewhurst, first Clark County Judge on record. Richard Dewhurst was born near Manchester, England in 1826 and came to the U.S. when an infant. His family settled in Bristol, Massachusetts, then moved to Ohio where Richard studied law. He taught school early in his career and came to Clark County in 1856 after being admitted to the bar. He served in the Civil War for WI. Mr. Dewhurst founded the Neillsville Bank. He was a lawyer, judge, businessman, and also engaged in logging operations.

**HENDREN** - The township of Hendren was organized with its present boundaries in April of 1911. It was named after Reverend William T. Hendren. Rev. Hendren came to Neillsville in 1872 prior to serving as Presbyterian Minister in Minnesota for 6 years. He was largely instrumental in construction of the Presbyterian Church at Neillsville and was pastor there for many years. He moved to Greenwood in about 1901 and was still active there when he died in 1920. Hendren Township was formerly a part of Eaton Township. The first community to be settled in Hendren was Tioga.

**BUTLER** - Butler Township was created by order of the county board on November 11, 1915 with a first town meeting held in April of 1916. Probable namesakes were the Butler family consisting of brothers; David, Isaac H., William C., and George Butler who were early settlers to the township. The Butler family owned land in Sections 10 and 14 as early as 1893. The Wisconsin born Butler brothers, along with parents George and Nancy Butler, resided in Buffalo County, WI, in 1880.

**FOSTER** - The record of Foster's creation is uncertain but it most likely was organized in the 1920's, being the last township formed in Clark County. Foster contains two township areas, and much of the land is a part of the Clark County Forest and Recreation Zone. In 1882, Nathaniel C. Foster of Fairchild built a railroad, the Fairchild & Northeastern R. R. Co., opening up the area through the township. The railroad was financed and constructed without any public aid or grants, through the energy of Mr. Foster. It's believed the town was named for him. N. C. Foster originated from Tioga County, New York, being born there in 1834. In 1891 he was known as the largest lumber manufacturer and dealer in West Central Wisconsin, owning about 15,000 acres of good timber in Eau Claire and Clark Counties. The timber supplied the large mills he owned at Fairchild, WI, which were established in 1877. Nathaniel C. Foster died in 1923.

**SOURCES:**

*Clark County Fair Centennial booklet, 1972; Clark County Fair Board & Centennial Committee*  
*Early History of Clark County by R. J. MacBride, 1853 - 1900*  
*History of Clark County, Franklyn Curtiss - Wedge Compiler; H C. Cooper Jr. Publisher; 1918*  
*The Neillsville Press (WI Historical Society - microfilm)*  
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*Dictionary of American Biography, Volume II, NY*  
*Plat maps of Clark County Townships from 1880, 1893*  
*U.S. Federal Census records - 1880*

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[Back to the Top](#)

[Home](#) | [Biographies](#) | [Cemeteries](#) | [Census](#) | [Churches](#) | [Civil](#) | [History](#) | [Land](#) |  
[Lookup](#) | [Military](#) | [Newspapers](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Photo Albums](#) | [Surnames](#) | [USGenWeb](#) |  
[Vital](#) |