

## City of Pinconning History as of July 2015

2015 marks the 100th anniversary of Pinconning cheese. Dan Horn, a Wisconsin transplant, created the unique Colby recipe in 1915, when he opened the first cheese factory in town, on the property that is now home to the Pinconning Cheese Store & Fudge Shoppe. Deforestation had all but eliminated lumbering, the area's main source of income; Pinconning was looking for a new industry, and local dairy farmers needed a way to use and market the milk they produced. Good ol' Midwest ingenuity ensued and a Michigan tradition was born!

Mr. Horn's daughter, Inez Wilson, opened Wilson's Cheese Shoppe, located across the street from her father's factory, in 1939; another daughter, Marie Horn Bennett opened a second retail outlet in 1946, at the site of the original factory. A marketing visionary who was ahead of her time, Inez is the person responsible for putting Pinconning on the map as the "Cheese Capital of Michigan." Located in the Old US-23 corridor, Pinconning is ideally situated for folks travelling up north from Detroit and other points south. By the 1960s, it is estimated that 100,000 people a year visited the small city of Pinconning, with cheese being the big draw. The Mouse, mascot for the city of Pinconning, still stands proudly in front of Wilson's, and to this day, thousands of people stop every year to take their picture with him.

Pinconning cheese is a type of Colby, although because of limited refrigeration in the early years, it was aged in cellars, at higher-than-normal temperatures, giving the cheese its unique flavor. Kraft bought the Halpin Creamery in 1936, and maintained a factory here until 1993. Although Pinconning cheese is no longer made in Pinconning, we use carefully selected cheese artisans throughout the state to follow the original recipe. From fresh squeaky curds to Super Sharp, which is aged 10+ years, Pinconning cheese is also offered in the form of delicious house-made spreads in a variety of unique flavors.

People are very loyal to Pinconning cheese; locals proudly hold up a hand and point to our spot on the sunrise side of Michigan's mitten, and anyone who lives here can tell you about the delicious cheese. Mention Pinconning to people from other parts of the state, and you will often hear, "The cheese place!" A delicious product, paired with small town hospitality (and a giant mouse) make for a delightful slice of Americana, celebrated every year on the 3rd weekend in June. The annual CheeseTown Festival and Races are a celebration of all things cheese, complete with a parade, fireworks and a Mac & Cheese Cookoff, with local restaurants each offering their version of the tasty treat. The CheeseTown Races have become increasingly popular in the last several years, with people coming from far and wide to participate in our annual Run/Walk.

People might be surprised to know that the word Pinconning comes from a native American word that means, depending on who you ask, “little potato,” or “land where the wild potatoes grow.” Either way, potatoes have definitely taken a backseat to cheese! Situated on the shores of the Saginaw Bay, there are many things to do in our little town, including kayaking, camping, golf and some of the best bass and walleye fishing year-round. Our most famous resident is probably comedian Rob Little, who still has close ties to Pinconning, and stays involved in community fundraisers and projects like our local food bank, when he isn’t touring/performing all around the country. We are also proud to claim Arthur E. Summerfield (1899-1972), the 54th United States Postmaster General, as a Pinconning native.

We are very proud of our city. Incorporated in 1872, we found our place in history in 1915, secured our status as the Cheese Capital of Michigan in the 1940s, and we are still going strong. Stop by and see us on your way up north. You can stock up on cheese and Michigan meats, as well as a variety of gourmet selections that will appeal to foodies and purists alike. Don’t forget to take your picture with The Mouse!