

February 2015 Volume II #43

ARTIFACTS



Cover: See p. 22. President's message by Phil Brown, 2; Tribune building, 3-4; Commercial hotel, 4-5; Parking lot wars, 6; Tribune building, 7-17; WFHR, 18-19; Cranboree by Lori Brost, 20-23; Patriot color guard by Bill Hartley, 24-25; Eight Corners Junction by Scott Brehm, 26-31.



The Big 6-0

A Little History of the Historical

By Phil Brown
President, SWCHC



As the South Wood County Historical Corp. turns 60 this year, we look back to our roots as an organization, when “Old Timers Reunions” were held occasionally as part of a larger community celebration. Like us, the senior citizens of 20th Century River City gathered to reminisce about “the good old days.” I wish I could have been there to capture the memories of growing up along the banks of the Old Wisconsin.

In this spirit, one of the first purchases of the SWCHC was an early wire recording device, later upgraded to a reel-to-reel recorder. With the assistance of Bill Shereck from the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, SWCHC members Dr. Lee Pomainville and Marshall Buehler interviewed many of the older residents. With T.W. Brazeau, Clarence Jaspersen, Estelle Farrish and others, the group typically lined up speakers for monthly meetings held from the late 1950s right up to 1970, frequently at Howe elementary school. Many of those meetings were recorded and are still in our archives.

When McMillan Memorial Library was built in 1970, what had been the T.B. Scott Public Library on Third Street South became the South Wood County Historical Museum. This marks the 45th year we have occupied Isaac and Charlotte Witter’s former home.

As we continue to acquire, document and save the precious pieces of our past, Lori Brost begins her eighth year at the Museum. Her title is Museum Administrator and she keeps the business end of our organization together. Lori is also the go-to person for all things historical and an important contributor to *Artifacts*.

Also, I am pleased to announce that Kathy Engel, with 35 years of library experience, has joined our now three-person all part-time staff. She will work with her lesser half, Uncle Dave, to organize and document our archives on the third floor.

At his desk in a corner of the same area, formerly the ballroom, Hank Bruse continues to volunteer many hours scanning photos and negatives, including a number used in this issue. Docents and other volunteers are also greatly appreciated at the Museum, not to mention the Master Gardeners and their meticulous attention to our beautiful grounds. We also have benefited for several issues now by the contributions to *Artifacts* by Vesper correspondent Scott Brehm.

As always, our Board of Directors does a wonderful job to keep everything going—putting together the budget, evaluating what needs to be done to preserve our facility and charting the proper course for the future.

Of course, all this would not be possible without you, our 300-plus members and special friends who give so generously above and beyond the basic membership level.

To members, employees, volunteers, board members, and those who came before us, we give thanks for helping us achieve 60 years of preserving and sharing the rich local history of the south Wood County area.

River City Memoirs

Tribune building site part of grand plan

By Dave Engel

For the *Daily Tribune*

With the dawn of the Age of Paper in the early 20th Century, plans for Wisconsin Rapids were designed and choices made that resulted in the city we now know. Foremost from the historian's perspective was the removal of superannuated structures in favor of riverside parks.

Consider the Commercial Hotel, in what was then downtown "Centralia" on the West Side.

The Commercial, built around 1858 by French-Canadian immigrant Joseph Meunier, replaced a candle-lit tavern in which guests used the same tin washbasin and wiped on the same coarse linen roll towel. By contrast, under the management of another Frenchman, U.S. St. Amour, the Commercial became known for relatively posh accommodations and lavish parties.

But by December 1944, no longer in use as a hotel, the building, purchased by Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co., had become a recognized landmark and eyesore.

Though the previous owner, movie theater impresaria Henrietta Eckardt, renovated parts of the building as an annex for Wood County welfare agencies, it was vacated in favor of the Rowland building near the courthouse.

The Commercial was one of three hotels Consolidated would acquire and demolish, all for the same reason.

Perhaps most picturesque was the LeFebvre "hostelry" along First Avenue North near Consolidated Park (now the location of the west end of the Jackson Street bridge). Admired for its French-Quarter style architecture, the building, later housing the Palmquist photo studio, was "torn down in the course of the program of the

Consolidated company to modernize and beautify the city."

Also to meet the same fate was the much larger and less-attractive Witter hotel on the East Side. Its destiny was defined in 1944, when Consolidated announced its gift to the city of land and buildings located upstream from the Witter, to be used for the parks that would also envelope the Witter plot.

The West Side had already been "beautified" and now the East side would benefit from the same comprehensive agenda of civic improvement.

"Wisconsin Rapids is growing and going to grow," said Theodore Brazeau, attorney for Consolidated. "Those instrumental in this transaction feel that now is the time to make provision for an orderly, well-conceived growth.

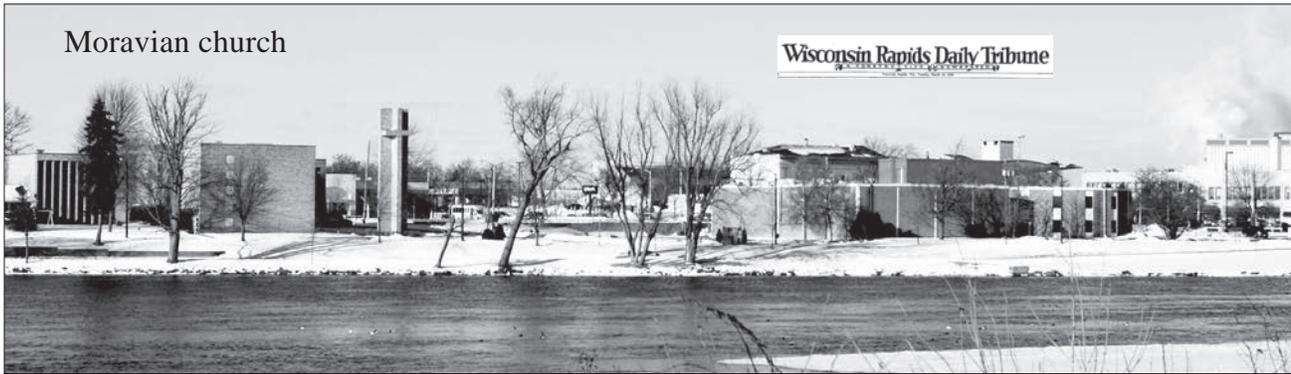
"Wisconsin Rapids already is considered one of the prettiest cities in the state and it can be the most beautiful spot in Wisconsin."

Back on the West Side, Consolidated remodeled the Commercial interior for temporary use as a rooming house with a recreation room, lobby and office. An apartment on the south end was used by the Joe Nash family.

No doubt because it was not actually situated on the river bank but across First Avenue, the Commercial site was not destined to become a park. In 1955, along with a house and property bordering on the south, it was sold by Consolidated to the Wisconsin Rapids Tribune Co., for \$45,000.

Publisher-owner William F. Huffman Jr. said the hotel and house were to be removed the following summer for construction of a new headquarters for the *Tribune* and Huffman-owned Radio Station WFHR.





Moravian church

Most of the original impetus for the replacement of the Commercial had come from George W. Mead I, pioneer industrialist and, by mid-century, retired president of Consolidated, who, said the *Tribune*, had long admired the hotel location. “Occasionally in recent years he has paused there, to be reminded in an appropriate spot of the magnificent development of the community, much of which he has had a hand in.”

The *Tribune* sold the contents of the hotel building and the lumber it was made of and cleared the lot in time for the construction of the innovative 1960 Daily Tribune/WFHR building that still graces the site. First the radio station, then the newspaper, were relocated to less spacious or scenic quarters. Current “Tribune Building” owner Incourage Community Foundation has implemented intricate, widely-publicized and still-evolving plans of its own.

Just after *Artifacts* editor (Uncle) Dave Engel began writing for the *Daily Tribune* in 1980, the “old old” building that preceded the 1960 extravaganza featured here, a short block north on First, was demolished.

The site became a parking lot for what was then the Consolidated “River Block” office building across West Grand Avenue. As of today, the River Block has been mostly vacated and the parking lot is a tree-lined display of aging and undistinguished pavement.



Commercial hotel enters afterlife.

Then

Former
LeFebvre
“hostelry,”
upstreamMoravian
church

Photo courtesy McMillan Memorial Library

Laisser les femmes se noient

When Adelia Cotey (later Corriveau) came from Canada in 1854 at age 11, a ferry crossed the river near the later Commercial hotel site. The craft was managed by one man who propelled it with pike poles. At a time when Adelia was a passenger, the water was high and the man nearly lost control. Fearing his occupants would drown, he called to some Frenchmen on the shore. One shouted back in French, “Let the women drown. Plenty of men have gone down under the water.”

Soon, an iron cable to anchor the ferry was stretched across the river from the LeFebvre building on the west to a building on the East Side.

For more, see “Who’s Who In Wisconsin Rapids,” *Daily Tribune*, March 17, 1921

A story was repeated by house historian Jane Jackson that a young midget girl, brought up by the Alfred Masse family, owners of the Commercial hotel, entertained neighboring children by rolling down the long flight of stairs, head over heels like a rubber ball. This girl, we are told, became a piano player and traveled around the world. Daily Tribune, Nov. 8, 1945

Historian Jackson wrote that, back of the Commercial hotel in what became the West Side Market Square was the Centralia schoolhouse. Surrounding the grounds were the houses and gardens of the local French inhabitants.

Once again, a story was told—about a group of pupils who were “playing ball” in the schoolyard when the ball landed in a potato patch. When one of the boys attempted to retrieve the needed component, a fiery Frenchman, owner of the patch, chased him away.

The schoolmaster, a slight but game fellow, volunteered to get the ball. Striding into the patch, he bent to pick up the lost article when he was seized unceremoniously by the hair in the grasp of the irate neighbor; but immediately the latter screamed with fright and ran for his house.

The “hair” had come off in the Frenchman’s hand. Shortly, the schoolmaster retrieved the lost ball and his toupee. *Daily Tribune, Nov. 8, 1945*

Infamous First Avenue Parking Lot Wars

By Dave Engel
For the *Daily Tribune*

At the 11th hour, the *Daily Tribune* building project almost went south—or so it seemed, as publisher William F. Huffman Jr. explained in a March 18, 1958, front page story.

The *Tribune*, he wrote, having purchased the Staven house property and the former Commercial hotel site, had tried to obtain a needed piece of city-owned land “at the rear,” or west, of the downtown site on First Avenue South.

The city of Wisconsin Rapids had been negotiating with the Milwaukee Road for the railroad right of way that passed through the West Side Market Square. The *Tribune* wanted some of that acreage for parking and expansion but its request to deal with the railroad was not approved by the city.

The city bought the land instead and put it on the market. But the *Tribune*, through Huffman Realty, Inc., was outbid by an un-named someone else.

Learning of the *Tribune* needs, the anonymous would-be purchaser withdrew; but an also-unnamed third party tossed in what the *Tribune* considered a less-than-bonafide bid at a too-high level, then showed no subsequent interest in the property.

Meanwhile, the Common Council deliberated for months while the *Tribune* proceeded with design of a building suited to the unique First Avenue location. Huffman said he felt the “urgent necessity” of solving the property problem in order to begin work in summer 1958.

Meanwhile, the *Tribune* exchanged land with the city to add several parking spaces and provide a “whole” and “saleable” lot, which the *Tribune* would then attempt to purchase for “six times” what the city had paid the railroad company two years previous. The *Tribune* also offered land at the front of the lots along First Avenue to solve a traffic “bottleneck.”

About the time an appraisal was being made, another second party again came forward at a Common Council meeting and put forth a higher figure than that offered by the *Tribune*. This bidder was the Thorp Finance Corp., wanting a building site for its office.

“Saddened at this turn of events after two years of attempts to obtain the property,” declared the *Tribune*, “and feeling that a new round of bidding would further lessen our chances to obtain the property and might push the cost far past the true value, we began to look for other locations.”

Found was a three-acre tract owned by Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. just inside the north village limit of Port Edwards, “only 4-5 minutes by car from downtown Wisconsin Rapids.”

The move, explained the *Tribune*, would be in line with a trend in recent years as many industrial plants and newspaper plants chose edge-of-city locations.

An agreement to purchase was signed and the *Tribune* claimed it had abandoned all hopes of building downtown.

But after the *Tribune*’s dramatic statement, Thorp withdrew its offer and the Common Council, called into special session on March 19 by Mayor Nels M. Justeson, approved sale of the city-owned land to Huffman.

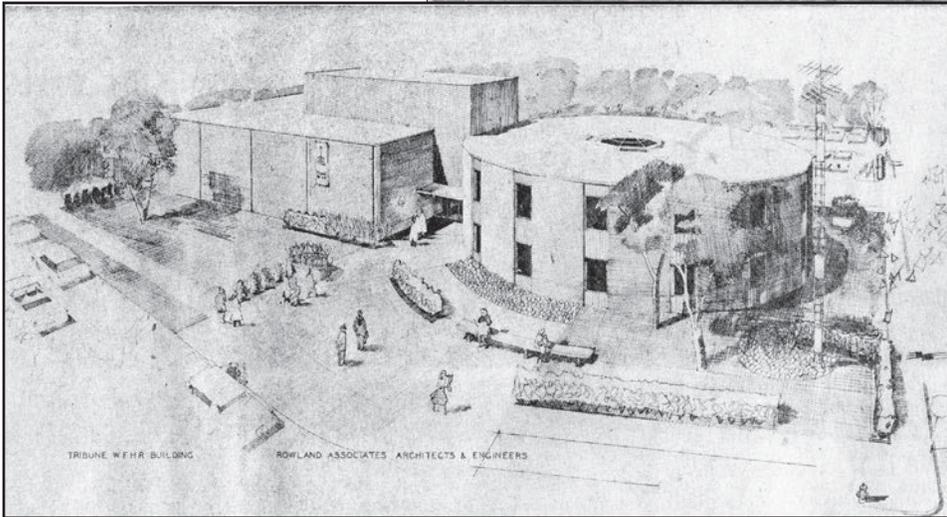
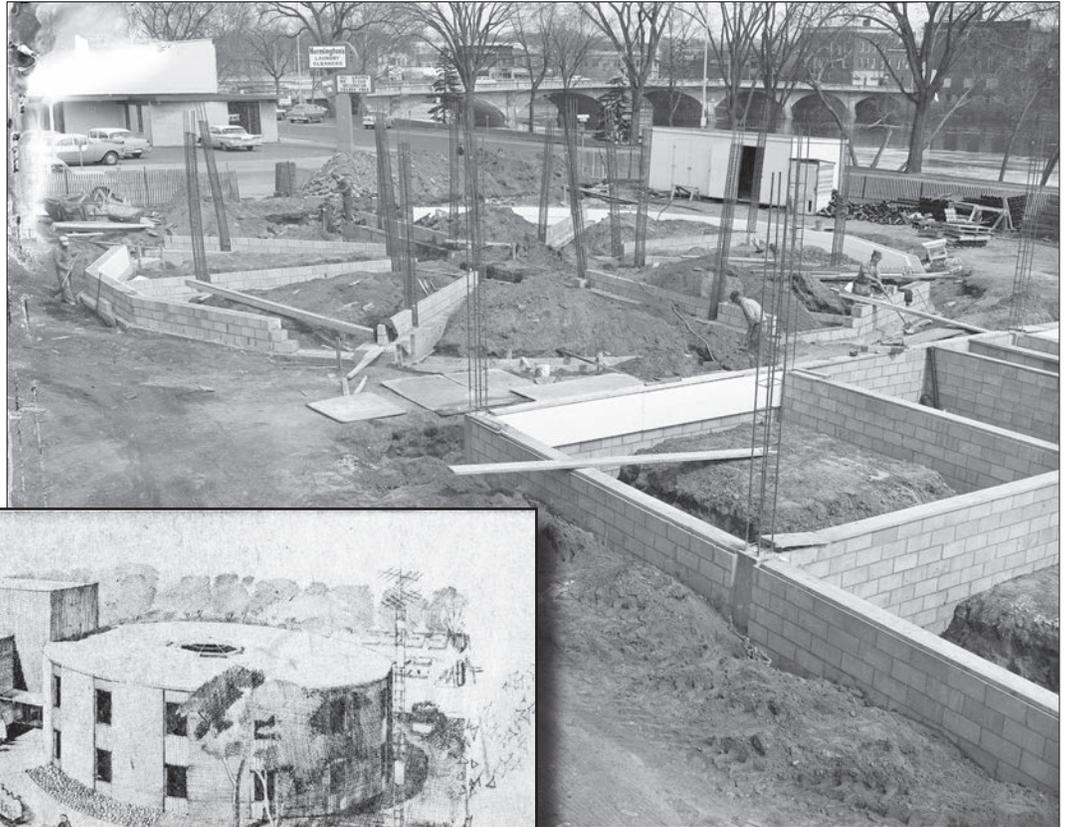
The offer was soon accepted by the *Tribune*, which explained, “The wide-spread public response to a move, the intensity of which we had not foreseen but which we immensely appreciate, was a factor in our decision to return to the original plan.”

Too bad for Port Edwards but good news for a downtown then in its glory years.



Photos from negatives donated to the Museum by the *Daily Tribune* and scanned by volunteer C.H. Bruse

Below: From *Tribune* special edition, May 20, 1960



Tribune under construction, beginning in 1959

Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune

— A CONSTRUCTION NEWSPAPER —

Completed in time for a May 20, 1960, special edition, the landmark *Daily Tribune/WFHR* provided a unique contrast in building shapes: a 16-sided, nearly round structure on the north connected to a rectangular structure on the south, joined by a three-story unit with a “penthouse” extending above.

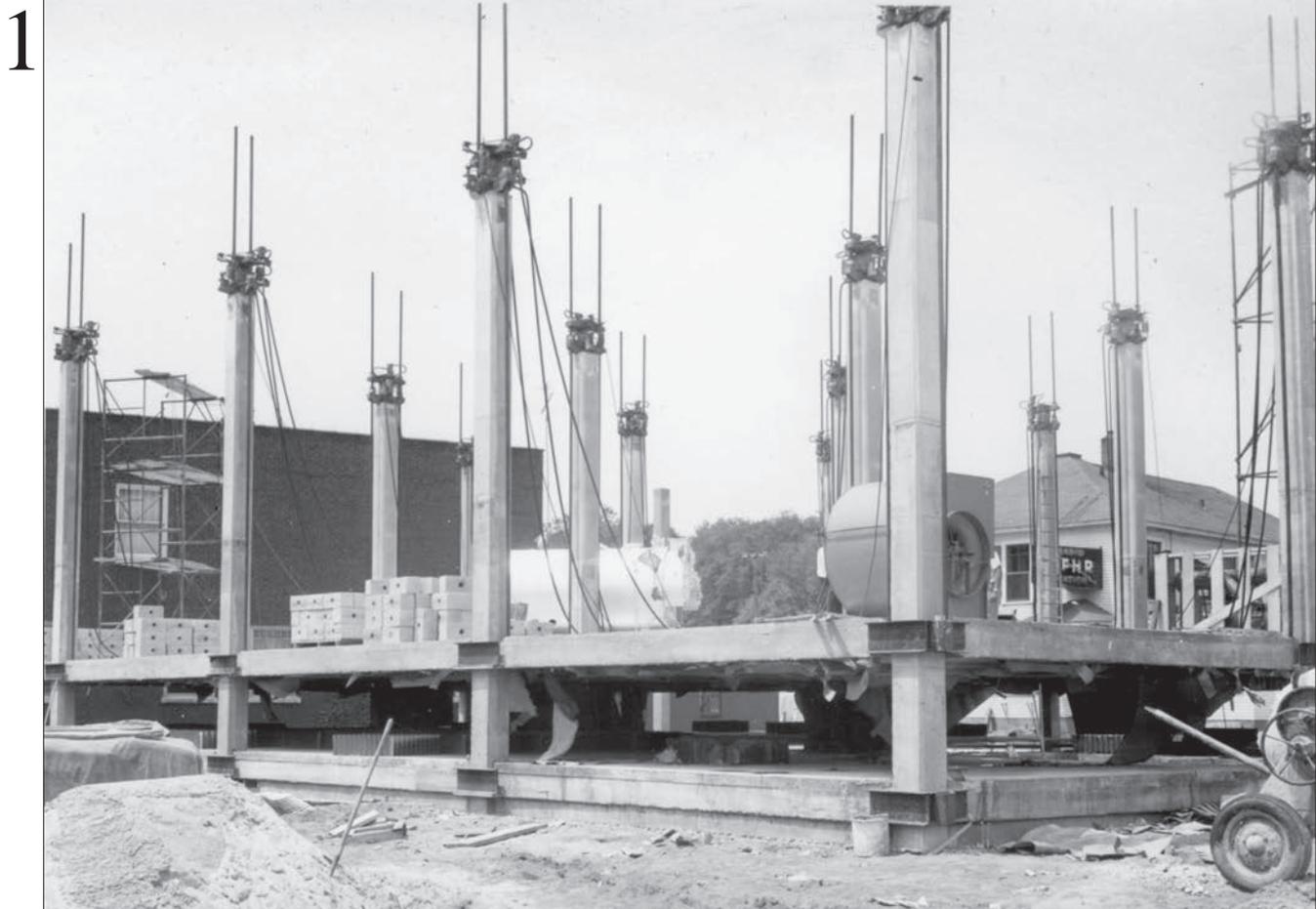
On the first floor of the round building were studios and offices of WFHR and the joint business office. On the second floor were the *Tribune* news and advertising departments.

On the first floor of the rectangular structure were the mechanical departments, press room, circulation department mailing and carrier rooms and a storage area for a two-month supply of newsprint.

In the third floor of the center unit was the heating, electrical and air conditioning equipment. The center portion also provided first floor entryway and passageway between the two larger units.

Local architects Rowland Associates were the first firm in Central Wisconsin to adopt the construction technique offered by Great Lakes Lift Slab Corp., Waukesha. In July 1959, second floors and roofs were poured in layers on top of the first floors at ground level and lifted into place, to be supported by poured concrete columns.

The walls were non-load bearing of brick outside and lightweight block inside.



2

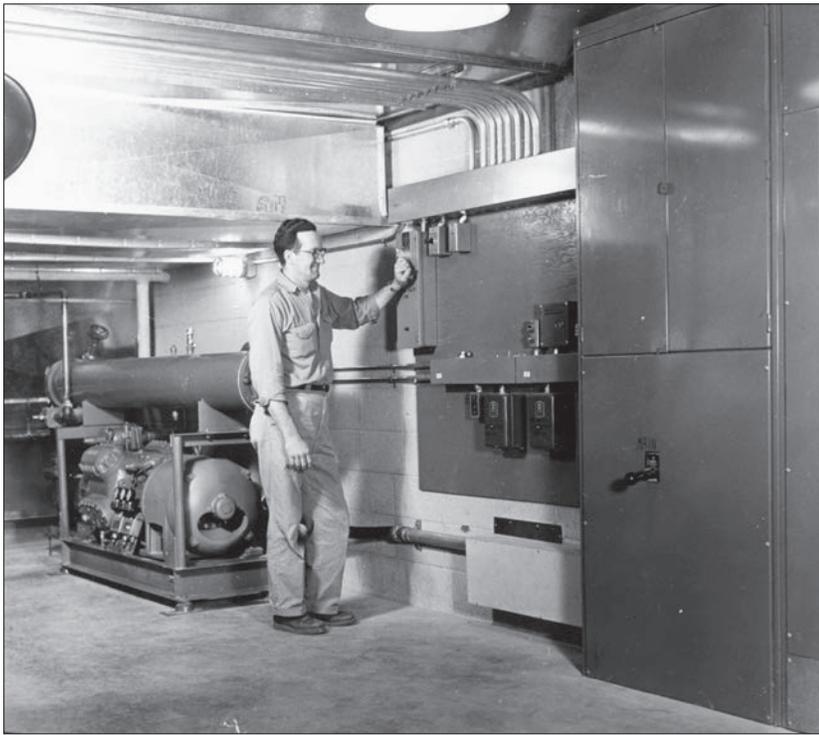


Right: Hydraulic jack on top of column connected to steel rods would, over a two-week period, lift the concrete roof and second floor slabs.



3





Left: LeRoy Ramsdell, maintenance man makes some adjustments in the “penthouse.” With no basement in the building (the previous building had flooded), utilities were installed on the partial third floor. Shown is the boiler for the gas-fired hot water heating system, electrical service panels and air conditioning system.

Right: Occupying part of the first floor was the office staff for WFHR (William F. Huffman Radio.)

Typing copy is Anola Janz.

Behind her, E.A. Leklem and Larry Sarawski, station sales personnel.

View from window appears to be to the north across Johnson Street.



The founder of the modern *Tribune*, William F. Huffman, had died in 1949, before the project shown here could be manifested. His widow, the former Louise Fey, became president of the firm. His son, William Huffman Jr. was publisher and secretary.

Right: Editor from 1949-72 Carl Otto and managing editor and columnist, Ollie Williams, reading the Associated Press teletype of national and international news.

Below: Don Lindstrom, sports editor; Bruce Estlund, reporter; William Spevacek, reporter; Carol Cepress, society assistant; Lorena Paap, society editor. Paul Butkiewicz, reporter, was covering a story.

There were eight members and one photographer in the news department and correspondents in 12 outlying communities.



Lorena Paap, right, was in charge of the mailing list for the predecessor of *Artifacts* in the late 1970s and early 1980s.
(Damaged print)



Above: Columns of news lines, headlines and ads are assembled in page form in the makeup area of the composing room. Norbert Kubisiak, left, and Earl Heineck, makeup men. Mechanical supt. Al Wenzlaff, right.



Left: Ronald Hamilton, photo-engraver, operating electronic machine that changes glossy photos into engravings used on the press. Two complete dark rooms were part of the second floor photo-engraving department.



Above: Setting lines of type in the composing room. From left, Frank Niklaus, Charlie Bidwell. Clifford Forster and Al Wenzlaff, checking output of perforated paper tape fed through automated teletypesetter units. The high-tech perforations that magically sent the news from place to place originated in the Associated Press Bureau, Milwaukee.



Right: Leonard Hicks attaching a plate to a cylinder of the 320-page Goss Universal press. After the press run, the plates were taken back to the stereotype department and remelted to be used again.

Below: Casting press plates to be used on the printing press. Left, William Rasmussen; rear, Leonard Hicks; right, John Uline.



Finished product: Printed and folded copies of the *Tribune* are delivered from the folding machine of the Goss Universal press as William Rasmussen prepares to take them out 50 at a time. Ed Andrews, stereotype and press foreman, checks the flow over Rasmussen's shoulder. Next, John Uline looks for pages that need adjustment in ink setting. Leonard Hicks stands at the roll stands where adjustments are made on the newsprint webs.

The printing press stood on its own foundation, independent from the rest of the building.

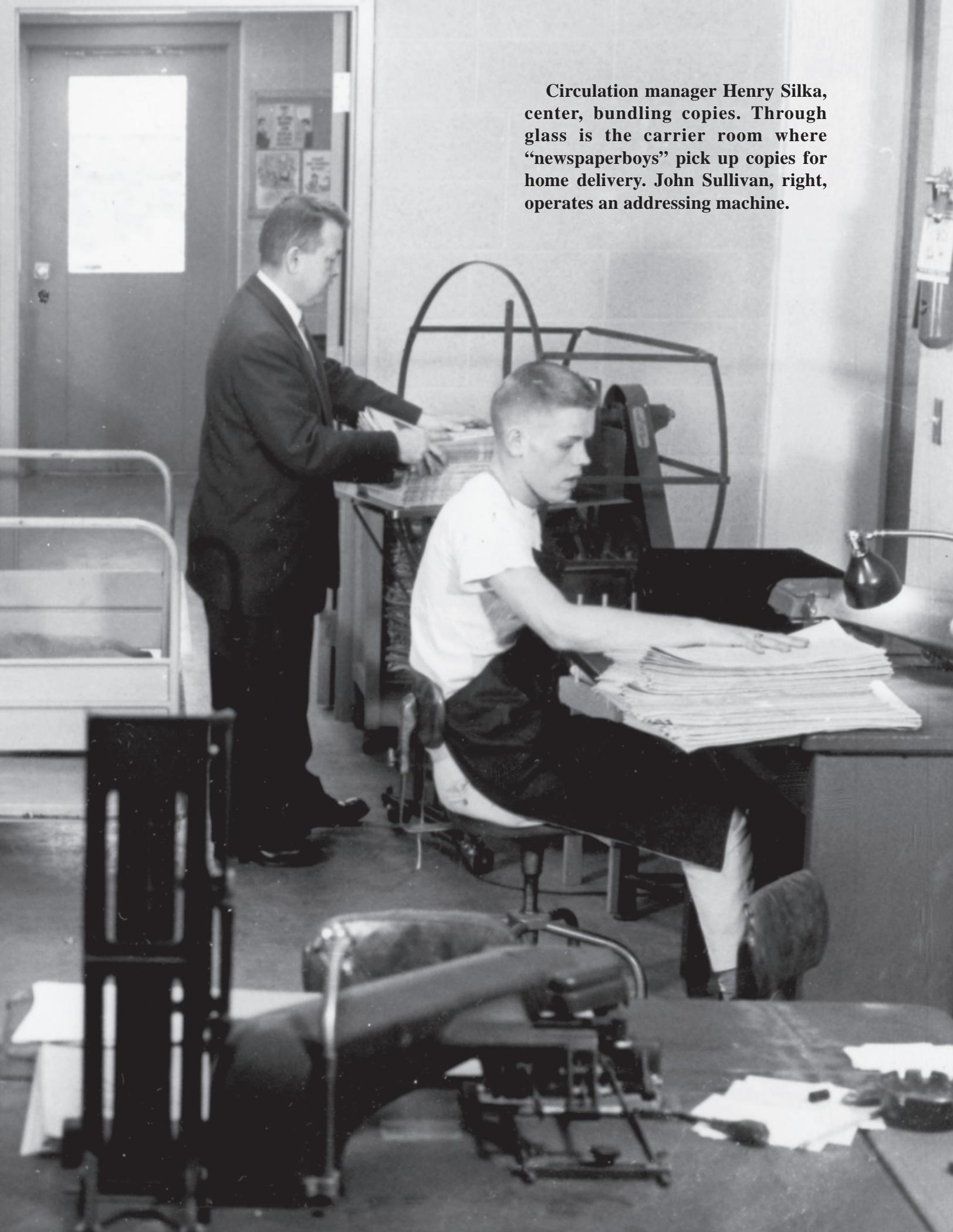
The press room was staffed by the same four-man crew that worked in the stereotype department.



Damaged
print



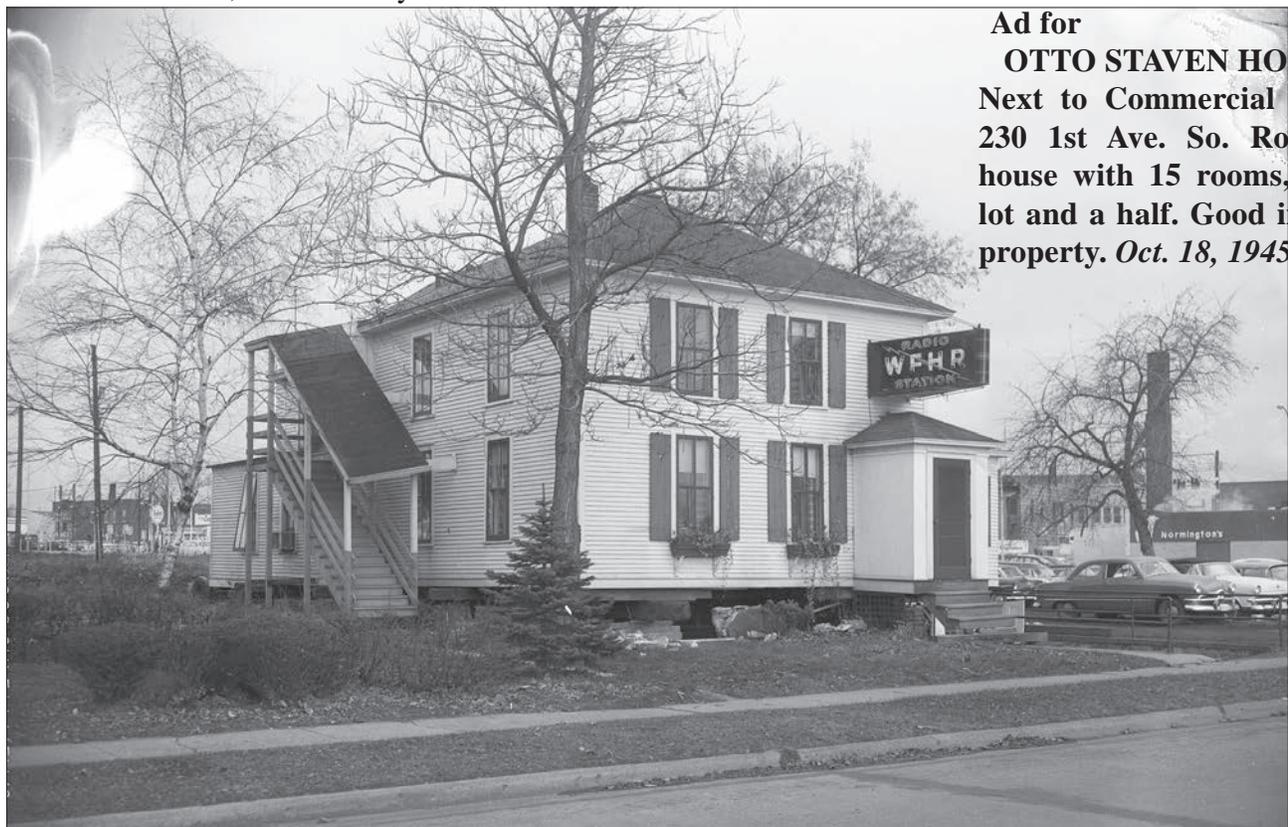
Circulation manager Henry Silka, center, bundling copies. Through glass is the carrier room where "newspaperboys" pick up copies for home delivery. John Sullivan, right, operates an addressing machine.





Above: Don Krohn photo c. 1950 shows WFHR sign and studio in the Wards block, West Grand Avenue.

Below: The house to the south of the Commercial lot was purchased by Consolidated from Mrs. Helen Staven in 1946. Her husband, Otto, had worked at Consolidated and died in 1945. Funeral directors were Krohn and Berard, from the funeral home next door, later Ritchay's.



**Ad for
OTTO STAVEN HOUSE**
Next to Commercial Hotel,
230 1st Ave. So. Rooming
house with 15 rooms, large
lot and a half. Good income
property. *Oct. 18, 1945*



Photos in the *Tribune* section of this issue were made from aging prints and negatives salvaged from the *Daily Tribune* building during Uncle Dave's tenure (such as those in the photo paper box above), and, more recently, as the building was being vacated by the newspaper.

Thanks to the *Daily Tribune* owner, Gannett Co., and then-editor Allen Hicks for donating these negatives and cases of story files to the Museum.

Most of the negatives begin in the mid-1960s and end with the use of digital cameras.



Above: Possible broadcast from the Staven house which used by Radio Station WFHR as a studio while the new building was under construction.



Members of the public at the riverside door of Tribune/WFHR building to attend the open house reported in the May 26, 1960, *Daily Tribune*. Looking east.

(D a m a g e d print)

Cranboree Street Scenes

By Lori Brost
Museum Administrator



Looking west, north side of Grand. VFW Post 2534 Color Guard starts the 1954 Cranboree parade at 7th and West Grand by the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific (Milwaukee Road) depot. Tall building is Farmer's Store, owned by Hilary Higgins, brother of funeral home owner Arnold. The Farmer's building was once owned by the Akey family—restaurant on first floor and lodging on second. Next door is the Brown Derby tavern, opened by Lawrence Huber in 1946 and managed by Greg Kizewski after 1949.



South side of Grand. Three businesses were housed in a building owned by the Bender brothers: The Midget restaurant, a barber shop and the bar run by Carl "Red" Bouton, who came to town as a baseball player and married Frances O'Betka, a former Miss Wisconsin Rapids. This building would not survive the Rapids Mall project.



Looking west. The Boy Scout Drum & Bugle Corps. A couple years later, Uncle Dave joined the local group as a bugler. Tall building is the current Metcalf Lumber.



South side of Grand. The Racine Kilties Drum & Bugle Corps performed in the parade and competed at Witter Field. The tall, darker, building at right is Weller & Weller's Jewelry. Center building was owned by Chester Swarick, whose father, Frank, had started the tavern in 1933 and, after a few years, sold to Joe and Ann Romanski and moved on to the Golden Gate supper club on Highway 13. The Produce Market at left, originally Anderson's Bakery, was owned by Babe Lutz. More buildings that would not survive the Mall project.



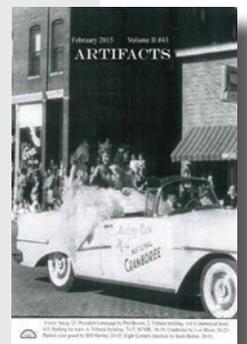
Stevens Point high school graduate Dixie Ann Sarchet, 1951 National Cranboree queen and 1954 Miss Wisconsin, in a 1953 Lincoln Capri. She would marry professional baseball player and later Milwaukee Brewers manager Harvey Kuenn in 1955. Between Romanski’s tavern at left and the Grand Avenue Tap is the Gift and Luggage Shop, owned and operated by Maurice Matthews.

Cover Photo

On Friday night, 1953 Cranboree Queen, Leanne “Sis” Parmeter, handed over her crown to Audrey Tork, Lincoln high school senior. Audrey attended Marquette University for two years and married John Dittrich, a football player for UW–Madison. He was taken in round six of the 1956 NFL draft by the Chicago Cardinals, and would play for the 1959 Green Bay Packers in the rookie season of coach Vince Lombardi.

Dittrich also played for the Oakland Raiders (1960) and Buffalo Bills (1961). Audrey enjoyed a successful career in real estate in Oakland and later moved to Las Vegas where she currently resides. (Thanks to Beatrice Tork, of Tork’s Beauty Shop, for this information.)

Audrey’s chariot for the parade was a 1954 Oldsmobile 98. The Mautz paint store at right was owned by David Ignatius Minta.



From slides by an unknown amateur photographer scanned by C.H. Bruse.

Marching with the Patriots

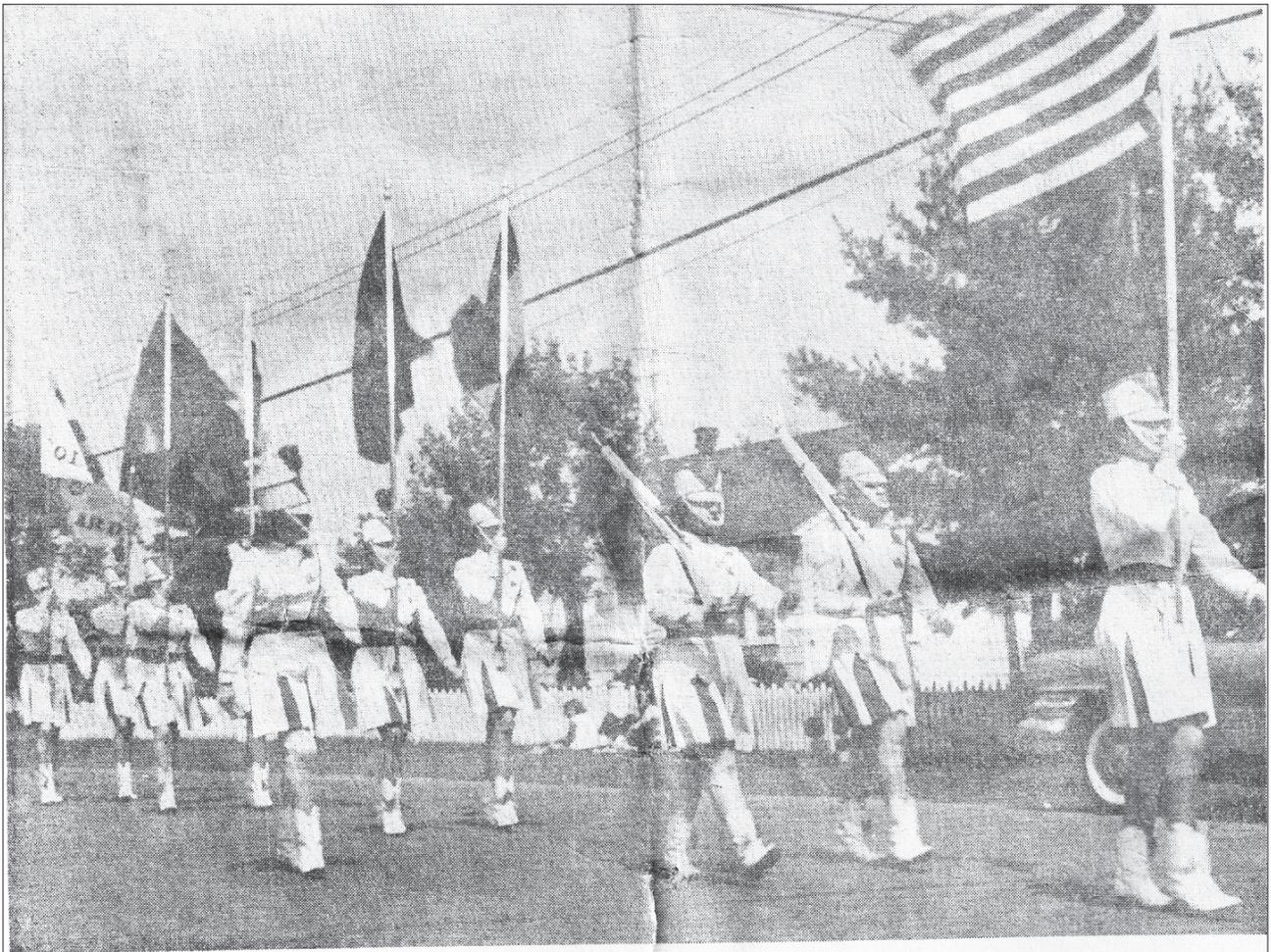
By Bill Hartley
LHS Class of 1963

Last year, when the Lincoln High class of 1964 held their 50-year reunion at the Hotel Mead, many classmates were heard commenting on how good it was to get together again and how they thought this was the best reunion ever.

Another, lesser known reunion took place that weekend at the Olympic II restaurant. Some of the class of 1964 were also members of a long-forgotten group that used to march on the streets of Wisconsin Rapids—the Patriots Color Guard.

In the early 60s, the Patriots Color Guard was a stand-alone organization of girls that competed against other color guards in Wisconsin and surrounding states. They competed in precision marching tournaments such as the one advertised from June 1962 (upper right) and usually fared very well, as evidenced by the small undated article and the trophies in the group photo. In about 1962, they merged with the Royal Guard Drum & Bugle Corps, also from Wisconsin Rapids.

Clippings courtesy of Bill Hartley

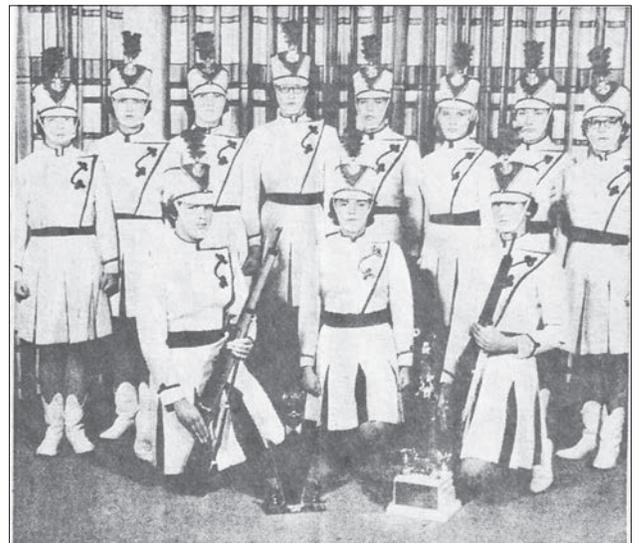


THE PATRIOTS—The Patriots Color Guard, directed by Mrs. Virginia Zimmerman, are Barbara Schill, Joyce Abler, Colcen DeKarske, Sherron Haza, Kathy Willems, Nancy Olson, Jill Jennings, Ann Taylor, Mary Lou Ticknor, Sue Johnson, Carol Babcock, Ginger Nelson, Betty Ann Kell, Roseann Tracy, co-sergeant, and Teri Zimmerman, sergeant.

Patriots who posed for the photos below at the Class of 1964 reunion:

Back Row: Nancy (Olson) Whitlock, Linda (White) Sullivan, Pat (Barton) Lovesee

Front Row: Kathy (Willems) Gotter, Shirley (Black) Hartley, Bev (Nelson) Rucinski



BADGERLAND CHAMPS—Top color guard in the Badgerland Association is The Patriots, a Wisconsin Rapids all-girl aggregation sponsored by the United Commercial Travelers. Present membership is 11, although as many as 17 may be included in a color guard. Kneeling around the trophies are, from left, Joyce Abler, Terry Zimmerman and Ginger Nelson. Standing, same order, are Theresa Matrain, Nancy Olson, Shirley Black, Sharon Martenson, Carole Nelson, Sharon Peterson, Linda White and Beverly Nelson. Mrs. Virginia Zimmerman is the director and her daughter is color guard sergeant. The group practices at the Corpsman Music Hall at 7 a.m. Tuesdays and at the Mead School from 8 to 9 p.m. on Wednesdays. Its competitive season is just beginning, with appearances in Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin anticipated.

Eight Corners Junction

Where Bill Haas has created a village of history

By Scott Brehm
Vesper Correspondent

Since I began writing for *Artifacts*, I have taken you on a tour of old Vesper, to Kissinger Hill at Seneca Corners and to Eight Corners. These stories tie together because family and community back in those days was close and most people didn't travel far. This leads me to my next feature article and the man behind it, Bill Haas.

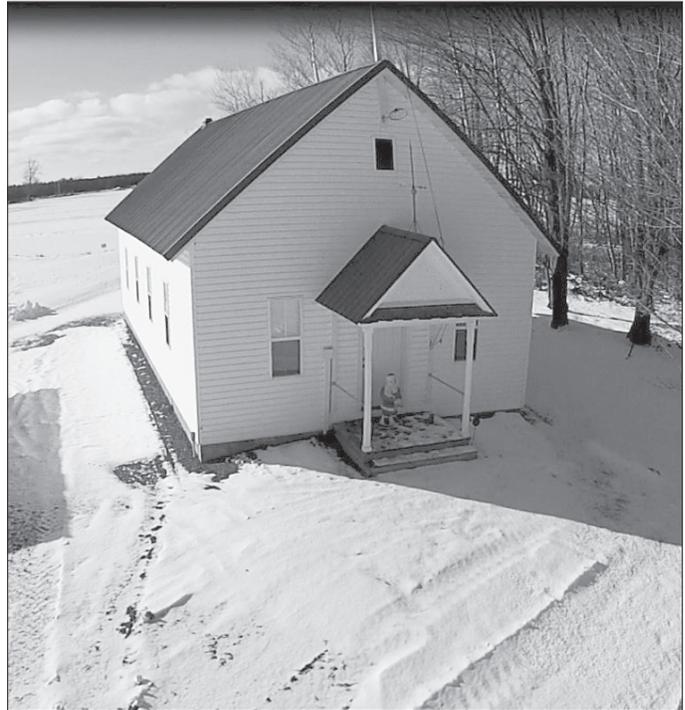
I have known Bill all my life. Bill's mom, Ida, was my grandfather Carl Brehm's sister.

Bill is a prominent man in these parts, having started Haas Builders across from his house on county highway F. Bill's boys, Jere and Steve, have taken over the everyday operations, which gives Bill plenty of time to work on his hobbies, like creating the historical village you see here.

When you come to meet Bill, you find an older gentleman who has worked all his life and still wears his bib overalls. But talking to him about history, you will wonder where the time went.

I had visited Bill several times. The first was to take overhead pictures of Bill's village with my drone. The second time was recently. I arrived shortly after 3 p.m., expecting to take some additional pictures before dark. To my surprise, Bill spent hours in the cold to tell me the history of each building and the details of many items, some consisting of our heritage from three or four generations before us.

When all was said and done and we entered the cold night air, I felt rich with knowledge and Bill appeared happy to be able to show someone new his passion for history.



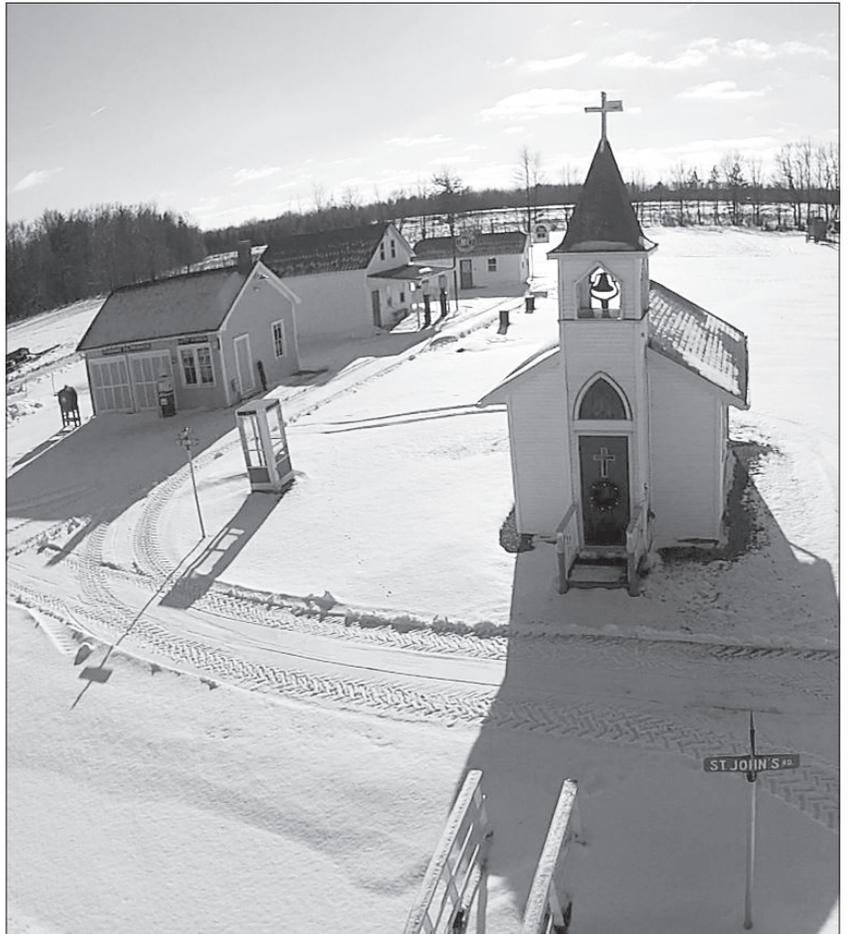
The history village of Eight Corners Junction began in 1989 with the 1909 Sigel town hall.



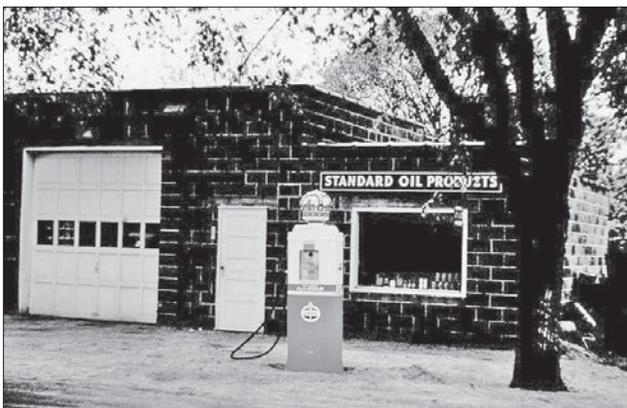
Bill acquired an old "putt putt" railroad car used at the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. This led to his interest in local railroad history. He has since added an old hand pump rail car, caboosie, water tank and rail tracks.

Photos by Scott Brehm

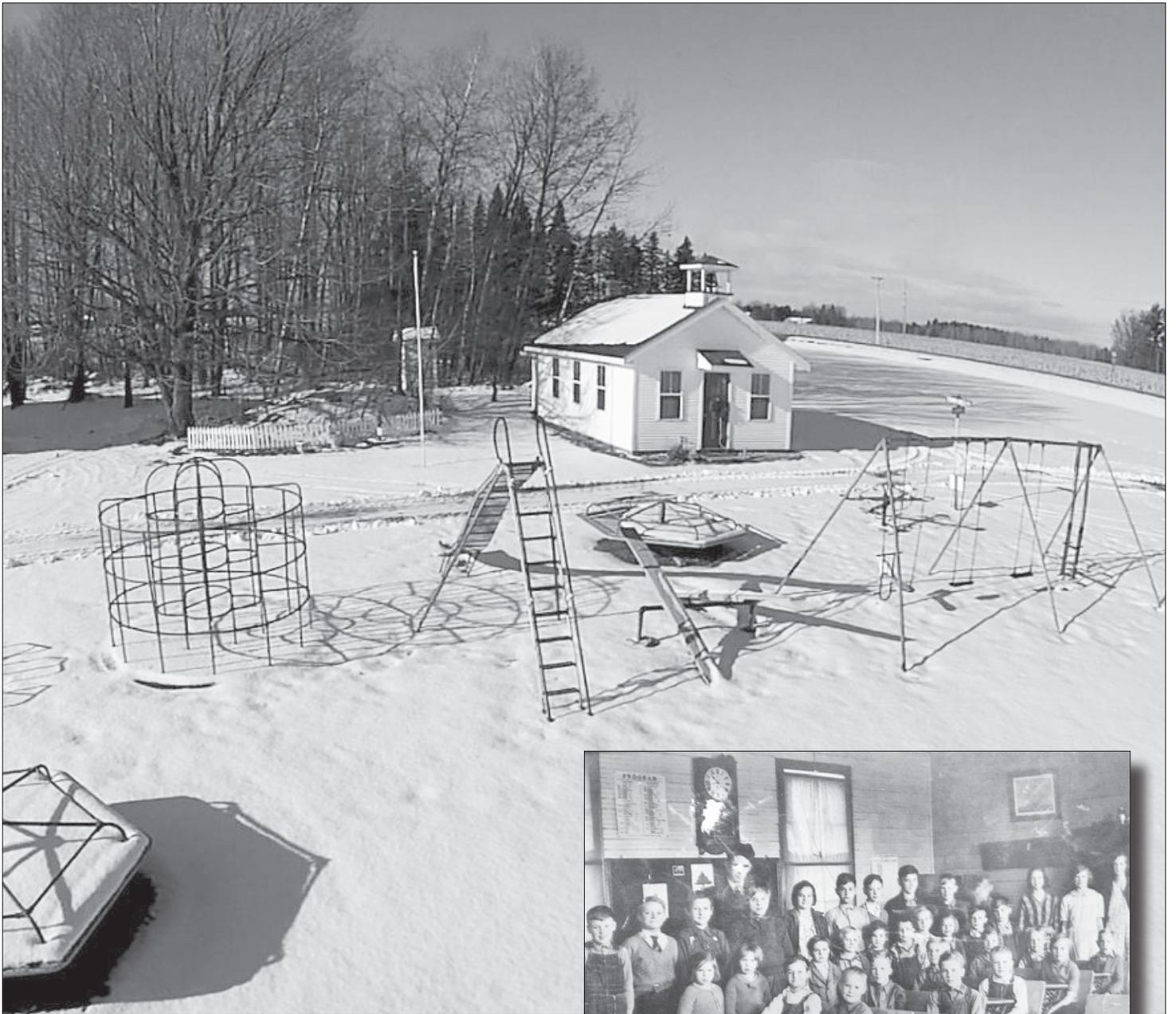
In 1998, Bill created a replica of the St. John's Lutheran church located on St. John's road. This is the church that our forefathers started.



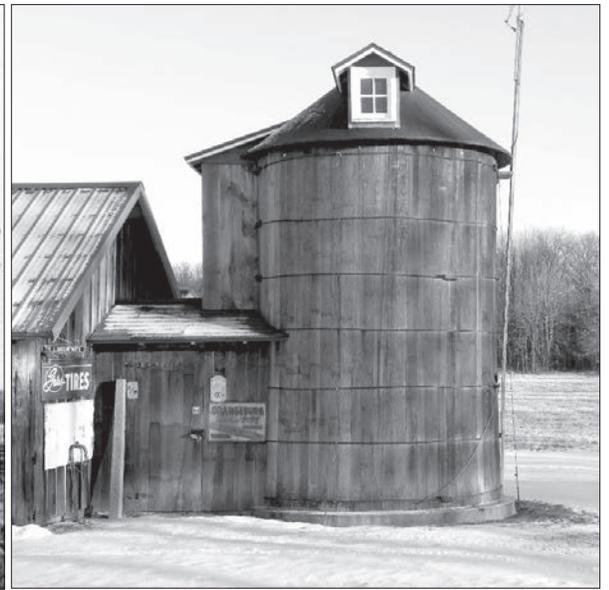
The stained windows, a hymn number board and stained lighted window at the center of the front wall came from the old Trinity Lutheran church that had been located on Main Street in Vesper. The pews came from St. Bronislava church. The light and candle holders came from St. Luke's Lutheran. The lighted cross came from the Congregational church in Vesper which no longer exists. The offering baskets came from St. Lawrence Catholic in Wisconsin Rapids.



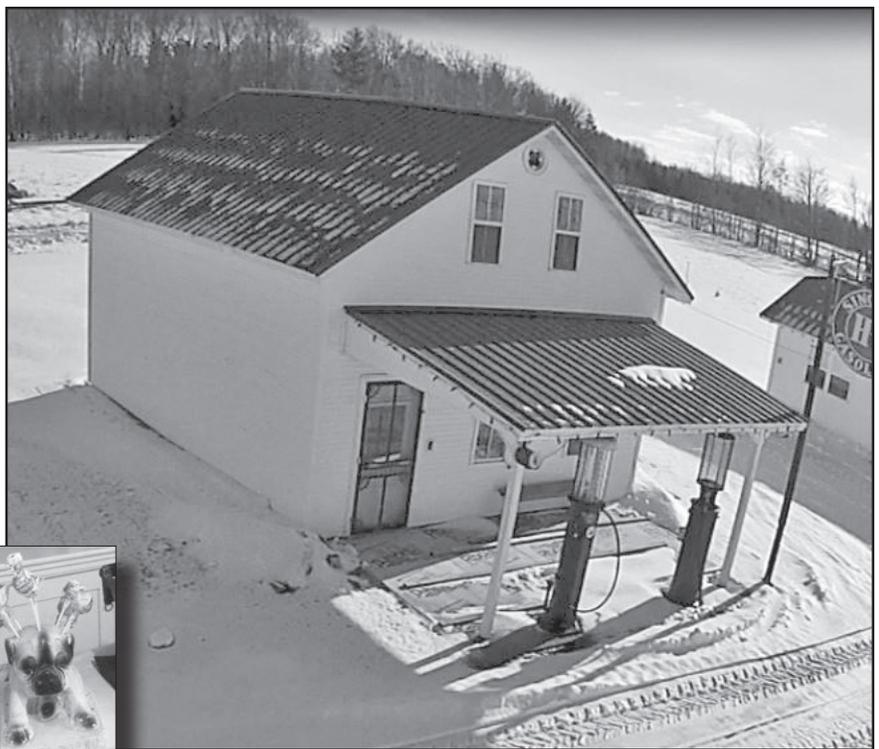
In July 1999, Bill acquired Oscar and Celia Goldammer's old garage in Vesper, which he turned into a carriage house/gas station. Bill was able to purchase a Standard gas pump, globe and Standard Oil sign from Jake Kievet who owned Jake's Garage in Vesper. (Jake lived next door to us when we were kids and we would visit him all the time.)



In the fall of 2000, Bill began a replica of the Pioneer School he attended as a child. By the end of March of the next year, the desks were in place, along with a slate blackboard, books, pictures of the time. The old stove, water cooler and 48-star flag completed the project.



In 2001, Bill began work on an authentic Vesper Wood Mfg. Co. silo which he acquired from the Elmer Rickman farm in Kellner. Bill, with help from relatives, took the silo down and hauled the staves and hoops to his village. He continued working on the silo in 2004, using an original catalog from the Vesper Wood Mfg. Co. to figure out how to complete the roof.



In 2006, Bill started on the replica of the Eight Corners Grocery. The original grocery building was the St. John's Lutheran parsonage, moved around 1930 to Eight Corners, where John and Ruby Olsen made it into a grocery store. The store closed in 1956 and became the home of the Dick and Marge Olsen family. It was torn down in 1989.

To his model, Bill added an original steel ceiling, given to him by Roger Seifert, last owner of the old Horn hardware in Vesper.

The counter, scale, slicer and window, inside the replica, came from the original store. Anyone who had gone into that store remembered the bulldog that held suckers but no one could remember what happened to it. One day, Judy Haas stopped by to see Dick Olsen. As she was standing in the doorway she saw the bulldog sitting there looking at her. The bulldog now holds its place on the original counter, complete with sucker.



In 2007, Bill started excavating to build a replica of the Eight Corners tavern.

For Bill's birthday, his son Jere was able to acquire the original Shell Rock tavern sign which was mounted to Bill's Eight Corners tavern.

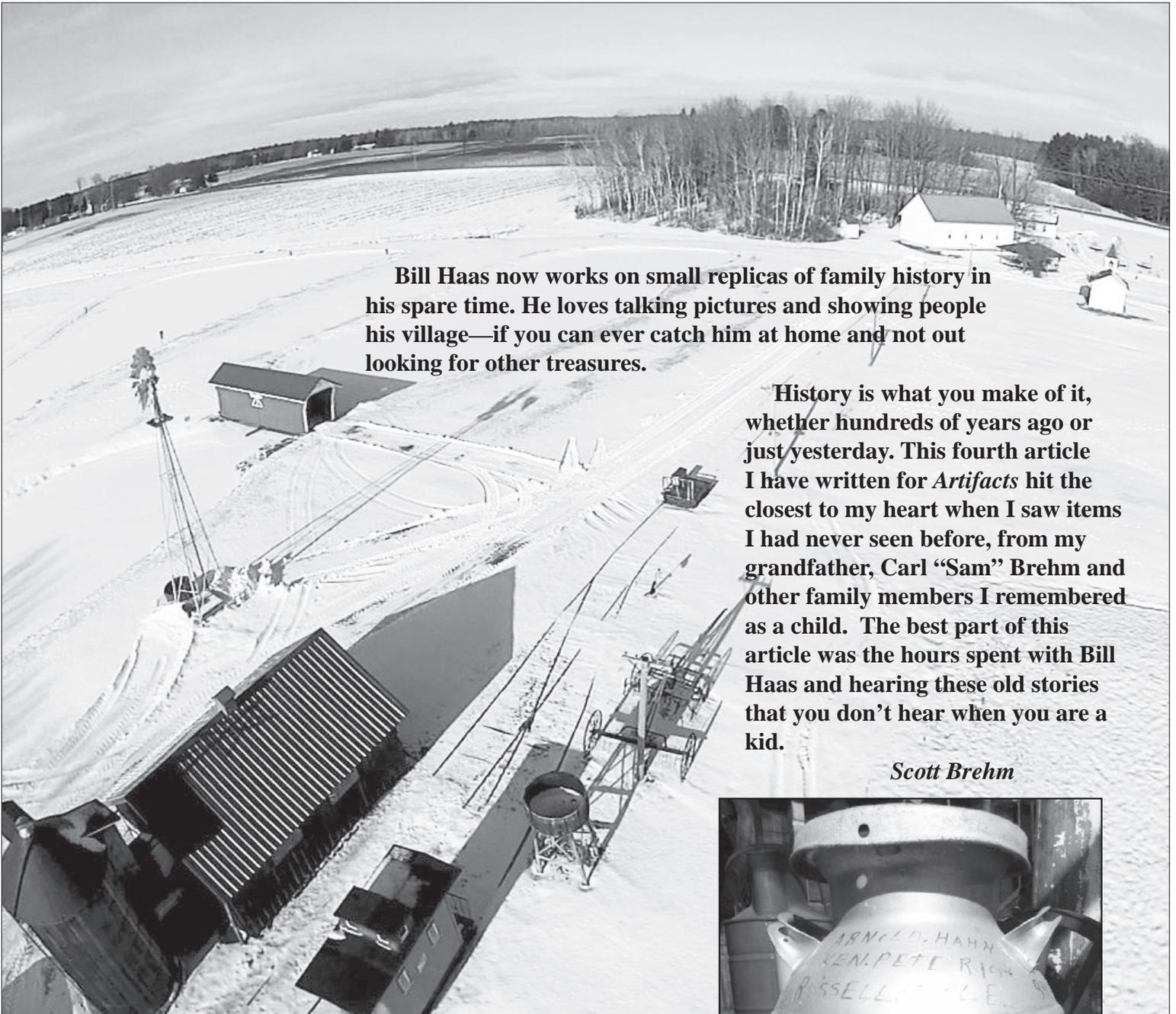
This bar was located on Highway 186 in Vesper. Wood County Head Start now occupies the building.

The original Eight Corners tavern was built by Ervin Polansky as a grocery store and gas station. In 1929, John Olsen bought it and moved the grocery store across the street into the St. John's parsonage building. Clarence Swenson bought the Polansky building and made into a tavern. In 1940, a living quarters was added to the north side.

Other tavern keepers were Emil Schara, Jack Krump, Archie Lawrence, Jack and Margaret Wagner, Jean and Vic Akers, Art and Ann Dorn, Charlie Hafenbredl, Art Bray, Gilly Hogden, Roger Bray and Augie and Nancy Jordan. The tavern was torn down in 2000.



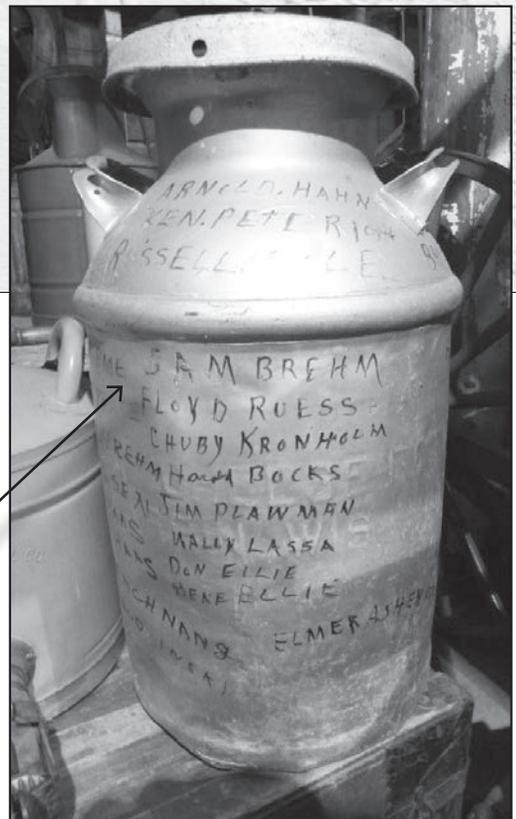
The same Bill Haas featured here "framed up" Uncle Dave's then-new house in 1976.



Bill Haas now works on small replicas of family history in his spare time. He loves talking pictures and showing people his village—if you can ever catch him at home and not out looking for other treasures.

History is what you make of it, whether hundreds of years ago or just yesterday. This fourth article I have written for *Artifacts* hit the closest to my heart when I saw items I had never seen before, from my grandfather, Carl “Sam” Brehm and other family members I remembered as a child. The best part of this article was the hours spent with Bill Haas and hearing these old stories that you don’t hear when you are a kid.

Scott Brehm



Scott's grandpa

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