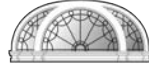


ARTIFACTS



Cover: Rudolph Grotto, see p. 2; Witter intro by Phil Brown, 2; Witters by Lori Brost, 3-7; Rapids Twins by Alison Bruener; 8-9; Bert Jagodzinski and Father Wagner, 10-21; Wagner education, 22; in Europe, 23; in La Crosse, 24; at Necedah, 25; Grotto misc., 26; Wagner's Iowa, 27; 1903 LHS 28-29; Revisiting LHS/East Jr. High by Thomas J. Johnson; Johnson Hill gas station photo by C. Henry Bruse, 31; Sledding photo, 32.

The latest I.D. for the cover photo: Rosaline Kempen Weiler, Alois Van Asten, Lorraine Van Asten Jagodzinski, Delores Kempen Dupree, Lucille Kempen O'Shasky, Germain Kempen Korslin, Clarabell Kempen See, Bernadine Kempen Jagodzinski. From Bert Jagodzinski: "Rosie, Delores & Germaine are cousins on my dad's side, Alois & Lorraine are cousins on my mother's side. Lucille and Clarabell are my sisters." (Photo from Bert.)



Our Museum Family: The Witters

By Phil Brown
SWCHC President

Even though we at the South Wood County Historical Museum "live" in the beautiful Charlotte and Isaac Witter home, photographs of Witter family life and the building's interior have been surprisingly hard to come by. It seems the family gradually left "River City" behind and were completely gone by 1948, when the T.B. Scott Library moved into their former residence. Thanks must go to our Museum Administrator, Lori Brost, for establishing great relationships with the Witter descendants pictured here. Even though they moved to distant places like California and France, for them, Wisconsin Rapids would always be the motherland!



This photo labeled "Wisconsin Rapids 1929" shows Charlotte Witter at an unidentified rock wall. Also marked 1929, the image at right shows Isaac with grandson Jere III.



Images

By Lori Brost
Museum Administrator

Unfortunately, we do not have many photos of the interior of the Museum when Isaac and Charlotte Witter called it home.

Thanks to 1925 newspaper articles, we get visuals of the decorations for the summer engagement party given to Suzanne Gobel and the Witters' only son, Jere—silver and pink in the dining room with baskets and jars of blossoms, silver and green in the ballroom with Benson's orchestra from Chicago playing for the dancers. The paper also documents late-winter wedding activities introducing Mr. and Mrs. Jere D. Witter II.

After the wedding, Charlotte and Isaac soon became grandparents, to Jere III in 1927, Priscilla in 1930 and Phelps Dean in 1932 (who was born in what is now the Museum). Following the birth of Phelps, the younger Witters moved to California and many family photos most likely moved with them.

Our search for those photos has continued and that is where I've been lucky enough to meet some of the right people. Some years ago, I was introduced to Ann Cates, daughter of Jere Delos Witter III and Jonell Ball Witter. Ann shared photos of her parents before and after their 1948 marriage and of her time with her dad before to his 2006 death.

Prior to Ann's passing in 2010, I received a couple handwritten letters from Priscilla, in which she shared memories of her Grandfather Isaac and his love of animals. His favorite cat was named Jack; maybe this is where her love of cats was born. He also had birds in cages in the house. She said her grandfather was the greatest man she had ever known.

I've also been lucky enough to meet Phelps Witter and his wife, Barbara, during their visit to Wisconsin Rapids when they shared photos with us, one of which hangs on the wall in the sun room at the Museum. Another is a more formal and softer photo of Charlotte than I had seen in the past.

In April, I received another group of images from Barbara: candid photos that you see here of the Witters young and old in Rapids and California.



Jere III with mother Suzanne, possibly 1933



A June 29, 1925, *Daily Tribune* outlined the engagement party for Jere Witter II (1902-77) and Suzanne Gobel at the Witter home. This photo of Jere may have been from that day.

What happened to the Witters?



Jere D. Witter III at his Third Street home, south of the Museum

After their December 1925 wedding, Jere II and Suzanne spent two weeks in Honolulu on their honeymoon before returning to Wisconsin Rapids and setting up residence at 1109 Third St. S., a structure still standing at the corner of Third Street South and Mead Street. The photos of the children on this page appear to have been taken at that location.



Jere III and Priscilla on Third Street



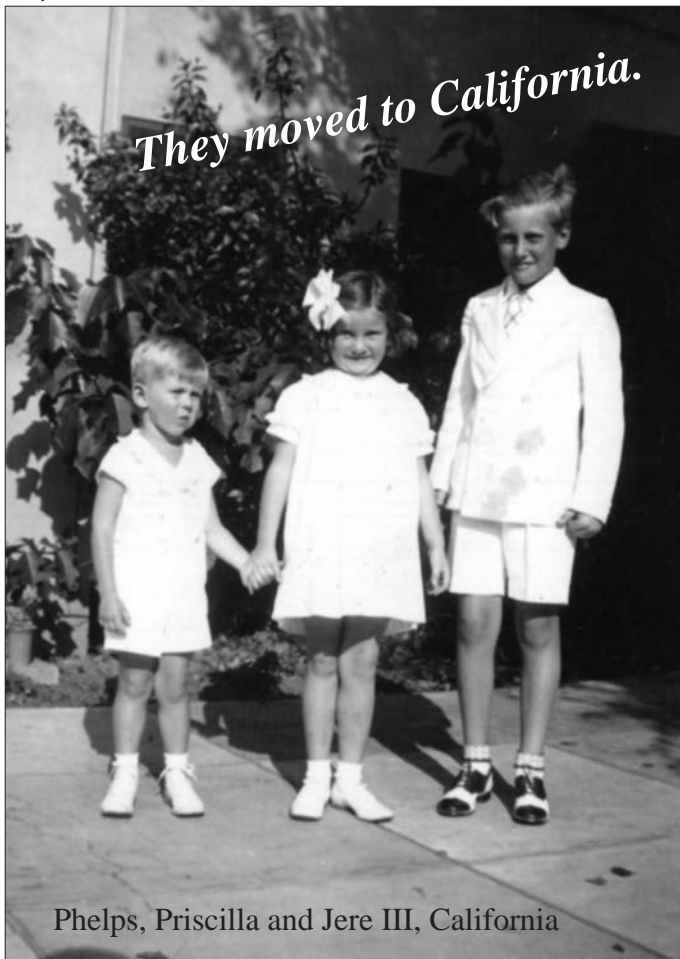
Priscilla Witter



Phelps Dean with mother Suzanne in Rapids, 1933



Jere and Priscilla in Rapids



Phelps, Priscilla and Jere III, California



Phelps Dean (often called Dean), 1942, California

Children of Jere Witter II and Suzanne Gobel Witter

Jere Delos (1927-2006)

The birth of Jere Witter III, Feb. 19, 1927, in Evanston, Ill., was announced in the Rapids paper for all of Grandma and Grandpa Witter's friends and family to see. After the birth of Jere's siblings, the family moved to California where Jere graduated from high school and joined the Navy, flying as a pilot during World War II.

While attending the University of California, Berkeley, Jere met Jonell Ball. The couple married on Aug. 17, 1948.

After receiving his bachelor's degree, Jere began his career—as a copy boy at the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Moving up in 1955 to a news writer for Channel 5 television in San Francisco, he later became news director.

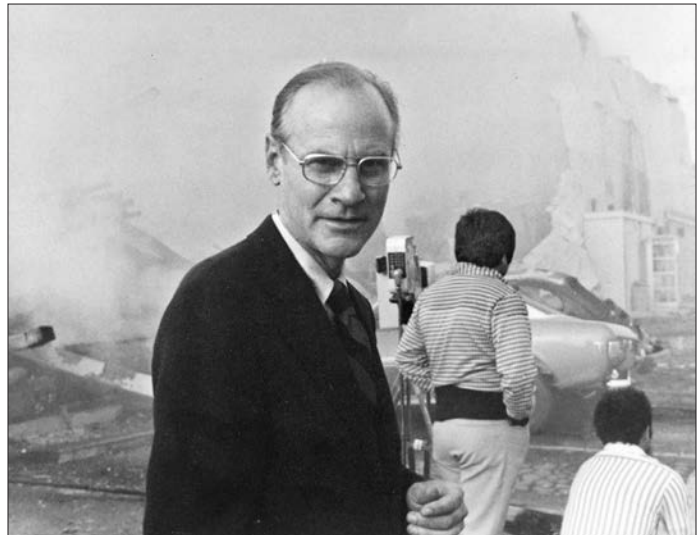
The couple relocated to Los Angeles in 1962 and then to Orange County where Witter remained in journalism until he became a field investigator for the Legal Aid Society of Orange County, his specialty being stories involving the homeless, and undocumented immigrants.

Jere enjoyed a celebrated career in his field including winning an Emmy in the early 1980s.

Jere would lose his battle with cancer in May of 2006.



1953: Jonell, Ann (Cates) and Jere Witter III



Jere Witter III reporting in California

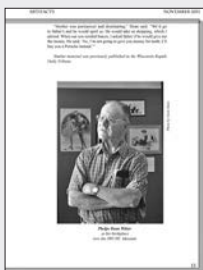
Priscilla (1930-2010)

Priscilla's mother, Suzanne Gobel Witter, passed her love for music to her daughter, Priscilla, born in Wisconsin Rapids. While living in France, where she had moved at 17 with her mother and brother Phelps Dean, Priscilla befriended leading classical pianists and wrote reviews for the international *Herald Tribune* and *New York Times*. She never married. During the last half of her life, she operated an animal shelter in the south of France, later establishing a foundation for abandoned cats and dogs, becoming the "cat lady of Menton." Priscilla always had fond memories of Rapids and Grandpa Isaac Witter. She is buried in Wisconsin Rapids next to her brother, Jere III.

Jere Witter photos courtesy of his daughter, Ann Witter Cates

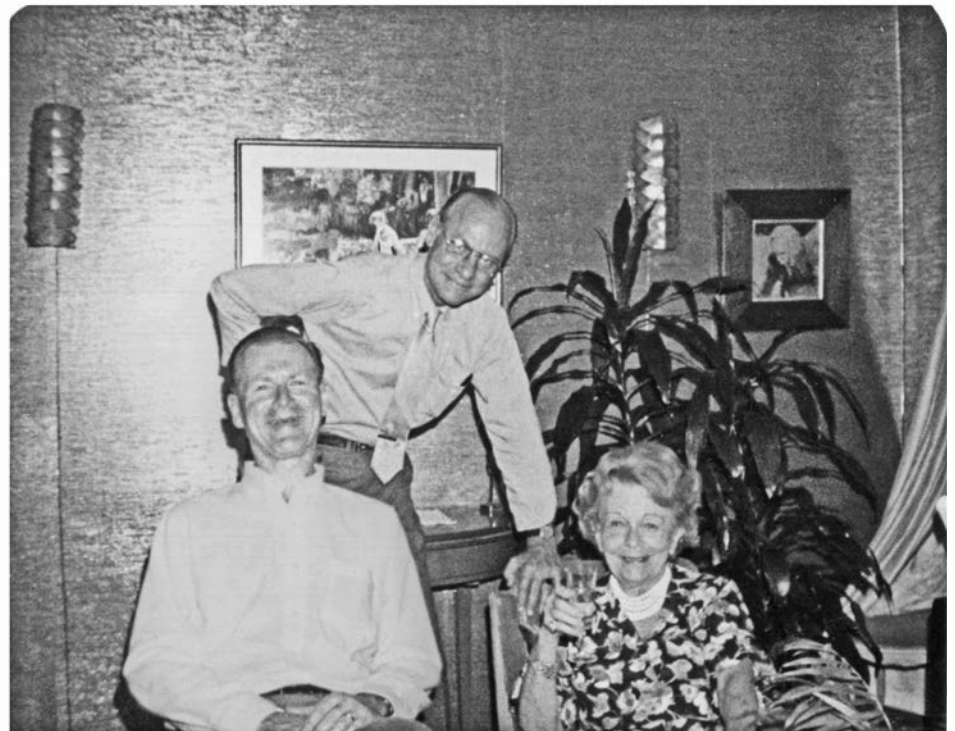


Wedding of Phelps Dean Witter and Barbara Newman, Priscilla Witter, rear



See November 2011 *Artifacts* for more photos of the Witter family

Phelps (seated) and Jere Witter with their mother, Suzanne Gobel Witter Smith Kaufmann, who died in 1997



Photos courtesy of Phelps and Barbara Witter

Phelps Dean (1932-)

With his mother and grandmother playing piano and organ, it seemed natural that Phelps Witter would excel in music at an early age—and he did, winning First Prize in the *San Francisco Chronicle's* annual talent contest at age 16.

In 1949, with his mother and siblings, Phelps moved to France where his musical training and excellence continued at the Paris Conservatory. His talent was not limited to performing. His compositions would be frequently performed throughout France.

During his time in France, Phelps would marry the woman he is still married to 60 years later. In July 1958, donning a short, bouffant dress, Priscilla Witter by her side, Barbara Newman exchanged vows with her fiancé in the American Church in Paris. The couple honeymooned on the Italian Riviera before making their home in San Francisco after the birth of their son, Warren Newman Witter, in 1959.

Phelps and Barbara added three daughters; Leslie (1960), Diane Charlotte (1962) and Carol Suzanne (1963). A recently retired numismatist who had operated Witter Coins, Phelps has again put his focus on his music.

Minnesota Twins logo, 1976-1986



Wisconsin Rapids Play Ball!

By Alison Bruener
SWCHC Staff

Thanks to Wisconsin Rapids resident, Amy Eswein, our memories of America's pastime have been revisited. With the donation of her father's (Henry J. Smith Jr.) extensive files of mostly financial records from his years as the Wisconsin Rapids Twins treasurer, we have also acquired a considerable collection of minutiae for future scholars to pore over.

While today in Wisconsin Rapids many summer nights are spent at Witter field watching the Rafters of the collegiate summer Northwoods League, this city has a history of hosting actual minor league teams. The Wisconsin Rapids White Sox played from 1940-42 and would return after WWII, 1946-53.

For a season in 1963, the Washington Senators brought minor league baseball back to Witter Field. But it was the team that took its place in Minnesota and here that most people remember.

The Wisconsin Rapids Twins were a Class A minor league team in the Midwest League.

The Twins held only one title, in 1973, the era of Elmore "Moe" Hill. The last season the Twins carried the name Wisconsin Rapids was in 1983. The following year, they moved to Kenosha and in 1992 to Fort Wayne, Indiana, where they became the Wizards.

The following are some notable names affiliated with the Wisconsin Rapids Twins organization:

Charlie Manuel: 1967, managed Twins in 1983. Played for five major league teams. Managed two major league teams (Cleveland Indians 2000-2002),

Philadelphia Phillies (2005-2013). Managed World Series Champions Philadelphia Phillies (2008). Pacific League MVP (1979). Philadelphia Baseball Wall [sic] of Fame.

Rick Dempsey: 1968-1969. Played for seven major league teams, including the Milwaukee Brewers, 1991. World Series Champion (1983, 1988), World Series MVP (1983), Baltimore Orioles Hall of Fame.

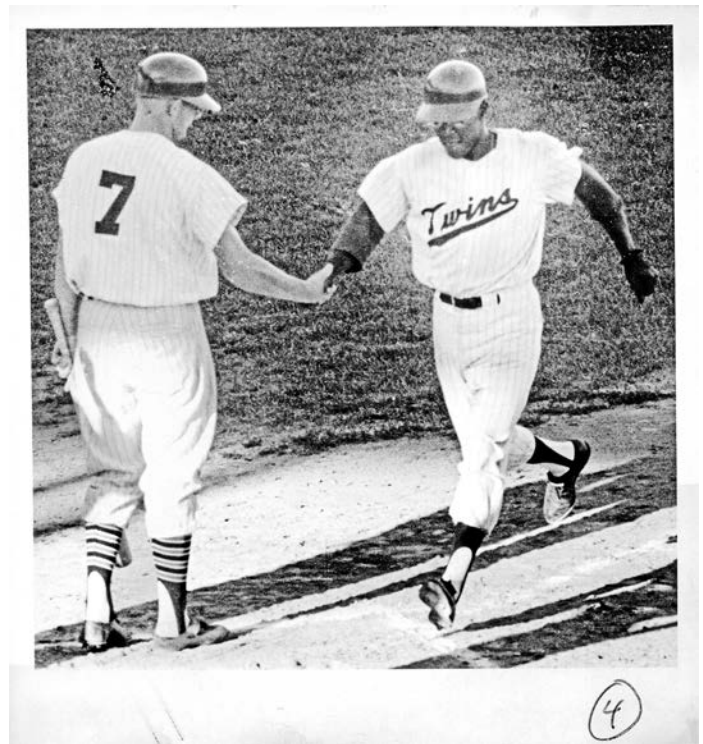
Bill Campbell: 1971. Played for seven major league teams. All Star (1977), AL Rolaids Relief Man Award (1976, 1977), AL Saves Leader (1977).

Elmore "Moe" Hill: 1972-1978. In 1974, led the league with a .339 average, 32 home runs and 113 RBI.

Gary Gaetti: 1980. Played for six major league teams. Minnesota Twins (1981-1990). World Series Champion (1987), All-Star (1988, 1989), ALCS MVP (1987), Minnesota Twins Hall of Fame.

Kent Hrbek: 1980. Played for Minnesota Twins (1981-1994). World Series Champion (1987, 1991), All-Star (1982).

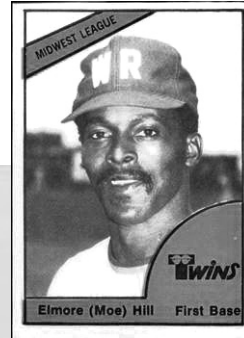
Jim Eisenreich: 1980, 1981. Played for five major league teams. World Series Champion (1997) with the Florida Marlins.



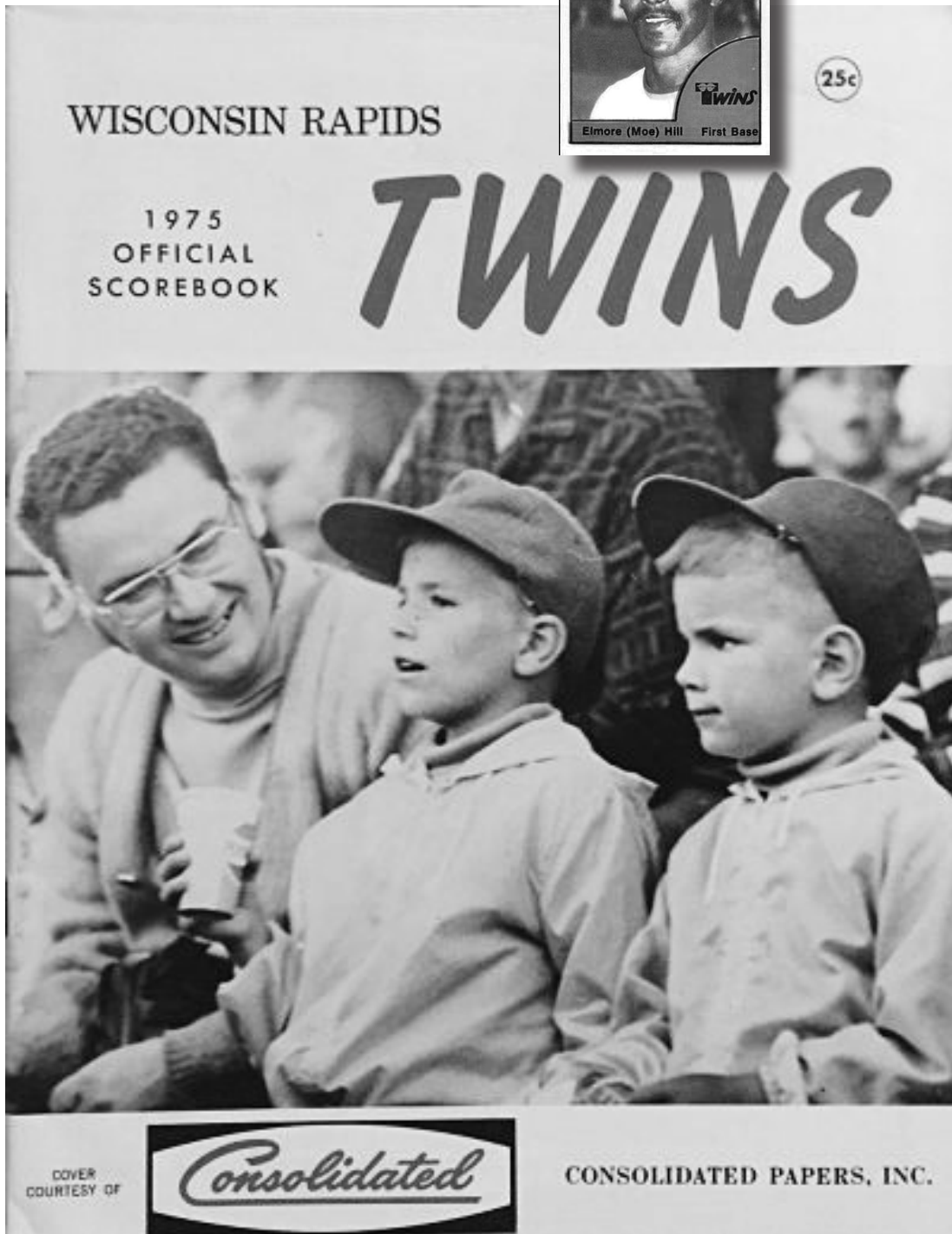
Tribune photo (unidentified) by Dave Engel, 1980s

Consolidated Night

When Consolidated Papers, Inc. handed out free tickets to its thousands of employees, Witter Field stands were crowded with fans—of free tickets. When the Twins “faithful” had to buy their own, the stands emptied, perhaps contributing to the departure of the team although, in the sports world, they had already stayed a relatively long time.



Trading Card Database



SWCHC

Photo by UD



"Bert" at new Grotto Welcome Center

Allow me, dear reader, to pause for a moment to introduce Bernadine Kempen, when she was a mere girl long ago.

There is a fairytale by George MacDonald, about a princess and a goblin, about a king's daughter, who in her father's palace found a room upstairs. In that room dwelt a lady with snow-white hair, and her eyes were younger than the springtime. Bernadine, then, perhaps ten or eleven years old, reminded me of that lady.

Rev. Philip J. Wagner in "Building the Grotto Shrine"

Father Wagner

Friend of Every Boy and Girl

*(Uncle) Dave Engel interview with Bernadine "Bert" Jagodzinski
June 12, 2018*

Born May 11, 1925, she's been Bert Jagodzinski since her 1943 marriage to Bill, but, in Roman Catholic nomenclature, her parents named her Bernadine Johanna Wilhelmina Marie Kempen.

Bert's family on both sides had come over from Holland, the Netherlands, inspired by the Rev. Theodore Van den Broek, who also founded the mission at Grand Rapids that became SS. Peter and Paul. Bert's mother was Mamie Joosten, whose parents, Martin and Anna Joosten, had immigrated to Little Chute in the mid-1800s.

The second migration of the Kempens was from Holland, Wis., to Rudolph, Wis., in the late 1800s, spurred by "good and cheap land" promoted out of De Pere, Wis., by R. Weyenberg and P.R. Lamers.

Families named Dorshorst, Joosten, Peters, Van Asten, Van Ert, Hartjes, Van Lith, Krommenaker,

Van de Wattering and Van de Loop settled near St. Philomena Catholic church located on the Rudolph road (now 5th Avenue) and it became known as "Holland Road."

Said Bert, "Father Van Sever was the priest and he did not put any money into those buildings on Holland Road because he sent it all home to Belgium. My mother's father, Martin Joosten, and four others went to La Crosse to tell the bishop that the buildings were getting run down and that Father would not do anything about it. So the bishop replaced him with Father Wagner.

"Father Wagner saw how bad the buildings were. That's why they just tore the buildings down. And he saw how the railroad had come in the meantime. That's how he moved the church to Rudolph."

Continued on p. 12

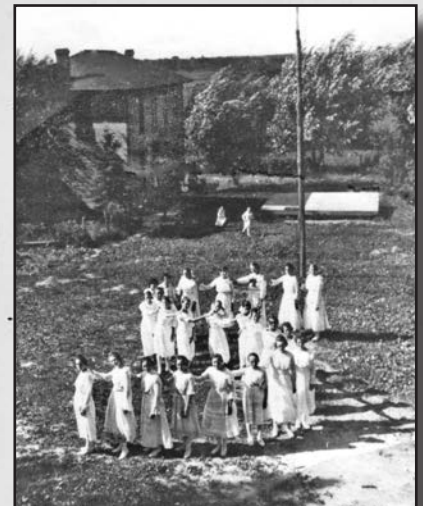
Holland Road Church

As told by the 1923 *History of Wood County*, Rudolph Catholics attended SS. Peter and Paul in Grand Rapids until 1878, when St. Philomena's parish in the town of Rudolph was annexed as a mission in charge of Rev. P. Pernin (of Peshtigo fire fame)—who had a church erected the same year.

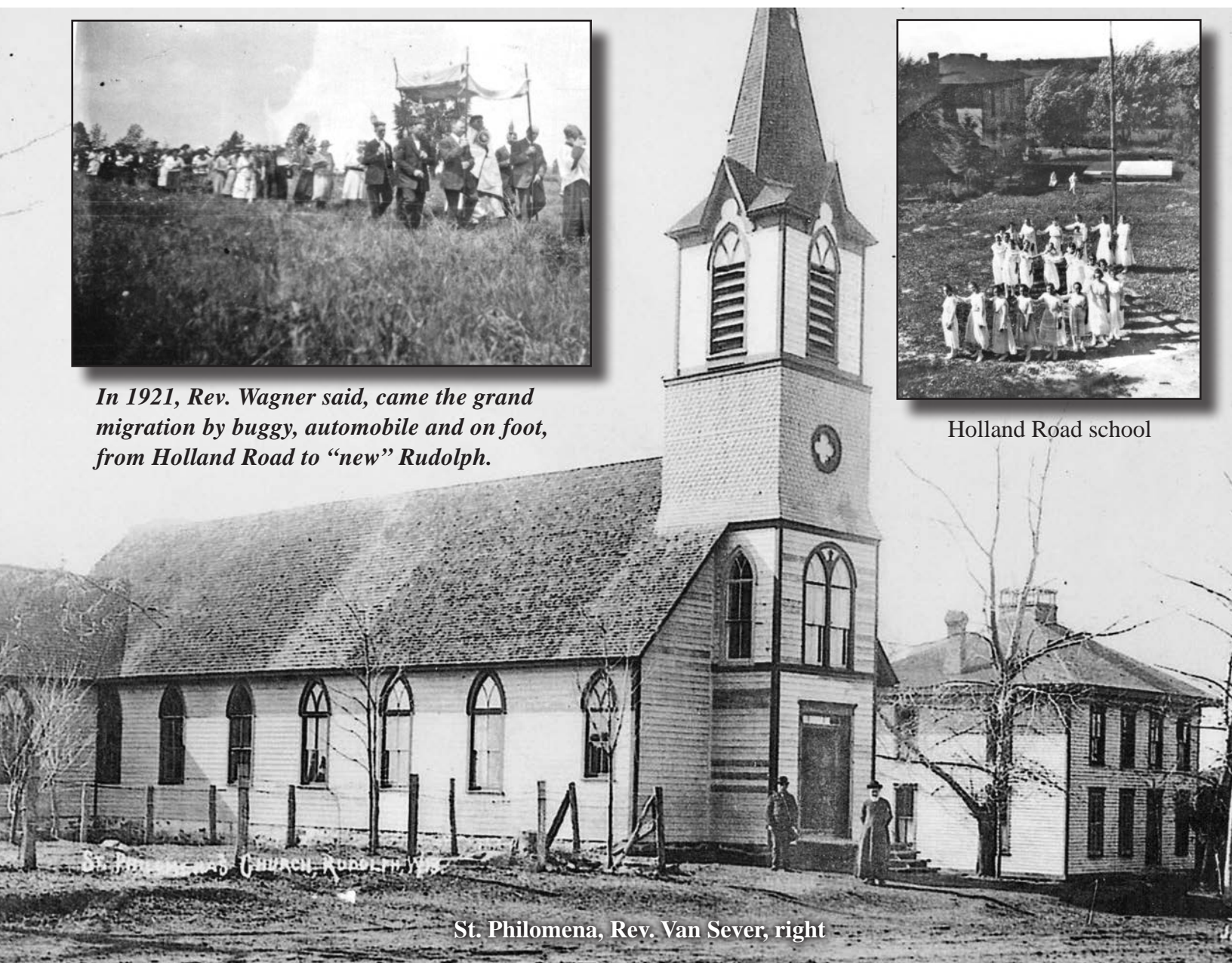
In 1884, Rev. August Van Sever, a Belgian, was appointed first resident pastor of Rudolph. In 1885, he started a parochial school with the Sisters of Notre Dame in charge. After 33 years, he left for St. John's Atonement College, Graymoor, N. Y., replaced by Rev. Philip J. Wagner. The old buildings shown below had "become inadequate" and a new location was selected on an elevation near the post-railroad village. Completed in 1921 was a "massive brick structure, serving at present not only as school and Sisters' residence, for which it is intended, but also as a church. Services are held for the present in the basement. The parish is composed of 130 families. The school has an enrollment of 140 children." That 1921 school and church has been replaced this year by a Grotto welcome center.



In 1921, Rev. Wagner said, came the grand migration by buggy, automobile and on foot, from Holland Road to "new" Rudolph.



Holland Road school



St. Philomena, Rev. Van Sever, right

Most photos from Grotto collection assembled by Kris Willfahrt and digitized by the SWCHC Museum; also Bernadine Jagodzinski and River City Memoirs

Continued from p. 10

Bert: "There were three houses by the new church: Cornelius Van Asten's and John Hartjes' and ours. That's all that was there when we were growing up.

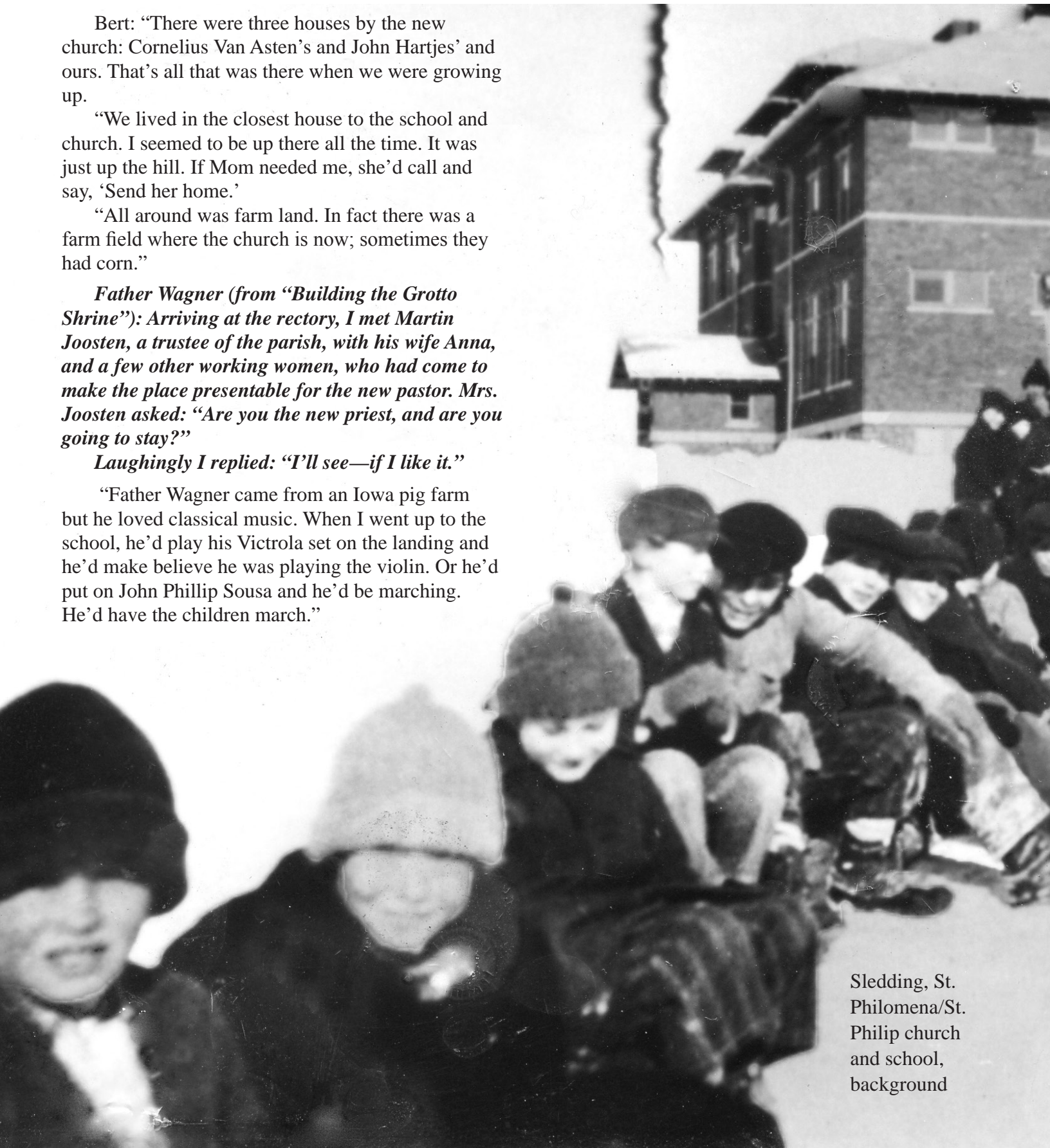
"We lived in the closest house to the school and church. I seemed to be up there all the time. It was just up the hill. If Mom needed me, she'd call and say, 'Send her home.'

"All around was farm land. In fact there was a farm field where the church is now; sometimes they had corn."

Father Wagner (from "Building the Grotto Shrine"): Arriving at the rectory, I met Martin Joosten, a trustee of the parish, with his wife Anna, and a few other working women, who had come to make the place presentable for the new pastor. Mrs. Joosten asked: "Are you the new priest, and are you going to stay?"

Laughingly I replied: "I'll see—if I like it."

"Father Wagner came from an Iowa pig farm but he loved classical music. When I went up to the school, he'd play his Victrola set on the landing and he'd make believe he was playing the violin. Or he'd put on John Phillip Sousa and he'd be marching. He'd have the children march."



Sledding, St. Philomena/St. Philip church and school, background



Wagner: Driving along the church road one day, toward the village—it was Saturday—I heard through a window the most heavenly music. Stopping the truck, I looked toward a home, where I saw the graceful silhouette of a girl playing the piano. To my delight the sounds came directly toward me. The musician was dressed in her Saturday gown. She was alone, except for her instrument, and her sheet music. How sweetly it sounded! All too soon it died away. Those moments still live in my memory as an exquisitely perfect experience. On close observation I found that the musician was none other than a pretty youthful female—Donna Jagodzinski [Lorraine's daughter, Bert's niece]—at the piano.

“Father was very theatrical. He loved making kids perform. He put on drills, and kids had Colonial costumes. He even had these white wigs they would put on. Mothers made dresses that were colonial and they did some Virginia reels.

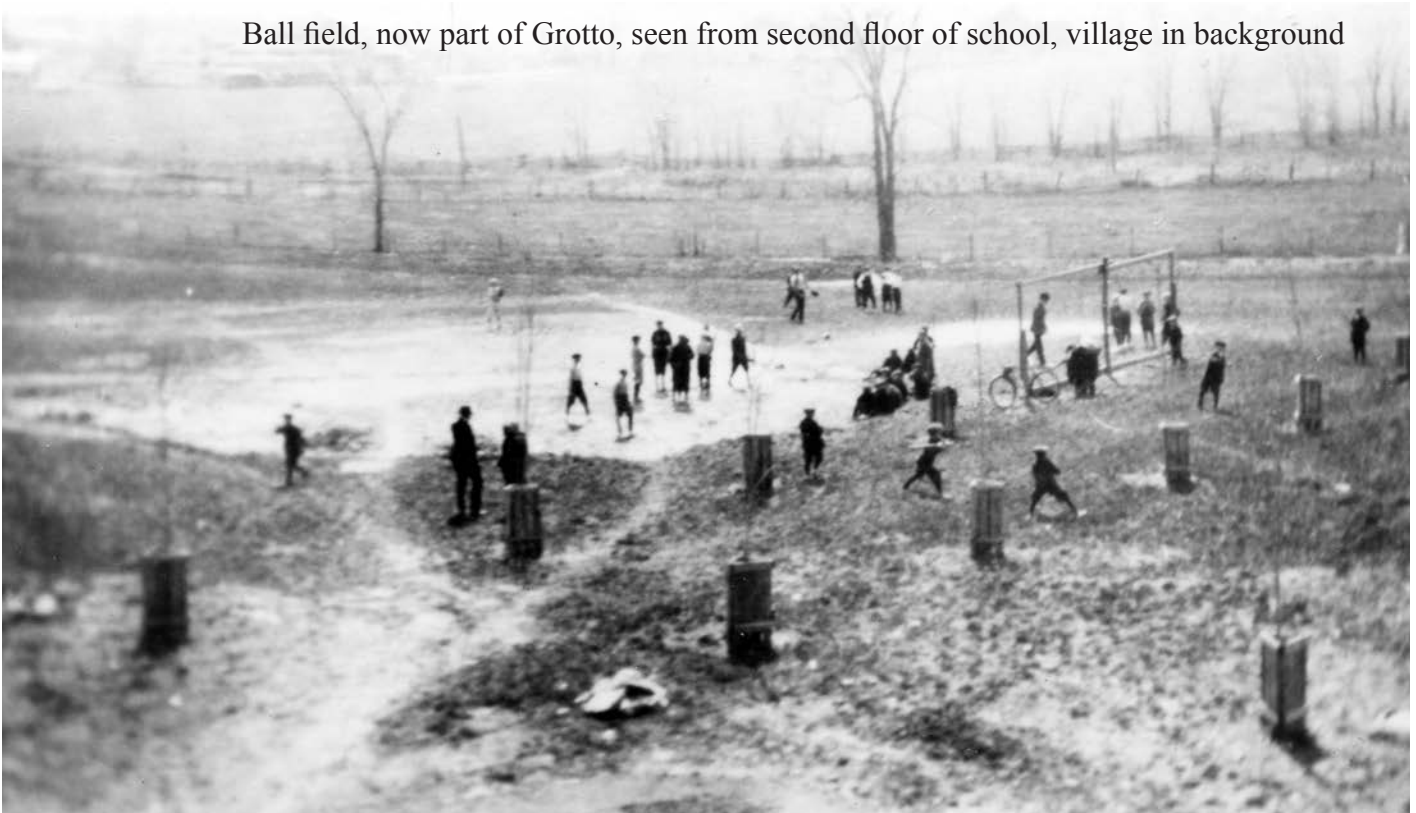
“During recess, he was out there before the kids were done eating, waiting to referee the baseball games.

“We had a much better baseball diamond than the ones in town. Father had a big back screen, where the balls didn't go any further than that. You batted up towards the hill from down below.



At least one skater (center) at St. Philip's

Ball field, now part of Grotto, seen from second floor of school, village in background



Bert: "Father was always trying to get a school to play us: St. Lawrence, St. Peter and Paul. And we would play some country schools. But, it was hard for them to come or us to go because you had to have transport and that wasn't the easiest thing.

"When we had a nice snow, on a Sunday he would pull us on toboggans in the back of his car on the country roads that didn't have another car in sight. People couldn't afford to drive back then, that was '29-33. We wore out toboggans; you could see the road through the wood.

"He built us a big slide, right opposite from where his windows were and it went straight down; they had to put sand by the main street in Rudolph to stop the sleds."



While building the Grotto there came days on which I loved the blue, gusty afternoons, when the wind-sprites chased each other among the tree-tops, and when there was only quiet raking and weeding to be done, which was accomplished mostly, at that time, by Art Hentjes, Junior, or Bernadine Kempen, a neighbor girl, or by her sisters Janet and Claribel.

"To me, he'd say, 'What class don't you want to go to tomorrow?'

"He'd come knock on the door and say he'd need Bernadine for a minute and we'd go to his room and he'd laugh. And he'd notice class was just about over and I'd have to go back."



The kids in trucks headed for a picnic.



George Washington Bicentennial program, 1931

Wagner: "I hope that digging isn't too much for you," Bernadine Kempen would sometimes say, when she was pulling weeds in the Grotto.

"Outside of the classrooms there was a bookcase that was at least six feet high and he'd put us on top and walk away. And he'd laugh and come back and take us down.

"When it was St. Nicholas day, there were transoms above the door that would open up. The nuns would forget and he'd open them the night before and St. Nicholas would throw candy in. The nuns didn't like that.

"The nuns were subject to him more or less. So he didn't always please them, because he had his own ideas. And his ideas were not as strict as the nuns wanted to be.

"They wanted us to take our seats and get busy. They were more into teaching kids and not riling them up with music."

I supposed my long time in the rain and wind were largely responsible for the ferocity of my appetite. It had reached a pitch that even Germaine Kempen, then my kitchen maid, became alarmed at my ravenous display of wolfishness.



Right: Rudolph band at Ossian, Iowa: Etteldorf home, 1938, first mass celebration of Rev. Raymond Etteldorf, archbishop-to-be, Philip J. Wagner's nephew. From left: Joan Joosten Yensh, Bernardine Kempen Jagodzinski, Jackie Joosten Wolf, Geraldine Joosten Swance, Lorraine Van Asten Jagodzinski, Father Wagner, Arlene Blonien Justesen, Joan Blonien. Front: Armella Van Asten Berard, Lucille Tosch Holmes and Josella Blonien.







Merry-go-round installed in 1924,
St. Philip school, Rudolph. Photo
probably by Rev. Philip J. Wagner



Bert: "He didn't have a bath tub. On Saturdays he'd go to Father Reding's in Rapids and have a bath and he'd call Mom and ask if I could come along. And when Father Wagner was having a bath I would talk with Father Reding.

"Up until 8th grade I always went to a lot of places with Father Wagner. We visited other shrines. Like Dickeyville and West Bend, Iowa. He even took my grandmother with him. He took the whole school band down to the house in Iowa that his aunt lived in because his nephew was being ordained.

"I saw the farm he grew up on several times. It was a nice big farm house near Ossian, Iowa.

"His niece, Josephine Ettelsdorf, had a beautiful soprano voice. I think she went professional. She came to Rudolph a few times. It was just like an angel singing.

"We all knew why he built the Grotto. He wanted to be a priest and his health was failing. He promised the Blessed Mother if she would make him well

enough to be ordained he would build something in her honor.

"We planted flowers, pulled weeds, mowed the lawn for a quarter a day. Anybody who wanted to work there, Father would hire them. He was very good that way."

Wagner: When on priestly duty at home I always saw to it that I was properly clad in Roman collar, black clothes, with hair not too long, and whiskers shaved.

It was a very warm day and I had taken off my clerical collar and vest.

Bernadine Kempen was weeding the flower-beds.

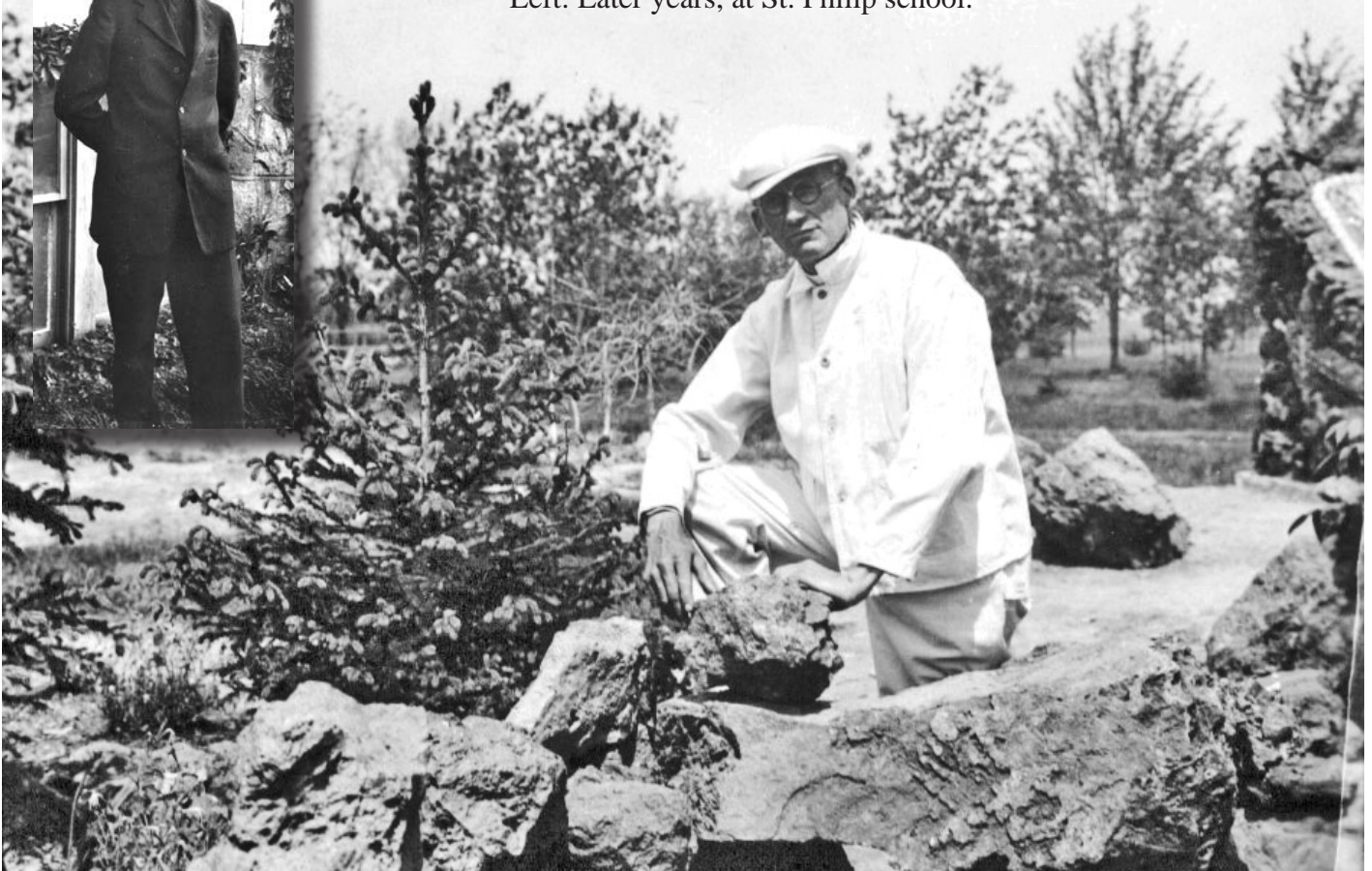
Seeing her, a sightseer said to me: "Is that girl your daughter?"

"No, thanks!" I replied, and walked off.

Sometimes I shaved with Burma-Shave, which is perhaps as good as any other.



Below: Wagner “at work in his famous grotto and rock garden,” June 1, 1934, *Daily Tribune*.
Left: Later years, at St. Philip school.



“When Father first started, Clem Blonien was up there a lot. Several men who only had a couple days work in Rapids would work for him and he would pay them a little something. Sometimes they’d work for nothing.

“There’s a hill right in the beginning of it. He’d brace it up. Must’ve been 1938 or something. He took the brace out and the whole thing fell down. He laughed and said ‘we have a hill here.’ So that when you first go in, that first hill was an accident.

“My sister, Marjory [Kempen] Schenk, would mix mud and help him. When she fell over into the wheelbarrow of cement he laughed and picked her up and sent her home.

“When we first had chicken chowder, all the farmers would donate a chicken. Louie Joosten, the banker in Rudolph, had a black cauldron and he used a canoe paddle to stir. He started it on Saturday behind the church. He would put the chicken and vegetables in and cook it all night. He had a stool he would stand on.

“My father and Father Wagner designed the bingo stand. They let the trees grow right through it. My dad ran the big-six wheel. There were always bands. They had a whole slew of games you could play. They had a fish pond for kids. They would have two or three bands, some polka.

“He could not give a fire and brimstone sermon at all. Asking for money was the hardest thing for him to do. He’d talk about the trees and the beauty of God’s nature, and the birds, running brooks. He needed one of the canned sermons they have today and he didn’t have that. He could not give a good sermon, but he meant well.

“When he wanted something. He got people to do things. He’d put on his collar and dress up like the very good priest, and then go and ask non-Catholics and Catholics whoever he needed to do something. And he was very humble, he didn’t expect people to do stuff. He was just innocently good at asking them so they could hardly refuse him.”

Bert: “My sisters did housekeeping for him. My mom would help take meals. He liked simple food. He had problems with his stomach.

“He was always available, tender-hearted also. I saw him cry a few times too. I went out after the evening meal. He was playing classical music and I was watching him—like he was playing the violin. And these people came to the door, knocked on the screen door and he could see them.

“He says, ‘Come in.’ They shoved their daughter in and evidently she was expecting and they were fit to be tied.

“I got up and went into the kitchen so I didn’t hear anything more and after they left and I came out and I didn’t know what to expect but then there was Father with his handkerchief and tears and, because he could not stop, I said, ‘Father, I think I better go home now.’

“So I knew it was something really bad. If someone was really sick or had an accident, he had a hard time. He did a really good job of saying a funeral mass, but he must’ve readied himself for that because his parishioners were like his family. When they hurt, he hurt, that’s the truth. I’ve seen him cry more than once. That was just Father Wagner. He was very human.

“When Father died, [1959] my sons Ken and Gary served at his funeral.

“I don’t know if this is true or not but when he was in [Sacred Heart/Campion, Prairie du Chien, Wis.] college he was a track star and they didn’t train like they should and I think that ruined his stomach. He was supposed to have had the highest I.Q. in the college until that time.

“In 1948 or ’49 the bishop was on him to build a church because we shouldn’t be going into the basement to church anymore. Otherwise the Bishop was going to move him, so nobody wanted him moved and he didn’t even have to ask for the money. The new church was built in 1950.

“I went to high school at St. Joseph’s Academy in Point. There were just one or two rows of girls in front of all these novices. So you were competing with girls that did nothing but study and pray.

“We stayed in houses near the college by St. Stan’s church. One time we were living on Portage Street and one time we were staying on Division. We were all there with those college kids. And we didn’t

do anything. You went to school, did your work. We had light-housekeeping homes.

“Can you imagine leaving high school kids with college kids? But we did. We would go home on weekends and each person would bring back one meal. Our parents gave us a quarter for bread or milk but we’d save that quarter and blow it on soda or ice cream! That’s the worst thing we did! Can you believe it?

“My dad had decided we went to Catholic School but I couldn’t join that convent because you had to be part Polish.

“I had one friend who decided to go out and celebrate with ice cream. The next morning she was sitting there in her outfit; she went right into the convent. She’s still there today.”

[Maria High School replaced St. Joseph’s Academy.]

Wagner: On a sunny afternoon I motored with Bernadette and Marjory Kempen to look over the situation at the Du Bay Dam project. We went, that is, to look for logs. The Consolidated Power and Paper Company had promised me all the trees I wished to take. Arriving in the woods, we met a number of young men busily employed with axe and saw. When the fellows saw the damsels they hailed them from afar. One of them shouted: “Look—look—what we have here—‘floosies’ in the Camp!”

We met the foreman of the crew, who remarked: “Are you conducting some kind of a co-ed institution in Rudolph?” “No, no!” I replied, “these are just some of my lunch girls.”



Bert’s sister-in-law Lorraine Jagodzinski with SWCHC website coordinator Angelica Engel, 1999, in house shown at right



Above: after 1920, looking north from school toward current cemetery.

Left: Father celebrating 25 years as a priest with Janet Kempen (Van Asten), Armella Van Asten (Berard), Lucille Kempen (O'Shasky), Bernadine Kempen (Jagodzinski) and Clarabell Kempen (See). Four sisters and a cousin.



Looking south: 1920, at rear left, Rudolph public school, Moravian church and, closer, Van Asten house later owned by Harold and Lorraine Jagodzinski. Lorraine was proud of grandson Jeffrey Panko, a distinguished pianist, son of the Donna Jagodzinski whose own playing was so admired by Father Wagner. According to his web bio, Panko "began his formal musical education at the age of six with his grandmother, Lorraine Jagodzinski."

EDUCATION OF PHILIP J. WAGNER



Philip with Louis Wagner, brother, 1887-1975. Louis donated a marble statue of St. Jude for the Rudolph Grotto chapel.



Four youngest Wagners?



Looks like Wagner at rear, third from right, in Sacred Heart/Campion baseball team photo. He graduated in 1911.



With brother clerics-to-be, marked with an X

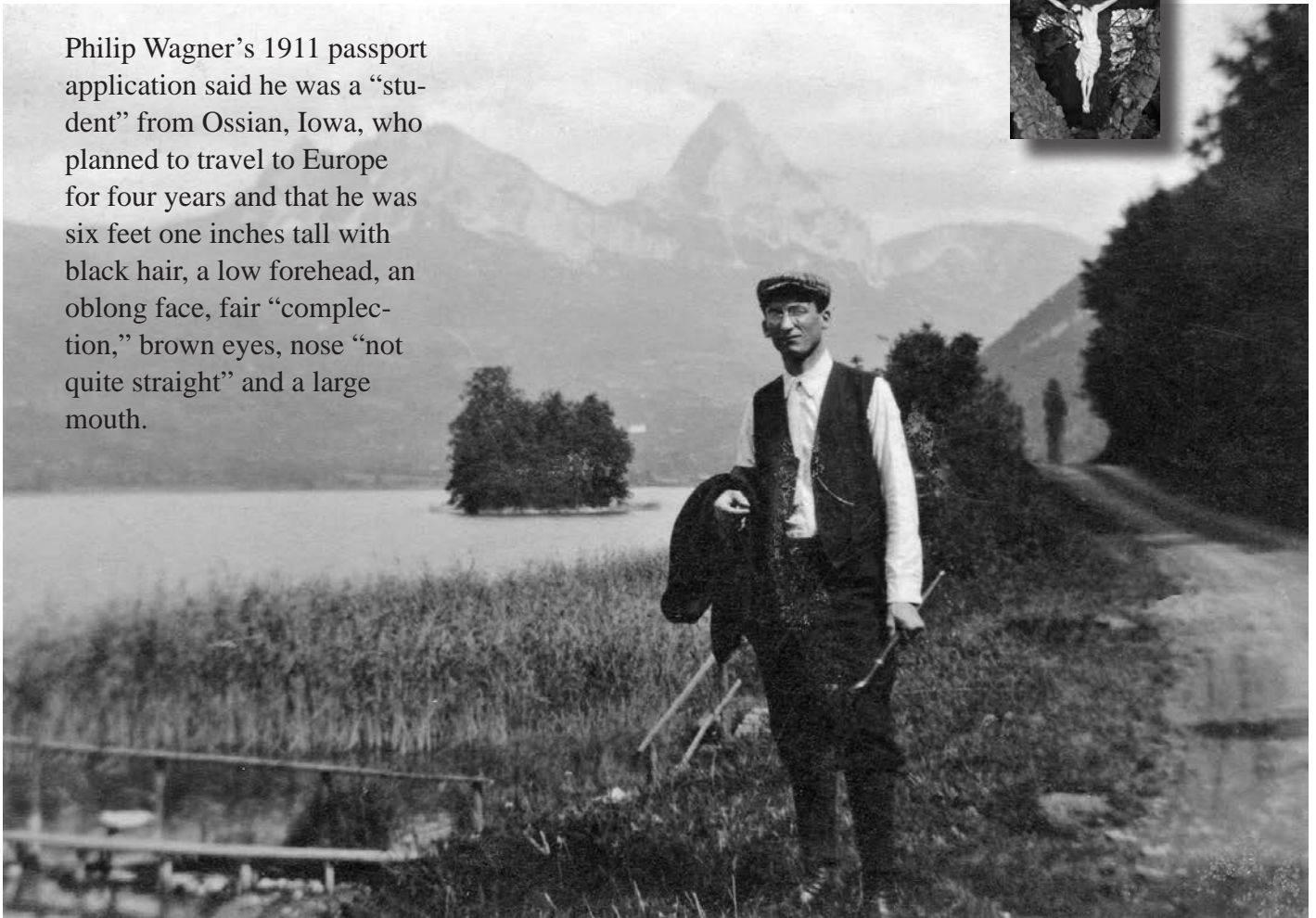


Dec. 30, 1914.
Rodling party at Speck's. - Stams.

Wagner appears to have a beer in his hand in photo probably taken in Europe

Wooden crucifix from Tyrol now in a Grotto display

Philip Wagner's 1911 passport application said he was a "student" from Ossian, Iowa, who planned to travel to Europe for four years and that he was six feet one inches tall with black hair, a low forehead, an oblong face, fair "complexion," brown eyes, nose "not quite straight" and a large mouth.



Raison d'être

August 16, 1932, *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune*

"Father Wagner told of losing his health when a young man after he had run 13 miles in an hour and fifteen minutes. He entered a European seminary [Innsbruck, Austria] and as he grew weaker the priest in charge of the school urged him to return to America and continue his studies here.

"He asked that he might be allowed to go to Lourdes and the favor was granted, he said. After praying at the grotto [in 1912] and bathing in the water there he told of his health and strength returning. He promised that sometime in his ministry he would do something for the Blessed Virgin and the grotto, he told his listeners, was the result of that promise."

Another account from 1932 says that Wagner visited Lourdes and promised to build somewhere an imitation of it.



Lourdes Shrine, France



While in Europe, Philip Wagner visited Luxembourg, looking for relatives. His aunt's brother was Bishop James Schwebach, a Luxembourg native who appointed Wagner in 1915 to his first position, assistant at the Cathedral of St. Joseph, La Crosse. He also sent Wagner to Rudolph.

Before arriving in La Crosse, "Rev. Wagner" and his father, Nick, detoured to Ossian, Iowa, where they were met at the depot by friends, relatives, and a band. On Aug. 26, 1915, he celebrated his first Solemn High Mass at St. Frances de Sales church, Ossian.

Rev. Wagner came to Rudolph in 1917.

**ST. JOSEPH CHILDREN
WANT FRIEND RETAINED**

But Opportunity is Given Father Wagner in Rudolph Church

"Dear and kind Rev. Bishop: Please consider why we want Father Wagner to stay. He is always good to us. He tells us so many nice stories during instructions. He always plays so nice with us. He is our very best friend. O, dear bishop, don't turn your children away! Please let Father Wagner stay with us."

The above letter, presented to Bishop James Schwebach by the children of St. Joseph's parochial school, who visited him in a body, was hard to turn aside, but Bishop Schwebach could not allow the opportunity to pass, and Father Wagner has been sent to take the pastorate of a church at Rudolph, Wis. He has been assistant to Father Paper, pastor of St. Joseph's cathedral, for nearly two years.

Father Wagner is well liked by the entire congregation, and is the friend of every boy and girl in the school.

Now and then: 2018 by UD,
Cathedral of St. Joseph the Workman,
La Crosse, Wis., built 1962



The auto driven by Wagner below is a Jeffery, later American Motors, c. 1915



Anita Taylor Doering, Senior Archivist, La Crosse Public Library, identified St. Joseph's Catholic church, La Crosse and provided the clipping above, a plea from the pupils below that Wagner stay with them.

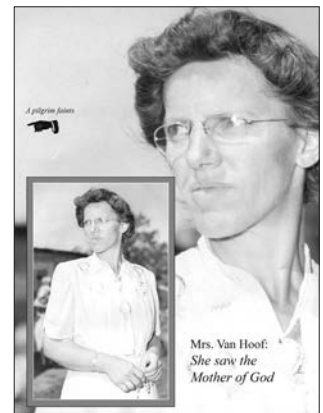
Visions of Van Hoof



The hairdo at back right was the clue: this is the Mary Ann Van Hoof farmhouse at Necedah, Wis., scene of the visions documented by *Tribune* photographer Don Krohn in *Artifacts* (2008). Rev. Philip J. Wagner, rear. The altar from Rudolph's original St. Philomena church was displayed behind glass at the Necedah shrine grounds in a grotto-like structure.



Krohnograph from May 2008 *Artifacts*, shows same rounded gateway in top photo,



Mary Ann Van Hoof, defrocked visionary

Kris Willfahrt
Grotto caretaker and historian



New Grotto welcome center

Further Reading

- “Our Lady of Rudolph,” in *River City Memoirs II*, based on an interview with Edmund Rybicki, Wagner’s assistant and successor.
- “The Envy of Third Street,” in *The Fat Memoirs*, in which Witter housekeeper Christine Andres Gloden recalls her Rudolph childhood.
- “Holland Road,” in *Ghost of Myself: River City Memoirs VII*.
- Rev. Wagner’s three books: *Milestones and Memories: An Autobiography—Building the Grotto Shrine—and Happenings of My Life: In Symphony and Song*.
- And the illustrated book, *A Promise Fulfilled: Rudolph Grotto Gardens*.



Misc.

Bert Jagodzinski at former play house built by Anton Kempen for his seven daughters, donated to Father Wagner in 1941 because it reminded the cleric of a famous building in Switzerland. The Kempen girls were Wagner’s helpers for many years.



Travels with Father

On his frequent drives to Iowa, Rev. Wagner often took locals along, including the family of Christine Andres Gloden, once a housekeeper for Isaac Witter. Others mentioned in newspaper accounts c. 1920 are Peter Hartjes, Martin Joosten, J.L. Grab, Arthur Hinchies, Tony and Mrs. Kempen, Leo and Mrs. Van Asten. Wagner was frequently visited by relatives from Iowa such as his sisters, Mrs. Wenzel Lansing and Mrs. Andrew Etteldorf, of Ossian, Iowa. His sometimes housekeeper was his niece, Olivia Lansing.



Iconic image from Wagner’s later years when much of his work was carried on by former pupil and long time assistant, Edmund Rybicki, right



Boots on the Ground IOWA

Philip J. Wagner, who died Nov. 1, 1959, at St. Michael's hospital, Stevens Point, Wis., was born Dec. 21, 1882, at Festina, Iowa,—to which, on July 31, 2018, traveled the *Artifacts Historymobile*.

Among the earliest settlers of Festina were the family of Wagner's mother, Katherina Meyer, German Roman Catholics of Our Lady of Seven Dolors parish.



Church historian Ken Ehler at Festina, where young Philip Wagner would have witnessed statuary, a chapel, and a shrine to Our Lady of Lourdes.



John Snyder repairing the grotto in Seven Dolors cemetery

Adjacent to the Wagner farm was the "World's Smallest Church," St. Anthony of Padua, built in 1885 to honor Johann Gaetner, who survived Napoleon's Russian campaign.



SWCHC librarian Kathy Engel, standing, and guide Virginia Manderfield at German American Museum in a former Catholic school, St. Lucas, Iowa.



Bernice Dietzenbach holds actual U.S. mail sent from Rudolph, Wis., by Uncle Dave to her Festina, Iowa, farm, asking if they live on the Wagner place. They do.



Former Wagner farm as it looked when Vern and Bernice Dietzenbach purchased it. The farm of Nick Wagner, a "stock man" born at Holy Cross, Wis., spanned the Turkey Creek, and bordered an old cemetery and the world's smallest church (written about by Rev. Wagner). It was dedicated 1886, when Philip was four years old.



Uncle Dave and (Aunt) Kathy Engel at former Laura Ingalls Wilder hotel in Burr Oak, Winneshiek County, Iowa.



Building of the 1903 LHS, below; and later on page at right when it was about to be demolished after construction of the 1931 building. Also below are 7th Day Adventist tents on old fairgrounds, later Witter Field. Looking south from a water tower with Lincoln street on the right?

SWCHC

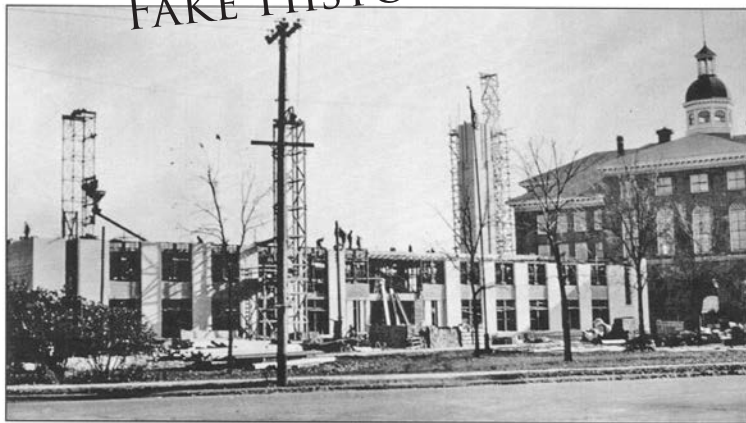




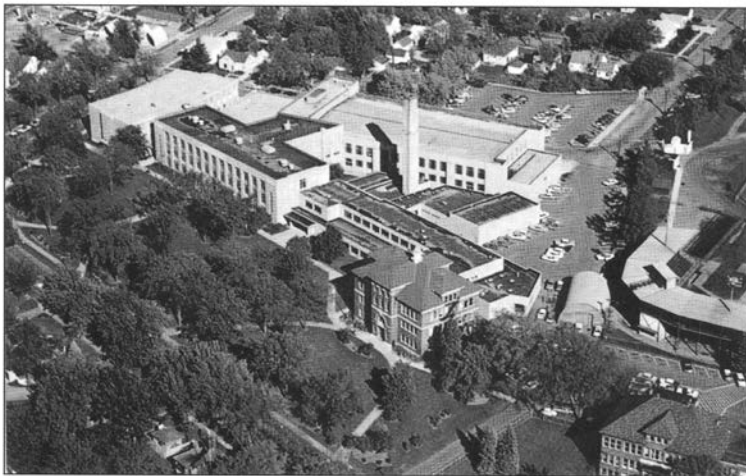
ARTIFACTS

JUNE 2018

FAKE HISTORY



The vocational section of Lincoln High School was added in 1957, connecting at right to the Witter building.



About 1970. Vocational addition center and board of education addition to upper left.

The photo at top of page above from the June *Artifacts* was incorrectly identified. It actually depicts the construction of the 1931 Lincoln high school that became East Jr. High with the 1903 Lincoln in the background.

On the lower half of the reproduced page above can be seen the addition attached to the Witter vocational school. The Witter building resembled the 1903 Lincoln high school and was built in the same era.

Robbin' the Cradle



At the Open House, Sue and I had our picture taken at the very spot where I first saw her back in 1962.

THOMAS A. JOHNSON

When the urge to exercise comes along, I lie down till it passes

Baseball 1,2,3,4, Manager 1,2; Booster Club 4; Choir 1,2,3,4; F.B.L.A. 2,3; Intramurals 1,2,3,4; Junior Prom Committee 3; Letterman's Club 4; Lincoln Lights Staff 2,3,4; Operetta 1,2,3,4; Wrestling 1,2; Traffic Club 1,2; Orpheus Club 1,2,4.



THOMAS JOHN JOHNSON

Success follows when real effort paves the way

Band 1,2; Chemistry Club 4; Intramurals 2,3,4; Orchestra 1,2; Pep Band 2; Badger Boy's State 3.



Which Tom Johnson?

Uncle Dave was a pal of both.

It was Wednesday, May 30, 2018, as my wife and I left Beaver Dam for the two-hour trip to attend the Open House at the "old" Wisconsin Rapids Lincoln High School, (later East Junior High) our Alma Mater. I had graduated with the class of 1963, while my wife, Sue Kohnen, was with the class of 1966.

We arrived at an event bustling with the many others touring a wonderful old building that had such an impact on their lives years ago, met long-time friends and classmates, and reminisced about times and events that helped shape lives. I met up with one of my classmates, Dave Engel ("Uncle Dave"); and as we toured the halls and rooms of "our" Lincoln High, stories were told and memories shared.

As we made our way up to the third floor, for an instant the date was Tuesday, Sept. 4, 1962, my first day of school as a senior. I went to the very spot where, on that date, before first hour began, I was standing with some of my buddies, and this girl came walking down the hall. As she passed us, I said to my Senior friends, "Now, that's one good-looking freshman!"

There was an immediate attraction and I was bound and determined to ask her out before the end of the year. I did! We then dated for over four years, and now will be celebrating our 51st wedding anniversary this coming August.

As big a building as the "old" Lincoln High appears, it seemed smaller in size than we remembered it; however, one cannot help but ponder how big an impact it had on our lives for years to come.

Thomas J. Johnson - class of '63

Hank's Picks

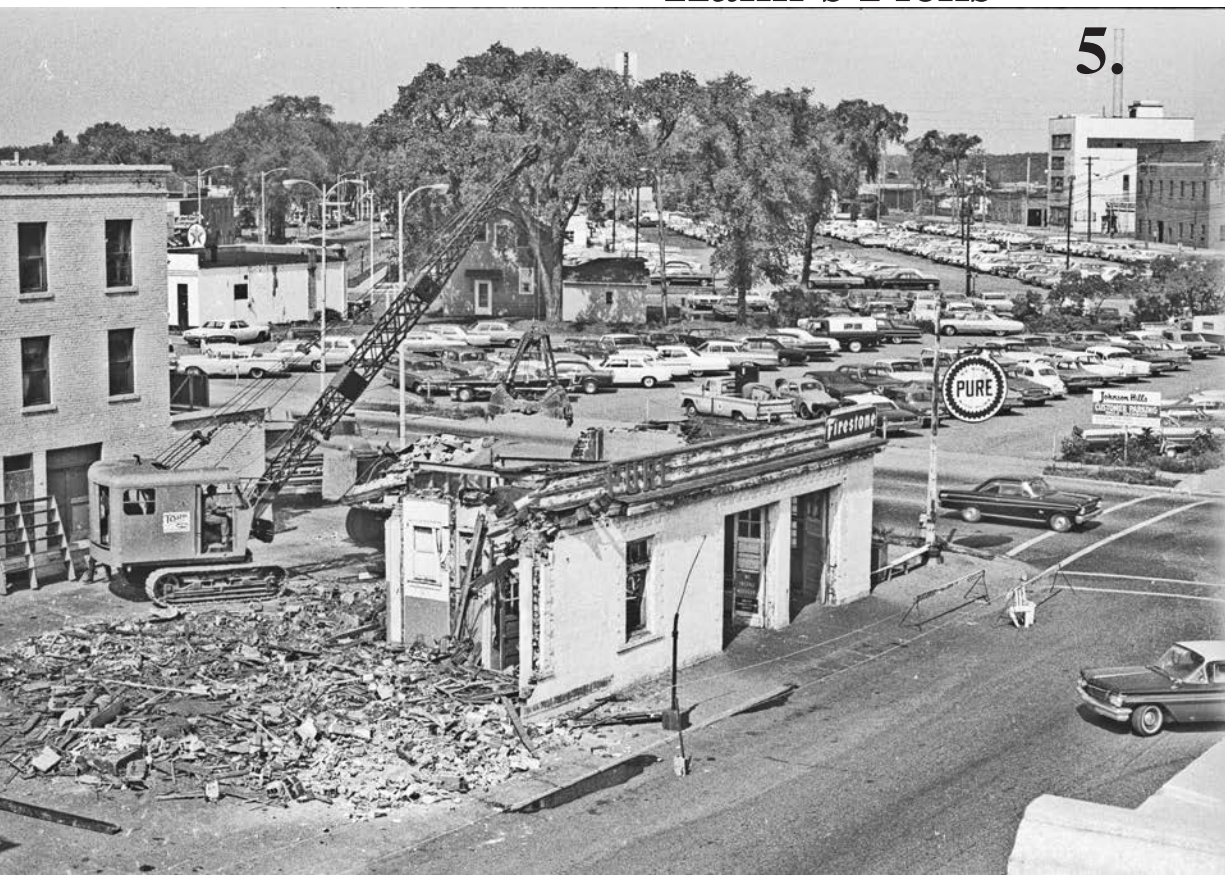


Photo Identification Workshop

C. Henry Bruse,

SWCHC Scanning Specialist First Class

Regarding the *Tribune* photos of the Johnson-Hill gas station being torn down in September 1967, I submit that the gas station was at the southwest corner of 3rd Avenue and Jackson. Small photos (1) and (2) seem to have been taken on the sidewalk or just off the sidewalk on 3rd Ave N, facing north. I see a paper mill building in the background, a building that no longer exists or is not visible.

Photos (3) (4) and (5) seem to have been taken from the roof of the Mead Witter building. The roof decorations in the lower right of the photos are still there. Note, too, the shadows, especially on the lower left of (5) which I guess is the shadow of the Johnson-Hill building. The shadow direction indicates that I have my directions right and that it must have been around noon when the photo was made. (The dude in the lower right of (4) doesn't seem to cast a shadow!

I am unsure about the building seen in (3) (4) and (5), next to the crane on Jackson. The window configuration and design seem the same as an existing side of the Johnson-Hill building but the building isn't in the 'right' place. It must have been torn down sometime, perhaps to make way for the current parking lot that occupies the area now.

UD: That building shows up on insurance maps as a flour and feed warehouse removed after 1974 as part of the relocation of Jackson Street and the Rapids Mall urban renewal project. Looks like 4th Avenue at top left heading out toward Rudolph. Center is then-new Kraft mill peeking out above trees.

South Wood County Historical Corp.
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Back up the hill one more time