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ARTIFACTS



Cover: See p. 15; Postcards by Phil Brown, pp. 2-7; Bridges by Barry Jens, 8-11; Everett Lambert by Rita Brockman, 12-14; Pfiffner murals, by Uncle Dave, 15-20; Mystery Box by Lori Brost, 21-24; T.B. Scott library, 25-27; Hang Outs by Bill Hartley, 28-31; Don Knuth photo, 32.

Postcards from the Den of Antiquity

By Phil Brown
SWCHC President

The 1893 “World Columbian Exposition” marked a milestone when illustrated cards were sold as souvenirs. About that time, postage for “Private Mailing Cards” was reduced to one cent and so began the Golden Age of the postcard.

Friends and relatives exchanged them, clubs were organized, and each home proudly displayed its own album. Many of the cards contained simple messages: arrived safely, thanks for your letter, will write soon—“having a wonderful time, wish you were here.”

However, the public again was dissatisfied, because the message had to be squeezed on the front of the card or around the picture. In 1907, the post office allowed the message to be written on the same side as the address.

Most of the early U.S. postcards were printed in Germany where color lithography was established as a fine art. World War I severed contact with Germany and postcards were printed domestically thereafter.

The 1930s brought cards manufactured on a linen-like paper, brightly colored, and often with a white border frame. The chrome era began in 1939 with cards printed from color film and named for the trade name, Kodachrome.

The early stages of my postcard collection would not have been possible without the help of Dave Carney and Gary Rosenkrans. Dave was a teacher at Lincoln High School. After I had acquired a number of postcards from local antique shops, he sold me his collection in the 1980s. This was the beginning of a passionate pursuit for more postcards. Gary Rosenkrans, also a teacher at LHS and owner of Gary’s Coins in downtown Wisconsin Rapids, was a valuable source for postcards and local memorabilia.

However, if it weren’t for Gerald “Gene” Johnson, my postcard collection would not be what it is today. Gene was the “Father” of local collecting, having begun with coins, tokens, postcards and other memorabilia.

In the mid-1990s, when I heard Gene had the “Mother Lode” of postcards, I met with him in the kitchen of his home on Chase Street. I had never seen so many wonderful postcards of the area. His duplicates were better than my collection. I pulled out about 30 postcards I did not have and asked how much he wanted for them.

He said, “I do not sell postcards, I only trade for them.”

He asked to see my collection and took out three of my favorites, allowing me to take three of his. I hated to see mine go, but I received three others that I had not previously owned.

As I was leaving, I said, “If you ever decide to sell any of your postcards, I would be interested in buying them.”

About two years later, Gene wondered if I was still interested in buying his collection. He told me how much he wanted and after I caught my breath, I realized I did not have that much money in my checking account. I had to wait one more day to get the cash and close the deal.

Gene and I became friends. Over the years, I was able to purchase most of his local memorabilia. He even became a “picker” for me at local estate and garage sales. Gene passed away in 2012, but his collection still lives on in my “Den of Antiquity” and at the Museum.

For years, my wife, Mary, and our children, Stephen and Allison, were wondering what I was going to do with the “stuff” I had collected. The answer is that, over a couple of years, I have been gifting it to SWCHC, and, in fall 2016, I let go of my pride and joy, the postcards. They are now co-mingled with the SWCHC collection and that of Joan Haasl, a long-time SWCHC board member, who willed hers to us after she passed away in 2010.

When you wonder what to do with your stuff, please remember the Museum—a safe place for your historical items, able to share them through our archives, exhibits, website or *Artifacts*.

POST CARDS



Circa 1955: Similar to the Fey postcard on p. 5, but on a linen-like paper, brightly colored. Power lines are gone and automobiles added. Curt Teich Postcard Co., Chicago, Ill., produced many of the linen postcards.

Curt Teich's "Greetings From Wisconsin Rapids" postcard.

Almost every community in the United States had a card similar to this.



Circa 1965: This chrome postcard was shot in a familiar location, Second Street North. Many readers can remember the businesses shown, especially the Sugar Bowl Restaurant. Most of us have fond memories of the cool cars depicted. The Wood County Bank on the right had been remodeled in 1963.

Postcards from the Den of Antiquity



Circa 1907: Real photo card at First Street N. and Baker Street, now a roundabout. The 1892 building housed the Grand Rapids municipal offices, T.B. Scott Public Library and fire department. To the right is the Wood County Jail and to the left, the Arpin houses and the original First Congregational Church. The city hall was demolished in the mid-1950s. In the early 1980s, Paul Gross rescued the clock from the city garage to be placed in the Wisconsin Rapids Memorial Clock and Bell Tower, dedicated in June of 1991.



4 Circa 1907+: It was common to send a real photo postcard to a lithograph company in Milwaukee to be colorized and enhanced. Here, power lines were removed and automobiles added.

Postcards from the Den of Antiquity



Circa 1908: This location was a favorite site for picture postcards. The photographer was at the intersection of what is now East Grand Ave. and Second St., looking north towards the Flat Iron, which was built in 1906. The block on the left was removed for what is now Veterans Park.

Circa 1925: As shown, in 1920, the City of Grand Rapids, Wis., changed its name to Wisconsin Rapids, Wis. This image is also looking north from the intersection of East Grand Ave. and Second St. The Wood County National Bank building at right was built in 1910.



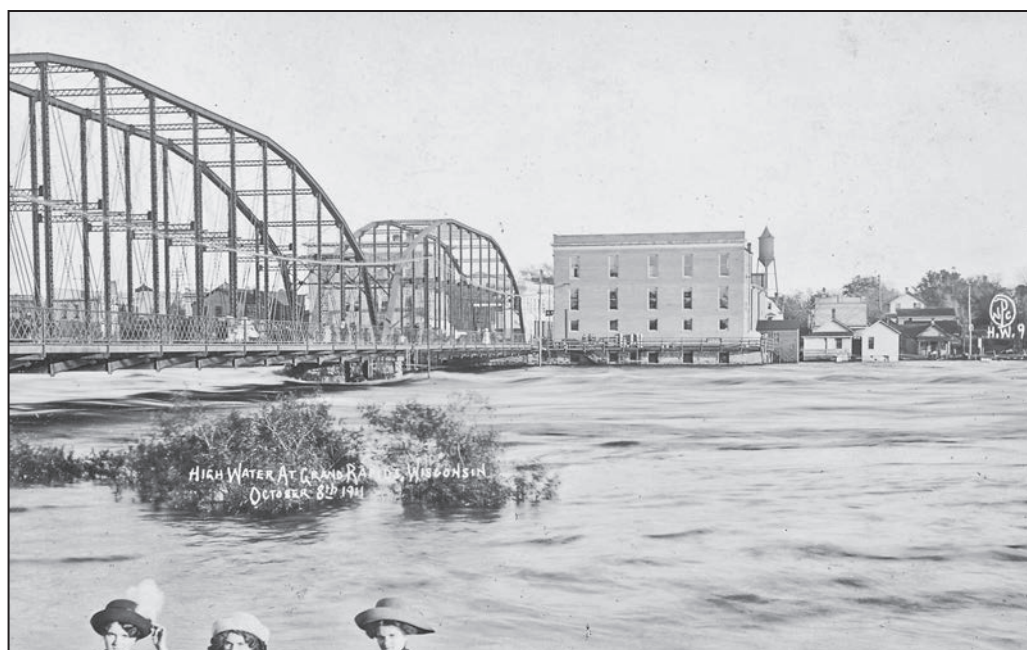
Circa 1948: This real photo postcard was produced by Henry "Hank" Fey of Fey Studio, who included numbered captions at the bottom. Gerald "Gene" Johnson started a list of all the Fey postcards. We currently have 64 different Fey views in the SWCHC Postcard Collection.



Circa 1908: Looking west from what is now East Grand Ave. and Second St. at the 1889 “girder bridge” that connected East Side to West side. In 1894, the two-story Wood Block on the left was built and in 1905, the adjacent three-story Post Office Building was added. (See Jens bridge story, p. 8.)



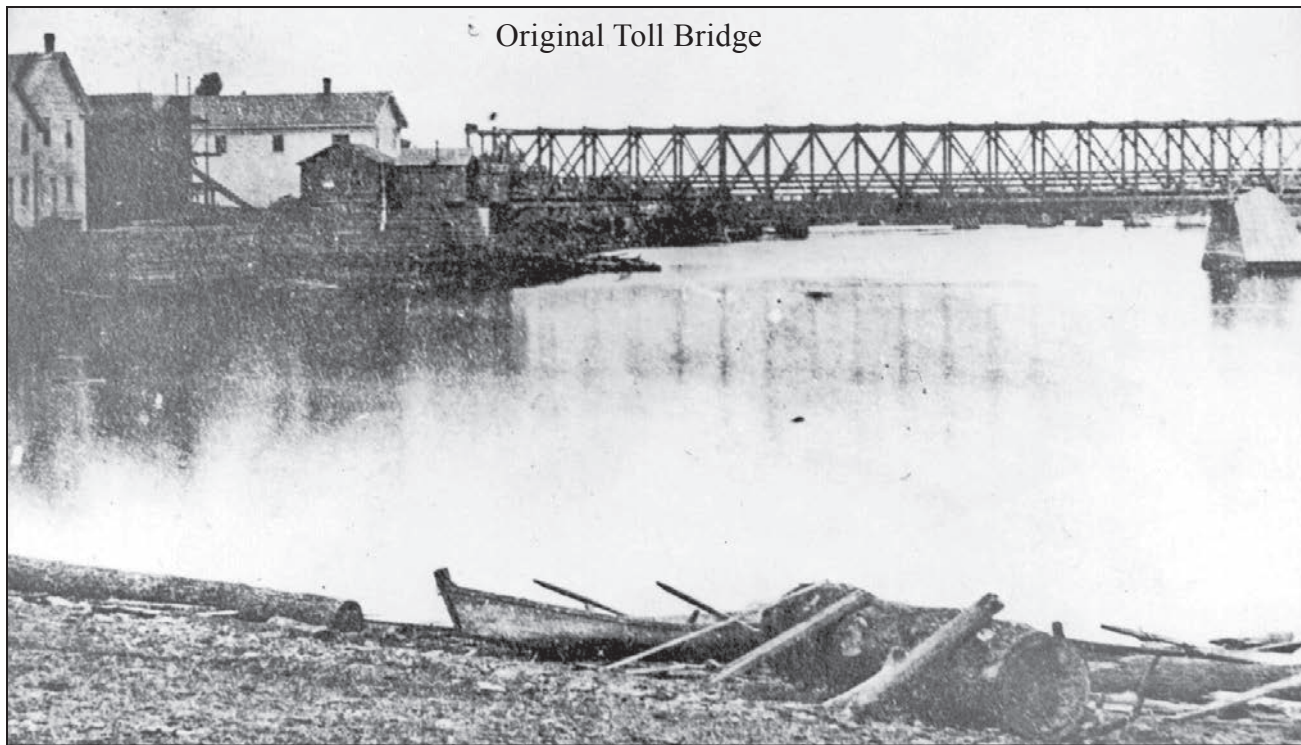
Circa 1921: West Grand Ave. was Cranberry Street and East Grand Ave. was Vine Street. The photographer is in front of 2017's Rogers Cinema. The girder bridge shown was replaced in 1922. The building on the northwest corner was the original location of the Wood County National Bank. In 1910, they built their new building as shown on the right.



One of three cards Gene Johnson needed for his collection, this was number 9 in a 10 ten-card series of the 1911 flood at Grand Rapids, Wis., produced by the Northern Postcard Company, Wausau, Wis., owned by James M. Colby. In the early 1900s, Colby or an employee would travel throughout Wisconsin and take photographs that were later made into postcards and sold to businesses.



Circa 1930: Curt Teich linen postcard looking west towards the intersection of East Grand Ave. and Second Street. The most noticeable change is the new Grand Ave. Bridge. The people and the automobiles in the postcard appear to have been added. Notice the tracks of the street car line that ran between Wisconsin Rapids and Nekoosa from 1910 to 1930. When this bridge opened in 1922, the street car line was extended to serve the east side of Wisconsin Rapids.



Original Toll Bridge

Bridge Bill Split County

By Barry Jens

SWCHC Board Member

During the more than 70 years I have lived here, it seems there was always some kind of feud between south and north Wood County. Here's how it all started, in the middle of the 19th century—over a bridge.

The southern portion of the county was settled first, so it was reasonable that in 1856 Grand Rapids became the county seat of newly-formed Wood County. Across the Wisconsin river was Rapids sister city, Centralia, connected by an 1857 ferry.

At the northwestern edge of the county, Marshfield's earliest settlers didn't arrive until the late 1860s. Bolstered by the recent arrival of the Wisconsin Central railroad, the commercial hub became a city in 1883.

Meanwhile, a toll bridge connecting Grand Rapids and Centralia was built in 1866 or so by George Neeves' Wood County Bridge Co. and may have been the first anywhere to span the Wisconsin river. The bridge charter said that the County could take over the bridge providing it would no longer charge for its use.

If so, who would pay to maintain it?

"Western" factions such as Pittsville and Dexterville wanted no part of footing the bill for the convenience of Grand Rapids and Centralia. Marshfield's growth added a northern component to the opposition.

After March 1873, when the County accepted control, the bridge was allowed to fall into disrepair. In 1876, Neeves sued to compel the county to keep it in a safe condition. The lower court and state Supreme Court held in favor of the Neeves interests and compelled the County to repair the bridge.

As reported in the *Grand Rapids Tribune* Jan. 27, 1877: "The defeated members on the bridge question have submitted gracefully and let the contract to build a new bridge from the water up, on the present abutments." The contract was awarded to P. W. Purtell, of Milwaukee, for \$7,844.

The April 14, 1877, *Grand Rapids Tribune*, happily reported that the "low stage of water, good ice and good weather, did much for the

convenience and expedition of the work, and the structure now stands as the only road bridge over the Wisconsin between Stevens Point and Kilbourn, and the best wooden bridge on the river, if not in the western part of the state.

"It is a Howe truss, of three spans, of 175, 180, and 170 feet, respectively, 22 feet high, with an eighteen feet roadway, and a sidewalk on each outside, making a total width of 33 feet. There were used in its construction about 280,000 feet of timber and 65 tons of iron."

The approach to the bridge on the west end was owned by Orestes Garrison and rented from him, first by the Bridge Company and then by the County. In 1880, "Mrs. Bishop," (probably 46-year-old Fannie) fell off the high board sidewalk and was injured.

Her case against the City of Centralia went to the Supreme Court which held that the lawsuit should be against the County of Wood, even though the land approach to the bridge where the accident occurred was rented not owned and was a part of Cranberry Street, leading to the bridge.

More importantly, the city vs. County feud came to a head when, said the *Wood County Reporter* of April 12, 1888, the bridge "was taken out on Wednesday afternoon at half-past one o'clock by a large ice jam." As a temporary expedient, Grand Rapids/Centralia businessmen Lawrence M. Nash, W. H. Cochran and W. F. Jones built a ferry boat and put it in operation in less than a week.

A May meeting was held to decide on the rebuilding of the Wood County Bridge and whether it would be a wooden structure which would require constant maintenance or an iron one, which the two cities would assume responsibility for.

A proposed new \$25,000 bridge was rejected by northern and western members of the County Board. Again, Neeves and his Rapids friends sued to compel the County to rebuild the bridge. The Supreme Court decided against Rapids on the grounds that no authority had been given by the electors to expend the funds and no tax for the same was authorized.

Complicating the issue, much of downtown Marshfield burned to the ground in 1887. While rebuilding their own town, many Marshfielders did not appreciate being taxed in favor of their rivals down county—especially when rumors had it that pro-bridge Grand Rapids/Centralia had actually celebrated the fire, a charge denied by the *Centralia Enterprise and Tribune*.

"When the great Marshfield fire occurred, we did not hear one single person rejoice at the calamity. The sympathy was universal and we feel convinced that the expressions reported by the *Marshfield Times* and attributed to parties here on that occasion, never were uttered, unless it might have been by some criminal fool, escaped from Waupun, or the insane asylum, or who deserved to be there.



Barry Jens at Museum with depiction of 1888 flood

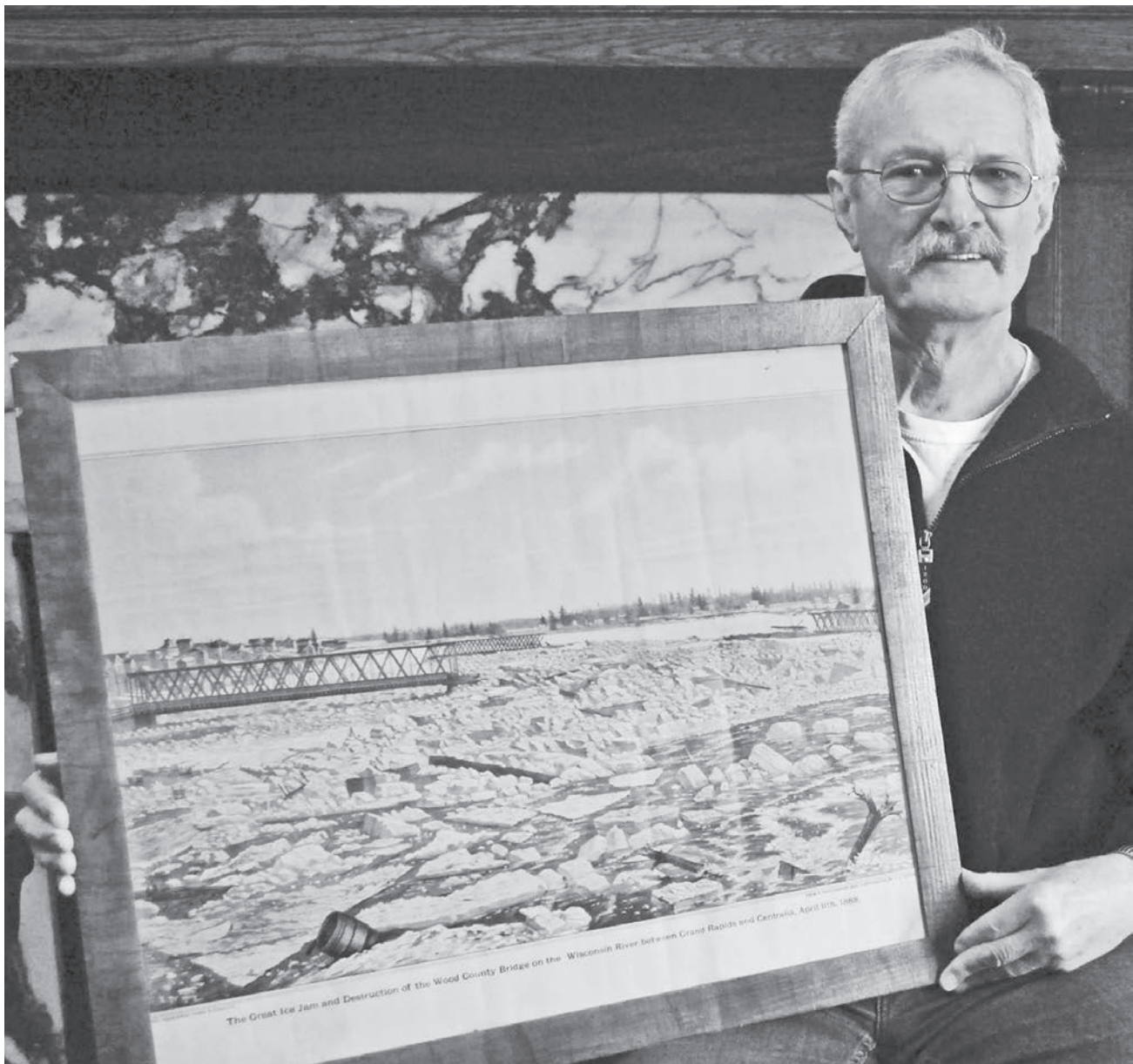


Photo by (Uncle) Dave Engel

"Furthermore...Grand Rapids and Centralia, through public and private subscriptions, sent the city of Marshfield over \$1,000 in cash...a fair proportion for the two *villages* and which was also most cheerfully given."

On the other hand, it was asserted that when the people of Marshfield heard of their victories in the Grand Rapids bridge fight, they celebrated by hoisting the stars and stripes, using the same flag which they ran up when they began to rebuild after the great fire.

In May 1888 a resolution was introduced by J. S. Davis, town of Remington that, because the county as a whole did not benefit from the bridge, it should be closed and a privately-owned

structure like the original Grand Rapids Bridge be built. The resolution passed 21-9. The 21 in favor represented the rural and Marshfield or "western" interests.

The nine opposed were John Edwards, town of Port Edwards; J. A. Gaynor, city of Grand Rapids; Geo. R. Gardner, city of Grand Rapids; Nels Johnson, city of Centralia; L. M. Nash, city of Centralia; Ferdinand Phillips, town of Rudolph; O. Rocheleau, town of Grand Rapids; E. B. Rossier, city of Centralia; and G. F. Witter, city of Grand Rapids.

Some voters may have been waiting for a compromise, as described in the *Enterprise and Tribune*, May 26, 1888.

Supervisor Nash of Centralia, Connor, of the village of Auburndale, Schultz, from the town of Auburndale, and Cameron of Vesper, met the supervisors of the city and town of Marshfield, along with Mr. McKercher from Rock township, to ascertain the amount the County Board members from the northern and western part of the county would appropriate for the rebuilding the bridge. After discussing the matter in a "courteous and friendly" manner, it was proposed that the County appropriate the sum of \$14,000, and Grand Rapids and Centralia the remainder necessary "to the construction of a new substantial iron bridge."

In 1889, an arched, two-span wooden bridge, soon replaced by iron, was built in the same location, replaced in 1922 by the classical concrete Grand Avenue Bridge—the impressive thoroughfare we knew when we were young.

A Good Ferry Story

Centralia Enterprise and Tribune, Oct. 27, 1888:

"Three anti-bridge gentlemen from Pittsville arrived in town on Monday night last after ferry hours. At the landing on the Centralia shore, they, together with Mr. Jack Mullen, of this place, took a skiff, the property of Mr. Smith of the Centralia meat market, and started to cross over to Grand Rapids.

"Mr. Mullen being an old riverman, handled the oars for the party, but the skiff was soon to be discovered unseaworthy, and when about half way across the river, commenced sinking.

"The passengers entreated Mr. Mullen to turn around and pull back to Centralia. Mullen did so, but the boat was fast sinking, and although encumbered with an overcoat and heavy clothes, he jumped overboard and bravely swam for the Centralia shore, which, after a few minutes exertion, he reached safe and sound.

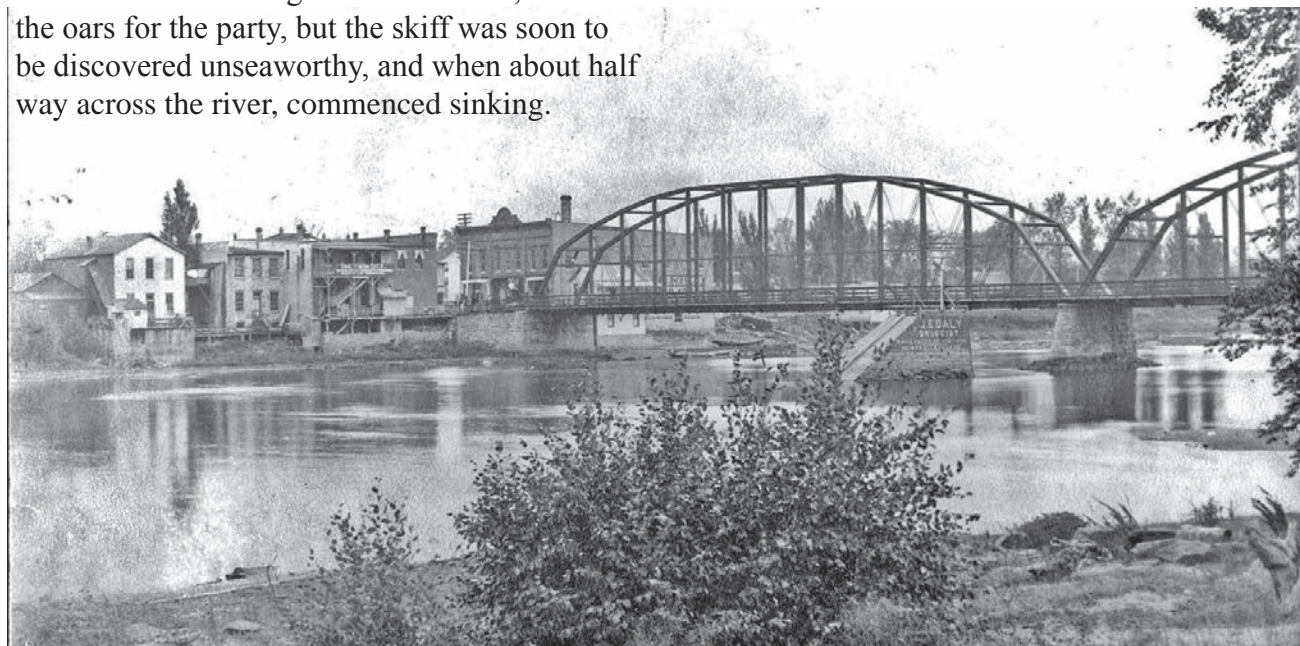
"The shipwrecked were piteously shouting for help with cries of anguish, calling 'Jack, good Jack, save us! What shall we do?'

"The answer came over the splashing of the waters. 'You are anti-bridge men, do as I do, swim.'

"Mr. Louis Lyonnais, Lavigne's ferryman, heard the cries of distress and went to the rescue of the unfortunates with the ferry skiff and, after fishing around for them for a few minutes, brought them to shore alive. Smith's boat was abandoned and drifted down the river. No insurance on the boat, but the parties are amply responsible for the loss.

"This is a very inconvenient river without a bridge. Sometimes even parties who are non-residents of these cities are inconvenienced and the Pittsville three came within a hair's brea[d]th of never voting the anti-bridge ticket. Let all take warning.

"P. S. All repentant anti-bridge sinners can be baptized free of charge, in the limpid water of the old Wisconsin."



Grand Rapids/Centralia bridge built in 1889

Everett Lambert, My Father

An Interesting Man

By Rita Brockman

While reading a recent issue of *Artifacts*, I was surprised to see my name and my dad's name. The article said the Historical Museum people were looking for a lost map. I called, as I have some maps my dad had made some 30 years ago. A few days later, Lori from the Museum came over, and she went back with lots of maps.

I tell you this because my dad was quite an interesting man and his story merits telling. So before they put him back onto the microfilms, allow me to reminisce about him.

He was born at Rushford, Minn. in 1909. As far as I know, there was nothing remarkable about his childhood except he told me, many years later, that he never learned to read because, "I could always read."

Sometime in the following decade the family moved to Wisconsin Rapids and in 1928 Everett graduated from Lincoln High School. Yes! It took him five years to graduate because, as he said, he "goofed off." However, after that he became the original self-made man.

During the next three years he took correspondence courses: Page-Davis School of Advertising and International Typographical Union Printing.

At the same time, 1928 to 1931, he became an employee of the W.F. Huffman Printing Co. in Wisconsin Rapids. In 1931 he started the Lambert Printing Co.

During those same years he became interested in motorcycles, purchased an "Indian" cycle and joined a local group of enthusiasts started by Don Fisher and his wife Thelma of Fisher

Cycle Co., in Wisconsin Rapids. I think my dad was treasurer of the club for a while. They had social events and went on hill climbs.

Everett and a friend took a trip out to New York. They kept detailed logs of all experiences including gasoline costs.

In 1932, my dad met my mother. She and a friend were walking on the old river road called "Lovers Lane" in Port Edwards. My dad drove up on his motorcycle to

tell my mother's friend her boyfriend was in an accident and broke his leg. Dad drove the girlfriend home and then came back for my mother. They were married two years later and went on their honeymoon via motorcycle!

In 1934, Everett began employment at Consolidated Water Power and Paper Co., retiring in the 1970s as beater room foreman.

During all those years, he kept printing as a hobby. In the 1950s he purchased a Chandler Price Platen press and installed it in the basement of his residence. He did

a lot of small job printing, often free of charge, for local and schools and charities.

I used to go down to his shop and "snoop" around while he worked. Soon he had me setting type, learning about quoins, chases, picas, leads, and brasses; how to ink and "feed" a press; how to keep records of supplier and customer orders, etc. Many times he would spend hours standing in front of the press, putting out an order of 500 or more copies of a "job."

To this day I can still hear the "klunk, klunk, klunk" of the press as he put paper in it one at a time. He could feed that press fast!



Everett

He compiled a book, *A History of Printing Presses*. After his death in 1984, I donated that book and many other items such as wood type and some rare books from his printing library.

About 1945, Everett had a small chemistry lab in the basement. He liked to mix up a “rotten egg” smell from various chemicals. As soon as the aroma reached the kitchen upstairs, my mother would yell, “Ew! Stop making that stuff!” He would laugh.

There was a small gram scale in the lab. I wish I’d have saved it. It was a work of art and he must have paid a “fortune” for it.

Also, in his lab, he had a small bottle of mercury. Sometimes he would let us kids have a few drops in our hand and see it “roll around and separate.” I don’t know where he got the mercury but it must have been “legal.” Now it is classified as a very dangerous product. I took the vial and content to UWSP and the lab there disposed of it. I asked if I could keep the little vial but they said, “No!”

An accomplished musician, he played various instruments but mainly the baritone, in Lincoln high school, where his dad Emil Lambert was band director during the 1920s and in the Wisconsin Rapids City Band, again when Emil Lambert was band director there. (His sister, Dorothy, told me once, “Everett never had to practice. He was a “natural”).

My dad was a member of the Local Musicians Union all of his life. He played in local dance bands (trombone) and at one time in a circus band.

Everett put together an extensive history of bands and orchestras in the Central Wisconsin area including many rare photographs.

He wrote music but never had any published. Beethoven was one of his favorite musicians and a bust of Beethoven graced his piano.

We sometimes had family “jam sessions” where I was educated to play the piano. About that time I also played clarinet in the LHS band. The orchestra needed a string bass player and I volunteered. One weekend, I took the bass

home to practice and my dad had more fun playing it than I did. After that I gave up the string bass and went back to clarinet, which was easier to carry around!

In the 1970s Everett spent a lot of time at the Museum. Among other projects, he took photographs of construction and/or demolition sites around Wisconsin Rapids and made street maps of each location so they could be recognized in the future.

He made a map of Calvary Cemetery. Copies went to each of the funeral directors in town. He used to go out to the cemetery where his parents and ancestors are buried

and would sometimes replace old wood crosses that marked pre-century graves.

Never without something new to explore, he drew “block” maps of Centralia, Grand Rapids and Wisconsin Rapids for the years 1800 to 1973 and recorded in each the most important events occurring in those particular years.

He liked old steam locomotives and made several models to scale. He always said, “When I get to Heaven I’m going to order a steam locomotive and a hundred miles of track.”

Other art projects were silk screen printing and aluminum castings. He had a small sand pit in the garage and after melting down a batch of beer cans he would make casts and pour small objects of art. He also drew cartoons.



Everett Lambert

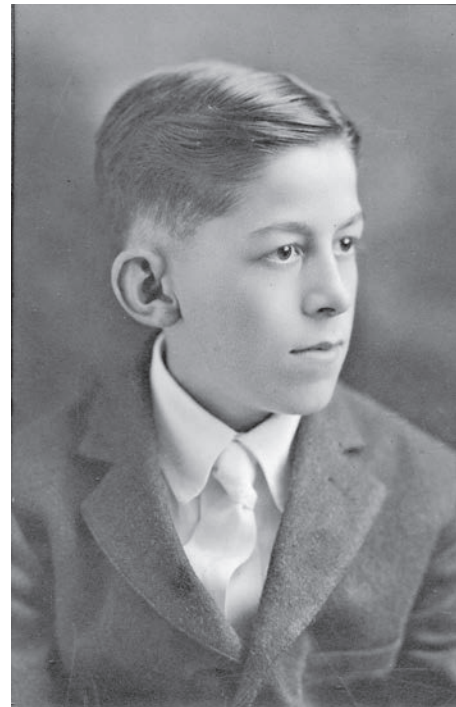
Other writing projects included a history of newspapers in Central Wisconsin and quite a lengthy story of how people lived in the 1920s and 1930s.

There's more. He worked on a cranberry marsh at harvest time, helping to take out sprinklers and raking in berries.

He compiled a "Measurement of Land" guide, took more correspondence classes on mathematics, and always had time to attend family gatherings on holidays, picnics, or just enjoy regular days when he was usually cooking at a grill.

When he got tired of the festivities he would announce, "Well, I'm going to go home and count my money," and we would all laugh.

After he died in 1984, we found out he wasn't kidding!



Everett



See *River City Memoirs III* for stories by Everett Lambert.

The Pfiffner Murals



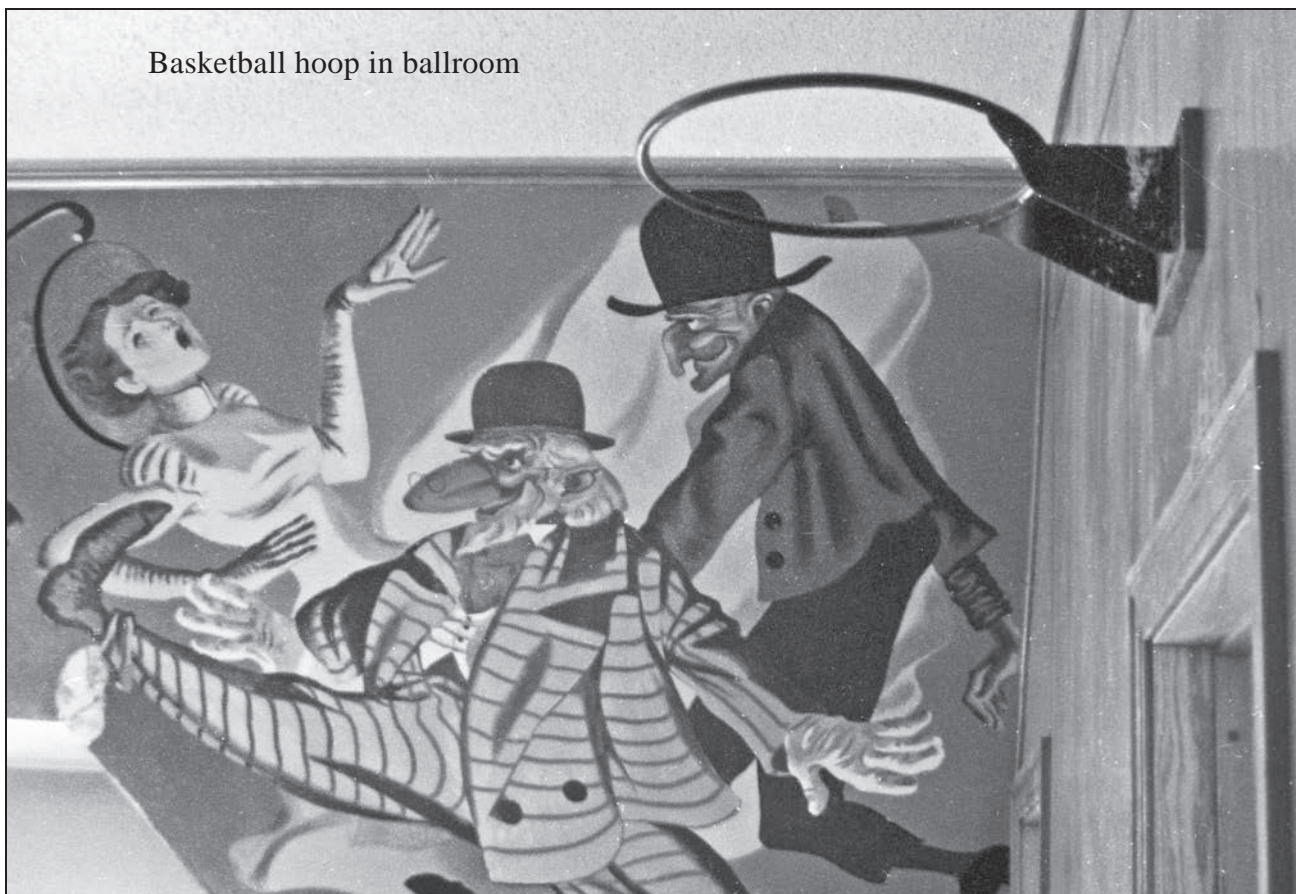
Murals are often believed to portray local persons. Recognize anybody?







Basketball hoop in ballroom



River City Memoirs 1990



Likeness of the artist?

Pfiffner

The Muralist: *E. John Pfiffner*

On several occasions in the 1970s, *Artifacts* editor (Uncle) Dave Engel took in a jazz band featuring Rapids' own Earle Garber on trumpet—at the Whiting Hotel bar in Stevens Point, Wis. The setting included murals similar to those on these pages, painted by Point native E. John Pfiffner in 1946, the same artist who, in 1950, illustrated the walls of Point's P.J. Jacobs high school and, about the same time, at the Hotel Menasha.

Edward John Pfiffner, the son of James Meehan Pfiffner and Mary Louise Sturtevant Pfiffner, was born March 29, 1919, in Point and died last year at 97.

After high school, he attended Milwaukee teachers college and Choinard Art Institute, Los Angeles, Cal. He was offered animation work at Disney studios but decided against it. In L.A., he became friends with and studied piano with Mead Lux Lewis.

After traveling around the country, painting and playing music, Pfiffner returned home as assistant art director at Brady Advertising Co. in Point.

He moved to New York in 1947, stayed with Selma Burke, sculptor of the image on the Roosevelt dime, and played piano with jazz and pop giants of the era. In 1951, he moved to Chicago and established himself as an illustrator, chiefly of children's books.

He married Constance Haight July 2, 1953, in Las Vegas, Nev.

In 1955 Pfiffner took a position as scientific illustrator with the Field Museum of Natural History. He was named head artist and stayed eight more years, producing murals, graphics, exhibit designs and paintings. After leaving the museum in 1963, he did free-lance work for them until 1978. He was also employed as a "jazz pianist" at the Field.

At Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., Pfiffner was medical illustrator for over 20 years. He illustrated many other books including "The Real Book about Spies" by Samuel Epstein and Beryl Williams, 1953; "The Cat: History, Biology and Behavior," by Muriel Beadle, 1977; and "Living New World Monkeys" by Philip Herschkovitz. He also illustrated for *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Doubleday and Harper and Row. He contributed artwork for numerous children's books.

Pfiffner's art was shown at Northwestern University in 1978, Stevens Point in 1988, and Wausau, Wis., in 2005.

Pfiffner was a long time friend of Rapids artist Nyal 'Fuzz' Forstner. For years, Forstner, as a drummer, joined Pfiffner, on piano, playing jazz at the Whiting.

The Pfiffner murals shown here were photographed in 1990 by *Artifacts* editor (Uncle) Dave Engel in the third-floor ballroom of the former Stanton W. Mead house, which had been sold to Northland Cranberries. Plans were underway to disappear some of them from view, according to then-Northland CEO John Swendrowski. (The building, 730 First Ave. S., is now the Wisconsin River Papermaking Museum.)

The artist's grandfather was Edward J. Pfiffner, namesake of Pfiffner Pioneer Park, a prominent lumberman and president of the Citizens National bank in Point. He died in 1948, the year these murals were painted.

According to a biography by the artist's nephew Patrick Pfiffner—John's son, Cameron, of the Chicago area, "carries on his father's spirit with his own paintings and murals and is also a fine jazz musician." It was Cameron who provided much of the documentation on this page.

Cameron Pfiffner





River City Memoirs 1990

The Stanton Mead ballroom, home to dance parties and classes for local youngsters



River City Memoirs 1987

Don Knuth 1922-2017: Goodbye to a man who shared not only his knowledge of local history and personal accounts with me but also his passion for motorcycles, his genuine kindness and wonderful heart. He will be dearly missed.

Lori



Photo from "the box"

Christmas comes more than once a year

By Lori Brost
Museum Administrator

They don't arrive via the chimney but appear mysteriously on our doorstep, some with information attached and some without. When the latest big cardboard mystery box appeared, it began its own story.

Where did it come from? It had no return address but was postmarked from southern Wisconsin.

What was in the box? We opened it to find that its contents had several chapters.

Chapters one and two were albums that contained some great candid photos. While many of the subjects were not local, the albums did include images from Biron, Port Edwards and Wisconsin Rapids, even an advertisement for the Hotel Witter from a billboard!

The next chapter really seemed to take on a life of its own.

The covers of the two books said they were ledgers but they were more like diaries. One contained a cough medicine recipe in which you cook one cup of Point beer and another of brown sugar until boiling; add menthol crystals and boil for several more minutes.

Some of the pages were records of purchases. On Nov. 3, 1953, the family bought what seems like a lot of beef, 178 pounds of it, from Andy's Locker in Vesper for \$41.06. On March 2, 1956, it was a new Speed Queen washer for \$130. In September 1963, a 30-pound case of oleo (margarine) for \$5.50. And in June 1966, they traded a 1960 Oldsmobile in on a new Chevy Impala at a cost of \$2,195.

Among family events mentioned is the writer's son departing for the Milwaukee School of Engineering in September 1956, and in December receiving his Selective Service card. The other son was involved in a car accident in March 1953 and received a job promotion in December 1959. On July 1, 1964, the writer's husband, "Hank," started a new position as a crane operator.

Of general interest, television station WSAU went on the air for the first time on Oct. 24, 1954. (The family would not buy a color TV until June 23, 1967, and would wait until Aug. 11, 1981, to have cable installed only to disconnect the following year.)

Sept. 19, 1957, was named as the starting date of a Consolidated strike that ended on October 8 after 21 days. November 16 would bring news that Mrs. Bernice Worden was killed in Plainfield, Wis. (resulting in the later arrest of Edward Gein).

On Dec. 14, 1959, the West Side IGA opened for business.

The last newsworthy update came on March 30, 1981, when President Reagan was shot and injured.

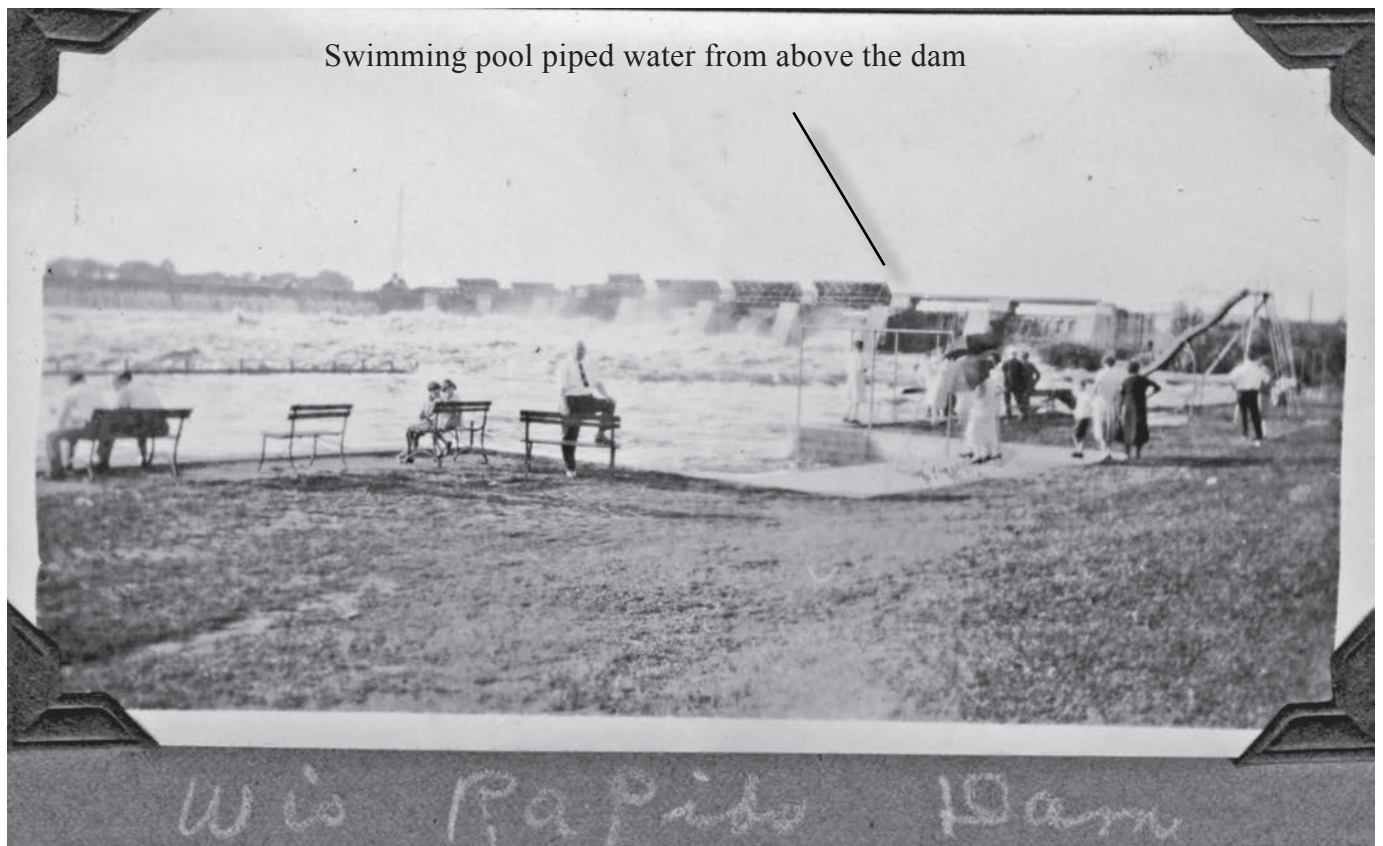
Numerous local names are mentioned, for example, on Oct. 10, 1964, family friend Hank Sawaska passed away at age 59. Using *Newspapers.com*, I found the obituary for Leonard "Hank" Sawaska of Cleveland Street. Sawaska was a millwright at the Biron Division of Consolidated but had also served on the Wisconsin Rapids Police Dept. 1926 to 1929.

In the box, there were items from a funeral. One of the "Friends Who Called" was Marjorie Billmeyer, the mother of: Mary Bronk; the late David Billmeyer; and Rosanne Billmeyer Mehta, who contributed a Billmeyer history to *Artifacts*.

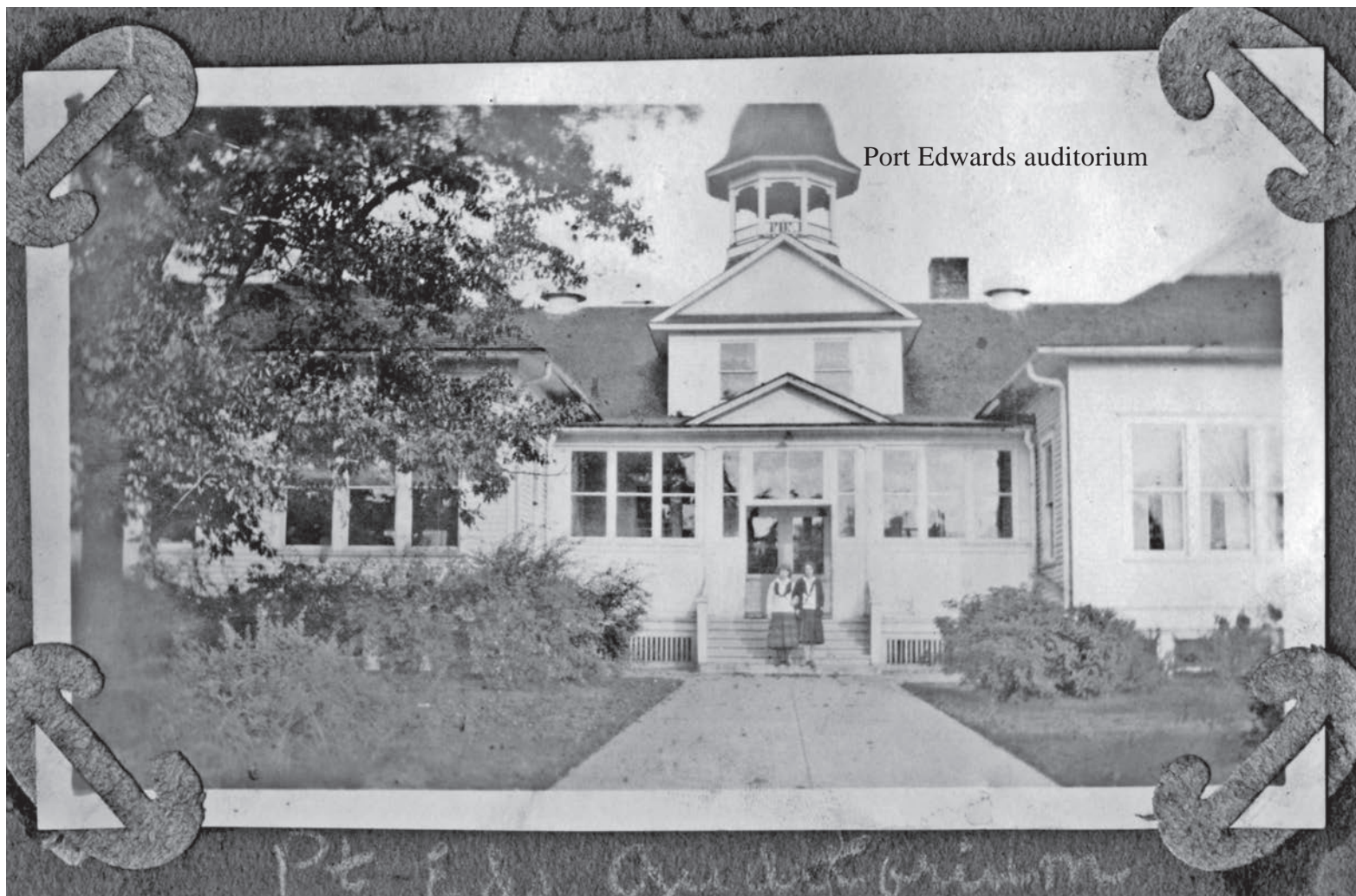
How the articles came to the Museum is still unknown but we have a lot more information on the donation and those named within than we had when Santa arrived with the package.



Consolidated office, 1923, a building that, given its inactive status and community attitudes is lucky to still be standing. See *River City Memoirs I*, "A Beauty Spot."



Looking from west bank Consolidated park to Witter Hotel area on east bank

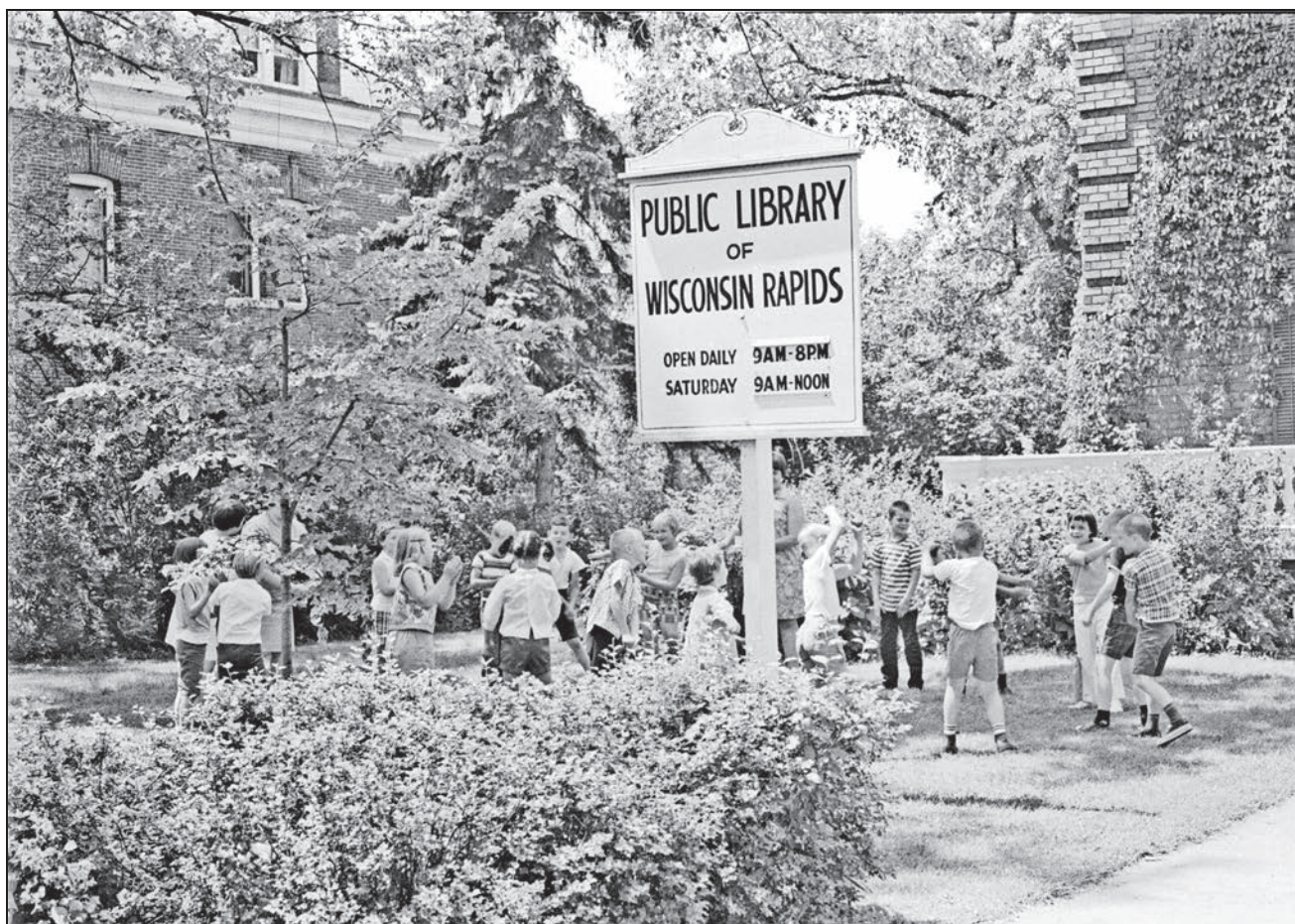


Port Edwards auditorium

Port Edwards log storage, 1925



Photos from the "mystery box"



T.B. Scott June 1967

Just after graduation from UWSP in June 1967, current *Artifacts* editor Dave Engel was working in the Rapids division of Consolidated, probably spending some quality time in the subterranean beaters with Everett Lambert, subject of another story here. Uncle Dave-to-be was soon to leave for the University of Wyoming, Laramie, never to return, he thought.

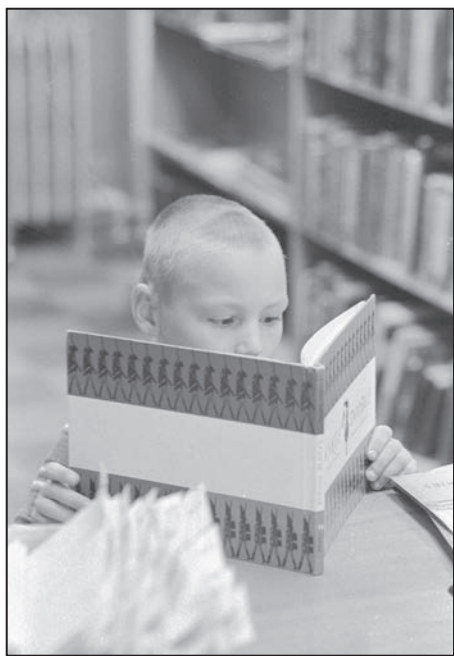
At the same time, young baby boomers were visiting the T.B. Scott Library, as shown here with their mothers, or perhaps librarians.

The building some of us visit every week was a library for 22 years. It has been the Museum since 1970. So, if you haven't been here since it was a library, you haven't been trying.





Scenes from "the library," 1967



Looking out at Third Street South
from the children's department,
now the kitchen exhibit.

Summer of '67

At the Library

Bill Hartley
LHS '63



HANG OUTS

Some of my fondest memories of growing up in Wisconsin Rapids in the 50s and 60s are of the places or businesses I hung out at and the friends I made there. These are places where you could feel comfortable spending some more time than you would in the average business. I'm sure I was a pest to some, but nobody actually threw me out as I recall. Most of my hang outs were places that were operated by nice, fun people, and most were very educational. Being a car guy from a very young age, many of them were related to cars (or girls) in some form or another.

Wisconsin Rapids Police Department - Fred Bonow was a relative of my friend and for several years he worked the desk in the old police station on West Grand Avenue. We often spent evenings there talking with Fred and the other officers who came through, listening to the police radio, and chuckling when one of our friends got picked up for something. I got to know many of the local police officers while hanging out there, and those acquaintances helped out a lot in my later (driving) years. I gained a huge respect for law enforcement and the tough job they have to do.

Fischer Cycle Company - Donald Fischer was my friend Jim's dad. He ran the bicycle and motorcycle dealership on East Grand Avenue across from the Dairy Queen. I bought my Schwinn Black Phantoms from him. He sold Harley Davidson motorcycles there also. He had a big Harley with a huge side car on it that he

used for many years to make special deliveries around town. Donald was a great mechanic, and he was always fixing something interesting in his shop. Occasionally we would slip out of the open windows in Mr. Carlson's third hour study hall and spend that hour with Don.

Joslin's Auto Salvage - Joslin's was located on County Z South of Nekoosa. They used to have a museum out there also. Tom Joslin was the owner and his two sons were in the process of taking over during the 60s. When I spent time there, Tom was still working there rebuilding manual transmissions. He was always willing to share his knowledge and techniques of rebuilding transmissions and living life in general with us, even if we were visiting on an afternoon when we maybe should have been in school. Tom was a great technical resource for transmission and differential questions.

In those days they would burn cars before crushing them and sending them off for recycling, to get rid of combustibles such as carpet, upholstery, wire insulation, and so on (try that today!). They would let us know when they were planning on burning out some cars prior to crushing them so we could take wiring, light bulbs, lenses, etc. out of them before they were burned. I still have some of those light bulbs to this day.

Friendly Fountain - Great food, nickel pinball machines, pretty girls. What more could a guy ask for? Oh yeah, my wife Shirley worked there, too, in the later years.

Pour Inn - a little beer bar on Second Avenue by Montgomery Ward's. Jean, the owner, also owned King Henry's around the corner. She was always fun and became a good friend to those of us who were regulars. I consumed many shorty

Hamm's and improved my pool skills there. Several excursions to the drag strip in Anoka, Minn., were planned over a few beers in the Pour Inn.

Liska's Sinclair - Charlie Liska ran a Sinclair service station across East Grand Avenue from the Mead Hotel. Charlie's son Don was a good friend and was in the Untouchables Car Club with us. I learned a lot about cars from Charlie and the other guys who worked there. I saw the inside of an automatic transmission there for the first time when I was about 15. Liska's was a great place to hang out to watch a parade, and any Friday night to watch the kids (girls) cruise up and down Grand Avenue.

Tom's DX - Tom's was on the corner of 8th Street and East Grand and was run by Tom Fogarty, or "Big Drag" to many of us. Tom was easy to hang around with and there was always a group of guys around there working on something. Tom bought one of the first Snap-On oscilloscopes for diagnosing ignition and electrical systems on cars, and several of us learned how to use it there.

I became good friends with many guys there, including Mick the Hamm's Beer truck driver. I went on a couple of trips to St. Paul to pick up beer at the brewery and a couple of trips to Kenosha to drop it off with him. Always a good time on the road.

Tom later went on to run the Enco station on 8th Street across from Terrace Gardens. I worked for him out there for a while. I remember we were open 24 hours during deer season because we were the first Enco station hunters saw on the way up north from Milwaukee and Chicago, and we were always busy. I also remember that I did not like pumping gas and providing full service to customers in the winter. Brrrr.

Bill Cammack's dad was a regular at both stations. Every Friday night, after he was on the road all week selling whatever he sold, he would come to Tom's for an oil change, grease job, and wash job. I washed his car one cold winter night at the Enco station, and when I was done

I couldn't open the bay door to get it out. It had frozen shut. Took a lot of ice chipping to get it open.

Art's Restaurant - on West Grand near the Wisconsin Theater, Art's was owned by Art Davis. I don't recall seeing Art in there very much, but most of the time I spent in there was after the bars closed. That's where I learned how to drink coffee (with cream, at first). It was a real gathering place for a while. (Became Sieber's in 1969)

Wilpolt's Restaurant - located across the street from Art's, it was frequented after school by a lot of girls from Assumption. It was always interesting, and a great place to get an excuse written if you had happened to miss school for some reason. That's all I'm going to say about that. In 1967, it was bought by Maurice Mathews.

Corpsman Hall - formerly the Masonic Temple and who knows what before that [a church], it was located on the west side across from the old Fischer's Dairy. When we were of age, it was a dance hall on Friday nights featuring local bands like the Triumphs and Zakons. Always a good time dancing and listening to rock music.

The Milwaukee Road Depot - I don't think I went inside very often, but I bet I drove around that little triangle in front of it at least 100 times every Friday night while cruising Grand Avenue. This was one of our favorite ways to see and be seen.

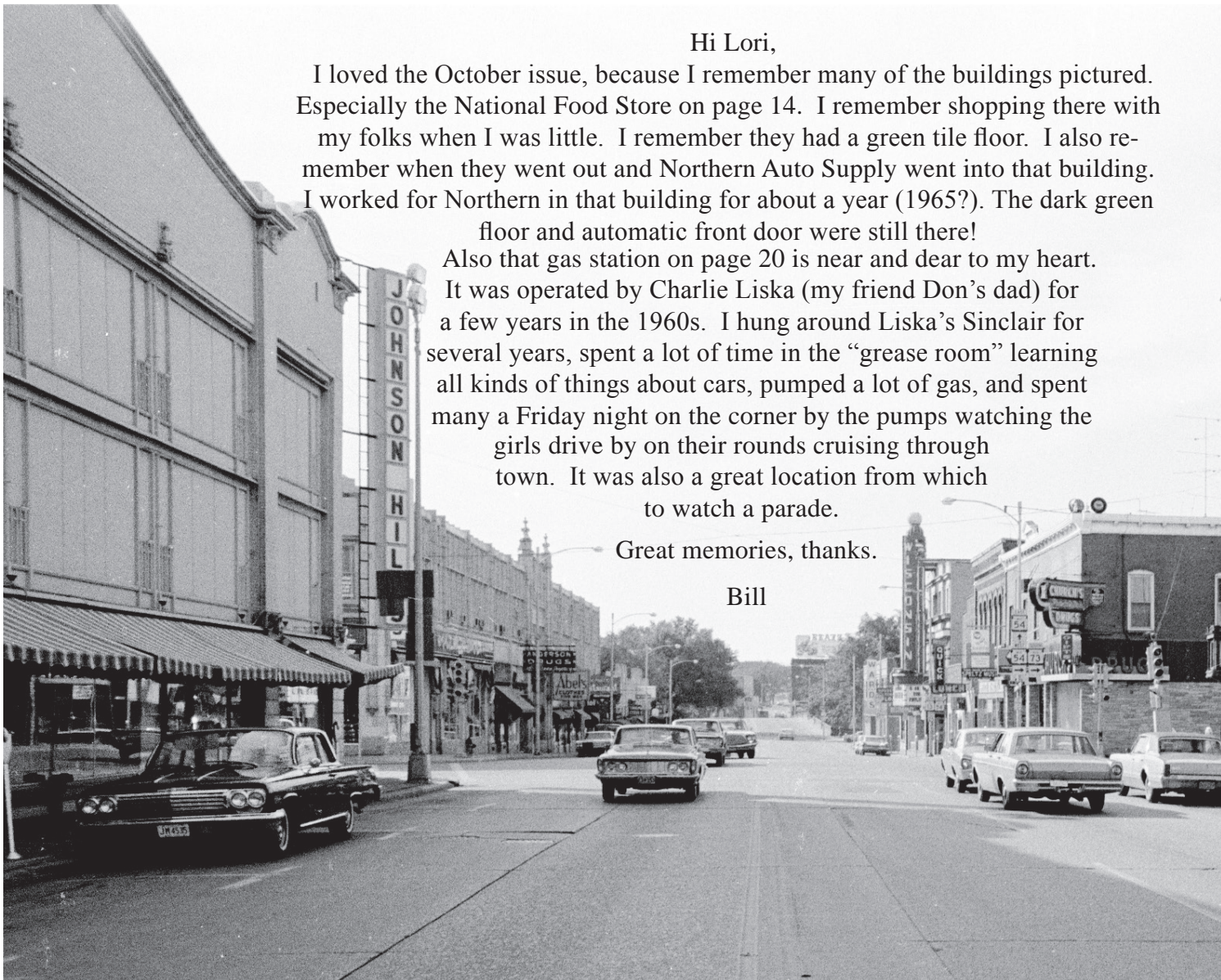
Untouchables Car Club club house - for a while we had a club house in a rented two stall garage out across the viaduct on 54, just past the Windmill Motel. We had graduated from someone's basement (probably mine or Jim Fischer's) and finally had our own place. We planned many car club activities out there, including club trips to car shows in far away places like Green Bay, trips to the drag races in Union Grove, and road rallies around the area.

I think we still had that club house when we bought the Henry J we made into the club's drag car. I remember we worked on it a lot at John Sowatzke's dad's concrete plant over on the west side someplace, too.

Portesi's - Our favorite pizza in the whole world. We spent many nights after the bars closed eating pizza in Portesi's. I don't think we ever got rowdy in there, but if the noise level reached a certain point, Mr. Portesi would come out of the kitchen and check the thermostat in the dining room. That was our unspoken warning to cool it, or else. We never knew what "or else" meant, but we knew we didn't want to find out. Shirley and I still visit Portesi's when we're in

Rapids, and the pizza is as good as we remember it. Never found any we like better.

Lake Wazeecha - Not really a business, but a great place to hang out nevertheless. I always hung at the white beach, since it was closer and my mom had forbidden me to come home full of that red sand. The beach was great, the metal slide would burn your butt on a hot day, and the swings were a great place to have a serious conversation with a girl. I lived close enough that I could ride my bike out. There were great, secluded picnic areas all over, too. They provided great tree cover, under which to take a special young lady and wax your car. My cars always looked shiny in those days.



Hi Lori,

I loved the October issue, because I remember many of the buildings pictured. Especially the National Food Store on page 14. I remember shopping there with my folks when I was little. I remember they had a green tile floor. I also remember when they went out and Northern Auto Supply went into that building. I worked for Northern in that building for about a year (1965?). The dark green floor and automatic front door were still there!

Also that gas station on page 20 is near and dear to my heart. It was operated by Charlie Liska (my friend Don's dad) for a few years in the 1960s. I hung around Liska's Sinclair for several years, spent a lot of time in the "grease room" learning all kinds of things about cars, pumped a lot of gas, and spent many a Friday night on the corner by the pumps watching the girls drive by on their rounds cruising through town. It was also a great location from which to watch a parade.

Great memories, thanks.

Bill

Joe's BBQ - also known as the Golden Eagle BBQ, located on Highway 54. Probably some of the best barbeque I've eaten (prior to moving to Texas, of course). Joe's was a great place to go for a sandwich and to get together with friends. They were always nice to us kids out there. I wonder if anyone ever got the REAL recipe? It was a big secret back in those days.

Herschleb's - probably the best ice cream known to man. A great place to sit at the counter and discuss world situations with friends over a soda or sundae. And they had car hops who would serve you in the car, on those days when the discussions had to be more private.

Sowatzke's Drive In - Art and Pearl ran the root beer stand on the corner of 8th Street by the LHS tennis courts. If you were lucky enough to get to play tennis during gym class, you could enjoy a hamburger, fries, and a cherry coke or root beer at Sowatzke's before the lunch or dinner crowd got there. As I remember they only had two stools out in front, but there was a picnic table or two out back you could use, as long as the gym teacher didn't come out to see how the tennis was going. We also drove in to that place quite often. I remember the bottom of my Untouchables plaque dragging on their driveway when it hung from the chains on my back bumper. Those french fries tasted great, especially in a '57 Chevy!

Your Record Shop - Clem and Dorothy Rumble owned it (David and Larry's parents). On 2nd Street across from Daly Drug, it was a great place to hang out, chat with the Rumbles, pick up the latest Top 40 listing, test-listen to some 45s, and test-read some car magazines. Occasionally we would have enough left from our allowance to actually buy a 45 record or a Hot Rod or Car Craft magazine. I'm sure we spent many more hours looking and listening than we ever spent dollars buying.

I'm sure there were other places I'm forgetting. But the message here is when we were hanging out someplace, we weren't out getting in trouble someplace else. Yeah, we had our share of fun growing up in Rapids, but what I remember most fondly are the people I learned from and the places where I hung out in my youth.



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Artifacts, a local history magazine and newsletter for the South Wood County Historical Corp. welcomes contributions of writings and photographs relevant to the greater Wisconsin Rapids area. For a year's subscription and membership send \$25 to the address above. Contact: (Uncle) Dave Engel, editor, dave@swch-museum.com or Lori Brost, Museum Administrator and assistant editor, 715-423-1580 or lori@swch-museum.com



In my editorial mind, he was the fact checker. No one knew more about this city. He once called because I said my first home was on 11th Street. He knew it was 11th Avenue. I had quoted a letter from an out-of-towner who didn't know West Side from East Side. Now that Don Knuth is gone, I can make all the mistakes I want to. It's a freedom I regret. *(Uncle) Dave Engel*