



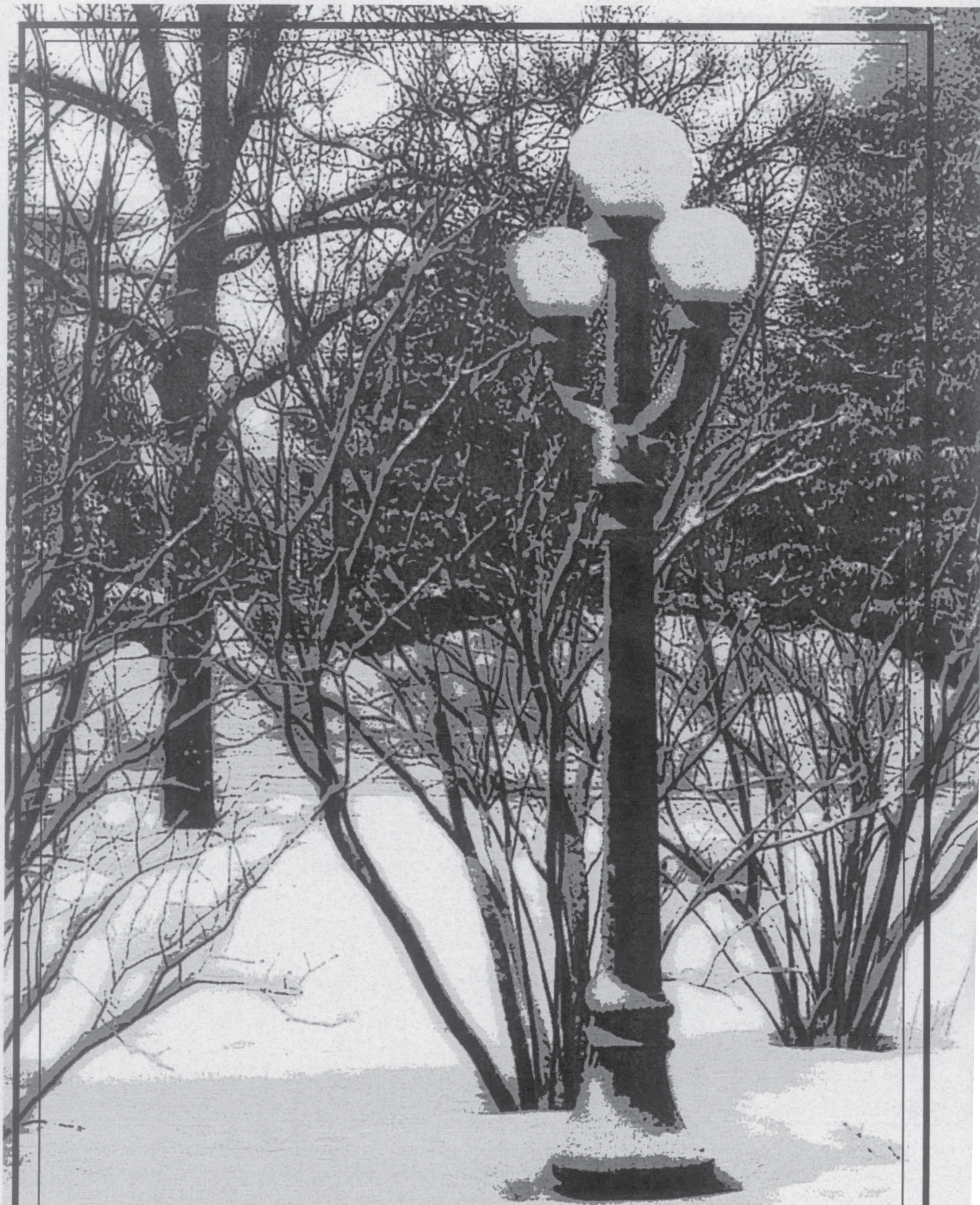
February 2008

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Artifacts



Cover: Mother and brother? of Mitchell Red Cloud, Jr., Korean War hero. (See back cover.) President's message, p. 3; Epinal by Dave Patrykus, 4-7; Memories of a Small Town by Herb Dittman, 8-10; Exner photo, 11; Mother and the Tramps by Gerald Johnson, 12-13; Moccasin Creek by Gerald Johnson, 14-15; Downtown photo 16-17; Theaters by Earle Garber, 18-21; "Artifacts" and photos, 22-28; Romanski photos, 29; Brother Santa by Dave Engel, 30-31; Red Cloud, back cover.

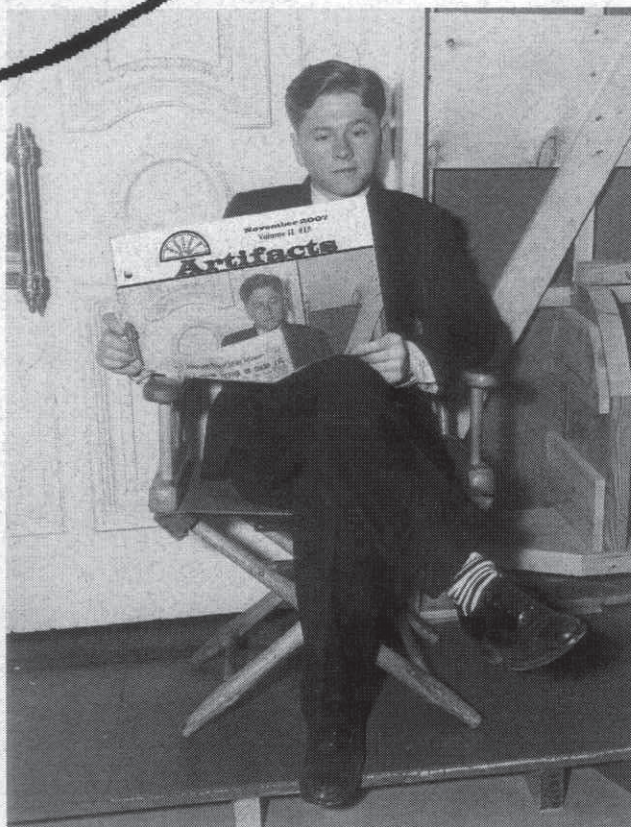


View from SWCHC History Center Office

Photo by Uncle Dave

Past Perfect

By Phil Brown, SWCHC President



Actor Mickey Rooney

The digital age has arrived at the South Wood County Historical Corp. with the purchase of PastPerfect software, designed for relatively small museums and historical societies such as ours. PastPerfect will allow us to establish and use a database for archives, membership, finances and just about anything else. A new part-time employee with extensive computer skills, Lori Brost, has been hired to help History Center director Uncle Dave with this project. Dave's daughter, Angelica, has also been brought on board and has been scanning photos for the upcoming Don Krohn exhibit.

Another exciting opportunity arises as we will be able to share much of our collection with you and the world, through a renovation of our website, by our board member and volunteer, Barry Jens, who operates a similar program for the United Church of Christ a few blocks up the street from our museum.

As we begin to copy our extensive photos and documents in digital form, I have had the opportunity to browse through the archives section on the third floor of the Museum. The first thing that comes to mind is how organized our collection is. Over our fifty-plus years of existence, many valuable artifacts have been entrusted to us by the citizens of South Wood County. Over the past twenty years or so, under the direction of Pam Walker and Karen Pecher, much of our collection has been organized and placed in acid free, archival storage boxes.

Like everything historical, this process, in its early stages, will continue to evolve as the South Wood County Historical Corp. uses as many tools as possible to bring its collection to the public.



EPINAL

By David Patrykus

John A. Corey
Sgt 411 Inf 103 Div
Wisconsin Jan 11 1945

That's all it says, without punctuation, just the simple facts. It is the grave marker of our neighbor, at the American Cemetery and Memorial in Epinal, France.

We never knew John Corey. My family had moved to the next house down Two Mile Avenue from the Corey's in the spring of 1944, after a one-year sojourn in southern California. Sgt. Corey had entered the Army the previous July.

John Corey had been killed somewhere in France on the day after my ninth birthday. I can recall my parents and other neighbors talking about it and remember that I had felt so sad for his family. At that age, I had never experienced death and wouldn't have known how to express my sadness to them. The Coreys had three blue stars in the window for three of their sons: Ralph, 1st Lt., USMC; Dean, Lt., USAAF and John, S/Sgt., USA. Now they would have one of gold.

Mr. and Mrs. Corey were kind and generous people, always happy to find odd jobs for us neighbor kids who wanted to earn a bit of money for a movie or maybe just a treat at our corner store, the Two Mile Grocery.

Mr. Corey, the Wood County Superintendent of Schools, always had a big vegetable garden with which he often needed help. He also kept a large flock of chickens for egg production. It was considered an honor to be asked to help him tend the chickens, whose care he was very particular about. I was proud to be asked to do so when he and Mrs. Corey went traveling for a week!

I entered the hen house through the feed room. The chickens were trained so that, before entering the coop proper, I had to knock on the door softly so as not to startle them. If I didn't knock, they would

fly about frantically and might injure themselves. If I did knock, they would be as gentle as could be. I was always surprised how well it worked!

Mrs. Corey was the epitome of everyone's Mother or Grandmother. Soft-spoken and gentle, she made each of us neighbor kids feel as if we were her favorite. There would sometimes be competition to be the first kid at her back door on a Saturday morning to "get a job." Mrs. Corey (our elders in those days were always Mr. or Mrs.) would meet us at the door in her apron and seemed always to be able to find a chore or two for us. Latecomers might also find that she had additional chores, not wanting to disappoint them. We would inevitably earn 50 cents. You might smile at this but in the mid 1940's, a Saturday afternoon double feature at the Rapids or Palace theatres was only 14 cents, popcorn a dime and a 12 oz. Pepsi or a large Baby Ruth candy bar a nickel. We'd have money left over. I believe that if we had taken a neighborhood poll asking, "Who are the nicest people on Two Mile Avenue?" Silas and Ruth Corey would have won hands down.

The years went by and we moved away; the Corey's grew older and then passed on, Mrs. Corey last, in 1994 at age 102. The death of their son John had faded from my memory until my wife Marlis and I stopped by their grave one day in Forest Hill Cemetery.

In memory of our beloved son
JOHN ARTHUR
1924 - 1945
BURIED AT
EPINAL, FRANCE
S/SGT. Co. K 411th INF.



David Patrykus and Dominique at Epinal

Memories of that time came back. No longer a nine year old, now a father and grandfather, I realized how painful it must have been for them to lose their son. I had always pictured him as an older man but he had been only twenty-one when he was killed. Over the years, we'd stop by the Corey's grave from time to time and their loss would again be brought to mind. We never dreamed that some day we'd travel to faraway Epinal, France, and to Sergeant Corey's grave.

It was on October 16, 2007, a cloudy and cool afternoon when we drove into the EPINAL AMERICAN CEMETERY AND MEMORIAL, a hauntingly beautiful and peaceful place. On a driving vacation around Europe, we had decided to make this pilgrimage to pay our respects to my former neighbor whom we had never known.

The French gentleman in charge, Dominique, greeted

us cordially and typed Sgt. Corey's name into the computer. The printout told us that he lies in Section A, Row 28, Grave 1, among 5,254 other Americans.

We soon found the place where John Corey had been lying for over sixty-two years. I placed a rose at the base of his marker and found myself in tears, unable to talk. The memory of Mr. and Mrs. Corey and the realization of their family's sacrifice was almost overwhelming. We stood silently for a while in the glow of a late afternoon sun which had broken through the clouds. Then, as it began to fade we walked toward our car.

Dominique met us to say that he would soon lower the colors and asked if I would like to assist him. "I would be honored," I said. With the flag lowered and retired, our visit ended. Finally, after all of these years I felt that in some way we now knew my long-ago neighbor. May he continue to rest in peace.



Epilogue

*Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune -
January 16, 1945*

OUR MEN IN SERVICE

"Pfc. John A. Corey, son of Mr. & Mrs. S.G. Corey, Route 5, has been awarded the Bronze Star for heroism, according to word received here by his parents. The Wisconsin Rapids soldier's citation reads:

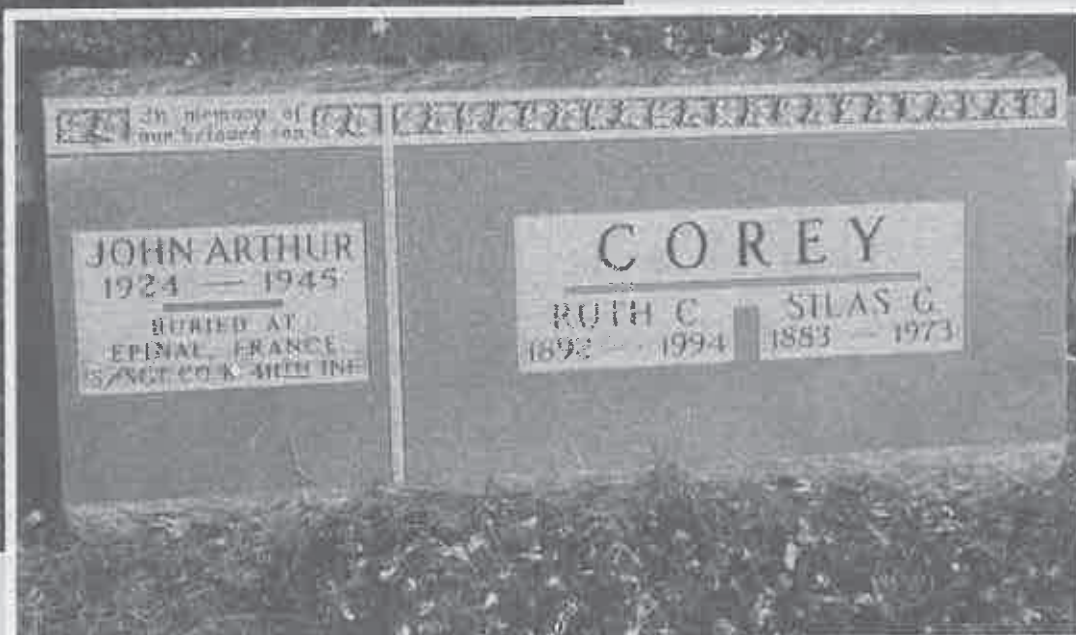
"The Bronze Star to Pfc. John A. Corey, 411th infantry regiment, for heroism in action during the daylight hours of November 28, 1944, somewhere in France. Private Corey, on his own initiative, skillfully crawled to an observation point in direct view of the enemy, in order to ascertain their impending movements. While maneuvering into position, he was subjected to enemy artillery and sniper fire but continued on his mission with undaunted courage and

utter disregard for his life. He reached his vantage point successfully and was able to relay vital information back to his company commander which enabled our troops to place accurate fire into enemy positions, completely disrupting their proposed plans, under these harrowing conditions. As a result of his outstanding valor the company was able to reach their objective expeditiously."

"Private Corey entered the service in July, 1943 and landed in southern France in October, 1944."

Note: Sadly and tragically, Pfc. (by now S/Sgt) Corey's heroic deeds appeared in his hometown newspaper five days after his death.

Photos and story by David Patrykus



MEMORIES OF A SMALL TOWN

By Herb Dittmann

Wisconsin Rapids, Wis., the town our family lived in during the mid-1930s to mid-1940s, had a population of about 9,000 at the time. To me, it seemed like a small town and still does.

We lived on a nice street in a four-bedroom single family home. It had a living room with a fireplace; dining room; quite a large kitchen; and a basement with a coal fired furnace.

Coal was delivered as needed by truck, which would back up into our driveway. The driver would insert a chute into the basement window and place lumps of coal on it and they would pile up there in a room that we called the coal bin. One of my jobs was to open the furnace door and shovel coal into it to keep the fire going. The colder the outdoor temperature, the more frequently this had to be done so the fire wouldn't go out. Later we got a "stoker." This was a hopper that held coal and fed it automatically into the furnace. This reduced the number of times we had to tend the furnace. Every week or so my Dad would remove the build up of coal residue. The residue was called "clinkers." These were about two feet square and were placed in the trash.

We were dependent on delivery men, it seemed, for nearly every necessity. The milkman had a wagon about the size of our present-day postal truck but it was pulled by a horse. Our milkman's name was Sandy. I can't remember his horse's name but he knew the route as well as Sandy. He'd plod along and when he came to a customer's house he would stop without being told. Sandy would jump out and go to the back door where the owner would leave a slip checked with what she wanted: milk, butter, eggs etc.

Milk was delivered in glass quart bottles that had a bubble-shaped top with a cardboard cap. The cream would rise to the top from the milk below. In the winter when it was especially cold the cream would freeze and push the cap right off the bottle.

Sandy would hop back on his wagon and the horse would plod on to the next stop passing up

maybe two or three houses who were not customers.

Another delivery man was the one who delivered the groceries. My Dad worked at a department store, Johnson Hills, that included a grocery and meat department. My mother would call in her order and it would be delivered again by horse driven wagon. When the roads were icy they would use a wagon that was fitted with runners that could glide through the ice. I remember the steam coming off the horse's back and from his nostrils.

My mother loved 8 O'clock Coffee but they only sold it at the A&P store. To go there would have been disloyal to my Dad's store so thinking no one would know me, I was designated to get it. We didn't tell my Dad. I think a pound bag cost 39 cents.

When we ran out of bread, rather than have it delivered, I was sent to Sweet's grocery on the corner. At first I didn't know it but Mr. Sweet would put the old bread in front on the shelf and the fresh on the back. One time I brought home a loaf of bread and when I got there my mother said, "This is stale. Take it back." I was afraid to tell Mr. Sweet that his bread was stale so as I walked back I squeezed the bread to make it soft and no one was the wiser.

In the summertime the iceman also had a horse-pulled wagon, with large hunks of ice piled on the open back. Customers put a sign in their window, showing how many pounds of ice they wanted. Twenty-five pounds was shown on the top, fifty pounds on the bottom. On the other side showed 75 or 100. The best part was watching the iceman wrestle with a big piece and with a pick chip away to get the right size for the order. He'd lift the block with large tongs and take it up to the house and place it right in the ice box. While he was doing this the kids in the neighborhood would jump on the wagon and pick slivers of ice and shove them in their mouths to cool off.

Our mailman's name was Shaw Hill. He was very friendly, always with a smile on his face. He

was related to the Hills of Johnson Hills and could have had a cushy job inside but he chose instead to be outdoors walking his route twice a day for the morning and afternoon deliveries regardless of the weather.

One day I was riding my bike past the train station when I saw a convoy of National Guard trucks lined up. My heart skipped a beat thinking that my brothers were coming back from the South Pacific early but I knew that couldn't be true. But what was all the activity then? I got off my bike and went over and asked an older gentleman who was standing by the recently arrived train. He said, "It is a contingent of German POWs. They were brought in to pick the crops, onions, beans, etc." There was a labor shortage and time was running out before the crops would rot in the ground.

As I watched the Germans get off the train and slowly take their places on the back of the truck I found myself feeling sorry for them. They were such a sorry lot, thin and unshaven. Then I was quick to remember that they were our enemies.

Being near the railroad tracks reminded me of a terrible incident that occurred while I was attending Lowell grade school. One of my classmates lived across the tracks from the school. There were always freight cars lined up making it nearly impossible to get across. He decided to take short cut and crawl under the cars. He didn't realize that the engine was starting to move; it instantly crushed him. We were all horrified by the story. There were no grievance counselors at the time, we merely had to face it and learn a sad lesson from it.

In the summer we would go to our cottage in another small town, Lake Delavan. There we had many of the same deliveries, except for coal of course. In addition, we had two bakery trucks that made their rounds regularly. One was from the Jaeger bakery and the other was Omar the bread man. They came with a basket showing what delicacies they had to offer that day in addition to bread. I'd hope my mom would buy some goodies but it didn't always work out unless we had company coming. When they did come and were staying for a meal, I was sent to Samuelson's grocery to get 15 cents worth of cheese. Half the store was occupied by a tavern where the Chicago

people gathered to celebrate their weekends and play the slot machines. Before leaving the store I would get a double dip ice cream cone, usually fudge ripple, for 5 cents and run back to the cottage on the gravel road in my bare feet. In the summers there I rarely wore shoes and practically lived in my swimsuit.

It was about this time that I was swimming with my friend Peony. We swam in the lake every day, sometimes all day. Her dad owned a tavern out on the highway and she was the only child so I guess I was the only one around who she had to play with. She was 12 years old, about two years older than I was at the time.

One day she said, "Let's swim out to the island," about a half mile out in the lake. It had a house on it that was said to be owned by bootleggers who stored their booze there and made deliveries from it. They built under ground tunnels from the house to the other side of the island where their Chris Crafts were docked so if they were raided by the police they could get to their boats and speed up to the end of the lake, get in their Packard sedans and drive back to Chicago without being caught. These were the same guys who blew up the rival gang's Dutch Mill dance hall up the hill from us. They looted all the slot machines and made off with the money.

The idea of swimming to the island sounded scary to me but Peony talked me into it and away we went. I got tired about half way there so I floated until I got my strength back and we finally made it to the shore. We walked around the house but didn't see any bootleggers. I don't think we knew what one looked like. We did hear dogs barking and thought maybe it would be better if we didn't go any farther and swam back to our beach. When we got there we laid in the sand until we recovered from our adventure and decided it wasn't such a good idea after all.

Occasionally, my Dad got grandiose ideas. We had a big rock in front of our cottage. It was too big to move so he decided to make the best of it and painted it with white and then painted the letters DITT-MANOR across the front of it. When my dad's brother, Al, and his friends came from Chicago to visit, they took one look at the shrine he

had erected and looked around our little cottage with no running water, kerosene lamps and an outhouse and laughed. They said, "Don't you think you should have named it DITT-MANURE?" This started another round of laughter and even my dad begrudgingly joined in.

He created another sign later for my sister Elaine and her husband Joe's house and had it attached to their light post in the front yard. It read, JOANY LANE, like it was a street sign. Before they were married Joe came to visit Elaine and decided we should take a ride to Lake Geneva. We all got in his car: my Mother, Mrs. Bayliss, an older lady friend of hers from Coventry England, Elaine and Joe and I. Half way there Joe said to Elaine, "Would you like to drive?" She said, "Sure." We started out again on the highway when all of a sudden Joe said, "Turn here." Unfortunately, we were almost through the intersection when she cramped the wheel and we went flying into the ditch nearly rolling over. I think Mrs. Bayliss broke her glasses but other than a few bumps and bruises we were all right. A lot of "Women Driver" comments were heard after that.

After we returned to Wisconsin Rapids at the end of summer, my friends and I resumed going to the movie matinee on Saturday afternoons. I was allowed 10 cents for the movie and a nickel for Milk Duds or Juju bears. There was always a 15-minute comedy, usually the Three Stooges or Our Gang. This was followed by Pathe News. Finally the movie came on. It was always a cowboy western serial. My favorite was Hopalong Cassidy. After falling off a cliff or some other life threatening scene it would end, to be continued next week. We'd then get on our bikes and ride across town and go out Chase Street to the stone quarry with our Red Ryder BB guns to reenact the entire movie.



Don Krohn Photo



*A small town then...
Rapids Police Chief Rudy Exner with friends*

MOTHER AND THE TRAMPS

By Gerald Johnson

They rode the empty boxcars and freight car undercarriages to anywhere else but where they came from, ending up in jungles all over the nation. They were called by many names back then: bums, hobos, tramps, beggars, and less complimentary titles. They were what we refer to in the year 2002 as indigents, or homeless, the flotsam of a society and economy which much like today, were not compassionate or strong. The economic depression that began in 1929 had not yet been overcome. The innovative and radical recovery programs of President Franklin Roosevelt had created an upswing of change, but the financial trickle down to the hopeless and homeless was slow to progress. In 1933, heavy industry and business in the big cities, and commerce on the whole, hit incredible lows, the demand for goods and services was almost nonexistent, and the disparity between the wealthy few and poor masses was great.

The John S. Johnson family lived on a shabby and dilapidated place on Gaynor Avenue, called the Boles Farm, apparently because of the builder or previous owner. The farm had no electricity or furnace, water was hand pumped from a well near the back door, and the outside toilet sat behind a nearby storage shed. The large two-story farmhouse of 1900 vintage was unpainted, primitive, dark and drafty cold. A number of small sheds were near the house, while the barn, perhaps the farm's soundest building, was 100 yards west.

Just a couple years earlier, my father, John S. Johnson, had quit his steady and good-paying paper mill job, and 'went into' his lifetime love, dirt farming. It wasn't really farming as such, just living on a farm. We had very little livestock, just a cow or two, some chickens, and for revenue, "boarded" horses and mules from neighboring farms. My mother, Tena VanderPloeg Johnson, was devastated and embittered by my father's job change and the move to the farm at a time her

family was growing up. My brother Roger was 13, Dale nine years old and I five years old. Kenneth, born at Nekoosa, had died as an infant 10 years earlier.

On the farm, we were able to exist on "county assistance" (welfare) and when the WPA was established, John S. Johnson, the farmer pretender, went to work digging sewers in Wisconsin Rapids, at 44 dollars a month.

Our Boles Farm location on Gaynor Avenue, a dirt road about a mile from the paved roads, lay in the general area of the four rail lines that curled north past Nekoosa and Port Edwards, splitting the state while serving Wausau, where rails branched east and west in a spiderweb-like service of transit and freight. A half mile from Wisconsin Rapids, in our vicinity, there existed two fairly large encampments of hobos, one near the cheese storage plant at what is now Wickham Avenue and 21st Avenue, and a larger encampment at the site of the old Carey concrete company near 17th Avenue and Russell Street extended. Three miles away was another large "hobo jungle" on the east side of the river at what is now called Robinson Park, near Baker and 20th Street.

The Wisconsin Rapids hobos were all men. I knew of no women in our "jungles," although there were stories of transient women in that time frame. It is true that many of the men were decent but penniless, but in the element were enough "bad apples" to band all hobos as undesirables. The hobos sought out whatever they could beg, borrow or steal.

The mark my mother put onto this sad situation was an empathy that now seems so very important in my personal memory, a pioneer kindness in the grasp of desperate poorness and poverty.

We lived on the Boles Farm for five years, from 1933-1938. We had land under cultivation, hay, and a small forage crop of corn, and somewhere in this

time frame mother created a large garden with small vegetables and berries. As she later told us, when a railroad tramp found a place where he could beg any kind of a meal, he chalked written notations for fellow tramps on the side of the steel rails in the area, describing the location of the source of food.

To the hobo, who owned nothing but the clothes on his back, our desolate farm must have appeared a big upward step. Other hobos found our home hostile, since hard work was always plentiful, and the meals provided austere. Here they found life's lot for the Johnson family was not much better than their own. The stove wood that needed to be split was dense, rock-hard oak and maple that would burn hot and slow in our cook stove and living room "heater." The water to be pumped and poured on the vegetable garden was from an old hand pump, and the pail hauling hard and long. The barn work was dirty and exhausting. Mother was a hard taskmaster but these unfortunates sat on our weathered old back porch, with a plateful of our best.

The lazy and unmotivated hobos never returned. Those who would work hard and long found a fellowship of the existence from which they had come, and perhaps a sandwich to carry off, or a second meal before departing.
















In later years I asked my mother if it wasn't frightening to be there alone on the farm with the hobos. She said she was always careful. They were never allowed in the house. If we kids were home, we were told to be polite.

By the time we left the farm and moved into the hand-built Johnson homestead late in 1938, the ranks of the hobos had thinned. There were still men, including my Uncle Herman, who were "riding the rods" on the freight trains, but as the war drew near, and the Roosevelt economic programs eased the poverty, the hobo brotherhood became smaller and smaller in number. In the end, those that remained were the lazy and the thieves. Local sanctions were finally put into place and the hobo jungles of Wisconsin Rapids were cleaned out and eradicated.

When the John S. Johnson family homestead was sold following Mother's death in 1991, in the attic were found the "tramp art" wood boxes. Mother must have treasured them to have kept them for over 50 years. We gave them to our friends, Joan and Harlen Zubke, these mementos of the hobos who visited our farm, talented fabricators of wood and metal, who fashioned humble "gifts," trade items for a meal.

Hobo signs from Fran

Great Grand Hobo, Duke of Cyber Space

 2 Women here. Tell a good story.	 Danger! Brutal men	 Get Carfare Here	 A crime has been done here	 Danger	 Woman living alone
 A Fence lives here	 Dog in the Garden	 May Sleep in the Haystack	 May get Money here	 Nothing Doing Here	 OK here. Good Chance for food.
 Poor People	 May Sleep Here	 Policewoman lives here.			

MOCCASIN CREEK

By Gerald Johnson

In our basement is a framed display of arrowpoints found along the Moccasin Creek, none of which were found by our family. They were purchased from residents who lived on or near the creek. Brother Dale found a number of arrowpoints, (one while I was with him,) and I only a single one. I traded my flint point for a cap gun, which I lost soon after playing in the field across from our home on Boles street. Dale traded or sold some of his to Frank Boyarski as I remember.

These artifacts are the only reminders of the Moccasin Creek that I have, other than a host of wonderful memories.

My brother Dale taught me how to fish on the Moccasin Creek while we were living at the Boles farm on Gaynor Avenue 1933–1938. This farm was located on Gaynor and 27th Avenue, current site of the West Junior High School. The farm's barn was located at the present site of the tennis courts.

Using a timeline of ages, I was between the ages of five and ten years old when I began the fishing trips to the creek, which we called "The Moggy." Perhaps it was to get me out from underfoot that I was first taken along to the creek when Dale went out to visit his friends the Boyarski twins, who lived near George Road on the other side of the Moccasin water shed.

The trip to the creek was straightforward. We walked down Gaynor Avenue, a dirt road at this time, to its dead end where the Willems Farm was located. We then crossed the Willems' corn field pretty much in a straight line west to the end of their property about a quarter mile from the creek. Today there is a connecting roadway at the site of the old Willems farm, where a cranberry marsh has

been built. Leonard Road (named after Leonard Romanski) didn't exist at the time.

Upon arriving at the heavily-wooded creek, a jackknife was used to cut a relatively straight stick about six feet long to use as a pole. The stick was pruned of its foliage, and a five-foot length of black fish line with a hook was tied to a small end of the stick, completing the necessary fishing gear. No nylon leader or bobber was used. A flat tobacco can of earthworms was carried in the back pocket, and a small sealed tin can contained several extra hooks and some line since many "snags" were present in the little creek.

The Moccasin was generally about twelve feet wide, often only eight or ten inches deep in the "riffles" but more than knee deep otherwise, with many dark fish "holds" under logs and along the hundreds of cut banks and twists as it wound through the low swampy land between two rising hillsides.

Fishing usually began slightly below the Boyarski Farm, and ended a mile down the creek at the "Iron Bridge" at Seneca road. The two mile trip back home called for cutting across farmers' fields along the way, creating a considerable shortcut.

The little spring-fed creek was alive with minnows and small fish and also populated by some native brook trout and a few odd species that occasionally ran from the Wisconsin River about ten miles downstream.

The edibles were called "keepers," mostly all chubs in the five inch category, with a few shiners thrown in, an occasional sucker, horned dace or stoneroller. To attain such a catch, it was necessary to hook and return to the creek many dozens of

minnows who chased the offered worms. We dug our fishing worms behind the old Boles farm bar, at the site of a former manure pile.

In later years at the farm I often went to the Moggy alone and soon was able to catch a few brook trout. The size limit was six inches on these trout, which were small, but bigger than most of the chubs and shiners.

To get position at many of the fish holds, it was necessary to cross the creek often. Sometimes a tree log could be used, sometimes a more improvised crossing. Backtracking to shallow areas to remove our shoes and wade was also an option. Even then there was many a shoe "soaker" from these adventure-filled crossings.

As I recall, the "keepers" were carried in a mesh onion sack, where they could develop rigor mortis. The catch was proudly carried home and cleaned with mother's help, rolled in flour, and devoured by the whole family. Dad was always lavish with his praise of the flavor and variety. The small fish rarely needed much scaling, with the exception of the flat bodied little shiners.

When we moved to our homestead on Boles Street, the walk became quite a bit further, but I found a series of "short cuts" through the woods, and later on my bike made the trip a snap for a dedicated fisher boy. As for the creek name, it was very common to see or encounter water moccasin snakes on a fishing trip. They often seemed to be standing on their tails in the knee deep water, with just the head above the surface. These were the non-viperous moccasin, and posed no biting danger.

Dale and his friends the Boyarski twins often went far down stream to some clear ponds near Port Edwards where they sought the crafty larger brook trout, a very challenging feat. Strangely,

I can't recall Dale ever bringing home fish to the family.

In 1980, late in his life, Dale came to Wisconsin Rapids to visit Mother (Dad was gone by this time) and Dale, Greg and I drove and hiked up northwest of Rapids, traced the creek and found the spring-fed pond where the Moccasin creek originates. We then followed the trickle back downstream to a road where it was three feet wide, and then downstream to the Highway 13 North crossing where the Moccasin pretty much becomes its summertime size.

Later that week, Dale and I tried to find the clear ponds where he and the Boyarski twins had fished. We started our downstream search at the "old Iron Bridge" on Seneca Road that crossed the Moccasin, then, using nearby roads, including Ghiloni and the dead end of Ver Bunker Road, we found the pond area on the creek, near the remnants of the old Coon Family Farm. The area was now built up, with several houses adjacent and near to the creek and ponds. We didn't ask permission to cross these properties to visit the ponds, but Dale was so very pleased to find them again after all those years.

Dale's last visit to Wisconsin Rapids fulfilled a dream for him: to see the creek's source and visit the old pond area of the big speckled trout.

The old Iron Bridge was replaced in 2000 and the many new cranberry bogs are stealing the spring waters that made, for a generation of the Johnson boys, the Moccasin such a pretty clear stream.

Christmas c. 1950



Don Krohn photo

*Looking north toward Johnson Hill's
First National Bank, left
Palace Theater, center and right*





Photo from Paul Gross

Rapids Theaters Before the Wisconsin

by Earle Garber

By 1862, Centralia and Grand Rapids were progressing from frontier villages to viable communities hungry for recreation. To satisfy this need, came a seemingly sophisticated venue called the "Opera House." The term was adopted from Europe and this first house of entertainment must have been a lively place.

Any refinement resembling the European culture centers was in the eye of the beholder and arias were few and far between. The opera house was more of a saloon, providing entertainment mostly for men: loggers, river rats, timber crews, timber barons and land speculators desperately seeking a reprieve from what was at times a dangerous and demanding work.

The prominent Grand Rapids Opera House was built by the French Canadian Arpin brothers. These timber barons offered live entertainment: vaudeville, drama and melodrama; dancing girls; and an orchestra of local musicians to draw loggers and settlers from the muddy roads and board walks.

There was even something approaching opera.

In February 1887 the local *Enterprise* raved about the performance of Lottie Lynn, infamous *prima diva* of opera singing, who also plucked a harp for an overflowing crowd, while accompanied by Russ Lyon and his orchestra. Local musicians that night were Russ and Dean Philleo on cornets; Frank Houston and A. F. Bandeline on violins; A. Zenier, piano; Fred Sawatsky, bass horn; and Ina Lyon's bell ensemble closed the show. A sellout crowd took in \$65, big money in those days.

Later the Daly Opera House and the Bijou, or Wonderland, were built. The latter became the Ideal theater and the Rapids. It's now Rogers Cinema.

Noted entertainment of the early days featured the "Apache Dancers," Rudy Exner and his lovely sister. Rudy replaced Todd Paine as chief of police in the 1930s. Music at the Bijou was provided by the Rapids Quintette Orchestra of Web Kennedy,

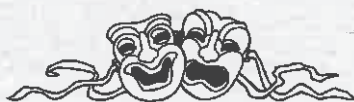
Florence (Matthews) Kennedy, Louis Peyruse and Greg Gibson. With the Grand and the Daly opera houses, competition increased and River City impresarios brought in jugglers and dancing dogs to draw a crowd.

Just before the advent of the silver screen, the opera houses competed with association halls offering "entertainment" in the form of lectures on the evils of liquor, stereoscope projections (slide films), drama, dance and music recitals.

In 1900, when a referendum passed to merge the towns, residents chose the name Grand Rapids, about the time silent movies made their appearance. with two-reel films of 2,000 feet such as "The Equine Spy" or "Detective Fuzzel's Triumph." By the time movie houses *per se* were established, well-advertised stars like Mary Pickford and William S. Hart, were regular "virtual" visitors to Grand Rapids.

From ads in several newspapers, it would appear that ticket holders cowered in their seats at the sight of the black-cloaked villain, tweaking a flaring wax mustache and agonized over a helpless maiden chained to the rails with a steamer engine rolling into view. As captions rolled across the silver screen, accompanied by an overzealous pianist or organist on site, she was rescued by her handsome lover. Ticket holders groaned and voiced their disgust when lights frequently interrupted their fantasy during all too routine film breaks.

By 1912, another surge took place in Grand Rapids when the magnificent department store Johnson & Hills was built (now the Schreiber building) and Robert and Mary McDonald were planning the Palace Theater. The movie industry was still new. Movie houses were considered risky business. Local theater historian Paul Gross has related that Mr. Demitz of the First National Bank insisted that, in case the movie venture fail, builder Anton Billmeyer should design a floor that could be leveled for other purposes.



The Palace opened its doors in 1915.

Its stage was deep enough to support the live drama and vaudeville augmenting the motion pictures. Dressing rooms for gals and guys beneath the proscenium's stage on either side of the boiler room enabled show people to change from act to act.

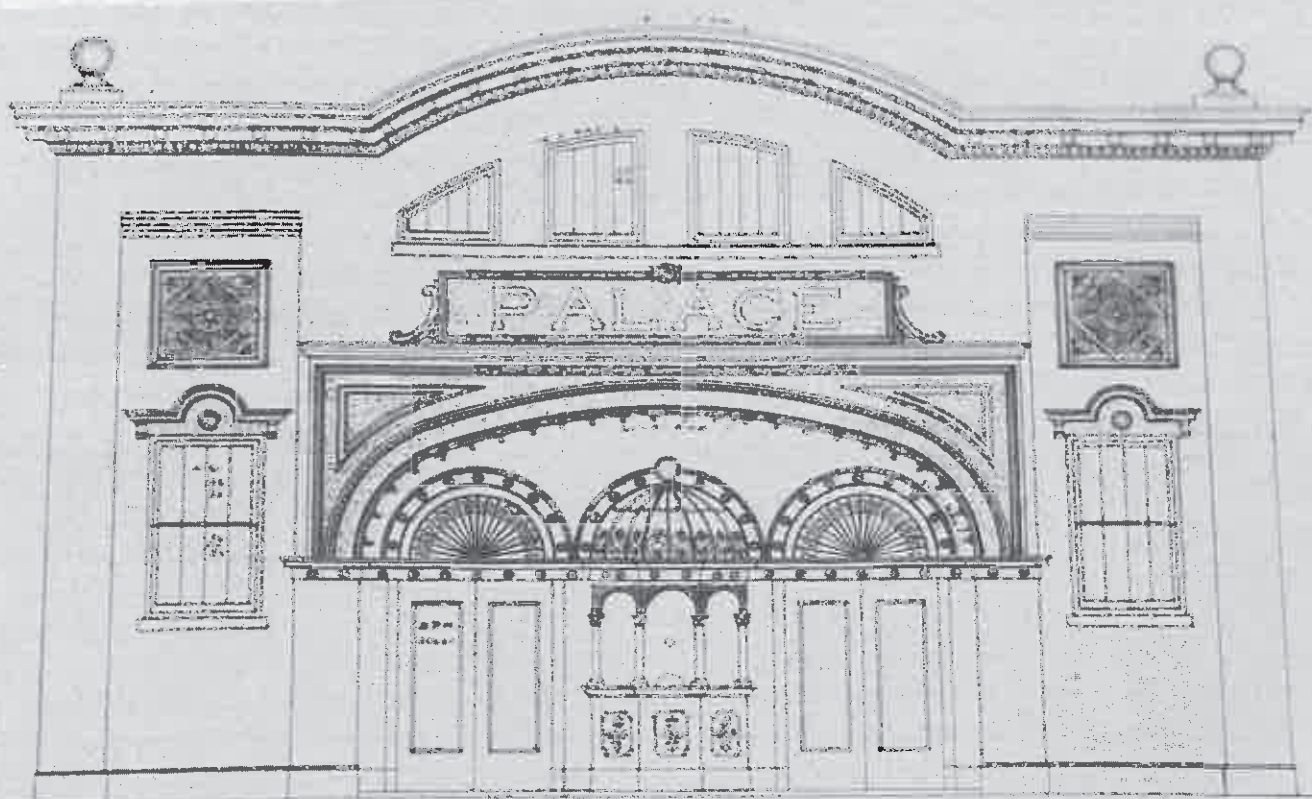
This new theatre boosted an orchestra pit and the finest electric organ available, as a few of us old timers can recall.

My parents were dating at the time and Mother described the lovely theatre. "We sat in cushy seats waiting for the commercials to end, looking at miniature lights across the ceiling as if we were in the Alhambra." The walls, roughly plastered with a fake balcony on either side, resembled a Spanish motif. "You can't imagine what it was like," she said.

"Voices coming out of nowhere. Something strange was happening, the movies were talking."

During the life of the building the Palace has had a number of owners. The McDonalds passed it on to the Gruwells who sold it to the Eckarts who would later build the Wisconsin Theater. The Palace passed into disrepair and The floor was leveled to accommodate a furniture store and offices and finally it became a ready-to-wear store. It's not that the movie industry failed, of course, but times change. Doesn't that sound familiar?

The Palace is now the Central Wisconsin Cultural Center. Soon the building celebrates its first 100 years.



FRONT ELEVATION
PALACE THEATRE
DESIGNED BY
J. J. BILMEYER

Original plan by Billmeyer Architects



Palace Theater Converted to Ballroom, Recreation Parlor

From the Daily Tribune, June 7, 1957

Formal openings of the Palace Ballroom and Recreation Parlor, 141 3rd Avenue S., have been scheduled for Sunday, it was announced today by Theodore Walrath and Mr. and Mrs. William Leder, operators of the two establishments...

Formerly the Palace Theater, the structure has been remodeled and expanded with the Recreation Parlor located in the basement.

The slanting floor of the theater has been raised to ground level and refinished to form the dance floor. Work on the new entertainment center began early in January, shortly after the building was purchased from its former owner, Mrs. Henrietta Eckardt, by the Kruger-Walrath Corp., a realty firm.

During the afternoon open house, entertainment will consist of dancing on the stage by members of the Allen School of Dance and organ music provided by Speltz Music Co.

A "grand opening" dance will be held beginning at 9 p.m. with music furnished by Jerry Stueber and His Country Gentlemen.

Dances have been scheduled for every Friday evening, with the main floor ballroom also available for conventions, banquets, wedding receptions and other types of parties. Kitchen facilities are being

installed at the rear of the building to provide catering service for such functions.

Dimensions of the building are 40 by 120 feet with the ballroom designed to accommodate up to 400 persons...

The ballroom has been decorated to provide a Hawaiian atmosphere, the stage and bandshell having a handpainted beach scene. Philippine mahogany paneling lines the walls of the room.

The projection booth has been converted into a women's lounge with a large picture window overlooking the dance floor.

The Recreation Parlor, operated by the Leders, is entered by a center stairway from the lobby. Located here, in the newly-excavated basement, is a soda fountain and grill, a small dancing area and juke box, and the pool and billiards room which has nine tables.

Designed for both teen-age and adult patronage, only soft drinks are served in the parlor, which has been open unofficially for about three weeks. It will be open daily from mid-morning until 11 p.m., except that when there is a dance in the ballroom, the basement will remain open until the dancing concludes.

PALACE TONIGHT

"SHORTY'S RANCH"

A Western **THREE REEL** Comedy Drama, featuring Shorty Hamilton

"THE FAMILY DOCTOR"—Reliance

Featuring Irene Hunt, Adoni Ferrase and A. D. Sears, a society drama

TOMORROW—Wisconsin River educationalogue pictures taken by Crossette Film Co. Some of the pictures they have of this locality are swimming pool, main street, climbing the water tower, views of the river, picking cranberries, hunting chickens on the marsh, cattle raising exterior and interior of South Side paper mill, dams and many others.

Matinee 3:15, admission free to children, night 7 and 8:30, 10c straight



Artifacts: The True Story

History a pristine science? When we handle letters and photos from the Wakelys, Witters and Washingtons, we wear white gloves to package the precious articles within acid-free sheets in air-conditioned comfort. But real boots-on -the-ground collecting is a desperate and messy activity. Usually, dilapidated cardboard boxes are involved and often adult children cleaning out attics and basements of deceased relatives and running out of patience.

For example, Uncle Dave has retrieved major works ready for the garbageman on the front porch of a vacant historic house. Someone gave me a fine photograph collection actually found at the city dump. Businesses routinely toss decades of historic records just to stay out of trouble. Every few years Ms. or Mr. Clean storms through an institution and clears the decks of old stuff.

But here's what happened earlier this year. A meter checker stopped at the Museum with one of those cardboard boxes. "A guy came in the parking lot and the door was locked so he handed this to me." Consequently, the meter man had been driving around for some time with the box in his truck until he could faithfully divest himself of it.

Inside are: photos, some of which appear on the following pages; a section of the Wood County Centennial Edition; a 1941 LHS diploma for William Robert Fischer, signed by A.A. Ritchay; and a baseball, autographed by the Chicago White Sox Class D baseball team that played here around 1940 and including Max Patkin, celebrated pitcher and clown.

A note inside identified the donor as John G. Fischer of Madison, who added "Some signatures are illegible. Wish I could have afforded a new ball back then."

SMILE: You're in Artifacts



Found in a box handed to Uncle Dave by a meterman who got it from a guy who pulled in the driveway and found the door locked. Looks like a graduation class: Howe high school? I.D. from back of photo.

1. Ed Herschleb
2. Neustedt
3. Zelda Beadle
- 4.
5. Pro Leuhr
- 6.
7. Burns

- 8.
- 9.
10. Arsene Arpin
11. Mayme Smith
12. Nellie Cole
13. Will Brazeau
14. Helen Philleo

Fischer Collection



They Might Be Rotary Club

L.D. taken from back of photo:

Top Row:

*1. Doce? Johnson 2. Fred Rogers 3. Dr. Hengen 4. Frank Walsh 5. Friedman 6. Marvin?
7. Brazeau 8. ? 9. Walter Wood 10. W.J. Taylor 11. ?*



2nd Row (from top):

1. ? 2. Searles 3. Geo. La Briere 4. O. Roenius 5. Nash 6. Babcock 7. Dr. Waters 8. P. Daly
9. Don? Smart 10. Menzel 11. ? 12. Dr. Merrill 13. ? 14. Jackson

3rd Row (from top):

1. Dr. Goodrich 2. G. Nash 3. C. Boles 4. F. Wood 5. Link 6. Teller 7. Redford 8. L. Horton 9. J.
Nash 10. Kellogg 11. Church 12. Arpin 13. G. Mead 14. D. McKercher 15. C. ? Kruger

Front Row:

1. Gleue 2. I. Witter 3. Roberts 4. W. Kellogg 5. Heger



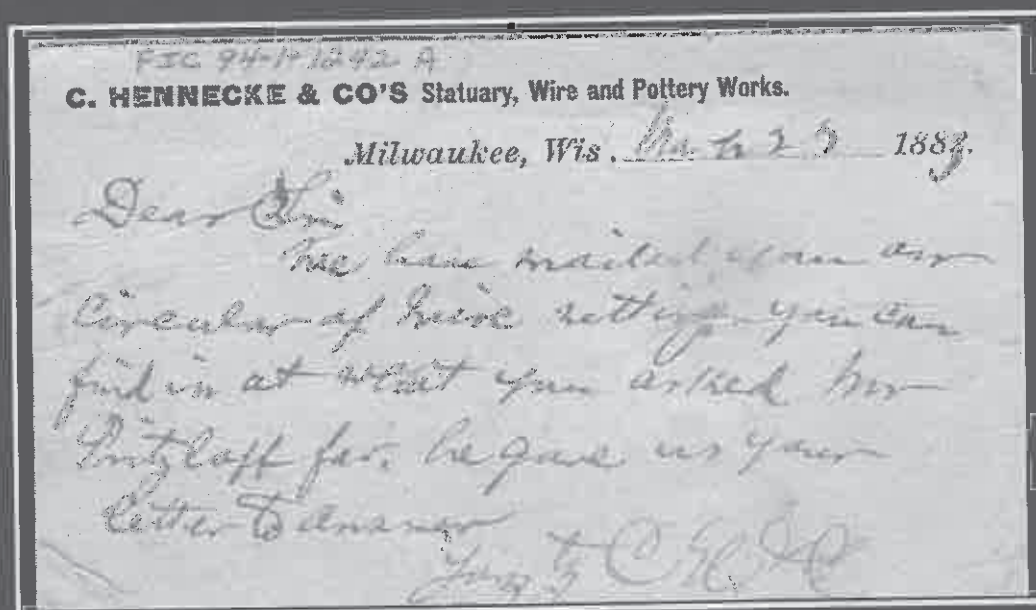
"Old" Centralia school (Lowell)



Fischer Collection

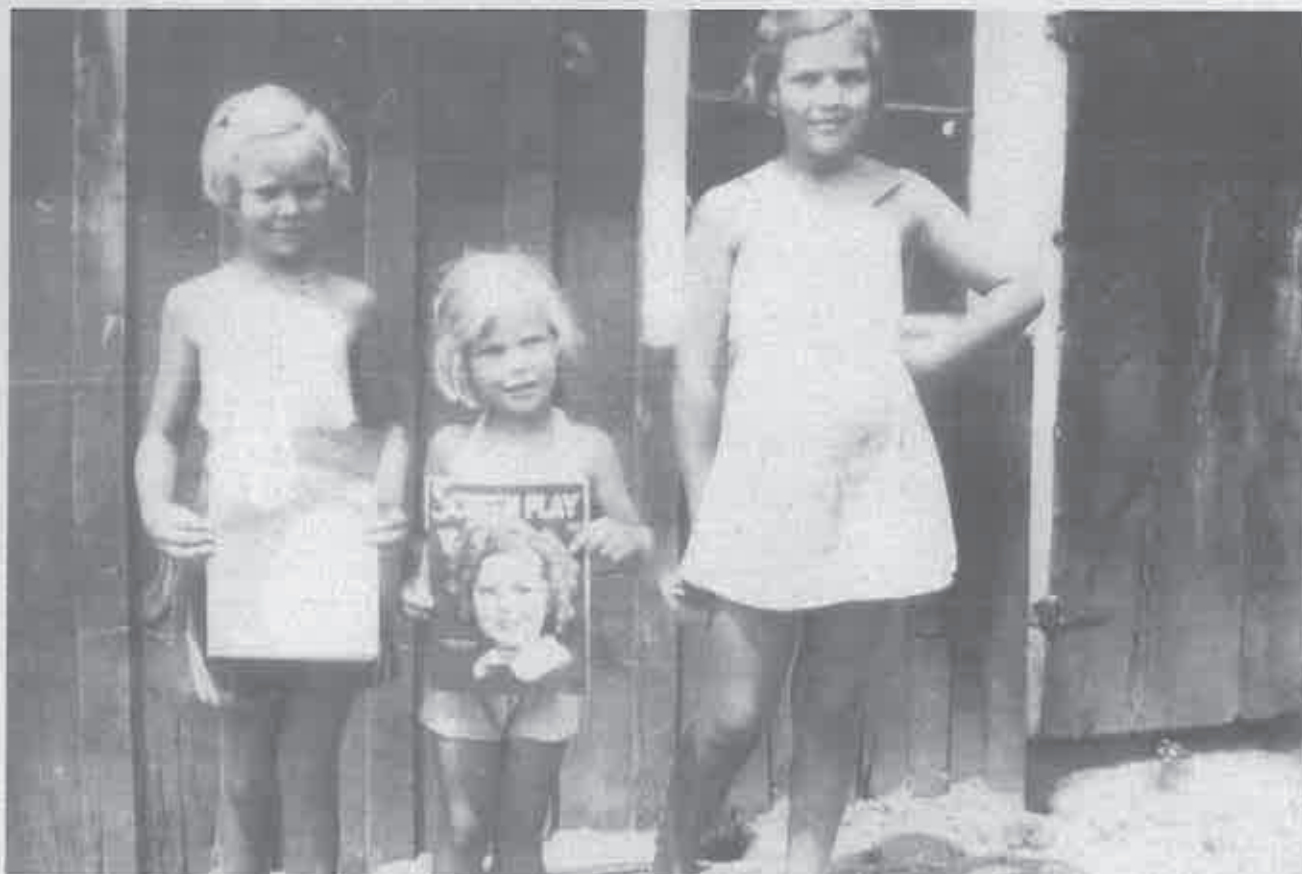


Artifact du jour: Postcard to Doudville, vanished town of Rudolph village formerly chronicled in River City Memoirs





Illustrating November's *Artifacts* story of the rescue of L.J. Romanski and daughters, Jane, 12, and Betty, 6, from drowning in Nepco Lake: one of the heroes was Earl Freeberg, shown above in WWII. Below: Marge, Betty and Jane Romanski, 1937. Story and photos were contributed by Marge Romanski Hamm.



The year Santa was my brother

By Uncle Dave

My youngest brother, Kenny, played St. Nick.

A right jolly elf he was, coming up the steps at our Two Mile Avenue home, wearing a red bathrobe and a basketball net for a beard. Ho! Ho! Ho!

Little Kenneth Lee was already bald in blotches; but that was because my dad cut his hair. Though the baby of the family was shy and self-conscious, nothing made him happier than hopping around the piles of pretty paper by the Christmas tree to hand out gifts.

Ken as a young man moved to Bellingham, Wash., but flew back for special occasions when we asked him to be Santa again.

He also spent three mostly-joyous weeks here each summer, my brother Gary's cribbage buddy and my co-conspirator on both domestic and arcane projects. His thick fingers did fine work better than I could; his strong back did the heavy lifting; and his sharp intelligence sought perfection.

We bought matching DeWalt cordless power drills and he became "Walt" and I, "D. Walt." A couple months ago, before he left for Bellingham, we raised our DeWalts in triumph, standing on our masterpiece, a moonlight viewing platform.

Last Monday, we in Rudolph township packed up Ken's package of gifts that he would unwrap one per day with the same patience that allowed him to sit and wait for his soup or pizza to cool while others burned their tongues.

Likewise, we knew his packages to us would be arriving any day, to be opened on Christmas Eve at Gary's Plainfield home, with all the family in on the action and a video to record the event.

But last Monday morning, something happened.

Ken, a baker for the Western Washington University food service, was working when the anti-Claus we call the Grim Reaper smacked him a good one on his now-bald head. Blood flooded his brain and he was, for intents and purposes, dead.

It was almost exactly what had happened to my sister, Kathy, in 1988. The aftermath also followed a pattern.

Somewhat to my surprise, I learned that Ken had made a pact with the Grim Reaper via the state of Washington Dept. of Motor Vehicles.

Ken would play St. Nick one last time. He would be

Santa, Father Christmas and a Salvation Army bell ringer.

He would be the Fire Department Toy Fixup Crew and the party at the Odd Fellows hall. He would be the reformed Scrooge tossing turkeys to beggars.

In the confusion of metaphors characteristic of the season, he was the sacrificial Lamb of God. The gift was himself.

On the second night, Tuesday, Ma in her Polartec and I in my cap banked the fire and settled down for a long midwinter nap in Rudolph township, knowing our brother was not stirring but lay in a white-sheeted manger among blipping monitors, stainless steel crosses and Christmas trees of St.

Joseph hospital, Bellingham.

The babe of the family was now bald-headed, wearing a real beard and a hospital gown, surrounded by well-educated wise men, shepherds and familiar angels who held his hand and sang to him.

After midnight, the phone rang here and I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter. A male nurse named A.J. told me the time was ripe for "harvest."

I could only imagine the scene as out of the chimney (or elevator) popped the jolly old elves, in their red bathrobes and basketball nets. Their sacks were empty but would soon be bulging.

A.J. made a list for me and checked it twice.

He wants to give the kidneys? Right.

Liver? Yes.

Pancreas. What's that?

Intestines, valves, veins, corneas, marrow, bones, skin, tissue: yes, take it all.

Wait, wasn't there something else?

Oh yeah, the less marketable parts, ethereal appendages that cannot be boxed up, wrapped and hauled away by strangers. Stuff that had already been transplanted.

Love? Absolutely.

Dedication? No question.

Loyalty? Lifelong Packer fan.

Blood, sweat and tears? Affirmative.

Wit, wisdom, goodness and mercy. Yup.

Generosity? Obviously.

Let's say it's Christmas Eve and we are on the newly-constructed moonlight viewing platform.

Naturally, we are impatient for the first sight in the western sky: among the satellites, his aerial contraption. Good St. Nick, Lamb of God, flying in tonight.



*Dave Engel
holding
brother, Kenneth,
with sister
Kathryn and
brother Gary*



Labor Day 1955



July 14, 1961

Lazy Ike

Kenneth Engel at party for sixth birthday. Note Roy Rogers book and Lazy Ikes play pieces. Both were found 46 years later in his apartment after his December 11, 2007, death.

Mitchell Red Cloud Jr.: Medal of Honor

Nov. 5, 1950: Mitchell Red Cloud Jr., a Winnebago Indian (Ho Chunk) from Wisconsin and a Corporal in Company E., 19th Infantry Regiment in Korea was guarding his company command post when surprised by a Chinese communist attack. Redcloud defended his position, firing his automatic rifle point-blank at the enemy. Severely wounded, he refused assistance and continued in action until he was killed. Red Cloud prevented the enemy from overrunning his company's position and gained time for evacuation of the wounded.

He was born July 2, 1924, near Hatfield in Jackson County to Mitchell "Mike" Red Cloud Sr. and Lillian (Nellie) Winneshiek Red Cloud, who had three sons and one daughter. All three sons were in the service, and Mike had served in World War I.

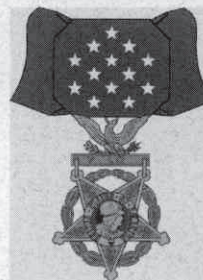
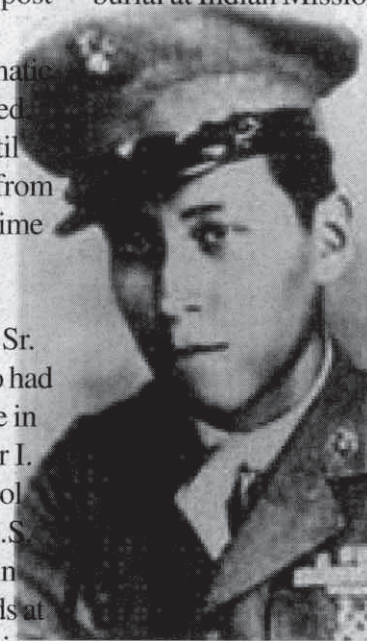
After attending Black River Falls High School for two years, Red Cloud, 16, enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in August 1941. He participated in some of the heaviest fighting in the Pacific Islands at the beginning of World War II, contracted malaria and dropped from 195 to 115 pounds. In December 1945, Red Cloud was honorably discharged from the Marines and returned home.

In 1948, after his brother, Randall, was killed while serving in the U.S. Army, Red Cloud joined the same and was sent to Korea in 1950.

For his heroic actions, he received the military's highest award, the Medal of Honor, presented by

Gen. Omar Bradley to Red Cloud's mother April 3, 1951, at the Pentagon.

Red Cloud's remains were returned for final burial at Indian Mission, Wis., March 26, 1955.



Rites Held for Cpl. Red Cloud
INDIAN MISSION, Wis. (AP) - Cpl. Mitchell Red Cloud Jr., U.S. Army, a man who died saving the lives of his fellow men at arms, has been laid to rest in the cemetery, held sacred by his tribal fathers, the Winnebago Indians.
 Red Cloud, 25 when he died, was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest citation for valor above and beyond the call of duty. It was 10 degrees above zero Saturday when the funeral procession, beneath a snow-filled sky, waited in the streets outside the tiny Evangelical and Reformed Church. More than 2,000 people were there, although the church held only 100.
 Mrs. Nellie Red Cloud followed her son's casket, draped with an American flag. She walked alone, hatless, fighting her tears. Her husband died in 1946.

For a subscription to Artifacts send \$15 to the SWCHC.

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