

IMPORTANT DATES IN CHETEK'S HISTORY

In the mid 1800s the many local Indian tribes called the Chetek area their name for Pelican, or Swan. Some of the early spellings were Sheetak, Shetak, Shetuc, Chetack, Shedack. When the first post office was established, "Chetek" became the preferred spelling which has continued to today.

The following excerpt has been taken from a book that was written by Harriet Calhoun about the history of Chetek and its people.

Derivation of the Name "Chetek"

From Herb Lampman, pioneer settler who came here in 1866 with his father Bradford Lampman, we learn of the origin of the name "Chetek," which the original inhabitants, the Ojibway Indians, called "Sheetak" and means pelican, literally little pelican; this to distinguish it from Big Chetac located farther north. The first postmaster's cancelling stamp spelled the name "Sheteack" but after several changes the present spelling Chetek was adopted.

From The Romance of Place Names, written by Robert Gard and L.G Sorden published in 1968, we find this: "In 1836 Joe Trepannier operated a trading post on what is known as the Red Club House Point. Records show that in 1852, when government surveyors arrived, they found Louis Montra buying furs from the Indians. The Chippewa word for Chetek is 'Jede-sagaigan,' Jede meaning swan or pelican, and sagaigan meaning an island lake."

From A History of the origin of the Place Names Connected with the Chicago & North Western & Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railways. Compiled by W.H. Stennet, Chicago in 1908. Chetek, in Barron County, was named by Knapp, Stout & Co. lumbermen for a Chippewa Indian Chief, whose name by various writers was spelled Chetek, Shetek, Shetack, Shetuc, and Chetack respectively. In a very early day in Connecticut the word was spelled Shetucket, and gave the name to a river there, the meaning being "between two rivers," or confluence of rivers."

Charley Moore, often referred to as "The Father of Chetek," while serving as assemblyman from this district was instrumental in getting a charter for the city of Chetek, this being the first and only city in the United States to pass directly from a township system to a full-fledged city, and also being the smallest incorporated city in the United States, having a population then of only 531 people.

Note: In spite of the above derivations of the meaning of Chetek my favorite interpretation is this one: "The Indian name Chetek was derived from a long-legged rice bird called, by the Indians, a Shadack. Chetek Lake was originally a source of wild rice which the Indians gathered. The spelling of Shadack was changed when the settlers established a post office in Chetek." Unfortunately, I cannot remember the name of the book from which it is taken, but it was in the Superior College Library.

Some important dates in Chetek's history are as follows:

1. First settler, Joe Trepannier in 1836.
First permanent settler, William Carey in 1866.
2. First school, in the Lampman home in 1871.
3. First dam built in 1863, rebuilt in 1872.
4. Knapp, Stout & Co.'s first logging camp in 1872.
5. Barron County's first presidential election in 1872.
6. First Post Office in Chetek 1872.
7. First platting of City of Chetek in 1875.
8. First County Fair held in Chetek from 1881-1889.
9. I.O.O.F. Lodge #309 organized in 1879.
10. First railroad through Chetek on July 4, 1882.
11. First Doctors in Chetek, Dr. Strong and Dr. Robbins in 1882.
12. Lake View Cemetery Association formed in 1882.
13. Presbyterian Church built in 1883.
14. First Lutheran Church in 1883.
15. Albert Weatherby G.A.R. Post #128 in 1884.
16. Advent Christian Church built in 1890.
17. A.W. Women's Relief Corps #131 in 1887.
18. Methodist Church built in 1890.
19. Chetek became a City in 1891.
20. Farmer's and Merchant's Bank organized in 1900.
21. F. & A.M. Lodge #277 organized in 1902.
22. First telephone in 1903.
23. City Fire Department organized in 1904.

A LOOK AT THE CHETEK AREA TODAY

The Chetek Chain of Lakes is surrounded by the City of Chetek and the townships of Chetek, Dovre, Prairie Lake and Stanley.

- Normal total population: 7,350.
- Summer population: with many resorts and motels, [Luther Park Bible Camp](#) and [Chetek Baptist Bible Camp](#) and 1400 summer residents, our total population is estimated to grow by 40,000.
- Chetek is located in Barron County, area 864 square miles, population 42,000. The largest city is Rice Lake and largest employer in the county is [Jennie-O Turkey Store in Barron](#).
- [The Chetek Alert](#) has been published weekly since 1882.
- Twenty-nine man volunteer fire department serves the city and area.
- Wisconsin Central Railway serves Chetek with freight service. Passenger service was discontinued in the 60's.
- Three banking establishments: [Sterling Bank](#), [Heritage Federal Credit Union](#), and [First National Bank](#)
- [Chetek Area School District](#): Elementary, middle and high school educational system with 1100 students.
- Two medical clinics, two dental clinics, eye clinic and two chiropractic offices.

- Eight churches serve Chetek residents and visitors.
- A newly housed 18,000 [Calhoun Memorial Library](#) with children's reading programs
- A museum to serve the area is located on 2nd St.
- [Knapp Haven Nursing Home](#) provides 99 beds.
- Twenty-four hour police protection and around-the-clock ambulance and rescue squad are available to residents.
- An airport with 3400 foot all-weather lighted runway, NDB navigational beacon and fuel facilities are located within the city.
- The Chetek Chain of Six Lakes was established in 1863 with the building of the first dam. The lakes cover 3,800 acres and are surrounded by 125,000 acres of watershed. The chain contains 11,000,000,000 gallons of water.
- Fishing abounds in the fertile waters of the Chetek Lakes. Crappies, bluegills, perch, bullheads, bass, northerns and walleyes are all sought after and caught in these waters. The chain is stocked every year with over 100,000 walleye fingerlings, courtesy of the DNR and the local Lakes Protection Association. By all estimates, over 400,000 fish are taken annually from the waters of this popular fishery.
- Chetek's floating islands received national fame several years ago when one of the largest ones broke free and threatened docks, shorelines and bridges. Today they are mostly tied down and provide excellent fishing habitat.
- The Chetek Fish-O-Rama Committee annually tags over 400 panfish that have a total value approaching \$50,000 each year. If you catch a fish with a cylindrical tag near the dorsal fin, take it to the Rod & Gun Sport Shop and claim your cash reward. Prizes range from \$25.00 to \$500.00. Oh yes, you have to purchase a Fish-O-Rama button prior to catching the fish - they're available from most resorts and businesses.
- For your shopping, recreation and vacation convenience, the Chetek area offers: groceries, pharmacy, hardware, barber and beauty shops, sport and bait shops, 43 resorts and motels, cafes and supper clubs, variety stores, laundry facilities, medical, dental, eye, and chiropractic clinics, weekly newspaper, several industries, industrial park served by municipal water and sewer and ready to move into, auto service stations, legal offices, marina, realty offices, two golf courses, public beach, veterinary clinic, 17 boat landings, two county parks, bakeries, liquor and convenience stores, camp grounds, bowling alleys, specialty shops, florist, plenty of good fishing and lots of friendly people ready to make your visit to this area very memorable.