

ARTIFACTS

Volume FALL |

SEPTEMBER 1992

★ ★ SEASON WRAP-UP ★ ★

We have enjoyed another wonderful and very successful season at the Museum. Special exhibits arranged by Betty Zimmerman and Marge Simolke were a highlight. There was enthusiastic response when exhibitors were on site to provide historical information about their displays.

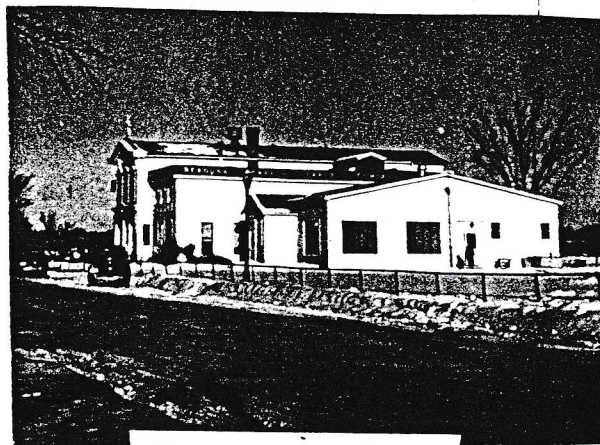
The Museum had over 2000 visitors this summer, many were repeat visitors viewing the changing displays. They were greeted by a host of volunteers lead by Karen Pecher. The staff answered as many questions as possible, Karen was relegated to dealing with special cases.

The Public took time to make comments on general operation and appearance. Those included:

- Brighter lights in basement exhibits
- Name tags on everything
- Charge an admission fee
- More toys in the Play Room
- Would like to purchase a variety of souvenirs
- Friendly and helpful staff

We are nearing our renovation goals as we begin disassembling the three rooms to be painted this fall and winter. In addition, we will continue our organization scheme with the assistance of a computer. Bernadine Remitz and Karen Pecher have inventoried items for one and a half years. They will be instrumental in entering the data into the computer.

Although the season has ended, we will continue to maintain office hours each weekday morning. If you have artifacts to donate or questions we may assist you with, please contact us at 423-1580.



NEPCO MAIN OFFICE

This wooden structure was the seat of authority for Nekoosa Edwards Paper Company until 1961. The higher part of the building was the office for the John Edwards Lumber Company and was built in 1872.

TURN ON THE LIGHT

Prior to 1890, that statement meant lighting the kerosine lamp or turning on the gas light. But in 1890, that changed when a dynamo was installed in the John Arpin residence. This dynamo was also used to supply the Pioneer Pulp mill, located across the street from the Arpin home on the site of the east side swimming pool, with the mill's electricity. (Editor's comment: The foregoing information is taken from the book, HISTORY OF WOOD COUNTY published in 1923 and it my opinon that the author of the book meant just the opposite. It would seem more logical for a dynamo to be located in the mill which used hydro power of the river and then supply the home therefrom.)

In 1894, Mack & Spencer, operators of a pulp mill on the west side of the river, were granted a franchise to install and operate an electric light plant for public utility purposes. The plant operated for five or six years but service was reputed to be poor. Accordingly, in 1899, a new electric utility company was organized under the name of Electric And Water Company. Promoters were Arpin, Gaynor, Schnabel, all local businessmen.

In 1899 the company bought a used steam generating plant from Consolidated Edison Company of Chicago, brought it to Grand Rapids and installed it on the east side of the river. The Mack & Spencer Company were paid \$3000 for their property. The total investment came to \$14,559.

In 1909 a reorganization of the company took place, a new and enlarged plant was built and the name changed to Grand Rapids Electric Company. The new company was able to pay a twelve percent dividend to shareholders and that was after discounting customer's bills by 20 percent for prompt payment.

In 1913, agitation of local citizens prompted the city to take over ownership. The Wisconsin State Railroad Commission appraised the property at \$80,000 and in 1915 the city issued bonds in the amount of \$96,000 to purchase the utility. The old steam engine was scrapped and the newly formed company purchased its electricity from Consolidated Water Power & Paper Company. (CPI).

How many readers remember cleaning chimneys and trimming wicks of the old kerosine lamps? It was a daily chore, one we no longer have to contend with as we flick the switch.

"ALL ABOARD"

Volunteers were treated to an appreciation cocktail reception on September 16th. The event was held at the famous Pullman car at Nepco Lake. This vintage railroad car was generously made available to the Historical Society as it has been for the past few years by Mr. and Mrs. Veneman. The car was built in 1908 and still has its original carpeting, upholstery, and inlaid woodwork. The museum appreciates the work of the volunteers and the generosity of the owners.



KRAUT EATERS ACTIVATE

Rumor has it that the cabbage crop this year is to be a bountiful one. After hearing that, I thought back to childhood days when grandma would make sauer (sour) kraut. How many readers can remember this time of the summer when parents or grandparents would purchase a burlap bag or roughly eighty pounds of cabbage and after peeling off the outer leaves, they would shred. Some cut it with a knife while larger producers had a cabbage cutter.

But before the fermentation of the cabbage began, there were other preparations that had to be made. A stone crock of fifteen or twenty gallon capacity had to be secured. It would be scrubbed to purge it of last year's remnants of kraut or anything else that may have settled therein during the past few months.

Next, I remember going up Rudolph way to find a rock. A nice round boulder that weighed about fifteen or twenty pounds. After finding the proper rock, it was brought home where first it was rinsed off outside, using a garden hose and a scrub brush. Then it was given a second scrubbing in the kitchen sink. The next step was hazzardous but the rock had to be sterilized by boiling it in a caludron of boiling water.

Meanwhile, grandpa was cutting a disk of wood. Seems that this disk of wood which would fit just inside the crock had to be of birch-no plywood or pine.

Now came the packing of the cabbage into the crock. First a layer of cabbage was placed in the crock and this was covered with a thin layer of salt. Then more cabbage and then more salt until the crock was full. Next the wooden disk was placed on top of the cabbage and firmly pressed down to force out as much air as possible. I have found out from science classes in later years that this was an anaerobic fermentation.

Finally the rock was placed on top of the wooden disk and the contents were left to ferment, usually in the basement.

How long? That I don't know since I always came back and the kraut was finished. Just how long the bacteria

were working on that cabbage, I don't know. But I do remember going into the basement, removing the stone and the wood disk and reaching in for a handfull of sauer kraut and eating it right there. It was delicious but high in sodium content. Perhaps that is why I have high blood pressure today.

SUMMERTIME IS ICE CREAM TIME

How about a double dip chocolate ice cream cone on a hot summer day? The tri-city area recognized the need of this treat as early as 1919 or perhaps even earlier. The HISTORY OF WOOD COUNTY (Jones-1923) states that Conrad Bloomer purchased the Chambers Creamery in that year and installed all new equipment to make ice cream; the refrigeration equipment being supplied by Wisconsin Rapids' own American Carbonic Company.

Meanwhile, down Nekoosa way, Gazley's Cream-E-Way Dairy was making ice cream as early as 1910. Both of these ice cream producers have given up on their providing us with summer treats. But we are all familiar with our present day ice cream plant-- Herschlebs.

Began in 1939 by Walter Herschleb, the plant on sixteenth street turns out an assortment of flavors which are sold right at the plant as well as in many grocery stores throughout Wood County. The business is operated now by Tom Brehmer, grandson of Walter Herschleb.

The plant produces 35,000 gallons of ice cream each year. The modern plant is a sharp contrast to the original facility which was located in the rear of Herschlebs ice cream parlor which was located next door to the Rogers Cinema theater.

Other dairies included the Babcock Creamery Company which was believed to have made ice cream---but only in the winter months! Babcock Creamery is best noted for producing butter which was sold to the Chicago area to the extent of 100,000 pounds per year.

How many readers remember the frozen cream that extended up and out of the milk bottle of frozen milk that had been left on the door step early in the morning on a cold winter day. To some it was genuine ice cream.

Notice of **ANNUAL MEETING**

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1992

AT 4:00 PM

THE SOUTH WOOD COUNTY MUSEUM
540 Third Street South
Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin



**SOUTH WOOD COUNTY
HISTORICAL CORPORATION**

540 Third Street South
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494

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