

SOUTH WOOD COUNTY HISTORICAL CORPORATION

ARTIFACTS

Volume 1999.3

Fall



The Renovation Begins...

Would Charlotte have my head??

The Board of Directors has agreed to pursue its most ambitious endeavor short of acquiring the building, that of renovating the front porch. We have struggled with the water in the basement, the columns separating from the building and the railing not tolerating the Wisconsin weather.

The steps continue to crack as the concrete landing settles. After reviewing proposals the Board has voted to spend approximately \$100,00 to meet this obligation. Boldt Construction will begin work this fall and observers will note that we have begun to move the landscaping from the porch area to accommodate the equipment.

The plan allows for a new porch, railing, columns, capitals, and walkway. In addition we will consider new storm windows and screen doors to replace those that have been damaged, and potentially undertake central air-conditioning. Funding for this project will come from the investment savings accounts held by the South Wood County Historical Corporation. Thanks to the continued support of donors and benefactors over the years, this project will proceed.

The fall museum schedule will remain unchanged, however the back entry will be used to access the building. The parking lot will be altered so patrons cannot drive close to the building, but we anticipate no great problems on the inside. If you like to watch construction projects, bring your lawn chair and let the games begin.



PLAT BOOK REVELATIONS
BY JMB

Our museum just had the 1921 Wood County Plat Book reprinted and copies are available at the museum gift shop. I perused one last night and found the following interesting little tidbits of information in the pages.

For instance, E.I. Dupont Powder Company owned eighty acres of land in the vicinity of Forest Hill Cemetery. A local historian and engineer, Brendon Doughty, guessed that Dupont probably had a dynamite storage warehouse in the middle of the property. In fact they probably had similar parcels of land all over the country. This was in the era when a license for blasting was not required and a farmer could purchase powder and blast stumps out of his fields; a popular endeavor in this era of transition from lumbering to farming.

Out in Remington township, the Willow Rug Company and the Delton Grass Mattress Company both owned parcels of land, most likely for the raising of marsh hay to be used for weaving into rugs and for stuffing mattresses. (How did they get rid of the wood ticks in the grass?)

It is quite noticable that the lumber entrepreneurs such as Arpin, Edwards, Hiles, Farrish and Roddis are no longer the owners of vast acreage of timber lands. What was their timber producing acres in the mid and late 1800's had been sub divided into individual plots and sold to farmers.

An exception to this is the entry of the Benton and

Anderson Company. This partnership owned several sections, (one square mile in a section) in the northern half of the county. They were land developers who acquired the cut over timber lands from the lumber mills and then sold it to farmers, many of these farmers coming from the east and from the metropolitan centers south of Wood County. Hence the need for some of that Dupont dynamite.

Several isolated parcels are indicated as owned by banks such as Bank of Menasha and The Bank of Grand Rapids as well as the Home Mortgage Company. I would surmise that some of those city farmers did not do too well at this new career and failed to make the payments on their bank loans, thereby forfeiting the land to the lender. Spaford and Cole, a Wisconsin Rapids retail business establishment, is also shown as owners of small parcels of land; probably obtained in the settlement of an accumulation of charges made at the store.

ARTIFACTS

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South Wood County Historical Corporation
540 Third Street South
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Editor: Pam Walker

ARTIFACTS is a publication that contains articles and information for the members of the South Wood County Historical Corporation. Its contents are not copyrighted.

PLAT BOOK of WOOD CO., WISCONSIN

PUBLISHED BY W. W. HIXSON & CO.
ROCKFORD ILLINOIS

Circa 1921

Reprinted from South Wood County Historical Corporation Archives Collection

East of Biron, the Rood Development Company owned property. It might have been in the area where they were experimenting with and developing a steam operated ditching machine which was designed for digging drainage ditches to reclaim marsh land. We have a part of one of these dredges standing behind the museum.

Grand Rapids Brewing Company owned land in Siegel township, perhaps for the raising of hops?

It is easy to understand why the Chicago, Milwaukee, Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad owned property in the county. Their railroad tracks ran through the property shown. But it is hard to explain why the Grand Rapids Street Railway Company had a parcel of land located a good half mile from their track. Were they thinking of extending the line to that area?

Many settlements are only names today but the map of 1921 shows the following locations, all of them railroad stops. No longer do we here of Mohle, Meehan, Walker, Elm Lake, Catherine, Amelia, Cary or Progress. And Ebbe Station was located two miles from Hans Ebbe's farm!

William Harshaw is a big land owner in the town of Saratoga. His name is spread across 2160 acres or about four and a quarter sections.

And over in Cary township, we had a small United Nations group. The Woodworths (English); the Kennedys (Irish); the Sniders, (German); the Larsons (Norwegian); the McDonalds (Scotch); and the Pomainvilles (French) all owned property that adjoined one and another. Fortunately, in spite of what their native countries might be doing overseas in Europe, they all got along here in Wood County. Otherwise Dupont might have had another sale for some of their blasting powder.



THE DE BRAZEAU'S MEMOIRS

Q. Would you tell us about some of your highlights during your career as District Attorney?

A. "I prosecuted many cases including a few murder cases and I guess I made a pretty good record; some against the will of the people and sometimes with favor from them. But I just tried to do my duty."

"After I was out of the office of District Attorney, I was appointed special prosecutor for many cases especially in the famous Magnuson murder case where a bomb was sent through the mail. The case attracted national attention. It was written up by the FBI and seven or eight detective magazines. It was written up in a textbook, 'Problems of Logic', which is used in at least ten university law schools and it was written up in a New York newspaper as a full page and comparing it with the Hauptman case. (Lindberg kidnapping trial). I was the first one to employ a Mr. Krahler, the wood expert, as an expert witness and I had three other witnesses that were also used in the Hauptman case later."

Q. Now this bombing case. When did that occur?

A. "That was in 1923 and I believe it went to the Supreme Court of the state. During my practice, I think I argued a hundred and seventy-five cases in the Supreme Court."

Q. When were you District Attorney?

A. "1904 to 1906."

Q. When were you on the Wood County Board?

A. "1902 to 1904".

Q What were some of the problems facing the county board in those days?

A. "Well we had all kinds of problems with building simple bridges. There used to be fights on their location. There were disagreements on building and locating roads. The support of paupers was another problem. These were the principle items. We had no where near the problems they have now."

Q. Would you tell us a little about your family?

A." My father was born in Montreal, Canada,. His parents died when he was an infant and he lived with an aunt while attending a French parochial school until he was twelve years of age. He left Montreal and came to the United States in his twelfth year. He went to Buffalo and worked there in a tailor shop and then in a barber shop. Next he moved to Chicago where he worked in a barber shop. He heard about a lot of wealth in Two Rivers, Wisconsin, where they were catching a lot of fish. So he went there but stayed a short time. He had friends in the Rapids, particularly the Pomainvilles, who also came from Montreal. My dad came to Grand Rapids in 1867 and was a barber here.

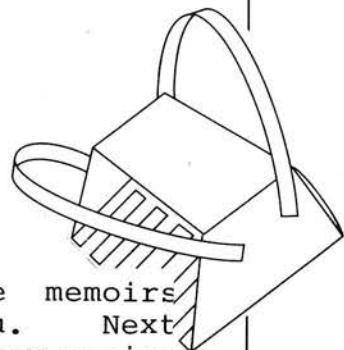
"Ten cents for a shave and twenty-five cents for a haircut. The town was mostly lumber jacks and sawmill workers then. In the spring when they came to town from a winter in the woods, it was harvest time, (hair and whiskers), and Dad kept the shop open until three AM, cutting the long hair and beards that had accumulated during the winter in the woods."

"Saint John The Baptist day, June 30th, was a great

day in the Rapids There was a big parade that day; the stores closed and the saloons opened. They decorated the streets and they marched with a sash across their breast, to the Catholic Church where services would be held. In the parade there was a little wagon with a little snow white lamb in it along with a little St. John DeBaptiste with his arm around the lamb. It was a great honor to be St. John who was always of French decent."

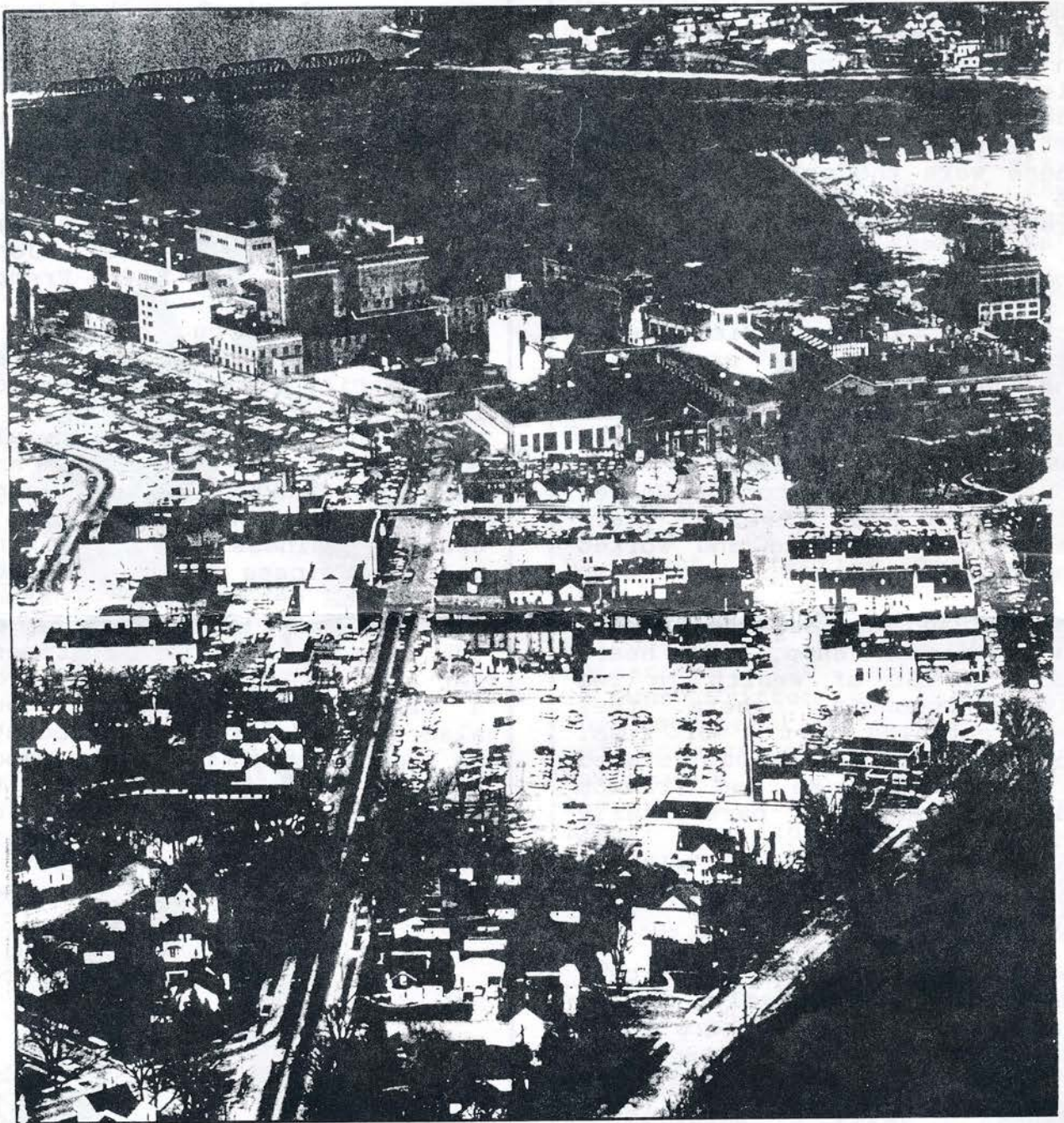
Q. Who would you place in a position of importance as far as the City of Wisconsin Rapids is concerned?

A. "Well of course I would put first and foremost and way above anybody else, George W. Mead. He not only was a great business man, having great business knowledge and foresight, but he was a learned man and had the interests of the city in mind at all times. Not only the interest from a financial standpoint but also from a esthetic standpoint. He wanted to make it a good looking city; a fine city to live in. To this end he sacrificed a good deal of his own personal time and money."



This concludes the memoirs of Theodore Brazeau. Next issue we will start a new series featuring the memories of Clara Smith, cranberry grower.

The Home Front



River City Memoirs VI

Dave Engel

Presents

River Cities Memoirs VI

At the

McMillan Library Coffeehouse

Monday, September 13, 1999

7:00 PM

*Publication sponsored by grants from the Community Foundation of South
Wood County and the South Wood County Historical Corporation*

WISCONSIN RAPIDS BRIDGE HISTORY

For many years there stood back of the Witter Hotel on the bank of the Wisconsin River where the east end of the new bridge now rests, a tall rampike towering in the skies some seventy-five feet or more with a trunk about three feet in diameter at the base, with its dead roots firmly fastened to a large granite boulder, a silent, barren and ghostly evidence of a once majestic white pine that stood during its life like a giant green plume overlooking the waters of the Wisconsin River. Hundreds of these giants of the forest, rearing their heads proudly in the skies some one hundred fifty feet above the ground, grew and flourished along both banks of the Wisconsin River from the swimming pool to our Grand Avenue bridge and far beyond.

Back from the East bank of the Wisconsin River a swamp, fed by numerous springs from the hillside, was filled with a thick growth of pine, hemlock, spruce, willows and alders. This once was part of the river basin through which at least a part of the Wisconsin River flowed. Fed by these springs, Arpins Creek, which had its source beyond the Green Bay & Western Railroad Tracks, flowed through what is now the East Side Market Square into the Wisconsin River about where the Daly Drug & Jewelry Store is now located.

From his little log cabin on the river bank, about where the swimming pool is located, a Canadian trapper and fur trader, Louis Les Loud, in 1835 listened to the roar of the mighty river as its turbulent waters battered their way through the large granite rocks. The roar of its current could be heard for miles as it echoed through the dense forest, and he looked down the river to the place where our new bridge is now located, upon the majestic forest hanging over the banks of the river. As the sun went down it was an inspiring landscape. In his solitude, he was interested only in the furs of the beaver, muskrat, otter and mink and other wild game which his trap and gun could retrieve. Little did he dream of the industry that was to capture and use the great power of that mighty river, and his wildest imagination could not conceive the prosperous and beautiful city that was to enjoy its waters and surroundings. Nor did he dream that the immense forest along its banks and far out from its shores would so completely yield to the woodmen's axe. A demand was rapidly growing for the white pine lumber for building purposes and the lumber industry took possession of the forests and river. The Biron saw mill came into operation in the year 1839 built by Saye and Draper and bought by Francis Biron in 1846, and the Rablin saw mill, built by J. J. and George Cruikshank and Robert Bloomer, where the swimming pool is located, came into operation in 1838. A saw mill at Port Edwards,

then called French Town, was started by John Edwards in 1840. The Neeves saw mill, about where the Henry Demitz home now stands, was soon added to the other saw mills, and the Garrison saw mill was built on the west side of the river about where the Consolidated mill is now located. All of these mills were fed from the huge forests that surrounded the Villages of Grand Rapids and Centralia. The droning hum of the circular saw converting the great pines into lumber could be heard in the small settlement where Wisconsin Rapids now exists throughout the early years of Grand Rapids and Centralia, and in the place of the forest there came pioneer settlers to work in the saw mills and to build their pioneer homes, many of log construction.

Small stores and shops sprung up to supply the new inhabitants, clinging close to the Wisconsin River where the mills were located and where the drives of logs came down the river to the mills.

The log drivers were crews of men, at that time mostly Canadians, who dislodged the logs from jams in the Wisconsin River where they piled up in huge masses. They operated in large boats called batteaus. Their work was hazardous and strenuous and the hours long. They were dressed with heavy boots with spikes in the soles for clinging to the logs which they rode often down the stream with great skill. They had Mackinaw trousers of color with silk sashes of red, blue and green tied about the waist with tassels at the ends hanging down from their waist, Mackinaw jackets of different colors and silk handkerchiefs of various colors tied loosely about the neck. The whole dress was in imitation of Canadian voyagers. At night they swarmed the streets of the downtown area and the wooden sidewalks were ruffled and torn from the pegs of their shoes. Their wages were from \$3.00 to \$5.00 per day which was a tremendous wage in those days, but they worked from sunrise to sundown. They were great patrons of the numerous taverns overhanging the river banks and spent their money lavishly. Brawls were common and the little wooden lockup located on the East side Market Square always housed a number of the lumberjacks.

There were small settlements on both sides of the river. Communication at first was by canoes and boats. The Canadian trapper from the log hut in 1835 could see down the river the colorful sight of Indians crossing the river in their canoes and dug-outs where the present Grand Avenue bridge is now located. The location of this crossing was logical because it was the first place for many miles of the river that the water rested peacefully enough to allow canoes and boats to cross without great effort, and the high bank where the Rapids Theater is located was the closest to the river and avoided a long swamp and creek crossing.

This fact determined the location of Grand Avenue or what became Grand Avenue later, but which at first was a mere trail to the river bank on each side. Later boats took the place of canoes and then a ferry in the year 1857. Then came a demand for a bridge as the settlements on both sides grew, and business and social communications became a necessity.

The Legislature was accordingly asked for a franchise to build such bridge. Chapter 364 of the Laws of 1856 when Wood County was a part of Portage County granted a franchise to build a bridge to T. B. Scott, who was a pioneer lumberman and who left his name in Wisconsin Rapids by contributing money for the library bearing his name, George E. Neeves who was also a pioneer lumberman, Henry Rablin, who was one of the owners of the Rablin Mill and a brother of John Rablin who came later as a prominent settler, J. H. Compton, Henry Jackson, and Orestes Garrison, owner of the Garrison saw mill on the west side, who came to Centralia in 1848 or 1849.

The bridge was to be sixteen feet in width and was to be built so as to allow a free passage at all times for rafts coming down the river and the grantees of this franchise were to be held liable for any injuries or detention of lumber floating down the Wisconsin River. This was to be a toll bridge with the following fees for crossing:

A vehicle drawn by two horses, mules or oxen	25c
and for each additional horse, mule or ox	8c
For any vehicle drawn by one horse or mule	25c
For a single horse	10c
For horses or cattle in droves, each	5c
For hogs or sheep in droves, each	3c
For foot passengers, each	3c
For one horse or a mule	15c

These tolls had to be posted in a conspicuous place on the bridge. Any person crossing the bridge without paying the toll was to forfeit \$5.00. It was a common sight to see yokes of oxen hitched to wagons or sleighs or teams of mules or horses or droves of sheep or hogs crossing the first bridge.

No bridge was built under this franchise. The franchise was amended by Chapter 142 of the Laws of 1859 and named a set of grantees differing somewhat from the first. The licensees were T. B. Scott, George E. Neeves, J. H. Compton, Henry Rablin (erroneously written "Robin"), Henry Jackson, Orestes Garrison, Joseph Wood (after whom the County was named), James McGraw, John Rablin, (a brother of Henry), E. G. Bean, Henry W. Jackson, and J. H. Lang who

was an early surveyor and platted the Lang Plat of early Grand Rapids. This franchise ran to the "Grand Rapids Bridge Company" which was char-

tered for the purpose of building a bridge across the Wisconsin River at Grand Rapids. The tolls and other provisions remained about the same.

This act was again amended by Chapter 41 of the Laws of 1861 and named only Joseph Wood, Henry W. Jackson I, George Weller, John Rablin and Jessie H. Lang and the bridge was to be constructed "at the foot of Drake Street in the Village of Grand Rapids to such a convenient point on the west side of the river as said Company may select."

The County of Wood had been organized by Chapter 54 of the Laws of March 29, 1856, and this bridge was designated as being in the County of Wood. Joseph Wood, one of the grantees, was a member of the Legislature and caused this county to be set off from Portage County.

This franchise was again amended by Chapter 178, Laws of 1865, or perhaps better to say a new franchise was granted to others to build a bridge in the village of Grand Rapids and is designated as amendment to the other charters. This franchise ran to George Neeves (erroneously spelled Nevis), Thomas B. Scott, Isaac L. Mosher (who later became a County Judge of Wood County), John Edwards, Jr. (the owner of a saw mill at Port Edwards), John Rablin (who took the place of Henry Rablin), and James Meehan (a prominent lumberman who had a saw mill at the Village of Meehan, Portage County). The act created a body corporate by the name of "Wood County Bridge Company." The tolls to be charged were the same,

except for hogs and sheep in droves the charge was only 2c each.

The bridge was actually built under this charter in 1867. The charter provided that the County could take over the bridge at any time and at such time it should be free from tolls. The County did take over the bridge in March, 1873 but allowed it to become in a state of disrepair and dangerous for travel, and in 1876 George Neeves and a number of others brought an action against Wood County to compel it to keep the bridge in repair and place it in a safe condition for travel and transportation of merchandise.

The plaintiff was represented by Powers & Briggs, an early firm of attorneys of Wisconsin Rapids with P. L. Spooner, state-wide known attorney of Madison, as counsel, and the defendant was represented by George R. Gardner, then a prominent attorney of Grand Rapids, and Minor Strope, practicing at the Village of Plover, which was then the county seat of Portage County and the location of the Federal Land Office, and Gregory & Pinney, of counsel, of Madison. Pinney later became a prominent member of the State of Wisconsin Supreme Court.

The lower court and the Supreme Court held in favor of the applicants and compelled the County to repair the bridge. The bridge was taken out by floods in 1877 and rebuilt by the County that year at the enormous, exorbitant and unthinkable cost of \$8,000.00.

Grand Rapids had been, prior to this time, chartered as a city by Chapter 247 of the Private and Local Laws of 1869 and Centralia had been chartered as such by Chapter 275 of the Laws of 1874. The population of Grand Rapids in 1870 was 1,115 and of Centralia, 800, making a total population of about 1,900, all living from the lumber industry and the labor being all employed in the various saw mills.

The approach to the bridge on the west end built in 1877 was owned by Orestes Garrison and rented from him by the Bridge Company and by the county which succeeded the Bridge Company. Mrs. Bishop, while approaching the bridge, fell off the sidewalk which was quite high and frailty constructed of boards, and was injured. Her case went to the Supreme Court in 1880 in a suit against the City of Centralia and the Court held there could be no recovery against the city, that the action was against the County of Wood, even though the land approach to the bridge where the accident occurred was rented and a part of the street then known as Cranberry Street, leading to the bridge.

By the way, Cranberry Street was named because there was a growth of wild cranberries along the street about where the Wisconsin Theater is now located. The cranberry industry, even as early as 1849, had grown to be a recognized enterprise in Wood County, as evidenced by the fact that the Legislature in 1849 had passed a bill forbidding the sale of green cranberries except by Indians.

On April 11, 1888 a huge ice jam in the Wisconsin River took out the bridge which had been rebuilt in 1877 and a new bridge was contemplated to be built by Wood County at the cost estimated at about \$25,000.00. The County refused to build the bridge on account of the vote of northern members on the County Board and again George Neeves and others associated with him brought an action against the County to compel it to rebuild the bridge.

Again the firm of Gardner and Gaynor and Geo. L. Williams represented the plaintiff and the defendant was represented by a prominent Wausau firm of attorneys together with J. W. Cochran of Grand Rapids and Frank A. Cady of Marshfield. The Supreme Court decided against the applicants on the ground that no authority had been given by the electors of the county and no tax for the same authorized. It still left open the right of the county board to authorize the building of the bridge by the county. This precipitated a

violent civil war between the north end of Wood County and the south end. The City of Marshfield had burned to the ground by a forest fire in 1887 and was rebuilding with great ambition and did not like the idea of being taxed to favor Grand Rapids and Centralia. Democrats and republicans abandoned their parties and divided into two factions, the Bridge Ticket for building the bridge and the Anti-bridge ticket. Each put up a full slate for county offices and each side fought with ferocity and vigor. The anti-bridge faction won a complete and sweeping victory and it therefore became necessary for Grand Rapids and Centralia to rebuild the bridge.

At that time the population of the two cities was about 3,100 and a new wooden bridge was built with an arch suspension. Later the wood was replaced by steel with a bridge of the same type and a narrow road bed of about sixteen feet, which did not leave much room for run-a-way horses crossing the bridge and many accidents occurred from this source. The new bridge, to replace the old one and which is the present Grand Avenue Bridge, was built in the year 1922. The humble and rural name of Cranberry Street had been replaced by the more dignified name of Grand Avenue. The City was becoming sophisticated and ambitious.

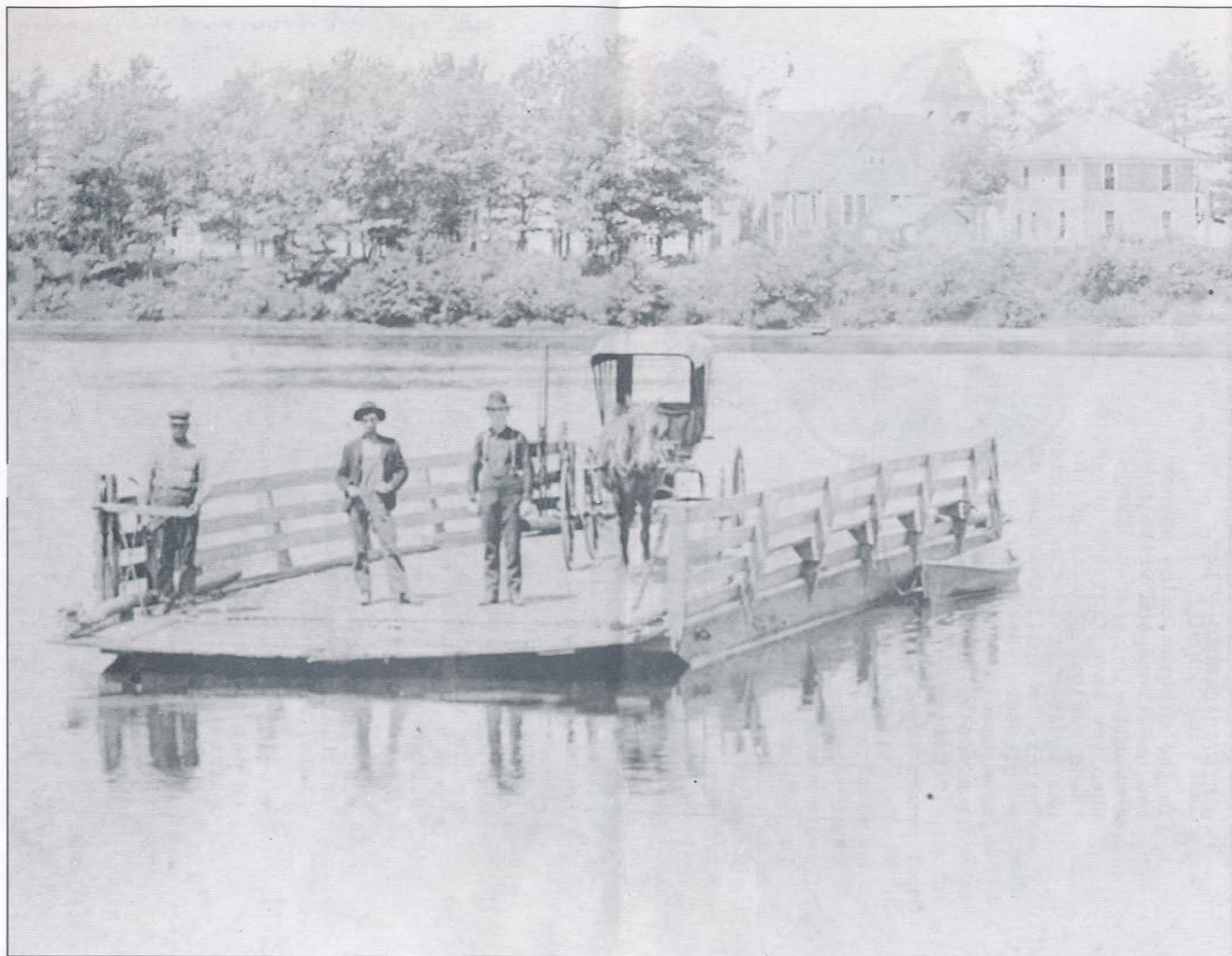
The Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. was in full operation at the time of this construction and the increased population demanded a better and safer bridge. The cost was quite startling compared with the \$8,000.00 cost of the original bridge.

Now we are compelled to accept, by reason of the growth of our population and industry and travel, a new and second bridge which marks another historical event in the history of our city. Again the cost has exceeded \$8,000.00 but the design and the character and need of the bridge seems to warrant the expenditure.

Since the original bridge was constructed the name of Grand Rapids has been changed to Wisconsin Rapids, the two cities united and this second bridge built as a result of the growth of our industry and population more thoroughly than ever uniting the business and social life of our people on both side of our beautiful river. There is no longer any east or west side in city relations.

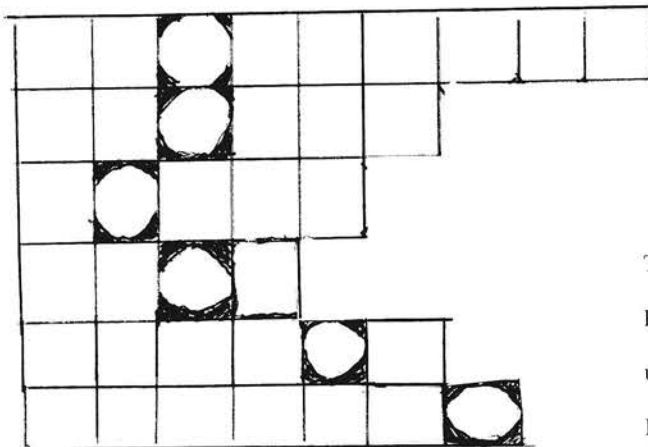
Respectfully submitted,
BRIDGE HISTORY COMMITTEE
Theo. W. Brazeau, Chairman
Clara Rablin
F. X. Pomainville
Ray Johnson

Aug. 15. 1955



HISTORIC WORD QUIZ

In the diagram below answer the questions and write the answer in the spaces. Then when you have finished answering the questions and filled in the squares, take the circled letters to spell the name of a pioneer lumberman. An extra five points if you can tell the approximate location of his mill.



The lumberman was _____ and

His mill was located in the approximate location
under the west approach of the Riverview
Expressway Bridge.

Perfect Score is 27. My score is _____.

1. An early name for Wisconsin Rapids. (3 points)

2. Name of a village located about midway between Wis. Rapids and Plover and a former station on the railroad. (5 points)

3. Last name of the famous wrestler from Nekoosa. (5 points)

4. Number of communities that originally owned Alexander Field. (3 points)

5. Name of the original owner of our museum building. (3 points)

6. Name of man who financed the first saw mill at Port Edwards. (3 points)

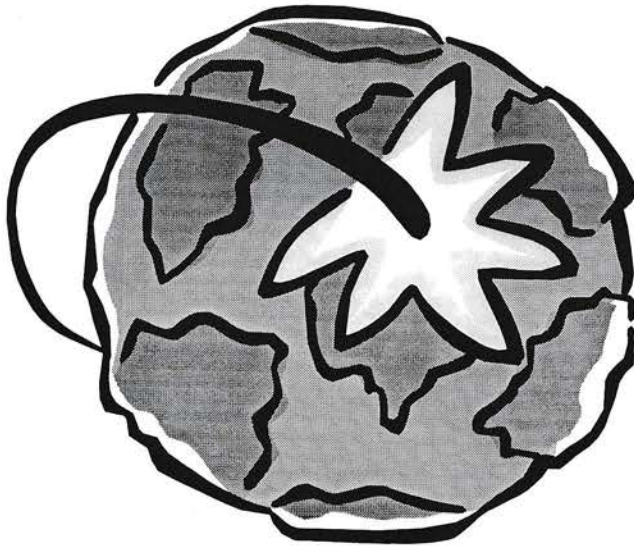
Answers: Centralia, Meehan, Lewis, Five, Witter, Edwards. Neaves

They found us!

2436 people so far
(compared to 2426 in 1998)

What a great Year!

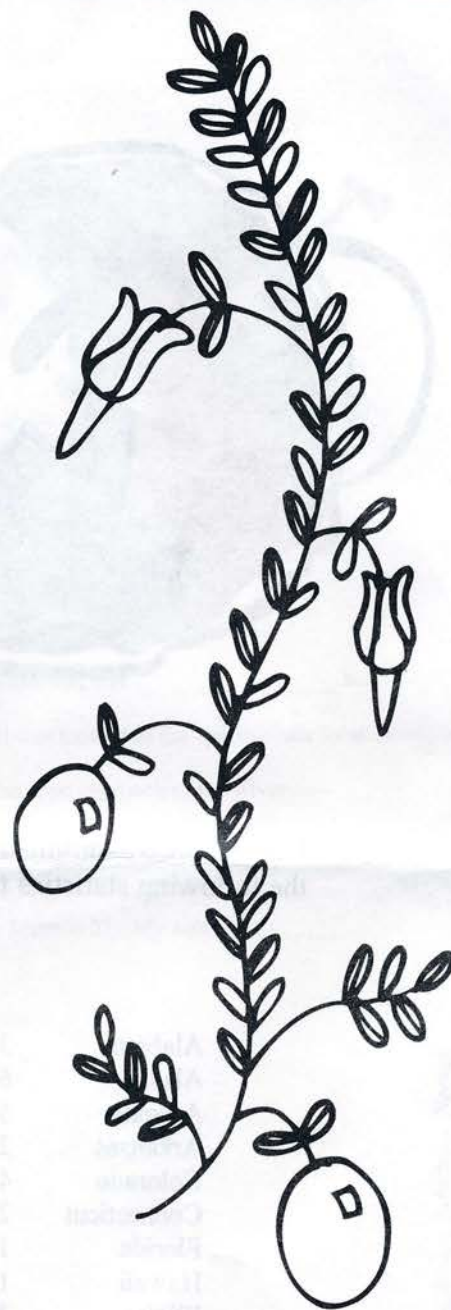
This has been an eventful museum season. We've had entertainment, an excited staff and visitors from everywhere! Changing the museum hours of operation has resulted in a few notable things. People come to visit each day that we are open...if you open they will come...and the staff has enjoyed museum training in collection management. Staffers have processed clothing, glass slides, photographs and ledger books. (They like it Mikey) It has pushed us down the organizational trail and I think many will return for more third floor adventures.



Karen Pecher, administrative assistant, monitors our visitor population and has provide the following statistics for us:

VISITORS STATES AND COUNTRIES

Alabama	3	England	2
Alaska	6	Mexico	3
Arizona	5	West Indies	3
Arkansas	2		
Colorado	4		
Connecticut	2		
Florida	12		
Hawaii	1		
Illinois	26		
Kansas	3		
Michigan	4		
Minnesota	14		
Mississippi	1		
Nebraska	1		
New York	5		
Oregon	1		
Pennsylvania	2		
Texas	3		
Virginia	4		
Washington	4		



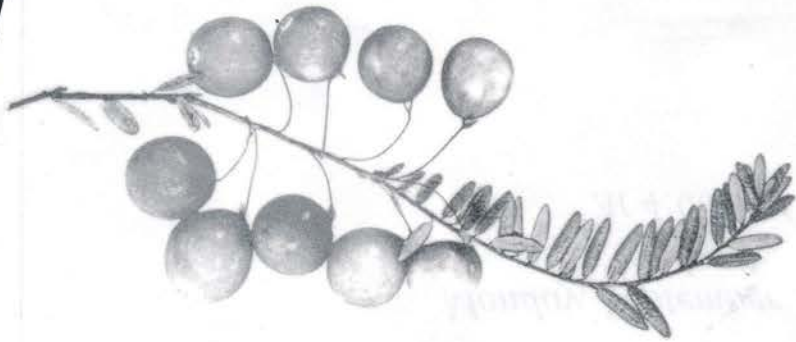
Dressing for a summer afternoon engagement, our summer assistants served ice cream, lemonade and ice tea to those attending the Madison Brass concert in July.

Despite the rain, all seemed to enjoy themselves especially our costumed ladies.

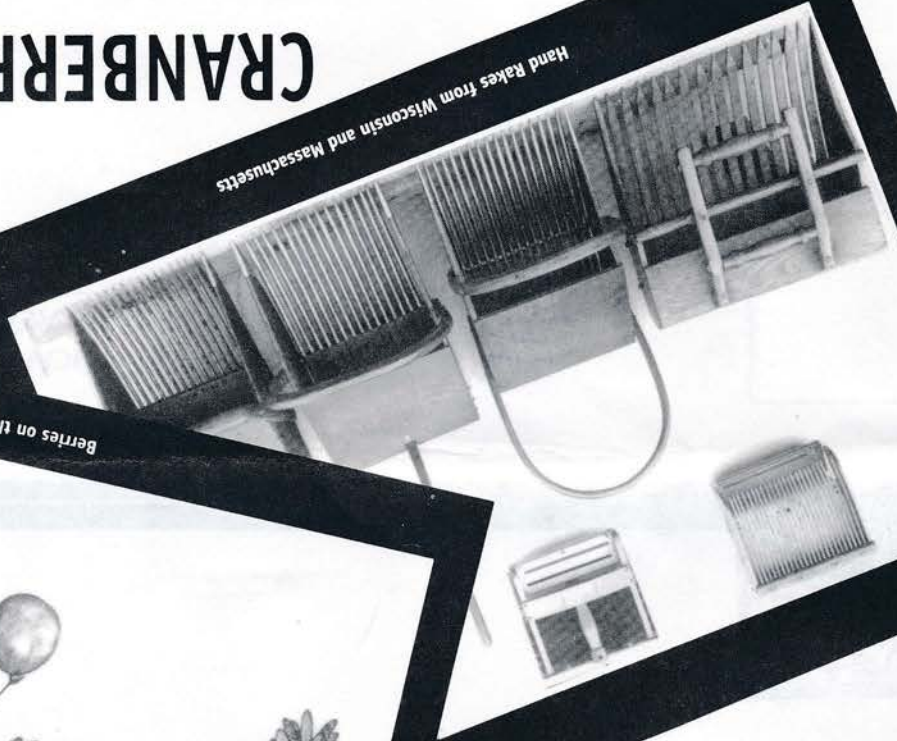
Pictured above are (bottom row) Aubrey Aschenbrenner, Jolene Arnold, Andrea Anderson, Jona Anderson and Jamie Hahner. Standing in back are Katie Milkey, Ursula Arnold and Stacey Lobner.

New Gift Shop Items

- Cranberry calendar
- Plat Book [ca. 1921]
- The Home Front, RCM VI by Dave Engel



Berries on the Vine



Hand Rakes from Wisconsin and Massachusetts

CRANBERRIES

Fruit of the Millennium Calendar

Selected images from the SWCHC Archives Collection





Annual Meeting

Of the

South Wood County Historical Corporation

Monday, September 20, 1999

At 4:00 PM



**SOUTH WOOD COUNTY
HISTORICAL CORPORATION**

540 Third Street South
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494-4352



Mr. and Mrs. Philip Brown
2466 Cty Hwy D
Wisconsin Rapids WI 54495-9330

