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South Wood County Historical Corp.

Artifacts



At the Rapids Theatre: THE GREAT DAN PATCH (1949). Raised by farmer Dan Palmer (Henry Hull) in turn-of-20th-century Indiana, standardbred pacer (race horse) Dan Patch is nurtured into greatness by Palmer's son David (Dennis O'Keefe), a chemist, returned to marry schoolteacher Ruth Treadwell (Ruth Warrick).

In this issue: Joan Haasl, pages 2-3; Eileen Keating photos of Don & Sally Engel, 4-5; Our 20th Century with Larry and Helen Murtfeldt, 6-11; West Grand Avenue photo, 12-13; Photos, 14-19; Phil's Den of Antiquity, 20-21; The Wedding photo I.D., 22; History at McMillan with Don Litzer, 23; From the Museum, 24. Cover photo by Don Krohn. Officer at center is probably Franklin Smith. A second officer is at Grand and 2nd. Probably 3, 4, or 5 p.m. at the city's only bridge.

Joan Haasl

We Have a German Name

When this happened, we were not at war with Germany. It was a Sunday morning and my mother, brother and I were walking on Third Street South, on our way to church. On the newsreel at the Rapids Theatre we had seen the German soldiers goose-stepping. Bill and I started goose-stepping and my mother reacted at once. "Stop that this very minute." She had such a look of fear on her face that we stopped that very minute. Then she said, "You know we have a German name." When we told Pa about what happened, he just laughed.

Reading a book about World War I, I realized what my mother's alarm was all about. During that time, while fighting for freedom, all freedoms at home were lost. The fear of anything German was pervasive. People changed their German names. Non-Germans with German-sounding names changed the spelling. People spied on each other and reported suspicious activities to the authorities. The most innocent remarks could be construed as pro-German.

This was a time of super-patriotism, war hysteria and paranoia. A letter was sent by a man in Marshfield about disloyalty among Lutheran ministers, claiming it was quite common. Boys over 16 were told to work or fight. In Minnesota, a boy was reported for not helping his father on the farm. No slackers were to be tolerated. Another report was on a man from Eau Claire who took his car in for repairs. The mechanic put a Liberty Bond sticker on his windshield. The fellow was reported for saying, "Who put that damn thing on there?" The report said he was a "slacker" and should be taken care of. People could be arrested for refusing to buy Liberty Bonds or for making any remarks that could sound as if they were pro-German.

So I then understood my mother's alarm in 1940. President Roosevelt said, "The only thing we have to fear, is fear itself." My mother clearly felt she had something more to fear than fear itself and it scared Bill and me to see her so clearly terrified. Normally, when she told us to quit something, we didn't pay much attention. That day, in response to a different tone of voice, we stopped at once, demonstrating the power of fear to affect behavior.

JH

My Brownie

We lived at 441 Third Street South, three blocks from the Post Office, until my dad died when I was fourteen. I was born in the big old house that was cut in two in 1933-34.

Pa had a big old chicken coop and always raised chickens. Sometimes a weasel would get in the coop and there would be blood and feathers all over.

I had a pet chicken I called "my Brownie." Brownie was a brown chicken of course, and was quite tame. She followed me around the yard. She hid her eggs and I would look for them. I was looking for eggs behind the garage when bees came after me and stung me all over my body. I think my mother made a paste of baking soda and put it on the stings. I cried a lot. It hurt.

Our neighbors across the street were Martin and Aletta Jacobson. They had George, Lester and Mae, all older than Bill and I. Mae was my babysitter the few times my parents went any place together without us. One time I remember was when my mother's cousin Eleanor Chamberlain married Frank Walsh. I was very upset that I couldn't go. I never wanted to miss anything. When Mae married John Natwick, I did get to go to the ceremony.

Mae never liked my dad. Over the years, she has told me this several times. Her reason seems strange to me. She says he was the meanest man she ever knew. When I asked why she thought that, she said because he wrung the chickens' necks so Mrs. Exner could fix chicken for our Sunday dinner. Chickens have to be killed if they are going to be eaten. But that's Mae's story and she sticks with it.

Back to my Brownie. I looked everywhere and couldn't find her. I called and called and checked all the neighbors' yards and no plump brown chicken. Finally, my brother, who loved to be the bearer of bad news, laughed and said, "We ate Brownie Sunday." I cried just as hard as I did when the bees stung me.

Pa moved the chicken coop up on the river property and made a little cottage out of it near the main cottage. After that, we never raised chickens again.

JH

Where are the mystery guys?
Look for them throughout this
issue.

Young at heart: who knew?

Snapshots of my parents, Donald and Arline "Sally" Engel, provided by Eileen Keating, Wisconsin Rapids. For more about Mrs. Keating, see *Daily Tribune*, 30 August 2004.



Don & Sally Engel



Who knew my mother fished?



Cover girls? Sally Engel and Eileen Keating



Baseball? Who knew?

Clyde Avenue



James Dean! Who knew?



Stunt Night

Stunt Night was one of a panorama of community activities at the famous Field House, then annexed to Lincoln High School, now East Junior High School. Sally Engel is second from left. The friend who provided the photo, Eileen Keating, is fourth from left, wearing a white dress and identified on the photo.

Our 20th Century *Murtfeldt*

8 November 2004
Wisconsin Rapids

By Dave Engel

Also present: Jim Mason, for Sunrise Rotary Oral History Project

Interview is somewhat condensed. The text will be on file at the South Wood County Historical Corp. museum and a related feature article will be published in the *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune*.

Born St. Louis, Missouri, 27 October 1909, Larry Murtfeldt received a degree in engineering from Washington University in 1930.

Larry Murtfeldt: I got a job with the Illinois highway department quite promptly, working out of East St. Louis. That went on for two, three years. Then I got a job up in Wisconsin Rapids at the Consolidated Water Power & Paper Company. That was about 1933.

Petenwell

I had read that they were building a big lake out of a river. I worked for the chief engineer, Bill Thiele. They had already bought a lot of land, but there were farms that people still rented. My job was to see that things went right, like, so they cut wood, but not too much, and...

Helen: They were flooding the land for Petenwell, before Petenwell was built...

D.: In the late thirties already?

L.M.: Yep, in the mid-thirties.

D.: What did the farmers think about it?

L.M.: Well, those that were poor farmers not doing well thought it was fine. But, it's always heart-wrenching to leave the homestead.

Du Bay

Shortly after I got there, the company wanted to do some surveying up above Wisconsin Rapids, which later became the Du Bay reservoir. I took a small party of men out and we did the job, trenched it and so on.

D.: In what year was that?

L.M.: Oh, that, probably about '33 or '34.

Grand Marais

Then, I think, the company decided they'd like to have me learn more about timberland and logging so they sent me up to northern Minnesota to help a Finnish engineer

named Jens Finstad. It was north of Grand Marais, about 20, 25 miles, not far from the Canadian border.

Helen: First of all, you lived in a CCC Camp.

L.M.: That's right. Mr. Finstad and I boarded in a CCC camp. Our job was to make a map of the land that the company owned so the foreman could lay out his roads and do the job. We spent the whole winter tramping around in the snow, about three feet deep.

D.: Did you wear snowshoes?

L.M.: You bet ya. It was all new to me. I'd take about ten steps and fall on my face to start with. It was real cold, sometimes 55 below zero. We still worked.

At noon, we'd stop somewhere, gather some wood together and make a sort of a raft, and put it on the top of the snow and build a fire. Jens would say, "We have a pipe now, okay," and that would mean we had a [tobacco?] pipe. We also had a tin can we'd hang on a leaning stick, and fill it full of snow and rabbit droppings, perhaps. And tea, good hot tea.

Camp Eight

We had what was called a walking boss and under him a very good foreman, Everett Wynn. He came in with the help of a lot of men that he got out of Duluth, perhaps three hundred. They built a two-hundred-foot building for cooking and eating, with a screened porch. We had a cook. You had to have a good one, too.

D.: Where was that?

L.M.: Camp Eight.

The next winter, they logged. Got a lot of horses from out west. Lumberjacks came and without mechanical saws cut eight-foot lengths of pulpwood and stacked them up.

D.: Did they use two-man saws?

L.M.: Yeah, usually, and, they'd have a piece of timber[land] that had been allotted to them. The foreman laid it out, from our map.

A lot of the men lived in the camp and went out there everyday. A lot of others did not live in the camp. They built a little cottage of their own and had a contract for cutting there. These lumberjacks are a pretty tough bunch, but a lot of them lived out in Duluth or some city.

D.: Were they a particular nationality?

L.M.: They were a lot of Finns and Swedes, the best ones, I think. But they usually didn't want to go to work until they were broke.

A lot of them had been working for other people. Consolidated wasn't the only logger in Minnesota. And our good foreman, Wynn, knew all about that, so, we'd call up Duluth and say, "Send us a load of men," and bring the guys up and put them to work.

D.: These lumberjacks, did they party on your time or did they go somewhere else for their wild times?

L.M.: When they came up there, there wasn't any "going."

D.: There were no women up there, right?

L.M.: No.

Helen.: Larry, didn't a lot of those lumberjacks get their paychecks and go to Duluth for the weekend?

L.M.: Well, when they got enough money, they went for the bar or the brothel until they bust. They'd come back when they were ready.

But, they'd cut this wood, they built roads, and they hauled the pulpwood down to the Swamp River. It's a little river with a dam there.

They landed the wood on the ice on the river, then come springtime, the ice melted and the wood hopefully went down river.

D.: What kinds of trees did you have?

L.M.: Spruce mainly.

D.: Had that country been cut over before or were you the first?

L.M.: It had not been logged much, no. And they didn't skin the whole thing, either. We had good foresters, and they did it the right way.

D.: So you were like the lumberjacks of the old days. You had to cut the trees by hand, you used horses...

L.M.: Yeah.

D.: And you rolled the logs into the river.

L.M.: Yeah, right. We went down the swamp and then come spring, why then, everything melted and went along. But, ah, then the Pigeon was another thing. That went to Lake Superior. There was a high falls, oh, a hundred feet high.

D.: Is that Cascade Falls?

L.M.: Yeah.

D.: Oh, and High Falls too, there's two of them.

L.M.: Yeah, right-o. And, when they got down to Lake Superior, we had a tug called the Butterfield that pulled the raft over to Ashland, Wisconsin. And, then, onto rail and went to Appleton and Wisconsin Rapids.

D.: Ralph Swanson, did you know him?

L.M.: You bet I knew him. In fact, he was our head forester for a while, and...

Stanton

D.: Now, Stanton Mead used to work at the Ashland [pulp wood] hoist?

L.M.: Stanton Mead was the vice president of the company.

D.: When he was young, I mean, his dad sent him up to Ashland?

L.M.: Yeah, that's true.

D.: That was before your time?

L.M.: Yeah. He's the one who sent me up, later on.

D.: He was always interested in forestry?

L.M.: Right.

D.: He loved the woods, right?

L.M.: That's true.

D.: Did he ever come up to visit?

L.M.: Sure.

D.: At Grand Marais area?

L.M.: Sure. First time I ever got up there, Stanton Mead and our forester, Emmett Hurst, and I drove up.

On the way to Grand Marais, I picked up some clothes and some snowshoes and we tramped around in the area that we were going to work. And, when it came time to log, they built a tar paper shack for the foreman and I.

D.: How many people lived up there?

L.M.: Three hundred or so.

D.: Did they log only in winter?

L.M.: Yes.

D.: What happened in summer? Everybody went home?

L.M.: Yeah, I think so.

D.: I'm trying to think of the name of Thunder Bay? It had two towns at that time.

Helen: Port William.

D.: Port William and then there was another.

L.M.: Port Arthur.

D.: Which one did Consolidated have their office in?

L.M.: I think it was in the Port Arthur. Yeah, Port Arthur was the only city that was nearby.



Larry & Helen in Minnesota

Helen

D.: Did you stay up there all year?
 L.M.: By that time, I guess I did.
 Helen: Uh-huh, you did.
 D.: You're going to come into the picture pretty soon, aren't you?
 L.M.: Helen lived in Chicago; she was the secretary for the vice president of...
 Helen: For Walter Mead.
 L.M.: I kind of ran across her walking up the street and thought, that's pretty good.
 D.: Where was that street that you saw her?
 L.M.: In the Rapids.
 Helen: He used to come down to see me in Chicago once in a while.
 D.: But you met in Rapids?
 Helen: Before he went up in the woods.
 L.M.: Well, 1937, we got married and went on a honeymoon, and then ended up in Minnesota, in a 24 by 24 log cabin that I had sketched up and a lumberjack built.
 Helen: And I was the only female with all those lumberjacks.
 D.: What season was that, when you went up there?
 L.M.: It was winter.
 Helen: Summer. We went up in June.
 L.M.: Well, let's see...
 D.: And stayed through the winter?
 Helen: Stayed through December. That's as long as I was there.
 L.M.: One time, Helen found a bear in the yard and went screaming and, we, some of the guys went rushing up with a rifle. I didn't have one. But, the bear was gone by that time. Came back later.
 One morning that Helen and I lived there, we heard the dog barking and making a big racket outside and looked out, there's the dog barking up a tree and a bear up there looking down.
 He climbed part way and then he'd come down and whap! The dog would run away. He never caught him. And then the bear would go back up the tree. So this thing went on for quite a while.
 Helen had a man who hauled wood to the stove that we...
 Helen: And water, he brought water up.
 D.: Water from where?
 L.M.: Out of the creek.
 Helen: We had a barrel stove for heat in the wintertime.
 D.: What about cooking?
 Helen: Didn't we have an old-fashioned stove that we cooked on, Larry? Once in a while, I would be invited to go down and eat in the camp with the cook. Oh, and was he ever a good cook!

And then the cookie would be there, and he would finish eating his meal and when he got through, his dessert was a big bowl full of jelly. And he ate the jelly that way.
 Oh, I tell you, we could tell some tales.
 D.: What's a cookie as opposed to a cook?
 Helen: He's below the cook.
 L.M.: Cook, a bull cook and a cookie. But two or three guys took care of three hundred very good.
 Let's see, when the logging was going on, I was the clerk. I was the bookkeeper, had a book about that long.
 D.: A big, old leather-bound book?
 L.M.: Yeah, I did.
 D.: You probably had to try to keep your ink from freezing.
 L.M.: Yeah, right-o. And, I could pay them off when they wanted to be.
 D.: A lumber camp always had to have a clerk.
 L.M.: I worked for the office up in Thunder Bay, Canada. I'd order food from Duluth, like camp cows. I think we used three camp cows a week.
 All we had for refrigeration was the screened porch. That's where the meat hung.
 Helen: Tell them about your Finn baths, how you took a bath.
 L.M.: Oh, yeah, we had a nice Finnish sauna. They stoked it up a couple times a week.
 Helen: Then you would go out and roll in the snow, wouldn't you?
 L.M.: Well, I wouldn't. Those crazy Swedes would.
 We had a nice forest fire while I was there before the logging started. Lightning set it on fire and it burned up the pig pen. We had water pumps and stuff like that and we held the fire back at that point.
 D.: So you had pigs out there that you ate? Did you have chickens?
 L.M.: No chickens.
 D.: Did you have cows out there?
 L.M.: No.
 D.: Did you have a lot of bacon?
 L.M.: Sure, well, anyhow, that was a tough time we had. Burned up many acres. The State of Minnesota put out a call for men. Made them come, too.
 D.: How long were you in that camp? You were there about six months or so.
 Helen: Uh-huh.
 L.M.: Oh, I was there several years.
 D.: What did you use for light out there?
 L.M.: We didn't have electricity. We used gasoline lanterns and Aladdin lamps. Aladdin Lamps are the ones with the mantle in it.
 D.: Did you like it up there?
 Helen: Sure, it was an experience.
 D.: You were eager to go or were you reluctant to go?
 Helen: Well, of course, we had just been married and I guess I was eager to go. My mother thought she'd never see me again.

D.: Your hometown is what?

Helen: Here. I am born and raised here.

D.: What was your maiden name?

Helen: S-t-a-h-l.

D.: And when were you born?

Helen: 5-13-13.

D.: That explains why you were in Rapids that day you met Larry.

L.M.: Graduated the local high school with honors.

D.: You did? About 1931?

Helen: Yes.

L.M.: Yeah, I was a pretty lucky guy.

John Longbody's Daughters

D.: But the whole time you were there, you were going together?

Helen: Oh, yeah.

D.: So you were writing letters...

Helen: And I was moved to Chicago as Walter Mead's secretary. But, Larry came down to see me a couple of times. It wasn't easy, but he got there.

D.: So a lot of letters go back and forth?

Helen: Oh, sure.

D.: Did you keep those?

Helen: Yeah, I've got them some place. I don't know, maybe I gave them to the museum, I can't remember.

D.: In '37, you got married? Was that towards the end of your time up there?

Helen: Well, I was up there six months and then Stanton thought Larry was looking at John Longbody's daughters and maybe he better bring Larry back to the Rapids. John Longbody was an Indian with a great big teepee and a bunch of daughters.

D.: Is that right?

L.M.: Yeah, sure, pretty nice squaws.

D.: Who was your supervisor at that time?

L.M.: Everett Wynn, I think. He reported to a walking boss, a big tall Swede.

He was called a walking boss, because he had to walk to one camp, and to the other. In those days, you didn't have a car.

Finally he got a Model-A Ford car. The first time he came up there, he got it stuck in front of the camp. He'd spin the wheels and dig a hole in the ground.

D.: You didn't really have roads up there, right, just logging trails?

L.M.: Yeah, right. So, then, I'd say, well, I'll try to give you a push.

So, he's spinning his wheels backwards and I'm trying to push it. And he leans out and he says "Murtfeldt, you ain't so strong."

D.: Did you have any pets when you were up there?

Helen: A dog and a pet fox one time.

D.: What year did you leave do you think?

Helen: We probably left in 1938.

Pulp & Paper

L.M.: About that time, it looked like the job was going to continue right along, and the company said, well, if you want to come down to the mills and learn the paper business, why, you could do that.

D.: Because you were an engineer, but not a paper engineer.

L.M.: That's correct. And if you want to stay here, we'll help you some.

Fair enough. I chose to go down to the mill and started in working for a mill manager, Clarence Jackson.

My job was to learn every damn pump and pipe in the whole bloody thing, which I did. And, sketched them up, so that if we had trouble at night, you knew where the trouble was before you got there.

Anyway, I got to be so-called pulp superintendent and head of the manufacture of sulphite pulp. Later on, they built a very fine Kraft mill, that makes about a thousand tons a day.

Helen: Now, don't be modest about it. You had a lot to do with the planning and building of it. I always called it "Larry's mill."

L.M.: So, I became assistant manager, then manager, and we had studies by Booz Allen Consulting and all that, so I ended up being vice president of manufacturing.

Sulphite

D.: Where does Bill Prebbanow come in?

L.M.: He was the manager of the sulphite mill and he was quite a character. He lived right across the street from the mill. I think he slept at the mill more than he did at home.

D.: His daughter is Ellen Sabetta, the long-time curator of the museum.

L.M.: Ah, yeah. This sulphite mill is a tough thing. We blow off digesters into huge pits. The gases go up there and the liquor goes down the river.

D.: Did that make a lot of noise?

L.M.: A lot of noise and a lot of smell, too.

D.: And people got upset.

L.M.: Oh, yeah, burned all their gardens, and...

Helen: Tell about Mr. Ebsen. G.W. made you go over and soothe Mr. Ebsen's flower place one time because you burned up all the flowers.

L.M.: Oh, yeah, well, George Mead called me, the old man, one night. He said, "I want you to get right over to the florist. He's pretty mad; we've burned up his garden."

So, I sure as hell did. I didn't save his plants but we had a nice talk about it.

D.: Did you build the new woodroom when they had a woodroom?

L.M.: Yeah. That was pretty tough, business. You got to get the bark off of it, you got to chop it up, then you have to cook it, and this sulphite thing...we used limestone and sulphur, burned the sulphur.

These digesters were huge. They were, oh, 15 foot in diameter and 50 feet high, I guess, something like that. Had eight of them, lined with brick.

Very often, they would leak and eat a hole in the steel, and then, many times I've been down there, and, Prebbanow was always there first.

But here comes this high pressure steam and sulphur gas. It's a miserable thing. Prebbanow would go right in the middle of it and get a snoot-full and then he couldn't work any more that day.

I told him more than once, "Look, you gotta cut this out."

The guys would take a long pole, sharpen it, and somebody'd hold the point right up to that hole where it was coming out and two or three of them would ram it in. That was what they did.

D.: I worked in the woodroom for one summer. You were probably in charge of that, in 1965?

L.M.: That's true. But, then we built the new one, with the Kraft mill.

I got Jim Esselman. He'd worked in the Kraft mills other places and he knew a lot of other good men, foremen, which he brought to us, and, we had it designed by a company in South Carolina, but overseen by Esselman and his crew.

D.: Was Stanton Mead involved at that time? Did you report to him at that time?

L.M.: Who did I report to? I guess, yeah, sure.

D.: George hadn't come along yet.

L.M.: No, George was still working in the research department.

D.: What year did you retire from Consolidated?

L.M.: Oh boy.

Helen: 1978.

Mead

D.: Tell me about Consolidated.

L.M.: Well, it was a company run by the Mead family, the elder George Mead and his brother, Ray.

They were running a furniture company in Rockford, Illinois and George Mead Sr. married a lady from Wisconsin Rapids, Ruth Witter.

D.: When did you first run into George W. Mead I?

L.M.: Up at the Rapids.

D.: Was it in his office?

L.M.: Yeah.

D.: Do you remember what he said to you?

L.M.: Well, like, you do what you're told and work hard, and you'll get along all right, that sort of stuff.

D.: You got to know him pretty well?

L.M.: He had a good feeling for the city. And, I think Stanton did as well. And George, who just ran it for quite a while here.

D.: "Young" George?

L.M.: Yeah, young George. He loves to tell me, tell people, that he had to work for me. I couldn't figure out what [job] it was, but it's all right with me.

D.: Stanton Mead, you probably knew the best?

L.M.: I think so, yes. Heck, I built him a tennis court.

D.: Was that at his house?

L.M.: Yeah.

Helen: And, you built that wall in front of Belle Isle.

L.M.: Yeah.

Helen: See this was the old Depression days.

L.M.: A man named Henry Baldwin had married, ah...

D.: Emily

L.M.: Emily, and they lived on the island and I did build a wall there.

D.: For Henry and Emily? What did you think of Emily?

L.M.: Oh, she was, very handicapped with her...

D.: Polio.

L.M.: Polio, yeah. She let me drive her electric automobile, though.

D.: Emily had an electric car?

L.M.: Yeah, she had one of those, sort of round ones, you know? With a stick.

Helen: Larry, wasn't that Mrs. George W. Mead's electric car? That was Ruth Mead's car.

L.M.: Sure.

D.: But they probably both lived on the Island at that time. Henry Baldwin, you knew him?

L.M.: Sure, well.

D.: Some people think that, if he would have lived, he might have been a good leader. Is that right? Or what?

L.M.: I guess so, yeah. He had...

D.: Or was there more of a...

L.M.: He didn't have a nice time of it. He'd get called out pretty heavily sometimes.

D.: By the Meads?

L.M.: Yeah.

D.: Because he was the "in-law?"

L.M.: True.

Helen: What was the paint company that his father had?

L.M.: Sherwin-Williams.

D.: But you're saying it was a little tough for him with all the Meads around. It was tough for Baldwin.

L.M.: Yeah.

D.: Just like it was tough for Jere Witter.

L.M.: That's what they say.

Helen: Uh-huh.

D.: Well, it was tough for Stanton, for that matter.

L.M.: They say.

D.: You have a brother, Harold, right?

L.M.: He was president.

D.: How did he happen to end up here?

L.M.: After I came, they badly needed a patent attorney and he trotted up here.

D.: Because you were acquainted with the company?
L.M.: Yeah, sure.
D.: So you [Helen] were working in Rapids?
Helen: And then they moved the sales office to Chicago, and I went along.
D.: Do you know what year that was?
Helen: Must have been 1936, because we were married in 1937 and I was down there a year.
D.: You lived in Chicago? And there was an office where?
Helen: In the Field building, on, oh Lordy, what street was that, that business street?
D.: And Walter Mead. What about him?
Helen: He was a very nice person. I enjoyed him. He was very kind to me, and very thoughtful and I just liked him very much.
D.: You knew him about a year down there?
Helen: Well, I knew him before they moved the sales office into Chicago.
D.: And, after you left, was that the end of your relationship with Walter Mead?
Helen: Yes.
D.: Did you stop working at that time?
Helen: I stopped working at that time, but, we were here and we'd see them when they were in the Rapids, just run into each other, you know the way things are in a small town.

The Lakes

D.: I was just talking to Mel Laird today. He said the people were concerned that Consolidated wasn't cutting the trees and the stumps out at Petenwell. Do you remember any controversy about that?
Helen: They weren't getting them out when Petenwell was flooded.
D.: They left the stumps right in, the trees and...
Helen: Larry, wasn't it Bill Thiele that would go along and look at the bottom, or look down where the stumps were and have them cut off?
L.M.: They didn't cut the stumps short enough. But, he invented a boat with a saw on it.
D.: Did you ever see that?
L.M.: Sure, I saw it.
D.: Did it work?
L.M.: I guess so, yeah, pretty well.
D.: That's after it was flooded already, though?
L.M.: Right.
D.: When you were going down there looking at those farms, did you see any villages or towns that were going to be flooded?
L.M.: Sure, Monroe Center, New Rome.

D.: Did you move the buildings? Or did anybody? What happened to them?
L.M.: Sure, yeah, sure. Oh, when I was in charge of things down there, we actually operated a farm in New Rome, with very nice cattle. I learned all about cattle at that time.
D.: Did you have anything to do with the Mead Reservoir, the one that they planned but didn't flood?
L.M.: No.
D.: Do you know what happened there? Why, what was the problem, or what? That was in about '55.
L.M.: I forget what they called the Mead Reservoir.
Between George Mead Sr. and Bill Thiele and Tom Utegaard, they cooked up more projects with flooding, the dams, and all that, they really did...and when they planned on doing something, they damned well had to get started right away to...
D.: So they did DuBay, they did Eau Plaine, Castle Rock and Petenwell, and then they wanted a bigger one.
L.M.: Well, Big Eau Pleine was there, but Little Eau Pleine never got flooded. I surveyed that one in the middle of all this. I had a survey team and we spent a summer fighting mosquitoes.
D.: But that must have been kind of interesting, if you knew it was going to be flooded later and you might be one of the last people to really look at it.
L.M.: Sure. Well, you know, we'd lay out the future water edge.
D.: Wouldn't that be something? Here's the beach!

Air Conditioned

D.: Your, family, Stahl, the name Frank comes into my mind, is that right?
Helen: My grandfather, uh-huh.
D.: What was he, some kind of business, right?
Helen: He was sheriff of Wood County at one time. He worked in a wagon place where they made wagons and straps and everything, across the river. And, he had his fingers in a lot of things. My dad worked in the Nekoosa mill.
D.: You lived in Rapids, though? And you started at Consolidated in what year?
Helen: Me? 1931, I think.
D.: How did they handle the Depression?
Helen: Thanks to Mr. George W. Mead, the older Mead, he just did so many things.
One year, he had one of the machines make nothing but toilet paper and gave it out to the employees.
D.: Imagine that.
Helen: Of course, there was no air conditioning at that time, and some way or other he brought ice in, and sent that through the registers, you know, to cool us off. He was always doing nice things like that.



West Grand

No meters are in evidence but tickets were given for overstaying a time limit. Angle parking shown has recently been restored. At left is officer Fred Bonow, who was hired in 1947, along with Carl Sharkey, at right, and Don Knuth, who provided this information.

The Coca Cola sign on the corner building was obscured by the photographer's pen. Also identifiable signs show the Uptown bar, a clothing shop, meat mart, jeweler, Quick Lunch and "Loans."

The movie playing at the Wisconsin is *Daisy Kenyon* (1947) with Joan Crawford, Dana Andrews, Henry Fonda, Ruth Warrick and Martha Stewart, among others.

Daisy, a commercial artist in Greenwich Village, is having an affair with a married man but in the end chooses the more reliable Henry Fonda character.



*Joan Crawford and Dana Andrews
in "Daisy Kenyon"*







Photo by Lawrence Oliver

Photo by Dave Engeloto



Maybe you know what burned at top left of page 14. Or who got stuck and where, at the bottom of that page. On this page, above, is the old Grand Rapids Brewery, later Sampson Canning Co., the evening it burned, Saturday, 5 March 2005. Below: Clearing snow in 1928 between F and G streets on south Section Street, Nekoosa.



Courtesy of Dick Skibba



Bar-R-Ranch?



Six suits and a shirt

Who? Where? When? What is that piece of paper? Send answers to Dave at 5597 Third Avenue, Rudolph, 54475 or kdengel@wctc.net



Alices ↑
in
Dairyland

←
The
Mohawk



↑ Behind Lowell school? Marbles were a spring ritual. In the photo, they are aiming at a “circle” of marbles. At Two Mile school, we aimed for the opponent’s piece. If you hit it, his marble was yours. If you missed, he had a chance for yours. I say, “he,” never having seen a girl playing marbles. They played jacks.

↓ “Leave it to Beaver.”





For more on comic books, see *River City Memoirs* in the 7 February 2005 *Daily Tribune*.

A regular feature from a SWCHC board member, historical collector and Cranmoor cranberry grower



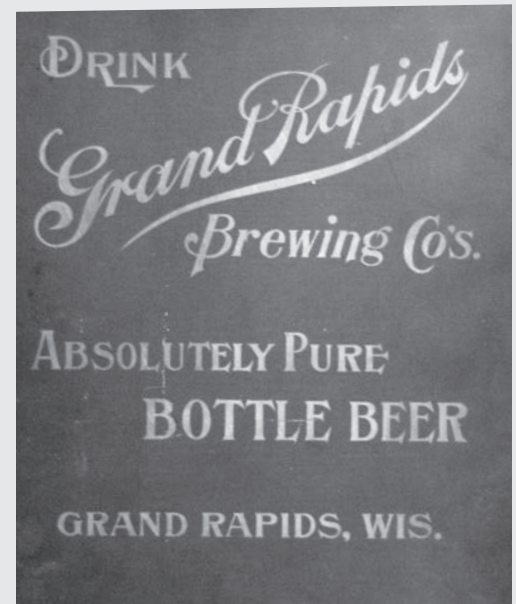
Phil Brown's Den of Antiquity

Shown are items from the old Grand Rapids Brewing Co. that burned March 5. In future issues, we will feature more from my "Den," the SWCHC Museum, and your collections. Let me know if you have something to share.

Phil



Typical Grand Rapids beer bottle



Serving trays, showing front and back





Grand Rapids Special: As the label upper left shows, the local product joined a long list of “Special” beers that included Stevens Point’s product. Above right, postcard photo of brewery shortly after construction in 1904. Below, Phil displays two Grand Rapids serving trays at the Den of Antiquity.



The Wedding

It was a bit of a coincidence. When I showed the November 2004 *Artifacts* cover to Glen Zieher, during an already-planned interview, he was able to identify most of the Wood county dignitaries standing at a courthouse counter because his father, Otto Zieher, was one of them. The rest were associates of the elder Zieher, a long-time county official.

Looking through his collection, Zieher offered an old postcard photo of a wedding that could not be identified. It was possible to make out the word "Sunrise" on the building and the year "1914" on license plates. The unusually picturesque illustration made it into the Zieher story anyway.

As a courtesy, the first copy of the February issue was delivered to contributor Don Litzer at McMillan Memorial library's local history

corner.

"I know that photo well," he said immediately, of the Zieher wedding postcard. Litzer continued with a description of an event about which he provided more information later.

"The photo on the lower part of page 14 of the February 2005 issue of *Artifacts* is, I am certain, a photo taken on the wedding day of Edward Beck and Mabel Seymour at Sunrise Tavern in the Town of Hewitt, Marathon County, Wis., on September 30, 1914.

"My mother, Nancy (Seymour) Litzer, was the daughter of William E. Seymour (1904-1988), who was in turn the son of Charles (1868-1948) and Wilhelmine (Minnie) (Ramthun) Seymour (1871-1933). Charles Seymour owned Sunrise Tavern, at the intersection of Sunrise Road and Wisconsin Highway 52, from 1903 to 1940, and

was the proprietor from 1903 to 1921.

"The *Artifacts* photo clearly shows 'Sunrise' on the side of the building. Another photo I have more clearly shows that the panel above that one reads: 'Chas Seymour.' The white sign at the outside corner of the building is a sign for Ruder beer, which was brewed in Wausau.

"Mabel Seymour (1896-1972), an older sister of my grandfather William, married Edward Beck (1888-1978) on September 30, 1914. Their marriage is recorded in Volume 93, #336 at the Marathon County Register of Deeds Office.

"There were two poses taken from this vantage point. I have in my possession a copy of the pose reproduced in *Artifacts*, on a picture post card. A second pose, including my then-10 year old grandfather, Bill Seymour, is shown on page 43 of the Town of Hewitt Bicentennial book, published in 1976."



Portion of February 2005 *Artifacts* photo



History at McMillan

by Don Litzer

Head of Adult Services

McMillan Memorial Library

The latest installment of “History at McMillan” established that history needed rewriting, or at least tinkering, as respects the history of south Wood County newspapers.

The earliest thread is that of the *Wood County Reporter*, which in weekly or semiweekly editions ran from November 1857 to November 1923.

The first stop in the *Wood County Reporter* story: the Library’s basement! A stack of oversize volumes, approximately one for each year of the *Reporter’s* existence, rested in the Library’s lower level storage area, presently being transformed into public space. The *Reporter’s* morgue apparently was bequeathed to what was at the time T.B. Scott Library, either while the library was at City Hall or in the present SWCHC Museum building.

It’s likely that these *Reporter* originals were used in the 1980s by the Heart O’Wisconsin Genealogical Society to index pre-1907 area newspapers for birth, marriage, and death notices. However, after that project’s completion, the volumes returned to obscurity.

A close review identified the following heretofore un-microfilmed:

Eighteen issues from 10 February 1858 (previously, the earliest known extant issue of the *Reporter* was 17 February 1858) to 6 July 1865, and the first color comics published in a Rapids-area newspaper, in *Wood County Reporter* issues from 6 July 1922 to 11 January 1923.

From 1 October 1906 to 31 May 1917, the *Daily Reporter*, a daily edition of the *Wood County Reporter*, was published. The Library’s run of

original *Daily Reporters*, except for the year 1910, was complete. Meanwhile, while the Wisconsin Historical Society had some of the *Daily Reporter* microfilmed, it didn’t include 1,990 issues from the *Daily Reporter’s* beginning through 6 July 1914 that the Library owned! A small number of issues in the Library collection remain to be microfilmed.

The second local newspaper history thread is the *Centralia Enterprise*, a weekly published from 1879 until merging with the *Grand Rapids Tribune* in 1887.

In the 1980s, owing in large part to Dave Engel, issues of the *Centralia Enterprise* had been microfilmed by the then-named State Historical Society of Wisconsin. However, at the SWCHC Museum, 125 *Centralia Enterprise* issues from 21 May 1879 to 26 February 1885 were identified that had never been microfilmed. SWCHC Director Pam Walker permitted these newspapers to be delivered to Madison for filming.

The third thread is the *Grand Rapids Tribune*, a weekly begun on 30 August 1873, which merged with the *Centralia Enterprise* in 1887 to form the *Centralia Enterprise and Tribune*, then, on 21 April 1900, when *Centralia* and *Grand Rapids* merged, resumed its original name, under which it was published until 26 February 1920.

Following this thread proved challenging, because doing so involved resisting the presumption that the *Grand Rapids Tribune* was the predecessor of today’s *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune*, and also because a reference in Oehlerts’ 1957 bibliography to a “Wood County Tribune” needed to be integrated into the historical narrative.

The untangling of the *Tribune* thread, as well as those of early Vesper newspapers, the *Wisconsin Valley Leader*, the *Yellow River Pilot* and other Nekoosa, Port Edwards, and Pittsville papers will be discussed in the next “History at McMillan,” as the story of early south Wood County newspapers continues.

From the Museum

The Museum will open for our 2005 season from noon to 4 p.m. on Sunday, May 29.

In honor of Memorial Day, we have a special bus exhibit for that day only.

“Behind Barb Wire: Midwest POWs in Nazi Germany” is the work of Michael Luick-Thrams and Dean Genth of TRACES, located in Clear Water, Iowa. Michael and Dean will accompany the exhibit. For more information, see their website: www.TRACES.org.

The Museum will be open Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1 p.m. - 4 p.m., through September 4.

For archival research, please call the office for an appointment about one week in advance. The archives are closed to the public and any information that you will need has to be gathered and brought down to the sun room by the staff. There is a form you will have to read, fill out and sign. Copies are 10 cents per page.



Our staff this year will be Amy Konietzki, Megan Lobner and two new members, Christina Wilson and Rebecca Pecher. Mr. John Billings plans on being our greeter again, though not as often this year. Molly Adams has moved on and I want to thank her for all the work she did in the years she was with us. Good luck in future endeavors, Molly.

If you are a member and would like to be more involved with the museum, think about being a volunteer. I am looking for a couple of people to help with various jobs during the year.

If you would like more information, please contact me. The office number is 423-1580 (you may have to leave a message) or email me at museum@wctc.net.

The Master Gardeners will again be taking care of the flower beds on the grounds. They volunteer a lot of hours and hard work to keep us looking good. Gardeners, we appreciate what you do. Thank you.

Karen Pecher
Administrator

JOIN UP!

To receive *Artifacts* quarterly - four times a year! - join the South Wood County Historical Corp. by sending \$15 to the Third Street Address below.

**South Wood County Historical Corp.
540 Third Street South
Wisconsin Rapids WI 54494**

**Beyond Barb Wire:
Midwest POWs in Nazi Germany**
Sunday, May 29, Noon-4 p.m.
At the museum

To: