



Volume II #30

ARTIFACTS

SWCHC
August 2011

I will not do the right thing.
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Cover: Vivian Schmidt at Grove School, story and photos pages 2-7; "Notes from the Den," by Phil Brown, 8; Haasl postcards, 9-10; "A Glimpse of Grand Rapids," by J. Marshall Buehler, 11-14; Hank's Pix, 15, 18; Rudolph postcard, 16-17; Montreal, 19-20; Centralia, 21; Meadville, 22-24; Mead/Witter letters by Holly Knoll, 25-26; "Nekoosa Then and Now," by Lori Brost, 27-31; Annual Meeting notice, 32.

Fourth Grade: When the right thing was the wrong thing

My fourth-grade teacher, Mrs. Schmidt, was smart, pretty and pretty much in charge as principal of the four room “state graded” Two Mile School. When she retired 21 years later, Mrs. Schmidt told the Daily Tribune she had taught grades one through four and liked fourth grade best.

“It’s a good age; the kids can do a lot for themselves. They want to learn; they try so many things on their own and they still mind.”

By “mind,” she meant do what they’re told.

In my year, 1954, Mrs. Schmidt had strongly reprimanded us for not returning encyclopedia volumes to their proper place. Yet, it wasn’t an hour before Larry, an archetypal underachiever, tossed a couple books in the general direction of the shelf and walked away.

Me: “Larry didn’t put the encyclopedias away.”

Mrs. Schmidt: “Don’t be a tattle tale.”

Clearly, it was a mistake to do the right thing and that was the last time I tried. By sixth grade I was carrying a loaded squirt gun.

Maybe 30 years later, I began to recognize Mrs. Schmidt around town, not nearly as tall or stern as I had remembered.

Through my mother, she relayed the scrapbook I am looking at now.

Here are wallet-size faces of friends Harlan Kramer, Bruce Zanow, Glen Brundidge, Jerry Calvi, Alfred Leggitt, Boyd Sharkey and “Two Mile School Jenny” Enkro.

As for Larry, I knew him by two last names. He is listed on the roll under the first but his record is blank and there is no photo, as if he didn’t finish out the year.

The scrapbook ends with Mrs. Schmidt’s 1976 retirement, which, she said, sort of snuck up on her.

“All of a sudden it’s here. It went by so fast, especially the last 10 years.”

Perhaps the biggest reward of teaching, she said, was being “very pleasantly surprised” when children with difficulties at home or in school “made well of themselves.”

In retirement, Mrs. Schmidt continued to add clippings about former students.

She had kept the 1967 Tribune story about me going to the University of Wyoming and 1980s Tribune stories such as “River City Memoirs Trivia,” “Heart of Rapids was Grand Avenue,” “Uninvited stranger shows up at Christmas.”

She had a 1979 photo and story about how Two Mile would close permanently June 1, recalling that the front half replaced a wood building in 1913 and the rear half was built in the late 1930s to accommodate a rising enrollment.

In the 1950s, pupils were not privy to lives of teachers. Lately, I found that Mrs. Schmidt attended Madison East High School and Whitewater State College.

In 1946, after stints at Fort Atkinson and Beaver Dam, she began teaching at Two Mile and, when it opened in 1949, Grove School, also then in the town of Grand Rapids. She later added a degree from UW-Stevens Point.

My first new friend at Grove, back in 1955, was George Zimmerman. He confirms that Larry lived with his Grandma Kitchkume on Pepper Avenue and that her clotheslines stood on the lot long after the old two story house had been removed.

I know that Larry’s grandmother was active in her church, the community and Native American events.

George remembers he and Larry in a vacant lot shooting blunt-tipped arrows into the sky, one scoring a direct hit on Larry’s head.

In 6th grade, George said, Larry in anger cast his fountain pen at the young teacher, damaging her red dress and quickly finding himself in Principal Budahl’s office.

George couldn’t verify my impression that Larry jumped off a railroad bridge into the Wisconsin river sometime before he left our lives.

Loving references to “Lawrence” have been placed on Ancestry.com, including photos of him with an attractive dark-skinned mother, who, according to records, attended Tomah Indian School.

Larry was born in Milwaukee and died at Elgin, Ill., in 1980. His son, an anti-gang activist, was murdered in 1996.



Two Mile School

Teachers listed below are Anola O'Day, Janice Cutler Sullivan, Margaret Hetzel Newman, Vivian Schmidt (front, center), Palmer Budahl, Dorothy Retzlaff, Leona Reichert. Maybe one of them took the photo.



Would Mrs. Schmidt do it over again, the Tribune had asked, meaning her profession.

"For me, it was the right thing to do," she said. She came from a long line of teachers.

For Mrs. Schmidt, telling me not to tattle on Larry was the right thing to do. Whatever precious wrongs the class bookworm might feel, he already had enough real problems.

From River City Memoirs in the August 2011 Wisconsin Rapids Tribune



Grove School 1950

1st row: John Molnar, Douglas Marti, Ann Swartout, Ronald Schmidt, Ronald Bottensek, Tom Provost, Betty Swartout, Lorraine Dunow, Margy Ostrander

2nd (includes 3rd): Ken Peckham, Melvin Back, Alyce Bigfire, Darlene Sparks, Sonja Schooley, Peggy Koeshall, Barbara Clark, Bill O'Dell, Donna Jacoby, Elaine Christianson, Sherry Keating, Henry Bogs, Melvin Back

3rd (or 4th): Gary Back, Bill Marceau, Clarence Pryne, Charles Tucker, Charles Loken, Larry Shepard, Kenneth Rapacz

Melvin Back is named twice.



Alice
Bigfire



Linda
Brenner



Donna
Calverly



Judy
Cork



Mary
Drackley



Betty
Fletcher



Paul
Hayes



Linda
Jones



Mary Ann
Liebe



Mary Lou
Mahoney



Dale
Martin



Gerald
Moseler



Janice Cutler - III



Margaret
Hetzel - II



Dorothy
Retzlaff - I & VI



Susan
Gray - III



Charles
Nelson



Neal Olson



Clarence
Pryne



Jim
Peterson



Helen
Raasch



Darlene
Spahr



Roger Turner



Bonnie Turner



Jim Sloan



Darlene Smith



Gerald

1948
Grade 2

1948
Scrapbook of
Vivian Schmidt

Two Mile Fourth Grade News

1952-53 - mimeographed

We went to the fire station in Mr. Calvi's bus. We met Captain Tess. He showed us the new 1952 fire engine. It was made especially for Wisconsin Rapids. It took three months to make it. It was made in New York. The motor has twelve cylinders.
Bob Beyer

Downstairs we have an art room and a music room. Soon the art room will be a lunch room. We have new steps in the front hall. They are red linoleum and very pretty. The children go up and down stairs quietly. **Carla Brandt**

We moved our library to the front of the room. The shelves are painted apple boxes. It is bright and pretty. We have many books in our library. It is a nice place to sit and read. **Carole Henry**

Mrs. Schmidt's birthday was January 28th. The fourth grade had a party for her. She didn't know anything about it. Was she ever surprised. She got some perfume from us. Doreen Zimmerman's birthday is the same day. They are twins. Donna Halbur

My neighbors have a new baby boy. They named him Mike. He eats every two minutes. **Barbara Glick**

There is a pond near our house. On Sunday my two sisters and my three brothers and I went sliding away down the hill to the big pond. This summer my brother and sister went down to the pond to swim. They went swimming with their clothes on. When they got home they got a spanking. **Barbara Lemonds**

When Mr. Budahl fell from the post, the children felt sorry for him. We wanted to get him a present. The children brought pennies. We bought him a pretty tie pin. All the children in first grade, second grade, third grade, fourth grade walked over to his house. The present came at the right time. It was his birthday. The teachers took pictures of us. **Virginia Zach**

We had fun yesterday because it was teacher's birthday. We played games and ate cake and candy. **Wayne Munro** *Mrs. Schmidt got two bouquets of flowers for her birthday. The teachers gave her one bouquet.* **Bill Drackley**

We have a new President. His name is Dwight D. Eisenhower. We have pictures of him on the bulletin board. One night when I was listening to the radio I heard some one say, "They are feeding the bread to the birds and the Democrats." **Mary Ann Jacobson**

Sometimes I go to my neighbors house. We play cards. She always wins because she cheats. I surely get mad. The worst part of it is she won't admit she cheats. I just quit the game. **Ginger Zach**

Our jeep was near the lake. The brake was on but it didn't work. The jeep rolled into the water. The next day the wrecker came and towed it out of the lake and took it to the garage. **David Murgatroyd**

Monday my Grandfather had a sawing bee at his farm. Something happened. Grandfather's glove caught in the saw. It pulled his hand right along. One of the men stopped the saw. It was too late. Grandfather's hand had gotten into the saw. One of the men wrapped Grandfather's hurt hand in a handkerchief. They took him to the hospital. The doctor sewed Grandfather's fingers back on. Now he will be able to do more work. **Carla Brandt**

My rabbit is getting along just fine. He is getting fatter by the day. We are going to eat him for Thanksgiving. **Donald Mitchell**

The other day when my dad got his check cashed he got a hundred dollar bill. My dad said we could get a lot of things with a hundred dollar bill. **William Drackley**

We are collecting old time things. We have old fashioned lamps, flat irons, a little covered wagon, a lamp that burns kerosene, a big pitcher, coffee grinder, cow bells, powder horn, tools, and dolls. It is interesting to look at these old things. **David Murgatroyd**

Our dog had seven pups. I can go up to Sandy, but I can't pick up the pups. Sandy would bite me. Four puppies are tan, two are white, and one is black. **David Keating**

This summer I made a hot rod for my little brother, Timmy. I put wheels on it. Now there is snow on the ground. I will put runners on the hot rod. **Bill McCarthy**

We are going to have a Halloween party at school. I am going to dress up in a witches dress. Then when it is dark I am going to scare everyone. I am going to take my cat and pumpkin around with me, but I am not going to hurt anything. I just want to scare everyone. **Carla Brandt**

On Tuesday we draw with Mr. Swalbach. He teaches us on the Let's Draw program. Sometimes we use paints, and sometimes crayons. The fall tree pictures are very nice. I liked cutting out Halloween men and coloring them. **Thea McCarthy**

All the P.T.A. in the city asked the manager of the Palace and Wisconsin theaters to have some good movies for children. The tickets cost one dollar for eleven movies. I can hardly wait to see "Robin Hood," "Black Beauty," and "Penrod and Sam."

Our new baby's name is Susan Jean. She was so little that she had to stay in the hospital until she weighed five pounds. My father wanted a boy, but a girl is good. He gave his friend cigars. **Marion Page**

Singing Wheels is our reading book. It is about stagecoach days. It tells about the Hastings Family. They had to work hard to build homes and haul wood. Tom thought the wood hauling was everlasting. They had no time to play. **Carole Henry**

1954-55

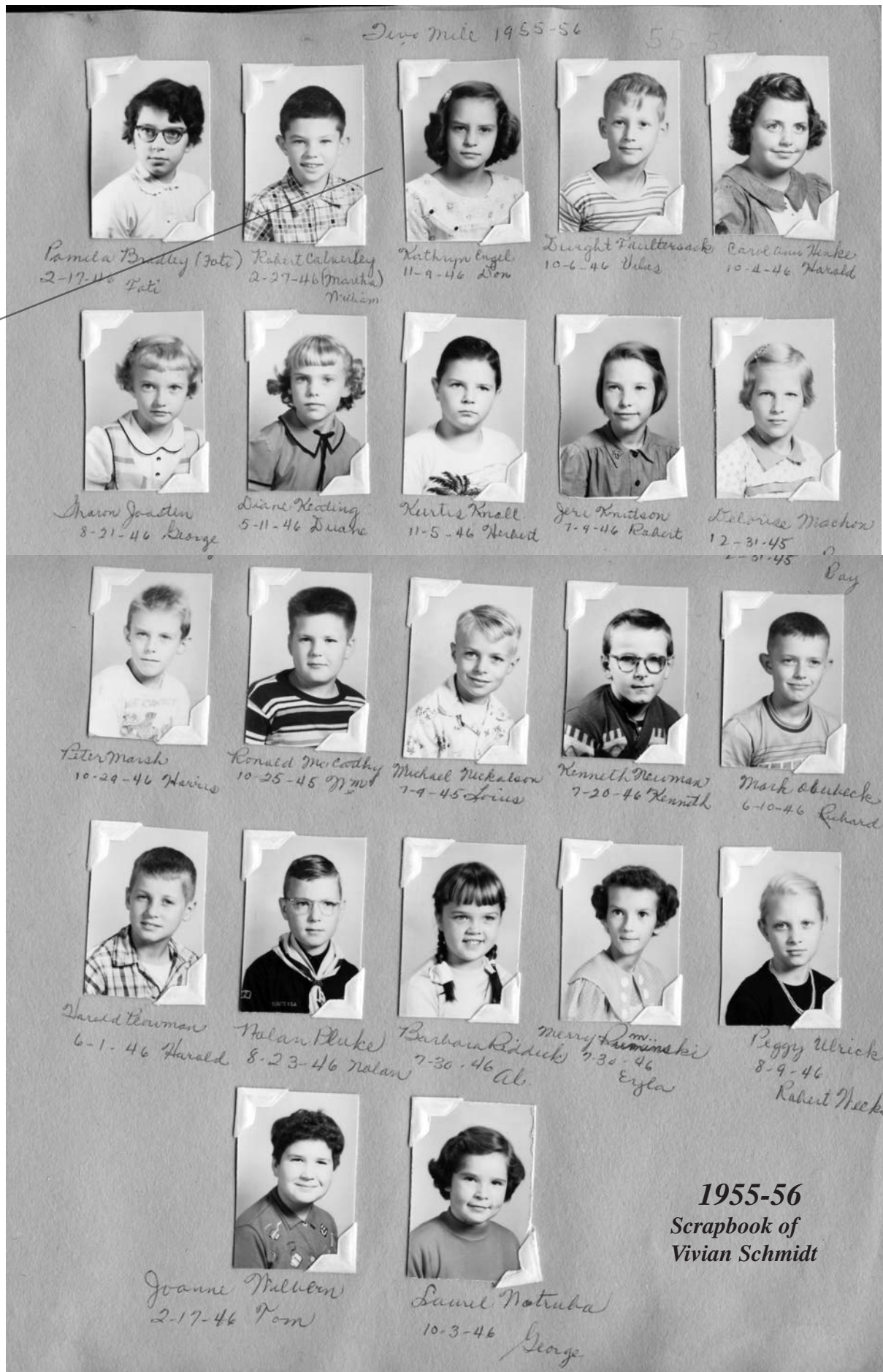
Scrapbook of
Vivian Schmidt

Two Mile

1954-55

Karen Brown
6-8-45James Brane
9-21-44 ClarenceGlen Brundidge
9-5-45 GlenJerry Calvi
RichardLinda Chambers
3-20-45Connie Dicks
7-8-45David Engel
8-12-45
DonaldJennifer Enora
3-24-45 ThemoFred Giese
12-13-44
FredLois Howard
10-8-45
Harvey WadeDarlan Hamer
6-9-45Alfred Haggitt
9-21-43 AnnetteDennis
McCarthy
9-20-45
WilliamBarbara Mitchell
1-10-45 ChetEllen Mosier
12-1-45 GeorgeLinda Rorman
12-26-43 HaroldBoyd Sharkey
10-1-45 DavidArleigh
Niggl
7-28-45
HenryMichael Niggl
6-20-43
HenryBruce Zanow
8-13-45
Adolph

Uncle
Dave's
sister



Notes from the Den

By Phil Brown
SWCHC President

After twenty-five years of collecting local memorabilia, putting together “Phil’s Den of Antiquity” as a story in *Artifacts* and a Museum exhibit has been a great experience. Of all the items on display this summer, we probably get the most comments about the Schwinn bikes from the 1960s.

If you have not had the opportunity to visit the Den yet, I encourage you to drop by the Museum before the end of September. The Den won’t be around much longer because we have already started making plans for next year’s exhibit, which will have a Civil War theme. If you are a Civil War scholar or collector, please contact us.

On another note, it was a pleasant surprise when I received a letter from the attorney for the estate of Richard F. (Butch) Haasl. Butch passed away this past spring. He was the husband of the late Joan Haasl, a long time board member of the SWCHC. It was Joan’s wish that her extensive collection of local postcards go to the Museum upon their deaths.

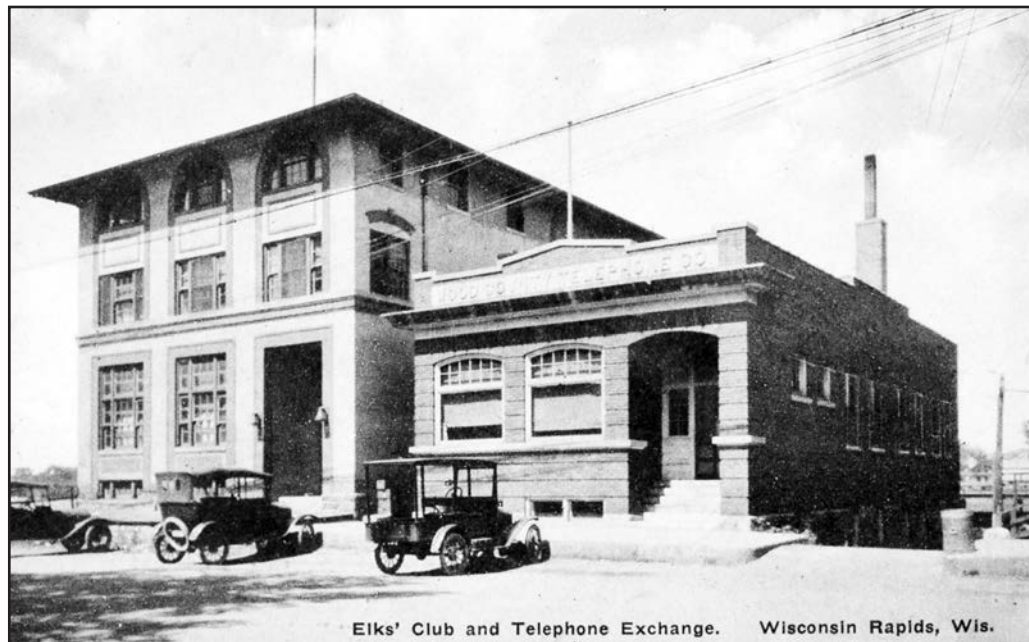
After receiving the letter from their attorney, I dashed down to the law office and picked up the collection and brought it back to the Museum where the staff and I spent the rest of the afternoon paging through the hundreds of postcards that Joan had collected.

With the addition of the Haasl collection, we now have the most extensive collection of local postcards from the South Wood County area. It is my pleasure to share a few of these images with you in the current issue of *Artifacts* and we hope to be able to share more of these postcard images with you in future issues. Thanks to the Haasl family for getting this wonderful collection to the SWCHC.

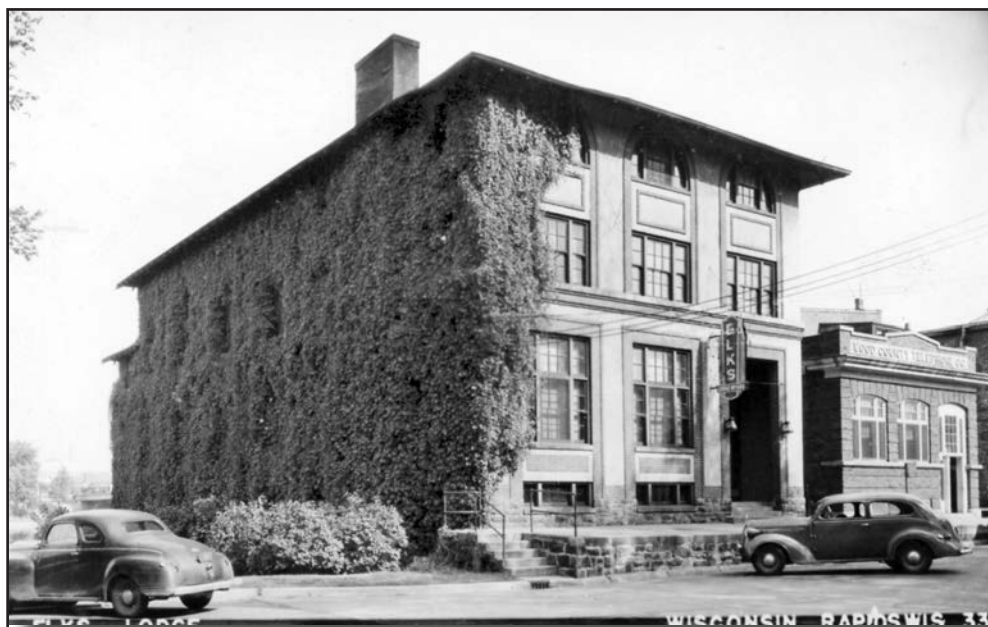


Phil was not available for this picture.

From Joan Haasl's Postcard Collection



Local landmarks are favorite subjects for postcards. The Wisconsin Rapids Elks Club has moved to the “old” Brig site, though the Elks building above stands. Wood County Telephone Co. is now Solarus with headquarters on Grand Avenue. Editor Dave is proud that he still has a WCTC email address.



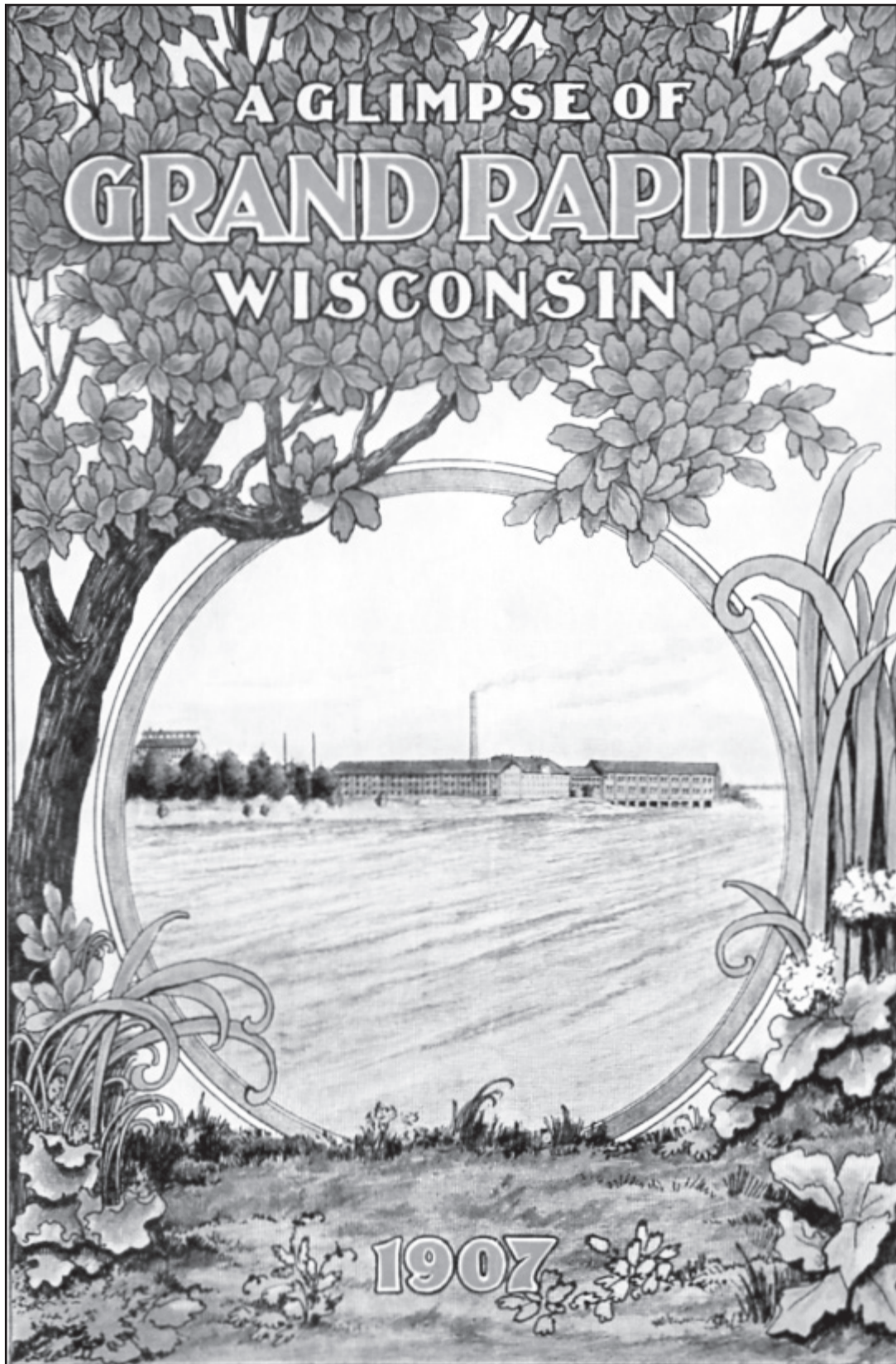
From Joan Haasl's Postcard Collection



Now a vacant lot with remnants of a "Lance's" sign, the Golden Gate tavern and supper club on 8th Street South (Highway 13) just north of Nepco Lake was more recently named Lance's Never Inn. The Chalet Motel below is the location of the Rodeway Inn at 3300 8th Street South.



J. Marshall Buehler Presents:



“Greater Grand Rapids Illustrated” is a pamphlet in the Museum’s collection. Perusing its contents, directed at promoting Grand Rapids businesses at the turn of the century, it is worth recalling three articles reproduced on the next pages.

GREATER GRAND RAPIDS ILLUSTRATED

GRAND RAPIDS BRICK COMPANY.

The great business interests that have conserved to make Grand Rapids the progressive city that she is today are conducted and controlled by able, enterprising and public spirited men of wide experience and high reputation, who have aided in every way the progress and advancement of the city in every line of trade.

This is particularly true of the vast brick industry that is centered here, and which contributes largely to the wealth of the city.



J. G. HAMILTON.

This plant is located two miles northwest of the city on the Wisconsin Central Railway. The company manufactures a red sand mold brick out of clay mined a short distance from the yard. The plant has been in operation for nine years and has an annual output of 1,500,000 to 2,000,000 brick. Between thirty and forty men are employed about five months of the year with an average monthly payroll of \$1,000.00. The brick are of a good quality and find a ready market in Grand Rapids and the adjoining territory. The business is of a wholesale and retail nature and is under the direct supervision of J. G. Hamilton, who is also one of the proprietors in the business. As a young man who has entered the business field of Grand Rapids, and made good in supplying the people with just what they want, Mr. Hamilton is certainly a success. He is one of our enterprising and successful business men and is widely known and universally respected by our citizens.

11

Grand Rapids Brick Co. was located at the end of Brick Yard Road where the present landfill site is now. It was a strong competitor to the Vesper Brick and Tile Co. and the Lessig Brick Yard, both prominent in this area.

GREATER GRAND RAPIDS ILLUSTRATED

OUR NEW GUM FACTORY.

What is unquestionably one of the most important industries, one that is destined soon to be one of the largest single plants in its line in this section of the country is our chewing-gum factory, that has recently been established by Geo. W. Lyons. Comparatively few people have the faintest conception of the magnitude of the chewing-gum industry. This gum factory may be termed a new factor in our midst, its various products find a ready sale through thirty different wholesale houses. Eight different brands of gum are being manufactured, Cinnamon, Orange, Licorice, Peppermint, Wintergreen, Clove, Pepsin and Wild Cherry. The latter brand is the one that will receive the most attention, and the one on which the factory relies for its large increased and increasing trade.

Mr. Lyon will soon have his factory in shape to manufacture from 200 to 500 boxes of gum per day, and in this way the name of Grand Rapids, Wisconsin, will reach every state and hamlet in the Union. Mr. Lyons came to our city in 1878, and for the past four years has been a member of the firm of Gross & Lyons, engaged in the mercantile business. He needs no introduction to the people of this city. He has proven himself a reliable, progressive and substantial citizen.

MARBLE WORKS OF WEEKS & WEEKS.

In their particular line of work this firm has few equals in any part of the country. They have made a study of granite and marble-cutting and have the true artist's eye and delicacy which gives that indescribable effect of a harmonious and beautiful outline and which distinguishes the work of art—the masterpiece—from the ordinary patterned block. The efforts of these gentlemen are directed towards the production of new ideas and original designs, and in the local cemetery are many of their productions which are striking examples of the work of masters in their profession. They deal extensively in marble and granite monuments, and cemetery curbing, and number among their patrons many of the best families in this section. The history of the business furnishes an unbroken record of honorable dealing and satisfaction rendered to every patron.

Another business not well known to today's residents is the Lyons' Gum Factory. The duration of the business appears to be from 1908-1911. The short life is attributed to the "difficulty of obtaining basic raw materials."

Would Lyons or Hamilton have dreamed of a computer-oriented Renaissance Learning Co. or an Alexander flying field or a Solarus Telephone/Internet/TV provider here? These are dreams that even Jules Verne did not realize.

—JMB

GREATER GRAND RAPIDS ILLUSTRATED

OUR RAILROADS.

Not so very many years ago a beaver skin was worth \$6.00 in New York; it was worth sixty cents at the head-waters of the Wisconsin River. The problem of transportation had not yet been solved. It was the day of raft and boat, of ax and rifle.

An army, a state, or a little city, is no greater or stronger than its transportation facilities. Grand Rapids, with a population of about 7,000, boasts of more diversity of industries than any other city of like population in the valley. The reason is that the natural advantages combined with its excellent facilities for shipment, makes of it an ideal manufacturing center.

The railroad facilities of Grand Rapids are among the strong factors in bringing to us a class of manufacturers that are desirable and which is a necessity for a wide output of tonnage. North, south, east and west are open to us for our products, through the channels of our four railroads. In determining a proper location for a manufacturing site there are three essential features to be considered, viz.: location, transportation and power.

Twenty-four passenger trains arrive at our City and depart daily, bearing their hundreds of travelers to all parts of the country, and the aggregate of freight shipped into Grand Rapids each year is about 20,000 cars, and the amount of freight shipped out is about 10,000 cars each year. These railroads have at all times maintained close relationship with the interests of their patrons, both freight and passenger, and stand willing and ready at any time to co-operate in any movement which has for its purpose the advancement of Grand Rapids. Our four station agents are not only practical railroad men, but they are practical citizens, and add much to the business and social life of our city.



Birdseye View of East Side.

*Don't judge the town by this picture.
I picked out the worst view.*

Note how railroad transportation has changed. According to the article above, 24 passenger trains stopped in Grand Rapids each day! And this was before the introduction of the Grand Rapids Street Railway Co. which provided hourly departures and arrivals 6 a.m. until 11 p.m.

Hank's Pix

MSPT historian and SWCHC Museum volunteer Henry Bruse has scanned thousands of negatives and slides that would otherwise not be available for use. Here at the request of Uncle Dave he chooses a few favorites.

Hank: These two photos reassure us that young ladies are lovely in any era,



even with ridiculous hats.

Extra credit to Hank for exchanging birthdays with Uncle Dave, giving the latter another four months of youth.

***The
Hankstir***



I like this photo because it shows Uncle Dave (wearing his grandpa's coat) back in the 1980s when he thought he was old enough, but found out later he was mistaken.

Postcard



From the Joan Haasl collection



PHOTOGRAPH POST CARD No. 3
- MADE, 1909 BY -
J. M. COLBY, WAUSAU, WIS.

Hank's Pix II

Somehow I have come to believe that railroads are the only work of man that actually improves on nature. In that sense, this photo depicts a much-improved Wisconsin Rapids, and is one of my favorites in this collection. This is travel, rather than mere transportation, and though the inked-in note says this is 1938, the scene is timeless.



Another railroad scene, this one at the west end of the C&NW bridge over the Wisconsin River. Today you must suffer the interminable cacophony of expressway traffic here, but back when the photographer snapped this photo, peace reigned generally supreme. You can almost hear the quiet.

Boots-on-the-Ground History

On the road with Uncle Dave

A notable source of early River City citizens is Montreal, Quebec. From the Francophone metropolis flowed a large proportion of the early settlers of Rudolph, Centralia, Grand Rapids, Port Edwards (Frenchtown) and Nekoosa (Point Basse).

Shown on the following page is Chapel of Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours in Old Montreal. It was built in 1771 over the ruins of an even older stone chapel whose foundations were recently uncovered by archaeologists and examined by the Artifacts editor himself.

The original church came about because, in 1655, Marguerite Bourgeoys, the first teacher and founder of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame convinced the Canadian colonists to build a chapel

of pilgrimage outside the settlement served by the larger basilica of Notre Dame.

The first Bon-Secours was erected in 1675, in plenty of time to serve the ancestors of Arpin, Brazeau, Crotteau, Du Bay, Varboncoeur, Po-mainville, *et al.*

After a trip back to France in 1672, Marguerite returned with a wooden statuette of Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours (Our Lady of Good Help) for the chapel. In 1754, fire destroyed the first chapel but the statue and its reliquary were found intact among the smoldering embers and can be seen today. Or so the story goes.

Photo by Mrs. Uncle Dave



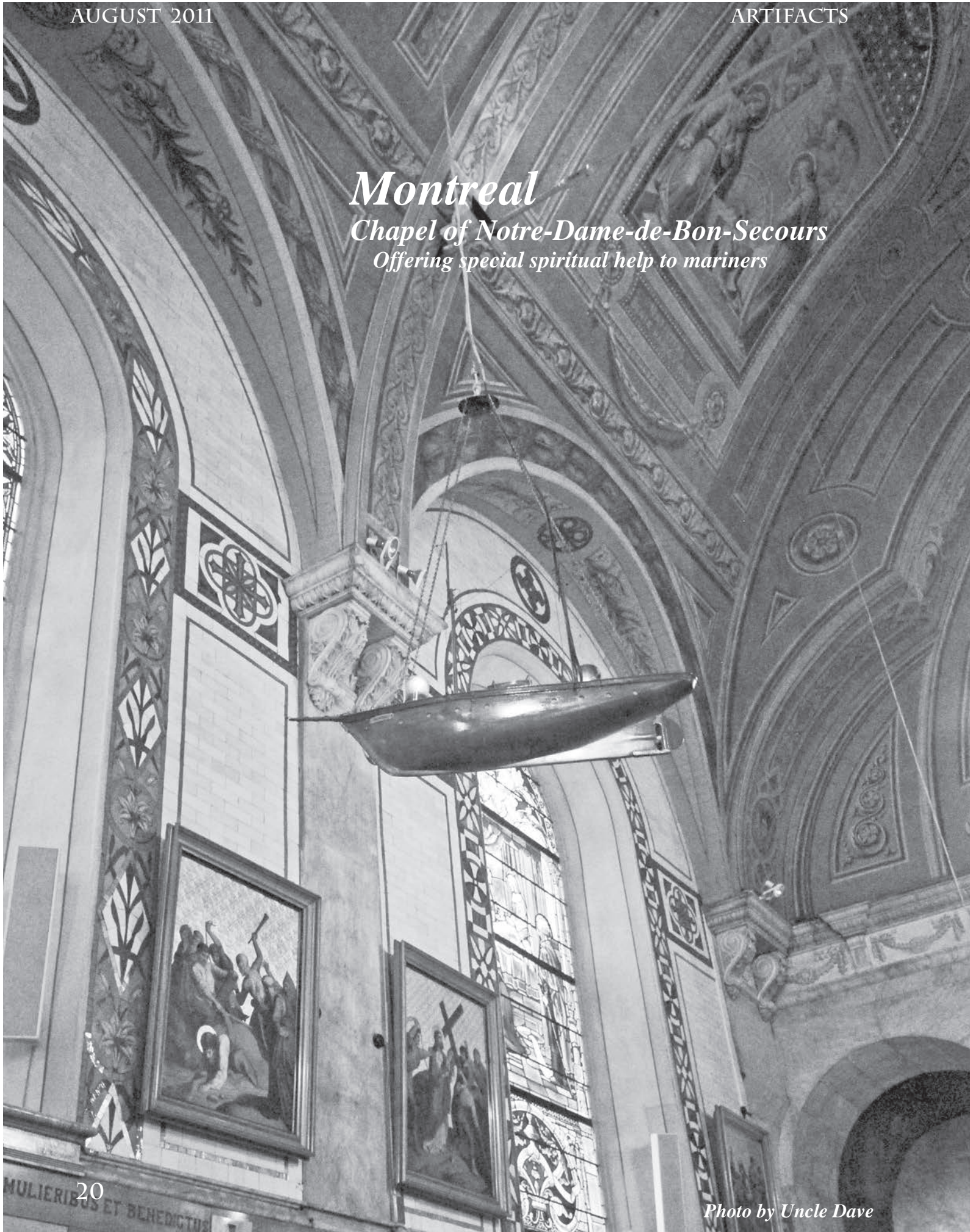
One of Montreal's numerous history museums, Centre d'histoire de Montréal, the city museum above, is a former fire station. It pays special attention to Montreal's neighborhoods and cultural groupings. The "History Center" is a museum to visit but also a society that influences its culture through services, activities, exhibitions, and guided tours "in collaboration with local associations, presentation spaces, institutions, and citizens."

The prose, as always in Montreal, offered in French with English as a lesser alternative, is tourist friendly. "First, relive our past by taking five surprise-filled tours of the city. For each time period, like a time traveler landing in the urban landscape of another era, you will come across people and meet Montrealers who have made history." We can do the same in River City, where the cousins of the same Montrealers constructed an alternate narrative.

Montreal

Chapel of Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours

Offering special spiritual help to mariners



Like Grand Rapids, Centralia was a generic name used in multiple locations. The best known may be Centralia, Wash., scene of a deadly encounter between patriots and Wobblies.

Uncle and Mrs. Uncle Dave visited Centralia, Ill., in March 2011.



Centralia, Ill., began as the point where the two original branches of the Illinois Central Railroad, built in 1856, converged, and is believed to be named for that railroad. It is near the site of a 1947 coal mine and the explosion that killed 111 and occasioned the song, "The Dying Miner," by Woody Guthrie.



Homage to Centralia



The population of Centralia, Ill., was 13,032 in the 2010 census.

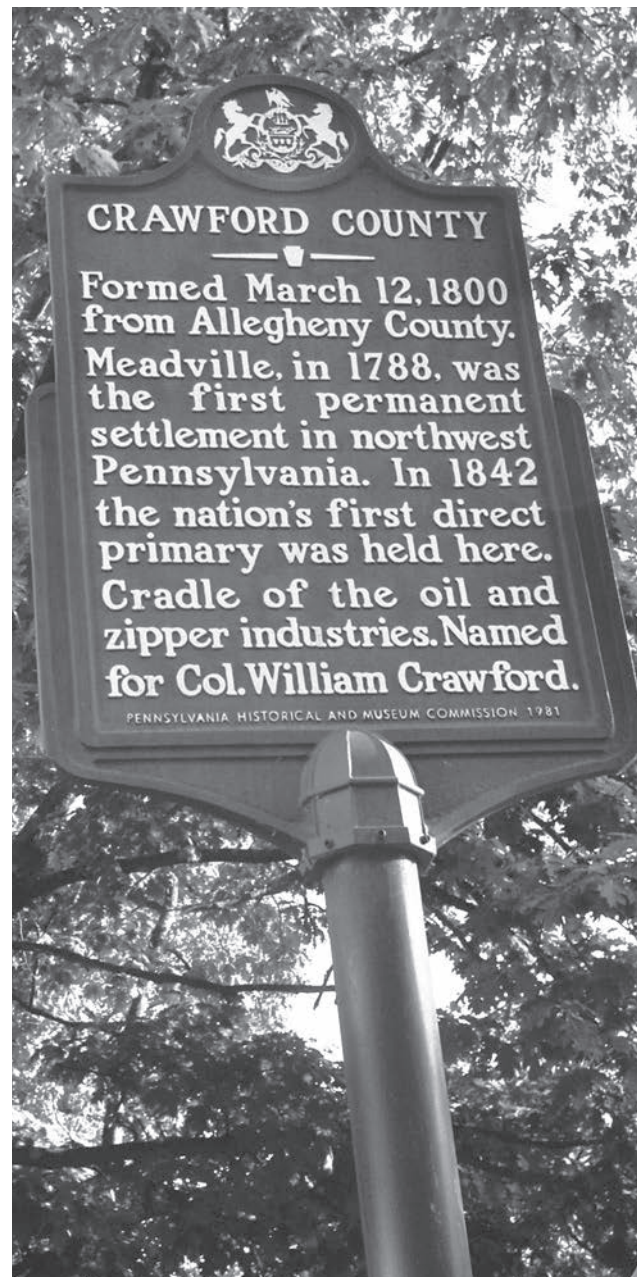
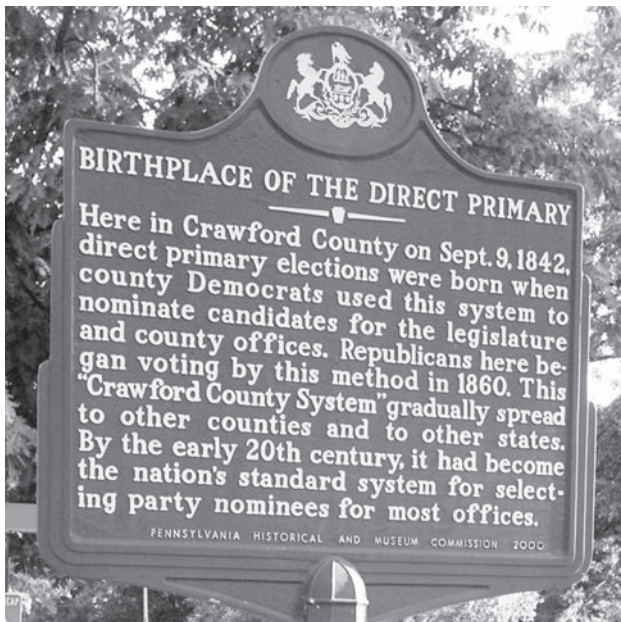
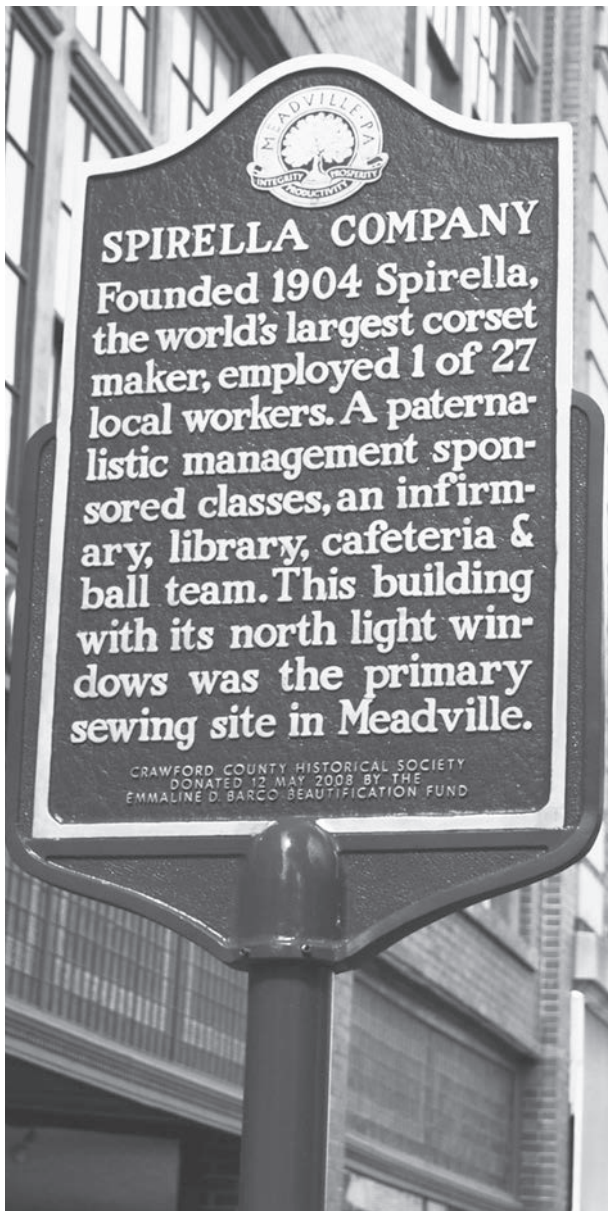


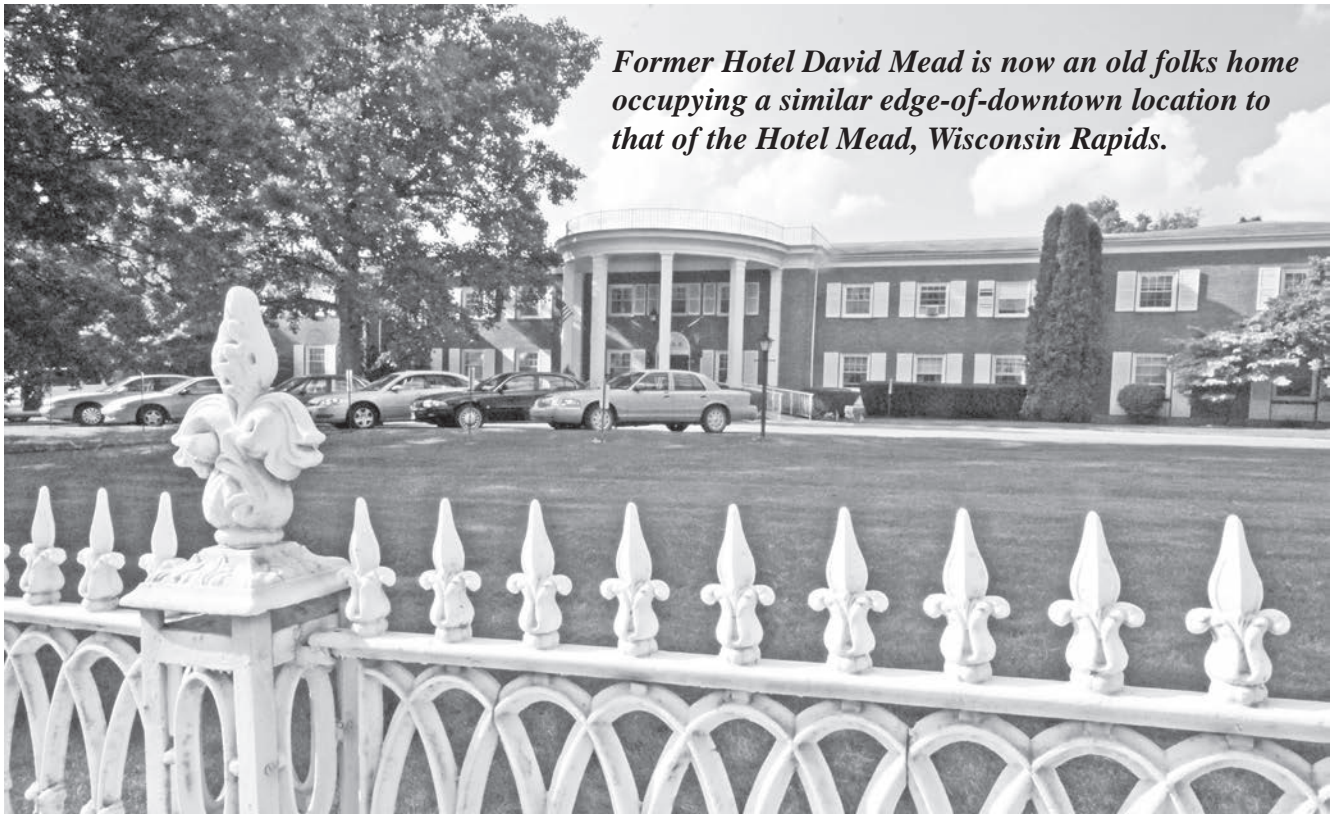
Centralia was the original name for what is now the West Side of Wisconsin Rapids, a twin to the formerly-named Grand Rapids.

Meadville

Returning from Montreal in July, Uncle Dave explored Meadville, Penn., because it was founded by David Mead, great grandfather of George Mead I, builder of Consolidated Papers Inc.

Meadville, in the Pennsylvania oil district was also fount of the buttonless fastener industry. The former frontier settlement south of Erie is similar to Wisconsin Rapids though it is older and has invested in a lot more historical markers. Meadville is best known as home of Allegheny College.





Former Hotel David Mead is now an old folks home occupying a similar edge-of-downtown location to that of the Hotel Mead, Wisconsin Rapids.

On Park[e] Avenue they spell it Meade. David Mead of Meadville served as a Major General in the War of 1812 and is sometimes confused with Union Gen. George Meade who defeated Confederate Gen. Lee at Gettysburg.



Replica of Meadville founder David Mead's frontier cabin, the first permanent settlement in northwestern Pennsylvania. On May 12, 1788, David and John Mead camped under a wild cherry tree on the east bank of French Creek and began a community. Partially in retaliation, David's father, Darius, was kidnapped and killed by a band of displaced indigenous peoples.





Believed to be a portrait of David Mead of Meadville, the only likeness known to exist. The house is his, and is being rehabilitated. The later photos below include added pillars.



Photos courtesy of Crawford County Historical Society — occupying quarters on Chestnut Street, Meadville, PA, Anne W. Stewart, curator.



David Mead house now

Ruth: Can't we just be friends?

Fate of River City in the Balance

By Holly Knoll

From Emily Baldwin Bell and, years later, from Emily's daughter, Ruth Baldwin Barker, came an unusually complete collection of memorabilia related to the important local families of Mead and Witter. Boxes of correspondence between George Mead and Ruth Witter now being transcribed at the Museum provide a look into their lives and the social events taking place around them.

One fateful letter from 1896 could have changed the history of Wisconsin Rapids dramatically, if indeed it was to be taken seriously. What would have become of Wisconsin Rapids if George and Ruth would have never married?

Here is a sneak peek into their world and the story that almost wasn't.

Dear Mr. Mead:-

I must confess that your letter was a great surprise to me. I had not thought that you felt for me anything more than the passing friendship that you would feel for the sister of one of your brothers in Theta Delta Chi. For anything deeper than that, I assure you I am not worthy.

Ever since I have known you I have regarded you with the highest of esteem, which when I became acquainted with you deepened into the sincerest friendship. A deeper feeling than this Mr. Mead I cannot say that I can give you now.

Marriage is a question which I cannot think of at present. In the first place I am a little too young. I hope my education is not yet completed. I may not be able to go to school any longer, yet I live in hopes that this year at least may be spent in college. If not it will be because I am needed at home.

May we not continue our friendship Mr. Mead? I should feel it a loss not easily filled should I lose a friendship that I have so much enjoyed.

Why do you fear I will never think of you?

There is not a day goes by in which I do not think of you. I miss you now more than the first few days after you left, and whenever we drive by the island I say something to myself.

You answered me a question that I asked you when you were here. Now I will return the compliment by answering one of yours.

You remember our evening when we were driving, you asked me if I liked Isaac [Witter]. Strange that I would not answer but I will tell you now. Yes, I like Isaac very much.

We were all invited to a picnic last Tuesday and we all went. It was quite amusing to see the two factions.

We had not intended to make any difference, but found it necessary when we all arrived. In fact I had occasion to foresee it before anyone got there.

By some mistake I got in the carriage with the wrong crowd and I truly felt I was "in the wrong pew." Of all the remarks and b----s[?] and "jokes."

If I had cared I should have resented it but as it worried me so little I took no notice of it. Coming home, we were all trying to sing when one young lady who had not been out to ... the lake started "Doris [the Village Maiden?]."

Carrie & Nan Ward immediately hushed her and told her that was only for the onion[?] crowd. I felt relieved I can tell you. For as you say "May Doris never be performed [?]."

So you have begun your reading. You are ahead of me. Isaac and I started a Romance of Two Worlds last Sunday. We both became very much interested but as I was not always ready to read, Isaac read ahead, so I have only heard a few snatches of it. Marie Corelli's language is always so delightful and her ideas, many of them are so novel that it gives one something to think about even though they cannot agree with her.

The afternoon is nearly spent so I must leave you. Hoping to hear from you soon again.

I am

Your Friend

Ruth Witter

At Home [On Third Street?]

Friday Afternoon

**From Ruth
in
Grand Rapids**



Dear Mr. Mead:-

I must confess that your letter was a great surprise to me. I had not thought that you felt for me anything more than the passing friendship that you would feel for the sister of one of your brothers in Theta Delta Chi. For anything deeper than that, I assure you I am not worthy.

**To George
in
Rockford**

Nekoosa Then and Now

By Lori Brost
Museum Administrator

One of the biggest projects I've taken on at the Museum is cataloguing the Photo Room on the Third Floor, where I've seen parts of the towns I grew up in that I never knew existed. Recently, I found a box marked "Slaybaugh Collection" that contained incredible photos of Nekoosa and decided that I wanted to show them off. That desire, coupled with another project, photographing the current businesses in the Rapids, Port Edwards and Nekoosa areas, seemed to go hand in hand. It's amazing to see how many of the buildings are still standing despite having changed owners, names and types of business many times over the years.

2011 photos by Lori Brost

The view from "The Hill" has changed. The dirt road from which you could see almost the entire town of Nekoosa is a paved highway with a drastically different view. Note the mill and smokestack in the background.

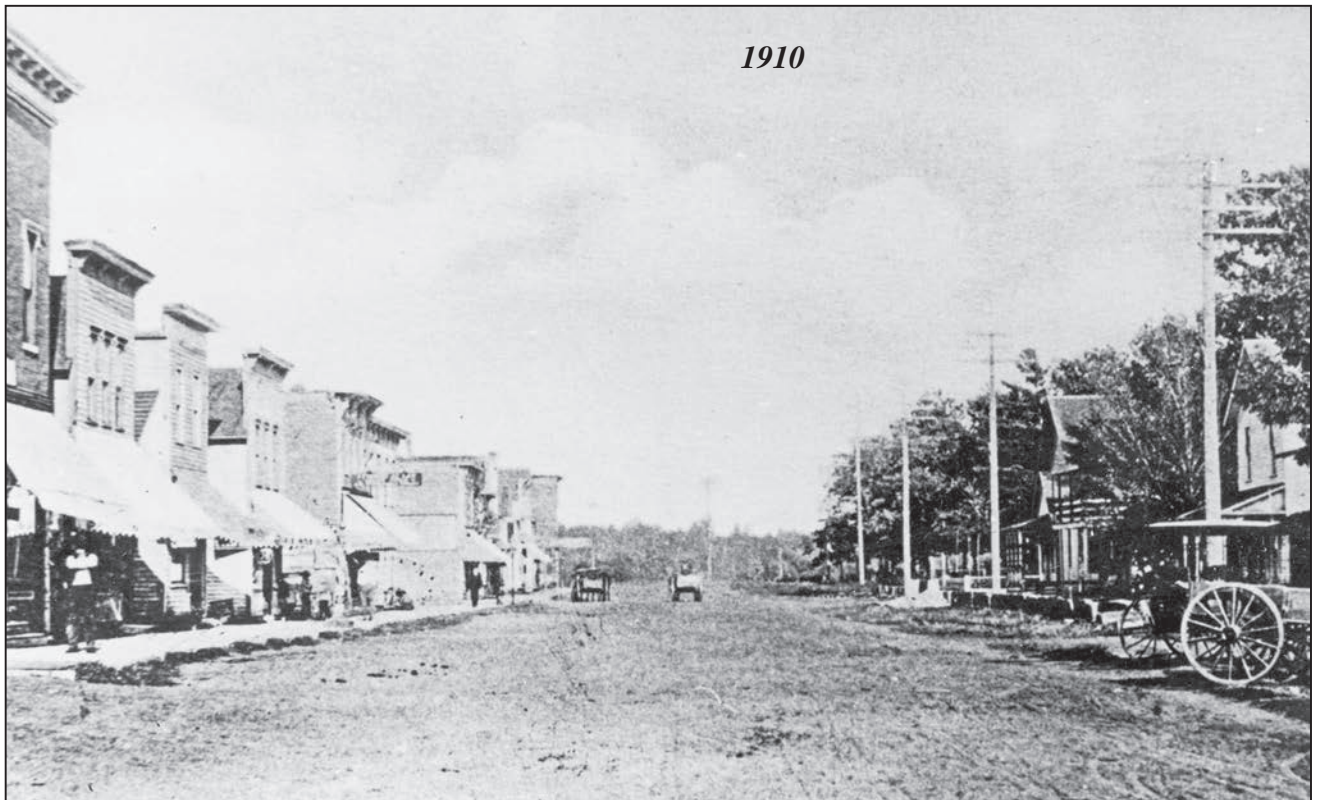


Looking east: On the left below is the end of Rogers' Grocery. The next building, formerly Gutheil Mercantile and Feckhelm's Store, is best known as "Gambles." The Zeman house was home to both the Beauty Nook and Pearl's Dress Shop, next door to Hooper's Store which was also the city library and Schroeder's. Brandt Market had apartments upstairs and Zurfluh's Bar and Bowling alley resided on the end of the block.



Now





1910

Looking east: Despite the dirt road and rather residential look, most of the buildings still remain from this photo dating 100 years ago. Voss Hardware, which appears to stand out further than the other buildings, and Herrick House are still standing in this photo; however, the Stevens Building has not yet been built at this time. Houses on the right side of the street are replaced by Nekoosa Port Edwards State Bank.

Thanks to Darla Allen of Charles and Jo Ann Lester Public Library, Nekoosa, and to J. Marshall Buehler, Port Edwards, for help with photos and identifications.

Now





Looking west, right to left (above): Denis Drugs, Herrick House, Voss Hardware, Stevens Building, Polzin's Restaurant, Post Office, Mlsna's saloon and, depending on the year, Brazeau Mercantile, Walker-Gwynn, Johnson Hills or Oliver's Grocery Store.

Denis Drugs building was most recently Phillips Drug but still stands. Herrick House was torn down to make way for the Clark Station replaced by Swiftwater Ice Cream. Voss Hardware was lost in a spectacular fire in 1960, replaced by the new H&R Block and Nekoosa Floral and Gifts. The Stevens Building still stands, though there are no longer dances or shows on the third floor and the main floor sits empty. The basement is a local "watering hole."

The Polzin building has been a restaurant, a café and is once again a restaurant called the Market Street Grille. The next building once housed the Post Office and Peltier Plumbing; after the Post Office was moved down by Denis Drugs, this building was torn down and Tom McLean built an office for his law practice. At one time the next building was called Jack's Bar. It has spent the majority of its time standing as a bakery. The middle apartment above the Napa store was the first place I lived after leaving home, the memories of the smell of the bakery next door and the swaying of the building during storms all came back when the building was torn down in 1999 and replaced with a more modern building.

Now





The dark building on the far left was the Korbal Grocery, after a fire it was replaced with a larger brick building, next is Polzin Hardware and the Bentz Hotel and saloon. On the right side of the photo is the Jackan Store building which was built as a hotel for paper mill employees. It later became a grocery store. Today, this space is used to store wood chips for Domtar's Nekoosa mill.

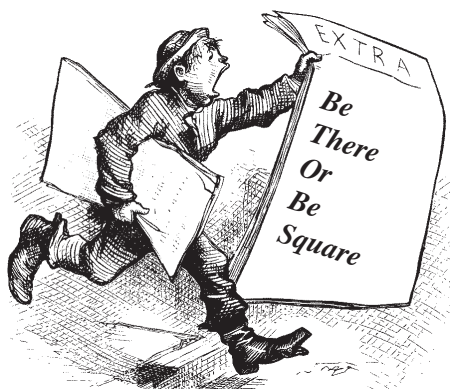


South Wood County Historical Corp.
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Artifacts, a local history magazine and newsletter for the South Wood County Historical Corp. welcomes contributions of writings and photographs relevant to the greater Wisconsin Rapids area. For a year's subscription and membership send \$20 to the address above. Questions? Contact Lori Brost, Museum Administrator and assistant editor, 715-423-1580. lori@swch-museum.com



Annual Meeting

South Wood County Historical Corp.
540 Third Street South
Wisconsin Rapids WI 54494
715-423-7496
Contact: lori@swch-museum.com

Notice is hereby given that the 2011 Annual Meeting of the South Wood County Historical Corporation will be held at the Museum on Monday, September 12, 2011, at 4 p.m. for the following purposes:

1. To receive the report of the President on activities of the South Wood County Historical Corp. for 2011
2. To elect Officers and Board of Directors

*All members are encouraged to attend this official
and social occasion.*