

## **THREE MEN AND A BOAT FOUNDED A COMMUNITY LATER TO BE CALLED OSKAR**

**Signatures found on Deric Garnell's timber rights/ property have Oscar Eliassen and Elsa Eliassen... this spelling is what I have tried to correct in the document. Also with Eliassen is his Letterhead "Office of Oscar Eliassen- Dealer in Hay, Straw, Cord-Wood, Timber, Ties, Hard and Soft Lumber". The Oskar Cemetery monument in his honor has his name spelled Oskar Eliasson.**

There are five stories on the founding of Oskar...

### **Story 1.**

The Gazette (11/7/1975) has community of **Oskar observing 100th year** when in May of 1875 Jacob Ojanpera, Oscar Eliassen and Sakari Hendrickson left by rowboat from Houghton and sailed 6 miles north along the shoreline until they came to the mouth of what is now known as Schlotz Creek. (A creek in community of Oskar). Mr. Schlotz got land patent for Oskar area in 1865, ten years earlier.)

Ojanpera built first, but others did near-by after that. The community grew to about 200 residents. (1916 pop. was 378 according to the 1916 POLK Directory)

### **Story 2.**

Norm Ruohonen says that they (3 men noted above) saw the stone wall on the way up to what is now the Oskar Cemetery, saw the creek, and built a sauna on Norm Ruohonen's side of creek. This was the first structure in Oskar.

### **Story 3.**

A book History of the Finns in Michigan by Armas Kustaa Ensio Holmes states: May of 1875, 3 men took off from Houghton/Hancock in a sailboat. They stopped at now Coles Creek (Barb Koski thinks they mean Schlotz Creek) and walked the rest of way along the stream. One mile from the mouth of the creek Jacob Ojanpera marked a home site. Farther along Hendrickson and Eliassen did the same. As they built their homes they slept in the sailboat. When homes were completed they went back for their wives and families.

Each worked inland making logs, railroad ties and cordwood with a team of horses and an ox. The logs were taken to Lake Linden by steamboat and then sent to mines on railroad. The cordwood was used in the mine's boilers.

As more wood was taken the manpower brought more homes and farmland cleared and a settlement of Ojanpera was formed after the leader.

### **Story 4.**

According to Richard Garnell's flyer on Oskar Canal: Three immigrants from Finland were living in Hancock. They wanted to find a home site where they could settle and start a logging operation. .... They rowed west along the waterway from Hancock. When they came to the creek (Schlotz) they all decided that was the location they were looking for. They all built log cabins and settled there with their families.

### Story 5.

Jack Ruohonen's account of the beginning is found in his history document (It was in Finnish, but Barb had it translated: It was a nice summer day in early May 1875 when three young Finnish men named Jacob Ojanpera, Oskar Eliassen, and Sakari Hendrickson sailed in a small boat from Hancock to the mouth of Slat (Schlotz) creek. Here they landed and walked some 1/4-mile along the creek bank and marked the place for the first house where Jacob Ojanpera would live and where Nels Burkman lived at a later time. (The community was thus first named after the first inhabitant Ojanpera)(Barb learns that property of Norm and Betty Ruohonen was where Nels Burkman lived).

Jack goes on to say: On a little bit farther up the creek Eliassen and Sakari were to build their houses.

The men started with youthful enthusiasm to build their houses so that they would have protection from the rain. The first days they lived in the boat where they also had their food supplies until the first house was completed.

The wives and children lived in town until the rooms were built.

The place was a dark forest of which they purchased 510 acres and started wood harvesting for firewood, logs, and railroad ties for the mining company etc. In the beginning the operation was small, only a few men, a team of horses, and a yoke of oxen. After a few years Ojanpera sold his share in the business to Eliassen. Hendrickson had left earlier so that Eliassen got the whole outfit.

He started to expand the business taking on several hundred workers for whom he had to build camps around the forest. And thus work was done for several years with a smaller crew. But slowly they hired more workers and so they pushed together for 8 years that is to 1883.

Lee Burkman shares: There was a community icehouse where today the mobile home trailer is across the creek on top of hill along the Canal Road.

Researching and interviewing was done by Barb Koski, Osma Plat Road, Houghton MI. I welcome stories. Contact the webmaster. Submitted in 2009.