

The 1880's

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The Island Woolen Mill Bridge and Dam

Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

It may not look it, but according to Mr. S.J. Poyton, the view in the above picture was the center of downtown Baraboo in 1880. At least Poyton was quoted as saying so in 1929, having lived in Baraboo since 1860. There were few around to dispute him. Today the bank corners on Third and Oak streets share that honor with Fourth and Oak.

The Warren Hotel

It has been nearly forty years since the Warren Hotel burned, but many residents still remember it fondly. Gone, however, are those who remember that it once had only two stories.

As can be seen in the picture, dated about 1880, it did indeed have only a second floor. The interior arrangement was somewhat odd, for the street level lobby had, on its north wall, a staircase going down several steps to the Pine Room, and up a few steps to the first floor rooms. The Pine Room served the city as a meeting room for service clubs, and parties of various kinds.

During the Powder Plant days, it was named the Bomb Shelter.

Off the lobby to the east was a bar room, fronting on Oak, where in later years Chinese food was served. This did not constitute all of the culinary services of the Warren, for a somewhat more formal dining room occupied the west bay, fronting on Fourth avenue. In addition, in the rear of the hotel there was a very small dining room

suitable for family dining, committee meetings, and certain games of chance.

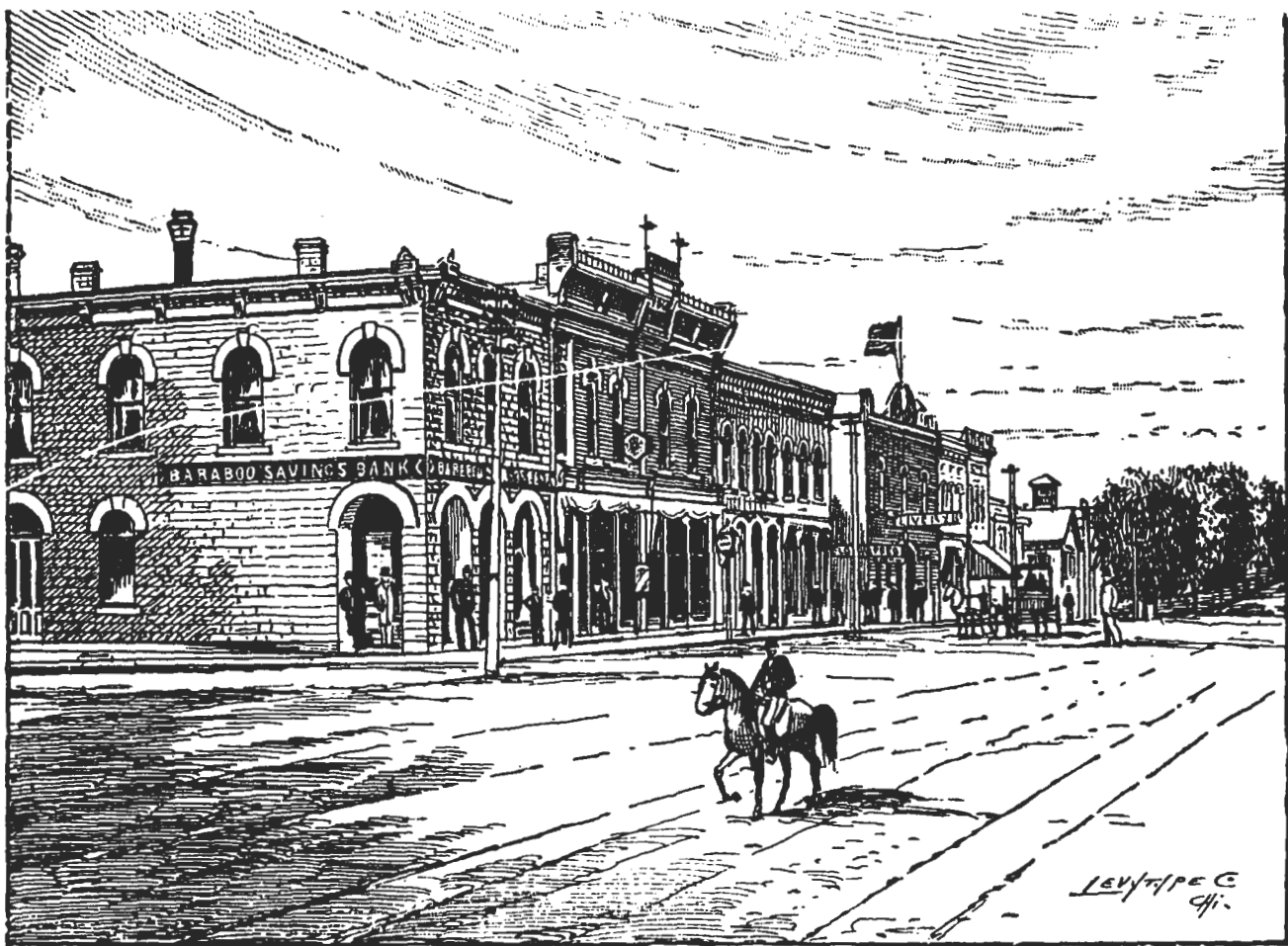
There are still those who mourn the loss of a downtown hotel with the class and dignity of the Warren. News-Republic columnist Charles Schluter clerked there in earlier days, and writes occasionally of his experiences there.

The Cornerstone Gallery

Across the street east of the Warren is a building similar in construction, for both it and the Warren had gray stone exteriors with walls two feet thick. This building is believed to have been built to be a bank. Though this plan got the building off the ground, it does not appear to have been used as such in the beginning.

Strangely, the early city directories list a meat market at this address: "Vallikett, J., corner of fourth and oak, the choicest table meats, fresh or pickled, hams, sausages, etc., in their season. Summer meats served from our refrigerator." Refrigeration then was with ice harvested the previous winter from the Baraboo river. There was no sewage disposal plant then either.

Not until 1889 would it house a bank, the Baraboo Savings Bank, which folded in about 1905. After a stint as a law office, it became the Farmers and Merchants bank in 1917, which in turn merged with the First National Bank in 1929. The building was still highly regarded, for its sale contained the



provision that it could not be used as a bank building for 50 years.

The year 1930 found it to be in the possession of P.A. Youngbeck, who operated the Square Tavern there for about six years. Some people remember that there was a north entrance, to a ladies bar room. Prohibition still reigned in the early days, and attorney Robert Gollmar was denied entrance to his offices upstairs for a time during a search of the building.

The sale of the building to John Moon began a series of professional occupants, namely Dr's. John Moon, John Siebert, Robert Dewel, Robert Konen, and William Wenzel, before its sale to the Cornerstone Gallery. During this writer's ownership, the

building was sandblasted and tuckpointed by Bud Hillmer and his crew, revealing a much lighter stone than had been expected.

According to the Baraboo Intensive Survey of 1989, the style is "a good example of Romanesque detailing on a commercial building....a popular style for banks and corner business blocks as the heavy feel of the building implied stability and security....allows the building to anchor the business row." Pretty fancy for 1880, and still impressive today.

The building is now in its 124th year. The abstract shows a multitude of owners over the years, Dr. Moon having it the longest time, 30 years. This writer comes in second, owning it 27 years, but one owner back in 1884 only held it for two days, making a neat \$50 profit on the

transaction. Occupants other than banks and meat markets include the Olympian Candy Kitchen, and perhaps a barber shop in the north end.

Moeller Wagon and Buggy Works

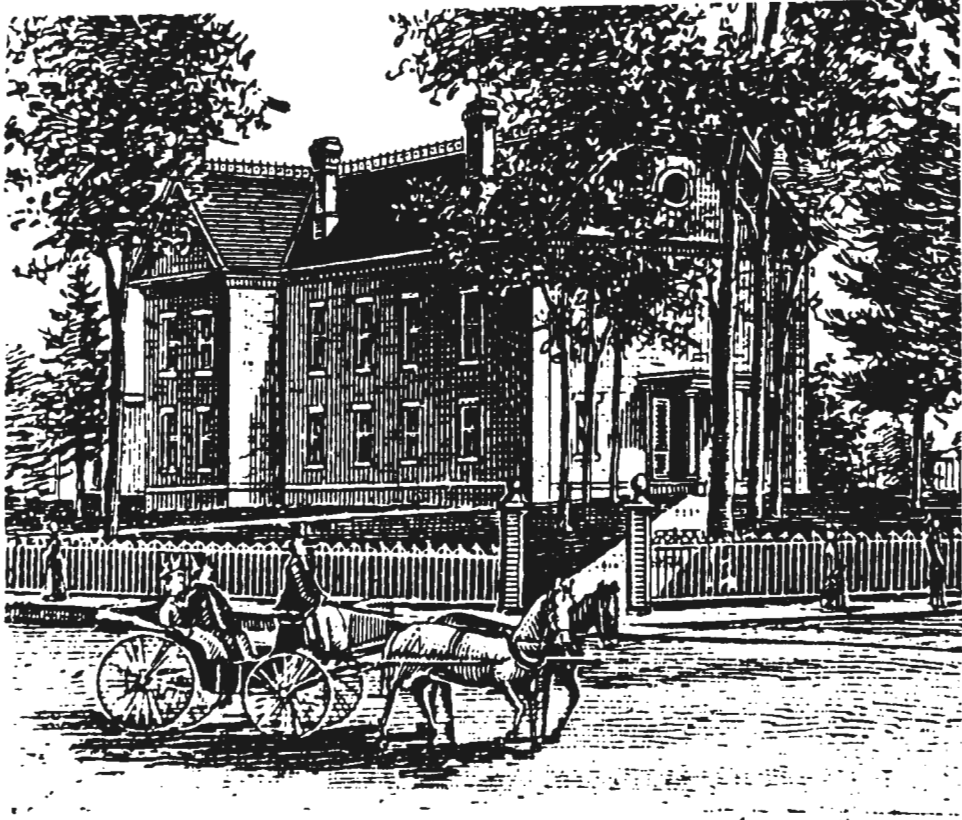
Referring again to the picture, it shows a ramp on the side of the building now occupied by Terri's Cafe and Specially Hers. The upper level was the Langdon City Paint Shop, and the buggys were hauled up the rather rickety ramp.

The ground floor, now Specially Hers, was occupied by the Baraboo Carriage and Wagon Works. The shop owner was Henry Moeller, who with his sons would in ten years be building circus wagons. The customers would be their cousins the Ringling and Gollmar brothers, young men about town with a flair for entertaining.

The Moellers would soon move from this location, probably to the building at 221 Third Avenue, now a law office but for years a wagon works, with circus wagons a specialty.

Also to be seen in the photo is a gas light on the corner of Fourth and Oak, one of very few in the city at the time. There are sidewalks, but the streets are as yet unpaved. Later they would be paved with brick, some of which are preserved in demonstration sidewalk blocks on both Third and Fourth Streets.

Incidentally, the city directory lists 25 dressmakers then--do we have any now? Also, there was a lady physician, unusual in those early days.



1888-Sauk County Court House

FOURTH STREET LOOKING EAST, 1890'S

Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

A recent article featured a photograph taken in or before 1880, and showing the scene in downtown Baraboo. That view looked west toward the corner of Oak and Fourth, said by an old timer to be the business center of Baraboo.

Today's picture looks east on Fourth Street from that same corner, but is taken some ten to fifteen years later, in the 1890's. It shows some changes in the growing city.

The Cornerstone Gallery

For one thing, the corner building, which today houses the Cornerstone Gallery, finally became a bank in 1889, the Baraboo Savings Bank. It is believed to have been built in 1877 to be a bank, but had suffered the ignominy of being a meat market for a time. Actually, it replaced a meat market in a frame building on that corner which burned in 1871.

There had been three owners since its construction, and it seems to have become a bank building in 1889 or 1890. This bank was to fail or be dissolved shortly after the turn of the century, to be replaced in 1917 by the Farmers and Merchants Bank. It would eventually merge with the First National Bank. When the building was sold, there was a clause that it could not be used as a bank for 50 years.

To the north of this building was a small barber shop, just as today, and beyond that was one of several livery stables in the city. No

garages or oil stations in those days, and of course no automobiles.

The Cornerstone building replaced a wood building about which little is known. A serious downtown fire in 1871 had destroyed some seven buildings, from the corner east to about the present location of the Alpine Cafe, and the empty lots were being replaced by building styles considered handsome in that day, buildings which still serve over a hundred years later.

One of the previous owners of the corner property had been Roseline Peck, the first woman to arrive in the Baraboo river valley. Another owner had been George Mertens, an early President of the Bank of Baraboo, later to become the Baraboo National Bank of today.

Other buildings

The next building to the east had not been built when the picture in our previous article was taken, and is dated 1886. In this picture, one bay is apparently occupied by a jeweler, for a clock on a ten foot pedestal stands near the curb in front of the bay. It can be seen just to the left of the little girl who stands in the street. Note that the streets are still not paved. Upstairs in this building is a sign apparently designating a lodge meeting hall.

There's another feature on this building, for close inspection reveals a street light, apparently gas, placed very high over the area, with

a supporting bar extending out from the building. The gas street-light on the corner, seen in the previous picture, is now gone.

The next building down is now occupied by Terri's Cafe and part of Specially Hers. The latter bay is, in the 1890's, a flour and feed store, essential in a farming community. This is the bay which, a decade before, had housed the Moeller Carriage and Buggy works, with the Langdon City Paint Shop upstairs. Just to the east was still a vacant lot, where the rest of Specially Hers is located.

Directly to the east of the vacant lot is a livery stable, of which there were several in the city, corresponding to our auto garages and oil stations of today. The Alpine Cafe occupies the west bay of this building, and Country Accents is in the east half. Notice that in 1990 the building had just two windows in front, plus the large entry way for buggies and wagons. The modern all window fronts came later.

Little can be made out in the next two buildings, which appear to be wood and to have escaped the fire of 1871. There is some indication of another very high street light. How these gas lights were lit at that height is a puzzle, unless they were left to burn continually.

The City Hall

The final building in the distance is the city hall of the day, which will be twice replaced over the years. On top is a cupola, with a fire bell to summon the local bucket brigade in their usually

futile efforts to put out a major fire. Citizens would pitch in and remove stock and furnishings in a burning building as long as it was safe. Sometimes a building down the line was quickly destroyed to stop the spread of the fire.

As late as 1912, Baraboo stored various types of fire fighting equipment on this corner, equipment such as a pumper wagon. In 1912 Mayor Theurer urged the council to replace the horse-drawn equipment with a gasoline powered truck. He explained that there was always a delay until the first citizen to arrive with a team of horses could hook them up and draw the pumper to the scene of the fire!

This city hall has a history, for it was built in 1850 as a schoolhouse, located in the same general neighborhood as the West school, probably the northwest corner of the playground. The cupola held the school bell. By 1876 it had been moved to this location, the corner of Ash and Fourth Street, and is apparently the same building as shown indistinctly in the picture.

Today many of the upper levels of downtown buildings are apartments, but originally they were occupied by business or professional offices such as attorneys, dentists, and physicians, or sometimes lodge halls. Even in 1960 most physicians were in downtown Baraboo, and some were still upstairs, as were three dentists.

Baraboo was a rising star among Wisconsin small cities in those years. Thanks to forward-looking citizens



Fourth Street Looking East, 1890s

in the village, the railroad had arrived in 1871. A series of fires destroyed many other ramshackle downtown buildings, to be replaced by buildings similar to those in these pictures.

The Island Woolen Mill was one of the largest west of Philadelphia. Its dam and turbines were already producing electricity, one of the marvels of the day. Even more of interest had been an article in the Evening News in 1884 describing, as new, something we now take for granted, the battery.

It was explained in great detail that "All that is required are merely the ordinary metals and carbons and a peculiar kind of acid. The electric force begins to develop....and batteries can be made to supply one or a hundred more lights...will be admirably adapted for

country homes and yachts, etc." Electric power was measured in candles in those days, and it was claimed a small battery would operate a twenty-candle light.

People were also talking about those talented but unpredictable Ringling and Gollmar boys and their success in having a real circus.

This success has given Baraboo an enduring reputation, to distinguish itself from just any old city, and this distinction is enhanced by the Ringling Theatre, the Crane Foundation, Boo-U, and the nearby railroad museum.

The civic leaders of the 19th century would be surprised and pleased with Baraboo's city-wide lighting, paved streets, telephones--the list is endless. But without their perseverance after the fires, we might not have Baraboo,

BARABOO OF 1884 SEARCHES FOR INDUSTRY

Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

1884 was a seminal year for Baraboo, not for a single event but because many of the things needed for a village to become a city had come together in the thriving community. Baraboo's future seemed bright indeed, on the surface at least.

Population in the 1880 census had been 3266, and it was headed for 4605 in 1890, a 40% increase. Fires in the seventies had ravaged the old ramshackle frame buildings of the business district. These buildings were now replaced with the fine brick structures, still standing in 2001. The village had incorporated in 1882, and now proudly presented itself to the world as a city.

The railroad was no longer new, having arrived in 1871 following a vigorous cooperative effort between the village and the township leaders, working together for progress. Baraboo was the Division Headquarters for the Northwestern, with dozens of trains a day tooting busily and belching smoke and soot from their coal fires.

These were signs of a thriving economy. The local woolen mill hummed with activity, and a few local brothers were said to be forming a real circus. The Effingers were opening a brewery this year also.

It seemed like a time of real potential. Not yet in Baraboo, but surely on the way, would be the newly invented telephone, hopefully

electric lights, and the new fangled "type writer" with which you could do your own printing. Invented in Milwaukee, it was said that some people even used it to type personal letters, a shame in those days of beautiful penmanship.

Most bicycles up to now had been the impractical high front wheeler, but the 1880's had brought the "safety bicycle" with wheels of identical size, and chain sprocket drive. Before the 1880's decade was out, air-filled tires were available. Bicycles were not too practical on the rutted dirt streets of Baraboo, however. No one thought they could replace the horse, and only dreamers wondered about horseless carriages in the future.

Building boom

Immediate interest locally centered on the building boom. A front page article told of Mayor Warren's plans to enlarge the Sumner House, and it would "rank with the leading hotels of the state." The third story addition would surely cost \$10,000, and the hotel would feature over 40 rooms. It would be renamed the Warren House. At Devil's Lake, an addition to the Cliff House would add some 50 rooms.

Also worth a mention on the front page of the paper were plans for an Opera House, which was located on the NW corner of Oak and Fifth Avenue. They didn't know it then, but the building would burn in 1905 to be replaced in 1915 by the magnificent Al. Ringling Theatre.

The above question is asked in no spirit of a chronic grumbler, and with no wish to detract from the popular estimate of the value of improvements now in progress here. We are getting many things which we need, and which will add to the attractiveness of our city and give us a good name abroad.

There is, however, one feature of the improvements that are being introduced that suggest the necessity of another class of improvements in order to make those we are getting an unquestioned benefit. The improvements now in progress are for the most part of the character of luxuries. They furnish ways of spending and consuming, and use new ways of producing anything. The electric light is a desirable improvement, but it is expensive and not a productive improvement. The new opera house is also desirable, but it furnishes a new way to spend what we produce with no corresponding increase of the facilities for production. The skating rink, while affording a place for wholesome recreation, is of the same character. The new stores open new places for trade, but where is the corresponding addition of people to trade with? There are new residences going up which indicate some increase of the population, it is true, but what increase of industry is there to make it a thrifty population? What is there here for new comers to do? The addition to the hotel will bring something into the town from outside which would go elsewhere, but a hotel, while an attraction, does not add much to the town industrially. Is it not evident that some addition to the industries of the place must be introduced in order to sustain these other improvements? They are of a character to leave us poorer than before in point of wealth, unless we can add improvements that shall be productive. We cannot grow rich by consuming, but shall grow poor unless we produce more. We cannot support more stores, more places of amusement and entertainment and instruction, a better system of lighting, a water system, and all that unless we add to the wealth producing power of the place. These other improvements tend to make Baraboo top-heavy. There must be a broadening of the base of productive industries.

Therefore, the proposed introduction of new factories is the great interest that should be pushed.

Baraboo's Building Boom.

With the advent of spring, the preparations for the erection of new buildings is seen on every side, and the building "boom" is assuming proportions astonishing even the oldest inhabitant. Firstly, Mayor Warren has taken in hand the enlargement of the Sumner House, soon to rank with the leading hotels of the state. A large three story, steep addition on oak street, with a handsome Mansard roof over the old and new portion, will certainly render this beautiful building exceedingly attractive. As the old portion cost \$19,000, the addition will probably cost \$10,000 to \$12,000 more. The interior of the first story of the present building, will be completely changed, the dining room and reading room and offices becoming models in their line. There will be some 40 to 50 fine rooms when the whole is completed. The equipment of the house will be first-class, and we shall certainly all be proud of the Warren House of the near future. 4-16-84

On the old Sumner site lot a magnificent new store is to be erected, the front of iron and plate glass, something similar to the beautiful store erected on the MBL's lot at Madison a year since. Architect Jones, of Madison, has been here looking over the site and preparing the plans, and we are glad to record the positive assurance that these improvements are soon to grace our beautiful city.

The addition to the court house will soon be under way; also the Opera House, and at least three other brick store buildings, and possibly an armory for the Joe Hooker Post. Besides the above buildings, fifty new houses will be built during 1884, some of them handsome structures.

The Baraboo Skating Rink.

The new skating Rink recently put up in Baraboo, is one of the largest and best to be found anywhere. The building is 120 by 60 feet, the offices and cloak rooms at the end of the building occupy perhaps 12 or 16 feet, thus leaving a clear floor of 100 by 60 for skating purposes. This floor is made of hard maple, planed off smoothly, and is as solid as the ground on which it stands, or more so, as the ground is sandy, while the floor is not. We happened to be present on Thursday evening of last week, when the rink was first opened to the public, and through the kindness of Mr. Hull, were permitted to inspect the building in the afternoon, while the floor was unoccupied. There is not a post between the two sides of the building, the immense roof being supported by a system of trusses, and appears to be firm enough to hold up any amount of ice and snow that is likely at any time to accumulate upon it.

The opening was a grand success, the floor being occupied by 150 pairs of skates, and each pair carrying some fair lady or her escort, while around the sides and ends of the building, were more than a hundred spectators, all intent on watching the sport, and some of them regretting that this amusement had not been introduced to the world some years earlier, so they could have learned it without the risk of broken bones, strained muscles, or cracked skulls. We confess to have been one of these sorrowful ones. 4-9-84

Now when our young folks want to go any where for a sleigh ride, if the river happens to be frozen, they can go to Baraboo, have a good time at the rink, and come home again in good time, by starting early enough. Or they can go up on the 3:24 or 6:28 train, spend the evening at the rink, and get back home at 11 p. m., and do it all within reasonable hours. We hope some of them will try it before long. — Lead Valley News.

On the central square an addition was being made to the 1855 courthouse, and "at least three brick or stone buildings and possibly an armory for the Joe Hooker (Civil War) Post" were projected for the city. Besides all that, some fifty homes were being built, "some of them handsome structures".

In civic matters, a \$5000 indoor roller skating rink, 64 by 120, had just been built, with a hard maple floor and free of posts. Messrs Nelson Bradley, Harry Holmes, and Orson Simonds had succeeded in "putting in a bridge for the accommodation of foot passengers at the lower mills" This structure would replace a foot bridge carried away in the spring by high water.

The Editorial

Under the heading "Is Baraboo getting too Top-Heavy?", the paper dwells on the thought that the new opera house, skating rink, and hotel, although attractive additions to the city, had one drawback: "They furnish ways of spending and consuming (but) no new ways of producing anything.

In a precursor of the situation in 1946, some six decades later, the editor asks "what increase of industry is there to make us a thrifty population? Is it not evident that some addition to the industries of the place may be introduced in order to sustain these other improvements?" He also asks for a system of lighting (it got a modest start in 1887) and a water system. He proposed that a proposed introduction of factories "is the greatest interest that should be pushed...a

liberal investment, or outright donations to paying industries is the policy for the times." Sounds like Baraboo in 1946!

Industrial Development

This raises the dilemma of city development. Does a city do what is required to bring in industry, so as to create jobs, the salaries of which make possible new churches, schools, skating rinks, river walks, university centers, parks, and all the other amenities which now make Baraboo such an attractive place to live?

Or, do you build such facilities, (new churches, university centers, etc.), tax the citizens heavily, and rely on the adage "If you build it, they will come".

It seems pretty obvious that Baraboo wisely chose the first path in 1946 when the Powder Plant closed and unemployment skyrocketed. This story was treated in four previous articles. Suffice to say, Baraboo in 1946 had ancient school buildings, decaying public buildings, no University Center, few parks, no riverwalk, and churches in need of remodeling or replacement. We have them now, thanks to jobs and salaries.

The 1884 first page editorial, then, was a precursor of the 1946 dilemma. Baraboo never dreamed in 1884 that the railroad division point would be moved, the aging woolen mill closed, and the circus grow and then leave. He was a wise editor, but it would be another generation before his wisdom would be recognized.



Today Baraboo has a fine mix of industries, and is not dominated by one industry, unlike the days of the railroad, the woolen mill, or the circus. Industries come and go, however, and city fathers need to be alert and ready for changes and additions.

VIBRANT DOWNTOWN BARABOO, THEN AND NOW, Part I

Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

Don't shed too many tears for Downtown Baraboo, folks. Like Mark Twain, the reports of its demise a few years ago are highly exaggerated. In fact, a case can be made that Downtown Baraboo, the traditional cultural, governmental, and economic center of Sauk County, is more vibrant than ever, though perhaps in a different way than before. These two articles will attempt to make that case. Let's start at the founding of Baraboo.

The Early Days

Briefly, in 1845 an ad hoc committee selected the level prairie overlooking the Baraboo River rapids to be the county seat of Sauk County. In 1846 Prescott Brigham of the Town of Sumpter purchased the land "with his own money...and deeded it to the county". A ramshackle wood courthouse was erected on the north side of the square, about where the Al. Ringling is today.

A ragtag scattering of frame buildings soon partially ringed the courthouse square, known then as the courtyard. Thanks to pamphlets by Matilda Ruel and Edith vonWald, we have a good idea of how the square looked and was used in the early days.

To begin with, some old timers say that downtown Baraboo was really known as uptown Baraboo, due to its height well above the banks of the river. The

business firms on Ash-Walnut Street, flanking the old covered bridge, were known as downtown Baraboo because they were down by the river.

Thus what we now call Downtown Baraboo has always had a rival, the Ash-Walnut section. Now it also has as a rival the the West Baraboo center. But the tide is turning, for soon Walmart and Slumberland and possibly another huge retailer will be paying taxes to Baraboo rather than West Baraboo, though they won't be in the traditional downtown business section.

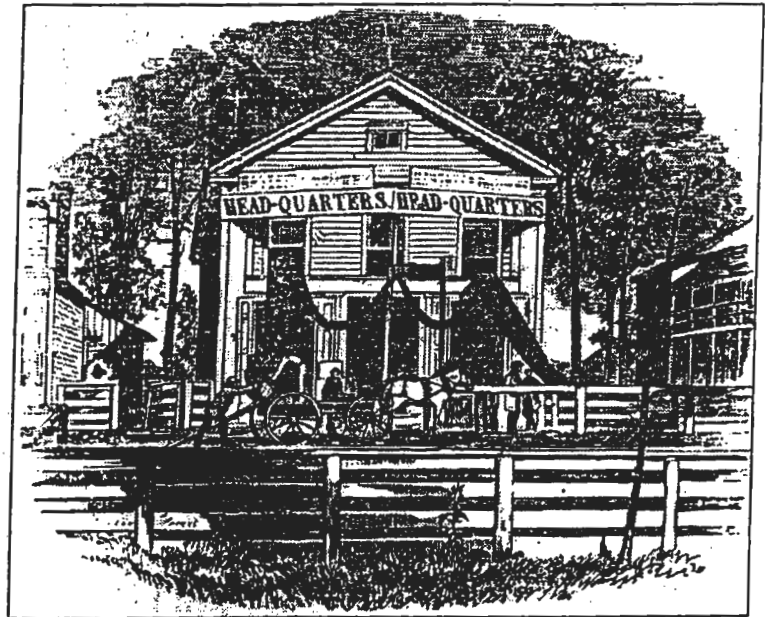
Up on the square in 1852, according to vonWald, was the Old Dutch Tavern, apparently located about where the present stage of the Al. Ringling Theatre stands. Only two downtown buildings remain from the 1850's, one at 137 Third Avenue, currently occupied by the Viney Law Firm. The other is the corner part of the Baraboo National Bank, built in 1857 but remodeled so many times that there is little resemblance to the original Italianate structure. The bank now occupies some six to eight times as much floor space as originally.

The small box-like county courthouse was at first the only meeting place in the village, and was used not only for court but for Congregational and other Church



CONTRIBUTED

Now the home of Corner on Wisconsin and Garden Party stores, this 1881 building (above) replaced the Western Hotel. At right, the 1852 "General Store" is shown in its original state. Now, the 137 Third Ave. building houses the Viney Law Firm. Below, the Sauk County Bank, built in 1857, is structurally part of today's Baraboo National Bank.



Services. VonWald says the men came barefoot and chewed tobacco during the Service. When the Methodists built Baraboo's first church building in 1850 on the south-east corner of Broadway and Fifth Avenue, it too served as a place for public meetings.

By 1862, a few frame hotels graced the square, and Miss Marie Crandall gave the first public address by a woman, speaking from a large open balcony of the Western Hotel, which stood on the south-east corner of Oak and Fourth Street.



Fires

All of the downtown buildings for many years were wood frame, the lumber coming from the mills on the riverbanks which were powered by the rushing water of the Baraboo River. Disaster struck in 1859, according to Ruel, when 200 feet of buildings fronting the square were wiped out. Another fire occurred in 1870, and one on December 3, 1871 destroyed seven buildings on the south-west corner of Oak and Third Avenue.

The bank on the south-west corner escaped with minor damage, due to its brick construction.

Another fire in November of 1872 took out seven buildings on the north side of Fourth Avenue, and a fire on November 6, 1878 destroyed the Western Hotel, on the south-east corner of Oak and Fourth. It was replaced by the building now occupied by the Corner on Wisconsin and the Garden Party Restaurant.

No wonder there were fires. The means of fighting was the bucket brigade, with the village pump the source of the pitiful supply of water. To control the last fire, two buildings were quickly torn down, apparently in the south end of the 500 block on Oak Street. Both were replaced with brick structures.

Still another fire, on April 13, 1880, took out several old buildings on the south side of Third Street. Meantime, on Fourth Avenue, several projected new buildings were to be built next to an old frame structure that had survived, but local zealots felt that it would be an eyesore and a blemish on the modern business row, according to the Baraboo Intensive Survey. Therefore, in the middle of the night, they "used twelve foot timbers to swing the structure from its foundation, badly damaging the building." However, the attempt failed, and the old building survived until about 1920.

Though fires were personal financial losses to the owners, the town benefited, for fine new brick structures replaced the old frame buildings, and serve their occupants to this day.

Facades

Baraboo's downtown building facades retain the grand flavor of the 1880's for the most part, since most of the buildings which arose following the various fires are of similar style. Much of the downtown business section has been proposed as an historical district.

A May 1997 booklet was produced by the Chamber of Commerce's Economic Development Committee, detailing the historic significance of the business section.

Incidentally, 1873 saw the first of only two gas street lights in the village, one being by the Walnut Street covered bridge, and one at the corner of Ash and Third. Darkness reigned elsewhere on a moonless night. There were ninety commercial establishments by 1876, according to the Wisconsin Business Directory, quoted in a recent publication by the Chamber of Commerce Committee called "Building on Our Past".

For future fire protection, huge cisterns were built on or near the square in the 1880's, and a volunteer fire department was organized. The village bought the property on the northwest corner of Ash and Fourth Street--now the city hall--and moved the old schoolhouse there to serve as a fire apparatus storage area. City offices occupied the second floor. A fine new school had been built on Ash and Second Street, but it was in turn destroyed by fire in 1905. It was 1912 before horse-drawn fire engines were replaced with motorized vehicles.

To be continued

The previous article discussed Downtown Baraboo as it was in the nineteenth century. Continuing that discussion, according to Ruel the early courthouse square had animals running at large, and they "nibbled holes in the grain sacks lying on the farmers wagons...geese waddled about the streets...and pigs pilfered the meat stored in the leanto's of houses". An ordinance finally prohibited livestock on the square from November 1 to April 1. Apparently they would still be allowed in summer!

Cultural Activities

Lest this scene lead you to believe that ignorance and chaos reigned, Ruel spends three pages on the cultural life of early Baraboo. Lectures, Lyceums and dramatic clubs are listed, with the lectures costing five cents for men but the ladies admitted free.

Musical programs had begun in 1853 with the arrival of a melodeon purchased for his wife by Nelson Morley. A Philharmonic Society was organized, as well and singing and home talent shows and Easter Cantatas. Later the Boston Ladies Symphony played, as well as Sousa's Band. There were several upstairs or storefront movie halls at the turn of the century.

VonWald reports that Taylor's Hall, on the south east corner of Broadway and Third Avenue, was a popular place for dancing, though dances were also held in the courthouse and also in the Adams Hotel on the corner of Ash and Water.

Square Dancing alternated with the polka, shottisch, and the waltz.

The Baraboo Intensive Survey almost overwhelms the reader with a plethora of local organizations in those days, most of which met in their own downtown halls or in the adjacent churches. Groups such as Modern Woodmen, Foresters, Royal Neighbors, Knights of Columbus, and many railroad unions had their own halls, and the YMCA had its own building, erected in 1890. Also having its own building were the Masonic Orders, their 1891 building on Second and Oak being replaced in 1958 after a 1956 fire.

Downtown Today

Social and Fraternal organizations were rampant in the early days, when there was no television, radio, and few telephones, and traveling even to Devil's Lake was a major undertaking. Now many of those early groups have disappeared from the square, but not so with the Masons and Elks, both of which remain on or near the downtown.

New to downtown since 1918 is the American Legion hall, formerly the German Methodist Church, on Second Street, The nearby YMCA building on the northwest corner of Ash and Second was razed in 1936. Most labor union halls disappeared when the railroad division headquarters went to Madison.

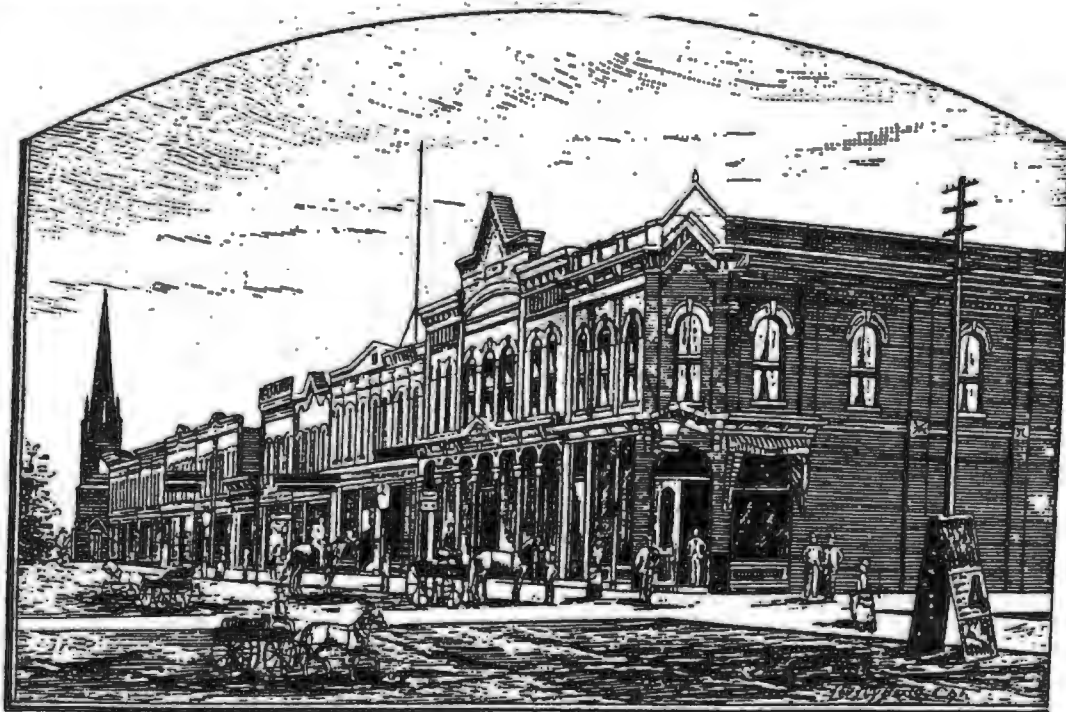
Changes

The late Nineteenth Century folks would find much the same as far as building facades are concerned, though the courthouse, its annex, and the West Square Building would be new to them. The old red



Downtown Baraboo was the natural place for Aton Implement to display the new farm binder in 1883 (above). The Gollmar Band is in the foreground. To its left, the boys are barefoot. Below, only the lower storefronts are changed in this 1900

view of Third Street, from the Corner Drug Store to the Presbyterian Church.



South side of Third Street, east of Oak - circa 1890

jail and the turreted City Hall would be gone. Eight parking lots, non-existent in the old days, are full daily not only for shoppers but for city and county employee autos, a considerable difference from the hitching posts commonly seen in old photos.

Old timers would be delighted to find that the Opera Hall at 522 Oak has been recreated, with an elevator, unknown in Baraboo in the past century. There is even an old fashioned soda fountain in the Corner Drug Store, Baraboo's oldest store, no longer on the corner but larger and more modern in its new location.

Beyond their fondest dreams and hopes would be the magnificent Al. Ringling Theatre, a far cry from the combination skating rink and meeting hall at Fifth Avenue and Oak which served in the old days. It burned in 1905, and cultural activities were pretty much on hold for ten years, until the Al. Ringling Theatre was built. The Al's stage is used up to fifty times a year, mostly for cultural presentations.

Restoration is slow and costly, but outside experts agree it is a sound building and well worth the cost and effort. The Theatre Historical Society of America says it is the first of the great movie palaces built in the United States.

Being accustomed to professional offices on the second floor of buildings, old timers would be amazed to find five shops upstairs (by elevator) at 532½ Oak. Most upper floors are now in use, some for housing and apartments where some of the old halls were. Gone, however,

are the old upstairs medical and dental offices, though legal professionals still cluster near the Courthouse, either upstairs or on a ground floor.

The West Square building offers downtown meeting rooms, largely for county committees but also for local business or social groups. City groups meet in the city Hall. Unique meeting facilities are offered by the Village Booksmith and the Java Cafe. The square is alive in summer with Concerts on the Square every Thursday, and in the summer of 2000 other musical groups kept an enthusiastic but rather lonely musical vigil on the square on late Sunday afternoons.

Courthouse Square

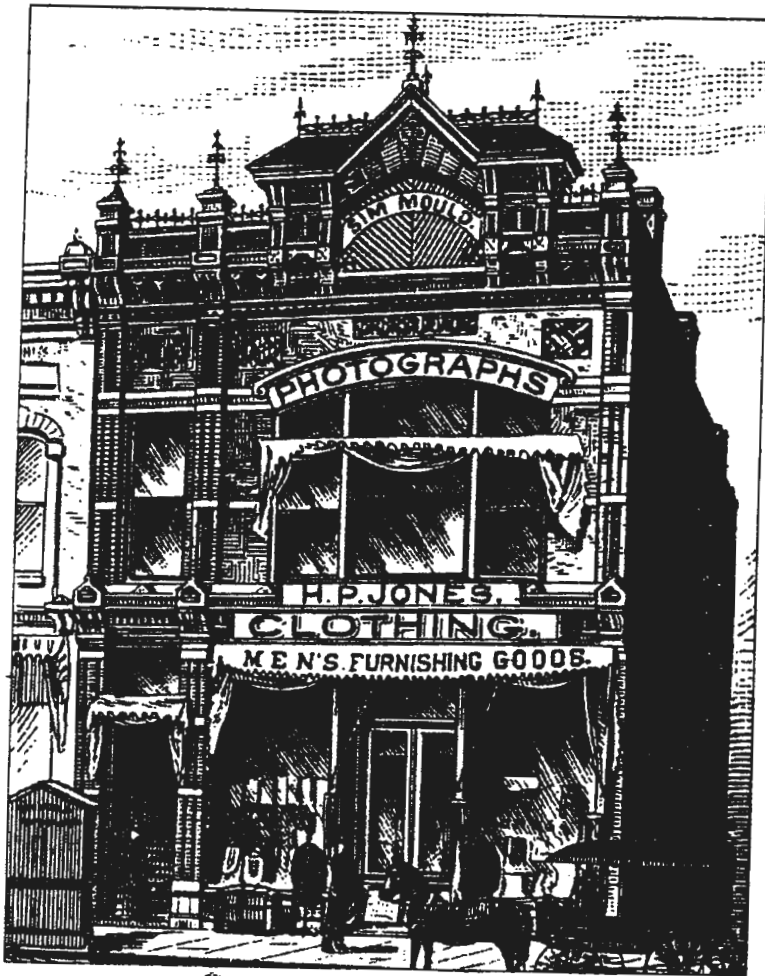
There are art and craft shows and Faire's on the Square, as well as the Farmers Market twice a week, and also the Fall Art Tour. Parades, such as Homecoming and Memorial Day, are always held on the square.

There is something else new, for more and more tourists are finding Baraboo's specialty shops attractive, as well as the tour of the theatre. The Nineteenth Century folks would be surprised to find five places to bank in Downtown Baraboo alone, as well as eight places to eat (plus the taverns) and five churches nearby in which to pray!

Downtown was a vibrant place in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in both a commercial and organizational way, considering its many meeting halls. Downtown Baraboo today, in the Twenty First Century, is vibrant in a different way, a way concerned more with the amenities of living, though it retains

several of the old retail establishments also.

The square has been described by one writer as having the flavor of a Norman Rockwell painting. True, the turreted city hall, McGann Store, and old red jail are gone, but the folks of yesteryear would feel comfortable, and also amazed at the modern selections at the retail stores. Downtown is indeed somewhat different than before, but also a magnet in its own right, still serving both as the capitol of the County and as its most varied commercial and cultural center. That's being vibrant!



today, in the old _____ the upper floor of this once opera hall, then photography studio, now features an "opera house" meeting hall.

Moeller Bros. were Good
Cousins to Have
Yesteryear Revisited
By Bob Dewel—
www.drbobdewel.i8.com

How do you get along with your cousins? Let's consider the Ringling-Gollmar-Moeller group of cousins of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. If you can measure up to their standards, you are lucky!

Their Mothers were all sisters, daughters in the Juliar family of Milwaukee and later of Baraboo. Juliar is a French name, but each of the girls married boys of German ancestry. Their ancestors had probably fought against each other in the various European wars of the early 19th century.

Sounds like a recipe for family problems, but not so in this case. Some of the grandchildren became famous, but others were essential to the success of their better known cousins.

We've already written several stories about the Ringling boys, and also wrote a couple articles about the Gollmar boys, who were quite well known in their time. This article is about the Moeller cousins, not as much in the spotlight as the others, but still an important part of the circus tradition.

Many of the three sets of cousins left significant heritages to Baraboo in the form of theatres, hospitals, pipe organs, etc., and though the Moeller name is not on it, the very generous Alma Waite Fund is Moeller money donated by the last survivor in the family, their niece Alma Waite. It has been used for a myriad of civic cultural amenities over the past decade.

Locations

Katherine Juliar's husband, Henry Moeller Sr. is first seen in Baraboo in 1856 as the proprietor of a wagon works. He lost everything in an 1872 fire, rebuilding and starting over on 7-23-1873. Here he was the operator and later owner, with

a man named Theuerer, of the Baraboo Carriage and Wagon works on 115 Fourth Street.

This is the building now occupied in 2004 by Specially Hers and Birdie's Café (formerly Terri's Café). Upstairs was the Langdon City Paint Shop, with an outside ramp by which buggies could be rolled upstairs for paint and refurbishing. This building is pictured in our Volume 4, page 4. The Moeller carriages were described as being of "elite" quality.

Much of the material, and also the inspiration for this article, was furnished by The Circus World Museum (CWM) Robert Parkinson Library and Research Center director, Fred Dahlinger. He notes that in 1880 Henry moved to 221 Third Avenue, and Henry's sons Henry Jr., and Corwin G. joined the firm in 1890. Their Mother, Katherine Juliar Moeller, died 6-25-79 at age 41.

After a few years, the frame building on Third Avenue was replaced by the present, brick structure, a building currently occupied in 2004 by Attorneys Cross, Jenks, Mercer, and Maffei. Henry Sr. died on November 1, 1908.

Later in the 1880's, the Moeller's were engaged by their Ringling cousins (and later by the Gollmar cousins) in producing heavy duty wagons, as well as elaborate circus parade wagons. As the fame of their quality construction spread, they counted among their customers such well known circuses as Al G. Barnes, George Christy, Miller Brothers, Charles Sparks, Sun Brothers, and later the Barnum and Bailey branch of the Ringling enterprises.

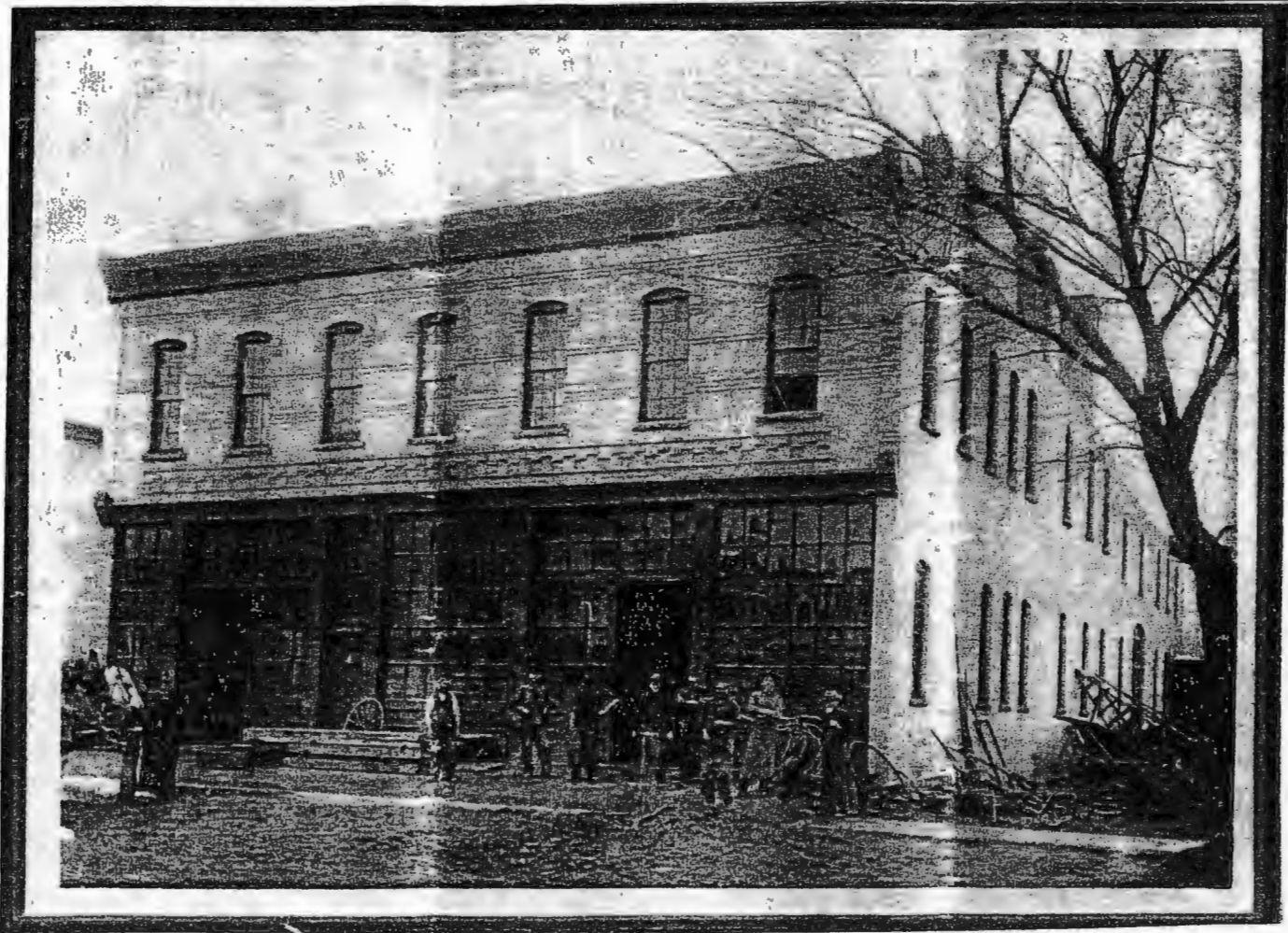
Dahlinger says that the Moeller Bros. "Made one of just about every kind (of wagons) used by a railroad circus of the time." He speaks of the heavy duty wagons as robust, and these were home to a diverse group of animals, from Rhinos and giraffes to moneys and tigers. The Moellers also invented a mechanical stake driver in 1904, a boon to the rapid erection of



Above: Before 1880, at 115 Fourth Street. That's the Warren Hotel in the distance, before the second story was added.

Below: The second location, at 221 Third Avenue. See another page for a photo of a frame building which served the Moeller Brothers for a time.

Photos courtesy of the Circus World Museum





Circus World Museum

This building at 221 Third Avenue was later replaced by the presnet structure, which houses Cross, Jenks, Mercer and Maffei Law firm



tents on a daily basis in the circus industry.

Their first entirely new parade wagon was the famed Ringling Brothers Bell Wagon of 1892, on display now at the CWM but owned by the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus of today. At an age of 112 years, it is the longest enduring single-show ownership of any circus wagon in history.

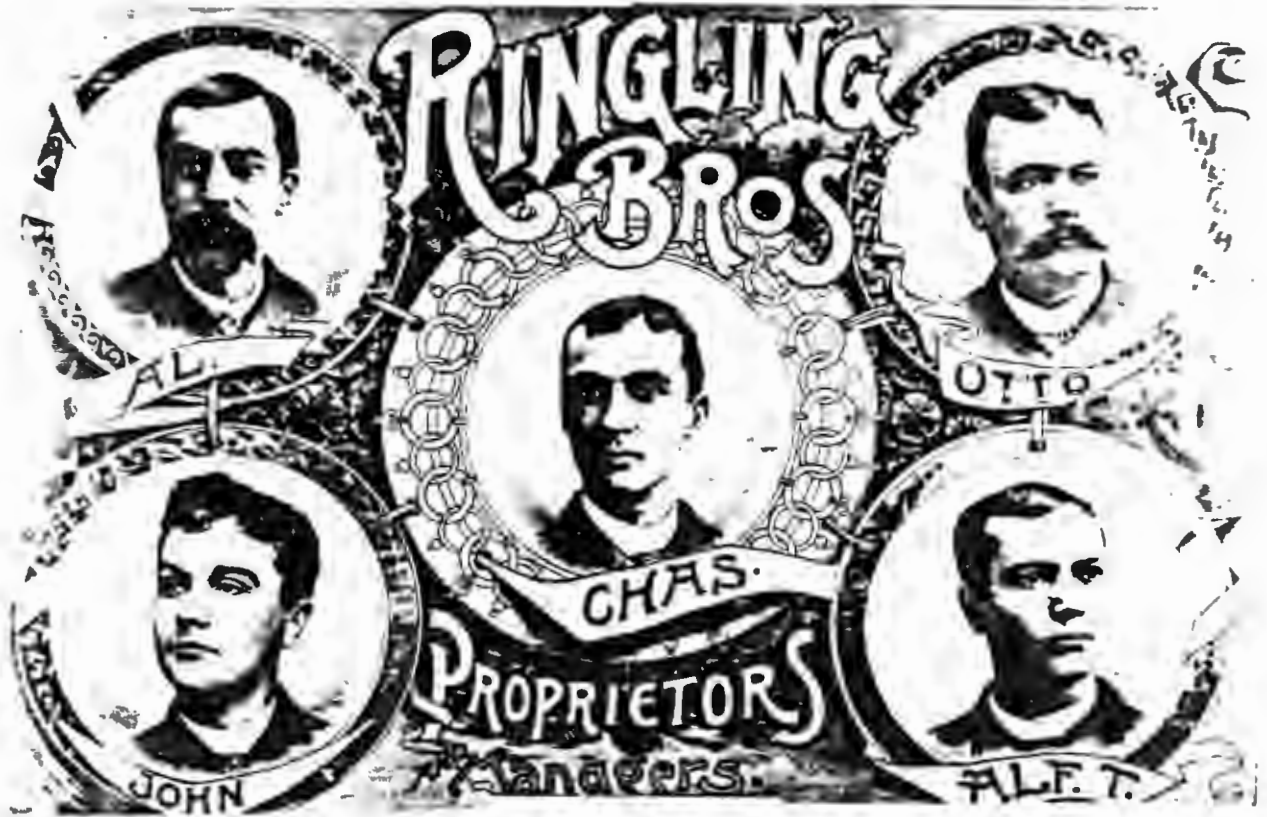
Another major undertaking was the 1904 Swan Band Wagon, inspired by the gardens at Versailles, France. It too can be seen at the CWM, for it is now back in the city where it was constructed. It was but one of a dozen parade wagons the Ringlings had built at that period of time in competition with their arch rivals, the Barnum and Bailey Circus. Before the decade was out, the enterprising Ringings owned that circus also.

The Moellers had another function in relation to the Ringlings, for they served as the local contact when the brothers were on the road. Henry Moeller Jr. was even called upon to break a tie vote when one of the Ringling brothers was not present and a business decision had to be made. The

relationship among the cousins appears to have been one of mutual respect, the Ringling and Gollmars sometimes assisting each other during winter quarters work also.

The Moellers also made some wagons for their other cousins, the Gollmars, though the latter sometimes did their own wagon construction. Though not as large a circus as the Ringlings, the Gollmar operation was still among the largest in the country. It was sold outright in 1916, and within a year or so the new owners sold parts piecemeal to other circuses. As a result, there are fewer remnants of this significant operation.

Neither Henry Jr. nor Corwin Moeller had children, and the family fortune became the inheritance of their niece, Alma Waite, mentioned above. One wonders if the Juliar grandparents viewed with disapproval, astonishment, or pride in the accomplishment of their grandchildren. They were probably gratified that the cousins not only prospered but got along so well with each other.



1885 - Rose



with the photo at the right, you may ask? It's Dr. Dewel's way of telling us this is the end of his series on local circus history.

Addenda

A reader has sent me a long article from *Etude* magazine from August 1944 featuring an interview with Edith (Mrs. Charles) Ringling. The gist of the article is that the musical talents of the young Ringling boys resulted in their first public venture, the "Concert Company." In that early venture they sang and played several musical instruments.

This, says Edith, skilled them in the entertainment business. Success there encouraged them to exhibit their other talents, resulting in the development of the circus. This was a new and interesting insight from someone who knew the Ringlings from the age of 12, married one, and eventually was co-owner and director of the Ringling circus empire.

Runaway camels and a rampaging elephant

We've all heard how the old time 40-horse hitch — last known to be used in 1904 — was revived in 1962 by Chappie Fox for the Great Circus Parade in Milwaukee.

Driven by Dick Sparrow then, and now by his son, this remarkable feat of cooperation between man and beasts thrills onlookers just as it did in the parades and shows at the turn of the century. It was so successful at the time that the Ringling Circus Impresarios began to look around the stables.

As told to Fox by John Kelley, their eyes fell upon the herd of camels, a cantankerous but hardy animal that was harder to control and not generally serving as useful a purpose around the circus grounds as the more trainable horses.

Why not a 40 — no, that's too much to expect — how about a 20-camel hitch? It had never been done before, and what a sensation it might be. "Let's try it" must have been the conversation at the Ringling winter quarters camel barn on Water Street. Today that camel building is still extant, serving as the souvenir shop at Circus World Museum.

The trial

After a careful consideration of how to adapt the horses' harnesses to camels, trial runs began with a small wagon and only two camels abreast. When things went well, more camels were added, and finally a wagon was selected for the 20-camel hitch. To provide suitable weight for them to pull, the wagon was piled high with

bales of hay. Somehow the camels were coaxed out onto Water Street and harnessed, four abreast in five rows.

The strange procession headed east on Water Street, unsurfaced in those days, approaching its junction with Elizabeth Street. The latter road dips abruptly from Mound and Rivercrest streets to its junction with Water Street, and the latter rose higher than it does today to accommodate the junction.

The camel cavalcade approached this rise, no doubt somewhat jerkily, and upon meeting the crest of the rise, began the modest descent, still on Water Street.

Unfortunately, there was a problem. So much hay had been piled onto the wagon that the brake leaver was nowhere to be found. Encouraged by gravity as it descended the small rise, the wagon advanced onto the rear of the closest of the row of camels. These camels, resenting the intrusion, passed the action forward to the next row of animals.

Like a group of dominos on end, the front row of camels soon felt the urgency of the approaching and brakeless wagon bearing down on them. Panic ensued, and 20 frightened camels, pursued by the hay-laden wagon, careened east on Water Street, out of control.

At that point, where the street bends somewhat to the southeast, there stood a small frame home with a front porch. Here the physically disabled occupant was sitting with his feet propped up on

the railing, observing with interest the approaching debacle. It soon became evident that the porch and its occupant were about to become an unwilling part of the spectacle.

Almost too late, the occupant of the rocking chair threw aside his crutches and sped with surprising alacrity out of the immediate scene, barely escaping the Sahara stampede, and sans crutches.

There is no doubt that time has probably enhanced the comedic scene just described. The fact is that the Ringlings, undaunted, continued the experiment. Although circus posters of the day show a 20-camel hitch pulling a wagon, (with the brake available at all times), in truth they never achieved more than a 16-camel hitch, according to Fred Dahlinger, curator of Circus World's archives. Even so, it ranks with the 40-horse hitch as an achievement which probably was never repeated other than — where else? — in the circus.

Chappie Fox

Speaking of Fox, if you visit him at his present quarters at St. Clare Meadows, he may proudly show you an attractive modern art painting, nicely framed. It consists mainly of crossing and intersecting swaths of iridescent purple paint, with a touch of green.

He then proudly announces that it was done for him by his "girl friend." His sly look belies the claim, and he may finally admit that it was done by an orangutan in the Kansas City Zoo. It hangs prominently on his wall, and indeed would surely have

Shown below is camel spring training on the shores of the Baraboo River. At bottom is a 12-hitch practice run on the bank of the frozen Baraboo River mill pond in 1910.



received complimentary remarks, if not a prize, at the recent and always successful Art Fair on the Square.

Old John

Ringling and Gollmar histories are replete with stories about the circus animals, indeed whole books have been written by the veterinarians assigned to the beasts. Fall tour groups at Circus World are shown the damage done to the elephant barn one time by the normally placid elephant, "Old John," the mightiest of the Ringling elephants.

Apparently John was having a bad day, because for no apparent reason he started to demolish the elephant barn, and there was some concern that he might succeed. Because he was grabbing the open beams in the ceiling with his trunk, it was necessary to install spikes to discourage him, and the spikes can be seen yet today.

Even some of the bricks in the outer wall were knocked out when John broke loose from his leg chains. He soon was calmed down to his normal docile composure. The barn was not heated, even in winter, the animals' body heat being sufficient. Manure from each of the animals was shunted from the building by chutes which opened from the inside for convenience of the trainers.

Every dictionary includes the word "jumbo," but that word did not exist somewhat over 100 years ago. P.T. Barnum brought an exceptionally large elephant to his museum at the time, and named him Jumbo. The word caught on, and became synonymous with the description of anything larger than is usually expected.

The ring barn

Nearby is the ring barn, where elephants and horses and camels were trained. In the ceiling is a turntable to which were attached safety ropes to catch the performers as they practiced their tricks riding on the backs of the animals.

The winter quarters area was indeed a busy place, and Baraboo teemed with circus folks while the winter quarters remained here. It was moved to Bridgeport in 1918, and then to Sarasota, Fla. Now, however, the world center for circus wagons and memorabilia is in Baraboo at Circus World.

Burial grounds

It is possible that every town in the U.S. where the circus showed has a tale that an elephant died and was secretly buried, and usually a mounded or depressed area is pointed out as evidence. The fact is that Baraboo really does have at least two such burial areas in or near the city, one being just off Moore Street, and another at "The Rooney farm north of town," according to one report.

Another report has an elephant buried "on the Ringling farm several miles east of Baraboo." There is also a hippopotamus buried somewhere. In 1933 the Ringling operation had as many as 30 elephants, and some must have died in Baraboo during the winter. The Ringlings' first animal is said to have been a hyena. No record on where its final resting place might be!

Perhaps in future years elephant bones will be unearthed and scientists will postulate that the area was

once a jungle. This may not be so far-fetched, for Canfield writes that bones of a mammoth were unearthed in the county, and this was long before the Ringlings and Gollmars ever dreamed of having a circus with jungle animals. Could some of those 20-hitch camels be buried here also?

Dr. Bob Dewel's "Yesteryear Revisited" column is featured regularly in the News Republic.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CIRCUS WORLD MUSEUM

Pictured above in a 1911 parade is a 16-camel hitch pulling the Egypt Tableau wagon in an eastern city. A four-zebra hitch follows the camel brigade.