ered that the Rablin House was on fire. The whole attic was a glowing blaze. The guests were awakened. Before any casualties were incurred, all had escaped.

As soon as each gentleman had taken care of his personal effects, he returned to remove furniture from the hotel.

The Grand Rapids fire engine was set on the walk opposite the house, and three streams were thrown into and on the house. The water, as usual, was of no avail against the original inferno.

The Rablin House barn and the surrounding buildings were rescued from destruction by the persistent efforts of the fire company. About half of the furniture was saved from the flames, some of which was put in a building recently used by A.A. Brundage as a restaurant. The furniture would not be safe there, either.

While furniture was being taken out, H.H. Compton, recently of Colorado, was hit on the head by a bracket fallen from the building's cornice. For a time, he was thought dead but soon showed signs of life. Drs. Witter, Whitney and Felsey were summoned and managed to restore him to sensibility.

Suspicion for the cause of the fire continued to be directed toward the "tramp." "The house has been threatened, as the rumor goes, by a tramp, at different times."

Another cause was proposed. Excessive heat the previous day, together with dampness, may have generated in the attic a gas that somehow ignited.

At the time of the fire, the hotel was owned by E.S. Joeffrey & Co. of New York and was valued by them at $10,000. They said it cost $20,000 to construct. It was insured by New York Underwriters for $3,250 and by Hartford for $3,250.

The furniture was owned by Col. Clarke and insured by North American for $750 and by Home for $750.

Insurance reimbursed some of those deprived by flood and fire. Soon it would be applied for again.

SWCHC

Rablin House

Jack Brundage and George Ferguson had to be a little groggy when the Grand Rapids' night watchman, Mr. Bell, awoke them at 3 a.m. Sunday.

The burning of the Rablin House on Friday night, June 12, had kept many awake. At the same time, the river was rising again, and Bell was assigned to warn businessmen if their property was in danger.

Brundage and Ferguson rushed to their store, "finding the aspect threatening in the extreme. The river, like an unchained demon, was threatening to submerge everything in the path of its terrible anger." The two merchants began removing tinware tools and general stock from the tin shop, a rear addition to their building.

They had been at work only a few minutes when the building was swept from its foundations, with Brundage and Ferguson in it. About 3:30 a.m., the tin shop, with its tons of stoves, nails and heavy goods "careened and fell into the hell of waters."

Brundage leaped from the door that opened from the tin shop to the main store but landed in the river. By chance, he caught a large rock and crawled into the store.

Brundage escaped, but Ferguson, possibly buried by stoves, went down with the store. Brundage ran down to the bridge, crying for help.

The flood bore the doomed building until, crashing against the bridge, it went into a thousand pieces and floated away a mass of splinters. "The oldest inhabitant can recall nothing so terrible as the flood, which has devastated our city the past week," said the Wood County Reporter of June 17, 1880, recalling the floods of 1847 and 1864 as "freshets" by comparison.

After the watchman's call, merchants brought teams and boats downtown, moving goods to the east side of the street.

The full seriousness of the event had taken some time to sink in. "Only when the water began to trickle through the slab embankments and run in little rills, fast swelling into angry brooks, cutting their way through the main street of the city, did we consider the impending peril in all its terrible proportions," said the Reporter.

By noon, the main street was "a surging turrent." Cables were attached to the buildings as huge logs, pieces of booms, piles of lumber and gigantic trees, torn up by their roots, came sweeping through the street only to clog up and cause new floods. The slough lying east of the main business section became like the river itself as buildings were swept down its widening current.

In water rising about four inches an hour, a line of men up to their waists passed the goods from Ingraham's store across to the Masonic hall while a batteau conveyed coarser goods to the shore by the Rablin House barn.

When the storeroom connected to the Spafford & Cole store suddenly parted and whirled out into the waters, all eyes watched the bridge. But the bridge stood its ground as the shed hit it and went under.

By Sunday, the water had risen to nearly 16 feet above low water mark and still was coming up. Already, a dozen buildings had gone down. Others opposite the Rablin house site were fast falling and moving down the tide, their fronts smashed in by accumulating logs and general rubbish.

From the street near the Congregational Church, buildings were standing at every angle, crippled, jammed and tumbled about with piles of wood and boomage pressing upon them.

Ingraham's store alone saved the entire sweeping away of every structure north of the post office.

The destruction did not long faze the editor of the June 17 Wood County Reporter, who said, "Let there be no whining, but let us look the matter squarely in the face, and Chicago-like, emerge from this calamnity of flood, as the great city has done from the calamnity of flame."

The damage was estimated at $200,000. Principal losers were: The city of Grand Rapids, Spafford & Cole, E.S. Jaffrey & Co., Brundage & Ferguson, Nick Winkle, J.D. Witter, M.C. Warren, T.C. St. Amour, Geo. Neeves, J.E. Ingraham, E.T. Bodett, Jo. Closuit, D.P. Morrill, R.W. Lyon, Henry Martine, John Wagner, F.J. Wood, M. Huntington, Geo. Zenier, Mrs. Grace and Antoine Arpin.

The city of Centralia received much less damage than did Grand Rapids because of its elevation and because of a fortuitous break in the Garrison canal that did not allow the flood to build up.

Everything is topsy-turvy this week. No one feels natural. Business is almost wholly dead. Ingraham's goods are over in Masonic Hall, Spafford & Cole's in Odd Fellows Hall. Woodworth's harness shop and Cleveland's restaurant are in next door to Hamm's store. Brundage & Fergu-

son's goods are in Engine House. Rablin House furniture is in the Kline building, almost wholly ruined by the flood. Morrill is located near the Roche House. Belknap, Bodette and Lord are not yet located. M. Vaughn is opposite Silber's. R.W. Lyon is still in the same place, though undermined terribly."

The only human casualty was George Alworth Ferguson. Born March 10, 1847, and reared at Morristown, N.Y., he learned bookkeeping in the Ogdensburg, N.Y., college. In July 1865, Ferguson, with his brother, A.H., moved to Lima Center, Wis., and entered the hardware business. After five years, he sold out and went to Berlin, a cranberry center. From Berlin, Ferguson moved to Grand Rapids, where he cultivated cranberries. In winter, he traveled, working his trade of tinsmith.

Ferguson's 1878 marriage to Jennie M. Gunn had yielded daughter Blanche. In April 1879, he entered the hardware business in Grand Rapids with J.N. Brundage, best known as a local newspaper editor and publisher.

A fruitless search was made for Ferguson by the Odd Fellows, of which he was a member. A human skull found in July proved to be unidentifiable.

Congregational minister J.S. Norris said, at Ferguson's funeral: "We are brought together by circumstances. One of our number, much loved and respected has been swept from our midst, by the ruthless hand of death, in manhood's prime. His was a sudden and unexpected departure."

Cleanup began when the waters receded. J.O. Herbert offered pictures of the flood for 50 cents apiece. Brundage & Ferguson's building was repaired, along with some of the other remaining structures. Col. B.E. Clarke, proprietor of the Rablin House, reimbursed for the loss of furniture, departed for Ashland, Nebraska. A new hotel recently had been completed, and he was to be the manager.

SWCHC

Grand Rapids

E.P. Arpin's 1881

As has been the custom, the young man opened the new year with a bit of terpsichorean frivolity. According to his diary, 17-year-old Edmund Arpin celebrated the advent of 1881 at the St. John the Baptist society dance and supper. On the next day, Sunday, January 2, Arpin's father, John, lost a watch, "a result of old timers Joe Boucher, Phil Ward and others having a good time at Pomainville's saloon."

Much of Edmund Arpin's activity involved recreation. On January 20, he spent 15 cents playing pool. On January 30, he attended Mass and then "went downtown and played billiards in our hall (1st Avenue North) in the afternoon." That evening, Arpin attended a temperance lecture.

On Friday, February 4, Arpin took in Belle Brundage's party. February 5, it was off to the Catholic sociable with Elmire Corriveau. On Sunday, he traveled with "Gaynor, Mary, Hebert, and Georgiana and Elmire" to Meehan's in a sleigh. The Roche Sociable occupied Saturday, February 10.

Monday, March 7, was such a "beautiful day" that Arpin went out riding with his colts.

Although April 18 also was a Monday, Arpin went to Permilia Belanger's party, and went riding with "Georgiana, Miss Clark of Dexter, Mary Cotey, Aunt Cotey and Mother."

April 23, a Saturday, brought a Catholic sociable or "necktie party" "in our building." On Sunday, Arpin participated in an activity not much in vogue any more; with Joe Dugas, he rode over the rapids on a raft.

In May, Arpin played the games of "Divorce" and "My Mother in Law." After Sunday Mass, he again played billiards. On May 13, Arpin went fishing "with Miller, Swartzmeyer and the priest." Despite getting wet from rain, he caught three pickerels and two bass.

Arpin "went in swimming" May 17 and later attended a concert at the fairgrounds, where he "took a dish of ice cream." On May 19, Arpin went fishing again, this time at "Clint's dam" in Port Edwards. He caught five fish.

The circus came to town on May 7. On the 9th, "the Methodists had an ice cream and strawberry festival down in our building." June 24, a Friday, marked the St. John the Baptist society's annual procession.

For Independence Day festivities, Arpin "went to the festival at our hall and to the concert . . . (to) the fairgrounds in the evening and to the dance."

Work as well as play was important to the daily life of Edmund Arpin. Many references are made to his father's forest-products industry. On January 27, Edmund went "to the landing" with a load of manure and "to Tarbox's," where he scaled logs. "Dan arrive broke sleigh tongue and singletree on stump."

On January 31, "father sold the land that he had from J. Young to Chase & Witter for $3,600." As he often did, "father started for Yellow River" on February 5. The younger Arpin "fixed up the barn."

On Monday, February 14, "father bought a yoke of oxen of Wm. Roe for $90." On February 17, "paid Amos Hasbrouck on account for work done, $2,000. Father started for a trip to Jenny (Merrill) and Wausau to see about selling the logs." On February 28, "Father started for Auburndale to see (Henry) Sherry. Father went to Wausau as the Central was blocked so that Sherry couldn't reach Auburndale." Frequent trips also were made to Pittsville and St. Germaine.

Arpin worked all day in the garden on April 21, then "got uncle's plow at Besalion's and our team, and worked one-half day for the city." Plowing and working in the garden occupied much of his time that spring.

On Friday, May 13, Arpin "went over the river" after lime but, since there was none, came home with sand instead. Tuesday, he "went to Beron's after lumber." "Uncle J. Cotey" returned from St. Germaine with talk of "the drive" on May 19. Arpin planted beans on May 31. He also got his boots fixed.

Aprin's father returned at 4 a.m. June 29 from Dubuque, where John had bought Edmund a silver Elgin watch for $30.

Further recordings of work-related activities included the building of a hay barn at Pittsville, a trip to a cranberry marsh by brother, Dan, and Edmund's visit to the Yellow River.

Other information received from the Arpin diary may be placed in the general category of "life and death."

On January 29, Arpin went "over the river" and got his teeth examined. He also bought a new suit for $17 and a pair of suspenders for 50 cents. Further purchases took place January 31, when Arpin bought a pair of overshoes for $2, an undershirt for $1.75 and a pair of drawers for $1. A bushel of apples, on credit at Ingrams, cost $3.

Severe and Laura (Biron) "started for school" on February 4, "Laura for Normal, Severe for Watertown." "Took Georgiana (Arpin) to Catholic school in Prairie du Chien college." On February 5, Arpin said he weighed 140 pounds. Weight was a common topic, usually falling between 136 and 140.

His father evidently had replaced the watch he had lost. Edmund recorded the number "996614" for the movements and the name "Wm. Ellery of Waltham, Mass." as maker.

A baby unnamed in the document was born at 3 a.m. March 6. On July 8, the baby became very sick. Despite Dr. Witter's attentions, on July 20, the baby died at 12:15 a.m. On Thursday, Arpin "stayed up til 5 o'clock." On Friday, "We buried the baby."

On May 2, "got my photograph taken."

On Saturday, July 2, reported Arpin, "Garfield was shot twice by Chas. Gideau of Chicago, a lunatic."

On June 6, "Uncle Antoine's horse died 2 o'clock in the night" and was buried the next day.

During 1881, Arpin played, worked and witnessed life and death. He also went to school. In the evenings, as a preparation for college, he studied German under Prof. Swartzmeyer.

On February 28, Arpin noted that he "went to the schoolhouse to go to German school, but no one was there, so I did not get my lesson." When he "settled up," Arpin paid Swartzmeyer $200.

In addition to German, Arpin studied botany, algebra and geometry. On July 8, "got my diploma from (Prof. Julius) Rosholt," principal of Howe High School, as one of the first graduates of that institution.

Arpin continued to study. He finished philosophy July 20, going on to spelling and grammar.

Preparing for the fall term, Arpin purchased, on August 30, a truck for $7, a handkerchief for $1.10, stockings and buttons for 30 cents each, and benzine and a writing book for 15 cents each.

He was about to leave his riverside home for the capital city and a new life as a college student.

Arpin Brothers

1901: J.B., D.J., A.L. (standing), J.Z., A.M., E.P. Arpin, sons of John B. and Clarice Cotey Arpin.

College Life

On September 5, 1881, Edmund Arpin left Prairie du Chien by train for Madison at 8 a.m. He arrived in Madison at noon. No longer, it seemed, would he be a Grand Rapids boy. Arpin had gone to the capital city, where he would attend the University of Wisconsin, earn a degree and be off for who knows where.

Arpin's first afternoon was active. A friend from the Rapids, Byrde Vaughn, gave him a tour that included a look at the Capitol and a swim in Lake Mendota. Among sites seen at the university were the "curiosities" in the natural history museum.

On that first day, Arpin also met Judge Spooner. Finally, he went to his lodgings at "Mrs. Morgan's."

The following day, Tuesday, September 6, was devoted to taking examinations. The results were fairly encouraging: reading—80, spelling—85, U.S. history—90, algebra—84, arithmetic—95, geometry—73.

Wednesday brought more exams, with better results: philosophy—90, physiology-80, botany—95, physical geography—90, civil law—95, grammar—90, analysis—92.

Apparently, Arpin's placement remained subject to his proficiency at German.

That evening, Arpin "commenced boarding" at the "Boss Club." Later, he "went around town" with W. Witter, who also had roots in Arpin's river city.

Thursday's activities included school errands, the paying of bills and boat riding. On Friday, Arpin "went downtown" to see about selling cranberries, probably from the family marsh in Wood County. That weekend, in the manner of many a homesick freshman, he watched breakers roll into the lake shore. He also bought a rubber coat for $3.25 and drawers for $1.50. With Vaughn and Witter, he went fishing.

On Monday, September 19, Arpin wrote that President Garfield, who earlier that year had been wounded by an assassin, died. Arpin didn't go to school, saying that he "didn't feel good." Instead, he obtained a prescription from "Dr. Favil."

On Tuesday, Arpin returned to the physician. Another hometown acquaintance, Jim Meehan, arrived in Madison. Arpin had a "good sweat when I went to bed, which did me good."

In an effort, perhaps, to alleviate the gloom, Arpin visited the Dane County Fair on Wednesday. On Saturday, giving attention to physical development, he bought a pair of dumbbells.

With Meehan, on September 25, Arpin went to high Mass. Later, he attended a temperance lecture at the Congregational church.

The deceased president, Garfield, was buried on September 26, according to Arpin, who listened to a memorial address by university President Bascom in the Assembly chambers of the Capitol.

Arpin was attempting to attend "drill" sessions at this time but continued to experience the ravages of an unnamed illness. "I have thrown up about a cup and ½ of tea and don't feel very well in consequence," he wrote on Tuesday, September 27. On Tuesday, Arpin also was visited by Mr. Powers, who influenced him to join "the Christian Association" as an associate member.

Brother Daniel Arpin's box of cranberries was received "downtown" on October 1. "Bought boots, $6.00" wrote Edmund

the same day.

On Tuesday, Oct. 4, came word of "another flood in the Rapids." Arpin still was "not feeling too good" as he went about university business, wrote letters home, drilled and attended the opera that night.

Sickness kept him at this residence, Wednesday, October 12: "Did not do my other recitations on account of sickness. Lay in bed all the remainder of day. Mrs. Morgan brought my meals to me." A good sweat in the afternoon brought some relief.

Thursday, October 13: "Didn't go to school today. Went to see Pres. Bascom this morning about my health. He told me I had better stay out the remainder of the week to regain my strength."

Friday, Arpin felt sick and chilled all day. The "doctor" called to examine him, and Arpin wrote that he was thinking of giving up his studies "on account of weakness."

His mind was made up by Tuesday, the 18th, when he received a letter from home, telling him that his father and Sherry had brought "Arnold" out and they all wanted him to come home, "so I am going to leave." First, however, "I went to the opera to see Humpty Dumpty. It wasn't very good."

Arpin's departure from the UW and Madison came Wednesday, October 19, when he went to the college with Witter, got $2 from the dean from his tuition payment, settled accounts and headed for home on the 4 o'clock train. He stayed overnight at Valley Junction and arrived the 20th.

When Arpin reminisced about his university experience 40 years later, he summarized this way: "In 1881, Byrde Vaughn and I went to Madison together and rented a room of Mrs. Morgan near the university. It was before the water works had been put in, and the limestone water did not agree with me at all.

"We joined Boss Sisters boarding house club. Mr. G.D. Jones acted as steward of the club and, for the sum of 1.53 cts per week, we certainly got off cheap, but I was not used to hot biscuits and I soon lost out and, after two months' time, I looked like a ghost.

"The studying was quite a task, and military drill took some strength.

"When my father took on a new deal in buying a saw mill and tract of timber on the Yellow River with Mr. H. Sherry, with whom he had been in partnership on other deals, he asked me home, and I was glad to return and get a change of activities."

Life seemed to pick up about where he had left it. On the 24th, according to the diary, "Father bought Champagne out for $2,200." Arpin worked "barreling up" cranberries and getting log pipes.

On Sunday, November 13, Arpin "went downtown." He didn't go to Mass, he said, because he had stayed up all the previous night with Jenny Stevenson, "who was quite sick."

Christmas fell on Sunday and was very dull, Arpin wrote. He went to Hurleyville "with Father" to look at a turbine wheel. That night, he went to a party and supper at Corriveau's. "Mary Arpin was quite sick today," he said.

Georgiana's party, Olive's party and a party "on Will Donovan" rounded out 1881. On Saturday, December 31, Arpin wrote, "Good night, old 1881, and come to me in my sleep, beautiful 1882."

Young Frank Foster went in the room behind Mr. Mosher's store, stuck a note in his vest pocket, put a rope around his neck and kicked the starch box out from under him. His friend said he was too honest to live. "I took thirty-five dollars out of the safe last night," Mosher read from Foster's note. "I hope there is enough due me to pay my board to Mr. Zenier."

Foster, according to the Wood County Reporter, had come to Grand Rapids from Massachusetts in 1867 and formed a partnership with Mosher. Then he went to California, losing his property on the plains from Indian depredations. After a time as a salesman for a Chicago company, Foster returned to the employ of Mosher.

According to H.B. Philleo, Reporter editor, the downfall of his genial friend in November 1873 was caused by the "gambling hells improvised out of our whiskey shops.

"Whiskey and Faro are twin devils whose hellish home is adorned with the whitening bones of the manhood of the nations . . . . We call upon the law-abiding people, and the good men and women of our city, to brand the one (whiskey) as hell's foremost champion and the other (faro) as 'Assassin.' "

Philleo prayed that the ghost of the victim would haunt the vile dens of infamy "till either their keepers feel the leprosy of its presence, or learn to gain an honest livelihood in reputable business."

Philleo's brother-in-law, Jack Brundage, added some "melancholy facts" about Foster's past. Oswald Voyer told Brundage that the previous winter, while Foster was a traveling agent for a Chicago firm, he won several hundred dollars at faro and said he would not play again. The next night, however, he returned to the gaming table and lost what he had won, plus again as much.

In the morning, according to the story, two traveling men found Foster hanging by a strap in the Lyons brothers livery barn. They cut him down and revived him, promising never to divulge the event.

Philleo believed the earlier story had been invented to lessen the "damning curse" of the later successful suicide. "He, too, easily became the prey of designing men who so blindly lure to ruin the sons of anxious parents."

On February 5, 1874, Philleo claimed the falsehood had been "promulgated by one of the Disciples of Bacchus in our city." In his best dudgeon, Philleo wrote that his friend, Frank, was "king over all such portable pustules infecting the face of God's beautiful earth."

Seven years later, on November 18, 1880, the Wood County Reporter had occasion to note another casualty of gambling dens in the city. "On complaint of Geo. Hiles, Chas. Le Claire, of Centralia, was arrested and brought before Justice Woodworth to answer to a charge of winning $300 from L.P. Powers in playing the game known as faro.

"Le Claire had his trial on Monday and was held to bail in the sum of $500, Frank Garrison going Le Claire's surety. It is high time that this nefarious business was stopped. We were surprised to learn that a number of our better citizens frequent such hell holes."

Indeed, Levi Parsons Powers carried the credentials of a "better citizen." Born in Marshfield, Vt., in 1828, he came to Grand Rapids in 1852 and may have been its first lawyer. He served in the state Legislature of 1863, as county judge, as president of the Wisconsin Valley railroad and as first mayor of Grand Rapids.

A transcript of the Le Claire trial shows that Geo. R. Gardner and J.A. Gaynor represented the state, and C.M. Webb and

Mr. Briggs, the defendant.

The alleged crime had occurred November 8. On November 13, a warrant was served on Le Claire by Sheriff Peter McCamley.

On November 15, the case appeared in circuit court. Witnesses for the plaintiff were George Hiles, Lawrence Ward, Francis Biron and L.P. Powers. The defendant did not offer testimony.

Hiles (of Dexterville) testified that the previous Monday night, he had been in the back part of the Centralia saloon, where the "faro bank" was running. He said he arrived at about 10 p.m. and left at midnight. Hiles said that when he entered, Le Claire was sitting on a box close to the dealer, acting as a lookout, "a person watching the game and pointing out the bets to be paid." Hiles further explained how faro was played.

A system of "checks" represented money. Red checks were worth $1.25 a piece or $25 per stack, whites were 25 cents a piece or $5 per stack. "They have a tin box and a pack of cards," said Hiles. "They leave a cloth spread out on the table, with ace, deuce, three spot, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, jack, queen and king."

The "sporting men" on the outside of the table passed in their money and took the banker's checks, which would be redeemed after playing. "After the outsider gets the banker's chips, he places his money down on any card he wants to. For instance, if the ace remains up, the outsider wins; otherwise, the banker."

Le Claire, said Hiles, remained in position of lookout for about 45 minutes before he began dealing. L.P. Powers was playing, testified Hiles, when Hiles entered and had a stack of red checks. Powers lost $180 worth of red chips, estimated Hiles.

Ward testified that he also had been present, and said he had known Le Claire for about four years. "He has been keeping saloons since he has been in Centralia, off and on, four years. For the last five or six months, I have seen him dealing a faro bank and playing poker."

"That night," said Ward, "Powers did not have as many chips when I left as when I first got there."

W.L. Jackson testified that he thought Le Claire was the banker, rather than Ayshford, "because Le Chaire has money, and Ayshford does not seem to have any."

Jackson said he had known Le Clair for six or eight years. "He has been dealing faro part of the time for the last two or three months."

While Jackson watched, Powers had lost about $50 in checks.

Biron testified that he also had been present at the faro game. "When I went in, Mr. Powers had 25 or 30 checks. I watched him bet until he lost all his red checks and, when I left (at 2:30 a.m.), he had 15 or 18 white checks."

Powers himself took the stand. He said he had been in Centralia's Rob Roy saloon, "having fun with the boys playing faro." Le Claire was dealing part of the time and Ayshford, part of the time. Powers said he played about eight stacks of checks with 20 checks per stack, but had not paid anything yet, so had not lost anything. "I gave him a piece of paper . . . purporting to be a check on the bank, payable to my order. It was signed by W.H. Cochran and was for $200. I passed it over to Le Claire without endorsing it."

Powers said he did receive $200 worth of checks for the bank note, which he had not seen since he gave it to Le Claire. He also spent $65 in cash for checks.

In all, said Powers, he stayed about 11 hours at the faro game. He seemed to think he'd got his money's worth.

It has been said that the boys of 1886 pined away in lonesome lumber camps without the company of the fair sex.

The Wood County Reporter indicates that there may have been more romance than we thought. "Quite a jolly load of ladies drove out and surprised the loggers at Mr. M. McCarty's camp Monday," said the Reporter of March 11. "That these parties have a good time as a rule is conceded. The hospitality of the boys in camps is unbounded."

In a separate item, the paper noted: "The ladies of the second ward engaged Horace Sweeney's round about and enjoyed a sleigh ride Wednesday out to Canning & Ingraham's logging camp. The company's larder box suffered on this occasion."

There was much activity of a mercantile nature as well. A few of the many wood products concerns operating were mentioned. "F. Heartel is now running his shingle mill to its fullest capacity. He has a contract with Messrs. J.D. Witter and J. Daly for 2,000,000. Nine men are given employment at present. He has also the stock for 7,000 grubs, which he will turn out for the spring lumbering trade."

William Quinn sawed at his camp in the "defunct town" of Dexter 1 million feet of lumber for John Edwards & Co.

Lynch and McGrath concluded logging for the season after banking 500,000 feet of pine and hardwood logs.

The environs of Grand Rapids were busy as loggers prepared to run logs and lumber down the streams and rivers. Yet, much of the activity in the hinterlands achieved a sordid aspect.

Not more than five miles from town, said the Grand Rapids Tribune, a Sigel man named Charles J. Reeve lived in a "little log hovel."

Reeve, 69, formerly taught school in the state of New York. He had been educated for the ministry. Both his former wives had died. By his first wife, Reeve fathered 13 children. By his second, Reeve fathered three. By his oldest living daughter, Reeve fathered five, making 21 in all. A number of the children were "idiotic and deformed." When Reeve was arrested, two were taken to the poor farm.

"Wood County is being purged of its rottenness, even if it is at the expense of its good name," wrote the Tribune. "It is better to speedily eradicate the vile carbuncles of our population than to allow them to remain in their wantonness, even though the former course compels us to show our hand to the outside world."

At Dexterville, a man the Tribune called Oleson and the Reporter named John Carlson, made a futile attempt at suicide with a razor. "The incisions did not produce the agreeable sensations he anticipated and the pain induced him to desist," said the Reporter.

The razor and a jack-knife were taken from the man, who left his boarding house for the woods, evidently not in his right mind. After four nights, he was captured by Pittsville Marshal H.S. James. Carlson's feet were frozen. Dr. Robinson of Grand Rapids amputated both his big toes.

In the town of Saratoga, another unfortunate incident occurred.

Peter Sorrenson and his 12-year-old son were hauling pine logs from the woods for the purpose of constructing a house. Near a "g-out" along a "side-hill," the roadbed gave way, causing two top logs to tumble down from the load, striking Sorrenson in the small of the back and killing him instantly.

Sorrenson left a wife and six children. It was presumed that it would be necessary to extend to them the hospitality of the county poor farm.

The old way of the woods could be rough but, out in the farmland of Rudolph, harbingers of a new life already had appeared. E.L. Whitman of Rudolph had purchased in Fond du Lac machinery with which to operate a cheese factory on the Whitman farm. The factory was expected to have the capacity to use 1,000 pounds of milk per day.

Whitman's son already was a cheese maker "and understands the business from Genesis to Revelations," said the Tribune, making this "no wild-cat affair."

In a prescient moment, the Tribune prophesied that, "as soon as this initial factory proves beyond a doubt that this branch of the dairy business is highly lucrative and an advantage to all concerned, we may expect to see similar factories spring up in almost every settlement."

However, the prospect of establishing an industry was temporarily sidelined by the prospect of finding wealth in a more natural state. "Gold excitement" had dawned upon Rudolph.

Patrick and James Meehan, with A. Eaton and son of Stevens Point, had been inspecting the "reputed gold fields of the town of Rudolph." They contracted with several farmers, among them John Akey, L. Livernash and Christopher Chose, for the conditional purchase of their land within a year. At the same time, they secured the privilege of prospecting and mining for the precious metal during the interim.

As has so often been proved true, the hope of finding gold already made soured, but curdling gold from milk continues, after a century, to provide riches for the cheesemen of Rudolph.

White Thunder

Black Cloud's Story: I finished picking cranberries at Bearrs Marsh and was going to the camp at Scranton. Just as I passed the station and before I reached the trail to the tent, I saw a white man on the railroad track coming with a jug in his hand.

"Hey, Indian, you want to buy any whiskey?"

I told him I did not have any money. I had $16.

"You can take a drink anyway."

He held the jug for me to take a drink.

"If you can put me on to a squaw, you can have this jug of whiskey."

I started away from the man.

"If you don't do what I say, I'm going to shoot you."

He followed me down the trail.

"I said I wanted a squaw."

I could see the light flickering from camp. When we arrived, I stirred up the fire to get more light. This was Lewis Johnson's camp. Johnson's two children were there. A squaw lay in the tent with her child.

"Johnson, roll out," I called. "A man here has got lots of whiskey."

As soon as Johnson got up, the white man gave him some liquor.

"I'm going to treat you fellows again," the white man said. "We're gong to have some fun tonight."

He wanted a dish to pour the liquor in. The squaw handed him a small tin that would hold about a pint. He filled it and handed it to Johnson. The two of us could not quite drink it.

"There is an Indian camped close to us," Johnson said. "I will call him."

So White Thunder came in and drank the rest of the liquor.

"You don't use me well by drinking my liquor and not getting me a squaw," the white man said. "If you don't get me a squaw, I am going to shoot you."

After the white man left, we were sitting in the tent. We were talking. Three children were in camp at that time. My wife was not there. She was at another camp, gambling.

The white man did not make any more harsh words than what was said there. Maybe half an hour after he was gone, I heard the report of a shotgun from outside the tent.

The shot came through the tent in a circle about two feet in diameter. I was struck in both hands, in the head, and through the hat, Lewis Johnson got hit in the head. White Thunder was hit in both hands and along the side.

It all happened in the evening after dark.

Black Cloud's Cross Examination: I have been among the white people about 25 years from my boyhood. I have met the white man often and have talked with him sometimes.

I don't know the days of the week used by the white man.

I understand what week means: seven days in a week. The first day of the week is called Monday. I do not know the name of the next day.

I know what month means.

I was shot on Monday night. I do not know the day of the month.

After I was shot, someone hid the jug. Someone brought the jug back and I did not drink any of it.

The women poured some of the whiskey out.

"Do not do that," I said. "Because it will have to be showed in court."

I was not drunk that night.

Cheegarchoukah's Story: The white man came into camp when I was lying down. He treated Black Cloud, Lewis Johnson and White Thunder to liquor.

He said to these Indians, "Get me a squaw."

He said he was going to get a gun and shoot them.

They wanted a dish to drink from. I handed him a dish. I don't know who took the jug away from the white man. I saw it in the tent.

After the white man left camp, I left too.

I went out and was just going to my camp when I saw a person coming and stepped to one side and sat there and saw him shoot into the camp and then run toward the station.

I did not go back to camp but laid right in the bush. I had a child and was afraid to go back into camp.

Where we are camping, we have wigwams. When we travel, we stop with other camps. I belong to the same tribe as these Indians. I have a husband. He was over at another camp that night, gambling.

We were on the way to Wittenberg.

W.H. Dufrane's Story: From my place in Scranton, we heard two shots.

The defendant is a cousin of mine. He has worked for me about ten months. I saw him the evening of the shooting. I sent him after my cow and told him to stop in City Point and bring the jug back with him.

When he came home, he was pretty drunk. He told me the Indians had the jug. He wanted me to go with him and get it. I told him I would not and that he should go to bed.

He went upstairs and went to bed. The gun was upstairs in the room the defendant sleeps in. It is a .10 guage double-barreled shotgun.

The next morning the defendant went to work about noon. The only thing I said to him was, "Joe, keep your mouth shut. I do not want to hear anything about it."

When I went to the tent, the space where the shot went through was all peppered full of shot. There was nothing in the tent except a deck of cards.

A big squaw went to the manure pile and dug the jug up. There was about a pint of whiskey in it.

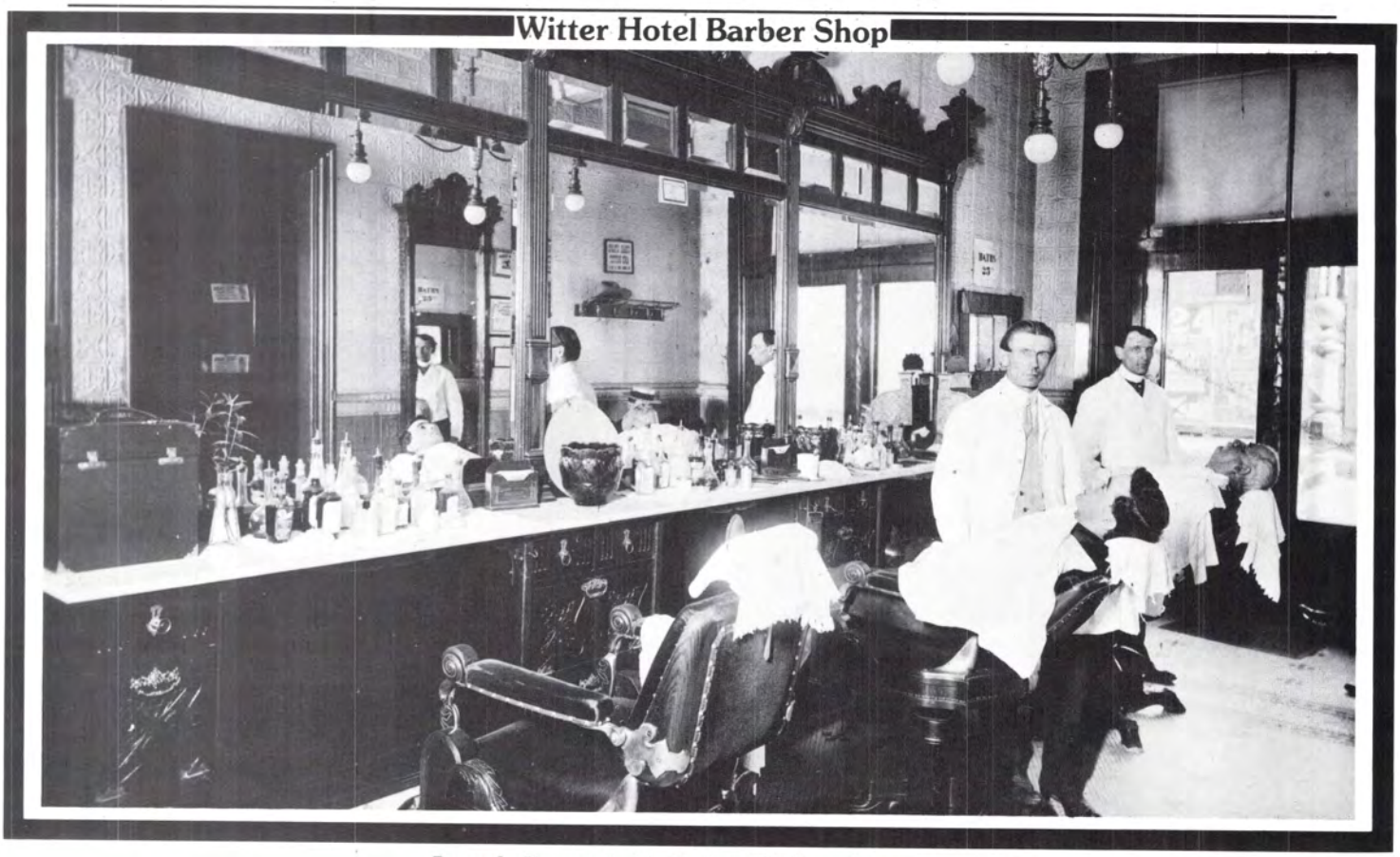
Ed Dufrane: The Indians showed me tracks outside the tent. I thought they were the defendant's. When I came up to the house from the tent, I told him he better skip.

Testimony, October 1890 before W.H. Getts, justice of the peace, Centralia on complaint of Lewis Johnson charging assault against himself, White Thunder and Black Cloud. Cause found to pursue the charge of attempted murder. Warrant issued.

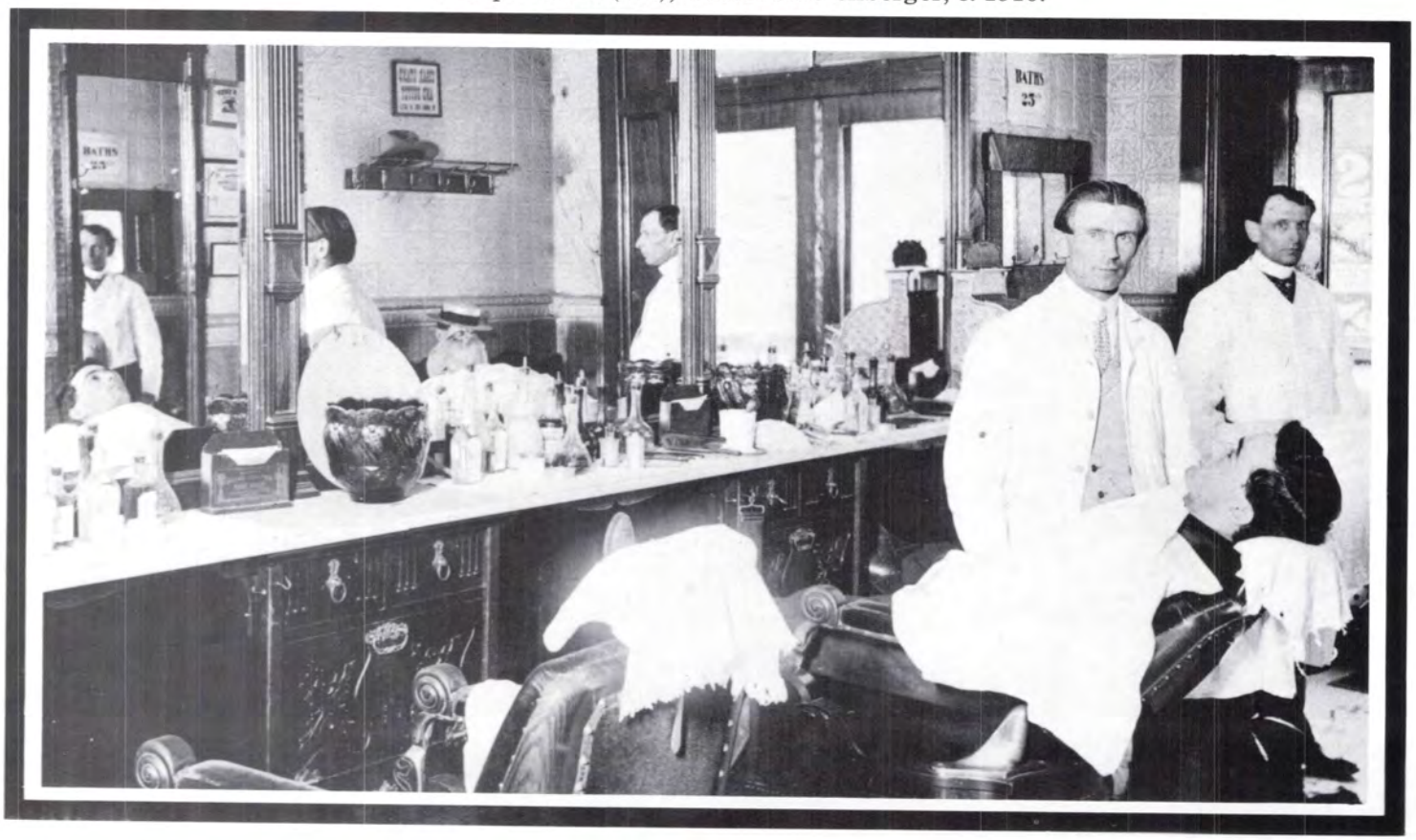
Trial, December, 1890, before Judge Charles M. Webb. E.C. Pors, district attorney. B.R. Goggins, defense attorney. No transcript available. Defendant denies any part in shooting.

Verdict of jury: not guilty.

Witter Hotel Barber Shop



Joseph Booze (left), Robert Sultzenberger, c. 1910.



Barber Shop

Pittsville Desperado

Harry Tracy, the desperado "mad dog of the Wild Bunch," probably was the baddest, meanest, most "unfavorite" son in Pittsville's 100-year history.

After a series of robberies in Washington and Oregon, Tracy and his partner, Dave Merrill, were tried, sentenced and admitted, March 22, 1899, to the Oregon state prison at Salem. On June 9, 1902, Tracy seized a rifle from a tool box and killed a guard while Merrill, another convict said to be Tracy's brother-in-law, grabbed a sawed-off shotgun. Tracy and Merrill scaled the yard wall, where Tracy shot three more guards. The last, wounded, he used as a shield. At the edge of the woods, Tracy killed the wounded guard and vanished.

Posses of sharpshooters and state militia from Oregon and Washington, accompanied by bloodhounds, took off on the trail of Tracy. According to the Grand Rapids Tribune of July 23, 1902:

"Probably no more remarkable manhunt has occurred in the history of the country than that which has been conducted in pursuit of Harry Severns, alias Tracy, who, during the 40 days the officers were after him, has killed six men and wounded several others, and, at last, eluded capture after the officers of the law have expended $10,000 in the hunt."

On June 14, Tracy and Merrill reached Portland, Ore., where they stole two horses, and later forced a boater to row them across the Columbia River into Washington.

Several times, the two confronted large numbers of armed pursuers and shot their way free. Said the Tribune of July 23: "The newspaper stories of how he had been surrounded and had squeezed out of tight places read more like the lurid pages of a dime novel than anything else.

"On every occasion that he has been seen, he has succeeded in killing or wounding some of his pursuers until they had got to using the utmost precaution in closing in on him; so much, in fact, that when they had closed in, they invariably found that he had made his escape."

After they left terrain known to his companion, Tracy apparently killed Merrill, having read a newspaper account that Merrill earlier had betrayed him. At a fishing village on Puget Sound, Tracy, now alone, commandeered a motor launch and ordered the captain to take him to Seattle, where he fought several gun battles in which four lawmen were killed. Then he headed inland.

In August, Tracy crossed the Cascades and the Columbia and continued eastward. He was spotted on a ranch near Creston.

From the middle of a wheat field, Tracy did battle. He was shot twice in the leg. After night settled, a shot was heard and, in the morning, Tracy was found dead, an apparent suicide.

The Tribune of July 23, 1902, knew Tracy was "a bold, bad man." And that he hailed from Wood County.

"It would seem that men born or reared in Wood County are destined to become famous in one way or another, if not as lawmakers or politicians, then along the criminal line."

According to the Tribune, Harry Severns was born at Pittsville in 1873, not leaving town until he was a teenager. He was the oldest grandson of J.Q. Severns, a moral and industrious pioneer, Civil War veteran and justice of the peace.

During his life in Pittsville, one of Harry's chief ambitions, said the Tribune, was to be considered a "tough." "While he succeeded in this to a certain extent, nothing was thought of him as a desperate character, he merely being classed among the rising generation of bad boys that can be singled out in almost any community."

Dullenty said Tracy left Pittsville with his parents, Orlando and Sarah Severns, in 1889 or 1890, for a homestead on Derosiers Lake at the new village of Chittamo, near Minong, Wis., but returned often to stay with his grandparents.

At Chittamo, Orlando Severns was elected school treasurer but soon disappeared with public funds. He surfaced in Kansas and was killed in 1891 while working as a railroad section foreman.

Sarah Severns then married Ed Goodwin at Chittamo, said Dullenty, not "a man named Tracy" as had been claimed. Harry continued to log in the woods in winter and to travel to the Dakotas to harvest grain in summer.

In 1895, he seems to have stolen $2 from a fellow crew member, was chased by a posse and made a getaway. How Harry Severns achieved the name of Tracy is not known.

The Tribune reported that when Harry was about 19, he went west to "try his fortune among the bad men of the wild and wooly state of Oregon. It seems, however, that the people of Oregon were not as much impressed with his importance as Severns had figured on and, as a consequence, he found himself in jail for some misdemeanor that he committed."

Unable to free himself, Harry wrote to his grandfather, J.Q. Severns. The old man had helped Harry before but refused this time. Later, Severns lay on his death bed while Harry fought his last battles. The family did not inform J.Q. of Harry's latest escapades out of fear that the news would kill him. Severns died anyway, in July 1902.

The Tribune continued its coverage in a sarcastic vein.

"During the pursuit of the convict, Tracy has been seen in almost every town of any consequence in the West, and every farmer that was approached by a tramp and asked for a piece of bread or a drink of milk immediately held up his hands and delivered over anything that was wanted, and reported that he had been visited by Tracy the convict."

The Wood County Reporter of August 7, 1902, said Harry Tracy Severns had killed himself at 11 p.m. Wednesday, 11 miles from Creston, Wash.

"Many of the residents of Pittsville remember Tracy as a bright and intelligent boy," said the Reporter of July 31, 1902. "He was wild, some say, but no one could have predicted the life for him that he has led since he left Wood County." The Reporter said the body of Harry Tracy was sent to the Salem penitentiary, where convicts were allowed to view the remains before the face was destroyed with vitriol so that the corpse would not be stolen for display purposes. The casket was buried at an unmarked location in the prison yard.

So came to an anonymous end the notorious career of Harry Tracy, desperado from the heart of Wisconsin.

Halley's Big Dud

According to area newspapers, Halley's comet was just as big a dud the last time around. "Not Delivering the Goods," said the headline on a May 18, 1910, account. Halley's comet, which probably had received more free advertising during the past few months than any attraction ever to come the way of the editor's office, "seems to be more or less of a fake. Not but what there is a comet, all right, but it is not as large and as grand and as magnificent as it has been represented to be by the press agents and others who have been managing the publicity end of the show."

Many got up early in the morning and others stayed up all night but most claimed that they failed to see anything or else that the sky was cloudy or that something else was the matter. One man who actually saw it said it did not amount to much anyhow.

A couple of months earlier, after the writer had gotten all excited over the stories of Halley's comet, "a nice little comet appeared in the western sky.

"It was a small comet and it appeared there all of a sudden, with its tail sticking straight up in the air like a scared cat, and was quite a sight and, at first, was supposed by many whose early education in astronomy had been neglected, to be Halley's comet.

"However, we were assured that this was only a base imitation, not to waste our valuable time looking at a little third-rate comet like this when Halley's, the only simon pure reliable comet, the one that had been admired by our granddads and our great granddads, would be along in a short while, and eclipse all the other splendors of the heavens by its magnificence. Those who have viewed Halley's comet say it is not in it with the little one that was with us early in the spring, so it seems that even an astronomer can be mistaken."

On the day of the report, the earth was expected to pass through the tail of the comet and some predicted that "when it wipes us with its tail that all living things will be wiped off the face of the earth. However, if we pull thru until tomorrow, there is some hope for us but, if we do not, it is entirely probable that something will happen."

A succeeding story on May 26, 1910, reported that Halley's tail missed the earth entirely, "one of the greatest blows modern astronomical science ever has received."

In spite of statements by scientists that there was no danger to the earth's inhabitant from the comet, "many poorly informed persons clung to the belief that dire calamities were about to occur." An aged Chicago woman, in fear of the comet, killed herself with gas and nearly asphyxiated the entire household. Also in Chicago, some gave away all their money and advised others to prepare for the end of the world. Domestics in South Bend, Ind., quit work. An Ohio man went insane worrying about the comet. Farmers near Neenah removed lightning rods from their barns for fear they would attract dangerous substances. Residents near Lake Superior left their homes fearing a tidal wave. Fakirs in Atlanta made large profits selling "conjur bags" said to protect the bearers from the comet.

Frank Walsh (1890-1986) remembered that he went with his mother to a hill outside Grand Rapids, Mich., to join hundreds of viewers. Many were afraid. What was going to happen?

A bright light shone in the sky, Walsh said, but that was about it.

Beatrice Klebesadel said she watched with her family, sitting on the porch on 2nd Street North. "It was like looking at shooting stars," she said. "I don't think they made as much of it then as now."

Emily Bell's father, George Mead, got his daughter out of bed and took her to the back window. It didn't mean much to the little girl but she never forgot his words, "Always remember that you saw it."

Mabel Johnson said she watched the comet as she hung May baskets—in the sky night after night, like a bright star with an enormous tail before it finally disappeared. "There was a lot of excitement," she said. "It was rumored that the tail would hit the earth. They thought it was the end of the world. It was rumored that some people had their coffins ready to jump in.

"Nothing happened," she said. "The world went on as always."

The Hermit

Especially if there were a storm would the grove assume a character most mystical, the images of gods reflected by many colored lamps and the eyes of the dragon beaming from the door of the shanty.

An old man, carrying a lantern and humming a solemn dirge, walks from god to god, stopping now and then to enter the shanty, where he consults a worn book of some antiquity.

On an afternoon in July 1903, a representative of the Wood County Reporter visited the old hermit, Joseph Corson, in Corson's house near Forest Hill Cemetery. These are the hermit's words:

"Being the day it is, I have not ambition to dress up.

"People say that I am a miser, that I have a great deal of money hidden in this 12-by-14 shanty, but it is not so.

"I am 70 years old. I have seen much of the world, but I have been a rolling man, gathering no money.

"Those half-friend sausages snarl and bark at me even now. My only friends are those god-images about my house. I talk to them. I worship them. I took some of them with me when I came from China and India years ago.

"In the Civil War, I served on merchant ships. I often visited South America to get provisions for the northern army.

For one year, I served on one of the monitors, which protected the coast from Jersey to Florida. At one time, I was taken prisoner by the southern army, but was soon exchanged.

"At the close of the war, I hired out on a vessel, which traded between South America and South Africa. I was shipwrecked on the coast of Brazil.

"It was a close shave, I tell you, five hours on a rock not larger than this house.

"I was picked up by a vessel, which I soon found to be manned by pirates. For 10 months, I was compelled to lead the pirate's life. I luckily escaped when we were near the coast of Africa.

"Four years ago, I came to Wisconsin from New Jersey. I lived down at Babcock two years ago. The people there did not understand me. They mocked my Chinese gods and the faith I have in them. They didn't think they owed me a living.

"And so the pirate nature that is in me arose in all its fierceness. Everybody was losing chickens and sheep. Family blamed family. There were feuds worse than in Kentucky.

"One day, Deputy Sheriff Jack Riley asked me to watch his farm. I said I would but instead I watched his chickens. Riley kept a butcher shop. I stole his chickens and sold them to him.

"After I had fun enough, I told them I was the pirate—an honest thief.

"Then the sheriff came and asked, 'Joe, what is all this about?' My house at Babcock was sold, but I saved my Chinese gods and dragon.

"They jailed me at Grand Rapids, but not long. Vincent built me a house near his farm, and I was happy again to get away from the wickedness of the world.

"It used to contain two rooms. I moved one of them out to scrub it and while drying, someone came round and stole it. I was afraid my well would be taken away and I therefore nailed a cover over it.

"When Vincent sold his farm, he sold me along with his other tools. I am rough but rather useful.

(Corson stops suddenly in his speech and sits in a chair near the porch.)

"My name is Eliza Hoddicker Peter Pancake. I'm a whole team and one horse to let, a dog under the wagon and a candidate for postmaster in Hardscrabble Township, Pumpkin County, Vermont.

"My mother is a policeman. My father is a conductor. I got two brothers. One is Sampson Ritan and the other, Moses Morris, a second-handed clown.

"One day, in the afternoon, just before breakfast, he went into an apple orchard and climbed up a peach tree to get some cherries to make a plum pudding. He fell down and stove out his insides."

(Corson turns a somersault over the chair and leaps to the house in frog fashion.)

"They say I am crazy. I am not. I don't like to talk too long with people," and went out to get some fresh air.

(In the house, Corson unlocks an old seaman's

chest with a rusty key. Inside are god images, sailor's clothes, old newspapers and several packages of old letters.)

"Yes, I have been in love. It was short and sweet, but how dreadful the awakening. Don't ask me if I have faith in a woman! Think of the siren and the many wrecks upon the rocks of love.

"Here's a copy of the first letter I wrote to that woman:

" 'My dearest love, perhaps you will wonder at receiving a few lines from me, but I have thought of you so much of late that I thought it very necessary to my own happiness to declare some of my love to you and hope you will not in any way be regardless of my feelings—all my hopes of future bliss depends on your answer.

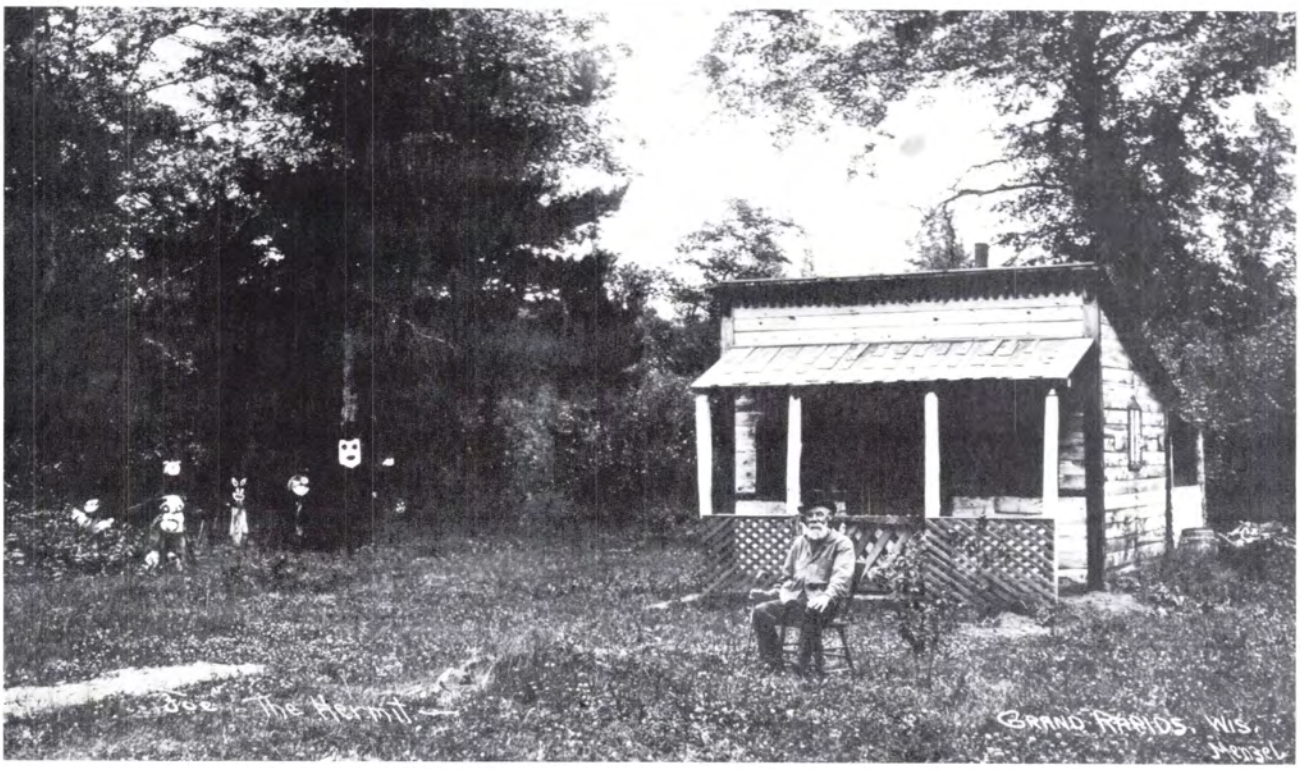
" 'You have it in your power to make my path in life full of joy and happiness or miserable forever. If you cannot return my love, I will not blame you.

" 'Although misfortune will frown upon you, you will always find me your lover whether I am upon the boundless ocean or upon land. I address to you these few lines and I would be very happy to receive an answer from the one I sincerely love and adore.'

"She answered and soon the wedding day was set. But it was only a dream. Now I console myself by speaking words of love and affection to my Chinese gods.

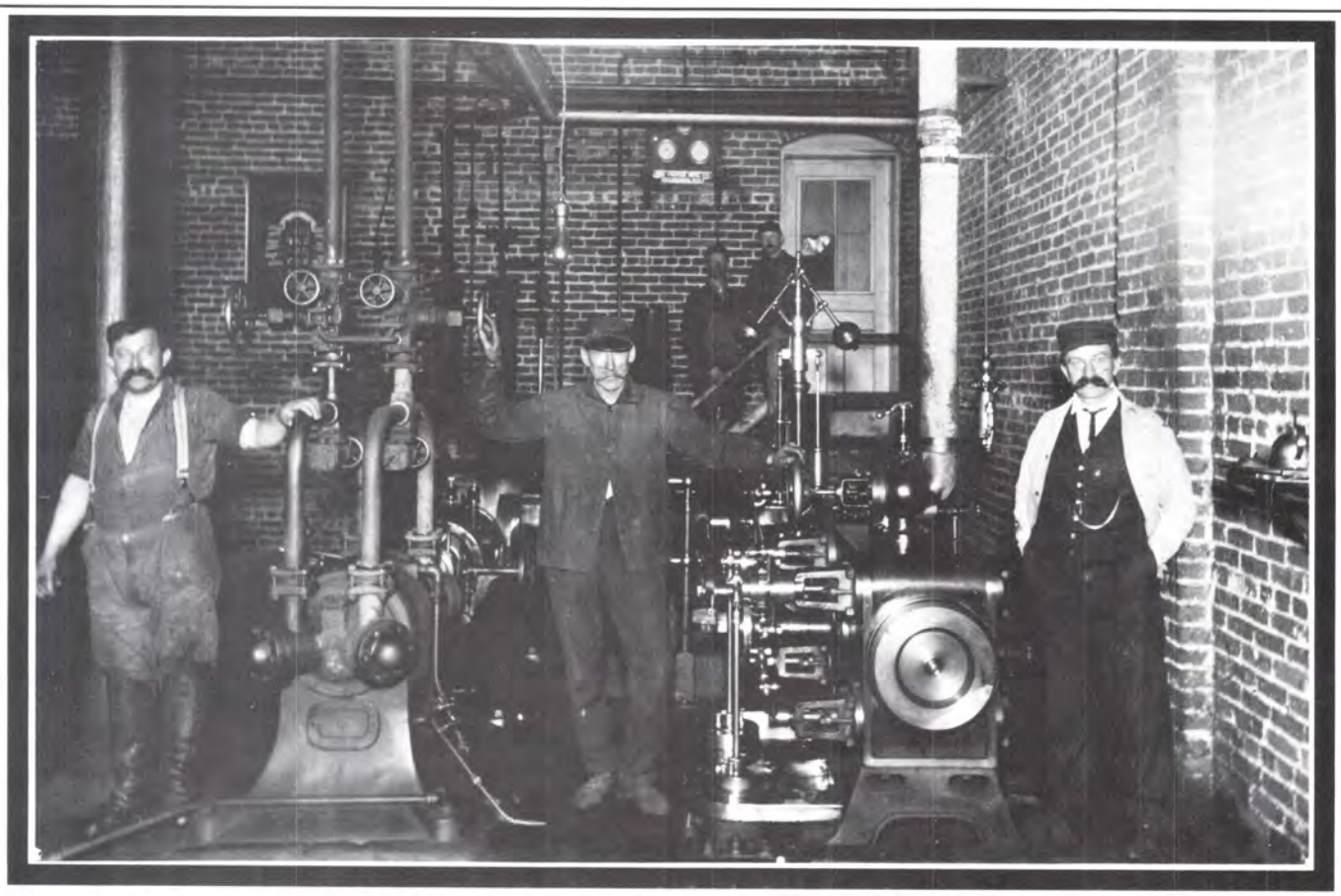
"Come again and bring your dinner with you. Stay all night and I will teach you the language and mysteries of the Chinese gods and the faithful dragon."

Such are the recorded words of our neighbor, Joe the hermit.



SWCHC

Joseph Corson at his habitation near Forest Hill Cemetery (1903). Corson died 8-19-12 at the county Poor Farm.



Photographs donated by Walter Tesser provide unique views of Grand Rapids Brewing Co. (1904-1920) in a 1st Street North building later used by Sampson Canning Co. Shown above is part of what appears to be a steam system.

Grand Rapids Special

GRAND RAPIDS—C.E. McKee, editor and proprietor of the Pittsville Record, gives us the following on one of our local enterprises:

Friday of last week, while the writer was in Grand Rapids, among other places of business duty called him to attend was the office of the Grand Rapids Brewing Company. Business was converted into a rare pleasure, however, when an invitation was extended to look over the plant by Manager Frank Rourke.

Mr. Rourke hunted up Joseph Holly and, under the guidance of this genial son of the Fatherland of Brewmasters, the trip from the intense heat of the furnace rooms to the icy atmosphere of the cooling and aging cellars was made a source of information and delight.

Brewmaster Holly is justly proud of the plant under his guidance. Everything about the place was clean, and the brass of kettles and wood vats showed plainly that "Old Dutch Cleanser" plays an important part in the brewing of beer in the Grand Rapids plant.

Steam, hot and cold water, and cleansing compound, manipulated through high-pressure hose, give the germ of disease a slim show to get in his work about the establishment presided over by the faithful Mr. Holly.

The process of the beer liquid, after leaving the cooking vats, is through the fomenting vats of 800 barrels capacity each and, from these, to the aging

"The liquid goes into the ripening vats or casks, for they look like huge kegs set horizontally, each holding 125 barrels."

vat of 2,000 barrels capacity each.

From here, the liquid goes into the ripening vats or casks, for they look like huge kegs set horizontally, each holding 125 barrels. Into the process, somewhere, hazelwood or white maple chips are put into the liquid for the purpose of clearing the beer. These absorb all sediments and impurities.

The bottling department is an interesting part of the brewery. The bottling and corking forms an interesting process to one who has never seen this work performed. And it is done with such swiftness and sureness as to (be) almost startling.

The bottled goods is a better class of beverage than that obtained from the keg. After a certain process of the brewing, that liquid intended for bottling takes another course and is lightened by the addition of rice and sugar.

Rice forms 15 percent of the bulk of the bottled goods. All beer, before it is put into kegs or bottles, goes through the big filtering plant, a very important part of a well-regulated brewing establishment.

Particular care is given to the washing of the kegs and bottles after they have been returned to the brewery.

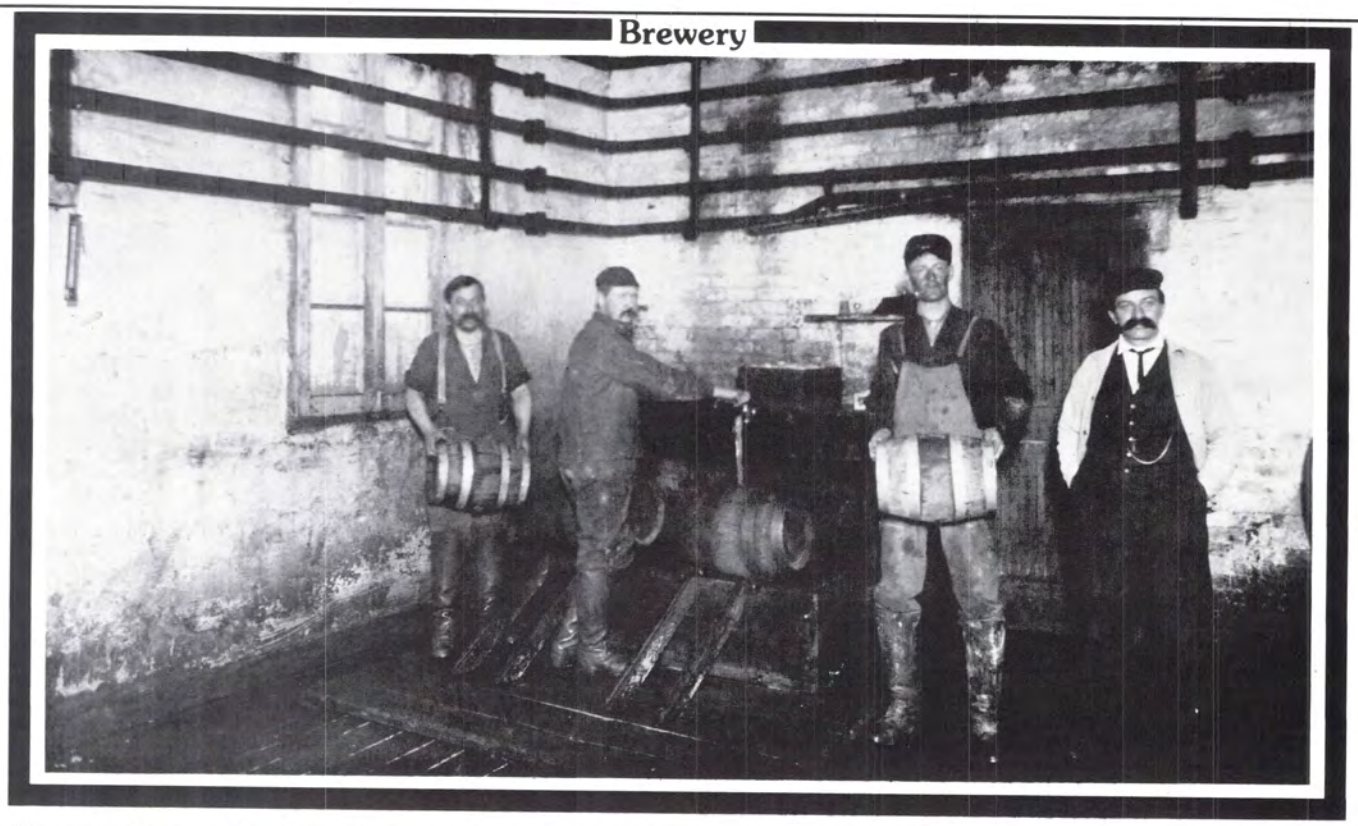
This is work that is accomplished in a swift though efficient manner, each keg being thoroughly and individually inspected by the use of lights before another filling is made.

The Grand Rapids Brewing Company have a very neat plant for its capacity and seem to have all the business the plant can handle.

The brewery has a capacity yearly of 15,000 barrels. The malt is shipped mostly from La Crosse, and the hops, from Washington and Oregon.

The writer's visit found the office force busy filling orders for the Fourth of July but not too busy to be courteous and attentive to the casual visitor.

A trip through an institution of this nature is of educational value to anyone.



"The bottling and corking forms an interesting process to one who has never seen this work performed." On the right is probably Jacob Lutz.

"Particular care is given to the washing of the kegs and bottles after they have been returned to the brewery."

"The bottled goods are a better class of beverage than that obtained from the keg." Clear bottles at center may have been used for soda pop.

The final product is sampled by several workers. The same facsimile of Jake Lutz (white coat) used in three previous photos is placed second from right.

Pittsville Pow Wow

On a certain day in early July, the motorist can encounter a terrific traffic jam out on Highway 13—car after car stacked up practically from the west side viaduct to Seneca Corners. Fortunately for the Marshfield-bound, nearly every vehicle turns left at what is today the entertainment center of Wisconsin. If it's the Fourth of July, this must be Pittsville.

For the parade, the streets are lined three deep for a mile with spectators. Later, most adjourn to the park for music, refreshments and recreation.

A spectacular summer festival is traditional for Wood County's third city. Remember the Pow Wow? Mrs. Eva Werner of Pittsville has written the history of that forerunner of this week's festivities. The following information is largely a result of her research.

Before the development of the Pow Wow, a home was needed. The city fathers eyed a strip of land along the Yellow River originally owned by Harry Ames of the Elm Park Hotel, later by Herman Lipka. Its elms, birches and maples in a natural ampitheater held many possibilities. The entire area, however, was swamp and needed much improvement.

A park board was formed with Dr. Charles A. Salter, an orthodontist, as chairman. Early members were John Tomsyck, John Pabst, Hubert Snyder and Shirley Werner.

On August 20, 1925, 13 acres were purchased from Lipka for $1,000. Proceeds from activities allowed the development of Riverside Park. Gradually, a circular bandstand, eat stand, bathrooms and a shelter house were added. At this time, Ed Keenan of Dexterville had been working with the Winnebagos on nearby cranberry marshes.

Keenan learned the Winnebago language and became interested in the welfare of the tribe. He attended many ceremonial activities and finally invited his Indian friends to have their pow wows on a field below his home. As the Pittsville park developed, Keenan convinced the park board that the Indian ceremonies would be a drawing card to help them financially. In 1925, the newly purchased land became the home of what was to be the annual Indian Pow Wow.

To create interest in the event, board members visited other Indians and invited them to participate in the Pittsville Pow Wow. Several tribes came: Winnebago, Chippewa and Menomonee. Often, South Dakota tribes were represented.

Tours to boost the Pow Wow were made to other cities. A procession of 25 or more carloads of enthusiastic citizens participated, led by a few members of the city band. A trip to Stevens Point ended at the radio station where the Pow Wow was advertised at short intervals between renditions by the band members.

The Indians usually arrived about a week before the designated date of the Pow Wow. They pitched tents, cooked over camp fires, wove baskets and displayed bead work. At night they had their own pow wows.

The main ceremonial dances were held in a thatched-roof dancing pavilion erected by the park board and volunteers. Planks served as seats for spectators. Older men seated in the center beat tom-toms while young women and braves performed in ceremonial costumes.

Other entertainment was also provided. A carnival with a merry-go-round and Ferris wheel plus concession stands were on the midway. There were pony rides for the children, a musical group at the band stand and a baseball game in the amphitheater. After the dam was built across the Yellow River, the water became deep enough for log-rolling contests.

All roads to the park were usually jammed with cars. Tickets were sold at the park entrance. Familiar faces in the sales booth through the years included Arch Parker, Emmett Knapp, George Parker, Leo Schalla and Warren Lindberg. Cecil Sines and Carl Heuer patrolled the grounds. Perhaps the biggest Pow Wow took place in July 1929, when Indians from Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa and the Dakotas attended. The highlight of the event was the adoption of Gov. Walter J. Kohler into the tribe as Wah-Nig-Chu-Ja-Ga or "Chief Red Bird" by Chief Monegar. The name was taken from Monegar's grandfather who had lived to be 125 therefore augured long life for the governor. The bird theme also complemented Kohler's reputation as the "flying governor."

In late morning, Kohler had landed at a field west of town and had driven to the park escorted by a color guard of Indian World War I veterans in uniform, Indians in "tribal splendor" on foot and horseback and the Pittsville band. He flew off for Kohler at 5:30 p.m.

On Sunday alone, more than 7,000 attended the festival, the largest crowd to that date. Order was maintained and no accidents or liquor violations were reported.

The Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune presented an impression of the Pittsville Pow Wow. "The old venerable chiefs, the younger chieftans, old women, young women, boys and girls, together took part in the dances, bringing back to the minds of the old the days when the Indians met at seasonal occasions and did those dances to invoke the blessings of their gods rather than to bring down the shekels of paler skinned spectators. It was an historic occasion well worth seeing."

The historic role of ancient ceremony faded in time. Shekels, or the want thereof, became problematic in the 1960s. The Pow Wow was discontinued, leaving only memories such as those of Mrs. Werner: the aroma of hamburgers, smoke from campfires, yells from the baseball field, music from the merry-go-round and tom-toms beating into the stillness of the night.

GOV. KOHLER WAS A CHIEF: At the 1929 Pittsville Pow Wow, Winnebago tribal Chief Monegar (fourth from left) named Gov. Walter J. Kohler (second from left) "Chief Red Bird." Between Kohler and Monegar is the governor's wife.

Corydon Purdy

Although our town has sent thousands of its native sons into the outside world of commerce, industry and culture, few have achieved such renown as Corydon T. Purdy, a name that, once remembered, is difficult to forget.

On May 23, 1934, Purdy, 59 years after his graduation, was acclaimed the most distinguished local alumnus of our high school when attorney Theodore W. Brazeau presented Lincoln High with an autographed photograph of Purdy and read an autobiographical sketch of the great man's life.

The story of Corydon Purdy's career, of his rise to success against all odds, of his persevering struggle to accomplish the thing that he set out to do and of the value of dependability and trust-worthiness that experience taught him, is a document that can profitably be read by Wisconsin Rapids' youth of today, who tomorrow will go out, as did Mr. Purdy, and dedicate themselves to a life of honorable endeavor.

But let us hasten to tell the story, more or less in his own words, of Corydon Purdy's background and boyhood in River City:

My parents, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel J. Purdy, came from New York to Grand Rapids in 1857 and I was born in a house in the Wood Addition.

I graduated from Howe High School in 1875. The members of my graduating class were Lillian Grace, Harry Worthington, Albert Fontaine, William Roe, Albert Burns, Peter McCamley, Frank Brundage and myself, eight in all.

Mr. John Gaynor was the principal. That graduation marked the end of his teaching. I believe he spent the following year studying law. At any rate, he returned to Grand Rapids a year later, opened a law office, and shortly afterward became district attorney.

Mr. Gaynor was a very important element in my life during the next four years. He taught me to have confidence in my own judgment and in my own powers and was my constant adviser.

The summer following my graduation, I worked for Mr. Moshier, county treasurer, recording tax returns and doing other writing. His office then was the old Moshier store building at the end of the bridge, and Mr. Frank Wood's office as county clerk was in back of his drug store, directly across the street.

During this summer, Grand Rapids had a valuable addition to its population in the person of Professor Chittendon, who was a brother, if I remember correctly, of Mrs. William Scott.

Chittendon was professor of physics at Columbia University and he brought with him all of his possessions relating to that work. That fall, he opened a private school for boys and I became one of his pupils, remaining with him until the close of the year's work the following spring.

As soon as I left this school, I began making a map of the city of Grand Rapids, which was published and used for some years.

The first of September, I engaged to assist in the shipment of cranberries from Bearrs Marsh. We shipped over 2,000 barrels to Chicago.

I went home early in October, and two or three days later, Alex Zanier and I started together to see the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. Immediately upon my return, I began teaching school in Seneca. It was my first experience in teaching. The school was small and I decided I could do better.

The next summer, I made a map of Wood County, which was also published and used for a considerable time. One of the last things that Mr. Gaynor did was to send me a copy of the two maps I had made.

That fall, in 1877, I contracted to teach school in Auburndale. The full year's work was completed there and I began preparation for entering the university at Madison.

During most of my childhood, I had suffered with diseased eyes. Fears were entertained that I might go blind. I went to Milwaukee and put myself in the care of Dr. Bartlett, an oculist of wide reputation. He kept me a month and took most of my money.

When I told Dr. Bartlett I was going to the university, he said, if I did, I would go blind. However, I went under these conditions: no study evenings, no exposing my eyes to the wind and no going out evenings without being blindfolded. It took three years of constant care to make my eyes strong.

My money gave out before the year was completed, so I went home and completed the year's requirements alone.

That year, 1879, I took a summer school near Marshfield. My mother died during my absence. The family home was broken up and not united again in Grand Rapids.

I went back to Auburndale for another year but in the middle of the year I met with an accident in which my left ankle and foot were terribly injured. As soon as possible I was taken away on a bed in a sleigh to Mr. Rablin's house in Grand Rapids, where my sister Emma was living and going to school.

Through the two long months before I could put my foot on the floor, the entire Rablin family cared for me as if I were a part of it. I owe much to the dear old friends in Grand Rapids.

When I was a small boy, still living in the lower part of the city, a new Howe truss wooden bridge was built across the river. I watched the work as closely as

I could and was with the workmen as much as my parents would permit. I said then that when I grew to be a man, I wanted to be a bridge builder.

As soon as I finished school, I sought work in drafting rooms and with railroads and surveyors, but my efforts to secure such employment were fruitless. It is another good neighbor and friend, H.B. Philleo, to whom I am indebted for my first job. He made the bargain for me without my knowing it, while I was still in bed at Mr. Rablin's.

That first position was the beginning of a long train of experiences in places far removed from this little river town, experiences in which I really had my first chance to measure myself with other men.

Although he was to become one of the most distinguished graduates of our local schools, Corydon Purdy's first job after leaving Grand Rapids was not one of great distinction. He carried stakes for a Neillsville surveyor.

Soon, however, Purdy advanced to draftsman. When his employer became interested in the construction of the Chippewa Valley railroad, Purdy was sent to Eau Claire to make drawings. Knowing nothing about the subject, Purdy studied books, ate little and slept less until he was ahead of his work.

When the task was completed, Purdy was sent to the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul railroad and installed as an engineer at Minneapolis. After further railroad work in Chicago and Wisconsin, Purdy was called into the office of the president of the railroad, Mr. Easton. Easton asked Purdy to design a bridge over the Chicago River, although Purdy had urged a tunnel.

"I think I never felt worse in my life," Purdy recalled, "for I was up against the impossible." He resigned and left railroad work forever.

Purdy immediately began working on his studies and working as a surveyor in the Chippewa valley for lumbermen. He graduated in 1885 and received a civil engineer degree in 1885 from the University of Wisconsin.

Three months before graduation, Purdy had been elected city engineer of Eau Claire. His personal clientele included most of the lumber and realty interests and was very profitable. But he was not pursuing his original purpose of designing and building bridges.

Purdy left Eau Claire, "cutting free from and forsaking all business friends and relatives that I had gained during these active and interesting years." He went to Pittsburgh to work for a firm of iron inspectors. A year later, he took a position in the engineering department of the Keystone Bridge Works.

In 1889, Purdy remained in Pittsburgh long enough to vote for president. He was 30 years old and felt he had sufficient experience to begin his vocation. With an old college mate and another already successful bridge designer, he formed a partnership. Purdy moved to Chicago and opened an office.

The bridge designer died soon after Purdy reached Chicago and the partnership with the other man failed. Purdy occupied an office for months with nothing to do before the opening came that was to insure his eventual prominence.

Purdy's arrival in Chicago came at a propitious time. Builders were talking about using iron frameworks rather than solid space-wasteful masonry walls to construct the higher buildings and so increase the earning power of the valuable real estate in the business sections of the city.

"As I walked the streets in the first months of my idleness I observed and studied these conditions. I appreciated what could be done with steel," Purdy wrote. He revised the plans for his life, turning from bridge construction to the building game.

Eventually, Purdy became one of a group of men intent upon inaugurating a new type of structure. Before the Columbian Exposition opened they had constructed buildings of unprecedented height with steel frames.

During the hectic Exposition, Purdy made an employee, Lightner Henderson, a partner in the firm of Purdy & Henderson. By now, his reputation, due to the Exposition, was established in the East and abroad.

In 1894, in a stagnant period, Purdy announced he was going to New York although the situation there was forbidding. Steel interests were controlled by certain interlocking architects, builders and manufacturers.

In spite of the "untoward" conditions, Purdy opened a small office in New York and began studying law books and building requirements. "I made new acquaintances when opportunity offered; but, most of all, I watched and waited." Meanwhile, Henderson directed the Chicago office with only an occasional visit from Purdy.

Waiting bore fruit when in 1895, Purdy received a letter from the president of one of the strongest building organizations in the country. In less than an hour from the time they met, Purdy had signed a contract to design the foundations and steel frame for the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel John Jacob Astor was about to build.

The New York business grew from this prestigious project. A head office was established in New York

The original Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York: foundation and steel work designed by Corydon Purdy.

Corydon Purdy

and a branch office in Boston. Incorporated in 1901, the activities of Purdy & Henderson were widespread over North America.

At that time, the United States Realty & Construction Co., the greatest such combination to that point, attempted to absorb Purdy but he did not consent. Instead, Purdy & Henderson was eventually entrusted with all the engineering and designing problems of the organization.

For the 1900 Paris World's Fair, Purdy, at the request of the U.S. government, organized an exhibit to show modern steel-frame construction by dismantling an office building, shipping it to Paris and returning it later.

The American army took possession of Cuba in 1900 after the Spanish-American war. Purdy took this opportunity to visit. As a result an office of Purdy & Henderson was opened in Havana.

In 1900, Purdy also designed the New York Times building and subway terminal in New York in such a way as the passing of the trains in this new transportation network could not be detected above ground.

An important contract of Henderson & Purdy involved building branch banks for the Royal Bank of Canada and Cuba and other Carribean islands. That led to a request to build banks across Canada.

World War I and depression caused the closing of branches at Seattle, Montreal, Vancouver and Puerto Rico, in which country Purdy & Henderson had in 1917 constructed the Army Cantonment.

In 1917, Purdy retired, leaving Henderson to manage the firm, which continued to undertake major projects such as, in 1925, the capitol building and the National Hotel in Cuba.

At the end of his career, Purdy attributed much of his good fortune to lessons learned long before in a small town on the Wisconsin River.

When we small children went to school in Grand Rapids, he said, we had some times to speak pieces and I have never forgotten a part of one upon the subject, "Opportunity."

"Opportunity," Corydon Purdy learned, has hair in front, but behind she is bald. If you seize her by the forelock, you may hold her; but if suffered to escape, not Jupiter himself can catch her again.

Passing of the Barn

Although my boyhood had been pretty citified, many impressionistic hours were spent in that calm and mysterious haven—Grandpa's barn. Not much experienced in the hard lessons of their use, I nevertheless could name the parts: milking parlor, stanchions, silo, granary, hayloft.

In later years, for what amounted to a quarter of a century, I had driven past the barn just off Highway 54, west of Seymour, on various missions to Green Bay, Marinette or Maine.

Grandpa Sanford Sylvester did not live there any more. Young folks who "worked out," and not on the farm, had bought the house and buildings. Some day, I swore, I would meet these new owners. I would tell them about the old barn, how I wanted to walk through the hollow walls again and balance what was left against the barn of my imagination.

They should have told me they were tearing it down. A personal letter, if they know me. An advertisement in the Tribune: "Grandpa's barn slated for demolition. One week for last respects." They should have announced the passing of the barn.

One afternoon late this summer, perhaps on the way to the Packer game, I saw it was gone. Immediately, I knew I could have been more surprised. The previous drive by, I had stopped for photographs and noticed large gaps between the paintless boards. Some sections had fallen or had been removed.

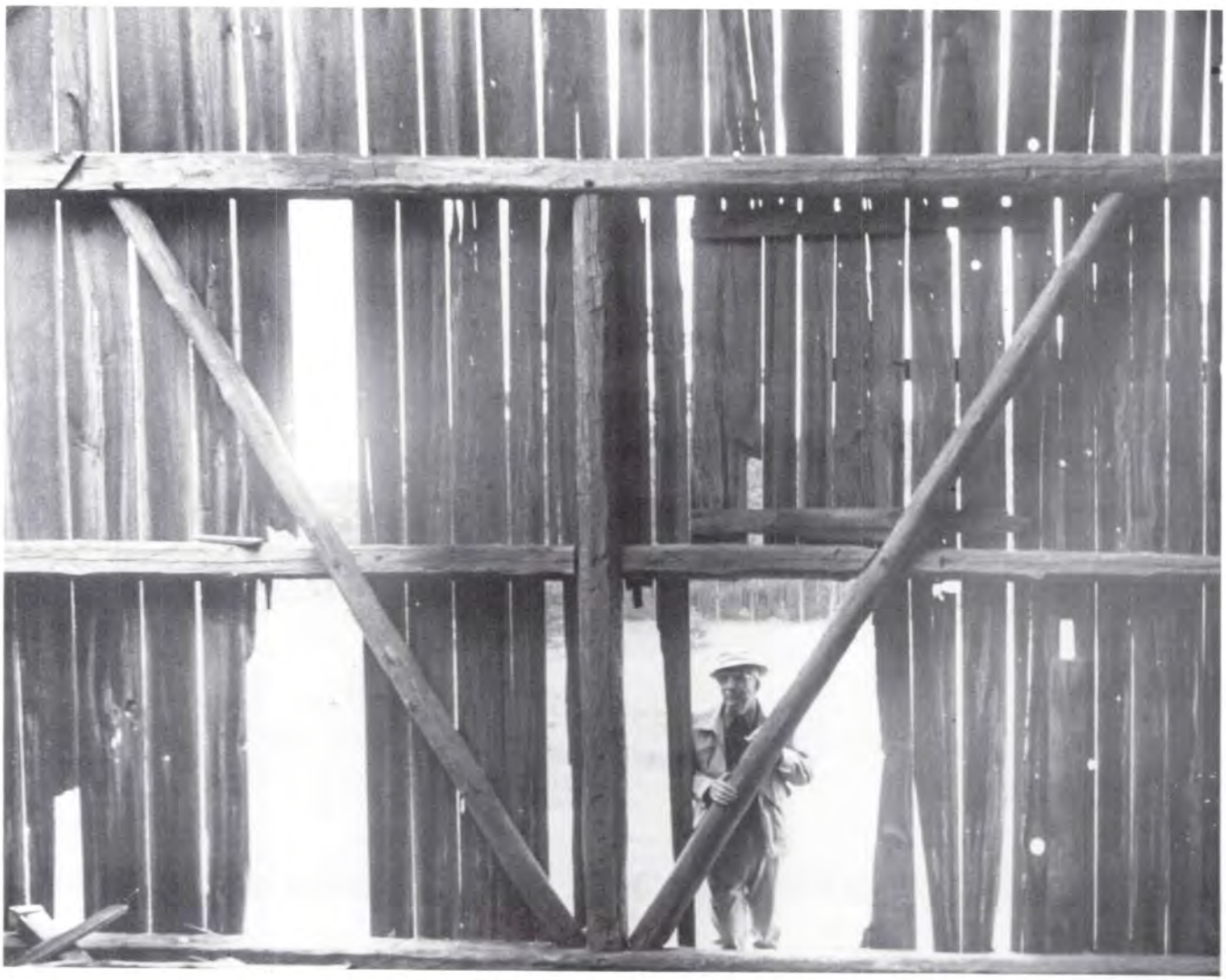
Barns like my grandfather's are going down in great numbers, victims of the socio-economic quake of continental impact.

Through nobody's fault exactly, the industrial revolution—creator of the barn and its accompanying structures—has, in the last years of the 20th century, flattened the 80-acre farm. The land has entered non-farm estate. Its owners are occupants, not agrarians. A barn without economic rationale becomes "too much to keep up" and "dangerous (we could get sued)."

The barn does not wear out from use. It weathers out from disuse. Roof and walls fail. Rain, Snow, vermin, varmints, rot, weight and wind combine to exploit neglect. Often, the owner is the wrecker of last resort. Walls that sheltered bovines and beasts of burden now are worth most dismantled for use as decorative paneling.

Some regions never were meant for dairying. Sand flats, such as in the town of Saratoga, Port Edwards and Grand Rapids, prove that. After the pioneer generation found these lands more suited to scrub-oak than corn, the barns became, like their owners, part-time. Finally, the homestead 80 is broken up into a subdivision and rows too drunken for any farmer to have plowed are planted with ranchless ranch houses. There are no cows, crops or chores. Only a mini-barn is needed for lawnmowers and hedge-trimmers.

In townships too damp, remote or fertile for subdivisions, farms still dominate the landscape,



Lester Ellis, former owner of the barn

although many farmhouses are merely rental property, and modular housing units have infiltrated the farmland. But even on vital agricultural lands such as Seymour, Rudolph and Sigel, the family-run 80 acres have been eclipsed. Herds (and economic demands) are much too large to be supported by that acreage. One agri-business, however owned, displaces six farms. The sons of six farmers drive to town for employment and six barns go stale.

Despite standing only as a voluminous anachronism above the housing developments, the barn retains a dignity and beauty not seen in its descendents.

A barn is good to look at: mossy wooden shingles high above vast walls, wind-beaten and weather-etched siding, rough rocks below. Inside giant rooms, light breaks between boards and softly illuminates arches, beams and lofts. I once went in a dark barn and saw a cross framed by moonlight shining through a doorway.

A barn is good to listen to: cows below and sparrows above. Creak and rattle in the wind.

A barn is good to smell: earth, animals, their sweat and breath, fly spray, milk, manure, the sweet rot of silage, the brittle bouquet of hay.

A barn is good to touch: wood, rough and smooth.

To us whose way of life is to serve ourselves, the barn remains as a museum to those who served the land and who served livestock and in that service, built grander structures than they themselves would think of occupying.

On the far side of Seymour from Grandpa Sylvester's 80 was Grandpa Engel's 80. Before he died, Grandpa sold the farm. As was common in mid-century, none of the family wanted or could afford the place and it became part of a neighbor's expansive holdings.

Grandpa's barn stands still, in excellent condition. It could be resurrected tomorrow. No cattle inhabit the barn but a certain function remains. Grain, machinery and wood are stored here.

My dad and I went there last week.

Though he is not a sentimentalist, Dad's first visit in 40 years moved him to envision in the now shadowed and silent loft a former day when his own father was young and he was younger, when a family of six boys and a sister worked to make a living from the land. He saw a day when he and his brothers muscled up bales of hay and packed the great room, now empty, with life.

All American Boys

"It's a funny thing, but there are no boys running around loose on the streets here. Driving through this charming village on the Wisconsin River, you see none hanging around the poolroom doorways and none loitering on curbstone corners." So observed Gustave Pabst, a writer for the Milwaukee Journal, on August 18, 1940 of Port Edwards.

The reason for the deserted hangouts was a program that combined paternalism, Puritanism, patriotism and pleasure: the Boys Club, dedicated, said Pabst, to the principle that no one in life is entitled to enjoy play without work. It would also let the boys know, he said, what it means to earn a dollar.

"Play if you work" was inspired by Lee Turley, the Nekoosa-Edwards paper company's sales and advertising manager who had lost his father at the age of two and had later worked his way through college. He remembered, wrote Pabst, that in summer the rich man's son had fun at camp while the poor man's kid spent most of his vacation on the street corner.

Frank Coldwell served as secretary on the board of directors. He said that when the village of Port Edwards decided to discontinue its summer playground program, Lee Turley, who had two sons, decided there should be an activity to replace the playground and became the "moving spirit" for the Boys Club. Fundraisers such as home talent shows and casinos were organized, "but it couldn't have been done without the help of John Alexander," said Coldwell of the company leader who provided moral and financial support.

Joining Turley, Coldwell, an engineer, and Alexander on the board were officials and employees of Nekoosa-Edwards: Walter Hinz, foreman of the firm's sample room and village constable; Harold Olson, president of the local machinist's union; F.G. Kilp, chief forester; Frank Hegg, a Nepco employee; in addition to Kenneth Rawson, principal of John Edwards High School.

A 1941 Boys Club Booster Book from the files of charter member J. Marshall Buehler provides a perspective on the first year of operation.

Erwin Simpson, a recent M.A. in physical education from the University of Iowa, was appointed director. Half of Simpson's salary was paid by the village board, the other half by Alexander. Membership was open to all Port Edwards boys between the ages of nine and 18. About 50 boys joined.

Mornings were often devoted to work projects such as woodworking carried on in the man-

"A good name for the club is the All American Boys."
—John Larsen

"I believe . . . if the U.S. put more money into making things for boys to do, there wouldn't be so much crime. Because boys want to do things that cost money and they can't do it without money. They aren't forced to rob because of (the existence of) the Boys Club."
—James Berryman

"I like to go swimming and learn how to swim. Swimming is fun because it gives us exercise. It is fun to swim on a hot day. We swim in Nepco Lake. Some boys could not go in because they had to have ear plugs."
—Lawrence Carlsen

ual training section of the John Edwards High School where the boys built bird houses, door stops and craft objects to be sold or carried home proudly.

Another popular project of the Boys Club was editing and publishing the Port Edwards News, eight pages mimeographed, the only newspaper originating in the village. Issued weekly, the News included advertising from Port Edwards and Wisconsin Rapids.

From an office provided by Nekoosa-Edwards, the News staff acted entirely on its own, gathering information, soliciting advertising, cutting stencils, running the mimeograph machine and peddling the papers. "Parents are eager to read what little Willie has written in this week's issue and not a line of copy ever trembles before an adult's blue pencil," said Pabst.

"Whoa there, laddie! At the end of a hot morning in the boys' truck garden." Boys Club Booster Book.

An important advertisement in the news was for the Boys Club's own odd-jobs employment bureau, offering such services as lawn mowing, window washing, hedge trimming and car washing. "Please call 37 and give the boys a chance to make some spending money," asked the News, "The rates are very reasonable."

The major work of the club was the garden at the edge of town on land donated by Mrs. Julia Ver Bunker. The boys had planted 300 feet of corn, 18 rows of beans, 150 hills of cucumbers, eight rows of celery and eight rows of cabbage. The boys worked from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30, converting a quack-grass ridden area to a productive truck garden, "a crew of hard working youngsters who spent many mornings hoeing, raking, seeding, weeding, cultivating and harvesting under the hot summer sun," said the booster book.

Popular among the younger workers was the "bucket brigade." A well was sunk, a pump installed and each morning the garden was watered with hand buckets.

Much of the produce was sold to housewives and the remainder to local merchants. The result was a profit distributed among the "garden gang" at the end of the summer.

Although the boys did not participate in its construction, the major lasting monument was the club lodge on Lake Nepco frontage donated by Nekoosa-Edwards.

When Robert Petry hired on at Nekoosa-Edwards as a young forester in 1940, his first task was gathering pine logs for the lodge from near the Bulls Eye Country Club and across the river at Boles Creek. "We had to be careful not to scratch them," he said. "Two old Finnish log cabin builders from Merrill put it together. They were working for the W.P.A." The work was supervised by Wisconsin Rapids architect Donn Hougen.

The lodge, as the entire Boys Club, was assimilated by the YMCA, upon the local Y's inception in the mid-1950s. By then, the work had gone out of "work and play." Boys (and girls) were sent to camp for recreational activities.

The boys had enjoyed the garden work, claimed the 1941 booster book, because it was a team effort, because they could see the results of their work in the daily crop growth and because they worked both for the club and for themselves.

"In the morning you can go in the garden and weed or cultivate the rows of vegetables. Some mornings, the boys work in the shop and make bird houses and different objects. In the afternoon we play baseball or different sports."

—Rudolph Foth

"One day we walked about 12 miles. Most of us were tired after the hike. Along the way we saw strange birds and plants. We crossed over Moccasin Creek on a well-built bridge. We enjoy hikes very much and wish to go on many more."

—Edwin Kauth

"The thing I like about the Boys Club is that we can go to Nepco Lake. We can go in swimming when we get there. We are going to have a Boys Club cabin in the woods. There are going to be boats to go riding around in. We can fish bullheads and other kinds of fish."

—Harold Rieman

Work was happily abandoned even by the Boys Club boys of the summer of '40. Their morning labors completed, they headed for Lake Nepco where they would hike, swim and play baseball through what they saw as a long afternoon of summer.

Looking northeast at 3rd Avenue (left) and Grand Avenue

A Pinery Village

Before 1925

Photographs from the archives of Consolidated Papers Inc. illustrate dramatically the metamorphosis from the style of the 1880s to that of the 20th century. At the site of what is now CPI's River Block office building was an earlier River Block and, before that, stood the collection of store fronts shown at right. In 1925, the old town was demolished in favor of the River Block shopping block below.

Looking northwest at Grand Avenue and 2nd Avenue.

Looking northeast at 3rd Avenue (left) and Grand Avenue

A Paper City

After 1925

A ramshackle row of shacks was not the style of Consolidated's president, George W. Mead I. He caused order to be brought to Grand Avenue with the 1925 River Block built between 1st and 2nd Avenues.

Architecturally echoing the Mead-Witter Block dating to about the same time, and incorporating as tenants old businesses from the same street, such as Kubisiak's Plumbing and Otto Drugs, the River Block resembled a shopping center of the 1950s.

Looking northwest at Grand Avenue and 2nd Avenue.

Downtown, workmen busy themselves at a monumental task. They must delete an immense object from the material world. They must dismantle, demolish, raze and obliterate the Grand Avenue Bridge.

With a crane taller than Consolidated Paper's River Block, workmen pluck off railings like eyelashes, remove old brick pavement and scoop out dirt fill from between concrete walls. Day after day through the Ides of March, the wrecking ball swings and hits with a thud. The bridge, for a while, retains a stubborn dignity worthy of its name.

Gradually, the repetition of shocks loosens bits and chunks of concrete that cling to a network of reinforcing steel. The south side is hacked off lengthwise. When the first arches fall, six piers are exposed like nubs of decayed teeth.

When it starts to go, the bridge goes quickly. This huge clunk of an object, one of the biggest in town, is quickly reduced to dust. The Grand Avenue Bridge has entered the afterlife. It is passing through worlds, along with other people, places and things of our life. It is going the way of the small town of our childhood. Like it, the Grand Avenue Bridge now exists nowhere but in us.

Soon enough, however, we will all be dead and the Grand Avenue Bridge, heavy as it was, will exist only in photographs and documents until they, too, enter the afterlife.

With the bridge out, a new worker is needed to build another bridge, not a minor facsimile of the Riverview Expressway bridge but a bridge as inspiring as the Grand Avenue Bridge itself. The worker must be as steadfast, strong and skilled as those who dismantled the old bridge, with an eye for details, a sense of perspective and a lively imagination. The new worker must accept the object removed from the material world and rebuild it, not out of concrete because concrete would be too heavy to carry around in his head. It must be made in the abstract, created out of memory.

Building bridges from this life to the afterlife and from the afterlife to this life has been my occupation for six years. Necessarily, my latest construction is the Grand Avenue Bridge.

We had a joke in high shcool. Only one line was ever used and that was the punch line. The joke was, UNDER WHAT BRIDGE?

"Mac and mimi had quite a party last night."

UNDER WHAT BRIDGE?

"Want to get a cheeseburger?"

UNDER WHAT BRIDGE?

"Starvin' Marvin has been looking for you."

UNDER WHAT BRIDGE?

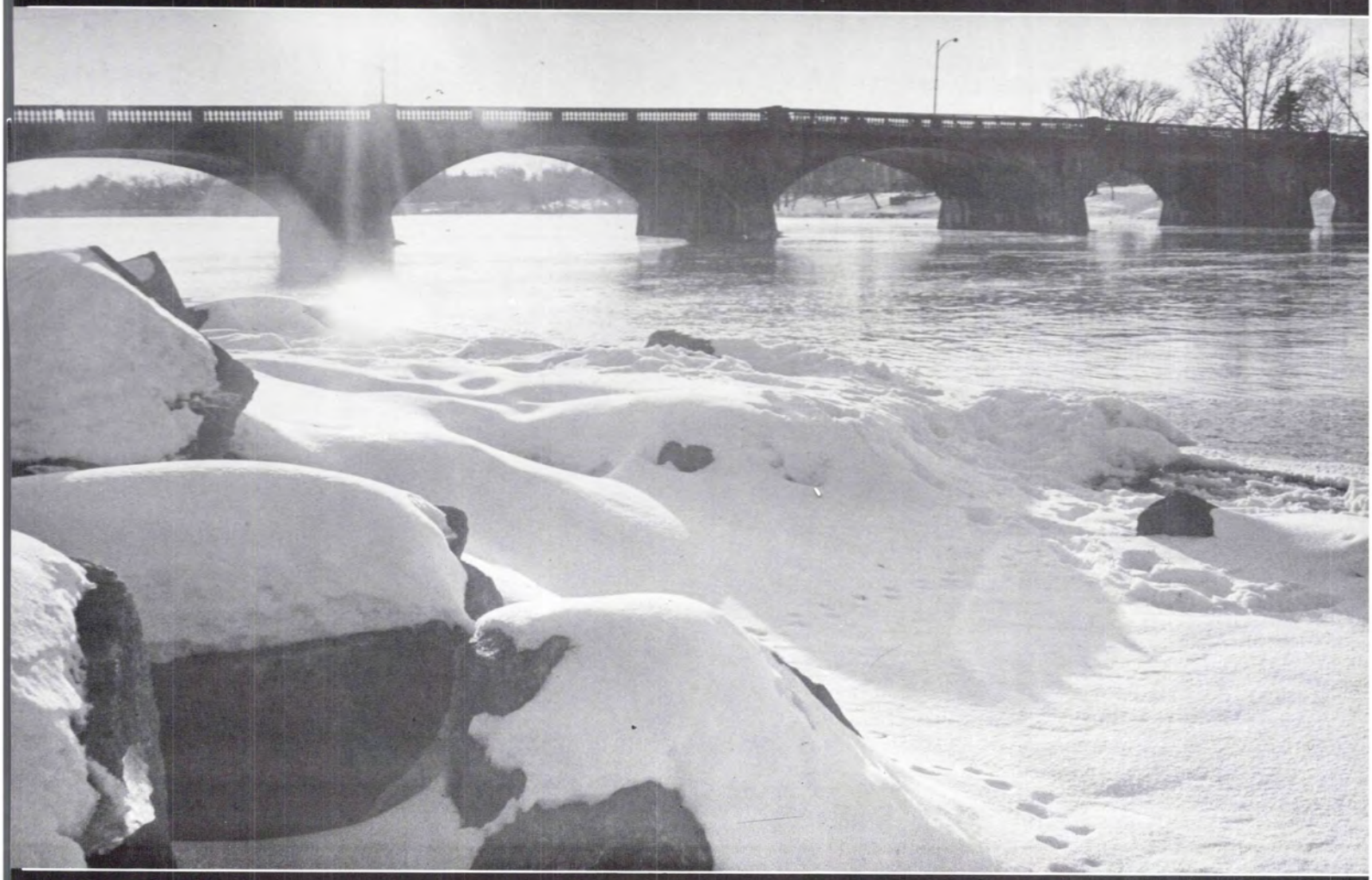
What bridge? There was only one answer. The Grand Avenue Bridge. It will always be "the bridge" of my imagination. And, under the bridge, against the debris of the shore, the slow swirling of the awesome dark waters.

Other images persist: Driving the family station wagon back and forth on a Saturday afternoon, to the depot, back across the bridge, to the high school, back across the bridge. Meanwhile, pretty girls in pairs stroll from the Sugar Bowl to Wilpolt's, from the Friendly Fountain to the Quick Lunch, from innocence to the Palace. "Hey Rita! Wanna ride?"

Later that night, with no car, only 17 years old, an outlaw in violation of the curfew laws must cross from 1st Avenue to 1st Street without being hassled by cops, kooks, hoods, hustlers or parents. Must cross that old, very long bridge. It had been there always. It seemed to be made of stone cut in the eternal city. Every step noticed, the walker hurries. So young, so impressionable, so vulnerable. Who would have thought he would outlast that bridge?

Enters the Afterlife

Grand Avenue Bridge
1922-1986



Photograph by Mark Sewell

Geo. Hill & Co.

"There is a great deal of hypocrisy in this life, you know it well, but there is none of yours and for that I respect you . . . . George, you know that I believe and trust you." So wrote J.D. Witter from Rome on March 31, 1898, to George Hill.

George Miles Hill was called a "pioneer business leader" in his 1949 obituary—a model citizen of the 19th and 20th centuries, "interested" in many concerns where his investments were crucial.

Hill was born February 28, 1857, near Waukon, in Allamakee County, Iowa, son of Achsa and Stephen Hill, both New Englanders.

Mrs. Hill died April 2 of that year. Stephen rented out the farm to the Damon Whaley family, providing they would care for George. On October 29, 1859, Stephen died, whereupon the Whaleys claimed possession of young George. The 2-year-old was kidnapped by his aunt and kept until the outcome of a lawsuit that added George to his grandparents' family of 10.

"One of my first recollections was waking up in a cradle under a quilt stretched over frames resting on the backs of chairs with a quilting bee in full swing," wrote Hill, in a late-life memoir. "I remember well when the war started in 1861. My uncles Miron and Manley enlisted. Uncle Uri & Uncle Manson were the only men left and Grandpa was very old and feeble. Draft papers were served on Uncle Manson. I was frightened terrible but he paid no attention to the call and didn't go.

"We all lived in a small log house. Uncle Uri and I slept in the attic—our bed was covered with snow very often. I have scars on my shins yet where I got too near the stove hearth to thaw out.

Hill said when he was young he helped with harvesting. It was his job to lead blind Uncle Uri from grain bundle to bundle and also to lead him to Waukon, three miles distant, to saw wood. Hill said he spent most of his time in blacksmith shops and "would always land Uncle in Mr. Rawlins candy shop. I can remember those jars of stick candy yet and poor old Uncle never failed to buy me some candy."

Hill said he used to hear men talk about railroads. He was sure his road to town was a rail-road since there were rail fences all the way.

When he was 10, George came with his uncle Manley Hill to Centralia. "When they came to Frenchtown, (Port Edwards) the low row of piers in the river was a novel curiosity to them, and on asking what they were, the driver told them they were pig pens," said a 1920s newspaper.

The first wooden toll bridge in Grand Rapids over the Wisconsin had just been finished and there was a long line of piers from the bridge to Belle Isle to hold a boom and guide the logs to the Neeves Mill.

The first school George attended was taught by H.H. Hecox of Rudolph in a little frame school house located on what became the West Side market square. Sunday school was held also in the school house.

Hill remembered passenger pigeons. "They used to nest out along 10 Mile Creek. People would go out and get squabs by the bushel. The flocks were so immense it would hide the sun."

At age 12, on September 14, 1869, Hill wrote to "grandma." "I am well and have grown so you would hardly know me. My hair is as curly as ever and pulls when I comb it. There is no school so I am picking berries."

As a youth, Hill worked in log drives on the river here and spent a brief period in the west as a homesteader, in company with another uncle.

At age 17, Hill entered the employ of the H.T. Panter drug store at the west end of the bridge in Centralia. After about a year, he went to work for Philleo & Ingraham at their east-side drug store and printing office. Besides his clerical duties, Hill operated a printing press and mailed the papers on publishing day.

After a year, Hill was transferred as manager of the west-side branch store. When that establishment was sold to H.W. Jackson, Hill moved back to the east side of the river. He stayed with that concern through several changes of ownership: Jackson, J.B. Mitchell, Mitchell and F. Garrison (J.B. Mitchell & Co.), Garrison & (Archie) Weaver, F. Garrison, Garrison & (S.N.) Whittlesey, Garrison. While so employed, Hill "gained a wide reputation for honesty and integrity and won a warm place in the hearts of the people," said an 1880 newspaper.

In 1887, Garrison sold his interest to J.D. Witter, who in turn conveyed a half interest to Hill. The name was changed to G.M. Hill & Co. Upon consolidation the same year with Nels Johnson's dry goods and grocery store company, the business became Johnson & Hill, incorporated in 1898 with Hill as president. Hill remained active until 1919, when he sold his interest and became manager of

Rood Construction Co.

Hill was one of the earliest investors in Consolidated Papers, Inc. He was also instrumental in reorganizing Prentiss-Wabers Products Co. in 1928. At that time Prentiss-Wabers was located in a building owned by Rood Construction.

In later years, Hill's principal business activity had been in cranberries. At the time of his death, he was president of Gaynor Cranberry Co. He also held offices in the Emmerick Cranberry Co. and the Lester Cranberry Co. and was president of the Cranmoor Cooperative Co. that operated the irrigation system for area marshes from 1933. He also served for a time as an officer of the Elm Lake Cranberry Co.

Hill was an officer in the Grand Rapids Street Railway Co. and a stockholder in Centralia Hardware Co. along with Lawrence M. Nash, Nels Johnson and J.D. Witter.

A reason given for Hill's success was that he was a linguist who spoke English, French, German, Swedish, Norwegian and Indian languages.

Hill, a Republican, served several terms as a member of the Grand Rapids Common Council, where he developed the system of naming and numbering the streets of the city. Streets running one direction were designated by numbers and those crossing them by names. He also was instrumental in the purchase of river-bank property later made into parks. Hill street in the Witter addition was named in his honor.

Hill was influential in obtaining a referendum at which electors approved consolidation of Grand Rapids and Centralia into a single municipality. He was active in the Congregational Church, Masons, Knights of Pythias, Elks and Rotary, and the father of six children: Kenneth, Clarke, Earl, George, Harold and Leslie.

Hill married Eva May Bell of the Vesper area in 1889.

In 1937 George Mead wrote to Geo. Hill.

"It is wonderful that you have lived through that terrible accident. I don't know any other man of equal age who would have taken it on the chin like you did and come through smiling. And the same can be said of you and the depression. You took that in the same way and are living it through and are coming up with a smile on your face."

Mrs. Leslie (Jennie) Hill

George and Eva Hill with sons Les, Harold "Shaw," George (seated, front to rear) son Earl and Uncle Uri (1905).

Johnson Hill's

From its inception, the Johnson Hill's mercantile concern has been involved in merger, expansion and diversification. The original partnership bought out much of its competition and, in its prime, became the preeminent local department store. During the expansive 1960s, Johnson Hill's acquired other similar department stores until it became head of its own chain.

Victim of national economic and consumer trends in the 1970s, Johnson Hill's was forced to dispose of store after store until the Wisconsin Rapids headquarters stood virtually alone. In 1987, its centennial year, Johnson Hill's in Wisconsin Rapids has been sold to Kline's, a Cleveland chain of department stores.

• Diversification and expansion

In 1887, the firms of Nels Johnson and George Hill came together. Much of the credit is given to Nels Johnson, who had come at age 18 to the United States, poor in money but rich in confidence and enthusiasm, establishing himself in the mercantile trade. Credit must also be afforded to J.D. Witter, who was the "Co." in both Nels Johnson & Co. and George Hill & Co., easily becoming the "Co." in Johnson, Hill & Co. In 1887, Witter also built the Bank of Centralia in the center of the present Mead-Witter block.

In its first year, Johnson Hill had 14 employees. In 1889, it purchased the general merchandise stock of W.T. Jones & Co.

On March 15, 1899, the company was officially incorporated as Johnson Hill & Co. by owners Nels Johnson, Geo. M. Hill, J.D. Witter, D. McKercher, Aug. C. Otto and C.F. Kruger.

Among other diversifications, in July, 1901, the Johnson Hill brick cheese factory at Seneca Corners opened with Fred Withelm in charge. Complementing that enterprise, Johnson Hill operated a 280-acre farm in the town of Sigel, with 60 acres of hay, 50 acres of oats, three acres of cucumbers and 26 milch cows.

On February 2, 1902, Johnson, whose Scandinavian background is evident in his prose, wrote to George Hill, who was then in Chicago. He said that when the new store building was completed, it would be easier to make $20,000 a year "than the old way 10."

"You will notice our stock is about the same as last fall and that was large. We owe on the stock I think about

Grand Avenue, 1800s: Johnson Hill's on right

$4,000 and Walter deducted the liabillerty from the stock make the statements look better and saving putting those things in twice . . . .

"We got a bill from Marshall Field for about 60 doz shirts of course they are not here so I can't tell but perhaps you remember—if there are no boys shirts we can use some of those black and white stripe to sell at about 40 cents. Those 25 cent line we have lots of them and they don't go.

"We sold in all the stores $225,000 doller last year, sold in the dryer good $77,000 and last 6 months in the dry goods $47,000 very good I think. If you are not strong you better not work to hard."

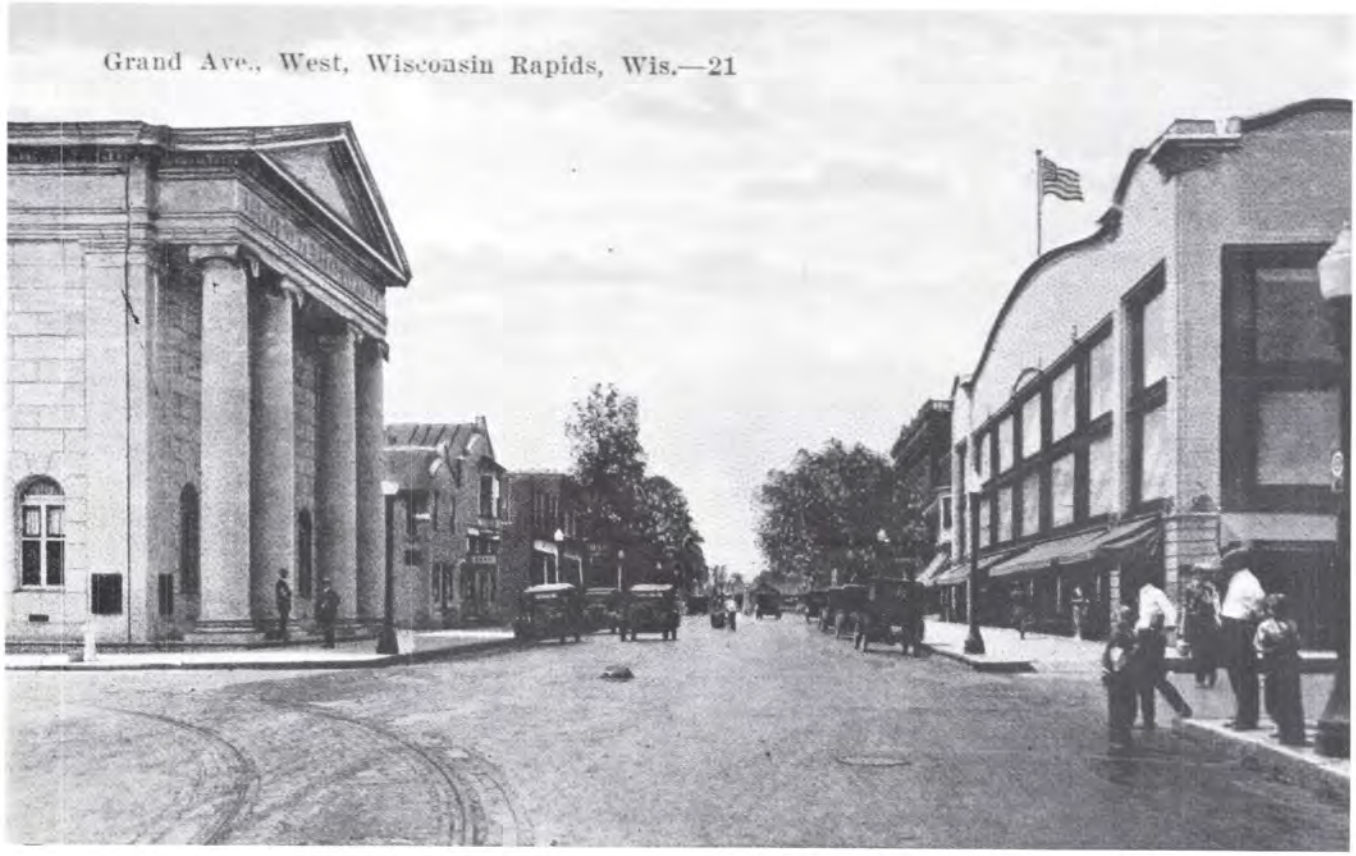
The July 10, 1902, Wisconsin Valley Leader said Johnson, Hill & Co. "occupy five rooms on the north side of Bridge St. (west side)" and are a "center of attraction to a large portion of the buyers in this part of the county . . . . Few business concerns in this part of the state are more distinctly cosmopolitan in the class of goods carried or manner of doing business."

The 1902 store included a grocery department managed by C.F. Kruger, a drug store, hardware store and a large double brick store with clothing and dry goods. "G.M. Hill and N. Johnson, members of the company have charge respectively of the dry goods and clothing departments," said the Leader.

On December 16, 1902, Johnson died unexpectedly. Witter had also died in 1902. Nevertheless, "Johnson Hill" forged ahead. In 1903, a "new" Johnson Hill store brought an article in the Grand Rapids Tribune. "The history of the Johnson & Hill company is a study in success. From an insignificant concern it has risen to one of the leading establishments in this section of the state."

That year, Johnson Hill owned three separate store buildings with frontage of 152 feet on Cranberry Street and 196 feet on Main Street, according to the Tribune. Groceries, crockery, drugs, clothing, boots, shoes, dry goods and hardware were sold.

An addition of 50 feet frontage on Cranberry Street was planned at the time of the 1903 article. Manager of the clothing and dry goods department was Geo. M. Hill. Manager of the grocery department was Chas. F. Kruger.



1900s: First National Bank on left, Johnson Hill's, right

• A landmark store

After 25 years at Grand and 2nd avenues, the company in 1912 built the present landmark store on the former H.W. Jackson property. At the time, the location was considered somewhat remote from the central business district.

In 1919, George Hill, then manager of the hardware department and Charles Kruger, manager of the grocery department, sold their interests. Ray Johnson, son of Nels Johnson, assumed the position of general manager and Donald P. Johnson became manager of the clothing department.

Johnson & Hill acquired the Walker and Gwin store at Nekoosa in 1929, and Knauf and Tesch Co. in Chilton in 1930.

In 1925, Johnson & Hill had legitimate claim to being the largest department store in central Wisconsin with 12 virtually complete stores housed under one roof and a payroll of 80.

Officers were Jere Witter's son, Isaac P. Witter, president; R.F. Johnson, vice president and general manager; George Mead, secretary; Mrs. Nellie Johnson, treasurer. Also on the board was Donald Johnson.

Johnson Hill remained essentially unchanged until 1952 when it was purchased from Johnson descendants by the Chester Bell group, which included Irving Moberg.

• Investment and expansion

Common stock was offered for public purchase in 1959. The corporation bought stores in Manitowoc and Oshkosh from the Boston Store Co.

In 1960, four Waukesha stores were acquired, including McCoy's. The company now had 1,000 stockholders.

"Diversification and expansion" brought the Bettersox hosiery company into Johnson Hill in 1963. The company also published PCA Farming Magazine and owned subsidiaries in Santa Barbara, Calif., and Guelph, Ontario, Canada.

The burgeoning corporation faced a challenge to its identity in 1964 as Leo Roethe of Ft. Atkinson attempted to buy control. Local management rode out the storm and Roethe bought back Johnson Hill companies he had originally owned, including the Nasco mail-order company and Bettersox.

In 1969, Johnson Hill bought Fey Industries of Edgerton, Minn., and in 1970, Winkelman's department store of Wausau. Johnson Hill, in the person of Chester Bell, who owned 70% of the stock, now had stores in Manitowoc, Oshkosh, Neenah, Wausau, Marshfield, Waukesha and Dubuque. All were stores that had been modernized.

• Divestment

Heavy losses in the early 1970s led to a major crisis. A stockholder's notice in October, 1975, stated that the company had changed, since 1968, from a large institution encompassing nine department stores, two specialty stores and one printing company with an annual net sales of $16 million and earnings of $260,000, to two stores with annual sales of $4 million and a net loss of $1,346,000.

The company's poor showing after 1971 was blamed on competition from suburban shopping outlets. It was noted that most of the Johnson Hill stores were in downtown locations.

In 1975, the company sold McCoy's in Waukesha, Stampfer's of Dubuque, Jandrey's of Neenah and Johnson Hill's in Westgate Shopping Center, Madison. It kept Johnson Hill's of Wisconsin Rapids and Wausau and retained ownership of some other real estate.

In 1983, Bob Panosh and Ron Stapleman purchased the Wisconsin Rapids store from Steve Bell.

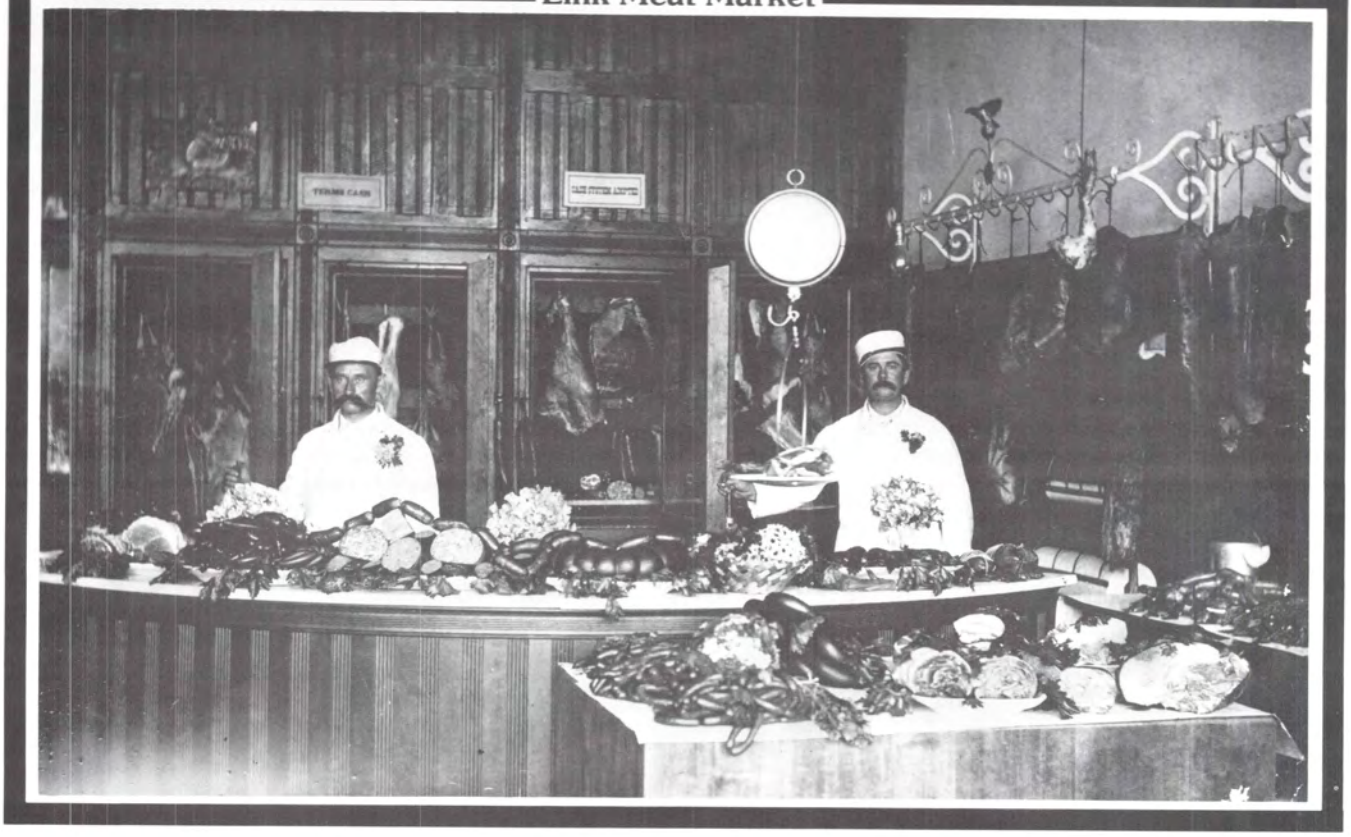
In the 1800s, Johnson, Hill & Co. on Cranberry Street was already called a "mammoth emporium."

Now, its diminished enterprise became the latest link in the tail of a much larger chain.

1960s advertisement

Augie Miller's 2nd St. Saloon

Link Meat Market



Trucking

On October 14, 1925 Louis and Quesnal Gross bought a used Ford truck, three horses, two wagons and the business of the Lemley Meat Delivery Co. of Wisconsin Rapids, all for $800.

The company they founded, Gross Common Carrier Inc., 660 West Grand Ave., now purchases more than $1 million worth of equipment per year and brings in annual revenues of $26 million, employing over 400 at 24 terminals throught the Midwest. "In the beginning, it was a grocery-store delivery business," said Louis' son and, since 1976, President Robert Gross, Brookfield. "They would pick up groceries from the stores and deliver to the person who had ordered them, sometimes two or more times in the same day to the same lady."

The Grosses, in 1925, operated out of a rented garage adjacent to brother Laurel "Tootie" Gross' house and a rented shed near Quesnal's house, both on Washington Street.

The first real terminal was at 530 E. Grand Ave., in the building later used for The Peddler bicycle shop. The original portion of the present facility was built in 1935.

Although owned entirely by Louis and Quesnal, three other brothers contributed to the organization: John, Tootie and Lyle, whose City Service petroleum company was closely linked to the trucking firm.

Deliveries in the early years were made partially by horsepower but getting in on the beginning of motor trucking was the key to establishing a profitable business.

By the 1930s, the United States had entered the Depression. The Gross brothers survived by handling small shipments from companies no longer able to afford larger quantities. Helpful to all truckers was the public works system that constructed or improved many roads.

By 1935, the federal government had brought the trucking industry under the regulation of the Interstate Commerce Commission. As a result of the Motor Carrier Act of 1935, Quesnal and Louis incorporated as Gross Brothers, of Wisconsin Rapids Inc., changed in 1936 to Gross Common Carrier Inc.

In the early years, the Grosses concentrated on the meat industry, using what they called "centralized freight delivery." Quesnal drove the company truck at night, hauling from meat packing wholesalers into Wisconsin Rapids. The next day, Louis delivered those orders to individual meat markets, which were numerous in the era of the neighborhood grocery.

The brothers soon earned delivery contracts with eight major meat-packing firms in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Packers shipped products by rail or truck to Gross terminals in La Crosse and Wisconsin Rapids.

Although meat delivery was the mainstay, a small, common-carrier operation was started from Sheboygan to LaCrosse. Later, the purchase of the Yellow Truck line of Madison provided access to the Milwaukee market, enabling Gross to concentrate on general freight as large chain stores began using their own trucks to handle the retail meat business.

During World War II, when railroad cars were needed for the defense effort, Gross developed the first "substituted rail operation." The Soo Line Railroad sent loaded rail cars directly to key-point cities, where Gross unloaded and delivered the smaller shipments to individual railroad depots.

Regulation and deregulation problems have been surmounted in the 1980s, culminating in a major 1985 expansion into the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Throughout the decades, the Gross company has been family owned and managed.

Gross Common Carrier

Quesnal, Louis (rear)
Laurel, John, Lyle Gross (front)

Getting the Lard Out

DON GETZLAFF

My brother, Stub, and I always met at Page Milk in Merrill when he came down from Rhinelander. After we were loaded, we always stopped for a stein of beer. One time, we decided to put our tractors to the test. We each had a 28,000-pound load. I led the way with my GMC and he followed with his International. I could pull away on the hills but he would catch me on the level. At Wausau, freezing rain came and accumulated to three-quarter-inch. On the Du Bay fill, the front wheels would not steer. With the trailer lights blinking, we slowed to a stop after a quarter of a mile and got out to talk things over. We both fell on our rears. We took it slowly the rest of the way home and arrived at 7 p.m. Louie was in the office waiting for us. We were the only trucks that came home that night.

Ques and Louis started a safe driver contest. We had a big dinner at the Hotel Witter and were to be given wrist watches as prizes. Al "Dynamite" Gellerman got a watch and George Reinholt got a watch. Within the year, "Dynamite" tipped over a trailer and George dodged a drunk by Smokey Joe's, tipping over a loaded trailer, and later killed two horses on the road at night. One hot day at Wausau, while I sat in a tavern next to Weltman Brothers' market, my double-parked tractor and trailer stopped idling. Of course, the electric brakes went out and the trailer backed down the street three stores wide into a pickup truck and pushed it way out into the street. I didn't get a watch.

One early spring night, I called Ques late in the evening and told him I had the flu and could not juggle meat in my condition. He called at 6 a.m. and found me no better. Could I go on the Point-Marshfield run with Frank Stolp and Frank Shannis if I only drove and had the bills signed? I told him if he would agree to my getting a half pint of brandy to sip on all day, I would go. He said that was okay, just so I was the only one drinking.

Any meat run I was ever on, I never had a butcher check the pieces I delivered. They would only ask, "Is it all here?" Guess they thought I could read the meat bills better than they could.

PETE ARNETT

The meat delivery was not the nice, neat job it is today. You carried everything into the store and hung it in their coolers. The beef would have a thin cheesecloth hung over it. Many times, you had blood running down your neck. On the longer runs, the meat had to be refrigerated and, in those days, that meant packing it in salt and ice. Two nights a week, a crew of men would wield ice picks on 100-pound blocks to produce barrels of chips.

We were working on the dock, getting meat loaded, when the union people came. They called a meeting right then and told Ques and Louie that until the agreement was signed for the new pay rate and rules, the men would just sit and leave the meat spoil. There was absolutely no problem. In a short while, everyone was back at work.

JIM BABCOCK

During the war, they had to go look for men to work. Several times, I went with Louis to the Pittsville area, looking for young farm boys. Louis always thought farm boys made the best workers because they were used to working hard.

On the way back from La Crosse, I lost my lights. In those days, we always carried kerosene pot torches in case of an accident. I wired the lights to the back door of the truck. By the time I made it back to Rapids, the whole back of the truck was black. Ques said he had never heard of such a dumb thing. Later, when a driver would call in with the same problem, I could hear Ques tell them how to wire a pot torch on so they could make it back.

One night, Louie and Wimp Reinecke, his helper, were coming back from the Merrill milk run in a sleet storm. They got halfway up the old Merrill hill and could not make it farther. They tried to put chains on the tires but the chains were too short. They must have tried a dozen times before Louie got mad and threw the stool he was using down the hill. He needed this stool, so he told Wimp he better go down and get it. That would have been about six blocks of solid sleet.

"You threw it, you go get it," said Wimp.

Louie slipped and slid down the hill, threatening all the way to have Wimp fired. The coming back up was a real feat. When he finally returned, Louie was so mad he cut some wire from a farmer's fence and made the chains fit. They had to get out five or six more times to adjust them before they made the top.

One time, when Bud Gross wanted to have a helper but didn't have enough freight to warrant one, he loaded the truck, starting from the middle of his trailer. That way it looked like a full load. Just before Bud and his helper were leaving, Ques told them that they would have to squeeze in the heavy lard pails for the bakery. Bud couldn't tell Ques what he had done so he lowered the tailgate and loaded the lard there since it was an in-town delivery. When they were going up the small hill by the Rapids theater, the truck tipped right to the ground on its back end. Boy, was Ques mad when he found out how it had been loaded.

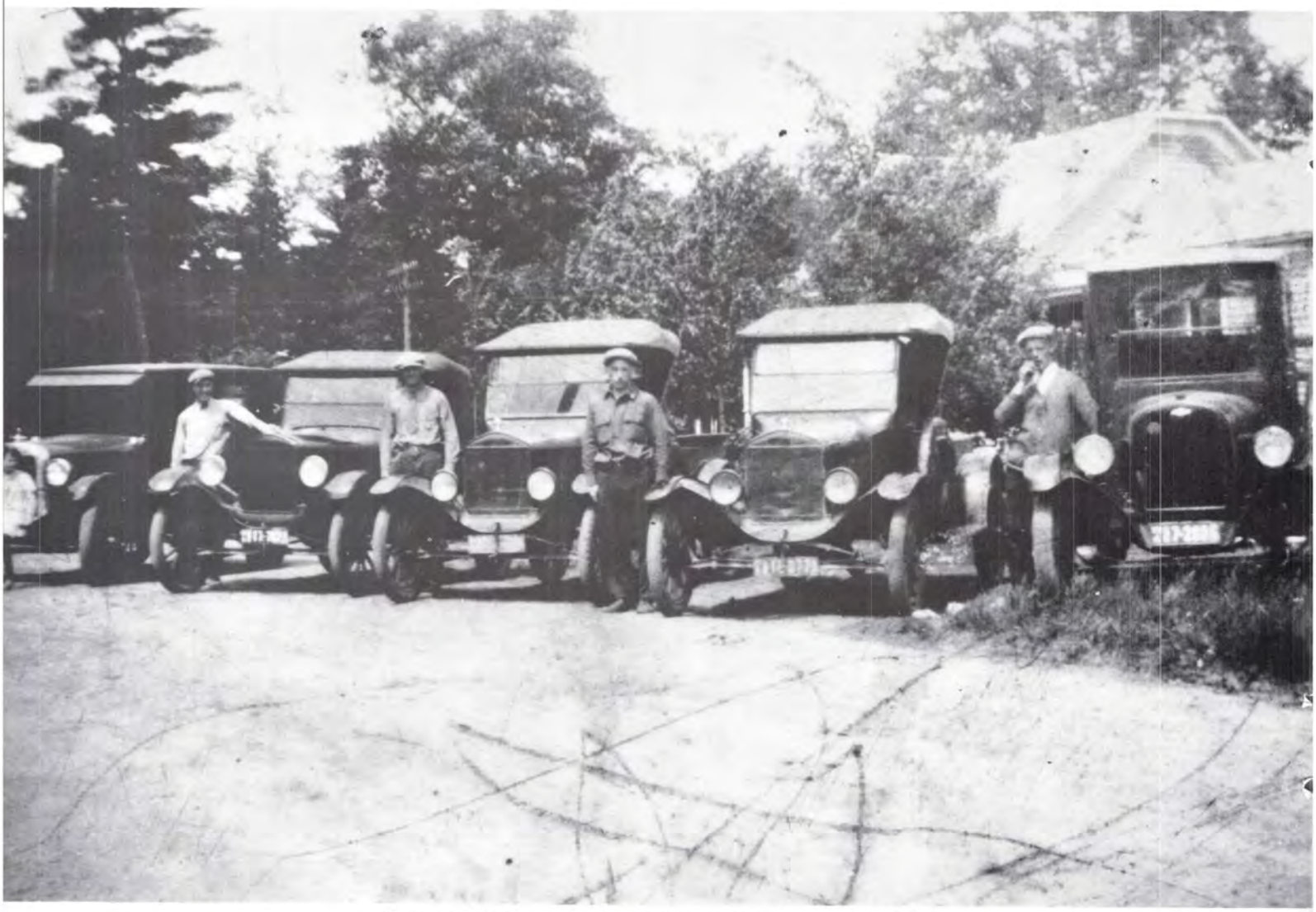
Shoot Getzlaff

My brother Stud (Edward) had worked for Gross Brothers about two years when, in 1931, Louie Gross asked Stub if I wanted to be his helper, picking up meat at Oscar Mayer in Madison on Sundays and Wednesdays for $1 per trip.

After a few trips with Stub, he taught me, a 17-year-old who had never driven a car, how to drive a tractor and trailer. In those years, there were only electric brakes on the trailers and the roads were two lanes. Some of the hill cuts were very steep. Stub taught me to use the down grades to help make the up grades.

Going down the hill at approximately 55 mph, I had to pass a car. I no sooner pulled out when a car rounded a curve ahead of us, coming very fast in the left lane. The electric brakes were nothing in a case like this, so Stub got a hold of the steering wheel and got on the horn. The car ahead pulled off to the right shoulder. We stayed in the center and the oncoming car pulled to the left. We all passed side by side. That was lesson number one!

At this time, the Gross brothers had a 1½-ton Studebaker tractor and trailer, a 1½-ton Chevrolet tractor and trailer, a 5-ton Interna-



Gross Brothers Trucks, Quesnal Gross on right

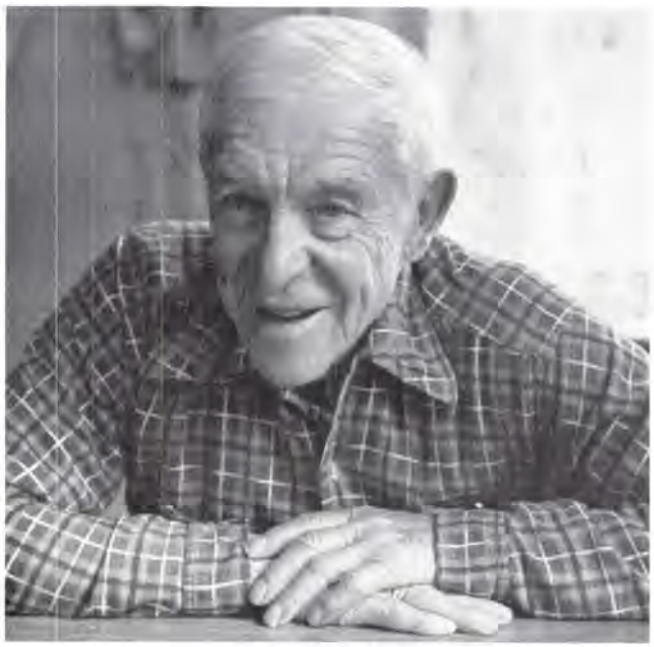
tional tractor and trailer, a 1½-ton GM moving van, a 1-ton dray truck and three city-delivery panel trucks that delivered from the meat markets to homes. Art Plahmer and Butch Neitzel still delivered groceries with light wagons and two-pony teams.

As Ques' helper two days a week, I learned the city routes, all the back doors and alleys, the pick ups from the freight depots, how to handle freight and how to read meat and freight bills.

At this time, Gross hauled for Oscar Mayer from Madison, Drummond Packing Co., Eau Claire, and Interstate Packing of Winona. Swift and Co. hauled into Wisconsin Rapids for Gross brothers.

The city dray truck was responsible for all local meat deliveries. We also hauled city freight from the depots to stores. The point for sorting and reloading was the Luick Ice Cream building on McKinley Street.

When Gross purchased Irv Henry's dray line in 1935, I delivered freight from the St. Paul, Northwestern, Soo Line and Green Bay depots. The almost new Model A Ford dray trucks had to go faster and faster, almost 35 mph anywhere in the Rapids.



Don Getzlaff

At this point, Louie and Ques really went after the meat business. Marv King, their lawyer, and Louie started looking for new territories and franchises. More tractors and trailers were also purchased. A new terminal was needed so the Gross brothers purchased part of the land where the present terminal is.

In our spare time, especially on Saturdays, we dug trenches for footings with pick and shovel. As this was an old dump site, we hit a lot of junk.

When Carl Billmeyer had completed the new terminal, Swift and Co. and Hormel delivered by refrigerated freight cars to a side track. Wilson meat came in at the Green Bay depot.

The streamlined furniture van became the pride of the fleet as Gross brothers moved anywhere in the state.

Ques, at the time, thought he had to have all big men to drive trucks so he used me, at 135 pounds, for lighter routes. Finally, when Al Krumrei decided to go to work for the postal service, I was given the Wausau-Merrill meat and milk run.

We arrived in Wausau at 6 a.m. and delivered to the sausage makers. We had to carry and roll the whole load into the butcher shops. A large barrel of casing weighed 750 pounds. I have carried front quarters of beef that weighed 365 pounds.

At Merrill, we loaded 26,000 pounds of canned milk in 20 minutes. My helper, Jim Babcock, and I would pile the milk as fast as six men could run it in on a conveyor.

We arrived back in Rapids at 3:30 p.m., two hours ahead of any other driver who had made the Wausau run. Ques found out it really didn't take a big man to do the job.

In 11 years and over a million miles with Gross brothers, I never learned to cuss and swear. Louie called me "Shoot" and that was my name to "Wimp" Reinecke, John Zuege, Ed Rickman, Bob Morey, "Patch Eye" Hanson, Pete Arndt, George Reinholdt, Al Gellerman, George Fisher and all the boys I worked with.

Courthouse

When Wood County separated from Portage County in 1856, no courthouse existed. The county board met in a hotel—the Magnolia House, at what now is Washington and 9th streets.

A courthouse wasn't really necessary. The county board consisted of only two members: H.W. Jackson and Eusebe LaVigne. They represented Grand Rapids, the only township.

The first business conducted, according to the "History of Wood County," was to approve the establishment of Rudolph township. At the second session, Jackson and LaVigne "were appointed" a committee to provide offices for the county.

On January 10, 1857, "It was ordered that LaVigne's Hall (Magnolia House) be rented for court purposes, with a suitable grand jury room to be furnished by LaVigne for $125 for the first year, and with the privilege of the same for the second year." By that time, H.H. Hecox from Rudolph and Henry F. Black from Saratoga had been added to the board. No county officers, however, were housed in the Magnolia House.

A record of November 11, 1857, shows that a hall for county purposes was rented for one year from William Roe. The sum of $50 was paid in 1858, for rental of county offices, at an unknown location.

A September 29, 1864, Wood County Reporter announced that the county board had located the county building on John Rablin's addition near the brewery, understanding that Rablin would donate the land and $300 toward the construction. "As far as we know, the location is a good one; still, it seems that a more central point could have been found. Mr. Neeves offered the site in rear of the Wisconsin House, on the island, which would have been an excellent location," said the Reporter.

The Reporter noted, tongue in cheek, that the courthouse would be near the brewery, "a great accommodation to the court and county officers. "For us, the clerk of the court, the jail will be close by, so that we can attend to the legitimate duties of the office and not be away from home."

This first courthouse was built by Lyman Howe and John Rablin on Water Street (1st Street North) to the east of what then was the Lutz Brewery and later the site of the Sampson Canning Co. Two workers involved were Thomas Love and Tom Stevenson.

The building was not actually purchased by the county for some time after it was finished, it is said, because of a controversy between the builders and the county board, possibly involving the purchase price. On February 16, 1867, it was "ordered that the county purchase from Howe & Rablin the courthouse in Section 8, Town 22 N, Range 6 E."

In 1956 and 1968 interviews, Clara Rablin Nelson described the old courthouse as a long, white, two- or three-story frame structure having a wide hallway running the length of the first floor. Apparently, there were living quarters on the first floor for the sheriff, the undersheriff and their families. The jail was in the basement. The county courtroom was on the top floor.

Since the original courthouse was some distance from the center of the city, and the action minimal, the county officers, for many years, transacted their official business from their stores or offices. In protest, the county board, on November 19, 1872, issued an order "that the clerk, treasurer and other county officers remove their offices to the courthouse."

A narrative by P.N. Christensen, who became register of deeds in 1881, noted that only county treasurer Emanuel Dutruit used an office in the courthouse, which was very cold in winter. Register of deeds Lemuel Kromer and county clerk C.O. Baker kept their offices in the business district, said Christensen. "Where the sheriff, Philip Ward, kept his office, I don't remember," he said, "but I imagine under his hat."

Christensen said he rented a former lumber office of Neeves & Neeves, adjacent to the Wood County bridge, until the new courthouse was built. While he was in the Neeves office, a heavy flood came down the river, and people navigated Main Street in boats. Consequently, Christensen hired a liveryman to haul his record books, papers and himself to safety at a house he owned on High Street, leaving behind a large iron safe and some stationery.

When it became evident that a new courthouse was needed, a bitter fight arose between Centralia, Pittsville, Marshfield and Grand Rapids, said the "History of Wood County." Each community claimed to be the best location for a county seat.

Fearing that an injunction would prevent the building of a new courthouse, Judge Charles Webb prepared papers for the contract and had them signed. Together with Judge George R. Gardner and Peter McCamley of the county board, Webb went to Green Bay and let the contract. The courthouse consequently was built in Grand Rapids,

The contract price was $20,000.

When Howe & Rablin had built the old courthouse, they retained, said Mrs. Nelson, a "word of mouth" agreement with the county board that the firm would regain possession of the building when the county no longer needed it. Rablin, who survived Howe, attempted to repossess the building, but the claim was disavowed when no one on the county board admitted remembering the agreement. The courthouse was sold to the Lutzes.

After the brewery owners took over, said Mrs. Nelson, there was a German-Lutheran school upstairs, which Mrs. Nelson attended for a while. The David Lutz cigar factory also was housed in the building.

Mrs. Nelson said that as a youngster, she used to go by the basement jail and talk to the prisoners. "One day, I saw a pile of dirt by the side of the building and up pops a man. He had dug out of the side and went off down the street as fast as he could go."

The original courthouse burned to the ground April 25, 1885, at an estimated loss of $1,200. The fire was thought to be the work of an incendiary.

Around 1899, the original dome topping the tower of the 1881 courthouse was replaced by a fortress-like turret. An addition on the west side of the building made its frontal appearance more symmetrical. A second and final addition in 1930 cost $10,000 and expanded the building to the south and west.

In 1895, a separate jail building and sheriff's residence was erected across Baker Street.

A $300,000 proposal in 1937 by the public property committee, including a plan for a new courthouse and jail by Donn Hougen, was turned down by the county board.

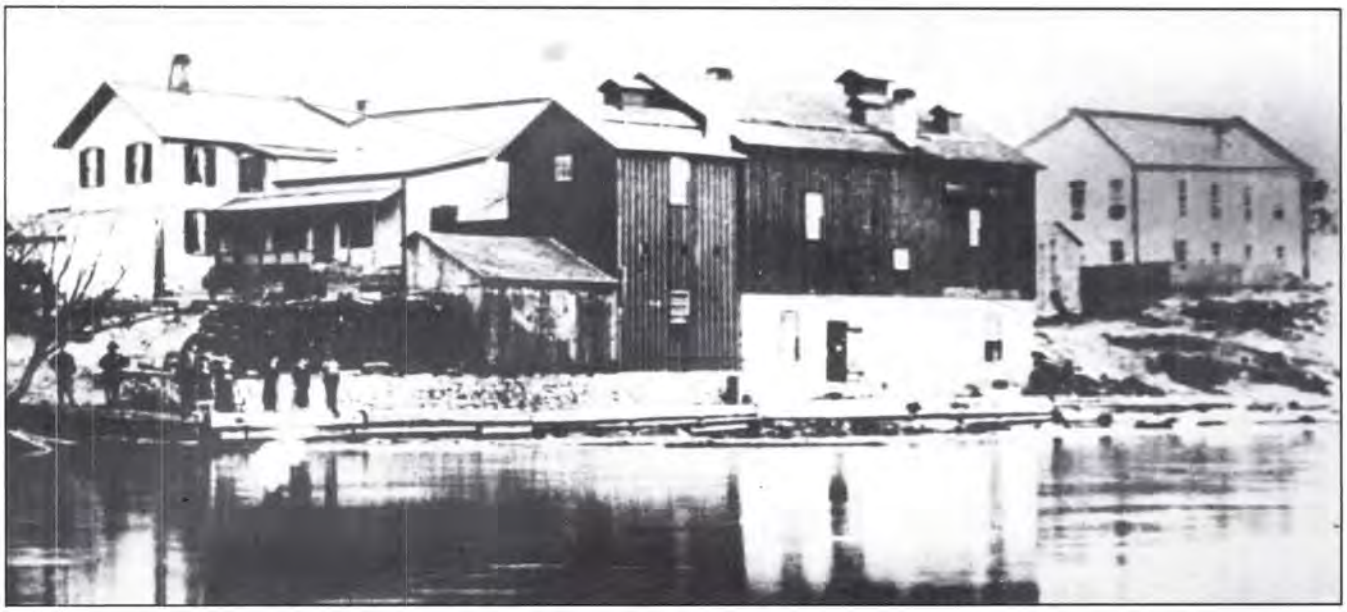
In 1944, a courthouse and jail building fund was started. In 1945, a plan by Childs & Smith of Chicago was considered and dropped, because of postwar building costs.

According to the 1956 Daily Tribune, the 1881 courthouse had been, for many years, inadequate to house many of the county departments, "which customarily are centralized under one roof." As a consequence, the county maintained two courthouse annexes, one in the old Rowland store building and one in the former city hall/public library. Some officials used their homes and private places of business for county offices.

Ground was broken for a $1.4 million courthouse, designed by Hougen, on August 31, 1954. In July 1956, the old courthouse was vacated.

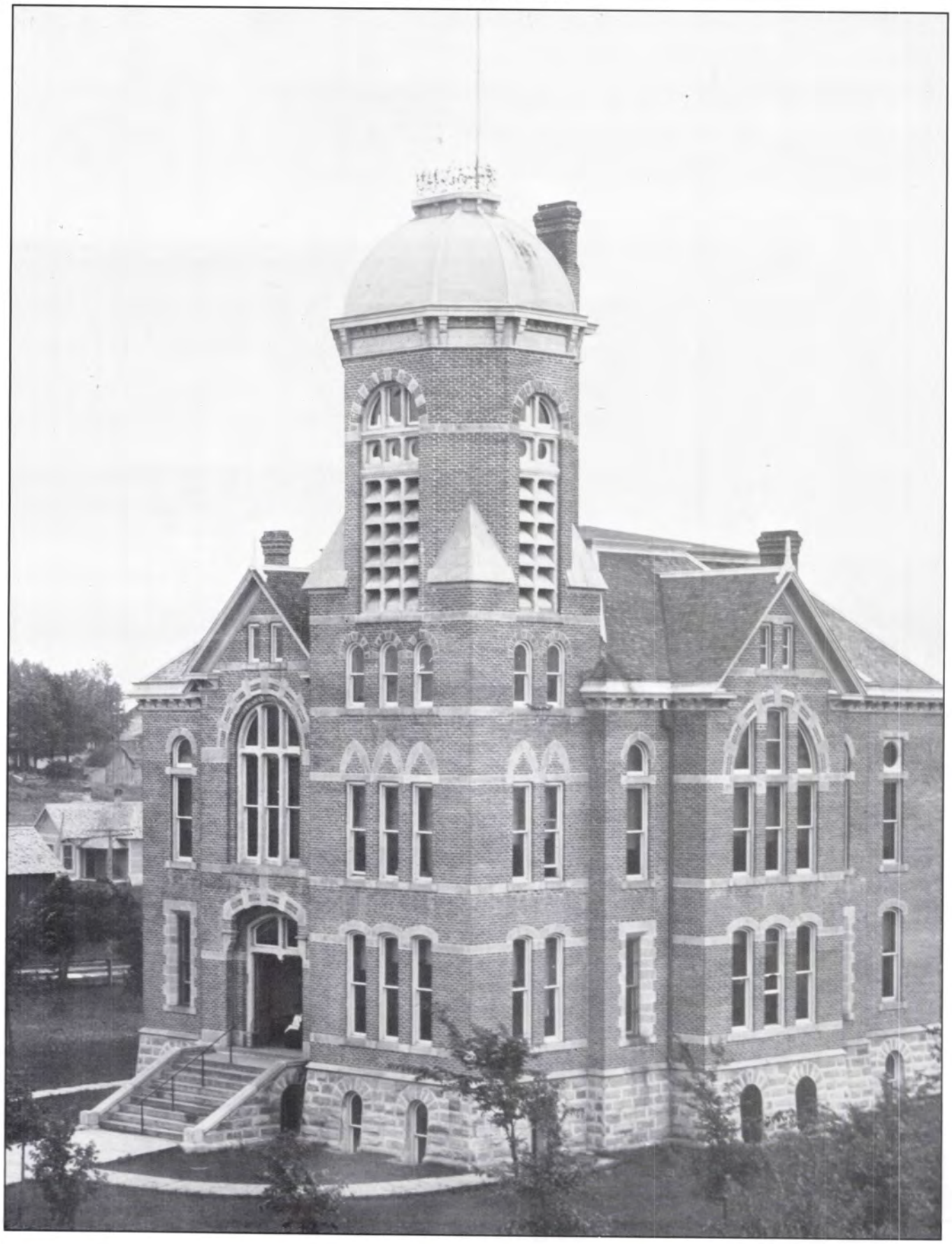
The new building was dedicated by former board Chairman Romeo Villeneuve. The principal speaker was John Roberts, a local attorney who reviewed the history of the old courthouse.

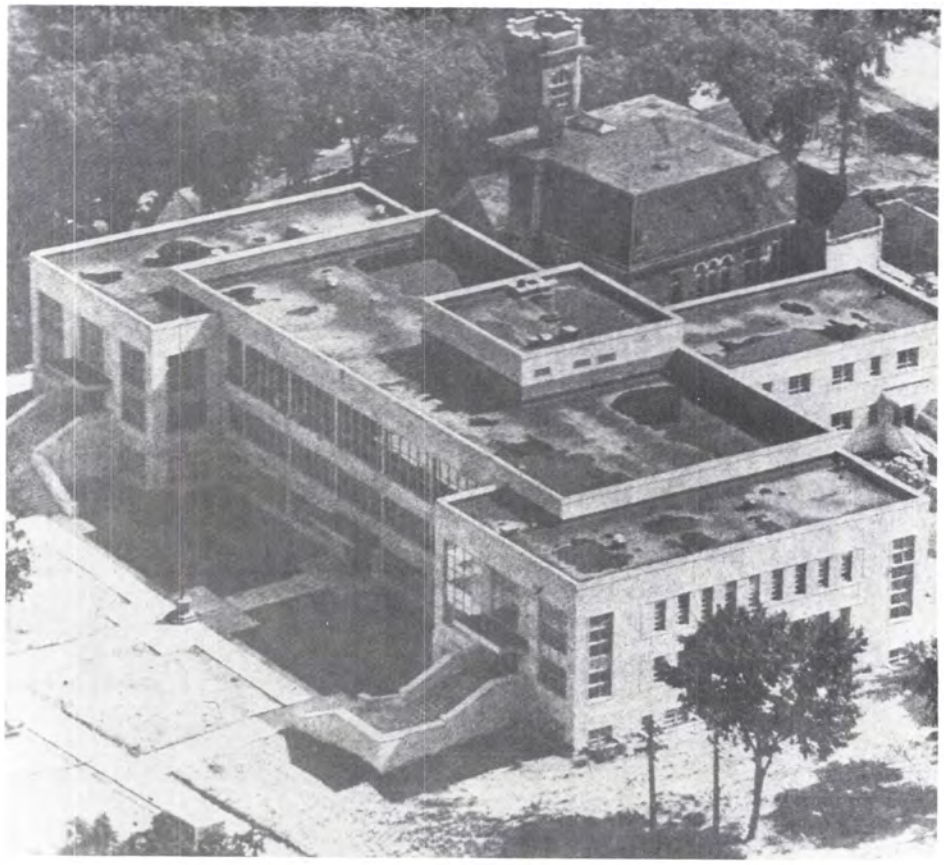
When the courthouse was completed, the old city hall annex and Rowland building were demolished.



SWCHC

Oldest courthouse (on right) next to brewery





Brothers of the Bar
William Pors, Charles Pors, Robert P. Bender, Fred Eberhardt, Richard Brazeau, John Jeffrey, Clerk of Court Jasper Johnson, William Conway, Leon Schmidt, Sr., Circuit Court Judge Herbert Bunde, Circuit Court Reporter Clarence Oaks, John Potter, County Judge Byron B. Conway, County Judge's Reporter Nellie Dolan, Harold Billmeyer, Theodore Brazeau, William J. Nobles, E.D. Helke, Donald Reiland, Byron Crowns, Morgan Midthun.

Wood County Normal

As rural state-graded schools proliferated around the turn of the century, institutions were needed to provide the teachers.

In 1903, a "county training school for teachers" was established here, with classes conducted in the new Lincoln High School on the site of the present East Junior High School. In 1906, the city of Grand Rapids offered six acres on which was built a school facing Lincoln Street, across from the Witter Street intersection. In 1937, a gymnasium and several classrooms were added.

In 1955, the state Legislature officially changed the name of Wood County Normal to Wood County Teachers College. Ten years later, the state phased out all county colleges.

From its beginning until the time it was closed in 1965, according to information provided by Phyllis Hunger, 1,523 students graduated from the teachers college here. The largest class was 1922, with 54 graduates. The smallest was 1949, with only five. (There were no graduates in 1935 because the school had expanded its course of study from one to two years.)

During its first 50 years, the school had only three principals—M.H. Jackson (1904-1924), Charles Hill (1924-26) and A.W. Zellmer (1927-53). Warren Lensmire served in that capacity when the school was closed in 1965.

Most graduates remained in education and became teachers or administrators. Normal school degrees often led to bachelor's and, in many cases, master's degrees at other schools of higher learning.

Phyllis Hunger was among the 18 graduates of '36. She came from Fountain City, Buffalo County, and returned with her two-year degree to Cowie School in the same county for $75 a school year. In addition to teaching, she was expected to start a fire, carry in water and sweep floors.

Phyllis said she had been recruited as a student by Supt. A.W. Zellmer of Wood County Normal. "In the Depression, the students couldn't afford to go anywhere else," she said. "We worked for board and room and tuition, repairing books in the attic, funded by a federal program. It was more like a family than a school. When someone got a job, we were all delighted."

The school yearbook, WOCONO, recalled that "On the 27th of August in 1934, 33 students representing eleven different high schools, walked timidly into the Wood County Normal School building to be welcomed by the faculty."

Entering higher education 50 years ago, the Class of '36 was the first to complete a two- rather than one-year class at Wood County Normal.

Participants at a 1986 reunion shared moments to remember, such as the Glee Club stuck in the mud on the way to Lone Birch School, the sleigh ride party, the 200-word theme about a "cow," lesson-plan writing and check tests.

During Cadet Week, seniors (as opposed to "freshmen") started teaching experience, both traumatic and rewarding, in Adams and Wood counties. Practice teaching at Model School provided the biggest thrill of the year for many.

Social activities also were remembered. "Who would even try to forget that grand costume party at Hallowe'en, and the interesting Christmas party, where Santa himself came in the person of Phyllis Hunger?" said the yearbook.

She went on to get a degree in education (1950) from Stevens Point and a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (1955). Because she had found her student days here so pleasant, Phyllis returned in 1946 as a teacher with a salary of $1,600 per year. She retired as principal of Lowell School ("the Rock of Gibraltar") in 1979, the year it closed.

The sentiment that was attached at the reunion of Wood County Normal was foreshadowed in such 1936 WOCONO inscriptions as this: "Dear Phyllis: I know I'll never forget you as a good friend of old W.C.N. Be sure and come back some time."

A Personal Note

The stage in the gym was just as miniature as it looked.

Students of Wood County Normal's Model School had produced a real puppet show. The characters and stories I cannot recall, but I know I thought it very mysterious and very brave.

Mention of Wood County Normal also brings to mind one of the few organized basketball games I played much of a part in when the "second five" of Ray Lecy's excellent, even intimidating, Grove School Pirates went over to play the Model School team.

That meant I got to compete against players not much better and not much taller than me. We played in the old Model School gym, the sound of the bouncing ball and shouts echoing between brick walls.

Our own student teacher—Bernie Enkro, from Two Mile Avenue—came over from the teacher's college to Grove School. It meant something to know a teacher before he had become a teacher—and to beat him at chess during noon hour.

My last thoughts of Wood County Normal revert to Buzz's Bar in the mid-1960s and conversations with a small group of young, innocent farm girls. They had come from somewhere the other side of Marshfield to be educated by the only college River City has ever had.

Halloween, 1934: Front row—A.W. Zellmer (Supt.) his wife Ruth, Walter Kersten, Fred Ellis, Wayne Fagen, Adelaide Hanson, Phyllis Hunger. Second Row—Marian Larson (Secy.) Maria Baron, Marcella Gerber, Malinda Sternweis, Florence Huser, Pauline Monson, Marian Fraser, Marquerite Vehrs, Hazel Berg, Wilma Mueller. Third row—Evelynne Wilson, Ruby Grube, Lydia Trachte, Marian McCoy, Betty McLaughlin, Lawrence Jozwiak, Inez Wagner, Gertrude Reinert, Betty Brooks, Valletta Cutler, Oliver Krings.

School Days

In the late 1920s, the photographer stationed himself near Lincoln High School in Wisconsin Rapids to take some lantern slides. The results are illuminated here.