

FEBRUARY 2019

VOLUME II #55

ARTIFACTS

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Embellished
photo by
"Brackett, Milw."
1936



Brackett, Milw
1911/26 50906



On the cover of *Artifacts* #54, I put the blue dress on the wrong Kempen girl. The latest I.D. for this photo: Rosaline Kempen Weiler, Alois Van Asten, Lorraine Van Asten Jagodzinski, Delores Kempen Dupree, Lucille Kempen O'Shasky, Germaine Kempen Korslin, Clarabell Kempen See, Bernadine Kempen Jagodzinski.



Bernadine, best known as “Bert,” a lifetime Rudolph-area resident featured in #54, provides an account of the photo event. “It was a beautiful, sunny day but it was windy. We were sitting on a bark log, not comfortable. And I thought we were high up in the air but it wasn’t that high when you look at the picture. Father Wagner took the picture. That was one of about six pictures he took that day in the Grotto.”

“I don’t remember but Uncle Arnold and Aunt Hattie Kempen (Germaine, Dolores and Rosie’s mom and dad) were probably visiting. They lived on Highway 34 a couple of miles south of Rudolph. Lorraine and Alois lived in the village. So they probably just came to our house to play. And we just went up to the Grotto, which we did very often. It is not on Sunday as we were not dressed in Sunday clothes.”

CTW-4 Mission Accomplished

It has been around long enough to be referred to in our world by its initials, “CTW.” The fourth annual Christmas Tree Walk is now history and it was another successful event for the SWCHC. Volunteers put up 22 Christmas Trees on the first and second floors of the Museum and we had over 1,000 visitors during the first two weekends of December 2018.

This event would not have been possible without the guidance of Sue Wesley and Judy Paul who worked countless hours to make everything ran so smoothly. Coordinating all of the volunteers is not easy, but Sue and Judy once again did an incredible job.

Phil Brown, SWCHC President

Ted Brazeau, author of "Cranmoor Kid" in this issue: "Today, the marsh is still there and the roads are in the same place and just as long, but now they are smoothly paved and the cars hurry over them with amazing swiftness and without shaking themselves apart."



Allison Brown Hewett, Phil Brown, Mary Brazeau Brown, Stephen Brown

Still in the Family

It was with great interest that I read the recollections of growing up on the family marsh by another "Cranmoor Kid."

Ted Brazeau is the son of Bernard Brazeau and a first cousin of my wife, Mary Brazeau Brown, the daughter of Bernard's brother, Richard. Mary is current owner of the Brazeau marsh Ted writes about, now named Glacial Lake Cranberries, Inc.

Since my move to that storied location in January 1980, this kid (cranmoorkid@yahoo.com), born and raised in St. Paul, Minn., has always been amazed at life in cranberry country. As I began to learn about the history of the township and our property, Ted was a great source of information through photographs, family movies and personal stories.

Along with learning about the heritage and importance of the cranberry industry in central Wisconsin, I have also become a student of the history of the south Wood County area and the Brazeau family's involvement in our community. These pursuits came together in 2004, when *Artifacts* editor (Uncle) Dave Engel and I collaborated on a book about the pioneer days in the "Cranberry Eldorado."

Stephen and Margaret Brazeau arrived here in 1857. Six generations later, the Brazeau family is still active in Cranmoor and Wisconsin Rapids. As for me, I never imagined living on a cranberry marsh and I have never regretted that decision Mary and I made 39 years ago.

Phil Brown, SWCHC President

Memoirs Online

Angelica Engel
SWCHC Website Coordinator

Regarding the SWCHC's presence on the International Network, AKA the World Wide Web...

We have added the most recent three of Dave Engel's books on the museum website for you to view and read:

Ghost of Myself: River City Memoirs VII (2009)

Building for the Future: Mid-State Technical College, 1907-2010, with Holly Knoll (2010)

Penultimate Memoirs (2015)

Dave's *Memoirs* are a collection of his Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune* articles broadly focused on

the history of South Wood County and neighboring areas. Remember, our newspaper used to be much more local (locally owned, even!) than it is today.

This is the web address to see the books: <http://www.swch-museum.com/publications/works-by-dave-engel/>

Our latest blog post included photos from the December 2018 Christmas Tree Walk, such as the beauty below.

We also have 40 issues of *Artifacts* available on the site.

So, go ahead, click around! Think of our site as a virtual archive for you to explore at leisure and in the comfort of your home.



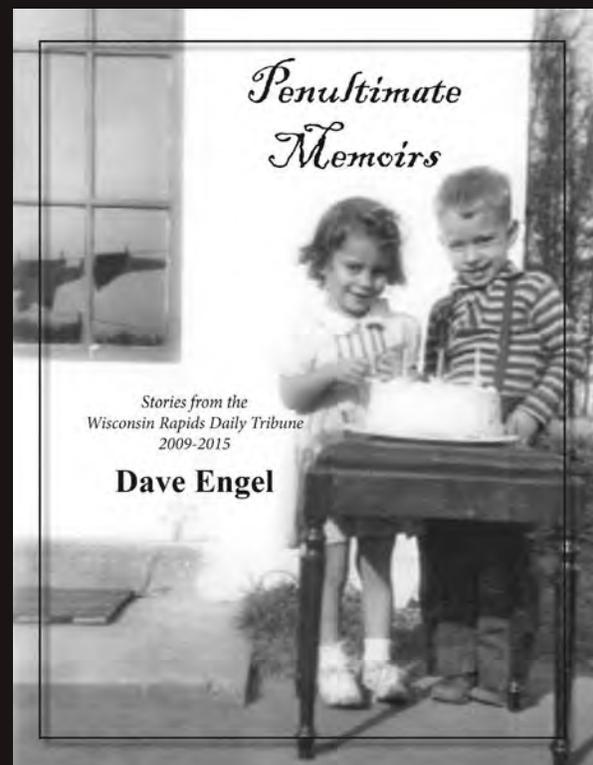
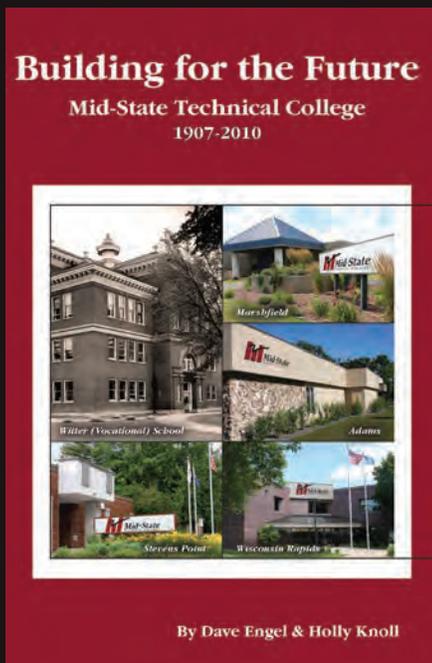
Photo by Angelica Engel

Now available

Free!



southwoodcountyhistory.org



Theodore Brazeau
Now of Donna, Texas

The Cranmoor Kid

Winter was the worst and perhaps the best. It was always harsh and threatening but beautiful, imposing and echoing with silence.

In later years when I was finally old enough to drive, I would crank up the tractor and ride a mile or so out onto the snow-covered marsh. It would be twenty or twenty-five degrees below zero, a sunny day, crystal clear as such a winter's day can be. I'd stand still, listening to the immense silence around me and hear only the occasional cracking of the ice in the distance.

Soon the cold became overwhelming and it was time to head back to the heated buildings. Even so, it was almost painful to start up the noisy tractor and break the overpowering silence. (At the same time I would be fervently hoping the unreliable thing would start.)

Sometimes we would tie a toboggan behind the same tractor and set off on one of the flooded and frozen cranberry beds as fast as that tractor would go—about twenty miles an hour—until we reached the center of the ice. The driver would slam the brake on one of the big wheels, causing everything to whirl in a tight circle. The toboggan rider would spin around at a tremendous speed, then let go and shoot off across the ice, padded by heavy winter clothes. Great fun.

At other times, more sedately, with the tractor and toboggan but on a shorter rope, to the children's delight, we would pile on as many kids as we could and slowly wend our way through the drifted snow among the trees and over the frozen marsh.

With spring came mud. The warmer, longer, days melted the snow and thawed the ground while everything became soggy and waterlogged. A child sent out to play came in soaked and smudged and full of energy. The warmth was wonderful and the greenness sprouting everywhere was miraculous after the long winter of white and black.

The winter floodwater was drawn off the cranberries and they came alive again. As spring turned to summer, blossoms appeared and bees were brought in to fly among them to turn them into cranberries. And to sting us when we were careless.

Summers were idyllic. We were surrounded by 3,600 acres of woods, marsh and reservoir, mostly wild with only about 120 of those acres in actual cranberries, the rest natural—terrific for a kid to roam and lose himself (sometimes literally). There were warehouses and barns and workshops to explore in search of mischief.



Ted Brazeau

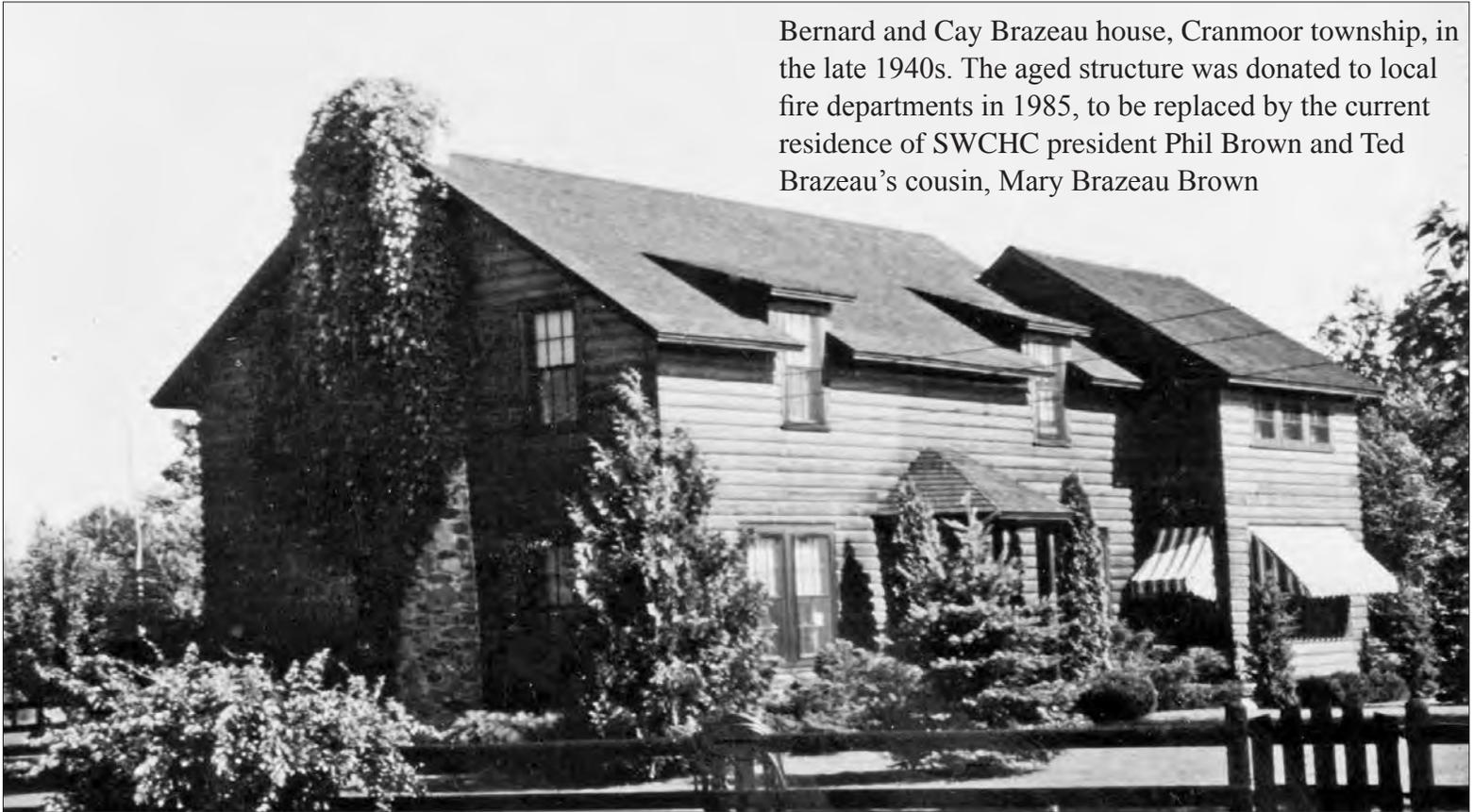
I'd throw on a pair of jeans, run down the stairs and out into the new day of opportunity, shirtless and barefoot, the screen door slamming shut far behind me. The barn today? The woods? Climb the tree to sit and read? Tease the pigs? Head for the machine shop? Never mind I really didn't know how to operate that power hacksaw, that metal lathe. Doing is learning. I never did lose a finger. Close, though.

A lazy summer with no school to interfere with our lives. But summer was filled with mosquitoes and flies. We had to put up with constant swatting and continual itching. Deer flies in the hair. Wood ticks were a nuisance and plagued the dogs. We weren't aware of deer ticks and Lyme disease.

Horses, cows, pigs, chickens, ducks, kittens and puppies, even guinea hens to interact with. Not to mention millions of frogs to put us to sleep with their nightly chorus.

Autumn days always came too soon with their cooler weather and falling leaves, the impending snows and, sadly, mandatory confinement in the Cranmoor graded school on County Road D, consisting of two classrooms of four grades each. Challenging classes but with wonderful recesses allowing for invented games in the forest behind the school in good weather and snow play during the long winter.

Photos from Ted Brazeau



Bernard and Cay Brazeau house, Cranmoor township, in the late 1940s. The aged structure was donated to local fire departments in 1985, to be replaced by the current residence of SWCHC president Phil Brown and Ted Brazeau's cousin, Mary Brazeau Brown

We actually did learn a few useful skills, mainly reading and writing, something about numbers and how to introduce live frogs into the ventilation system.

There was a certain advantage to taking lessons in the same room with the more advanced classes. After we first graders suffered through the hourly presentation by the teacher (Miss Pinchke or Mrs. Iverson) and while we were struggling with the convoluted problems in our workbooks, we had no choice but to listen to the lessons being explained to the second, third and fourth grades. Inevitably we absorbed some of this wisdom before our time.

Autumn brought the turmoil of harvest. Cranberries were raked and trucked in from the beds, then sorted in the warehouse and poured into wooden quarter-barrel boxes for market. Semitrailer trucks roared up to the warehouse to be filled with the boxes and rumble on out. Scores of Ho Chunk [Winnebago] Indians traditionally came by—some on horseback in the early days—to rake cranberries. They were joined by a few local farmers whose crops were already in. It was a time of all-around commotion and excitement.

This was all overseen by Chic and Harry Merk, two brothers married to two sisters, Alvina and Mary Redwine, four of the best people I've ever had the privilege to know.

The little store on the marsh was crowded every day at quitting time with mostly Ho Chunk shoppers eager to buy after a long hard day. It was tiring work, standing bent over, wearing hip boots in the icy water (cranberries are flooded for harvesting) and swinging the heavy box-like rake, with its long metal teeth, to comb the cranberries off the vines. Even so, after a day of this effort, some of the younger harvesters still had the energy to actually run the mile in to the buildings in hip-booted foot races.

Fast moving items in the store were waiskop (*bread*), waiskop kou (*cookies*), daneena (*tobacco*), daneesha kitikish (*candy bars*) and the like. We sold gas and oil (*wuhkinny zizzip*), ice cream, soda pop, canned goods, some produce and baked goods. The prices were reasonable, comparable to downtown. Not bad for a tiny store way out in the country.

All this hustle and bustle continued through Thanksgiving with a little left over for Christmas.



The Cranmoor Graded School, addition built in 1937. Arlene Fairbert

The marsh was 17 slow miles from Wisconsin Rapids on washboarded gravel roads negotiated by now-antique vehicles.

Because of the difficulty of getting into town, at harvest time the marshes would set up huge dormitory tents for the influx of workers and each of the larger marshes would include an additional tent for Saturday night dances and social gatherings.

In fact, the cranberry marsh and Cranmoor were becoming less isolated and more diverse as was much of the wider world around it. World War II had a lot to do with that.

Cranmoor had always been the home of many Ho Chunk workers. During the war years, Jamaican and Barbadian workers replaced locals who had joined the military. In addition, there were scores of German prisoners of war who were overjoyed to be in Central Wisconsin weeding cranberry beds rather than fighting a losing war in Europe and Africa. Toward the end, I've been told, there was only one guard for all the Cranmoor prisoners. No one ever tried to escape.

Until it ended, that is. After the war, there were a number of escapees who found the Chicago and other Midwestern German communities more inviting than a devastated and starving Germany.

My parents, observing my—and my brand new little brothers'—relative isolation and general ignorance of the world, chose to move us all to town, to

the house on Third and Dewey streets in Wisconsin Rapids. But only for the school year. We still lived on the marsh in summer since there was work to be done.

Now that we were in the city, I was duly informed that in the fall I would be enrolled in Howe school, an immense and ancient building over on 8th Street, far from home.

I said “No!” I would not be going to any such place.

After all, I was now going on nine years old and capable of making my own decisions. Besides, I felt I was already adequately educated; I could read just fine. But there was a war on and we all had to do our duty, no matter how unpleasant.

In recollection, the Howe building really wasn't all that big, but it was immense in my eyes at the time, square and tall—three, perhaps four stories—faced with brownish stone and harboring a scary basement. It was also seriously ancient. After all, my grandfather had attended the school and later even taught classes there when it was a high school.

I did eventually acclimate and I actually have reasonably fond memories of playing marbles and mumbledy-peg in the muddy springtime schoolyard and of winter sledding down the slight slope over toward 6th Street. I had survived Miss McFarland's Fourth Grade and Miss Seim's Fifth and Sixth with-

out permanent damage and had finally become somewhat accustomed to the school when at summer's end in 1947 we were abruptly transferred to a niche in the north end of the Lincoln high school building.

Around this time, my friends and I branched out to roam the streets of downtown Wisconsin Rapids and haunt the stores that are now ghosts themselves. Herschleb's (which soon became the Friendly Fountain) and Perry's Sports Shop, both next door to the Rapids Theater, were frequent stops. Geoghan's, Fink's Drugs, and the Kreutzer Brothers second-hand store were sources of comic books, new and used. The Witter Hotel was still standing as a landmark at the far end of downtown and Tom Poulos' Sugar Bowl was another landmark and a favorite hangout although we were decidedly not among Tom's favorites. We liked the Labor Temple for resetting bowling pins at 10¢ a line and, later, Your Record Shop for the music on 78-rpm discs.

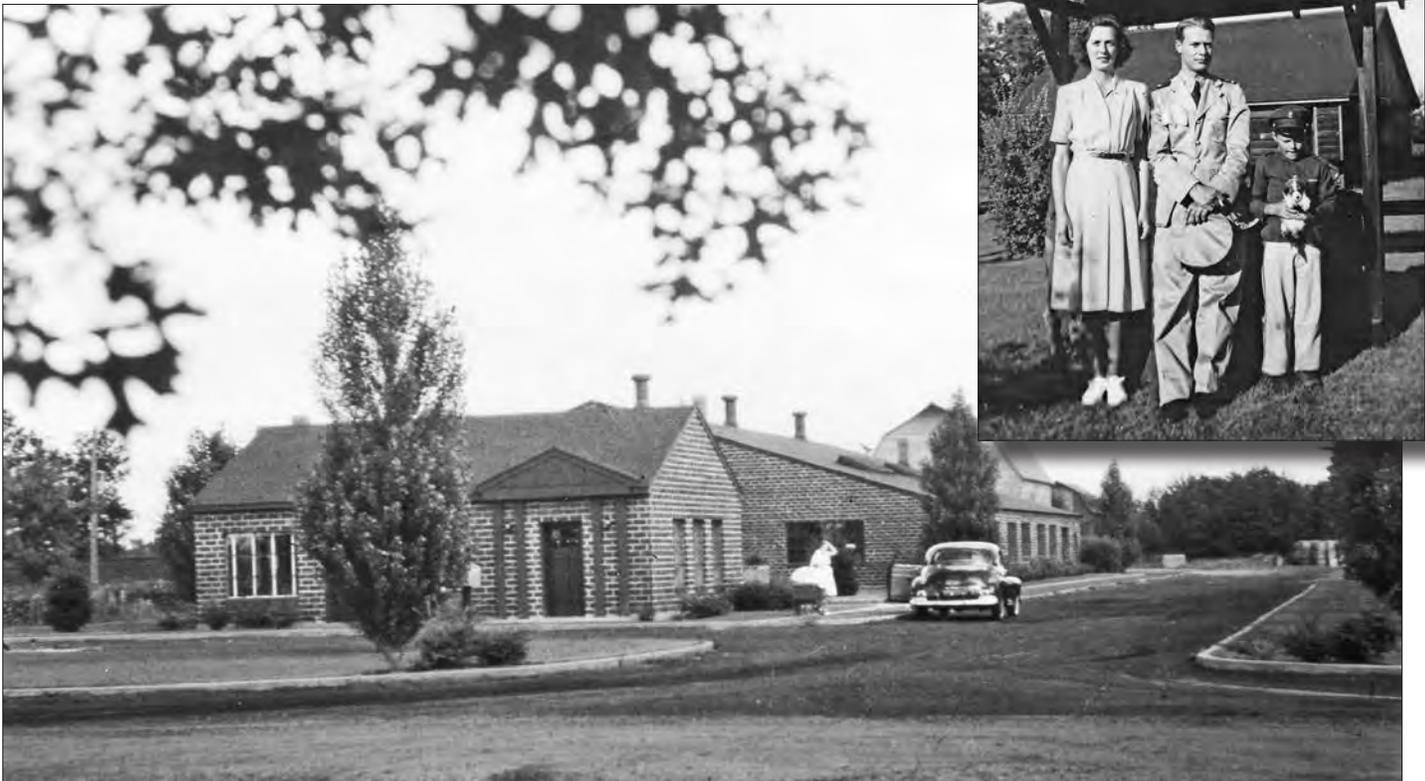
On the West Side, Johnson Hill's was as close as we got to a mall back in the day along with its neighbor, the Woolworth 5&10. Nestled next to the Wisconsin Theater and downstairs from Bill's Pool Hall, Kerrin's ice cream parlor was a bit of an antique even then.

Supermarkets were a thing of the future. The A&P purported to be one but would be considered a medium sort of convenience store today. More representative of the time was McCamley's Grocery over on Grand Avenue and 8th Street where we stopped on occasion for our 5¢ ice cream cones.

Since we had been unjustly deprived of television by being born too soon, we frequented the three movie theaters, especially the Rapids with its 9¢ matinée admission for kids like us (another 5¢ for popcorn or Milk Duds). It really was a good deal—two full features, usually involving cowboys, preceded by a serial, two or three cartoons, a short film and a newsreel. Had they been bribed to keep us off the street?

In school, after a scant two years to adapt ourselves to our new location, we were thrust into high school proper. True, we were still in the same building but everything else was changed.

The students now surged from one floor to another with different classes and teachers every hour: Bill Miller, Wally Hemp (a wonderful teacher in World History and German), Ella LaPerriere (the



Store, warehouse and “yellow barn.” Inset above, Virginia, Richard and nephew Theodore Brazeau at wishing well near house (*Photo from Phil Brown*)

poor lady was saddled with me all four years—both French and Spanish), the ghastly math class with Lulu Moll (actually she was a very good teacher—I was the problem), Coach Phil Manders and, above all, Principal Aaron Ritchay. And we faced brand new subjects: Geography, French, Spanish, German, History, Algebra, Geometry (Lulu Moll), English Lit, Science and others.

And most terrifying of all, girls.

Despite their frumpy 1940s and '50s wardrobe, girls had somehow morphed from unpleasant environmental blemishes into something much more mysterious, while doing unsettling things like cheer-leading and flirting.

At the time, the secluded environs of Lake Wazeecha were a favorite area to try to sort out these mysteries. And there were other such places around Lake Nepco and—my favorite—out behind

the airport. These efforts, however noble, required a certain amount of cooperation from those same girls, a cooperation that was spotty at best.

We also developed occasional undertakings involving beer and similar beverages. Since these activities also largely took place behind the airport and in other obscure nooks and crannies, they were, whenever possible, combined with the interaction with the girls. With rather uneven results.

In my case, I was blessed in later high school years with a 1937 Chevrolet. Not a hot rod—it would only exceed forty miles per hour on downhill stretches—but it did do very well behind the airport.

Overall, we tried our best to be wild kids, courting what delinquencies we could find. I'm afraid, though, that we failed miserably in that respect. Despite our efforts we just didn't have it in us.



Howe School 1940s
*Ted may be at center
in flannel shirt*



Sorting cranberries in the new warehouse, Brazeau marsh, now Glacial Lake, early 1940s

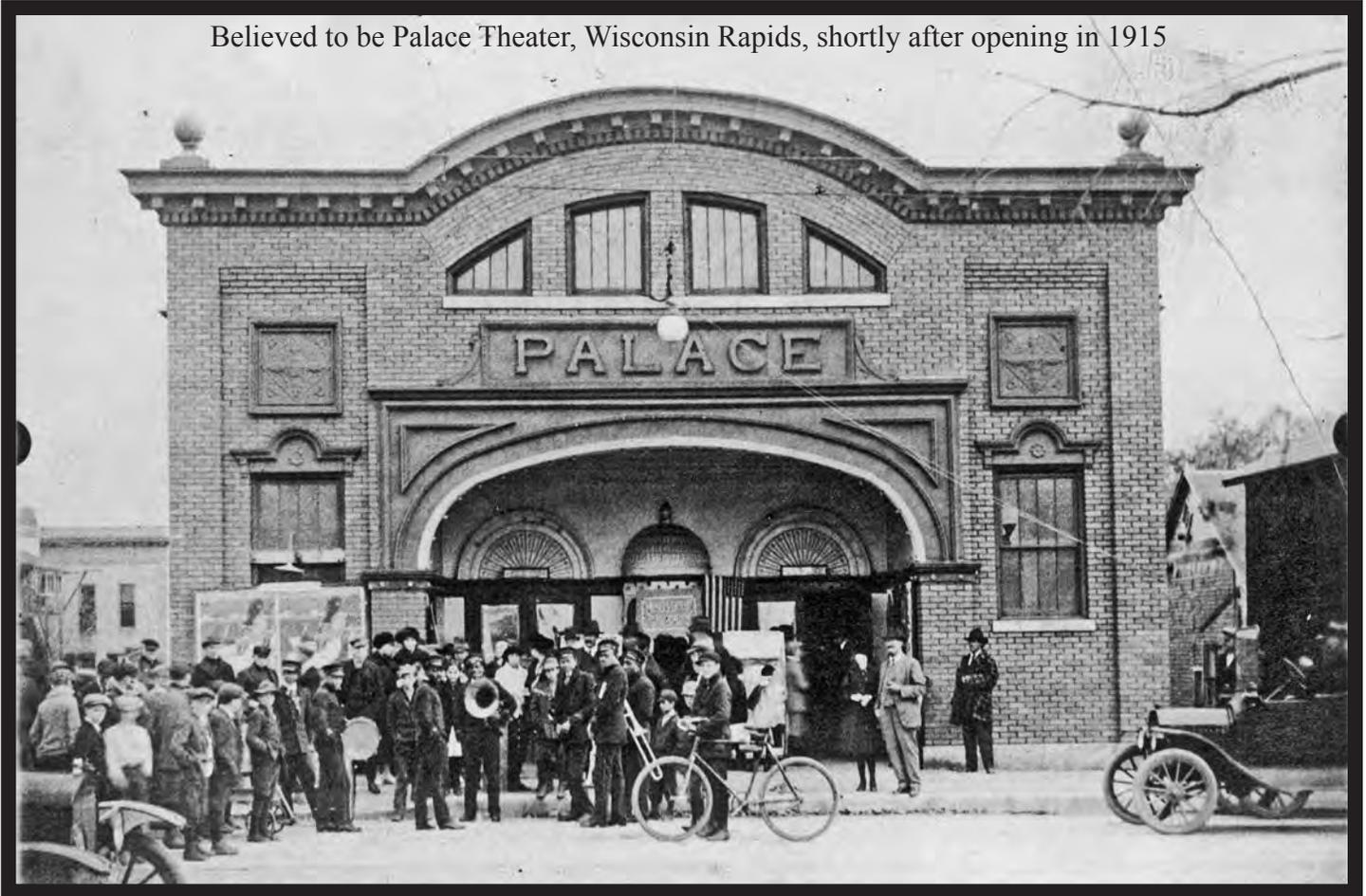
Photos from Ted Brazeau



Then-new warehouse with cranberry beds in foreground



Believed to be Palace Theater, Wisconsin Rapids, shortly after opening in 1915



THE PALACE

Built 105 years ago

By (Uncle) Dave Engel

Saturday afternoon in the 1950s.

By then the Palace was the least posh of three theaters and happily for me, served up the cheapest films, typically a double-feature western or a serialized melodrama costing a dime. Maybe my parents added a nickel for popcorn as they dropped me off at Third Avenue and Johnson Street.

Then, the Palace to me was an exotic and timeless hall of magic. I now know that the building had been constructed in 1914 to open in January 1915.

It was built on the site of a livery stable, probably that of the Lyon Hotel that became Church's drugs, next door. Underneath the livery site was found an old stone well, filled with water.

Directors of the theatre (also spelled "theater") company were president and manager R.A. McDon-

ald; vice president F.L. Bossert, of Bossert Coal Co.; treasurer G.M. Hill, all round investor; and secretary W.H. Fintzel, probably the same guy who in 1914 was director of a theater in Webster, S.D.

According to a Grand Rapids newspaper, "It is the purpose of the new amusement company to book high class attractions and to show only the best motion pictures obtainable. The theatre will cost \$12,000 and will seat from 600 to 800 people."

Manager McDonald was followed, probably in 1918, by John P. Gruwell from Maquoketa, Iowa.

In 1923, Henrietta Eckardt bought the Palace and ran it and other theaters until 1957 when Theodore Walrath of Kruger-Walrath realty bought it from her. No longer to be used as a theater, the facility became the Palace Ballroom and Recreation Parlor.

The new Palace was to be used for public and private dances, meetings, conferences, demonstrations, banquets, wedding receptions and parties. Designed for adult *and* teenage patronage, it served only soft drinks.

Architect Carl J. Billmeyer replaced wooden beams with steel and leveled the floor, creating a ballroom that was decorated to provide a Hawaiian atmosphere complete with a stage and bandshell sporting a hand-painted beach scene.

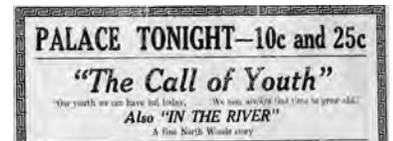
A basement was excavated under the new floor for a recreation parlor which was leased by Mr. and Mrs. William (Jeanette) Leder.

Leder's sister Bernice was married to Theo Walrath.

The recreation parlor, known to me as "the pool hall," was entered by a stairway leading down from the theater lobby. It had a soda fountain and grill, small dancing area, juke box, and pool-and-billiards room with nine tables.



Photo above: 1921 "The Call of Youth" and "Brewster's Millions" played at the Palace; but is that building at back left the Lyon Hotel? The theater's front entrance seems to have been enclosed since the exterior shot on the previous page.



Kiddies Flock to Free Movie Today

Lining the streets as early as 1:20 o'clock this afternoon, approximately six hundred children under the age of twelve were hurrying toward the Palace theater where they were guests of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Eckardt, proprietors of the Palace and Rapids theaters in this city, at a special showing of "Tom Sawyer." This is an annual affair and is given for the poor children who perhaps would otherwise be deprived of seeing a moving picture at the Christmas season. That these little folks were thankful to their hosts for their hospitality was very evident for the six hundred little faces beamed with happy broad smiles as they marched into the theater.

Daily Tribune, Dec. 21, 1931



After the Palace transitioned to a dance hall, I was a regular customer. The "ballroom" was safe territory but I felt I was risking my unassuming 100-pound-freshman life when I descended into

that smoky underworld of the pool hall, where the "hoods" hung out. Inspired by Marlon Brando in *The Wild One*, they rolled packs of Luckies in the sleeves of white T-shirts, turned up the collars of their black leather jackets and clomped around in black engineer boots.

According to an agreement, when Eckardt sold the Wisconsin Theater to Grand Enterprise of Milwaukee a year previous, the Palace was not to be used as a theater for 50 years. When it opened, dances were scheduled for every Friday evening, beginning with Jerry Steuber and his Country Gentlemen.

1936
movie:
“Piccadilly
Jim”



Photo
from
theater
historian,
Paul
Gross

In 1930, the remodeled “new” Palace theater featured what the *Daily Tribune* called “the most artistically decorated medium-sized picture houses in the middlewest,” which it said, under the management of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Eckart, had shown leading productions for years, often before the big city theatres had them.

According to the *Tribune*, “One becomes lost in the atmosphere of old Spain when viewing and hearing a picture in the new theatre.” The illusion was accomplished by a dark blue ceiling designed to resemble the sky, designs of old Spanish castles along the wall and “Spanish red seats.” The foyer continued in same style with decorations of bronze and gold, wrought iron fixtures from the ceiling and a box office that was a reproduction of a Spanish castle. A new vertical 30-foot sign contained 1500 lamps.

Designed to take advantage of the popularity of the new “talkies,” said Mrs. Eckart, the remodeled venue strove for “the perfect reproduction of sound,” using amplifiers behind the screen. “Ever since the talking picture and equipment have been on the market, Mr. Eckart and I have left no stone unturned in attempting to give our customers the best within our means.”

By (Uncle) Dave Engel

Aug. 15, 1992

When I met up with Ted Walrath in the late 1980s, I remembered his scandals from the Palace dance hall days. But by the time I contacted him, he was a mildly irascible 70-something, sort of like I am now. He was sick and getting sicker, making frequent trips to Marshfield to have congestion sucked out of his lungs.

Walrath was 80 when he died—in 1992, around the time of the *Tribune* story at right.

As a Palace habitué circa 1960, I was a criminal myself and stole from Walrath. In order to avoid the cover charge for weekend dances, I carved a (backwards) Palace stamp from a block of wood. With a measure of impish pride, I used it a few times and kept it as a souvenir of my Dickensian youth. When I am able to locate it, I will share an image with *Artifacts*.

I doubt that I mentioned my sins to Ted and he didn't mention his to me. As the story at right avers, he proved to be the most knowledgeable person I have met about buildings and property in Rapids. Because of his bad eyesight, I had to drive as we revisited the Main Streets and side streets of River City, him pointing out landmarks including houses that had moved, old grocery stores, gas stations and buildings Ted had owned. Much of this can be found in *River City Memoirs* books.

In Ted's basement was a collection of pianos that reproduced the playing of former virtuosos. Ted was gracious in allowing my wife and daughter Angelica to attend as we watched and listened to the ghostly and disembodied fingers of Liberace and friends as they danced across the keyboard.

Walrath owned parts of the old downtown Wis. Rapids' first rock 'n' roll shows were at Palace theater

By DAVE ENGEL
Tribune Correspondent

WIS RAPIDS — If I had not met Theo Walrath, 930 Washington St., more than a decade before his May 26 death, I would be even more ignorant than I am.

Much that I know about Wisconsin Rapids buildings came from his many phone calls and interviews.

Walrath, originally of White Creek, grew up in Nekoosa. He moved to Wisconsin Rapids in 1931 for a year at Wood County Teachers College while figuring out what he really wanted to do.

A job with Charles F. Kruger's Wood County Grocery Co. led to a career as a landlord.

Once housing the Rapids post office, the two-story section of the Wood Block at the southeast corner of the Grand Avenue Bridge was built in the 1890s. A three-story section was added on the river side in 1906, said

Kruger on the street. She said, "Mr. Kruger, I've been offered \$36,000 for my block. I'm thinking about accepting it."

Kruger said, according to Walrath, "I don't think that's enough. I'll offer you \$50,000." Later, Mrs. Siewert called up and said, "Mr. Kruger, were you serious?"

He said, "Yes," and the deal was struck.

Church's Drug Store occupied only the corner portion of the Siewert building. Other tenants were Le Ray's dress shop, Consumer's Market and Ignatz Zimmerman's shoe repair.

Upstairs were two apartments, three dentists, a medical

and Henrietta Eckardt "were people who came to town with money. Mrs. Eckardt bought the Palace after she built the Wisconsin auditorium. They also owned the Rapids Theater."

Walrath said he remembered going to bargain with Mrs. Eckardt in her red brick house, resulting in his purchase of the Palace.

The Palace, "the place to go in the 1920s" and popular until outshone by the Wisconsin, was in need of renovation by the late 1950s transaction.

Stars could still be seen in the ceiling, and Walrath remembered a revolving unit that made moonbeams move across the sky. There was an organ loft, but the organ had been removed.

Walrath cut the theater-style sloping hardware floor from the walls and leveled it. He said he filled a five-gallon pail with chewing gum he scraped off the floor.

The first new use for the Palace was as a dance hall. There were wedding receptions, usually catered through



2 BIG ROCK 'N 2
ROLL DANCES
PALACE BALLROOM
Friday, May 26th
THE LA SABRES
Saturday, May 27th
THE ZAKONS
Dancing 8 to 12 Admission 65c

1961



What had been the Palace had become the Central Wisconsin Cultural Center. It was, in Rapids terms, a blighted structure begging to be put out of its misery. (2018 photo by UD)

River City



The Palace



Church's



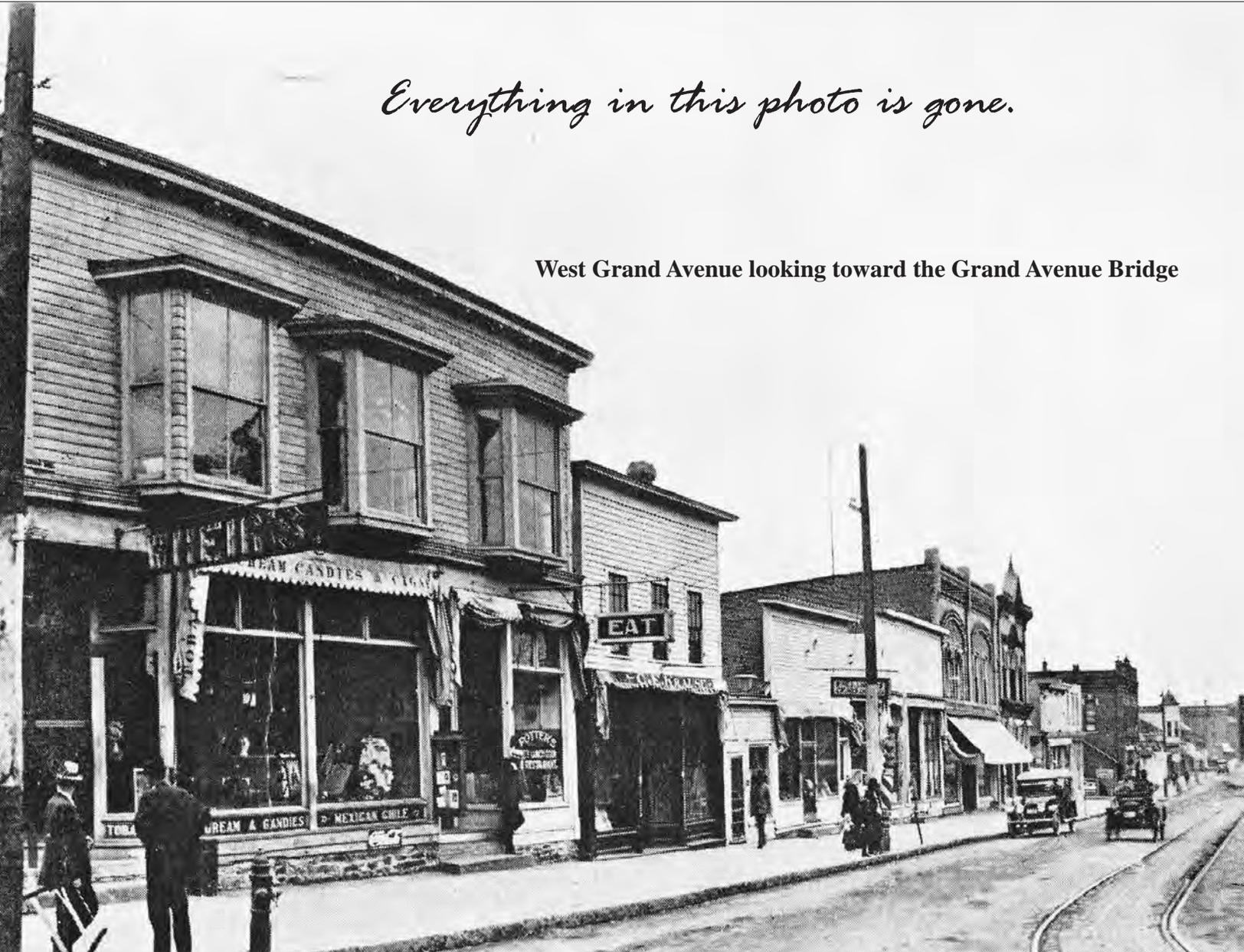
Business as Usual

Book World



Everything in this photo is gone.

West Grand Avenue looking toward the Grand Avenue Bridge



Church's

By (Uncle) Dave Engel

The neglected relic had been the biggest hotel in Centralia. The builder was Clark Lyon, born in 1853 to Reuben Lyon, an early partner with Ahira Sampson in a South Centralia sawmill.

As a youth, Clark worked in his father's shingle and planing mill on the site of what would later be the Consolidated mill yard. In 1883, he tried homesteading in North Dakota with a group that included cranberry chronicler Sherman N. Whittlesey and mercantilist investor George M. Hill.

Clark returned and built a house for his brother-in-law, J.W. Natwick, father of future film animator Myron Natwick. He also built the Union church, later to be the Masonic Lodge and Corpsman Hall.

In 1887, Clark built the eponymous Lyon Hotel, "the largest hostelry in the city," at the corner of what became Third and West Grand Avenues. In 1890, he bought a lot on French Street (Third Avenue) for a horse and cattle stable or "livery."

Lyon leased the hotel in 1899 to Jasper Crotteau, former manager of the Commercial Hotel (on the site of the 1960 *Tribune* building, now In courage's) who enlarged the dining room and spruced up the rest of the building.

Upon leaving the hotel, the Clark Lyon family moved to the old homestead on the west river bank which he later developed into a subdivision near the current Lyon Park.



Former Hotel Built 131 Years Ago

When Crotteau’s lease was up in 1904, the hotel was remodeled into offices and stores, including the pharmacy of county clerk Sam Church, an Ontario native recently of Baraboo, who came here to work for the Centralia drug company in the MacKinnon block by the bridge.

In 1920, Otto H. Siewert bought the by-then-dubbed “Church’s” block from Clark’s brother, Theron Lyon. The *Grand Rapids Tribune* said it was “one of the pioneers of the city and was rebuilt into the present brick structure about fifteen years ago.”

In 1945, the Kruger-Walrath real estate company bought the Church’s building. Theo “Ted” Walrath, would soon purchase the Palace Theater.

In 1959, the Reisbeck family bought Church’s and removed the distinctive bay windows. In the early 1980s, your editor patronized the drug store there in its location convenient to the *Daily Tribune*.

Hans Lien bought the Church’s space in 2000 and opened a video archery shop.



Medicine box pictured is from SWCHC archives.

West Grand Avenue, looking west, First National, now U.S. Bank, rear



Tom Taylor

“The Spot” building above, on the corner of Second Avenue and West Grand Ave., is the same shown below, referred to as “Empire Bar” in November 1967 *Tribune* photo. Center of block above is Citizen’s National Bank, later Wisconsin Theater. At rear left below, looking south (downstream) is current Daily Tribune/Incourage, an outlier in the campaign of public and private vacant lot creation.



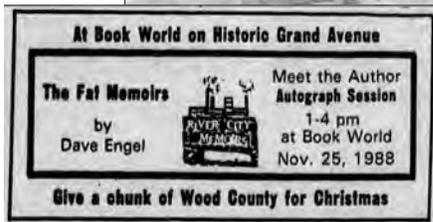
SWCHC/Daily Tribune

Book World

West Grand Avenue, looking east (to left)



Postcard shows streetcar, left



Book World

Natwick store built 125 years ago

What we knew after 1986 as “Book World” was owned by a modest chain out of Appleton, Wis. It had been built as a furniture store in 1893, by James W. Natwick, scion of a Norwegian lumber mill owner.

Natwick was married to Henrietta Lyon, making him brother-in-law of Clark Lyon. The latter had five years earlier built the Lyon Hotel next door, later to become Church’s drugs.

In 1886, Natwick had started a furniture store in a building on the west river bank, behind the then extant MacKinnon building at the bridge landing.

Natwick then moved a few yards to the Pomainville block on Cranberry Street, now the location of the Mead-Witter block on renamed West Grand Avenue.

For his new building, Natwick used brick from John Lessig and Sons, Rudolph, a material that, according to an 1893 *Tribune*, provided a useful fire break in a long line of wooden buildings.

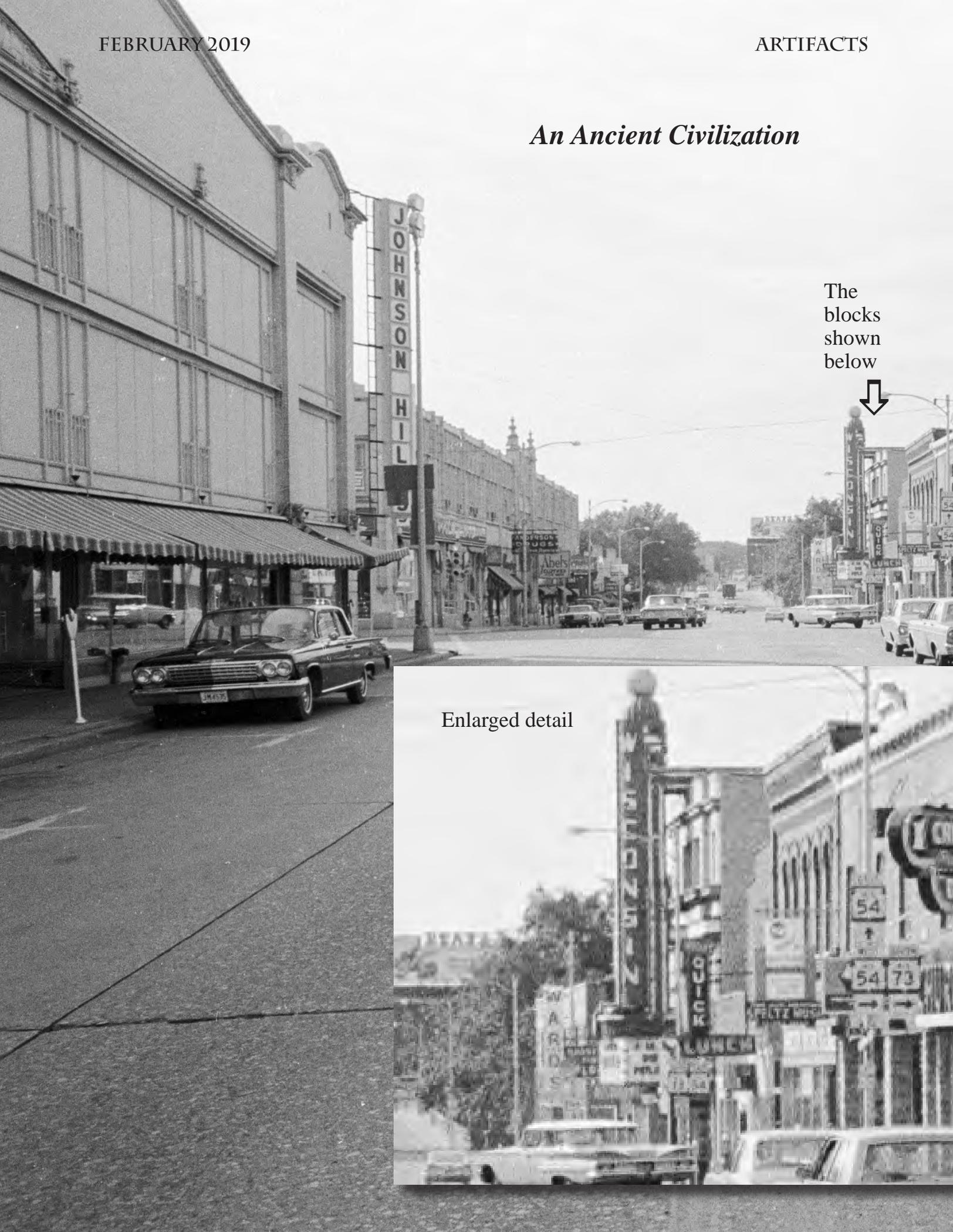
In 1921, Natwick retired and sold to T.P. Peerenboom, a grocer. Leased by Badger Paint and owned by A.J. Novotny, in 1965, the building was purchased by Bob and Ray Speltz for their music store.



West Grand Avenue, looking east (to left)

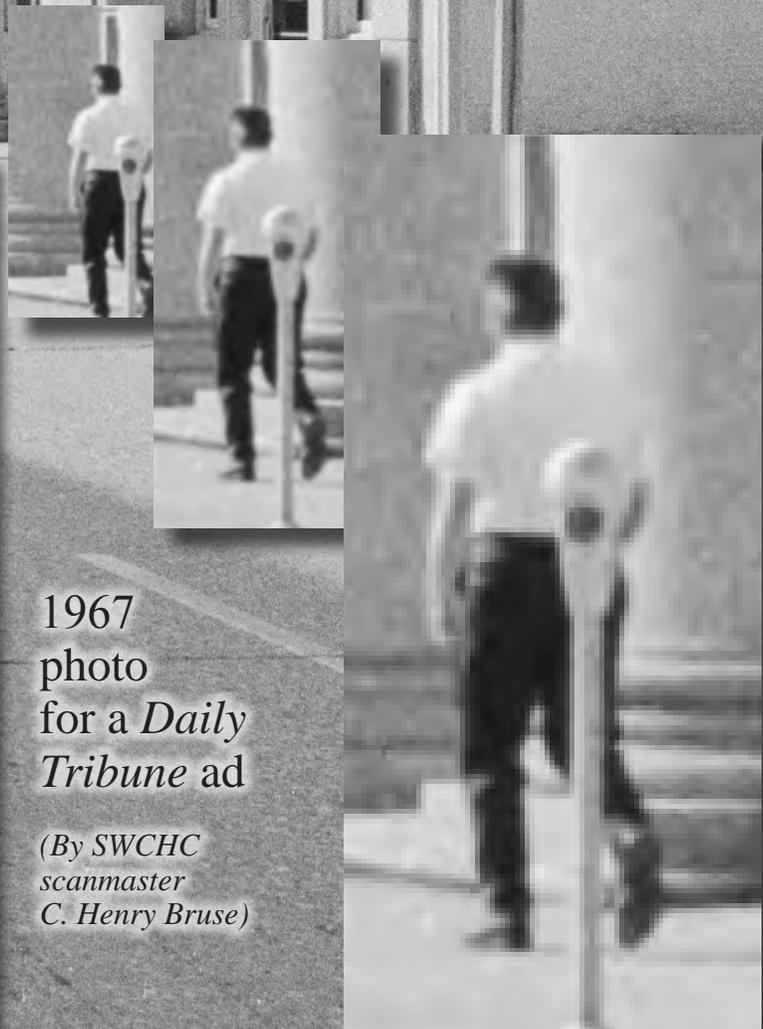
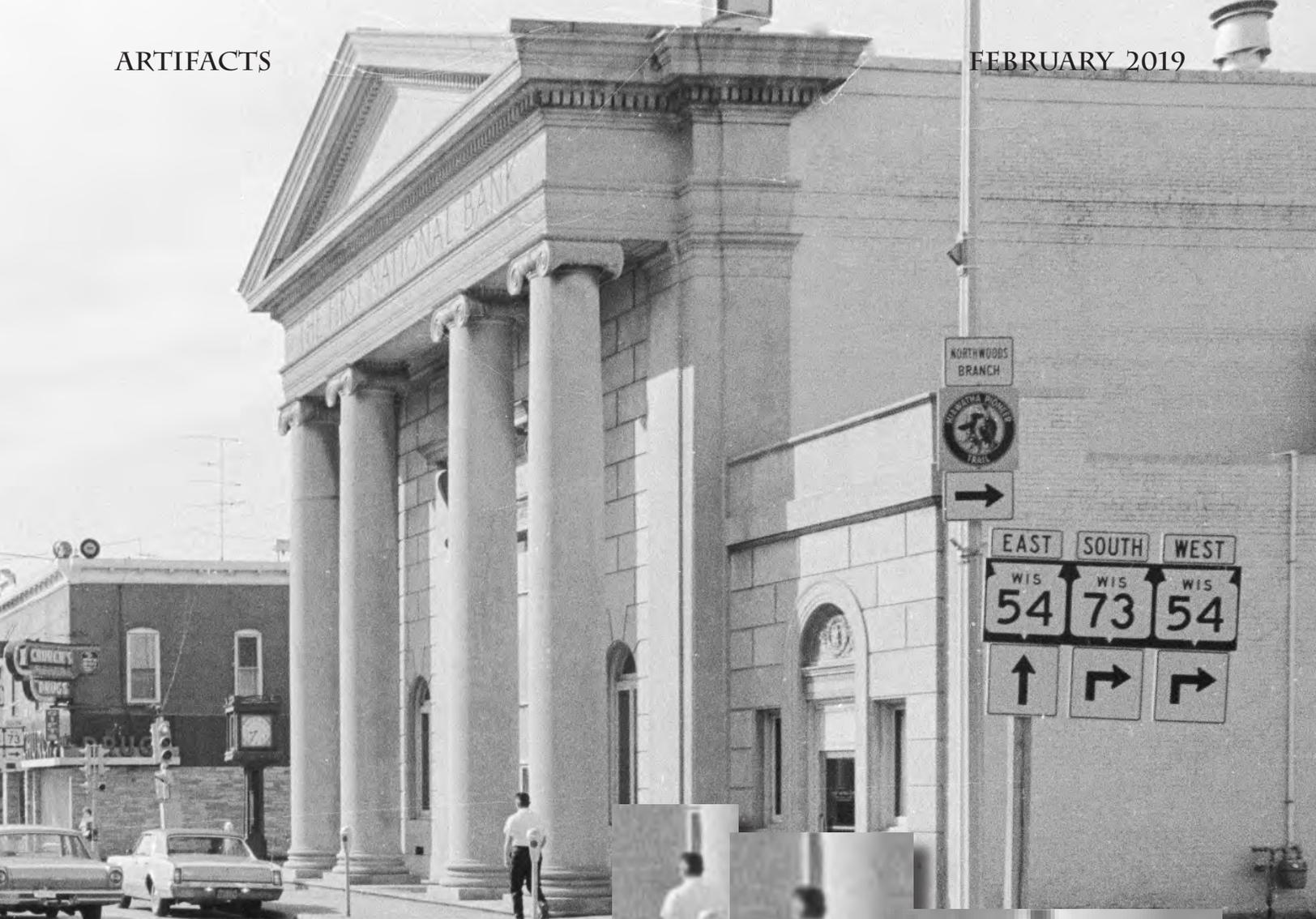
An Ancient Civilization

The blocks shown below



Enlarged detail





1967
photo
for a *Daily
Tribune* ad

(By SWCHC
scanmaster
C. Henry Bruse)



Downtown Wisconsin Rapids 1968
State Highway Commission



Sign visible
at 2018
razing
(photo by
John Berg)



- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lyon Hotel/Church's 2. Natwick Furniture/Book World 3. Palace Theater/Various businesses/Cultural Center 4. Dutch Mill/Buzz's 5. Citizens Bank/Wis. Theater 6. Wisconsin Theatre auditorium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Empire Bar, Household Finance, Art's restaurant/
Siebers' restaurant 8. Montgomery Ward 9. Emmons Office Supply 10. Western Union, Normington's 11. First National/U.S. Bank (still standing!) |
|---|---|



The Wienermobile in the mid-1950s with Little Joe

Jack Harrison, Hotdogger

By James Hass

Jack Harrison, Wisconsin Rapids, loves to tell stories and the best include his work for the Oscar Mayer Co. when he drove the Wienermobile for over five years in the early 1950s.

Known as a “Hotdogger,” he rode mostly with “Little Joe” White, “the world’s smallest chef,” who was the second of nine Little Oscars over the years. He also drove for the original Little Oscar, Meinhardt Raabe, the actor from Watertown, Wis., who starred as the coroner Munchkin in the film, “The Wizard of Oz.” Jack and Little Oscar would travel all over the Midwest, mainly to grocery stores, to hand out toy wiener whistles to kids and generate loyalty to Oscar Mayer wieners.

At the time there were five Wienermobiles covering the United States and his was the original vehi-

cle, poorly engineered and prone to breakdown. The top travel speed was 40 mph. But it held five people in the front seat and stored plenty of supplies in the back. It would be replaced with several finer versions over the years.

Finding the Wienermobile for a two-week tour was sometimes a problem because it was used so much for promotions. For example, Jack was told to pick up the Wienermobile in Minneapolis for a tour, but it would never be where he had left it.

Jack loves the story about when his Wienermobile was “garnished” overnight with mustard in Rockford, Ill. The vandalism was reported, made the newspapers and generated much good publicity for Oscar Mayer.



Jack Harrison, 1952

In 1957, Jack married Charlotte McClellan at All Saints Church, Babcock, Wis. An Ashland, Wis., high school grad, Char had trained at Saint Joseph's School of Nursing in Marshfield and worked at the Wisconsin veterans hospital, Madison. Their honeymoon was aboard the Wiernmobile on a tour!

Subsequently, they moved to Wisconsin Rapids to raise their family where Jack sold insurance. Their three children are Colleen Webster, Waunakee, Wis., Christie Tilkens, Green Bay, and Sister Carla Harrison of the Daughters of Our Lady of Pieta, Lima, Peru. All attended Saint Vincent school and Assumption high school.

A son, Jeffrey, died at age 6 of leukemia and this started Jack's deep faith in God. Jack sang in choirs, from Necedah as a youth to Saint Vincent and Saint Lawrence. He would often lead the family, singing his favorite song, "Let there be Peace on Earth and let it begin with me."

Jack has accumulated a fine collection of Wiernmobile memorabilia and can't help but spontaneously start singing the theme song:

"Oh I wish I were an Oscar Mayer wiener,
That is what I truly like to be.
Cause if I were an Oscar Mayer wiener,
Everyone would be in love with me."

The Harrisons: Jack with Sister Carla, Christie, wife Charlotte and Colleen



Photos courtesy of Carole Derksen from a family collection

Continuing the genealogical chronicle of a quintessential immigrant German family...

The Brehm Boys

By Scott Brehm

This is my last article for *Artifacts* involving the Brehm segment of my genealogy in the Vesper area. It has been a great venture and I want to thank the Museum and Uncle Dave for allowing me to write these stories.

In the previous article, I talked about the second-generation Brehm girls who lived here after their father, mother and siblings all crossed the great ocean from Prussia in 1885 to reach the Town of Sigel.

It is now the boys' turn to be heard from.



Born **Karl Edward Brehm** on Sept. 3, 1884, in Brandenburg-Prussia, the oldest son of Reinhold and Amelia Brehm was known as Charles Brehm.

Charles arrived in New York on Sept. 12, 1885, aboard the steamship *Wieland* with his parents and sisters, Anna and Louise. He lived on the family farm in Sigel until his marriage to Selma Maria Hoffman Aug. 22, 1907. They had four children:

- George Carl Brehm*, Nov. 29, 1908–Oct. 3, 1970.
- Isabelle M. Brehm*, Jan. 15, 1911–Oct. 22, 1972.
- Carl William Brehm*, March 22, 1912–May 24, 1990.
- Raymond Brehm*, 1913–1914.

Charles moved to what is now Wisconsin Rapids, Wis., and worked for the Grand Rapids Foundry. He moved his family to Beloit where he took a job at the Fairbanks-Morse foundry and was a member of the Beloit Fire Dept. Charles died Sept. 30, 1923, in Beloit, when he fell to his death while working on a utility pole.

Charles Brehm Succumbs From Broken Spine

Body Crashes Twenty Feet to Ground When Hold is Loosed on Pole

CAUSE IS UNKNOWN

One Theory is That Electric Shock Led to Fall - On Department Six Years Started - ~~in~~ **1917** -

IS FIRST FATALITY

As far as I know this is the first fatal accident that has occurred on the Beloit Fire Department." Chief Nygren said this morning. "Men have been injured in fires, none of them seriously

His back broken just below the shoulder blade when he fell twenty feet to the ground from a telephone pole in White Avenue, near Central, late Saturday afternoon, Charles E. Brehm, 39, a mechanic at the west side fire station for six years, died from his injuries at the Beloit hospital

early Sunday morning after fifteen hours of intense suffering.

The only warning that Brehm was falling was a muffled groan when he slipped away from the pole. Chief John Nygren, who was standing near by, looked up and saw Brehm's form hurtling towards the ground.

Tried to Break Fall

The last the Chief saw of Brehm was when he was about eight feet from the ground. The other three men were busy with wire and other equipment and were not looking upwards.

"I heard a cry and a groan," the Chief said. "I looked up and saw him coming down head first. I tried to catch him, but the force was too great. His shoulder hit my arm, but it did not break his fall much. We did all we could to give him first aid."

The wires on the pole on which Brehm was working do not carry a heavy voltage, according to telephone linemen. Whether Brehm received a shock which caused him to lose his hold on the pole, or whether he slipped, likely will never be known, as no person has yet been found who saw him as he started on his downward course. No marks on his body would indicate that he received electric burns. Possibly his life would have been saved had he fastened his safety belt around the pole. From the appearance of

the belt, it had not been used.

There was no better man on the department. Chief Nygren said early this morning. His only fault was his fearlessness. He was afraid of nothing. He was an all around man on the department."

President of Association

Brehm was one of the best liked men on the department. He had acted as president of the Firemen's Relief Association for several terms, and was the present president of the organization. He took an active interest in anything which would benefit the association, and was a hard worker for the promotion of the Firemen's annual dance, the proceeds of which went into the treasury of the association.

Brehm was unconscious when his companions reached him. It was at first believed that he had suffered from a severe electric shock. First aid was given and after working over him for some time he did regain partial consciousness. He complained of severe back pains when an attempt was made to place him in a sitting position. He was taken to Beloit Hospital in the police ambulance. He died at 7:55 o'clock on Sunday morning, September 30th. James Sheard, Hiram Stolcup, Charles Brehm and Chief Nygren were adjusting wires which connect the fire alarm system.

Edward William Brehm (my great grandfather) was born Aug. 26, 1886, in the Town of Sigel where he grew up on the family farm, Knuth Road.

Edward first married Louise Schultz. Edward and Louise had three children:

Irene Wihelmine, born July 25, 1910.

Irene first married Richard Olsen in 1926 and they had two children, James and Richard Olsen. Richard Sr. died in 1948. Irene then married Elmer Dassow in 1952 and they had two children: Rodney Dassow and Betty Anderson. Irene died Aug. 12, 1991.

Erma Louise was born Feb. 17, 1912.

Erma married Emil Schroedel in 1930. Erma and Emil had three children: James, Janet and Judy. James died at birth. Erma died March 10, 1998.

Ruth Amelia was born Feb. 22, 1914.

Ruth married Gilbert Tomfohrde in 1932. Ruth and Gilbert had six children: Gilbert, Ronald, Charles, Marlene, Peggy and David. Louise died March 11, 1914, days after giving birth to Ruth. Ruth died Nov. 30, 1988.

Edward then married Minnie Stake Mueller on March 7, 1917. Edward and Minnie had four children:

Eva Edith was born Sept. 1, 1919. Eva married Delbert Krommenacker and they had two boys, David and Jerry. Eva died September 1, 1992.

Ethel Marie was born Oct. 23, 1921. Ethel married William Kroll and had two children, Patricia (Jackan) and Daniel.

It should be noted that Ethel was the last of this generation to die. Ethel died Jan. 19, 2015. (When Ethel died, I felt bad since I had promised to take her back to the old Ed Brehm Farm where she was born so that we could reminisce. It never happened.)

Edward Carl "Uncle Bud" was born Aug. 16, 1923. Edward married Gladys Wunrow and they had two girls: Barb and Nancy. Edward died in a car accident in Arizona, July 13, 1998.

Carl Henry "Sam" (my grandfather) was born May 26, 1926. Carl married Lucille Ladick. They had five children: Donald L. Brehm (my father), Jerry C. Brehm, Judy (Scheunemann), Danny E. Brehm and David R. Brehm. Carl died Dec. 30, 1978, and Lucille died December 4, 2005.

Minnie had been married prior to Edward to William Mueller. Minnie and William had four children: Ella (Otto Hess), Rosie (Albert Miller), Leo Mueller and Ada (Bernard Haas).

Edward Brehm



Edward and Minnie

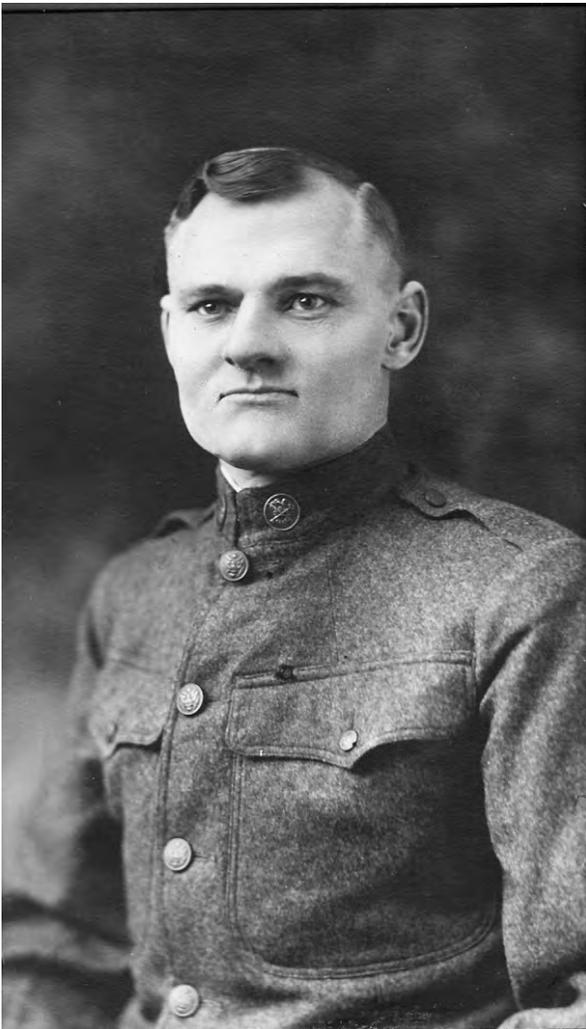
Edward moved to Wisconsin Rapids and lived on Grand Avenue until he moved his family to 5713 County HH on June 23, 1910. Edward farmed his 80 acres till his death. Each Sunday, family would meet at Edward's farm.

Edward Brehm died on Jan. 2, 1957, and is buried at Forest Hill cemetery, Wisconsin Rapids. Minnie Brehm died on Dec. 23, 1973.

Frank Robert Brehm



Frank in WWI uniform



Frank Robert Brehm was born Aug. 26, 1888, in the Town of Sigel.

Frank was still on the family farm during the 1910 census at age 21. His mother, Amelia, was then 56. Also living with Amelia were brother William, 9, and sister Minnie, 17.

The *Wood County Reporter* has mentioned Frank living in Beloit, employed in the gas engine department of Fairbanks-Morse plant and obliged to come home on account of sickness Dec. 28, 1911. He again visited Sigel in July 1913 before returning home to Beloit.

In 1917, Frank completed a military draft registration card showing he was 28 years old, single, living at 1141 Hackett Street in Beloit and working as a machinist for Fairbanks-Morse.

Frank died Oct. 17, 1919, at Mendota hospital from injuries sustained during World War I and was buried at St. John's Lutheran cemetery. I was told by Ethel Kroll that Frank's mother, Amelia, remained at her home on Knuth Road and cried when she saw, from across a 40-acre field, the hearse carrying Frank to Edward's home on County HH where his body lay in state. Amelia was so distraught that she remained home and never went to the viewing.

A Sept. 9, 1920, notice said Frank's mother, Emilie (Amelia) Brehm would be heard and considered for the appointment of an administrator of the estate of Frank, who had no children.

Form 3 REGISTRATION CARD		No. 111
1	Name of registrant	Frank R. Brehm 28
2	Place of birth	1141 Hackett St Beloit Wis
3	Date of birth	August 26 1888
4	Place of birth (if a naturalized citizen, list in plain text the name of the country of which he is a naturalized citizen)	Madison, Wis
5	Place of birth (if a naturalized citizen, list in plain text the name of the country of which he is a naturalized citizen)	Grand Rapids, Minn
6	Place of birth (if a naturalized citizen, list in plain text the name of the country of which he is a naturalized citizen)	
7	Place of birth (if a naturalized citizen, list in plain text the name of the country of which he is a naturalized citizen)	Machinist 15
8	Place of birth (if a naturalized citizen, list in plain text the name of the country of which he is a naturalized citizen)	Fairbanks & Morse Co. Beloit Wis
9	Place of birth (if a naturalized citizen, list in plain text the name of the country of which he is a naturalized citizen)	Beloit Wis
10	Place of birth (if a naturalized citizen, list in plain text the name of the country of which he is a naturalized citizen)	Single Caucasian
11	Place of birth (if a naturalized citizen, list in plain text the name of the country of which he is a naturalized citizen)	None
12	Place of birth (if a naturalized citizen, list in plain text the name of the country of which he is a naturalized citizen)	LA

REGISTRAR'S REPORT		No. 21 A
1	Name of registrant	Medicine
2	Place of birth	Medicine
3	Date of birth	20
I certify that the person named hereon is the person registered and that all of the answers are true, except as follows:		
<p style="text-align: center;">Martin Christen</p>		
City or County	Beloit	4/7/19

William Fredrick Brehm was the youngest boy and was born Jan. 12, 1891.

He married Eva Hall June 24, 1914. They had three children:

Donald E. Brehm, was born January 28, 1916.

Donald died in service on Corsica, Aug. 17, 1944. He was never married and had no children.

(My father, Donald L. Brehm, was named after Donald E. Brehm. Years ago at Forest Hill cemetery, I came upon the headstone of Donald E. Brehm. I called my grandmother, Lucille Brehm, and explained what I had found. She laughed and told me that my father was named after him because he was such a brave man that had fought in the war.)

Leonard F. Brehm was born on July 14, 1918.

He married Ruth Conklin. They had 2 girls: Belinda (Seitz-Enkro) and Lorelee (Thurber). Leonard died July 6, 1992. (Belinda had two boys, Sterling and Preston Seitz. We became friends when I began researching the family tree.)

Robert W. "Bob" Brehm was born Jan. 31, 1927.

He married Eloise Adams. They had three children: Donna (Peter Smart, SWCHC board member), David B. Brehm and Pamela (Kuhta). Robert died Jan. 17, 2002.

William was employed by Consolidated Papers for 36 years and retired in 1952. He died Nov. 25, 1966.

...

This is the final article on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th generations of Reinhold and Amelia Brehm, written for the 5th and 6th generations still living. In the next few months I will be creating a large family tree on Ancestry.com for all to see. Since writing this article, I have sent my DNA into *ancestry.com* and have been in contact with cousins from the Charles Brehm lineage that none of us were aware of.

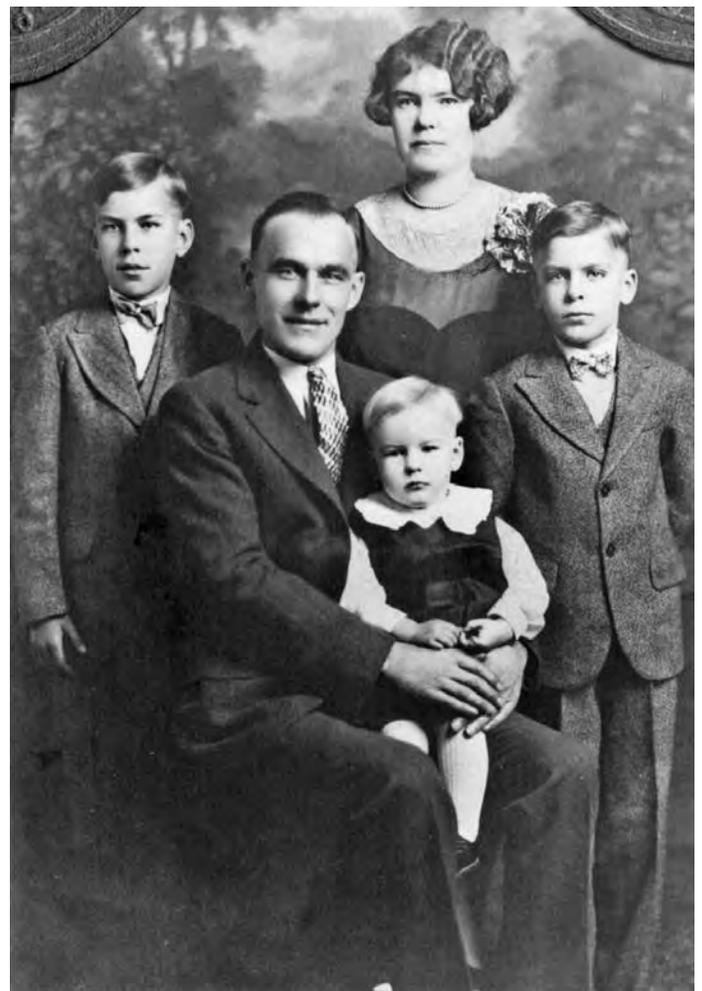
The next *Artifacts* article will be about a local kid who took his childhood dreams and has created an empire.

Scott Brehm

William Fredrick Brehm



William with Eva, Donald, Leonard and Robert



South Wood County Historical Corp.
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Wisconsin Rapids WI 54494

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**CHRISTMAS DRAG HOP
PALACE BALLROOM
TONIGHT**

Featuring The Fabulous

ZAKONS

Dancing 8 to 12

Sponsored by The Creepers Rod
and Custom Club

● Proceeds for the benefit of Club Drag Strip Project