

Charlie Swanson, Pioneer

Charlie Swanson had the distinction of being a nice old man for more than 60 years.

Born in 1850, Swanson lived until 1944, primarily in the Runkels area north of Junction City. The community formed around the Runkels sawmill and a church founded by Swanson and his immigrant friends.

A Sunday school was officially organized in 1886, although there was no permanent pastor at that time. Traveling evangelists convinced the young congregation to affiliate with the Swedish Evangelical Free Church of America, itself founded in 1884.

In 1891, the church was formally organized, with 17 charter members. The original building still stands with a large modern addition. Elected in 1892 as chairman was Charles Swanson, who served until 1935, when he retired from the position at the age of 85.

According to Mark Sederquist, the family came to the newly opened Junction City region in 1881, where Charles was employed in logging camps, earning money to acquire property, which was further financed by logs cut and sold from it.

Five children were born of the first wife, Amelia, a German. Swanson's second wife, Henrika, had two children when she married Swanson, to which they added five, for a total of 12 children. The last two, twins Henry Swanson and Eva Borth are still living.

Charlie Swanson was an early land speculator and an effective founder. Immigrants, largely Swedish, would camp on his barn floor and cook at his stove until their own homes had been built. Charlie had the high status of being the owner of a team of oxen. "He'd come over and work with the oxen," said William Swanson, not a relative. "Dad would have to work three days to pay him back. Old Charlie was one of those long-winded

guys. When he preached, Dad never got home until 1:00. He'd preach for two or three hours and we wanted to play baseball."

As a dedicated Sunday school teacher, it is not surprising that Swanson hated liquor and used to go out of his way to avoid a tavern. He also didn't get along with his younger brothers, who drank, smoked and danced.

Henry Swanson, Charlie's youngest boy, shared the following anecdotes.

"One time, he hauled a load to Stevens Point in winter. He was supposed to buy me a pair of boots. We listened for a long time for him to come. He came late, without boots. Someone had stolen them out of the box."

Henry remembers his father as being of good humor, although not exclusively. "When he got mad, things flew. One time a neighbor came and my dad was still sitting in the house.

"Why aren't you up yet?" said the neighbor.

"If I was able," said the elder Swanson, "You'd go out of here head first."

Henry said his father would play with the children on the floor. "He used to put on a big coonskin coat. There was fresh straw under the rug and we'd tumble around."

Henry said he and his sister, Eva, were giggling in bed one night, while Charlie sat in the kitchen.

"He came in hitting us with a newspaper. We ducked under, laughing."

Every morning, we had to sit down and listen to him read a portion of the Bible before he would go out to work," said Eva. "He was a good Christian man, patient and lovable."

Eva first saw her father in 1909, when he was 59. He was already an old man with a long white beard. For all anyone knew, he had never looked any other way.

Fire at Runkels Mill!

"If it caught again," said Aagot Berg Frederickson, "they'd have to take the kids and crawl in the well. Birds and animals flocked by before the fire and the cow with her calf wandered to the millpond and stood in there until it was over."

Mrs. Frederickson's father, Gundar, worked at the nearby Runkel's sawmill, 2½ miles north of Junction City. "They used to tell how the fire came through the woods," she said. "There were three children in the house. He'd throw a little water on the house, a little water on it, until the well ran dry. Then he used sand."

The house was saved and the children escaped the well. But the barn, shed, lumber, hay, tools "and everything else," were destroyed.

It occurred in a drought-dry May of 1886, when a high wind drove flames through timber, brush and dry branches left by loggers. The fire was carried a half mile through the air at times. Destroyed was a sawmill owned by Anton Arians, where Howe Creek and the Wisconsin Valley Railroad tracks met. Also burned was what the May 29, 1886 Stevens Point Journal called, "the little lumbering hamlet consisting of the depot building, school house, store, three or four dwellings, barn, &c.", all "swept from the face of the earth."

Arians apparently had been fighting fires for three days. Several back fires had been set to save the mill, a tactic defeated by the strong winds. As he fought to save the mill, wrote the Journal, Arians saw the house his family lived in catch fire.

Human life was saved, but the fire consumed household goods, books, papers and the local post office, with its letters undelivered. Some 60,000 feet of lumber belonging to Arians and more owned by other lumbermen, became fuel. There was no insurance, but the disaster may have been mitigated by the decision earlier to move the mill to Junction City.

"It used to be a good mill, my dad said," recalled Albert Mayer, "until the lumber kind of ran out."

In its inception and demise, Runkel's Mill was typical of sawmill towns of the 1880s and 1890s and of the lumbering era in central and northern Wisconsin.

George Runkel began his purchases in 1872.

Tax records show a jump in the evaluation of SWSW Section 24, in what was then Eau Plaine, in 1876, reflecting the building of the new sawmill. In 1877, a road was ordered laid to "Runkel's Mill." Although he kept most of the land, Runkel sold the mill to Anton Arians, who apparently ran the Eau Plaine Land Co.

The decade from the building of the mill in 1876 to its destruction in 1886, was one of heavy immigration, particularly from Scandinavia. The Norsemen were experienced woodmen and quickly adapted to a new life in the pineries. The 1880 census for Eau Plaine lists occupations related to the cutting and sawing of logs: trimmers, slab sawers, dressers, millwrights, lumber shippers, shingle sawyers, loggers, lumber edgers, log drivers, lumber pilers, filers and saw setters.

A typical family, such as the Bergs, came to work the woods long enough to pay for and clear their own 40-acre farm and buy a team of oxen. When the pines were gone, the farms had started. "My father," said Mrs. Frederickson, "bought a boxcar, loaded it with a cow, calf, 10 chickens, a wife and three children, and left it on a sidetrack until he could build his house."

Essential to the development of this woodland was the coming of the Wisconsin Valley Railroad, opening tracks of pine distant from markets, as well as allowing easy migration of potential workers. The railroad also allowed access by fire-fighters, when, in the dry spring of 1886, calls for help came to the Stevens Point fire department from Wausau, where a heavy conflagration had broken out at a local lumber mill. At "Runkel's mill" another fierce fire—wrote the newspaper account, made it impossible to continue. The rails had been twisted out of shape.

The fire destroyed the town and the mill, but "Runkels" continued as a church, cemetery and school.

Once in a while a reminder of the old days came along. Carl Grestad said that some years ago he was going after some lumber in Dancy when "one of those old steamers forced us off the road." His frightened horse, said Grestad, fell through some rotted planks into a four-foot hole.

"Sure," he said, "That's where the old mill was."

Butter Factories

A century ago, dairy farms had little significance here. A few cows roamed the stumps of the pinery and the city riverbanks but most workers logged. Feed for the cattle was poor and some had no winter shelter.

This changed as farmers from Europe located in the cutover land on their "wild 40s" and set about taming them. Only after the decline of wheat as a cash crop did farmers turn to dairying. A needed market had sprung up in growing towns such as Grand Rapids and Centralia.

Creameries, meaning butter-factories, started in the late 1870s in the state and in 1889 in Wood County by William Carey, Walter Dickson and Frank Rourke, who bought cream at 15 cents "an inch," made it into butter and shipped it to Philadelphia, where it sold for 11 cents a pound. Since each inch made one pound of butter, the proprietors lost four cents on each pound sold and did not prosper.

Closer to home, a profit could be made and dairy production in 1909 measured seven times as great as it had in 1899. From 1910 to 1913, the

number of cheese factories and creameries increased 25 percent.

Only a small quantity of milk was retailed in the towns, compared to the amount processed into butter and cheese. A tendency was early noted to send milk to cheese factories rather than creameries.

In 1910, 17 cheese factories and 27 creameries were counted. By 1913, 32 cheese factories had begun, while the number of creameries declined to 22.

By 1920, 63 cheese factories compared to 17 creameries and in 1922, 64 cheese factories, to eight butter-makers. Each factory evidently had become more productive however, as the overall pounds produced does not reflect the same decline.

The creamery would prove a prominent, but temporary, adjunct to our ever-improving dairy farms. By 1982, there was not one milk-bottling or butter-manufacturing plant in south Wood County.

The Milkman Calls

The clank of bottle against bottle as the milkman makes his morning rounds is the chime of antiquation, however recent. In 1977, the last delivery by a local dairy was made.

The "milkman," as we knew him, is a phenomenon of only 50 years duration.

At the same time small butter-making creameries disappeared, in the 1920s, home delivery of milk became popular, partly because of the rise of the milk bottle as a portable container.

One large dairy emerged early. The Mott & Wood Co. was organized in 1916 by Roger Mott, a 1915 arrival in Rapids who, upon moving to Evanston, Ill., in 1922, sold Mott & Wood to Paul Pratt. It would be known thereafter as Wisconsin Valley Creamery Co.

Challenging the Valley's dominance in the 1930s and 1940s were small dairies operating out of nearby farms, whose owners bottled their own raw milk and drove it house to house.

The probable estimate is that 35 dairymen at one time sold milk in Wisconsin Rapids.

In 1941, milk distributors listed by the U.S. Agriculture Department were A.C. Freeman and Curt's Cream-E-Way of Nekoosa; and Fred J. Fischer, Henry A. Glebke, George Jackson, Edward Konkol, Ferndale Dairy (J.B. Ostermeyer), Sheboygan Dairy (Ray E. Rankin) and Wilfred Rehnberg, all of Wisconsin Rapids.

Making butter in 1941 were Town Line Dairy Products of Arpin and Wisconsin Valley.

The Tri-City Directory for 1941 adds Clem

Vradenberg, Fred Braun, Ernest Hamm, Frank Hamm, Peter Jozwick, Karberg Dairy, John Luth, Steve Pelot, Peterson's Dairy, Mrs. C.M. Phillips, Joe Reddin, Basil Rocheleau and Martin Zuege.

In addition to cow dairies, a goat-milk dairy was run by Howard Kortkamp.

Out of the ranks of farm dairymen came two major competitors to Wisconsin Valley: Glebke's and Fischer's dairies.

Wilbur Glebke started a dairy from his father's farm on Washington Avenue when he was 16. When he retired in 1977, his was the only local dairy left. "Wisconsin Valley was the biggest when we started," Glebke said. "We kept nibbling away. There were so many farmers going into it that Johnson & Hill's stocked bottles for them.

As the farm dairies, one by one, went out of business due to competition and more stringent requirements for sanitation and pasteurization, Glebke increased his business. In the 1950s and 1960s, more formidable competitors moved into town, with names like Land O' Lakes, Fairmont, Morning Glory and Borden's. By this time, supermarkets had become dominant, and the milk-buying habits of River City changed.

Rather than pay for home delivery, the housewife increasingly relied on store-bought milk in paper containers at cut-rate prices. "Even the gas stations were selling milk," Glebke said.

The Glebke dairy's major local rival was Fischer's, owned by Bruce Fischer.

"My father joined his brother, William, in the butter-making business," said Fischer.

"It ended when they loaded a boxcar of butter and sent it to Chicago. It was sealed, as usual. A message was sent back, 'Would you mind holding until tomorrow?' "

The "farmboys" agreed. The next day, the price dropped from 80 cents to 10 cents and Fred Fischer went out of the wholesale butter business. Instead, Fischer picked up cream from farmers, weighed and tested it, and sent it to a "centralizer" at Plymouth, Wis.

About 1923, Fischer also bought a farm route and dairy outlet. "We would bring cans in and sell out of there. 'Give me about a quart,' a customer might say, and we would dip it into their container. Of course, they always got a little more than a quart."

Like Glebke, Fischer bought "another farm and another farm." In 1951, he purchased the Wisconsin Valley concern, the only other company pasteurizing milk at that time, he said.

From then on, it was Fischer's or Glebke's. And the big companies. At its peak, Fischer's numbered 2,000 customers, about the same as Glebke's, he said. "When the stores cut their prices," said Fischer, "it cost us customers, so we began delivering wholesale to a large area.

Fischer had intended to continue his dairy, but was displaced by Rapids Mall. "We had the volume of milk and production," he said. "The problem was getting the money to build another plant."

Norbert Bushmaker drove a horse route—one of five—for Wisconsin Valley from 1938 until 1942. "We were classed as salesmen," he said. "We got a base rate monthly and our commission, plus \$1 for each new customer."

"We were the only horse people," he said. "Every fifth week it was our turn to take care of the horses. We'd let them go from our stable over to the water trough on the square."

Bushmaker said he learned his route from his horses. "He'd stop somewhere between houses. It was 3 in the morning and I'd have to go up to the house with a flashlight. Sure enough, it was someone on my route."

The clank of Bushmaker's milk bottles as he tiptoed up the doorstep may have been musical in its way, but the summer clatter of horse's hooves could be an unpopular sunrise serenade.

It may have been partly for traction, Bushmaker said, but it was mostly to muffle the sound that the horse wore rubber shoes, as the two carried out, in relative obscurity, their nocturnal mission.

English Spoken Here

As in most midwestern states, the first settlers of Wood County included a large number of Yankees—American citizens from England or Ireland who probably had immigrated by way of New York or Ontario. Their homesteads are among those now termed Century Farms.

To be recognized as a Century Farm, the land must have been owned by the same family for at least 100 years and must be registered with the Wisconsin State Fair.

Four family farms of that duration were founded by English-speaking pioneers here.

1869 They were Irish

From famine-stricken County Cork, Ireland, in the 1830s, to England's woolen mills, came Jimmy Brennan. Then to Frenchtown, new state of Wisconsin, in 1855, having heard of logging in these parts and finding work as a cook on a raft taking lumber down to St. Louis for John Edwards.

Brennan's first "forty" was near the present YMCA, traded for another forty nearby in 1869, where he built a house and sent for his wife and daughter. Wife Margaret died before she ever lived in that house.

A dutiful daughter, Ellen, cared for Brennan until she married Charles Bruener, a German, against her father's will. The confrontation was stormy, "but they were Irish."

Husband Charles could not find harmony with the Irish and departed in 1902, when his son James was eight. James kept the place but gave up farming in the depression and started the Port Edwards timber products factory now owned by Bruener Enterprises.

"Dad started the business I manage today," said James Bruener's son, William, on the porch of the old homestead.

1971 Pine Lodge

For most of its 101 years, the Whittlesey cranberry marsh in Cranmoor has been cared for by two men. The first was Sherman Newell Whittlesey. The second major caretaker is Newell Jasperson, Whittlesey's grandson, who owns and runs the marsh today.

Jasperson's father, Clarence, had married Whittlesey's daughter, Harriet, following Jasperson's appointment to a mill position by L.M. Alexander, in 1899. After Whittlesey's death in 1935, Harriet and Clarence managed the marsh from town, until Newell and his wife, Helen, took over.

As Jasperson surveyed a large mown lawn flooded with the aroma of lilacs and pine pitch, the house built by his grandfather standing grandly behind him and the calls of wildlife loud in his ears, he reflected on Pine Lodge.

"It may be tempting to sell at times, because of the land values and the expense," he said. "But it's home. When you spend your life to build up a place"

1873 An empty pocket

“Whoever goes into the cranberry business needs a well filled pocket book, an empty skull and a magnifying glass,” write Grandpa A.C. Bennett, some years ago. “His pocket book will soon be empty and he will need the empty skull to put his experience into and the magnifying glass to find where his money went.”

Asa Bennett could have used that glass to find some of the \$500 he paid for 40 acres of bog in 1873. “They saw him coming,” says his great-grandson, Irving, better known as “Chuck” Bennett, who now owns the forty plus 1210 additional acres.

The elder Bennett (1834-1919) who bought the marsh in 1873, passed it on to Arthur (1862-1963), his son, who passed it on to Erwin (1899-1963), his son, who passed it on to his son, Chuck (1925-) who will in turn leave it to his sons Randale (1955-) and Michael (1952-). And Randy has a son seven years old. So it goes.

The buildings erected by the first Bennetts are coming down: a few years ago the dancehall and bunkhouse; a barn this summer; the old house of over 100 years next, then the warehouse that has blown off its foundation. “We will try to save it,” said Chuck’s wife, Jane.

If they don’t, old A.C. could hardly complain.

It was he who wrote, “We live in a world of change. I expect to live to see the day when we will use a specially constructed automobile to mow our woody vines with a band saw, change the rig and use it to prune out vines and later on change the platform and use it to pick our berries while at the same time delivering them all nicely cleaned into boxes behind the machine while we ride around like gentlemen and later visit the eastern marshes in our private air ship taking our friends along with us.”

1876 Dawesville

You won’t recognize that intersection of 13-73 with D as Dawesville; that’s all right, the Dawes are gone.

“I am the oldest one left,” said Irene Dawes Dibble, who lives a couple miles to the west. “I was born on that farm 79 years ago.”

“The big trees had been cut off, but I remember the stumps. The only road to Rapids was through a slough hole filled with logs. When I was a kid I saw a bear on the property and some of us kids saw what we thought was a big dog on the way to school. We tried to play with it but it was a wolf.”

It was 1876 when Irene’s grandfather, William C. Dawes bought the land Irene’s son Fred Dibble retains 40 acres of. “It was all swamp,” said Dibble, working on the house he is building just north of the old Dawes land.

“The old man and old lady came from England to Watertown and then here when Dad was a little kid. They had a wagon rigged up to an ox and a cow. Most of them had to walk, since there were 13 kids at that time,” recalled Irene.

“There was nothing here except an old saw-mill. Eventually a brother got a piece of land and another brother another piece and then grand-son got a piece of his dad’s land and”

Then there was Dawesville.

Schleswig to Sigel

Ehlert, Ruesch, Henke, Eberhardt, Marx, Engel, Kauth: all are "good German names" of the kind Wood County has been known for.

Unlike the Yankees, who moved to the Eastern United States first, many Germans came here directly from Pomerania or Prussia.

Speaking only German, they tended to con-

gregate with others of their tongue and religious taste, first sampling, in Wisconsin, the Milwaukee area.

After appraisal of opportunities in the northern pineries, they moved to where land was cheap, and, when the trees were down, horizons were limited only by the imagination.

1866

A lot a year

Alex and Dorothy Kauth, 4010 Airport Ave., sell approximately one lot per year of the old Eberhardt place. In this way, Dorothy's family home supplements their pension income.

Born in Breitenbach, Germany, John Eberhardt came to Wisconsin in 1855 and Grand Rapids in 1866, when he built the house that stands near the newer house the Kauths built.

Across Airport Ave. is a wooded forty that Kauth says has never been clear cut. To the east of the woods is a hay barn moved out from the old Lutz brewery, where Dorothy's father, Louis Eberhardt once worked.

Although a lot goes now and then, Kauth claims he will attempt to hold on to most of the land. "They make more and more people," he said, "but not more land. I don't believe that every piece of ground should have a house on it."

1874

Home sweet home

"In 1874, my grandpa had it, then my dad got it, then my sister got it and then me and I give two or three acres to my boy on the hill." It's a family farm, the Henke place in Sigel township, with a German tradition.

"I could read and write German," said August Henke, "but I ain't talked it for 50 years."

The old house Henke grew up in is now full of hay. The Henke's live in a modern house near the road. During Henke's 44 years working at the Consolidated mill, he had been snowed and muddied in too often.

While he worked at the mill, wife Mildred farmed. "We had to have the milk out by six," she said, "the same time he had to be at work. I had to learn how to get off a 20 foot haystack while the moon was shining."

"Gone but not forgotten," Mildred has written, "are the days from before, and the loved ones that helped to make this town of Sigel farm a homeland. For how long we don't know, but it's still Home Sweet Home to us."

1875

An aptitude for farming

"Grandfather spoke German; I answered in English," said Elmer Ehlert, of Seneca Corners.

According to a biography of William J. Ehlert, Elmer's father, by Elmer's brother, Edward, "Elmer was always a youth who seemed to have an aptitude for farming. As a little boy he used his shoes as horses; the shoe laces were the reins, and he hitched these up and played with them by the hour. As a six-year-old, he could drive a team of horses as well as any man. He was on every load of hay, and on every load of grain that was hauled from the field."

"I didn't go to high school, they did," said Elmer, who has been "working the farm as long as I remember."

Elmer's grandfather Fritz immigrated from Mecklenburg, Germany, in 1866, settling in Brookfield. In 1875, Fritz bought the present property where there was a sawmill, long out of operation. The Ehlert family was among the founders of St. Paul's Lutheran church, erecting in 1887 the buildings still in use.

Fritz's son, William, worked for a while as a delivery boy for Corriveau's market, then worked in the shingle mill at Hansen, a small village northwest of Seneca Corners. Active in local affairs, Ehlert served as town clerk, and was on the board of directors of the Farm Bureau and the local fire insurance company. Ehlert was a founder of the Seneca Corner's Dairy Company (1917-1928).

While William was selling insurance, his son Elmer was running the dairy farm. Elmer sold the cows in 1972 and quit farming in 1978, at the age of 70.

Although he owns, with his wife, Iola, a cottage "up north," Ehlert will not move there, nor to town. He expects his youngest son may want to take over the farm.

"Admit you won't leave," teased his wife.

"This will always be home," said Ehlert.

1879

We always had an accordian player

Behind the barn at Tom Ruesch's place south of Seneca Corners, is a hill where, according to his aunt, Catherine Marx, "young people around here thought it was a good place to have a dance hall."

So they put one up, "made of poles, with a good floor," she said. "And there were always musicians, Swiss people from Altdorf. We always had an accordian player."

As many as 150 celebrants came and danced and drank beer provided by Catherine's father, Fredelin, a shoemaker who had come with his father, Leo, also a shoemaker, in 1879, after some years in Milwaukee.

The first mass held in the infant St. Joseph's Catholic Church, two miles to the southwest, was held on the Leo Ruesch farm, in 1879.

Catherine grew up in the old house on the hill, already on the property when the Rueschs bought it. An orchard also graced the scenic hillside.

Tom Ruesch, who grew up "down the road" but helped hay on the home place, still tends apple trees he has grafted. An insurance salesman, who has owned the farm since 1945, Ruesch has also dairied, and he looks to his oldest son, Patrick to carry on the tradition.

With eight milk cows, one pig and six chickens, said Ruesch, "Pat's our farmer now."

Letters from a Dream House

DREAM HOUSE: Ideal for vandals. Three bedrooms upstairs. Downstairs—living, dining, kitchen, pantry. Nice stuffed furnishings to bust open. Old piano. Lath and plaster walls to kick in. Hardwood floors and trim. Other specialties too numerous to mention.

This imaginary advertisement for the typical farmhouse ruins has been answered by a couple of young drunks. As is their fashion, they have knocked holes in the wall, etched graffiti ("Stayed here 5 days in '77") and have torn out the piano hammers. Like the worms and termites that riddle the rafters, the vandals have acted their parts to bring the house down. Since no one else was interested, it is their inheritance.

Nothing here is old enough or clean enough or curious enough to interest the scavengers who would, in the interest of personal profit, dissipate "antique" souvenirs of a modest, bog country farm to the affluent of distant suburbs. The blue jars have shattered.

Nothing here attracts scholars from the college. The artifacts are not old enough, the information not new enough.

Relatives living among peach groves long ago decided not to travel here just to clean up a lot of junk. Gossips will not rummage, either. The path to the house is muddy. Besides, there is not enough scandal here.

Ghosts, perhaps, will join the vandals. They are said to favor cavernous basements and cobwebbed corners, vacant windows and the symphony of rats on piano wires. This dream house has a silhouette against the moon that would shiver the timbers of the hardest 11-year-old connoisseur of spectres.

Neglected by them all are certain messages left in scrap piles under furniture and in corners. These are the articles reminiscent of human life: boots, belts, pots, pans and egg beaters. These are the last words: "Rubbed Sage," "Successful Farmer," "White House Milk Company."

A few fragmentary letters in grimy, unglued envelopes evoke rhythms and images once a lively part of existence here:

. . . Prohibition, 1920 . . . Joe was home for two weeks. He had a bad one. I even got a nerve enough to go to a blind pig and got him a bottle that put him back on his feet again.

. . . Rec'd the kodak all O.K. and am sending you picture's that were taken down there. The one of the turkey didn't turn out very good, but am sending others.

. . . Our records indicate that it has been quite sometime since your hearing instrument has been checked over by us.

. . . From Grand Rapids, Wis., 1918—WWII . . . My Dear Brother: Mother and I both rec. two cards each from you yesterday saying you had landed safe over seas. Have the haying all done, and are cutting the grain. So far the grain is very good only we have had a two days thunder wind storm and it has lodged some of the grain quite badly. Harry and I are the chief grain shockers on the farm. We do pretty good for green horns. I have my neck sunburned in a horrible shape. Also three fingers with big blisters on from carrying the bundles. Will be wise enough next time to put on a pair of gloves.

. . . Thanks for the pickels. They sure hit the spot for lunch. I am eating them all day long also the children. Must close with love from all.

. . . Only for a short while yet, then the mills will close down again. I am afraid we will never get to come East, maybe better you come, with one of the girls.

. . . Eleanora and Harry went down to Laura's yesterday and she stayed and Im nearly lost without her. The house seems so empty. I dont know what well do when she goes back to Rice. It wont be long either until school began and both the kids will be gone. After the grain is cut I think Ill go to work for I dont think they need me any longer.

. . . We have a new kind of potato bug that is completely destroying the potatoes in some places. They are sort of a green grass hopper. Only real small. And they get under the leaves of the potatoes. Paris Green doesn't have any effect on them. Everyone is wondering if this is something the "Kaiser" has sent us. Ha! Ha!

. . . Jim wants me to tell you the cows are doing fine.

Grand Rapids Special

When "Old Jake" Lutz got to Wisconsin in 1860 at the age of 20, he went to work for his brother Andrew on his Almond farm. They both moved to Stevens Point to work at the brewery Andrew bought in 1867. David, a third brother, joined them in the venture.

In 1880, Andrew, who was 18 years older than Jake, purchased the Schmidt brewery in Grand Rapids, which he sold the same year to Jacob and David. Jake never married and spent his years at the home of David and his family.

According to Tom Taylor's unpublished photo-history, "Jacob Lutz was a jovial German inclined to be rather farther around than up and down. He had a high-pitched falsetto voice and spoke a pleasant broken English with a German accent." His brewery "was a favorite place for J.D. Witter and 'Squire' Chase to leave town and meet 'Old Jake' in their serving room for a nice little game of cards of the German variety and you would think none of them had a cent left in the world the way they would quarrel over point."

Next to the brewery was the old courthouse building, which David Lutz, Jr. lived in and operated a cigar factory from. In 1885, it burned. The cause was thought to be arson. The brewery itself was not harmed. In March, 1887, the Grand Rapids Tribune wrote, "Messrs. J. Lutz & Bro. have recently purchased a nine horse power steam engine and during the past week, Mr. J. Patrick has sent the same and put it in motion. This will add materially to the capacity of the brewery, and will facilitate the process of getting rich, through which the proprietors have been passing over since they assumed charge of that property."

Six years after the cigar factory burned, the brewery was destroyed in a "midnight conflagration." The family suspected arson. The brewery occupied valuable water rights.

Old Jake rebuilt in 1893 under the name "Twin City Brewery." This time he bricked the walls and added an "iron" roof. Nevertheless, in February, 1895, reported the Centralia Enterprise and Tribune, "A lurid light in the northern heavens betokened no good." The "firefiend" had struck again and the investment of \$20,000 was "now a mass of ruins."

Old Jake was through, his later years plagued by diabetes, from which he died, nearly blind, in 1901. His nephew, Big Jake, opened a tavern on the east side, south of the brewery site. It was destroyed by fire. Big Jake also ran the "old Empire tavern," mortgaged to Pabst, in 1897. By some fluke of fate, it still stands.

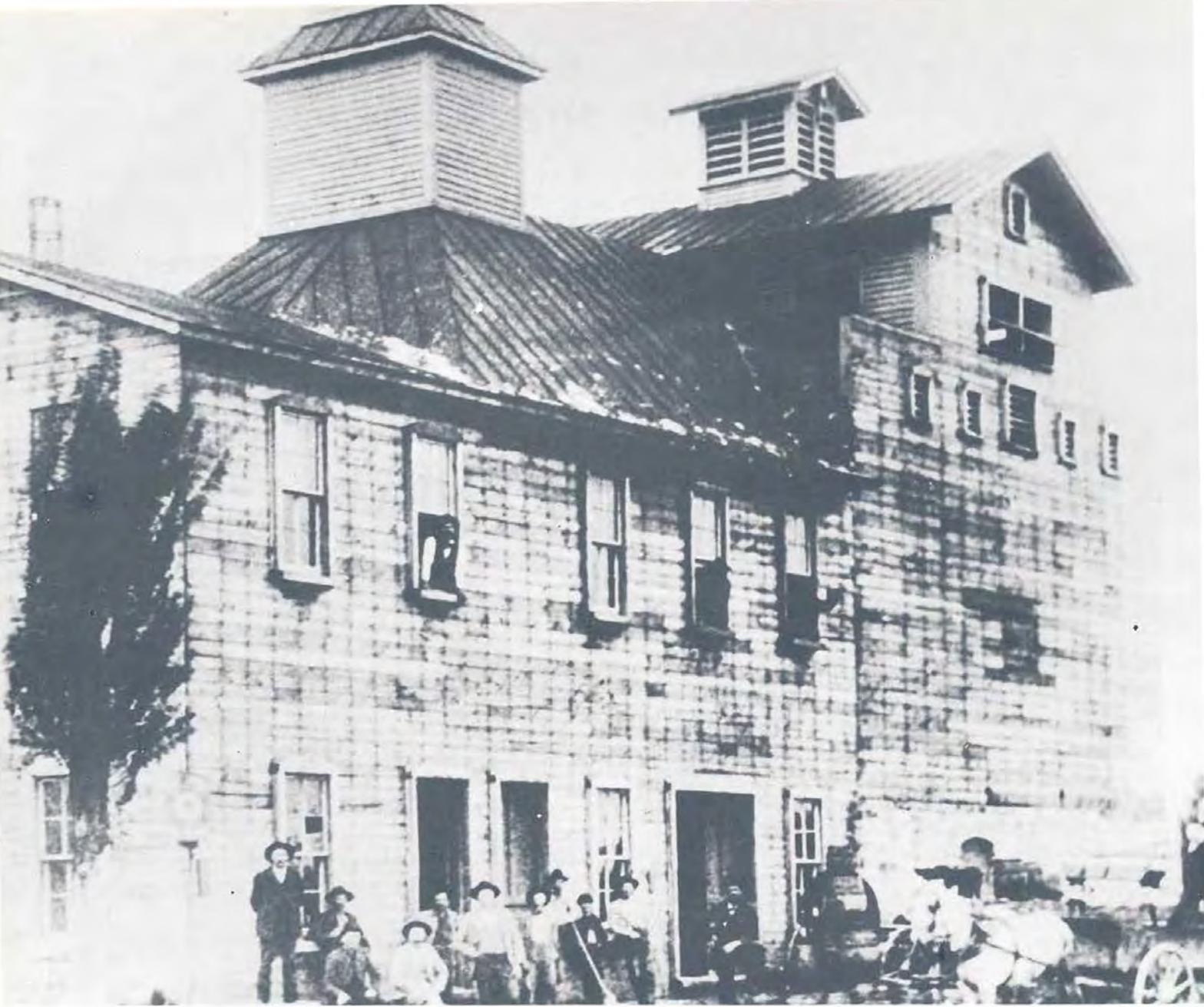
Big Jake's overwhelming accomplishment was the Grand Rapids Brewing Co., incorporated in 1904, the brewery "rising over the ruins of the past." The beer, sometimes called "Select" or "Special," was of course brewed from "pure spring water only." Lutz produced 16,000 barrels a year with 20 employees. "Practically every bar in the city sells their beer," said the Tribune.

The brewing of Grand Rapids beers was halted forever by the 18th Amendment, effective Jan. 29, 1920, prohibiting the production of beer and other alcoholic beverages. The brewery could not survive on near beer alone. Lutz had recently installed new copper kettles and the financial drain was too much. The brewery went into the hands of a receiver, then to its 1904 vice president, H.A. Sampson, who converted it to a canning factory.

Big Jake turned to the manufacture of burial vaults and to cranberry farming. "We were fixing the marsh up," said his nephew, Chester Miller, who still lives in Big Jake's farmhouse, 4510 Plover Rd., "but we ran out of water every fall." He described an earlier day when the Lutzes had been prosperous, owning a farm for the brewery horses, cottages on the river and collections of fine china, silver and diamonds.

Big Jake continued to enjoy many traditional German pleasures even after he lost the brewery. "He had a big cooler with kegs of beer and a little pump." On visits to Milwaukee relatives connected with breweries there, "We tasted warm beer right out of the vats," said Miller. At home, there was a big lunch of sausage and cheese, followed by games of pinochle or schafskopf.

Big Jake died on Nov. 15, 1938, the day of the big Armory fire downtown. Had he been younger and well, Big Jake would have attended. His own life and that of his family plagued by flames, Lutz was for many years chief of the Rapids volunteer fire department.



Mapping the Mud

First you go to Plover and turn right. Cross the railroad tracks. Drive past a church and school on the right. Jog right across some more railroad tracks and continue west parallel to the tracks. Pass the Meehan church and school on the left, then turn left and a quick right.

Bend right and leave the tracks. Pass a school on the right. This is the county line. Cross railroad, pass cemetery at right, another rail crossing, turn left, then right on Apricot St. to 12th St.

Turn left, turn right on Baker St. and before you know it, you're at the Grand Rapids courthouse on the corner of Baker and 5th.

Were the directions written today, they would read: "Take Highway 51 to Plover. Turn right on Highway 54."

When the first words of geographic advice above were given in the 1913 Scarborough's Motor Guide to Wisconsin, they were intended to get a motorist from Stevens Point to Grand Rapids, now Wisconsin Rapids.

At the time, there were no highway maps as we know them, because there were no highways.

The Wisconsin State Highway Commission's study, "Wisconsin Highway" (1947), summarized the development of roads in the state.

Conditions in the late 1800s were primitive. Before the automobile, many county and town officials, as well as their constituents, were reluctant to finance adequate highways. The state government at that time could extend no assistance because the state constitution forbade participation in works of internal improvement.

Very little effort was made to connect one highway with another and one town with another, in an organized way.

The State Trunk Highway System, with uniform signs and routes, was not established until 1918.

Leaving Pittsville, turn left, turn right. Cross railroad tracks, pass school on left, railroad tracks again, bridge. "Here is good clay road." At Seneca Corners, "some sand." School on left. "Fair road." Three more railroad crossings and you enter Grand Rapids in Grand Ave., where it is suggested you stay at the Hotel Julien, featuring Marshfield Box Springs, light and airy sample rooms, special attention to tourists, first class cuisine, a bar, a buffet annex and "baths," all for \$2 a day.

According to the highway commission history, the first automobile, or "light self-propelled highway vehicle" in the United States and probably in the world, was designed and operated in 1871 by J.W. Carhart of Racine. "It was a two cylinder steam engine with wagon wheels, the operation of which, through the streets of Racine, caused a sensation."

The state of Wisconsin was also the first government in the world to subsidize the development of automobiles, offering in 1875 a reward of \$10,000 for the invention of a self-propelled vehicle that would successfully run over 200 miles of public highway.

Although the early inventions proved impractical, by 1905, 1,492 automobiles were registered in the state. That dramatically increased to 124,603 in 1916. The larger numbers were made possible not only by improved cars, but also by improved highways.

A constitutional amendment in 1908 had been enacted, allowing the state to finance local highway improvement, a program that was instituted in 1911.

Consequently, after 1911, there was an "epidemic" of unofficial laying out and marking of routes for through travel by promotional organizations.

Included with the route directions were mileage estimates from point to point and a map of Grand Rapids showing the four routes. The road to Mauston was south on 1st Avenue; to Black River Falls, west on Grand Avenue; to Marshfield, north on 4th Avenue; and to Stevens Point, east on Baker Street. These are similar to the exits now used.

Highway 13 South was not mapped.

One "garage and livery" was advertised for Grand Rapids: Jensen Bros. at 106 4th Ave. S., featuring "vulcanizing, welding and repairing."

The 1913 motor guide was priced at \$1, or \$2 in leather. Anyone finding mistakes or who knew of a better route was invited to "furnish detailed, accurate running instructions to properly show same," and, in return, would receive a free copy of the next edition.

Registration fees at that time were \$5. Drivers uncertain about their right bends and left turns, who couldn't remember if they had jogged before or after the railroad tracks, had plenty of time to think about it.

The speed limit was 15 mph in the city. Out of town, you could watch the cows blur by at 25 mph, at least when it hadn't rained lately on that "good clay road."

To get to Grand Rapids from Mauston, you go through New Lisbon and Necedah, then to Armenia, where there is a postoffice. "Turn left down plank hill on board floor." Bend right and cross bridge. Follow a "good river road eleven miles."

Pass a large paper mill on the right, turn right into Nekoosa, then turn left and parallel trolley and river, past cemetery on left, over iron bridge.

Turn right and cross trolley, parallel river, cross bridge, and bend left and cross railroad into Port Edwards.

With trolley at left, go over viaduct, cross trolley and bend right, parallel trolley into South

Centralia.

Cross railroad, jog right, left, bend right, turn right on Vine St. and cross river bridge. Turn left on 2nd St. Bend left on First St. Bend right and there you are at the Grand Rapids court house.

From Auburndale, turn right no fair clay road, cross railroad, bridge, another bridge, another railroad, turn left, cross bridge and you're in Vesper. Go "straight through" across railroad on clay road, turn left across rails then right.

At a railroad crossing 20 miles from Auburn-dale, turn right on "Tour Ave.," and left at Grand Ave. You're back in Grand Rapids.



Elephas Maximus

In those days, Babcock had some prominence. The Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railway had built a large roundhouse there for its Wisconsin Valley Division headquarters.

In the interval "between daylight and dark," the fireman on the passenger train going north from New Lisbon remembered, years later, "we saw this light. We were getting pretty close."

Too close for comfort, he figured, and jumped.

Not far away, but hours later, a farmer awoke, looked out the back window into the early morning fog and wondered where dreams end.

"Honey, I think you've been drinking too much moonshine," his wife told him.

The farmer had seen an elephant in his back yard.

During one of central Wisconsin's most enchanted visions, the herdsman of domestic bovines had, indeed, experienced an oriental pachyderm amongst his petunias. Dr. Leland Pomainville recounted the events of Aug. 16, 1910, when his physician father took him along on an unusual call.

"Before the sun rose that day," said Pomainville, "Babcock was the scene of the worst wreck in the history of the area."

In the early morning of the 16th, the Campbell Bros. Circus train, traveling from Grand Rapids

to Tomah, was supposed to wait at Babcock, until a Milwaukee Road passenger train coming north from New Lisbon has cleared a Y junction. It seems the passenger locomotive was shoveling hard coal furiously. Still smoking to make up lost time, "the train roared past the stopping point," said Pomainville. "Seconds later, it smashed into the circus train broadside, which was about halfway through the junction."

The passenger train completely derailed, the engine on its side. The four cars on the circus train that were hit directly were splintered. One worker was killed. It was said that three others died later, at the Babcock town hall, used as a hospital.

Six camels, several Shetland ponies and at least one llama were killed instantly. According to an Aug. 18, 1910, newspaper, the "sacred cow" also met a violent destiny.

Two elephants, badly injured, had to be disposed of, not an easy task. A local veterinarian supplied poison, but allowed a circus worker to stuff it down the elephant's throat. The poison had no effect and the animals were shot.

Four elephants escaped. A witness recalled, in 1965, that "young guys" from the area pursued the mammoth beasts into the swamp. "They found them up in the Yellow River bottoms a mile north. They hooked 'em and led 'em out of the woods pretty well," said the witness, "but a little dog began barking and one of the 10-foot bull elephants went wild and trampled fences and trees."

At least two, and maybe four, of the elephants were shot and later buried near the wreck. Pomainville said that the farmer who shot them was reputed to have remarked, "Teddy Roosevelt had to go all the way to Africa to hunt elephants but here I can stay home in Babcock and shoot mine."

The crash scene was a chaos of twisted steel, splintered wood, smoke and wounded animals. Hot coals from the capsized firebox had ignited many fires. Burned creatures of exotic description cried out in pain. A water buffalo rolled out the flames on its own body.

Residents of the Babcock bogs and Grand Rapids rushed to the experience they knew immediately was unique.

"My brother, Roy, and I jumped on our horses," said Lela Winn, "and rode just as fast as we could." She met "the young Bennett people" and went with them to the wreck. "I'll never forget those animals."

Pomainville said that, many years after the wreck, an elderly lady told him that while she was picking raspberries, she saw a log start to move. "It was a giant snake," she told Pomainville.

The Wisconsin Valley Leader of that week reported, "There was also a story afloat that a lot of big snakes had escaped, as well as some of the ferocious lions and tigers and were in the woods and brush along the Yellow river, which flows through Babcock, but these stories could not be verified."

In the same issue, the Leader called the circus "an A no. 1 menagerie. "In fact, the Campbell's circus is 'all the candy' and they give the public the worth of their money."

The paper criticized the railroad, however. "This C.M. and St. Paul road seems to be a hoo-doo to every circus that travels upon it." The account stated that the Ringling Bros., in Grand Rapids "a few weeks ago," had a breakdown at Babcock.

With so many curious beasts passing through by such precarious means, Babcock had the potential for becoming a zoological graveyard of some dimension. It could be confusing many years later . . .

In that interval between discovery and confirmation, the archaeologist pauses; this might well be the find of a lifetime. Not a cow, not a horse; by golly, it looks like, but it couldn't be: an elephant skull? And more bones. Another skull. Can the archaeologist conclude that "elephas maximas" made its home in the mid-Wisconsin flats in the early 20th century?

Not rightly. These are the casualties of the great circus train wreck of 1910.

The Pecan Line

You'll buy no pecans on the old "Pecan" line.

The Pecan or P.E.C. & N., more comprehensively named the Port Edwards, Centralia & Northern railroad, was the "only road that bore names of the local communities in its herald," according to a 1950 Daily Tribune feature by J. Marshall Buehler, Port Edwards.

An 1889 edition of the Wood County Reporter, noted the beginnings of the P.E.C. & N. "Messrs. John Edwards & Co., of Port Edwards," wrote the Reporter, "have a party of engineers and assistants out looking up a feasible route and securing the rights of way for a railroad from their large saw mills at Port Edwards to some point on the Wisconsin Central, presumably Auburndale."

With the new railroad, "a large and valuable tract of pine and hard wood timber" would be opened to the Port Edwards firm and to the Centralia Pulp and Water Power Co.'s large pulp mills.

In a January 1890 meeting at Pomainville Hall in Centralia, the new railroad had been named. Directors elected for the first year were John Edwards, W.A. Scott (of Merrill), F.J. Wood, John Arpin, T.E. Nash, G.J. Jackson and J.D. Witter. Capital stock was fixed at \$200,000. A March 1890 issue of the Reporter announced "with pleasure, and an assurance of confidence that it will prove a success," that the directors had gone ahead and surveyed the line, planning to commence work on the grade that spring.

"Everybody connected with this enterprise is in dead earnest to make or break in building up the twin cities [Centralia and Grand Rapids] of moderate dimension to those of metropolitan airs," continued the Reporter. In June, W.A. Scott won a contract to "clear, grub, grade, bridge, tie, iron and ballast a line of railroad, with necessary side-tracks, turn-outs and Y's, from Port Edwards, via South Carolina, Centralia and Vesper, to Marshfield, a distance of about 30 miles. The Reporter looked forward to "an era of progress and development heretofore unknown."

"No cities in the state have the waterpower sites nor the natural advantages these have, being in the centre of a country of marvelous resources and wealth."

The Marshfield News replied somewhat sarcastically that outside backers such as the Wisconsin Central would necessarily be financing "an enterprise as questionable as the Port Edwards line."

"The principal trouble with the Marshfield people is," came back the Reporter, "that their argument for the new country scheme is knocked in the head by the new railroad. They will have no trouble to reach the county seat when this line is completed."

The News retorted: "Marshfield is not inimical to the road, but on the contrary welcomes it with open arms and trusts that when it is built that some of the Grand Rapids people will crawl out of their shell long enough to see that Grand Rapids is not the only town in the county."

By July 1890, citizens of Marshfield were termed by the Reporter, "enthusiastic" over the railroad that would afford a direct outlet for the "Northern towns." "The road mentioned traverses between Marshfield and Centralia, a rich farming country by nature, but now heavily timbered with hardwood and pine, and rather remote to mill men and loggers from railroad communications."

Along with the development of the railroad came the development of the village of Arpin, which it served, the John Arpin Lumber Co. having been organized in 1890. The Arpins had purchased two-thirds interest in 6,000 acres served by the new P.E.C. & N. in 1890, "there is some talk of the Arpins putting in a saw mill on the above tract."

At the first annual meeting of the P.E.C. & N. board in 1891, President T.E. Nash was commended for "splendid work." Only a few more weeks were expected to be needed to complete the road bed and lay the steels. W.A. Scott, Nash's son-in-law, was elected president for the coming year and T.B. Scott, secretary and treasurer.

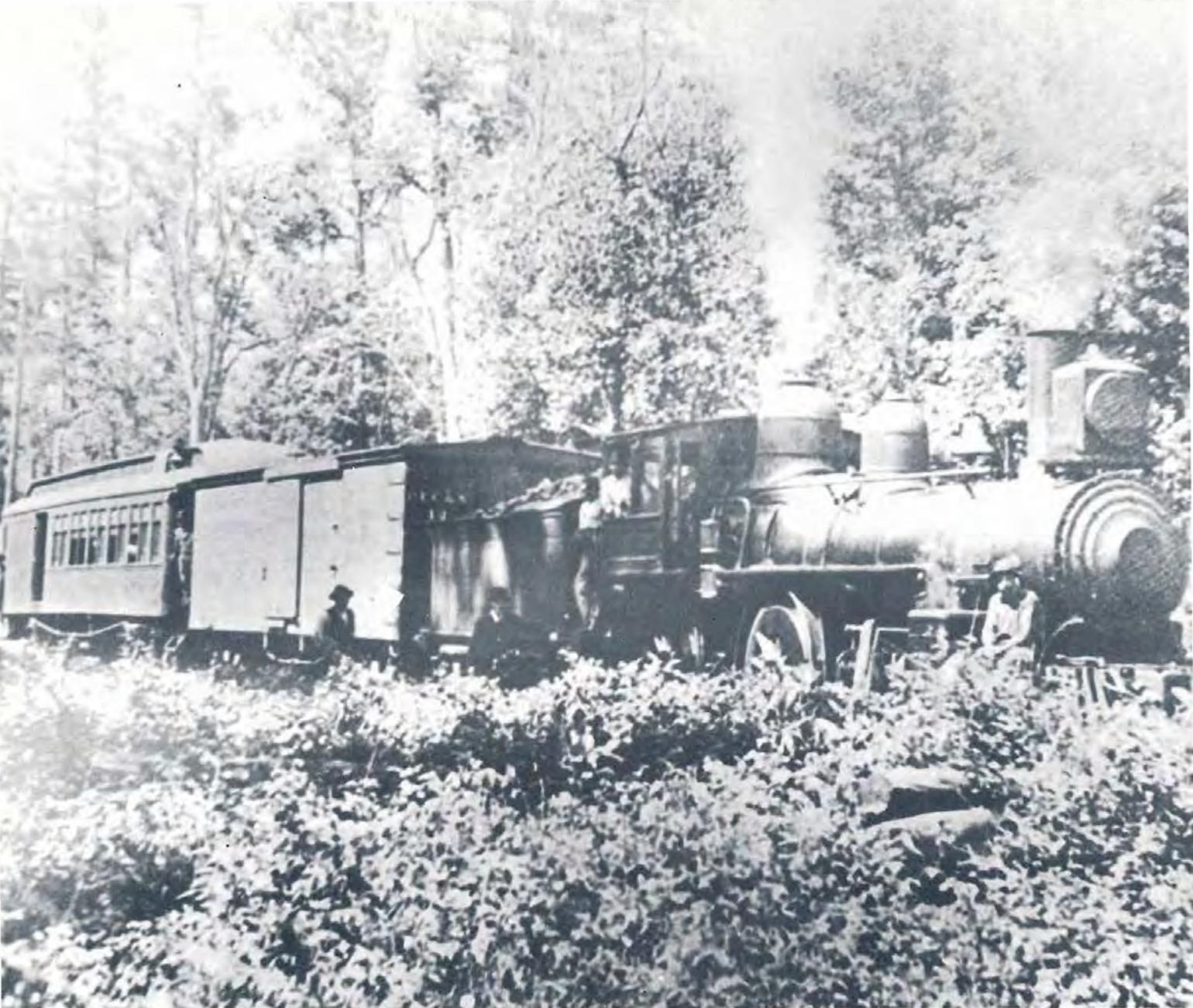
Depots were built in 1891 at Centralia and Port Edwards. By April, Port Edwards had a round-house and turntable.

The 1896 schedule included a 9 a.m. departure from Port Edwards with stops in Centralia (10), Vesper (10:30), Arpin (10:50) and Marshfield (11:45). The afternoon train left Port Edwards at 3:30.

Throughout the 1890s, rumors had continued that the Wisconsin Central would take over the P.E.C. & N. In a relatively short time, the rumors had become reality.

In the Reporter of Jan. 23, 1896, the railroad was advertised to be sold at public auction, "under foreclosure action." No bids under \$300,000 would be considered.

In 1896, the short-lived line was reincorporated



as the Marshfield & Southeastern, controlled by the Wisconsin Central, which added tracks to Nekoosa.

The Marshfield and Southeastern was annexed by the Wisconsin Central in 1901. That year, a competing line, the Princeton and North Western built a track close to and parallel to the M. & S.E.

In 1911, the Wisconsin Central was leased by the Soo Line, which still operates on the old

P.E.C. & N. route. The parallel North Western and the Soo Line consolidated their tracks in 1941.

Passenger service had been discontinued in 1940, but even today, the rails haul wood, coal, paper and other products of land and industry to and from clients in South Wood County.

But not pecans.

Ballad of the Rudolph Cut

When they write the “Ballad of the Rudolph Cut,” they’ll have to exaggerate a bit.

Twelve feet deep is no canyon and a quarter-mile long is not much of a trek, but the Milwaukee Road grade leading north out of Rudolph has caused its share of trouble, mainly in winter.

In an undated interview some years ago, Lewis Wilcox, an engineer for the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad (now Milwaukee Road), reminisced about the so-called “climax era” (between 1900 and 1940), when rail service was at its peak.

“Heavy snow in the valley tied up the railroad from Grand Rapids to up north. Tim Donovan got stuck with a 10-wheeler, a 4-6-0 at Junction City at the top of Runkle’s Hill. The snow was over the top of the cab.

“The engineer crawled out and walked to Junction City, over a mile. It was so quiet and stuffy that I fell asleep. I awoke with a start and then remembered the fire. When I looked in, there was only a small nut burning. It took over an hour to get it going again although we weren’t going any place.”

“They brought a double-header,” said Wilcox, “and pulled the train and engine out, one car at a time, about 24 hours later.

“They kept sending crews and engines to break the lines open. They would dig out an area 10 feet long every 100 feet or so and then let the engine and a plow drive in as far as possible and then dig it out, back up and start in again.

“The day the line was opened through the drifts, I was the engineer. H. Ober was the superintendent and told me that there were no special speed limits and he was depending on me to get through. I had a 4-6-0.

“We filled the boiler up and put in as much coal as we could and started to make a run for it,” said Wilcox.

“Just as we hit the drift, I dropped the Johnson Bar down into the corner and gave it wide-open

throttle and ducked, expecting the windows to break in. It seemed that we stopped and popped through the drift, but I’m not sure. The sun looked good on the far side.

Wilcox described another storm, in 1918, when seven engines and crews worked to break through south of Junction City.

“No one wanted the lead engine,” he said, “as the hard-packed snow kept breaking out the windows and filling the cab with snow, and knocked the men off the seats and back into the coal space on the tender.

“They put an engine ahead with the windows boarded up and no one on it, and pushed it with five more. When they finally came to a stop, the dead engine was sitting on the right-of-way fence. They had to bring up the wrecker to pull it back on the track. Eventually the five engines pushed the plow through.”

Lillian Blonien, a lifetime Rudolph resident, recently provided several annotations to the future ballad.

“One year, my brother couldn’t get back to school at St. Norbert’s because of the snow,” she said. “The railroad was hiring people to shovel. He worked two days and got a check for 50 cents.

The following entries are from her diary of Feb. 22, 1937:

“We have not been able to get to Wisconsin Rapids for 30 hours. The snowplow is stalled on the school hill. The 6:30 train arrived in Rudolph at 9:00 a.m. It is stalled on the church hill since then and yet is not out at 1:45 p.m.

“All the able-bodied men are diligently shoveling snow. Mother Nature had played a cruel hand and has beaten all the modern machinery and is still blowing more snow in revenge,” she wrote.

Wilcox stoked up his four-six-oh.

But no engineer could plow through that snow.

All the roads blew shut,

Which ends the ballad—of the Rudolph Cut.

Cranmoor Vigil

In every season since 1912, Hank Westfall has watched over the Potter and Son cranberry marsh in the town of Cranmoor. "When I was 12, my dad brought me out. I weeded a couple days for old M.O. Potter in the rain. I didn't like it. When my dad brought me back, the weather cleared up and I stayed."

His wife, Margaret, remembers M.O. Potter's last words to her. "I had given him some homemade butter, so that night he called to thank me. He said it was a cold night. He said the stars were out, that Hank'll be out on the marsh tonight."

Margaret has sat doing fancy work many nights since while Hank watched the marsh for signs of frost, which on the bogs can come any time of the year.

One time, she said, "I was so scared when I woke up in the middle of the night and he wasn't around. I would have sworn I saw his truck in the water, but rather than headlights, when I got there it was the reflection of the moon."

At the highway she found Hank's truck parked with the motor running and her husband napping across the front seat. "I was so disgusted to think I had walked all that way."

Henry has done his worrying out on the cold marsh at night. An ulcer put him in the hospital. As soon as he got home, he said, "Where's the pickup keys? I know you hid 'em. I'm going out and look over the marsh to see if they did the things they're supposed to."

The habit of a lifetime separates Hank and Margaret. If it looks like frost; if the stars are bright; if the moon casts an eerie glow across the bogs and glares back from every ditch, then Hank is out, watching.

Prof. Mosque & Dr. Aleppo

From a hole 6 by 12 feet at the home of Wally and Georgeanna Ives, were removed articles such as a clock, baby buggy and tobacco tin, as well as crockery and approximately 35 bottles.

Like many a cache of "ancient" objects, this appears to have been a dump whose contents, once a nuisance, now are suddenly of monetary value. Will they be plundered, such as the tombs of Egypt were? Some have suggested that the Iveses intend to pay for their new floor space with the profits from the "basement."

That the dig was a dump is substantiated by memories of the neighborhood—the lot was the backyard of the old courthouse and of the Kellogg Lumber Company. Maps show a bushy hillside before Avon Street was extended toward the river.

In order to evaluate this find from a provocative perspective, we turn to some time hence, when one civilization has declined too far and fallen on its face and another, richer in certain power commodities, has taken its place. From the University of Damascus come two learned anthropologists, Professor Ahmad Mosque and his colleague, Dr. Aleppo.

"Professor, I haven't seen a bottle of Chamberlain's Pain Balm in mint condition since the Dexterville-Hinkfuss dig. What is your evaluation?"

The antiquarians lend their noses to the green-tinted bottle containing the elixer once advertised in local scrolls as a panacea to patients who had "organs taken out and scraped and polished and put back."

"But Professor Mosque, I believe this is the earliest item," says Aleppo, holding a blue canning jar of the Mason category to the light. It is stamped 1858, but, according to the "price-list" was made in 1871.

"Our site cannot predate the manufacture of this glass," concludes the good doctor.

His colleague, in turn, examines bottles labeled Plato Water America's Physic, Heinz, Watkins Face Cream, Willson's Pure Flavors, Madame Joles Almond Blossom Complexion Cream, Whittemore French Gloss and Rexall.

"Common remnants of the Ascendant Era

(American) as a whole," Mosque says, "but let's look at these local items."

—An opaque decorative jar from Cohen Bros., a mercantile establishment in Grand Rapids that began after 1890 and closed in 1918.

—A pair of medicine-dispensing bottles marked Wood County Drug Store, A.H. Voss and John E. Daly Drug and Jewelry Store, Grand Rapids. Both started in 1891. The name Grand Rapids became inoperative in 1920.

Also conclusive in determining the dump date are five bottles labeled Grand Rapids Brewing Company. "Since the brewing establishment of that name lasted only from 1905 until 1920, our dig is thus dated," maintains the professor.

"The best end-date," adds Aleppo, "is 1930. From the abstract of the original dwelling, we know then the first foundation was established and the debris-depository rendered inactive."

"So, professor, we date these materials as 1871-1920 and the dump as post-1871 and pre-1930. How do you evaluate the culture of that time, from these contents?"

"As you can plainly see, Aleppo, this is a typical river city refuse pit of the first decades of decadence. Hence, we have a portion of a 'baby buggy,' used to wheel infants about in order to stop their wailing, and a piece of 'toy train,' used for the same end.

"This is a 'clockwork,' and was meant to notify the owner that the sun was up and tell him when it had gone down sufficiently that he might retire. The heavy object is an 'iron,' named apparently for the material of manufacture and used as a cloth-flattening device and footwarmer. Why they wanted their cloth flat has not yet been determined.

"And this 'bucket' is obviously a container for liquids. We can only assume it was used to transport spirits in larger quantities than the bottles could hold.

"It seems, then, Professor Mosque," interjected Aleppo, "that the villagers were gullible and vain and that they drank an awful lot."

"No doubt correct, wise Aleppo, but judging from the equal quantity of medicinal vials, it made them sick."



Chapter Three
PEOPLE

Walczyk's Adams

August Walczyk as a personality didn't leave much of an impression.

Townfolk in the Adams-Friendship area remember him vaguely as a polite, calm and gentle man. He was also, apparently, quite short.

As a professional, however, Walczyk has left a busy and meticulous record of his 50 or so working years.

He was not the world's best, but he was the town's only photographer for most of half a century. If you are from Adams-Friendship and you had dotting parents, it is likely Walczyk took your baby picture.

He may have attended as well to your confirmation, graduation and wedding. The cycle was repeated with your children.

Walczyk may have photographed your parents and perhaps the 50th anniversary of your grandparents. He may even have, in the old custom, photographed Grandpa in his coffin.

Like Brady's Civil War and Bennett's Wisconsin Dells, Walczyk's Adams transcends the faces and events it portrays. The album communicates a time as much as a place. Fortunately, that Adams has been in large part preserved, thanks to Tom Robertson, Adams, and the Adams County Historical Society.

It was Robertson, a photographer himself, who purchased in 1966 the equipment and supplies Walczyk had used in his Main Street, Adams, studio.

Among the collection were a mortar and pestle, a scale (in the original box), a hydrometer, a contact printer, a portrait camera and a large-format camera used partially, at least, for outdoor work. Among the supplies were chemicals in brown bottles, varnish for "waxing" prints and, most importantly, glass-plate negatives from the period 1910-1930, still in their cardboard boxes. Among the photographs were Indian ceremonies, automobile garages, World War I troop

trains, aliens, school days, 4th of July parades, churches, families, sports, babies and the Dellwood Pavilion.

When Walczyk began his professional career sometime around 1910, said Robertson, "a sky light on the north side of his studio was the only light.

"If you moved," said Robertson, "Mr. Walczyk, by way of a pencil and a magnifying glass really created a face. He was an artist in his own right."

Robertson said that when he was a boy, he, and his pals would visit Walczyk's studio, "when we couldn't think of any way to get in trouble.

"He would show us around and tell us a story," said Robertson.

Walczyk was known for his meticulous work making frames with barely detectable miter joints and for his skillful rendering of hand-colored prints.

Walczyk continued making portraits until about 1962. "The same time the Four Hundred left," said Robertson, "so did Walczyk."

The Walczyk photographs will be exhibited in the historical society's new museum at the Adams County Fairgrounds, Friendship.

The museum is the old fairgrounds horse stables, built circa 1890.

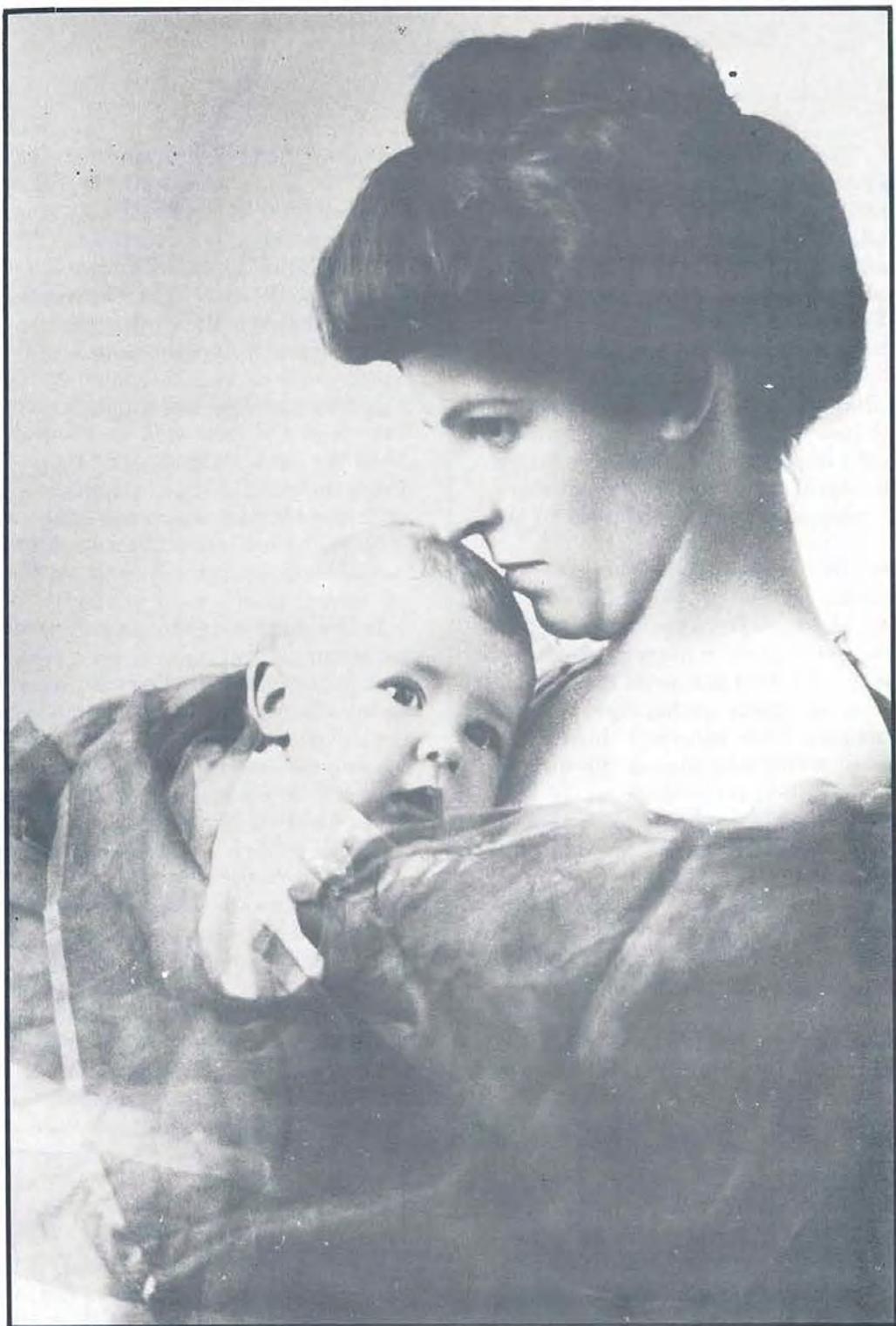
From conversation at the March 10 exhibit, it seems Walczyk died out of town. No one could say when or where.

As a photographer, his life in Adams, however, was well remembered.

"He was a small man with a big heart," said Lawrence Klatt, Adams. "He taught my crippled brother the business, how to retouch the negatives, how to color."

Because of Walczyk, Klatt, too, is easier to remember. Walczyk took Klatt's high school and wedding portraits. He also photographed, in 1914, another Klatt classic.

His baby portrait, of course.



Biron

In a letter to George W. Mead in 1912, Francis Xavier Biron's daughter, Laura, wrote about her father, who had died in 1877. She said the Birones had been feudal lords in France, with the old name, "de Goutant de Biron."

"Father's ancestors left France because of a beheading of a Biron accused of treason . . . a letter thought to have been written by him, but which he did not write, lost him his head."

Because of the suspected treason, Francis' own ancestor came under the displeasure of his friend, the king, wrote Laura, and was "put in a barrel and rolled on board a ship bound for Canada." He died, but three of his sons continued to the new world.

The anniversary of the beheading was thereafter solemnly observed by the reading of a poem written by the victim, while in prison. A nephew of Biron's, Joseph L. Cotey, in his reminiscences, named the poem, "La Complente de Biron" and said it was sung at family gatherings. He said General Biron had been executed during the hundred days of terror and placed the date of emigration in the mid-17th century.

Biron's grandfather, Joseph Biron, settled on the St. Francis River, northeast of Montreal, Quebec, and cleared a farm in 1785.

His son, François, married and had five children, the oldest of whom was also named François, or Francis. Born in 1815, young Francis left French Canada in 1835 for the less-settled timberlands of Wisconsin.

Biron landed first at Green Bay, where he began contracting with the U.S. government to supply Fort Winnebago with timber and hay, working mostly around Portage. In 1838, he floated a timber raft down the Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers to Dubuque, Iowa, where he began a grocery store that operated for two years.

From 1840 until 1842, Biron hauled lead ore to furnaces in southern Wisconsin. At the later date, he set out for Grand Rapids with two wagon loads of supplies for lumbermen. At Grand Rapids, Biron sold his wagons and teams, bought lumber and floated it down to Galena, Ill. In the process, he doubled his money.

During the winters of 1842 and 1843, Biron cut cordwood on Mississippi islands, selling it in Dubuque. In the fall of '43, he again started for Grand Rapids. This time, he built a lumberman's supply store, half of which served as lodging for himself and his teamsters, who regularly hauled supplies from Galena.

On an 1845 trip to Galena for supplies, Biron had \$700 stolen from a trunk. Although he spent another \$300 on lawsuits in an attempt to regain the money, he was unsuccessful. His credit, however, remained good and he continued in business.

In 1846, Biron bought a sawmill upriver from Grand Rapids at the site that would soon bear his name. Known as the "Widow Fay's Mill," the operation had been initiated by Harrison Kellogg Fay and Joshua Draper in 1837. Fay died in 1840 and the mill was purchased by Thomas Weston, Jess Helden and John T. Kingston. From this mill, in 1840, was shipped the first fleet of dressed lumber down the Wisconsin.

Near the mill was "Beefsteak Point," a clubhouse for lumberjacks and often their first sight of "home" after a hard winter.

In the same year Biron purchased the sawmill, he accomplished a mercantile feat for which he was long remembered, according to his nephew, Cotey. Convinced there had to be a better way to get merchandise from Galena than hauling it up by wagons, in August of 1846, Biron walked the 175 miles to Galena and chartered a barge. For a crew, he hired 12 rivermen.

Biron loaded the barge with supplies and started down the Fever River to the Mississippi, then went up the Mississippi to the Wisconsin River and, by means of oars, poles and ropes pulled from shore, hauled the barge up the river to Point Basse, now Nekoosa. Then he had the material hauled to Grand Rapids by wagon.

The cargo consisted of 75 wagon loads. It had taken less than a month to make the trip and supposedly had reduced costs by 75 percent.

In 1853, Biron rebuilt the mill and added a 1½-mile boom. The mill ordinarily ran all day and all night, with two 12-hour shifts, sawing mainly Mill Creek pine, some of the best along the Wisconsin.

A year later, he donated land for "the Catholic church," which would correspond to the 1982 S.S. Peter and Paul building. In 1856, Biron invested heavily in timberland both along the river and its tributaries and in Canada. While in his homeland, Biron also married. His wife was the "beautiful and accomplished" Marie Boivin, a baker's daughter 20 years of age.

After Biron took up residence in the pineries, he influenced other Canadians, in addition to his wife, to follow. After his nephew, Cotey, came Biron's parents, his sister, her husband and four daughters.

Biron set an example of economic opportunity and power. A.G. Ellis wrote in 1857, "Three miles above Grand Rapids is the extensive lumbering establishment of Francis Biron, which makes some three millions a year (of board feet)." The 1860 census lists 16 residents of his household, in addition to four family members. His worth was stated as \$25,000, an outstanding sum then.

His influence is demonstrated in a reminiscence by a Wausau lumberman who described an 1859 confrontation at the Kilbourn (Wisconsin Dells) dam. A mob of lumbermen had threatened to tear out the offending dam, which had backed up great quantities of logs, only to be dissuaded by a lone townsman armed with a pistol.

"The next winter," wrote the memoirist, "Francis Biron tore out the dam and it was never rebuilt while lumber was run on the river."

Besides his gravestone, Francis X. Biron has left at least three monuments of historical and economic importance.

The first is the Biron Division of Consolidated Papers, Inc. Built on the site of the sawmill Biron purchased in 1846, it is a logical continuation of that industry.

Second is the village of Biron, serving first the sawmill and now the paper mill.

The third and historically most picturesque memorial is the Biron "White House," built in 1865 as Biron's residence and a boarding house for his workers, used briefly as a school after 1911, as a recreation center prior to the Biron Community Hall and, since 1921, as division headquarters for Consolidated.

In 1873, Biron built and equipped a new and larger saw mill and improved the dam. That year, his wife, who at that time was 36, died, "a very hard blow from which he never fully recovered."

Biron's own health declined from that point

forward until his death Sept. 28, 1877, at the age of 62. The newspaper chronicled in great detail Biron's last days.

The week before his death, Biron was at Point Basse, directing work on river improvements, when he told his men he was not feeling well and would have to leave. He said he did not expect to see them again.

On Saturday, Sept. 22, he became worse and was confined to his room until noon and returned to bed for most of the day and the following day. By this time, a large abscess had formed on his side.

On Tuesday, Biron sent for Cotey and asked him to stay with him until the end. On Wednesday, he asked Cotey to open the window shutters that he might look out at the sunlight. After a long look, Biron turned away, folded his hands over his breast and repeated, "O mon Dieu, mon Maitre, layez pitie de moi" (Oh my Lord, my Master, have mercy on me). Thereafter, Biron fell into a coma, repeated the words above frequently and died at 9 a.m. Friday.

The mill passed from the senior Francis Biron to his son, Francis, who ran it until the disastrous flood of 1880 and consequent financial catastrophe from mill damage and lost lumber.

Francis Jr. was not the manager his father was and it was not surprising that he turned over the Biron mill to his younger brother, Severe. However, the lumbering industry in central Wisconsin was coming to an end as the supply of logs dwindled, and logging ended at Biron around 1892.

The mill was sold to the Grand Rapids Pulp and Paper Co., which manufactured paper after 1894 on the site. In 1911, the entire property was absorbed by the Consolidated Water Power and Paper Co.

Mead's Gamble

"All right, Mother Witter, we will build the dam and the mill."

The year was 1902. The speaker was George W. Mead, a Rockford, Ill. businessman who had come to Grand Rapids to help his mother-in-law settle the considerable estate of her husband, Jeremiah Delos Witter. "At that time, he didn't know any more about paper than the man in the moon," Mrs. Emily Mead Bell said of her father, George.

When Witter died, Mead and his brother, Ray, had been doing just fine in their Rockford furniture store.

Mead's connection with central Wisconsin had been made 10 years earlier when, as a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Mead formed a friendship with fraternity brother Isaac Witter, Jere's son. Visiting his friend in Grand Rapids, Mead became acquainted with Isaac's sister, Ruth, whom he married in 1899.

Upon Witter's death, the couple came to Emily, or "Grandma" Witter's, bringing their young son, Stanton, "As they sat around the table with Grandma, making out figures," said Mrs. Bell, "it came to the point of building a paper mill.

"Before that," she said, "people would take a little piece of the river and put in a water wheel for a grain mill or a little lumber mill. With Nels Johnson, his partner in this project, Jere Witter had bought up power rights all along the river."

Because of the enormous risk involved, Issac Witter said he believed the family would be best advised to abandon the "Consolidated" scheme.

Grandma Witter burst into tears. "That project was Jere's dream," she said. "I don't want it to go."

Mead said he would assist in bringing her husband's plans to completion. In what he supposed was a temporary move, Mead brought his wife and young son, Stanton, to Grand Rapids, where he bought a house being built on 3rd Street, with the proposition that they'd put in an inside bathroom.

"Father intended to be a professor of the classics," said Mrs. Bell. "He had lots of business training in the years that he earned his way through college. There must have been some engineering somewhere. To father, nothing was impossible, so what he did not know he learned fast, and got good people to help."

Mead's "business training" began at age 7, when he and his brother sold their vegetable produce door to door. Later, in his first year at Beloit

College, said Mrs. Bell, Mead's sister, a sixth-grade teacher in Rockford, came down with what was diagnosed as consumption. "They called for father. A youngster of 17, he went and taught sixth grade. And had a good time doing it."

His teaching career brief, Mead transferred to the University of Wisconsin. In summer, he worked as a door-to-door salesman, selling clocks and Bibles. His sales acumen apparently was considerable. When a skeptical housewife said she wasn't interested in a Bible, Mead insisted, "Let me show it to you anyway," and talked with her long enough to allow subtle persuasion to do its work. Finally, she demanded a Bible.

"I promised I wouldn't sell you a Bible, so you can't have it," Mead insisted.

During the school year, Mead worked as a furnace man for three houses, said Mrs. Bell. "One gave board, one gave room, one a few pennies to live on."

Mead graduated with a bachelor of arts degree. Mrs. Bell remembers his good-natured brag: "You sing but we roar; we're the class of '94."

No college curriculum could have prepared Mead for the task ahead of him in Grand Rapids, especially when Jere Witter's partner and the prime exponent of the proposed Consolidated Water Power Co.'s paper mill, Nels Johnson, unexpectedly died.

Mead had decided to build the dam; now he had to decide how. "It was a big river and the rapids were terrific," said Mrs. Bell. "He used to wake up in the middle of the night. He'd go and sit on the rock by the rapids. One time he was sitting, looking how they'd build a dam. 'Well, we don't have to go straight. We can take it across to the island and turn it.'

"And he didn't have enough money. Something like \$25,000 soon gave out. Down to Milwaukee he went to see the bankers. He'd borrow from one end and go back and worry. Then, he'd borrow from another to pay off the first. All the bankers in Milwaukee liked him. He always paid off on time.

"He was scared out of his wits," she said. "He had an ulcer. When he came home at night, he'd be so worried and tired we were not allowed to make noise. He went to bed every night at 10.

"Father intended all the time to go back with his brother in the furniture store," said Mrs. Bell. "But he'd worked so hard on the paper mill, he kind of wanted to stay.

On May 13, a Friday, the first machine rolled,"

she said. "It actually rolled and made paper. Father was as happy as could be. Mother and Grandmother were up on the sand hill picking crowfoot violets when he told them the good news."

That was 1904, Mrs. Bell recalled the decision eight years later to move to Belle Island. "Father and a friend had decided to buy this island," she said. "But mother wouldn't move until I was able to swim."

"On a hot 4th of July in 1912, we were all in the same bathroom and Father was trying to shave. When the door opened, he cut himself and lost his temper."

"Go down and get the rabbits, pigeons and pony and bring them all up here, because I'm going to move down to the new house on the island," Mead said.

"My brother, Walter, and I went in the kitchen and got pots and pans and put them in Mable the pony's cart and we all trooped down to the island," said Mrs. Bell.

"The house wasn't finished. The house man had decided it was a good day to burn up spare wood in the furnace, which made a furnace of the whole house. His face was very red. He was upset. That night, his family called up and said he was coming down with smallpox. We all got vaccinated. It was quite a day."

In his new estate with his family, settled now in Grand Rapids, the mill running smoothly, George Mead enjoyed what he called the happy

days.

"There were picnics along the river," said Mrs. Bell, "and lots of surprise parties. The door would open and a crowd would enter with baskets. Later, there were dancing parties. Uncle Isaac and Aunt Charlotte had a ballroom on their top floor. We had one in our new house, which doubled for a basketball court for the boys."

The Witters and Meads joined the Arpins in buying newly popular automobiles.

"We would start out full of excitement and confidence, Uncle Isaac, Aunt Charlotte, Jere and Grandmother Witter in one car, we five in our car, the women in dust coats and hats and veils. Father would make me a cap out of one of his handkerchiefs."

"Coming back, we'd often get lost. I remember Father walking out into a field looking for the north star."

"At Christmas time, 3rd Street would be a blaze of lighted trees and lighted houses. Each house would have a party. And there was the New Year's Ball at the Elk's Club."

The rewards had been as great as the challenge.

"I like the story he told of standing on the old iron bridge with Uncle Isaac, watching the building of the mill," said Mrs. Bell. "Uncle Isaac, shaking with fear, said, 'Oh, George, if we ever get out of this, we will surely be lucky.'"

"I wish those two men could stand on the new bridge," she said, "and see what there is now."

Fancy Free

“Kiss the babys all for me. Tell them that I will cum home as soon as I get money a’nuf to by a farm. I could give all my old boots if I could be at home.”

Harriet Athorp read these words, written Dec. 2, 1864, and probably wept.

She had a new baby son and a new house in the Wood’s Addition subdivision of Grand Rapids’ northeast side, but she was missing a husband. Darius Athorp had departed in May, bound for Dakota Territory and whatever riches fortune might bestow. He had not waited for the birth of the couple’s fourth child, Willie Ray, born Dec. 5, three days after the letter had been written.

Alone, Harriet cared for the baby and for Lizzie Etta, 6, Emma Jane, 4, and Frederick Gleason, 2.

In a move she may have later regretted, Harriet Samantha Frederick, born 1829 in Tyngsboro, Mass., had traveled, some years before, to the frontier logging town of Grand Rapids, with her sister, Elizabeth, and Elizabeth’s first husband, Darius Emerson.

At Grand Rapids, Harriet married Athorp (also spelled Athorpe or Athrop) in 1858, when she was 29 and he was 35 years of age.

While in Wisconsin, Darius had bought and sold land in the townships of Grand Rapids and Rudolph, using some of the timber in his portable shingle mill. The earliest record pertaining to him at the Wood County Courthouse is for 1855, when he sold, for \$350, eighty acres and “my interest in all the shingles, tools, bedding, provisions, &c.” that went with it.

After Darius left, Harriet had to get by on \$10 and \$20 payments she received irregularly from her husband, and by her own determination. She bought a house for \$450 and mortgaged it for \$300, to her sister’s second husband, Henry Hutchins.

To add to the hardships of single-parenting on the frontier, the youngest son, Ray, contracted scarlet fever at the age of 4 or 5, from which he never fully recovered, having been left retarded.

Darius said goodbye to Wisconsin in May. His first letter home is dated July. Harriet probably read it no sooner than late August.

“We are now at Fort Larmey [Ft. Laramie, Wyo.]. It will tak about six weeks from now to get to Idaho [territory]. We hear a good many Indian storys and we hav seen a good maney. But they air friendly.

“We air now in company with about fifty wagons and about sixty five men and I think there

is no danger. Tell the children to be good and I will bring them something when I come back. Tell Darius [the letter writer’s nephew] that he must larn as fast as he can.

“I want you to remember that I cant rit and you must excuse me for not riting befor. I want you to rite all the news and if Sampson has payd of that money.

“If you want to trade at Moshers you can. And if I am drafted [for the Civil War] let them get me if they can.

“The sun is now setin and must close by saying you are all near and dear to me.

“from a friend God knows

“D. Athorp”

Miles from a post office, Darius was able to add a postscript before he mailed this first message home. “I have a little time to spare now. I’m watching cattle and the wind blows like hell. Haf to watch cattle once a week and the time seems very long. We are near the Black Hills.

“I must stop for it is dark dont forget to kiss the babys for me.

“Good bye old woman.

“Please to direct yer leters to Virginia City Idaho Territory.”

“When I first got heare I (could have) had five dolars a day for a little while but it was wat and cold so I left town and went fifteen miles to a vally their I went to work I made sixty dollars in gold and since I have taken a claim of 160 acres farming land and have bilt a log house on it and will farm it.”

At the end of January, Athorp complained that he still had not heard from home. “It seems strange to me that you don’t rite as long as you know where I was a goin.

“I wish you and the babys were here,” he wrote. “I think we could make money as fast as a mint.”

By May 11, 1865, Darius had received a letter.

He answered: “You speak of bying a house and I am frad you will be short for money but you must not sufer. If it is necessary give your house for surity and get e nuf to eat. I dar not say anything about coming home now for fear but I will come home as soon as I can after I make a little rase.”

Harriet did mortgage her house, but apparently was becoming increasingly disenchanted with her husband’s activities. Only his answer

remains, however, to tell the story.

"I want you to remember how hard I have worked and mad nothing in Wisconsin and not insist on my coming home for I think I can do better hear."

He said he had sent fifty dollars and was uncertain whether it had arrived.

On Feb. 24, 1866, Darius again answered to his wife's dissatisfaction. "I know you talk rather hard to me but I don't blame you one bit. If you knew how hard I have tryed to make something to take to my family I dont think you wood skold me."

A homesick letter of April 1866 stated that, although he could not come home that summer, Darius would when he sold his farm. "A man that farmed heer last summer toll me that I will make from three to five thousand dollars."

He also offered to pay Harriet's brother-in-law \$500 "if he will come out and bring you and the children.

"I will come home as soon as I can and bring money a nuff to bye a farm," Darius promised in mid-summer of the second year. In spring, he promised fall; in fall, it would have to wait until spring.

"I will have to stay untill I harvist my crop and thresh it and sell it and that will take until winter and then I will haf to tak the stag(e) to the States and that will cost me five hundred dollars . . ."

Darius had hoped to reap great profits from grain, before selling out, but a plague of grasshoppers wiped him out. "I cood count twenty on one head of wheat," he said. "My barley was not heded and they moad it down bad."

A discouraged 45-year-old Athorp wrote next from Cheyenne, then in Dakota Territory. "I have swore I wood have some money before I went home or I wood dye in the mountings but I see no prospect of my dying."

By now the letters have become terse complaints of financial problems forbidding a return trip and requests to kiss the "babys." "You say my letters are rather cool," he wrote. "I dont know how you can expeck any thing als as long as you gev me hell in evry leter."

In May of 1868, four years after he left, Darius had "bought a team on credit and have been out

doors all this winter and spring and when I wright I seet on the ground by the fire and sware at the smoke."

Mail from Darius had dwindled almost to nothing when, in 1871, Harriet's sister's husband, Henry Hutchins, visited him in what is now Wyoming. "I am all alone today away out on the plaines a sitting in the grub wagon whilst I write," said Hutchins. "Darius went to Laramie City to get some money that was owing him. He has got a good place but I do not think farming will pay very well but a man can do well as stock raising and he intended to go into it and he says he shall never come back to live in the states.

"He wants me to come home after you next fall," wrote Hutchins.

Darius, in his penultimate missive, commented sarcastically that "Mr. H is well as usual. He goes to bed sick gets up in the morning eats his swil and is sick all day. He is the best hand to grunt I ever saw."

The last letter came from the Black Hills, written June 23, 1872.

"It has bin a long time since I roat to you but I think you did not care for you have not rote to me but I have bin a shamed to rite without sendin sum money.

"Tal the girls I will rite to them next sunday if I can. I have to work all of the time.

"D Athorp."

If Darius wrote that next letter, no copy has survived. He never saw his children again nor his wife. One of his daughters, Lizzie, died in 1880 of childbirth. One of his sons, Willie Ray, died in 1890. Harriet died in 1903.

Darius himself homesteaded finally a ranch on the Big Piney River, near Buffalo, Wyo. "An old time friend" wrote to the postmaster of Grand Rapids in 1896 to say that Darius Athorp had died. The news was forwarded to Harriet and her son, Frederick.

The information about the exiled husband and father added a poignant conclusion to the 32-year estrangement. "He had the pictures of his 4 children and he has often showed them to me," he wrote, "and would point to the youngest boy and say that he had never seen him."

Negative Bliss

When Sherman Whittlesey was a green tender-foot, "Balch and Thompson, two hardened (timber) cruisers," sent him alone into a woods. "I was told to go up through the center barking like a dog. The two men would go along the borders and shoot the deer as I drove them out.

"After chasing my bark so far alone," Whittlesey was to write, his erstwhile guides were elsewhere.

Whittlesey wandered until past midnight, when he decided to wait by a fire that, unfortunately, burned his boots. By morning, "a light snow had fallen and I noticed tracks in it made by wolves smelling of me as I slept."

Sherman Newell Whittlesey was persuaded in 1931 to "write down some recollections of events and experiences happening to me in my life of more than eighty years." Born in 1849, Whittlesey died in 1935.

In this 49-page memoir are anecdotes such as the above, occurring in 1870, and a primary account of the establishing of one of the first cranberry marshes in Wood County, now operated by Whittlesey's grandson, Newell Jasperson.

"I had saved \$300 of my wages and received \$500 of legacy to my mother" and "felt quite a capitalist and was on the point of starting off for Washington Territory to get possession of some of that big timber on Puget Sound," wrote Whittlesey.

Instead, a letter from his father, "urging me to come to Berlin, Wisconsin," was persuasive.

There, the young adventurer "found a cranberry craze raging because the Carey boys, a family of Irishmen, notoriously barefoot and ragged, had that September gathered from their hitherto almost worthless swamp 10,000 barrels of cranberries and sold them for \$100,000.

"Inoculated with this cranberry craze," Whittlesey was convinced by John Balch, in 1870, to go north to the area later called Cranmoor, where marshland could be bought for 50 cents an acre.

What Whittlesey found was "one vast uninhabited wilderness of wet, level, open marsh of spongy peat soil of two to twenty feet depth, interspersed with islands of two to two hundred acres of higher and harder sandy land covered with pine forest, tamarack and tangled brush shading off to the wider spaces of open marsh, where patches of wild cranberry vines could be seen with their crop of ungathered red berries

hanging on awaiting the coming of adventurous, fortuitous pioneers such as we."

With Balch, Whittlesey bought 400 acres "of this cranberry gamble" and returned in the spring of 1871, when "We built a shanty, got a cookstove, a few kettles, pans and tin plates, iron knives, forks, spoons and we were equipped for business.

"Digging drain and irrigation ditches, building dams, flumes and roads," Whittlesey worked with the men "and set the pace for them nine and one half hours every day. I required the half hour from eleven-thirty to twelve to get their dinner on the table, fried salt pork and flapjacks, frequently potatoes or beans.

"The summer was hot. Gnats and mosquitoes were unbearable and inescapable. We smeared our exposed cuticle with axel grease, looked like caricatures and felt worse than we looked. We lived through it and wondered if some sinister motive or mistake could have marred a fair creation with such exquisite tortures."

Whittlesey had enough and tried to sell out to his partner, Balch. "I wanted just my cash back throwing into the bargain my summer work and vision of opulence."

Another rude "awakening" came when Balch not only took the cash offered but presented another bill for the same amount. Subsequent frontier justice resulted in Whittlesey's loss of land and loot.

"I was broke—I meditated murder. It was then I met an old surveyor, Hank Beatty, by name. Says he to me, Stop your sniveling bub. I can show you where you can get a cranberry marsh so much better than what you've lost that you'll be glad you lost it."

Beatty led Whittlesey to "the spot we call 'Pine Lodge,' and have ever since owned and operated, sixty years of time."

Whittlesey and Beatty "walked, waded and wallowed west to Remington" to file his claim, but, suspicious of H.W. Remington's motives in questioning them, they "rushed farther off to Madison and secured title to the patch of 'state swamp land' we had selected just in time, for Remington's application for the same lands arrived by mail the next day."

Thieves took the first crop. Fire threatened another.

"We put Beatty in the well, stood him in three feet of water—his head barely in sight above the surface of the earth. He dipped up water and set

pails full on the bank as fast as he could. Henry [Whittlesey's brother] and I would grab those pails of water and throw them on the fire as fast as we could."

Stored berries were saved, although the next year's crop had been ruined. "But we were young and could afford to wait." Not as fortunate was Whittlesey's scheme to build on "high dry land, that we could get away from or get to easily and on a trot from the outside world."

Fire destroyed the new shack and "we abandoned our half way homestead idea and concentrated on production and development of the cranberry marsh and a passable road to it," still wondering "whether I were wasting the flower of my life in that benighted place."

Whittlesey's marriage to Annie Downs, in 1875, brought him great happiness, despite the necessity of remodeling "that log house that had no floor, nor windows and a door that you must enter endwise because the sill was so high and lintel so low that you could not enter standing up. 'Til then we had been going into that house or stable same as our horses did—head first."

Domiciles were to become more distinguished and the way less arduous.

"H.W. Remington built the Wisconsin Valley railroad that year from Tomah to Centralia passing within one mile of our place and giving us a fine shipping outlet for our cranberries and inlet for pickers and supplies. We began to feel contact with a developing outside world."

After buying a house in Centralia for winter use and working the off-season for Coleman Jackson Milling Co., Whittlesey, in 1878, bought a half interest in "the stock and store of Frank

Garrison," selling out in 1884 and moving to South Dakota.

"That was the land of promise then and pioneers were pouring into that frontier."

Whittlesey moved next to Nebraska. "A drouth there had shortened the crops. Then, I had to leave Annie and the kids and go to Wisconsin and pick the cranberries. We had our eggs in too many baskets. But we were young—what else mattered!"

Moving finally from the Nebraska farm in 1891, back to Pine Lodge, Whittlesey sold that year 2,000 barrels of berries for \$14,000.

"We thought with that kind of a gold mine, we could live in Madison, Wis., a beautiful city and put our children through the university and make governors or great men of the boys."

Instead, "we did nothing all summer but fight fires. Cranberries ceased to grow and the vines nearly all perished in the winter of 1894 with no water and no snow. We plowed 100 acres of burned over marsh . . . and planted oats and potatoes."

For 10 difficult years, Whittlesey worked in the woods, his daughter taught school "to buy our groceries," and Annie "went on the road selling books."

After that, the years were prosperous, but Whittlesey would look back with nostalgia.

"As I write this now, in the winter of 1931, I cannot help wishing I could have another chance—be young again. If man is immortal, perhaps his pathway may pass through periods sweeter than youth. If his end is oblivion, that is a negative bliss of which he cannot complain after once entering in."

T.B. Scott, Millionaire

"Here was the son of a tenant farmer who made a million dollars on the frontier of Wisconsin and who became the most important man in the history of Merrill and one of the most important in the history of Wisconsin Rapids." That is how Ramon Hernandez, biographer, described T.B. Scott, entrepreneur.

As Scott, born in 1829, was growing up, his native Scotland suffered from the Industrial Revolution and poverty that resulted from the Napoleonic wars. His father, James, was a tenant farmer at a time when landlords were replacing tenants with shepherds. It seemed better to go to the American wilderness than to go into one of the factories.

After living in New York state and Dekorra, Wis., Thomas moved to Grand Rapids in 1851. He married Ann Eliza Neeves, daughter of a prominent local lumberman and spent 30 years making money and promoting the Rapids area.

His arrival was chronicled by Sarah Wood Balderston in "The History of Wood County."

"The coming of the stage was always a noticeable event. One day it brought Thomas Scott with two barrels of merchandise. Near where the Wood County National Bank now stands, Thomas emptied the barrels, put the boards across them, spread out his merchandise and went into business."

When Wood County was established in 1856, Scott began a political career as county treasurer, as county clerk and one of the first supervisors. He also favored an attempt to found "Grand Rapids University."

In 1860, Scott joined the new Republican party in support of Abraham Lincoln. During the Civil War, he acted as deputy provost marshal in administering the local draft.

Scott served five terms as state senator. In

1874, he introduced legislation to establish McPherson County, an attempt that was successful as "Lincoln" County. His own interests ranged from a sawmill in Merrill to a bank in Galena, Ill. and lumber in St. Louis. He also bought a half interest in the John Edwards mill at Port Edwards. His speculations involved a river city's founding fathers: Farrish, Powers, Garrison, Jackson, Wakely, Hasbrouck and Biron. Scott also became a director for the Wisconsin Valley Railroad. He was the second president of the First National Bank. A devout Methodist and temperance advocate, Scott and his wife strongly supported the local church.

In 1880, Scott went as a Republican delegate to the national convention that continued voting for more than 30 ballots until the Wisconsin men changed their vote and nominated James Garfield. 1880 was a "zenith year," said Hernandez, for Scott. That year, he bought full interest in the Merrill-based Scott-Anderson Lumber Co., joining his father-in-law, George Neeves as the "biggest" lumbermen on the Wisconsin River.

His business now in Merrill, Scott moved his wife and three children, Cassie, Walter and T.B. Jr. He died there of Bright's disease in 1886.

Scott's estate amounted to \$938,000 of which \$10,000 went to the Merrill library and \$5,000 to the Grand Rapids library, both acquiring his name and many years later, Mr. Hernandez as director.

Scott's wife's will provided well for the Methodist church in Grand Rapids, asking in return that they install an appropriate stained-glass memorial to her parents. Windows from that church now grace a sanctuary that she, as a temperance crusader, doubtless would have avoided, the Pub of the Mead Inn here.

Field & Stream

Nick Zieher is probably the only sportsman we know who can claim to have been on the cover of the *Field & Stream*. "They were painting Dassow's store," he said, "when Charlie Wussow swatted a hornet, Lawrence Oliver picked it off the ground and dreamed up that picture."

The result graced the August, 1942, issue, one of many stories using photographs of Zieher to illustrate outdoor topics. A *Milwaukee Journal* of Feb. 24, 1949, proclaimed Zieher of Vesper a "Typical Trapper." Mel Ellis wrote, "He has been trapping since he could press a spring hard enough to notch the pan."

"I used to catch more beavers by accident," he said, "than they do nowadays on purpose."

Hunting isn't what it used to be either. "One year, they limited us to 10 mallards. I shot 249."

A popular hunter and guide, Zieher has sported with many dignitaries, including former Gov. Warren Knowles, "one of the best guys I ever knew."

Not every hunter won Zieher's favor. "The big shots would come over here to hunt, but some of them couldn't hit a bull in the ass with a scoop shovel."

He recalled accompanying game warden Vince Skilling on some of his tougher assignments. "Skilling wasn't afraid of two devils," he said.

"They'll say I was one of the wildest characters around when I chased wild women and sold moonshine," said Zieher. "I started my first moonshine joint in 1930. You could buy it anywhere for \$1.50 to \$2 a gallon. Selling it for 25¢ a shot, there was a pretty good profit."

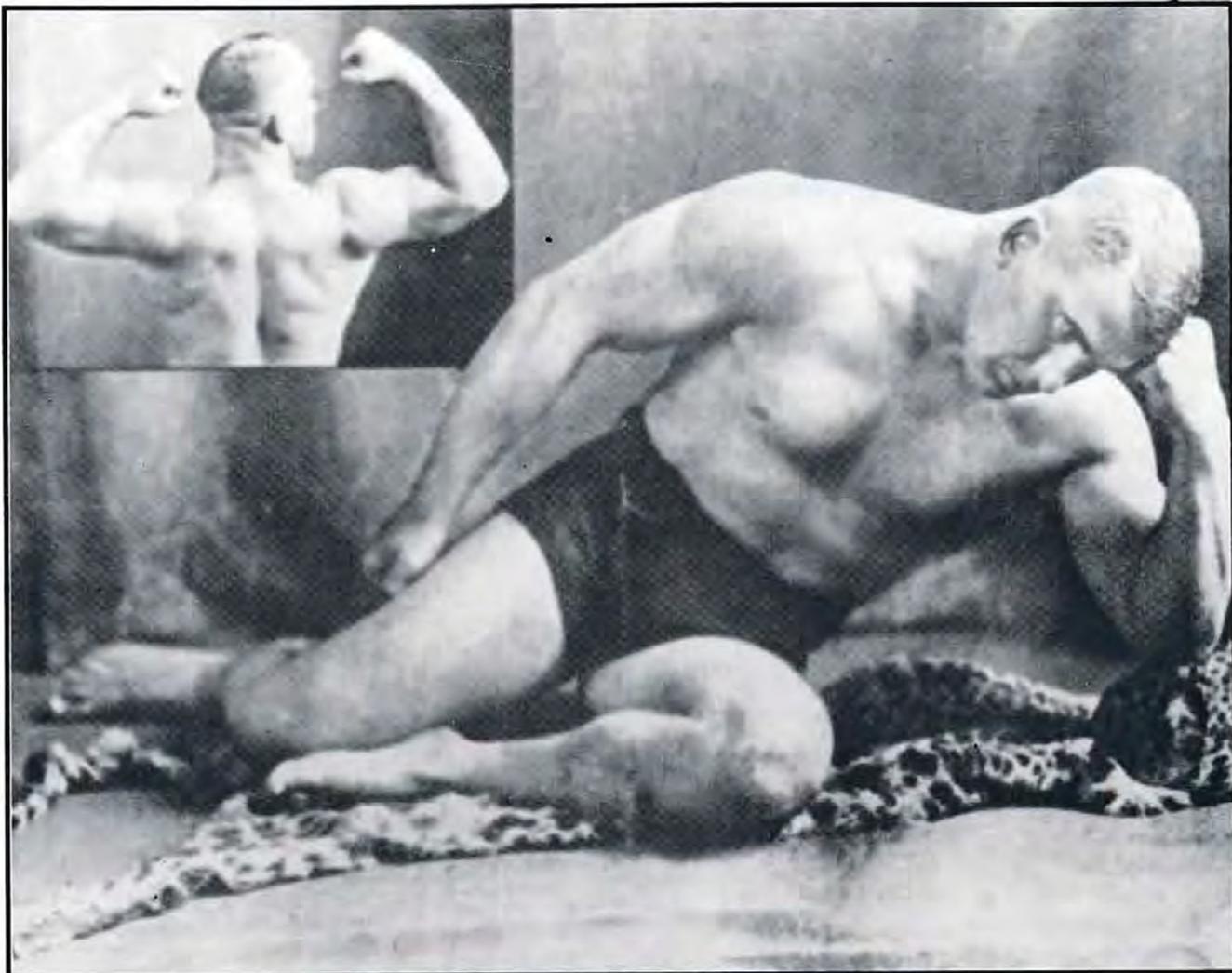
There were also hazards. Zieher was once raided at his Seneca Corners establishment after he had siphoned the contents of a nearly empty five gallon keg into bottles. "By God, in came two federal men. I had a 16-ounce glass under the bar, full of moonshine. I dumped it but the fed smelled it anyway.

"The full bottles were under a washtub. He moved the tub but didn't tip the bottles over. My heart was going bang,

bang, bang. The fine was \$1,000 plus a year in the house of correction.

"We hid the bottles in a cornfield when he left in case he started thinking about that washtub and came back."





The Strangler

Ed "Strangler" Lewis, a Nekoosa native born in 1890, reigned as world champion heavyweight from 1920 until 1932. He held the title five separate times.

Lewis in 44 years of professional wrestling earned somewhere between \$3 million and \$15 million in some 6,200 matches, of which he lost only 33. His most famous may have been in Omaha in 1916 against the Scissors King, Joe Stecher.

The match lasted over five hours and resulted in a draw.

Art Crowns grew up with the boy then known as Bob Friedrich.

Crowns and Friedrich both played for the Nekoosa city baseball team in 1908. At a baseball game in Pittsville, receipts were so low that

Friedrich found himself wrestling the "pride of Pittsville," a young man named Brown in order to pay the way home to Nekoosa.

Friedrich picked Brown up off the ground and squeezed him until he turned blue. He used similar tactics against another locally famed wrestler, Dave Sharkey of Rudolph. After beating Sharkey, Friedrich moved in 1910 to Kentucky University at Lexington to play baseball and develop a new identity.

As the Strangler, a name he borrowed from a previous wrestler, "his name was synonymous with the punishing hold," wrote national sports columnist Ted Carroll after Lewis' retirement. "With master showman Jack Curley fanning the flames of publicity, Lewis himself flashed an instinct for ballyhoo."

Over the years, Lewis wrestled in almost every major city of the world and "once claimed that there wasn't a town or city in the entire United States of more than 5,000 population in which he had not appeared."

The Strangler claimed the world title in 1914, at a New York tournament in which he threw all comers. His claim, however, was not recognized until 1920. Through two generations, Lewis would be a dominant figure in world wrestling.

"Bob was not quarrelsome, just athletic," Crowns said. "He had a peaceful attitude. He was raised in a German family, where Dad was the boss." Friedrich's father, Jake, was a Nekoosa policeman. "He was strong," said Crowns.

The Strangler studied the sensitive nerves of the neck and soon began gaining advantages over opponents by applying pressure to these nerve centers. He practiced the famed headlock on a wooden dummy fitted with strong springs.

"You could see Bob would never get any place playing ball," said Crowns.

Friedrich worked as a delivery boy for the Gutheil grocery in Nekoosa, where his strength allowed him to move 300-pound kegs. "His value was somewhat lessened," said the 1956 Daily Tribune, "by a penchant for stopping his horse and buggy delivery wagon anywhere to play ball."

"Not overly tall, his beefiness was concentrated in his upper body upon comparatively slender legs," wrote Carroll. But, as Strangler, "he more than compensated for his physical unsightliness with an innate athletic skill surpassing that of most wrestlers."

A Kansas City *Star* of 1949 wrote that "Lewis was a dramatic figure, overpowering in his size with his massive chest, thick neck, powerful arms. He walked through the unusual capacity crowd as the old Convention hall to the cacophonies of the almost hysterical spectators, who booed his step and hooted his entrance into the ring."

The *Star* described a typical strangle.

"The routine seldom deviated. The Strangler would be flung with a terrific crash on the mat; tears would stream from his eyes. His face, screwed-up in pain, presented a rapturous picture to the gloating fan.

"The Strangler, with a mighty burst, would loosen the grasp of his opponent. Lunging toward his foe, he would secure his famous grip, the headlock. Hurling down, the opponent would stagger groggily to his feet. Hurling

down again, he had difficulty arising. It was all over."

The occasion for the *Star* article was the transformation of the Strangler, now "more vitally concerned with the reformation of the nation's underprivileged youngsters."

Having been nearly blinded by trachoma, an infectious disease apparently passed among the eye-gougers, Lewis had turned to the Christian Science religion and had joined the lecture circuit.

"He was generous," said Crowns. "The people of Nekoosa were proud of him. Kids followed him around. He was a hero."

Friedrich would never live in Nekoosa again, but came now and again to visit his mother, sister and old friends.

"He always came back and put on a wrestling bout when any of the kids needed money," said Crowns.

If the Strangler came back a hero, he also came back often empty-handed.

"Despite his dedication to the art of wrestling," wrote Carroll, "Strangler Lewis let none of life's pleasures pass him by. In the modern parlance he was a 'swinger,' check-grabber and good-time Charley.

"If the Strangler's headlock was viselike, his grip on a dollar was too easily broken and he spent his final years in heart-breaking fashion dependent upon charity and with his eyesight gone."

"He always wanted \$20," said Crowns. "I couldn't turn him down, because of our friendship."

A youngster once asked the Strangler, "Did you ever wrestle Jesus?"

"No, but for 15 years now I have been wrestling on his team," replied the heavy-weight champion.

After he "got religion," having lost his fortune, Lewis returned to Nekoosa now and then. "The last time I saw him," said Crowns, "he wanted to borrow \$20 from me.

"But I didn't want him to take another \$20. So the last time I saw him, I beat it."

In 1966, at the age of 76, Robert Friedrich, also known as Strangler Lewis died of a lingering illness in a Tulsa, Okla., nursing home. He had wrestled with Art Crowns, Wayne "Big" Munn, Alex Garawienko and Kala Kwariani. He had wrestled for Jesus, he said.

The Strangler, who had won a million with a crushing headlock, and who lost it all. The Strangler, a muscular myth among the lore of River City.

Lela Winn's Chronicle

Among Lela Winn's memories are the 1900 "marriage" of Centralia and Grand Rapids and the first graduation class at the first Lincoln High School, which included her brother, Guy.

"Most impressive were the immenser red drapes hiding the platform," she said. "As a chord was struck on the piano, they began to slowly part and were drawn to the sides. The pianist gave a flourish and started a march as the first graduate appeared at one side."

Recalling her own treks to that high school from 3rd Avenue North, Mrs. Winn said, "We had to go up and around Oak Street. Grand didn't go up the hill. John Daly would wave to us to come in his store and get warm. That iron bridge was the coldest."

"I began writing it down in 1954," said Mrs. Winn, of the historical work that was to become her book, *The Marsh*. "My brothers, Guy and Oscar, went over what I wrote and gave me more information."

In her chronicle of central Wisconsin pioneering, Mrs. Winn features her parents, Melvin and Auril Woodruff Potter.

By the time Melvin, as a young man, and his brother, Jerome Potter, got to Berlin, Wis., the cranberry craze of the late 1860s was in full swing and all the good land had been taken. "So they came to City Point on a chartered train, with a land speculator from Chicago who thought he'd made a mint. The weather was very hot so the man took off his shoes. He couldn't find them and had to give his speech in bare feet."

Since it was out of season, no berries were in evidence and the Potters were able to pick up land "for a song." A cabin was built and they readied for the first harvest. But before they could reap any benefits from their labors, a fire destroyed the vines. Temporarily suspending cranberry cultivation, the Potter brothers cleared a farm in Section 10, Rudolph township.

Other cranberry families, including Bearrs,

Arpin, Nash, Whittlesey, Gaynor, Searles and Bennett, settled the Cranmoor area. Soon, the Potters returned to join them in what was to become, after many mutual struggles, a prosperous venture.

Central to the plot and theme is the struggle of pioneering a rough land. Fire was devastating to the early non-irrigated marshes. The following incident depicts an ultimately successful fire-fighting attempt in the 1890s.

"A large firebrand flew over and dropped to the ground three-quarters of a mile away, at the edge of the Potter property. The buildings were near and the wind now was sweeping in that direction. In no time, the men were astride the heavy work hores, whipping them to a gallop. Melvin directed the others to gather brush to beat out any sparks as they came, but he went on.

"At the buildings, the pickers were so frantic, they climbed into wagons with no horses.

"Melvin yelled, 'You'd better get down and fight this fire or you'll never get out alive.'

"Others were on their knees in the middle of the big garden.

" 'Praying won't help,' Melvin told them. 'It can't get above this smoke!' "

The final passage from "The Marsh" was written as a tribute to her father, but it may be applied as well to a daughter who has brought her past vividly to the public.

"Melvin Potter had come from a rough life in a log cabin out in the timberland of Rudolph to become a successful cranberry grower. He owned the Potter marsh, the house in Grand Rapids, and the farm in Rudolph.

"It hadn't been easy. Fires had destroyed his holdings many times, as had drought. But each time, with his faithful wife, he struggled back and, through hard work and determination and a large dose of what was called pluck, would leave his family a legacy and a heritage of which they could be proud."

A Kind of Harmony

"People lost their shirts and everything else," said Henny Gjertsen. "Nobody could get anything. They closed the banks." Even though her husband's partner in an Elkader, Iowa, music store was a banker, the Gjertsens lost their business, their house and what money they had in the bank. In 1939, they moved, with their seven children, to Uncle Hans Hansen's near Nepco Lake.

"The situation seemed bleak," said daughter Johannah Eswein. "We lived on cornmeal."

John Gjertsen, with his son and a crew, cut, peeled and stacked pulp logs in the Roche Cri area. At night he milked a farmer's cows for the "couple quarts" he hauled home. The work hurt a merchant unused to physical hardship. "He got lines in his face that made him look 80 years old," said Mrs. Eswein.

After two years of hard labor, Gjertsen's musical talents were realized when he began tuning John Alexander's piano at Alexander's Nepco Lake residence. That led Gjertsen to the Daly music company, where he repaired and tuned instruments. He also worked locally on other instruments and as far away as Sarasota, Fla. for the Ringling Bros. circus.

The Gjertsens had been married 61 years when in 1969 John died. The romance had begun in Bergen, Norway, where both had been born.

"He had a cabin on top of the mountain," said Mrs. Gjertsen. "We used to go up on Sunday with a group of boys and girls. He would play accordion and mouth organ. He could sing too."

Norwegian life ended early for Henny. Several of her girlfriends, who had emigrated to the United States, urged her to join them. "They got it in my head all the time," she said. Convincing

her father to buy her a ticket, Henny sailed in 1906. She never saw either parent again.

"I came over alone," she said, "on a big ship that went to England and then to New York." There the ship passed the Statue of Liberty and stopped at Ellis Island for immigration processing.

"We all had to get vaccinated," she said, "because someone had come down with scarlet fever."

Upon transferring from boat to train, the young Scandinavian met her first brash American. "Lady, are you married?" he said.

The train took Henny to Chicago where she stayed with the Hansen family. "There weren't any automobiles or anything. They could go out only at night because the horses were afraid to go past them."

After a couple years, Henny went to St. Paul. "my sister and a friend asked me to come for Christmas. They made me stay . . . and get married."

John Gjertsen found his girl would not return to Bergen so he came to St. Paul, married Henny and took her to Chicago where he opened a music store.

Mrs. Gjertsen said she never did get used to the sound of piano tuning. She hadn't liked it the first time she heard it back in Norway when John took her home to meet his parents and proudly showed his skill on the wires. "Clunk, clunk, clunk. I had to sit there through all that stuff. Ding ding ding. It was really monotonous. He thought it was a big deal."

She feigned fascination. "I put on a good show," she said.

Waiting for Dillinger

It wasn't long before police rookie Rudy Exner got action on Christmas Eve, 1930. He had been assigned to watch several parking lots from which automobiles had been stolen. "Three youths were pushing a car from the lot. I grabbed one of them and I thought, 'By God, this is going to be exciting.'"

When he earlier had seen an advertisement in the Daily Tribune for openings on the police force, Exner applied. He could start Christmas Eve, said Chief R.S. Payne, if he could come up with a flashlight, a gun and some blue clothes. If he had a car, he could use it, since the department had no motorized vehicles. In an emergency, he could call a cab.

The only communications between the officer on foot and the headquarters in City Hall were two red lights on the East Side and two on the West. If a call came in at night, when no one manned the station it was up to the city telephone operator to push a button that flashed the red lights. The policeman on the beat had to go to a telephone at a restaurant or gas station and call the operator.

When motorcycles were commissioned the following spring, a siren was added to get the officer's attention. Shortcomings of the new vehicles were demonstrated when Exner arrested an obese and very intoxicated driver at the scene of an accident. "I told him to get on the motorcycle and hang on to me. I held my breath most of the way."

In 1938, a Lafayette automobile with a siren, two spotlights and a red light was purchased as a police car. The passenger seat folded, allowing a cot to be inserted through the trunk, so the vehicle could be used as an emergency ambulance. Three years later a two-way radio was added.

Upon the death of Chief Payne in the line of duty, Exner was appointed chief of police on Nov. 22, 1939, a position he held until his retirement in 1971.

In his early days on the force, said Exner, the night duty officer had to feed the furnace and the "lodgers" in the jailhouse, many of whom were hobos from the jungles along the railroad tracks near Lowell School and at 16th St. N. "One of the first things I did as chief was to break up the jungles. They drank canned heat and got in fights."

Exner said that in the early thirties he spent many hours waiting for John Dillinger at the Grand Avenue bridge. "We would receive a mes-

sage that law enforcement on Highway 13 should be on the alert for a big dark car with four or five men. Many days and nights on the motorcycle, I wore a bullet-proof vest."

Dillinger never showed but in 1932 three alleged bandits from Chicago, fresh from the holdup of a Stanley drugstore were spotted at the West Side overpass on Highway 13. On his motorcycle, Exner pulled them over at 12th Ave. "I had them get out and stand against the car. While holding my gun on them, I reached in the car and found a bag of money under the seat. It was from the Stanley drugstore."

Exner forced them to get into their own car and drive to the police department.

In another memorable case, Forrest Case was being held by Chief Payne, who allowed the man to return home for supper before being taken to Stevens Point, where he was wanted for burglary. His guard was Exner, who saw his prisoner jump up and dash out the back door into darkness.

Exner spent the following 25 hours chasing down leads. Eventually, someone outside the Case home heard talk of a proposed rendezvous. Exner dressed in the clothes of the man Case was to meet and waited in the dark and rain at the side of the road until Case showed up. The arrest redeemed Exner for his earlier misfortune.

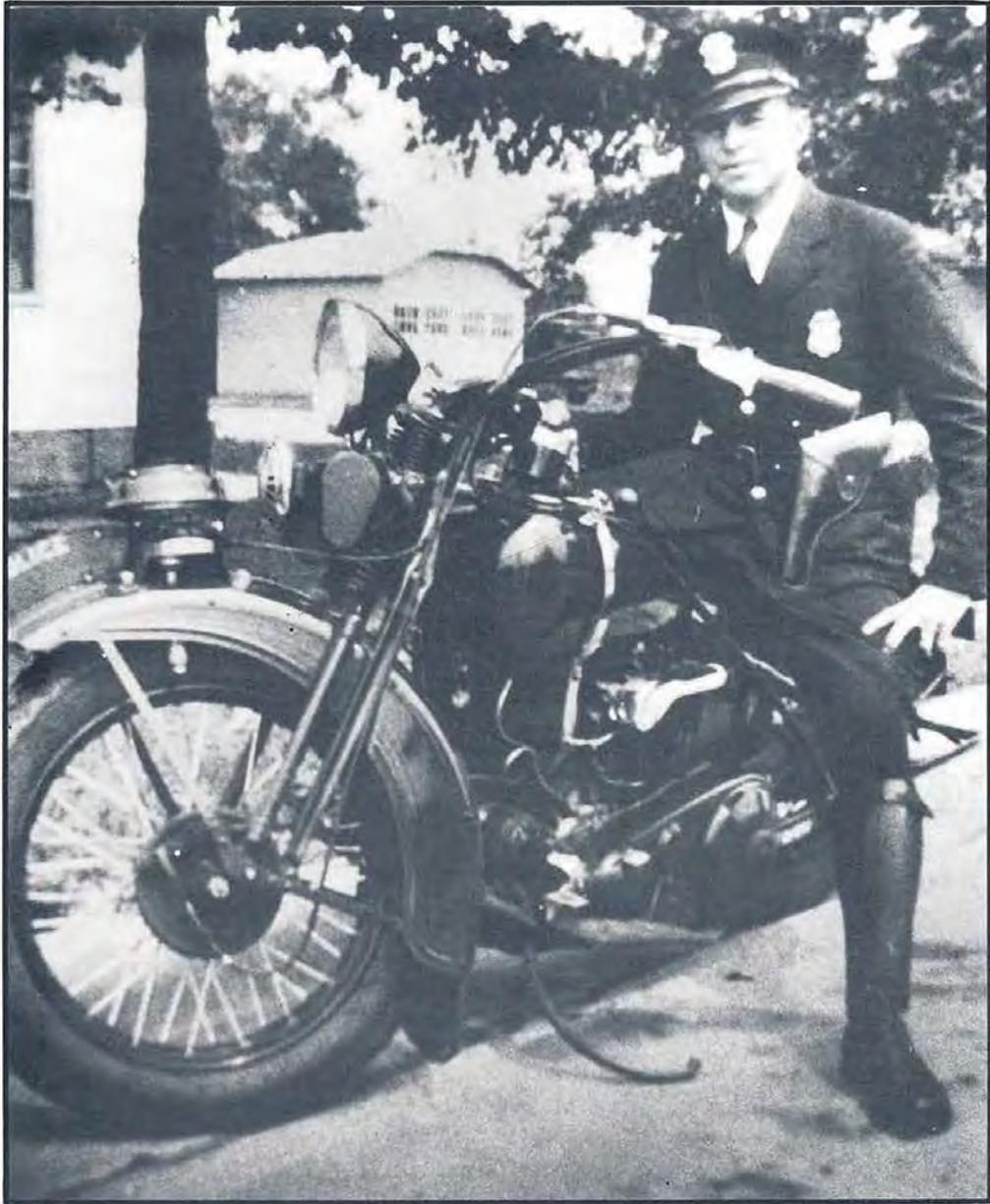
Searching a Baker Street house for a soldier absent without leave, Exner looked in every room, without results. While in the basement, he saw under the front porch what looked like a man.

Outside, "All I could reach was a leg. I grabbed him and pulled him out."

A bank-robbery suspect in 1944 provided another look at nearly successful subterfuge. With an FBI agent, Exner staked out the suspect's room. At the sound of footsteps, the two burst in with weapons drawn and made the arrest. "We subjected him to all-night questioning. The sun was rising and he had not admitted a thing."

That was when Exner realized the man had not taken his hat off throughout the interrogation, a lineup and even while getting his picture taken for the newspaper. Upon inspection, the lining of that hat was found to contain cash from the robbery.

Exner fired his weapon on only one occasion, while chasing two burglary suspects across the Grand Avenue bridge at 50 mph. "The only way to slow them down was to hit their tires." Exner



counted five shots. Although he considers himself an expert marksman, all five missed. The criminals escaped toward Kellner.

Exner said the experience got his heart pumping with excitement, just like he had figured back on Christmas Eve, 1930.

Woodville

An old salter from the Civil War, name of Preston, why he had swam the Potomac, he had a loaded wagon on the Meeham ferry and took a pole and pushed it to shove off from the bank. The pole stuck and he went off into the river and drowned

Since 1889, Linwood has provided the components of Emmett Bean's life. His grandfather worked at the Meehan sawmill at the mouth of Mill Creek. His mother was born nearby. Bean's father was sawed in half at a local mill. A Linwood girl became Bean's wife.

Bean cannot remember the Meehan mill in operation, but he remembers the old buildings. Just north was Wood's mill, a school and a cemetery—"Woodville."

"When I was a boy it was all wild country," said Bean. "Milo S. Wood bought lots of land for nothing."

Bean remembered Mill Creek backed up in spring with logs to besawed. "The mill would run all summer before they got caught up." He was not yet born, however, when a ferry ran from Meehan's mill to a landing near Meehan Station and the Green Bay and Western.

Woodville sat near the well-known route used by modern commuters between Wisconsin Rapids and Stevens Point, County Trunk P. When Bean was young, there was no university to commute to in Stevens Point and no County

Trunk P. "The main road went around and followed the river to Point. I worked on P when they first started it."

In 1932, at the age of 45, Bean bought 80 acres and a log cabin on Mill Creek for \$250. His friends thought it a bad bargain. "There wasn't a place clean. I cut and sold logs and wood and burned it. There was wood piled around all the time."

Bean added a "new part" to the cabin and farmed there, "ever since, till the old woman died and then I sold the cows."

"We used to go to town every week," he said. "In winter I'd cut some wood, put it on a sleigh and take it up to the Point square. I sold pigs and potatoes too."

Due to an ability to milk ten cows and make money at it, Bean was not greatly affected by the depression of the 1930s.

"They came in here with the WPA," he said. "And everybody got 50 cents an hour to pull gooseberries and I don't believe they pulled two bushes all day. There were guys sitting on stumps and lying all around."

A Mad Democrat

The elder Vадnais brother didn't know his own name until he was 28. "When they came to sign me up for the war the guy told my mother he wanted my baptismal papers. I was doing business as Anthony but when my mother got the papers out of the Bible I was Joseph Moses Antonasius."

Joseph Moses said he had always lived in the town of Rudolph farmhouse his uncle built except for fifteen months in "the war," World War I.

"There were a lot of Frenchmen around here," said Tony, "but they spoke low or Indian French. My dad spoke the same language as in France because he came from Quebec, Canada. So when I was in the war the colonel would take me along to do business with the French."

"I was on guard a little after nine when a bunch of Negroes came into the camp. They were AWOL at a tavern and had stayed out overtime. I halted them but they took off at a run to the beach and ducked under some seaweed. After I fired two times, the captain came out. 'You boys go down and kick 'em up,' the captain said.

"One came out and he clumb up on the bank, where the captain halted him but he didn't stop. The captain fired a shot that took him right in the back. 'Well, Gastone,' said the captain, 'It's you again. I warned you.'"

"Yes, Captain but I had to do as I did."

"And I had to do as I did," said the captain."

"That's Army stuff," said Tony. "If you don't behave, you get shot."

Tony saw no combat although he was only two miles from the firing line. "We got there a day or two after the armistice was signed," he said, "but they didn't tell us."

His job was taking care of "drafted horses." One kicked him in the side, inflicting a wound that troubled him from then on. "I was dazed all the way through."

"One night when I was on guard the man who had to haul the horse manure out in the country and sell it came back drunk. A guard halted him and he went up and kicked the guard's gun so the guard fired and killed him. That's some of the stuff I saw in the service."

Lying on his back on a couch, the only way he can sing, Tony Vадnais croons lyrics satirizing F.D.R. with as much spirit as those lampooning George Washington: to him they are Republicans. "I'm a mad Democrat," says Tony.

Shanagolden and Back

As reserve judge, Herbert A. Bunde figured in the temporal destiny of thousands of Wisconsin citizens including Edward F. Kanieski in 1952 and Ed Gein in 1957.

Following graduation from the University of Wisconsin Law School, Bunde served as Wisconsin Rapids city attorney from 1931 until 1942 when he enlisted in the Navy. As city attorney, Bunde said, his major accomplishment was disposal of at least one-third of the city's ordinances, including those referring to sidewalks, horse-drawn vehicles and breweries.

After World War II, Bunde was elected Wood County district attorney. Following two terms, he successfully campaigned for circuit judge of Wood, Waushara, Portage and Waupaca counties, a seat he held from 1945 until 1967.

"The first case I remember," he said, "was in Stevens Point. People would not believe it but we had to have an interpreter. Many of the participants spoke only Polish."

Bunde's river city heritage began shortly after 1868 when his father Charles, a German immigrant, moved from St. Louis to Grand Rapids. When Bunde was one year old, the family moved to a lumber town founded by

T.E. Nash in northern Wisconsin. This was "Shanagolden."

"We stayed until the mill burned," said Bunde, "which ended the Nash interests there." At least a dozen houses were moved from Shanagolden to nearby Glidden, where Bunde attended school.

"I drove up there two years ago," he said. "The road had been changed so I stopped to ask what road to take to Shanagolden. From the back room an elderly gentleman called, 'That sounds like Herbie Bunde!' It was someone I went to school with in Glidden."

Grand Rapids was always considered "home" and the Bundes moved back in 1920, allowing Herbert at age 15 to join the Lincoln High class of 1922.

"I was happy to move my oldest grandson's admission to the State Bar last spring," said Bunde, who is proud of his own career that included three of the state's outstanding news stories in 1958.

His statement to the jury of the Kanieski trial stands as an appropriate summation of Bunde's own aspiration. "You have done your duty as an American citizen and that is the best compliment I can give you."

Talk American

Her father, Charles Bunde, wanted her to “talk American,” said Carrie Bunde Panter, older sister of Herbert Bunde. Many neighbors, however, continued to speak German, French or English with a brogue.

Charles Bunde, she said, came to the United States because his father had been in four wars against the Polish and French and did not want Charles to suffer the same fate. The young Bunde intended to stay with an uncle in Milwaukee but “somehow the people on the dock got him mixed up” and he ended up in St. Louis working on a vegetable farm.

Demand for lumberjacks brought Bunde north to Grand Rapids where he soon switched to railroad work, primarily for T.E. Nash. After his marriage to Alvina Brosinski, Bunde established his household on 9th St. The neighborhood resounded not only with foreign tongues but with the cackle and moo of livestock. Family cows were led to the street after morning chores, where, for a “grassing” fee, “a couple guys would herd them to the fields.” automobiles were unknown and horses scarce.

“My father used to walk from here to the south side where he worked 14 hours and then had to walk back.”

Charles and Alvina, “who weren’t rich,”

sacrificed to send their sons to the state university at Madison. “My mother baked bread. The boys used to barber to help pay their way through.”

By the time Charles took his family north to Glidden, Carrie was already working on her own for the telephone company. Her wedding was held “up north” however. Her husband, Alfred Panter, worked for the railroad there.

Panter, said Carrie, was the son of one of the founders of Kellner. “The church and the town are on his land.”

Unfortunately, Alfred broke both legs working on the railroad and the young couple returned to Grand Rapids. During World War I Panter moved to Milwaukee where he worked in a bomb factory. “We stayed until my husband got sick. The doctor said to come back here.”

Throughout the depression, the Panters owned and operated a grocery store at 8th and Chestnut streets. It was not an easy time. “Everybody charged and you couldn’t collect.”

Alfred died in 1957, the year the two celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. “I have lived as a widow 25 years,” said Carrie Panter.

The Old Country

The best birthday present, said Bernice Madejczyk, would be a trip back to Poland. To Bernice, born in 1881, "the old country" is a golden vision of peasant farms and friendly folk. "There was not a bit of fighting," she said. "The people were all together, dancing and drinking."

The former Bernice Motyka left the old country at the age of 16 when she, with nine other girls from her village, boarded a ship for the new world. "Daddy gave me the money," she said, "but he didn't want me to go. 'You never come back no more,' he said."

The crossing is remembered as a good time flirting with German immigrants on the ship.

After checking in at Ellis Island, Bernice was put on a train to Sault Ste. Marie. At the northern Michigan port, Bernice stayed with her aunt and uncle, Teckla and Stanislaw Wojnarski. The semi-rural setting reminded Bernice of Poland. Many countrymen carried on the same wedding and birthday rituals.

"Chicago was altogether different," she said of her next home. "It was everybody for themself."

Six years after she married Albert Madejczyk, another young Polish immigrant, the two moved to Necedah, because "he wanted to live in the country."

The Madejczyk home was a former cranberry marsh that had burned over. The dwelling was "a cranberry house." "People that worked here

stayed upstairs. Downstairs, the floors were wore out from dancing."

Albert went to work for the railroad at a dollar a day, leaving Bernice to tend to the farm work. "I raised the beans, the cucumbers, milked the cows, working, working, working. With the hay, with the oats. Lots of chickens—500." She picked blueberries for 10¢ a pound and sold cream. From milk, she made cheese.

At the time, her farm might have been less isolated than it is now. Highway 21 had not yet been built and the wagon trail passing her house was the main route west from Necedah. It was common for Indians to stop for a cup of coffee.

"They don't bother so bad," said Bernice. "They say thank you very much. Sometimes they bought potatoes."

Tramps also stopped by for snacks. "I'll pay you sometime," they said. That was in the old days.

Then people came from all over, she said, and it was all right.

Albert died in 1944. When she was 82, Bernice stopped milking cows. Her last dance was son Joe's wedding in 1948. She doesn't feel too good now. But when she speaks once again of a Polish wedding long ago, Bernice Madejczyk's voice fills with fun and it is clear she is seeing with young eyes the old country.

Partnership

When Plainfield turned 100 in 1982, the town was only three years older than Lena Barker.

Lena's grandfather, Jacob Mehne, was a carpenter with 12 children, of which ten followed him to Wisconsin in the early 1860s. One of them, young Jacob, was immediately drafted into the Civil War, at age 18.

"He never fought in a real battle," said Mrs. Barker. "He was sent out to protect civilians from Indians." Mehne learned many Indian words before he learned English.

By the time Mehne returned to the Almond area, his German sweetheart waited for him. They married and settled on the farm to which his military service entitled him.

To learn the new language, Mehne sat for hours copying words from newspapers. Eventually, the family spoke English and Lena forgot her childhood German.

Mrs. Barker attended the "common school" through 8th grade, when she entered Stevens Point Normal and earned a grade-school teaching certificate at age 18. For 19 years, she taught at Polonia, Ellis and Bancroft "I'll bet no other teacher in Portage County has been paid in gold," she said.

From her wages, Mrs. Barker had to pay room and board at a local farmhouse. She said she joined in with chores as a member of the household. When the school children caught measles, she did too. Since there was no substitute teacher, the school was closed for three weeks.

At age 37, Lena married Duncan Barker, a town of Pine grove farmer, having finally met the "right Lutheran."

On the farm, she worked along with her husband. When their only child, Earl, was born, they took him to the barn for chores. Back in the house, Duncan helped with the dishes.

A sort of catastrophe changed the farm partnership to another kind. "We lost the whole herd to T.B.," she said. "The neighbors helped us drive them to Bancroft and load them on the boxcar."

Government compensation for the cattle enabled the Barkers to move to Plainfield, where Duncan bought a garage and started selling cars. When he obtained the Chevrolet franchise that Earl and grandson David still operate, success was assured.

"Selling cars seemed to come naturally for Duncan," said Mrs. Barker. "I helped him. When they'd come in, I'd talk it as good as he could."

After the Mill

Mike Kubisiak remembers

Pioneering

My father, Frank, went to Erie because he had a friend already there. He came to Milwaukee in much the same way. And here. Another friend had bought 80 acres south of Seneca Corners.

Frank had the idea that he wanted to farm. What he bought was nothing but brush and trees, a wild 40 where the pine had just been cut off by the Cameron lumber company of Vesper. What was left on the land was maple, basswood and stumps of pine as big as four feet across.

He started clearing the land and built a little log house. My older brother was born in Milwaukee, but I was born in that house.

As soon as we got big enough, we had to work on the farm. We only went to school when there was nothing else to do. My mother, Antonette, sometimes I wonder to this day how she survived, taking care of 12 kids and out in the field with my father until we grew up old enough to help her.

Misfortune

When my father cleared a piece of land, he would plow some of the soft stuff out. The problem was, he had the plow, but no horse.

One of the church members sold him a pair of oxen and he plowed some with them. The results of it was the first time he had to go to Rapids with the oxen, it took half a day to get there.

On the way coming home, it was already late. He came to a creek, with water running across the road and mosquitoes thicker than hair on a dog. When the crazy oxen got to the creek they crawled in and lay in the water with only their heads sticking out. He couldn't get them out of the water, because of the mosquitoes.

He took a 50-pound sack of wheat flour and a few other groceries and walked home. When he came in the door, you could see his eyes sparkle, he was so mad. He said he wasn't going back to get them, and went to bed.

The next morning when he got up, the oxen were standing by the barn. He drove them to Stevens Point and sold them and bought a mare and a gelding.

After he had them three days, he fed them a little raw oats in the manger. The next morning

when he came out, the mare lay there dead.

A neighbor pretty well versed in horses came over and said, "you know what I think, that horse's got some worms." We found out he was right. The horse's throat was choked with worms. They'd crawled up to get the oats.

Courtship

Sometimes there'd be more people out at the church dance hall in Sigel than there'd be in Rapids. One time when I was staying in Rapids with my brother, I went out to dance and to see my girlfriend, Kate Brostowitz. My friend and I rode out on bicycles.

After half an afternoon, it started to rain. Since it was all clay road back to Rapids, we were a little worried, but forgot the rain after a while. At midnight, it was still raining. When it let up, we took off back to Rapids in the mud. When we got to the place with the octagon barn, it started to pour and we went into a tool shed. It was very dark. We stumbled over machinery until we finally found a bare spot and sat on the ground. I had my good suit on.

When it got light, you should have seen us, full of clay from head to foot.

My brother was up by the time we got back to Rapids. "Where you been?" he asked.

Working

When I left the farm at about age 20, I went to work in the Nekoosa mill on the wet machines for \$1.50 a day, 11 hours on the day shift and 13 on the night shift. We worked seven days a week. Every other Sunday we worked 24 hours. Then, I heard they were paying \$1.75 a day on construction for the mill at Port Edwards.

I thought, "That's better," so I went to Port.

There, I met a friend working in piping. "Say, I need a helper," he said.

"Yeah, I'll work," I said.

That's when I started as a pipefitter. From the Nekoosa job, I went to Nash Hardware. Old Larry Nash knew I was a Kubisiak. He asked me if I would go to work for him. A year or so later, I went over and said I would. So I became a plumber and that's all I ever did after I left the mill.

When it comes to old tales and fascinatin' stories, I am a champion listener, but Erwin Hall did me in. "Ancient news, that's what he wants," said Erwin's sister, Evelyn Sprafka and before you knew it, she and the rest of the family had snuck out of the house.

"My father was real young when he drove with his father from Pennsylvania, at night, with oxen, to avoid the Indians," he began. After two and a half hours, he was on the verge of throwing in the towel, but I pressed on although I was feeling a bit fatigued myself. But each tale he came back with was too interesting not to write down. Al Capone, Liberace, Strangler Lewis: my fingers cramped.

Finally, he ran out of steam and we went outside to say good-bye. There I made the mistake of asking for one more photograph. "Did you know they make cartoons from thousands and thousands of little pictures?" he said. Walt Disney had shown him around the studio once . . .

Raconteur

"Around 1910, my father had a big barn in back. He rented it to a man for a dry-cleaning place, the first around here. The man had a big barrel, like a whiskey barrel, that you'd throw naphtha in and then turn . . . with a hand crank. He gave me 10 cents a day to turn the handle.

"The fumes would make me so drunk," Hall said, "I'd stagger home."

Down the dirt road that was Lincoln Street in 1910, farmers returned from the market square. "They would come with a load of fresh-killed pigs they sold for 4 cents a pound.

"In those days," Hall said, "you could buy a schooner of beer for 5 cents, along with several raw eggs to stir into it, and all the lunch meat you wanted." Hall said people would send their kids to the saloon with wooden buckets lathered with lard so they wouldn't foam up so much. At these taverns, ladies had to sit in the back room. If they came in the bar itself they were considered prostitutes.

The only newspaper Hall remembered from "those days" was "a little shack across from the Elks Club."

The downtown streets were dirt and the bridge swayed when the circus was in town and ele-

phants crossed it. "They made them break step so it wouldn't collapse." The railroad bridge was loaded up in spring with coal cars to weight it down so the ice couldn't dislodge it.

If commodities came cheap in the early decades of this century, so did labor. Hall worked at the MacKinnon Hub and Spoke Factory for 10 cents an hour, he said, working 10 hours per day, seven days a week. Every two weeks, he got a check for \$12.

Hall worked cutting ice out of the river to use in ice boxes over the warmer months. "They had teams of horses on the river, where men sawed by hand cakes of ice about two feet by three feet by four feet. The horses would pull the cakes out and we'd float them to conveyors. We had hooks and swung them into the ice house, covering each layer with sawdust."

The ice trucks then would go down the street. "If you wanted ice, you just put a card in the window."

Another season's occupation was raking cranberries at the Bennett marsh. "I worked in water five hours before lunch and five hours after. It was hard, tough work, especially when you got diarrhea from the drinking water out there."

The neighboring Gaynor marsh, said Hall, hired Indians. "One time, a bunch of us guys cut across the marsh to a dance at another marsh. We jumped up and down on the floor until it broke. Those Indians chased us all the way back to Bennett's."

Hall remembers a winter job shoveling out stuck trains. "We'd go out with shovels and picks. The train would get up steam, run into the snow and get stuck again. We'd jump out and go to work."

Closer to town, Hall said, Indians used to live in wigwams on Sand Hill in what was then the town of Grand Rapids, known as "Shantytown."

Hall's spirit of adventure called him from Grand Rapids at an early age. His first venture was to a northern Michigan lumber camp where he worked as a cook's assistant or "cookie." Because he failed to clean lamp chimneys properly, Hall met with the displeasure of the one-eyed cook. To retaliate, Hall snuck up on the blind side and whacked the much larger cook on the head.

The tactic proved inadequate and a bruised Erwin Hall was next seen on the train out of town.

Down on the Farm

“We’d get up and poison potato bugs at three or four in the morning, while the dew was on. And no sleep during the day,” said Celia Brostowitz of her childhood on her parents’ farm in the township of Rudolph. “We had to hoe corn and potatoes, all by hand. We had to pick stones.”

When Celia’s mother, the former Johanna Walloch, came to join her husband, Albert Haydock, “the roads were logs from Rapids to Sigel.” Like most homesteads, the Haydock place was “just a little clearing.”

“They would stick a pole under a stump and all hang on the pole to dig the stump out.”

All the kids had to work, she said. But not always to the family’s advantage. “When I was a little girl,” Celia said, “my mother and dad went to town with the big lumber wagon and left a churn of cream for my brothers to churn while they were gone. One was churning so fast and the other unhooked the top and all the cream went on the floor. They picked the cream up and put it back in.”

“We’d shear sheep in May and use water from the creek to wash the wool,” she said. Then her mother would spin it. “When she’d get away from the spinning wheel, us kid’s get at it and bolusk it up.”

Play could also provoke mishap. When the children made ice cream, “the cat stuck its head in the cream pitcher and ran off into the field with the pitcher on her head.”

When the boys grew up, they went to the Biron mill. The girls got married and then had to work

some more.

In 1910, at the age of 19, Celia married Peter Brostowitz. That year, the Haydock barn had blown down. In the new barn was held the wedding dance. “A lady would sit with plates on her legs,” said Celia. “The one who wanted to dance with the bride tried to break a plate with silver money. If it was broke, he got to dance.”

“From Rudolph, we drove to Sigel to get married. They had a lumber wagon with a band on. By every farmer they stopped and played.”

After the wedding, it was back to work. “During the depression, Dr. Frank Pomainville delivered our babies. My husband came up with a few dollars to pay him but he said, ‘No Pete, you need it badder than us.’”

The Brostowitzes found a unique way out of the depression. They started selling dirt, in the form of topsoil. The lot of the farm wife though, never was easy. The worst was when threshing crews and company from the city both came at the same time.

“You’d have to make meals for as many as 60 people: breakfast, lunch, dinner, lunch, supper and sometimes something at night, without electricity and without refrigerators.”

It seemed like everyone on the farm had to work hard, except maybe that old bucking horse back on the Haydock place. The one who would only work a few minutes before lying down.

“But when the Biron whistle blew, he’d come to stand by the barn,” said Mrs. Brostowitz, “and wait for dinner.”

Daly's Music

If business had been good in 1921, Francis Daly might not have met Mr. Edison.

In order to beat the poor record of 1920, the Edison phonograph distributors sponsored a sales contest that was won by Grand Rapids and Francis Daly. The prize consisted of a trip to visit Thomas Edison in New Jersey and Warren G. Harding at the White House. "Harding paid particular attention to the only young lady in the group," said Daly. "They said that was his weakness."

Daly started in the music business while still in high school. "I took the Edison phonograph agency," he said, "while helping my mother in the operation of the piano business and transporting her on evening calls selling pianos."

"Radio almost killed the phonograph business. At one time, we were the only ones selling phonograph records. We had half a dozen customers."

Radio was new but the Daly heritage was long, by Wisconsin standards. "My mother's folks left Ireland during the potato famine. From what they say, the Irish people were peons to the British landholders who taxed them heavily."

Three Henchey sisters landed in the Grand Rapids area. One married Patrick Conway, one married Patrick Case and "one married Steve Jeffrey, my grandfather," said Daly.

Jeffrey was blinded in the Civil War and spent the later years of his life sitting by the stove or

walking and singing army songs. Daly's mother taught school in Babcock and Hansen.

Meanwhile, Daly's father, Frank P. Daly had moved from Pennsylvania to Necedah, where his brother Joe owned a drug and jewelry store. When Frank decided to move to Centralia, his brother tried to dissuade him. "He said Necedah was a thriving lumber headquarters. Centralia had no future, in his opinion."

Daly said that when his father moved to Centralia, it consisted of a few boarding houses, taverns and homes of people mostly employed in local lumber enterprises.

In 1886, Frank Daly established a retail store in that river city, selling groceries and later sewing machines, pump organs, pianos and farm machinery.

Frank Daly died in 1904, when Francis was seven and brother Glen was two. His wife Louise took over the business, which she ran until 1936. After Mrs. Daly's death in 1945, "Glen and I operated together," said Daly. "He handled the music and I handled the appliances until he moved the music business."

Louise Daly put up the building in 1922 that continues to be run as a television and major appliance store by her grandson, Francis Daly Jr., better known as "Bud." Upstairs lives the man who had his picture taken in 1921 with Thomas Edison, Bud's father, Francis Daly, Sr.

Nothing out of Kilter

When Ralph Roberts' father bought land along what was then the "river road" on the east bank south of Nekoosa, "every plowable foot of land was put into crops. Potatoes were the biggest. In fall, we'd go to Nekoosa with a load of potatoes. Eighty other loads would be there. We'd help each other shovel them off. When the potato business got into big hands, we went into dairying."

Roberts remembers his father saying after buying 640 acres at \$7 an acre, "Son, if we can hang on to that land, it'll make us rich some day." Unfortunately, the year after his parents moved to the Saratoga tract, "everything burned to the ground."

When he married Verla Ross, "from a mile down the road," the newlyweds lived first in a granary that had been built of green lumber. "The boards all shrank. The paper on the roof wrinkled and my wife would wake up with water trickling down her neck."

An improved two-story house was built in 1935. "I cut the lumber on this section and hauled it to Rapids with teams where it was sized down but left in different widths. Some floor joists are three inches thick," he said.

"Nothing is out of kilter. And that jackpine holds a nail. After two or three years, you can only pull the head off."

Roberts operated the Oakwood Dairy for 22 years, the length of time he served as Saratoga town chairman. "In hot weather we used ice from Ross Lake to keep the milk cold," he said.

Roberts also was chairman of the county board and a member of the Nekoosa school board, for many years "into politics up to my neck."

His main contribution to our civilization, said Roberts, was "we fixed up all those sandy roads by mixing oil with the sand and spreading it back over. In ten years every road in town with any traffic on it was fixed."

A Nickel a Head

Art Buchanan relates an early version of trickle-down economics.

When I was a boy, the county paid five cents a head for gophers, a real pest in the gardens. It wasn't long before some of us Nekoosa lads devised a sure-shot procedure for catching them.

The gopher, a clever little stinker, has for his burrow a front door and a back door or escape hatch and I believe it was two French-Canadian brothers, Lee and Harold, who suggested we pour water down the entry and stand by the outlet with a wide, flat paddle. "Whack, you got 'em!"

A local lawyer represented the county. His office was on the second floor of the Nekoosa bank building. So up the stairs we went, two at a time, to collect the bounty.

Keeping the heads in the office on a warm day was out of the question so the county representative placed a large barrel just below a window and with unerring accuracy dropped the heads dead center.

Noticing the procedures, a sudden thought entered our minds. Back down the stairs we went to retrieve those heads. Allowing a reasonable time, we returned to the stairs again. Some describe it as doubling your money in the shortest length of time.

Dr. Lee

After the accident an unconscious Leland Pomainville was hefted onto the back of a truck and hauled to the hospital. Margaret, his wife, watched him roll back and forth like a log. "When I woke up, there was F.X., Francis, Dad, Harold," he said. "The whole crew was there. 'Jeez,' I thought, "This must be pretty bad."

His cousin, Francis, sewed him up but it could have been Lee's uncle, F.X. or his dad, George or his brothers, Harold. Like himself, all physicians.

"The first doctor in my family," he said, "was Frank X. My grandfather came to Mr. Hill of Johnson and Hill and said, 'I got a boy interested in medicine. I'll pay his salary if you'll take him into your drug store.' Later, Dr. Witter came in and said, 'Young man, I think you should be a doctor.' I'm pretty sure Grandpa put him up to it."

"F.X. went to Chicago to go to Northwestern but got on the wrong street car and ended up at Rush College." After graduating from Rush, F.X. practiced for 59 years. Leland himself delivered over 1,500 babies in his 52 years. He attributes his start to the "soft sell" administered by his father George, a Nekoosa physician.

"He'd say, 'I'm going out in the country. Want to come along?'"

"We'd go see an old Civil War soldier. We could see the seams where the shrapnel hit. Harold and I used to hang around Dad's office. A lot of Indians would come in and I got interested in Indian medicine. I've taken care of more Indians than you can shake a stick at." He said of 12 Indian students attending a lecture of his at Stevens Point, six were named Leland. "I must have got along all right."

When he arrived at the University of Wiscon-

sin Medical School, the young Pomainville found it "tough for a kid that hadn't studied." He said he did as well as he did in high school because he took his French teacher to the prom. "In college they put me in sophomore French and I didn't know anything."

"But I'm a dedicated guy," he said. "I used to sleep double bunk with my brother in medical school. I'd practice knots under his bed until I went to sleep."

After graduation and an internship in Milwaukee, Pomainville returned to central Wisconsin and began the practice of medicine with F.X. and Francis. He joined the staff of Riverview Hospital in 1933.

Pomainville's marriage in 1934 to Margaret Currier of Plainfield began with a honeymoon to New Orleans on which the car had eight flat tires. Despite that and long periods of watching football, the Pomainvilles parented three daughters, Ann, Jennifer and Martha.

Pomainville opened his own office in 1939 above the old Penney's store on 1st St. In 1952 he moved to 521 8th St. S.

During World War II, Pomainville served in the South Pacific as a Navy surgeon. Much of his local work also included surgery. "Back in the early days there were a lot of gunshot wounds. As often as not, we'd leave the bullets in. We didn't have a lot of time to look for them.

"One time, a fellow was sitting in his cottage with a stranger, who drew a gun. The first guy headed for the door but the other one shot him in the kidney, liver and lung. It took 11 units of blood and an incision two feet long on his back to get all those organs.

"He lived to marry twice after that," Pomainville said.

More from "Mr. History"

Not the best patient: "I was one of the first patients operated on in the new hospital. That was in 1917. After they took my appendix out, I remember monkeying with the button to call the nurse. When I pushed the button, a light came on. I got out of bed and turned it off at the door.

"Naturally, the nurse came 'round, wondering how it got turned off. When she found out, she said, 'Oh! Oh!' It was my own version of early ambulation.

"In those days, they didn't believe in giving the patient water. They kept me dry for three days. Well, I was so thirsty I'd open the window and eat sooty snow from the ledge. I wasn't the best patient.

Mobbed: "When I played football for Nekoosa, I don't say we were the easiest team to play.

"At Mauston, they claimed we were playing dirty and 1,000 people mobbed us. They speared our tires and threw bricks. We put everything in our pants and held them over our heads so they couldn't hit us.

"One of the fellows got kicked in the mouth and was unconscious. They threw a brick through the window of the car that just missed. We got out of town.

"At the trial in Milwaukee, we won. But our coach said we shouldn't have."

Forty minutes and no basket: "For Friday's game in Stevens Point, we had to leave Thursday morning from Nekoosa. It was a three-day trip in 1922.

"From Nekoosa, we took the streetcar to Rapids, where we walked from near the bridge to the Green Bay depot. We took the passenger train from Rapids to Plover, where we got the Soo Line to Point. By the time we got to Point, we had used the whole day Thursday. Then we had to stay in a hotel until the game the next night at the Normal.

"Did you ever see anyone go berserk? We went berserk that night. We didn't make one field goal. Forty minutes and not one field goal.

"We stayed overnight and Saturday spent all

day getting back. Saturday night, we snuck into town, ashamed of ourselves. Forty minutes and no field goals. That's history down there in Nekoosa."

Two of us could beat any kid in town: "By the time I boxed in the Army at Camp Custer, I was 150 pounds.

"'Who do you want to box?' they asked me.

"'Anybody!' I said. I was quite a scrapper in those days.

"The guy they put me with was tall and lanky. He hit me so hard I saw stars. Have you ever seen stars? I did.

"My buddy poured water on me and I got up. The rest of the match, the other guy just flailed at me. I started to beat him. The coach thought I was pretty good.

"What had happened was that when he knocked me down, he had broken his hand, badly.

"Three fellows have broken their hands on me. I was rough and tough in the back-alley fights. My brother, Harold, was a scrapper, too.

"The two of us could beat any kid in town."

Put a lantern out: "The guy called up when there was a blizzard out by Vesper. 'My wife's pretty sick,' he said.

"I told him to put a lantern out, like I always did. If I got to the wrong place, they'd shoot first and ask questions later.

"When I got to the Vesper crossroads in my model A Ford, wearing a heavy coat, cap, mittens, overshoes, I went north and didn't find any lantern.

"Maybe I got it wrong. I thought, and went south, but I still couldn't find the lantern. I couldn't call because he'd called from a neighbor's. All I could do was go home.

"The next day he called and I said, 'Jeez, what happened last night?'

"'I wanted to tell you,' he said. 'You know, once I tied up the dog and put out the lantern, she got better. So I let the dog go. And, since I didn't need it no more, I took in the lantern.'"

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indexed by Dorothy Moll and Barbara Wolden





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Dave Engel



River City Memoirs

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