



# ARTIFACTS



Cover photo from *Fat Memoirs*, "Milwaukee road" depot c. 1898. Sculpture "Home Again" by Phil Brown, pp. 2-3; Weeden Witter Legacy, 3; Depot Exhibit Update by Lori Brost, 4-5; Passenger Depots of South Wood County by Alison Bruener, 6; Depots of Wisconsin Rapids 7-19; Depots of Port Edwards by J. Marshall Buehler, 20-23; Depots of Nekoosa by J. Marshall Buehler, 24-27; Vesper Depot by Scott Brehm, 28-31; Heiser *Scope* story and *Penultimate Memoirs* by Uncle Dave, 31; St. Paul depot, 32.

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Phil Brown  
SWCHC President

## Home Again

It started with Barb Herreid, one of our Master Gardeners, as she looked through the November 2011 issue of *Artifacts* (#31). When she saw old photos sent by Phelps Dean Witter, showing statuary in the garden here, she couldn't help but think of a similar piece—next door.

By chance, our neighbor's house was for sale and Barb commented to another Master Gardener, Michaeleen Erickson, "Wouldn't it be nice to have that statue in the garden at the museum?" When the house's owner, Christa Pierce, confirmed that indeed the statue used to be in the Witter's garden, a deal was made, and plans formulated. How to get a 3,500 pound statue out one yard and into another before the closing?

Mechanical contractor Tweet/Garot had helped us move the First National Bank clock from West Grand Avenue to East Grand Avenue so I called Kurt Hollatz at Tweet/Garot and they were happy to volunteer their time and talents again. After two inches of rain the night before, we tore up the neighbor's lawn in the process, but we got the statue into the parking lot at the Museum.

Under the direction of the Master Gardeners, the new site for the statue was prepared and Tweet/Garot returned and placed the statue on the "left" side of the back lawn.

The sculpture, carved or cast of uncertain material, shows a young man serenading a young

woman, probably his girlfriend. According to one former owner of the statue, Mary Connor Pierce, it was purchased by Isaac and Charlotte Witter in Europe, between 1900 and 1925.

In the late 1940s, before the Museum property was purchased by George Mead to become T.B. Scott Public Library, Hamilton and Catherine Roddis purchased the statue and moved it, along with two smaller sculptures, to the Roddis property at 1108 E. Fourth Street, Marshfield. Upon the 1964 death of Catherine Roddis, the statue was given to Catherine's granddaughter, Mary Connor Pierce, who, with her husband, Dudley, had purchased a home at 530 Third Street S., across Locust Street from the Museum, then the T.B. Scott Public Library.

Mary was told by a knowledgeable source that the idea for the statue, known as "The Troubadours," came from a famous French painting.

The Pierces had their lower yard professionally landscaped, complete with a tennis court, and hired a moving company to transport the statue from Marshfield to Wisconsin Rapids, where it was placed on a pedestal. When Dudley

Pierce retired from his law practice, their son Andrew and then-wife Christa Pierce moved into the house. In summer 2015, the property was sold but not before Mary Pierce made sure the Witter statue would find its way back to its original home.

The statue was part of a Nov. 1, 1946, *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* story contributed by SWCHC board member Sarah Sigler. The most serious act of vandalism that Halloween "occurred at the residence of Mrs. Isaac J. Witter, 830 Third Street South, where a large stone statue on the lawn was pushed off its base and damaged, and a concrete urn was pushed off the front porch onto the sidewalk and smashed.

"The 1,200 pound statue, 'The Serenaders,' which was imported from Italy, was knocked completely off its stone base onto the ground, breaking a hand and forearm on one of the figures. No estimate of the value of the statue was available, since Mrs. Witter is at her winter home in Beverly Hills, Cal. The vandalism was reported to the police by August Kauth, caretaker of the estate."

"Serenaders" still shows some of the damage done by these hooligans.

## **Weeden's Complicated Legacy**

*How former statue owners Mary Connor Pierce and Isaac Witter are related*

Why was industrialist Hamilton Roddis of Marshfield interested in the Witter statue? The explanation goes back to one of the early Witters, Weeden (1764-1827) a resident of Hopkinton, Rhode Island, also home to Weeden's sons, Josiah (1805-1872) and Squire (1807-1882).

At Brookfield, New York, one of Squire's sons was George Franklin (1830-1910).

One of the sons of Squire's brother, Josiah, was Jeremiah Delos (1835-1914), George Franklin Witter's first cousin.

In Wisconsin, George F. married Frances Phelps and J.D. married Emily Phelps, themselves cousins.

J.D.'s son, Isaac Witter (1873-1942), was the only resident owner of the Museum building.

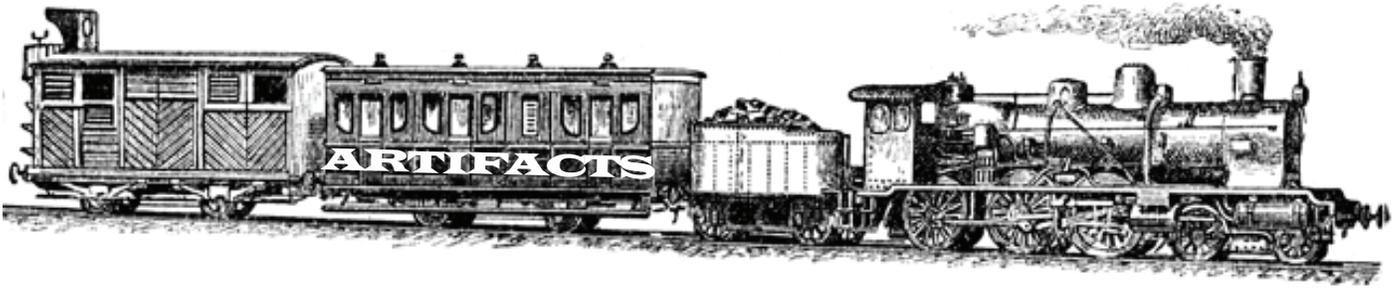
George F.'s daughter, Huldah Marybelle "Mary" Witter (1865-1935), wed William Duncan Connor (1864-1944).

Their son, Gordon (1905-1986), wed Mary Roddis (1909-2000).

The parents of Mary Roddis were Hamilton (1875-1960) and Catherine Roddis (1882-1964). That brought them into the Museum sculpture picture.

The daughter of Gordon and Mary, Mary Connor (1933- ), wed Dudley Pierce, (1930- ).

It was Mary Pierce who had lived next door to the Museum and provided much of the information presented by Phil Brown here.



Lori Brost  
*Museum Administrator*

## Depot Exhibit Update

In the years since 2008 when I came to the Museum, I have been involved in some pretty significant projects, such as the Witter/Mead wall exhibit—important because it enables our visitors to follow the relationships between the two families, while expanding the presence of these prominent individuals not only within the home but throughout the community.

The most ambitious exhibit work I've been involved in to date has been the Front Gallery, housing the Grim Natwick display. Everything came down off the walls, which were repainted. Photos were printed and captions written. Both were mounted and the exhibit put back together.

This year's project is significant on a personal level because it allowed me to work with Port Edwards historian and charter board member Marshall Buehler.

Marshall had a passion for railroads as a child and his love and interest has never faded. A few years ago, he and his wife, Pat, made a generous financial donation and immediately I said, "This needs to be used to update the depot area."

Marshall doesn't remember exactly what the basement area looked like prior to the depot exhibit but recalled train items and a wooden bench from the Milwaukee Road depot which had been torn down around the time the Museum was set up.

In 1993, then-Director Pamela Walker and Marshall set out to create an actual exhibit in the

depot area. A tinned ceiling was put into place, a ticket agent desk built and photographs and other items, including a stove, added. The result has been a favorite attraction, complimented many times over the years.

Now comes time to enhance that exhibit a little more. Working with railroad buff John Berg, summer intern Alison Bruener, and Marshall, we plan to bring the focus to depots within the area that includes Wisconsin Rapids, Nekoosa and Port Edwards.

Many of those depots were community landmarks that can be seen in this issue.



Marshall Buehler, working on the existing depot exhibit, 1993



Above: Tom Coley model of Milwaukee Road depot, on loan



Current depot exhibit, Museum basement

# Passenger Depots

## *of South Wood County*

By Alison Bruener  
*SWCHC Museum Intern*



Working as the South Wood County Historical Museum's summer intern, I have had the privilege of seeing firsthand how rich our region's history is. The Museum building and the people who have graced its rooms both past and present have taught me how important it is to learn from one's history as we move towards our future. This upcoming school year, I will be a senior at Northland College in Ashland, Wis., majoring in History with aspirations to attend graduate school—in museum studies.

This season, the Museum focused on the topic of train depots. It is fitting that a summer be devoted to a topic that holds a special place in our nation's history. In the mid-1800s, railroads would come to cross not only from coast to coast, but to inland regions such as ours. With the Wisconsin river running through this community, lumber production and rafting was a major industry. In the late 19th century, wood production would soon be replaced with papermaking. Moving raw materials, products and passengers by waterway was replaced by rail and the depots you see here were built.



Green Bay and Western staff in 1947 at the 1886 depot on First Avenue North (replaced in 1959): Jim Dolan, Earl Fox, Seth Canning, P.H. Clark, R.A. Vandrel, Sam Remley, C.H. Halvorson, R.M. Anunson, E.F. Russell, L.J. Van Dreese, C. Stutleen.

Anunson, a friend of the editor's family, managed to get brother Gary Engel a job in 1973 – as a gandy dancer. Gary also worked for Chicago & North Western prior to a career as a teacher.

## Passenger Depots of Wisconsin Rapids

# **GREEN BAY AND WESTERN**

In November 1872, the first railroad arrived here, the Green Bay and Lake Pepin (later Green Bay and Western). It was the only railroad to build a depot on the Grand Rapids side of the river and the center of a neighborhood community, as shown in a July 14, 1904, *Wisconsin Valley Leader* as it celebrated “the new North side.”

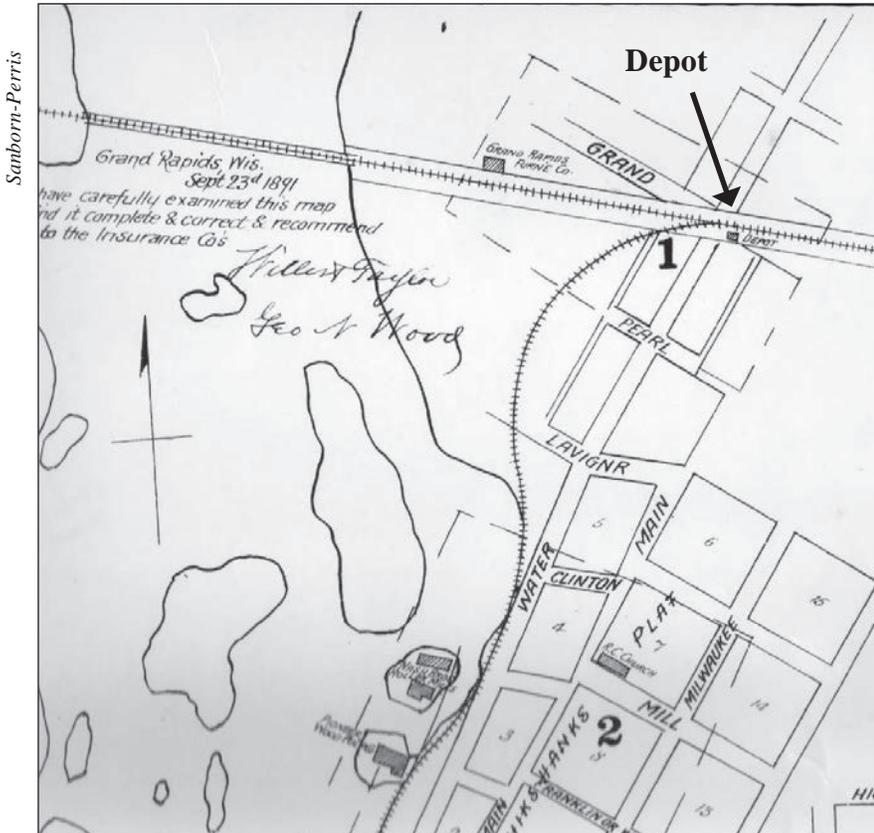
“We have the East and West side, the South side and are rapidly developing a healthy North side since the establishment of the new brewery near the Green Bay depot. There will be clustered about this depot the brewery, the pickle station, the table factory, a cigar factory, two hotels, two saloons and a first-class grocery, crockery and notion store.”

Ten years later, a 1914 *Grand Rapids Tribune* noted the depot was likely to be replaced

and that it “was alright at one time, but the city has advanced so rapidly in recent years, and the business of the road so increased to such an extent that the present depot is not sufficient to hardly take care of the patronage. Besides it is not in keeping with the advancement of the city.” But there is no evidence that the old depot was replaced until 1959.

After World War II, passenger train service would begin to dwindle due to the conversion to automobile travel.

The Green Bay and Western ceased passenger traffic in 1949 and in 1993 would be absorbed into Wisconsin Central which in turn would be purchased by Canadian National in 2001.

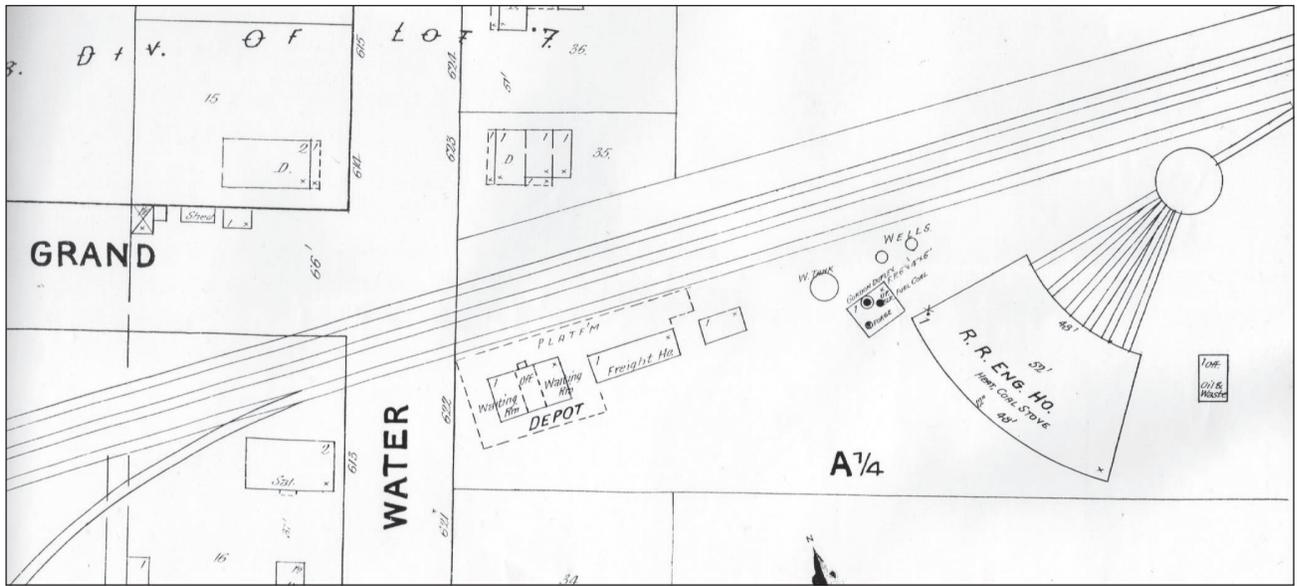


In an 1892 directory, The Green Bay (and Western) depot was listed at “north city limits, Grand Rapids” and, in more modern times, at 1500 First Street North, Wisconsin Rapids. A roundhouse also at that address (shown opposite) still stands.

On the 1891 map at left, Water Street is now First Street North, Wisconsin Rapids.

Train fun: August 30, 1890: tickets were advertised on the G.B. & W. and the “St. Paul” for excursions to Lake Emily; Winona Exposition; Minn. Exposition and State Fair; Interstate Fair, La Crosse, Wis.; Great District Fair, Stevens Point; Milwaukee Exposition. By S.F. Durga, Ag’t

1891  
Sanborn  
Perris  
insurance  
map



Summer 1940 photo by William O’Gara shows G.B.&W. coaling tower in background (dismantled in 1953), water tank and 1912 freight house.

Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault St. Marie

## **SOO LINE**

In 1890, the Port Edwards, Centralia and Northern railroad connected Marshfield and Nekoosa.

The PEC&N became part of the Marshfield and Southeastern in 1896, which joined Wisconsin Central in 1901 and, after 1908, was operated by the Soo Line.

A vivid portrayal of the Soo depot came from the *Grand Rapids Tribune* of May 22, 1912.

“It has only one waiting room with a seating capacity of about nine people, and when about fifty persons, consisting of a conglomeration of Indians, drunks, women, and children get crowded in there, with the air blue with tobacco smoke and profanity, and murky with the odor of German socks and cheap whiskey, it is anything but pleasant for a person who has not a well developed, we might have said abnormally developed, sense of humor.”

The suggestion was that the Soo follow the example of the St. Paul and build a new depot.

The Soo was not a major passenger carrier and it showed. Their depot was a “Disgrace to the City,” proclaimed the *Daily Leader* Dec. 30, 1914.

“How this architectural curiosity held together seems to be a mystery. It is the worst excuse for a passenger depot that we have ever seen...”

“There is no accommodations whatever for the traveling public. The place is not clean and it is altogether too small.” Patrons, said the *Leader*, would rather stand outside in the cold than go inside and soil their clothes.

In August 1916, a new depot was under construction by a Chippewa Falls firm and, said the *Daily Leader*, “will be one of the finest in this part of the state. The building will be 110 feet long and 27 feet wide. This is the same width as the St. Paul depot in this city. The arrangement of the waiting rooms and ticket office will also be the same as that of the St. Paul.

“The Soo line is now building all their new depots without steps leading into them. They are built on the level with the street, thus getting away from the dangerous steps.”

By Sept. 18, 1917, the Soo railroad depot was opened and well received. It was built of sandstone and pressed brick with an asbestos roof with a cement platform two hundred and fifty feet long.

“It is finished with oak and the walls tinted straw color. The building is strictly up to date, being heated with hot water, and equipped with electric lights, toilets, parcel lockers, and a telephone booth in the men’s waiting room for the convenience of the traveling public.”

A new track was installed from Seventh Avenue south to Grand Avenue, and a new stock yard was built. The “old shed” that had been the original depot was sold and moved across the tracks where it was used for storage.

Soo Line passenger service in this area ended in 1961. The depot was vacated August 1974. It was sold and dismantled in 1976 and, like all west side depots and rail yards was subsumed into oblivion by redevelopment and the Rapids Mall project.

*Soo Line Historical and Technical Archives*



*Jan. 16, 1917.*

*Soo Line Historical and Technical Archives*



1969 photo by William O’Gara of Soo Line depot, 531 W. Grand Ave., a facility shared with CNW. By removing the canopy, the Soo converted a potentially attractive structure to an eyesore.

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19th century photo shows horse-drawn omnibuses read to take passengers to addresses for a fee or to hotels at no charge. Water tower likely served Mackinnon Hub & Spoke factory.

McMillan Memorial Library



Old depot pictured here and on the cover was probably built by the Wisconsin Valley Railroad after 1873 and was called the "St. Paul" depot prior to "Milwaukee Road."

Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific

**MILWAUKEE ROAD**

Of the local depots, the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (Milwaukee Road), was the most well-known by recent generations. Built as the Wisconsin Valley Railroad from Tomah to Centralia/Grand Rapids in 1873, the tracks extended as far north as Star Lake. Wisconsin Valley was sold to the Chicago, Milwaukee & Saint Paul railroad in 1880.

In the 1930s, the depot handled four trains per day, two going north and two south, plus “specials” such as the air-conditioned Hiawatha North Woods inaugurated in 1936, promising a well-rested trip “up north” for fishing or gambling. Another train, more suited for bankers and students, went south to Madison.

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October 8, 1949: A Hiawatha train of the Milwaukee Road “holdup” at the station was a stunt to publicize the first annual Cranboree princess, who gave cranberry pies to the engineer, fireman and conductor. Passengers got cranberry juice from Lincoln high school girls.

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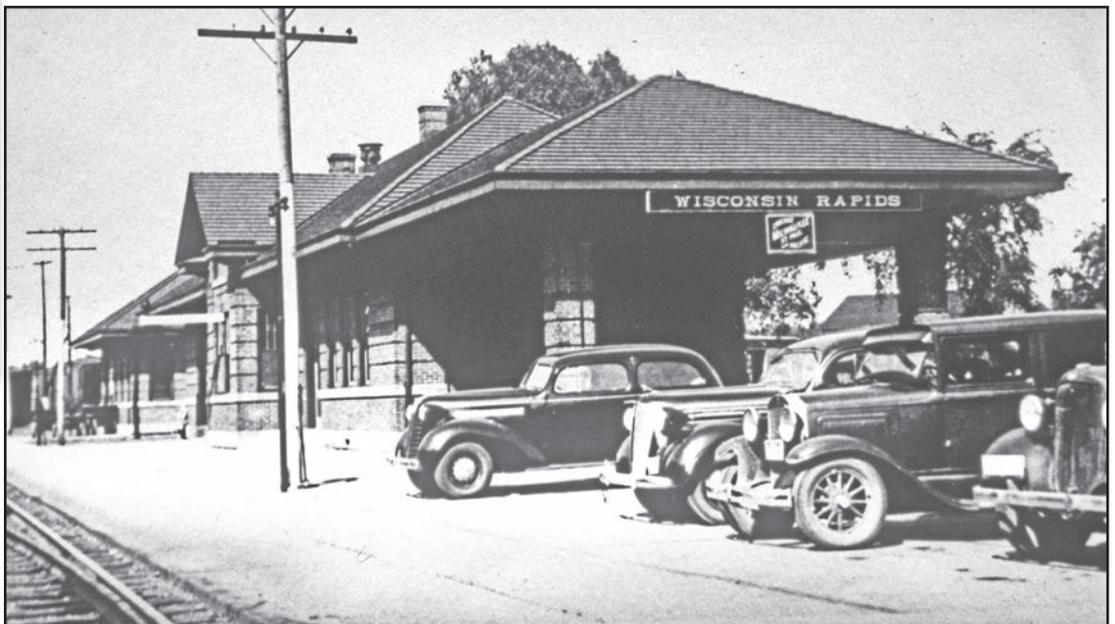


“Railroad Station about Completed.” *Grand Rapids Tribune*, Dec. 25, 1912.

“The building is 118 feet overall. On the south end is a covered platform for the accommodation of passengers during stormy weather. Just north of this is the ladies waiting room while on the north end of the building is the baggage room and the smoking room. In the center of the building is the office, the ticket window being in the center where it is readily accessible from both ends.”

The interior was described as being bright and cheerful, woodwork finished in oak, the “ground” completely “finished with floors so it stays clean,” bathrooms, separate waiting rooms for men and women and the entire building with electric lights.

Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune ads, 1946



SWCHC

At 720 West Grand, with an “in and out” driveway, it was a good place to turn around and drive back to the high school, and then turn around and drive back to the depot. That was called, “riding around.”



Right: Last passenger train to service the Milwaukee Road depot or any depot in Wisconsin Rapids, October 7, 1970.



Below, July 1973: Free bricks were offered.





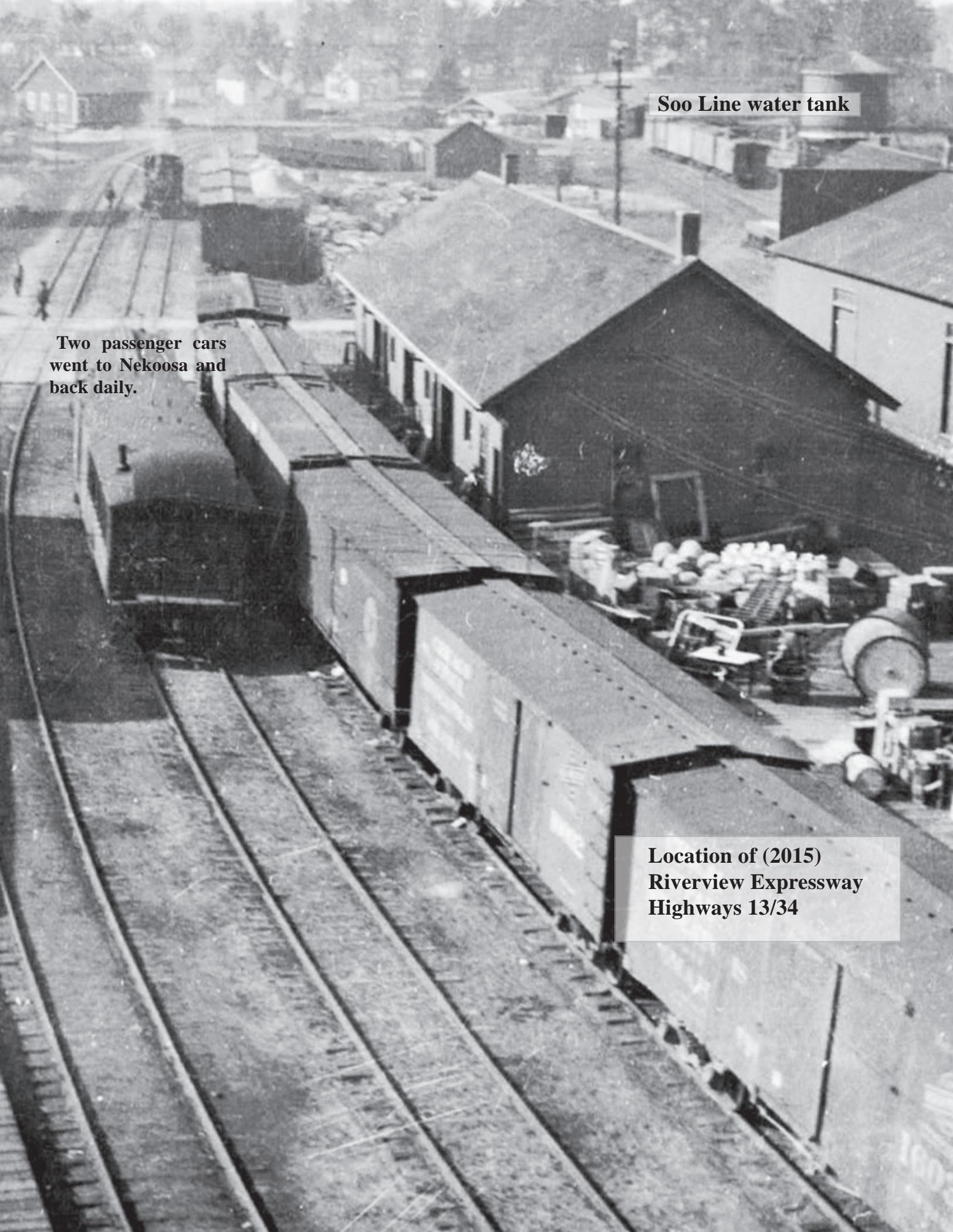
Centralia City Hall

West Grand Avenue



North Western Depot

1912 photo by Art Heger,  
North Western Agent, facing  
south from water tank

An aerial, black and white photograph of a train yard. In the foreground, several passenger cars are lined up on tracks, facing away from the camera. To the right, a large freight train is also visible. The yard is surrounded by residential buildings and a utility pole. A large water tank is visible in the upper right. The text 'Soo Line water tank' is overlaid on the image in the top right corner. Another text box in the middle left says 'Two passenger cars went to Nekoosa and back daily.' A third text box in the bottom right corner says 'Location of (2015) Riverview Expressway Highways 13/34'.

**Soo Line water tank**

**Two passenger cars  
went to Nekoosa and  
back daily.**

**Location of (2015)  
Riverview Expressway  
Highways 13/34**

## **CHICAGO & NORTHWESTERN**

Chicago & Northwestern passenger operations began Dec. 2, 1901, with regular service to Marshfield, paralleling the Soo Line tracks.

Heading east, CNW tracks crossed the Wisconsin river south of downtown via a picturesque bridge at what is now the site of Riverview Expressway. On the west side, a branch to the south connected with Port Edwards and Nekoosa.

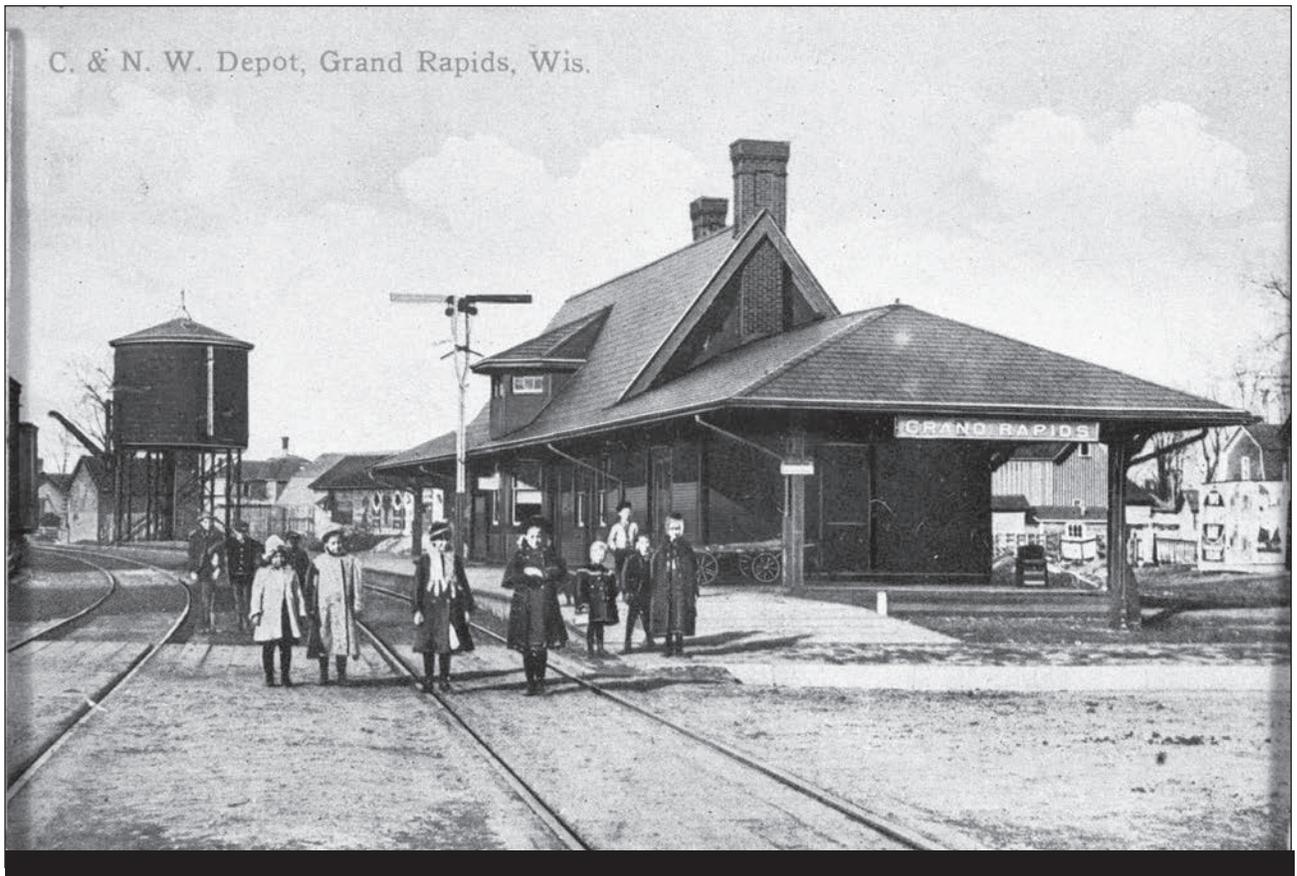
*Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune*, June 20, 1963:

“A landmark on West Grand Avenue will soon be torn down. The old Chicago and North Western building has been purchased by the Wisconsin Gas Co. and is destined to be demolished.

“The deteriorating depot building has not been in use by the railroad for the past many years. Chicago and North Western employees have their office in a portion of the Soo line depot on the Southside of Grand Avenue.”



SWCHC



Chicago & North Western passenger and freight depot, 510 W. Grand Ave.



## *They should have built a union station*

By J. Marshall Buehler

There used to be three depots and now there are none. These are the ups and downs of U.S. Railroads.

Rail service came to Port Edwards in 1873 when the Wisconsin Valley Railroad built their line from Tomah to Wisconsin Rapids. The Soo Line, originally the Port Edwards, Centralia and Northern Railroad, entered the village in 1890 and the Chicago & Northwestern, originally the Princeton & North Western, arrived in 1901.

I doubt that these pioneer railways built the more elaborate depots displayed in our railroad exhibit at the Museum. After all, they only offered once a day service each way in their formative years. As passenger and freight business increased, so did the size of their station facilities; usually resulting in a new structure.

The Milwaukee Road, successor to the Wisconsin Valley Line, had the most elaborate structure. Since, as a young lad, I spent up to five hours a day at that depot, I can comment on that one best.

I went there right after lunch, watched them load and unload freight from the Wisconsin Rapids to Nekoosa local. Next came the fast freight that did not stop at Port Edwards. But the highlight of the afternoon was the arrival of the streamlined North Woods Hiawatha. I had the opportunity on a couple times to climb up into the cab of the locomotive to hand the engineer some orders or a letter. Wow!

Wheeling the two-wheel cart of mail out on the platform to the mail car was another experience, along with filling the water jug from a hydrant across the street, filling the coal pails in winter, and even sweeping the floor—all for a handful of peanuts from the vending machine.

Continuing with the afternoon schedule, the local freight now returned from Nekoosa and finally, around five fifteen, the Hiawatha returned from New Lisbon. I made a couple trips from Port Edwards to New Lisbon and back but only after explicit instructions not to get off the train at New Lisbon or else I might board the wrong one at New Lisbon and end up in Chicago or Milwaukee.

The Port Edwards Milwaukee Road depot was a high roof building. Why they all had those high roofs, I don't know. At one end was a waiting room, wooden benches, ticket window, coal stove,

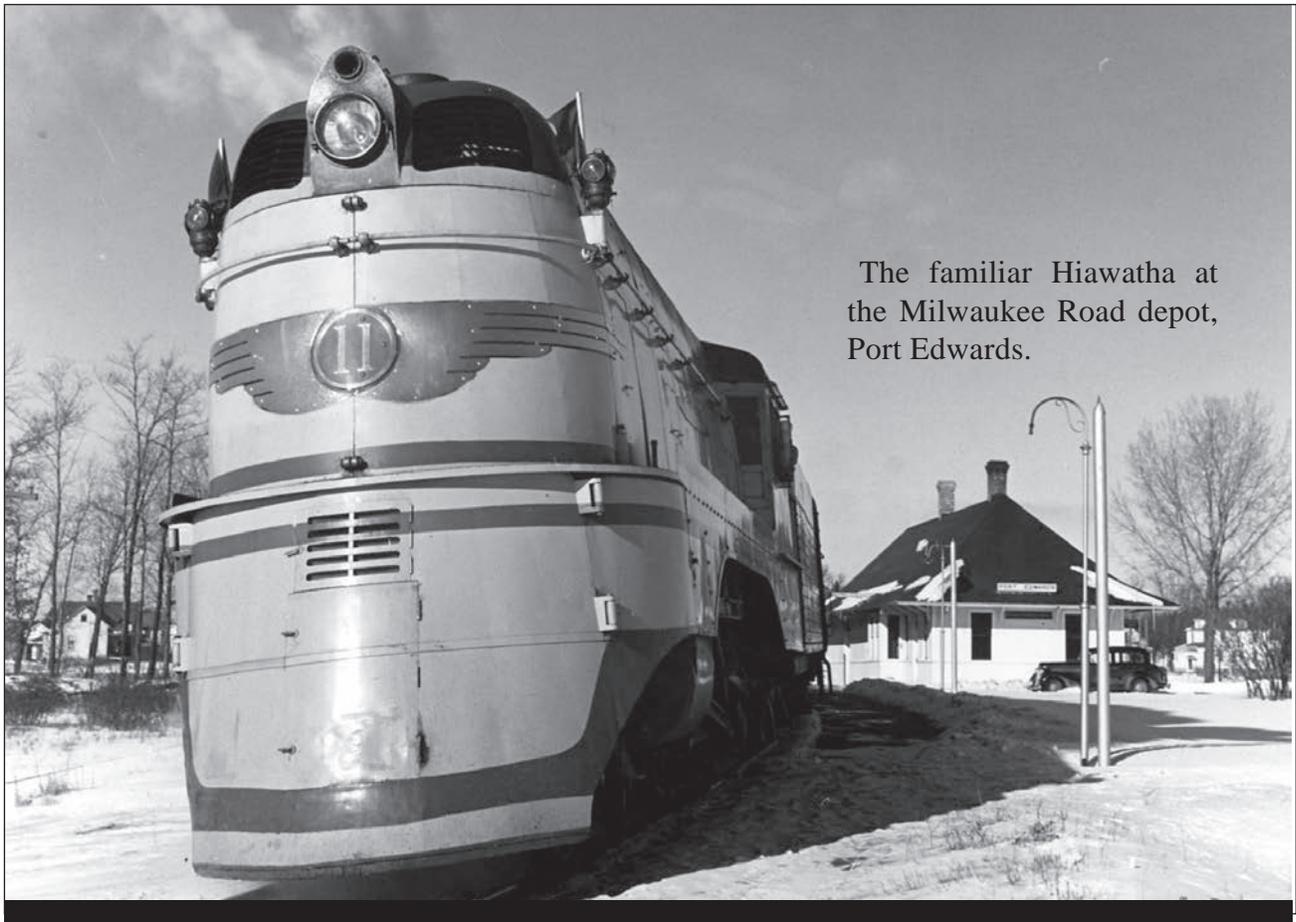
and a "Canteen" candy vending machine. It offered stale, and in the summer, wormy candy bars for a nickel. A glass globe peanut vending machine delivered a handful of salted peanuts for a penny. A small child's hand that is.

The center of the structure was the office where two desks, one for the agent and one for his assistant and a chest high counter provided a place to do business. There was the traditional bay window with the telegraph instruments on a desk, just as we have in the Museum. Two large levers over the desk operated the semaphore arms outside. There was another coal-fired stove in this area.

Next came another waiting room, which was vacant and probably used by men who wanted to enjoy a cigar while they waited. Lastly, there was a freight room. It was unheated, had a coal pile in one corner and a big sliding door, large enough to take out the big four wheel Railway Express wagon.

And very important was the segregated men's and women's outhouse.





The familiar Hiawatha at the Milwaukee Road depot, Port Edwards.

The Soo Line depot was about the same but the waiting and freight rooms had been converted into living quarters for the agent, Mac McGill and his family.

Most modest was the North Western depot, which had no agent and was the first to succumb to the wreckers crowbars. The depot was dismantled right after World War II and the salvaged lumber used to build a duplex house about a hundred yards to the west.

The Milwaukee Road depot was presented to the Port Edwards Fire department, to be used as a practice drill in extinguishing a structure blaze. If I remember correctly, the volunteers enjoyed three evenings of putting out the fire and deliberately reigniting it each evening. This was after passenger service to Port Edwards was terminated.

Of interest is the fact that all three depots were spaced within a distance the length of a football field. Hence a Union Station would have made sense.

Another bit of information is the fact that all three depots were painted white. Most railroads had a personalized color scheme: North Western was maroon; Soo Line was yellow; and Milwaukee Road, two-tone gray. But in Port Edwards they were all white, carrying out L.M. Alexander's goal for a neat clean village. Hence the nickname of Port Edwards was "White City."



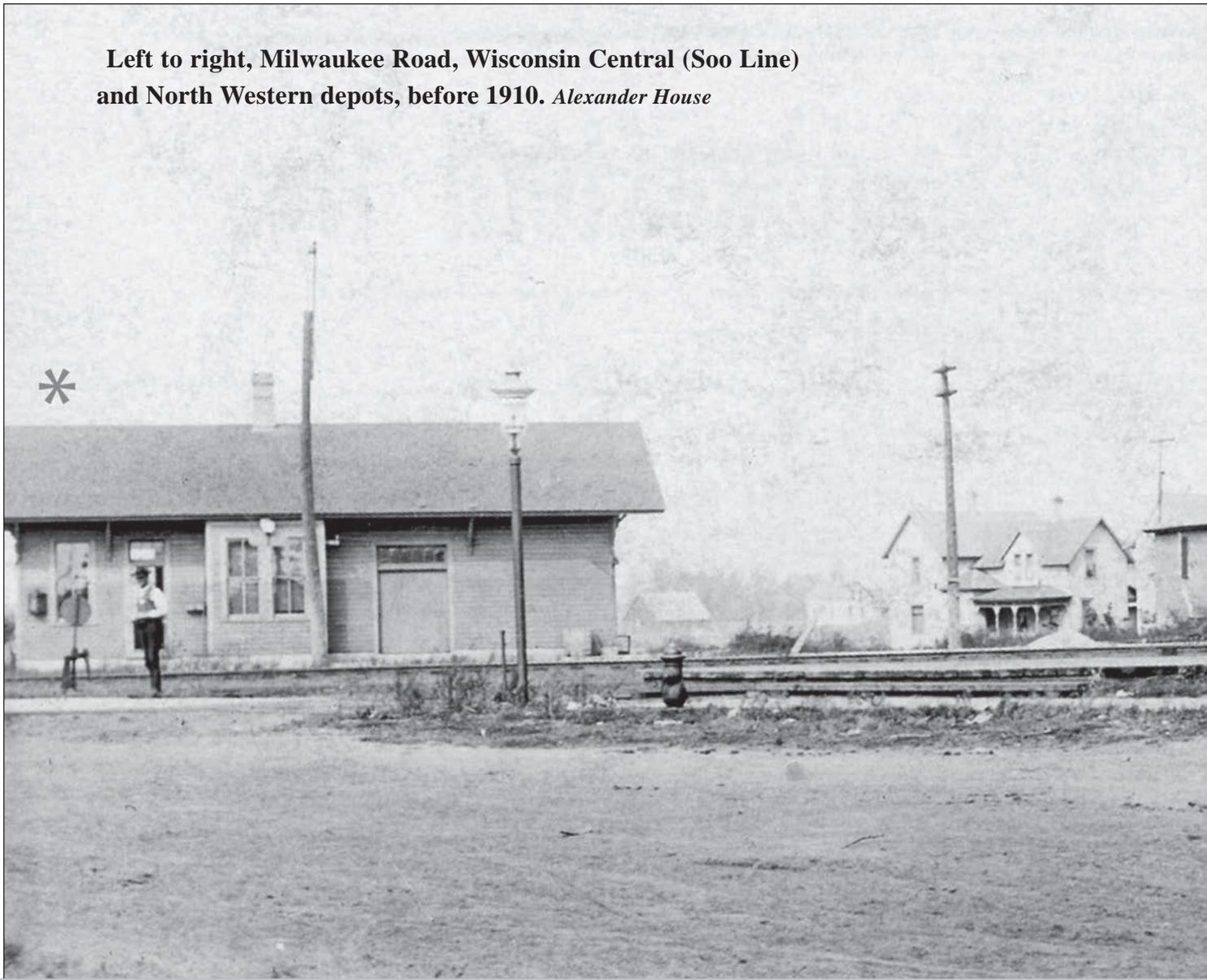
*George A. Ferero Jr., summer 1974. Soo Line Historical and Technical Collection*



*Other Port Edwards and Nekoosa photos in this section are from Alexander House*



Left to right, Milwaukee Road, Wisconsin Central (Soo Line) and North Western depots, before 1910. *Alexander House*



## Nekoosa Depots

By J. Marshall Buehler

Nekoosa could have qualified for a union station, since the same three railroads that served Port Edwards also provided service to Nekoosa. And all three depots were within fifty yards of one another.

Two of them, Soo Line and Northwestern, were at stub ends of tracks that came from Wisconsin Rapids. North Western came into Nekoosa with the locomotive at the usual front of the train, but then had to make a 'runby' on an adjacent track and couple on to the other end of the train. Thus the locomotive operated in reverse to Port Edwards where there was a 'Y' track for reversing engines.



The Soo Line did the same and used the 'Y' turn around at Port Edwards or proceeded to Wisconsin Rapids where they had their own turning facilities.

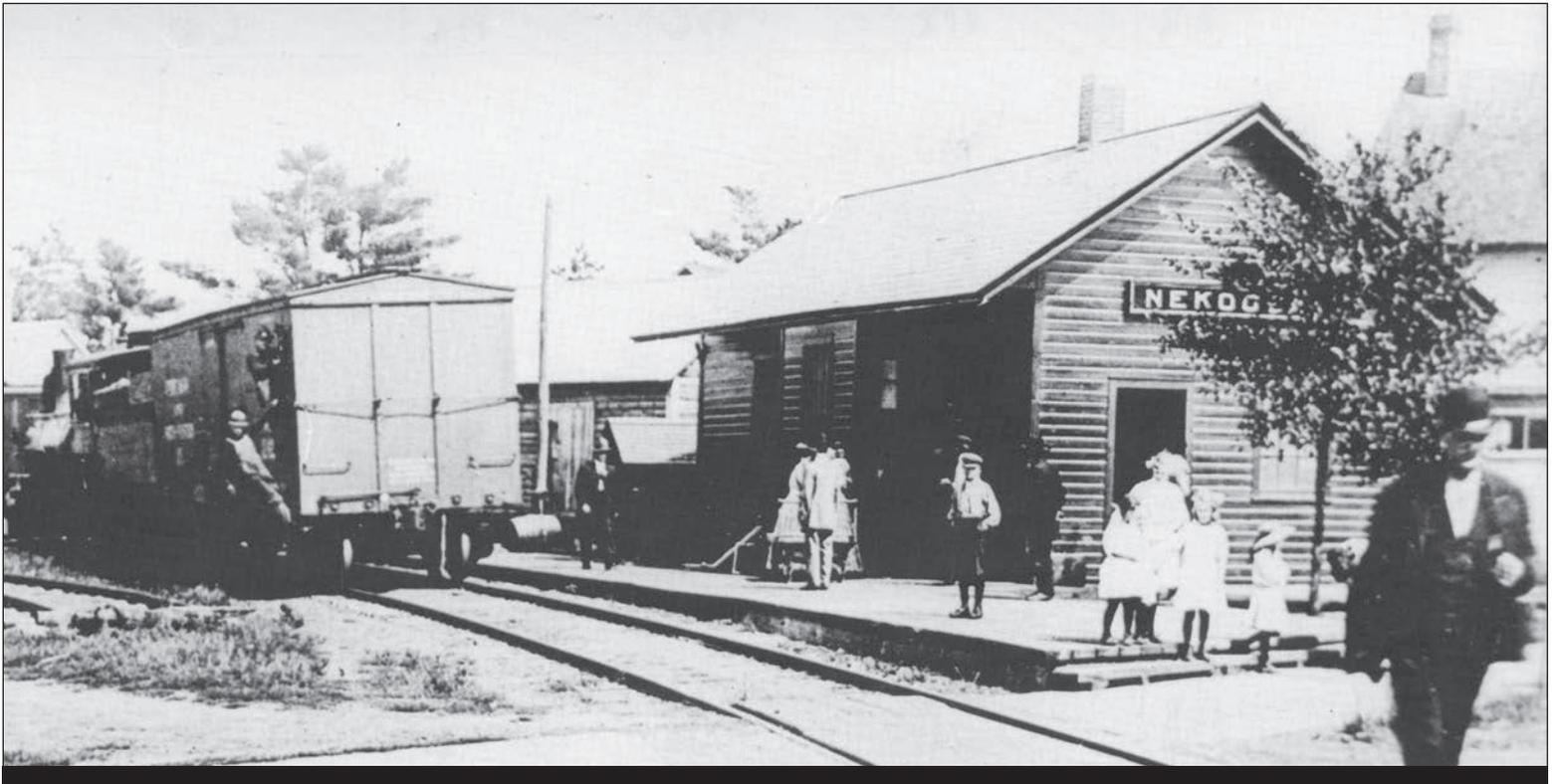
Both of these railroads terminated at Market Street where they had their respective depots.

However, the Milwaukee Road, which also had its depot at Market Street, did not terminate the track there. Instead, their track crossed Market Street, ran along the mill fence in a south-westerly direction, across Point Basse Avenue and then made an oval loop to the north—past the site of the

present post office, and at a spot near the foundry, went through a spring switch which placed it back on the track that it had arrived on.

Hence the train was reversed with the engine still on the front of the train.

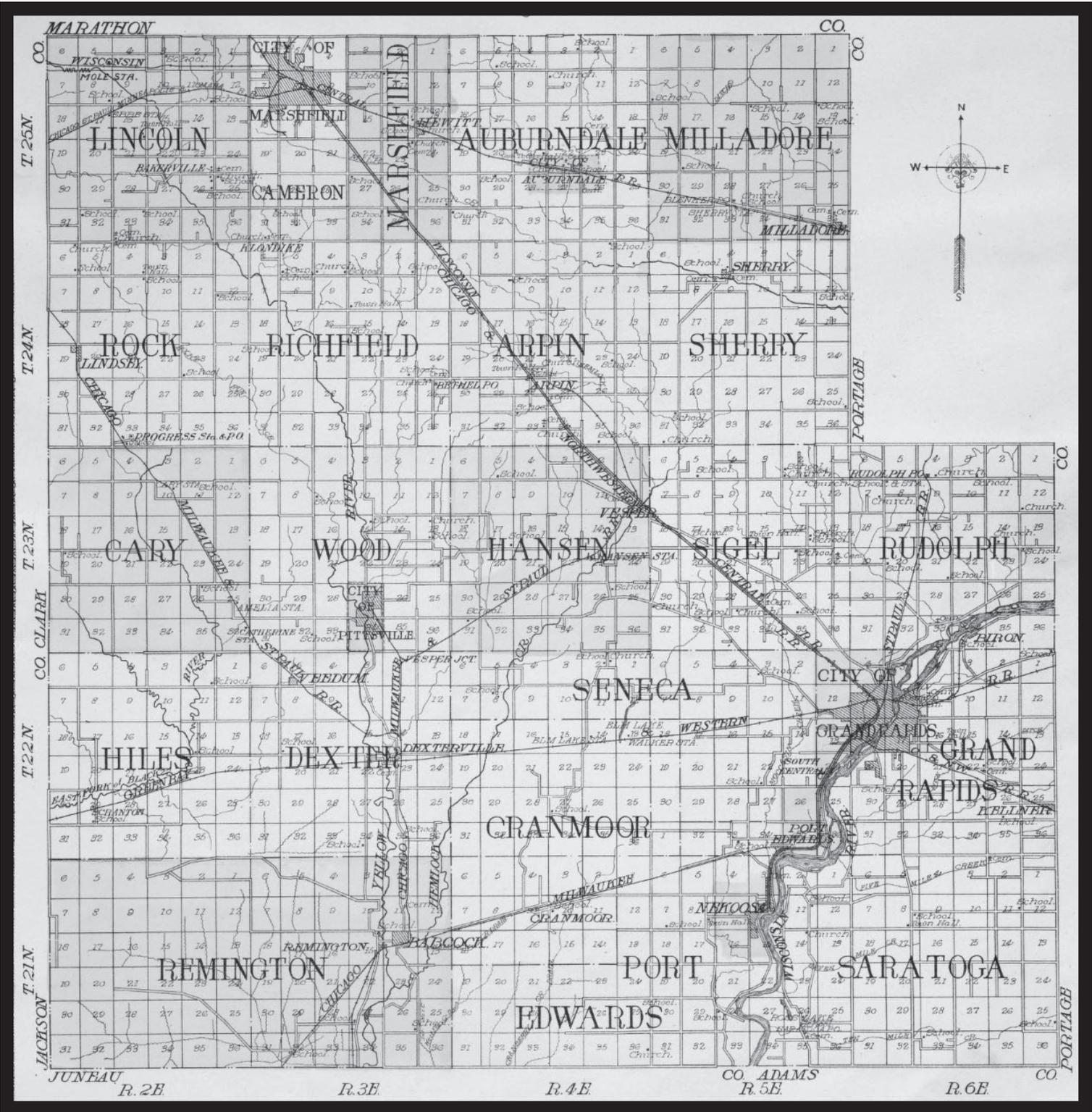
The track into Nekoosa was a spur line from the road's Valley Division line which ran from New Lisbon to Woodruff, Wisconsin. The spur's diversion was at Nekoosa Junction, about a mile and a half from Nekoosa proper. The Switched Tavern is located at the site.



Above: Chicago & North Western. J.M. Colby postcard via William O’Gara.

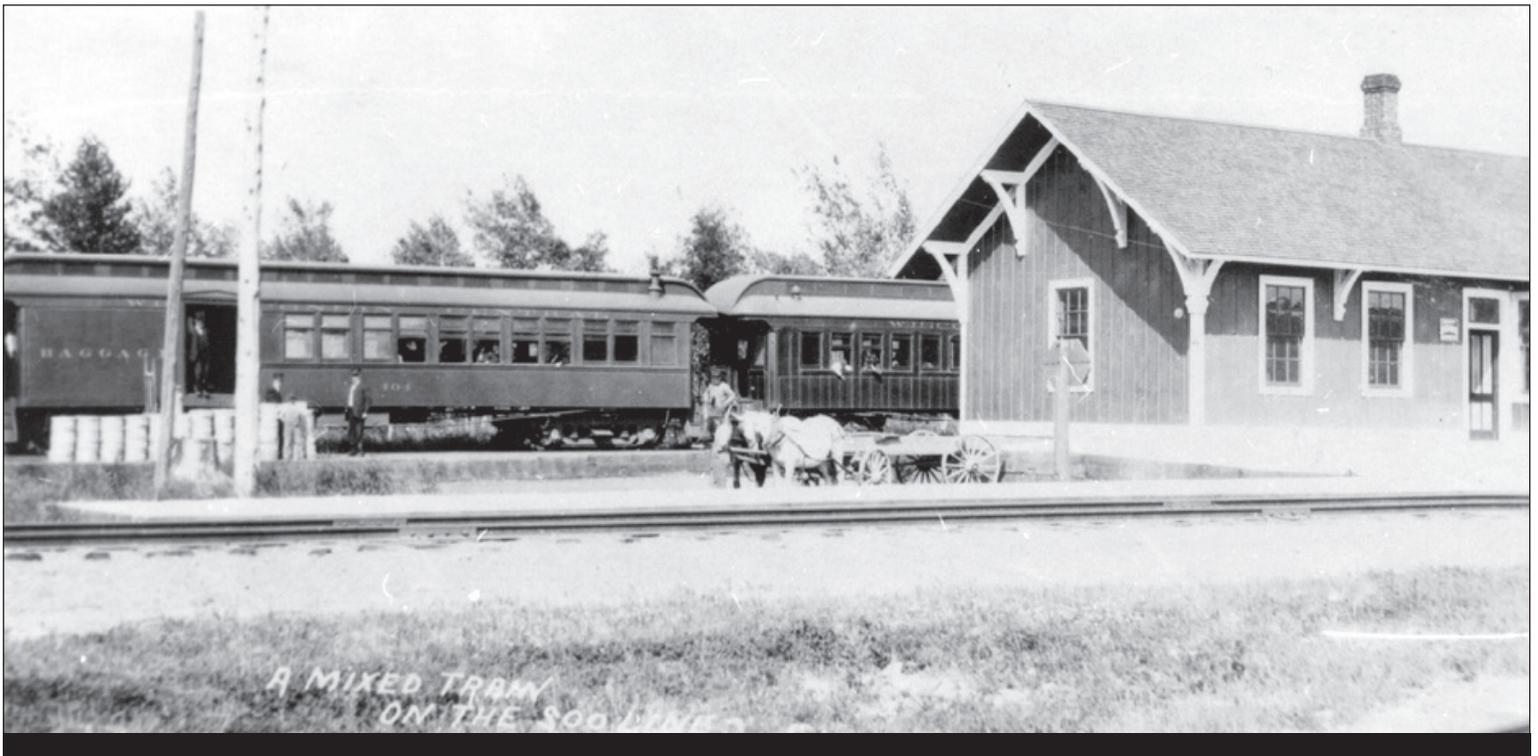
Below: By William O’Gara, Wisconsin Rapids, September 1969





1909 Wood County Atlas

In 1909 when railroads were the main transportation routes, Grand Rapids had four, visible on this map: from the southeast, Chicago and North Western, continuing to Marshfield; from the southwest, Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul, headed toward Rudolph; Green Bay and Western, from the east and heading straight west; Soo Line, here the “Wisconsin Central,” Nekoosa to Marshfield. Interstate highways bypassed Wood County, allowing Stevens Point/Plover to become the commercial hub of the area.

*A mixed train on the Soo Line.*

Scott Brehm

*Vesper Correspondent*

## The Vesper Depot

When I was very young, we used to jump our bikes over the double train tracks near what is now Kerry Ingredients. At that time, we never knew there was a depot in that same exact spot used so many years ago by the local sawmills, businesses and passengers.

As a young kid, I was fascinated by Vesper history. When we moved to the city limits on Cameron Avenue, our property butted up to the existing railroad at the time. During the summer, my siblings and I would leave early in the morning and go scouting out back. We always knew to come home for lunch when the Vesper noon whistle blew. We then headed back out till dark, many times back to the railroad tracks.

On one of those occasions, I located the second set of railroad tracks, north of the existing ones. These were covered up with dirt. But by scraping on the surface, we got down to the old railroad ties and found several railroad nails.

Later research showed the hidden track was shut down around 1918 due to World War I, and

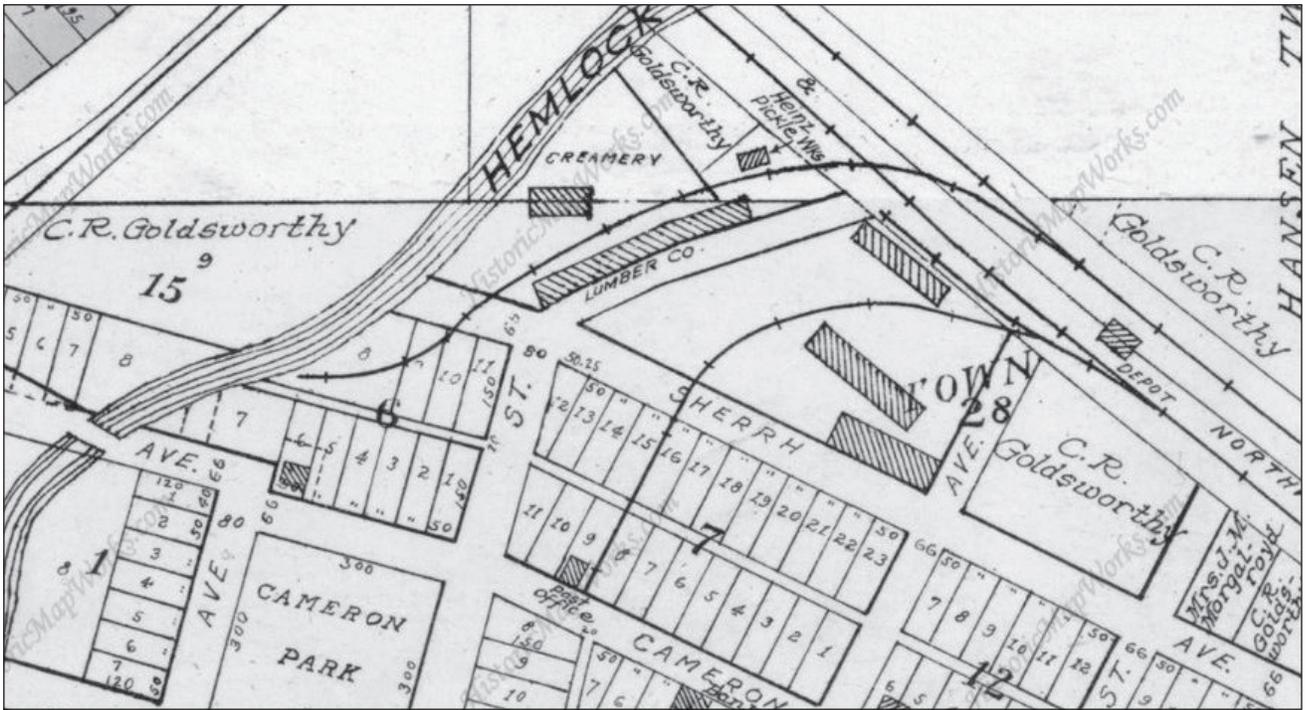
removed in 1973. The then-operating tracks were shut down before 1990, leaving Vesper without trains or tracks.

On a side note, the earliest set of railroad tracks came into Vesper in 1883. This track from Pittsville to Vesper connected with the Wood County Railroad, also built in 1883. My assumption is this track was shut down after the 1894 fire that wiped out Vesper when it was on the West side of Hemlock Creek.

It was in the 1990s that my father purchased 80 acres between Vesper and Pittsville. Going through the middle of the woods is the railroad right-of-way, which can still be seen to this day, over 100 years later.

I further researched and found that Vesper was traversed by three railroads: the Chicago & Northwestern; the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul; and the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Saint Marie, more commonly known as the “Soo Line.” From 1896 to about 1899, the Milwaukee operated a two mile spur extending west from Rudolph.

Sanborn insurance map



Two Milwaukee predecessor railroads also merit mention. Both were constructed by “King” George B. Hiles. First was the Wisconsin Pittsville & Superior Railroad. In 1883, it constructed a line north from Babcock to Pittsville (opened in Oct.), and from Pittsville to Vesper—and a connection with the Wood County Railroad later the same year.

There were rumors that there was a depot on the west side of the Hemlock but we could never find it.





Not just for passengers: Unloading silo staves for Woodruff Silo Co. are Margarete Woodruff, Frank Jagodzinski, Marie Clark, Frank Meres, Mrs. Albright and Emil Staven (The Minneapolis, Saint Paul and Sault Ste. Marie is the Soo Line.)

Vesper train yard: Fruit Growers Express refrigerated car



Brehm: It was later in life that I drove past a building out in the country on Heiser Road that had a sign "Vesper" on the side. I was told by my grandmother that the building was the old Vesper train depot that had been moved prior to 1973. (a similar photo was published in 1980 by Uncle Dave. *See opposite page.*)

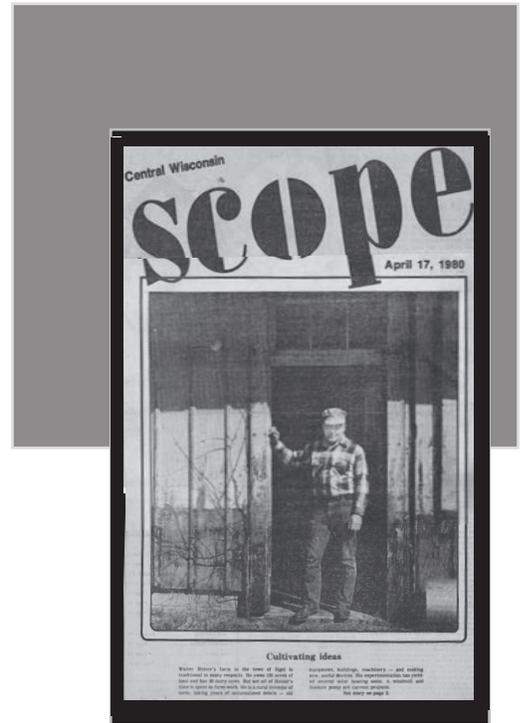
### *Vesper Depot 1980*

Since 1980, Uncle Dave has piled up a ton of stories, many of which have been republished in book form, like the upcoming *River City Memoirs VIII*, described below. In the Engel archives are more tons of not-yet-republished local history such as the April 17, 1980, profile of depot-curator Walter Heiser, then 40, at right.

“Any visitor who hasn’t already noticed will be shown the old Vesper depot,” said the account in the *Tribune* tabloid, *Scope*. “Altering a few letters has changed the name to ‘Heiser.’”

“...Heiser has installed on the old depot a fiberglass roof as a solar heating project, ‘It’s nice and warm in the attic,’ he said. ‘I’m hooking up a blower and ducts to circulate the heat.’”

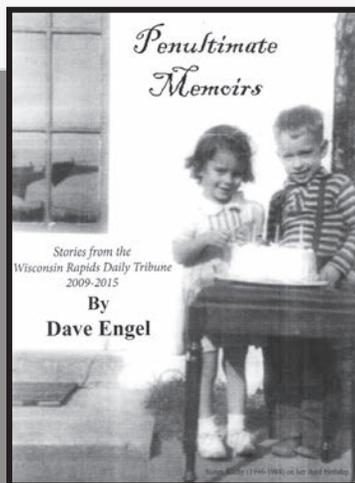
Also in the depot was a wood furnace and hot water boiler. “I got it from the Hiawatha bar in Rapids, when they tore it down for redevelopment,” Heiser said. A cooler also retrieved from the Hiawatha is stored in several parts in the adjacent quonset building.



## Penultimate Memoirs

This second-to-last collection ever of *River City Memoirs*, described in *Artifacts* #44, is expected by Christmas.

A later, final, *Ultimate Memoirs* will assemble the remaining unpublished works that have accumulated since 1980.



*Penultimate* will be available for a limited time from the author at [dave@swch-museum.com](mailto:dave@swch-museum.com) or 5597 Third Avenue, Rudolph WI 54475.

Also at the Museum, 540 Third Street South, Wisconsin Rapids WI 54494.

The price is \$20.

South Wood County Historical Corp.  
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*SWCHC formerly used in Fat Memoirs*



St. Paul depot. Laura Mae Whitrock (one of the three women pictured), later renowned socialite Laura Corrigan, and John L. Sullivan, pugilist become entertainer, center.