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Volume II #65

ARTIFACTS



Photo contributed by Kathy Daly

Cover: Leonard, Paul and Carl Arpin heading up Drake Street hill toward site of old Magnolia Hotel—from their ancestral home, later destroyed as described in April 20, 1985, *Daily Tribune*.

Contents: Jack Wesley, new SWCHC president, pp. 2-4 by Uncle Dave; Jim Wesley, 5; Fifties by Ed Severson, 6-7; Bum's Jungle by Severson, 8; Vehicles by Severson, 9; 3rd St. condemnation by UD, 10-11; Lefebvre building, 12-15; Red Cab and Mead-Witter, 16-18; Magnolia Hotel, 19-22; Rudolph school days by Theresa Baughman Rickett, 23-26; Quarries by Steve Bornbach. 27-31; Krohn photo, 32.



Uncle Dave

New SWCHC president has Rapids roots

Though his boyhood home was a Chicago suburb, Jack Wesley and I were both Rapids kids—at least part of the year.

Jack was born Feb. 18, 1943, at Detroit, Mich., where his father, Lawrence, was temporarily stationed during World War II. When Lawrence was transferred back to Fort Harrison, Ky., Jack and his mother, Margaret, moved to Chicago to stay with her parents, Reginald and Ruth Hickson. After the war, Lawrence joined his family.

Jack's sister, Susan, was born in 1953 at the northern suburb of Glenview, Ill., where Jack graduated with a class of 940 from Niles Township high school in 1961.

By age 11, Jack had got a job as a caddy and began a long association with golf that continues at Bulls Eye golf club here. "Basically doing what most kids do," he said his high school career was not particularly distinguished, but he served on student council and as a classroom president.



Dave Engel photo 2022

Jack Wesley

NORTHLAND

How did he come to live here in God's Country?

Back at Niles, in lieu of being confined to high school study halls, Jack signed up to meet as many college recruiters as possible and was persuaded by Wes Church to apply at Northland College

"I can remember going home after that interview and telling my parents about it. And they said, 'Oh Wisconsin, it can't get any better than that.' So that fall I was in Ashland, Wis."

At Northland, Jack lived in Mead Hall, named for our own George W. Mead I, Wisconsin Rapids industrialist and an important college benefactor.

"It was a big change in general. Small town, small school. My high school graduating class was larger than the student body of Northland."

RAPIDS

Turns out Jack already was no stranger to the "you think this is cold?" state.

"My dad grew up here and my mother was very connected to Wisconsin. I had traveled here every summer to visit my grandparents so it wasn't foreign to me."

At 1531 2nd St. N., not far from the old Green Bay & Western depot, lived Jack's grandparents, Anna and John Wesley, and Uncle Clarence Wesley, the oldest of three brothers, a divorced bachelor by then.

"Before my grandfather worked at Consolidated, he was a station agent at the Green Bay & Western. I have kept a telegram allowing me to ride the switch engine from Rapids up to Biron and back. Dirty and hot as I remember.

"When my grandfather worked for Consolidated, he'd walk home from work every day when the whistle blew. Having your grandfather coming home for lunch and having a big meal in the middle of the day was different than I was used to."

Jack's grandmother was German, a Sprafka from Sigel. "I remember going south on First Street where

Sampson canning was. My grandmother worked at Sampson's. When you walked by, you could see an open space and she was working right there in the doorway."

Across from Sampson's, the steep steps of a grocery store [variously named Siewert/Plenge/Konietski] always gave me a thrill. The Love House boarding house and tavern was across the street.

"You start heading south to the swimming pool and watch the frogs. A large pipe from the river was diverted into a 'pool' and out. There was a flow of water and everything that was in the water came on through.

"From there you'd walk past the courthouse square. I remember the Red Owl behind the parking lot of the court house to the east."

Along the way, Jack saw the landmark "stores" of our generation, like Penney's, Daly drug and the brick monuments of the East Side.

Grand Avenue was in its prime. "At the Consolidated shift change, the fire station would send a truck across the bridge because they didn't want to be stuck on bridge traffic."

Johnson Hills and its mezzanine coffee shop? "It was kind of a neat place. I'd certainly been to much bigger department stores. But the scale of it was maybe more to my liking."

Hiawatha bar.

Movies at the Wisconsin, Palace and Rapids.

BBQ out by the log cabin place [Golden Eagle].

Root beer stand by Witter field, baseball games.

The old Golden Sands speedway on 54.

"If you went to the track you'd end up at Al and Hazel's across the road. When I was there it was just a little bar with a few tables in the back. I remember getting a dog from Al and Hazel's."



The ritual of bringing a loaf of bread and cookies to a woman known as "Sloppy Annie."

"It was almost like a welfare visit. She was a character. She lived in this rickety old house and had 18 dogs running around."

Visiting Rapids in the Fifties?

"Coming from the city where your daily life was surrounded by big buildings and suddenly you're here in the open space and you have grocery stores and neat old buildings; it was different. I don't have any remembrance of it being a one-horse town. There was a paper mill and there was a river."

YET ANOTHER LINK

So how is Jack related to former SWCHC board member Barry Jens?

"I met my wife, Susan Griffiths, at college at Northland. Her father, William, was Ashland fire chief. We were married in 1969.

"After Sue graduated, she had gone to teach in Nekoosa. A sister, Sandy, went on to graduate school and worked for the state board of education for a year or two. Nancy, the older sister, came to Pittsville to teach school. Somewhere along the line, she met Barry Jens and they married and lived

happily ever after."



Jack

SHELL

After Northland, Jack returned to Illinois for graduate business school in marketing at Northern Illinois University, Dekalb. He joined Shell Oil in 1967 and spent the next 25-plus years moving around the U.S., and, finally, landed in London.

"I ended up being a Senior Advisor in Finance. The title meant I could go to third-world countries, have an awful time and go home. In 1995, I took early retirement, went to work for an insurance company in Bermuda and spent almost ten years there. It was ten years of a holiday 'cause if you think this is the real life you're crazy."

RAPIDS RETURN

At the time Jack and Sue went to London, they were living in Houston, Texas, but didn't have any desire to stay there. "We knew we had to have a place to call home in the U.S. When my younger son, Steve, was a junior in high school, his cousin, Tom (Nancy and Barry's kid) suggested Steve come to Rapids and we buy a house. The real plot for him was that he wouldn't have to go to London. Which is what happened.

"He came to school at Lincoln and we went to London without him. Two years later, he graduated and I retired to Bermuda. So, we never really came home. But we had bought a little frame two-story house at 14th and Baker, a good place to put your stuff.

"We sold that house and in 1994 bought the [Brazeau] house on Third. We had it five years before we lived in it.

"When son Steve graduated from Lincoln, I flew in from Bermuda for the graduation party.

"I show up and meet local people and meet his friends' parents. Everyone is very welcoming and they keep saying, 'Now where do you work?' At the end of



the evening, I'm cleaning up with Sue, and I wonder if they thought, 'Can't this guy get a local job?'

"Because we had bought the Brazeau house, I became associated with the South Wood County Historical Corp.

"Mary [Brazeau] Brown was interested in keeping the history of the house alive. She was very kind and gave us a lot of history stuff. And there was more in the house. So, we became pretty close to [previous SWCHC president] Phil [Brown] and Mary." As a board member, Jack has been long-time SWCHC treasurer.

VISION

The new president believes the thematic re-imaginings now under way at the Museum were needed.

"The museum had become a little tired. If you came here four years ago and came again in 2021, you'd see the same place, unchanged. You know some people still think this is a library. And that's kind of sad because either our name isn't big enough outside or we aren't doing enough. It will take some energy.

"We need to have an active, participating, board. We need to reach out to the community. Who are we and what do we stand for and what does that mean we should be doing? Soon I hope we can look at what our vision is and whether we are doing more than giving it lip service."



Jack and Sue Wesley



Jack's "Aunt Kay" Wesley had been married to Jack's dad's brother, Lamont, "Uncle Monty," who later remarried. Aunt Kay had two sons, Gene, six years older than Jack, and Jim, close in age and more of a companion. Jack sometimes stayed overnight with cousin Jim and Jim's mother. "They lived where K&W Glass shop was and then it moved next door and became Kay's Dress Shop."



SOME ENJOYED IT—Motorists weren't too happy over the 2 inches of snow that covered the city this morning, but the youngsters had a great time. Among the snowballers at the Howe School were, left to right, Alan Norman, Don Hill and James Wesley. (Tribune Staff Photo)

* * *

Note: Jack's cousin, Jim Wesley, unsuccessfully attempted to groom a youthful future *Artifacts* editor to become a cornet player in his polka band.

Ed Severson

Growing Up in the Fifties

In the 1950s, we kids were anywhere from four to 16 years old. Our lives had begun as the result of WWII veterans returning home, primarily from 1944 to 1946.

Mostly men (including my father), they came back to sweethearts or wives. These couples began having children, including myself, born on Sept. 25, 1945.

Many of those men took advantage of what is known as the “G.I. Bill,” a federal government program to teach a skill. That is how my father began a four-year electrician apprenticeship program, resulting in a good-paying job at Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. That went on for 34 years, allowing him to support my mother and a family of nine children. The G.I. Bill also helped my parents purchase a small house in Wisconsin Rapids in early 1947.

Most homes during that era were modest: two or three bedrooms, one bathroom, kitchen, dinette and a single-car garage, on a small lot. There was no air conditioning or fuel-oil furnace, certainly not natural gas.

We were born into a world that had become relatively peaceful. The “Korean Conflict” did occur from 1950–53 but television was in its infancy and what media we had did not seem to report much about it.

My father worked his job and my mother, as a “housewife,” managed the household. She did well in that role with our help washing and drying the dishes, cleaning, mowing the lawn and shoveling snow.

There seemed to be a hierarchy in the community’s workplace. The mostly male “white collar” class was made up of doctors, lawyers, dentists, business owners and office workers. The next group, “blue collar,” included paper mill employees, municipal workers, metal workers at Preway and truck drivers.

A last group was composed of women who might be store clerks, secretaries or nurses, for example.

Dad could afford only one car, almost always a General Motors model: Chevrolet or Pontiac. The three U.S. companies of GM, Ford and Chrysler made up the predominant population of vehicles. Import or other domestic brands were the exception. Perhaps a VW Beetle or a Honda “rust bucket” Civic. The late 50s saw the onslaught of “fins” on cars—gaudy and really not functional.

Our goals as kids were to have fun, play with friends, go to school and survive winters that seemed to be colder and more snowy then.

Fun included “sandlot” football, baseball, and basketball, sledding on the Highway 54 viaduct and swimming in the municipal pool or Lake Wazeecha.

Robinson Park was a draw in our part of town as it was large with open grassy areas. Many boys lived close to the park, enabling us to have group games.

Collecting baseball cards (especially Milwaukee Braves) was another popular pastime. Maybe the attraction was the piece of bubble gum in each package.

In our area of Wisconsin Rapids (Apricot and 16th Streets), Iverson school served as the kindergarten for my sisters and brothers. They actually had two classes as there were so many kids.

For us Catholics (the majority religion), St. Peter and Paul school was our likely destination. Because there were so many Catholic kids, there eventually were five Catholic schools in town.

Nuns were the predominant teachers. In my experience, they provided a solid education and were strict but didn’t really need to use rulers for discipline.

We then went on to Lincoln or Assumption high school.

For me, Lincoln was a joy. In my experience, kids were respectful of others and the teachers. I did not witness fights, drugs, shootings or bullying, although there was some alcohol use among older students.

Paper, pen, pencils and textbooks were our means of learning. Reading, writing and arithmetic (the three R's) were the foundation. No computers, tablets or smartphones.

Stores available to us took the form of "corner groceries," serving certain geographical areas, and retail shops for clothing (men and women), drugs, shoes, appliances, etc. Most were family-owned. "Chain stores" in Wisconsin Rapids were J.C. Penney, Montgomery Ward, Woolworth's with a lunch counter and Johnson Hill (eventually operating five stores in central Wisconsin).

Saturday was often shopping day. My mother would take us "downtown" to buy necessities. During the summer months, many stores closed at noon. Almost all were closed on Sunday year 'round.

Most households had a telephone on the wall. The mouthpiece was wired into the receiver. To activate the phone, you took the hearing device off the cradle, spoke into the mouthpiece to a "live operator" and told her who you wanted. She would manipulate the switchboard wires to the correct requested phone.

Many people had "party lines" which involved sharing a telephone line with others—cheaper that way. The telephone company also charged for long distance calls, which were carefully limited.

News and entertainment from the outside world came primarily via radio. We would often gather as a family around our monster floor-model Zenith. "The Jack Benny Show" was popular. In the early 1950s, people began purchasing black-and-white televisions, usually a 17-inch round model.

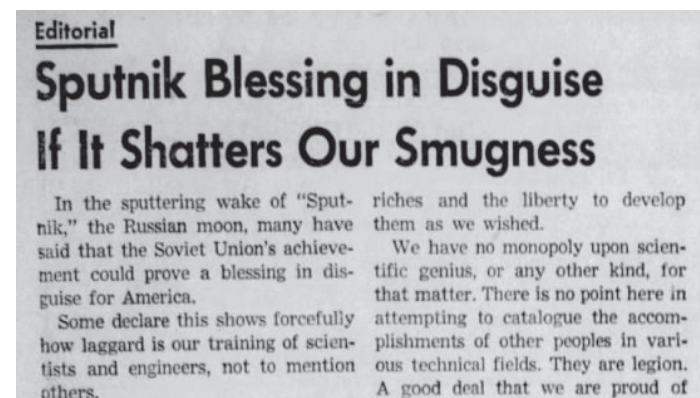
The first television station to service Wisconsin Rapids was WSAU Channel 7 (CBS) out of Wausau.

WAOV Channel 9 (ABC), also from Wausau, soon followed. Reception was via a "rabbit ears" antenna set on top of the TV, or if you were lucky, an antenna on the roof. On occasion, Channel 13 (NBC) could be received.

The first national CBS news was 15 minutes with Douglas Edwards. He was replaced by "Mr. National News," Walter Cronkite, the anchor for 25 years.

Travel outside of Wisconsin Rapids was on two-lane roads that went through the towns along the route. For example, if we went to North Chicago, Illinois, we would take various state highways and it would take five to six hours. Today via the interstates, the trip would be about three and a half hours. The interstate highway system was initiated by President Eisenhower in the late 1950s. The model was Hitler's Autobahn.

Of startling significance was the launch by Russia of the satellite named "SPUTNIK." It circled the earth a number of times each day in a relatively slow orbit so if the atmospheric conditions were just right in the evening, SPUTNIK would be seen by the naked eye. Us kids were excited but the politicians in D.C. were greatly disturbed as Russia had beat us into space.



October 1957

Ed Severson

Bum's Jungle

Our “Bum’s Jungle” was located on Preway Inc. property north of Norton Street between 14th and 16th Streets in Wisconsin Rapids. It was literally a jungle of trees and bushes where “bums” camped out after riding the Green Bay and Western freight trains on nearby tracks. They were essentially what we would call the homeless today.

Preway allowed us, Ed and Bill Severson, Tom and John Vallin, to “camp out” there. So along with other boys our age, we would play Cowboys and Indians, hide-and-seek and other kid’s games. We would dig in the sand on a hill.

As we began to make more productive use of the jungle, we decided to build a running track, pole vault, high jump and tennis court area and finally a two-room cabin, constructed from lumber scraps, cardboard and heavy-duty canvas. It had a window, four bunks, a table and two chairs. It was then very rustic but livable. Other “track stars” came by and used the track equipment.

During the day, we would “hang out.” One night during the summer, we tried to sleep there, but had to give up, as it was too hot.

We boys had a great time. There were never any girls there. Probably a safe policy. The only vandalism was cutting the tennis net. The City Building Inspector, Harold Loeser, inspected the property. He found it very ingenious.

The property had no bums evident when we were there.



“Bums” Woody Guthrie and Burl Ives in Central Park, NYC

Editor’s note

Local attitudes to “Hobo Jungles” varied over the course of the Depression. In 1931, the Green Bay & Western railroad outfitted two box cars near Forest Hill cemetery with stoves, bunks and coal heat for the “knights of the road.” In warmer seasons, the travelers cooked over campfires, washed in open air and slept on newspapers.

By the end of the Thirties, residents around the main camp west of Lowell school, where hobo camps had operated for more than five years, complained so much that, in 1940, Rapids police chief Rudy Exner “cleaned up” by eliminating the camp and finger-printing all transients.

Ed Severson

59 Vehicles

When I asked Jeanne, my spouse, how many vehicles I have purchased since age 17, she said “too many.” Wrong answer. The correct answer comes later. So let me go back to my first purchase. My Dad purchased quite a few vehicles beginning at age 17. I believe his first was a mid-1930s two door Chevrolet.

I followed in my Dad’s footsteps. My first vehicle was a used 1957 Rambler four-door sedan, very basic. That took me through Lincoln High School senior year as one of the privileged few students with a vehicle.



On to UWSP with the ability to commute. Well, my dad decided to offer his 1957 Pontiac “gas guzler” to me for \$400 so I sold the Rambler for \$300. A year later, I sold the Pontiac for \$400 as I didn’t need it at college

My dad also pawned off four other vehicles on four of my brothers and sisters.

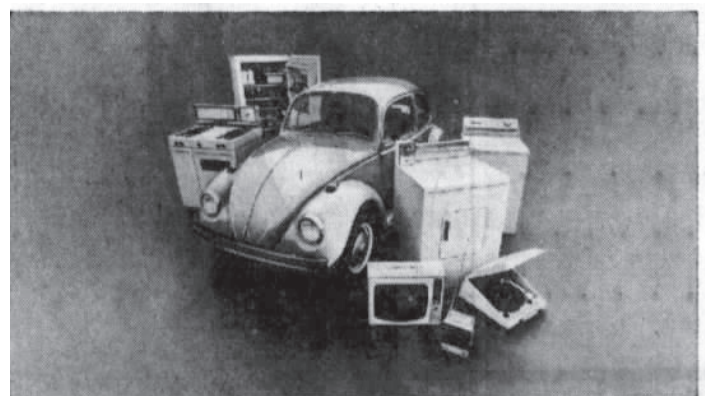
When I did return to Rapids, my dad arranged for me to buy a 1960 Plymouth Valiant. Finally, a vehicle with an automatic transmission.

In the meantime, I was now working in a car wash. In comes a man with a 1966 Chevrolet Super Sport. He needed cash to pay off a debt, so I bought the car for \$3000. A year later, I needed cash to return to UWSP.

My dad came to the rescue. I had him trade in the Super Sport for a new 1967 Pontiac Tempest, and I received his 1965 Tempest with a smaller engine. I kept that vehicle for five-plus years.

Over the years, I have purchased 59 vehicles—for me, Jeanne and my daughter, roughly one vehicle per year since age one, mostly passenger vehicles and 15 trucks, four Chevrolet HHRs and three VW Beetles.

1968



All for the price of a fancier priced car.

\$3260 is the latest average price paid for a new car these days. (So says the Automobile Manufacturers Association.)

\$3260 will also buy you a new range, a new refrigerator, a new dryer, a new washer, two new television sets, a record player and a \$1,699 Volkswagen.

Of course our little package doesn't include all those tricky little items you find on those fancier-priced cars. (Like

an electric trunk opener. An electric ash-tray cleaner. Or headlights that disappear when the sun comes out.)

But it does include good food, clean clothes, nice music and a chance to watch all the summer reruns in color.

A lot of people frown on a Volkswagen because they feel it doesn't offer enough in the way of fancy gadgetry.

Look again.

How fancy can you get?



Unfit for Human Habitation

Another Third Street chateau is condemned to the afterlife

Here goes another story I didn't want to repeat: how a grand old house, built over a century ago, sometimes called a mansion, starts out elegant and braggable, then the original owners pass on and another private owner or two of lesser prominence come and go before the property falls into the hands of an absent landlord. Over a few decades, it deteriorates, through a joint effort of time, rot and renters. After four decades of historical indignation, my sarcasm continues to fall on deaf ears.

Shown at the end of its tenure, the example at left was found only because photos were attached to court records of its demise.

In its effort to rid society of this eyesore, the municipality of Wisconsin Rapids was represented by city attorney Kenneth M. Hill. Came forth Arthur Reiter, Rapids building inspector, to label the structure old, dilapidated, dangerous, unsafe, unsanitary and otherwise unfit for human habitation. Clearly, he testified, it would be "unreasonable" to attempt to repair the moldering hulk so the city pasted a placard on the premises: "This Building Cannot Be Used For Human Habitation, Occupancy or Use."

To present their case, the owners, Vincent and Lottie Pelot, hired local attorney, Robert P. Bender, who argued that the building was structurally sound and not in danger of collapse. It had been used for the last several years as a rooming house containing eight rooms on the ground floor and six on the upper level.

Bender said the negative report by Reiter reflected the failure of the tenants to have their rubbish re-

moved rather than debilitating structural deficiencies. He offered an appraisal by Leo Kubisiak and plans by the Pelots to remodel, including reducing the tenancy from a five or more units rooming house to a two or three-unit apartment building.

Owner Pelot asserted he had been unable to devote time to repair and remodeling of the Third Street house because in late 1969 he had just completed construction of a clubhouse and golf course: the

Pagoda, west of Highway 73 and Pelot's Switch tavern, across from the then-new chemical plant now ERCO Worldwide.

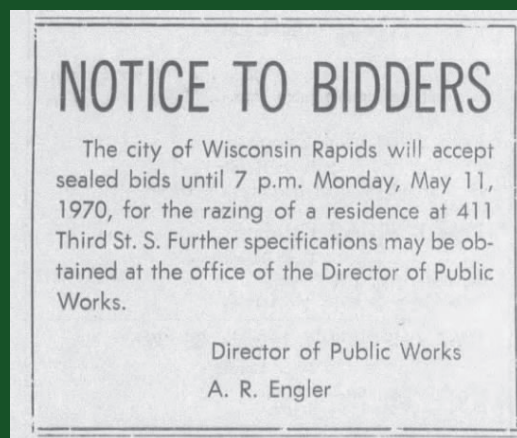
The Switch had been owned in 1910 by the Grand Rapids Brewing Co. Pelot bought it in 1964 from Russell Karberg, featured in *Artifacts* #63, October 2021.

At the time of Vince's 2006 death, his home was still listed as 411 Third Street S. here—and Naples, Fla. He may have built the newer house that stands there now.

A WWII veteran, Vince apprenticed with the Frank J. Henry company and founded Central Construction Co. With his wife, the former Lottie Szaf-ranek, he had also owned VFW Bar, Hillside Bar, and Pelot's Inn.

Lottie died in 2021.

Unfortunately, it is not known who built or lived in this quintessential Third Street/Quality Row residence that, half a century ago, fell victim to the urge to clear the decks of the old thing, no matter how historic, and move on.



Lefebvre building, left, and Consolidated Park bridge



What ate what: The big house of the former Amelia Lefebvre (Mrs. L.M. Nash) was torn down (see October issue of *Artifacts*) to make way for a Consolidated parking lot. The same thing happened to her childhood home, the Lefebvre house. And the old Nash Hardware store on Grand Avenue that had become Montgomery Ward? Consolidated parking lot. Consolidated Park shown above became landing for the Jackson Street Bridge, built to facilitate Consolidated rush hour traffic.



—Tribune Photo
OLDEST LANDMARK TO DISAPPEAR—From the hospitable balcony of the LeFebvre building, above, residents of the community gathered in the early days to watch the ice go out of the Wisconsin river. Then the building, as general store, tavern and rooming house, was a center of the Wisconsin wilderness and, down the years from the frontier days, the building has come intact from the Civil war period when Hippolyte LeFebvre built it. Oldest building of the community, and one of the oldest in this part of the state, it is now being torn down. It has been owned since 1919 by Consolidated Water Power & Paper company.

First Museum

Wednesday, October 26, 1927.

Wisconsin R

Just an Old House

The home of Ahdawagam chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution

By GRACE B. DALY

The local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution are the fortunate possessors of a home.

On the west bank of the Wisconsin river the LeFebvre house, built in the early sixties, has through the generosity of its owners, been given to us to use, for such time as it stands. And, standing as it does today, one of the few land-marks of early Wisconsin and a pioneer of old Grand Rapids, it ought to appeal to an admirer of the sturdy folk it represents who cleared the way for us.

Built by a Frenchman, its iron balcony across the entire front of the upper story and the peculiar "build" of its first story windows speak in themselves of the man who built it. Not that it stood in the early days with green shutters and iron balcony, nor its many additions of wings. But, one likes to think that when life was through with the old Frenchman it stood as a completion of what he wanted when the first timber was hewn.

Saw Old River Scenes

Its many windows facing the old Wisconsin, where the pride of the pinery was floated to southern markets, where the rough but big hearted river-men rode the logs, it could tell us much of the early life: and to those who love old houses, and old times it does. There are with us yet men who were young boys in those days—Henry Sampson, F. J. and George N. Wood, Henry Rablin, E. T. Bodette, H. A. Herschleb, George M. Hill, Clark Lyon, F. H. Jackson, and doubtless many another throughout the county—who can tell many tales of the things they know about the old saloon and tavern.

But our interest is with the few rooms we are trying to restore. As a very small girl I can remember scuttling past the open hall door, and seeing carpeted stairs, and over the carpet white toweling, held in place by brass rods. Today the catches which held the rods are still there, and I never yet have been able to figure out the why of the white toweling.

On the wall of the hall we have a copy of the newspaper containing an account of the death of Abraham Lincoln. This paper was given to our Library many years ago by W.

A. Keyes, a Civil War soldier, and pioneer carpenter of this city.

We have also in the hall a beautiful brass lantern which serves as a globe for an electric light: loaned to the house by Mrs. E. J. Clark, it was given to her by Mark Pratt, a Wood County pioneer. A sword of Civil War days also hangs in the hall. And an old traveling trunk, calf skin covered and studded with brass nails, loaned by Mrs. J. E. Daly, is very similar to those proudly displayed in Washington's Mount Vernon home.

In the one-time parlor of the old house a square piano, for fifty years the valued possession of the Seth A. Spafford family, has been contributed by Mrs. I. E. Philleo, a daughter. Before it stands an organ stool which was considered very fine fifty-five years ago, and on the piano some interesting song books made in the sixties.

Mrs. Ivah Babcock, who was one of our most earnest members and for many years the chapter registrar, left us, among other things, a most interesting, and valuable scrap book. Two chairs of walnut, upholstered in green rep, loaned by Miss Catherine Farrish, are much prized. These came from the old John Rablin home, once one of the "show places of the town. Miss Farrish also contributed a clock that ticked off the hours for many a traveler in the old hotel known as the "Rablin House"—and which stood where our Public Library is today. Mrs. Ella Schultz gave us a pleasing walnut what-not, some chairs and a mirror.

Relics of Old Cherished

Several volumes of Peterson's magazines for the years 1863 and 1868 and a quaint "Hunting" pitcher have been given by Mrs. Minnie Palmatier. Mrs. C. P. Ridgman gave a rush bottom chair and Miss Catherine Vaughan also gave one.* We have a pewter pitcher contributed by Mrs. Nathalie Johnson. Some candle molds and many attractive dishes and old time pictures given by our members. Mrs. Jennie Ridgman gave us a picture of the big ice jam and destruction of the wagon bridge in 1888. An interesting dance program announcing a Military Ball in 1864, held in the Magnolia Hall, has been given us by Mr. F. J.

Wood. On the parlor wall is a picture of Joseph Wood, earliest of settlers, for whom Wood county was named. There is also a picture of Mrs. Le Febvre, wife of the man who built the tavern, and as was so very true in those days, a "help-mate." This picture was loaned by Mrs. George W. Mead.

We would like very much to fill the plush album, presented by Mrs. J. J. Jeffrey, with pictures of early settlers. We have two of interest: one of Richard Compton who was the first man to teach school here in the year 1850; and one of Susan Compton, his sister who taught here in 1855. These were given by Mrs. Catherine Townsend, a sister, who still lives here, and is better known as "Aunt Kate."

Two files of newspapers, the "Wood County Reporter" for the year 1873 and the "Grand Rapids Tribune" for 1876, are certainly valued possessions. An old oval rag rug has been given by Mrs. Billins: and some not so old have been contributed by Mrs. Nathalie Johnson, Mrs. H. H. Voss and Mrs. August Gottschalk. We also have a much prized strip of rag carpet made by Mrs. Potter who left us not so long ago.

A real old time spinning wheel which was owned by Mrs. Monroe Huntington, a pioneer, and a baby's cradle fashioned of birch bark, have been given by Mrs. Elizabeth Fishbeck, a granddaughter.

Mrs. A. U. Marvin contributed a comfortable wide arm chair, which while not of the early days, still hob-nobs nicely with our other old fashioned furniture.

Two "hanging lamps" one given by Mrs. Marvin and the other by Mrs. Imig, and long ago consigned to the attic, have become useful once more. In the upper room walnut bed-room furniture, once the best set in the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Witter, tells the story better than words of the worldly progress

of its owners. The plain things of their earlier days discarded, this bureau, with its long mirror and marble top, the commode, also marble topped, and the big bed, with its ornate head board, tell their own history: this furniture was given by Mrs. Ray Johnson, a daughter.

Covering the bed is a hand knitted spread more than one hundred years old. Its value to us is in serving to remind us that though the hands that made it have been dust these many years, material things live on. Old style feather pillows are covered with "shams". Shams, and what not and candlemolds to the younger generation are probably Greek words.

Reminders of Old Times

We have not collected these things and placed them in the old house simply because they are old, but because they represent the history of our fathers and our mothers, typical of the days in which they lived and worked to make living today the better for us.

And what finer monuments can

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YOUNG AND YOUNG

3 DAYS Only
STOCK UP NOW

SAME PRICE for over

35 Y

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The writings of Grace Balderston Daly have appeared previously here advocating the appreciation and preservation of local history.

GOOD
Y-DENT
OTH PAS
and polish
cleanses"



In its last years, the Lefebvre building housed Palmquist photo studio and a history museum

Fulfilling the same intent as the original South Wood County Historical Corp., the Daughters of the American Revolution opened historical displays in the Lefebvre building, which managed to exist until 1940. In the 1950s, the historical society was established but it had no home until the opening of McMillan Memorial Library left the old T.B. Scott library building available. Many items from the DAR facility, stored in locations around town, found their way to the current South Wood County Historical Corp. property at 540 Third Street St. S.

Of the Lefebvre building, former historian Tom Taylor wrote, "The picture shown at the top of the page was one of the early buildings on the west side. It occupied a favorable location as it was the resort for all who either wanted to cross over on the ferry or used it as an excuse to watch the ferry arrive from the other side. It was an old time saloon with a favorable reputation. It is the only building in the block that was left when the River Block was built. In the rear of the Lefebvre building was a dwelling that housed many people at various times. It was a sort of annex for a time to the saloon in front."

Looking West

Photo from the Wood Block facing the west end of then-new Grand Avenue Bridge before redevelopment by Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. On the right side of Grand at the bridge is the MacKinnon block. Across Second Avenue, what would become the River Block shopping center and, further west, what would become Mead-Witter Block, followed by the recognizable Johnson Hill department store. To the right is the complex of old structures destined to be parking lots.





1926, Red Cab drivers at new Mead-Witter block, part of a joint project by major Consolidated owners George Mead and Isaac Witter just before the latter left the company. Behind the awning at right is the Johnson Hill department store.



—Starting to wreck LeFebvre bldg. We offer doors, floors, windows, siding, blinds. NOW. Lumber orders taken subject to stock. \$12.50 buys the furnace. Very good bricks at \$5.00. Phone 1830. 1940

Consolidated replaced the Lefebvre building with a parking lot and replaced the River Block with the River Block shown at top, now county offices.



Consolidated built the business block at right in 1925. Lefebvre building that housed the DAR museum is far right.



Corner W. Grand and Second Avenues before Consolidated's first River Block (*Fat Memoirs*)



The Magnolia

When Grand Rapids occupied the high ground

If early Grand Rapids was a shining City on a Hill, at its heart was the Magnolia Hotel.

When, in 1856, Wood County separated from Portage County, its two board members, H.W. Jackson and Eusebe LaVigne, represented the only township: Grand Rapids. They met in a \$125-a-year room on the second floor of the Magnolia. Their first business was to carve out a second township: Rudolph.

Across from his residence at Drake and Washington streets, the Empire House had been built by Joseph Wood in 1853 and enlarged in 1857 to become the Magnolia. Also on the “bluff” were the offices of the *Wood County Reporter*, which began publication that year.

Among early residents were Judge Charles M. and Prudence Webb, whose first child, Mina, was born in the building. In 1860, Louise Gross Davis, daughter of Louise and Albert, was also born in the Magnolia.

The hotel was rented to J.X. Brands, who advertised in 1857 that it had been greatly-enlarged and newly-furnished, “rendering it one of the most comfortable and commodious Hotels in Central Wisconsin.” Open at all hours, the motto was “Everything in order.”

An 1858 ad promoted the “Shades,” “the cool retreat beneath the Magnolia House...where may always be found the choicest Wines, Liquors and Cigars and a new billiard table.”

A quote from an earlier Plover *Herald* recalls how, “we fetched up at the Magnolia house, kept by our chum, Jacob X. Brands. Jake had just got his hotel in good running order, and a most excellent saloon connected with the institution...Dancing school was out about nine o’clock, and a general dance ensued.”

Before he came to the Magnolia, Brands had owned the Knowlton House between Stevens Point and Wausau, named in honor of his 1818 birthplace, Knowlton, N.J. And before that, Brands was associated with hotels at Galena, Ill., and Hazel Green, Wis.; the Half Way House between Rapids and Plover; and

the Plover sheriff’s office. He was an unsuccessful candidate for Wood County sheriff. Married for the third time in 1876 Brands died in 1897 at age 79. He is buried at Pine Grove cemetery, Wausau.

In 1858, a certain “Miss Lynn” announced she had brought a large stock of millinery goods and dress patterns of the latest New York styles to a room at the Magnolia house where the local ladies were invited to call. In 1859, public preaching by Rev. Mr. Harris was featured at the Magnolia Hall and later at Garrison and Co. in Centralia

In 1864 a “Military McClellan Dance” was held to support the Civil War general against Abraham Lincoln. Tickets were \$3.

The McClellan program found its way into a 1911 Merrill *Herald* and in 1943 into the second floor of the T.B. Scott public library at the corner of Baker and First Streets where a historic display room had been opened “to acquaint the younger people of this community with the day-by-day living of the pioneers.” It was an interim archives between the Lefebvre building and the second T.B. Scott library that is now SWCHC.

Unfortunately for the City on a Hill, the business district of Grand Rapids literally went downhill to the river bank upstream from the new bridge. Like many old hotels, the Magnolia House was converted to apartments. Later, someone counted seven families and 42 children residing there.

The building was converted by Joseph Wood’s son, F.J. Wood, into a home for George L. Williams and later sold to A.L. Fontaine. In 1900, the former Magnolia was razed to make room for the more modern house that stands at 840 Washington St.

In 1921, traveling salesman T.E. Mullen recalled, “I earned my first dollar by taking nails out of the boards when the old Magnolia House was being wrecked by the owner, Joseph Wood. I received 25 cents per day for the work.”



MAGNOLIA HOUSE: An early hotel and meeting place was on Washington Street, about where this large white house now stands. It will be included in another of the Wood County "Firsts" series.

1990 Daily Tribune: The Magnolia House had been at this site on Washington Street.

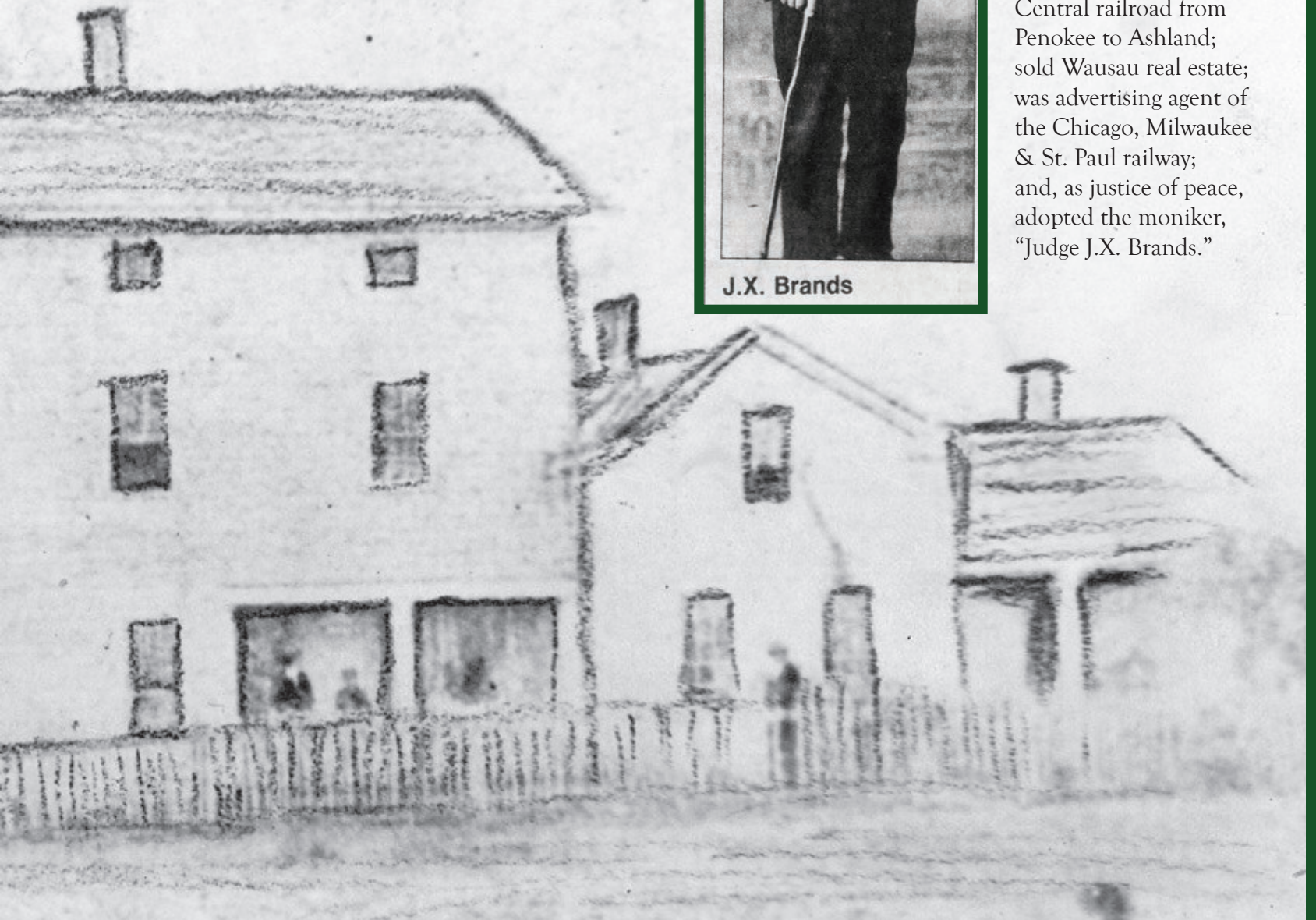


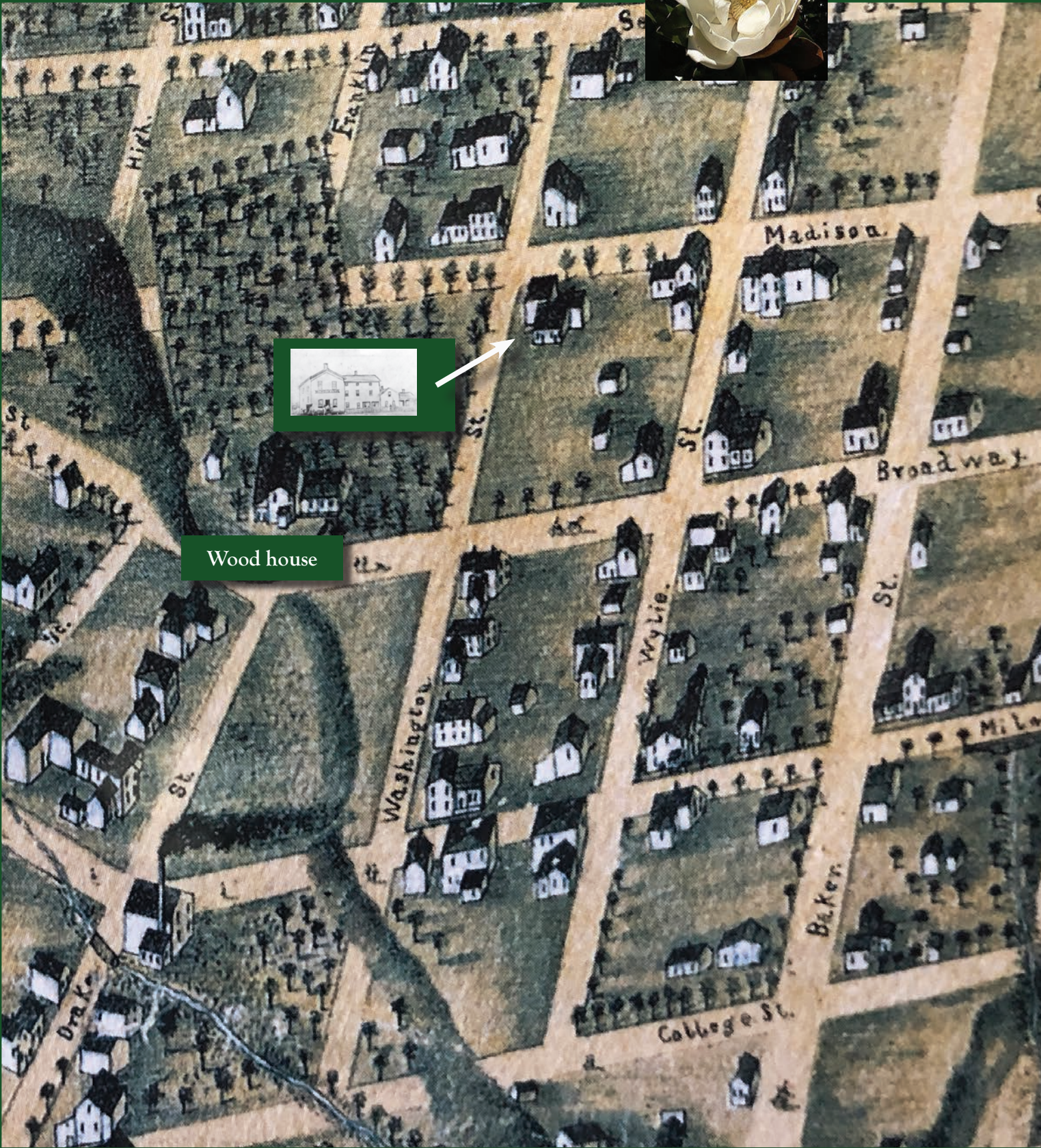
Magnolia house proprietor



J.X. Brands

After the Magnolia, J.X. Brands moved back to Plover to run the American House. In his time, he also served as U.S. marshal, Plover; farmed; traveled; ran the Falls City House, Mosinee; worked for a coal company in Iowa and the Wisconsin Central railroad from Penokee to Ashland; sold Wausau real estate; was advertising agent of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railway; and, as justice of peace, adopted the moniker, "Judge J.X. Brands."





Wood house



Theresa Baughman Rickett

Cool Nights in Rudolph

We walked to school through most of the winter days. We often walked one of the miles backward because of the wind. If the wind was blowing toward you, you turned around and walked backward. We got so we could walk backward about as fast as we could walk forward, and it took a blizzard, or a severe storm, or the deepest snow, to get a ride

If it were really unbearable, our father took us in a sled and that was a little bit difficult, because Father would take us in the morning in the sled and then he'd stop by in the village on the way home from tak-

ing the kids to school, and sometimes then, he forgot to go home, because it was warm, companionable, and all the other fathers who had taken their children to school were there, and they'd gather in the local saloon and make a day of it.

My mother used to be furious. I can remember walking home through a bitter day to find that Father had not yet come home, because sometimes, you see, he'd wait and pick us up again after school. That made the kind of an evening in which there was a coolness indoors as well as out.



Photo from the 2006 Rudolph Sesquicentennial book. Probably the tavern Leon Baughman, the father in the above story, frequented. What became Skmo's (Jim Simonis) in 1972 was originally convenient to train travelers on property known in 1887 as Mattice saloon. Peter Keyser built or was associated with a hotel there in 1903 that in 1904 became Grandshaw Hotel until 1916 and the Hierl Hotel until 1937, followed by other owners. For a while it was known as the Jolly Farmer.



Theresa Baughman Rickett

Hooligans on the Rudolph Road

A childhood memoir of Rudolph township west of the village

A whole new idea opened up to us.

If you took the first road west you went up what was called a hill in this flat land, and on it was a quite large Catholic church and a convent. This was something we had known nothing whatever about in our previous living.

The sisters were kindly and if little children like us, with a few pennies, appeared at the door of the convent, they would sell us sweet chocolate of a sort we couldn't get anywhere else.

The priest and the other people who lived in this community often walked along the road chanting Latin services.

Our little ears picked this up so this was something we'd play at home. We would walk around with our heads bowed down, chanting imitation Latin to our amusement.

In one of her visits to us up north [from Illinois] my grandmother took me and we walked the mile and a half to this place and we called upon the priest.

My Uncle Rollie had married a Catholic woman. She had died after her second child was born and was buried in the churchyard at this place. My grandmother wanted to locate the grave, so she had called to see if the priest could help her. He was Father Wagner, I remember, and I was taken there with her.

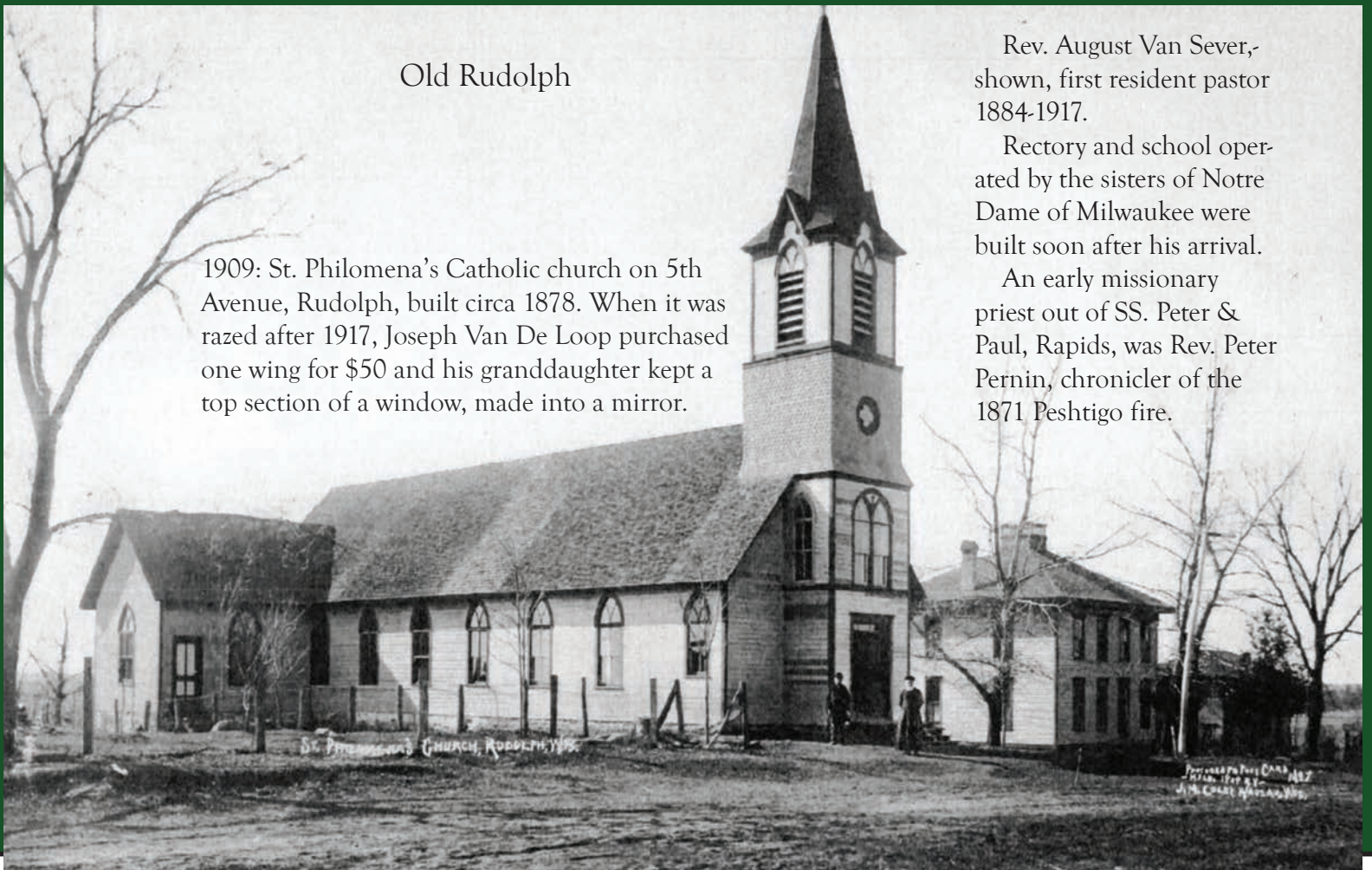
Old Rudolph

1909: St. Philomena's Catholic church on 5th Avenue, Rudolph, built circa 1878. When it was razed after 1917, Joseph Van De Loop purchased one wing for \$50 and his granddaughter kept a top section of a window, made into a mirror.

Rev. August Van Sever, shown, first resident pastor 1884-1917.

Rectory and school operated by the sisters of Notre Dame of Milwaukee were built soon after his arrival.

An early missionary priest out of SS. Peter & Paul, Rapids, was Rev. Peter Pernin, chronicler of the 1871 Peshtigo fire.





She sat in the living room of the priest's house conversing with him. I remember the priest saying to my grandmother, "Are you of the faith?" and she said, "No, but I have always had great respect for it," which pleased him, and then they discussed this grave which he was not really able to locate. So then we went home again.

This convent ran a school. Our school, the public school, was very small, but the Catholic school was large, and all these French and Dutch and German surrounding people-their children went there for all or part of their schooling. It was much bigger concern than our school.

One of the results was that if we took that route to our school we were likely to encounter the children coming up to the parochial school, and it amused them to bother us, annoy us, torment us a little, and they'd string themselves across the road so that we'd have to sort of break through or between them or perhaps go around the edge. Anyway they'd hold up

for a while and perhaps make us late for school. It was a very worrying thing.

But we hadn't been going so very long to our new school when one of these big brutes took after my little brother to annoy him and tease him; he sort of grabbed him, took hold of him and I swung my dinner bucket square in his face with all my might. I did, and his nose bled, and he bawled, and rushed off to the sisters for medical aid, I suppose.

Anyway, when they let us alone and we went on to school, I looked and not only was my school dinner wrecked, but the lunch bucket was, too. We had little round tin pails with little covers that settled down neatly on top like the lid of a teakettle, with a little rim on top of it, and it had a little bail. And my pail was bashed in until it could not be repaired. So I went rather nervously home that night, and my father laughed and laughed. He said, "Go ahead! I'll buy you a new dinner pail every time you whack one of them." But strange to say, I never had to.





Memoirs of Theresa Baughman Rickett (1902-1976) were included in the effects of her cousin, Idelle Baughman Kolstra.

Idelle's husband, Louis, was Don Engel's foreman at Consolidated and cause of many a late night phone call to the Engel household, "It's Louis Kolstra!" Meaning welder Don Engel had to get in to work.

Theresa married Harold Rickett, an academic from England, and was a teacher herself.



Grotto builder Rev. Philip P. Wagner, featured in a previous *Artifacts*, came to Rudolph in 1917 and moved St. Philomena church to the village of Rudolph



Photos courtesy Rudolph Grotto Visitor Center

Steve Bornbach

There's Value in Some Wood County Stones

*Article and photos by Steve Bornbach
with addendum by J. Marshall Buehler*

Central Wisconsin history is rife with pioneers, lumbering, farming, papermaking, but next to nothing has been written about the history of quarries in Wood County.

That is a shame because local quarries contributed greatly to the construction of homes, businesses, churches, and paper mills, and, I suppose, even the dams on the Wisconsin River. Vague, obscure references of "very valuable sandstone" can be found with intensive searching. And a long-forgotten 1915 article in "Stone" – of Stone Publishing Company, once made a reference to the Wisconsin Sandstone Company of Grand Rapids, Wis.

Sizable quarrying operations in Wisconsin did not begin until the 1850s and became an industry in the 1870s and 1880s. By 1890, Wisconsin was ranked 12th in the nation for its number of quarries.

Sandstone makes up a large portion of the state's bedrock. Most sandstone used for building in this area came from the central portion of Wisconsin, most notably south Wood County. Light-colored sandstone was used locally throughout the 19th century. Very little of the product was shipped elsewhere as it was too fragile to be handed in bulk.

Two quarries played a major part in the development of the Wisconsin Rapids region from roughly 1880–1916. They were the Bender Quarry at what is now George Road in Seneca Township, and the Chase Street quarry in what was once Centralia in present day Wisconsin Rapids. However, it may have been the Worden quarry in SE section 29 in Rudolph Township that was one of the bigger players for materials in south Wood County.

The following information came from an 1873 newspaper: "The settlement at the station named for

A.D. Worden, who owned a stone quarry which was connected with the railroad by a spur line from the station." That station was first called Doudville, but the Douds moved to Pittsville after a fire destroyed their homestead and livelihood.

The settlement was renamed Worden until it ceased to exist but the quarry business kept going strong for a few more decades. Over time, the Worden Quarry became known by locals as "Fifth Avenue Quarry" or "The Rudolph Quarry," north of Reddin Road.

Building Stone at Worden's Quarry.---I will sell common building Stone at my Quarry in lots of 10 cords and upwards for \$3.00 per cord at the Quarry. Parties wishing to avail themselves of the advantage of the low price of Rock will please give me their orders as soon as possible. I can furnish to the amount of 1500 cords the present season.
A. D. WORDEN.
Grand Rapids. Nov. 8th 1873.

I was recently able to connect with local historian J. Marshall Buehler, who shared some memories of the Fifth Avenue quarry. He talked about the "Worden" side track which was a spur from the main rail line when the Port Edwards Mill was being built in 1895. Worden rock may have also been used on area dams for Nekoosa, Port Edwards, Centralia, and Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. The Fifth Avenue quarry had slowed up considerably by the 1950s when Marshall used some of the quarry stone for his new house. He was charged \$.75 for as much as he could put into his car and haul away on each trip.

Honorable mentions of other quarry locations within a few miles of Wisconsin Rapids were:

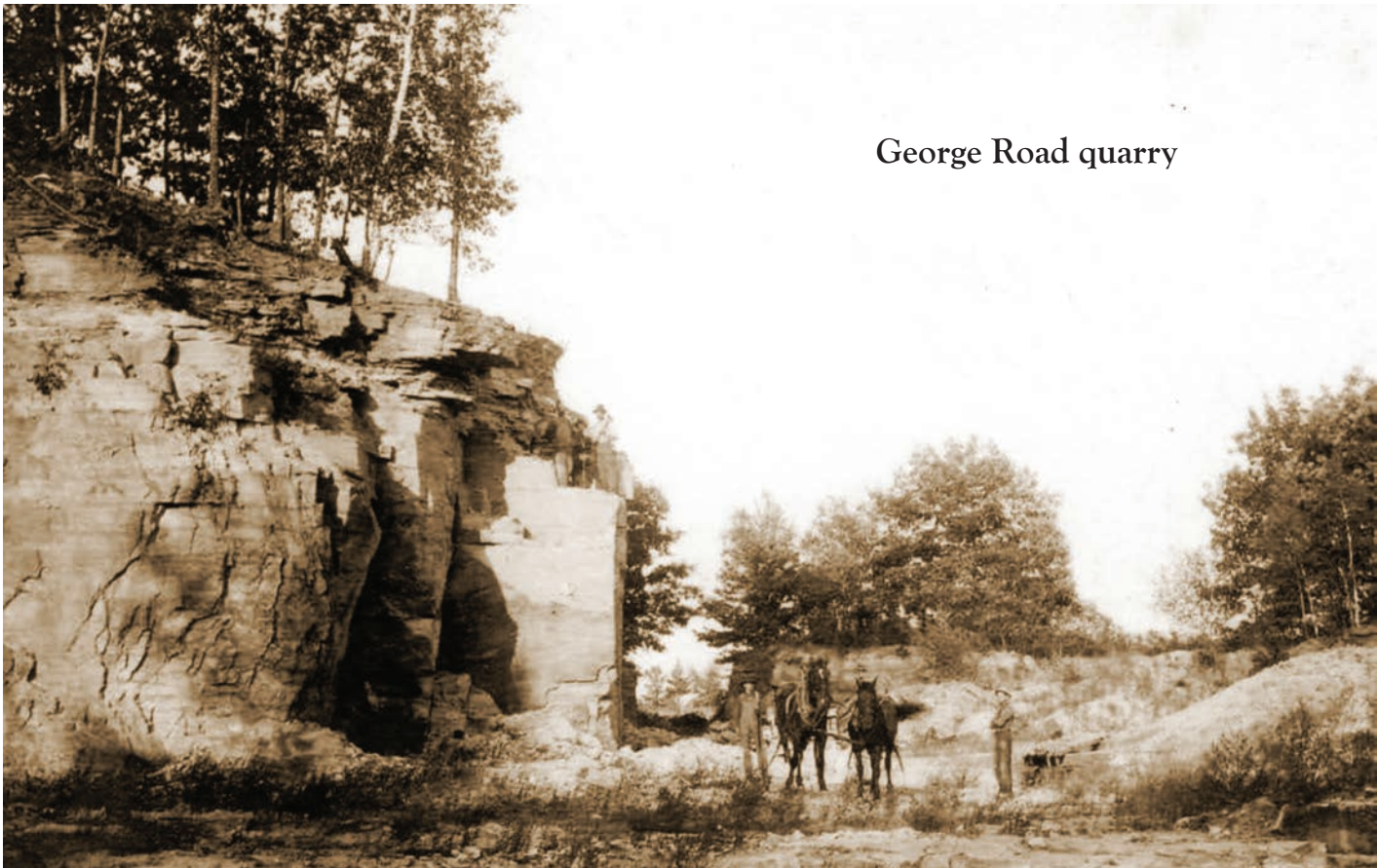
- Haessly quarry on Wilhorn Road north of Nekoo-sa. That site was primarily used for obtaining sand to make cement product for construction.
- A quarry just east of 80th Street and north along County FF in Portage County for use in building homesteads in that immediate area.
- A quarry in Grand Rapids just south of Lake Street, between 67th and 68th Streets. Material from that quarry was used in that immediate area and may have also been incorporated into houses along old Highway W on the way to Wisconsin Rapids. Stone from that site could possibly have been used to construct the shelter houses at South Wood County Park in the early 1940s.
- Mengel quarry, east of Wisconsin Rapids and south of Highway 54 at 2310 40th Street North. There is a fair-sized pit that is full of water at County Materi-

als at that address, the result of holes being dug with a drag line to supply sand for the creation of Biron's first mills, "not new ones but the old ones."

The quarries discussed here specialized in sand, or sandstone which is soft as far as stone is concerned. I recently visited with a Mr. Dombrowski from Port Edwards who showed me the different sandstone varieties used in construction of his home and garage. Specimens of light brown, dark brown, bacon stone and pinkish sandstone which is supposedly the hardest grade of sandstone.

There was also a demand in our community for stone of great strength and toughness, and that is where the Tork quarry came into play. Mr. Buehler alluded to the fact that sand from Tork quarry was first used to make the ballasts, or beds upon which local railroad tracks were built.

The former Tork quarry was purchased in recent times by a large conglomerate called Milestone.



George Road quarry

I was able to get a little “official” information from a local sign out by the landfill on the west side of Rapids, out toward Arneson’s old hill. The sign read “Milestone Materials, a Division of Mathy Construction Company. Tork Quarry Site #119.”

By chance I was able to see the quarry first hand from a distance. I could not believe my eyes! It was immense, gigantic, monumental, a marvel, a behemoth of incomprehensible size for a community such as ours.



“Beehive” Brick Kiln, 1969

Bricks were produced by the Lessig company near the Worden quarry

Added by Marshall Buehler

A few comments concerning quarrying and mining in Wood County.

Lewis Alexander, President of John Edwards Manufacturing Co., kept an account book of the materials and equipment used to build the paper mill in Port Edwards in 1895. One entry indicates that 4,085 cords of stone or about 1,000 rail cars full of stone from the Worden quarry were used for the foundations of the mill as well as the water flumes that were part of the water turbine power. Broken pieces were also used to fill the rock cribs in the river to which log booms were fastened.

Another note on quarries is to be found in the *History of Wood County* (Jones 1923). It states that in Rudolph township a trial shaft was dug, producing rock that assayed at \$90.16 per ton. This was broken

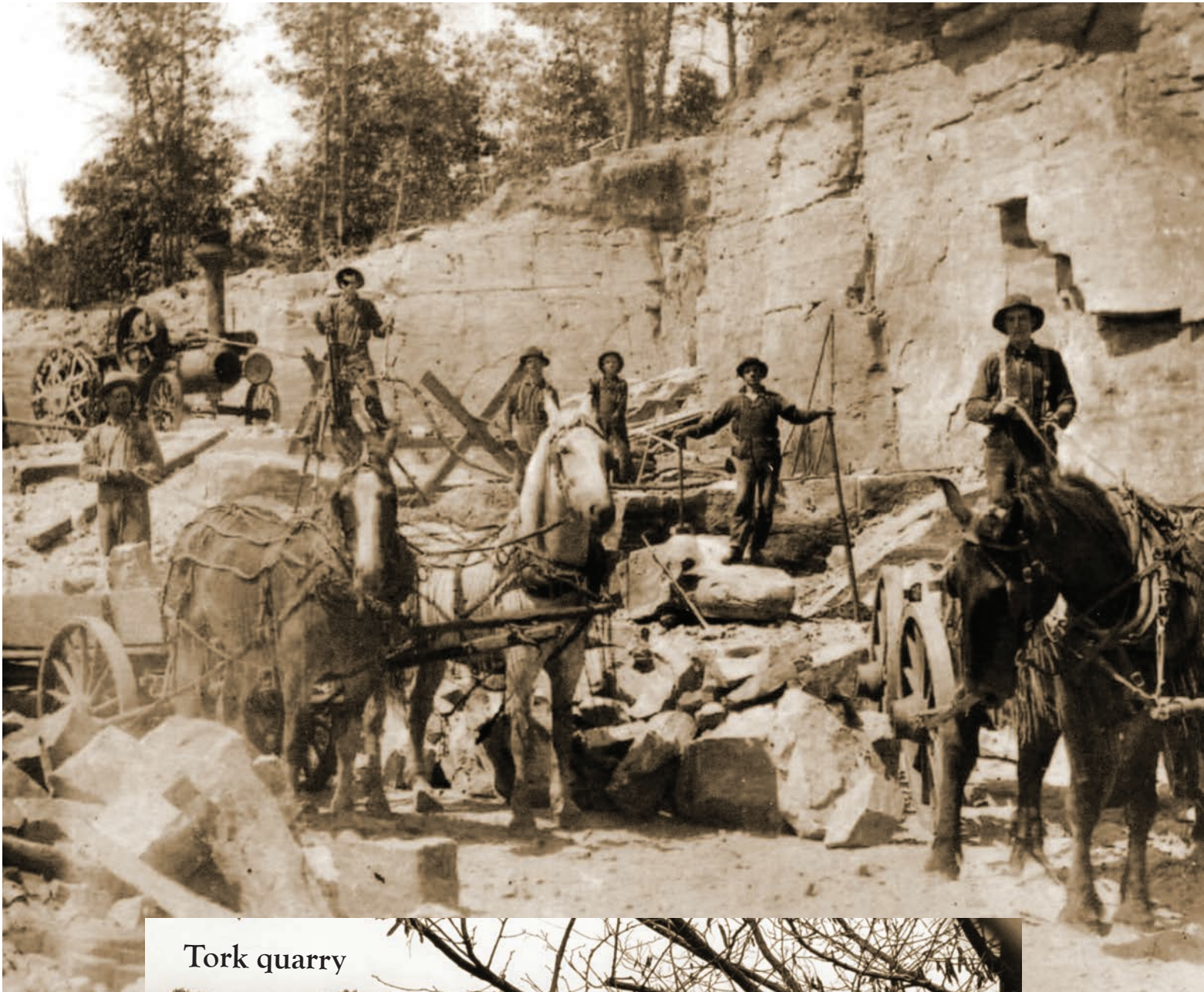
down as silver worth \$6.82 and gold at \$83.34. But even in 1890 this was deemed to be “not profitable.” Could this have been a gimmick to sell land in the area, another Oil City scheme like in southwestern Wisconsin?

Asbestos and iron ore are to be found in Rudolph township. A pit was dug in the 1890s to mine the asbestos rock. As a high school student, my science teacher and I found the abandoned pit. It was a square hole, about six or eight feet on each side or about three or four feet deep. It had been abandoned for over fifty years.

Clay pits were to be found in several Wood County locations and one of these operated until about the time of World War II. The clay was used on the site for making bricks and building tile. Many a red brick building in the area can be traced back to the county’s brick yards. A “beehive” kiln is still partially standing near the Worden quarry.

Lastly, mention should be made of the soapstone quarrying that took place on the northern part of Wood County. Soapstone is a soft rock that can be cut with a saw, whittled with a pen knife and polished smooth with sandpaper. A company was formed around the turn of the last century to commercially quarry the stone which was cut into slabs and used for laundry tubs and laboratory counter tops. I have found pieces of this stone and a small quarry north of Milladore, just before being evicted from the property as a trespasser.

Another Industry.—Messrs. Dowd and Sons of Winona, have made all the arrangements for the construction of a first-class stave manufactory at the junction of the W. V. R. R. and the highway leading to Rudolph, near Worden’s quarry station. This enterprising firm has bought about eight acres,—forty rods along the track, and thirty acres back from the track, where they propose erecting their works immediately. They are advertising for immense quantities of stave timber, and will have seventy-five or one hundred men at work the coming winter.



Steve Bombach

Worden's Fifth Avenue quarry



GOOD BUILDING STONE
 Delivered in any part of the City of
Grand Rapids or Centralia,
 From
Worden's Celebrated Stone Quarry,
 AT A FAIR CASH PRICE.
 Inquire at the Red Front Store or at the Quar-
 ry. Dimension Stone furnished to order—of any
 size, length or thickness, to suit purchasers.
 A. D. WORDEN.

Building Rock from Stonington Quarry.—I will furnish from and after this date, common building rock at the Stonington Quarry at \$4 per cord, until further notice. Parties wishing to build will find it to their advantage to buy of me rather than take the chances of finding them lying around loose.—Dimension rock for sale in such quantities as may be needed.

A. D. WORDEN.
 Grand Rapids, Jan'y 6th, 1874.

Center right: Howe School, built in 1876 of sandstone from the then-new Worden quarry.



Worden quarry, c. 1982 by Dave Engel

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

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Storm clouds or photographer Don Krohn's fingerprints? East Side c. 1950, all long gone.