



February 2007 Volume II #12

South Wood County Historical Corp.

Artifacts



Cover photo by Don Krohn, then *Daily Tribune* photographer. West Grand Avenue, corner of 3rd Avenue, looking toward the Grand Avenue bridge, Mead-Witter block on left, c. 1950. Anderson drugs, Wilpolt's restaurant and F.W. Woolworth signs are readable. The view (Wood Block at right across the river) is one of few still similar in 2007.

Inside: SWCHC president Phil Brown's message, pages 2-3; "Holstein: A Wood County Farm Family," by Chris Barney and Pamela Holstein Barney, 4-13; Photos by Don Krohn, 14-25; "Grandpa John Loonstra, George Mead's Gardener," by Sally Romanski Cook, 26-29; "Teen Times at the Sugar Bowl," by Earle Garber, 30-31.

The Year of the Museum

By SWCHC President Phil Brown

As incoming president of the South Wood County Historical Corp., allow me this opportunity to thank you for your interest in our history, now, and, for some of you, since the SWCHC was founded in 1955. Over more than half a century, a few of those who have made notable contributions in more-or-less official capacities are Mary McMillan Burt, T.W. Brazeau, Estella Farrish, Dr. Lee Pomainville, Emily Mead Baldwin Bell, Cay Brazeau, Ellen Sabetta, Pam Walker and Karen Pecher. Not forgotten is the work of crucial board members, employees and volunteers.

However, there is one person who deserves special recognition at this time: J. Marshall Buehler. With his participation and leadership, we moved into our beautiful headquarters on Third Street in 1970, oversaw the transformation of the building from the T.B. Scott Library to The Museum, and saw to it that the financial gifts bestowed upon us were properly invested for the future.

To follow Marshall Buehler as president is a huge task. I am thankful he has agreed to remain on our board of directors.

Many have asked me why I am so interested in local history when I was born and raised in St. Paul, Minn. It began shortly after I married a local girl, Mary Brazeau. In 1980, I walked into Mrs. Fisher's antique shop where Gary's Coins is now located, in the Mead-Witter Building .

As I was looking around the shop, I came across some old silverware engraved, "Daly Drug & Jewelry Co., Grand Rapids, Wis." When I asked Mrs. Fisher where Grand Rapids was, she told me the whole story about why Wisconsin Rapids changed its name in 1920 so we wouldn't be confused with Grand Rapids, Mich. I thought that was pretty cool. It also dawned on me that any collectible with Grand Rapids, Wis., written on it would be more than 100 years old during my expected lifetime.

That first purchase from Mrs. Fisher still holds a prominent spot in my Den of Antiquities. The rest, pardon the expression, is history, and so began a long and sometimes expensive journey into collecting local memorabilia and a love of the heritage of South Wood County.

As we look to the future with the past in mind, 2007 promises to be a great year for the Museum! It was 100 years ago that Isaac and Charlotte Witter built their beautiful home on the shores of the Wisconsin River.

To mark this occasion we have declared 2007 "The Year of the Museum." We hope you will join us to celebrate our building's centennial and the fifty-plus anniversary of our organization. Watch for upcoming events through special mailings, notices in *Artifacts*, and in the *Daily Tribune*.

Please join us to commemorate "The Year of the Museum."



Below: George W. Mead, second from left, at a fireplace in what is now the Museum of the South Wood County Historical Corp. The books in the lower photo suggest the year may be 1948 when Mead donated the former Isaac and Charlotte Witter house to become the home of the T.B. Scott Public Library. A special program on April 19, 1948, dedicated the facility and “honored the men who helped the library through the years,” according to a history by Alice Hayward, Isaac Witter was the brother of Ruth, George Mead’s wife. Top photo below, second from left, T.W. Brazeau, a founder of SWCHC.



Facing page: New SWCHC president Phil Brown at fireplace shown above. Once gracing the dining room of the Isaac P. Witter home, it later provided ambience for visitors to T.B. Scott Public Library and now to a meeting and display room at the SWCHC Museum. *Photo at left by Dave Engel*



George W. Mead I, center

John Holstein farm, Sherry township, Wood County, c. 1920



HOLSTEIN

A Wood County Farm Family

by Christopher Barney and Pamela Holstein Barney

It was the morning of Saturday, August 19, 2000...the red-hued eastern sky gave way to the rising sun, illuminating dew clinging to tall prairie grasses across the road from the 50-acre Wood County farm property in the Town of Sigel.

The family inside the century-plus-old farmhouse began to rise. Coffee was started, showers were taken, teeth were brushed. Then came a hearty farm breakfast of cereal, toast, eggs, bacon...and it was time to call the auctioneer, Tom Vruwink.

A quick verification of the schedule, and it was time to prepare for something this farm family had been personal witness to at an ever-increasing rate over the previous two decades. Now it was time for Hank and Minnie Holstein to auction off their farm equipment, vehicles and personal items, a sure sign of what was to soon follow: selling the farmhouse, farm buildings and land that had been an inextricable part of their very existence for more than a half-century.

When Henry "Hank" Holstein finally quit farming in 1983, it never really quit him. To this day, whenever he goes for a ride in the country where he lived for almost 81 of his 87 years, he can point at property after property in a three-mile radius of his old farmstead and identify not only who lives there currently but who lived there 70 to 80 years ago.

While driving by planted crops, he can identify each one, even to determine which cutting of hay is being chopped down. When the first raindrops of a storm system begin to fall, he will look out the window of his modest Wisconsin Rapids home and say, "This will help. The corn is a little behind this year." Or, if a mid-winter storm drops a half-foot of snow: "That will help keep the frost out of the ground; it'll be easier for the farmers to turn over the soil in the spring." Most of us would just bemoan the fact that we have to break out the snow blower, but farming remains in Hank Holstein's blood.

It should; he was born into a Wood County farming family on Nov. 5, 1919, in the home of his uncles, Helenus "Leonard" and Andrew Bussema, in the town of Hansen. Twenty-three years earlier, in 1896, his paternal grandfather, also named Henry, had brought

his family to Chicago from the Dutch village of Sauerton, Groenigen Province. In 1907, they moved to Wood County and southern Sherry Township, near the then-unincorporated logging village of Vesper.

Flyers had been printed up offering cheap land for sale in central Wisconsin, where land had been cleared of trees but not stumps. The property was offered primarily by the Benson and Anderton Land Company, Milwaukee land speculators who had purchased large land tracts in central and north-central Wisconsin beginning in the mid-1890's.

Much of this land lay in Wood County and had been heavily forested until Henry Sherry and James Cameron's loggers felled old-growth virgin timber there between 1880 and 1895. Sherry and Cameron sold most of their land holdings in the area to Benson and Anderton, who in turn advertised it throughout the Midwest as "prime" farming land, which appealed greatly to the Dutch emigrants in northern Illinois, especially those in urban Chicago. Benson and Anderton cleverly omitted the fact that this "prime" land was full of tree stumps, long before stumping machines were available to the common farmer.

The Dutch, among many ethnic groups seeking economic freedom and opportunity in America,

were particularly enthralled with the idea of owning and making a living off such fertile land, even if it meant spending back-breaking hours pulling out, dynamiting or burning stumps to the ground. Hollanders had worked equally as hard back home for less money, on someone else's land as little land was available for purchase in Holland. The opportunity for economic freedom and land ownership proved a compelling reason to emigrate and face the emotional task of severing physical ties with beloved family members.

The Holstein family had come to America in a later wave of Dutch immigrants, in the 1890s and, while many settled in a rural area southwest of Chicago, later named South Holland, the senior Henry Holstein (b. 1872) settled in the Englewood district of the large urban area along the south western tip of Lake Michigan, and set about to work in a furniture store.

John Holstein, father of the subject of this story, was born there in 1897. His birth had been preceded by sister Almena (b. 1895) and would be followed by two more sisters: Annie (b. 1899) and Nellie (b. 1901). By the time the central Wisconsin lands became available for sale, Henry Sr. was able to pack up the family and make the 200-plus mile trek to Wood County.

John Holstein Sr. (pronounced Hol-stine) with Dolly, c. 1917



Henry Holstein at Christian Reformed church, Sherry, Wis., c. 1940



When his family arrived, young John Holstein was but 10 years of age, already eager to learn the farming trade. By the age of 19, he had contributed enough to be allowed his own plot of land and farmhouse—on the north side of the Arpin-Sherry road, in the Town of Sherry. A photograph from about that time shows John seated in a buggy in front of his new farm, the buggy hitched to Dolly, the family horse, looking ready to “go to town” or “go to meeting” at the local Christian Reformed Church, located on the same road just east of his farmstead.

In 1917, John Holstein was married to the former Jacoba Bussema at the Vesper Christian Reformed Church. Like his father before him, young John had a strong Dutch work ethic that would carry him through his adult life and which he would pass along to his children, primarily his eldest son, Henry.

Few of the modern conveniences of today were available in 1920, when John Holstein began his farming operations. The work was difficult, days were long, and idle time was virtually nonexistent. None of this presented a problem for the hard-working Holstein family, which eventually operated three farms in the Sherry-Arpin-Sigel area.

What did present a problem was the onset of the Great Depression, following the stock market crash of October 1929, and then the milk strike of 1934. Rather than be defeated, the Holstein family buckled down and made every dollar count. Clothes were worn as long as possible and those which could no longer be worn were used as patching material. Children’s clothing was handed down from older to younger kids, and everything edible grown on the land was eaten fresh or canned for winter meals.

The younger Henry Holstein graduated with honors from grade school in 1932 and immediately set about learning the farming trade from his father and uncles. Most farm children did not go on to high school; they were needed to keep the family farms functioning at peak capacity.

Henry remembers much from those early days, such as taking the eggs to the Vesper train depot for sale and shipment to Chicago. He also remembers hauling cut hay and corn about two miles from the Hansen farm to the Sherry farm, using horse and wagon as late as 1940, when the first rubber-tired tractor was purchased.

The farm truck was used for a multitude of purposes from hauling raw milk to the Arpin Dairy, to going into Vesper (sparingly) for necessary supplies, to attending church. Not surprisingly, the first thing Henry learned to drive was the 1927 iron-wheeled Fordson tractor used to plow farm fields. Henry could recall a “baby” Overland car and 1926 Ford Model T truck. It was a big thrill when, at age 13, he was granted the privilege of driving that farm truck for a school contest in Sherry.

Then came Sunday, Dec. 7, 1941, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, when able-bodied Americans of all ages signed up to fight for freedom. The 22-year old Henry boarded a bus to Milwaukee (the only time he can remember traveling on one) to register for military service. Unfortunately, he was sent home with an agricultural deferment to work the farm.

Rationing was a fact of life during those war years. With sugar at a premium, Henry developed a liking for Karo Syrup which continues to this day.

Henry had met a pretty girl by the name of Minnie Vlietstra, part of a Christian Reformed family from rural Hatley in Marathon County, at a youth rally held by the Vesper Reformed Church in 1944. Henry was 24, and Minnie, daughter of Klaas Vlietstra and the former Cora Van Prooyen, was 20.

Henry and Minnie were married on April 2, 1948, at the Birnamwood Christian Reformed Church in rural Norrie, Marathon County, Wis., and began working their newly-purchased farm on the southwest corner of Tenpas Road and County Trunk Highway F in the Town of Sigel. Henry would continue working the other two farms with his father, John.

Having a true fascination for farm implements, Henry can to this day recall every piece of equipment purchased for the three-farm operation all the way back to the 1920s. He can recall the daily routine of nearly six decades:

“Spring was tilling and planting time. Oats would go in first, in April. Corn would go in by mid-May; usually the first hay crop would be harvested by late June.

“Weather was always your boss. If there was too much rain in the spring, crops would go in late, which would reduce your yield.

“In the summer, we were always up at or before 5:00 AM; we would bring the cattle in from pasture and start milking the heifers right away. Then we would feed the calves; after that, we would carry the cans of raw milk and put them in the back of the pickup truck to bring them to the dairy.



John Jr., Pam and Henry Holstein, early 1960s

"There were several different dairies we dealt with over the years: Fair View, Hillside, Arpin, White House, Sanna, and Sherry Dairy.

"After the milk was delivered, we would come home for breakfast, usually bacon, eggs, cereal or oatmeal, toast and coffee. Sometimes, we would stop at the grocery store in town and pick up a few sweet rolls for an after-breakfast treat.

"Lunch was usually brought out to the field in a bucket if we were too busy to come in. The second milking of the day was usually at 5 p.m.; then the cattle would be put out to pasture until the following morning, and the routine would start over again.

"If the weather was good, we would often work until it was almost dark. Then we had a hearty, traditional, supper of meat, potatoes and vegetables, almost always farm-raised.

"June and July were prime haying months; in August it was grain-threshing;

"September and October was harvest time, where the corn was pulled off the field and turned into silage, which was followed by filling up the silos. October was spent mostly plowing the farmland under in preparation for the following year's growing season.

"By November 1, the cows were usually put into their stalls until spring. In the winter, we usually got to "sleep in" until 5:30 a.m., then we would go out to the barn to milk and feed the cows, which would be followed by hauling the raw milk.

"After breakfast, the barn would be cleaned and manure stored for fertilizer, then hay and silage would be thrown down. In between about 9 a.m. and the second milking of the cows at 5:30 p.m., we would occasionally go to town and have oats and corn ground up for feed. In the winter, there was time for an occasional nap now and then."

Henry can also remember nearly every piece of farm equipment and farm vehicle that had ever been

purchased, as well as every farming operation they had ever engaged in.

"We had three farms. We had 50 acres in the town of Hansen where we grew corn, oats and hay. We also pastured cows there until 1948. On my dad's 60-acre farm in the town of Sherry, we also grew corn, oats and hay and had dairy cattle. My dad built a large pig coop in the 1920s but pig-raising became unprofitable, so we switched to chicken-raising in the same coop. We sold eggs for the Chicago market, and would took them to the Vesper depot to be shipped down there. We did that until 1935.

"When Minnie and I were married and got our 50-acre Sigel farm in 1948, we also grew corn, oats and hay and raised dairy cattle.

"It was really a family operation, including, at various times, in addition to my dad, myself, Minnie and Pam, my sisters Celia, Johanna, Josie, Helen, Elaine and, for a while, my younger brother, John."

"The first tractor I remember was my

dad's 1927 iron-wheeled Fordson. After that, we used a 1941 Ford-Ferguson, a 1948 Ford 9N, a 1951 Ford 8N, a 1954 Ford Jubilee, a 1957 Ford, 1964 Ford 4000, and, lastly, a 1968 Ford 3000.

"At various times, we used a corn planter; grain-driller, which was horse-drawn into the 1960s; and a new hay-loader we bought in 1943. We needed a hay-loader bad, but it was wartime and new ones were not supposed to be available. But Minnie's uncle, Garrett Bultman, said 'I'll get you one but you'll have to put it together.' So, that's what we did, picked it up in pieces and assembled it back at the farm.

"My dad had a 1926 Ford Model T truck, followed by a 1929 Ford Model A. The next six trucks were Dodges: a 1936; 1941; 1947; 1952 (a nice two-tone



Photo: Henry, Pam and Minnie (Vliestra) Holstein, 1961

job); 1958 and finally a 1965 blue-green two-tone. In 1969, I went back to a Ford, and my last farm pickup was the 1978 F-150 we sold at auction

In December 1958, Minnie got pregnant with what would be their first and only child. On Thursday, Sept. 3, 1959, Pamela Joy Holstein was welcomed into the family. Minnie was 35 years old and Henry was 39.

When Pam was old enough to walk, she was trying to emulate her mom's cleaning and cooking duties. Before too long, she was helping Mom for real by standing on a chair to wash dishes, a moment immortalized in an old snapshot in Pam's family photo collection.

By the time she started school in Vesper, Pam was helping her Mom regularly in true farm family tradition. In the summertime, Pam would also carry lunch out to her dad and sometimes to her Aunt Johanna and Grandpa John, in buckets placed in the front basket of her bicycle.

Pam got an itch to milk one of the cows, so she grabbed a milk can and stool and set about milking.

One problem: Pam was only four and could easily have gotten kicked by the animal. Horrified, Minnie ran out to the barn, only to see to her astonishment the cow patiently standing there while her little daughter valiantly worked to fill the bucket!

Later years would see Pam progress to more involved farm work, such as working in the haymow, loading haystacks and pulling "rocket" weeds from the fields. She would also help her mom out by cooking meals and cleaning and waxing floors from time to time.

As satisfying as farming was to Henry Holstein, his profession was fraught with everyday dangers. In 1945, prior to marrying and starting a family, young "Hank" was driving a tractor which was pulling a

wagon that was collecting harvested corn. Near a barbed-wire fence used to pen in their cows, the tractor hit some of the wire and somehow snagged Henry's clothing. The tractor kept going, but Henry was jerked backwards right out of his seat and off the tractor. The nearly-empty wagon ran partially over him before the tractor hit a post, started running up it and stalled.

Unbelievably, the only injuries Henry suffered were minor cuts above his groin.

Many years later, in 1968, another mishap occurred

which proved more serious and, again, could have been fatal if not for what Henry believes was a miracle. One day, he was hauling manure and had to stop to clean the spreader.

Henry got off the tractor from the rear instead of from the side and the cuff of his overalls got caught in the power takeoff. Henry was immediately pulled to the ground and, like an ever-tightening giant

vice, the powerful engine began to grip his pant and leg, pulling him ever closer to the corkscrew-like discs of the manure spreader.

Henry screamed and tried in vain to pull free; soon the discs would be tearing into the flesh of his right leg. Then, as if in answer to a fervent prayer, the engine began to sputter and stalled out.

Relief turned to panic as Henry realized he had better not delay in working his leg free. Irrational or not, he feared that the engine might roar back to life as quickly as it had died. Using his left foot, Henry was able to pull his bare, blood-blistered, right foot out minus his sock and shoe which remained wedged in the power takeoff along with the entire leg portion of his overalls, which had been ripped completely off by the torque of the power takeoff's engine.



Photo: Pam and Henry Holstein, mid-1960s

As soon as he realized he was free from the takeoff, Henry Holstein did something he rarely did in public; he wept openly.

Upon getting up and finally making it back to the house, the removal of what was left of his overalls and his shirt revealed deep blood blisters on his shoulders in the shape of the shoulder straps of his overalls. For weeks afterward, the marks would be a daily reminder to Henry of how close he came to being killed.

Two weeks later, a farmer in nearby Junction City was killed in a similar accident, which served as a somber reminder of what a miraculous escape Henry had managed on the day he faced death and by the Grace of God walked away.

As with her Dad, Pam was not immune to farm dangers. One day when she was 11 or 12, the family was putting hay bundles onto the elevator for storage up in the barn's haymow. Pam was up in the hay loft with her Aunt Johanna helping to pull bundles off the conveyor belt. When she reached a little too far for a bundle, Pam began to lose her balance. To fall forward could have meant landing inside the hay elevator's whirling mechanism and probable death.

Just as she was about to fall, Pam felt a jerking tug which halted her forward motion - her Aunt Jo had, thankfully, been looking directly at her and instinctively grabbed for the belt loop of her pants, hooking it on the first swipe.

A few years after Pam started school, Minnie decided to find her first outside employment since they had married. In 1968, she went into Vesper and was hired to work in Frank Gill's paint roller factory, in a building which had formerly housed the Equitable Creamery.

Finding it inconvenient to use the family pickup truck to take her into work, Henry decided it was finally time, at 48 years of age, to purchase his own car. Against his own father's wishes, he went into Marshfield and purchased a new 1968 Ford sedan.

Minnie continued to pitch in with the farm chores on their town of Sigel farm, such as throwing down hay and delivering calves. This would sometimes leave her so exhausted that she would sink into an easy chair after dinner and fall fast asleep, much to the disappointment of daughter Pam, who wanted a little time with her mom.

Holstein farm, 2000





2000 Auction

After leaving the paint roller factory, in 1974, Minnie got a job at the Vesper processing plant of Madison-based Sanna Dairies, Inc. (later known as Beatrice Foods and known today as Kerry Ingredients). She would spend 14 years there, retiring in 1988.

The farm auction began. Henry, Minnie and Pam could only watch as mementos of their life were auctioned off by Vruwink: farm implements, rakes, tools, ladders, chairs, linens, glassware, lamps, even most of Pam's childhood doll collection.

In 1977, after graduation (with honors) from Wisconsin Rapids Lincoln High School, Pam decided to attend the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh in the fall of that year, majoring in secondary education.

Pam's Grandpa John was decidedly against it. He wanted her to continue full-time in the farming operation but Pam persisted and her dad and mom finally relented and allowed her to enroll at the college. Henry and Minnie both knew what Pam's departure meant that the Holstein family farm operation probably would not continue into another generation.

After graduation (again with honors) from Oshkosh in 1981, Pam moved to Milwaukee because of the meager job opportunities in central Wisconsin. It was evident she didn't intend to return to farming.

Gradually, John Holstein relinquished his farm duties to son Henry. By 1983, the last of the cows were sold off and Henry and Minnie retired from the farm operation they had worked together for 35 years. The farm acreage which still surrounded them was rented out to nearby farmers. All that was left for Henry and Minnie to tend was their large vegetable garden in back of the house.

Henry volunteered to work on the Town of Sigel road maintenance crew with neighbors and friends John Osinga, Howard Knuteson, George Overzet and Dick Olsen. Minnie still had her job in Vesper and would still can and preserve fruits and vegetables in the fall.

Henry's mom, Jacoba, had passed on in February 1958. His dad, John, passed away in January 1987 at age 89, and Pam's Aunt Jo joined her Grandpa in November 1989 at only 67 years of age, due to illness.

Meanwhile, after 4-1/2 years at Trade Press Publishing Company in suburban Glendale, Pam was hired in January 1986 by the United States Postal Service in Milwaukee as a machine distribution clerk.

By 1990, smaller family farms were slowly but inexorably being replaced by larger, corporate farms. Neighbors were selling off entire farms and moving into either Wisconsin Rapids, Stevens Point, Marshfield or the smaller communities of Sherry, Arpin, Vesper and Rudolph. Henry and Minnie continued to hang in there, not wanting to leave the land they had loved and worked for so long.

In 1991, Pam married Christopher Barney, a fellow postal worker with two children from a previous marriage and they made regular trips "home." Chris grew to enjoy the stillness of the rural open spaces which still surrounded the family farm. Even Pam, contrary to just 15 years earlier, seemed to begin to enjoy each homecoming.

The farm auction was winding down. Little remained in the yard space which had initially been so filled with family artifacts. It was now time

to auction off the "star" of the show, Henry's 1978 Ford F-150 pickup truck, with only 27,000 original miles. The bidding was spirited,, and Henry's eyes got a bit misty as the gavel came crashing down.

As the 1990s wore on, Henry and Minnie began to slow down physically. Routine chores and even stair-climbing became a struggle. By the dawn of 2000, Henry was 80 and Minnie was nearing 76.

One day at the kitchen table, during a visit from Pam and Chris, the subject of selling the farm was brought up in earnest. Real estate agents had in recent years approached Pam's folks about selling their farmland for cranberry bogs, but it was the first time they had really been serious about it. Pam set about negotiating a price with a young engaged couple from the area and was able to get a fair sale price for the farm. By August 2000, papers were signed and the deal was done and Henry and Minnie found a nice side-by-side ranch duplex rental, just finishing construction, in Wisconsin Rapids.

Vruwink auctioneers at 2000 Holstein farm auction





Photo by Dave Engel

Henry and Minnie Holstein at their Wisconsin Rapids home of six years, January 2007

By early September, the move was ready to be made. Pam and her mom finished vacuuming the now-empty rooms of the farmhouse, while Henry and Chris loaded items into the moving truck and Chris and Pam's pickup truck. Finally, it was time to take a last look around. Chris got out his 35mm camera and snapped a last picture of the three Holsteins with their familiar farmhouse in the background. Then it was time to leave. As the vehicles turned onto County Highway F, headed for Wisconsin Rapids, Pam, Minnie and Henry took one last look at what had been a huge part of their lives and promised not to forget the hard work, blessings and love of the Holstein Family Farm of rural Vesper, Wisconsin.

More than six years later, hardly a visit goes by without Henry, Minnie or Pam recalling a favorite

memory from "back home" on the farm. Recently, Minnie had to undergo pacemaker implant surgery at St. Joseph's Hospital in Marshfield.

Henry was clearly worried. The couple had seldom been openly affectionate but as the attendants came to wheel Minnie to the waiting elevator, Henry, to the surprise of Pam and Chris, leaned over his wife of 58-1/2 years and, tears streaming down his cheeks, tenderly kissed her and told her how much he loved her. Chris later said to his mother-in-law, "Henry loves Minnie."

In her 21st year with the Postal Service, Pam still looks forward to the day she can return to her "up north" childhood home after retirement. Although a lifetime Milwaukee-area resident, Chris is in complete agreement with his "Pammy" and is also looking forward to the move.



Frank Abel, left. Abel's men's clothing store was a fixture of the Mead-Witter block for much of the 20th Century.



School cloakroom , c. 1950



February 2007

Artifacts

ABOUT YOUR PROFIT
SHARING PLAN
COMMITTEE MEETS
4TH THURS. EACH MONTH
2:00 P.M.
YOU'RE WELCOME!





See page 19 for commentary



Shaw Hill (left), Cecil Leverton. Wisconsin Rapids postal carriers. Where?

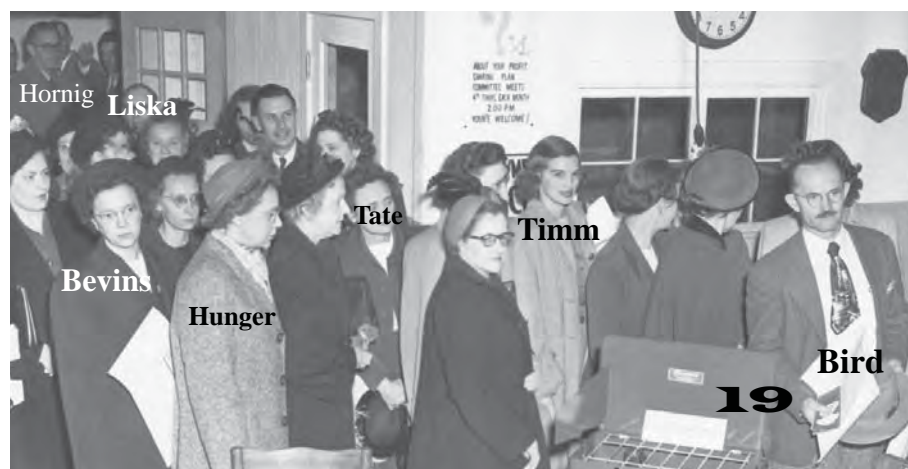




Wisconsin Rapids postal employees. From left: Nate Anderson, Joe Wheir (postmaster), Emil Krumrei, Chester Severance, Martin Panter (Assistant Postmaster) I.D. by John Billings, former postal employee.

Prentiss Wabers

See pages 16-17: Looks like a Preway tour group, possibly school-oriented, as several of the following were teachers. Identified: Elizabeth Bevins, Phyllis Hunger, Mrs. Wm. Tate, Mrs. Reuben Timm, Edgar Bird, Roger Hornig and Joe Liska.





Probably Wisconsin Rapids City Hall, I.D. by John Billings



**Location?
(WFHR?)
Event?**

**B. Beichel
(WFHR)**

**Walter
Bean**

**Miles
Barker**

**Harold
Collman**



Above: First row, from left: Jack Fritzinger, Ralph Cole, Bernard Ziegler, William Heilman, Harris Anderson, Harold Haertel, Joe Ellis. Back row: Ray Burchell, ?, Wendell Miscoll.

Below: First row: Bernard Garber, George Frechette, Lee Kimberly, Nels Justeson (mayor), Bill Heilman. Second: Robert Schill, Joe Ellis, Ralph Boyer, Dan Meyer, Bernie Ziegler.





Above: Second from left, Charles Gurtler. Boy at right, Ray Klappa. Alfred "Duke" Hornigold, teacher, at right.

Below: Third from right, Mrs. Bud Rued. Second from right, Mrs. Ray Manka.





From left: Dr. F.X. Pomainville, Mrs. Richard (Bernice) Lawless, Mrs. Tom (Isabelle) Utegaard, Mrs. Del (Grace) Rowland, Emily Mead Baldwin (Bell), Mrs. William F. (Louise) Huffman.

Identifications

on this page and others are tentative and subject to corrections and additions from readers.



Was this house moved from Oak Street to make room for the Hotel Mead? See the previous *Artifacts* for more about Oak Street. Or is it the courthouse location?



Grandpa John Loonstra

George Mead's Gardener

By Sally Romanski Cook, Sparta

In these days of text messaging and e-mails, letter writing is becoming a lost art. Among my cherished possessions are two handwritten letters from George Mead I, sent to me when I was a little girl. The first arrived in 1949 and the second in 1951, after he had suffered a stroke in September 1950.

My grandfather, John Loonstra, worked as a gardener for Mr. Mead, both on Belle Isle in Wisconsin Rapids and at Mead's winter home, Casa Meda, in Miami Beach, Fla., in the 1940s and 1950s. This job provided him with the opportunity to spend the winters in the warm Florida sunshine.

He and members of the Mead household staff would leave Wisconsin in late October to prepare the home in Miami Beach for Mr. Mead's arrival. They returned in April to reopen the island home here. It was after these return trips that Grandpa would ask my sister or me to write to Mr. Mead to report on their arrival.

My sisters and I became acquainted with Mr. Mead during our frequent stops on the island to visit our Grandpa. We made regular trips from our home on Oak Street to the T.B. Scott Public Library on Third Street. From there, it was only a short walk farther to Belle Isle.

My grandfather retired from his job as gardener at the age of eighty. Not only were he and George Mead I employee and employer, they were good friends and remained so for the rest of their lives.

George Mead died in 1961 at the age of 90. My grandfather died in 1966 at the age of 91.

It still amazes me that a man of George Mead's importance would take time out of his busy life to write to some little girls. He was a very kind, caring, down-to-earth man.

See the letters on following pages.

John Loonstra in Florida



Photo courtesy of Sally Romanski Cook

George W. Mead - 5666 Collins Avenue - Miami Beach 40, Florida

Dear Sally.

Thanks very much for
your letter. I am glad that
your Grandpa arrived there
safely. He must be careful
not to catch cold.
And I hope he will enjoy
it there. Tell him we
are all well - Sally Mead
my only guest now.

Capt. Tom and the
boat are fine.
We are getting plenty of
radishes & tomatoes.

Regards to you all.

George W. Mead

April twelve

1949.

George W. Mead - 5666 Collins Avenue - Miami Beach 40, Florida

Dear Sally and Susan,

Thanks very much for your letter. I would have written sooner but they keep me very busy here. I am getting much better and hope to recover entirely but it will take another year.

Tell Grandpa that it is wonderful down here, that I am staying all summer for the treatment. I am getting especially in the warm salt water pool of the Bath Club. Water is 84 and air about 88. My place looks fine. Dan and a negro man keep it in order. Tell him also to write me about the Island and what flowers he has planted. Does he want to come South again winter? Love and good wishes,
George W. Mead

July 13.
1957

Teen Times at the Sugar Bowl

By Earle Garber

Our favorite hangout had a long history. At the turn of the 20th Century, where we now have Veterans Park, our community (then named Grand Rapids), was blessed with, among other business places, the White Front Candy Kitchen. Years later, George and Jim Drivas, two brothers of Greek descent, purchased the store and changed the business to the “Sugar Bowl” restaurant.

The Sugar Bowl was a somewhat ominous cavern filled with dark mahogany booths on both sides of the front of the store. There was a white marble soda fountain across from the front booths, where all flavors of phosphates, ices and ice cream were served. From high ceilings hung bulbous lamp-covered chandeliers with dimmed low-wattage lights that drooped feebly over us. In back was a small dining room that looked over the river. Brother Jim served the few folk who would eat there.

The Sugar Bowl front windows were plastered with posters for circuses, dances at the Eagles Club and benefits at the local churches, whatever was taking place that week or month. Just inside, was a wire stand piled high with newspapers from Milwaukee, Chicago, and, as far away as New York City. They were somewhat outdated, having arrived by train.

Bordering either side of the Sugar Bowl store front were two glass display cases of chocolates filled with nougats, walnuts, almonds, creams and sweet cherries. White taffy (in season) was tacked on white paper doilies in long narrow pyramids.

The Sugar Bowl was the center of our town and our weekend world. During World War II, our teen years, it was the favored gathering place for me and my friends. Our fearless leader, Dick, lived over the J.C. Penney store next door with his mom and dad.

On Saturdays, we took command of the first booth, nearest the south window. While George usually tried not to show it, he must have had second thoughts about us. We took up space during his busiest time. However, he was usually too polite to show us the door.

Early on Saturday, Dick would call, “Get down here.” He’d let us know that Cynthia and Richard, Dana or Myrtle, Hank, Don, Wayne or Rusty and Joan or Ewald were on the way.

We were always planning something. It could have been a dance. Most of us were members of Swing Shifters, the high school dance band. Or it could have meant the Eagles Ballroom or a meeting later at Jo's house when her folks were out of town. It's what teens did those days.

For us, it was the best of times, although it must have been the worst of times for our folks. The country was at war; the town was emptying of military-eligible men daily. Gas, butter, meat and even shoes were being rationed.

Money was scarce. Just ten years back, "the big "D," as Dad called the Depression, had financially hurt so many families, at least those who didn't have a job in the mill.

Most Saturdays, our folks reluctantly graced us with an allowance, if they could afford anything at all. On those Saturdays, we took control of the booth nearest the front window, taunting and waving at customers walking by, gabbing and sipping cherry or chocolate phosphates, while waiting for our friends.

Sugar Bowl booths had shiny black glass tabletops. We could make them squeal when wet. It didn't please George.

He was always behind the counter, his belly wrapped with a white apron strung tightly, chewing on a fat blunt cigar, as if bonded to the fountain, waiting, hoping, we supposed, someone would have a bite to eat, have a treat or buy a magazine or newspaper. With his thick garbled accent he would shout, "Hey you kids, what's it today?" We sensed his concern. Times were slow.

He would stand behind the taller white marble soda fountain and we knew if we didn't quit making objectionable noises, he'd walk across the linoleum floor to explain how it hurt his business and ask us to stop.

On this particular Saturday, we had some fun in mind. We behaved as usual, slowly sipping, dragging on straws for the hour or so it took to assemble the gang. Then someone extracted ice from an empty tumbler and threw it at a late arrival. This was followed by a Red Raider cheer, a sort of wake up call.

That's when George, rolling his lower lip tightly inward and grinding his teeth, gave out a ferocious growl. We were bug-eyed. We were up in arms, you might say. He was pointing at us; he was pointing at the door; he was telling us to leave. We rolled our eyes. We put the plan into action. Jumping from the booth, waving our arms, we ran for the door shouting what no restaurant owner wants to hear:

"Cockroach!"

Year of the Museum

Special attention in 2007 will be focused on the Museum building and the histories it represents. Originally built in 1906-07 as a residence for the Witter family, it became T.B. Scott public library in 1948 and the home of South Wood County Historical Corp. in 1970.

Watch for more information and features in the Daily Tribune and in subsequent issues of this publication.

The spotlight comes at an auspicious time. Made possible by a bequest, considerable effort was expended in 2006 to restore the building to a stable and attractive state through replacement of rotted wood and windows and application of new paint. It looks great!



**South Wood County Historical Corp.
540 Third Street South
Wisconsin Rapids WI 54494**



Uncle Dave knows you have memories, stories, photos, maps, artifacts and other historical materials that you haven't shared yet. Now there is a way: *Artifacts!*

This publication is a benefit of membership in the South Wood County Historical Corp., and is received four times per year. Membership is still only \$15.

Send your subscription/membership dues to The Museum, 540 Third Street South, Wisconsin Rapids 54494. All other materials to Dave Engel, 5597 Third Avenue, Rudolph WI 54475.

To: