# October 2017 Volume II #51



Cover: Dec. 20, 1965, Goggins St. and 3rd Ave. President's Message by Phil Brown, p. 2; Website link, 3-5; Old Port by Lori Brost, 6-10; Print Shop tribute, 11; Beer Bars by Helen Zimmerman, 12; Blue Note, 13; Crash Club photos, 14-26; City Hall photos, 27; Domenic Gentile by Uncle Dave, 28-29; Les Paul by Dawn Wesenberg, 30-31; Wolcott's Wrecking, 32.





#### Phil Brown SWCHC President

## Keeping up with the Times

Another positive summer season at the South Wood County Historical Museum meant special events, high school reunions and a steady stream of local-history seekers. Next big date on the calendar will be the third-annual Christmas Tree Walk when the Museum will be decked out for the holidays and featuring 15 to 20 Christmas trees on the first and second floors.

The Christmas Tree Walk will take place on: Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 2 and 3 from noon to 4 p.m.; Friday, Dec. 8 from 5 to 8 p.m.; and Saturday, Dec. 9 from noon to 4 p.m. The event, free and open to the public, is a great way to get into the holiday spirit.

As you will find in the following pages, our new Website Coordinator, Angelica Engel, has revived our website and continues to offer more information online. SWCHC committed to the digital age early on and has been using computers since the 1980s for preservation, dissemination and record keeping. The new age moves a little faster than we can but we are doing our best to keep up.

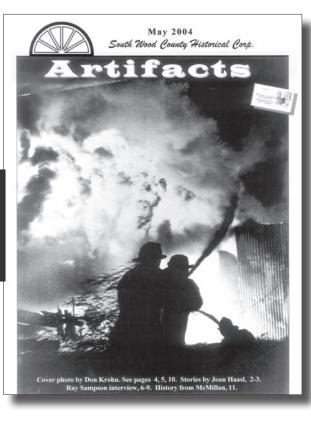
Note that the biggest website news is the addition of early issues of your favorite history magazine, *Artifacts*. This and our other offerings would not be possible without your continued membership renewals and financial support. The South Wood County Historical Museum thanks you once again for your past support and looks forward to your continued support in the future.

Now available on website: the first issues of *Artifacts*, Volume II



"Don't believe everything you read on the Internet just because there's a picture with a quote next to it." -Abraham Lincoln

"If it's not online, it doesn't exist." Mark Twain, oft-quoted by SWCHC president Phil Brown



While on the website, subscribe to our blog and an alert will arrive in your email inbox when something new is posted. And, if so moved... write back.



The Internet offers immense possibilities for encounter and solidarity. This is something truly good, a gift from God. A familiar face!

AZQUQTES

"Hew to the line, let the chips fall where they may!" *Wood County Reporter* 

The website looks like this:

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## South Wood County Historical Museum

540 3rd Street South Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494 phone: 715-423-1580

Search Our Site

Search



#### Welcome to our website!



Third Street, the nearness to

•••• use sights and sounds, tood hearing the Wisconsin Valley milk divering milk with the horse drawn to our house at 441 Third Street South, the morning, the horse's hooves would ng, the horse would snort and I could we milk bottles rathe. On freezing p the cream would be popped up. io worther in the street is the street of the street of the system of the street of the street of the street of the system of the street of the street of the street of the system of the street of the street of the street of the system of the street of the street of the street of the system of the street of the street of the street of the system of the street of the street of the street of the street of the system of the street of the stre

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hired girl came and got me and said in trouble now, kid." m I got older and learned to roller skate, go up and down the block. Then I could the further and finally I could go from

od by the curb, telling my

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#### Joan Haasl

Every picture tells a story. Or it did in 198 th Joan Staub Haasl's help, at her 191 ynor Avenue home, Wisconsin Rapid , Old fri

Artifacts

Dave Enge

#### I Get to Cross the Street

the post office to the hospital on the same side of the street. Then the big day when I could cross Third all by myself. I liked to skate by the old houses on Third and I especially liked the Witter house. I tride to picture in my mind what ii was like inside. Then it became T. B. Scott Liharay and I often saw the inside. With bookshelves all over med uable theore the iii wasen's ae rend as 2.

floor tile, it wasn't as grand as I it became the South Wood County

rp. museum and I've volunteered re than twenty years. It just gets Instorters than twenty years better all the time. I often sit and wonder what it was like when I was a child and the Witters lived there. I think they would like what we've done with the

The building. But truthfully, I can't imagine living there, thas more the feel of an institution than it does f a home. Maybe when the Witters were there felt like a real home. The walls won't talk, so

# **Publishing Firsts**

You see here the first pages of the first issue of Artifacts, Volume II, May 2004. Now, also a first, it is available online, on our own website, eventually to be named southwoodcountyhistory.org. Our current URL is swch-museum. com. Search for "South Wood County Historical Museum."

Many back issues can be purchased for \$5. A few are sold out. Contact lori@southwoodcountyhistory.org if you are interested.

On this page and on the web you can enjoy contributions from one of Uncle Dave's favorite local writers, Joan Haasl, an early contributor, Museum volunteer, board member and raconteuse-complemented by the photos of former Daily Tribune photographer Don Krohn.



#### The Old House



I have long dreamed of working in a museum. For a small town girl, museums were extraordinary in their abundance of primary sources. The summer before my senior year, I returned home and earned my credits by being the intern for the South Wood County Historical Museum that once was Isaac Witter's family home. – Alison Bruener, Museum Assistant

## WEBLOG

# The Museum staff have all contributed to the SWCH-Museum blog.You are invited to contribute your own history and writing.Rlog excerpts

Late summer 50 years ago, in 1967, I abandoned the Rapids paper mill beater room to motor west from River City in a twin-finned baby blue '59 Pontiac that could easily cruise at 120 mph. Most likely, I was smoking Salems, drinking Coke and lunching on meat loaf sandwiches from Mom. – Uncle Dave, Director Emeritus



I remember bouncing in the bed of a pick-up truck with my two step-daughters and a large dog in 1987, while Dave and Harold Craig, Hebron, N.Y., historian, conversed about the Wakely family who had come from Hebron to Wood County in the 1830s. – Kathy Engel, SW-CHC Librarian

Photo at left: 1987, Uncle Dave's daughters, Elissa and Jessica, in Harold Craig's truck for a tour of Wakely sites in upstate New York. Harold's dog would follow, yipping all the way.



2007, Brookfield, New York: Angelica and Kathy Engel with Witter family historian Harold Witter (yes, our Witters)

Kathy and Angelica Engel, 2017, at grave of former T.B. Scott and McMillan librarian, Edith Dudgeon, Madison, Wis.



Searching for Josiah Witter's gravestone in the woods with my dad [2007] was business as usual for me. Before I entered grade school, I had accompanied him up to Hibbing, Minn., many a time as he researched the then-washed-up Bob Dylan. I remember falling asleep at Iron World (a nearby historic site) as my parents chatted with pop singer Bobby Vee, who had given thennamed Bob Zimmerman his first paid gig...

I didn't appreciate until recently that these vacations with my family are part of the reason my worldview has grown to be broad and receptive to new information. That's what happens when a historian and a librarian take a kid on a trip. – Angelica Engel, Website Coordinator



## Search our site

#### kilobytes of history

Subscribe to our blog

Look in "Digital Library" and "Publications" megabytes of history



#### SWCHC

Find an expanding album of our own history. At left, Emily Baldwin Bell in the "Children's Room."

#### **Don Krohn** The *Daily Tribune* photographer donated his superb collection to the Museum.



**Tom Taylor** Insurance and history guy published picturesque ink blotters now on our website.



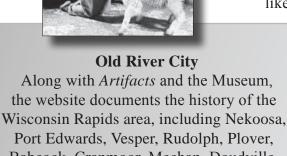


**Cranberries** See our own photos and others shared through sister institutions.

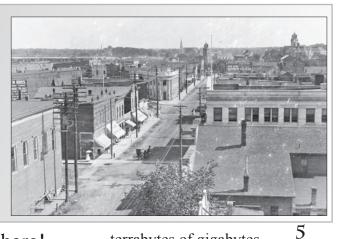
**Postcards** From Rapids, Nekoosa and Port Edwards; many show the best of historical views



**Lawrence Oliver** Uncommon classics from the Vesper photographer, like the two little lambs at left.



Babcock, Cranmoor, Meehan, Doudville. Did I mention Sigel, Kellner, Altdorf, Saratoga and Seneca Corners, And Biron?



#### Historic Daily Tribune clip art

# New Views of Old Port

By Lori Brost Museum Administrator

In the nine years I've been at the Museum, I've been asked 'what do you do there all day?' I have quite a few answers. Sometimes it's bill payer, receptionist, greeter, exhibit designer or author. People also ask me 'what's your favorite part of the job.' One answer is that I have a beautiful, although chaotic, office with wooden built-in bookcases, a marble fireplace, domed ceiling and huge windows,

but my other answer is always the people that come in and out of that same office.

I've met people who worked with my grandpa at the Nekoosa mill, people related to a friend or even to me. Visitors from different states and others from the area who reminisce about their days at the T.B. Scott Library. But I've also been blessed

with some who have taken time out to sit with me and teach me some of our history and to help me identify people, places and businesses in old photographs. One was Don Knuth, the other is Marshall Buehler.

A few weeks ago, I received five binders of photographs dating back to the 1920s from both the Port Edwards and Nekoosa mills. And as usual, when I receive something like this, I look for the

The Port Pharmacy on Market Street would later become the Port Edwards post office. At one time, the drug store and a dentist office were on the lower level with a beauty shop upstairs.

In 1951, the upper level was the first apartment of newly-married Marshall and Patricia Buehler.

The building was razed and is the current location of a bank.

expert in the subject.

Marshall and I sat down on Wednesday to go through these gems. They included images from the upgrading of the Port dam and adding splash planks around 1921, photos of the settling basin construction on NEPCO Lake and construction of portions of the Nekoosa mill.

One of my favorite photographs of the collection

is an aerial of the mill and river area in Port Edwards. I drive from Nekoosa to Rapids multiples times a week through Port Edwards, coming up on 54 and prior to turning onto Wisconsin River Drive I look across the river at the trees. Not one time did I ever think "oh that's an island." And that was my response when Marshall identified that area as 'the

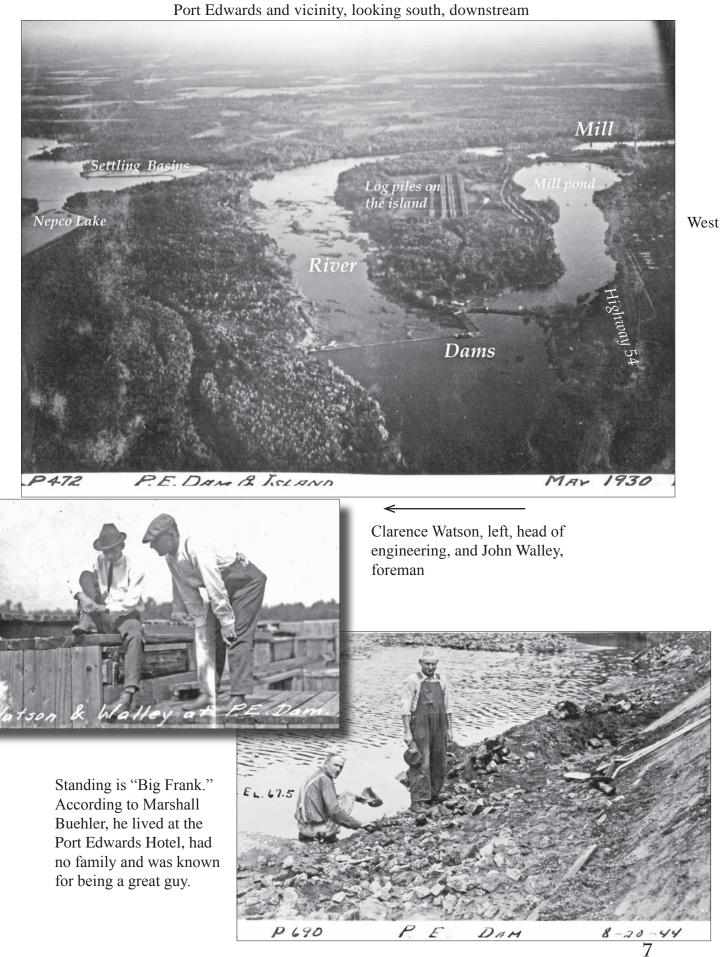
island.' He took his time and explained the entire lay out for me, and that coupled with the photo, it made sense.

I may have the beautiful office and a lot of different titles but the one thing that remains the same is that I cannot do my job to the best of my ability without a guiding hand from others who know more and are willing to share that information with me.

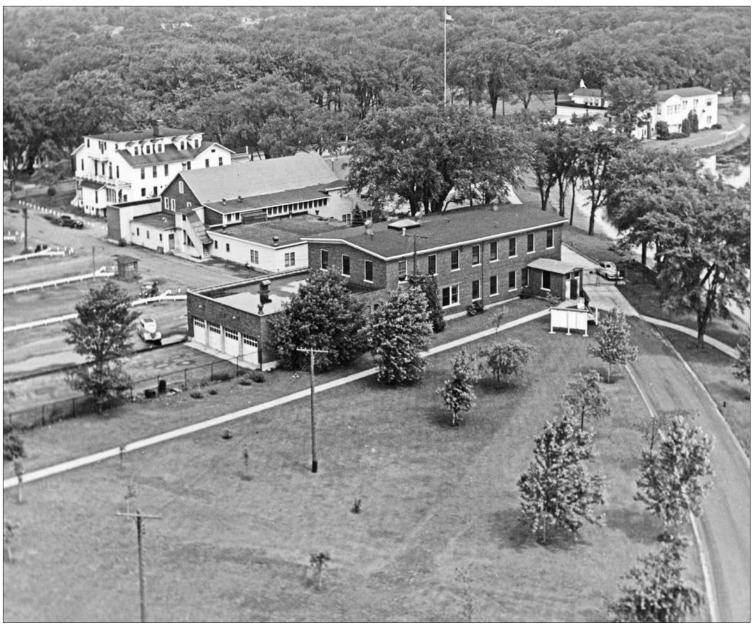




Marshall and Lori



East



Right to left:

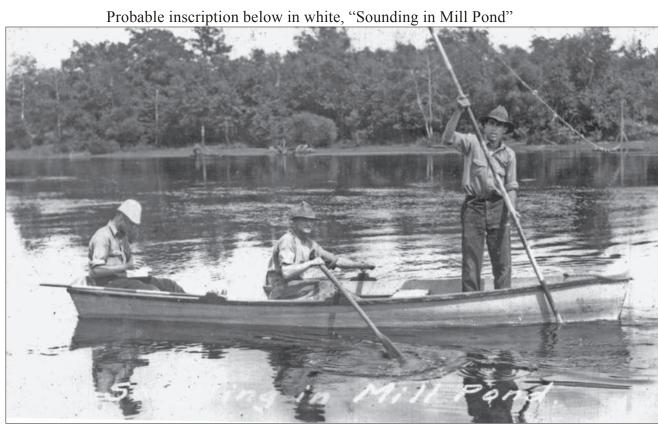
The white structure at far right, rear, was the original John Edwards office building which grew and expanded over the years.

Darker building is the original clock house in which hourly employees punched in or out. The upper level housed the Engineering Department and the lab. The lower level was the time and nurses office. The portion on the end was used for the Fire Department. This building still stands.

Center of three was constructed in 1919 as a barracks to house replacement employees for the strike that ended in 1920. The building was used as storage until 1941 when it was converted into the Paper Inn, a restaurant and a bowling alley.

The large white building at left was the Port Edwards Hotel.

See Marshall Buehler's Looking Back: A History of Port Edwards for more info.

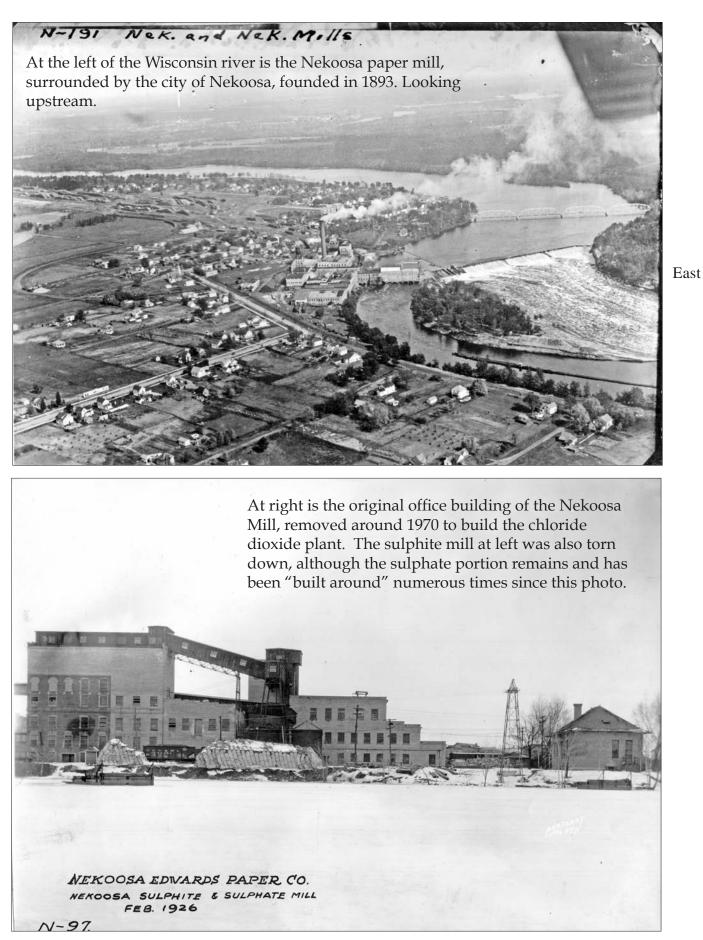


Residence of Capt. L.G. Mulzer, pilot of the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. Trimotor airplane and active in the early days of Tri-City Airport, now Alexander Field. This house still stands.





In the late 1920s, the Nekoosa-Edwards Building Program provided a building lot, \$35 toward a sidewalk, free fill and top soil, grading, fertilization and seeding. Through the NEPCO Engineering department, materials could be purchased by employees to reduce costs, allowing many employees to provide housing for a reasonable amount close to their work. This was the home of Charles E. White, built through this program. It still stands.



West

10



Pressman Dan Guenther loads paper for printing the second side.



#### To Uncle Warren

My gift for reverse prophecy was evident in the previous *Artifacts* when I paid homage to the Print Shop, our partner of 14 years. Hardly was the ink dry when Warren Miller called to announce his retirement. Godspeed anyway, Uncle. It's been good to know ya!

Uncle Dave



Audrey Young prepares files for making plates for the offset press.



ĨĘ,

Sue Doerrler checks a completed book.

Warren Miller

Prínt Shop

> It was a good run: 14 years of

of Artifacts



Sylvia Miller proofreads #50.



Kathy Doerrler trims press sheets.

## Didn't have to be a beer nut to love a beer bar By Helen Zimmerman

While most of the country had a legal drinking age of 21, states like Wisconsin lived by different rules. After Prohibition, Wisconsin reserved a "local option" allowing municipal governments to set the age for legal beer drinking. As a result, the state was a patchwork of rules and regulations.

On June 15, 1940, a tavern in Oshkosh became the first in Wisconsin to be issued a beer-only license, beginning a 30-year chapter in Wisconsin life that often brings chuckles and some wonderful stories from those who lived through that era. At a "beer bar," kids 18 to 20 years old could enjoy a beer (but not liquor or wine), often accompanied by music, dancing and socializing.

The Wisconsin Rapids area had several "beer joints."

There was the "Blue Note," located in what looked like a cute bungalow, run by

"Hazel" just out of town on Highway 13 west.

To the east, on Highway 54, halfway to Plover, was "Meehan Station," where if you misbehaved, you were not allowed back in for a week. Needless to say, we all tried to be on our best behavior when there.

Just off of South 8th Street was "Twin Pines," run by Helen Brahmstedt. She had a great sense of humor and enjoyed harmless good fun.

"Club 9" was another beer bar just off of George Road, run by the McCarthy family.

A newer bar was "Riverside" on the Wisconsin River off County P, now Highway 66, run by Clarence and Helen Molepske, who assumed the role of proud parents, refusing to sell you beer if they thought you had enough to drink and suggesting that friends drive friends home if needed.

Our Bob Zimmerman liked his stool at Riverside so well, he would occasionally take it home with him at the end of the night. This would result in a call from Clarence Molepske to his work, telling him to bring it back, which he always did. Many establishments would have special glasses reserved for their regular customers – it was a badge of honor. If you asked some of your older friends who lived here, you might be surprised how many marriages were the result of meeting at these fine establishments. I met Bob at Blue Note 59 years ago; we have been married for 57 years.

A new 1972 law gave 18-year-olds full rights, including the right to drink hard liquor



and beer bars ceased to exist. Pressure to raise the drinking age continued until, on July 1, 1984, a bill created a drinking age of 19. Finally, in September 1986,

it went back to age 21.

Those of us, who were a part of this era, look back fondly at the fun and friends we shared in the only places available for young people to spend time together on a daily basis.

Joe Jackan, former Wisconsin Rapids resident, shares a story from Twin Pines bar. He had returned from down South with fireworks called "Cracker Balls." They were pea-sized and made a large bang when stamped on. Magically, some appeared on the bottom of a toilet seat in the women's bathroom, resulting in an extremely loud bang and a young girl running out of the door with her clothes askew. Needless to say, that young girl was never seen again at this

# From the Editor: Blue Hotes

The Blue Note Tavern sounded a few sour chords in the local press. In 1957, proprietor Hazel Pribbenow, 32, was fined for serving a minor. The next year, Alton Pabst, 43, of the Note, had his tavern license revoked in Justice Harold Thalacker's court for selling beer to minors on three occasions, including the final incident in which three Marshfield youths had crashed their car after purchasing beer for three 17-year-old Marshfield girls.

In 1960, the year of Bob and Helen Zimmerman's nuptials, a burglar used a ladder to crawl through an unlocked lavatory window into the Blue Note, then broke open coin boxes on a juke box and on machines for bowling, pool, shooting and cigarette vending, taking approximately \$73. There had been a similar burglary in March.

The same night as the latter incident, owner Hazel Pribbenow had \$23 stolen from her car parked on West Grand Avenue, prompting a speedy arrest of a local delinquent.

In 1961, the Blue Note went up for sale, "fully equipped" with living quarters adjoining. Apparently, it became a residence only. As reported June 16, 1976, in the midst of a remodeling project, the former Blue Note burned, leaving the local Red Cross to look for rental housing for a family of seven.



January 24, 1963, 8th Street S. and Chestnut Street

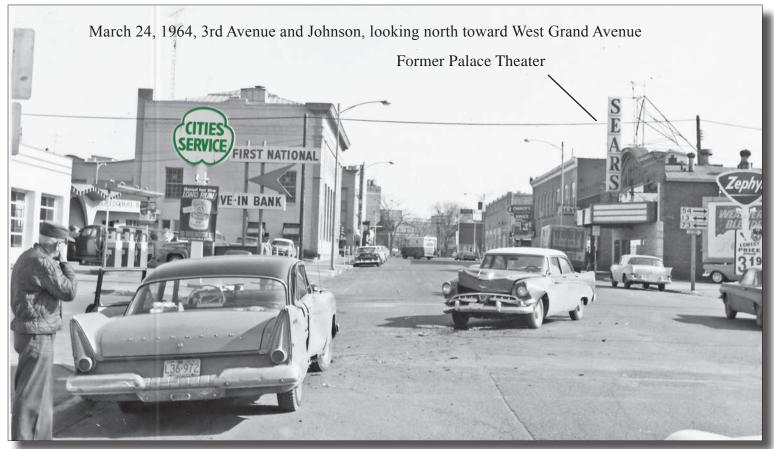


Crash Club Wisconsin Rapids Police Department Photos From SWCHC Archives





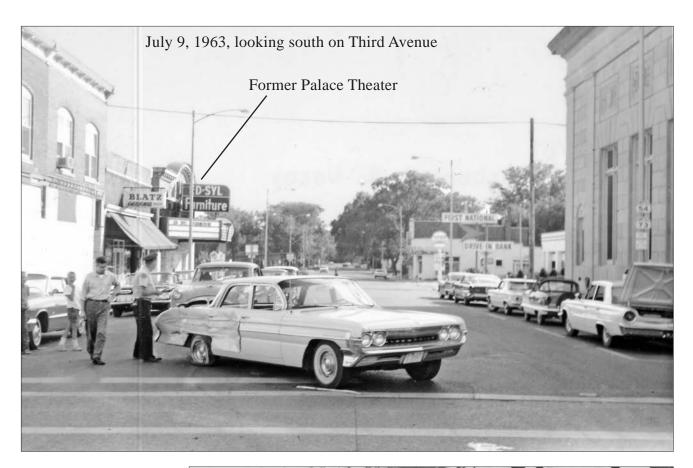
Photos have been chosen for historical value; unpublished versions are not available to the public.



## OCTOBER 2017





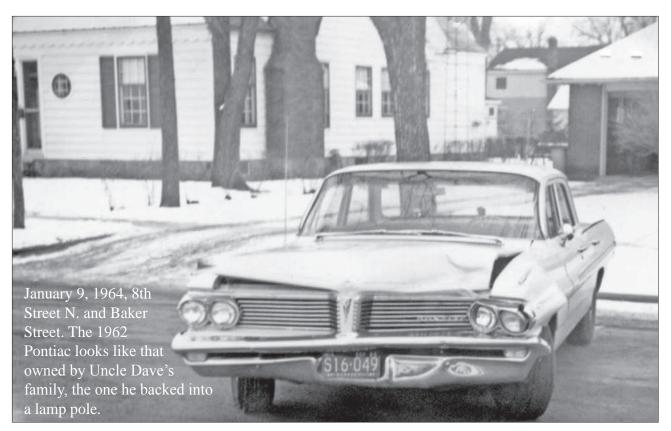




Long-time WRPD photographer James Smith, later (1970s) a member of a UWSP class of Uncle Dave's at the Portage County courthouse, aimed at police officers.



April 10, 1963, Two Mile Avenue and 8th Street S. at Uncle Dave's alma mater, Two Mile school. Woodside school is barely visible at rear.



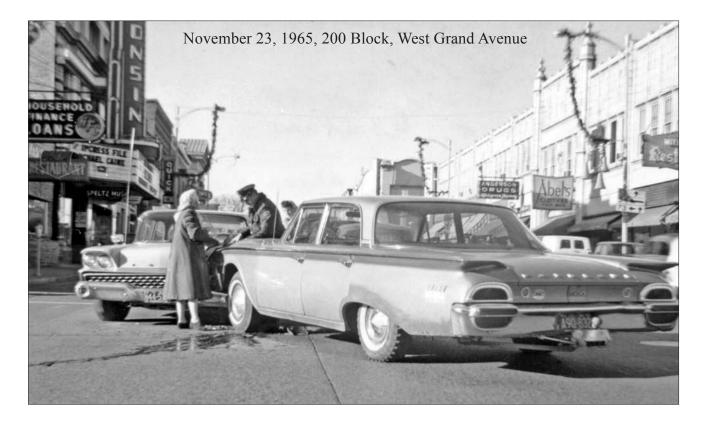


October 17, 1949, where Lincoln Street crossed the Chicago & North Western railroad tracks, now Riverview Expressway. Note onlookers at left, a common feature.

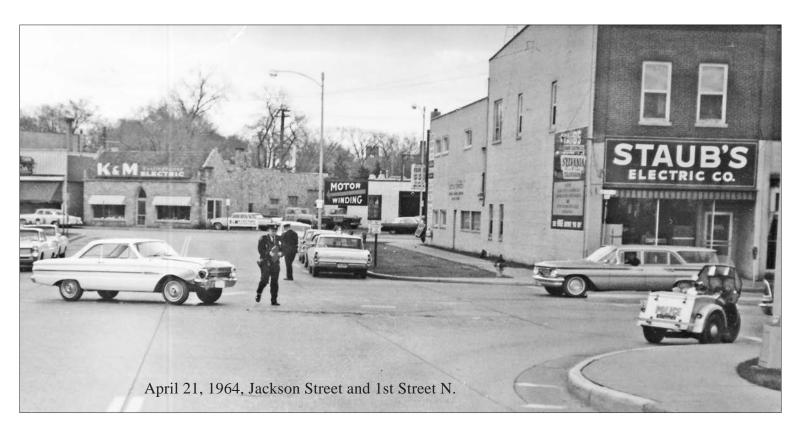


Always draws a crowd. Note LHS letter jacket.

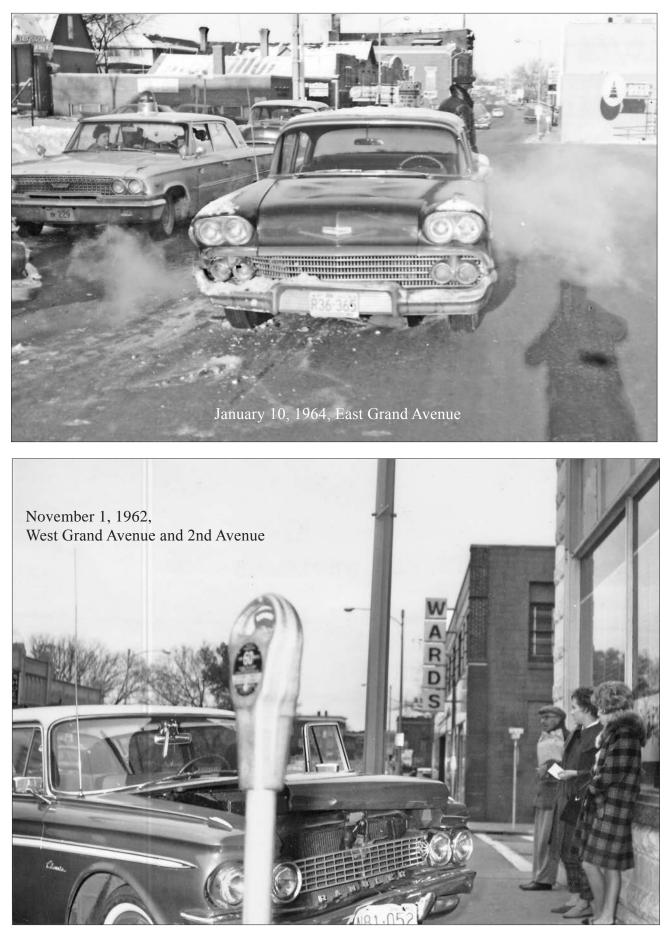






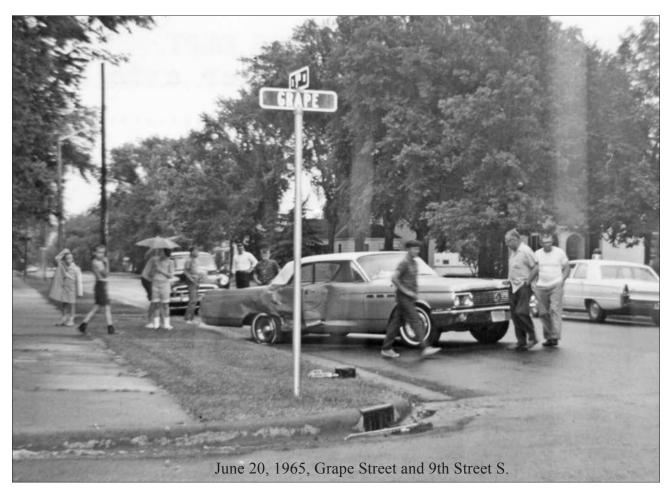


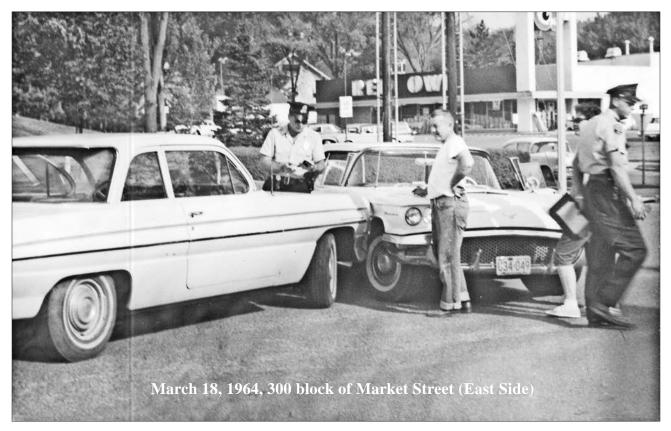




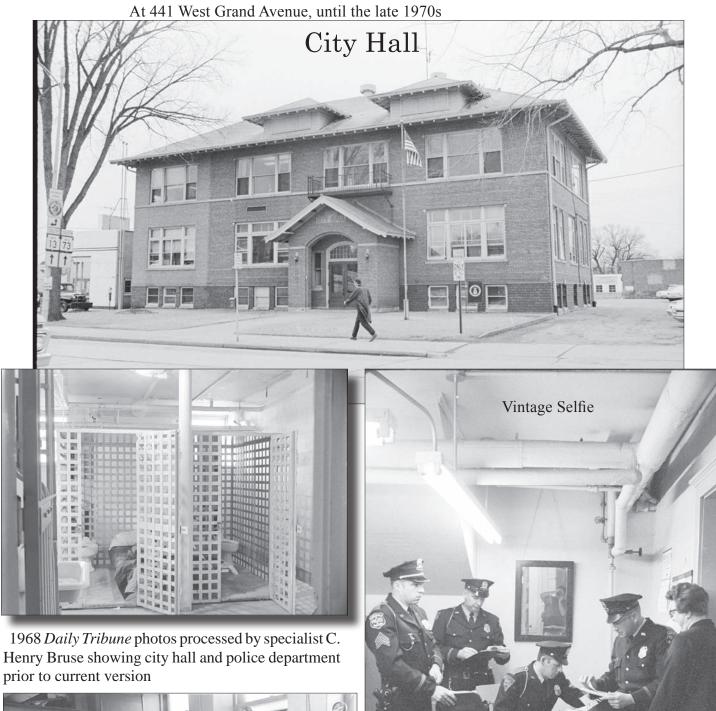


June 1, 1962, Pepin Street (between Oak St. and East Grand Ave., vacated 1975)













# Coach Gentile

#### By Uncle Dave

Paging through the 1953 Rudolph high school yearbook, *Icarian*, I was surprised to encounter the name of an obscurely "famous" person, familiar to that fairly numerous fandom who followed the Green Bay Packers in the latter 20th Century.

Domenic Gentile.

How did it happen that he registered his academic residence in the farm, grotto and cheese village of Rudolph, home tundra of the "Reindeer?"

Long time Packer trainer Gentile (jen-TILL-ee) was born in 1929 at Hurley, Wis., home to numerous Italian-Americans like himself. Gentile's mother did not speak English.

The iron-mining enclave, adjacent to Ironwood, Mich., had been hit hard by the Great Depression of the 1930s. Domenic's father wouldn't accept relief or "welfare," making Dom Jr.'s young years tough ones.

Gentile attended North Dakota State University in 1949 and in summer worked for the Hurley police department,

counting among his non-violent encounters, one with a drunken Ralph Capone, brother of Al.

During the Korean war, Gentile served 88 days in military service before landing a teaching position at Rudolph, "for the princely salary of \$2,900 a year," according to his memoir, *The Packer Tapes: My 32 Years with the Green Bay Packers* (1995).

"I celebrated by buying a car in 1952; not only was it my first car, but it was the first automobile owned by any member of the Gentile family."

Gentile told the *Daily Tribune* in November 1953 that he hoped his basketball team could

defeat Almond in the season "away" opener, overcoming a three-year "jinx." He listed a lineup of Marvin Panko and Charles Reimer at forwards, Bill Pedrazoli at center and Darrell Reber and Elliott Havitz at guards. "Also slated for considerable service are Jim Nelson, Jim Pascavis, Hank Kaminski and Ronald Pascavis," said the *Tribune*. Rudolph would open its home season the following week against Athens, Wis.

In October 1953 at the annual Friendship dinner of the Rudolph PTA, Gentile presented a

travelogue on Canada after which Carol Borski's vocal performance was accompanied by Mrs. Harold Jagodzinski, who was later our own Angelica Engel's piano teacher.

In a December game, Rudolph edged the Auburndale Aubies on a last second shot by Nelson. Darrell Reber "was again the big gun in the Rudolph offense with 11 field goals and a free throw." Coach Gentile specially praised the defensive work of sophomore forward Charles Reimer.

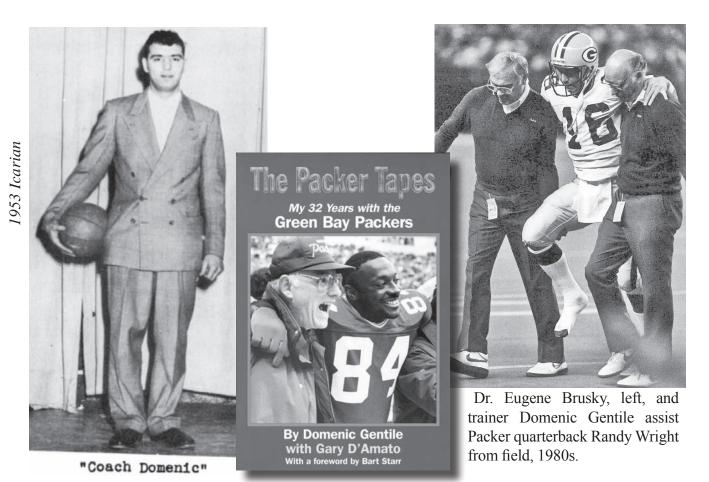
After two years at Rudolph, Gentile moved on to Chilton,

where he taught history and coached football and basketball. Beginning in 1954, he taught and coached basketball at West De Pere, resigning in 1964 to concentrate, he said, on his job as a teacher of world history and school disciplinarian. He was already working for Bud Jorgenson, Green Bay Packers team trainer, whose responsibility was the physical well being of the players.

In 1969, Gentile was named by General Manager and Coach Phil Bengtson to succeed Jorgenson, who had retired after 45 years with the Packers. Gentile would retire in 1993 and die in 2000.



Domenic Gentile North Dakota State College Physical Education History



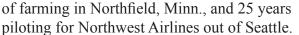
## Protege

In his memoirs, Packer trainer Domenic Gentile told of Darrell Reber, a good athlete

who had dropped out of Rudolph high. Then basketball coach Gentile found Darrell at the Reber farm. "He was plowing, but I didn't see a whole lot coming up except rocks and dust."

With Gentile's persuasion, Reber went back to school and wound up an excellent basketball player, whom Gentile persuaded to attend his own alma mater, North Dakota State.

Reber soon joined Air Force ROTC and went on to spent nine years as an Air Force pilot in Viet Nam, followed by ten years



Many years later, as a thank you, Reber sent Gentile and his wife to Hawaii for a two week vacation. "You ruined my life around 30 years ago," Reber said, tongue-in-cheek. "This is my way of repaying you."

Darrell D. Reber (1936-2005) died of leukemia at his home in Kent, Wash., where his ranch at one time boarded 340 horses and inspired an official 800-meter horse track with training facilities.

Additionally, he founded the Animal Supply Company, a wholesale distribution company.





Dean Davis with Les Paul and Mary Ford, 1951

A Famous Friend

By Dawn Davis Wesenberg (LHS 63)

Dean was a 36-year-old veteran, recovering from brain surgery, lying in a hospital bed at Wood Hospital in Milwaukee, Wis. He had just come out of a post-operative coma, when something wonderful happened to him.

A music lover, he was soon to meet one of his idols, Les Paul. Les and his wife, Mary Ford, were at the peak of their popularity on that November day of 1951. With such hits as "Mockingbird Hill," "How High the Moon," and "Vaya Con Dios," they were rocking the music world.

Les Paul, a music virtuoso, had pretty much invented the hard body electric guitar. Les and his wife, Mary Ford, were the first to do overlay harmony in which Mary harmonized with her own voice on their records. The result was an amazing new sound.

The veteran and Wood hospital patient was my dad, Dean Davis; like Paul a musician, playing many instruments, including guitar, mandolin, and violin, in local bands. After his brain surgery, the right side of his body was paralyzed. Les, from nearby Waukesha, and Mary, were visiting veterans during this trip to Milwaukee. When they came to my dad's room to play for him, Daddy started to cry. He thought he would never be able to play guitar again because of his paralysis. Les, however, assured him that he could learn to play left-handed. He had himself been in an accident a few years earlier and had taught himself to play left-handed because his own right hand was damaged in the accident.

My dad quickly asked to hear a song, played by Les with his left hand. He asked it to be in the key of D flat, a very difficult key to play in. Les complied, and a friendship began. They found out that they were very close in age (one month apart), and along with their shared love of music, they clicked.

After they left my dad's room, Les and Mary decided to have a left-handed guitar made especially for my dad. He died one day before it arrived, Nov. 19, 1951.

Les and Mary kept in touch with our family for many years, with letters and holiday cards. My family treasured a picture of my dad with the two of them. I hoped some day to meet them.

By the time I had an opportunity, Mary Ford was deceased. A fund-raiser was planned in Waukesha for a Les Paul Museum. It would feature an auction, concert, and meal, with a chance to meet Mr. Paul. The price was \$300 per ticket. I decided that I had to go. My mom and my brother, Denny, each contributed \$100 for my ticket.

I was excited to see Les Paul's bus outside the hotel the day of the concert. The evening started with a silent auction, followed by a fine meal. The concert was amazing, considering Mr. Paul's arthritic hands. He could only play on his right hand with a few fingers, but he still sounded great. He played "Over the Rainbow" in memory of Mary.

Then came the time for meeting Les Paul. I had that picture with me. After waiting in line for about 30 minutes, I heard the announcement, "Mr. Paul is tired, and will only sign one item." Great, I thought, I won't get to meet him at all.

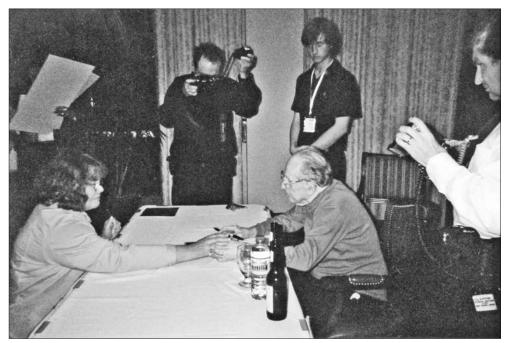
As I got closer to him, a woman came up to me and said, "I've seen that picture before." Later, I learned she was the museum curator.

When I got to Mr. Paul, I laid the picture on his table and asked if he recognized it. He said, "I sure do. Who are you?" I told him that the veteran in that picture was my dad and I started to cry.

He sat me right down at the table and told me about seeing my dad, having a left-handed guitar made for him, and what songs he had played for him.

Until this moment, I hadn't known for sure that he had ordered the guitar, and that it had arrived one day after my dad's death. He didn't want to sign the picture, saying that it would "spoil it." I told him that I wanted him to sign it for my family. He asked for an extra copy of this picture; and it just so happened that I had an extra one along, which I left with him. He asked about my brothers and my mom.

He made me feel like a princess, almost like my dad had done. I'll never forget meeting Daddy's friend, Les Paul.



Dawn Davis Wesenberg with Les Paul who died in 2007

#### Who are your heroes?

In the August 10, 2017, *Rolling Stone* magazine, Joe Walsh of the folk-rock "Eagles" answers: "Les Paul was one of the coolest people on the planet. He invented the Les Paul guitar, and he invented modern recording as we know it. He was in a car accident, and they said, 'You'll never play again,' because he broke his arm in four different places. He sat down and started playing and said, 'All right, set my arm like this. Put the cast on now.""

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

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