



November 2005 Volume II #7

South Wood County Historical Corp.

Artifacts



Homecoming!

Probably the Homecoming bonfire at Wisconsin Rapids Lincoln circa 1950. The girls in this Don Krohn photo are likely Red Raider cheerleaders about to lead the snake dance downtown.

In this issue: Joan Haasl, 2-3; Phil's *Den of Antiquity* (Baseball), 4-5; Curly Kobza, "The Glory Days," 6-7; Witter Field, 8-13; Isaac and Charlotte Witter, 12; Cranboree, 14-19; Howe School, 20-23; Citizens Bank, 24-25; John Vickers, 26-27; *Consolidated News* (Grim Natwick), 28-29; Radomski tavern, 30; Don Litzer, "History at McMillan," 31.

Joan Haasl

Kindergarten Was a Waste of Time

There is a book titled, *All I Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. I can't remember learning anything in kindergarten except that I was scared of the huge high school students.

I spent seven years in the old Lincoln High School building. Kindergarten was in the room that was later used to teach typing. Then seventh and eighth grade were in the same building and were called Junior High. That led to four years in the regular high school.

Our Kindergarten teacher was secretly married. In those days, female teachers couldn't teach after they married. Also in those days, not a lot was taught in Kindergarten. In our case, nothing was taught because our teacher slept most of the time. I think it was her last year teaching because someone told the school board she was married.

What I do remember, is class being dismissed at the same time high school students were changing class. I felt so small and felt they were so big. It was like being in a forest of huge trees and looking up. I was really glad to go to first grade at the old Howe. The highest grade there was sixth, so the kids weren't so big and I wasn't scared at Howe.

Naughty Boys

"Weren't they naughty boys, your dad and my Martin, to go and die on us like that?" This was neighbor Lettie Jacobson speaking. Over the years, I've thought of what she said so often and it always brings a smile to my face.

I remember when her Martin and her son George were naughty boys. George took his father to a bar and they came home a little wobbly. Lettie was mad. "Aw Ma," George said, "We were only at the Blue Goose." Lettie said, "I don't care if it's the Purple Hen, don't you ever do that again."

Lettie had a witch's costume she wore for Halloween parties. She had a scary cackle to go with her outfit. In our old house, before it was cut in half, there was a finished stairway to a huge attic. For a party, Lettie went up in this attic and kids could go up there and converse with the witch.

I was never afraid; I knew who the witch was. But a neighbor boy, Jack Goggins, was so scared he ran all the way home and would never come to another party at our house.

JH

Joan Haasl

Run For Your Lives

We were on our way to the Episcopal Church on a Sunday in 1935. Mother, father, brother Bill and me. The folks were talking about high water on the Wisconsin river and how they had never seen it this high. I thought high water was fun to watch.

After church we went to Wilpolt's Restaurant on the West Side. Dad and Mom talked to various people there and everyone seemed concerned about the river. I was more interested in the food.

We were on our way home to 441 3rd Street South and had just turned the corner by the post office when we saw Mike Geoghan, running and shouting. Dad rolled the window down and we could hear Mike screaming, "Run for your lives, the dam's going out!"

Mike was tall, skinny, nervous and at this point, hysterical. Mike's store, Geoghan's News and Toy Shop, was at 121 1st Street North where water often got in the basement. But Mike was running along 3rd Street on high ground. I don't think to this day I have ever seen a man so excited. My dad called him a nitwit.

I was reminded of this long-ago event by an article in the *Daily Tribune*. It said the Wisconsin river's record flow was in 1935 when an ice jam affected a dam at Biron. Estimated flow was 75,000 cubic feet per second. So there might have been some cause for concern but the dam still hasn't gone out, seventy years later.

JH

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

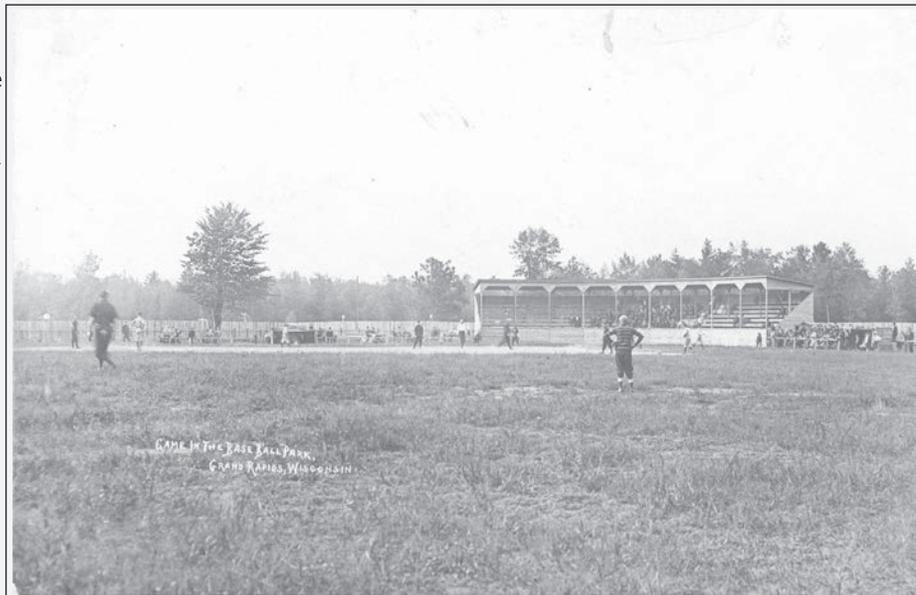


Phil Brown's Den of Antiquity

Baseball has been an important local sport since the 1800s. Most of the big games were played at what is now Witter Field, previously a race track and fairgrounds.

Further identifications of the photos here are welcome. All but the enlargement at right are from postcards.

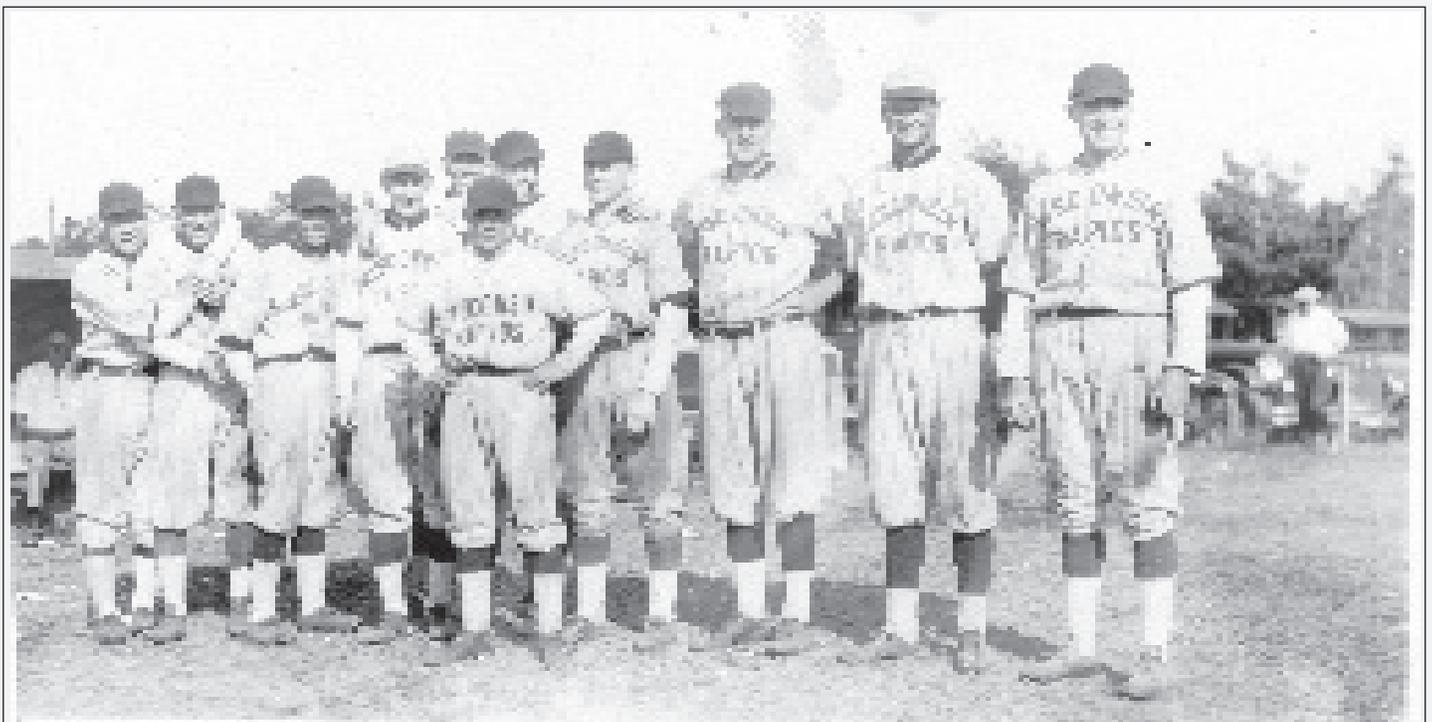
Game In The Base Ball Park, Grand Rapids, Wisconsin



From the back of this postcard: "Lawyers & Doctors ball team"



As written on the back of photo: Mac McLain, Huba Brandt, Hribirnek, Plahmer, Paul Schanlon, Sakolosky, Huber / Stub, Frahner, Harlem Brownley, John Lubben, Elmer Henke (middle)



Witter Field?

The Glory Days

by Curly Kobza

Witter Field was lit up and fans filled the stadium as we warmed up on the playing field before the game of fast-pitch softball. We looked like pros suited up in Shell Oil colors. Our sponsor, Butch Behrend, owned the Shell Station at 8th Avenue and West Grand across the road from an A&W root beer stand.

Mike Akey was in the catcher's box, Connie Bialozor or I on the pitcher's mound. Whitey Carney or Norb Bushman covered 1st Base, Bill Laeder or Ray Kobza 2nd, Herbie Wittenberg 3rd base. Bob Schill was shortstop, Rich Haza or Buzz Bouton short field (there were ten men on a team).

Right, center and left fielders were Harold Schroeder, Harry Mize and Steve Kobza or Connie Bialozor. Some positions had alternate players depending on the shift they were working at the paper mill. Joe Zastava, an impartial guy, umpired the home games.

This was back in 1939, '40, '41. The population of Wisconsin Rapids was about 8,500. The *Daily Tribune* sports section covered the games and interest mounted when the wins continued for home games as well as on the road. We played in Wausau, Stevens Point, Marshfield, Arkdale and every cow pasture. We went to King to play at the veterans' home.

When asked, "What's out there back of center field?" a veteran replied, "Oh, that's a cabbage patch but don't worry. No one's ever hit a ball that far."

Mike Akey stepped up to the plate and belted one over center field. The ball landed in the cabbages as Akey rounded the bases while the veterans cheered.

Joe Parzy was a tough opponent on the mound. With Joe being a southpaw, Van Kubisiak, our manager, would signal for a

bunt to third. By the time Joe retrieved the ball and turned around to face 1st base, we had a chance to beat the toss to first. Joe was quick and eager to hurl the pitch over home plate. Van would tell our batters to step out of the box, a strategy common in baseball to nettle the pitcher.

I worked in the lab at Consolidated at that time and Bill Prebbenow arranged to have me get off early when we had games scheduled in distant towns. Since some of the guys didn't own a car, I drove a carful in my brand-spanking-new '39 Ford. Most of us lived within walking distance to work and those that worked in Biron rode the company bus.

Billboards were a common sight on the two-lane highways. Sometimes, Schroeder rode with us. He'd read every sign in his deep bass voice. It drove us nuts but he never let up. The Burma-Shave signs were, at least, heartening, so we did enjoy hearing them read.

Invariably, after a game, we'd stop at a local bar in the town. On seeing a whole team coming in the door, straddling the stools, and ordering a brew or a soft drink, the bartender would get excited by the sudden rush of business. One of our guys would go behind the bar and help out at the tap. (No license-no sweat.) After a couple of quaffs, and on learning the bar-keep's name, someone would pipe up and the rest followed suit, singing:

How do you do, Mr. Smith (or whatever)

How do you do?

How do you do, Mr. Smith (or whatever)

How are you?

Oh, we're awfully glad to think that you're going to buy a drink.

How do you do!

How do you do!

How do you do!

No admission was charged for the games. The hat was passed and our manager handled the money and all the expenses (including \$15 for lights).

Only once did we have to guarantee a gate. It was when the Milwaukee Ghosts came to play and performed, midway, in the game. They had an entertaining act that brought a lot of laughs. No ball was pitched, caught or thrown but they simulated the sounds and went through the motions, ending with an ovation from the packed stadium and bleacher seats. Behrend Oil won, easily, that night.

We were up to and over thirty-some wins in succession. The crown gained momentum each time we won yet another game. At the tournament in Green Bay, it was my turn on the mound.

Akey asked our manager, "You aren't gonna let Old Wildass pitch, are you?"

Van, always calm, replied, "It's his turn."

I really put the speed on the ball and it careened off Akey's mitt on the third pitch just as the umpire called, for the third time, "Strike!"

Akey ran after the ball and pegged it to 1st, too late.

I whistled three more, each past the next three batters for four strikeouts in the first inning.

The score was 0-0. One of our men was on base. Connie came up to bat, hit a home run and won the game. And, we came home with a trophy!

Connie Bialozzer was a class act pitcher and batter, all wrist action. Harry Mize could hit the ball hard, too. When he joined the Navy, he received a rousing ovation at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center as his bat connected and the ball sailed out of the field. Woody Swancutt dated and later married Rich Haza's niece, Kathleen, and played with the team when he was in town. (He would gain fame as a pilot flying Day's Dream, forerunner of the Enola Gay that brought an end to World War II.)

Home games were replayed at Red's Dixie Bar or Rollie's. Those of us who didn't drink sat in the Blue Room at Red's, played "Sierra Sue" and "Blueberry Hill" on the juke box, had a Coke

and just hung around such as myself, mainly because I had to give some of the other guys a ride home.

We'd won 35, 36, 37 games. The fans kept coming. I was up to a whole pack of gum on the mound. Fans called out, "Keep chewing that gum, Curly!"

We'd beaten them all, even the Astro Bombers. Game 39, we faced the "Kenoshays," national champions, at Witter Field. The final score: 4-3, Kenosha.

We could always rely on our most vocal fan, Grace Krueger, but some expressed relief that they wouldn't feel compelled to come out to the ball park to root for us night after night after night.

Eventually, all the games were called...on account of war.

Clarence "Curly" Kobza died while this story was being processed.

From his Daily Tribune obituary: Clarence "Curly" Kobza, 86, of 1020 Wisconsin River Drive, Port Edwards, died Sunday, Sept. 25, 2005, at his home.

Curly was born June 17, 1919, in Wisconsin Rapids, to Anton and Josephine (Wucinski) Kobza. He married Virginia Nowak on May 16, 1942, in Milwaukee.

Curly was employed at Consolidated Papers Inc. for over 40 years, retiring in 1981 as a supervisor. He served in the U.S. Army Air Corps as a medic during World War II from 1942 to 1945, serving in the Pacific Theater.

Curly was a member of the Disabled American Veterans, the Knights of Columbus, Council 1558 of Wisconsin Rapids and the St. Lawrence Club.

Survivors include his wife, Virginia; one son, James (Lorilyn Mortensen) Kobza of Biron; his grandchildren, Jennifer (James) Olivarez and Timothy Kobza; his step-granddaughters, Melissa (Kip) Shuda and Megan Parsons; and two sisters, Theresa Morgan and Emily Molepske, both of Wisconsin Rapids.

Curly was preceded in death by his sister, Irene Young.

Your Story

Artifacts welcomes materials related to central Wisconsin history such as:

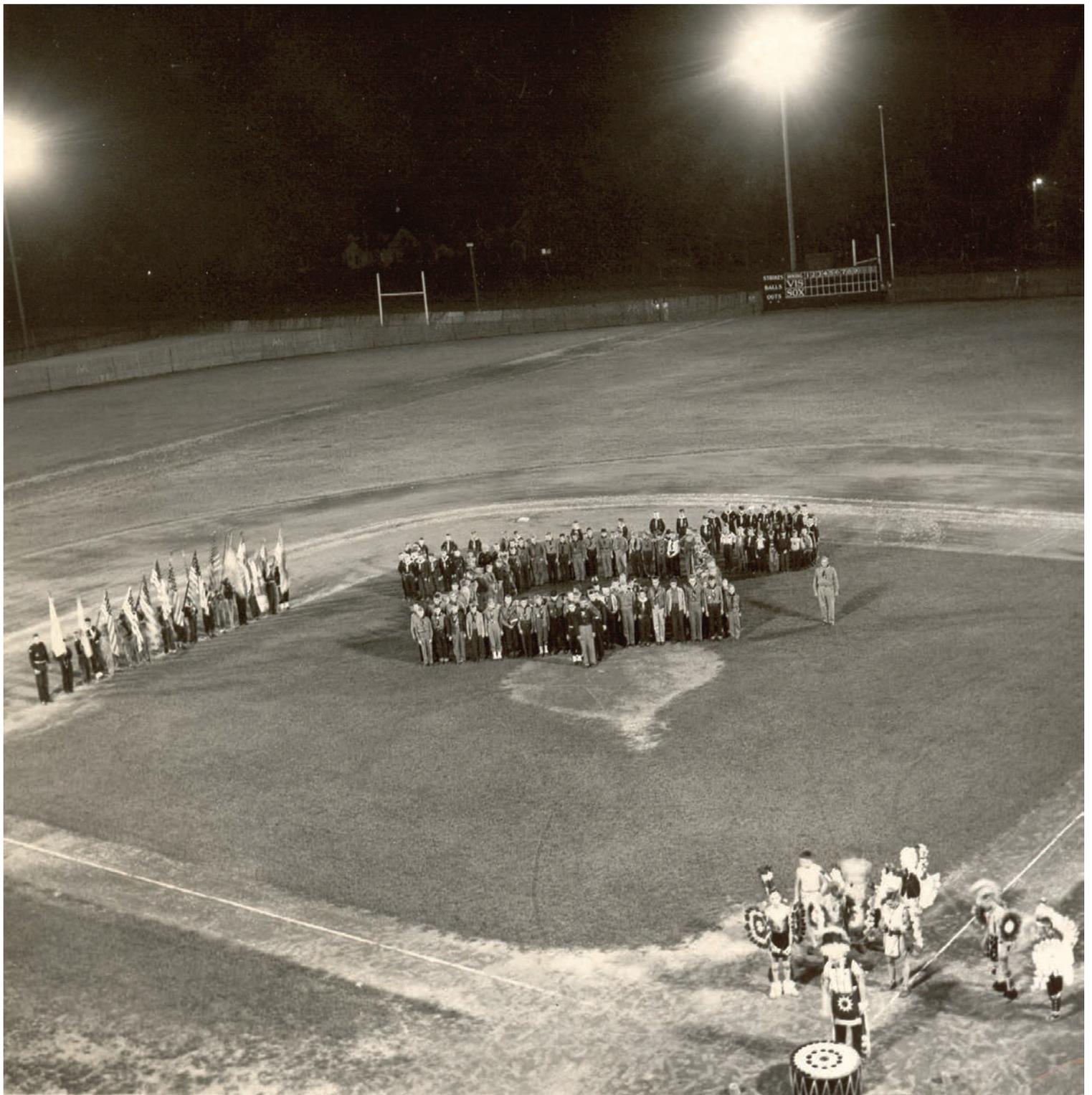
- Memoirs or autobiography
- Research
- Family history
- Interviews
- Creative writing
- Photographs
- Objects, publications and papers (artifacts)
- Identification of photos published here

Submissions to editor Dave Engel, 5597 Third Avenue, Rudolph WI 54475 or Phil Brown's *Den of Antiquity*, 2466 County Road D, Wisconsin Rapids WI 54495.

Email kdengel@wctc.net.



Can you identify? Circa 1950.



Believed to be snapped circa 1950 by *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* photographer Don Krohn from the press box at then-new Witter Field baseball grandstand. Appears to show a Native American and Boy Scout ceremony. The football field used by Lincoln and Assumption high schools can be seen at left rear.

Sporting Grounds

What is now Witter Field was originally “the old cow pasture.” In the mid-1800s, it was converted into Worden’s Trotting Park, a horse-racing track. The 40 acres was sold to the Wood County Agricultural and Mechanical Assoc., in 1876, for use as a fairground, though it remained primarily a horse track.

In 1897, the grounds were taken over by Grand Rapids, now the east side of Wisconsin Rapids, which continued the fairs until the original Lincoln High School was built on the north end of the site, in 1902. This was followed by Wood County Normal teachers college, built in 1906 on the race track, and the Witter manual training school, in 1908.

“Lincoln Field,” was used primarily by the adjacent public high school and later shared by Assumption high school for its sports events. It was also popular with the public for professional baseball games, concerts, fireworks and ice skating.

The name was changed, in 1940, to Witter Field, in honor of Isaac P. Witter, a banker and philanthropist.

The wooden grandstand below was replaced in 1950 by the baseball stadium now in use. The Wood County Normal building was removed in 1978, the Witter building in 1979. When nearby East Jr. High was built in 1931 as the second Lincoln High School, the adjacent field house was one of the finest in the state.



Right: Don Unferth with bat? Can you identify him and others on this photo from about 1950?

Below, construction of 1950 Witter Field grandstand still in use. It has been used for high school, amateur and professional baseball games as well as community events.



*Isaac and Charlotte***Benefactors**

Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune. Morning of June 3, 1955. Charlotte L. Witter, 79, member of one of our city's most prominent families, died in Beverly Hills, Cal., where she had resided since leaving Wisconsin Rapids in 1947.

Mrs. Witter had been in ill health since suffering an attack of influenza.

Her late husband, Isaac P. Witter, said the *Tribune*, had been president of the First National Bank and an influence in business, industrial and civic affairs here for many years. He was a former state senator.

Witter Athletic Field, of which he was a major benefactor, was named in his honor. Isaac had died in Wisconsin Rapids, Sept. 26, 1942.

Charlotte was born in Green Bay, Wis., daughter of Mrs. and Rev. George Gibson, an Episcopal clergyman. Her marriage to Isaac took place in Wisconsin Rapids, June 27, 1900.

Mrs. Witter was one of the founders of the Federation of Women's Clubs, and was affiliated with the Ahdawagam Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution and the Travel Class. She had been prominent in the Wisconsin League of Women Voters and the Wisconsin Conference of Social Work

An accomplished musician, she was organist of the Episcopal Church for many years and interested in the activities of the church. The Witter family helped build the present Church of St. John the Evangelist and the organ was Mrs. Witter's personal gift.

The "palatial" Witter home on Third Street was acquired by the city of Wisconsin Rapids in September 1947 to house the T.B. Scott Public Library. Mrs. Witter then established her permanent residence in Beverly Hills, where she had previously maintained a winter home.

She was survived by one son, Jere, Los Angeles, and three grandchildren.

Also in June 1955, trustees under the will of Isaac P. Witter announced bequests totaling \$90,000 that had become available following the death of Charlotte L. Witter.

The gifts included:

\$15,000 to T.B. Scott Public Library as a fund for the purchase of books to be known as the Isaac P. Witter Book Fund.

\$24,000 to the city of Wisconsin Rapids for the maintenance, upkeep and development of Witter Athletic Field.

\$25,000 to the Church of St. John the Evangelist (Episcopal) of Wisconsin Rapids

\$25,000 to the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac.

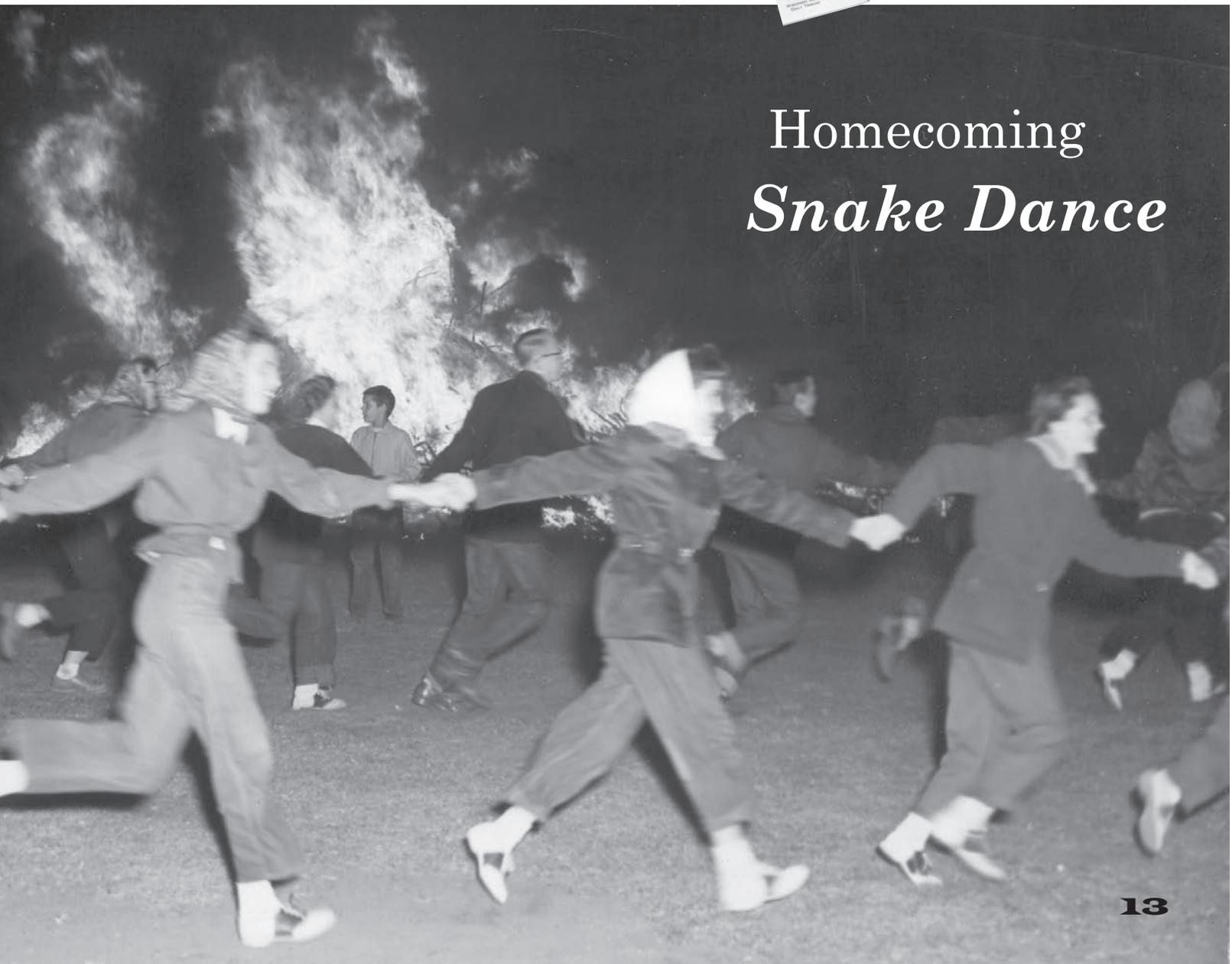




Lincoln High School tennis (team?) at Witter Field

Gwen Cobleigh

Copyright © 2005
Witter Field
Lincoln High School



Homecoming *Snake Dance*



National Cranboree

Above: Motorists entering Wisconsin Rapids were given an official introduction to the cran-jamboree.

Right: Appears to be the early stages of cranberry pie production in a butcher shop. Is that a meat grinder?





If that's a bowl of cranberries to the rear, this shows the latter stages of pie production for the National Cranboree. The product would be distributed downtown as shown on page 16. Pie making/baking contests added spice to the event.

National Cranboree

This Don Krohn photo seems to show cranberry pies being distributed in downtown Wisconsin Rapids, around 1950. A possible location is the west end of the Grand Avenue Bridge with the River Block in the background.

After six years, the Cranboree was canceled for 1955, fifty years ago. Numerous explanations for the demise have been provided but lack of support from the cranberry sector is most often cited.

For the latest *River City Memoirs* to examine the Cranboree, see the Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune* of October 11, 2004, and September 12, 2005. A more complete history can be found in the book, *River City Memoirs V*.

If you recognize anyone on this photo or any others in this publication, send the information to Dave Engel, 5597 Third Avenue, Rudolph, WI 54475.



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PIE CRUST
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15,000 pieces Cranberry Pie
RECIPES



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River City Memoirs

Did music spat sour Cranboree

Many lament loss
of legendary event

by Dave Engel

Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune

12 September 2005

Jane Berg (Kruger)?



Fifty years ago, a rotten thing happened. It put an end to an event that glows like a bottle of fine cranberry wine in the reminiscences of most residents over 55.

An end to the mythic Cranboree, canceled when the local Chamber of Commerce board of directors decided not to sponsor the event again.

“Due to the general lack of interest in some quarters, the financial burden which rests heavy upon certain people and upon firms who annually have had to cover expenses incurred in the celebration, and due to several events large in scope and important to our community in the immediate future, and other extenuating circumstances, it was resolved to suspend the National Cranboree for 1955,” revealed B.T. Ziegler, manager of the Chamber.

As a replacement, the Chamber board voted to extend to the city of Wisconsin Rapids the hope that the opening of the new Jackson Street Bridge be given proper recognition by a one-day celebration with the possibility of a short historical pageant. The possible centennial celebration in Wood County for 1956 was also referred to.

Only one person had volunteered to be general chairman of the Cranboree and that person was the only one offering any outside help.

But also of concern were recent difficulties between the Chamber and Local 610 of the American Federation of Musicians, apparently one of the extenuating circumstances.

“I couldn’t say that it was the factor for suspending the Cranboree, for it was a combination of all the other things too, which were considered in making the decision,” said Ziegler. “But as things stand now, the Cranboree is still on the ‘unfair list’ of the AFM.”



Martin Lipke, secretary and business agent of Musicians Local 610, said, “We wrote letters to the Chamber of Commerce on April 15 and again on May 1 asking for a meeting to negotiate, but so far have not had any word from them. Maybe it’s because the Chamber has not found a convenient time to meet with us.”

Ziegler said the Chamber had not been told why the Cranboree was put on the musicians’ list and had not been told what had to be negotiated.

“The gate to the door for settling this affair has always been open,” Lipke said.

He repeated that his union had not “blacklisted” the Cranboree, and that “blacklisted” was a term invented by the Tribune.

The Cranboree had been held for six years, gaining national renown and publicity, according to the same Tribune. It had attracted an estimated 60-80 thousand spectators on the day of the big parade.

“There is a sense of genuine regret in Wisconsin Rapids, as well as among the community’s neighbors and friends far and near.”

“It has, without a doubt, done more than any other single civic enterprise in modern times to put Wisconsin Rapids ‘on the map.’”

Perhaps it was the only logical decision under the circumstances, agreed the Tribune.

“Uncertainty” had been permitted “to surround the fate of the 1955 event so long that an air of pessimism had taken hold of many who in past years were numbered among the event’s most ardent boosters.” Certainly, the delay in organizing would have made it a “lesser Cranboree.”

The Tribune did not accept the common assessment that the Cranboree was too ambitious for a community of our size; but “too many were too willing to let too few do all the work and bear all the expense.”

Even worse were those who, “without contributing in any way, shape or manner to the success of the Cranboree” sought ways to personally profit from the event, which “by its very nature was a non-profit venture.”

In the what’s-in-it-for-us category, said the Tribune, a prime example was the local Musicians Union, “which helped to speed the demise of the event.

“We doubt that even the Musicians Union will feel any sense of satisfaction in seeing the Cranboree pass from the local scene. For it did provide employment for union orchestras, each and every year it was held.”

Faraway, in a more cran-happy vein, Vice President Nixon was presented a cranberry pie in Washington D.C. by Mrs. Lester Balthis, Oakdale, Wis., winner of the cranberry pie baking contest held during the 1954 National Cranboree.

Nixon promised to share it with his 7-year-old daughter, Tricia, because she liked cherry pie and he thought she’d be similarly delighted with a cranberry pie.



George Frechette, Red Blanchard
(Artifacts seeks Blanchard memorabilia.)

Who, what, when and why at Howe

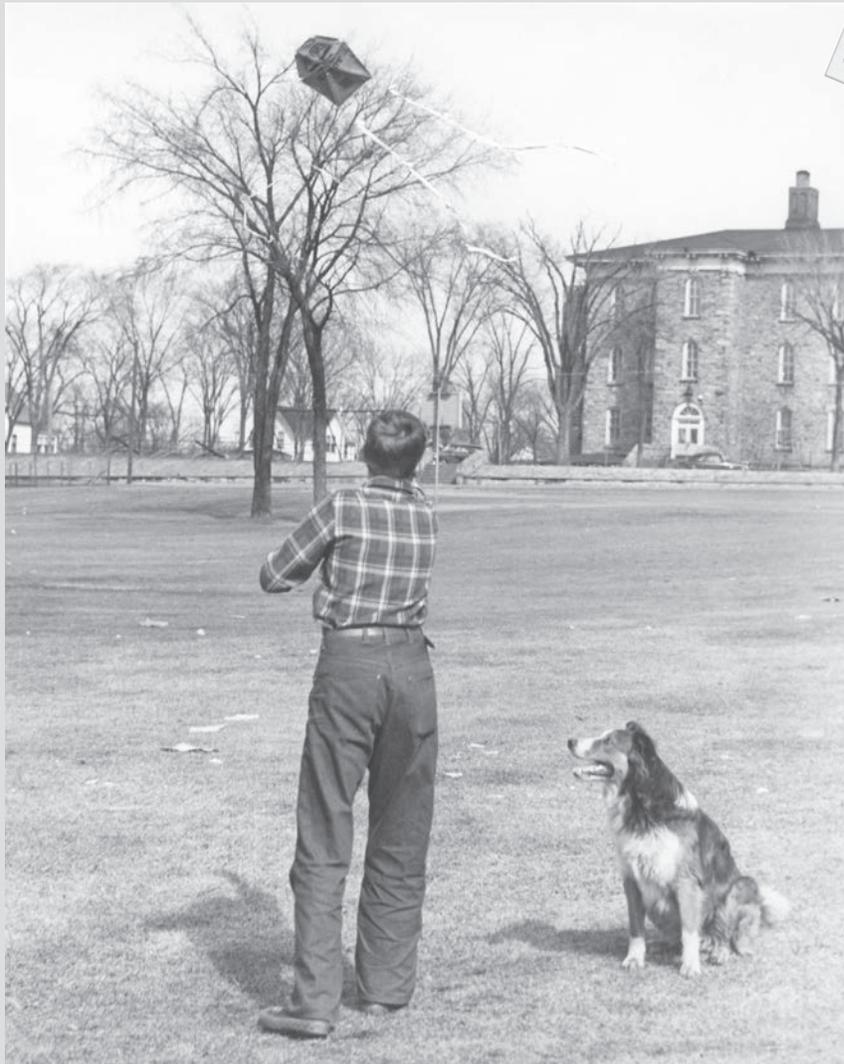
Since the 1870s, generations of pupils have attended the old Howe high school and grade school shown here and the newer Howe Elementary that replaced it.

The photos at right from Lois Roach Flick show the 5th-grade class at Howe in 1945-46. She was about ten years old then and can identify only a few of those pictured, such as Judy Urban (married name), Mary Pegelow, Leanne (Sis) Parmeter, Lois Roach, John Chadwick and Marvin Bocaner.

Someone probably remembers all the names...



Shooting
the
breeze
at
old
Howe
in
its
final
days.



Study Hall



It was the high school of Grand/Wisconsin Rapids before the first Lincoln was built to accommodate the merger of Centralia and Grand Rapids. Then it became an elementary school for the East Side. The Howe school pictured here on 8th Street North was replaced in 1951 by the core of the building that exists in 2005. Fortunately, *Tribune* photographer Don Krohn was at the scene as some historic figures arrived.

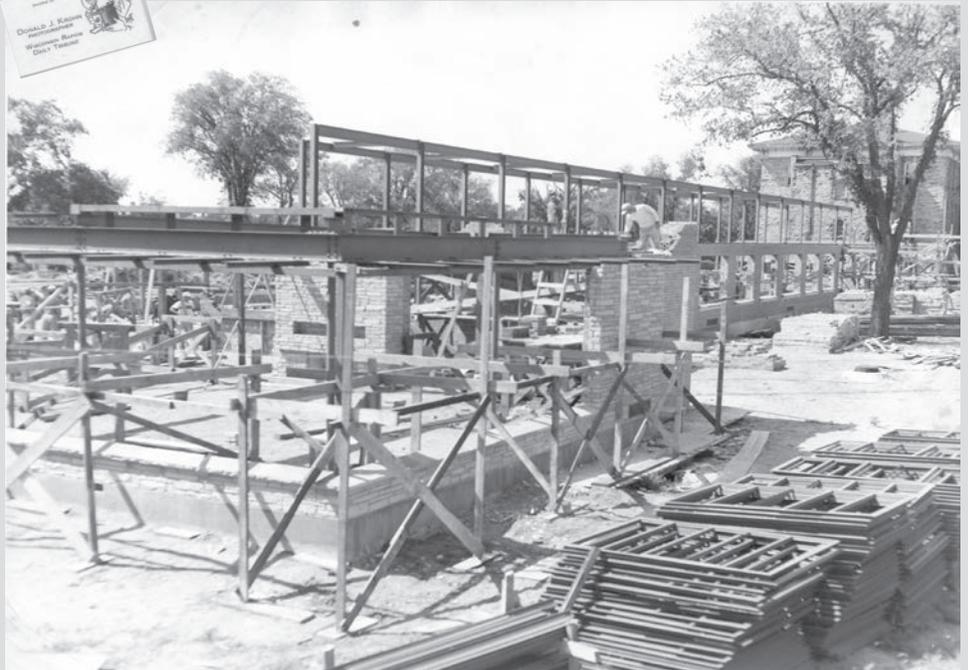
Howe to Lincoln

From Joan Oligney:
Just finished reading your column in today's paper with a mention of Miss Pitsch, a teacher at the old Howe.

In the fall of 1944, 6th grade was transferred from Howe school to Lincoln High. Miss Seim was the teacher and our classroom was on 3rd floor under the clock.

We also went to 7th and 8th grade there and my teachers were: Miss Eleanor Boardman, Miss Ann Mary Pitsch and Mr. Randy Facklam.

Not many students can claim that they attended Lincoln for 7 years. I remember sitting in the classroom and all the church bells and mill whistles sounding over the end of the war with Germany. It was exciting.



As the new building is constructed, the old is still in place to the north. Fireplaces would be features of the kindergarten room on the south end, later the library.



Pupils leave old Howe school, possibly on one of the last days of its use, 1950-51.



A prominent landmark on 8th Street North, Howe school, a sandstone structure typical of its times, served almost 80 years. The stone came from the “Bender quarry on Route 3” (west of Rapids) and “Collier’s quarry at the end of Chase street,” according to a newspaper account. Large wooden pegs secured most joints in the white pine framework. Third floor ceilings were 17 feet high, second floor 14 feet and first floor, 10 feet. Wings including fire escapes were added after the original construction. In 1934, a belfry was removed. Note that the heavy machinery came from Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co.

CITIZENS NATIONAL BANK OF GRAND RAPIDS/WIS RAPIDS

- 12/30/1912 Bank organized
- 02/15/1913 Charter granted as Citizens National Bank of Grand Rapids, Wisconsin
- 03/29/1913 Opened for business on West Grand Avenue
with capital of \$100,000 and surplus of \$10,000
Joseph A. Cohen, President
George W. Paulus, Vice President
Dean B. Philleo, Cashier
E. M. Witzig (Wittig?), Assistant Cashier
Directors: George P. Hambrecht, William H. Peters, Jacob Lutz, George W. Paulus and Joseph A. Cohen
- 09/16/1916 Total Deposits: \$188,950.61
- 11/27/1916 Total Deposits: \$193,776.01
- 00/00/1917 Total Deposits: \$236,121.00
- 7/28/1917 Moved into new three story, 47' x 66' building located two doors west of its original location, the Quick Lunch Restaurant (Gee Building) (New building is the future Wisconsin Theater)
A. F. Billmeyer Architect and Builder
F. S. Gill Painting & Decorating
J. F. Farley Heating & Plumbing
J. A. Staub Electrical
- 11/11/1920 Name changed to Citizens National Bank of Wisconsin Rapids
- 04/01/1924 J. A. Cohen died
- 08/01/1924 Charles E. Briere elected President (Lawyer and mayor of Grand Rapids)
A.P. Hirzy, Vice President
D. B. Philleo, Cashier
Walter F. Herschleb, Assistant Cashier
- 06/30/1925 Deposits: \$676,105.85
165 stockholders
Directors: C.E. Briere, A.P. Hirzy, D.B. Philleo, Nate Anderson, Wm. H. Peters, J.A. Staub, Dr. D.N. Mortensen, D.W. McKercher and Dr. C.F. Bandelin
- 12/31/1930 Total Deposits: \$759,600.61
Total Assets: \$1,021,887.75
- 08/15/1931 Bank sold to First Natl. Bank & Wood County Natl. Bank of Wis. Rapids
All assets and liabilities assumed by the two banks. No losses incurred by depositors.
- 12/22/1931 Bank placed in receivership

Citizens Bank,
Continued
from previous
issue

Sources: *Wood County Reporter*, *Wis. Rapids Daily Tribune* and personal collection of Jim Janz

HANDSOME NEW BANK BUILDING

7/26/17

**Citizens National Bank Ready for Occupancy
Opening To Take Place Saturday July
28. Everybody Is Cordially Wel-
come To Visit the New Edifice**

Saturday, July 28th, will be an interesting day for the Officers, Directors and Stockholders of the Citizens National bank of Grand Rapids. This is the day that they open for the transaction of business in their new handsome bank building which has been made possible by the expenditure of considerable money. This bank, when you take everything into consideration that it was organized and started when the city of Grand Rapids, were already excellently served with banking facilities in three different institutions of long standing. They have done well, and this new edifice is a great credit to the management and all those who had confidence and placed their money investments in the institution. This new building was started about a year ago, and its doors are now thrown open to the public for their inspection, good will and future patronage.

The building is located on Grand Avenue west side, in this city. Its dimensions are 47x66 feet, three stories and basement. Its walls were erected of pressed brick and tile. The front is of Carthage Missouri Marble giving it a very handsome appearance.

First floor consists of Burglar Proof Vaults, President's private office, Cashier's room, Directors and Customers room, Consultation room for customers, ladies waiting room, Savings Departments, Etc. Over the vaults is a Mezzanine floor which is to be used for public gatherings, conferences, etc., and overlooks the public lobby. In the center of the public lobby is a customers marble circular desk with all the necessary supplies and convenience for the signing of checks, etc. The lobby is large and roomy and the entire ground floor has a beautiful outlook that gives the customer a very favorable impression.

The second floor consists of nine office rooms for rent, which are accessible by an outside entrance wholly free from the bank proper. This floor also has a back entrance leading to the second floor. The third floor is unfinished and the officers have not yet sub-let this floor which can be fitted out for offices, or for public lodge room purposes.

A. F. Billmeyer, the well known architect and builder, had the contract for the erection of the building, and sub-let the contracts for painting and decorating to F. S. Gill. The walls and ceilings of the ground floor are finished in a flat enamel and the color scheme carried out is ivory and gold. The second story walls and ceilings are finished with a light cream, and the woodwork finished in fumed oak, making a very rich looking combination.

The Mezzanine room walls and ceiling are finished in dark ivory and the wood work mahogany. The workmanship in this building is very complimentary to Mr. Gill and his excellent corps of workmen. No one could have done better.

The heating and plumbing was sub-let to J. F. Farley, whose workmanship has been first-class in every respect. The radiators are all painted and decorated to match the walls and Mr. Farley has received many compliments for the excellent manner that he and his workmen have shown in the installing of this plant.

The electric wiring and installing of the fixtures was very ably executed by Joe Staub the well known electrician. His workmanship speaks for itself.

A. Moorman & Co., of St. Paul, drew the plans and specifications for the entire building and was given the contract for supplying the furniture and

fixtures thruout the building. The furniture is in mahogany and the latest designs and patterns for first-class banking houses. They reflect credit upon him as a designer and serviceable for the officers of the bank. This building contains all the modern conveniences for the people who will occupy the same. Mr. Billmeyer and all the sub-contractors have spared nothing that they knew of that would aid in service to the patrons of this institution, and at the same time beautify and make it attractive to the eye.

This new building is certainly very creditable to the officers and stockholders of the Citizens National Bank and will prove to be one of the handsome monuments to the industry and thrift of a growing poular institution. Everybody that had a part in its erection will never have any occasion to regret the part they may have had in the erection of this handsome new bank building. We join with the citizens of Grand Rapids in extending congratulations to the officers and the stockholders for having produced this magnificent edifice as an addition to the commercial business interests of Grand Rapids. May they be attended with success and prosperity.

Contributed
by
Jim Janz

John Vicker

MY FIRST CAR

After I got married back in 1943, we moved about four miles north of the Rapids in the Sweeny Addition. We had no car yet and we had to buy one fast, or walk to work. Our bank funds were real low and the money that we had at home was under a hundred.

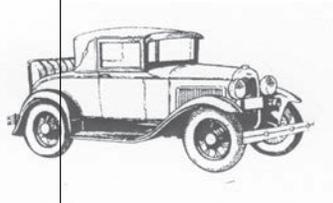
We saw an ad in the paper for a 1928 Model-A Ford out on 8th Street by the Two Mile school. The man's name was Kramer and he used the car to haul his paint sprayer and pails of whitewash to farm jobs. The Ford was a two-door coupe and the trunk lid or cover was removed and a long box was built in to haul all this junk. The whole car was a mess, all splattered up from top to bottom. Even the windows had paint on them. The man said, "It runs real good and it's only \$35."

I told him "Sold."

We snuck it home after dark, stopping at a store for a gallon of black paint and two big brushes. We were up at six the next morning and started slopping away before the neighbors woke up.

We drove the car for three years and it ran like a top. When it got cold out, you just walked around to the front and cranked it up. It had room for two people and our two kids who stood between us. It had a nice little gas heater that warmed us up in the wintertime.

The only bad thing about that stinker was that if it was raining and you had the wipers on and you stepped on the gas, the wipers would stop. If it was raining real hard, then you had to stop, as they were running on vacuum. At forty miles to the gallon that's better than you can get on most cars today.



JV

John Vicker

MY FIRST HOUSE

In 1943, I married a Reimer girl and she had two brothers: Joe, who worked at the Biron Mill, and Gordon, who worked at Preway. They bought some land on Highway 34 about four miles north of Wisconsin Rapids in a plot of land called *The Sweeney Addition*. The owner of this land was their uncle, Hank Sweeney. He lived a block east of the Lone Birch School on Oak Road, a couple of blocks north of Dave Engel, who lives on 3rd Avenue, north of the Biron Dam.

I talked to Hank Sweeney and, being a part of the family, he sold me an acre of land for \$25, next to the Mosquito Creek. This was before they built the new section of Highway 34. Howard Freeberg's store and Ed Freeberg's gravel pits were a block or two away.

Being a dirt poor truck driver, I did what all the rest of the family did. I laid down a 24 x 24 form of 12-inch timbers and built my tarpaper shack on half of it. It had a 6 x 12 kitchen and an 18 x 12 living room and bedroom combined. My wife and I lived there for five years before we added on the other half of the house. Wow! With three kids now we were really living.

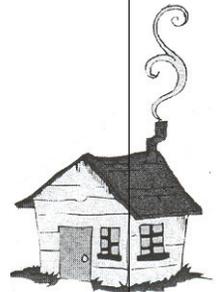
Four years later we had Hank Sweeney dig our basement next to the house. That's when I found out about the Rudolph landscape. There

were solid layers of blue and green rock and granite. We dug and blasted for days. Then the swamp water came in because it was spring. I think that nature wanted to help me. We laid the basement walls two blocks higher to keep the water out, and we had to put our knee boots on every time we went down to the basement.

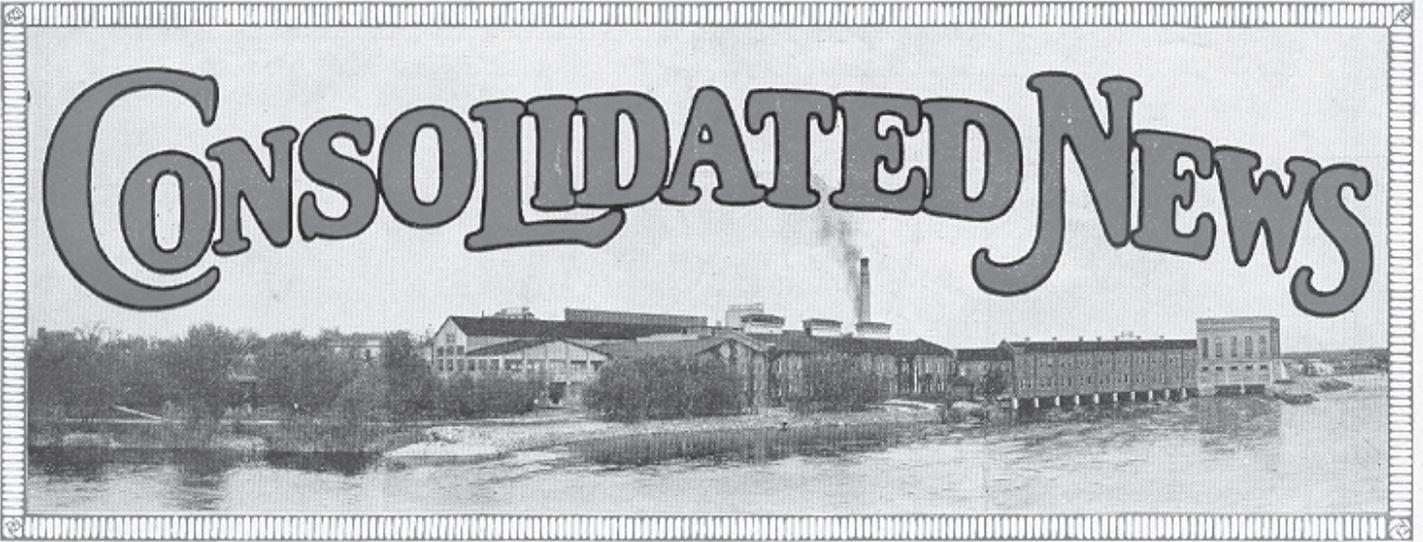
Ralph Peterson, who worked with me, brought his truck, cable and rollers over and we pulled my little shack over onto the basement. The house was about six inches off on the back side, but they told me that nobody looks back there anyway, and my new roll brick siding would cover that up.

Well, two more kids and we were out of room, and I heard that Ken Freeberg had bought a large house from the Rapids by Marling Lumber Co. He cut it in half and hauled it out about a block from me. He set the two houses on basements (a little higher than mine), built garages and painted them all up. One of the houses looked real good, and the wife and kids liked the two bedrooms upstairs.

So I gave Ken Freeberg my little shack as a down payment and I had to pay him \$80.00 a month for life, or until the house was paid for. My family liked this house much better. It sat on the basement a little straighter and we didn't have to put our boots on to go down into the basement.



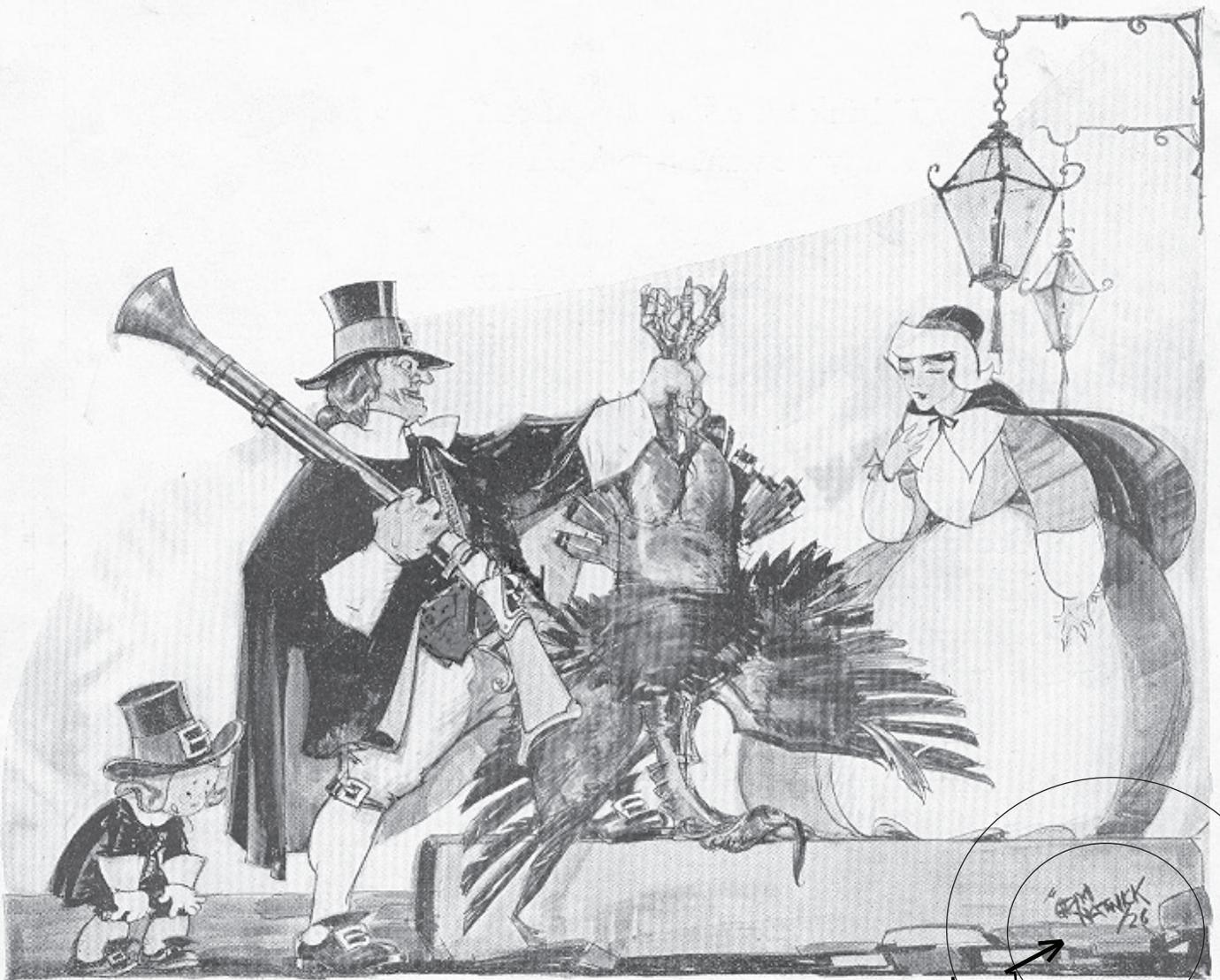
CONSOLIDATED NEWS



Vol. I. No. 10.

November, 1926

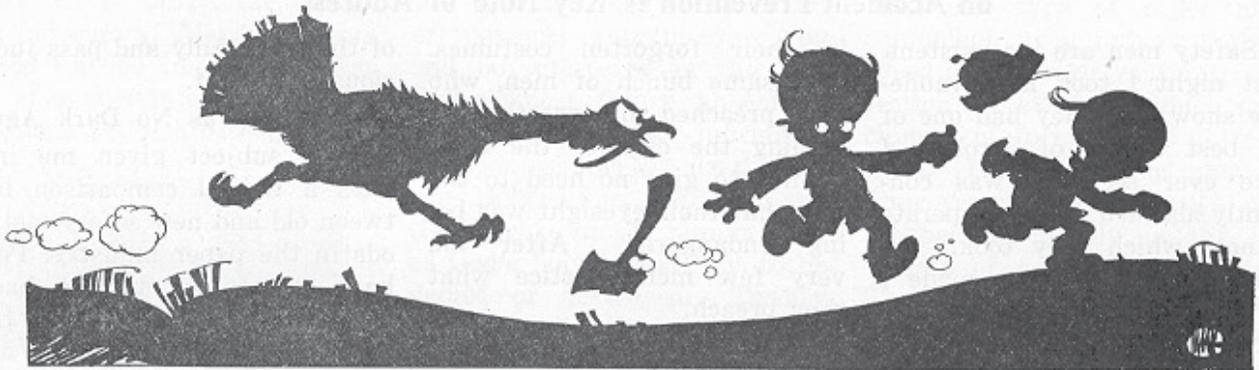
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Price to Others 5c per copy, 50c per year



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What I Am Thankful For

This is the month of November. Thanksgiving month. Members of the Consolidated organization and of the Wisconsin Rapids community are thankful for many things as shown by the following statements:

G. W. Mead: "That mankind moves forward and upward year by year; that this urge is always toward an ideal of better living for all of us; that the year 1926 in America has brought us nearer than ever before to that goal."

T. W. Brazeau, Wisconsin Rapids Attorney: "The turkey."

Rev. J. M. Stevens, Pastor Congregational Church, Wisconsin Rapids: "I should be thankful that I am alive in a world and at a time when there is so much that needs to be done. There are many wrongs to be righted. There is much that is bad to be overcome. There are many reforms to be accomplished. There is much good to be encouraged and strengthened.

I have an opportunity,—and some ability,—to help. I should be thankful for that."

E. B. Redford, Secretary of Consolidated Company: "I am thankful to have my car again, and that Chief Payne's record for recovering stolen cars is still 100 per cent."

G. M. McDonough: "A bushel basket wouldn't hold the things I am thankful for."

Geo. W. Lynn: "Will say all employees that work for the Consolidated may thank their lucky stars that they are working for one of the finest companies in the state. I for one am thankful that I have good health and that my appetite is no worse than it is."

Ross Joy: "As I sit here at my desk a few coins jingle in my pockets, and then I realize what I am thankful for. My wife and children have new winter clothes; there is some coal in the bin to keep the family warm for a few days; there are potatoes and turnips in the basement so we are sure of having something to eat; and I have money left—what more could a fellow be thankful for?"

Earl Otto: "I am particularly thankful for the arrival of Marjorie Jane and also thankful that I have not had a trombone player for a neighbor all my life."

Norbert A. Roemer, Appleton Storekeeper: "I am particularly thankful for good health, the ability to work, for good loyal friends, and for the general prosperity which He who gives us all has bestowed upon this great country of ours."

C. K. Boyer, Appleton Mill Manager: "I am thankful for the loyal hearted friendships which have come to me from out the crowded hours of industry's exacting demands. For it is these genuine friendships, these human contacts that brighten the darkest path and transform defeat into victory."

Guy R. Stearns, Appleton Employment Agent: "I am thankful that I have held firm and steadfast my belief in God and His word, for the companionship of true and sincere friends, for the good health of my wife and kiddies, and for the opportunity to earn a fair and just wage for their care and support, and that my employer has prospered, thereby making possible the same opportunity for many others."

*Such recognition
must be deserved!*



Airport Bar-B-Q
Highway 73 at Airport Road
Mr. and Mrs. William Radomski

For more see:
July 19, 2004
River City
Memoirs
about
the
Radomski
bar and grill.

Building for Better Business

When Mr. and Mrs. William Radomski opened the Airport Bar-B-Q, State Trunk Highway 73 at Airport Road, just south of this city, they opened one of the finest barbecue restaurants in central Wisconsin.

Here again the ability of the Sandman organization presents itself. As the picture reveals the Airport Bar-B-Q with its large roughly hewn pillars and log cabin effect is a building of rustic design in keeping with the barbecue idea, smartly planned and economically designed. One finds no wasted space in the large attractive building. Spacious dining rooms for patrons, well planned kitchens for serving and a large salesroom are in addition to the roomy living quarters of the Radomski family.

There's a moral in this short true story and here it is: When you want a good barbecue sandwich served in the finest dining room go to the Airport Bar-B-Q and when you want a building that will best serve your needs call Sandman.

Gilbert Sandman

Contractor
and Builder



Phone 532
Wisconsin Rapids

History at McMillan

By Don Litzer
Former Head of Adult Services,
McMillan Memorial Library

The latest installment of “History at McMillan” traced the runs of the *Wisconsin Valley Leader* (1902-1918)/ *Daily Leader* (1914-1920)/ *Daily Tribune* (1920-present)/ *Wood County Tribune* (1920-1923)—the south Wood County newspaper pedigree that continues to the present day.

Besides newspapers published in Centralia and Grand Rapids/Wisconsin Rapids, the smaller communities of Vesper, Pittsville, Nekoosa and Port Edwards were also represented on mastheads in south Wood County. The earliest was the *Yellow River Pilot* and its successors, published in Pittsville from 1895 to 1905 and in Nekoosa from 1905 to 1922. Copies have survived and have been microfilmed from November 1897 to March 1922.

The *Yellow River Pilot* pedigree is confusing because the paper changed names and place of publication several times over the course of its run. The paper’s various names, with place and dates of publication:

- Yellow River Pilot*, Pittsville, 1895-1903, 11/5/1897 to 2/27/1903 extant and microfilmed
- Pittsville Wisconsin Times* and *Yellow River Pilot*, Pittsville, 3/6/1903 to 2/11/1904
- Pittsville Times* and *Yellow River Pilot*, Pittsville, 2/18/1904 to 9/1/1905
- Wood County Times* and *Yellow River Pilot*, Nekoosa, 9/7/1905 to 12/31/1908
- Wood County Times*, Nekoosa, 1/7/1909 to 12/30/1915
- Nekoosa Tribune*, Nekoosa, 1/13/1916 to 3/16/1922

Wood County’s only weekly newspaper still in existence is the *Pittsville Record*, which began publication on August 19, 1909. The complete run of the *Record* has survived, and issues

through 1996 have been microfilmed.

Until recently, McMillan Memorial Library’s collection of the *Pittsville Record* included only the early decades of its run. However, owing to the Heart O’Wisconsin Genealogical Society’s fund-raising efforts, McMillan now has a full run through 1996.

Microfilming of the *Record* from 1997 to present by the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) had been delayed by missing issues in WHS’ run. However, after Diane Creola at Pittsville Community Library loaned issues to fill the gaps, those papers have been filmed, and copies will likely be available at McMillan by late 2005.

Sixteen years after the *Nekoosa Tribune*’s demise, the *Nekoosa-Port Edwards News* was launched on September 15, 1938. Three issues have survived; it is not known how long the paper survived. Joan Benner of Wisconsin Rapids collected and arranged for the premier issue (owned by Marshall Buehler), in addition to 10/20/1938 and 11/23/1938 issues that Joan located at Nekoosa Public Library, to be microfilmed by WHS.

A *Nekoosa-Port Edwards Weekly News*, published first in Wisconsin Rapids and later in Nekoosa (mastheads in later issues read simply “Weekly News”), was published in 1976. In late 2000, Doris King of Wisconsin Rapids referred me to Ruth Moody of Nekoosa, who had 13 issues of this paper. Joan Benner also located 16 issues at Nekoosa Public Library. Between the two collections, 22 issues from March 25 (vol. 1, issue 3) to October 8, 1976, were microfilmed by WHS. Gary Morgan, the publisher, has been unable to confirm when this newspaper ceased (though he has acknowledged generally that the papers extant so far cover the bulk of this paper’s run).

In the next issue of *Artifacts*, the final installment in this story will recount a search for surviving Vesper newspapers that had heretofore escaped the microfilmer’s camera, as well as a brief epilogue for the project.



How to get on the list

Join the South Wood County Historical Corp., 540 Third Street South, Wisconsin Rapids WI 54494. A membership of \$15 per year includes four issues, published quarterly.

Address other correspondence to the editor: Dave Engel, 5597 Third Avenue, Rudolph WI 54475.



South Wood County Historical Corp.
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To: