

ARTIFACTS

**For Sale by Owner
\$1**



Biron White House

Cover by Alison Bruener; Biron House ND letter pp. 2-3; Francis Biron, 4-5; Grand Rapids Pulp & Paper, 6-7; Biron aerial, 8-9; Biron House photos by Alison Bruener, 10-11; In the White House by David Siewert, 12-13; L.M. Nash house, 14-15; Gardner Rifles, 16-17; SWCHC by Phil Brown, 18-19; "Museum" by Lori Brost, 20-21; Mary M. Burt by Lori, 22-23; Balderston, 24-25; Third Street by Joan Haasl, 26-28. Odd Fellows, 29; Rogers house, 30; A. Dyda & Chaplin, 31; Girls Brigade, 32.

There's always a catch...



November 18, 2021

Jon Evenson
President
Biron Municipal Center
451 Kahoun Road
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494

Phil Brown
SWCHC Board President
South Wood County Historical Museum
540 3rd Street South
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494

Mead Witter Foundation, Inc.
ATTN: Susan Feith
730 1st Avenue South
P.O. Box 39
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495-0039

To Whom It May Concern
Point Basse/Wakely House
Historic Point Basse, Inc.
PO Box 295
Nekoosa, WI 54457-0295

Re: Notice of plans for Biron mill white house

Dear community leaders:

Over the last three years ND Paper has become keenly aware of the positive impact we are having on the Biron mill and with our local community members in both Biron and Wisconsin Rapids. We value the partnership we have with both city and county officials in the area and we want to ensure that we do nothing that reflects negatively on you or us. To that end, we would like to share news about some safety plans we have onsite at the mill.

In 2022, we would like to continue to make our mill property a safe environment for our worker teams. To that end, we would like to discontinue repairing and maintaining the former General Manager home referred to generally as the "white house" and remove it from the mill property. The white house currently sits in the middle of our mill operations and is no longer a functioning asset for any of our teams. We do not make this decision lightly and are aware of some potential community interest in the white house building itself given its age and ties to the Biron mill and the community at large.

ND Paper – Biron Division - 621 N. Biron Drive, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494

To that end, we would like to inquire if you or any organization or person you may know might have interest in purchasing the white house for one dollar (\$1.00) and physically move the white house to another location in Biron or Wisconsin Rapids where it can continue to be visited and enjoyed by members of the community. ND Paper would like to see the white house removed by Saturday, June 4, 2022.

Here is ND Paper's timeline for this project:

- Parties interested in purchasing and moving the white house must notify ND Paper in writing by December 31, 2021 by sending an email to Brennan.Burks@us.ndpaper.com
- Interested buyers must submit written plans for the white house's purchase and removal by March 31, 2022 by sending an email to Brennan.Burks@us.ndpaper.com
- The white house must be purchased and physically removed from the Biron mill property by end-of-business Friday, June 3, 2022
- If the white house is not physically removed from the property by June 3, 2022 then ND Paper will be free to remove the white house as we see fit

If no person or organization completes any one of the timeline steps above, ND Paper reserves the right to move up our timeline to remove the white house from the mill property at an earlier date.

While change is never easy, we hope you understand our overall goal is the continued health and wellness of the Biron mill's operations for many generations to come.

Sincerely,



Caleb Coder
Biron Mill General Manager

ND Paper – Biron Division - 621 N. Biron Drive, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494



F.X.B.

In 1934, it was considered an elegant show place, “the now famous Biron white house. It stands today precisely as it did in the year of its erection and is used as the office of the Biron division of the Consolidated company”: architecturally graceful and massive without being ostentatious, surrounded by lawns, stately old elms imported from the East and gardens laid out in the 1860s. The 3,300 square feet former private residence was made entirely of the best hand-selected lumber with panels of floral decorations and filigreed cornicing of imported Parisian stucco. Ceilings were installed by craftsmen brought in from New York. Semi-French windows with porcelain knob hardware fittings were unlike anything seen in the Wisconsin valley before “the rise of the Biron.”



Biron White House

In 1946, said house historian Jane Jackson, Consolidated was taking good care of the White House, keeping the elaborate designs painted and making minor repairs. At its centennial in 1965, what was then the mill manager's office was celebrated in the *Tribune* as reflecting the classic Victorian style of the Civil War era—a sound building despite its 100 years of service.

The landmark had been built on a hill where a residence had burned previously, becoming one of a few notable buildings in that section of the Pinery, admired up and down the river.

After the local school house burned in 1912, desks and books were moved into the White House until a new school was built in 1914.

Francis Xavier Biron

In or about 1840, the first raft of lumber to go down the Wisconsin originated at the Biron site, then “Draper’s Rapids.” Shortly after that, Francois “Francis” Biron bought the “Fay and Draper” sawmill. The last lumber raft to go down the Wisconsin left in 1888, also from Biron.

Biron’s namesake was one of a line of Francois Biron in French Canada going back to 1648.

Born near Trois Rivières, Quebec, in 1816, jeune François worked on his father’s farm until 1833, when he left for Fort Howard at Green Bay, Wis., to work in the timber trade. The next year, he walked to Fort Winnebago at Portage to cut hay and more timbers, then walked to the Dubuque lead mines where he ran a supply store and hauled lead to furnaces and steamboats on the Mississippi. In 1843-45, he came to Grand Rapids from Galena, Ill., with three wagon loads of provisions. Building a storehouse on the site of today’s courthouse roundabout, he sold supplies mainly to loggers, while doing some logging himself for the Henry Clinton mill.

With his wife Marie Boivin, Biron had three children: Francis Jr., Laura and George Severe.

In 1873, Biron built a new and larger saw mill and improved the dam. The same year, his wife, Marie (Mary) died at age 36. He died in 1877 at age 61.

After the flood of 1880, Francis Jr. relinquished management of the mill to his brother George Severe. They sold to the Grand Rapids Pulp & Paper Co. in 1896, owned in part by J.D. Witter, father of Isaac P. Witter, of SWCHC Museum fame.

George, called “Severe,” continued as associate manager for a while with later Consolidated founder Nels Johnson. In 1911, Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. assumed control of the mill.

In 1921, Consolidated moved the office of the Biron mill into the White House, enjoyed in 1931 by manager John B. Purvis who appreciated especially a “very beautiful ceiling.”

George Severe died in 1899, followed by his brother, Francis Jr. in 1915, who died “at his home in the village of Biron.”

Francis Jr. had been born in Montreal in 1856 and came to Biron with his parents. After a collegiate education in Montreal, he married Celena/Salena DeMars. At the time of his death he was operating a grocery store.

When daughter Laura Biron, a patient at the county hospital for 27 years, died in 1951 at 91, the funeral was held at SS. Peter & Paul, the Catholic church of her father.

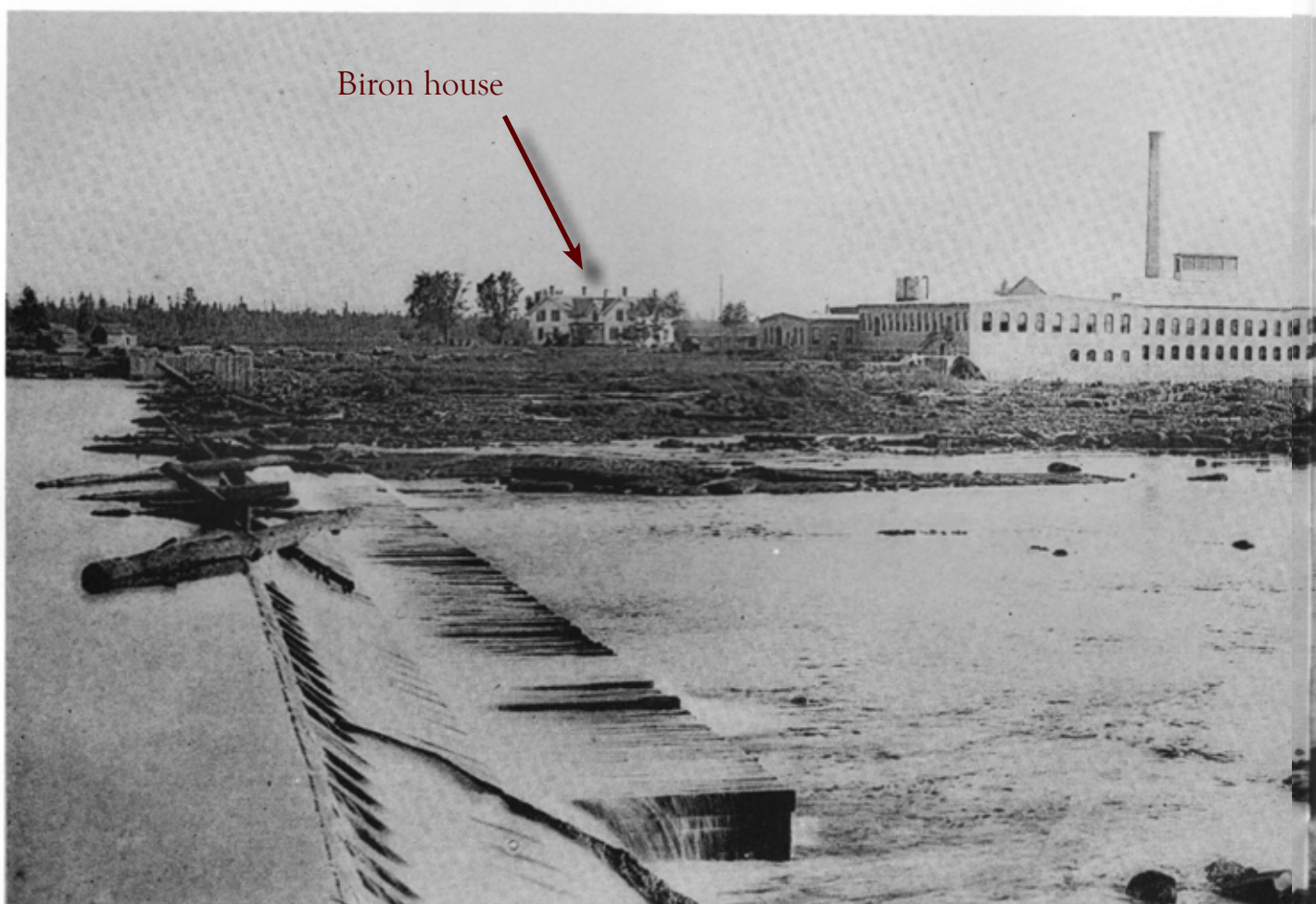
The Biron family has left central Wisconsin. Francis Jr.’s daughter Delamos Biron Wolfe homesteaded at Choteau, Mont., and moved to Lander Wyoming in the late 1920s.

A son is named Francis Biron Wolfe and that’s as far the name Francis Biron has been tracked for this issue.

1873

Sociable at Mr. Biron's.—Our Catholic friends enjoyed a right royal time last Thursday afternoon and evening at the residence of Mr. F. Biron. The gathering was not confined to sect, but all went who desired so to do. Willey's bus plied to and fro all day, and up to a comfortably late hour, a goodly number enjoyed the good things and the hospitality of the excellent hostess.

Grand Rapids Pulp & Paper



Born June 17, 1847, in Denmark, Nels Johnson became the quintessential self-made man of the frontier.

In 1867, he immigrated through New York to Chicago, where he worked as a laborer before coming up to Grand Rapids in search of some employment suitable to a "green country boy." Johnson started, like so many others had, as a laborer in the employ of Francis Biron. He worked in the woods during the winter and in the saw mill at Biron during the summer. "He advanced himself up until he held the position of head sawyer," wrote the Wood County Reporter, "when he quit to enter the general mercantile business with Henry Langord in 1876."

Apparently, Johnson sent \$500 to Marshall Field in Chicago and asked him to do the buying for the Grand Rapids concern. The two continued to correspond.

Langord sold out in 1877 to William H.H. Edwards, who sold in 1879 to J.D. Witter, who sold in 1887 to George Hill. Johnson & Co. became Johnson & Hill.

In 1892, Johnson built a new store and a new house, fulfilling the prophecy of the May 30, 1891, Enterprise and Tribune, which reported his purchase of 12 acres for \$1,050. "With a frontage on the beautiful Wisconsin River, a fine stock range in the rear, and the whole only four or five blocks from the business center of the city, Mr. Johnson's new pur-

From *The Age of Paper* (1986) in the *River City Memoirs* series by Dave Engel



SWCHC

Grand Rapids Pulp & Paper Company, 1896

chase certainly has every commendable feature for a first-class residence site."

In 1895, Johnson presided over the building of a dam at Biron for Grand Rapids Pulp & Paper Co.

Incorporation papers of that company were recorded in 1892 by J.D. Witter, George Severe Biron, J.W. Cameron, "Daly & Sampson" and E.T. Harmon. They purchased and razed the old Biron saw mill.

Due to a business "depression," the firm deferred further action until 1895, when operations began on a new dam and mill. Initially, the mill was planned to contain seven grinders and a single paper machine. That would make it the size of the plant at South Centralia and about half the size of that at Nekoosa.

So reported the Centralia Enterprise and Tribune of June 15, 1895.

By August, work had commenced.

"What a change! What transformation! What stir and hustle and activity! But for the old family residence and one or two other remaining landmarks of the old place, the Biron of today could not be recognized as the same place where for over a generation the old mill turned out yearly its product of lumber. Year by year its products rose in long rows of towering lumber piles along the banks of the river that furnished the sinews of power that made the buzzing saws gnaw their way greedily through the heart of thousands of pine logs that were spring floated into the mill pond. But year by year the rows of lumber piles grew shorter and shorter, as the supply of timber became exhausted more and more, until for a number of seasons the annual output was very slight. The lumber industry on the Wisconsin in this vicinity was a thing of the past."

At Biron, brick walls of the new boiler room, the beater room and the machine room were going up, built on a foundation of solid rock. Two steam drills worked at excavating a wheel pit for the seven turbine wheels. General Superintendent Nels Johnson told the Enterprise editor that more than 2 million feet of lumber would be used in the dam and plant, practically all furnished by the John Arpin Lumber Co. About 800,000 bricks would be used and 3,000 cords of rock.

Pulp making started on January 20, 1896.

"The Enterprise was furnished a sample of the product, taken from the first sheet by Mr. Flavel Beadle, one of the millwrights. We were indeed surprised that the first run of pulp should be of such high quality. There was not a defect in composition or color, and the whole presented an excellent fiber."

"The mill has been running almost continuously ever since it was started up," reported the Enterprise. "The Company now has four grinders running and will have two more ready in a day or two. From the four grinders they made 312 bundles of pulp during Tuesday night. They made their first shipment on Wednesday, which consisted of two carloads of pulp consigned to the Centralia Pulp and Water Power Co. of this city."

In April, 85 workers turned out four carloads of pulp per day, to be stored for the purpose of having a surplus on hand when the mill started making paper, an event predicted for the following week.

An aerial photograph showing a large industrial facility, likely a paper mill, situated along a river. The mill has a long, white building with a dark roof and several tall, cylindrical storage tanks. To the left of the mill, there is a large pile of raw material, possibly logs or wood chips, and a train of dark-colored railcars. The surrounding area is a mix of dense green forest and cleared land. In the foreground, there are several smaller buildings, parking lots filled with cars, and a large, open dirt area. The river flows through the upper right portion of the image, bordered by thick trees.

ND Paper mill and
remnants of old Biron
photo from ND website

What happened?

Biron's White House





Photos
by
Alison Bruener
SWCHC





Living in the White House

By David C. Siewert, De Pere

My grandfather, John R. Abel, worked for Consolidated starting at 50 cents a week—and retired as head millwright. He died in December 1975. Grandmother was Emma Catherine Johnson Abel, who died in May 1967.

Margaret Abel Siewert, my mother, was the last child to be born in the White House—in 1923. Her wedding reception was held there and at the Community Center in 1945.

My brother told me the house came with Grandpa Abel's job as head millwright. My mother told me they lived there as an appreciation for what my grandmother did for the Mead family.

George W. Mead would send the car for Grandma and she would go to their place on the Island in Rapids to prepare the family for their trips.

When Mrs. Mead died, she was placed on a chaise full of flowers in the garden room. After she was buried, Mr. Mead had guards around the grave so it wouldn't be disturbed. He kept her electric car in the basement of his house for a period of time.

When my grandparents died, members of the Mead family attended their funeral at Baker's.

My grandmother had crippling rheumatoid arthritis and after a while couldn't do the stairs. Both her bedroom and the bathroom were on the second floor so in the early 1960s, they moved to a small house at 940 Center Street in Biron.

At the White House, the front part of the first floor was a social area that my grandmother took care of before the offices were moved there. It was a large formal living room that went the full width with a couch, several chairs, the radio and at one time a piano. A funeral was held in this room in the 1930s for my grandmother's brother.

Also in this room, Christmas was a large gathering of our families, including nine grandchildren and eight adults. Grandpa would decorate the big tree. He

even lit candles once for us to experience an old-fashioned Christmas.

There were waxed stars and many ornaments. Under the tree were piled presents to each of us.

The children had a big table set up in the living room. The adults were in the dining room where there was a round table with several leaves, two china cabinets and a window seat where Grandma kept her ferns and Christmas cactus.

The kitchen had a Hoosier cupboard sink, stove, table and chairs and a stove. Most of the storage for china and food was in the pantry.

Grandma made her great breads, meals and pies on a wood-burning stove. She also provided meals to Biron school teachers at the round table in the dining room.

Upstairs were three bedrooms and a large bathroom with a claw foot tub.

One of the bedrooms was a large extension of what may have been part of the ballroom. My mother's brothers, Maurice and Elmer, used this as their bedroom and also a playroom.

Mom had doll furniture that Grandpa had made: a glass-doored china cupboard;

a round table with two chairs; a rocking chair, a glass-knobbed mirrored dresser and a baby's crib on original spoked wheels.

After my grandparents left, the furniture was moved to our family house for my younger sisters to play with.

There was an old Edison record player that still plays and is in my brother's possession. An old piano, owned by the Biron family, was so big it was used for storage.

Grandma also held her quilting club in this room.

When we were there, we slept in what I called the Abraham Lincoln bedroom. It was such a beautiful room with furniture like President Lincoln's bedroom in the Washington D.C. White House.



Margaret

The big, dark wood bed required us to use a step stool to sit in it. Other furniture was of the scale of Lincoln's. I still have the chair from that room.

It was at one time my grandparents' bedroom. The Victorian dressers were filled with Abel and Mead families' photos. My grandmother and I would go through them but somehow after she died all of these things disappeared.

Grandpa worked on his woodworking projects in his basement workshop. A master of his trade, he would make tool boxes for men at the mill. My brother, Dale, still has a small one that he made for him.

My mother had a corner room on the second floor.

She was a widow after my dad, Valentine Perry Siewert, died in 1963 at age 41. John Siewert Sr. was my father's brother. They were members of the family real estate corporation, Central State Realty Corp. that subdivided a lot of Wisconsin Rapids. The Val-Dor Subdivision was developed by my grandfather and named after him and his wife.

The large yard around the Biron house was kept up by the company but Grandpa took care of the gardens. Here he would grow his great tomatoes, onions, carrots, green peppers, cucumbers and others.

There was a huge lawn in front of the house, trees, walking paths, a rose arbor and a sun dial and space behind to drive to the back porch. The gardens were like an English cutting garden along with a gazebo with seats covered with roses. A round pansy garden would later be filled with moss roses with a sundial in the center. Lilies, brown and red, multi-colored zinnias, dahlias, Sweet William phlox, marigolds, gladiolas and mums: we would take flowers from the cutting garden and vegetables from the vegetable garden home with us.

When we visited, Biron was a mill town with rows of houses which were rented according to a person's status in the mill. We often went to the general store. Biron had its own elementary school and athletic events. Everyone knew everyone else. When someone was sick, neighbors would help by bringing food. Today, Biron's mill houses are gone, replaced by blacktop parking lots and the mill is almost up to my grandparents' porch. History has left Biron except for the Biron White House.

1978 Wisconsin Historical Society survey photo shows remnants of the lawn and garden.

The local Consolidated paper company remodeled the interior as office space and maintained the exterior.



PROGRAM

Fair Grounds, Grand Rapids, Wis.

Sunrise, 42 guns.

10 A. M. Street Parade and exhibition Drill by Gardner Rifles in uniform, followed by a Sham battle by the Grand Rapids Juvenile Invincibles commanded by Capt. Cotey.

Music.—Ice Cream, Lemonade, Fire-crackers, &c. at Agricultural Hall and elsewhere on the grounds.

11 A. M. Oration, Rev. Robinson, of Marshfield.

Music.

Noon Intermission, 10 guns. An elegant lunch may be had on the grounds.

1 P. M. Sham Battle by Gardner Rifles Music.

2 P. M. Horse races and foot races, sack races, potato races, &c.

Music.

Refreshments at the different stands any time during the day.

3,30 P. M. Base Ball Game, Grand Rapids (Battery, Kipp and Mullen) vs. Merrill (Battery, Noel and Stack).

Music.

Sundown, 10 guns.

8 P. M. Fireworks.

9 P. M. until morning, Dance at Opera Rink.

Music for the day furnished by Philleo's Juvenile Band.

Music for the dance by the Tomah Orchestra.

Gardner Rifles: 1890-1992

New construction

Early 1890s photo below shows the Gardner Rifles, a military reenactor and marching group, and by happenstance, the home of Lawrence M. Nash, a local investor and merchant—located on the West Side, north of what is now Grand Avenue. It was described in 1902 just before the construction of the Consolidated mill and dam: "This home is located in a slightly place over-looking the Wisconsin river at the foot of the great rapids." The previous occupant of the property may have been William Bowman's Centralia House hotel.

Nash built a new house on Third Street S. in 1922, the year Consolidated moved his original house to face Third Avenue N.



March 1925

Wreck Once Imposing Home To Make Room For Industry

One of the city's old residential landmarks, once one of the most imposing residences in the vicinity, is now being torn down as the result of a transaction recently completed between Frank Garber and the Consolidated Water Power and Paper company. The residence was formerly the home of the L. M. Nash family and is being torn down to provide additional space for the piling of pulp near the paper company's pulp shed.

Building materials used in the building were all of the finest grade, the builder, J. W. Cochran, using only the best of lumber in the construction of the residence. During the period when the building was under construction Mr. Cochran was the owner of a lumber mill in the town of Sigel and used choice material in constructing the building, which was partially completed in 1890. In 1892 Mr. Nash purchased the residence, making several changes. It had never been occupied

previous to the Nash family moving in.

The first story was of brick veneer construction and the second story of framework. It was one of the largest homes in the vicinity and was located between Second and Third avenues, north, facing Second avenue. For approximately thirty years the residence was occupied by the L. M. Nash family when it was purchased by the Consolidated company and moved back to its present location.

Mr. Garber intends to use the brick in completing his building on Fifth avenue north and will dispose of unused material. Two furnaces which were included in the transaction will be used to heat the new building.

The need for additional pulp storage space prompted the mill officials to dispose of the property at this time and no building operations are contemplated, it was stated by mill officials.

1921

L.M. Nash house,
2nd Avenue N.,
same as opposite:
George Nash
Fred Razan [?]
Unidentified
Neil Nash
Charles Nash





Upper right:

John Arpin house on 1st St N,
now LeChateau The Manor bed
and breakfast. Built in 1891,
same year the Gardner Rifles
were founded.

*Gardner Rifle
Capt. Dr. Brant
Consolidated 075*



ford - Dentist
is, the old Camp site.
- O. B. Merrill

Phil Brown
SWCHC President

1955: A Very Good Year for South Wood County History

As we commemorate 50 years since we opened our building to the public, we look back even further, to Friday, July 15, 1955, and a meeting headed by Theodore W. Brazeau. Here, a constitution and by-laws were adopted and the society's name chosen, South Wood County Historical "Corporation," no doubt because it was indeed legally incorporated.

In December 1955, articles were filed with the Wisconsin secretary of state. With 87 members, SWCHC was one of the larger charter enrollments of any county unit in Wisconsin, according to a Dec. 22, 1956, *Daily Tribune*.

The first public meeting was May 11, 1956, at Howe School. Speaking to the 25 in attendance was William J. Schereck, field representative of the state historical society. Schereck said the reason for having a local historical society was to assemble and preserve data and records of events which have important bearing on a community's history—still the main focus of our archives and publication departments.

Hazel Gemberling of the Howe faculty brought forth three pupils of the school's Junior Historical Society: Susan Wefel, Sally Hazell and John Farrish. Estella Farrish announced 24 persons had taken charter memberships in SWCHC.

Because of the busy 1956 Wood County Centennial, society activities were paused for the summer. At a second public meeting in October 1956 the society investigated obtaining quarters for a museum to display photographs, manuscripts and artifacts that were stored in the basement of the Wood County Court House; the attic of the American Legion Club a couple blocks down Third Street; and the Odd Fellows garage next door to today's Museum.

Officers in 1956 were T.W. Brazeau, president, C.A. Jaspersen, vice president, and Mrs. Estella Farrish, secretary-treasurer. The board of directors included Warren E. Beadle, W. J. Taylor, Dr. F.X. Pomainville, Hazel

Gemberling, Carl Otto, Marshall Buehler, Martin Lipke, Dr. T.A. Pascoe, Fern Ross Amundson and Dr. Leland Pomainville.

Fifteen years after the organizational meeting, the SWCHC received the gift of a ready-made museum in the form of the old T.B. Scott Public Library. In November 1971, work on exhibits and artifacts storage began under the guidance of Cathryn (Cay) Brazeau and Warner DeKarske, curator. For a "sneak preview," Oct. 22, 1972, more than 500 people visited the museum. The transformation of the old public library building to a new historical museum was completed in November 1972, allowing the Museum to open for its first full season on Sunday, June 3, 1973.

ADDITION of a fourth affiliate of the State Historical Society to those already functioning in Central Wisconsin is welcomed by the Marshfield Historical Society, youngest of the trio which further consists of the Portage and Marathon county units. Organization of the South Wood County Historical Society, including adoption of a constitution and by-laws and selection of a name, was announced a week ago in the Wisconsin Rapids Tribune, which gave this additional information: "Attending the organizational meeting were C. A. Jaspersen, Port Edwards; Warren E. Beadle, Biron; Mrs. Estella Farrish, T. W. Brazeau and W. J. Taylor, Wisconsin Rapids. Also present to provide counsel in setting up the new group was William J. Schereck, Madison, field representative of the State Historical Society. Purposes of the organization, as stated in the constitution, are 'to preserve, advance and disseminate knowledge of the history of Wood county.' The first regular meeting for election of officers will be held in September.

July 23,
1955,
Marshfield
News-Herald

Phil, center, and SWCHC were both born in 1955



Mary Elizabeth "Betty" Brown
(1919-08)

Peter (1945)

Christopher (1953)

David (1942)

Phil in 2021 Photo by UD



Phil in 1972
the year SWCHC opened its Museum



Lori Brost

Museum Administrator

The Museum Story Continued

The transition from Witter family home to T.B. Scott Library was a pretty smooth process. The next step from library to museum, however, had its fair share of bumps.

The May 11, 1966, headline read “Mrs. Burt Offers Half Million Dollar Gift for New Library.” This was the first public announcement of a project which would honor her late parents, Archie and Margaret McMillan, and uncle, George McMillan.

Her donation of 16,000 shares of Consolidated Papers, Inc., common stock was placed into a trust with attorneys Richard Brazeau and John Cole; and Consolidated vice president Ira Boyce as trustees.

The new library would be bordered by East Grand Ave. and Birch St. and Fifth (Lincoln) and Garfield St.

After a plan was outlined and accepted, the trustees would turn over the stock to the city upon either Mrs. Burt’s or her husband’s death, whichever occurred last.

Initially, it was stipulated that an area be created within the new library building for the South Wood County Historical Corp. to utilize as a museum to display items they had been collecting for 15 years. However, after years of planning and discussions, it was decided that a different location would be better suited for the museum.

On Monday, May 11, 1970, the Wisconsin Rapids Common Council’s Public Property Committee recommended the city turn over the old T.B. Scott Library building on Third Street South to the South Wood County Historical Corp.

There would be no charge to the group for the building but there were still concerns. J. Marshall Buehler, SWCHC board president, inquired if the city would be assisting with maintenance.

Buehler stated that the SWCHC board did not feel that the funds they had were adequate to cover both initial costs and maintenance. He noted that there was Consolidated stock earmarked by Mrs. Burt for the so-

ciety after her death but a lesser amount of stock was available to them if they accepted the offer.

The next morning, an article in the *Tribune* read that at the request of the South Wood County Historical Corp., the city would withhold formal action. Harold Zager, Chairman of the Public Property Committee, asked for permission to withdraw the city’s offer. Alderman Harvey Schneider said the request was to allow the society time to consider the proposal.

Within a week, ten members of the SWCHC board met at the office of Dr. Leland Pomainville to discuss the financial issues of accepting the building and voted to find a competent builder who could give them an estimate on the costs to make any needed renovations to the old library.

A local contractor estimated repairs to the building’s roof would range from \$200 to \$400 and said the rest of the building was in good shape. At this point, the society notified the city they would accept the building on Third Street.

While the conversion from library to museum would be gradual and there was no set timeline, the members began moving items from storage in the Odd Fellows’ coach house back behind both buildings.

In August, Buehler reported to his board members that the Common Council had revised the terms of the agreement and had inserted a clause that the Third Street building would revert to the city if it were not used as a museum. The city would also retain a strip of land in front of the building.

The following month, Buehler informed the city committee that the society would not be accepting the former library with those provisions. “We do not want to invest money in a building that would not be ours.” He said he expected to renegotiate.

The negotiation did not take long. In November, the city agreed that the former T.B. Scott Library building would become the property of the South Wood

County Historical Corp. The only opposition was from alderman John Ritchie who did not think the city should give away property that they might need later for a right of way. Alderman William Suckow pointed out that when the city accepted the trust agreement with Mrs. Mary McMillan Burt for funds for the library, they committed itself to the deal with the historical society.

On Nov. 14, 1970, "Lots A and B of Webb and Others Replat" were officially deeded to the South Wood County Historical "Society," and on November 30 the SWCHC Board met to begin the process of turning the former library into the Museum.

Despite the new activities surrounding the museum building, SWCHC continued to educate the community with monthly presentations: slides featuring the history of Guatemala, the French Revolution and the Menomonic Indians.

During the exciting first phases of the building itself, there was plenty of local assistance. Green Thumb took on painting, the Sunrise Club restored the Tom Taylor Collection, local architect Donn Hougen drew up plans for no charge, garden clubs cared for the grounds and Father Marceil restored a fireplace.

As noted in the September 1972 minutes, one last issue arose. It was deemed necessary to replace the sewer pipe as soon as possible.

At the same meeting, the first opening hours were stipulated for October 22, 1-4 p.m. *Tribune* publisher William F. Huffman arranged for publicity. There would be special invitations (complete with maps) to the mayors of surrounding cities, County Board chairmen and neighboring historical societies. Posters would be hung in stores and banks. Each exhibit chairperson was asked to organize workers for their areas.

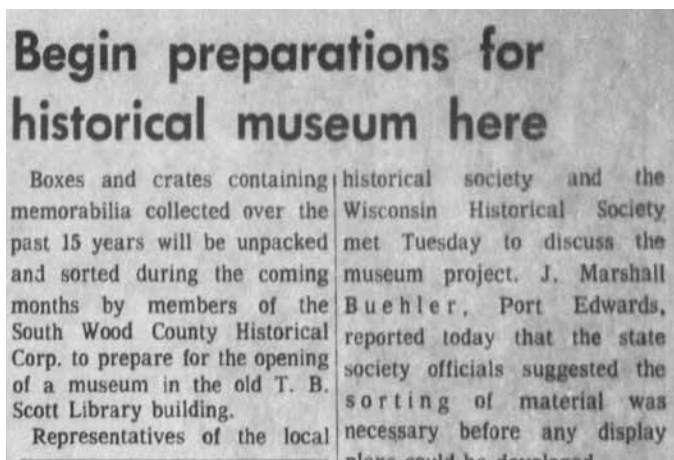
The *Tribune* dedicated a full page on Oct. 21, 1972, to promoting the Grand Opening. A follow up article on October 26 celebrated the event.

On October 27, SWCHC secretary McConnell wrote a letter to the editor thanking the *Daily Tribune* and WFHR for their publicity during the event. She also thanked the community for their warm response. Fifty years later, the SWCHC echoes that thank you for the support of the community it was organized to celebrate.

Lori

working hard since 2008

shown here with her personal volunteers



May 5 1971



Chad, Mayci, Lori and Lea Brost

Lori Brost

Museum Administrator

Our Benefactor

Mary McMillan Burt lived her life generously in every aspect, a trait she may have inherited from her father and uncle, Archie and George McMillan.

Their parents, Daniel and Isabella McMillan, moved from Scotland with three children to New York, where another child was born.

Daniel served on the school and town boards and as clerk of court. When his health began to fail, the family moved to Waushara County, where he died in 1856.

Archie, the oldest child of Daniel and Isabella, was born in 1839 and married Margaret “Maggie” Moore in 1876—the year Mary was born, followed by Anna in 1881. A childhood injury prevented Archie from joining the military in the Civil War but it didn’t keep him from serving his community.

After years on their farm, the McMillans sought a better education for their daughters, Anna and Mary, in Centralia, Wis., twin city of Grand Rapids, where, following in his father’s footsteps, Archie was elected city clerk. He served on the school board, as jury commissioner and as a trustee of the Congregational Church.

Archie died of typhoid fever in 1922, leaving his estate to his wife Maggie, who died 15 years later. She in turn left his former holdings and hers to the two children.

Archie’s brother George McMillan, uncle to Mary and Anna, was born in 1840. He sacrificed his education to help his family survive as his father’s health failed—without his parents knowing. After the first time he gave his mother money he remembered, “I felt prouder when I handed my mother that dollar and a half than any money I have ever made since.”

George joined the 16th Wisconsin Infantry in the Civil War and was appointed first sergeant, an experience documented in *The Fat Memoirs*. After numerous

jobs and investments, George moved to Grand Rapids to take over the cranberry marsh belonging to his brother, Daniel (born about 1851) went West and was never heard from again. George did not marry, but remained close to his brother Archie and in 1925, left an estate valued at \$57,050.77, to his “adopted daughters” Anna and Mary.

The girls graduated from Centralia High School and Stevens Point Normal. Anna moved on to Stout Institute and Columbia University. Mary received both of her degrees at University of Wisconsin-Madison. Their lives were spent educating others in Wisconsin Rapids, Ashland, Marshfield and River Falls.

Mary served on the Board of the T.B. Scott Library for 25 years.

While Anna never married, Mary did, later in life, in April 1942—to Laertes Burt, 70. She was 66. The two shared 24 years together prior to his 1966 death.

Laertes [in *Hamlet*, the brother of Ophelia] and Mary spent their summer in Rapids and the balance of the year in St. Petersburg, Fla., his home since 1916. He had been most recently employed in the retail clothing business.

Burt was born in Ablemans, Sauk County, Wis., in 1872, and grew up in North Freedom, Wis. His highest grade completed was 8th.

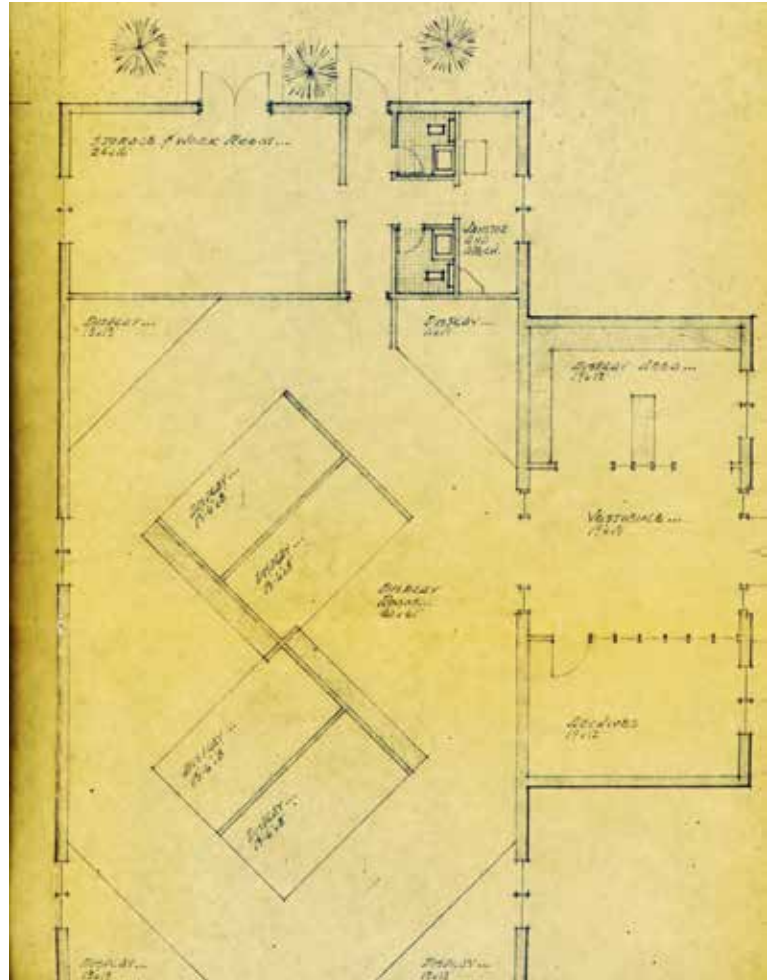
As a young man, he established a men’s clothing store in Baraboo and for a time traveled for the Curtis Publishing Co. At 27, he lived in Baraboo as a mill hand with his parents and grandparents. In 1910, Burt and his wife, Ida, lived in Tomah, where he ran a billiard and pool hall.

According to his obituary, he moved to Florida due to “ill health.” In 1940, he resided with his mother-in-law. When he met Mary McMillan, he was a salesman and a widower living in St. Petersburg.

Besides supporting a new library that bore her family name in Wisconsin Rapids, Mary McMillan Burt left money to schools, churches, a cemetery, a hospital and the South Wood County Historical Corp.

“This is my home town,” she had written. “Anything which contributes to the progress of the city in any way is, and has always been, of real interest to me.”

Donn Hougen plans for SWCHC in McMillan Memorial Library included space for the South Wood County Historical Museum



Mary McMillan Burt
at
then under
construction
McMillan
Memorial Library,
Wisconsin Rapids,
1969



Quality Row

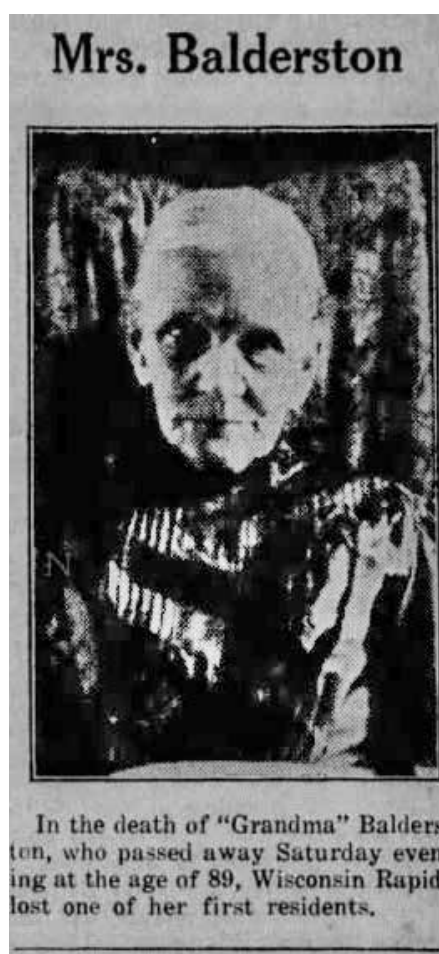
Who's Who in Wisconsin Rapids

Jeanette Wood Balderston

by Grace Balderston Daly

1920 in the *Daily Tribune*

Excerpts with notes by UD



1924

William Balderston died in 1877, same year as Francis Biron. His wife, Jeanette, lived 47 more years.

Who's who in 1920? That would be Sarah Jeanette Wood, born in Seneca Falls, N.Y., in 1834 [yes the same Seneca Falls that would become the "birthplace of women's rights" 14 years later].

Jeanette's father, Joseph Wood, the "born pioneer" for whom our county is named, brought his family to a farm at Fort Hill, Ill., west of Chicago, where Jeanette's mother died and after which Joseph began traveling with his "wee" daughter to the Wisconsin Pinery.

Recalling herself as a young girl in "Indian country," Mrs. Balderston said the Indians were law abiding and peaceful whereas the "rivermen" were inveterate fighters and worse drinkers.

She remembered the day the stage brought in Thomas B. Scott with merchandise he displayed on boards laid across barrels near the present WoodTrust bank corner.

The same Scott who built what Balderston called the "old Pomainville home" on Third Street [and a near palace in Merrill which is on deck to be demolished]. Scott supported the library here named for him, the second iteration of which is now the SWCHC Museum. Jeanette's daughter, Grace Balderston Daly, was the first librarian of the first T.B. Scott library, beginning in 1892.

At age 19, Sarah Jeanette eloped with shoe salesman and short-term city marshal William J. Balderston. On the way to the Wisconsin House of George and Mary Neeves, the couple was chased by an irate father, "Judge" Joseph Wood.

A bridesmaid ran madly up "Pumpkin Hill" and into a house standing at the crest of the Baker Street hill about where Mrs. Elizabeth Daly's is today [added to the National Register of Historic Places by 1980s-owner Pat Orcutt]. The bridesmaid was pursued by the father, and by the time he discovered his mistake, his daughter, in the arms of the best man, had been carried over the ["Arpin"] creek which ran across the road near the Hammer House and minus one slipper, was taken down Third St., then an Indian trail, to a mill boarding house, back of the present Ellis home [near Belle Island].

In July of the year she was married, 1853, then "Mrs. Balderston" moved into her long-time home on today's Third Street South. The only other building on that then-rustic pathway was a mill boarding house. Pine trees and berry brambles filled the country all around.

Jeanette said it was her husband, William Balderston, who first applied the name High Street to the current Third in memory of the same in Baltimore, though ours joined the ranks of posh boulevards became commonly known as "Quality Row," a term used both in pride and derision.

Gradually "the neighbors" came to what was then the south end of town: Sampson, Neeves, Scott, Butterfield, Rowe, Wheelan, Whitney, Purdy and Smith.

Mrs. Balderston added to the list of presumably south side residents: Kromer, Fritzinger, Witter, Webb, Hunt, Woodworth, Naylor, Mosher, Worden, Compton, Bernier, Sweeney, Grace and "a little later" Emmons, LaBreche, Belanger, Besoir, Bell, Farrish, Lyons, Warren and LaVigne.

Presumably all lived on or near Third Street. Once prominent, most are familiar now only to historians..

Balderston's on Third

At top right, Grand Avenue between Fourth and Third before the frame buildings were removed for the 1932-33 Post Office. The Balderston house at the extreme right of the picture had been there 72 years and was originally built by Grace Daly's father, W.J. Balderston, and continuously lived in by the family.

"Dr. Mills" moved the house showing in the center of the picture to what is now 450 East Grand Ave. The dwelling on the corner to the left, at one time occupied by W. H. Drumb, one of the former editors of the Rapids *Tribune* was torn down. To the old settlers this was the home of R. W. Lyons, one of the early pioneers.

Balderston house



McMillan Memorial Library

Balderston house almost hidden at far right, corner of Third Street and East Grand Avenue



Post Office building opened in 1933



Planted by W.J. Balderston

Joan Staub Haasl

Remember When...

I was three or four years old, and we were living on Third Street and I came in with a handful of pennies. When my mother asked where I got them I said, "the gypsy lady." My mother was afraid someone was trying to kidnap me. Mother hid in the bushes, and the "gypsy lady" turned out to be Mrs. George Mead in her electric car.

I loved to see that electric car go by, it was a beautiful machine, which later became a vivid childhood memory.

August 4, 1934

When I was around eight, I was often sick with tonsillitis. I would be in bed with black salve and outing flannel on my neck. I was told I'd get better if I would just eat my oatmeal.

By this time, my dad had bought Mrs. Mead's old electric car and she had a new one. The old car had an arm for steering, lovely upholstery and lanterns on the fenders. It sat in our yard for some time before it was moved to our cottage. I was told if I was good and ate my oatmeal, I would get to ride out in the electric car.

There was a roof over the back door of our house just outside my bedroom window. Snow covered this roof. Every day I opened the window and threw the oatmeal out.

The reason I was getting better, I was told, is because I was eating my oatmeal. One day the sun came out and melted the snow. I was told the reason I wasn't getting better, was because I wasn't eating my oatmeal.

I wasn't worried about not getting a ride in the car because Pa always gave in. Not this time!

One day Pa and my brother, Billy, got in the car and headed to Biron and the cottage beyond.

I got to play in the electric car and pretend I was driving it, but I never got that ride I wanted. I don't know what became of that wonderful machine, but I do know I still hate oatmeal, and when I see it on a store shelf, I always think how it took my ride away.

Joan "Josie" Haasl 1928-2010

Staub Property Good Example of Modernization



At the left is seen the J. A. Staub residence, a 10-room structure, as it was before it was made into two houses during the past few months. By making the change Mr. Staub improved his property in many ways.

Two houses with the upstairs of each having 5-room apartments and the downstairs having similar sized apartments is the result of the alteration and modernization project. The buildings are located at 441 and 451 Third street south.



Joan Staub Haasl

This Old House

In 1933 and early 1934, our house at 441 Third Street South was cut in two.

The house originally had ten rooms and an interesting history. The lot was first deeded to Samuel Rawson Merrill by the United States in 1845. Later, it was sold to William Roe, who built the house around 1876. Roe sold the house to Mrs. Sarah E. Vaughan [previously profiled in *Artifacts*], the mother of Assemblyman B.M. Vaughan. She later sold the house to Eugene Bisbee.

In 1902, the George W. Mead family rented the house. Mead told the *Tribune* in 1934 that Bisbee wanted to rent it to him for \$15 per month without a furnace or bathroom. Mead said he would pay \$30 per month if bath and furnace were installed. This was done for \$1,000.

The Mead family moved in July 4, 1902. On May 25, 1905, Mead bought the house from Bisbee. On July 4, 1912, the Mead family moved to their new brick home on Belle Isle.

Lacy Horton, manager of the Grand Rapids Milling Company, bought the house from Mr. Mead. Horton later sold it to A.G. Miller in 1922. On March 6, 1926, Joe Staub bought the house from Miller. Some remodeling was done shortly after this sale, and the major remodeling was started in 1933.

The house was cut apart where French doors separated dining and living rooms. The rooms in the original house were huge. Brother Bill could ride his two-wheeler through the living and dining rooms without touching any furniture. I was five when the house was cut in two, 14 when Pa died and I went to live at Rowlands.

I remember a few things from the house. A large attic with finished steps going up, and a wood floor. There was an old trunk that had belonged to my Grandma Staub, who died three months after I was born. The trunk was never opened. I don't know what happened to it, and I still wonder what was inside.

I remember playing with Dad's jackknife, cutting my finger and crying when I saw blood. I remember the porch across the front and around the side. On rainy days, I put blankets around a card table and played inside in my own little world.

I remember eating some cheese and getting sick in my crib (I still don't like cheese).

My crib was in a big front room. My doll was in a box under the crib. I stood on the rail and jumped in the crib, and the bottom collapsed and smashed the doll. Pa went to Ragan Furniture and got me a metal bed with a 20-year guarantee. Some of my kids slept in that bed.

I also remember a Halloween with Mrs. Martin Jacobson in the attic playing a witch. She had a costume with a big peaked hat and a cackle that was really scary. Jack Goggins ran home crying, he was so scared.

I remember Raymond Vickers and his mother living upstairs and Raymond playing the piano. He had lived in New York City and came home to live with his mother. She saved cheese boxes for me to play with. Raymond said he would play for my wedding someday.

I remember digging a hole in the backyard. When the hired girl asked what I was doing, I said I was digging a hole to China. I remember looking for my pet chicken Brownie and getting stung by bees. Bill laughed and said we ate Brownie for Sunday dinner.

Quality Row

Joan Staub Haasl

MUSEUM NOTES:

Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune Sept. 21, 1996

3rd Street, an interesting place

Museum volunteer recalls childhood encounters with city's famous folks

My world, as a child, centered on Third Street South. It was a very interesting place.

Mrs. George Mead would stop her electric car and give me pennies. The Daly kids walked by and always talked to me. Jim Daly went on to become a famous actor and his daughter, Tyne, and son, Tim, are well-known actors, also.

In a book at the museum, I found a picture of Jim Daly in a local play—most likely his first acting role.

Dr. Lee Pomainville went by several times a day, and always tooted and waved at me. Years later, he, along with many others, was a driving force in forming the museum.

When I could leave the block, I would roller skate up and down the street. One of the houses I skated by was the Witter home. I often wondered what it was like inside. I found out when it became the T.B. Scott Library.

I didn't know then it would become a museum, and that I would spend happy hours there as a volunteer. After many years, I am still learning, and the museum is still changing.

I urge all visitors to come back again and again. A single visit is just the beginning.

Joan Haasl was a member of the board of directors of the South Wood County Historical Corp.

Quality Row

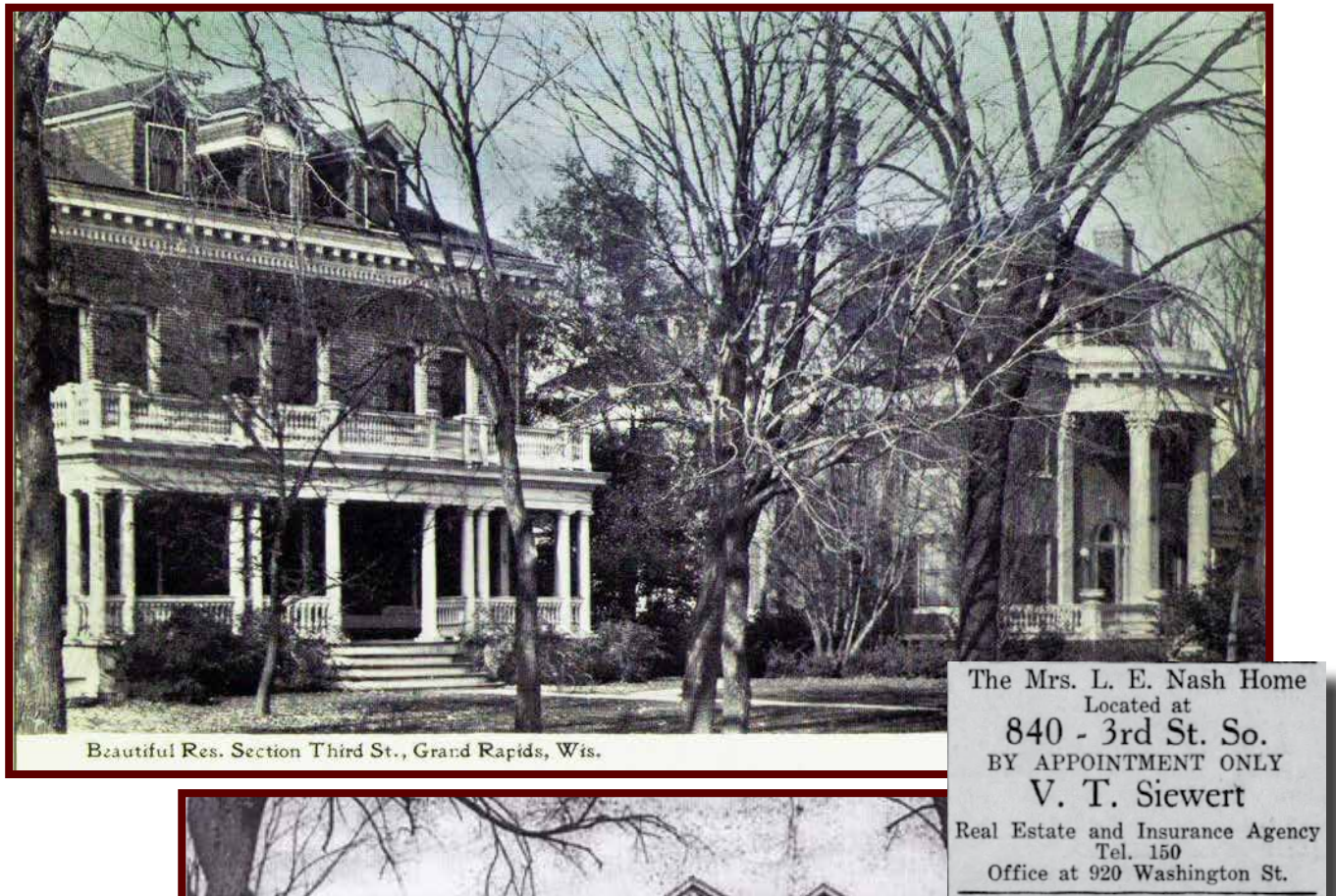
Halloween

The first Halloween I remember was before the house on Third Street was cut in two. I know it was then because our neighbor, Mrs. Martin Jacobson, was up in the attic dressed as a witch. The attic in the old part of the house had a nice stairs and was finished off, not like most attics.

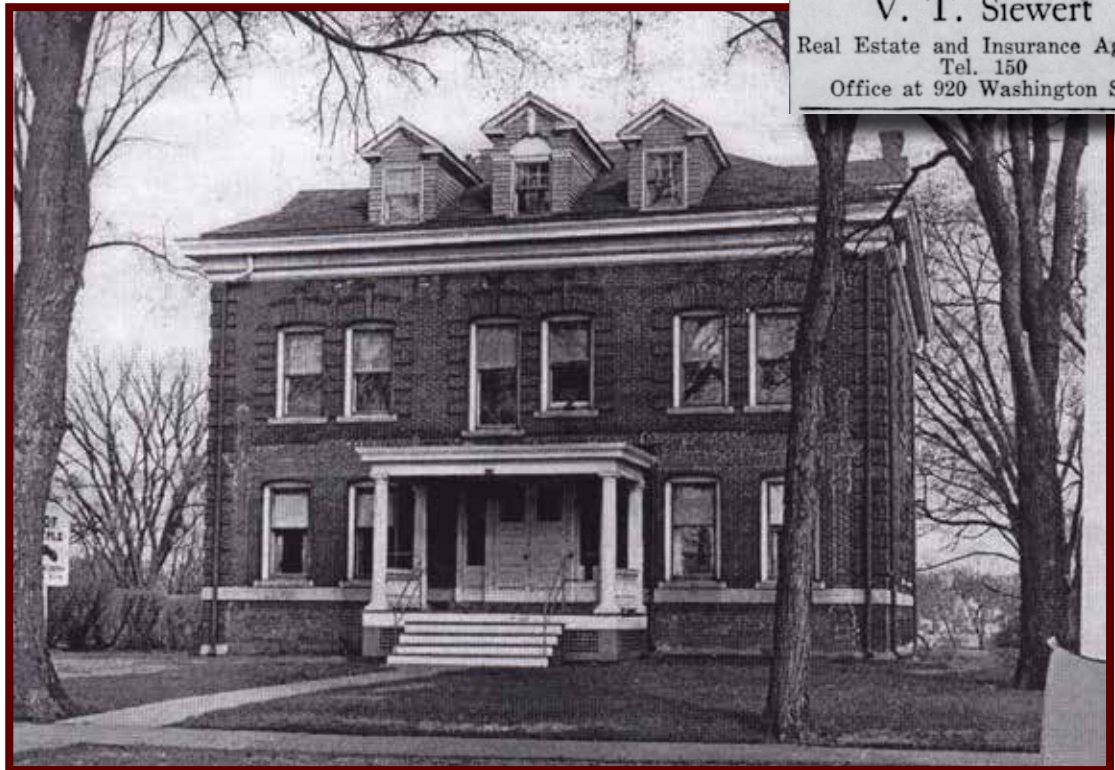
I was five when the house was cut in half, so on this Halloween I was four. Mrs. Jacobson had a black outfit on with a big witches hat, and she had a cackle one had to hear to believe. I wasn't scared at all, somehow I knew it was just Mrs. Jacobson. But, a friend of my brother's, three years older, was so scared he ran to his home on Birch Street, shrieking all the way! He would never come to our house for Halloween again.

The other Halloween that was memorable was the year Judge Calkins' wife said I threw rotten tomatoes at her. I pulled some interesting stunts in the neighborhood, but throwing rotten tomatoes wasn't one of them. I was nowhere near Judge Calkins' house that night, but my mother was impressed with titles and she stated, "If Judge Calkins' wife says you were there, YOU WERE THERE!" But I wasn't—that was the night I shoved a neighbor boy in the rain barrel.

Left: L.E. Nash, house, later Odd Fellows Hall. Right: I.P. Witter house, later SWCHC Museum. Before 1920



In 1980, under the leadership of UD's dad, Don Engel, the Odd Fellows built Engel Fellowship Lodge at 1930 7th Street S., their current home

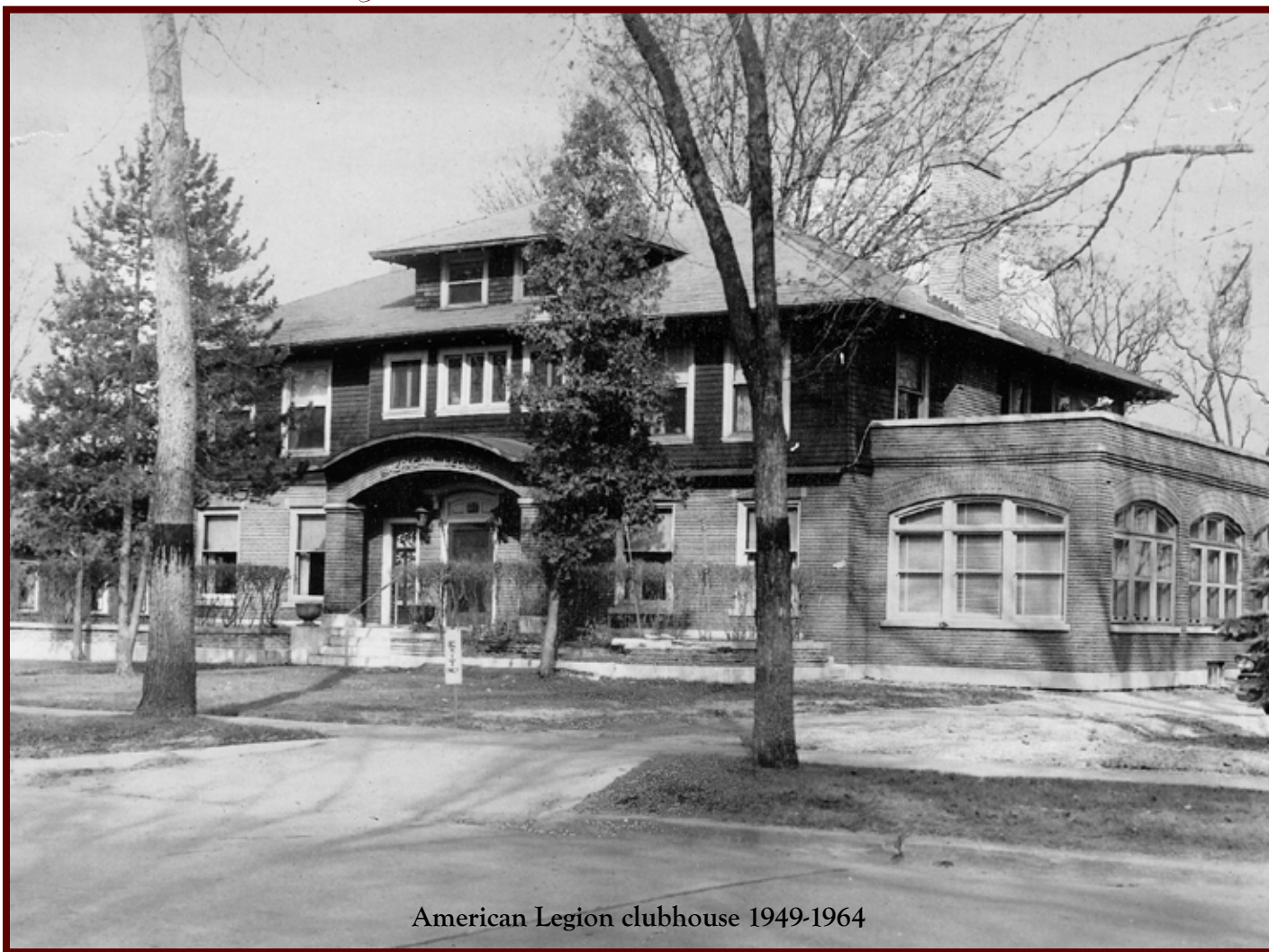


1947 Odd Fellows Hall or "Temple"

Quality Row

Rogers House

570 Third Street South



American Legion clubhouse 1949-1964

Built 1915

Rogers house lasted 50 years



Built 1965

Imperial House 57 years and regal as ever

According to local devotee Bill Cwiklo, the American Legion clubhouse was built in 1915 as a dwelling for Roye Mortimer Rogers and his wife, the former Millie Stange, sister of their neighbor, Mrs. E.W. Ellis. Millie's father was August H. Stange, founder of Stange Lumber Co., Merrill, of which E.W. Ellis was Rapids president.

Rogers, a lumberman in his own right, was born in Adrian, Mich., in 1871. He came to Grand Rapids in 1914 to be associated with Ellis in the Stange Ellis Lumber Co. and left for Beverly Hills, Cal., in 1941, living, like his former Quality Row peers, Isaac and Charlotte Witter, on N. Arden Dr., a street of Spanish-style mansions.

The Rapids house was sold by Dr. O.A. Backus to American Legion.

When Roye (sic.) and Emily “Millie” Rogers moved to Beverly Hills in 1941, they took their pipe organ from their spacious music room with them to their palatial California mansion. They also brought a maid.

In May 1941 at age 26 or so, Angeline Krzykowski of Sigel, to the tune of numerous farewell parties, also left for California where she planned to spend a year as a maid for the Rogers.

It might have been her first city job. In 1940, the Rogers’ maids here were Clara Henke and Violet Haberland. Angeline was home with her father and three sisters. Her mother, Selma Cepress Krzykowski, had died in 1927, and “Angie” filled in.

A year after joining the Rogers, May 1942, the Sigel farm girl, Angeline Krzykowski, had her brush with *Artifacts* fame when she accepted the position of second maid in the home of Charlie Chaplin, also in Beverly Hills. She found Chaplin difficult to work for and didn’t stay long.

Angeline returned in June 1945 to spend a month’s vacation with her father, John Krzykowski, and to attend the wedding of her sister, Grace and Melvin Peters.

A 1948 voter registration list has Angeline at 703 Arden Street along with African-American chauffeur Bennie Hill and wife Blanche, and their employers, Roye and Millie Rogers—in a residence currently worth \$20 million. Angeline registered as a Democrat.

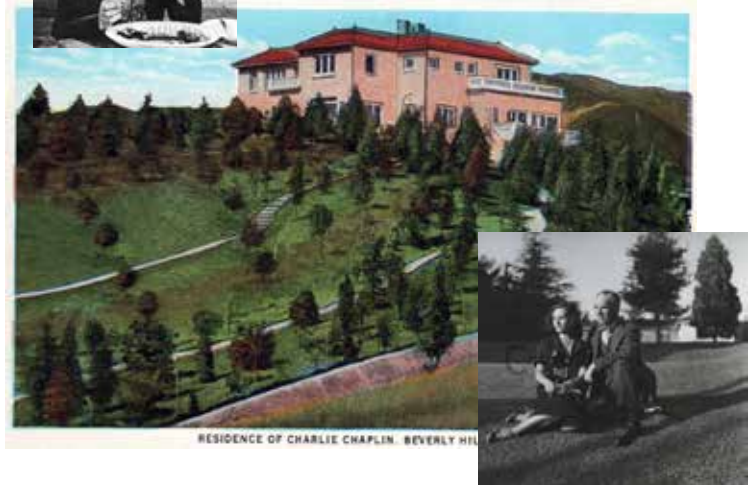
In 1947 at a polka dance in California, Angeline met Andrew Dyda, formerly of Kronenwetter, Wis., who had served in WWII in the South Pacific, 1941-45.

Andrew and Angeline married June 25, 1949. He became a farmer and worked for Wisconsin Valley Concrete.

Angeline died in July 2004 at King veterans home, her husband in 2006.



The Little Tramp
Charlie Chaplin



Servant to the Stars



1991 Amtrak trip to California

Back Cover

Centralia girls brigade, 1888 photo by J.O. Hebert. The group was organized by J.W. Cochran as a military drill team to raise funds for old soldiers to attend a reunion in Milwaukee. Sara Goodman was captain of the group shown, which performed at the Daly Opera House. Left to right, seated: Stella Kellogg Walworth, Julia Smith, Minnie Getts, Gertie Wood, Grace Getts. Standing: Sara Goodman Kenyon, Bess Robinson Chapman, Lavina Carrington Pearson, Adah Skeel Otto, Maude Brastad Daniels, Katherine Smith.

South Wood County Historical Museum
540 Third Street South
Wisconsin Rapids WI 54494

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Artifacts: South Wood County Historical Corp., 540 3rd St. S., Wisconsin Rapids WI 54494. For SWCHC membership & subscription, send \$25. Dave Engel, editor, dave@southwoodcountyhistory.org; Lori Brost, Museum Administrator, 715-423-1580 or lori@southwoodcountyhistory.org.



See page 31 for info.