

Spring Valley Township Guide

Published by the Rock County Genealogical Society

This guide contains the fifth township in a series of twenty township resource guides. It is intended to be of use to those doing genealogical or historical research in Spring Valley Township, Rock County, Wisconsin. Besides being published here, the resource materials collected for each Rock County township will be placed on file in the RCGS Library located at the Wilson King Stone House on the grounds of the Lincoln-Tallman House Museum.

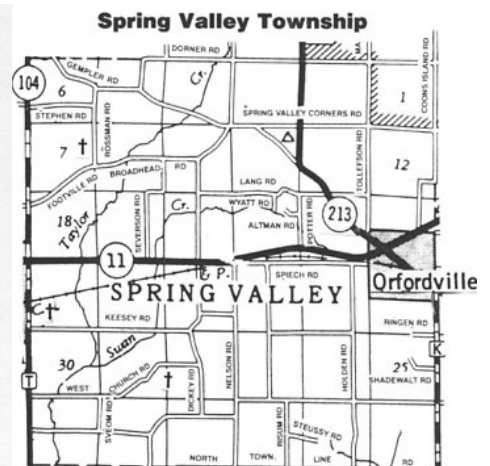
Additions and corrections to this information are welcome and should be sent to the Rock County Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 711, Janesville, WI 53547. These suggestions will be put on file and added before final publication of the compendium of Rock County Township Guides in the future. These materials will be available and much-used by RCGS research volunteers and individual genealogists and historians.

See more General Resources relevant to all Rock County Townships at: http://www.rootsweb.com/~wircgs/rock_twps.html .



**Rock County's Townships
With Surrounding
Counties and Townships**

	Dane Co.		Jefferson Co.			
	Rutland	Dunkirk	Albion	Sumner	Koshkonong	
Green Co.	Union	Porter	Fulton	Milton	Lima	Walworth Co.
Spring Grove	Magnolia	Center	Janesville	Harmony	Johnstown	Richmond
DeCATUR	SPRING VALLEY	Plymouth	Rock	LaPrairie	Bradford	Darien
Albany	Avon	Newark	Beloit	Turtle	Clinton	Sharon
Brooklyn						
	Winnabago Co., IL		Boone Co., IL			
	Laona Shirland Rockton		Roscoe Manchester Leroy			



Place Names of Spring Valley Township

Place Names of Spring Valley Township		
Name	Former Name	Section(s) #
Orfordville	Orford	part of 13 & 24
Spring Valley Corners		corner of 3,4,9,10

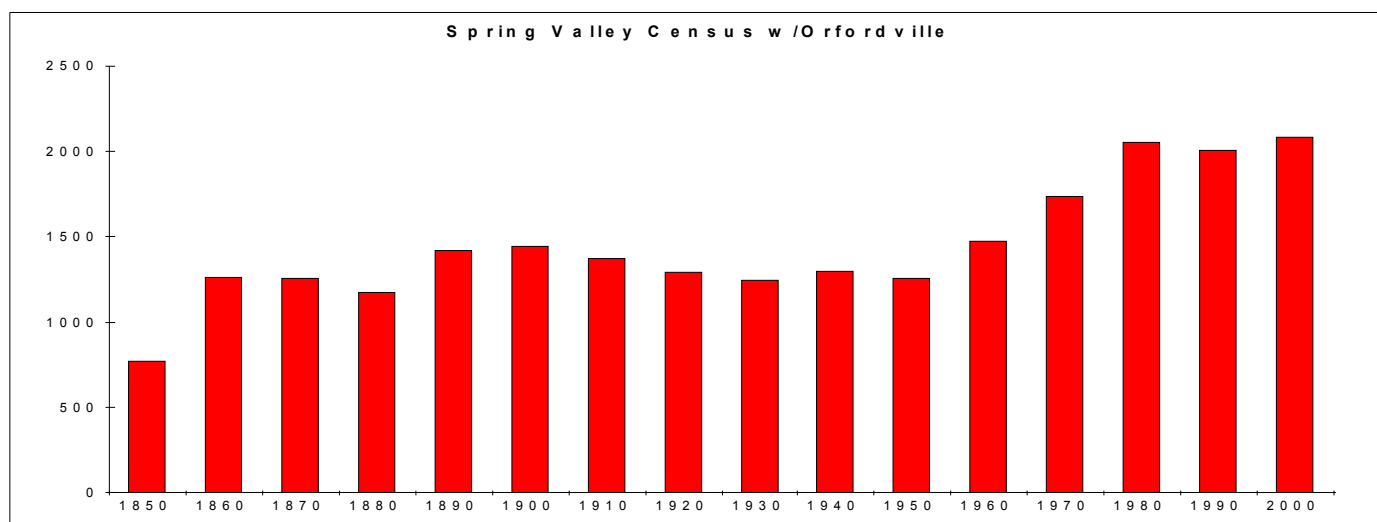
Location of Spring Valley Township

Town of Spring Valley
Town 2N Range 10E

Physical Features of Spring Valley Township

Physical Features
Taylor's Creek
Swan (Marsh) Creek

Population of Spring Valley Township



History of Spring Valley Township

The town of Spring Valley lies in the southwest portion of the county, its western boundary separating it from Green County. It was organized by act of the Legislature, approved February 2, 1846. Its territory includes township 2N, range 10E. The first town meeting was held at the house of Nicholas E. PHELPS. John CALL was the first settler. Among those who soon after made claims were James KIRKPATRICK, Erastus C. SMITH, Robert TAYLOR, Roderick M. SMITH, James BRADSHAW, Almerin SPRAGUE, Amos REMINGTON, Allen HURLBUT, S.G. MILLS and Solomon ROSE.¹

This town contains very little prairie. Its surface is gently undulating and covered with a scattering growth of large burr oaks, with more or less hickory, and altogether a very good agricultural town, well watered, well wooded, a good productive soil with a reasonable portion of good, natural meadow for cutting hay, making it altogether a very desirable location for a farmer who wishes the conveniences for a farm – rather than to have an extensive one. The Southern Wisconsin Railroad will pass through this

¹ Portrait and Biographical Album of Rock County, WI, 1889, p1022

town, and will have a station here. They have in this town one Store, one Tavern, kept by Col. E. CLAPP and Dr. S.W. ABBOTT. A Post Office, Post Master.²

This Town is made up of thrifty and progressive people, who have tilled the soil and brought it to the high state of cultivation, so that it produces abundant crops. The residences, barns and outbuildings, are as a rule, modern in construction. In 1907 Spring Valley stood third among the towns of this county in the raising of tobacco, having 627 acres. In 1908 it stands fourth in order of amount with 433 acres. The population of the town has decreased from 1446 in the year 1900 to 1000 according to the state census of 1905.³

Other early settlers coming to the Town of Spring Valley in or before 1850 are: Ellef ANDERSON from Norway in 1850, H.T. BORTNESS from Vermont in 1850, Willard BOWLES born in Wisconsin in 1840, Thomas BRICE from Scotland in 1840, W.F. CLARK from New York in 1844, N. COLE from New York in 1848, P.H. GAARDER came to America in 1843, S.T. GREEN from Connecticut in 1849, Ole HANSON from Norway in 1850, T.O. HAY from Ohio in 1847, E.O Hopper from Ohio in 1846, B. HUNGERFORD from New York in 1845, Robert JACK from Scotland in 1847, Robert OLIVER from Scotland in 1844, J. PALMER from New York in 1848, N.N. PALMER from New York in 1847, L. PEPPER from Pennsylvania in 1842, T.M. PURDY from Vermont in 1847, S.M. STRAUS from Germany in 1840, Taylor SWANN from Scotland in 1845, Robert TAYLOR from Scotland in 1844, John WARD from New York in 1844 and Mark WRIGHT from Ohio in 1850.⁴

Orfordville

The area on which Orfordville was to develop was known to the early settlers as "The Prairie" (1842-1855). In 1842, the Gifford boys, Joseph, Benjamin and James, came to this section of "The Prairie" and built a log house.⁵ Others soon followed. It is difficult to appreciate what life in the little community was like in those early years when there were no stores, no streets or roads (only trails), which were not too good. The houses, some of which were built of logs, were some distance apart with thick woods on all sides. Before the coming of the railroad, building materials and supplies had to be transported from Milwaukee via vehicles drawn by oxen.⁶

Isaac Wright is credited with starting the settlement in 1850. His farm was located south of the railroad, which was completed in 1857, at which time the community began to grow. The village was laid out and named by J. T. Dodge, a surveyor of Janesville in 1855, and included about sixty acres, part of which was re-devoted to farming when it became evident the village would not cover it. The first merchant was Edwin Harrington, who began business about 1855. A year later David Harris and Daniel Mow built a store which was occupied by one Greenleaf. About twelve months after the opening of this second store, a third-grocery and liquor store-was established by Thompson and Diamond. The first birth was that of "Patsey" Coleran, in 1857; the first marriage that of Edward Wright and Edith Clark, in 1856; the first death that of Mrs. David Harris, in 1859. The first school was taught in 1846 by Clara Sprague, in what was afterward the residence of Isaac Wright. A second school-house was built in 1848, which gave place to the present one in 1862. The hotel was opened by S.A. Thompson in 1857. The village contains Baptist, Lutheran, and Methodist Churches, and ships livestock and grain.⁷

² History of Rock County & Transactions of the Rock County Agricultural Society & Mechanics' Institute. Wm M. Doty & Bros. Printers, 1856, p125

³ Brown, William Fiske, Rock County Wisconsin a New History of Its Cities, Villages, Townships, Citizens and Varied Interest from the Earliest Times Up to Date. C.F. Cooper & Co., Chicago, 1908, p.707

⁴ The History of Rock County Wisconsin, Western Historical Co., Chicago, 1879, p.858-861.

⁵ Demrow, Kay, Orfordville History, p1

⁶ Ibid, p1

⁷ Portrait and Biographical Album of Rock County, Wisconsin, 1889, Chicago, Acme Publishing Co., p1022

Several names were suggested for the village. The surveyor, J.T. Dodge, suggested the name “Orford” after Orford, Vermont/New Hampshire (both being correct since the states redefined their boundaries and Orford was on the dividing line). The name of the Post Office, which was established in 1857, has always been ORFORDVILLE. The name of the village according to the original plat, was ORFORD, which was also the name of the railroad station. So much annoyance was caused by express packages being miss sent to Oxford, that the Railroad Company was requested, in 1898, by the then newly appointed Postmaster, Mr. Charles Taylor, to change the name of the station to ORFORDVILLE, to correspond with the name of the Post Office.⁸ In April of 1900, residents requested that the territory known as Orfordville be incorporated as a village. In June 1900, Circuit Judge B.F. Dunwiddie reviewed the request and required a local election to see if the majority of residents would favor the incorporation. The election was held on June 29, 1900, with 95 men casting votes. The request to incorporate was supported by 65 votes, and opposed by 30 votes. The territory known as Orfordville then became known as the Village of Orfordville, and was no longer a part of Spring Valley Township.⁹

As is true with many communities found along the railroad route, Orfordville was platted out by land speculators when the location of the proposed rail service was known in order to take advantage of the easy access to attract settlers. The railroad depot was often one of the first structures to be built in a preplanned town and the most important because it was a link to the outside world and provided a focus for the community. The depot was built in 1856 and the railroad completed one year later. The Orfordville Depot is not unique in its architecture nor grand in its scale but rather is a good example of a typical style used for many small towns in the late 19th century in southern Wisconsin. Very similar clapboard sided wood frame depots with overhanging eaves supported by braces and decorative gable-end trusses were found at Argyle, Jonesdale, Blanchardville, Fitchburg, and Monticello to name a few.¹⁰

The first grade school was built in 1862 at the corner of Church and N. Center Streets. A second school was built at 408 W. Beloit Street and was eventually torn down to build a new school, which is the current Orfordville Elementary School. The first high school was built in 1915. Prior to the high school, students were sent to neighboring communities to receive their high school education. The first graduation was held in 1921 with seven students graduating.¹¹

Interesting Fact

In 1860 the vote for Abraham Lincoln was 193 with Stephen Douglas receiving 16 votes.

Schools in Spring Valley Township

There were seven rural schools in the Town of Spring Valley and also a school in Orfordville. (Location of schools – per Luther Valley Historical Society)

1. Beck School – Sec. 1, Tollefson Rd & Spring Valley Corners Rd., NE corner of intersection.
2. Scotch Hill School – Sec. 7, Scotch Hill Road, just north of Footville-Brodhead Road, on west side of Scotch Hill Rd.
3. Spring Valley Corners School – Sec. 9, SE corner of intersection of Gempler, Knutson, Spring Valley Corners & Footville-Brodhead roads.
4. Spring Valley Center School – Sec.15, on Speich Road, between Nelson & Bernstein Roads.
5. Oak Hill School – Sec. 32, corner of Hafeman & Avon Store Roads, NW corner of intersection.
6. Randall School – Sec. 34, Avon North Townline Rd., between Nelson Road & Risum Road.

⁸ Demrow, Kay, Orfordville History, p2

⁹ www.orfordville.org

¹⁰ Orfordville – 100 Years in the Making, Printed by the Orfordville Journal & Footville News, June 14, 2000 p8:1-2

¹¹ www.orfordville.org

7. Rock Hill School – Sec. 35, Hafeman Road, just west of Holden Road.
8. Orfordville School – Sec 13, in the village of Orfordville, corner of Center & Church Street, built in 1862 and used until 1890.
9. State Graded School – Sec. 13, in the village of Orfordville, West Beloit Street, built in 1890 and used until 1915.
10. Orfordville School – Sec. 13, same location as above, 3-story brick building, opened in 1916 and used until 1970. First High School graduation June 3, 1921.
11. Parkview School District – Sec. 13, 106 West Church Street, 1964 to present.

Churches in Spring Valley Township

A United Methodist Church was built in 1859 in Orfordville. In 1996 the church combined with the Footville Methodist Church and built a new building adjacent to Highway 11 and became the New Horizon United Methodist Church located in Plymouth Township. The address is:

New Horizon United Methodist Church
 1726 S. Murphy Road
 Janesville, WI 53548
 Phone: 608-876-6256

Orfordville Lutheran Church was founded in 1868. It was originally known as Luther Valley Church of Orfordville, which tells of its beginnings as a split from Luther Valley Church located in Newark Township. The church was built in 1871. In 1972 the current building was constructed. The address is:

Orfordville Lutheran Church
 210 N. Main Street
 Orfordville, WI 53576
 Phone: 608-879-2575

Bethany Lutheran Church, formerly known as West Luther Valley Church was built in 1871 to accommodate church members who had settled in the western parts of Spring Valley and Avon Townships. It burned to the ground in October 2003 and was rebuilt the following year. The address is:

Bethany Lutheran Church
 16529 W. Church Road
 Brodhead, WI 53520
 Phone: 608-897-4158

The Baptist Church was built in 1881 located at 207 North Main Street, Orfordville, and was dissolved in 1910.

Harvest Community Church, formerly known as Trinity Church of Orfordville was organized in 1981 and the building was constructed in 1986. It is a non-denominational Protestant Church. The address is:

Harvest Community Church
 519 E. Beloit Street
 Orfordville, WI 53576
 Phone: 608-879-2640

Funeral Homes in Spring Valley Township

The only funeral home in the Town of Spring Valley is the Newcomer-Silverthorn Chapel On The Hill Funeral Home, 3008 South Coon Island Road, Orfordville, WI 53576.

Cemeteries in Spring Valley Township

Greenwood Cemetery, located just east of the city of Brodhead on County Road T, in Section 19.

West Luther Valley Cemetery, located next to Bethany Lutheran Church, (formerly West Luther Valley Church) on the south side of West Church Road, west of Dickey Road in Section 28 & 29. Earliest burials from the 1870's.

Scotch Hill Cemetery is located on Scotch Hill Road (Resman Road) west of Footville-Brodhead Road in Section 7.

Newspapers in Spring Valley Township

The Orfordville Journal and Footville News is a weekly paper published in Orfordville, WI.

In the 1850's there was a Norwegian newspaper "The Emigranten" which was published in nearby Plymouth Township. Other newspapers which serve the area are the Janesville Gazette, The Beloit Daily News, and the Brodhead Independent Register.

Compiled by Kay Demrow & Lois James

The information compiled here was found in resources from the Luther Valley Historical Society, Rock County Genealogical Society, the Janesville Hedberg Public Library and the Luther Valley Historical Society.