



# ARTIFACTS



Cover: Gold Rush, Klondike, Wood County, Wis. "Annual Report" by Phil Brown, p. 2; "O Tannenbaum!" by Lori Brost, 3; "Ghost Post Offices" by Chris Barney, 4-12; 1909 Wood County map, 13; Lindsey photo, 14-15; Vesper churches and cemeteries by Scott Brehm, 16-20; George Hiles, 21-31; RCMVIII, 32.



**Phil Brown**  
SWCHC President

## Annual Report 2015-16

At the South Wood County Historical Museum, 2015 was another good year with lots of upgrades to our exhibits and some preventative maintenance on our beautiful facility. But as it should be, people took center stage.

For over a year now, we have benefited by having Kathy Engel on our staff assisting in the archives and with this publication. With 13 years of experience at McMillan Memorial Library and 16 in the Wisconsin Rapids district schools, she brings much-needed skills to our archives and to *Artifacts*. We have also enjoyed having an intern join us this past summer and during her Christmas break. Alison Bruener is a senior at Northland College in Ashland majoring in History with aspirations to attend graduate school in museum studies. She was able to assist Uncle Dave and Kathy on the third floor as well as helping Lori in the office.

2016 is shaping up to be another good year with Board member Barry Jens overseeing the upgrade of our logging room exhibit and John Berg helping us with the depot exhibit. John is a retired teacher from East Junior High and has published books and articles about the logging and railroad history.

Active volunteer William “Billy” Parker remains committed to supervising our military exhibit and organizing our military archives on the third floor. Henry “Hankstir” Bruse also continues to volunteer his time and talents to our scanning project.

As the SWCHC Board of Directors charts the course for our organization, I want to personally thank all members for being actively engaged in running the SWCHC, especially Marshall Buehler, who marks his 60th year with our organization. The following is a complete listing of our current board members:

Philip Brown, President; Marshall Buehler, Vice President; Sarah Sigler, Secretary; Jack Wesley, Treasurer; Andrew Barnett, Nicholas J. Brazeau Sr., Page Casey Clark, Kathy Daly, Mary Anne Getzin, Barry Jens, Peter Smart, Robert Zimmerman.

All this would not be possible without you, our close to 350 members. Thank you for supporting our efforts at the SWCHC. I also want to thank those special friends who give generously above and beyond the basic membership level. Your extra gifts go a long way in keeping our organization strong.



Jack and Sue Wesley preparing for Christmas Tree Walk



## Lori Brost

Museum Administrator

## O Tannenbaum!

It started with an idea that became a suggestion and grew into one of the biggest events the Museum has hosted in years.

Hoping to draw greater public attention to the Museum, Sue Wesley, wife of SWCHC treasurer Jack Wesley, approached Board President Phil Brown with her idea for the Christmas Tree Walk. After his agreement that we host the event, Sue set up a meeting with Wisconsin Rapids Mayor Zach Vruwink and it was determined that the event would be organized in conjunction with the Mayor's Council on Beautification. The next step was a phone call to Judy Paul to ask her to chair the event as a whole; she signed on.

Working with local Garden Clubs, Boy Scouts and numerous citizens, the group put together a total of 18 theme-decorated trees! But our interior decorations were not limited to trees. The staircase was wreathed in foliage. The Buehler Gallery was decorated in rich reds, winter white and accents of nature. An original painting by Bonnie Dhein was placed above the mantel along with a vintage Santa Claus collection belonging to Pam Nettesheim.

The sunroom was a beautiful mixture of greens, browns and champagnes with homemade



*"Children's Tree" provided by Marjorie Schenk*

angels, floral arrangements and a dining room table set by Kathleen Johnson for the most beautiful of Christmas brunches.

Outside decorations included a vintage sleigh in front of the building—full of presents.

During the event December 5 and 6, we were overwhelmed by the 750 people who signed our guest book and the uncounted extras who didn't. The guests were treated with punch and cookies while entertainers sang or played music to complete the experience.

Thanks to Sue, Judy and all those who took the time to design and decorate a tree. The variety of styles were fun to look at and inspiring.

With the turnout and the feedback we have received in the weeks since the event, this may not be a one-time event-- I'll keep you posted.



Chris Barney

## Wood County's "Ghost" Post Offices

Following Jan. 14, 1845, when the Grand Rapids and Point Bausse post offices were established, there have been 55 named post offices in 44 locations within present-day Wood County. However, operating post offices in the county today number only 11: Marshfield, Auburndale, Blenker, Milladore, Arpin, Vesper, Rudolph, Pittsville, Nekoosa, Port Edwards and Wisconsin Rapids.

Some post offices lasted several decades, such as Kreuser/Hewitt (1882-1986) and Sherry (1884-1968); others only survived a year or two (Amelia 1907-09, Bast 1899-1900, Miner 1879-81); still others were either discontinued after a month or less (Arquett, April-May 1900) or established on paper but not officially opened at all (Upham, November 1887).

Before the advent of Rural Free Delivery around 1900, patrons were forced to come in for their mail so every few miles post offices sprang up. Most were opened along regular routes of travel, first rivers and then stagecoach routes and later along railroad lines. Settlements in outlying areas would usually not have a post office established and their growth would be limited.

In Wood County, if there was a lumber camp or mill in operation, there was almost always a post office, such as in Dexterville, French Town (now Port Edwards), Sherry, Nekoosa, Centralia and Grand Rapids. Smaller lumber camps and mills sometimes had a post office, such as Daly in Remington township (1882-99).

Another sure sign a post office was forthcoming was a railroad route coming through a town or village, especially if the railroad made a scheduled stop there.

From the 1850s through the late 1940s or so, railroads were the primary source of moving goods and people. After World War II, with the advent of truck transportation and proliferation of the automobile, rail traffic experienced a steep decline and the few smaller post offices remaining in the county eventually closed their doors, such as Lindsey (1951), Sherry (1968) and Hewitt (1986). A couple of small-by-comparison post offices, Blenker and Babcock, remain open but with limited hours of operation.





The long list of post office casualties—not including those eliminated only by a name change—are as follows:

LINCOLN TOWNSHIP

Ebbe  
Bakerville

CAMERON TOWNSHIP

Bast

MARSHFIELD TOWNSHIP

Hewitt

ROCK TOWNSHIP

Nasonville  
Lindsey  
Progress

RICHFIELD TOWNSHIP

Upham  
Bethel

SHERRY TOWNSHIP

Sherry

CARY TOWNSHIP

Granite  
Amelia

WOOD TOWNSHIP

Miner

HANSEN TOWNSHIP

Carey  
Hansen  
Forest City  
Hemlock

SIGEL TOWNSHIP

(None)

RUDOLPH TOWNSHIP

Worden

HILES TOWNSHIP

Scranton

DEXTER TOWNSHIP

Dexterville #2

SENECA TOWNSHIP

Altdorf  
Point Bausse  
French Town

GRAND RAPIDS TOWNSHIP

Centralia  
Smyrna

CRANMOOR TOWNSHIP

Elm Lake  
Cranmoor

REMINGTON TOWNSHIP

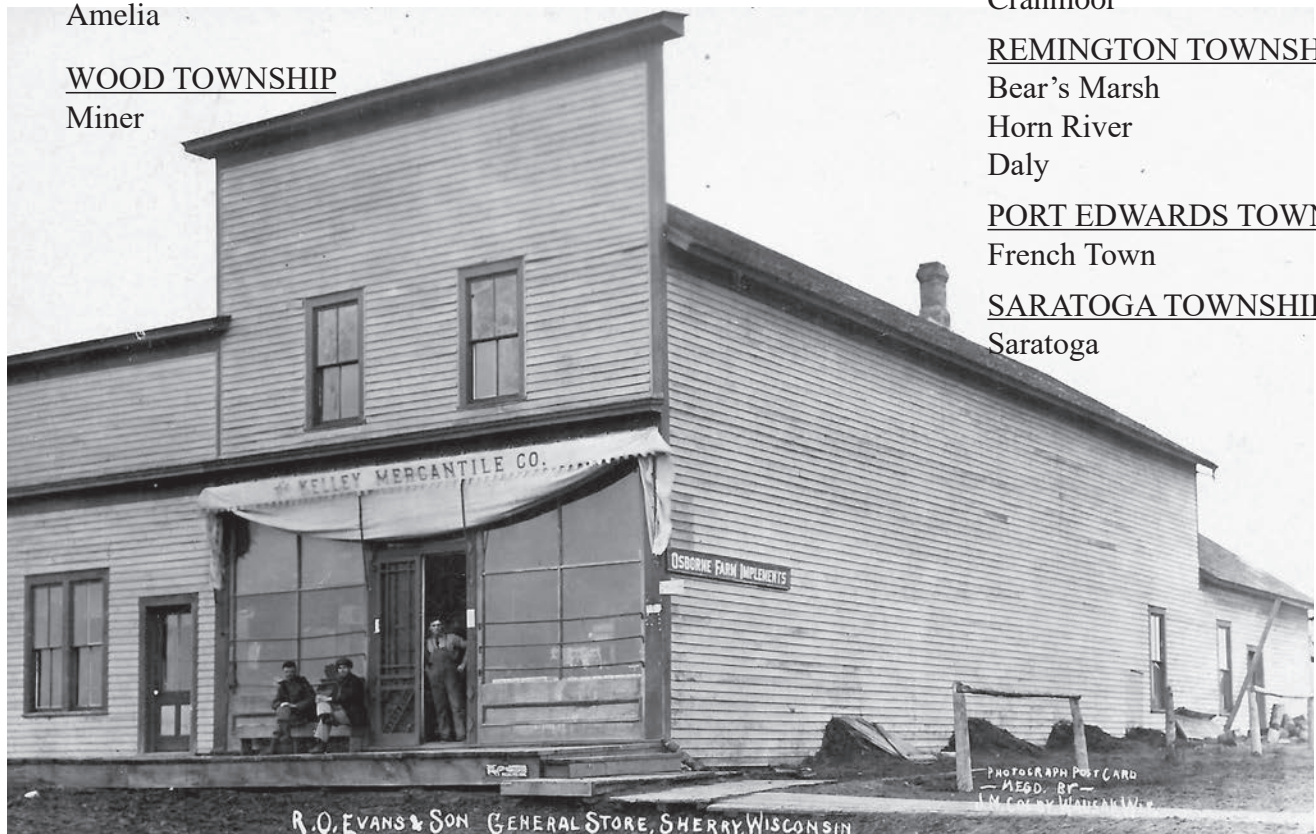
Bear's Marsh  
Horn River  
Daly

PORT EDWARDS TOWNSHIP

French Town

SARATOGA TOWNSHIP

Saratoga



Photos from Chris Barney

R.O. EVANS & SON GENERAL STORE, SHERRY, WISCONSIN

*Ghost Post Offices by Chris Barney cont.,*

In my “DPO Travels” since 1998, I have searched for the locations of many of these “ghost post offices” but have found very few. In 1998, I found the former general store and PO located in the village of Sherry and was able to photograph it just before the second-story facade, a very recognizable feature in the front of the building, was removed by the current owner.

On the south side of West Grand Avenue in Wisconsin Rapids, just west of the bridge, I photographed the former Natwick furniture store which was later occupied by Speltz Music. This was where I believe the Centralia post office was operated by James W. Natwick from 1889 to 1893. James was the father of “Grim” Natwick (1890-1990), favorite son of Centralia and Rapids for his legendary prowess as a cartoonist and illustrator. The City of Centralia merged with Grand Rapids in 1900; the Centralia PO lasted another four years before closing in 1904.

About ten years ago, my wife, Pam, and I located the Hansen township farm of Robert Havenor, where it is likely the Carey (township and bluff spelled Cary) PO operated from 1880 to 1887. The last location of the Hewitt PO, in the

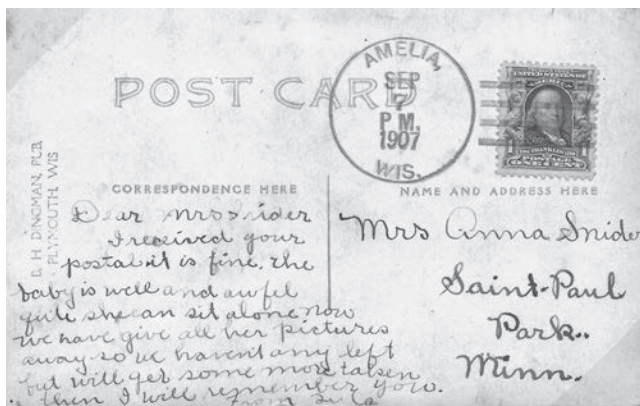
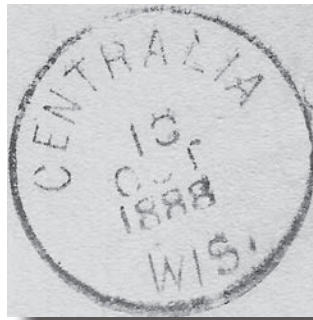
front parlor of Mrs. Germaine Nowaczyk’s home from 1961 to 1986, was found and photographed a number of years ago. Mrs. Nowaczyk graciously invited Pam and I into her home and showed us where the post office section was located, allowing us to take a few photos. She even autographed some “last day” covers, postmarked there Jan. 31, 1986.

Although the building is no longer standing, the Bast PO was located in Anton “Tony” Bast’s Klondike Saloon at the former intersection of highways 13 and 10 about three miles south of Marshfield. The area is still known as Klondike Corners, although the existence of Tony Bast’s saloon is probably unknown to most people except for local historians.

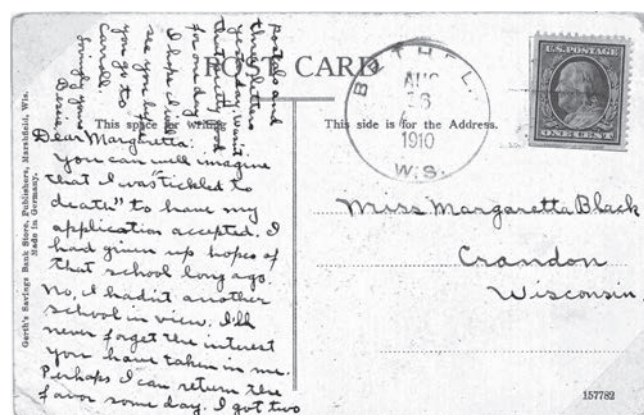
Daly post office was on the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railroad, in Section 31, Remington township, between Babcock and

Mather along what is now State Highway 173, built on that former railroad right-of-way.

Other smaller post offices such as Ebbe, Progress, Granite and Hemlock, established in hamlets long ago lost to history, may never be pinpointed other than knowing what township and section they were established in.

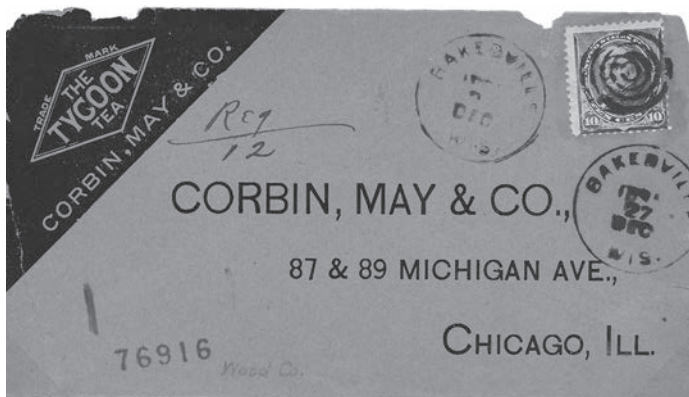


Amelia: Eastern Cary township on the line between sections 23 and 24. Post office established March 9, 1907. Not known when discontinued.

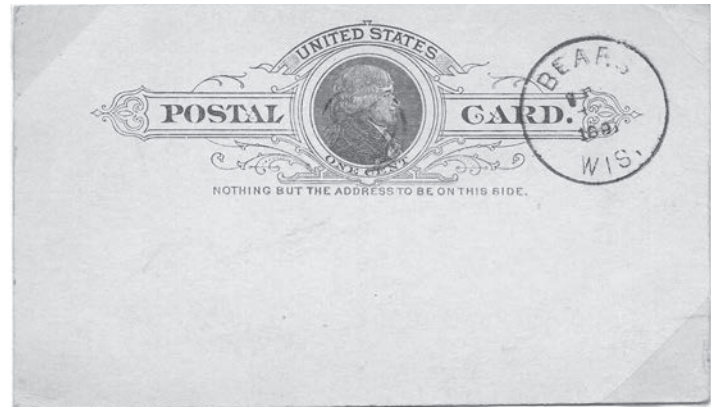


Bethel: Richfield township. Founded 1899 as home of Bethel Academy. Post office Feb. 20, 1900–Aug. 31, 1928. Jorgen C. Mikkelsen, first postmaster.

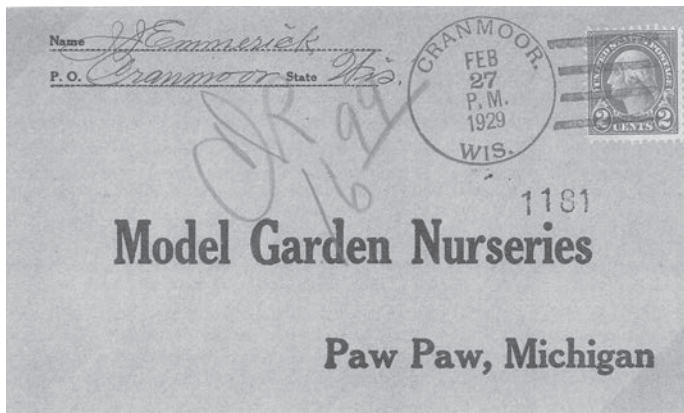




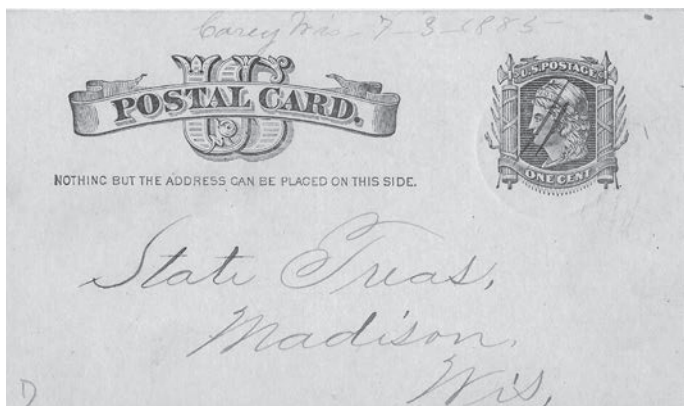
Bakerville: Eastern Lincoln township. Post office Feb. 7, 1879–June 4, 1900, mail transferred to Marshfield.



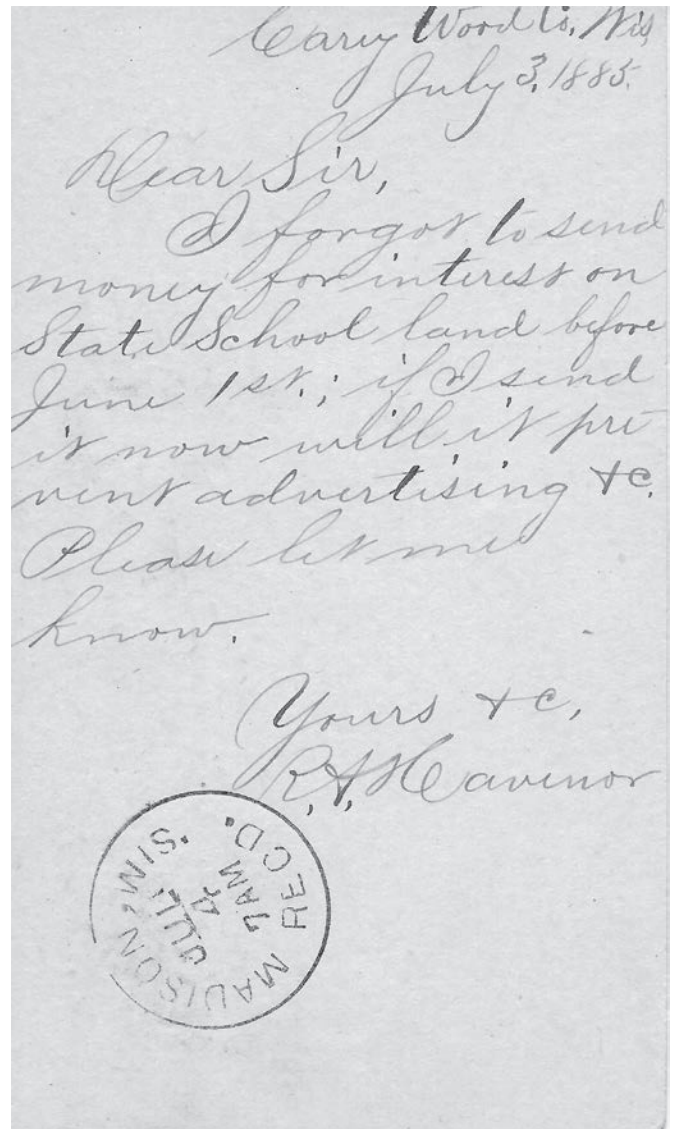
Bears [aka Bearss]: In 2016, it is in Cranmoor township. Platted in 1879. Post office established Dec. 21, 1889, Michael O'Donovan, postmaster. Name changed to Bears Marsh, April 13, 1893, and to Cranmoor again May 28, 1898. Discontinued Aug. 31, 1932.

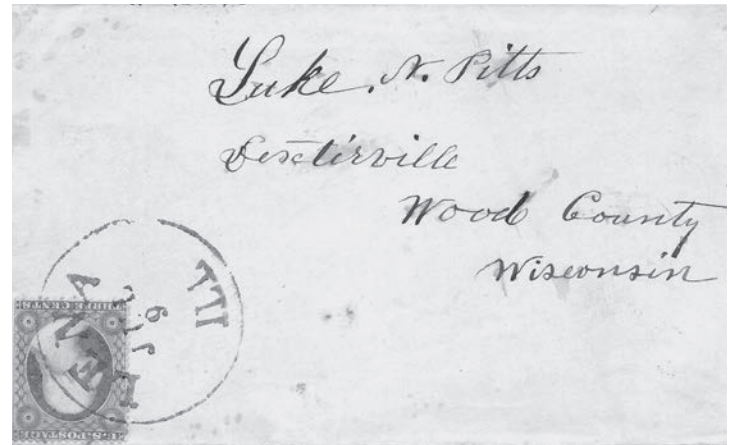
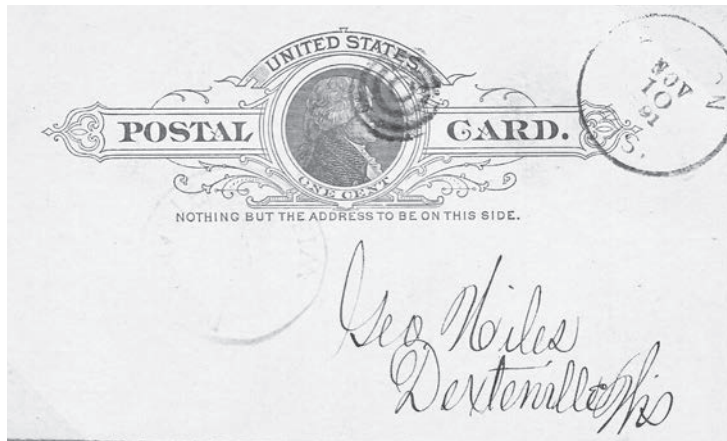


Cranmoor: Cranmoor township. Shipping point on railway for cranberries. Post office 1898–1932.

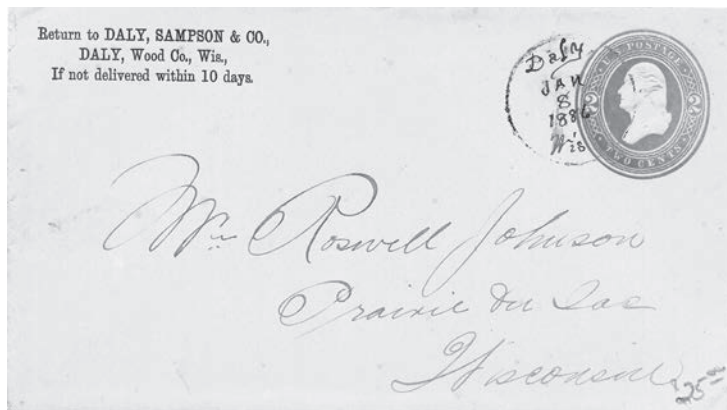


Carey: Established 1880 in SW quarter of Section 19, T23N R4E in Hansen township. Robert A. Havener, postmaster. Discontinued Dec. 9, 1881, and its papers sent to Hansen.



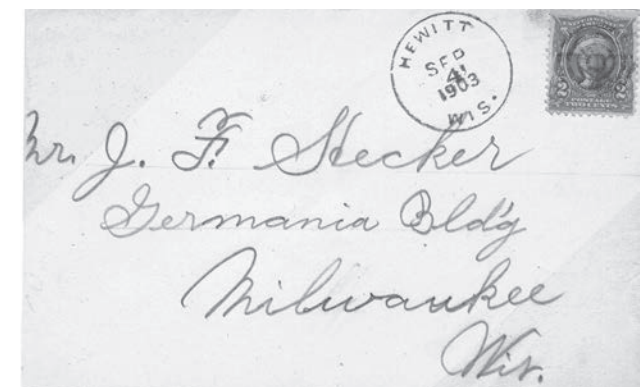
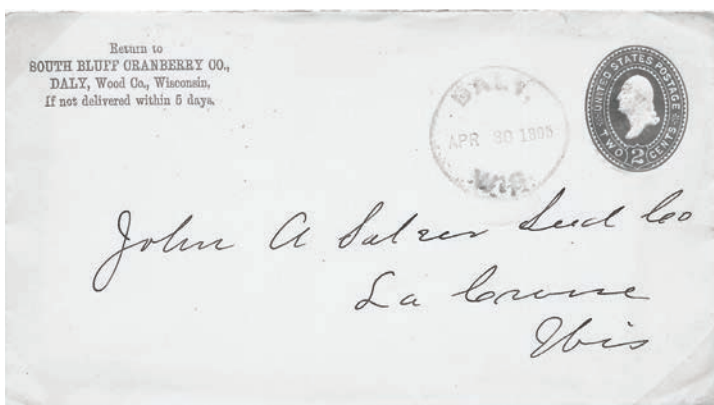


Dexterville: Founded by George Hiles in late 1850s. Post office established July 13, 1863. Discontinued? Pittsville is named after Luke Pitts and family, shown on card at right.



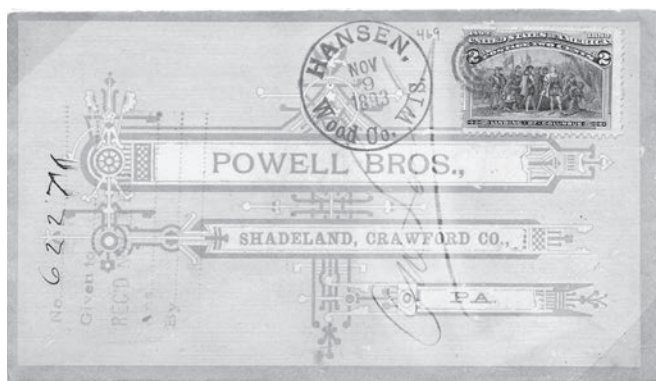
Daly: Remington township. Station on the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railway Oct. 30, 1876, called Smith's Mill. Changed to Daly, Dec. 29, 1882, discontinued Oct. 31, 1899, mail going to Babcock.

Doudville: Established May 28, 1877, George S. Doud postmaster. Changed name to Worden Feb. 25, 1884. Discontinued Oct. 28, 1885, mail going to Grand Rapids.

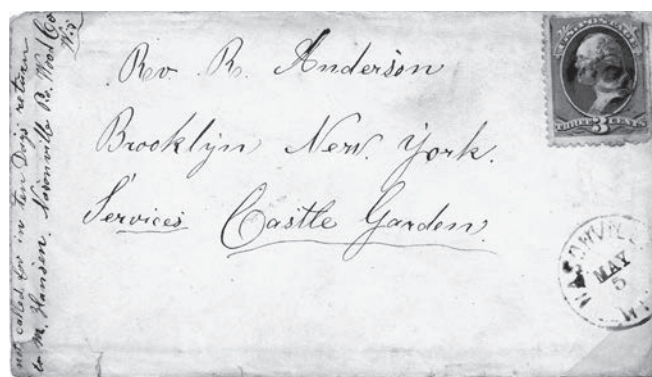


Hewitt: Marshfield township. Post office established 1882 at Kreuser, changed to Hewitt Nov, 13, 1883, to correspond with railway station named after Henry Hewitt, a lumberman. Fred Korth was the first postmaster.

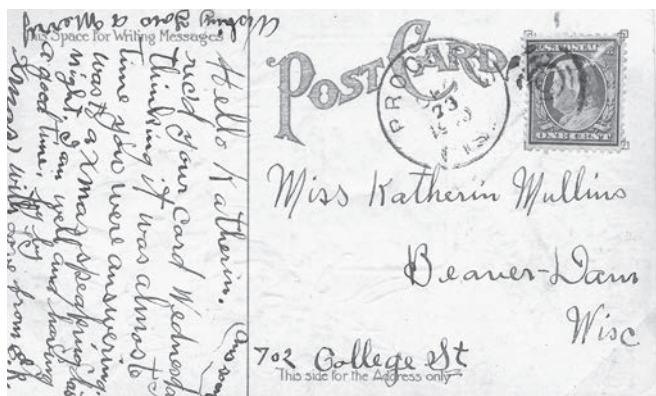




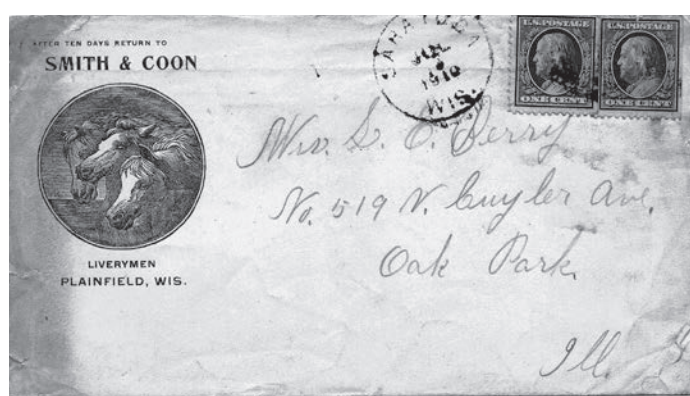
**Hansen:** Hansen township. Named for Martin R. Hansen, who settled there in 1883 and operated the Wisconsin Lumber & Manufacturing Co. sawmill. Post office Dec. 7, 1883–March 31, 1905.



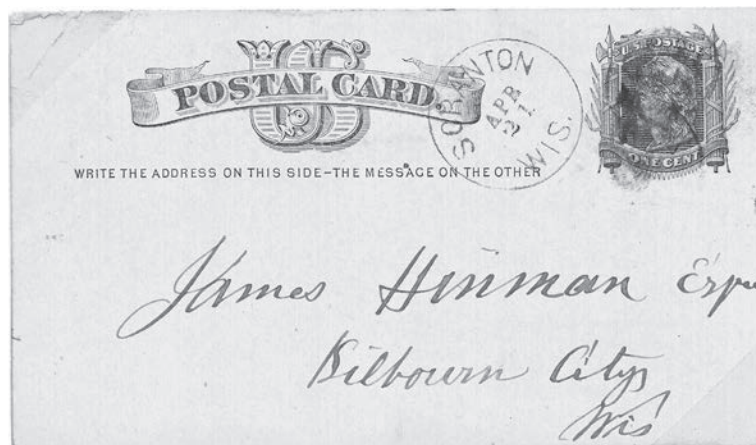
**Nasonville:** Rock township. Settled by Solomon and William Nason in 1856. Post office established Feb. 14, 1859, Solomon Nason postmaster until 1890. Office discontinued March 22, 1890, resumed June 20, 1899. Discontinued May 21, 1900, mail going to Marshfield.



**Progress:** Rock township. Shipping point on Hiles railroad, in southwest section 33. Post office April 23, 1899–Dec. 15, 1912.



**Saratoga:** Saratoga township. Post office established April 7, 1860, Lavinia B. Griffin, postmaster. Discontinued June 15, 1915, mail going to Grand Rapids.

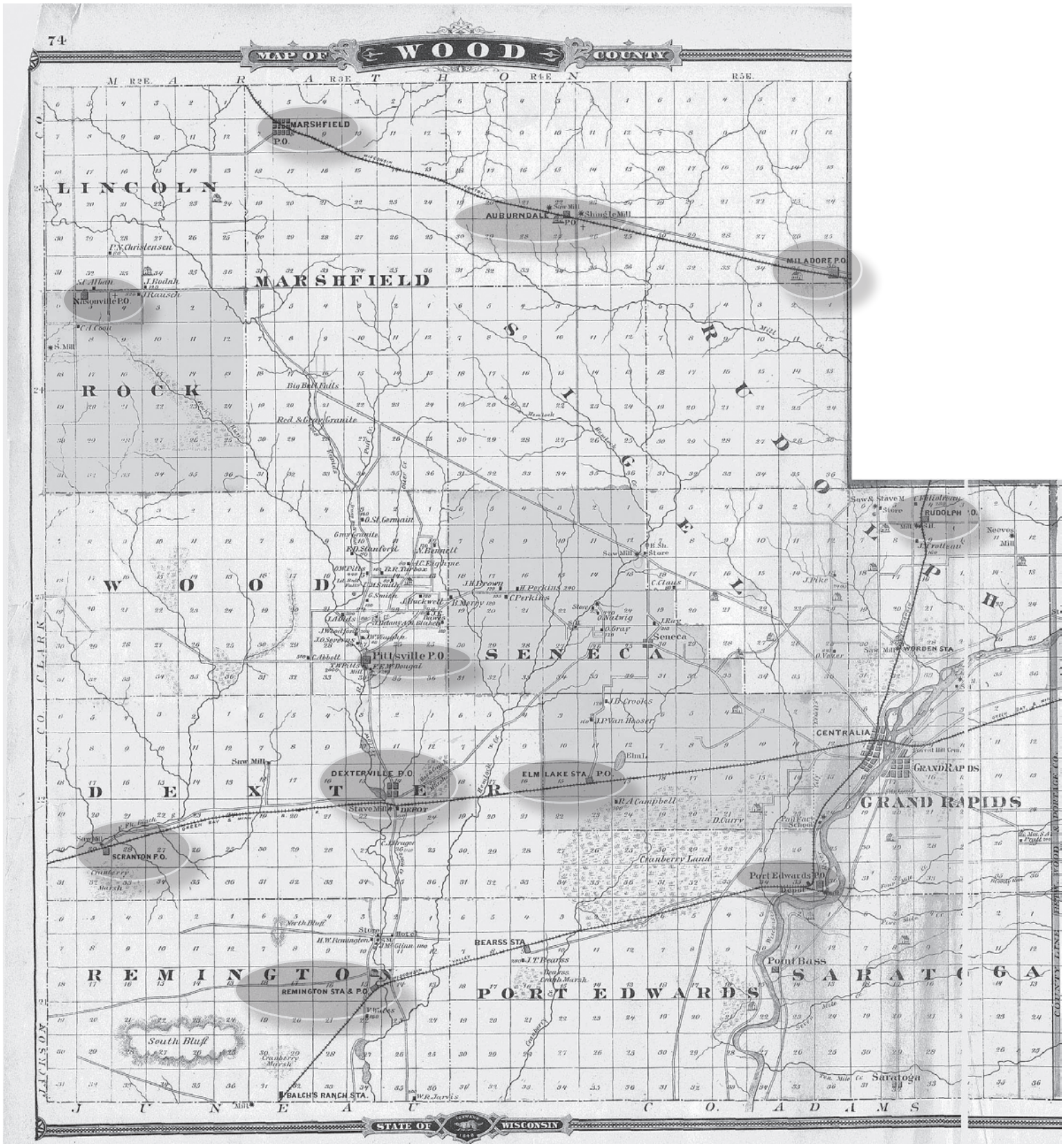


**Scranton:** Hiles township. Settled by Edwin C. Bullis, 1873. Post office established Nov. 14, 1873, Bullis postmaster. Discontinued June 12, 1892, mail going to City Point.



"P.O." (Post Office) Towns

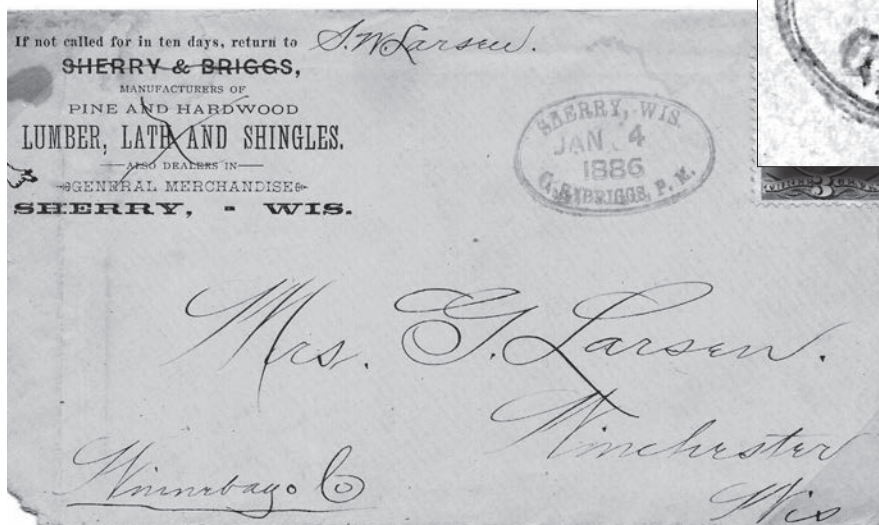
1878



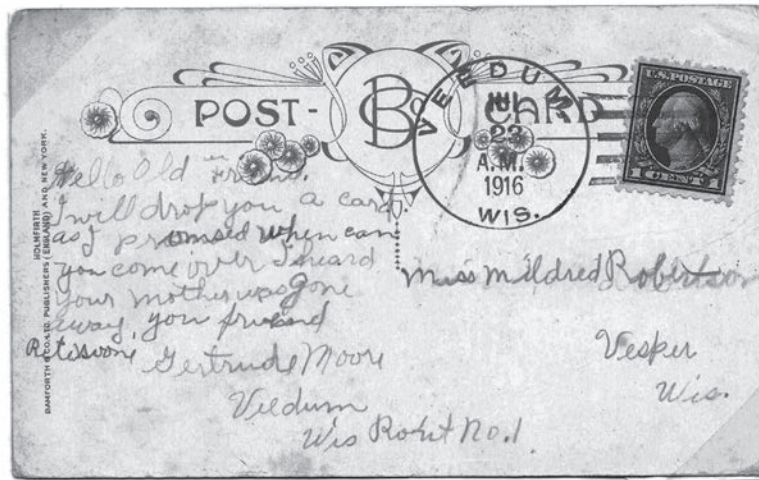




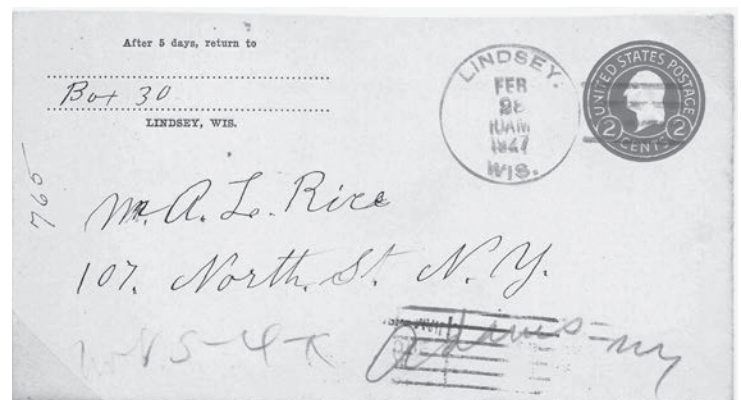
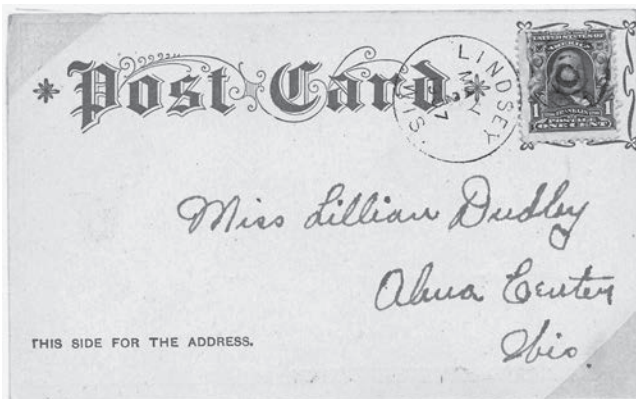
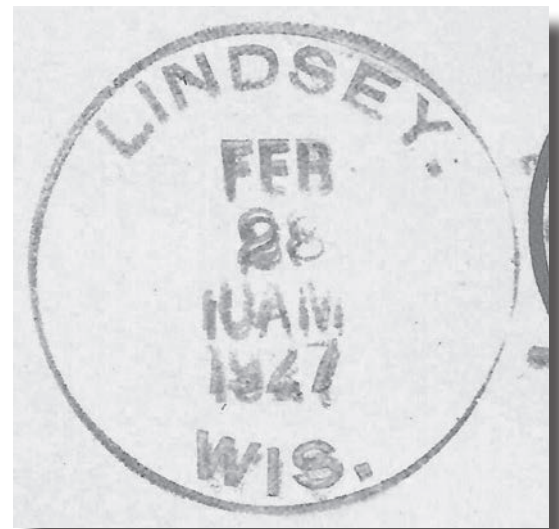
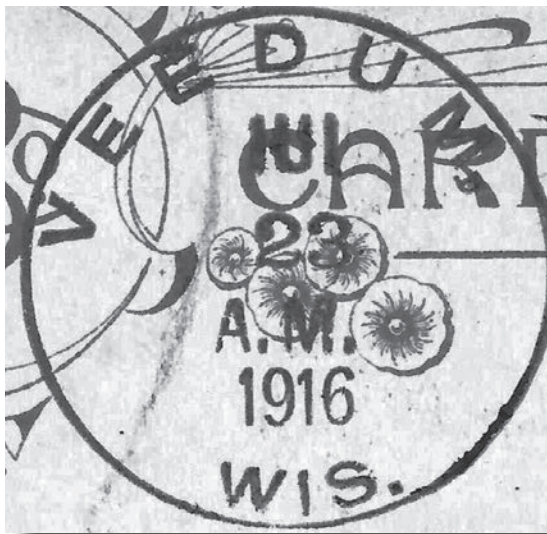
Sherry, Wis., R.O. Evans store & post office, ca 1910



Sherry: Sherry township, named for Henry Sherry, partner in Sherry & Briggs lumber co. Post office established April 12, 1884, Charles S. Briggs postmaster. Discontinued Aug. 31, 1928, mail going to Arpin. Service reestablished Aug. 16, 1937, discontinued May 8, 1968, mail going to Milladore.



Veedum: Dexter township shipping station of lumber and cranberries on the Babcock-Romadka branch of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railway. Post office Jan. 30, 1901–Jan. 31, 1917, mail going to Pittsville.

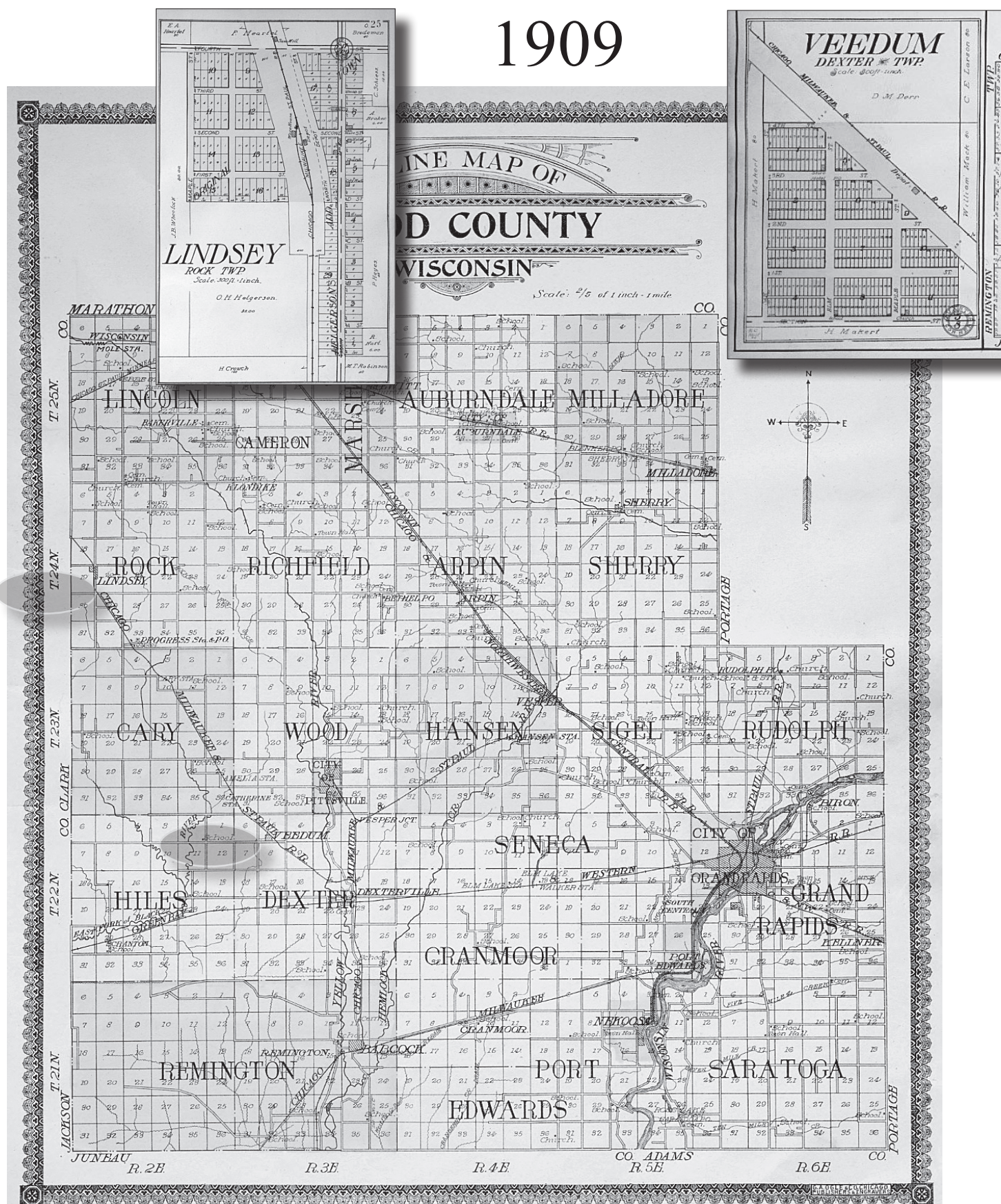


Lindsey: Rock township, sections 19, 20. Originally on logging rail line built by George Hiles. Established as Hogan in 1887, changed to Lindsey Aug. 25, 1889, discontinued Sept. 1951.





1909

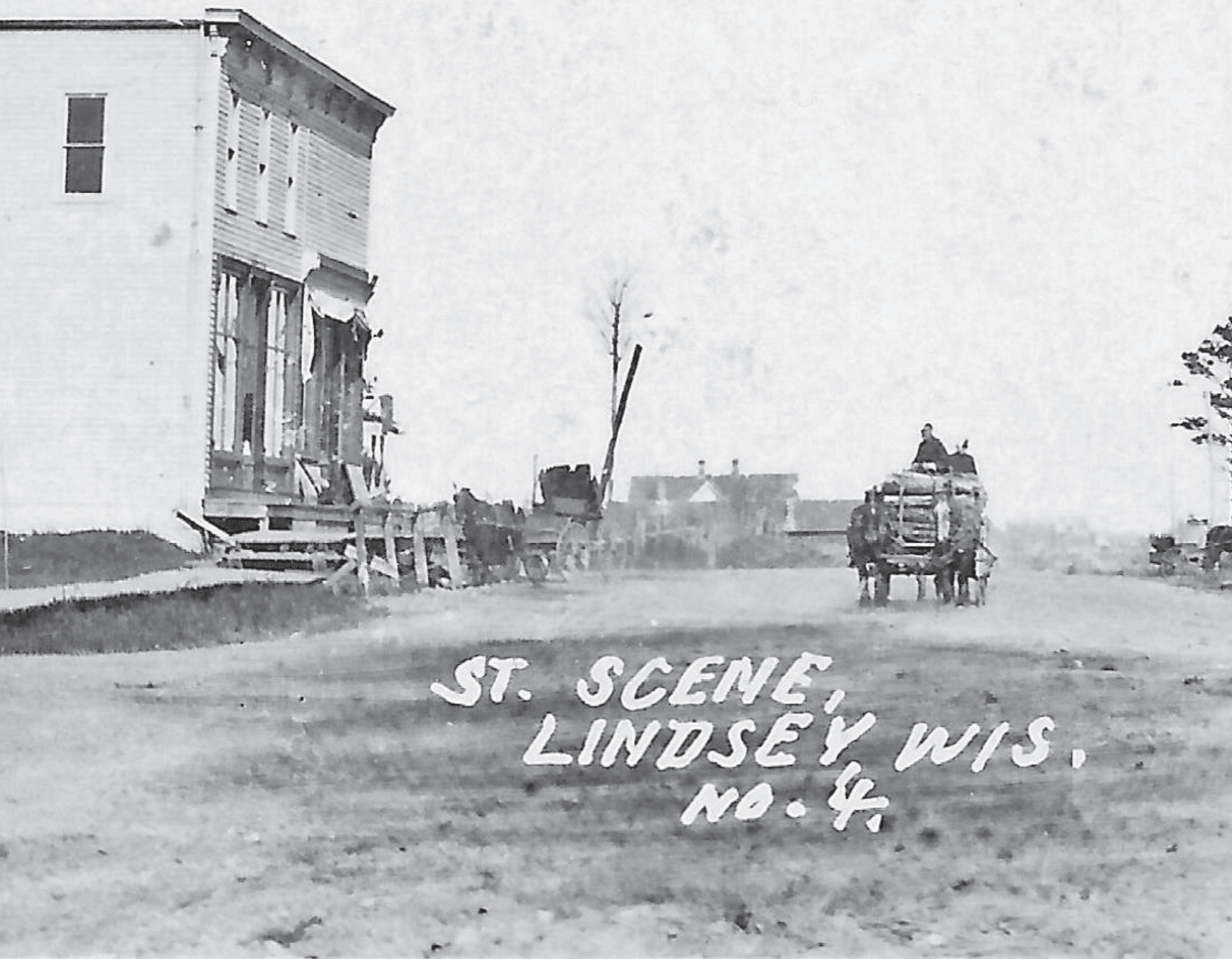




*1893-94 Wisconsin Gazetteer*

Lindsey, on the C.M. & St. P. Ry in Wood County, population, 300.

H.H. Johnson, postmaster; W.L. Blakely, hardware; R. Broker, grocer; F. Goetch, physician; J.G. Gossett, hotel; Haertell & Sons, shingle mill; H.H. Johnson, general store; Grace Nason, music teacher; S.L. Nason, saw mill; George Park, meat market; Wm. Schroeder, boots and shoes; C.C. Thresher, hotel.





Building at right, Broker's Store, shown on a postcard, still exists as Bell's General Store on Internet image below.







Scott Brehm's grandparents at Trinity Lutheran cemetery

## Monuments

Hamlets, however miniscule and mutable, share a sequence of institutions. First might come transportation: by river, road or railroad. Next, industry for most of our places meant wood products manufacturers—lumber, shingles, tubs, barrels. Then, a post office and with it, an official name—Progress, Veedum, Lindsey, Amelia, Smyrna. A one-room school. Most likely, a church, Catholic or Protestant first, then the other one.

When the town goes, what goes first? Probably industry. The mill closes when the raw materials are used up or they can get it cheaper down in some South American town. Then, the post office, once because of dissipation, lately because of centralization. If it's a railroad that's no longer profitable, the depot goes offline and maybe the tracks are hauled away. The school is depopulated or absorbed by a larger district. The church sometimes outlasts the town. The last to go are cemeteries populated by solid rock markers of something resembling civilization that blew in and blew away.

— (Uncle) Dave Engel



Grave of great-great-grandfather Reinhold Brehm at St. John's cemetery.



Scott Brehm

## The Vesper Story

### *Churches and Cemeteries*

Among the churches that began to crop up in the late 1800s in the Vesper area were St. James Catholic, Trinity Lutheran, Dutch (Faith) Reformed, Christian Reformed, St. Paul's Lutheran and St. John's Lutheran. Each had its own cemetery.

Besides church cemeteries, there are also several plots in the Vesper area that have private burials, such as one near Eight Corners in the Town of Sigel. I had been past this plot many a time, always wondering what it was. Later, I was told that a family was buried there. I knew nothing more until I did the research for this story.

A small fenced-in area in an open field, it is called the Gaulke Plot. The Heart of Wisconsin Genealogical Society website states that this is an abandoned cemetery with 19 burials from 1863

to 1893.

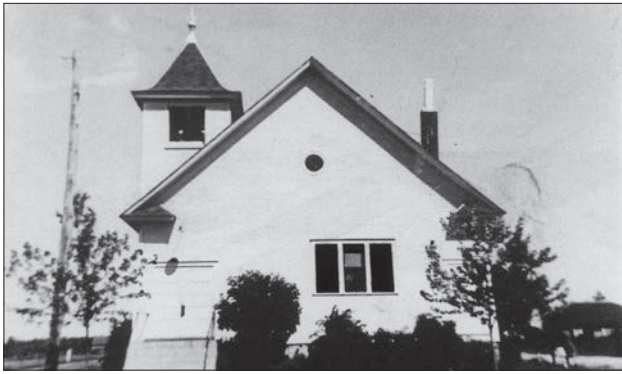
Two churches were of the same Dutch (Faith) Reformed denomination, according to my cousin, Kathy Woodruff. She had been given the story from Bill and Yvonne TeKampe, who lived between the Faith Reformed Church and its cemetery. After a disagreement in the congregation, one group remained with the church in Vesper while the other group built a church on County HH, which was called the Christian Reformed Church.

There were many days my brothers and I went fishing in the ponds just outside Vesper on County HH and we rode past remnants of an old church. I often wondered what the story was. Not until the making of this article was I able to place the cemetery with the church.



Vesper Christian Reformed, 2.5 miles northeast of the village, built 1893, enlarged 1913.

Photos by Scott Brehm



In 1916, the Dutch Reformed (later Faith Reformed) church organized in Vesper. In 1947, a new church was completed in Wisconsin Rapids.

As I try to tie all of my stories together for my readers, I recall a moment when I was a child living in Vesper. My grandmother, Lucille Brehm, had married Gene Wenker after my grandfather had died. They lived on Oak Avenue, also known as County C, heading out of Vesper on the west side where the great Vesper fire had wiped out the entire little town back in the late 1800s.

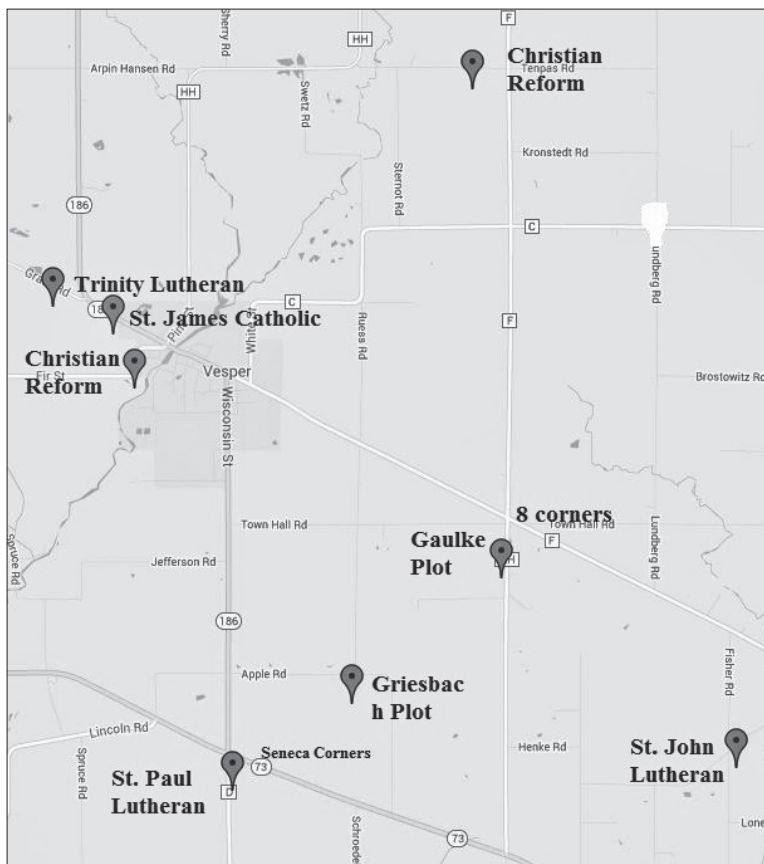
The house they lived in seemed odd, being such a large house with bathrooms on the main

floor and second floor. My grandmother told me there had been a church right next to the residence many years ago and that the house they were living in contained the minister in the lower level. "Nuns," as she called them, lived upstairs and had a separate entrance. As my grandmother's health got worse with her battle with cancer, I eventually bought the house in early 2000.

During this time, I was outside as a car pulled into the driveway. An elderly man got out of the car as well as three elderly women. He introduced himself and stated they were from Canada. He explained his brother had been the minister of the Faith Reformed church located on the vacant lot next to my house and had lived in the house I then occupied.

He also confirmed the living arrangements in the house when his brother worked there and showed me where the entrance was for the upstairs. After showing the house, we shook hands and they left. He appeared to be pleased to see where his brother spent his last years and I was happy to learn a little more of this area. Unfortunately, to this day, I don't remember his name.

Scott Brehm



The Vesper Chapel on 1st Street in Vesper was a non-denominational church built in the early 1980s by Ervin and Rosemary Hodd. Sam Runnells was the pastor from 1988 to 1990. His wife, Naomi, taught Christian school. Sam and I became good friends in recent years and talked frequently of Vesper at many Freemason breakfasts and lodge meetings.



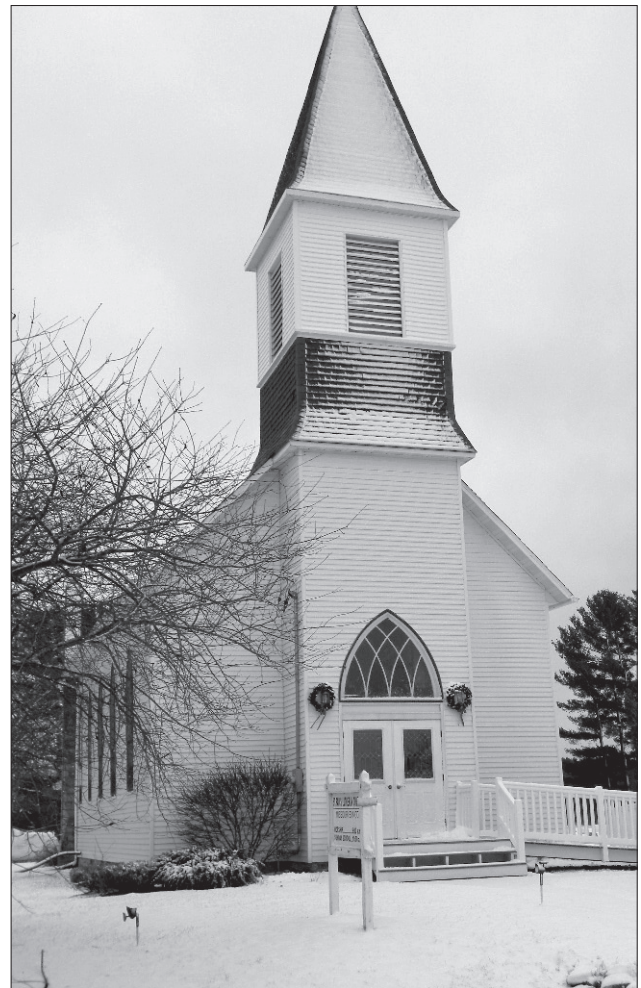
Another church that has passed the test of time is St. James Catholic on the west side of Hemlock Creek in Vesper. The church continues to be very active.

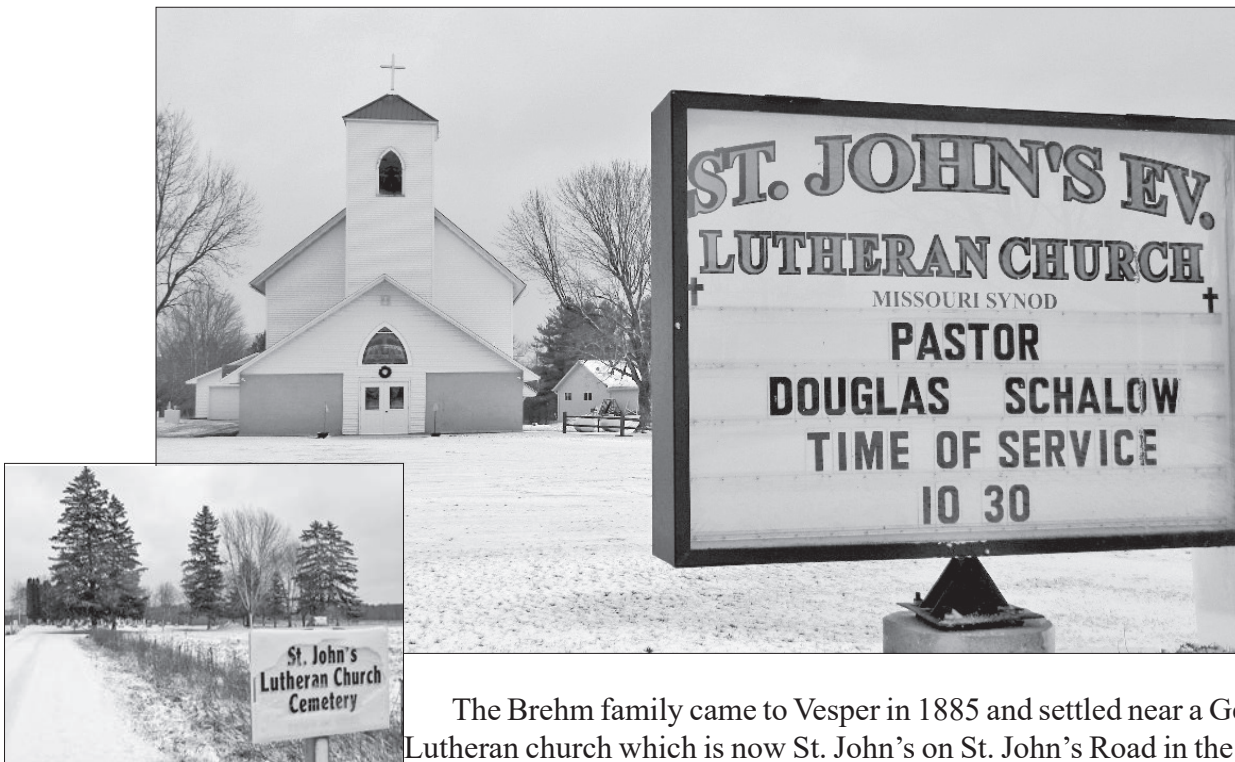


An active Lutheran church a short distance from Vesper is St. Paul's, located at Seneca Corners on County D. The church and cemetery are on the same property.



Vesper Congregational church, since razed, was built in 1912 but there is no cemetery associated with it. The parishioners later joined the Wisconsin Rapids church.





The Brehm family came to Vesper in 1885 and settled near a German Lutheran church which is now St. John's on St. John's Road in the Town of Sigel. Most of the people living in this area at that time came from the same church in Prussia, Germany.

In 1831, King Wilhelm III of Prussia made the Lutheran church illegal and the people who attended were fined and punished. Those who remained faithful to the church were called "Old Lutherans."

St. John's church and cemetery are in a country setting and continue to function today. The Reinhold Brehm family (my great-great grandpa) and the Edward Brehm family (his son and my great grandpa) both belonged to St. John's.

What changed, I don't know, but it was my grandfather, Carl Brehm, who began going to church in Vesper at Trinity Lutheran, like St. John's, formerly known as "German Lutheran." Three generations of my family have gone to this church. The building sat on Main Street of Vesper until it was razed and the new Trinity Lutheran built on Michigan Street. The Trinity Lutheran cemetery is located just west of town on Grant Road.





(Uncle) Dave Engel

# Big Man



I am one of the little people and you probably are too. We are descended from farmers, laborers, millwrights, blacksmiths, cookees, clerks, teamsters, sawyers, swampers, river pigs, scalers, timber cruisers, teachers, storekeepers, servants, housekeepers, post masters, etc. etc.

We were brought in by the big men, the lumber barons, timber kings, back country monarchs, the grand poobahs in their Quality Row castles. Around here, one of the biggest of the BIG MEN was George Hiles of Dexterville.

He was approximately 69 in April 1894, when he took steps to retire, through the incorporation of the George Hiles Land & Lumber Co., made up of Hiles, his sons F.P. and James Hiles, his daughter Phoebe Hill, granddaughter Lilah Skidmore and her then-husband, Benjamin Skidmore, Jr. With capital stock of \$500,000, the new corporation would continue the extensive logging and lumbering business Hiles had operated since 1850.

He wasn't finished, however. The next year, Hiles, was, purely on his own initiative, building a wagon road from Dexterville towards Centralia/Grand Rapids, crossing the vast marsh land, which he had, according to the Centralia *Enterprise*, "been lead to believe, through adequate experiments, possesses great value as farming and dairy lands."

"How much more Mr. Hiles intends to build, man knoweth not. He simply keeps his large crew and teams at work and says nothing. Whatever may be the extent of his labors in this direction, we hope and trust that the several towns will take up the work were he leaves it and push the thoroughfare to completion."

The road never reached anywhere important, a last burst of controlled folly from the "well known Milwaukee millionaire lumberman," as the Oshkosh *Daily Northwestern* referred to him, who had realized his failing health a couple years before his death March 8, 1896.

## Sojourn in Albion

In time for the 1870 federal census, George Hiles, formerly of Dexterville, Wood County, found himself a resident of the town of Albion, Jackson County, along with his village, colleagues and appurtenances. Apparently, the people of Wood County regarded him as a nuisance and wanted him out; but he wouldn't move on his own accord. The county wasn't large enough to "divide" so state senator Charles M. Webb of Grand Rapids, an associate, relative and neighbor of J.D. Witter, procured passage of a bill attaching several towns in Jackson County to Wood. That political maneuver made Wood large enough to divide so the bill gave back to Jackson County the town in which Hiles resided. Jackson County didn't appreciate the give and take, calling it "gerrymandering," and considered the land worthless except for pine timber that was rapidly disappearing.

For his part, Hiles held local offices and was a Democratic member of the Wisconsin Assembly for Marathon and Wood counties. His general methodology was critiqued in 1887, when he petitioned for the reorganization of the "old town of Dexter."

"He is a wily schemer, and unless his actions are closely watched and his moves check-mated, there will be a majority in his favor. He will have arrayed upon his side, his personal friends or hirelings; his 'vomit victims,' the patrons of the W.P. & S. [Wisconsin, Pittsville & Superior] road, if he can bring them under his power by threatening exorbitant rates; the prospective gainers by the prospective extension of that road; and any whom he can buy, win by flattery, conquer by intimidation, or gain by that method known in all legislative bodies by the name of 'trading.' Then, his howlers and hooters will be there."



# King George

*When he lived, they called him King George. When he died, they buried him as if he had been one.*

*King George, who had founded a string of towns across his central Wisconsin empire. Who left an estate of \$3 million largely composed of Wood and Clark county timber, 70,000 acres of it. Who farmed 12,000 acres with the most modern machinery.*

*King George, who ruled Dexterville, Scranton, Amelia, Cary, Lynn, New Dam, Turner Creek, Catherine, Progress and Lindsay and who wanted Babcock and Pittsville.*

*Who in Milwaukee owned choice residences including his own home at 88 Farwell Ave. and a row of flats at Cambridge and Forest Home avenues.*

*Whose Chicago holdings amounted to half a million dollars—his 240 acres in Chicago Heights, his tract in Chicago Lawn and Franklin Park, his houses downtown.*

*Who “with his large means, his recognized ability as a man of affairs, and his comprehensive grasp of financial problems,” was at the time of his death one of the largest owners of timbered land in Wisconsin and owner of 100,000 acres of pine land in Florida and a 5,000 acre ranch in Nebraska.*

Editor’s note: “Lindsey” is misspelled in this story!

That most majestic of historical subjects, George Hiles of Dexterville, emerged from a humble origin, a log cabin in the northwoods.

The year before his death in March of 1896, a biography of Hiles appeared as a chapter in the *History of Milwaukee County, Vol. III*. Much of the information contained therein probably came from Hiles himself.

“One of the most successful men among the pioneers of Wisconsin and one who may be said to have grown up with the state is George Hiles, now a citizen of Milwaukee, where he has become prominently identified with banking interests, and well known as an extensive lumber manufacturer and property owner.”

According to the account, Hiles was born at Farmington, Mich., Oct. 23, 1828, son of John Hiles and Phoebe Mansfield Hiles, who had come from New York state with the earliest immigrants to Michigan territory.

Farmington was a frontier, much like Wood County, Wis., would be 30 years later. In fact, George Hiles is considered to be the first white child born there.

The Hiles place was, like most northwoods homesteads, a tangle of stumps and brush. George, as a lad, helped his father clear the land and became “far more familiar with toil than with schools or other educational institutions.” What academics he picked up came at his mother’s elbow.

When she died and his father remarried, new tensions arose in the household. At the age of 18, George took off for the next territory.

Before he left, however, he visited with his sweetheart, Miss Amanda Brown. They reached the conclusion that separation would be unbearable and were married. Traveling by wagon, the couple drove around southern Lake Michigan, through Chicago and finally to Baraboo, when that settlement was more a trading post than a town.

“A young man of broad common sense, honest, industrious, and energetic, although he had no other capital,” Hiles went into business.

The principal industry at Baraboo was a sawmill, where Hiles found employment at a rate of \$14 per month. The winter following his arrival, he worked in a lumber camp, where “his industry and honesty soon won for him the high regard of his employer.”

Among those with whom he became acquainted was a trader named Wood, “who evidently looked upon him as a sagacious and thrifty young man” because he took Hiles as a partner in the Indian trade business.

Hiles traveled the pinery, meeting with Indian fur trappers and trading whatever baubles, gimcracks or tools he had for their animal skins. Often, he went to Milwaukee to sell the pelts.





## From *River City Memoirs II*, 1984

After two or three years, Hiles had accumulated enough of a stake to open his own store in Baraboo, which he ran for several years. Through whatever means, the business prospered and the Hiles fortune began to accumulate.

"Naturally a close observer, and an excellent judge of the value of lands and land products, his travel and experience as a trader gave him a knowledge of a broad expanse of Wisconsin territory, which proved exceedingly valuable," recorded the *History of Milwaukee*.

Among the places visited by George Hiles, fur trader, was "Eagle Point," where, "observing the splendid timber of this region, he was quick to perceive that in the not very distant future it must become immensely valuable and the manufacture of lumber one of the great industries of the northwest."

His friendly relations with the native Winnebagos apparently helped Hiles in his search for good timber and choice sections of land. As soon as it was open to settlement, Hiles "was on the ground promptly," acquiring large tracts not only for himself, but as agent for others.

About 1852, Hiles moved to "Eagle Point" and founded the seat of his prospective empire. Said to be named after Hiles' mule, the new kingdom was called Dexterville.

In company with Albert Searles, Hiles built the first saw mill in the region, a water-driven mill "of the old-fashioned kind," and very small compared to those he would construct later.

From 1853 until 1888, Hiles lived at Dexterville. In the region, he built 15 saw mills. The last, still operating in 1895, was considered one of the finest lumber mills in the state.

For some time, there was no rail transportation, so the entire product of lumber, staves and shingles had to be marketed by way of the Yellow, Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers. Hiles solved the problem by building his own railroad in 1883, from Dexterville Junction (Babcock) 50 miles north to the town of Lynn in Clark County. He sold out in the early 1890s to the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway Co.

Chicago had become the principal market for Hiles' timber products. He had an office there and a distributing agency, along with extensive real estate and other properties. In 1886, he decided to move to Chicago and take his considerable fortune with him. Hiles was 58 and ready for semi-retirement.

He changed his mind and moved to 88 Farwell St., Milwaukee, another city in which he had many interests. One of his projects was the rehabilitation of the Marine Bank, which had failed during the panic of 1893.





During his reign, King George became known as a somewhat cantankerous despot.

Circuit Judge Gilbert Parks said on a number of occasions that it was his solemn opinion that his court was not legally in session, since, in looking over the docket, he had noticed that the name of George Hiles was not mentioned, either as defendant or as plaintiff, in any of the suits of law pending.

Pittsville's experience with the monarch is a case in point.

Hiles had planned to link Pittsville with Superior by train until the complaints of local housewives that his newly built charcoal kilns might mess up their wash caused the city to pass an ordinance forbidding the operation of those kilns. King George refused to allow his railroads to go to Pittsville at all. He said he hoped grass would grow in their streets.

Instead, grass grows in the streets of Dexterville and all over Hiles' kingdom.

Once weighing more than 200 pounds and a robust sort of man, Hiles in his last several years declined in health to "a mere shadow of his former self." Yet, he attended to business almost every day.

The last summer before his death, Hiles had been in Dexterville, which by that time had grown to around 500 people. He was especially interested in the reclamation of marsh land and the conversion to dairy farms.

In October, he moved to his Milwaukee residence because a more equable temperature could be maintained there and because better attention could be provided.

That winter, King George suffered a series of paralyzing strokes. Then on March 8, 1896, a Sunday afternoon, he partly arose from the lounge on which he lay, gasped and fell back dead.

He had already planned his memorial. The entire program of burial was carried out in accordance with wishes expressed by Hiles before his death. He requested that his last resting place be in a cemetery just over the river from the town he had ostensibly named for his mule.

At Dexterville, all was quiet. The mills had shut down. The stores and shops closed. "Every line of activity seemed to have ceased in harmonious intuition with the last heart beat of the founder of that little berg and the

support of it for lo! these many years," observed Wood County Reporter.

A special train from Milwaukee had reached town at 8 a.m. with the body of King George accompanied by Milwaukee and Chicago relatives, except for Hiles' invalid wife. The "corpse" was taken directly from the coach to the schoolhouse, where services would be held at 3 p.m. At the school, the body rested in a bed of flowers.

About noon an eastbound passenger train on the Green Bay line steamed into Dexterville. It carried a special car filled with those paying tribute to the old railroad magnate.

The delegation was met at the depot by Samuel Hiles, the brother of the deceased. Carriages waited to take them to the services.

At 2 p.m., a third special train arrived. This time the passengers were railroad dignitaries who had come to pay last respects to a colleague.

"In the little Dexterville schoolhouse with its rough, undecorated walls, far away from the wealth and finery and busy hum which must, in life have surrounded the millionaire lumberman," wrote the Reporter, "occurred the last solemn rites." A choir from Grand Rapids sang.

The railroad built a special spur to the cemetery to install the \$10,000 monument that marks the burial place of Hiles. Shaped of Vermont granite, the piece was brought in on flat cars. In the process, the tip cracked and had to be reshaped.

George Braun, longtime Dexter town chairman, was quoted in 1956 as saying he learned that Hiles had provided in his will for the five-acre cemetery with explicit orders that it be used freely by his friends and relatives, but that it not be administered as a public cemetery. To insure his wishes, the will provided \$25,000 for upkeep of the burial ground.

"However, in all my years as town chairman," said Braun, "I was never able to locate any of that money or to determine exactly what happened to it."

"Mr. Hiles had many virtues which will live after him," wrote the Centralia Enterprise and Tribune upon his death. "Let his faults be with his body." Lest anyone forget where that body lies, there is that 40-foot-tall shaft of granite, an obelisk to a man who would be king.







Wisconsin Rapids Tribune

The Dexterville Mill

... The population of Dexterville is about 50 in summer and 250 in winter, yet there has never yet been a death or burial here. Mr. Hiles has resided here most of the time for 17 years. Somebody suggested that a corpse ought to be imported in order to start a cemetery, but this necessity will probably soon be obviated, as we understand a physician has recently settled there.

Green Bay Advocate, 1873

Added in 2016

### Kilbourn Confrontation

When the Kilbourn dam was first put across the Wisconsin there was indignant protest from the up river interests, lumber owners claiming it would ruin rafting. Excitement was at a fever pitch when Hiles came down with his entire cut of lumber in rafts manned by sturdy rivermen. Finding the dam in such a shape he could not get his lumber over, he announced his intention of cutting his way through with axes. The inhabitants of the village lined the banks when the Hiles crew came to the dam and one of the head men of the town held a rifle in his hands. Calling Hiles by name he announced that he would shoot the first man who laid an ax to the timbers. Hiles looked at the man and the barrel of his gun, then he swung his ax and said, "I'm taking chances that you are lying" and the keen blade made the first stroke that soon forced a passage. Many believed it fortunate for the town as the river men would have made a mess of it.





## Dexterville Doings

Although Hiles died at his Milwaukee home, he had ruled from Dexterville, Wood County, Wis., from 1850 to 1886.

In the 1860 federal census he was a “lumberman” with a \$10,000 personal estate. His brother, Samuel, and other lumbermen named Jarvis, Baker, Hurlburt and Houston, came in at around \$1,000. Also notable in the town of Dexter were the Pitts family, for whom Pittsville is named.

Dexterville, like similar sites, was prone to the fire bug. In 1866, the sawmill burned, and again in 1872. Next year, a steam mill. In 1879, fire in the woods. But Hiles had a habit of using insurance to cover his losses.

An October 1874 *Wood County Reporter* reporter took a train to Dexterville station, “a point which two years previous could not be reached in less than four hours, over the most terrible roads and through seemingly impassable swamps. Upon our arrival, we were met by Miss Annie Houston, the Post Mistress of Wood, who conveyed us to her father’s where we spent the night.”

Dexterville in 1874, was a thriving village with many fine residences surrounding a stave mill, boarding house, railroad house, depot and Sabbath School, but “sadly” in need of a school house and church.

The *Reporter* took a shot at Hiles’ notorious electioneering. “This section looks very little as it did fifteen years ago, when a white man was a curiosity, and the aborigines were so common that it is only a wonder they were not appointed to positions upon the canvassing boards at the Spring and Fall elections.”

In 1880, another writer was escorted by George Hiles himself, the “venerable sage of Western Wood” at Dexterville, who pointed to an extensive saw mill lying idle “for want of men to run it.”

The federal census for that year shows Hiles occupying the #1 spot in the village, with his second wife, Mary, and a grand daughter. Also listed are a hotel keeper, bookkeeper, dress maker, school teacher, agent for the railroad, baker and other occupations of civility.

By 1881, Hiles had built a sawmill, tub and pail factory, two hotels, cooper shop and 30 dwellings that he rented to employees. The “\$100,000 village” was reduced in 1885 by a windstorm that destroyed stores, houses and stock.

That year, a journalist related that, “A few days ago we were called to the town of Dexter on official business, and while there [took] the opportunity to examine somewhat closely the new steam mill erected by George Hiles the past season. The river at Dexterville presents a most desirable location for mill property, natural sluices affording an excellent harbor for the security of logs.

“The mill erected by Mr. Hiles is large, capacious, and put together in a manner reflecting great credit on the architect, Mr. Johnson. A powerful steam-engine of 75 horse-power propels the machinery, which runs so still that no noise is audible at a distance of a few rods from the structure.”

The 1881 *History of Northern Wisconsin* provided the basic story of how Hiles came in 1850 with H. Searles; the two lived in a log shanty; had a saw mill built; a house; and in 1857 a post office with Hiles postmaster. The first school came in 1858. Population was about 200 in 1881.

The 1893-94 *Wisconsin Gazetteer* counted 350 residents “at junction of G.B., W. & St. P. and the C.M. & St. P. Rys.” No doubt the total varied by the season.

Businesses listed were Ralph Bullis, hotel and restaurant; S.A. Downing, hotel; Wm. Downing, grocer; Farley & Co., saloon; Frederick Heinze & Co., saloon; George Hiles & Son, woodenware makers; Samuel Hiles, logger; Hudson Bros. saloon; Mrs. Anna Keenan, confectioner and restaurant; J.H. Larcom, grocer; John Standacher, meats.

By the 1923 *History of Wood County*, Dexterville had “vanished into the misty past.”





## Fairchild

The son of a rich Madisonian, Cassius Fairchild, wrote to his father, J.C., in 1861 that “All of the lumbermen up and down the river are putting him [George Neeves] up to make Remington all the trouble he can because they think that Remington is in with Geo. Hiles to help skin the poor cusses out of their logs.”

The next year, Charles Fairchild, younger brother of Cassius, in the company of a law enforcement officer, tried to recover some cranberries owed him and fired five shots the direction of the timber king. He missed but Fairchild and the officer were arrested on the complaint of Hiles. The sheriff brought Fairchild and officer to the courthouse at Grand Rapids where both were discharged.

Charles wrote in September 1861 that Hiles had shaken hands on an agreement to drop prosecution if the Fairchilds would discontinue their civil and criminal suits against him. But who could trust the big man? Charles told his mother he would depart quickly if danger erupted because his life was “worth infinitely more than all the cranberries in Christendom.”

Mrs. Fairchild wrote to another son, Lucius, later Civil War hero and one-armed Wisconsin governor, about Charley’s “narrow escape” from “the rowdies of the north.” She said she hadn’t seen any notice in the papers and hoped not to, “lest it should irritate Hiles.”

Charles told Lucius that expenses were getting pretty high—for road building, lawsuits with Hiles and keeping back outsiders from the Fairchild cranberries.

In 1862, Charles had been jailed in lieu of \$500 bond for his assault of Hiles. “The justice before whom the case was tried was owned by Hiles and, knowing that fact, I filed the necessary affdt and applied for a change of venue. This was vigorously resisted by the Dist. Atty. and was denied.”

So Charles was committed to the Wood County sheriff but placed in the Portage County jail “for safekeeping.” Knowing he would be released but that Hiles would try to arrest him

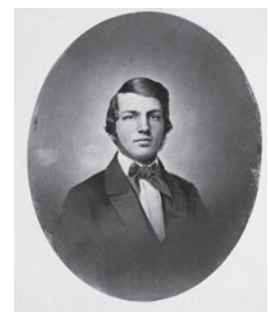
again, he told his family he did not intend to stand trial and would quietly leave Plover for Madison until the case had blown over.

In early 1862, Charles was in Chicago checking cranberry prices when he unexpectedly saw Sam Hiles, brother of George, in the street. He didn’t think Hiles saw him that time, but in February wrote, “The Hiles crew have arrested me again, it is true, and show a good will to pursue me, but Mr. Palmer and Judge [Minor] Strope both agree that they would stand no chance of convicting me and, now that I am discharged, I am running not because I fear conviction but because I dread being dragged around in attendance upon courts for six months or a year.”

A grand jury indictment had been issued against Charles for assault with intent to kill. Once arrested, said Madison attorney J.M. Flower, Charley would be in considerable danger, “for he has got an accursed set of hounds after him who will stop at nothing in the shape of perjury or anything else.”

As far as Charles was concerned, it was time to check out of the “Hotel de Cranberry Swamp” and think about joining the Union cause in the War of Rebellion.

Charles Fairchild



SHS

*In the Fairchild collection housed at the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, is a letter L.A. Houston wrote April 24, 1862, to J.D. Witter, that a man had started from Hiles’ place that morning to raft lumber from Remington’s Mill. “They came here and employed Hiles and Remington to help him cheat and defraud Hurlbut’s and others.”*





## Litigation

The *Stevens Point Journal* of Sept. 11, 1886, joked that Hiles would feel lonesome if he didn't have a big lawsuit on his hands. At the time, he was being sued by Curt M. Treat and Melvin A. Hoyt over a Waukesha county quarry near the new Wisconsin Central railroad branch—because they had located the site and sold it to Hiles who refused to pay them for it.

In 1875, Hiles learned there had been a warrant issued against him for election fraud.

According to the May 1, 1875, *Grand Rapids Tribune*, “Geo. was over-anxious to be arrested, and hunted the town over and over for the Sheriff; but that officer had gone up to Biron’s.

“At about tea time, they met on the sidewalk and Geo. asked for his arrest.

“The officer hadn’t the papers with him, but if he would walk down to his office he would be accommodated.

“‘Never mind now,’ said George, ‘I’m going to supper now. Consider me under arrest and make your return on the warrant accordingly. I will be down to see you after supper—if I can find you.’”

An April 26, 1883, *Wood County Reporter* said a federal grand jury at Madison returned indictments against Hiles, James Hiles, W.R. Jarvis, Will Johnson, and Walter O’Brien, again for election fraud. Dexter township had given “Park” 168 votes out of 174, whereas the town usually polled only 75 total votes.

According to a *Tribune* of April 18, 1885, Hiles “of Arcadia” consulted with Milwaukee attorneys to represent him in 27 suits for damages against supervisors and officials of Wood County totaling over \$500,000, coming out of his efforts to establish the town of Grant, Wood

County. Plaintiffs including John Edwards alleged that Hiles, while an official of the town of Dexter, collected money for the town and kept it. The same year, Hiles pursued a case to recover insurance on his cooper shops and store rooms that had burned about two years earlier.

Also in 1885, said the March 12 *Reporter*, J.D. Witter submitted the tax roll for Dexter for 1881, showing that tracts owned by others were assessed at \$200-300 per 40 acres while Hiles’ property was valued at less than \$50 in every case for the same parcels.

In the same litigious year, Hiles lost a verdict for false imprisonment and malicious prosecution to Mrs. Sylvia Spears, who had been arrested for burning buildings at Dexterville. The enemies of Hiles thought the fire was set to claim insurance money.

Hiles claimed she requested to go to jail to make a case against him and, while “in jail,” lived with her children in the sheriff’s quarters. While in jail, Spears delivered an “imbecile” child.

“*The whole plea of the prosecution was that I was worth a million, and could easily pay the woman \$10,000,*” Hiles said. “*I don’t care a snap of my finger for that amount of money. I made \$50,000 this week—but I don’t propose to stand still and be robbed.*”

In 1890, the big man was involved in a sheriff’s sale in Portage county involving the Good-year brothers. There was also a lawsuit against him over misrepresented land purchased from Hiles in Florida and another lawsuit in against him as president of the Nebraska Land and Improvement Co. Business as usual for George Hiles.



For more info on George Hiles and Dexterville, see William Hiles, Sr. and Sheryl Hiles *Yellow River Pioneers*, 1987. *History of Northern Wisconsin*, 1881. *History of Wood County*, 1923.





## False Alarm, 1869

From the *Wisconsin River Pilot*: During an affray on the Yellow River between George Hiles and some employees, Hiles got them into his counting room and locked the door. As they fought to get out, the result was Hiles and clerk were killed.

## Busting the Reporter, 1874

*Wood County Reporter*: “And now King George of Dexter declares—we give the words purporting to come from his heart if he has one, and we judge he has though nitro-glycerine would be powerless upon it as a baby’s breath breathed against Gibraltar—I’ll bust that G--d D--d Reporter.” Now we declare that George will do no such thing. King George with all the money he has stolen from the County—all he has robbed from hard working men in years past—all he has obtained legitimately, if so he has gathered a copper, can’t buy, choke down or ‘bust’ the *Reporter*.

## Arcadia, 1879

The Arcadia Mineral Springs were situated about half a mile west of Arcadia [Trempealeau Co., Wis.] in a romantic and beautiful spot, and their waters, it was claimed, could cure dyspepsia, liver, kidney and stomach complaints and other physical derangements. It was discovered in 1878 on lands belonging to George Hiles. He had begun to build a large hotel in 1879 when it was destroyed by fire and abandoned.

## Breach of Promise, 1890

Her name was Elizabeth “Lib” Carter but she probably should have been called Mrs. Hiles. Her \$25,000 lawsuit in 1889 was for “breach of promise.” As a 19-year-old resident of New Lisbon, Juneau County, Wis., her deposition said, and while carrying on “a good paying business,” she became acquainted with Hiles, who represented himself to be an “unmarried man of large means and great wealth.”

Hiles, she said, commenced paying marked attention to her and escorted her to places of amusement; gave her presents; expressed great personal admiration for her; professed to be in love with her; and in a short time made an offer of marriage. “After yielding to his solicitations, the plaintiff was seduced into social relations the same as if they were lawful man and wife, and gave up her employment and devoted to his enjoyment her company and associations.” During 1868, they lived together in Chicago, Milwaukee and other places, a state of affairs that existed until 1875 when the plaintiff, learning that the defendant was married, left him and settled again in New Lisbon.

In 1887, Hiles sought her out again and said he would soon be free of his marital obligations. Back she went to act as his faithful wife, nursing him, looking after his comfort, cleaning his apartments and acting as assistant, companion, counselor and friend in business.

Carter’s case foundered, said the April 24, 1890, *Reporter* when she claimed he had committed bigamy by marrying a second wife, Mary, when he was already married to first wife Amanda. Hiles admitted being married Nov. 7, 1843, to Amanda Brown at Farmington, Mich., and that Amanda died March 25, 1859, near Sparta; but added that the two were already divorced, March 29, 1855.

With Col. C.W. Briggs as his lawyer, the plaintiff settled in 1890, for somewhere between \$1,500 and \$10,000.

After the case, Col. Briggs himself, Hiles’ lawyer, sued his client, claiming Hiles wouldn’t pay him and indeed had developed a chronic dislike for paying attorneys throughout years of litigation. Briggs also said that when he was working for Hiles’ railroad, Hiles gave him a raise, but then “I was occupying rooms of the railroad company as offices, and he used his friendly intervention to increase the room rent, so that it would balance the increase of salary.”





## By Ed Arpin

It was related that, when the time to pay off the men in spring came, the men would find on the accounts charged against them a certain amount for whiskey that they did not buy. It was a custom to have a barrel of whiskey open at the store and those that wanted it had only to reach for the dipper and take a drink. If they did not help themselves, it was their fault but they had to chip in and pay the same at the end of each pay day.

The company got a bad reputation and it became hard for them to get men to work. At times, one of the Hiles boys, either Jas. or Frank, would be sent to Winona to hire men and bring floaters to help out.

I remember at one time in the spring one of the men who had worked all winter for them stopped and did chores for us for a spell. He had a poem that told how George Hiles sent one of the boys out to hire men and told them not to go to a certain place where they were too well known as “having skinned them to the bone.” Later on I mentioned this poem to Jas. Hiles who was with me for many years on the County Board and we were friendly. Jas. remembered the poem and recited several verses, tears running down his cheeks with laughter.

### “Terrible!”

Friend Brundage:—I find the following advertisement in the Juneau Co. Argus: Wanted.—At Dexterville, Wood Co., Wis., —100 men to work on the River, in the Saw Mill and in the Logging Camps, and at Lumbering business generally, for which I will pay the highest prices in cash. No American citizen of African descent need apply.

Geo. Hiles

Dexterville, Wood Co., Aug. 23, '63

To a man “up a tree” the English of the above is about as follows:—”Wanted, at Dexterville, Wood Co., 100 men, nominally to work for me, but more particularly, to be at the election in my precinct, in November, to drink my whiskey, to vote for me, or my ticket, and to assault and browbeat every one who has any mind of his own, and want to vote the Union Ticket.

No negroes need apply, because they cannot vote.

I give you the above for the benefit of such of the readers of your paper as do not understand the Dexter dialect. M.Y., Necedah, Sept. 5, 1863, in the *Wood County Reporter*

### Lock Box

That much abused man Isaac Stephenson [congressman, lumberman—wanted to look at the records] but the polite town clerk very kindly told him that the Poll list, and all other proceedings pertaining to that election [1882] were locked up in an iron safe, with hasps and clasps big enough for a common jail, and that George Hiles had the keys, or had thrown them in, I don't know which. Mr. Stephenson's time being very short for the approaching contest, left Dexter fully satisfied that all was well for him, receiving 6 votes out of 173. C.J. Kruger, Dexterville, April 27, 1883, in the *May 3 Reporter*

### Hansen

In the Oct. 17, 1891, *Oshkosh Northwestern*, a story about M.R. Hansen of Hansen township claimed he had been missing for two weeks “and the wildest stories are in circulation regarding his financial operations for the past year.” Hansen's sawmill and lumber had been attached by the Wood County sheriff for the First National bank of Grand Rapids. It was expected that repayment of loans from George Hiles “of Milwaukee” and two others of La Crosse “will eat up all the property.”

It was alleged that Hansen had forged the names of Mons Anderson and Hiles on \$25,000 worth of notes and that a lot of money belonging to his employers had “been swallowed up.” There followed a detailed investigation and comparison of handwriting by the *Milwaukee Journal*, which was skeptical of the charges.

But another newspaper said Hansen had been spotted in Ohio.





## Not So Bad, 1896

After the death of George Hiles, a Milwaukee acquaintance defended him, saying Hiles was rough and cynical but generous, “a notable example of a man who was looked on by the world at large as the embodiment of a shrewd, bad business man, who never traded unless he could get the best of a deal, and who would rather be at war with his neighbors than dwell with them in amity.” But, according to the writer, life was different in Wisconsin forty years earlier “and the men who plunged into the wilderness, built mills and marketed their lumber at St. Louis, after floating it out of some Wisconsin stream and down the Mississippi, naturally became as rough as the life they lead. The weak died and those who could not swim perished in the rapids.

As Hiles himself said to a friend, probably the writer who quoted him:

*A fellow with a little money can't afford to let folks know that he ever lets go easy. You see the world is full of sharks, and they are always looking for a fat sucker. In order to save the trouble of stepping on some of them, I'd rather they'd think me too tough to tackle, and keep away for fear of being hurt.*

*It ain't such an awful job to make some money, if a man has health and ain't lazy, but I tell you it takes lively fighting to keep it after you've got it. There are lots of smart people on earth who want to live on the profits of somebody's labor, and the schemes they will spring to get a dollar are really funny when a man has time to sit around and watch them figure to get the best of him.*

*Most of them think I'm tough to deal with, but if I had not been, I wouldn't have had nothing that they'd think it worthwhile to scheme to get.*

*Watching schemes is about all the fun I have now, and I tell you some of them are better than a theater in the new ways they will invent to get at a man.*

*When I first moved to Milwaukee, you should have seen the fellows that wanted to give me the inside points on wheat, and pork, and iron. At last they got tired and quit, and then came the*

*fellows with options on farms that they wanted to annex to the city of Milwaukee at my expense. Some of them have got tired and dropped me, but I still have enough coming to the office to keep me laughing.*

*The critters have got to working in gangs and its fun to see them. Two or three will drop in, one at a time, ask if I have any lots in some addition, and say it's a good thing, and wish they had money to invest. After two or three days of this talk, along will come a fellow with lots to sell right there, and he's the man who afterwards goes off and tells the gang I'm too rough for any use....*

The statements, said the friend, were expressed partly as a joke and partly in earnest. They explained why Hiles was “always careful to cover up the numerous kindly acts which marked his journey through life.” For example, Milwaukee's Third Ward fire, when Hiles was one of first to draw a check for \$500 to swell the fund to relieve the sufferers.

And when he was in a sanitarium at Eureka Springs, Ark., and a fire destroyed cabins occupied by the poor. Although unable to leave his bed, Hiles started a subscription with \$150.

When a clerk who had been with him a long time at Dexterville was attacked by a nervous disorder, never able to resume work, Hiles continued to provide his regular monthly salary until he died.

When asked if he had really been paying wages to a sick laborer for a year, Hiles said,

*Well yes, I done it, but I ain't going to any more. I got notice the other day that he was well and at work in the mill again. It being about Thanksgiving time, I told the boys to send him a few loads of wood, just to let the family know I was glad I did not have to support them any longer.*

Hiles also privately made regular semi-annual donations to the Little Sisters of the Poor. His only public donation, said his defender, had been the gift of a site for a church at Dexterville and lumber to erect it.



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# RCMVIII

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The author on Clyde Avenue, River City

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