

# The 1850's

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## MASONS CELEBRATE 150 YEARS IN BARABOO

YESTERYEAR REVISITED

By Bob Dewel

What is the oldest continuously operating organization in Baraboo? Aside from a few church organizations, the Baraboo Lodge #34, F. and A.M. (The Masons) is probably the oldest. A petition for a Lodge was made in 1851, and the Charter was granted in 1852. On April 17, the Lodge will celebrate its sesquicentennial with a table lodge, speakers, and appropriate ceremonies.

### Baraboo in 1851

Baraboo was little more than a scattering of cabins, dams, and small frame homes in 1851, its first inhabitants having arrived only 12 years before. Lumbering was the principal occupation, the rapid fall in the river level providing power to saw and shape the wood, and also to grind the grains being produced by local farmers.

It would be ten years before the railroad reached the little settlement. Wisconsin had only become a state three years before this, and the entire Sauk County population was about 4500 souls.

The human urge to band together for a high purpose is strong, and in 1851 a number of the most prominent leaders in the settlement gathered together to seek a dispensation for the formation of a Masonic Lodge. Thanks to a 1956 history of the lodge, prepared by attorney Walter W. Jenks, we have an excellent and comprehensive history of the Lodge. The next several paragraphs will consist of a copy or in

many cases a condensation of his document.

### Early Lodge History

"The earliest minute book of the Lodge that could be found commenced in 1865. (However) in one of the Sauk County histories is an historical account of the Lodge prepared by M.C. Waite, who was for a time Master of the Lodge and for a number of years the secretary. In that account it appears that Baraboo obtained its dispensation in 1851. The applicants for this dispensation were: Col. James Maxwell, Harvey Canfield, David Munson, Daniel Schermerhorn, G.G. Gollmar, and H.G. Jones."

"On June 8, 1852, application was made to the State Grand Lodge by M.C. Waite for a Charter, which was granted. The members under the Charter, (in addition to the above, included) W.D. Truax, G.O. Miller, Daniel Ruggles, and Wm. Phelps." Jenks continued with a listing of other prominent men of the times who were Masons, some of whom have Baraboo streets named after them. Others were also prominent in Company A of the Iron Brigade in the Civil War.

The mention of G.G. (Gottlieb) Gollmar is of interest, as related in a recent letter from the wife of Walter S. Gollmar Jr. of Evansville. Gottlieb and his wife had arrived in Baraboo on May 8, 1851 after a nine day trip from Chicago in an open buggy. Several decades later Gottlieb was honored as the only remaining Charter member of the Lodge. He was the oldest member of the Lodge at the same time his son, Walter Sr., was the youngest member. A grandson, Robert Gollmar of Baraboo, became Grand Master of Wisconsin. Other grandsons and great



Corner of Oak and Second Avenue. This building was destroyed by fire in the late 1950's. In this picture the McGann Furniture Store occupies the lower floor and the Masonic Lodge the upper floor. After the fire, a new building was built, again with the Masonic Lodge on the upper floor.

grandsons have been or are presently Masons.

Jenks continues: ' The fees for the degrees were then \$35, which was also the amount they paid D.K. Noyes for six month's rent...in 1867 the Tyler was getting 25 cents per meeting, this covering his work of building the fire and sweeping out after the meeting. "

Jenks then speaks of the Masonic relief efforts of the day, for the minutes show a special meeting was called to consider relief for the recent fire sufferers in the N.E. part of the state, apparently including the victims of the Peshtigo fire. As would be appropriate for a Masonic body, there are records of many acts of relief throughout the state, and other states.

Jenks, reports, however, that the books would indicate the lodge seldom had much money. "On December 14, 1875, balloting was suspended to permit the Lodge to vote on the question of paying the secretary a salary. It was finally decided to pay the secretary \$25 per year with a pro rata reduction for every evening he is absent from the Lodge....Those who have much occasion (today) to check real estate records often have the impression that many well known names were people of considerable wealth....(but) were either land poor or at least not as wealthy as the present generation would assume."

#### Meeting Places

Meeting places are of interest. Jenks reports that "On June 3, 1872, the Lodge paid \$4 for painting the hall. They were then subletting the hall to the Odd Fellows for \$85 per year....(In June 1872) a report was made on negotiations for the building of a temple, and the Lodge voted to have the committee look into a contract for

the building of a hall at a cost not to exceed \$2800. In November, the Trustees reported back, recommending the taking on a new lease instead of the building, which was adopted by the Lodge."

In 1879 the roof of the hall was apparently in bad condition, for the Tyler was ordered to remove the carpet and furniture from the west end to protect them from the rain. They stayed in the same hall, however, until 1882, when they rented the Stanley Building on 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue for \$160 per year."

By now the Lodge was ready to consider a building program. Jenks reports "The movement to build the new temple was initiated by the appointment of a committee, January 21, 1891, consisting of James Hull, Levi Crouch, and J.F. Hofstatter.. This committee took an option on the present lot at the N.W. corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Oak Street for \$2000.

#### The Ringling Brothers

A special meeting was called for April 8, 1891 to hear the report of the committee....at this meeting the Ringling Brothers took the principal offices: Alf. T. Ringling, Worshipful Master; August Ringling, Senior Warden; Al Ringling, Junior Warden; Charles Ringling, Senior Deacon; Otto Ringling, Junior Deacon; Henry Ringling, S.S. This is one of the few times these brothers were in the Lodge at the same time, and the only meeting in which they filled the principal offices."

On August 10, 1891, the Trustees were authorized to borrow

# Baraboo Masons Observe Centennial

Hold Special Program

Saturday  
JUNE 7, 1952

The 100th birthday anniversary of Masonry in Baraboo was appropriately observed Saturday when Masons from all over the area and grand lodge officers joined members of Baraboo Lodge No. 34 in a special program.

The original charter written in long hand, was granted to the Baraboo lodge on June 8, 1852, but June 7 was a more convenient date for the centennial meeting. The charter was displayed during the ceremonies.

Robert G. Vermum, Wisconsin grand master of Wisconsin, headed the delegation of grand officers who were particularly interested in attending the program since Alf, Robert H. Gollmar of Baraboo is senior grand warden of Wisconsin.

Other grand officers who were here were: Ingvald O. Hemore, Madison, deputy grand marshal; Carl W. Holmeister, Chilton, junior grand warden; Robert M. Millard, Eau Claire, grand treasurer; Paul W. Grossenbach, Milwaukee, grand secretary; Ernest H. Hiegel, La Crosse, grand lecturer; Harry A. Speich, Mineral Point, senior grand deacon; Al W. Anderson, Stevens Point, grand steward; Gilbert Schwabbe, Kenosha, grand steward, and Edward W. Stegner, Milwaukee, grand pursuivant.

Charles Emory, director of Masonic charity, was also present.

Past Masters of Baraboo lodge who were present were: Fred E. Warner, 1910; Jesse W. Fritts, 1915-17-18; Paul A. Herford, 1924-25; Chris. Lyndal, 1921-22; Herbert W. Hawkins, 1926-27; Robert H. Gollmar, 1942; Dean V. Anderson, 1932; Curtis N. Sampson, 1929; Clark W. Wilkinson, 1942; Severn Binkab, 1944; Deland Shaw, 1940; Arthur A. Bassett Jr., 1948; and H. I. Steeps, 1951.

Fifty-year members of Baraboo lodge who were present were Fred J. Gollmar, Oscar Altpfleter and Uggve E. Reiss.

Vocal selections during the program were furnished by Alan Pitt, Bonabel, accompanied by Robert H. Gollmar Jr. The address of the evening was given by Junior Grand Warden Carl Holmeister of Chilton. Henry J. Steeps acted as master of ceremonies and Rev. Maurine E. Jones gave the invocation.

Huge floral pieces were given by Fort Winnebago lodge, Portage, Past Matrons club, the Arthur K. Bassett Baraboo, Baraboo National bank and a \$100 bill from the Eastern Star was presented by Sanford D. Schaefer, worthy patron.

The committee in charge of the event consisted of Jesse W. Fritts, chairman; Robert H. Gollmar, secretary; Arthur A. Bassett Jr., Chris. Lyndal, Earl C. Frost, Paul A. Herford, Walter Suck, Robert W. Meyers, Deland Shaw and Henry J. Steeps.

\$10,000 and proceed with the building. The corner stone was laid August 27, 1891 and the Temple was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies on April 27, 1892. Later a legacy from Brother Henry Klein provided new equipment, carpeting, and other improvements.

Jenks concludes with the following: "Masonic Charity was then a reality...the early Masons did build the foundation of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth" This concludes the review and condensation of the rather lengthy but thorough history prepared by Attorney Walter Jenks in about 1956.

By unknown but extremely fortunate circumstances, Jenks kept a copy of the history either in his home or in his office. This was most fortunate, for disaster was to strike the Lodge within the decade, and all records except for Jenks' were lost.

This matter will be related in another article.

## Knights Templars Parade in 1890's

### Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

In connection with Bob Dewel's recent article on the history of the Masonic Lodge in the March 19 issue of the News-Republic, there is a picture of the Knights Templars, a Masonic group, in parade in the late nineteenth century.

The picture was taken from a Warren Hotel room window, looking south on Oak. To the right is the courthouse square, with its wrought iron decorative fence. Not in view, to the right, would be the 1855 red brick courthouse. It would burn in 1905.

On the lawn, however, can be seen the still present civil war memorial. This is a fine granite statue, which has now viewed the scene in downtown Baraboo for over a century.

Across the street east are the buildings pretty much as we see them today, with little change in the upper story, but new lower level facades in most cases. An exception is the Amish Furniture store, the lower façade of which remains unchanged.

In the far distance is the former location of the Corner Drug store. The magnificent façade of the First National Bank is yet to be added to the view in this picture.

No streetlights then, not as we know them today, but power lines criss-cross the downtown area. There is plenty of parking on Oak Street, with just a lone buggy in view. A bakery occupies part of which is now the Corner Drug Store, formerly Woolworth's. The first awning to the left is probably Reinking's department store, and advertises millinery and cloaks. The next open awning is Hoppe's Men's Clothing, with a sign out front proclaiming J. Hoppe, The Clothier.

The occasion for the Templar's march is not known. Masonry has many branches, with different regalia and emphasis in each branch. Similar regalia was developed later for the Elks, Knights of Columbus, and other fraternal groups.



Knights Templars Parading Undated



## The Widow Garrison Plats a City Yesteryear Revisited By Bob Dewel

We rightfully think of Sauk County's pioneer women as strong, hard-working, and sometimes long suffering, but trapped in a frontier society best described as being a man's world. Women could not vote, had limited property ownership, and little voice in local affairs.

An exception, however, was Baraboo's Widow Garrison, a promoter more cunning and aggressive than many of her male peers. We've spoken briefly of her in a previous article, but much more information has now come to light. The Sauk County Historical Society's Southard collection has newspaper clippings dated May, 1905 about her.

The first clipping is a letter to the editor from E.D. Jackson of Minneapolis, dated May 7, 1905. He tells in the elegant rhetoric of the day how the Widow Garrison, whose first name is never given, had observed the success of the dams on the Baraboo River, and the adjacent mills. Although no date is given for the following events, we know from other sources that it was circa 1850.

Not to be outdone by the success of the little Baraboo Rapids settlement, Mrs. Garrison vowed to create a dam, mill, and village of her own, making the unfortunate choice of the eastern or lower narrows of the river, also known today as Caledonia or as the Butterfield Bridge area.

It is hard to believe that she thought the placid flow of the Baraboo River in this area could be successfully dammed and harnessed for power, since it lacked the fall in river level normally associated with dams. Nevertheless, her vision was not to be denied, and she proceeded to attempt to create a city, named Garrisonville of course, that would hopefully eclipse the existing village which would later be called Baraboo.

It is of interest that in his letter Jackson speaks of the area as the Greenfield Bluffs, and Devils Lake as Lake Diaaboles (satanic), and he agrees that the widow, a 'bold adventuress', made a poor choice for her dam and village. He says that she had "a familiar acquaintance with quite all the prominent men of those territorial days," and that therefore she was able to get funding for her promotion sufficient to construct a dam and saw mill at the site.

For a time it sawed only "oak logs of large dimensions cut from the surrounding hillsides". A small cluster of little cottages was constructed as the nucleus of her dream city. Unfortunately the Baraboo River is relatively placid in its course through Sauk and Columbia Counties. An exception is its four mile rush through Baraboo, where the drop in the river level totals some fifty feet, providing generous opportunities for a mill pond, and ample fall for the mills.

In contrast, the Garrisonville dam backed up water to the west for miles, with very little fall to develop a head for her dam. Jackson says that this "want of fall...(did)...overflow and injure the valley lands for miles, and cause malarial disease. No sufficient power to run the mill was ever developed...the dam needed repairs...finally the mill stopped....decay attacked the mill, the dam went also." With it went the dreams of the Widow Garrison.

She had at one time attracted a physician from the east, who planned to develop a medical college, but one can imagine his consternation when he found Garrisonville consisted only of a poorly located dam and mill, and a scattering of cottages.



Was Mrs. Garrison a widow? In a follow up article on May 27, 1905, an unnamed writer told the Daily News that " Mr. Garrison had gone away...Some think he joined a party for California and lost his life in the struggle for gold." This is a familiar story in early Baraboo, if one recalls Eben Peck and Alfred Holmes, for example. Even Count Haraszthy caught the California fever, but at least he took his family and father with him, though the latter left his wife at home.

Jackson writes that with the failure of her promotional dream, "age had drawn its fire-quenching mantle over the spirits of our heroine. The sparkle had forsaken her eye, and beauty had vanished even as (had) the fabric she had woven on the river." Jackson had a way with words!

There is more to be learned about the unusual life of this eccentric and remarkable woman, how she shot an Indian, her later marriage to a man who was able to dominate her former daring independent spirit, and their subsequent misfortunes. Even though we never learn her first name, her story is good for another article!



*Here, in the lower narrows of the Baraboo River, The Widow Garrison had a city platted out. The village was to support a dam, mill, village, and perhaps a medical college!*

## The Widow Garrison Meets Her Match Yesteryear Revisited By Bob Dewel

As was related in last week's article, the widow Garrison had attempted to start a new city at the lower narrows of the Baraboo River some 6 miles east of Baraboo, but failed due to the lack of dependable water power. The backwaters of the huge mill pond also flooded the properties of many settlers sometimes, and they opposed rebuilding of the dam after a washout destroyed it and the mill. The outlook for the widow's project was not good.

There is some confusion about her husband, Andrew Garrison, for Butterfield's history has him as the proprietor, though all other accounts list only her. There is also some hint that her first name was Ann, for in 1858, there was still a Garrisonville post office with an Ann Garrison as postmistress. Andrew Garrison was not at the scene long, if at all, and was reported killed in the California gold rush.

The letter from E.D. Jackson, mentioned in the preceding article, mentions a personal encounter with Mrs. Garrison at a later date. He reports "I saw her in the later days when almost 70 year had done their work. She was the wife of an Englishman of towering proportions, a veritable country squire, and aside from an irritable temper and unbounded firmness...brusk and domineering...(he) completely cowed her former dashing independence."

Jackson also reports, in his 1905 letter to the newspaper, that "they both died a few years ago, literally of starvation," in Chicago. His letter was followed on May 17, 1905, by that of another writer, name not listed. This writer states that she came from Nova Scotia, and had an early encounter with

an Indian wife living south of the bluffs. According to her, he was trying to steal a pig. While he was leaning over the fence to grab a piglet, she shot him, apparently in the rear, but not fatally. This aroused fear of reprisal in the neighborhood, but there was none.

The anonymous writer says she owned a farm in Greenfield Township, where she laid out her proposed city. He simply states that Mr. Garrison had gone away, confirming that he "lost his life in the struggle for gold. This story is very probable", he added. Garrisonville was platted by none other than William Canfield, and it was then promoted in the East. One day Mrs. Garrison is reported to have returned from Milwaukee with \$20,000 and a fine team of horses, but this is not explained.

In an interesting sidelight "a shaft was sunk in the sides of the bluff, and before a great depth was reached, gold was discovered...the report became current that the mine had been salted." Later, another hole was dug for marble, again without success. Still another shaft was sunk "on the side of the bluff just east of the dam, again without results." You can't say she didn't try! Does anyone know where these shafts are?

Returning to the account of her second marriage, it was to a Dr. Taylor "in the city of Brotherly Love (Philadelphia), each thinking the other was wealthy!" Apparently he came to live at Garrisonville, as did a potter, and Dr Taylor entered the hops business, erecting a fine stone building for the purpose. It would be interesting if someone could find the location and remains of this enterprise. It would not necessarily be near where the dam and mill stood.

As enterprise after enterprise failed, the couple moved to Chicago, where Dr. Taylor appears to have written a couple of less than memorable books, unknown today. The former Widow Garrison was now known as Auntie



*Site of former McArthur Dam*

Taylor, and retained a strong temper. Once, over a trivial matter, she exclaimed "Why the devil can't you?" The interesting part about this show of temper, mild in today's world, is that the 1905 Daily News shyly left out some of the letters of devil, printing only "d\_\_l" to avoid hurting the sensibilities of some of its readers!

Mrs. Garrison-Taylor was an interesting woman. As the writer in 1905 concluded, "an occasional character must be in every community in order to make life interesting, even if they do not appear to help the world along."

### WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN.....

There are no pictures of Garrisonville, of course, but let's let our imagination run wild, and assume that the Widow Garrison's dream came true! Here at the lower narrows of the Baraboo River, between the two majestic bluffs that guard the passage, is the thriving city of Garrisonville today, with a population of some 12,000 persons. Because of those bluffs, it is shaped like an hourglass, with a northeast section and a southwest section, and the business section in the narrow part. Three bridges cross the Baraboo River, which has a couple of dams. As a result, pleasure boats ply the waters, as well as excursion boats for the tourists. In the northeast section are competing railroad stations for both the Northwestern and Milwaukee roads, both skirting the bluffs on the north rather than cutting through them. Six miles to the west is the ghost town of Baraboo, with only a couple of shacks remaining from its peak in 1850, but of interest to historians. Portraits of Mrs. Garrison hang in the largest bank, and in the library. Both bluffs have skyline drives with spectacular views, and an occasional country home for the more affluent. Well, you get the picture of what might have been, had Mrs. Garrison been successful!

# Naming the streets in old Baraboo



Part of a larger Historical Society sketch (cost \$5) showing Baraboo circa 1890. The courthouse is shown at right center, with the Presbyterian church near the right center margin.

**BOB DEWEL**  
YESTERYEAR REVISITED

Who named the streets of old Baraboo? Who was Elizabeth, to get such a long and rather important street named after her? Baraboo doesn't have very many through streets, so it must have been a great honor!

How about Guppy Street! Cherry Alley? Waldo, Andro, and Withington? Who were these people? And is there a street named after Baraboo's founder, the irrepressible Abe Wood?

We know the answers to some of these questions, thanks to a news item clipped out of the paper in 1917 by City Attorney Virgil Cady, grandfather of Bud Cady. Virgil was a prolific clipper, frugally pasting the items on the pages of old, out-of-date law books, all of which Bud preserves.

The newspaper credits the article to City Engineer H.E. French, in a paper prepared then for the Historical Society. French served from 1904 to 1936.

## Obvious names

To begin with, we can eliminate the obvious names, such as streets named after trees. Another group of names refers to their physical location in the early village, streets such as East, West, South, Center, Summit, Ridge, Quarry and Park. There is no North Street, and the original Bridge Street was renamed Ash for reasons unknown in 1855. It becomes Walnut over the bridge to the south.

Broadway is so named because, beginning at First Street and going north, it is one rod wider than any other street in the city save Fourth Avenue, with is wide from Broadway west. Mound Street is named for the very numerous Indian mounds which formerly existed in the area.

By 1855, several additions had been made to the 16-year-old settlement. Its early name, Adams, had been named by Preston Brigham of Sumpter Township, who "with his own money" donated the land on and about the Courthouse Square to the fledgling county. He selected Adams due his admiration for the Adams family of Massachusetts, which produced two of our presidents. Now not even a street carries the Adams named.

### The two villages

Actually, some of the present city which lies south of the river had been platted and named Baraboo by a developer, George Brown. In 1849 Adams and Baraboo were designated together to be called Brooklyn, but operated separately until 1856 when the name Baraboo was uniformly accepted for the settlement.

To the west, historian Canfield had platted out Lyons, now West Baraboo, as a future metropolis, but included only a rather small town square. He named it Clinton Square after DeWitt Clinton, builder of the Erie Canal, and named Lyons after his old home in New York.

To the east, the village of Manchester was platted near the present pumping station, without success. All are now considered greater Baraboo as far as the post office is concerned.

### Elizabeth and others

Elizabeth Camp was the wife of a prominent early settler, and both man and wife have streets named after them. The name Elizabeth was suggested by Roseline Peck, the first woman to settle in Baraboo in 1839 or 1840. She observed that both she and her daughter Victoria had streets named after them, and thought it should be Elizabeth's turn.

The first Elizabeth Street stretched only from Second to Fourth Street. Little did Roseline expect that in time she and Victoria would still have streets only one block long, but that Elizabeth Street would stretch from the river to City View Road, about a mile! Incidentally, Wheeler Street is named for Victoria Peck's first husband. The second husband didn't get a street.

Lots of early settlers attached their names to streets. There was Capt. Levi Moore, the man who loaded the pistols with powder only, for the duel mentioned in a previous article. Moore actually settled at and named Skillet Creek, so named for the skillet-shaped areas hollowed out by the water cascading over the Skillet Creek Falls. This beautiful natural area has never been open to the public.

Other men who named streets after them-

selves include:

- James Maxwell, dam builder in the Manchester area.
- H.H. Potter, who married Maxwell's daughter Emma.
- H.H. Withington, an Englishman residing at Devils Lake.
- Lyman Clark, hotel keeper.
- H.J. Case, still living in 1917 when French was writing.
- Hitchcock, who married case's daughter Laura.
- Blake and Brier, workers on the dams and waterpower.

There were others too, most of whom had a family connection to some prominent citizen. Their names are memorialized by such streets as Florence, Martin, surveyor Crawford, lawyer Remington, his partner Blake, Dr. Mills, druggist Miller and hotel keeper Warren.

### Oddities

An interesting name is Guppy Street. No, it is not named after the small fish of brilliant colors, which in turn was named after one R.J.L. Guppy of Trinidad. Baraboo's Guppy Street was named by Major Charles Williams in honor of his friend Col. Guppy of Portage. Does Portage have a Guppy Street? Williams didn't get one either.

One street was named by mistake. A street was to be named after Ed Alexander, but somehow the Commission in 1917 thought his first name was Waldo, and assigned that name. It stuck.

It is possible that some of the streets named in the 1917 article have received new names, just as First Street had formerly been called Bench Street, for its view of the Baraboo River. Presumably there were benches for the weary or curious.

Wood Street was not named after founder Abe Wood, but for J.W. Wood, a partner of surveyor Crawford. Abe's partner, Wallace Rowan, has no street either, even in West Baraboo, where his bones reside in someone's yard. Needless to say, Eben Peck, the third male who first settled here, received no street name due to his abandonment of Roseline and daughter Victoria.

No attempt will be made in this article to trace the derivation of the more recent streets named by modern developers. Somewhere along the line presidents Washington,

Jefferson, Madison, Monroe and Lincoln were honored. Astonishingly, there is even a Taft Avenue, generally known as County T. Does any other city in Wisconsin have a street named after Taft?

Nowhere to be found is recognition of Benjamin Franklin, this writer's favorite Founding Father. Franklin's towering presence guided the Declaration of Independence, the French entrance into the Revolution, and the Constitutional Convention of 1787.

The shortest street of all must be Andro Street, and the most interesting intersection is Hollywood and Vine, with another interesting street being Cherry Alley. There are two Center streets, and both Baraboo and West Baraboo have Oak and Walnut streets.

Some streets have two names, Eighth being Ringling also, and Broadway being Gollmar also. Both circus families depended on the Moeller cousins for circus wagons, but no street bears their name yet, nor is there an Alma Waite Avenue.

Speaking of missing names, consider Ted Mandt, the powerhouse of the Industrial Expansion Corporation which revitalized a drifting city after World War II. For a short time there was a very short street named after him, but it was vacated. We should do better by Ted Mandt.

No one knows how they got their names, but we have Crestview Drive, Hillcrest Street, Crestwood Circle in West Baraboo, and Glenview to complicate giving street directions. And traveling north on most streets, you find the 600 block of addresses between Fourth and Fifth streets! Strange!

### Comments

It takes only a look at the map to see street problems in Baraboo. Eighth Street/Avenue is the only through east-west street. Various government and school and industrial developments preclude any other route, with the possible exception of Second Street/Avenue, the north-south direction, only East and Elizabeth have any potential, but are blocked by the river and southside developments.

In addition there are several changes in the street grid, such as the awkward and unfortunate "intersection" of Eighth Street and Jefferson. Also, Baraboo residents must even pass through West Baraboo to get to the University of Wisconsin-Baraboo/Sauk County campus. Future zoning and planning should be alert to problems such as these.

Moreover, our streets appear to need major refunding efforts to keep up with the needs of a proud and admirable city. Our founders were proud of their work, proud enough to leave their names on the streets of the city. Can we do as well?



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Word Count 488, floppy disk available

## **Highway, Byway, Skyway, Broadway, Freeway, Throughway**

### **Part II**

I would like to add a little to my previous article regarding the changing of street names. Wind Hill ran north from the intersection of Ash and Water to First Street where Col. Dykins Noyes lived. Its name was eventually changed to North Bridge Street. After some streamlining of the curve and hill, it appeared to be more of an extension of Ash Street so the name was extended to the bridge. Walnut also was known early on as South Bridge Street. First Street was initially Bench Street, maybe because Ash Street and Oak Street took on the definition of legs of a bench overlooking the Baraboo River? Maybe someone by the name of Bench pioneered that area? Somewhere along the line, South Broadway received the new name of South Boulevard, no doubt due to the rows of beautiful stately shade trees that line each side. I have yet to locate the trees but will keep searching.

Lynn Street west of Vine was also changed to Linn Street to avoid confusion. Confusion still reigned, so it was changed to West Linn and eventually to Lynn Avenue. Water Street did not fare so well as that portion west of Oak was simply named West Water Street. This lost its identification somewhere along the line and the numbering of structures in that block were done quite haphazardly, willy-nilly of original intent.

In 1877 there were problems as to the continuation of Maple Street, known as the "Lake Road." The property owners on that thoroughfare had been somewhat antagonized. What was then known as the "compromise Line" was established by agreement of interested parties some years prior but the boundaries had been lost over the years with traffic cutting across yards etc. Substantial monuments then marked the line so that future disputes would be avoided. The end result was Lake Street.

In a recent historical article, local historian Bob Dewel asks the following question. "Why is the 500 block located between Third Street and Fourth Street?" This is confusing but there is an explanation. Over one hundred years ago, the city council introduced a new numbering system as well as changing all the roadways west of Oak from "Streets" to "Avenues." If you would stand in the middle of the Baraboo River, between Oak and Vine Street and faced any direction, north, south, east or west, you would find even house numbers on your right and odd numbers on your left. Actually, when south of the river, the east-west division of house numbers begins at Quarry Street, which I believe was the main highway in those early days.

Also, if you faced north while standing in the middle of the river, you would be at the start of the 100 block. Therefore we find the 200 block between Water and First Streets. That's why the 500 block is between Third and Fourth Street.

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## THE MANY BANKS OF BARABOO

Yesteryear Revisited  
By Bob Dewel

Baraboo must be a really good place to do business, for we have ten places where we can do banking directly with a live teller. In addition, who knows how many ATM machines there are, where one can get cash day or night from a machine, deducted of course from your account.

Until recently there were 11 places with live tellers, until Amcore shut down its downtown location near the theatre. We won't have to wait long, however, for soon the Community First Bank will open in its temporary location in the 700 block of Broadway, formerly Hollywood Video. The bank has a building plan for the corner of Eighth and Broadway, formerly the KFC location.

Then we will again have eleven places to bank! What a change from 25 years ago when there were but two places, the main downtown banks. How did we survive in those days, with such inconvenience?

### Early history

Banking has a long history in Baraboo, beginning with the establishment of the Sauk County Bank on July 1, 1857. Now known as the Baraboo National Bank, it carried the name First National Bank for a couple years around 1800. Then it became the Bank of Baraboo, finally adopting the name Baraboo National Bank in 1938.

Thus that bank boasts 145 years of service, and is one of the oldest banks in Wisconsin. A previous attempt had been made in the 1850's to establish Baraboo Valley Bank, but it had failed to attract subscribers.

Not only did Baraboo National carry the name First National Bank for a time, but there have been in effect two other First National Banks, including the present one, but which is now

converting its name to Wells Fargo Bank. In 1924 there was an aborted attempt to rob the First National Bank by entering through the ceiling during the night, as reported in an earlier article.

In 1886 it was chartered as the First National Bank, located at 108 Fourth Avenue, now the location of the Java Café. It relocated in 1900 to the present location on the northeast corner of Oak and Third Street. The present handsome building was built in 1926.

101 Fourth Street

The Baraboo Intensive Survey publication of 1989 states that in 1929 First National merged with the Farmers and Merchants Bank. That bank had formerly been located at 101 Fourth Street, now the Cornerstone Gallery. Within three years, however, all U.S. banks were mired in the Depression, and the First National Bank and Trust was reorganized, partially under the direction of L.H. Eckhart, who became its long-time President.

The Cornerstone Gallery location is of interest in banking history, for, besides the Farmers and Merchants Bank, it also housed at one time the Baraboo Savings Bank. This bank was organized in 1889, but the building had been there for well over a decade. From all appearances it must have been built as a bank, but research by this writer shows that probably its first occupant was the Gust Meat Market, succeeded by the Vallikat Meat Market.





*100 Block 4th Street*

Other than a picture, not much is known about the Baraboo Savings Bank, but it is no longer listed in the 1905 city directory. The abstract shows that the property was sold in 1897, indicating that the bank may have failed at that time. It would be 1917 before the Farmers and Merchants Bank was organized, and occupied the building. Had the plans of a group of investors in about 1975 been fulfilled, it might have had a third bank as an occupant! The stately building has now been proposed for designation on the National Register of Historic Places.

Not to be confused with the old Baraboo Savings Bank is the Baraboo Savings and Loan organization, formed in 1934 by local businessmen such as Dr. Al. Dippel, Attorney R.H. Gollmar, and manufacturer George McArthur, under the leadership of R.L. Hirschinger. A mutual lending corporation, it was located in the former Trimpey Studio building at 128 Fourth Avenue. After remodeling in 1962, a new building on

1159 Eighth Street was built in 1972, with additional remodeling in 1983. It was later reorganized as the Baraboo Federal Bank rather than a savings and loan, and recently became part of the Amcore banking system in Illinois and Wisconsin.

#### Banking Ownership

Thus Baraboo now has three banks, with a fourth opening soon. Of the four, only one remains locally owned, but competition from out of town owners has not been a deterrent for the locally owned bank. Currently certain letters to the editor are deploring the possibility of a new lumber yard which would not be locally owned, yet one of the two larger lumber yards already in town has not been locally owned for generations.

**Another place to bank--the Credit Union!**



Curiously, Baraboo's first store was owned by an out of town person, the colorful Count Haraszthy of Sauk City—that town was called Haraszthy village then. There was probably consternation when the J.C. Penney Company, a chain store, came to Baraboo, date unknown, but local merchants rose to the challenge of competition. In the 1960's Baraboo had a downtown Sears store, plus a Woolworth dime store, and people signed a petition for the latter to stay when its departure was announced.

In fairness, it is true that the "big box" stores have forced a change in the nature of some downtown stores. Baraboo is going through growing pains, as it emerges from being the "Baraboo Area" to being the "Baraboo Regional Shopping Center", and we suspect that

Reedsburg and others would dearly love to have one of the big boxes in their vicinity. Being the center of County Government is a positive force also.

The presence of four banks, with eleven live teller locations, is a pretty good indication that, as always, Baraboo will thrive. There is something about Baraboo's scenic location, its varied mix of industries, and its quality attractions (circus, theatre, Crane Foundation, UW Campus, Zoo, etc.), that makes people want to live and work here.

Industries come and go, and highway bypasses try to route people quickly by us so as to benefit our neighbor to the north, but this city and its unique and attractive downtown will not be deterred. Those bankers must know something!

Wops--We forgot to mention  
The Credit Unions of Baraboo,  
where one can also deal with  
a live teller!



Sauk County Historical Society Photo  
Oak at Third Street. Bank Loans made these Late 1880 buildings possible.

# County papers and jails.

94

This newspaper, or at least the Republic part of it, was founded in 1855. More about it and other Sauk County newspapers later.

What has attracted our attention now is an editorial in the March 1857 issue of the young Republic publication, and how it correlates with the inmate housing dilemma we face in the year 2000. History does in a way repeat itself, for the issue in the spring of 1857 was where to house inmates of the jail. Present-day jails are overcrowded, but in 1857 the problem was that there was no jail at all!

## The prisoner

The Republic's editorial is reprinted in "The American Sketch Book" (1875) by Belle French Swisher. It describes the life of a prisoner in Baraboo, in 1857, as follows:

"He sleeps at the Western Hotel, the best in town, eats his breakfast there, and lounges around the village, gossiping with merchants and clerks until the gong sounds for dinner, which meal he eats with as good a grace as if he, instead of the county, paid for it. Afternoons and evenings are spent in the same manner, with the single interruption of tea; and at a tolerably reasonable hour our prisoner goes to bed, not being, we fear, a sadder or wiser man."

After describing the pleasant day enjoyed by the prisoner, who was being punished for stealing a cow, the Republic continued: "He has no disposition to run away, considering himself the best treated man in Sauk County. We understand that the sheriff proposed to him to work on his farm, but he was informed by this gentlemanly prisoner that the county had agreed to support him for three months without work."

## then and now

### Early jails

Sauk County was only about 13 years old at that time, and Wisconsin a state for even fewer years. Thanks to the generosity of Preston Brigham of Sumpter Township (as related extensively in another story), Baraboo had become the county seat. A courthouse of sorts was erected in 1847, about where the Al. Ringling Theatre stands

today. By Jan. 1, 1857, it was replaced by a handsome red brick building on the square, which served until fire destroyed it nearly 50 years later.

This building was made possible by contributions totaling \$3,000 from Baraboo residents to assure that the county seat remained here — people still remembered Reedsburg's attempt to capture the county seat in 1852.

The crude 1847 building had been occupied for a time by the Republic newspaper. It then became a saloon, and was destroyed by fire on the July 4, 1857. The fire must have outshone the fireworks, if indeed there were any!

Nearby had been, for some time, a makeshift jail, said to resemble a dry goods box, and "was not sufficiently strong to hold anybody." Baraboo's irascible founder, Abe Wood, had simply dug his way out under the wall when he was incarcerated for some misdemeanor. The net result was that the young county in 1857 faced a problem not unlike that of the year 2000 — how and where to build a jail.



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They solved the problem soon with a small hexagonal jail, apparently located where the post office is today on the northwest corner of Broadway and First Avenue. A wooden addition was added later. That jail was in turn replaced by a red brick building just to its north in 1890. This building served to house both the prisoners and the sheriff and his family, and served until the recent 1960s.

Currently, the county jail is on the top floor of the 1962 courthouse addition on the Square, plus the Huber Center near the junction of South Boulevard and Highway 12. Both are usually full to near capacity, and prisoners are often farmed out to jails in nearby counties.

### Early newspapers

The Republic, established in 1855, wasn't the first paper in the county. According to Cole's "Sauk County History," the Sauk Prairie area had the Pioneer am Wisconsin, its first issue being on Nov. 23, 1853, in German. Though neutral at first in politics, it became Republican because of the issue of slavery. It consolidated in 1892 in Sauk City with the Sauk City Press, becoming the Pioneer Press.





A side view of the jail showing an addition at the rear — the sheriff and his family lived here.

*Photo from Sauk Co Historica Society*

Even the 1853 German language newspaper had been preceded in Baraboo, however, by the short-lived Sauk County Standard, which first published on June 25, 1850. This paper supported the Democratic persuasion, but the paper folded in November 1856. Its competition, the Baraboo Republic, had begun in January 1855, it being of the Republican persuasion. It is from that humble beginning that the Baraboo News Republic of today traces its origin. During the 1920s the Republic merged with the Evening News. The Republic went daily in March 1894.

Other papers came and went, such as the Sauk County Democrat and the Mirror Lake Echo, and also

the Advertiser, forerunner of the Evening News (1894). Most recently, the Baraboo Sun published in 1997-98.

Reedsburg had a sporadic newspaper service until 1872. Prairie du Sac had the Sauk County News beginning in 1876, and Spring Green had a paper, founded in 1877, with the name Dollar Times.

#### **Journalism**

In present time one frequently hears his hometown newspaper castigated for insufficient coverage of local news, as compared to years ago. This writer confesses to having that opinion until he began researching for these "Yesteryear Revisited" articles. It develops that the earlier editions of some 50 years ago, and before, had far less local news than at present.





Sauk County Historical Society

The Western Hotel stood on the Southeast corner of Oak and Fourth Streets in downtown Barboo

The dailies, at that time, including the News Republic, fancied themselves as purveyors of national and international news thanks to their Associated Press or United Press wires, and their front pages resembled those of the

Madison and Milwaukee papers. The gold mine of local news was poorly tapped, though researchers are grateful for any local news which was printed.

The older newspaper editors had another characteristic. Rather than attempting balanced coverage of a story, and confining opinions to the editorial page, or to feature articles such as this one, the older papers were politically biased, with a vituperation that would redden the ears of a modern reader.

#### **The Baraboo Republic**

Our Constitution guarantees, along with freedom of religion, the concept of a free press. It was in that tradition that the editor of the Baraboo Republic in 1855 dared to criticize the governing bodies of his day by exposing the lenient and almost luxurious manner in which a person was allowed to serve his sentence in the county.

Perhaps things haven't changed so much, anyway. Janet Bjornsen remembers talking with Buster Wilcox one day, in the 1940s when he was acting as jailer. A prisoner upstairs rattled his cage, said he was cold, and asked permission to fix the furnace. Buster let him go downstairs, but said to Janet, "I'll bet he has a bottle down there." After the prisoner returned upstairs Buster investigated, and sure enough there was a liquor bottle hidden behind the shovel. Buster emptied it and replaced the contents with vinegar. Soon the prisoner offered to fix the furnace again, but returned, cursing Wilcox and saying, "After this you can fix your own (deleted) furnace".

Though we still have biased publications, particularly in matters of religion and politics, the free press serves us well. Baraboo is particularly lucky in having a daily newspaper, for there are now only about 1,500 in the entire country, and but a handful in cities the size of Baraboo. The News Republic, despite a rather small staff, is diligent and dedicated — but don't tell editor Ben Bromley that — it might go to his head!

# The ladies of the Baraboo Whiskey War

In a previous article we related two stories, one about the rendering of paternal justice after brotherly fisticuffs, and one about a duel in early Baraboo that was settled over a bottle of whiskey.

People were not reluctant to take matters into their own hands in those early days, perhaps due to the rudimentary legal system and the relative scarcity of attorneys. In many cases, like one of those above, hard liquor was a factor.

## Saloons in 1854

Such was the case in 1854 when a group of local women observed that the village had no bank and no newspaper, but did have several saloons. The death of one of the town's drunkards due to drink was an instigating factor, a community wake-up call so to speak.

The situation was highlighted by sermons from the various pulpits in the town. Particularly eloquent remarks by the Methodist Minister, Rev. W.H. Thompson (not an ancestor of our ubiquitous Governor Tommy Thompson) helped set the matter into focus.

Rev. Thompson, in his sermon, prayed to God that "the thunderbolts of heaven should shiver (shatter) the Birch Tavern and its contents, animate and inanimate." Thus encouraged many ladies of the town and local countryside decided that they were to be the thunderbolts to shiver the Birch Tavern. A local attorney suggested that it would be nice to see all of the liquor "poured into the streets," adding to their resolve.

The story is told by historians Cole and Butterfield, each of which wrote a "History of Sauk County," and also by an undated newspaper article at the Sauk County Historical Society. Cole seems to downplay the resulting action and carnage, but

does agree that the action of the ladies caused much excitement, and that women from the nearby countryside participated also.

Both authors discreetly omit the names of the ladies.

Some 50 women had appeared on the streets armed with axes, hatchets, spades, hoes and clubs at an early morning time. Butterfield, more a contemporary to people who would remember the incident, waxes eloquent in his rather enhanced report, devoting several pages to the matter. Here is what happened according to Butterfield:

## Butterfield's Account

While the Brick Tavern's "whilom dispenser of these evil spirits is wrapped in slumber...the destruction proceeds so quickly that his sleep is not disturbed. Rye, bourbon, and Fine Old Tom meet a common fate, and are rapidly absorbed into the parched earth in front of the hotel" as the ladies ravage the alcoholic beverages.

Across the street a grocer who "keeps a little to accommodate his customers" observed the destruction and locked his front door, but the ladies effect a rear entrance and all the liquor is destroyed.

Next to receive their wrath is an establishment known as "French Pete's." According to a newspaper report a few years later, Pete is said to have "met them with a gun, only to be knocked senseless with a spade wielded by one of the women." His supply of booze then met the same fate as had that of the previous establishments.



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WORLD BOOK ENCYCLOPEDIA

Baraboo ladies used a hatchet to crack down on saloons 50 years before Carry Nation did.

### Justice

Frontier justice was not completely lacking, however, for in due time the ringleaders "pleaded guilty to the charge of disturbing the peace, were fined \$30, and the cases were dropped," according to the news article.

Butterfield, however, says that the total damage, as assessed by Judge Wheeler, was only \$150, and that the ladies were taken to Lower Sauk, now Sauk City. The justice remanded them to the sheriff, who released them on their own recognizance until the next term of court.

Meantime, according to a recent newspaper

report, the women's husbands "finally paid a toll of \$150 to end the affair." So ended the Baraboo Whiskey War!

### Temperance

The war may have ended for Baraboo, but there were statewide ramifications. According to a booklet called "Wisconsin's Legal History" public outrage at the incident prompted the state legislature to pass a bill prohibiting the manufacture and sale of liquor. The bill was subsequently vetoed by the Governor.

The temperance movement, as represented in Baraboo by the ladies, culminated some 60 years later in Prohibition, America's experiment with legalizing morality.

The significance of the Baraboo action is that it occurred so early. Carrie Nation, the great symbol of the movement, was only 8 years old at the time. She began her crusade in Kansas in 1890, where state-ordered prohibition was not enforced. So obsessed was she with her mission that her husband divorced her in 1901 for desertion. She died in 1911, before Prohibition by constitutional amendment was enacted in 1920. It was repealed in 1933.

The ladies of Baraboo, Carry Nation, Prohibition, and its repeal were movements that came and went, but the abuse of alcohol remains as a problem of human society. Different groups wrestle with the problem, and there is a Woman's Christian Temperance Union group in Sauk City to this day.

Particularly difficult today is the association between alcohol and driving an automobile. The ladies of 1854 could not have anticipated this, for in those days the horse knew the way home even if the driver didn't.

# The Great Baraboo Brewing Co.

## - in Michigan?

You never know what you will get into when you print a story. I suppose every writer wonders if anyone reads his stuff. Fortunately there are several local history buffs, who not only provide encouragement but supply ideas.

Wednesday, Jan. 27 was a remarkable day for this writer in that respect. Earlier in the day the News Republic printed our article about "The Ladies of the Baraboo Whiskey War," and we received two significant bits of feedback, both favorable fortunately.

### The Great Baraboo

It was Gene Dalhoff, genial director of the Baraboo Area Chamber of Commerce, who first informed me that there exists a tavern and restaurant near Detroit named the Great Baraboo, or The Great Baraboo Brewing Company!

It was Gene's understanding that they somehow knew about the Baraboo Whiskey War story a few years ago, and chose to use the unique name Baraboo as the name of their establishment. Gene said they have T-shirts with their motto "Make Beer Not



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War" emblazoned on them, of which he has one (see at right). Gene had discovered the name on the Internet while researching the name of Baraboo.

Gene thinks they may give you a free beer if you show them your driver's license, complete with Baraboo address! Augie, the day manager, made no such offer when we called, but Gene says that if you do stop, take some pictures so we can all have a look at the Great Baraboo Brewing Company!

Within three hours after talking with Gene I had a telephone call from Millie Royer of Baraboo. It seems that her daughter, Jane Ripplinger, lives in Arbor Hills, Mich., and has dined at the Great Baraboo. In fact, on a recent visit she and Millie planned to go there for lunch, but illness intervened.

Thursday I called the Great

Baraboo and talked with Augie. She confirmed the name, and gave the location as 35905 Utica Road, Clinton Township, Mich. This is near Detroit. The Great Baraboo appears to be an upscale bar and restaurant, with a wide menu of steaks, pizza, ribs, etc., and has been open for four years.

Their menu tells the story of the Baraboo Whiskey War, and their slogan is indeed "Make Beer, Not War." They also sell a variety of clothing items with that logo, and Augie remarked that the T-shirt logo includes a picture of a dark-haired, bosomy woman. There is no explanation as to whether she represents our fair city or not.

### Baraboo license plate

Millie Royer also spoke of another mention of the name Baraboo, for the Royer's daughter Sherry, who lives in Oswego, N.Y., has a personalized auto license plate with the name Baraboo. She says people have looked at it and said, "Oh, I know where that is."

So what does it all mean? Certainly Michigan has the only Great Baraboo eatery in exist-

tence, and Baraboo is the only Baraboo in the world. Is it that there is a certain vocal attraction to the pronunciation of Baraboo, or is the name different enough to provoke amusement?

Well, if so, let them laugh away. Not many citizens can boast of the following:

1. The world's most complete circus research library, circus wagon collection, and circus summer attraction.

2. The world-famous International Crane Foundation, written up in countless publications, journals, and news articles.

3. The first of the great movie palaces built in the United States, perhaps in the world, the Al. Ringling Theatre.

4. The nearby Baraboo bluffs, full of geology, flora, and fauna.

5. The list could go on, but you get the idea. Baraboo has its problems, but is a colorful and interesting and beautiful place to live.

#### The rest of the day

The 27th of January was not done with me, however. Not only did a number of people comment on the Whiskey War story, but other contacts were made.



Shown above is the logo of the Great Baraboo Brewing Co., as shown on a T-shirt owned by Gene Dalhoff.

Ray Wickus suggested I do an article on the 1931 school orchestra, with an accompanying query as to why the school no longer has an orchestra, though there is extensive band training.

The mail also brought a nice card from the Gene Suchomels of Lake Delton, who said, "We

haven't lived in the area very long ... (but) we like the history."

Also in the mail was a three-page letter from longtime resident J. Ray Otis. Ray offered to supply information on Baraboo's first postal service, mail drop, and stage coach delivery system. At age 90, Ray is pretty much bedridden but retains an alert mind and a good legible penmanship.

And while the day was dominated by the Great Baraboo brewing story, Ray, not knowing about it, said that he is reading his second volume of the histories of breweries world-wide. It should mention the Ruhland and Effinger breweries, the latter of which occupied the building now housing the Robert Parkinson Circus World Museum Research Center.

So, the Whiskey War story made a busy day for this writer. I realize this won't happen again, and that I now have had my 15 minutes of journalistic fame. But it was a fun and interesting day in an interesting city with the memorable name of Baraboo.

## The Wisconsin House and the Whisky Ladies

Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

The recent series in this column on early Baraboo hotels would not be complete without an examination of the Wisconsin House Hotel. We should also revisit the Baraboo Whisky Ladies story.

The Wisconsin House was an early contemporary of the Western Hotel, being built in 1850. Known at times as the Park View House, it was noted in its early days for two things. One was its tavern, named the Little Dutch Tavern. Because it was the first brick structure in Baraboo, however small, it was also known as the Brick Tavern. The other 1850 notation is that the first Roman Catholic mass was held on the premises in May by a traveling priest, Rev. Maximillian Gartner. Several Protestant denominations already existed in the village.

### The Brick Tavern

The hotel's location at or about 136 Fourth Avenue, now the Al Ringling Theatre, was already historic. Previously a small wood jail had been built on or near this property. It was from that structure that Abe Wood, Baraboo's irascible founder (along with Eben and Roseline Peck), had escaped simply by digging out the dirt floor under an outside wall.

The Brick Tavern also has a place in Baraboo history, for it was here that the Whiskey War occurred in 1854. Baraboo women, urged on by local clerics, arose early one morning and invaded the Brick Tavern. The sleeping owner, Michael Kormel, was unaware that "rye, bourbon, and Fine Old Tom" met a common fate, and were "rapidly absorbed by the parched earth in front of the hotel."

Another tavern, French Pete's, met a similar fate, but with the owner awakened by the ruckus. So did the Van Wendell Saloon, where a male person blocking the way was rudely jerked aside, having been caught by the waistband. Unfortunately, "the suddenness of the attack caused some of the fastenings to give way", apparently creating an embarrassing situation.

The women were subsequently fined \$150, a not insignificant sum in those days. This has been a brief summary of the Whiskey War story, which we published in a more complete form a couple years ago. Alert readers may remember that as a result of the story, we learned of the "Great Baraboo Brewing Company" a restaurant near Detroit, Michigan. They feature the Baraboo Whisky War as their theme, mentioning Baraboo in both their name and in their menu, which contains some thirteen entrees with the word Baraboo in them. We now learn that Dorothy Farrell has an Illinois license plate which reads Baraboo.

### The Wisconsin House

As can be seen by the accompanying photo, the Wisconsin House grew in stature, leaving its raucous past and becoming a sizeable hotel for a small town, with a strategic location facing the courthouse square, called the county park in those days. In the rear was a livery stable operated by Ferdinand Welk. The hotel was purchased in 1867 by John G. Schlag, and his brother-in-law, Herman Albrecht, both of whom had been German immigrants. Albrecht was also a Civil War Veteran.

Apparently time took its toll, for by 1898 Paul Schlag, perhaps a son, was the proprietor. In the 1903-05 city directories, a C.L. Brown was control. By 1907 the ownership had passed to Wilson Eddy, he having purchased it from G.H. Campbell of Kilbourn. A J. Beaulieu was in charge in 1908, but he closed the hotel in November, 1910, and ownership remained with or returned to Campbell.



Apparently the hotel remained closed until 1912, when the heirs of G.H. Campbell of Kilbourn sold the property to Al Ringling, certainly one of the most significant real estate deals in Baraboo if not in Sauk County. Downtown historian Joe Ward has supplied much of the material on ownership of the Wisconsin House. Incidentally, Ward finds references to the theatre as "the Al" as disrespectful to Al Ringling. Another alert reader has consulted past signatures and says that Al Ringling did not use a period after "Al", as is commonly done today.

How the Wisconsin House escaped the many fires in downtown Baraboo is not known, and its ignominious fate was to be torn down in 1912, the vacant lot being used for outdoor movies the two following summers.

This is the final article on old Baraboo hotels, of which Downtown Baraboo had many, and now there are none. Motels on the three highways serve the traveling public, with a large motel projected to replace the Thunderbird on the east side. Most promising is the rumor that a fine hotel will soon be built near downtown. We don't think they have to worry about the Whiskey Ladies any more.



Sauk County Historical Society

## August Ringling and the One Horse Shop

Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

On June 23, 1855, the newly founded Republic carried the following advertisement:

"Ho, fellow citizens! Give attention to the One Horse Shop. Now if any are desirous to know where cheap things (saddles, bridles, etc..) stay, they will crowd their way to the shop of the undersigned nearly opposite the Summer House. A. Ringling."

In a subsequent advertisement in 1855 suggestive of the ballyhoo of his sons' circus 50 years later, Ringling advertised that "The One Horse establishment will now, good friends, pass as a DOUBLE HORSE Concern (his capital letters)."

Apparently things didn't go too well, for an 1858 issue of the Republic carried the following notice, also complete with capital letters: "A Ringling Announces that in consequence of the Hard Times he is selling out his entire stock of Double and Single Harness, Saddles, etc. At Cost."

This was the first of two moves to Baraboo by Ringling, whose fortunes rose and fell, mostly fell, in various locations such as Prairie duChemin, McGregor, and Stillwater, MN. An 1848 immigrant from Germany to Milwaukee, he met and married Marie Salome Juliar, the daughter of French immigrants who had arrived there in 1845.

The Ringling family had, 300 year before, been French with the name Richelin. They had escaped from France after the infamous St. Batholemew's day massacre of Protestants by order of the Catholic French Regent, Catherine de Medici, a part of the religious wars of the time. Escaping to Germany, they changed the name to Rungleing and settled in Dankelshausen, Hanover. Family records show frequent marriages over the years to females in the Bauermann family.

It was nearly 300 years later when August Ringling, a 21 year old harness maker and carriage trimmer immigrated in 1848, as narrated above. Moving to Chicago, their first born child, in December of 1852, was Albert, or Al, followed closely by August in 1854.

Their first move to Baraboo was in 1854, where the advertisements quoted above were published. Downtown historian Joe Ward found his shop listed as being on Fourth Street, "east of Dan Ruggles' location." Much of the information in this article is from a book by Henry Ringling North, and called to this writer's attention by Eldon Johnson.

Ringling now moved his growing family to McGregor, Iowa, where, as luck would have it, the family of all boys saw a Dan Rice Circus and the seeds were planted for the greatest circus dynasty the world has ever seen. The family fell further in debt, however, and an unfortunate move to



Many years before this picture was taken, August Ringling Sr. had his shop on the ground floor of the building to the right, known as Taylor Hall, The family lived upstairs.

Prairie duChien in 1872 was disastrous, brightened only by the birth of Ida, the only girl to survive birth in the family.

It was back to Baraboo in 1876 for the Ringling clan, minus Al who was out on his own in Brodhead, Wisconsin. Interestingly, the concern was now located in what was an earlier time Baraboo's principal meeting place, Taylor Hall, on the SE corner of Third and Broadway. The family lived upstairs, but the boys were restless, with memories of the Dan Rice circus in McGregor a few years before.

The return of Al in the summer of 1882 was the catalyst, and the Ringling Classic and Comic Company was on the road that fall. The dynasty had begun, conceived in McGregor and born in Baraboo, probably to the consternation of August and Salome.



*William H. Canfield, 1870 ca. WHi 45364*

Carte-de-visite portrait of William H. Canfield (1819-1913), a Wisconsin civil engineer and surveyor who is best known for his studies of Sauk County's natural and human history. Handwritten text at the bottom of the image reads, "W. H. Caulfield."

Photographer's credit on back reads, "Hugo Broich, Photographer, 365 West Water Str., cor of Chestnut and 116 & 118 Spring Street (opposite the Plankinton House), Milwaukee, Wis." Attached handwritten card inserted behind carte reads, "Baraboo Nov 13th, 1870. I.A. Lapham, Milwaukee, Compliments to thee and family. Especially the good old quaker mother. As ever..."

## Courthouse Approaches Centennial Observance

Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

The granite Civil War statue of a Union soldier had stood on the courthouse lawn but a few years in 1904, having been dedicated on May 30, 1897. They had been quiet years for the most part, a new-fangled horseless carriage competing with the neighing of horses on occasion, plus a certain amount of frenzy during the Spanish-American War days.

But the statue had never seen anything like this on a night in 1904, and his granite eyelids must have frantically raised and his stone eyes widened as he watched in horror, for the courthouse was on fire, and no one was around to sound the alarm.

### Fire

It was 11:30 in the evening of an icy December 27, 1904 when the bartender in Lentz's saloon, John Harris, discovered the fire. The red brick courthouse had stood for nearly 50 years. It was built in 1856 by P.A. Bassett, contractor, and dedicated on Jan 1, 1857 after Reedsburg's failed attempt to relocate the county seat.

Over the years an annex had been added for the storage of records, but the structures were not fireproof. Just 6 weeks earlier, on November 18, 1904, the county board of supervisors, (by one vote margin) had voted to replace it with a new structure. There was only \$8000 in insurance on the building. Temporary offices were set up in the Baraboo city hall.

This 1856 unimposing red brick structure, forty by sixty feet, had cost \$5000, and was actually the third Sauk county courthouse building. The first had been in Prairie Du Sac in 1844, but in 1846 the county seat was moved to Baraboo after a lengthy dispute chronicled in another article. The first

Baraboo building was erected in April, 1848, at 120 Fourth Avenue, just east of the Al Ringling Theatre today, at a cost of \$4000.

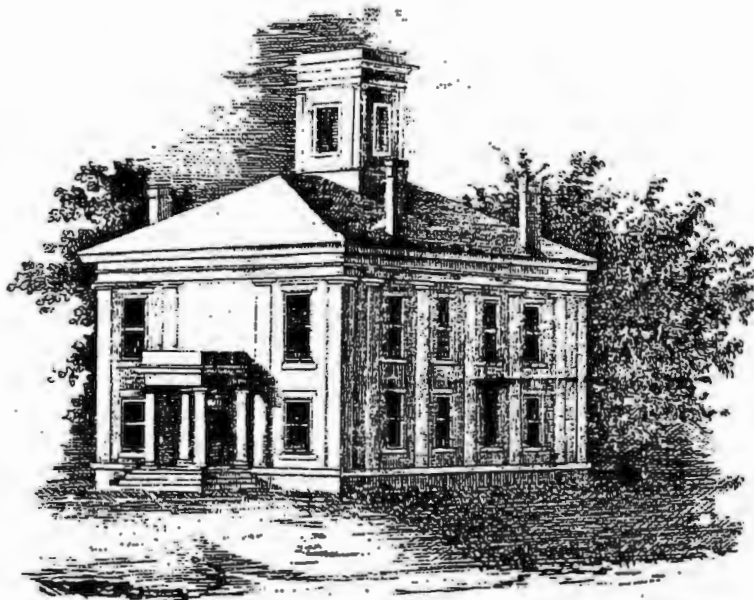
That frame structure was the village's first multi-purpose building, being used for dances, church services, funerals, and school functions. In 1852 Reedsburg unsuccessfully attempted to become the county seat, a story in itself accompanied by bitter disputes settled in Baraboo's favor by a federal marshal. Ultimately replaced in 1856, the frame structure became a saloon before succumbing to fire on July 4, 1857.

Over \$3000 of the cost of the 1856 red brick courthouse was funded by contributions from Baraboo citizens and businessmen to secure its safety from another Reedsburg attempt at relocation. It was to last 47 years, being replaced by the present classic structure in 1905 after the fire. The latter is an imposing but understated Classic design in Indiana limestone, with a green terra cotta roof. Actually the design is said to have been the second choice by the supervisors. They had considered and rejected a grandiose domed structure rivaling the state capitol, complete with pillars or columns.

Moved into the new building were the records from the vaults for the Register of Deeds, the County Judge, and the Clerk of Courts. Lost in the fire were County Clerk and County Treasurer documents.

Although the board had voted \$100,000 for the new structure, the bids came in at \$83,384, the architects being the Milwaukee firm of Ferry and Clas, the latter being a Sauk County native originally. Dedication was on August 18, 1906, said to be a fine summer day, but it belied a dispute as to where the principal entrance should be, west or east. As a result, the building has two cornerstones, one a copper box on the northeast corner of the building and a similar one on the southwest corner.

As previously reported, the cupola on the original building was



The  
1855  
Court  
house  
before  
several  
additions



The 1905  
Court  
house  
before  
additions  
to the  
west

replaced in 1915 with the present clock tower in memory of J.J. Gatticker, who was prominent in county affairs.

It is not too early to start planning for a centennial observance for this venerable building, and an exploratory committee has been appointed by the Sauk County Arts, Humanities, and History Preservation Committee. We did

not get the traditional dome and pillars, but even so, the stately courthouse has a dignity and style not often seen in modern government buildings. Our forefathers were proud of their county, and were willing to pay a little more in taxes for quality and beauty.



# Gold in Coffee Sacks in Reedsburg

## Tales of Earlier Days

By Bob Dewel

We've all heard of con men, those unscrupulous vultures who cheat honest men out of their money. The letters from Nigeria are common these days, as are the fake messages from a distant relative in Canada in need of immediate cash to avoid kidnapping or whatever. Perhaps it is an investment advisor touting a worthless stock.

We are told to think these schemes are a byproduct of our modern civilization, with its "loose morals" and money-centered capitalistic vultures. Surely this did not happen in the good old days, with its pioneer spirit, religion, and "one for all, all for one" attitude of sharing?

Well, think again! One of the most complicated and ingenious con schemes happened right here in Sauk County, in Reedsburg. It occurred in 1856 and is chronicled in The "History of Reedsburg and the Upper Baraboo Valley". The story is long and difficult to condense, but worth listing as an historical event in the saga of Sauk County,

Our story really begins in Beaver Dam, when a banker named Wells found a bundle of papers on the roadside by his home, supposedly lost by a traveler headed for Reedsburg, but actually a plant. Within the bundle were letters from a man named Burleigh, an admitted robber, and written to a Mr. Burton in Cincinnati. Fearing detection and loss of his life, Burleigh was confiding in Burton, to whom he owed a favor. The bundle contained maps showing where, in Reedsburg, Burleigh had supposedly buried \$50,000 in gold many years ago. It specified that the gold was in coffee sacks,

The letter was inviting Burton to join Burleigh, but of course the letter was now in the hands of Banker Wells of Beaver Dam, who had found the bundle of letters. Proceeding to Reedsburg, Wells confirmed by a hotel register that Burton of Cincinnati was in town, supposedly also seeking the treasure but without the map. Needing local guidance, banker Wells sought the advice of Judge Wheeler, who was delighted to share in the booty in exchange for his advice and participation. Several others were allowed to join the search, including a Beaver Dam man named Burchard.

They knew from the letters that the "burial site" was on the property of a Reedsburg resident, L. Gay Sperry, who supposedly did not realize that. They approached him regarding a purchase, but he replied that he was considering an offer of \$3000 for the property, an outlandish offer in those pioneer days. The property was probably worth only three hundred dollars. *It would appear to Wells that Burton, in the hotel had made the offer.* In his greedy state, Wells now offered Sperry a larger sum, to which he reluctantly agreed. Sperry had few possessions in his cabin and quickly moved on, giving Wells and Wheeler immediate possession of the lot and cabin.

Here we quote, somewhat condensed, from the History of Reedsburg book: "That night at the stroke of Midnight, the conspirators sallied forth with their spades and several coffee sacks (which they left at the gate)...and the digging began with hearty good will and with an energy that would have discouraged Satan, had he been trying to prevent the finding of gold at that site. "

""Be careful (cautioned Judge Wheeler), not to strike the bags with the spade. You might scatter the gold". However only a short time sufficed the two who had the spades that there was no gold there, for they had struck a stratum of earth nearly allied with stone. As the two paused from sheer despair, another of the conspirators leaned over the hole: "Should I go get the coffee sacks now?' The Judge's reply is not on





Sketch of Reedsburg, about 1860

record, from the fact that it would not look good in print", remarked the author of the story.

Like all good mysteries, this leaves us hanging a bit. Was there really a Burton of Cincinnati during all of this, or, was it all the concoction of Sperry? Incredibly, Sperry quickly departed with the money, going to Beaver Dam, home of the swindled men! Sperry does not appear to have had the brains to work out such a scheme.

The angry Beaver Dam men returned to that city and discovered and collared Sperry, taking him to a room where a stormy interview ensued. Sperry is said to have been trembling in his boots. The men "persuaded" him, so the story goes, to return the greater part of the money that had been paid him, and take back the property. It is said that Sperry spent a minimum time back in Reedsburg, quickly abandoning the property for back taxes.

As for Burton of Cincinnati, (If he existed), we assume that he left his hotel and abandoned his search. The gaping hole in the ground which the morning light revealed must have aroused small town speculation, and when Burton learned that others had preceded, and perhaps even found gold, he was left holding the sack so to speak. On the other hand, perhaps he did only exist in the mind and scheme of Sperry.

As for the good old days, it appears that men were greedy then too, despite our idyllic view of those supposedly halcyon days. Justice was quick, though erratic, and sometimes unjust. We sort of think Sperry had it coming, though.

## THE DAMS AND OXBOWS ON THE BARABOO RIVER

### Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

Baraboo readers will remember the lively and spirited but short-lived Baraboo Sun newspaper. They may also remember that the Sun vigorously opposed removal of the dams on the river, as did this writer.

We opposed the removal partly on historical grounds, but also because some people happen to find mill ponds attractive. What is more tranquil than a guy and his date leisurely paddling a canoe on the smooth waters of the pond?

However, when the die is cast and the battle is lost, there is a motto which fits the occasion--"if you can't lick 'em, join 'em!" So last year, on the morning of Clean Up the River Day, I could be seen in Hasking Park with the Kiwanis keyboard, happily accompanying the singing of a song for the dam busters and river cleanup crew. The song was called Cleaning Up the River.

It is sung to the tune of Cruising Down the River, and a couple of would-be entertainers made up the words for the Kiwanis Club a few years ago. They include such ugly phrases as "You wade and splash and hold your nose, mid all that goo and gore....You squish and scratch, and push and pull, and wish that you were through...Your hands, they stink, they're black, not pink...Remember all the cows upstream, don't pick your nose or teeth."

Last year was not the first year for a cleanup of the river. Early mid-nineteenth

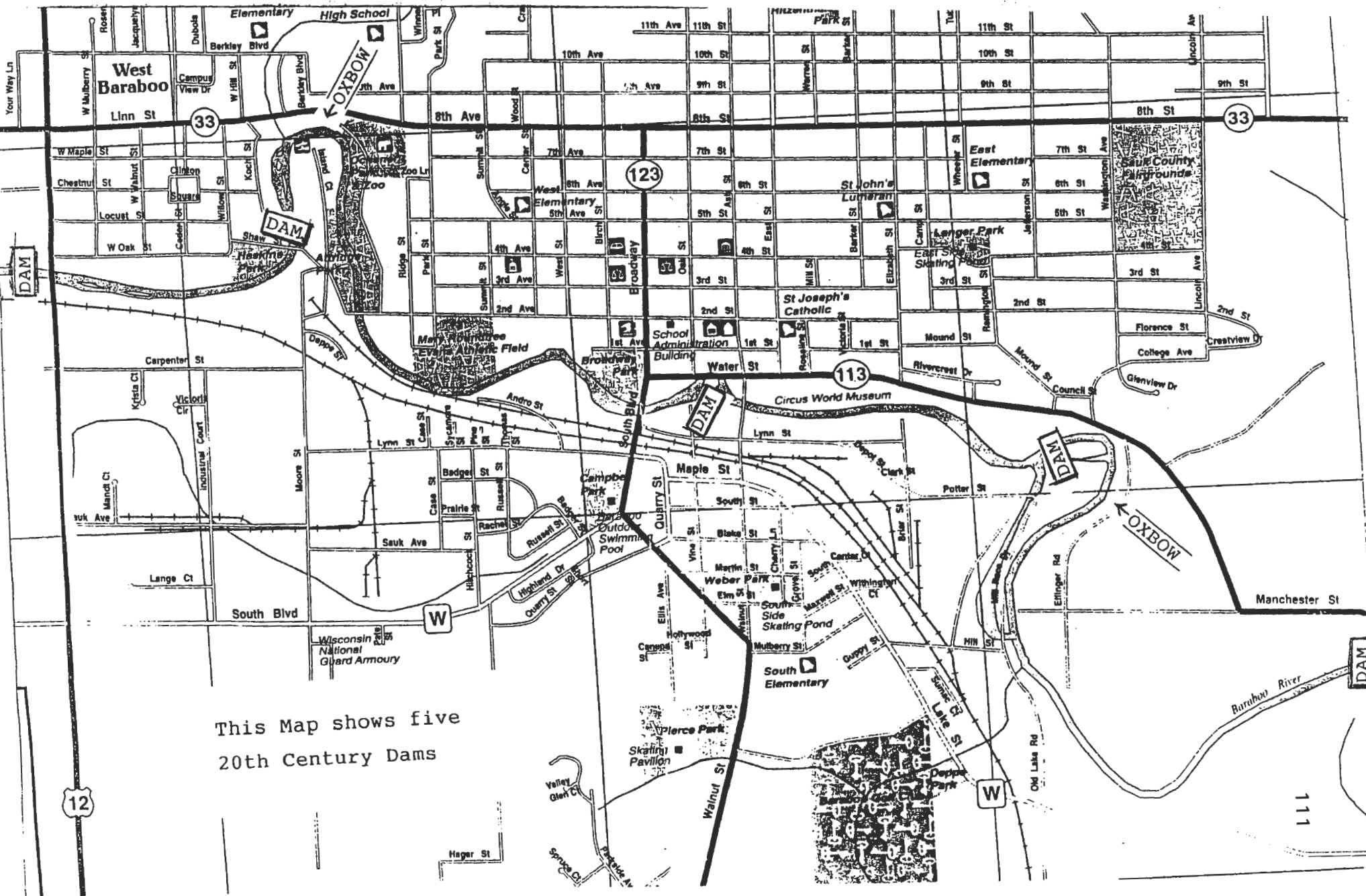
century pictures show it was a total mess, and over the generations citizens have made gradual improvements. Back in 1969 or 1970, after prodding by high school Key Club member Mike Mossman, the Kiwanis Club conducted a Sunday afternoon cleanup.

About five years ago, that same club, having come into some money, reversed a decision to give the money away to local charities and decided instead to initiate the current riverwalk project.

You've heard of the Gang of Five in our national judicial system recently concerning the election? It was a gang of five in Kiwanis that persuaded the club to change its first decision and ultimately to go for the riverwalk project. The first results can be seen in the excellent riverwalk already in place in Ochsner and Mary Rountree Evans Parks.

With regard to the loss of the dams, one has to admit that though the loss erased significant early history of Baraboo, the result had not been the disaster that was predicted. The lucky reason is that Baraboo has the only real rapids of any significance in the course of the river.

Dam opponents anticipated stagnant pools of water, but from Haskins Park all the way to the McArthur dam on highway 113, the stream flows briskly, or will when that dam is removed. It does remain to be seen what the river bed will look like in a truly dry August, but for now, thanks to the drop in elevation,



This Map shows five  
20th Century Dams





The Manchester Bridge was moved from Manchester Street across town to Ochhner Park, and now serves as a foot bridge. In this picture the river is near flood stage

it looks pretty good. Reedsburg and North Freedom do not have rapids like that, but Baraboo is lucky.

#### The Dams

There have been many dams. An 1872 map prepared by historian and surveyor Canfield shows four dams at that time, with the fall on each.

The first dam is just west of the new bridge on highway 12, near what will soon be called the old Walmart Building. The map names it the Thomas, Claude, and Thomas dam, with a fall of seven feet. Canfield lists a company called Hub, Spoke, and Wagon Gearing Manufactory and Saw Mill at this location.

Next is the Island Woolen Mill dam, just north of the bridge connecting Haskins Park and Attridge Park, on the upper oxbow. An oxbow in a river gets its name from the wood or leather ushaped yoke which passes under and around the neck of a harnessed ox.

The oxbow in the river resembles that oxbow. If you look at a map, you will see two oxbows in the Baraboo river, acting almost like bookends for the northern two-thirds of the city of Baraboo, though the lower or eastern oxbow bookend has fallen down a bit.

There must have been a lot of fill added to the south when the Broadway Bridge was built, and where St. Vincent De Paul store is today, to narrow the river.



## A Thirty-Five Year Feud in Early Baraboo

### Tales of Earlier Days

By Bob Dewel

Were the early settlers of Baraboo peaceful people, cooperating for the good of the community? We usually think so, looking with disdain at the tumultuous history of such Western hamlets as Dodge City or Tombstone. Surely the mostly New Englanders and other Easterners who settled out lands were not like that!

Don't be too sure. How would you feel about a 35 year Feud? Not exactly the Hatfields and the Coys, but bitter and enduring in the small communities of Baraboo-Adams. At least they resorted to the courts, but the feud only ended with the death of one of the adversaries.

Our information comes from a column in the News or the Republic (credit was not given), as written on January 7, 1906 by A.A. Roberts. The column was headed "More about Pioneers". He in turn quotes one Eldridge W. Jackson, apparently from the early pioneer days, on the trouble between Philamon Pratt and William Brown "usually pitted against each other in the courts." Brown was apparently the son of Chauncey Brown, the claim jumper (book owners see I-22 and VII -1 to 9).

Roberts refers to a long and bitterly contested feud between Brown and Pratt starting nearly sixty years before, which would put it at the beginning of 1847. The Baraboo Raids settlement was but 8 years old then, and entirely dependent on water power to operate the saw mills and grain grinding activities.

The trouble started out fairly innocently, with the purchase of Brown's "South side water power", probably in the river at the foot of Oak Street. Pratt paid the amount due, but Brown soon detected a flaw in the transaction and demanded more money, which Pratt did not care to fork over. Brown then brought suit against Pratt which the latter "contested with his natural energy, thoroughly aroused by a sense of injustice."

Brown lost the suit, and bad blood now existed in the small community, but there was no litigation for 35 years. At that time Brown brought suit for an interest in some lots on Quarry Street, where Pratt owned two houses. Brown did a strange thing, having Mike Nippert build a house in the street and fence the latter off. (We have met Michael Nippert before, as a veteran of the Napoleonic wars—see VIII-14).

Pratt was angered by this, to say the least, and without waiting for legal process, produced an axe and removed the fence. Because it was in the street, the city defended its rights, and Brown again lost his suit.

In a later event, the writer says Brown had "taken occasion to show his peculiar eloquence at the depot", and was put off the platform by C.A. Swineford, railroad Superintendent and Baraboo's first mayor in 1882. Again Brown brought suit, and was faced with either jail or bail. The writer is a little confusing here, but apparently Brown could not raise his bail. Pratt, his nemesis, then paid the bail money! It appears to have been sort of a backhanded insult.

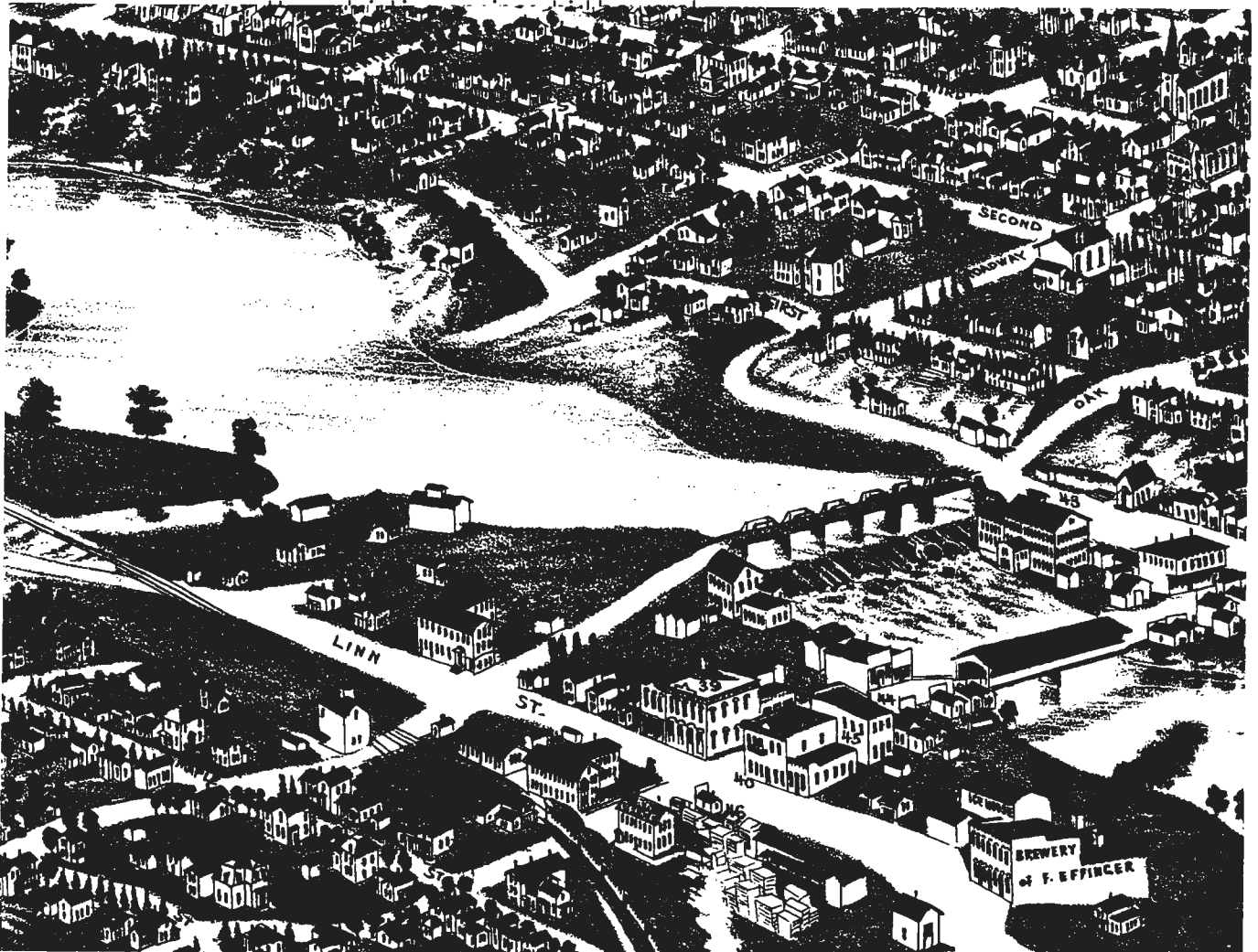
Undaunted, Brown again sued regarding land at the old low Oak Street Bridge, later the location of the High Bridge (VII-49 to 56). Here, finally, Brown did not have to again face the humiliation of defeat, for he died before the Supreme Court of Wisconsin handed down an adverse decision.

It is only fair to note that this is one person's account of the affairs. However, we have met the Browns of early Baraboo before (I-22), apparently the same family. If so, it was the Browns who platted the south side of the river and named it Baraboo, in contrast to the courthouse and village on the north side called Adams. Eventually both were united under the name Baraboo.



There is more in the article, for credit is given to Philormon Pratt for building the first Oak Street Bridge. It was known as the Pratt Bridge, which the author calls a "chimerical (fantasy) dream". The bridge was free to the public, with Pratt maintaining it and cutting away the ice from the piles on which it was built every spring.

Rumors circulated that it was not safe, and eventually a low iron bridge was built. This was followed by the 620 foot long High Bridge, built in 1890-91 some 26 feet above the river. The bridge eliminated the arduous climb up the hill from the Walnut Street Bridge. It was removed in the spring of 1929. All that remains is an abutment at the foot of Oak Street.



This 1880's sketch shows the second, or low iron bridge connecting Oak Street and vine Street. Note the covered bridge on Walnut Street. Note also that Broadway has no bridge, and curves into Water Street

Poetry was an important part of the life of early settlers, and one poem from that era describes a farmer's entrance to the city from the South and over the new High Bridge in 1894:

Here, shrieking engines,  
bid beware!

We cross the tracks with  
prudent care.

The lofty bridge, on iron  
piers,

With show of strength,  
allays our fears.

And yet we heed the  
stern command,

To "walk our team, from  
land to land".

Five dollars fine, the wight  
must pay,

Who, heedless, dares to  
disobey.

We reach the mart of  
busy trade,

Our trip is done, our bow  
is made.

Anther poet, J.W. Wood, after four long dissertations on an early morning wagon ride to Baraboo, concluded his poetic essay with the following kind words about Baraboo:

The distant city, bathed in light,  
 In beauty breaks upon our sight.  
 This choicest gem in all the land;  
 Lies nestled in its hills so grand.  
 It's crowning tower, on northern rim,  
 Which seems like sentry, armed and grim,  
 Does not bespeak of foes,  
 But choicest blessings from it flow.  
 Again we pause, in fullest view,  
 To sing a song of Baraboo:

I'll not burden you with the six stanzas of his song, set to the tune of Auld Lang Syne! Later: I see now that all of the above is a part of the same extended poem by Wood, with the first stanza quoted above really being the final verse, namely the arrival of the bard and his wagon into the city. It is surprising what the human brain can do when not cluttered with Television and computes and iphones, but free to dream and compose. When they are not feuding, that is.

# Stagecoach, tavern and ferry days at Merrimack

The recent series of articles about the original names of Sauk County towns and villages made brief mention of Matt's Ferry in the present Merrimack area, known then as Colmar or Collamer.

This Wisconsin River ferry merits explanation and amplification, particularly the manner in which the ferry operated in the absence of gasoline or diesel fuel. It demonstrates well the remarkable ingenuity with which the pioneers solved the problems of the frontier.

## The river

As was stated, Chester Mattson arrived in the nearly totally unsettled area in 1847 with a commission to construct a road and ferry, which he did. At the time, horses were the principal land form of power on the frontier.

The newly developed steam engines were not practical for the short and occasional trips a ferry was expected to make. The dams at Prairie du Sac and Wisconsin Dells were undreamed of, but the river had enough depth and width and flow to be a formidable obstacle to travel.

That depth and swift flow, however, were essential for the type of ferry operation which developed. The ferry was located in approximately the area operated now by the railroad trestle, an area free from the sand bars and changing channels so common to the Wisconsin River.

## The cable and skow

Canfield in his county history says that the cable for the ferry, running from riverbank to riverbank, was 1,200 feet long. The first cable is described as being of three inch manila, heavily tarred. It had to be lowered to allow steamboats to pass, and required several strong men to raise it to position again. Later it was replaced with a wire cable.

The ferry boat was a flat-bottomed scow, some 40 feet long and 16 feet wide, with room for only two double teams and their wagons. Like the present ferry, platforms were lowered to allow entrance and exit. The ferry carried many army recruits during the Civil War, a one-way trip for too many unfortunate young men. Indians were allowed free passage if no paying customers were present.

## The operation

We are fortunate that Cole, in his "History of Sauk County," has quoted in full a 1913 letter from a Chicago resident John D. Jones, who had personal knowledge of the ferry and its operation dating back to 1856. Jones' father had purchased the operation from its second owner, James Flanders, for \$3,000. Jones' description is complete and lengthy, and is best related in his own words, albeit in an abridged form, as follows:

"A strong cable suspended in air ... was attached (to the ferry) by lines starting on windlasses at each upper end of the boat, and attached at the (cable) by two large pulleys in wooden hoods ... (the) operator would wind up the line on the end of the boat in the direction he wanted to go, until the boat would stand diagonal to the current.

"The pully rolling on the cable, the current would swing the boat over to a right-angle position and the momentum of the boat would carry it further ... this would cause the pully to make another run and so on like the pendulum of a clock, until the crossing was made."



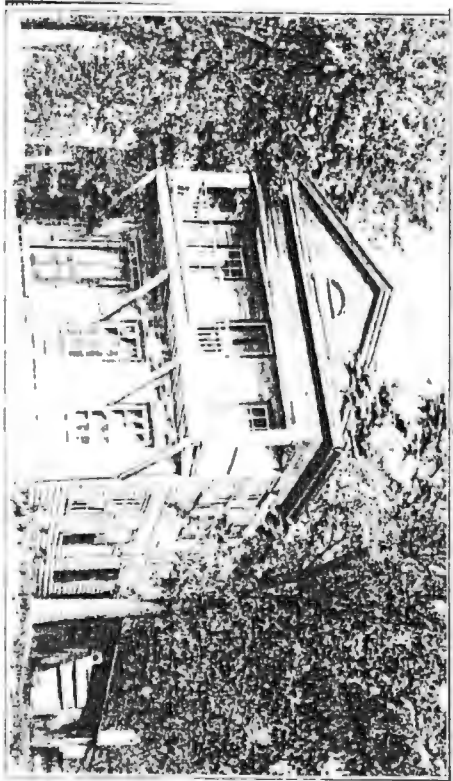
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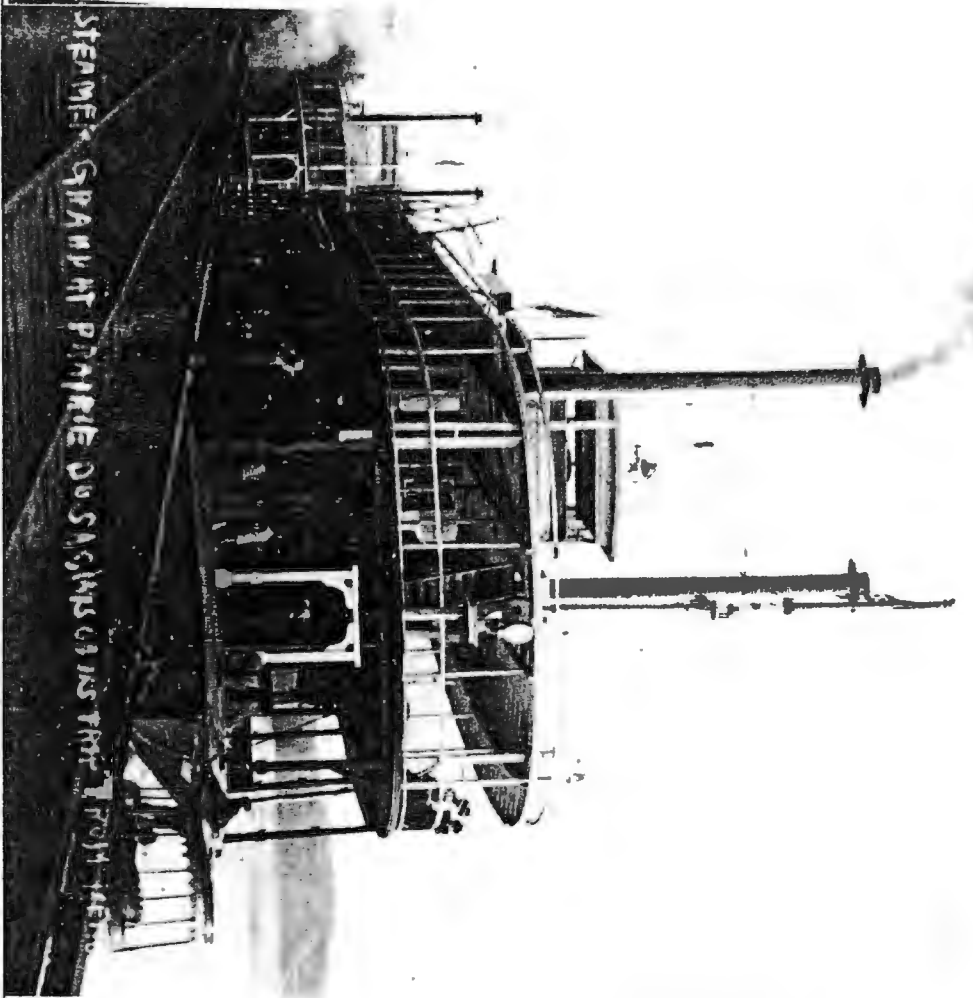
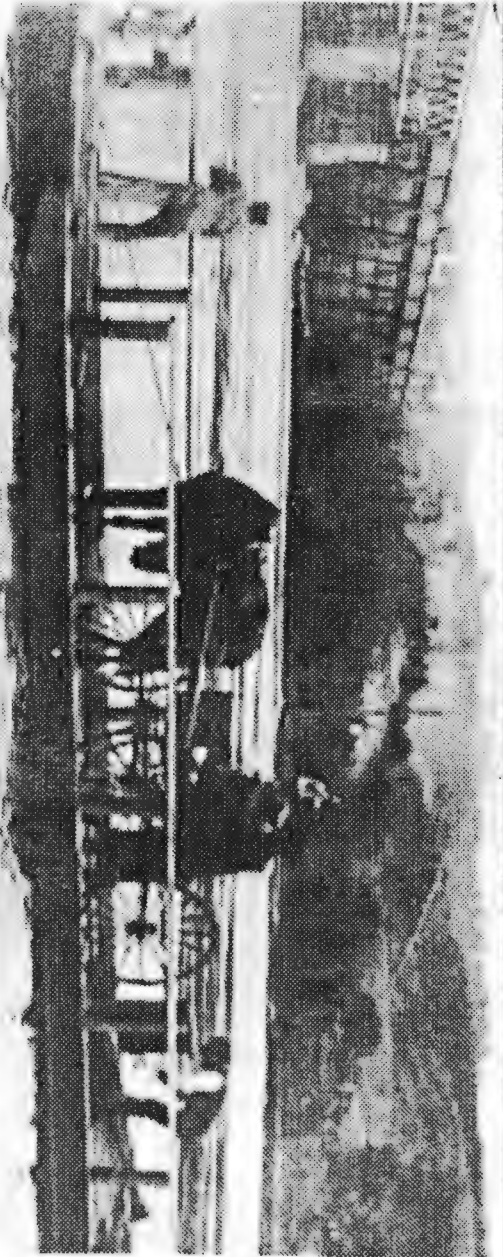
An 1860 traveler, Peter Richards, gave a clearer explanation: "The rope connecting the boat with the cable was wound up taut at the bow, and let out at the stern, thus placing the boat at a sharp angle with the current, the glancing of which along the side constituted the propelling power ... (crossing) seldom required more than 20 minutes."

If the lower ground on the east side of the river was flooded, the flat-bottomed ferry was detached from the cable, and teams of horses would pull it over to solid ground. Thus with only the current of the river and the muscles of the operator and sometimes of the horses, a few tons of horses and wagons and men could cross, though there must have been anxious moments as the boat swung back and forth. One wonders how the horses tolerated it.

The cable was a cause of friction between the ferry operators and the steamboats that plied the waters in those days, from Prairie du Sac to Portage, and on at least one occasion a steamboat captain cut the cable rather than wait for it to be lowered. One of the steamboat owners was Count Haraszthy of what is now Sauk City. He later was credited to be the father of the wine industry in California, incidentally.



From Derleth's "Sauk County"



*Goc Many A fine harvest*

Pictured at top is an early ferry scene across the Wisconsin River at Merrimack — for a time called Merrimack (from August Derleth's "Sauk County"). At left, settlers came to the county on ships like the steamer Grand, which visited Prairie du Sac in the 1890s (from Goc's "Many a Fine Harvest"). Pictured above is the Ferry House at Merrimack, near the north end of the ferry crossing. The building was constructed in 1847.

# ferry days at Merrimack



## Matt's Ferry Road

Mattson's commission from the Provisional Legislature called for a road, which was completed in 1848, and bore his name, Matt's Ferry Road. Presumably it corresponds in many areas to the present state Highway 113, which of course still crosses the river using a ferry, the Colsac. The old stages using the road required some eight hours to travel from Madison to Baraboo, though Solomon E. Cowles once drove it in six according to Cole in his "Stagecoach and Tavern Tales."

## The tavern

Mattson also began construction of a tavern-hotel at Merrimac, then known as Matt's Ferry, and it was finished later by James Flanders, who bought out Mattson, ferry and all, for \$700. Like so many other early settlers, Mattson seems to have moved on, probably due to the California gold rush.

The tavern prospered for many years, but is not without its own tales, including references to a "galloping ghost," which Cole does not explain in his book.

The tavern was the scene of a wedding, one J.H. Ela marrying the sister of Flanders' wife. Ela went hunting, but following a day spent hunting deer, he returned to the tavern with his feet frozen. It was determined that the swollen and painful member must be removed, so "a block of wood was placed on the floor, a hammer and chisel produced, and the sufferer instructed to place his foot on the timber."

The toe "was smartly struck, the member clipped, and the victim fainted." Ela was transferred to Lodi by sleigh the next day, where a physician removed two more toes.

Business was not always rushing, so when a pounding on the door was heard one midnight, the proprietor, in his nightshirt and probably cap, not only allowed entrance, but prepared a meal of sorts for the usual price of 25 cents per person.

### Stagecoaches

Goc, in "Many a Fine Harvest," says that the run from Madison to Baraboo took 12 hours and cost \$2.50.

There must have been times when winter snows or spring mud made any travel impossible. Baraboo was on the frontier for a time, and the stagecoach was also used to transfer money to the Sauk County Bank, forerunner to the present Baraboo National Bank. This was done in relative secrecy, for the drivers did not particularly want to be robbed or murdered. It is believed there never was a stagecoach robbery in Sauk County.

Goc's county history also says there was a ferry at Weigand's Bay for a time. The Merrimac ferry was motorized in 1900, using kerosene for power, and in 1924 Columbia and Sauk counties took over the operation, the ferry adopting the name Colsac from its new owners.

The village of Merrimac had only minor increases in population from 1900 to 1990. Most settlers had come from New England or northern Europe, as can be seen in the 1860 census. Now summer homes line the bank of the lake created by the Prairie du Sac dam, built in 1914.

### Brown's cabin

Long forgotten, however, is the first resident of the area, not Chester Mattson but a man named Brown, and the area was naturally known for a time as "Brown's Cabin." Canfield reports that settlers gathered to erect the cabin, but that "as soon as the cabin was fairly complete, Brown was mysteriously missed, and has never since been heard of."

Today some residents want a bridge, some want an improved ferry, or other combinations. Autos speed along the smoothly surfaced state Highway 113, once known as Matt's Ferry Road. If they catch the ferry immediately they can be in Madison in an hour, an incomprehensible feat for the pioneers who bounced and lurched in a stagecoach all day for the same purpose.

The crack Northwestern train, the "400," must have made it in record time, but even it crossed the long 1877 railroad bridge with care. The Wisconsin River remains a barrier requiring bridges and ferries and the ingenuity of modern man, just as it did in the old days. As the old song says, "old man river, he don't say nothin,' he just keeps rollin' along."



# Of stagecoaches, taverns, jehus and romance

by Bob Dewel

*With what era and area do you associate stagecoaches --- perhaps the Western States? How about taverns and inns for travelers --- perhaps the Eastern States at the time of the Revolution?*

*Both answers are right, but we don't always realize that we had stagecoaches and country inns right here in Sauk County. Moreover, some of the end stage lines existed well into the 20th century!*

## **The Coach to Madison**

The present general route of Highway 113 to Madison was the main trail from Baraboo to Madison in pioneer days, though some travel went via Prairie du Sac also. Neither trail could be called a road by our standards.

The Merrimac trail probably went via the present county road called "Baraboo Street" leading North from Merrimac, then joining DL to highway 113. James Cowles was an early stagecoach driver, or jehu, and the stage passed through Okee and Lodi, it taking until noon to reach that village from Baraboo, where travelers had lunch at one of the two inns.

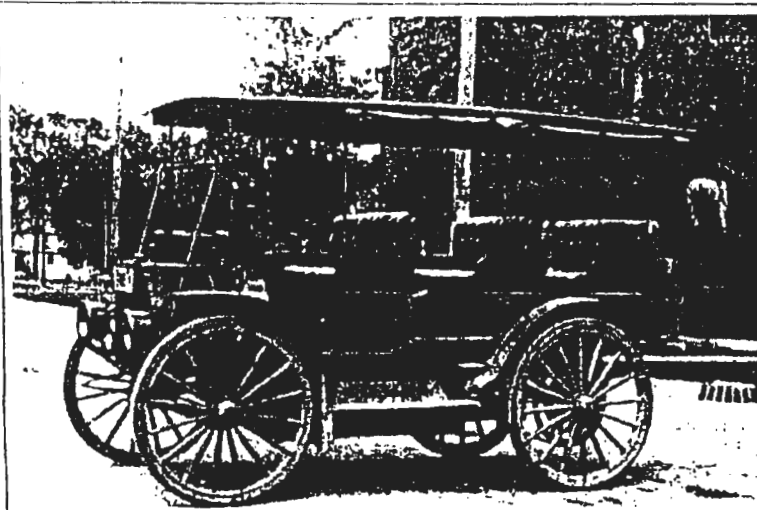
Leaving Lodi, the weary traveler faced many hours of bouncing before reaching Madison at 7 p.m., following a 12-hour trip. The fare was \$2.50.

## **Crossing the river**

A highlight of the trip would be the crossing of the Wisconsin river, as yet undammed but still a formidable crossing. Cole in his *History of Sauk County* relates in some detail the means of crossing, as follows:

*"The stage was drawn onto the boat, a large stick thrust through both hind wheels to prevent any forward or backward movements of the wheels and so keep it safely on the boat.*

*The rope connecting the boat to the cable was then wound up until it was taut at the bow, and let out at the stern, thus placing*



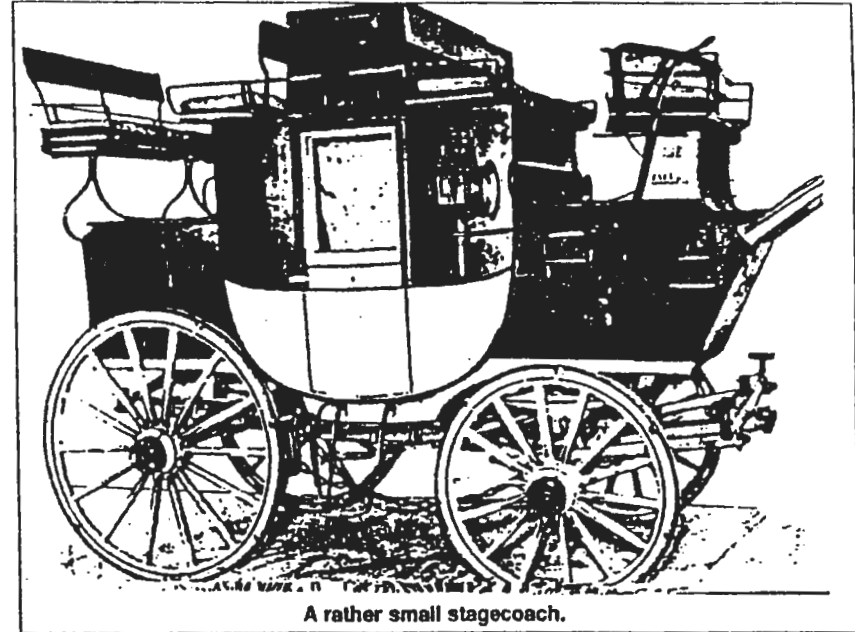
*relates that once, on the return trip from Madison, "a buggy was driven up behind the stage and a voice called out: 'Jim, stop a minute.' He stopped and Simeon Mills the Madison banker, handed Mr. Cowles a package, saying, 'There is \$1000 in that package. I want you to carry it to Baraboo and give it to Mr. Thomas.'"*

Thomas was Terrill Thomas, president of the Sauk County Bank, predecessor to the present Baraboo National Bank, now in its 141st year. The story continues: "*Well (said Cowles) I will do it this time, but I do not want you to follow me out of town in this way to give me money to carry. Everybody who saw you coming after me knew well enough what you wanted of me, and it might lead to me being followed, murdered and robbed for the money I was supposed to have in my possession."*

## **The route to Kilbourn**

Another stagecoach driver in the Baraboo area was James Curry, whose route went to Kilbourn, now Wisconsin Dells, and whose salary for the year was \$300 in 1860. His business included express and packages as well as passengers, and on occasion he ran two stages, one driven by his wife.

Kilbourn was important at that time, because unlike Baraboo, Kilbourn had rail-



**A rather small stagecoach.**

stagecoach company. They maintained a huge barn where the city hall now is, with as many as 50 horses, and of course many stagecoaches.

W.W. Warner, who five or six decades later donated the Warner Memorial Highway to Devils Lake, was among the rowdy boys who dragged all the stages out of the barn and onto the courthouse square one midnight as a prank.

Though Curry discontinued his service in 1870, there were still other stages running even as late as 1905, when they were modernized by the use of an international

operated the first stage between Madison and Prairie du Sac.

Later lines were added from there to Baraboo, Mazomanie and Merrimac. It is not clear that Brigham operated these, but the trail to Baraboo is believed to have passed through the present Badger Ordnance property and up the hill, joining the road to the South Shore of Devils Lake.

Brigham became a prominent public figure in the developing county, holding several courthouse elected offices.

## **Rev. Fullerton at Teels**

Another tavern and inn was apparently operated by the Teel family on land now occupied by the Badger Ordnance Plant. It was fondly remembered in later years by the young itinerant Methodist circuit rider Thomas Fullerton. He called it the Methodist Tavern. He writes:

*"My principal home during the year was at Father Teel's. I spent nearly a week there once in three weeks, and myself and horse shared in the best they had. Mother Teel was more than a Mother to me, for she saved my*

it at a sharp angle with the current, the glancing of which along the side constituted the propelling power that moved the boat."

Another example of Nature's natural power source, our rivers! No polluting diesel motors in those days, and the crossing was made in 20 minutes.

### Carrying money to Baraboo

Stagecoaches carried mail and express packages as well as passengers, and Cole

The "modern" motorized stage to Kilbourn, posed on Broadway and Fourth Avenue.

photo from Historical Society

"truck car" and a "powerful Buick Coach." Cole, writing in 1918, wrote glowingly of the

improved road to Kilbourn (the Dells), now probably County A. He stated that one could speed along at 20 to 25 miles an hour, and the price per passenger was \$1, less that what the old stagecoaches had charged.

### Road building

Road surfaces then were considered to be top quality if made of brick, gravel or stone — paving was yet to come. One of the first paved roads was Warner's gift, in his will, of money to establish and pave the present Highway 123 from Baraboo to Devils Lake. Plaques on the road and at the Chateau memorialize his gift, though it is rarely spoken of as Warner Memorial Road any more.

In addition to the motorized Baraboo-Kilbourn route already mentioned, there were still, as late as 1918, four stage routes in Sauk County. Reedsburg had two, one to Loganville and one to Sandusky via Lime Ridge. C.T. Hill of Spring Green operated a line to Plain.

### \*Preston Brigham

We have written about Preston Brigham in previous articles as the donor of the land for the courthouse in Baraboo. Brigham was a prominent resident of the town of Sumpter, and historian Erhart Mueller devotes an entire chapter to him. Brigham operated a tavern or inn in Sumpter, including an eating house. He also was a stagecoach driver and

life, once at least, by her skill in treating a dangerous disease successfully. No poor itinerant (preacher) ever met with more generous hospitality than I did at that 'Methodist Tavern,' and my home there is among the most cherished memories of my life."

In those days, town and county budgets for roads were minimal, often augmented by donations from businessmen or farmers along the route. For example, in the Town of Baraboo in 1903, "William Toole introduced a resolution providing that the town road leading into Baraboo (which received) the largest donations) be paved —" The total county aid to the Town of Baraboo in 1904 was only \$964.28.

### Conclusion

Cole comments: "From the first the stage was an important factor in the life of the people. Its coming and goings were events of the quiet days. It brought missives to and from loved ones and newspapers, rare and precious in those days were eagerly awaited. Like the tides of the ocean, the stage came and went, giving and taking, in the ebb and flow.

How faithful it was, sometimes late, but unfailling! Through torrid heat or fiercest blizzard, through blinding dust or frowning rains, the old stage persevered. Strangers at the beginning of the ride were friends at its close, and many romances began within the cutained recesses of the old stage."

\*Prescott

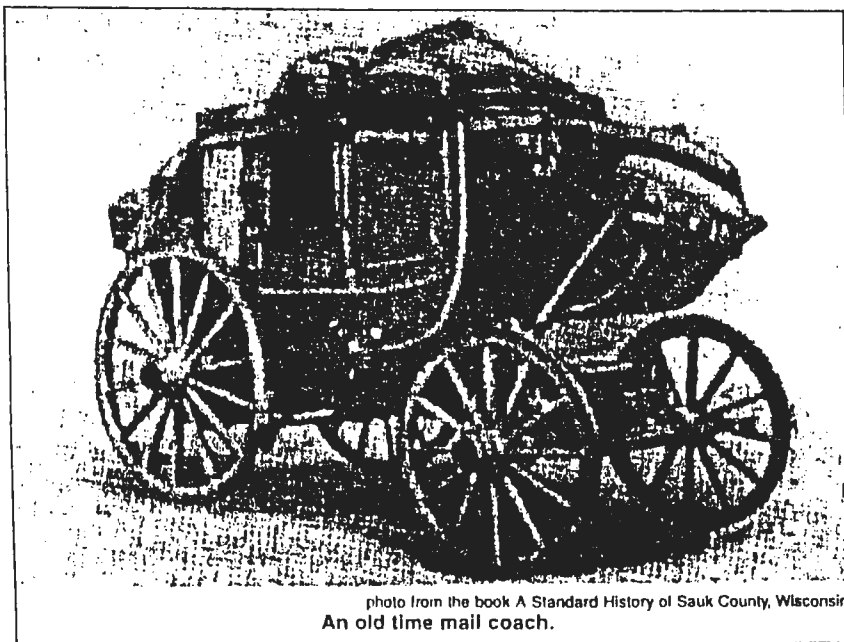


photo from the book A Standard History of Sauk County, Wisconsin  
An old time mail coach.



photo from Historical Society  
The "modern" motorized stage to Kilbourn, posed on Broadway and Fourth Avenue.

## Sauk County's Little Brown Church in the Wildwood?

Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

Oh, come to the Church in the wildwood,  
 Oh, come to the church in the vale.  
 No place is so dear to my childhood,  
 As the Little Brown Church in the Vale.

No, it is not brown, and no, it is not in a wildwood or vale, but on a high hill with a commanding view. There are, however, similarities between the Westfield church and the one in Iowa made famous by the song. Both Protestant churches are well out in the country, they are similar in size, and both have a rich history dating back to the earliest settlers in their particular area.

The Westfield German Methodist Church is located at the junction of County D and Schanke Road, some two miles southwest of Rock Springs. Adjacent to the church is the cemetery, and its tombstones carry such well known Sauk County names as Alexander, Biege, Stackhouse, Kelly, Fleming, Schuster, Waddell, Repka, Hirschinger, Weidman, Haskins, Verlein, Gaetzke, and many others.



The Westfield Church today, with its neatly groomed cemetery



The Westfield German Methodist Church , circa 1880. Church records show that the fence was in constant need of repair

The once thriving church has been closed since about 1956, when Percy Alexander was the only one who showed up for services. Pastor Zeuner stated that there would be no sermon, whereupon Percy is said to have asked, "If you had only one horse, wouldn't you feed him?" Good roads and modern transportation had by now made easy access to the village and city churches possible, and many country churches merged into the village and city congregations.

Even so, the influence of this congregation, formed in 1852, is felt today. A post card, printed appropriately in a German Gothic font, invites friends to the 151<sup>st</sup> anniversary this year on July 20 at 12:30 for a potluck. These homecomings have been held regularly since 1913. The invitation promises that a short meeting and shared memories will certainly follow the meal.

The earliest settlers were Yankees, but Immigration in the following years had brought a surge of Germans into the area to escape religious persecution and rigidity in Europe. By 1859 John Warren deeded an acre for a cemetery. Later the same year George Moog deeded an adjacent acre for a church.

Not every church has a historian, but Westfield German Methodist is fortunate in that in 1977 Edwin R. Pawlisch prepared a very complete and sometimes detailed listing of events. A copy of that history will be placed in the Sauk County Historical Society files.

The first building on the property was a log church, built in 1859 during Rev. Merton's pastorate. Its location on the acres is uncertain. The present building was built in 1877, and straddled the dividing line of the two consecrated acres. It has stood sentinel on the crest of the hill for 125 years.



*As the farm population decreased and transportation improved, Westfield records were moved to the German Methodist Church, and then to the First United Methodist Church, Baraboo, above*



Pawlich reports that the German language was discontinued in 1916, about the same time as the Baraboo German Methodist discontinued the language. An examination of the census figures for Westfield township shows a population decline from 1462 in 1880 to 767 in 1952, and the church itself had only 8 remaining members by that time. When the Methodist conference moved to condemn the ancient building in 1958, "friends and neighbors rallied to a plea for funds and labor to restore the church. The historic landmark is preserved as a monument to the ideals of the first settlers."

Today friends of many faiths honor the structure and all it represents. An exception occurred in 1971 when a vandal or vandals whose integrity appeared to be challenged stole many time-honored possessions of the building. The robbery was not an especially clever act, for the door of the church had never been locked up to that time.

A complete index of the burials in the cemetery has been prepared for the some 130 known graves. As is always true of old structures, preservation is an ongoing project. Pawlich's history is an invaluable source of information on the journey of Faith by these intrepid early settlers.

The Iowa Church in the Wildwood survives as a poplar wedding chapel, aided by the publicity provided by the hymn quoted above. The Westfield Church survives because of the love and respect shown by its friends and neighbors of many faiths.





## Sauk County Fair has 150 year history

Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel (Yahoo: dr bob  
dewel)

What local organization was already 40 years old when the Ringlings ventured forth out of town with their first circus (1894)? That same local organization was already 50 years old when the old courthouse burned in 1905. (Clue, it's the Fair)

This seems to be the time for anniversaries. The Circus World Museum (CWM) is having an anniversary, and it is 120 years since that first circus parade out of the city. A committee is planning an observance of the centennial of the present courthouse. Circuses and courthouse buildings come and go, but the County Fair seems to go on and on.

The organizational meeting

The Fair, one of the oldest institutions in the county, was organized in Baraboo on February 22, 1855, with Alexander Crawford as temporary president and James S. Mosely as secretary. As a result of the meeting, James M Clarke was elected president, Daniel Pound, vice-president, R.H. Davis, treasurer, and James S. Mosely, secretary. Each of the 24 persons present not only signed the articles of incorporation, but contributed the \$1 membership fee.

According to one account, "a premium list was arranged and on October 16, 1855, a fair was held in the Taylor building "on the South East corner of Broadway and Third Avenue". Another old time newspaper account puts the first fair on October 1 and 2 in 1856. That account also states that the first fair was in the old wood courthouse on the north side of Fourth Avenue.

By 1860 an undisclosed area was fenced in by P.A. Bassett, with 800 entries and cash premiums. There is some indication, however, that fairs

were discontinued or greatly diminished during the Civil War years, with a revival in 1866. In 1869 the fair was canceled due to a dispute over the 10 acres leased from J.B. Crawford. This appears to have involved acreage just off the present Draper Street in Baraboo.

In 1924, old-timer Frank Ames of LaValle recalled that in 1867 the fair was held on property now occupied in 2004 by the Baraboo High School, formerly the John Kelly property. He also states that horse races were held on East Street in Baraboo at that time.

1870, however, saw the purchase of forty acres from Adam Nixon for \$1540, part of it on the south then being sold off to C. C. Remington. The north half of the forty acres is the present location of the fairgrounds. A fair was held on Oct. 6 and 7 of that same year in a large tent, and there was a half mile horse race, a trotting match, a running race, and a ladies riding match, plus a plowing match of draft teams pulling stone boats. By 1882, debts had been paid, and exhibition buildings were constructed, along with stables and fencing. Many of these still exist in 2004 at the time of the sesquicentennial.

More buildings, including a new barn, were constructed in 1891, leaving the society in debt in the amount of \$779.59. On August 8, 1898, movement began to incorporate the society, and on February 25, 1899, the aggregate value of the property, \$8000, was divided into 800 shares at \$10 per share as part of the incorporation as a stock company.

Such was the early history of the Sauk County Fair. Much of the above material was supplied by Mary Farrell Stieve, the amiable assistant at the Sauk County Historical Society, who will have an exhibit at the fair featuring the early history. This article will be followed by another with a more light-hearted approach, including flying machines and a balloon ascension that could have resulted in death.



[www.wisconsinhistory.org](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org)

Photo submitted by Joe Ward  
Well-dressed crowds attended the Fair in 1906

## Fairgrounds events over the years

### Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel (yahoo: Dr Bob Dewel)

Around the turn of the last century a popular song, "Meet me in St. Louis, Louis, meet me at the fair" advertised that city's international fair and exposition. No such song touted the Sauk County Fair, but old time pictures attest to the tremendous crowds in attendance at the fair in Baraboo over the years.

For some persons, the fair was the one great getaway from the farm and its endless chores, as exemplified in the movie and stage show "State Fair". The fair seemed divided in to three venues, one of course being the agricultural exhibits and familiar premium lists. Winners of the latter always saw their names printed in the paper a few days later.

Another segment of the event was represented by the midway, a diverse collection of rides and games and sometimes bawdy features, the type of entertainment seen only once a year at, of course, the county fair.

The third aspect was the grandstand entertainment, both afternoon and evening. The night program was usually a variety stage show, sometimes featuring an actual wedding or similar event, and always closing with a few skyrockets and perhaps a fiery display of the American Flag.

The afternoon shows were varied, with tractor pulls and horse races. After World War I the new-fangled airplane, whether mono or bi-plane, might perform, with former wartime pilots acting as barnstorming daredevils.

Other uses

Often the fairgrounds were (and still are) rented to various groups, and in Sept. 1920, for example the still young and vigorous WWI veterans rented the grounds., The celebration was renewed for several years, and even the Baraboo stores closed at noon for the events. Featured downtown was a Fourth Avenue auto show of 1920 models, some still hard to get as the nation shifted from wartime to peacetime production.

New and novel were the auto and motorcycle races, while at the grandstand a Portage orchestra presented what was called a "jazz Orgy" There was of course a ball game, Baraboo outscoring Portage.

There seems to have been another veteran's celebration in 1922, with 1500 former soldiers and their sweethearts attending dinner on the grounds. That afternoon had featured a balloon ascension by H.C. Fondella of Rochester N.Y After rising to 4000 feet the balloon turned over, the 65 foot bag emptying its gas and dropping "as limp as a piece of cloth" The balloonist came down in a parachute. Despite this obvious malfunction. to say the least, the Republic cheerily reported that "the flight was fine, and was the 188<sup>th</sup> for Mr. Fondella."

#### Artifacts

On hand at the Sauk County Historical Society are a number of artifacts gathered by Mary Farrell Stieve, such as early pictures and posters, stock certificates, premium tags, news stories, and accounts of several fires. Fairest of the Fair news accounts and pictures are being saved, as well as stories of baby contests and other events.

#### Reedsburg Fair

The fair was not always without competition. Reedsburg, sometimes doing its own thing, actually had its own fair and fairgrounds for a number of years. It was a private enterprise by A. P. Ellingwood beginning in 1872. Speakers for the events included Dr. John Bascom, President of the University of



Flying Machine, 1911

Photos courtesy Mary Hein

Auto. Racing, 1920



Wisconsin at the time, and Robert LaFollette, who later married Belle Case, a Baraboo schoolteacher.

A feature of this fair was a baby contest, and it was duly reported that "Mrs. Barnhart's baby took first prize for beauty, while that of Mrs. Bishop carried off the prize for corpulence."

As roads and transportation improved, the Reedsburg fair was abandoned, for Baraboo had become more accessible. Today's fair retains many of the traditional events, such as Fairest o f the Fair, tractor pull, demo derby, dog obedience, etc. as well as the usual midway and the ever-interesting exhibits. It is a six day affair, from Tuesday July 6 through Sunday July 11, and continues the traditions begun so long ago, in 1855.



Track events were well attended in 1905

# Newport was once Sauk County's largest city

In 1856 it was the largest city in the newly organized Sauk County, with a population of 2,000 hardy and aggressive souls. Now all that remains is one house.

It once was projected to be a major national trading center, of 10,000 souls or more, where inland shipping from the Great Lakes would unite with a great railroad center for the exchange of goods.

The short life of this town was marked with great hopes, wild speculation, vicious deception, and a major scandal reaching into the very highest offices of Wisconsin government. It was the once proud and hopeful city of Newport, in the northeast corner of the county.

## Different accounts

There are two and perhaps three ways to view this story. It all occurred in the sixth and seventh decades of the 19th century — between 1852 and 1865. The location was just off the present County Highway A where it crosses Dell Creek, a little over a mile south of Wisconsin Dells. That mile would make a big difference to a lot of people — riches for some, financial ruin for others.

The mouth of Dell Creek, on the Wisconsin River, had for years been a trading post where raftsmen, having survived the rigors of the Dalles (Dells) passage from the north, could pause and replenish their provisions, and also their tired bodies and spirits. It was also an outfitting point for those headed for the rafting camps upriver.

Thanks to historical accounts by Butterfield, Cole, Lange and Goc, and also the Wisconsin Supreme Court, we have good but conflicting accounts of the rise and fall of Newport.

## Cole's version

Cole, in his "History of Sauk County," takes seven pages to unfold the story. He tells how county farmers found the Dells trading post to be their best and closest outlet for their produce and grain, especially when a flouring mill was built, apparently located on what is now Lake Delton — the lake didn't exist then.

Importantly, one day a small steamship showed up at Dell Creek, demonstrating that the Wisconsin River could be navigable. A canal was being built at Portage, connecting the Fox River and the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. It was clear that the area had the potential to be a great inland port.

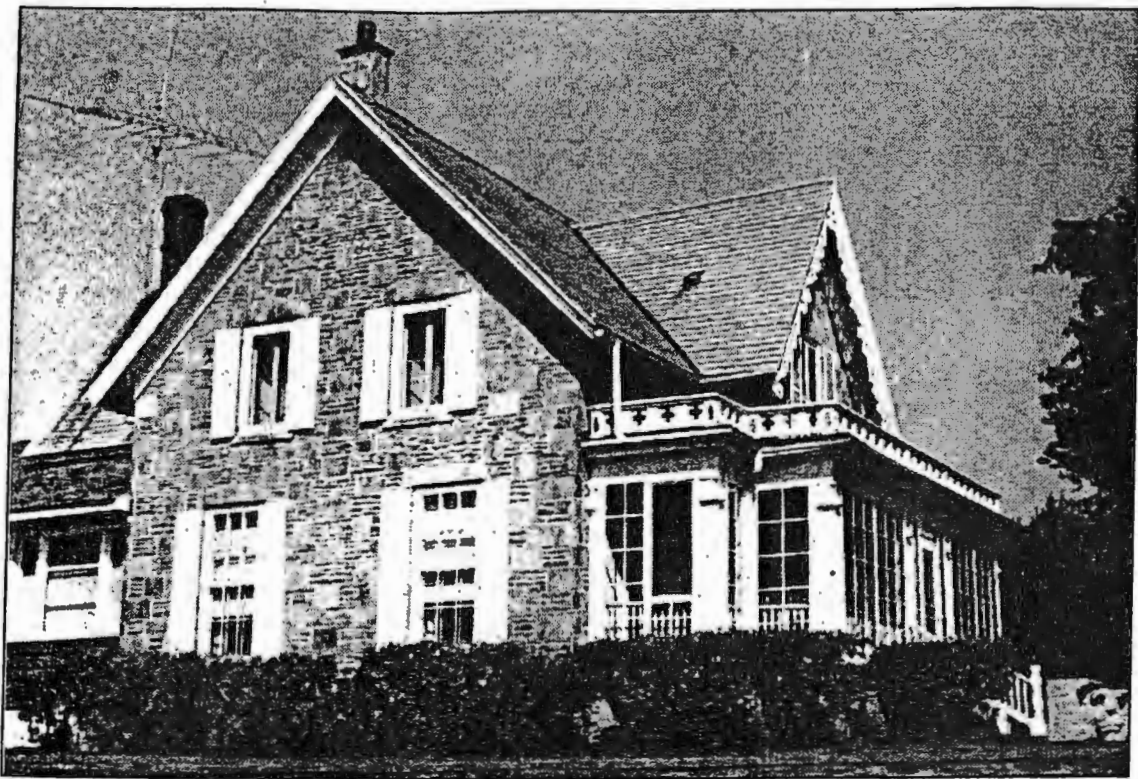
A village, actually a small city, was laid out in the Dell Creek settlement, now named Newport. A sawmill was erected, followed quickly by two hotels, several stores, a medical office and many saloons. A brewery was hollowed out of nearby rock. news soon came that the projected Milwaukee and La Crosse railroad would cross here, and this news energized the belief that a great port, now with rail facilities, would materialize. East-west rail service would meet north-south shipping!

In addition, eastern and Milwaukee capitalists were proposing a dam for water power, with the race passing through the center of town. Greedy townspeople, however, who had paid about \$12 per acre for their land, now demanded \$1,000 per acre from the dam promoters.

The booming village now numbered about 2,000 people according to Lange in his "A County Called Sauk," as many or more people than Baraboo had at the time. Similar inflated prices were demanded for the proposed railroad right-of-way. Suddenly, townspeople realized that the railroad was going to pass them by and cross the river at the present location of Wisconsin Dells. Some say the new route was surveyed by moonlight to avoid detection.

Panic and financial ruin faced many of the Newport speculators. A pitiful plea to the railroad authorities gained their permission for the village to build a handsome railroad station across the river in Columbia County, which they did, but the die was already cast. In 1858 the first of many houses was moved out of the city, some going to Delton, some to Baraboo, and some to the newly created village of Kilbourn at the new river crossing.





Kilbourn was named for the Milwaukee financier who had left Newport in the lurch. Despite the new railroad station, derogatory remarks were made about the railroad at the 1858 dedication of the station. Newport began its death march, and by 1868 the post office was discontinued. Even the tax collector dropped the lots from the tax rolls in what was now a ghost town.

#### Butterfield's account

In his county history, Butterfield took a more critical view of the dealings than does Coffe, condemning not so much the greed of the speculators in Newport as the slippery dealings of the railroad.

Dozens of farmers had mortgaged their farms to support the railroad and thus improve the market for their produce. They now faced foreclosure and a dim future due to the financial burden of a mortgage.

They noted that the financiers for the dam were often the same people as were promoting the railroad.

Butterfield says that the promoters "induced numerous farmers to give their notes, secured by mortgages on their property (with the ) prospect of forthcoming dividends." Kilbourn had said in Baraboo that the railroad might pass there, but the same night he told Newport residents it would be the crossing point.

"The feeling against the company was quite intense, not only in the county but in other parts of the state where the people had been hoodwinked." Settlement was finally made at about 20 cents on the dollar.

#### The Supreme Court

Until recently most accounts seemed to favor the Butterfield version of the rise and fall of Newport, putting the blame on the perfidy of the railroad and dam developers. Although it does not support that view directly, a pamphlet issued by the Wisconsin Supreme Court two years ago in recognition of the Wisconsin Sesquicentennial contains an essay by a Madison attorney, Joseph A. Ranney, which sheds some new light on the situation.

It seems, according to Ranney, that a major railroad scandal erupted in the Legislature in 1856. Brian

Kilbourn, the Milwaukee financier and promoter of the railroad, had obtained federal grants for 1 million acres of Wisconsin land, and now federal grants for a million acres of Wisconsin land, and now had to convince the Legislature to finalize his proposal.

Because Kilbourn had rivals for the project, he resorted to bribery, finding willing takers not only in the Legislature but in the governor himself. Gov. Bashford received \$50,000 in railroad bonds, for example!

Not only that, but Supreme Court Justice Abram Smith received \$10,000 for his cooperation. This involvement of the Supreme Court itself has an echo today, when just this month an investigation was begun as to the manner in which a recently elected judge received anonymous support for his campaign.



Back in 1856, Gov. Bashford lost the next election to Alexander Crandall, a political foe of Kilbourn. Moreover, a severe depression in 1857 plunged Kilbourn into financial difficulty.

In 1858 the new governor persuaded the Legislature to investigate the bribery charges. Ranney reports, however, that "ethics standards for public officials were more lax then than now, so no criminal charges could be filed against ex-Governor Bashford and other recipients of bribes!"

He also reports that Wisconsin received national attention, largely negative, and "was a laughing stock for a time." It was a bad example of rampant capitalism unchallenged by government regulation.

#### **The final result**

None of the authors detail how the railroad was finally financed, but Brian Kilbourn apparently had sufficient admirers, or at least influence, for the new river crossing was named Kilbourn. It remained the name of the village until well into the 20th century, when savvy promoters of a new generation found "Wisconsin Dells" to be more descriptive of and attracting for the growing vacation and amusement industry.

Poets sometimes sum up matters in a few words. There is a Biblical allegory in this anonymous verse which made the rounds at the time:

*A serpent once roamed the garden, 'tis said,  
with deception and lies as  
his theme.*

*And engulfed in corruption  
our primitive head  
with his fake and fraudulent  
schemes.*

*So his offspring now, in all  
they may do*

*Be known by the way they  
travel—*

*The serpentine course this  
railroad pursues,*

*Will their origin fully  
unravel.*

Nothing remains of Newport except Dawn Manor, the home built by Abraham Vanderpoel and pictured with this article along with the carriage house. Many good people, and some greedy people, sadly abandoned their dream and their village for greener pastures. Newport is remembered only in the history books, and in articles like this one.



# The days of Newport, Garrisonville and Bessemer

In the previous article, we began a mythical journey through the cities, villages and townships of Sauk County, using the original names of the locations. The cities of Adams (Baraboo now) and Babb's Prairie (Reedsburg) were considered at some length, as well as the six townships which made up the county in earlier days. The battle for the county seat location was also considered.

Now, in this article, we continue that mythical journey, visiting such colorful places as Newport, Garrisonville, Excelsior and Bessemer, all former village names in Sauk County, and consider what might have been. The accompanying map might prove helpful.

## Newport

As stated in the previous article, Newport could have been a larger city than Baraboo. Indeed it once probably was, with a population of more than 2,000 in the 1850s. Nothing remains now, but had the promises of the Milwaukee and LaCrosse railroad and certain promoters been kept, their trains would have crossed the Wisconsin River a couple miles south of the present brief crossing of Sauk County. Instead, the crossing and station were at Kilbourn (Wisconsin Dells) in Columbia County. Now parts of that tourist mecca extend into Sauk County nearly to the old borders of Newport!

Had Newport won the railroad, there is some doubt whether the Northwestern line would have attempted the difficult construction through the Baraboo Bluffs. Baraboo would have lan-

guished, and the Ringling and Gollmar circuses might have located elsewhere for rail access — perhaps at Newport.

The abrupt rise and fall of Newport ranks as one of the great disappointments (some say swindles) in the history of the county, and may be considered in a future article. Suffice it to say, Newport's demise was good news for Baraboo in the 1850s, making possible its emergence as a rail center and its booming prosperity in the 1870s and 80s. Both Baraboo and Reedsburg residents had shared in the financial loss at Newport, but ultimately prospered with the arrival of the Northwestern in 1871.

## Baraboo's suburbs

Baraboo had at one time three satellites, or aspiring suburbs. Garrisonville, near the Butterfield bridge and eastern narrows a few miles east of Baraboo, was a promotion of the widow Garrison. Cole, in his "History of Sauk County," speaks of her as "a brilliant, unscrupulous woman, with a strong personality, very successful at hoodwinking all classes ... (using) large sums of other people's money ... prospecting for metals in the area."

She originated and platted the village of Garrisonville, circa 1850, sold one fifth of the empty town for \$5,000, and persuaded an eastern doctor to build a medical college. This fell through when he visited the relative wilderness, though she had built a few token buildings for businesses. The rapid growth of Baraboo at the time doomed the project, and she ended up



BOB  
DEWEL

▼  
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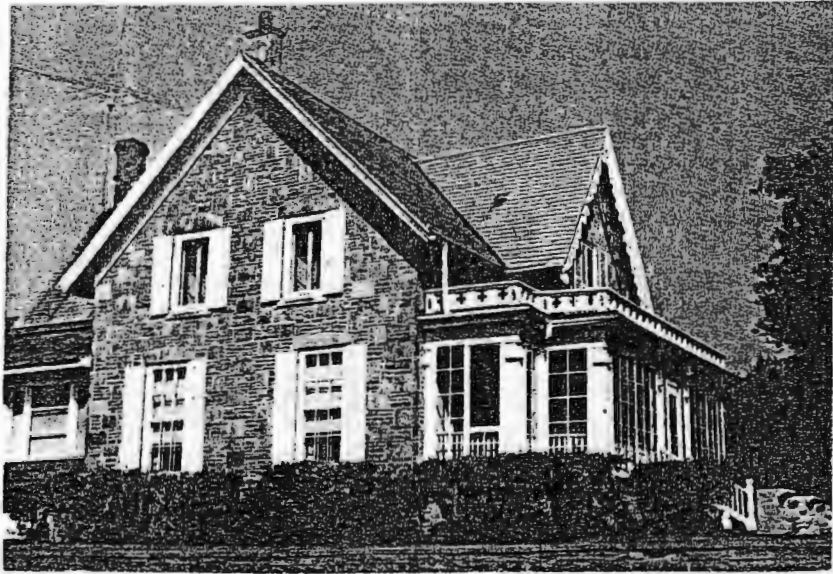
elsewhere in relative poverty. In fairness, ballyhoo and hyperbole were common in the developing Midwest at the time.

## Lyons and Manchester

Lyons, now West Baraboo, was platted by historian Canfield in 1846, confident that when the much-desired railroad came his village would be the natural center. The village square was named after DeWitt Clinton, his friend when they worked on the Erie Canal and also the Federalist candidate for president in 1810. Baraboo was awarded the railroad station in 1871, and Lyons essentially slept for some 125 years. West Baraboo's emergence in the past decade as a discount center has transformed the "Baraboo area" into the Baraboo regional shopping center.

The village purchases its water and sewer services from Baraboo, and is conveniently located near to the UW university center and Baraboo district middle and high schools. There is talk now of establishing its own police force to supplement services provided by the county sheriff.

Another suburb, Manchester, was platted in 1850 in the present area of the waterworks pumping station. The iron bridge, formerly



on Manchester street, was moved a few years ago to its present location connecting Ochsner and Attridge parks over the upper rapids.

Eben Peck was an early settler in the area. Lots, blocks, streets and alleys were laid out. Butterfield, in his "History of Sauk County," said that Manchester would at least hold its own with the "Pretentious village of Lyons," an unfulfilled prediction.

#### Excelsior-Ableman

Founded by Col. Ableman in 1851 in anticipation of the railroad, he built a frame house and settled here. The name Excelsior came from that of the township, but was changed to Ableman in compliment to the colonel, who was instrumental in bringing the railroad through Baraboo and Excelsior (now Rock Springs) in 1872. Cole said in 1918 that the village, post

office and railroad station "are now Ableman and will be as long as there is a village." Not so, for it was changed to Rock Springs later.

At one time there were six quarries within five miles, and to this day the Pink Lady fills endless rail carloads with quartzite rock. This writer, touring his new county nearly 40 years ago, was startled to pass through the narrows and encounter a large and neat sign simply stating "Gall Stone Company."

Ableman was a large man who had once been a U.S. marshal, and his energy and experience were crucial in obtaining the railroad through the bluffs.

**Bessemer (also Bloom)**

Derleth in his county history says the iron discovered in North Freedom and LaRue in 1900 was of such high quality that the name of North Freedom was changed to Bessemer, a famous name in the production of steel from iron. Baraboo's Herman Grotophorst was among the promoters, but unfortunately the iron, though of good quality, was too deep in the earth to be mined profitably, though it did operate from 1910 to 1914.

Actually, though, the first name of the little village was Bloom, the area being platted by a farmer of that name who also had a sawmill. In 1873 adjacent land was platted as North Freedom, though the railroad station was in Bloom. The two plat areas were consolidated under the name North Freedom, which remained except for the short period of time it was known as Bessemer.

The final article in this series will discuss the entities of Pucketechute, Logtown, Colmar and others.

# Podunk, Pucketchute, Logtown and others

In this third and final article, our mythical journey through Sauk County visits such unremembered names of places such as Podunk, Pucketchute, Logtown and Haraszthy.

## Podunk and Pucketchute

Travel with us now to the northwest corner of the county. Although never heavily settled, this part of the county has its own history. Present-day Valton seems to have been called Oaks at one time. Here one finds the Modern Woodmen Hall, with its wall paintings showing Woodmen initiation rites.

Better known, however, is not a village but a seven-mile railroad, the Cazenovia and Southern Railroad, leading from Cazenovia to La Valle. Financed by businessmen of both villages in 1911, its rocky roadbed frequently caused the uncoupling of cars from the engine, which had to back up and re-couple them at times. Thanks to the rocky road and the huffing and puffing of the engine, the little line was nicknamed Pucketchute.

Lange, in "A County Called Sauk," says the line's colorful owner, Joseph Duren, once wrote the president of a large western railroad to exchange courtesy vouchers, as was the custom. He received a courteous refusal, due to the inequity in size, but Duren retorted, "You are quite right, my road is not very long, but I can assure you it is just as wide."

The Cazenovia Southern had three names during its varied financial history, and never built beyond Cazenovia to Sauk City, and/or Lone Rock, as planned. For its size it had several locomotives, as well as freight cars. Dick Goddard of North Freedom is researching its history, and hopes to have enough material for a full history of the unusual line.

About a month ago the Mid-Continent Railway came into possession of a dilapidated Pullman car, unique in that its passenger seats were on one side and the freight area was on the other side. It has been in the Wisconsin Dells area for many years, serving variously as a storage shed, antique shop, or residence of sorts.

Also using the Cazenovia-La Valle rails at one time was an ancient Model T Ford converted to rail by the use of steel flange railroad wheels. It carried passengers and/or freight as the need arose. The Pucketchute was the only operating short-line railroad in Sauk County. A series of floods in 1935 destroyed many of its bridges, and it was not rebuilt.

Speaking of railroads, there are reports that two stone viaducts still exist, in good condition, in the wooded riverside area across the Second Avenue bridge and to the left in Baraboo. The Northwestern Line abandoned that roadbed, moving to its present location somewhat to the south sometime after the collapse of the Lyons bridge. That wreck was described in a previous article.

A few miles west of La Valle is a small railroad siding known, believe it or not, as Podunk. That probably wasn't its first name though — it was "Poor Dickie." It is not known for sure which name came first, but either would be a strange answer if you were asked where you came from! Lange says there was a store, a potato warehouse, a blacksmith shop and a boarding house there.

## Logtown (Cramers Corners)

This village near the southwest part of the county was named originally after its postman, a Mr. Cramer. It has another name, too — Logtown, due to many log houses in its early days, but we know it now as Plain. Cole speaks of it as in the midst of "prosperous cheese country, with five cheese plants nearby."

And south of Baraboo on Highway 12 is an area still known as Kings Corners. It once had its own post office, and served many citizens of Sumpter Township before Badger Army Ammunition Plant was built. Sauk County had many such neighborhoods and villages, too many to research for this article but each with a history, and each usually had a post office.





Railways played a major role in Sauk County's development. Pictured above is the Pucketchute at the Cazenovia Station. At right is a Cazenovia Southern car recently acquired by the Mid-Continent Railway Museum in North Freedom. The Cazenovia, Ironton and La Valle Stage (below) must have been competition for the Pucketchute.

PHOTOS FROM LANGE'S  
"A COUNTY CALLED SAUK"



### Haraszthy

Another Sauk County town has had three names, as have Baraboo and North Freedom. Sauk City was first platted in 1841 by the colorful and ubiquitous Count Agoston Haraszthy from Hungary, and he modestly gave it his name. He soon was the dominant figure, operated stores there and in Baraboo, manufactured bricks, operated a ferry, and also a steamboat on the Wisconsin River.





3711. Alligator Rocks, Dells of  
The Wisconsin River.

### Spring Green

Spring Green has always had the same name, given when pioneer Turner's wife noted that the swales in the area, damp and spring-fed, turned green earlier in the spring than surrounding areas did. The village did not develop, however, until the Milwaukee Railroad arrived, a line which would eventually go to Rapid City, S.D. This was Sauk County's first railroad, though it covered only a few miles in the county.

### Colmar, or Matt's Ferry

The arrival of Chester Mattson to this Wisconsin River area in 1847 with a contract to construct a road and a ferry was the beginning of what we call Merrimac. First known as Matt's Ferry, complete with Matt's Tavern, it was to become known as Colmar or Collamar. The name honored the name of the postmaster general of the U.S. then, from whom Mattson got the contracts.

Of interest to Baraboo, he served on the scouting committee which was angered by the alleged duplicity of Prairie du Sac in obtaining the county seat. That committee chose what is now downtown Baraboo for the county seat.

Haraszthy is discussed in more detail in a previous article in the Highlights of Baraboo series. Like James Reed of Reedsburg and Eben Peck of Baraboo, he left the area after a few years. Reed and Peck were not heard from again, but Haraszthy went to California, where the pretentious and erratic count became assayer of the United

States Mint, as well as a member of the General Assembly. In 1869, on a promotional mission to Nicaragua, he disappeared into the jungle.

For a time after he left his village was known as Westfield, and then became Sauk City. Nearby Prairie du Sac has not had a name change. It was laid out in 1840, the oldest of the Sauk County villages.

Within two years, however, Mattson sold out to W.P. Flanders, and soon a hotel was built. The railroad arrived in 1871, but the village didn't attain much growth. The name was changed to Merrimack, with a "k," at the suggestion of Mrs. J.C. Train, in recognition of Merrimack County of New Hampshire. Some time since then, the "k" was dropped.

Mattson's clever way of using river power to operate his ferry is a fascinating subject, mentioned in a previous article. Later the ferry was operated with power from kerosene engines.

### Finis

So ends our mythical journey in the Sauk County that might have been, and we return on the old stage road, now Highway 113, to the town once known as Adams and then Brooklyn. The latter name never really caught on, but Baraboo enjoys national and sometimes international mention of its International Crane Foundation, Circus World Museum, and Al. Ringling Theatre. The early settlers would be amazed.

Sauk County's only recent residential development is Badger Village. Will there be a Ho-Chunk city platted in our future? Will mergers produce a greater Baraboo and a united Sauk Prairie? Perhaps in 100 years a future historian will be amused that we thought the county was complete politically in 1999.