

The 1910's

455

Pages 455 to 570

H

Growing Pains and Terrible Teens	456
New Street Lights once Prompted Parades	459
Fire Trucks and Sirens in 1912	464
Telephone Yanked from City Hall	468
In Spring, a Young Man's Fancy turns to –Taxes	470
Propose Two More Rail Lines to City	474
Man finds traffic Rules "Inconvenient" in 1915	476
1912 Legislature saved Baraboo Industry	480
Al Ringling's 1912 Decision—what might have Been	483
A Significant Ground-breaking in 1915	485
1915 Citizens Honor a Civic Benefactor	487
Baraboo's Eventful Summer if 1915	491
Al. Provided Fascination for Sidewalk Superintendents	494
An Afternoon Interview and a Grand Opening	498
Live Theatre brings Culture to Baraboo	500
The Silent Movies in the Early Days	504
Nothing is Too Good for Baraboo	507
Nothing WAS too Good for Baraboo	511
Seams of Time	513
City Fathers Reject Gift from Ringling Theatre	515
Cahoon Mine was once a Principal Industry	519
The Sauk County Village of Bessemer	523
When LaRue and North Freedom were Boom Towns	525
Canoeing the Wisconsin in 1914	528
Early Refractory Days at Devils Lake	530
State Wins and the Refractory Moves	534
Patriotism in Sauk County, 1917 and Today	537
Baraboo's 21 were a Lucky Bunch	539
WWI Diary lists Familiar Hardships	541
A Croix de Guerre in Baraboo	544
Baraboo Youths burn German Books	547
Sauk County Welcomes Home its WWI Veterans	551
Big Traffic Problems in Early Baraboo	554
From Indian Trails to Super Highways, 1840-1960	556
Epidemic once led to Closing Churches, Schools	561
Where is the Warner Memorial Road?	564
Abe Wood, Dr. Ochsner and Ochsner Park	567

**Baraboo's Growing
Pains and Terrible
Teens
Tales of Earlier Days
By Bob Dewel**

This is the final article to be based on the Virgil Cady scrapbooks of 1912-1918. The clippings he saved have given us a microcosm of life nearly 100 years ago in Baraboo. It was a time when the old had to give way to the new.

We've already written about the great telephone controversy, the proposed electric train line, the elimination of horse-drawn fire wagons in favor of an auto fire truck, and how it took a legislative act to keep the circus in Baraboo in 1912.

Because I have written extensively in the past about the introduction of electricity (II-11,23 and VIII-26), the struggle with major corporations is not repeated here. Suffice to say that the city was in and out of the power and gas business. Dams on the river supplied the early power needs but were unable to meet the growing demand. It was time of growing pains for the emerging city.

Horse drowns on Washington St.

It was also a time comparable to the "terrible Teens" which can make life miserable for young people. There are stories which do not merit a full article, but deserve at least a mention. For example, the horse was still a major means of transportation and field work. We complain about our streets today, but look what happened to Rev. Beyer of the German Methodist Church.

On a cold February day in 1916 he was returning on his horse from ministerial duties in Greenfield. He turned onto Washington Street, the street bordering the fair grounds on the west. This street did not yet have storm sewer

apparently, and "The horse broke through the ice and into about two feet of water. The horse's head went under the ice, and before help could reach him he was dead". Actually this was a time of major improvement in the city infrastructure, with the City Council continually occupied with sewers, paving, garbage, and yes, sidewalks.

The schools

The school situation was different then. Only the city operated high schools, directly under the jurisdiction of the city Council. Only the city's citizens paid school taxes at that time. The school Board was simply a commission reportable to and appointed by the city council. It took an ad hoc local organization, the Guardians of Liberty, to demand an election in April, 1916, with the School Board members elected by popular vote.

Meantime, the city won a law suit against the builders of the red brick high school on Oak and Second Streets. Local persons that attended there may not know that the building was at one time virtually condemned during construction. Floors were already settling, an arch fell down, and joists sagged and had to be propped up, etc.

Built in 1906-07, lawsuits dragged on until 1912, when the city won a lawsuit and was paid the grand sum of \$87.50 and all costs by the architects. Within 20 years of its construction it was replaced with a new high school, though the red brick school continued to serve until sometime in the 1960's. One gets the feeling that cheapness was a priority in 1906. The building was built for only \$75,000 after several cuts had been made. Schools are not the place to be cheap.

Speeding over the High Bridge.

Speaking of lawsuits, the city and the state clashed on what seems like a simple local issue. It appears that the High Bridge was not the sturdy structure that its massive structure presented. The ordinance is not dated, but the City Council, in its wisdom, passed an

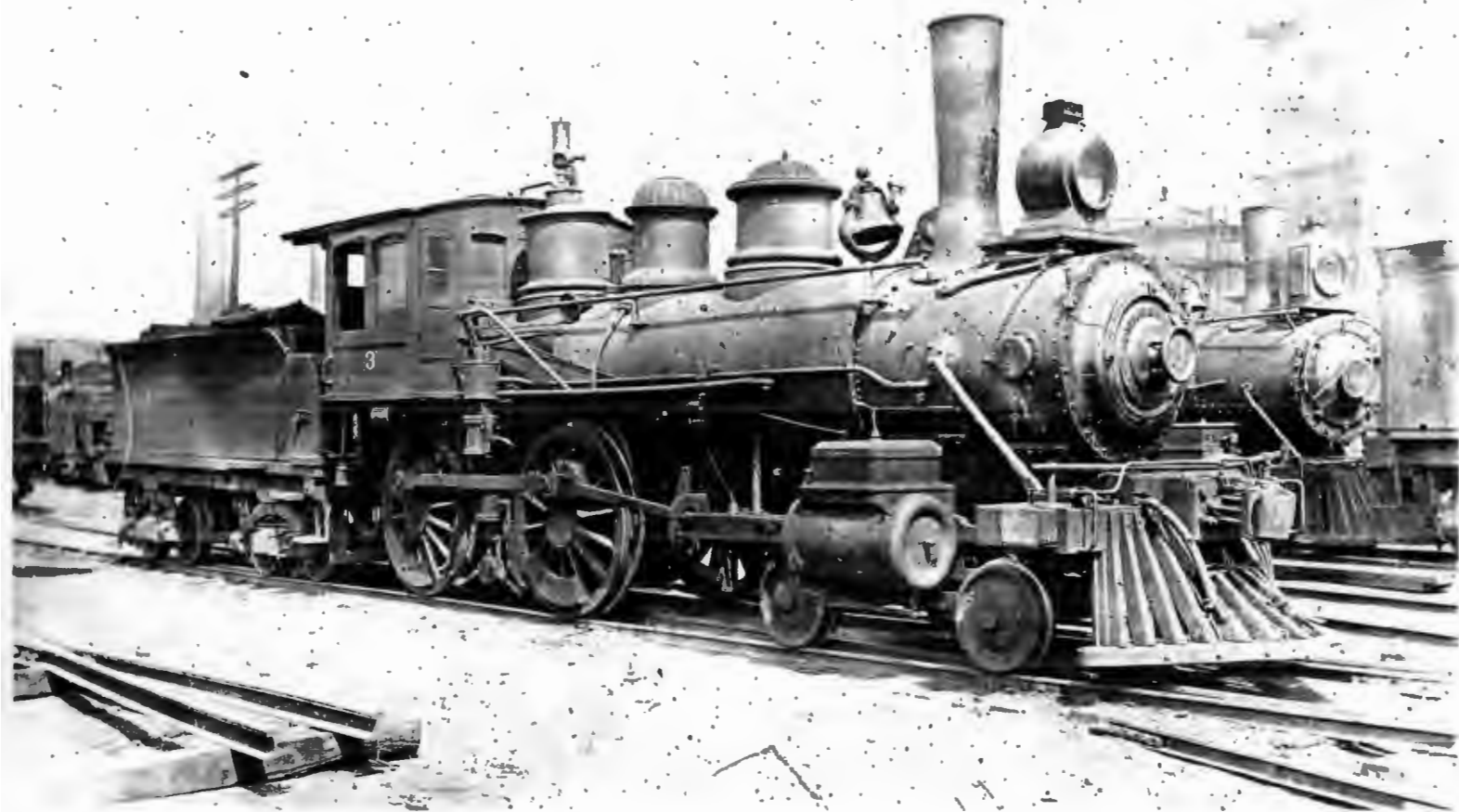


Photo courtesy of Ray Buhrmaster

The importance of the Baraboo Division Point on the Northwestern Rail Line is indicated by the name of this locomotive--the Baraboo. Thanks to Dick Godard of the Lake States Railway Historical Association, we learn that the engine, known as number 26, was built by the Baldwin Works in 1870, complete with brass decor and special paint. In 1899 it was sold to the Mattoon Railway and renamed Engine no. 3. Baraboo is a unique word, and has been used in many ways over the years.

ordinance restricting the speed of teams, autos, and any means of transportation to ten miles per hour, since greater speeds would "subject the structure to use and abuse." The fine was from ten to One Hundred dollars, with a possible jail sentence of six months.

A man named Dwyer contested the Ordinance, and Judge O'Neil decided with him, declaring the ordinance void. He reasoned that it was a matter of state regulation, not local. The matter went to the State Supreme Court, arguments being presented by City Attorney Virgil Cady, keeper of these scrapbooks. Unfortunately Cady lost the case, the court ruling that 15 mph, not 10 mph, was acceptable. Curiously, the court ruled that automobiles could not be regulated speed, but that horse-drawn rigs could be!

These were times hard to imagine today. Women were still angling to get the vote. The salary of the Police Chief for one month was \$65. "Silent Policemen" were installed at downtown intersections, requiring exaggerated left turns. An audit revealed a scandal in the city treasurer's department. But two momentous occurrences created hardly a ripple at the time: the dwindling use of Baraboo as a railroad division point, and the losses of the Gollmar Circus in 1916 and the Ringling Circus in 1918. These industrial blows would stymie city growth for well over a decade—it is said that the Depression started in Baraboo in 1918. Growing pains indeed!

Bob Dewel's newest book, *Tales of Earlier Days*, is now for sale from the author, or at the Booksmith. h

It is available in either soft cover at \$24.50 or red hardcover AT \$49.50.

New street lights once prompted parades

Editor's note: This article is being reprinted because the wrong photograph was included when the article first was published.

Though chilly, the evening of Dec. 8, 1913 featured an event that brought most residents of the young city of Baraboo down to the Courthouse Square. At last, Baraboo was to have a real street lighting system, like Chicago and Milwaukee.

"The night was turned into day" gushed the Evening News, as the boulevard lights were switched on, crowds extended from the city hall all around the courthouse square. Baraboo had gone from gas to electricity and gas and finally to all electricity.

Festivities began at 8 p.m., with a procession of 1913 automobiles headed by the brand new fire truck. Motorized fire protection had also just come to Baraboo.

The Baraboo Marine Band played, rather shakily we assume, from the bed of a 1913 truck, which was followed by cars with city fathers, members of the Commercial Association, the Women's Civic League and other interested citizens.

After a tour into the residential areas in all directions, the entourage stopped at Oak Street where the band played as best they could with cold reeds and mouthpieces, and speeches were given. Some of the jitneys were decorated, one with a proud banner reading "Beautiful Baraboo." Mrs. Della (Alfred T.) Ringling had arranged the decorating as founder of the Women's Civic League.

T. Edward Mead, whose daughters live in Mauston today, was secretary of the Commercial Association and spoke of the benefits to the community which would come with the new improvement. His stellar committee, consisting of names important in the community at the time, had worked hard, raising some \$4000 to pay for many of the iron poles, underground cables, and installation costs. This seems a bargain, since the new poles installed in 1998 cost \$1350 each.

Dr. E.G. Thuerer, the seemingly ever-present mayor in those days, thanked the businessmen for the "beautiful and brilliant illumination which the city now has."

Actually, Thuerer had urged the city to get going on lights the previous January, and also included a request that the city buy a motorized fire truck, "as we have for some time been hampered in securing teams (of horses) to go to fires."

The installation

The city's electrical power in those days came from the private Baraboo Gas & Electric Company, with its generators powered by the Baraboo River.

Installation of the street lighting included 98 iron post lights downtown, 247 concrete post lights and 129 center support lights, lighting not only the business section but residential areas as well. What's more, the new lights would burn all night at a cost to the taxpayers of \$10,000 per year.

One pole remains today. It is located on private property on the southwest corner of ~~Oak~~ ^{ASH} and 10th Avenue in Baraboo.

It is interesting that this type of major city improvement got so much attention in those days while lighting improvements get so little now. The recent installation of some 130 new streetlights in the business section in 1998 merited no parade, no speeches, and no public thanks to the many businesses and individuals who contributed to their installation. And the band didn't play.

It appears that the 1913 lights replaced a helter-skelter mix of electric arc and gas lights. The 1913 lights were replaced in the 1950's by two story iron poles — the street lighting fad at the time which lacked the attractiveness of the concrete poles that chart out the tic-tac-toe nature of Baraboo's downtown district. It must be an interesting sight from a plane.

Change always brings change, and in the case of the Baraboo streetlights, an ordinance had to be passed establishing a fine for any person who tied their horse to a light pole. The fee was five dollars, plus the cost of putting the horse into one of the local livery stables until it was claimed. The situation was not all that different from cars being hauled away today and owners having to reclaim them. But today's fine is more than five dollars.

Third Ave. , looking East.



Looking east on Third Street, circa 1918, the First National Bank is on the corner to the left.

Lighting history

The Evening News of Dec. 9, 1913, followed its story on the festivities with a review of lighting in the city. This account is best quoted directly, with some editing, and read as follows:

"From the time of Abe Wood (and) the first permanent settlement here, until long after the railroad came in 1871, there were no street-lights in Baraboo. Early in the history of the village, when a man desired light along his path he brought forth his tin lantern pierced with hole and lighted by a tallow candle. It served the purpose until lanterns with glass sides came. Some of these had tallow candles in them and, later, lanterns with globes and oil came into general use. Some of the old lanterns of the pioneer days are among the relics of the Sauk County Historical Society."

The Old Covered Bridge

"City Clerk J.S. Worthington recalls when it was necessary for him to go home some dark nights and reach the railroad station early in the morning. At that time, there was a covered bridge over the Baraboo River at the foot of Ash and Walnut Streets. Sometimes Mr. Worthington carried as much as \$3000, and when the bridge was reached, dark as a tunnel, he cocked his revolver and hurried through, ready to meet any foe that might be lying in wait for him.

"In time, Baraboo became large enough for kerosene lamps set on posts. Clarence Boughton was the first lamp-lighter. Later came Jones & Company with a gas plant. After that, M.A. Warren

installed an electric light plant which forever put to sleep the gas lights in a large portion of the city. In time the Welsbach Company installed gasoline lights in the suburbs."

Future predictions

The account in the News mentions two companies not previously known to have participated in the development of gas and electric power in the city, namely Jones & Company and the Welsbach Company.

The News made one prognostication at the end of its article, reading: "Just what the future generations may have, it is folly to even speculate, but electricity will no doubt be supplanted by radium. It may come in your day or mine, but that time will no doubt come."

In a way, the prediction was partially right, for the past few decades have seen nuclear power used in varying degrees of success in large power plants. Its future in the United States is uncertain, though all of

France and many European countries rely almost entirely on nuclear power.

One thing some today wish to predict with certainty involves modes of transportation and supplying of power, both inter-city and intra-city, as well as the potential elimination of unsightly telephone and power poles and overhead wires. There would still be power in the home, of course, and surely there would still be "ornamental boulevard lights," as started in 1913 and perpetuated in 1998.

One more current area of speculation involves the proposition of suspending huge mirrors in space over each city or area, that would reflect the sun's rays down on cities at night high enough to be out of the shadow of earth.

They predicted radium in 1913. We can dream, too!



by Bob Dewel

Only three of some 135 donated street lights remain to be installed downtown, making a huge lighted tic-tac-toe grid when seen from the air at night. This project was a joint effort of such groups as the City of Baraboo, Sauk County, the Chamber of Commerce, BID, Downtown Baraboo and interested citizens.

Since the badly deteriorated underground wiring had to be replaced anyway, the city bore that cost, with all of the poles being donated.

The volunteer committee, chaired by Steve Emerson, included Nancy Dillman, Sharon Eastman, Sandy Haskins, Mary Hein, Larry Hill, Terry Kramer, Anna M. Krause, Tom McCarty, Jim McGann, Sue Moore, Herman

Peterson, Laska Reiger, Anne Rindfleisch, Floy Sauey, Lonnie Selje, Chuck Spencer, Dean Steinhorst, John Taapken, Paul Wolter, Tim Teelin, David Deppe, Erich Herbst and Bob Dewel.

Listed here are the pole donors. It should be remembered that pledge payments are not due until the end of the year. A complete accounting may be published by this newspaper next year.

Astute readers will note that, as a volunteer project, some local businesses did not care to participate, while several businesses located elsewhere than downtown did make significant contributions, on the theory that "What is good for Baraboo is good for me." Several private citizens donated poles also. Additional donors are invited for possible future projects.



GREAT DEMONSTRATION WHEN THE NEW BOULEVARD LIGHTS ARE TURNED ON BARABOO

News
Dec 9
1913.

Glad Shout Goes up, the Band
Plays and Automobile Process-
ion Moves, when Streets
are Illuminated.

MORE MUSIC AND SPEECHES FOLLOW

Improvement Due to Ac-
tivities of the Baraboo
Commercial Club.

Ah!
O-o-o-h!
Certainly fine!
B-e-a-u-t-i-f-u-l!
A great shout went up.
Then the band played merrily.
The automobile procession moved.
Speeches and more music followed.
The night was turned into day and
Baraboo rejoiced.

The above in brief is the program on Monday night when the new boulevard lights were turned on in the business section of the city. A great crowd gathered in the neighborhood of the city hall, around the public square and along all of the principal streets to see the demonstration. At eight o'clock the long procession of automobiles formed, headed by the new fire truck and other trucks bearing the Baraboo Marine band, followed by cars with the city officials, members of the Baraboo Commercial association, the Woman's Civic league and citizens. When the lights flashed on the automobiles moved along Fourth, Broadway and Fifth avenue, to the west part of the city, then to the east, north and south sections. The machines stopped on Oak street opposite the public square where the band played and where the addresses were given. Many of the cars were decorated and one bore the words:

BEAUTIFUL BARABOO.

Four of the automobiles were especially decorated for the Woman's Civic league; there was a four horse team which carried the junior members and their band followed by another conveyance with a number of other juniors. Mrs. Della Ringling, the founder of the league, aided energetically in arranging this part of the parade. The automobiles extended for many blocks.

The Addresses

T. Edw. Mead, secretary of the Baraboo Commercial association, in his address told of the work of the organization in perfecting the plans for the system, thanked the business firms for the generosity extended by them and predicted that great benefits would come from the advertising that the new lighting system assured. The committee of the Baraboo Commercial association which has had charge of the task for the organization consisted of E. S. Johnston, the former president; L. S. Van Orden, the present president; G. W. Brunschweller, Peter Lind, W. T. Marriott and T. Edw.

Mead. Those who had charge of the exercises of the evening were W. E. Rowland, marshal; G. W. Brunschweller and W. E. Baringer. Automobile committee—L. S. Van Orden and Thomas M. Mould.

Committee on Advertising—G. W. Brunschweller, Paul Gust, Elme Scoville, T. F. Risley.

Music—Attorney J. W. Frenz.

The above were assisted by W. T. Marriott, P. Lind, T. Edw. Mead, E. S. Johnston and others.

By the Mayor

Mayor G. T. Thuerer followed by accepting the system on behalf of the city and thanked those who had aided in the improvement. He also predicted that great advancement would result from the installation of the lights. He spoke of the value of a community working together and assured his hearers that it was the result of the contributions of the local firms that all enjoyed the beautiful and brilliant illumination which the city now possessed.

By the Company

Frank R. Grover of Chicago spoke of the appreciation the company felt in the aid that had been given and for the demonstration of the evening. He also spoke of the good work done by George I. McFarland and that his services had been highly satisfactory. In the future the plant will be under the direction of Earl Potter, who will be here but a portion of the time. Theodore Durst of Waukegan accompanied Mr. Grover.

The New System.

The Baraboo Commercial association aided greatly in bringing about the boulevard system of lighting. Contributions were made by the business firms, the county board and the Baraboo Gas & Electric company for the lights in the business section. The iron posts, underground cables and installing cost about \$4,000. The most of this money was subscribed by the Baraboo business firms. The whole system includes:

- 98 iron post lights.
- 247 concrete post lights.
- 129 center support lights.

Fire Trucks and Sirens in 1912

Tales of Earlier Days

By Bob Dewel

Have you noticed the 2' x 2' brass bell displayed on the front façade of the City Hall? Is it truly possible that this relatively modest object actually could be heard throughout the city, and alerted firemen in 1912? Why didn't they have our all too familiar and beloved (?) siren which now shrilly demands our attention?

Take yourself back to 1912. You are relaxed and reading the Republic, when you hear a very distant bell, (housed then in the old city hall tower), ringing vigorously. All bells have their own tonal quality, and you already know the tone of each church's bell. But this tone is different. This bell rings for a fire, serious business in those times.

The Different Signals

You listen carefully, for the Republic has just informed you about the new fire alert system being inaugurated. First, if you hear just two strikes, that means the police patrolman is called to report in—so this may not be a fire. But "Hark—it is still ringing—It is a fire!" you realize. You quickly read from the Republic as follows:

"When a person desires to give an alarm of fire, he should telephone to Central (telephone operator)...the operator (but not Central, we presume) will give...several strokes of the bell, followed by a signal denoting the number of the Ward where the fire is located. First Ward, one tap. Second Ward, two taps. Third Ward, three taps."

You know what comes next. One hears the frantic clatter of shooed horse hooves as nearby teamsters spur their steeds to the fire shed behind the City Hall. Here, in a flurry of inefficiency,

the first team to arrive gets to hook up the hose wagon and gallop off to the fire, which by now is burning dangerously. This must have been the scene when the Opera House burned in 1905, on the NW corner of Oak Street and Fifth Avenue.

The Mayor Speaks

This was state of the art in small rural cities and towns in 1912, but it was about to change. Before the year was out, the ubiquitous Mayor, Dr. Thuerer, will inform the City Council that "something must be done in the near future...so next year...funds will be provided to carry this work to a successful conclusion".

True to his word the progressive mayor told the council that teams were no longer readily available, and "it is high time the department be made adequate to meet the needs of the city". In an astonishing proposal, he suggested, that, in 1913, the city equip the fire department "with an auto fire truck...these machines are so perfected that they are thoroughly dependable".

Dr. Thuerer was apparently a persuasive leader, for by 1914 "there was a decided improvement in the fire department by the purchase of a new auto fire truck and hose equipment." We find no additional references to fire trucks until 1918. By then we read that Dr. Thuerer's "highly perfected auto fire truck" was replaced with a new auto fire truck--this one a Hook and Ladder rig!

Think of these fire trucks, however as enhanced pre WWI Model T Fords or other makes of vehicle, not the behemoths of today. But here is a surprising fact: the 1913 Fire Truck was constructed right in Baraboo! The builder was none other than Dr. Helm, apparently having abandoned veterinary medicine for the more lucrative and glamorous occupation of auto maker. Joe Ward, Baraboo's downtown expert, has shared in his new book his considerable information on the operation,



The 1892 Fire Bell served until 1918

Sauk County Historical Society
photo



A mid-1920's fire truck, with chains. City Hall in background

At one time there
was a South Side
fire station



Sauk County Historical
Society Photos

Helm had a veterinary office at 619 Oak Street, behind the Warren Hotel, in 1904. It was converted to a garage in 1910. His first two ton truck sported a 35 HP engine, selling at the astronomical price of \$2000. Ward, in his book, reports an interesting set of experiments regarding the strength and pulling power of the truck. In 1913 the Council authorized a twin chain-drive 60 HP motor, geared to 25-30 mile per hour. It included a 50 gallon chemical tank, with room for two ladders and a hose basket, etc.

The Republic duly reported the purchase, stating "the trucks Dr. Helm has sold locally are giving satisfaction and the action of the council in placing the order with a local manufacturer is commendable. Mr. Helm will provide the city with a first-class fire fighting vehicle, there is not a doubt". This appears to have been the 1913 vehicle.

Like a story earlier this month, this article is taken from several pages of the Virgil Cady scrapbooks, Cady being City Attorney at the time. This is through the courtesy of Virgil's grandson, Bud Cady, who has made the stories available to us. But there is another minor item along the line of the city and fires that should be mentioned, and it refers back to the fire bell we mentioned at the beginning of this article.

There is a birthday here. In 1918, while expressing pleasure at the purchase of a new fire truck, Thuerer (still around and still Mayor) remarked that "when the new siren is installed, everything will be in excellent condition" Notice the date, for there is a siren birthday coming this year! Beginning then, and for ninety years, that siren or a successor has been regularly skirling its piercing cry to distant parts of the city, including everyone's ears. For many years it did not sound for country fires, but on Feb. 19, 1951 Chief Rommelfanger announced that it would now sound for all fire calls.

Originally installed for fires, the siren is now used for tornado warnings

and national emergencies. In addition, it is often now sounded for auto accidents, where a fire truck goes in case of gasoline spillage. Some people question this additional use of the siren for auto fires, since a couple of minutes elapse from it's sounding to when a truck is started up and leaves the station. The trucks have their own sirens, which can be used liberally, as do the ambulances, which often are dispatched before the city siren even sounds.

The siren's frequent use for fires has been food for discussion in at least one coffee clutch within the city. Will 2008 see a happy 90th birthday celebration for the siren, and a possible restriction of its use? Incidentally I checked on the meaning of Coffee Clutch. It does not translate directly from the German term Kaffee Klatch, for Klatch means gossip. Gossip certainly does not occur in a local Coffee Clutch, men's or women's does it?

Telephone Yanked from City Hall Tales From Earlier Days

By Bob Dewel

A City Council is expected (hopefully) to consist of not only representatives of the people, but statesmen solving local problems with due wisdom and deliberation. Such is not always the case, and in 1914 a feisty council dueled with the Wisconsin Telephone Company over a relatively minor matter, the telephones in the City Hall.

At one time the Baraboo City Hall was reduced to one phone in the outer hall, to be used for all fire calls, police calls, and any other city business required by the various offices in the building! Actually the phone was free of charge, due to an agreement made in 1903, and due to expire in 1918.

The agreements

The first notice of telephone problems came in 1912 when the ever-vigilant city attorney, Virgil Cady, requested regular notification from the state regulatory agency of any actions by the new state-wide telephone company. There was no indication of the storm ahead until Feb. 12, 1914 when respected local attorney Evan Evans, representing the Telephone Company, stated that it was unlawful for the company to give out free telephone service, and that they were requesting payment.

The free phone agreement, dated from 1903, was with the old Baraboo Telephone Company, which later had merged with the Wisconsin

Telephone Company. The courts had now held, in a Kenosha case, that it was against public interest for the company to offer free service. The city held, however, that the agreement was valid. Actually the city had six free phones, four with the four city schoolhouses and one at the library, as well as the city hall free phone.

Headlines

The matter made headlines on April 8 and 10, 1914, when newspaper subscribers read "Take telephone from city hall", and "City may clash with Telephone Co." Because of the impasse the Telephone Company had exercised its supposed right to remove the free phone in the Police department office, a right supposedly guaranteed for four more years. This was considered an affront to the city's original agreement with the predecessor telephone company, and the council resolved to resist the change.

Cady made his case by citing a related court decision in 1909, and he claimed for the city that the 1909 decision applied. In the following week, Justice Stevens issued an injunction forbidding the telephone company from removing the phones until the matter was settled.

Just what transpired in the meantime is not reported in the Cady scrapbooks on city affairs. It developed that there actually were four phones in the City Hall. On April 18 a vindictive City Council ordered them removed, leaving but one phone to serve all of the offices. Was this to spite the Telephone Company?

Agreement?

Apparently wisdom prevailed now, for Cady reported a compromise in which the free phone would remain for two years instead of the four remaining years on the old contract. The compromise was referred to a committee of the City Council, but here it stalled, the council apparently still bristling at the affront. The committee submitted a complicated report,

demanding that the phone not only be free, but that it should have the capability of ringing in several offices, each with its distinctive ring. This would eliminate some of the expense.

How did all this come out? We are left dangling, for in July a compromise of sorts had to be referred to the State Railway Commission. Why? In those days the telephone company often rented space for their poles and lines on the railroad right-of way. The railroad already had its telegraph poles and lines there.

We have to believe that reason finally prevailed, and that the city Hall retained its telephone service after tempers cooled. It seems comical now, but these were the times of Teddy Roosevelt and his program of standing up to the multi corporations of his day. If only he knew the super-corporations we have today. Also, we wonder how many phones the City has now.

Local Boy Makes Good

On a related matter, Ann Forbes has made available some material on a local boy who made a name for himself in the outer world. He is related to this time period because he was doing his work at the same general time as the telephone wars were getting all of the publicity.

His name is Goy Holmes, and his service was good enough to be recognized after his death with a Memorial band concert in the fall of 1945. This was not just a mention of his name at a regular band concert, but a special one in his honor. It was held at the band shelter at Ochsner Park. The local Legion Band, led by Fred Morey and assistant Ben Jones, was augmented by members of the Wisconsin Bandmaster's Association from around the state, who came and played in Holmes honor.

Holmes, it developed was a composer of band music, and many of his songs are still being played today. His compositions came at a time when band music still had a limited repertoire,

the fine works of Sousa being predominant. It was also a time when the emergence of high school bands increased the demand for band orchestrations. He also was a composer, cornetist, and pedagogue in his own right. The memorial concert consisted entirely of his compositions.

A product of the Baraboo school system, he composed his first work at the age of ten. His band tours included every state in the Union plus several foreign countries. He was buried in Walnut Hill Cemetery on Feb 22, 1945. His pallbearers, all Baraboo civic leaders at the time, were Earl Schilling, Norm Solum, Frank Terbilcox, Arthur Schadde, Fred Effinger, and Paul Stewart.

Each of the fifteen selections at the memorial concert was directed by one of the visiting bandmasters. It would be interesting if our local Concert on The Square band could feature one or more of Holmes compositions this summer.



GUY EARL HOLMES
(1873-1945)

**In Spring, a Man's
Fancy Turns to—Taxes
Tales From Earlier Days
By Bob Dewel**

What is 94 years old, returns every year in April, and is dreaded and sometimes cursed by many of us? Hint: April 15 is the deadline for your "return". It is, of course, the Income Tax return, both Federal and State. They affect nearly everyone in their pocketbook, but without it our governments could not exist. More on that later.

The 1913 Tax Form

It began in 1913, and a copy of the original tax form is featured on this page thanks to Jerry McCammond, a local tax preparation expert and merchant. There is one thing about the IRS, they are consistent in names, for it is still labeled as Form 1040. In bold black letters, the taxpayer is warned that "failure to have this in the hands of the Collector of Internal Revenue on or before March 1, 1914 could result in a fine from \$20 up to \$1000".

It is called a "return" of annual income of individuals, which has often puzzled this writer. Does this mean that it has been somewhere else, and is being returned to its rightful owner? Incidentally, laws took effect rapidly on those ancient days, for the law was passed on Oct 3, 1913, and on March 1 of 1914 you paid the tax on 9 months of 1913. For some reason, only 9 months of that year were to be taxed.

Figuring the tax

The form seems simple enough. After listing your gross income and subtracting "General Deductions", you have net income. Then you are allowed to exclude certain dividends and net earnings from corporations! There is also a mysterious deduction of "\$3000 or \$4000 as the case may be", and this is subtracted from your net income.

Figuring the tax, you are told that the tax will be 1% of that figure, unless it is over \$20,000, a very rare income in 1913. Actually the tax rate seems to be 1% up to \$50,000, 2% of the next \$25,000, and so on up to the horrendous rate of 6% in the half million dollar income range! There were few individuals in that bracket in those days, though the system must have snared the tax-hating Ringling Brothers and also some of the greedy robber-barons of the railroad and steel industries.

The tax form seems quite straightforward. The honest man finds his classification and pays his tax, willing to pay his share for the benefits of citizenship in a great and powerful nation—the very system that made his good fortune possible. But why has the tax system become so complicated now, with its thousands of pages of regulations, and requiring thousands of tax specialists to guide citizens through the red tape?

Well, there is a reason. Over the years unscrupulous men, often affluent, found ways to beat the system, loopholes with which to preserve their wealth—they never have enough, it seems. The Government, seeing a fair share of the proceeds of taxation unfairly lost, stepped in to plug the leaks and loopholes. The result was pages and pages of rules and regulations which we have today.

Why an income tax?

So why do we have an income tax anyway? Trouble is, a Sales Tax is inherently unfair to the lower income and younger taxpayer. A tax that is a significant part of the budget of the young and poor is a hardly noticeable figure in the financial report of an affluent person. Another tax, the Corporation Tax, is said to simply be passed on to the consumer. This is a hollow argument when one reads of the gigantic profits and exorbitant salaries paid to the top echelon people in major industries.

TO BE FILLED IN BY COLLECTOR.

Form 1040.

TO BE FILLED IN BY INTERNAL REVENUE BUREAU.

List No. _____

INCOME TAX.

File No. _____

_____ District of _____

THE PENALTY
FOR FAILURE TO HAVE THIS RETURN IN
THE HANDS OF THE COLLECTOR OF
INTERNAL REVENUE ON OR BEFORE
MARCH 1 IS \$20 TO \$1,000.
(SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON PAGE 4.)

Assessment List _____

Date received _____

Page _____ Line _____

UNITED STATES INTERNAL REVENUE.

RETURN OF ANNUAL NET INCOME OF INDIVIDUALS.

(As provided by Act of Congress, approved October 3, 1913.)

RETURN OF NET INCOME RECEIVED OR ACCRUED DURING THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 191____

(FOR THE YEAR 1913, FROM MARCH 1, TO DECEMBER 31.)

Filed by (or for) _____ of _____
(Full name of individual.) (Street and No.)

in the City, Town, or Post Office of _____ State of _____
(Fill in page 2 and 3 before making entries below.)

1. GROSS INCOME (see page 2, line 12)	\$			
2. GENERAL DEDUCTIONS (see page 3, line 7)	\$			
3. NET INCOME	\$			

Deductions and exemptions allowed in computing income subject to the normal tax of 1 per cent.

4. Dividends and net earnings received or accrued, of corporations, etc., subject to like tax. (See page 2, line 11)	\$			
5. Amount of income on which the normal tax has been deducted and withheld at the source. (See page 2, line 9, column A)				
6. Specific exemption of \$3,000 or \$4,000, as the case may be. (See Instructions 3 and 19)				

Total deductions and exemptions. (Items 4, 5, and 6)

7. TAXABLE INCOME on which the normal tax of 1 per cent is to be calculated. (See Instruction 3). \$

8. When the net income shown above on line 3 exceeds \$20,000, the additional tax thereon must be calculated as per schedule below:

	INCOME.				TAX.			
	\$				\$			
1 per cent on amount over \$20,000 and not exceeding \$50,000	\$				\$			
2 " " 50,000 " " 75,000								
3 " " 75,000 " " 100,000								
4 " " 100,000 " " 250,000								
5 " " 250,000 " " 500,000								
6 " " 500,000								

Total additional or super tax

Total normal tax (1 per cent of amount entered on line 7)

Total tax liability

1 The incredible shrinking \$50 bill...

If you need a reminder about the importance of saving, consider what time does to money not put someplace where it can grow: Inflation erodes its buying power.



\$50
in 1957
is worth ...



\$6.58
today after
inflation

\$1,952

2 ...means you have to pay more for the same goods.



	Prices in 1957 ...	and today
■ Gas, a gallon	\$.23	\$2.24
■ Coffee, a pound	.69	3.14
■ Milk, a gallon	.97	3.20
■ Eggs, a dozen	.45	1.26
■ Sugar, a pound	.11	.51
■ Harvard tuition	800	31,665
■ New home	14,200	241,400*
■ Median income	4,966	46,326

*National Association of Realtors median projection for 2007

\$910

From AARP Magazine

That leaves the Income Tax, a burden small or non-existent to those struggling up the ladder of success, and not too burdensome for the more affluent, who made their money under our capitalistic system. The latter can escape the state tax, at least, by changing their residence to a state without an income tax (though other factors may mitigate that "gain"). Since much of our state tax revenues revert back to our local schools, it could be said that moving the residence to another state denies critical support to the community where one made his money.

The National debt

Modern government, if a nation is to survive in a cut throat world of competing governments, must have the resources to not only defend itself but to offer its citizens, regardless of financial situation, the benefits of modern medical science and other advances of civilization. I've lost the source, but someone claimed that in 1981, when Ronald Reagan became President, the national debt was already high—so high that if you divided it into \$1000 bills and piled them on top of each other, they would stand 6.5 Miles tall!

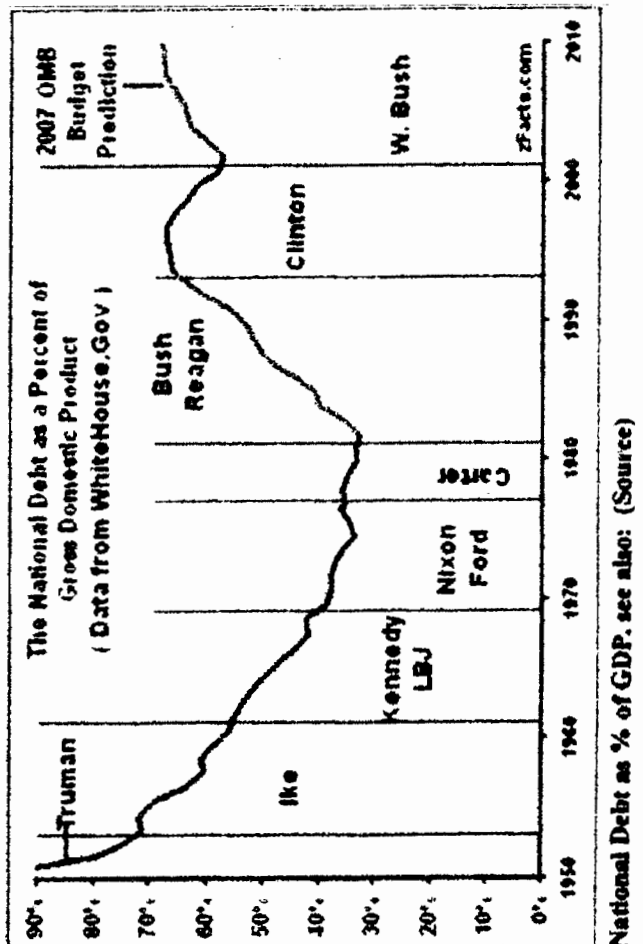
By 2004, due to Reaganomics and the Gulf War, the debt had grown so much that if it were divided into \$1000 bills and piled on top of each other, the stack would be 510 miles high! We don't even want to think how high the pile is now, thanks to Iraq. Only two Presidents in the past 40 years have paid down part of the debt—Presidents Clinton and possibly Nixon. Today our national debt is \$8,781,499,592,920, up from 5.6 trillion when George Bush took office.

It would seem, then, that the astute 1913 legislators, in establishing a tax weighted to one's financial status, made a valiant effort to provide the revenues need for modern government. Their plan, the graduated income tax, has survived for 94 years despite necessary and sometimes burdensome tinkering—or tweaking, to use a more

contemporary term. They never envisioned, however, today's excessive national debt.

Some will say this country was founded on a belief in no taxation. Not true. The colonists, in their legislatures, levied many taxes, including some to support the French and Indian War. What the Colonists did object to was taxation by a Parliament in which they did not hold even one seat. The Revolution solved that problem, but as Ben Franklin said, Death and Taxes are always with us.

I know people who are proud to have earned enough to share some of their monetary gains with their community, both through taxes and gifts. They consider it a sign that they have been successful citizens. However you may feel about that, here's Many Happy Tax Returns to ALL, and to ALL a Successful New Tax Year! And, don't try to use the 1913 1040 form!



Propose Two More Rail Lines to City Tales of Earlier Days By Bob Dewel

This is a long introduction, but it sets the stage for a startling proposal. By 1913, the Baraboo Valley and its villages were a prosperous and productive area, important to the State. Two developments were especially significant in the prosperity of the area. Not to be overlooked is one industry of which we have written in the past, and will not dwell upon today, namely the remarkable emergence of the circus, both Gollmar and Ringling. Seasonal work was supplied in the winter months to the farm population, leaving the men free for work in the fields while the circuses were away in summer.

The other principal spur to prosperity had been the arrival of the Northwestern Railroad in 1871, rescuing the beautiful valley and its villages from economic obscurity. Now trains, both freight and passenger, roared through the bowl shaped valley, belching black smoke but bringing jobs and progress to the tranquil area, once doomed to insignificance had the rails not arrived.

The proposal

We don't always give them credit, but there were smart business men in those days, several of whom had achieved modest wealth in retail or service industries in Baraboo. Assessing the situation, they proposed that though the Northwestern was a huge success, it and most Wisconsin rail lines were oriented to the northwest, the Minnesota Twin Cities. The saying until recently was

"You can't get to Iowa or Southern Minnesota from here". Appleton-Green Bay areas were difficult to reach also.

We don't know whether the proposal came from the Viroqua-Cashton area or from Baraboo, but several men with means now proposed an electric railway from Cashton to Baraboo and on to Portage. The electric idea had a lot of appeal—no belching smoke, thanks to adequate power from the new dams appearing at Kilbourn (W Dells) and Prairie du Sac. This was no fly-by night proposition, and capitalization was set at a million dollars, back when an million dollars meant something. The line would be both passenger and freight.

A railroad Hub

All of this was learned from a 1914 clipping from the newspaper by City Attorney Virgil Cady, whose scrapbook of city affairs 1912-1917 was lent to us by Bud Cady, his Grandson. There weren't many clips on this matter, but it developed that another line was to be built also, this one from Plain to Baraboo via Devils Lake, and then on to the rail connection at Kilbourn. Baraboo would be the hub, with connections to service on the Northwestern Line also. Baraboo would be a railroad hub city no less.

This was a serious proposal, backed by some of the heavy hitters in Baraboo at the time: T.F. Risley, W.T. Marriott, T. Edward Mead, J.W. Frenz, F.J. Effinger, P. Lind, W.E. Roland, and G.W. Brunschweiler. Other investors, presumably from Cashton and Plain provided additional backing. Foreign (European) money was also involved.

Overpasses on Lake and Walnut

Little is known of progress on the plans until two City Ordinance notices appear in the paper, numbers 409 and 413, dated Sept. 24, 1914. They allow the rail company to build an overpass on Lake Street "and over and across Walnut Street". There was a 20 foot wide passageway on Lake for its auto and team traffic. These ordinances,



PETER EHRLICH, ELECTRIC TRACTION IN IOWA

The author rode this interurban between Mason City and Clear Lake, Iowa, in youth. The interurban lines also featured electric engines and small freight operations.

however, are the last we hear of the project. As so often happens, great ideas die when exposed to practical implementation

One can speculate. How would the line proceed through town? Each line would probably have its depot near or in conjunction with the Northwestern one, for convenient transfer—sort of a Baraboo Grand Central Station! Perhaps the north-south line would cross the river and then travel the center of East Street on north. Then it could follow County A to its terminus with the Milwaukee line at Kilbourn (Dells now).

The Cashton Portage line would want the same depot arrangement, perhaps entering town alongside the Northwestern tracks and then East on or near County W, avoiding a crossing of the Baraboo River in town. How grand it seemed, and responsible Baraboo business men bought into it. Today such a project would call for government participation.

I have not found any articles on the subject beyond this point, and it obviously failed to materialize. Not all dreams fail, and there are Baraboo men and women today who dream of developments of a different nature, plans with a much more solid base of probable achievement. Stay Tuned.

**Man Finds Traffic
Rules
"Inconvenient"
in 1915**
Tales of Earlier Days
 By Bob Dewel

This is the story of a local resident who was hauled into court in 1915 for disobeying the new traffic laws. His defense was that he found the new restrictions "inconvenient". Let's set the stage for the charges against him as compared to today's regulations.

Traffic Laws Then and Now

Ever notice how well the signage on our streets is displayed and maintained today? Principal thoroughfares have not only center lines, but speed limits are indicated. Stop lights regulate movement for all at several intersections, parking and no parking areas have signage and parking stalls indicated—well, you get the picture.

It is generally conceded that these signs and markings are for the general good, and that traffic flows faster and fairer for everyone. There are certainly a few thousand of automobiles in Baraboo, plus those of travelers and business men and other visitors. Imagine the chaos if none of the regulations existed.

Not so in 1915. The astonishing total of perhaps a few hundred "flivvers" were now chugging about on our city streets, and competing for space at the hitching rails. Baraboo had even been the home of a few early auto companies, of which we have written previously. There were almost no traffic regulations, however, and the city council had only recently passed the

modest regulations as proposed by Councilman L.M. Moore.

The Violator's Defense

In an early test of the ordinance, Iceman August Platt had been fined one dollar and costs. The exact nature of the offense is not indicated, though the Council had authorized the police to request citizens "to stop on the right hand side of the thoroughfare, and in other ways obey the city law."

Platt disregarded an order, hence the fine. In his defense he stated that "it was often inconvenient to follow the traffic rules". The police claimed that they had notified the proprietor of the ice company, who "resented" the request. To be fair, the horse-drawn ice wagon was common on the streets then, and probably weaved from side to side depending on which side of the street each delivery was to be made. Apparently it was inconvenient to stay on one side of the road, especially since the horse knew only the side-to-side route. After discussion, the council stood by its ordinance, with one dissenting vote.

Reedsburg Blue Laws

They then approved licenses for eighteen saloons—three years before the ill-fated Prohibition amendment was tacked on to the Constitution. City Councils then were strong on enforcing the "blue Laws", in which government often supported dictates of religious or business conservatives. That same summer, Reedsburg Mayor Seifert brought charges against Harry Rodems of Rodems Fruit Store in that city. Rodems had kept his store open on Sunday despite what the paper cited the ordinances of that city, as well as Wisconsin Blue Laws. Three "big stores" had complained, Rodems apparently being the only establishment not complying with the law.

In a separate news article a few years later, Charles Wing reported that in 1855 his father, also named Charles, had built a house at 120 Third Street, (presently the Public Defender's Office),



The Platt ice wagon sits here in the middle of the street. In earlier days, iceman August Platt disregarded a traffic order and was fined \$1 and costs. He said it was "often inconvenient to follow the traffic rules."

with a tailor shop in the front room. Charles Wing Sr. told his son that due to an especially rainy summer, hogs wallowed in the mud on Third Street in front of the house. He sated that his sisters "had to gather their skirts close, or they were liable to rub on some dirty hogs." We gather that there were few if any traffic regulations on Third Street at that time!

Tax-exempt Property in Baraboo

On the same page: As taxpayers, we often fail to realize how much property goes untaxed, having been declared religious or charitable or governmental entities. Rarely if ever is a list of tax-exempt properties published, but it was done in 1915 or 1916—the paper is undated. There are 31 tax-exempt organizations listed, with valuations that seem minute today. Even so, the non-taxable Baraboo entities totaled \$662,000. The point of the listing however, is the large amount of property that was exempt from property tax even then.

There were 16 religious organizations not paying taxes, their total 1915 valuations being \$193,000. Remember, these are 1915 dollars. Tax exemption is a little appreciated concession to the religions, mostly Christian, in our nation. It adds up to many multibillions of tax revenue denied to our nation's budget over the generations, but most people are willing to accept this generous exception to the principle of Separation of Church and State.

Several non-religious charitable organizations were included in the 1919 article also. The greatest individual evaluations which were tax-exempt went to the red brick High School (long gone now), at \$120,000, and the courthouse at \$180,000. This is because governmental units do not tax each other. Imagine the chaos if they did! We'd be taxing the fairgrounds, library, city hall, jail, and even our parks! Exempt also, of course, were all schools, plus the courthouse and jail, the fair

grounds, library, city hall, and a few charitable clubs.

It would be interesting to see a list of the tax-exempt properties we have today, and their valuations! Apparently the assessor was required by law in those days to produce a yearly list. Is he supposed to do so today?

QUESTION OF STREET TRAFFIC BEFORE COUNCIL

On Thursday evening the question of enforcing the ordinance in regard to street traffic was informally discussed by the members of the council. About two years ago when L. M. Jacobs was on the council he fathered an ordinance to regulate traffic and quite recently the council passed a resolution to have the police department enforce it. The police have given advice to many persons and made requests that they stop on the right hand side of the thoroughfares and in other ways obey the city law.

On Thursday August Platt appeared before a justice where he was charged with disregarding the ordinance and was fined one dollar and costs. He appeared before the council and stated his case, claiming it was often inconvenient to follow the traffic rules. The police claimed they had notified the proprietor of the ice company who resented the request. The whole matter was gone over, but all the aldermen except one stood by the resolution as passed. They did not feel like making an exception and the matter stood as at the beginning.

Eighteen saloon licenses were granted, also five drug licenses. The application of D. Trumpf for a saloon license was refused.

A sewer will be constructed on Eighth street.

It was decided to open the alley between East, Elizabeth, Second and Third street.

PUBLIC PROPERTY IN CITY VALUABLE

Listed For the First Time
by the Assessor While
Making Rounds.

For the first time the assessor this year was required to make a list of all public property in the city. City Assessor E. G. Marriott placed valuations as follows which does not include the personal property of a number of lodges and other organizations in rented buildings. When the whole is added together the sum is much greater than one would suppose. The list is filed with the city clerk, county clerk and the state as follows:

Congregational parsonage.....	\$ 1,500
Congregational church.....	15,000
Episcopal church.....	20,000
Episcopal parsonage.....	4,000
Public library.....	20,000
City Hall.....	25,000
I. O. O. F.....	2,000
Court House.....	180,000
Baptist church and parsonage.....	15,000
Masonic Temple, second story.....	5,000
Ger. M. E. church and parsonage.....	10,000
Y. M. C. A.....	15,000
High school.....	120,000
Evangelical church.....	5,200
Sauk county jail.....	14,000
Sauk county jail grounds.....	2,000
South side hose house.....	1,000
Third Ward school.....	20,000
Free M. E. church.....	1,000
First Ward school house.....	12,000
Presbyterian church.....	12,000
Presbyterian parsonage.....	3,000
M. E. church and parsonage.....	28,000
Second M. E. church.....	3,000
Norwegian church.....	200
Second Ward school.....	20,000
Advent church.....	1,000
Fair grounds.....	10,000
Lutheran church and parsonage.....	30,000
A. C. church.....	1,000
St. Joseph's Catholic church, school and Sisters house.....	60,000
Total.....	\$662,000

The above is not taxed.

The water plant is valued at \$100,000 and in case it should be listed with the above the total would be boosted just \$100,000 more.

Reedsburg Mayor Is Enforcing Sunday Laws In That City

Forces Places to Close or
Go Into
Court.

Complaint was recently made to Mayor Seifert that some of the business places were kept open and on Saturday last he gave notice to C. P. Kerigan, Gust Dangel, Jack Falvey and Harry Rodems that the ordinances of this city as well as Wisconsin blue laws required their closing. These places were all closed last Sunday with the exception of the Rodem fruit store and on Tuesday formal complaint was filed by the three big stores of this city against Mr. Rodems and he was called before Judge Sheldon. His hearing will be on July 23rd.—Reedsburg Times.

Costly to
Keep Dog
That Bites

Harboring of a vicious dog has taught George Schott of Madison a valuable lesson. In the municipal court in that city yesterday he was convicted upon the testimony of a number of witnesses and Judge Fehlandt fined him \$25 and costs with the alternative of spending 80 days in jail. He paid.

Schott's dog bit John Smitback.

**1912 Legislature Saved
Baraboo Industry
Tales From Earlier Days
By Bob Dewel For BNR Jan 9
2008**

The loss of a major industry is serious business for a city. In 1912, Baraboo was reeling from the ongoing removal of the railroad roundhouse and division point. The City was hardly prepared to take another hit. But one threatened, a serious one, for in 1912 the City almost lost its largest, most famous, and most unusual industry. Only an act of the Wisconsin Legislature saved Baraboo from losing the Ringling Circus. It also saved for Baraboo the future erection of the Al Ringling Theatre!

Six years later Baraboo did lose the circus, but remember, this is 1912. Al and Henry and Gus still lived here. Charlie's daughter Hester had just graduated from Baraboo High School, and Ida had her two boys in school. Why would the Brothers consider leaving their complex of buildings, their many residents skilled in winter repair and renovation of the show, and indeed their home town?

Well, as with so many things in this world, the problem was taxes--not only taxes on the extensive circus property, but the proposed new fangled Wisconsin Income Tax (there was no federal income tax then). It is often said that the Ringlings did not like to pay taxes, but, as with all celebrities, a lot of things were and are said about the Ringlings that may or may not be true. They were in the public eye, and fair game, and perhaps they understood that. But the fact is, they may have had a point--they paid a LOT of taxes.

The Virgil Cady records

Thanks to Bud Cady and family, we have considerable insight as to this matter. Bud's Grandfather was Virgil Cady, City Attorney of Baraboo from

1912 until late in the 1920s. Virgil preserved in a scrapbook all public legal notices, plus associated newspaper articles in the city. This included articles on city-related affairs such as the possible loss of an industry, in this case the mammoth circus winter quarters. Bud Cady has generously allowed this writer access to the first six years of those valuable records. We expect to present several articles gleaned from this city treasure, this being the first.

The New Wisconsin Income Tax

A few words about the Wisconsin Income tax in 1912. Wisconsin then was known nationally as Progressive in its politics, not aloof from its citizens but involved in their well being, often led by Fighting Bob LaFollette. This subject has been fodder for full length books. Suffice to say here that the state had instituted what seems now to be a very modest new income tax. A newspaper clipping at the time spoke of it as a tax affecting "only the classes of citizens abundantly able to pay". It was pretty obvious that, by 1912, the owners not only of their circus but also the Barnum operation were the circus kings of the world, and were quite well off.

The Ringling Response

This meant that they were subject to the new income tax. Rumors had circulated for some time about the future location of the circus. So, what was the basis for the Ringling dispute? The first clipping that Cady saved is from the Milwaukee Journal, dated July 15, 1912. In a bit of bluffing, Al Ringling was quoted as saying that the circus was already relocated in Bridgeport Conn. in the old Barnum and Bailey quarters! According to the article, Al said "the income tax was the cause of the removal....We formerly paid one twentieth of the tax of this county (Sauk)...If the income tax is modified, we certainly shall re-establish our winter quarters in Baraboo."

One can well imagine the consternation this announcement produced, particularly in Baraboo and

Al. Ringling
Theatre
Booklet



*The Ringling family c. 1890. Left to right:
(Back row) Al., Alf T., August (Gus), Charles, Otto,
(front row) John, Salome, August, Ida, Henry*

Sauk County. Headlines proclaimed that "Baraboo Citizens petition to amend income law to keep circus in state...Main concern is (Ringlings) taxed \$8000 while its earnings in the state are less than \$20,000." Local assemblyman Carpenter along with area Senator Avery, introduced bills in the Legislature to provide exemptions to the income tax when ninety percent of the concern is transacted out of the state.

Anticipated loss

For Sauk County and Baraboo, this was a serious matter. It was stated, probably fairly correctly, that "the city would lose 50 to 100 families and 300 children will be taken out of the schools...the winter quartering constitutes one of the important industries of Baraboo, since the show is practically rebuilt every year." Avery, it seems, was also the assessor, and stated that of \$17,000 income tax assessed in Sauk County, \$10,000 was assessed against the Ringlings. Circus attorney John Kelly, later the sparkplug for starting the Circus World in Baraboo, stated that the circus spent \$15,000 in the state every year.

The Legislature acts.

It would seem that the Ringlings had a point! We do not have access to the actions of the Legislature, but assume they were satisfactory to the brothers. An undated article reported that Al. Ringling had returned to the city, and "All will be glad to see the gilded wagons and champing steeds with gaudy trappings return to the greatest circus center in the world."

The reporter did not know it, but already Al. Ringling was meeting with architects in preparation for building the first in the United States, of the opulent palaces which would arise for the growing silent motion picture industry. The Al. Ringling still serves majestically today. Also, thanks to Al. and his Al. Ringling Theatre, Baraboo taxpayers have not had to be taxed for a civic auditorium for 92 years. It is a perfect example of financially comfortable

people giving back to their community while they are still alive. Al. once fought taxes, but saved all of us from a civic auditorium tax! Thanks, Al!

Al Ringling's 1912 Decisions--What Might Have Been Yesteryear Revisited By Bob Dewel

The year 1912 was one of big decisions for Al. Ringling, and the world-renowned circus king's decisions would have a big effect on Baraboo. Clue: This was NOT the year that he built the Al. Ringling Theatre!

True, he was thinking about a theatre, and thanks to ace researcher Paul Wolter and to a 1984 article by Dr. Robert Loeffler, we know a lot more than heretofore. Loeffler's article, given to us some time ago by Helen Saloutos, has been preserved in the Sauk County Historical Society archives, as will Wolter's research, and perhaps this article too. Baraboo had been starved for a real theatre for 7 years, and Ringling's decisions that year had the town's hopes up and down like a yoyo!

The first news was good. The Republic announced on March 1, 1912, confirmed later by the Daily News, that Ringling had purchased the old frame building, now closed, which once housed the historic Wisconsin House Hotel on Fourth Avenue. "Work is to start immediately", gushed the paper, but remember this is 1912, not 1915.

The newspapers do not report it, of course, but there was certain amount of uneasiness among some of the locals about this project. Al. and Lou had been spending less and less time in their relatively new and somewhat palatial Baraboo home, the big brown structure which has housed the Elks Club for many decades. There were those who said that there were matters of a personal nature between Al. and Lou, and also that the Ringlings in general were chafing under what they considered to be an unreasonable Wisconsin tax system. More and more time was spent in Florida, it seemed.

Even worse, it was known that the couple had been house hunting in the Chicago area, probably Evanston, and Baraboo might lose its world-renowned citizen. On April 25, then, you could almost hear the cheers coming from the Republic office, as they breathlessly reported that Al. "said to a representative of the Republic that he and his wife would continue to occupy the home in Baraboo, contrary to reports."

"This settles, in a way a question that has agitated the people of Baraboo for some time. It is a relief to see the blinds removed from the finest residence in the city (because) their household goods were mostly packed and ready to move on short notice" said the Republic. Now they would resettle in the house.

The March 1 announcement regarding a new theatre now seemed more believable, and subscribers of the Sauk County Democrat read with interest and pride that the structure would be three stories in height, with a centrally located entrance and storefronts on either side. There would be offices for rent on the middle floor. The theatre, to be built in the fall, was to seat 1200 persons.

The Evening News was even more glowing, noting that George Isenberg would begin removing the old Wisconsin House building at once. Some of the brick in that structure dated from the 1850's, and perhaps was part of the old original courthouse which was located there at the time. In earlier years the Wisconsin House had been known as the Little Dutch Tavern, and perhaps was one of the objects of the wrath of the 1855 Baraboo Whiskey Ladies, of which we have written.

The Weekly News continued: "Everything will be in a plan that will be in keeping with Baraboo until it becomes a city of 20,000 or more, for the city will grow to that size." This statement was based on the expected profits from iron mining, and indeed the Cahoon mine south of town did operate for several years.

The Republic took pains to state that the theatre would be a joint ownership between Al and Lou, an "equal partnership", and mentioned that Lou was active in planning many of the features of the theatre.

It should be emphasized again that all of this was in 1912, not 1915. Since Rapp and Rapp were the architects in 1912, it is interesting to note that during this very year when they were planning a theatre with Al, they were building a very similar theatre in Iowa City, Iowa. Accompanying this article is a picture of the façade of that theatre, nice but not very different from the usual variety of downtown buildings in Baraboo. Note also that it, like the 1912 plans reported in the newspapers of the day, is three stories high, with the entrance in the middle and storefronts on either side.

This was the style of Rapp and Rapp then, and it is quite possible that, had Al proceeded with his 1912 plans, Baraboo's theatre facade would be similar to that in Iowa City, not extraordinary as was the final 1915 theatre which we admire today. We are fortunate that the building was delayed, and that we instead got a magnificent terra cotta façade instead of the standard downtown Iowa City style design.

Well, Al, apparently made another big decision in 1912, for though the Wisconsin House was demolished, the theater was not built. We are not yet privy to the reasons for the delay, but as a savvy entertainer, Al, saw to it that the property did not go to waste. Wolter's research displays eight articles about a phenomenon of that day, a tent theatre known as the Star Theatre, operating on the cleared location of the hotel.

The Republic noted on June 12 that "ground was broken where the new opera house is to stand some time in the future" and that the ground was leased to F.A. Philbrick. On July 3 the tent movie theatre started, and "side curtains were opened so that the breeze could pass through." The Marine Band played "as the picture were being thrown on the canvass."

On July 17, the top of the tent was painted black so the show could start earlier, and on July 24 a six piece orchestra played. August 14 the paper reported packed houses, and August 28 was "nickel night, money refunded if you were not satisfied". Pretty hard to beat a bargain like that! Finally the tent was removed on Oct 16, 1913, "until next spring, when it is likely to be opened again for the 1914 summer season."

Thus the summer plays we enjoyed this year outdoors at the University Center had their predecessors in these shows of 1913 and 1914, as the town waited hopefully for Al. Ringling to finally make the big decision and build his theatre. Luckily, their patience was rewarded with the magnificent façade of 1915 rather than the 1912 designs of Rapp and Rapp, as exemplified in the Iowa City theatres.



A Significant
Groundbreaking in
March, 1915
Yesteryear Revisited
By Bob Dewel

March 29, 1915, was a great day for Baraboo and Sauk County, one we should commemorate. It was on that day, which the Baraboo News said featured "crisp March air", that workmen actually began what would become the "Ringling Opera House," as it was called then.

The report observed that "a man with several tools and packages of material was seen to walk upon the vacant lot on Fourth Avenue where the Ringling house is to stand. His first work was to begin the erection of a tent to protect the tools and men in stormy weather."

In a follow up paragraph, it stated that "Walley Brothers of Chicago, the contractors, have arrived and expect to push the work at once. They desire to hire all of the help here that is possible. The erection of the fine new building will give new activity in Baraboo and provide a much needed improvement."

This was indeed great news for Baraboo, news that skeptics doubted would ever come to pass, for three years had gone by since the project was announced in April, 1912. Now, at last, real culture and entertainment would return to the city.

Old Opera House Fire

In an article which appeared in the Baraboo News on Sept. 1, 1938, Alderman Ernest Sanderson traced the history of turn of the century entertainment in Baraboo. He could speak with authority, for it was he who discovered the fire in the old opera house. It was located on the North West corner of Oak and Fifth Avenue.

It was on Friday, Feb. 22 (Washington's Birthday), 1905, that

Sanderson and Frank Shults (later the postmaster) were shoveling the snow in front of Sanderson's Barber Shop. It was located at 606 Oak, still a barbershop and known now as John McNabb's Kut Hut.

Smelling smoke the men turned and saw that Shults' large frame City Opera House was on fire. As the News reports, "Within two hours the building was ashes, and Baraboo was without a gathering place of any sort save the G.A.R. Hall, which could accommodate but a small crowd."

The \$4000 gift

It took a while for the citizens to fully realize the loss, and the lack of mental stimulation and cultural influences which followed the fire and loss of a gathering place. Finally a number of members of the Fellowship Club, primarily a church group which also served as a civic improvement committee, determined to take action.

AS chairman of that group, Ernest Sanderson's job was to secure the sum of \$4000, as a gift to any developer who would construct "an opera house at a cost of not less than \$20,000." Gifts ranged for \$1 to \$100, and at length \$4000 was pledged or given, but there were no takers.

Al Ringling steps in

Observing all of this was the civic minded Baraboo booster Al Ringling, who said "If Baraboo folks are that much interested in an opera house, I will build them an opera house." Al of course had no need for the \$4000, and began plans which culminated in our magnificent Al Ringling theatre. It went far beyond the theatre dreamed of by the Fellowship club, but they were the catalyst for the project.

Thus it all began on that crisp morning in March. This year the Art Friends will invite all citizens to help celebrate the 90th anniversary of the theatre. Additional articles will chronicle the building of the structure, the opening night, and subsequent developments.



The Wisconsin House Hotel was razed in 1912 in preparation for construction of the Al. Ringling Theatre. Three years passed before construction of the theater began.

CONTRIBUTED

1915 Citizens Honor a Civic Benefactor

Yesterday Revisited

By Bob Dewel

June 25, 1915, was a really big day in early Baraboo. No, it wasn't an authentic circus parade, such as we will see this year on June 25. Nor was it Faire on the Square, or Old Fashioned Day, or Art Fair or Craft Fair Days, like we have today. Yet, with no such attractions, it drew a crowd in 1915 comparable to those on the best of our Faire days.

The eventful day had been proclaimed by the Mayor, and its purpose was to honor just one man, a civic benefactor. Speeches of praise were given, all of them accolades to the man who was recipient of all the adulation, with heartfelt applause following each utterance.

It was so big a day that the news reports covered most of the front page of both the Daily News and the Sauk County Democrat newspapers. The speeches were printed in detail. The Baraboo Marine Band provided selected and spirited selections. Stores were closed.

So why was the town so excited? It was, at last, after 10 years of dreams and hopes, getting a building that would serve as a prominent anchor for downtown Baraboo for decades to come, indeed still today in 2005. It was, of course, the half-constructed Al Ringling Theatre rising on the north side of the square. It would then, and still does today, favorably distinguish Baraboo from its peer cities in Wisconsin.

The speeches

But the crowd had come to honor not only the building, but its donor, the world-renowned but still Baraboo-minded benefactor, Al. Ringling. Al had been brought to the square in a 1915 auto, where the crowd repeatedly greeted him warmly in appreciation for what he was doing for the city. Both newspapers commented on Al's ill health, and indeed it was fragile. Actually, he had but six weeks to live, dying on January 1 1916. Yet he persevered in his dream.

Speeches were given by Mayor Theurer, who spoke of the community's "deep sense of gratitude" for the enterprise, and Al's unselfish nature. He said "We delight to honor a man who, by industry, honesty and integrity, rises from a humble beginning to fame in his chosen field." Also noted was the fame that the theatre would bring to Baraboo over the years, setting it apart from similar size cities.

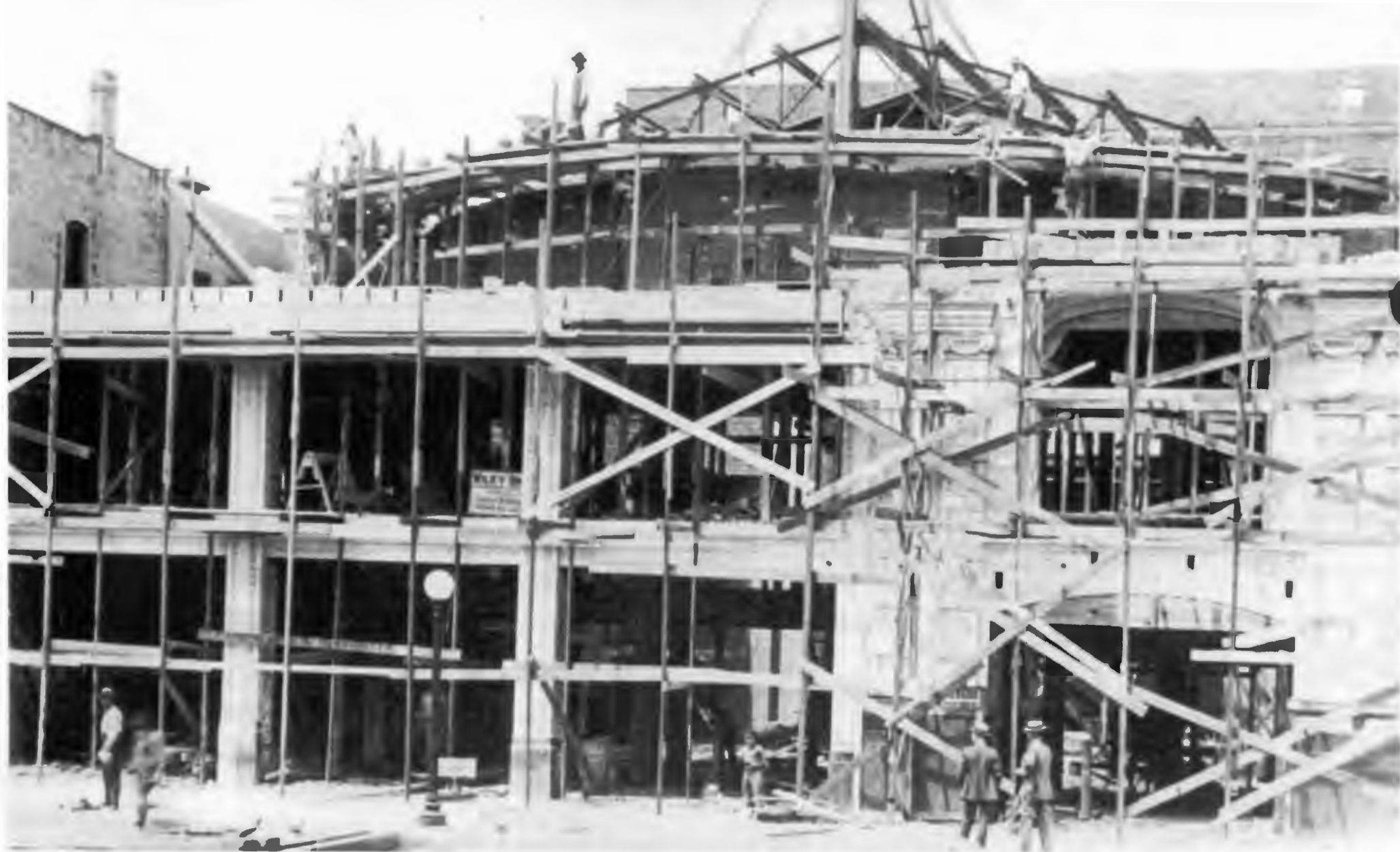
Supt. Of schools A.C. Kingsford paid glowing tribute to the veteran showman. He said "We are proud to call him fellow citizen....We assure him that although his name has been blazoned throughout the world and is known to countless millions, he is loved nowhere as much as here. We owe him, not for what he has, not for what he has done, but for what he is. "

Significance

So how big a day was it, and how important was it? Consider the following: It was to Al. Ringling that the State Legislature, after 70 years of existence, gave the first resolution of regard for high service ever granted to a private citizen. Many members of the State Legislature were present. All business places were closed for about two hours so as to not detract from the observances,

And why was the construction of a theatre such a big deal for Baraboo? Other towns already had "opera Houses" and indeed Baraboo had once had one of sorts, doubling as a skating rink at times. Located on the NW corner of Ash and Fifth Street, it had burned ten years previously, and the city suffered a dearth of cultural activities.

So much missed were theatrical performances, lectures, and cultural programs that a citizen's group had pledged \$5000 to anyone who would build a showplace costing "not less that \$20,000." Now Al was building one for \$100,000, without accepting



*Sauk County Historical Society
The Al Ringling Theatre under construction, Summer 1915*

the small purse offered. Now Baraboo citizens would have an opera house beyond their most hopeful dreams.

Unique Décor theme

Not just dollars were involved, for the décor of this theatre was destined to be the pathfinder for the American theatrical world for decades to come. Later, theatre representatives from the new Balaban and Katz chain came to Baraboo to see what a theme theatre could look like, and soon similar palaces sprang up all over the country.

Unlike the storefront movie theatres of the day, the Theatre would have a pre-Revolutionary French décor, a veritable palace such as one might find in Paris or Versailles. One can visualize the workmen returning home at night to tell their wives that Al had gold columns twenty feet high in the building—perhaps the wives suggested the men had been drinking on the job to come home with such tales! But the women engaged in sewing the high quality red velvet thought there was no end to their work.

The theatre was expected to seat about 1000 persons on the main floor, and rumor had it that the boxes would seat 250, more than double their true capacity. The area behind the boxes was called the dress circle, and it was believed overflow crowds could be seated there, though this is impractical and is not done at the present time.

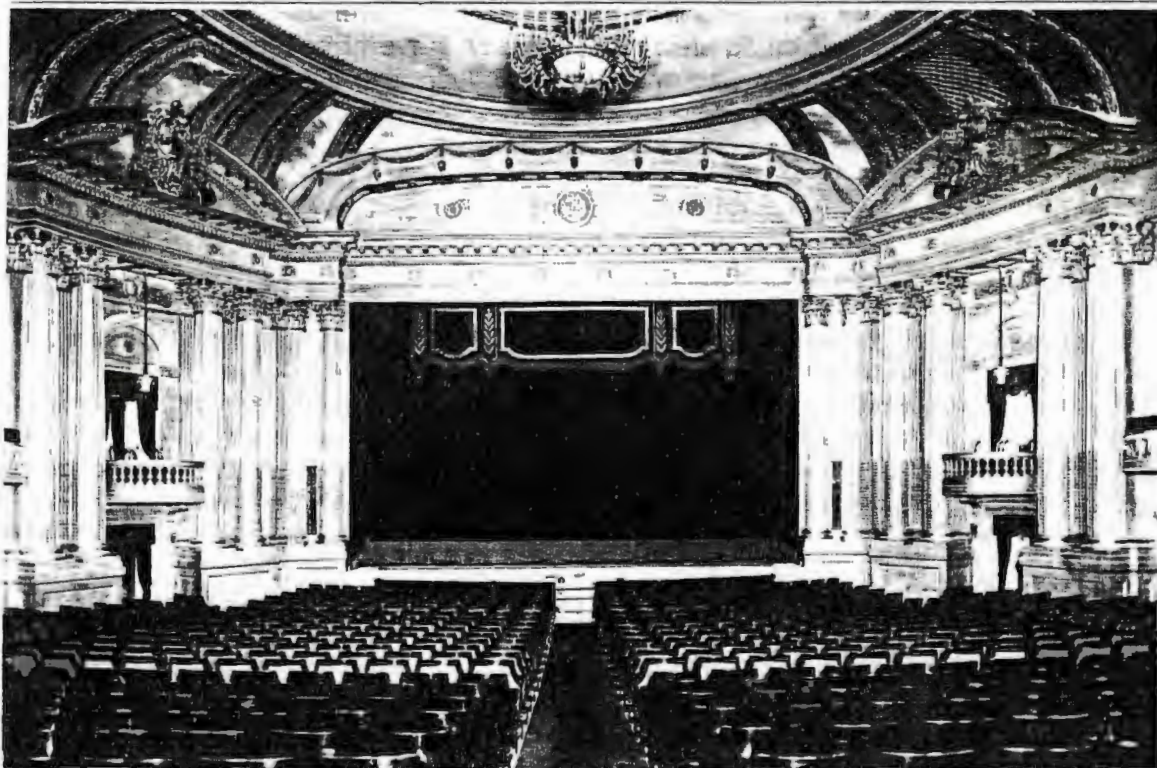
The townspeople were excited, thrilled and curious. Nothing like this had ever happened in Baraboo before. In addition, everyone knew their local celebrity was seriously ill, yet was proceeding with building his dream. No wonder the crowd was large and appreciative.

It was a great time to be in or from Baraboo, with both the governor (Phillip) and the Lieutenant Governor (Dithmar) from the area. Two major circuses headquartered in the city, their varied and often glamorous employees giving it a more cosmopolitan air than normally found in a small Wisconsin city.

One might say the same today, with not only a circus presence but other unusual and quality attractions such as the International Crane Foundation, UW Baraboo-Sauk County, nearby Devils Lake and Mid-continent railway museum. And yes, the still magnificent Al. Ringling Theatre, proudly awaiting a new generation of benefactors like Al Ringling.



lots of bells and whistles



Previous organ is barely visible at head of aisle

Baraboo's eventful summer of 1915

The summer of 1915 must have been an exciting time to live in Baraboo, especially for the sidewalk superintendents who always seem to appear.

When else in the history of the city could one view with intensive interest these two major downtown construction projects:

- The construction of Al. Ringling's magnificent opera house, soon to be named after him.

- The addition of the new and enlarged cupola on the Sauk County Courthouse, complete with two huge and sonorous bells and four clock faces, a gift in honor of longtime public servant J.J. Gattiker.

The sidewalk gawkers must have been hard-pressed to know where to direct their gaze, with two such defining projects occurring on the square at the same time.

The courthouse

The county's current courthouse had been built in 1906 following the 1904 fire, which destroyed the previous 1857 structure.

The classic new structure, with its ionic columns and its solemn "Lex" high over the east doorway, had been capped with a cupola having a small and architecturally inadequate pointed roof, not readily visible if you were standing near the building.

Public buildings were built with class and style in those days. The County Board and the public both wanted a public structure which would define the quality and importance of the young county, rather than restricting themselves with lowering taxes — apparently there was less obsession with taxes and more interest in pride in

BOB DEWEL

YESTERYEAR REVISITED

one's corner of the world then.

The building had cost some \$100,000, big money in 1906. The cupola seemed almost an afterthought for the grand building which rose from the ashes of its predecessor.

The Gattiker sisters

So it must have seemed to Margaret and Luise, the daughters of J.J. Gattiker. A Swiss citizen who immigrated at the age of 29, he had within three years become county clerk. He subsequently became a supervisor, and later was president of the school board. Nancy Mandt, a lifelong Baraboo resident until recently, was a descendant.

The sisters determined that a suitable memorial to their father could be a new and finer cupola, complete with a clock with faces in all four directions, plus the two bells. Unfortunately, we were unable to find newspaper references to a dedication in the summer of 1915, but there were many references to its construction in the May and June papers.

On May 7, 1915, the "small" bell, a 600-pound, 30-inch casting, was hoisted to the heavily reinforced structure. It would sound on the half hour, using the musical tone B. Hoisted soon after this was the larger bell, a 2,000-pound, 46-inch casting, which would sound on the hour with the musical tone E. The Seth Thomas clock faces each feature a dial 6 feet, 6 inches across.

The Evening News opined that the new addition "will remain

there for many decades, perhaps centuries." On the side of the larger bell is inscribed, "In memory of J.J. Gattiker, 1826-1895."

Magdalene home

A sidelight: Mrs. Gattiker's first name was Magdalene, and the Magdalene Home on Ash Street, built in 1960, carries her name. It also was funded originally by the sisters. A Ringling home stood there until it was razed. Like her husband, Magdalene Gattiker was Swiss. Baraboo was fortunate to host these immigrants, and to have their daughters as benefactors.

Baraboo in 1915

How the onlookers must have speculated on the size and weight of the bells, as well as the cost to the daughters. But they had a few other things to speculate about during dull moments, for 1915 had other news of interest. The Great War in Europe had begun, but Woodrow Wilson would be elected the next year on the slogan "He Kept Us Out of War," so all was well.

Locally the loafers talked about the 1916 Buick runabout at the Prothero and McGinnis Auto Co., costing \$985. Chautauqua was in town for a week, and drew great crowds. The Mayo doctors of Rochester were already famous. Two band concerts on the square by the Baraboo Marine Band had been canceled for various reasons.

The Hoppe Clothing Store was selling men's suits as low as \$9.80 and as high as \$17.80. The motorized stage to Kilbourn (now Wisconsin Dells) left daily at 7 a.m. and 3 p.m. for the one-hour trip. Of great interest was the arrival in Baraboo stores of a new cigarette brand the name of

The 1905
Court
house
before
additions
to the
west



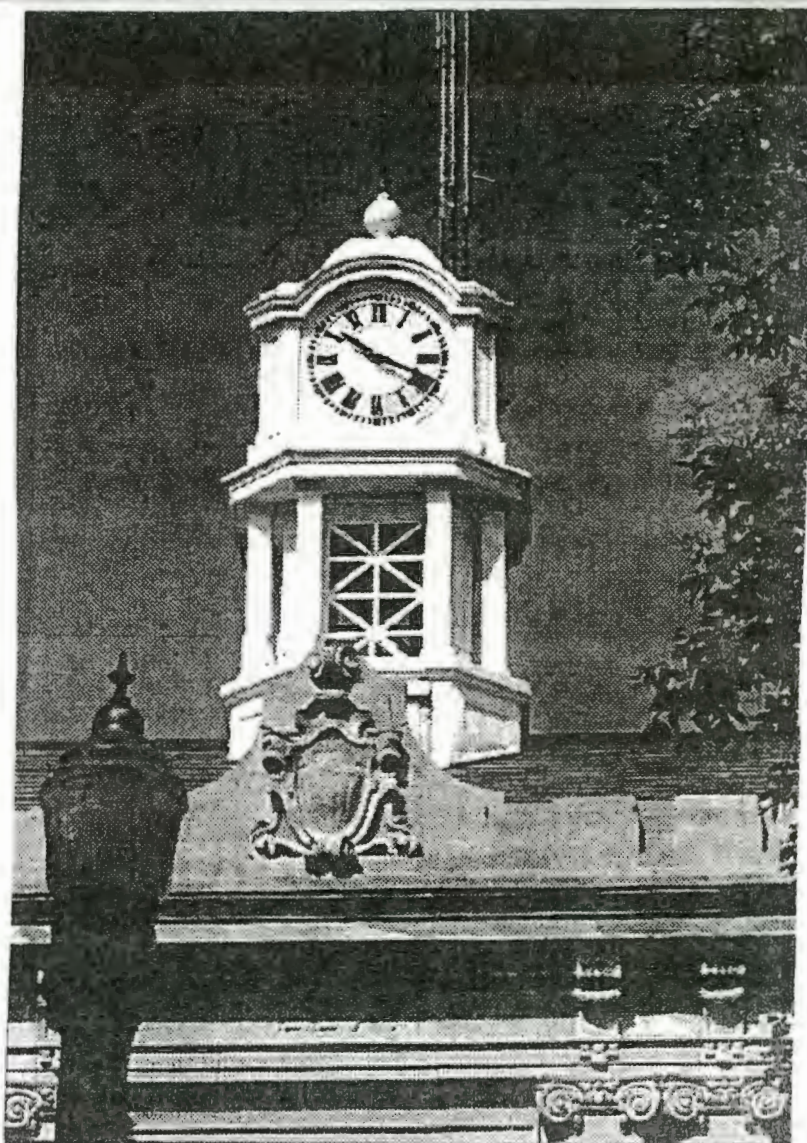
CONTRIBUTED

Above, a photograph from the Sauk County Historical Society shows an early view of the courthouse's original cupola. At right is the Gattiker memorial clock, which was added to the base in 1915.

which, curiously, was Camels. To the astonishment of the onlookers, someone had seen a woman smoking one.

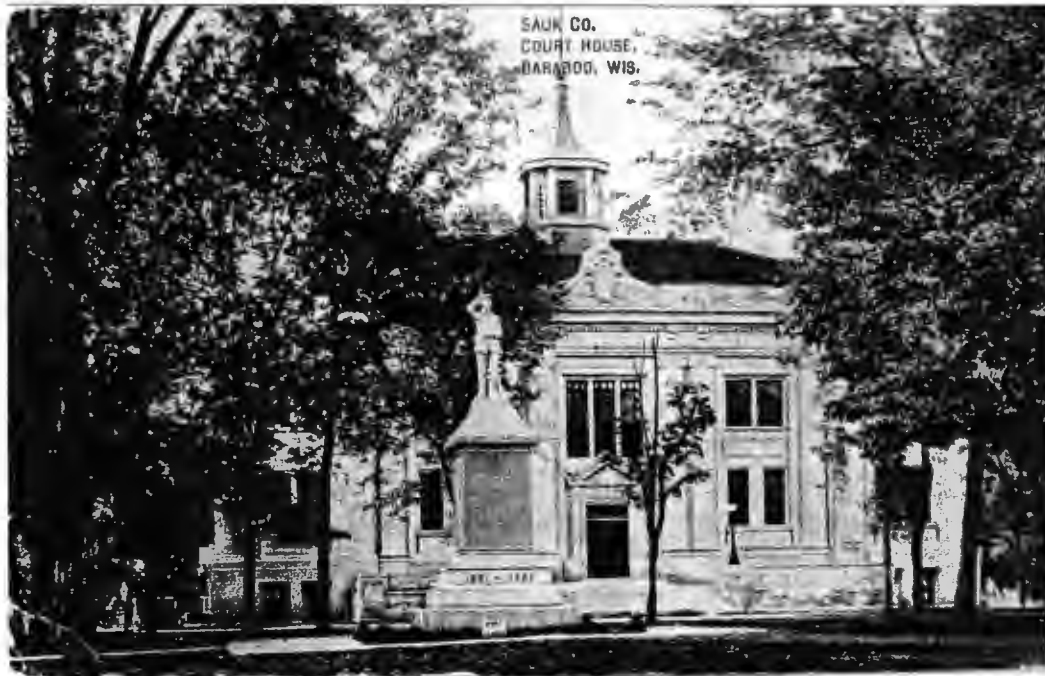
For laughs, there was the straightforward item in the Evening News about immediate past President Taft, a very portly gentleman. It seemed that, while attending the Pennsylvania Bankers Association convention, the gentleman filled the tub for a bath, not allowing for his girth, "with the result that when he climbed in there was a sudden rise of tide." The result was "water trickling down on the heads of the guests in the dining room below." This certainly served for many guffaws by the loafers on the square.

So, that's how it was in the summer of 1915, with one major addition, the massive opera house Al. Ringling was building on the north side of the square. This deserves an article of its own.





The Courthouse Drinking Fountain was popular during Prohibition



The cupola would be replaced in 1915

Al. provided fascination for sidewalk superintendents

494

If the sidewalk superintendents of 1915 were fascinated by the installation of the Courthouse cupola and its bells, they were absolutely astounded by the doings on the north side of the square.

The old frame hotel, run-down and next door to the more elegant Wellington Hotel, had been razed. In early spring several dignitaries had gathered in the cold to dig the ceremonial first spadefull of dirt for Al. Ringling's project, an "Opera House."

The need

Everyone knew how badly a real playhouse was needed. Most public gatherings were held in the fairly new Methodist Church, or the Congregational Church or a small G.A.R. Hall. The red brick high school on Oak and Second did not have a real auditorium. True, there were an occasional stage presentation at the little Gem Theatre, but the Lyceum Theatre was equipped only for motion pictures.

But a real auditorium with an adequate stage and a slanted floor for good visibility—Baraboo had never had such a facility. Ten years had passed since fire leveled the Shults place, a roller skating rink converted into an "Opera house" on the Northwest corner of Oak and Fifth.

So hungry were the citizens of Baraboo for cultural attractions that the "city fathers," probably a combination of city funds and individual donations, got up a purse of \$5000 in about 1910. It was to be donated to anyone who would build a theatre costing "not less than \$20,000."

The figure seems ridiculous now, but laborers those days got far less than a dollar a day, and you could buy a man's suit for less than ten dollars. Times were so tough that the fee for a wedding license had been reduced from \$3 to \$2. But Al. Ringling's theatre would have a base cost of over \$100,000, which shows how modest the purse offering was. Al. did not accept it, of course.

So, after ten years, Al. Ringling had stepped forward to build a theatre which, 84 years later, still amazes first time visitors. Baraboo residents, on the other hand sometimes seem to take it for granted that we have such a magnificent facility. Even the Theatre Historical Society of America has pronounced it to be the FIRST of the great palatial movie houses which sprang up around the country after Al. showed the way.

Sidewalk superintendents

The sidewalk superintendents were skeptical. You could tell the structure would be big, for it occupied four store fronts. Rumor had it that Al. tried to buy the two buildings directly to the East, without success, for a really large facade. City Attorney V.C. Cady had arranged for a three foot extension into the alley, and a letter of appreciation from Al. remains today in the hands of his grandson, Bud Cady.

The gaping onlookers no doubt included high school youths checking the daily progress. Within three years, many of them would be in military service, and 21 of Baraboo's finest would escape death when the Tuscania troop ship was torpedoed off the coast of Ireland in 1918.

Rumors

Rumors abounded. Workmen coming home at night reported dozens of 18 foot gold columns, and the wives suspected they had been drinking on the job to be telling such outlandish tales. Seamstresses reported what seemingly was miles of Red velvet to be sewn, and it was noted that there were several foreign-speaking wood carvers and artists on the scene.

What's more, a "large pipe organ" was to be installed, in the theatre yet, with the pipes hidden in a loft out of sight somewhere! There was to be a real orchestra pit, with the organ right smack in the middle of it. How amazed the populace would have been had they known that the first organ would be replaced in 13 years with the Mighty Barton, even with talking pictures arriving at theatres, replacing organ music.

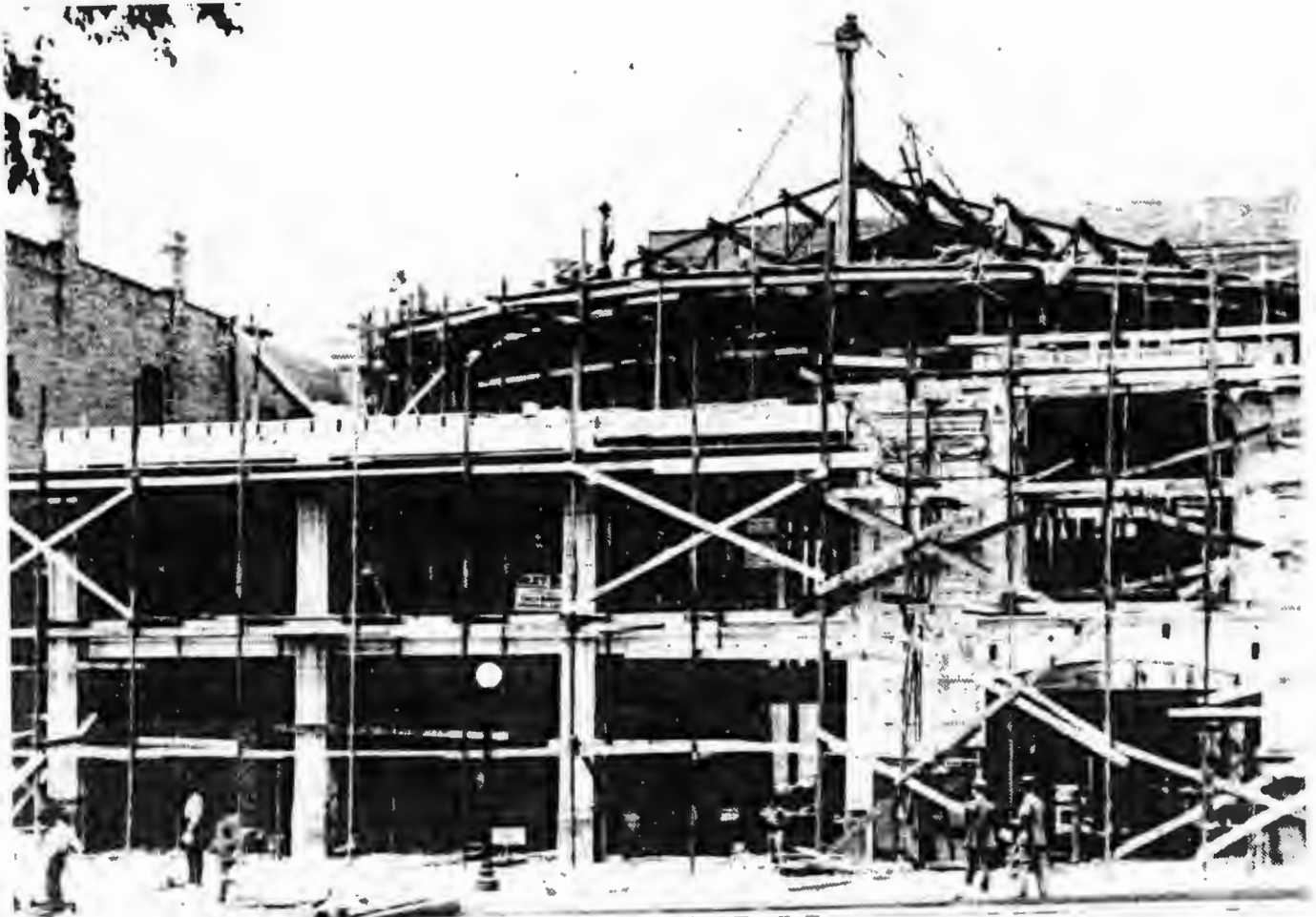
Railroad men reported delivering 59 train cars of bricks for the building. There was a girder

weighing all of 12 tons. There would be room for 1000 souls to be seated in comfort. And a ladies lounge—who ever heard of such a thing in Baraboo?

Al. Ringling

There was another rumor. It was that Al. Ringling, the town's world-famous citizen, didn't look so good. A noted eye doctor, himself blind, was summoned from Chicago and Al. reported "some comfort" from the visit. Al. went to Portage to see his Barnum and Bailey Circus perform, and the Portage Register reported him to be in ill health.

The Register reported, perhaps with some envy, that Al's theatre would be "a momento of esteem for his home town" and



If the sidewalk superintendents of 1915 were fascinated by the installation of the historic Courthouse

cupola and its bells, they were absolutely astounded by the doings on the north side of the Square.

was to be "a memorial to the city." Two years later the city council declined the gift!

Recognition day

The loafers on the square were not the only ones to wonder about Al's health. Mayor Thueuer had proclaimed Thursday, June 24 as a day of appreciation, and thousands gathered on the square to pay tribute to their famous citizen. Al. was brought downtown (it was called uptown then) in a car for the event, which consisted of the customary flowery speeches of the day by the Mayor and school superintendent Kingsford. Businesses closed for the event, and "the Baraboo Marine Band discoursed appropriate music."

Even the state legislature passed a resolution of appreciation for Al. "who is now suffering prolonged illness at his home." But a determined Al. Ringling forged ahead with his gift to the city, which really became in effect a gift to the whole county.

The lasting gift

Well, it WAS a big deal for Baraboo and Sauk County, and still is. A dying man persevered in his dream, a gift to the citizens who had tolerated his elephants making pot holes in the streets and whose lions and tigers roared loudly into the night. Now, 84 years later, the theatre still gleams through a patina of age in the grand style of pre-revolutionary France, a

cultural gem in south central Wisconsin.

One can visualize Al. in his castle-like home, now the Elks Club, frequently going to the window to watch the walls rise and the great ventilators reach for the sky atop the stage area. As Al's health worsened and his eyes failed, he visited less frequently, but opening night on Nov. 17, 1915 he found the energy to attend. He sat in the center box with his wife Lou, who in the early years of their marriage had served as a snake charmer in the show.

Lou charmed the audience as she whispered in his ear, for by now Al. was blind. He had to see his finished theatre through the eyes of his wife, and hear her identify the many friends from far and near who had come to see Al's masterpiece.

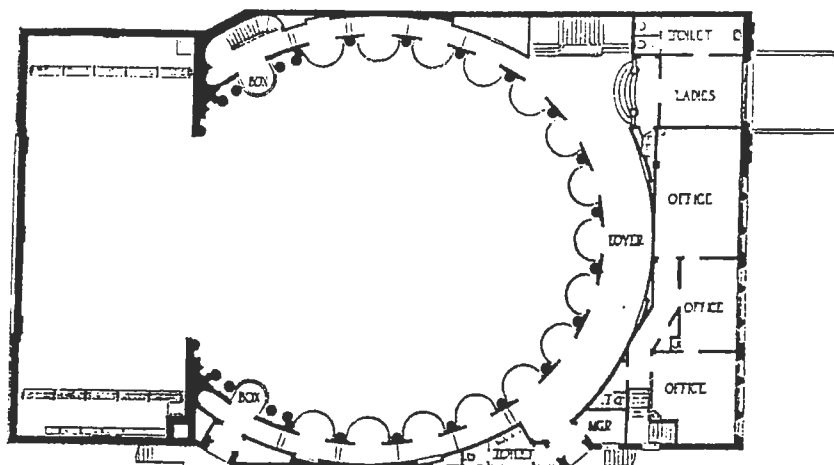
Some of the men were in Tuxedo and opera cloaks, and the ladies were in their finest floor length dresses of the day. The Governor was present, and spoke to Al. across the auditorium crowd below from his box near the proscenium. It was a gala occasion indeed, but the mood was also solemn. In seven weeks Al. Ringling was dead.

Alma Waite?

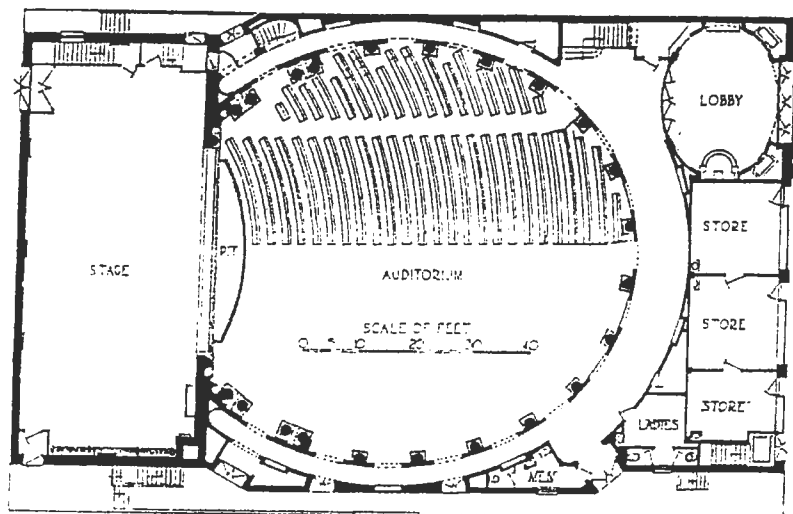
Is it possible that Al's second cousin, Alma Lux, was in the audience as a child? Later, as Alma Waite, she too became one of Baraboo's great benefactors. Perhaps it was then that the seed of philanthropic generosity was planted by the example of her great cousin. Her money was circus money. Both gave generously to the entertainment world in their lifetimes, and it might be assumed that the example she set could be a guide in the use of her gift by the city.

If indeed the seed was planted then, Al. Ringling's memorial gift served a double purpose, for Alma Waite's funds are now used often, but not always, for public entertainment and enjoyment.

Let no one ask "What did the Circus ever do for Baraboo?"



ENTRESOL WITH BOXES



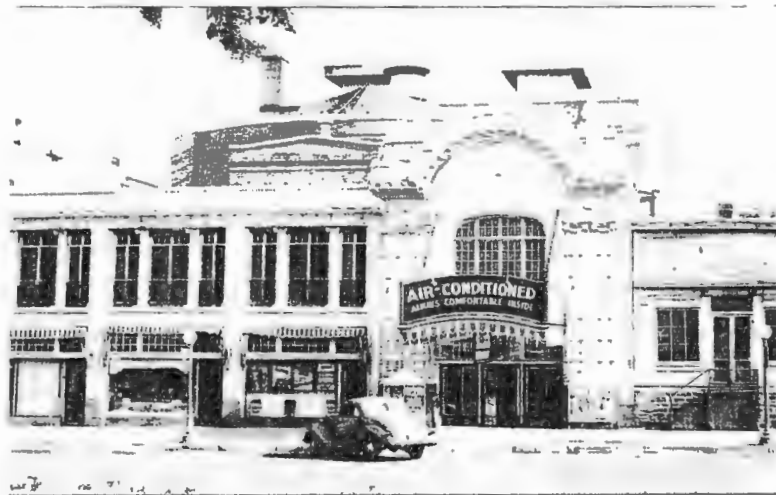
ENTRANCE FLOOR

Feb 1 1907
100 years ago this week (1907)

■ "The moving picture show opened last evening in the Odd Fellow building on Third Street. On account of the band concert the attendance was not so large as would have been. However a large crowd is expected. The program is one of the finest to be secured."



In 1937, Rapp & Rapp was commissioned to encase the original marquee within the current model, with the Al. Ringling name in glowing lights. (Douglas C. Green, Historic American Building Survey.)



(Above) The Al. Ringling Theatre, circa 1940

An Afternoon Interview and a Grand Opening

Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel News Republic copy

The feeble November sun was lowering in the southwestern sky, and seemed to threaten a descent into the chimney of the Methodist Parsonage. As the visitor approached the large brown Superior Sandstone home on Broadway, he reflected that it was by far the largest home in the city. Even the stable, also in sandstone, was larger than many homes.

The visitor was not intimidated, however, by the fortress-like structure with its huge porch and air of foreboding. After all, he was expected, indeed invited, and would soon be seated with an old but very famous friend on the most auspicious day of that man's life.

His ring was promptly answered by the butler, whose outstretched hand waited for the visitor's card. Alas, no card, but mention of the name and the appointment was sufficient and he was soon ushered into the office of the owner, a world famous entrepreneur and old friend. Though neither man knew it, one would be dead in seven weeks, but only after observing the crowning pinnacle of his life.

On the train

D.W. Watt, the Janesville editor, had boarded a Northwestern Line train at 11:35 that morning, and was delighted to join old friends who had previously boarded in or near Chicago. There were Charles and Edith Ringling and son Robert, now of Evanston, Illinois, and Charles' brother Alf. T. Ringling and son Richard of New York City. Many other theatrical and circus personalities were also present. All were headed for Baraboo to "do honor to a man who had the courage to build in that city one of the finest, if not the finest, playhouses in America, Mr. Alf. (sp) Ringling."

On arrival in Madison, the merry group was joined by Charles and Edith's daughter Hester and her husband Clif Parks. Unbeknown to all, death stalked here as well as in Baraboo, for the bright and talented young man would soon succumb to an early death.

The scenic passage from Madison to Baraboo went only too quickly amid the merry group. On arrival at the depot they found Henry Ringling with a big touring car. Our Janesville editor does not appear to have been included in the family car, but taxis and coaches, one perhaps driven by Baraboo's Frank Terbilcox, carried visitors across the high bridge into downtown Baraboo and its sparkling new theatre.

Nearby to the East was the massive Warren Hotel, with the Wellington Hotel directly to the west of the theatre. The town square, with its business buildings huddled around the courthouse square, seemed like a scene out of the Norman Rockwell paintings of a future generation.

The Interview

We are indebted to Paul Wolter, the intrepid president of the Sauk County Historical Society and indefatigable local history researcher, for finding this remarkable article, giving us additional input and confirmation of the events of opening night at the Al Ringling Theatre on Nov. 17, 1915. Editor Watt's newspaper story tells us much about Al Ringling's state of health on opening night, for example, and confirms and enhances the grandeur of the event.

It was well known that Al Ringling was suffering from an unstated illness, probably Bright's disease, but Editor Watt found him busy in his home office, dictating letters and telegrams to his secretary. The familiar friends quickly entered into spirited discussion of the grand opening of the theatre coming up that evening.

Watt quotes Ringling directly as saying that the cost of the building "has never entered into the game. My object from the start was to give the people as fine a playhouse for its size as there was anywhere. I have had much pleasure in all the years that I have been in the business, and it was a pleasure for me to make the money. Now I have done something with a part of it that will bring pleasure to my friends and neighbors".

Watt reports that workmen were still busy at 4 P.M. on opening day, putting on the finishing touches. He states that the orchestra (the main floor) held 844 seats, plus six seats in each of the 17 boxes on the mezzanine, making a total capacity of 946. Especially interesting is his account of the red velvet drapes and curtains, believed today to be the original from opening night.

Opening Night

Watt gives us little insight into the actual interview, but does include interesting information about opening night. He states that the lights were intentionally kept very dim until everyone was seated, at which time "the entire lighting plant was turned on, and the cheers that went up with their first sight of the new playhouse were deafening, and lasted for some minutes".

He indicates that a large part of the male audience were in white tie and tails, with their ladies being in their best finery. The ushers were all in uniform, and this writer has interviewed elderly women who were ushers in the early days, telling of the flowing gold skirts and red jackets and usher caps.

The Ringling box and parts of the mezzanine were filled with floral decorations, one from the Baraboo Commercial Club being four feet high. Watt also quotes at some length from the speech given by Governor Phillip, praising Ringling for his contribution not only to Baraboo but to Sauk County, and, indeed, to the State of Wisconsin.

Tradition has it, not confirmed by Watt, that Al was blind on opening night due to his illness. It was his only visit to his palatial playhouse, America's Prettiest. The theatre is recognized by the Theatre Historical Society of America as the first of the palatial movie houses which soon were built in the larger cities. Al Ringling would not live to see this. In seven weeks he was dead. His gift to the Baraboo region cannot be measured, either in cultural or financial means. He was a true benefactor.



Not many pictures of Al Ringling's home show the stable, the building on the left. The Port Cochere (coach door) shows well in this picture also.

LIVE THEATRE BRINGS
CULTURE TO BARABOO
Yesteryear Revisited
By Bob Dewel

Imagine, if you will, a world in which there not only is no television to entertain you, but no radio. No radio in your car, none in the kitchen, none in the shower. Hardly half of the homes have telephone or electricity, and email and the computer were concepts not even dreamed of.

Sure, the postman delivers mail twice a day, and the post office is sometimes open for a while on Sundays, but there is virtually no junk mail, and many days you get no mail at all. It all sounds pretty bleak—and you complain that there is nothing to do now?

There was, however, one new source of entertainment, and a pretty exciting one—silent movies. Baraboo in the early days had a succession of up to eight storefront theatres, including one named the Urodoram. Sometimes piano was provided, either live or player piano, so as to fill the room with sound during the silent film. You felt more comfortable laughing or crying then, with sound in the room to cover your emotions.

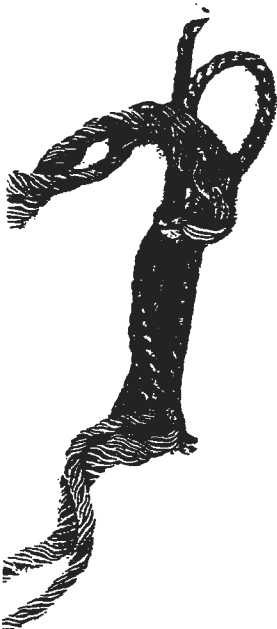
However, Baraboo had been without a real theatre since its first opera house, such as it was, burned February 22, 1905. The silent movies in the storefront theatres were all right, but everyone knew that there was another venue that they were missing—culture in the form of stage performances with live orchestras and skilled actors and singers.

The
Al. Ringling Theatre
Baraboo

Opening Performance

Wednesday Evening
November the Seventeenth
Nineteen Hundred and Fifteen

Doors open at a quarter past seven
Curtain at a quarter past eight



On Stage at the Al.

The story of how Al. Ringling recognized and filled this void with the nation's first commodious and thematic movie palace has been told in other articles. This article will discuss how the stage was used for live theatre from 1917 through 1920.

What a glorious use it was! Thanks to the late Clark Wilkinson, there are over 30 scrapbooks containing newspaper clippings, programs, and notices covering about everything that happened at the wondrous theatre called the Al. Ringling. Credit should also go to Inez Stewart, who recently catalogued many of the scrapbooks, which are stored in the State Historical Society building in Madison.

So what was on stage at the Al. Ringling? It is well known that the theatre opened on November 17, 1915, with a Broadway play, *Lady Leisure*. The local Theatre Guild has a copy of the script, and though it was the rage in 1915, it is considered too dull for modern audiences. Opening night was a white tie and tail affair, with friends of Al. from across the nation. The Governor spoke from the proscenium box, praising Al.

Opening night was not a flash in the pan. On November 19 a seven night run began, with light opera performed with a cast of 50. Two plays were presented in December. On nights when the stage was dark, movies were shown, accompanied by the theatre's first organ. It was replaced in 1928 with the present Mighty Barton.

1916

The following year, 1916, finds 44 stage presentations listed in the scrapbooks. One troupe was accompanied by a 60 foot rail car filled with scenery and props. A special train came from Hillsboro for the event, and the local Bachelors Club, featured in a previous article, entertained their ladies with a theatre party at the second show, followed by a midnight dinner. Another 1916 sensation was real movies of Baraboo boys in training at the Camp Douglas facility.

One 1916 presentation included a street parade, and the Winnegar troupe played for seven nights during the county fair. In Sept. the Ministerial Association praised the decision of management to close the theatre on Sundays. One wonders how they felt the following month when the Al. presented a show with "30 gaily clad, pretty, shapely, clever girls with voices trained to the minute." Also in October was a play presented entirely in German.

New lighting was installed in October, and we first hear the slogan "Nothing is Too Good for Baraboo" at this time. November election returns were broadcast, as received by "private wire to the stage", apparently a telegraph line, or possibly telephone.

1917

1917 lists at least 55 stage presentations. Special trains from Reedsburg and elsewhere were mentioned, and again opera was included, in this case *Il Travatore*. A hypnotist held forth one night, including a man riding a stationery bicycle for hours without stopping. Saturday serials began, and patriotic rallies for World War I were common. Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* made it to the stage also. It was in 1917 that the surviving brothers offered the theatre as a gift to the city. As was reported in previous articles, the gift was declined due to far too many restrictions in the offer.

Wartime in 1918 saw fewer stage shows, only 38 being listed in the scrapbooks. The theatre was used for Red Cross and other patriotic rallies. A wartime entertainment tax brought in over \$25,000 for the war effort. A flu epidemic, also previously reported, closed the theatre and all churches for 38 days. Later people were admitted unless "you have a cold or have been exposed to the flu."

And so it went. 1919 scrapbooks show 56 stage shows, with music on the piano by Sigmund Romberg, Jerome Kern, and George M. Cohen. High school plays were presented, a custom still followed 81 years after the theatre was built. The most recent, in 2002, was

Lady Luxury

502

CAST OF CHARACTERS

In the Order of Their First Appearance.

- EDWARD VAN CUYLER Mr. J. W. Herbert
A common-sense man, sah -- without frills, ma'am -- whose home and ideals are a generation old; his butler
- HARPER Mr. Sam J. Burton
who, however, adores his young mistress
- ELOISE VAN CUYLER Miss Florence Webber
an American heiress, whose fortune has been held in trust for her until the hour the play opens, although her brother.
- JIMMY Eddie Morris
has been spending his share and is just home from abroad on the same boat with
- MRS. DRAPER-COWLES Miss Emily Fitzroy
an English chaperon, who comes to assume charge of Eloise's social campaign, accompanied by
- MAUDE DRAPER COWLES Miss Gipsy Dale
her daughter, destined for a rich marriage, but secretly in love with a very different type of man.
- SAM WARREN Mr. Forrest Huff
from Texas, not used to modern girls, but anxious to learn from Eloise, who has engaged
- MADAME MISCHKOWA Miss Fritzi von Busing
a Russian dancer, to appear during the birthday festivities and who endeavors to solve the mystery before the fall of the final one carried by
- COUNT PINIASELLI Mr. Arthur Albro
whose own losses make him welcome the coming of
- DETECTIVE SCATRO Mr. E. H. Crawford
who endeavors to solve the mystery before the fall of the final curtain, with the aid of

DEBUTANTES AND OTHER GUESTS, DANCERS, ETC.

Misses Tessie Goldie, Harriett Springer, Bettie De Grasse, Josephine La Velle, Edith Ramey, Alma Buell, Violet Dale, Marie Farrell, Cecil Corey, Loretta Doyle, Elsie Stillwell, Norma Van Norman, Fayles B. Hilton, Jeanette Sorlote, Pauline De Lawrence, Lillian Berry, Dorothy Fitch, Loretta Wilson, Louise Morris, Alice Elden, Jane Reade;
Messrs. John Alexander, Eric Block, Toney Nash, Frank Kenny, Irving Eastman, Nicholas Wilson, Monte Stone, Harry Wild.

The Circus World Museum has a program from opening night, November 17, 1915. One page is shown above.

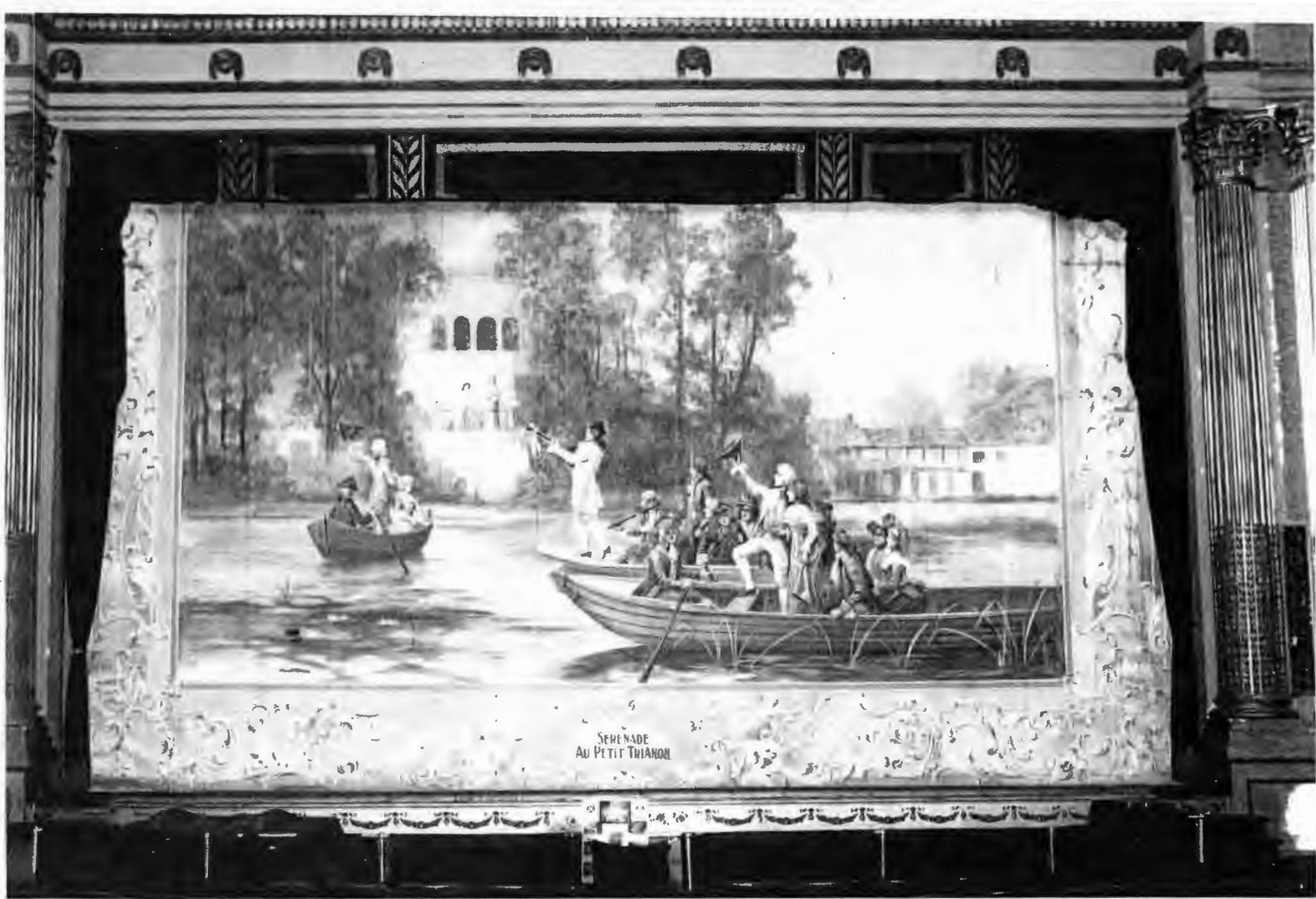
"I Haven't a Clue". Also in 1919, the theatre was rented by the K.C.'s and Elks for various programs, and the Methodist Church had its statewide annual meeting there one year.

1920

The tradition continues in 1920, with 63 stage presentations listed in the scrapbooks, including a lecture about the efforts of Herbert Hoover to aid the starving Armenians. Some shows speak of the Al. Ringling Orchestra accompanying the stage shows. The annual encampment of the G.A.R. civil war veterans ran from 10 A.M. to 9.P.M.

Curiously, it included what was called a Jazz Orgy, and a Ford was given away in a drawing.

A story on the theatre in the Twenties decade may follow. It should be noted that the Al. Ringling was built with private funds, paid taxes for 75 years, and still acts as a city auditorium, with no tax levy. Reedsburg and Sauk Prairie finally have city auditoriums after all these years, largely at taxpayer expense. Baraboo has been fortunate indeed!



*The fine screen at the Al Ringling Theatre
Photo by Mark Tully*

THE SILENT MOVIES IN THE EARLY DAYS IN BARABOO

Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

Unlike her neighbors to the East, North, and West, Baraboo has only one theatre, but what a difference! No cheaply painted walls in a boxy room with a white screen at one end—not for Baraboo! Not well known, however, is the fact that Baraboo had two theatres in the 1970's, and we don't mean the Juliar. More on this later.

In the early days Baraboo had many theatres, and it was a Mecca for the showing of silent movies. Before movies it was a center for stage shows and events. Let's review the meeting places and theatres of Baraboo, starting 150 years ago with Taylor Hall. It seems to have been located on the SE corner of Broadway and Third Avenue. Before Taylor Hall, the little village relied on the 2 ramshackle courthouses or the Methodist Church, located then on the SE corner of Broadway and Fifth, for meetings.

Taylor Hall

According to the "Baraboo Intensive Survey", Taylor Hall existed from about 1850 to 1875, but its sorry state of repair caused the Baraboo Republic then to call for its replacement with a real opera house. Such was done, using the term loosely, on the NW corner of Oak and Fifth Avenue, part of the time it being a roller rink.

The Opera House seated 1000, and such notables as Robert Lafollette and William Jennings Bryan spoke from its stage. It burned on February 22, 1905, leaving Baraboo with only a few storefront movie houses with no stage. Baraboo was pretty much without culture and stage performances until the Al. Ringling was built in 1915.

There was, to be sure, the opera hall at 518 Oak, currently refurbished as the Opera House and used as a banquet hall. The burgeoning silent

movie industry found outlets in Baraboo quickly, though they often were little more than vacant storefronts with a screen at the far end.

They did not lack in impressive names, however, for there was the Elite theatre upstairs at 118 Ash, the Bijou at 112 Third Street, and the strangely named Urodorum, said to be somewhere in the vicinity of the present Al. Ringling. The Orpheum was simply "on Third Street", and the Lyceum at 145 Third Street, plus the Electric at 129 Third Avenue, upstairs over what is Ploetz' Furniture today. Not all were here at the same time

The Gem

The above information from the Intensive Survey is supplemented, fortunately, by a true eyewitness. In a document recently made available to the writer, the late Clark Wilkinson writes of his employment, at age 14 in the Gem theatre, perhaps best known of all the old silent venues. The year was 1920, and he had already attended movies there as a youth, most of which he remembered with photographic memory 60 years later.

The Gem had been in operation since 1913, and was located at 142 Third Street. Its façade is pictured on this page. In his remarkable memoirs, Wilkinson states that movies were sometimes shown in vacant lots like the one behind the Reinking store (across from the Alpine Café). Among the pianists at the Gem were Genivieve Winchester, Mrs. Keith, and a woman who was sister to Durlan Meyer. Other employees at different times were Wallace and Dick Crowe, Helen Schadde, and James Benardis. As a former circus performer, Benardis sometimes added a short demonstration of his art after the movie. The Ringlings bought and closed the Gem in 1923.

As was hinted in the first paragraph of this article, there was another Gem Theatre in Baraboo, existing in the basement of the Wilkinson home on Fourth Avenue. Clark had a



This is the facade of the Gem Theatre as seen in "Wisconsin Then and Now". The location is 142 Third Street, and the year is 1916. The little photos are for a best baby contest. Those babies are now in their eighties!

significant "Hollywood Museum of the Movies" there, to be treated in another article. One room he named the Gem after his early days as an employee. Here he showed visitors a short flick by W.C. Fields. It stood, not seated, perhaps a half dozen persons!

The Grande

Wilkinson's documents include a lot of newspaper quotes about the Grande Theatre. On November 13, 1897, it featured a Projectoscope, gramophone, and piano. The paper said the "the motion pictures as projected upon the screen are something wonderful—clear—distinct. The Niagara Falls, Greater New York Police Department, and the morning bath, are among some of the finest productions".

The paper gushed on at length on this new invention by the "greatest mechanical mind in the world", (but unnamed). There was a stage of sort, and elephants appeared one night, as well as a high school lecture course. One advertisement says "Mahara's Colored Minstrel Shows, last night. All dissatisfied with the last act can have their money back." On January 28, 1999, Spanish American War Pictures were shown, including patriots of Cuba. On the first night the admission was 30 cents, and the second night the price dropped to 10 cents.

The arrival of the magnificent Al. Ringling was the death knell for the small theatre operations of the day. As told elsewhere, citizens not only were demanding real theatre, but put their



Clark Wilkinson stands beside the King Kong model used for creating the monster of the famous thriller of the 1930's.

money where their mouth was, raising a \$5000 purse for anyone who would build "a theatre valued at \$20,000 or more". That would build a lot of theatre in those days.

Al. did not take the money, and spent well over \$100,000 for his gift to the city, a gift the city declined—a fortunate thing in the mind of this writer, as spelled out in previous articles. Years later The Ringling heirs built the short-lived Juliar Theatre. There is talk that Baraboo may someday see a small sister theatre next door east of the Al. It is all part of the 150 year saga of theatre in Baraboo. Let's not call it the Urodorum, though.

“Nothing is too good for Baraboo”

by Bob Dewel

It had been a dizzying climb for Al. Ringling. Hardly 40 years ago he had been a carriage finisher, a respected but hardly promising trade. Now, in 1915, he was the Circus King of the World, an experienced world traveler and showman extraordinaire.

Moreover, this year he was building what the Theatre Historical Society of America now calls, in 1998, the FIRST of the palatial movie theatres built in the United States. The concept was to be copied in such prestigious venues as the Chicago Theatre, the Paramount in New York, the Fox in Washington, D.C. and a plethora of elegant theme theatres throughout the country.

Most important of all, Al. was building his theatrical gem in little Baraboo, Wisconsin. Al. had a strong attachment for Baraboo, and perhaps may have felt an obligation to the town, which after all had tolerated his elephants making pot holes in the street. His circus even gave the town a certain aroma of the circus at times.

Al. the Performer

In the earliest experimental days of the circus, Al. had been an integral part of the performance. He is best remembered, strangely, for his ability to balance a heavy plow on his chin. There were other feats of strength and daring as he plied his trade of wagon finishing and blacksmithing in the small towns of southern Wisconsin. He had married Louise Morris in November, 1880, AT THE AGE OF 28 (she was 27), and together their talents made them the leaders of the family enterprise. Lou performed as a snake charmer!

Retirement

Now, in 1915, Al. had for the first time retired from active management of the far-flung Ringling, Sells-Floto, and Barnum and Bailey enterprises, for he had another project in mind. Having seen the opulent concert halls of Europe, he realized that American music halls left much to be desired. Al. had the interest, he had the desire, and he had the capable Rapp and Rapp architects from Chicago to do his bidding.

Moreover, they appeared to have rather unlimited access to his checkbook — for the unheard-of sum of \$100,000 or more was to be expended on Al.'s theatre. The townspeople

noted that the sparkling new courthouse (still extant) had only cost \$83,000! Also, the theatre was to be built in seven months — men worked long hours in those days! But there may have been another reason for the speed. Al. Ringling wasn't looking so well, and the whole town knew it.

Construction

The planning had taken two years, and the *News* reported the first spadeful turned in April, 1915. For a man of 64 who was ill and in a wheelchair, it showed the town his determination to complete his dream — a sort of monumental gift to the city which had nurtured his parents, his brothers, and their circus.

The city was moved by his generosity, and on June 24 several thousand persons gathered on the square to pay homage to their world-famous citizen, whom most knew by his first name. Al. was brought to the square in a

1916 auto, and speeches were given by Mayor Thuerer and Superintendent of Schools Kingsford.

The project became the talk of the town. Workmen returned at the end of the day with tales of yards, if not miles, of red velvet arriving. Some would talk in wonder about the 26 gold columns some 20 feet high, and the multi-light chandelier. Al. was obviously up to something. Baraboo had never dreamed it could have, a world-class theatrical venue.

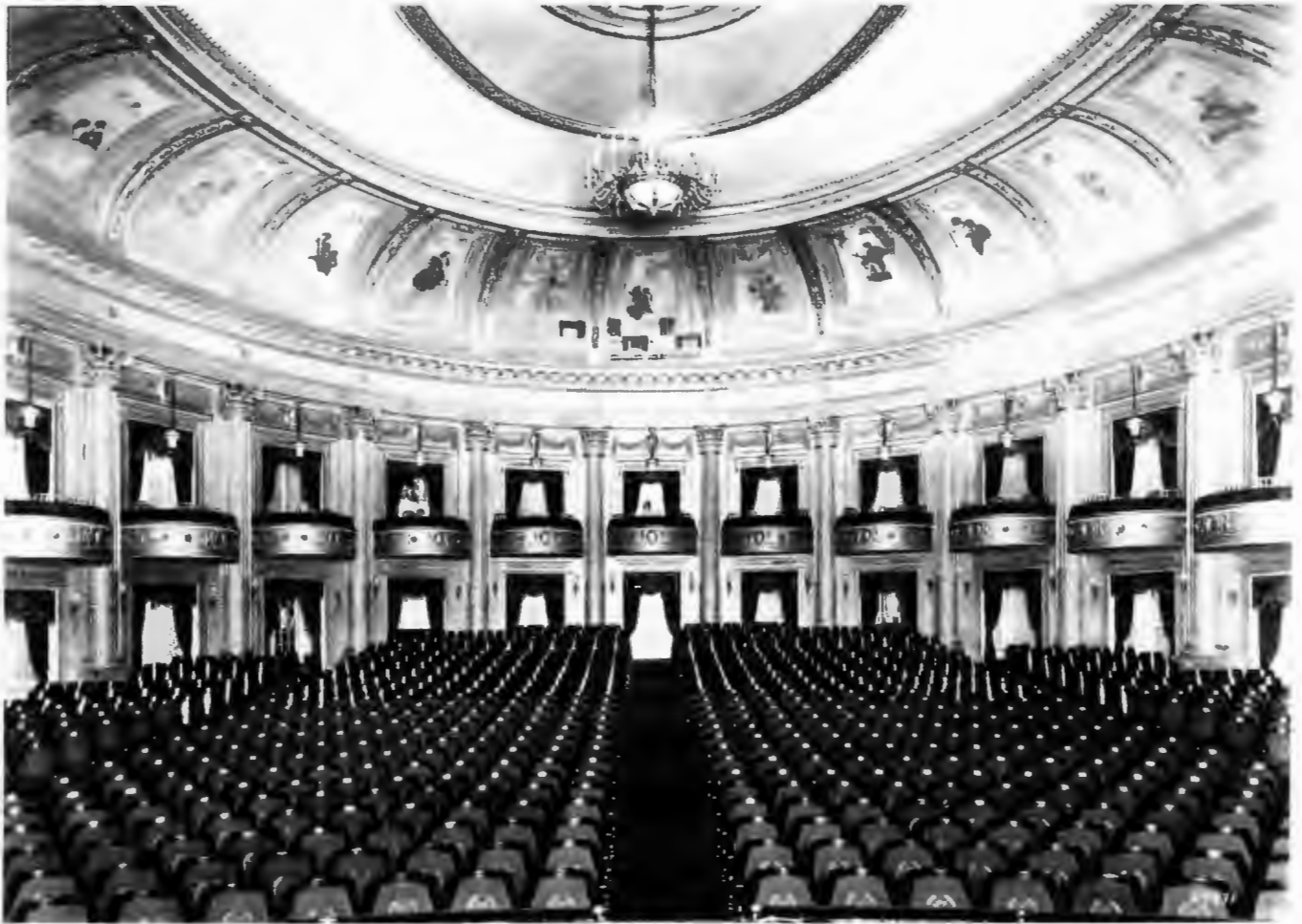
Culturally deprived for years

True, the city fathers had hoped someone would build a theatre, since the old “opera house” and skating rink had burned in 1905, ten years earlier. A fund had been started, and what in those days was a very generous \$5,000 was raised. It was to be given free as a purse to anyone who would build a meeting hall costing at least \$20,000, considered a more than adequate sum for the small town. Now Al. had raised the ante to over \$100,000, and would pay for it all himself!

Opening Night

Opening night, November 17, 1915, was perhaps Baraboo's most shining moment, for Al.'s friends from all over the country had come to share in his enterprise. It was for many a white tie and tails affair, some wearing opera cloaks and silk hats. The Governor and Lt. Governor spoke from one of the 17 elegant boxes, an orchestra played, a stage play direct from Broadway was performed, and all present heaped praise on Al. Ringling.

Sadly, Al. Ringling never saw his completed theatre, for by this time he was blind. Opening night was the only time he attended, and in seven weeks he was dead. The friends and townspeople had been right — Al. hadn't looked so well all summer, but he had pressed his project to fruition. Baraboo can be thankful.



Theatre Historical Society

And what a grand spectacle it was. As the Theatre Historical Society of America writes: "This isn't just any old théâtre. As significant as the Ringling name is to the history of the circus in America, this name carries at least equal import in an account of the rise of the motion picture theatre in America."

"However unlikely the transportation of the architecture of Imperial France to rural Wisconsin, the fantastic notion did take root in Baraboo, then blossomed in as many cities and towns nationwide as the circus ever played. As the reigning first family of circus, the Ringlings bequeathed a theatrical legacy that has come to benefit us all."



Contributed photo
"One of the first examples of palatial design (in America) . . . the earliest that can be accurately called a movie palace." — Theatre Historical Society of America — 1990

Items of amazement and wonder might include the elegant outer lobby with its Renaissance style ceiling fresco and choir boy frieze by Della Robia, the baroque style continuing into the inner lobby, and the magnificent paintings, columns, Pearlman boy frieze by Della Robia, the baroque style continuing into the inner lobby, and the magnificent paintings, columns, Pearlman light fixtures, jewel-like boxes and a fire screen painting free of the usual cheap advertising. Rarely noticed are the seven faces over the proscenium, or the private stairway.

Also amazing is the decision of the Ringling descendants to install the mighty Barton organ in 1928, with talking pictures on the horizon. The organ still speaks eloquently, and with authority!

Comment

Few events have had the cultural and educational impact on the community as had the Ringling theatre, let alone the approbation of the theatrical community occasioned by its construction. Naylor recognized the Al. Ringling in his "Great American Movie Theatres." It soon became known as "America's Prettiest Playhouse."

Thankfully, the theatre has not suffered the indignity of "remodelling," nor will it under the auspices of the Al. Ringling Theatre Friends. Instead, restoration will be the key word. Theatre experts from the cities under the auspices of the Al. Ringling Theatre Friends. Instead, restoration will be the key word. Theatre experts from the cities marvel at how true the facility is to its birth in 1915, making it worth restoration.

Public Service

It continues to provide a venue not only for the Theatre Guild and the thousands of people who have participated in the Guild's presentations in the past, but for numerous

patriotic events beginning with bond and European relief in 1917. The Al. has seen weddings (still does), children's events, and grade school graduations over the years. Both the Public School systems and the University Center use the facility. The folks in 1910 who raised a \$5,000 purse for anyone who would build a theatre felt the need. The Al. has filled that need for 83 years.

Today, like the serial movies of Saturday afternoons in the old days, the venerable dame may be the damsel in distress, tied to the railroad tracks. She awaits heros or heroines, hopefully local, to rush to her rescue as Al. Ringling came to the rescue of the community in 1915. Some may do it publicly like Al., or anonymously. One need not wait until they are blind, like Al., to help with the restoration!

The damsel is crying out, Baraboo and Sauk County! Remember, Al.'s motto was "Nothing's too good for Baraboo." What is our motto in 1998?



Facing page, the simplicity of the RINGLING's butterfly curtain. This page, the painted asbestos curtain relates more directly to the theme of pre-Revolutionary France. (Douglas C. Green, Historic American Building Survey.)

Nothing Was Too Good For Baraboo

Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

You don't hear the above phrase often anymore, but at one time it was a prominent part of the advertising of the Al Ringling Theatre, along with the slogan "America's Prettiest Playhouse."

Was it just an advertising slogan, or were Al Ringling's intentions to present Baraboo with an innovative design, believed by many to be the first of the stage and movie palaces in the United States? Al's motives have traditionally been that he wanted his theatre to be a gift to the city, whose citizens had happily nurtured his early circus ventures.

Thanks to several original letters on file at the Sauk County Historical Society, we can now determine that Al's motives were truly altruistic, and that indeed nothing was too good for his home town of Baraboo. All five letters prove that the theatre was to have quality productions, with prices commensurate with the budget of the average citizen.

The First letters

For over a decade the theatre tour guides, including this writer, have sadly stated that due to blindness, Al Ringling never saw his beautiful theatre, and that he died six weeks after its opening. The latter statement is true, but the letters cast some doubt about the blindness, as will be seen by what follows. All of five letters still exist, written during the six week period after the grand opening on November 15, 1915, but before his death on January 1, 1916.

All of the letters were dictated to his male secretary, and the first was on November 18, the day after the grand opening. Addressed to a film supply company, it contains several requests that the films they send be a "good strong show...even though it may cost me a little more...please be sure... without fail...see that our program is a strong one."

This first movie was to be on Monday, November 22. In another letter dated November 19, Ringling ordered several glass slides such as used in the days of silent movies. They read as follows: "Welcome...Ladies' Hats Off...short intermission...good night." Some of these were still around a few years ago, and may still be extant.

Al Ringling was a sick man, but not too sick to get another letter off the next day, the 20th. Here he commented at length on the failure of an orchestra to appear on opening night. He again showed concern for quality productions, for he states "Mr. Wingfield...my idea is to be careful in getting good shows to give the public and not let the people go away from my house dissatisfied.

Here the matter of price of admission comes up., for Wingfield has written that theatres in the city charge 50 cents to \$1.50 for seats. Al writes "I hope you don't mean that 50 cents is the lowest price paid. I would rather show at a lower figure...I do not wish to misrepresent anything with regard to a show."

Later Letters

The December 18 letter is concerned about the Christmas showing, for the agency has booked "The Scarlet Sin" and "Ready for Reno". Al feels these would not be appropriate, and suggests they book "Christmas Memories." He complains that "some of our programs recently have not been quite satisfactory...if your office is unable to watch matters such as the instances given, kindly advise together with your suggestions", a not too thinly veiled threat to look elsewhere for bookings.

On Christmas Day Al of course does not realize it, but he has but one week to live. Even his secretary is at work, for the letter is dictated with regard to the New Years Day

program plans. Al reports that the Christmas Day program was "a disappointment....too low, coarse, and lacking in refinement." The letter sharply questions the contract with the agency, and says that for New Year's Day "we do not wish a repetition of our experience of today." One wonders if the theatre remained open on New Year's Day, when Al died.

So was Al blind or not? He does not quote the opinions of others in his criticisms, leading one to believe that he personally saw and disliked the productions which were sent. The letters do show a great concern for quality and reasonable prices, revealing the benevolent nature of the enterprise which still proudly bears his name 88 years later.



Al Ringling

Seams of time

Dress worn at Al. opening has been preserved

BOB DEWEL
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS REPUBLIC

BARABOO — When the Al. Ringling Theatre opened in November 1915, the glowing newspaper accounts spoke of the stylishly dressed audience, many of them friends of Al. Ringling from across the country. There was mention of opera cloaks, etc., and it was perhaps Sauk County's most formal occasion of all time.

ART Friend Jane Powers of Mauston recently provided evidence of this, for the dress worn by her grandmother, Mrs. Lillian (Effinger) Mead, has been carefully preserved all these years.

Moreover, Mead's two daughters, now Audrey Walsh and Eleanor Shelton, still live in Mauston and retain lively memories of Baraboo and its superb

and historic theater. Walsh is Powers' mother.

Both ladies graduated from the Baraboo High School from the stage of the Al. Ringling, and have retained 1922 band programs and 1923 Glee Club programs from the time.

In addition, they have programs of two school plays performed by the school at the Al., one being "In the Garden of the Shah," and the other which is mysteriously called "Katcha Koo." The latter was produced by the senior class, and ran two nights.

With regard to the dress, the outer layer is a navy blue chiffon-like material, with three narrow horizontal strips of fur on the skirt. There are vertical strips of fur on the bodice, and lace at the neck. The full-length sleeves culminate in lace also. A white silk

petticoat completes the dress.

Mead, who wore the dress on opening night, was the former Lillian Effinger, a well-known name in the annals of Baraboo. Her husband, Edwin Mead, dealt in insurance and real estate, and was also secretary of the Baraboo Commercial Society.

The Mauston ladies, though small children at the time, remember that their parents said they had occupied one of the boxes at the theater on opening night. Also Eleanor Shelton, then Eleanor Mead, later worked for Dr. Al Dippel for a time.

As for the dress, it has now deteriorated somewhat but will be donated to the theater if a suitable display case can be arranged. Several old-time pictures were donated at this time, including a new view of the theater building under construction.



Jane Powers models a dress worn at the opening of the Al. in 1915.



*Photo from Sauk Co Historical Society
The Wisconsin House was removed in 1912*



The Groundbreaking in April 1915

City Fathers reject gift from Ringling Theatre

Suppose the lead story in today's edition of the *Sun* began as follows: "City fathers offer \$150,000 as a gift. Recipient must build an \$600,000 theatre in city. No other strings."

Now suppose that 10 years later the lead story began: "Council declines Al. Ringling Theatre as a gift." City will not accept Ringling heirs' offer."

The wording is ours, but both events were true in their time. Money was offered to anyone to build a theatre in the early 1900's, and in 1917, the City spurned the Al. Ringling as a gift!

The generous gift

Let us consider first the gift of money to build a theatre. We have adjusted the dollar figures to account for 90 years of inflation, but even so it is remarkable that such an offer was made.

The fiery destruction of the Shults Opera House in 1905, on the Northwest corner of Fifth and Oak, was bad news for the people of Baraboo. Leaving them "without a gathering place of any sort save the (small) G.A.R. Hall." The fire had been discovered by barber Sanderson while shoveling the walk in front of his barber shop on Oak street, now the McNabb shop.

This was a serious blow to the city, for "Baraboo could not be without a place where a concert could be given, a political meeting held or a repertoire company show."

Interestingly, the *Baraboo Evening News* spent little time mourning the loss of the "opera house," once a skating rink. Their sub-headline reporting the fire read "Now for a new one," and spoke of the old building as now being "out of the way."

There are two versions of what happened during the next five years. Most accounts speak of the offer to partially fund a new theatre as coming from the "City Fathers," which usually refers to a city council. But the reminiscences of Barber Sanderson state that the Fellowship Club, serving as a civic organization "working to better the community," raised the money.

Sanderson was named the chairman and pledges were secured so as to entice a speculator to build a theatre. Some persons gave "as much as \$100, and there was great jubilation among the Committee when the sum had reached \$4000." It was all to no avail, for 10 years would pass before the city had an opera house — but what an opera house it was and is!

Advertisements of the day show how \$4000 would be like \$150,000 today, for an overcoat was \$6, patent leather shoes \$2.00, and silver dental fillings 50 cents! A new piano was \$135.

It was here that Al. Ringling stepped, in, apparently in 1912. "If Baraboo folks are that much interested in having an opera house, I will build you an opera house." The *News* stated that "the only assurance he wanted was that the people of Baraboo wanted an opera house, and their pledges proved it." And so, in 1915, he opened his theatre, ending the 10 year drought in culture in the city. Of course he did not accept the \$4000 gift.

So who are the "City Fathers?" If Sanderson's account is correct, it appears that we the public are the city fathers! And do things

never change in small cities such as ours? In 1997 we are having fund raisers for the skating rink, the swimming pool, and of course the big one, restoration of the Theatre. Future articles will consider large benevolent givers, such as Kate Hill, John and Murrel Lange, and the Ritzenthalers.

The City spurns the Al. Ringling

Speaking of benevolent donors, who can top Al. Ringling, whose \$150,000 investment in 1915 would be like a few million dollars now. The interesting part is that he intended it as a gift to the city, his heirs offered it on June 28, 1917, and the city spurned the offer!

A newspaper of July 5, 1917, reported the proposed gift, stating "The main stipulations are that the playhouse retain its present name . . . and that the proceeds be kept in a separate fund (from the city's). The brothers do not desire that it become a profit making institution (other than to) keep the playhouse in operation and repair."

However, there were more stipulations, and on Nov. 1, 1917, the city was advised by city attorney V.H. Cady that there were problems. The Ringling brothers wanted a five-man board, three members of which would be of their own choosing. None were to be paid, and none could be over age 60. Ringlings were to have free seats, and in case of fire the theatre must be rebuilt.



Sun photo by Harold Willis

Dr. Bob Dewel (left) with a film crew from the Public Broadcasting System (PBS), James and John Koch, from Marietta, Georgia. The father and son team were in the area in July filming the Al. Ringling Theatre, Circus World Museum and House on the Rock for up-coming TV specials.

It was well known that Al., who died six weeks after the opening night, intended the theatre to be a gift to the city, and perhaps the brothers were attempting to safeguard that desire on his part. At any rate, the gift was rejected in due time, and Al.'s nephew, Henry Jr., then age 11, eventually became the operator and owner until 1955.

So, does Al. Ringling qualify as a benefactor of Baraboo? To begin with, there seems to be no doubt that he intended the theatre as a gift to the city, and it was spoken of as such at the time. His widow, Lou, also confirmed this publicly. His illness and death shortly after the grand opening probably interfered with his plans. Sadly, Al. never saw his beautiful theatre, for he was blind on opening night. Six weeks later he was dead.

Also, his heirs did indeed offer the gift, albeit with some restrictions. They were possibly designed to protect the memory

of his gift from the politics of a future city council.

More importantly, Al. spared no expense in preparing his gift. It was known from the beginning as "America's Prettiest Playhouse" and "The envy of Broadway." Even today the Theatre Historical Society of America calls it the "first of the palatial movie palaces" in the entire country.

Al. could have built and donated a run-of-the-mill theatre such as the \$20,000 building envisioned by the Fellowship Club in its fundraiser. Instead, his contribution still draws "oh's" and "ah's" even from large city theatre people who view it in 1997.

Perhaps it is just as well that Al.'s gift was spurned, for who knows what a conservative city council would have done to it during hard times in the theatre industry. Instead it remained in the care of Ringling descendants for 40 years, and then in private and usually caring hands to the present day.

Now it is owned by ART Friends, the "city fathers" of today with a membership open to all. Both local and distant Art Friends are caring for the 80 year old Lady. She is currently getting a face lift, and if we are as civic minded as the folks in 1907, the restoration will return her to the glory of 1915.

Are we, the modern "city fathers," up to the challenge?

The new 2009 Concession and ticket counter, in bldg next door

517



The old 1953 concession and ticket counter, a blight on the beautiful foyer



A simple but wide doorway connects the two rooms



AL. RINGLING THEATRE (1915)
BARABOO, WISCONSIN
AMERICA'S FIRST MOVIE PALACE



Cahoon Mine was once
a Principal Baraboo
Industry
Yesteryear Revisited
By Bob Dewel

Next time you travel south on the Warner Memorial Road, glance to the right as you pass the Baraboo Golf Course at the foot of the hill. There is a new ball diamond there, but notice a couple of power poles that head southeast across the open field.

Up to a couple years ago you would have seen, in connection with the power poles, an old railroad bed, the tracks long gone. They were removed in October, 1929. This was a spur from the Northwestern line, and went only about a mile, to a coal mine. Indeed, if you drive a little further south on Warner Road, you come to Mine Road. It passes west and joins the power line and remnants of the railroad bed, beyond which are dense woods.

It is in this wooded area that there existed at one time one of Baraboo's principal industries, with a potential for growth and high employment. It was the Cahoon Iron Mine, which existed from 1915 to 1919.

Thanks to a 1981 essay presented to the Sauk County Historical Society by Victor Johnson, we have a fair amount of information about this enterprise, and indeed about

other mining operations in Sauk County. As a young man, Johnson had been an employee at the Cahoon mine on three different occasions, and thus he can write with authority.

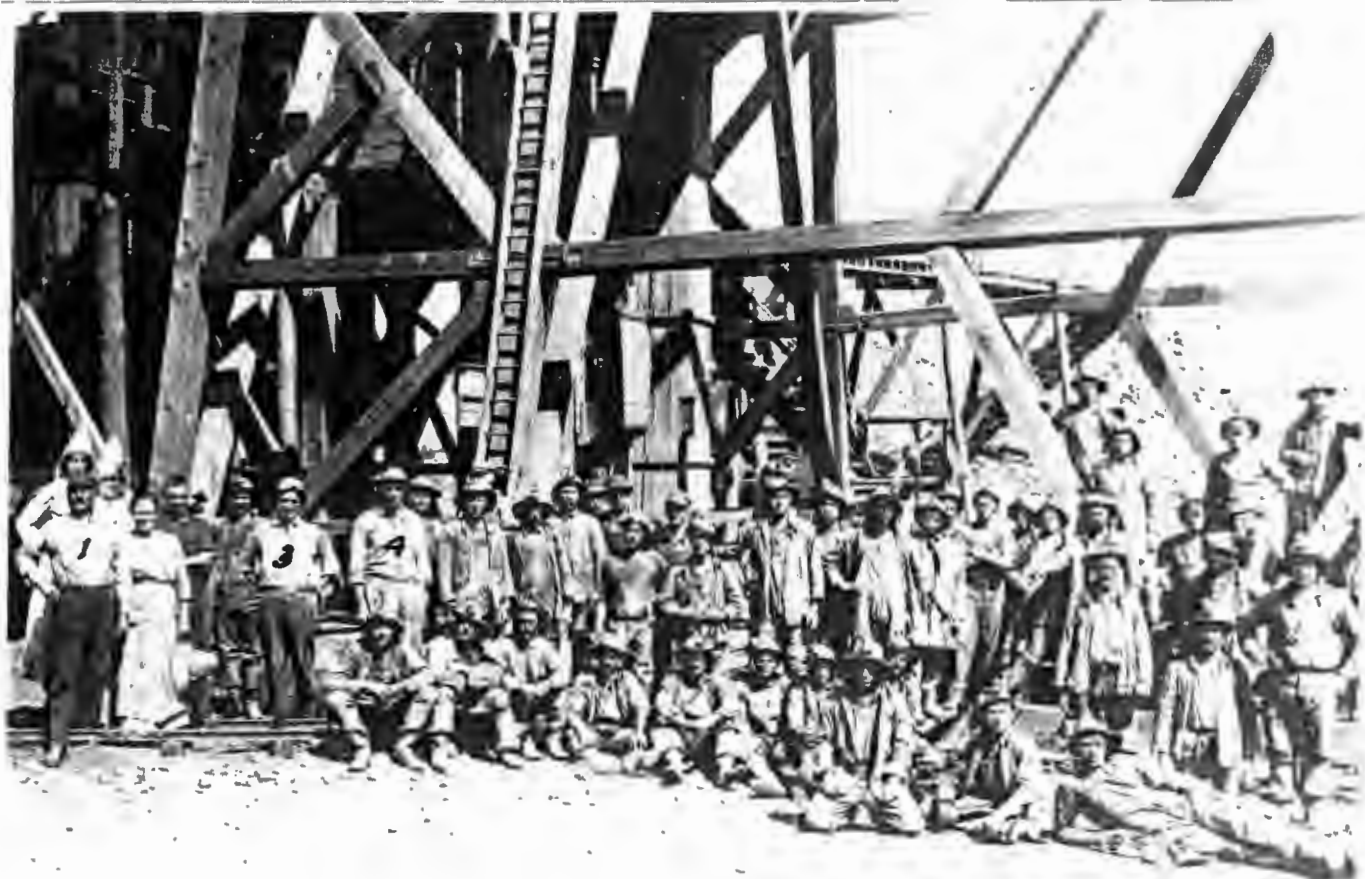
Johnson reports that the mine had a perpendicular shaft with a depth of 400 feet. A horizontal shaft went from that depth some 1200 feet to the west, perhaps going well below highway 12. Another shaft went some 1100 feet to the east. There was also an inclined shaft, with four separate levels.

The owner was the Donner Coal and Steel Co. of Pittsburg. The company also held land east of the current sewage disposal plant, and under the present Baraboo Golf Club

The Cahoon name came from the previous owner of the land, Asa Cahoon. He was the father of Dr. Cahoon of Baraboo, and of another son, Wilbur, who according to August Derleth was an Assemblyman from this area.

According to Johnson, the iron ore was of very high quality, possibly 62%. Unfortunately, the area was also bountifully supplied with ground water and artesian wells, and two 1500 gallon pumps were insufficient to keep the shafts dry. Johnson says that Wisconsin's hostility to the mining industry was a determining factor also, this being in the news yet today with the Crandon mine controversy.

As a youth Johnson used to watch the miners come out of



Credit: Sauk County Historical Society
Night shift workers at Cahoon mine, 1918



Credit: Sauk Co. Historical Society

The Cahoon Mine, Baraboo Stockpiled one in back ground, office in foreground, blacksmith and machine shop beyond.

the shaft, and he describes it as follows: "At that time the men wore candlesticks with a candle in the holder on their slicker hats. When they came up from underground they used the ladders and of course, when they were weaving their heads, it looked like monkeys coming up a tree."

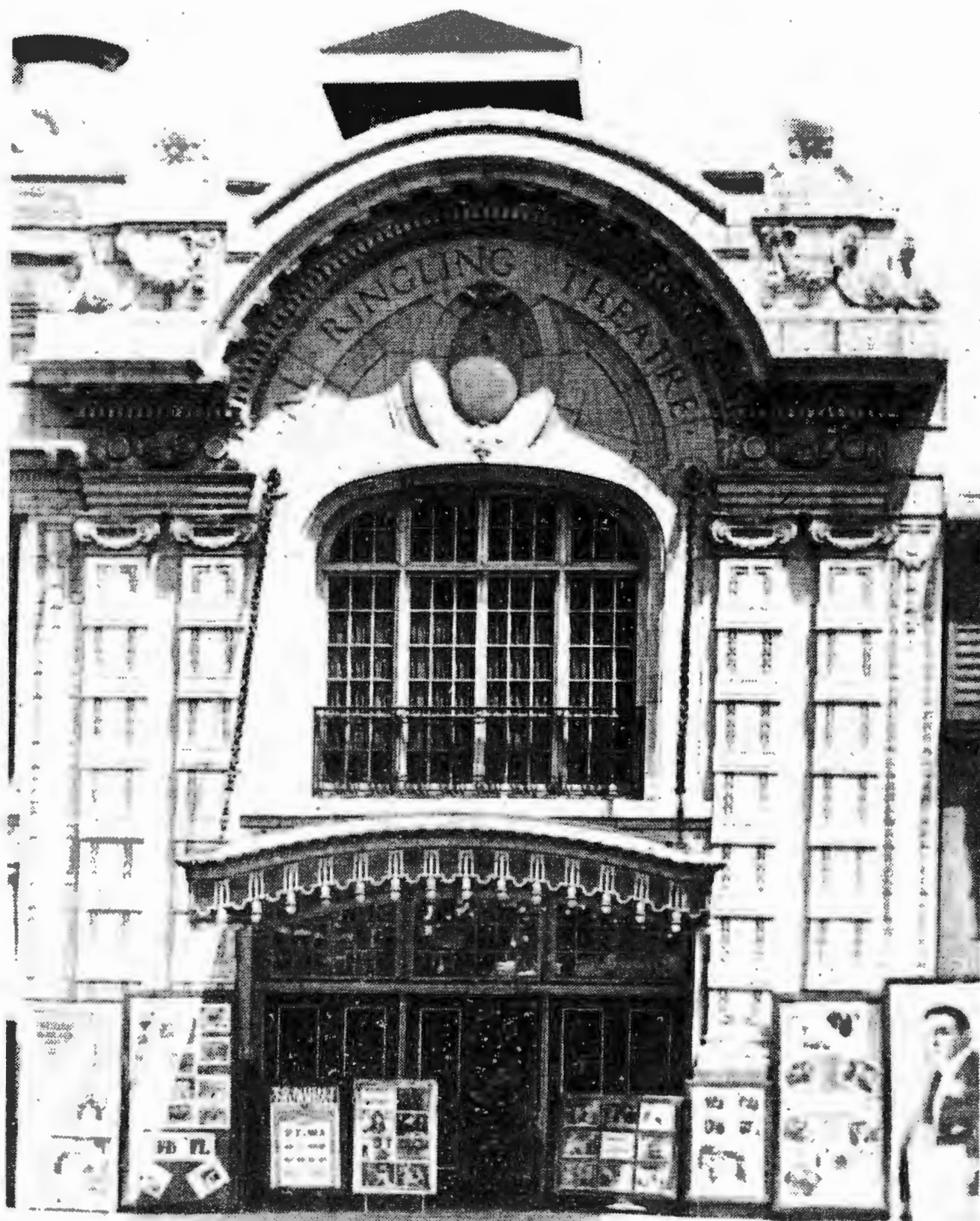
At the age of 16 Johnson dropped out of school, having failed in Latin. With Supt. Kingsford in pursuit, he became a miner in Shullsburg, drifting back and forth between jobs there and Baraboo in 1916-1918. He was injured on March 22, 1919, and spent five months in Baraboo's hospital of the time, located by

the corner of 3rd and East...."formerly the Mark ~~Moany~~ *Martiny* apartments, the old Fisher property." at 310 3rd St.

Mining was dangerous business, and Johnson reports that several men were killed in the operation, even when the shaft was being developed, and there were any number of serious injuries. Progressive Wisconsin of that time had the nations' only Workmen's Compensation law. Wages, originally \$2.10 per day, had risen to \$4.00 per day by 1918.

There is more to the Sauk County mining story. To be continued.

The Theatre at the time of the Cahoon Mine.



Al. Ringling Theatre, Baraboo, Wis.

The Sauk County Village
of Bessemer
Yesteryear Revisited
By Bob Dewel

What's the difference between a mine and a quarry? What does each produce? Why was one Sauk County village allegedly renamed Bessemer for a time, and what does Bessemer mean?

The previous article dealt at length with the Cahoon Iron Mine in Baraboo, which operated from 1914 to 1919. Sauk County has a history of many mining operations, none of which are in operation today. Quarrying also has a history, and is a major operation yet today..

So, what is the difference? A quarry is generally an open pit, from which gravel or slate or quartzite or other surface materials are removed. The most active currently is the Pink Lady in Rock Springs. The gash in the Baraboo Bluffs near the Butterfield Bridge on highway 33 is a quarry, and so were the three locations at Devils Lake. A previous article traced the history of that operation, active around the turn of the last century..

A mine, on the other hand, is generally below the surface of the earth, with a shaft and tunnels as described in the article on the Cahoon mine. A mine extracts mineral or ore from the Earth, and in some cases can be an open

pit, rather than a deep shaft. The Cahoon operation ceased in 1919 due to ground water and other problems. However, it was 1925 before the company shipped out the 50,000 tons of ore which had been brought up to the surface previously. The rail spur was removed on 10-24-1929.

Alert readers

Alert reader Lorraine Cummings of Reedsburg called our attention to a humorous error in the article on the Cahoon mine. We quoted the transcript of the Johnson speech as locating the hospital at "the old Mark Meany Appartments." The transcriber had interpreted the subsequent owner George Martiny's name as Mark Meany, and we repeated it!

Another alert reader, Harold Krueger, lived near the railroad spur and remembers hobos setting a boxcar on fire in an attempt to get some heat. He says the creek now in the golf course ran red with the water pumped from the mine, and that one time a pump was purposely disabled, apparently as a labor protest.

North Freedom

North Freedom has a history of three mines. The original settlement was named Bloom, after a farmer who also had a sawmill. In 1873, land adjacent to Bloom was platted as North Freedom and the two plats were merged under the latter name. August Derleth, in his county history, says that for a time the

name was changed to Bessemer, a famous name in the processing of iron ore. The iron in the Freedom mines was of very high quality, but was hard to reach and extract.

Sauk County has a village named Ironton, so named because of the open pit operation, which appears to have begun in 1857 according to Victor Johnson, who was quoted in the previous article. Up to 150 men were employed at one time. A nearby blast furnace reduced the ore to pig iron, which was transported to the railroad by horse and wagon.

LaRue

Mines in the vicinity of North Freedom included the Iroquois, which was one-fourth mile north of the Klingemeyer tavern in LaRue on the east side of PF. It operated until 1907, apparently from a beginning in 1885. Only 1000 feet away was the Roberts mine. The Illinois Mine was located "back in the hills on a stone ridge on the south side of PF and W."

Victor Johnson, the source of much of what we know of the mines, was raised in La Rue, living there from the turn of the century until 1907. He recalls that both the Effinger and Ruhland breweries of Baraboo had saloons there. There was also a general store operated by Lange and Kanaus, and a church on the southeast part of the village. He reports that there were a number of boarding houses for the single

miners, one operated by the Pearson family and one by Adelle Young..

According to Johnson, the LaRue village was named after W.G.LaRue, who lived in Rock Springs, called Ableman in those days.. LaRue was an early promoter of the mining operations in the area, but was of no relation to the LaRues who had the open pit mine at Ironton.

Other than Johnson's speech and a couple of pictures and clippings, there is very little information available on this industry which was once so important. The Historical Society urges anyone with pictures or family memories to contribute the same, or copies of the same, to the Museum.

When LaRue And North Freedom Were Boom Towns

Yesteryear Revisited
By Bob Dewel

A writer never knows which of his articles will be of the greatest interest. I get frequent calls and donations of material from some stories, but I did not really expect much from the two articles on iron mining in Sauk County. Actually, there was an outpouring of material, much of which was not generally known before.

Grace Stone

The first call came from Grace (Chester) Stone, who has generously donated a heavy duty aluminum lunch bucket originally used at the Cahoon mine, and then at the Powder Plant, now known as Badger. Later it was used at the car shops. It is said that the red-coated miners, upon emerging from the shaft threw their empty buckets in the air in celebration of the end of the work day. It can be seen at the Historical Museum.

With regard to the Powder Plant days, Mrs. Stone recalls that Baraboo citizens were urged to open their spare bedrooms to plant workers due to the housing shortage, and that she cooked and washed and did the banking for some two dozen men in her neighborhood. Most of the men were expert welders, but one who showed no aptitude, but kept his job, was considered to be a government snoop or stooge.

Other contributors

Like most industries in the early days, the Cahoon mine had a steam whistle. Paul Young has the one from the Cahoon mine, and it is now mounted on the roof of one of the new buildings at the Badger Steam and Gas show grounds. Paul says that Dan

Dingman, who lives on the old mine property south of town, has a sign from the mine. Earl Wichern added the information that Victor Johnson, who supplied much of the information we used in the first article, was hospitalized so long due to a cave in, and suffered for the rest of his life with shoulder and arm disabilities. Mrs. Helen Grosiniski remembers Dr. Cahoon and his little pink fever pills, dispensed in his office over the Woolworth building.

Howard Shale

Howard Shale, now of Reedsburg, provided the most complete information we have seen so far with regard to the North Freedom and LaRue operations. Its close location to the mines made LaRue perhaps the fastest growing village in the county at one time. High quality ore had been found in all three mines.

In an essay by Howard's Mother, Margeret Shale, published in the Wisconsin Sampler in 1983, she gives a complete description of the Freedom-LaRue scene shortly after the turn of the century. Mining requires intensive human labor, and the mining company built a row of cottages as well as other work buildings in LaRue. Because of the water table problem, the men wore heavy rubber boots and oilcloth suits. There was an electric generator to light the mines and operate the winch.

The iron ore had other uses, such as red paint for barns and boxcars, and even road materials. Mules were used in the mines to pull trams along the passageways. Men entered the mine on the skips which had just been emptied of ore brought up.

LaRue had a hotel, lumberyard grocery store, two taverns, a blacksmith shop, and a church, along with the cottages pictured. Later a hardware store and second grocery opened, as well as a second hotel. It is unclear whether these were all in LaRue, or some in North Freedom. Howard Shale remembers his father speaking of living



Just 150 yards west of today's Klengenmeyer's Tavern, Illinois Mine flourished in 1900. Will Tennant visited the scene when La Rue was the hope of the township.

in one of the cottages as a boy. He and friends would swim in Seely Creek, which ran red from the water pumped out of the mine, the red clinging to their bodies afterwards. The rubber boots that the men had worn out quickly, and the boys would collect and sell them to the rag man.

In another coincidence, Kathy Waddell's 100 year ago column recently mentioned how the Freedom-LaRue company was proposing to open a mine south of Baraboo, which of course became the Cahoon mine. The news article of the day concludes "the future of the mining industry cannot be estimated at this time, but it is safe to say it will be large."

It was for a few years. And say what you will of LaRue and North Freedom, they are the only villages in the county that have passenger train service!

Mr. Weigand's emporium was once a blacksmith's shop. The two-story hotel was once the Hotel Randall. Gillett: SHSW.



**Canoeing the
Wisconsin in 1914
Tales of Earlier Days
By Bob Dewel**

O.K. you outdoorsmen, how about a canoe trip on the Wisconsin River, from its source in Lac Vieux Desert all the way to Merrimac? It is 1914, and you have no radio for weather reports—radio hasn't been invented. No global positioning of course, but you hardly need it on a river. There is no way to make a 911 call even if you are stranded near a farmhouse—they probably don't have electricity or a phone anyway.

But you are young and keep a diary on this somewhat daring venture shortly after the turn of the century. Well it all happened, and I have been given that diary, written by a young dental student, Clausen Stekl. Stekl later became a WWI dentist, then came to Baraboo to set up his practice in 1919.

In 1914, however he was recovering from the then deadly disease, Scarlet Fever. As he related it "Three of us went (to a sanitarium), and two came back." He was stricken early during the semester at dental school, and had to scramble to catch up on his studies and practical dental work. He was "a boy with the most yellow-green color you can imagine."

At summer break while visiting an aunt in Minnesota he met Bill Schmidt, a seasoned outdoorsman who was looking for a companion to canoe the Wisconsin. Stekl took him up on it, believing the outdoor air and exercise would help him to recover his health. They loaded their canoe on a train, and persuaded the engineer to stop the train where it crossed the tiny stream up north, and they quickly unloaded their gear.

After a night on the bank of the stream, they paddled upstream, not

down, so as to reach the true source of the river, as close as a canoe could get, and this was at Lac Vieux Desert. To get there they had to walk the canoe across sandbars. Having reached the source, they then turned around and began the trip back downstream.

For bedding they used in turn pine boughs, then twigs, then fern leaves followed by a blanket. As the days went on and their bodies became hardened, they dispensed with the bedding and simply scratched out a place in the sand. Later even the tent was left in the canoe unless a storm threatened.

Stekl writes that one night they did pitch the tent due to threatening weather. In the middle of the night, to keep the tent interior from flooding, "we doffed our shorts so they wouldn't get soaked, and with improvised weapons we scooped a trench around the tent (in their birthday suits) to carry off the water."

Sunburn quickly became a problem, and they treated it with sweet cream from a farm, which one can assume quickly soured on their backs. Schmidt was a keen student of nature, and Stekl soon learned a number of bird calls from him. Mink and Muskrat were often observed going about their days duties.

For food they brought along potatoes, a slab of bacon, some condensed foods that were available in those early days, and coffee. This was supplemented by fish and an occasional duck. Sometimes "we had a slumgullion of duck, bacon, potatoes, and onions." Bacon grease was used to fry the fish and to "put on Bill's wonderful flapjacks, which we often had for breakfast."

One night they tied their string of fish to the canoe, but got a surprise in the morning. "When I went to get the fish, only the heads or the fish were left. That is where I learned just what turtles can do to a string of fish." One doesn't think of the Wisconsin River as having

rapids, but some were so great that the young men portaged around them. They could not afford to take a chance and lose their food and supplies. There were some 16 miles of rapids south of Rhinelander. Their only injury to the canoe was a dent from a rock, but it had not ruptured the canvass. Stangely, after the trip, and while the canoe was being shipped express, it received a bad hole in the bow.

"The night out of Rhinelander we ran into the worst aggregation of mosquitoes that we found on the whole trip and neither Bill nor I got much sleep that night. I'll wager that they were much bigger than the fabled mosquitoes that we used to find around Camp Douglas during our National Guard Days, which some men claimed that they took home for milking stools."

Arriving at Kilbourn, they both jumped onto Stand Rock, a tourist attraction today. "It is not much of a jump going out, but the plateau of the rock is a few feet lower than shoreside. When it came time to jump back I had to take a couple of trial starts before I had the courage to make the leap back. I was very glad to be back."

By now Stekl reports that his yellow-green appearance had changed to deep mahogany. They finally beached at Merimac after a 24 day trip. "It brought me back to back physically to where I could continue my education."

So, check yourself out in a mirror, folks, and if you detect a yellowish green look, find a canoe and plan your trip on the Wisconsin from Lac Vieux Desert next summer. Meantime, you can read the canoe trip diary at the Historical Society.



*Clausen Stekl at the dam
at Grandfather Falls*

EARLY REFRACTORY DAYS

AT DEVILS LAKE

Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

Memory has failed, but someone has asked for two years for a story on the American Refractory at Devils Lake. Information has been hard to come by, and pictures are rare, but some information on what was once a leading local industry has emerged.

To begin with, refractory is a word to designate "obstinate, unmanageable, difficult to melt or work, resistant to heat or high temperatures." It refers in this case to the dense nature of the quartzite rock of the Baraboo range, exposed by the elements at Devils Lake but also constituting the underlying rock of the range. American Refractory (later General Refractory) refers to the mining company which operated at the lake for nearly 70 years, threatening the integrity and beauty of the area.

Short geology review

To understand the refractory you should understand the remarkable geologic area in which we live. Scientists say our Baraboo range is the remnant of a prehistoric mountain range, which existed some one and a half billion years ago. At their zenith, the range rivaled the Appalachian and Rocky Mountain ranges, which arose later.

Everyone ought to view the story as depicted in panoramic views at the nature center at the lake. There you will learn of a prehistoric sea which stretched from the western Dakotas to Michigan. Ken Lange gives good descriptions of these events in his books also.

What became the Wisconsin River was a huge outflow of water from that sea, strong enough to cut a passage through the range in what we know of as the Devils Lake cut. That

powerful river, like the Colorado in the Grand Canyon, cut a gorge to the depth of several hundred feet below the present bottom of the lake. Thus, with the bluffs on either side, the gorge is said to have been 960 deep, a torrent of white water rapids.

Such was the situation when the last ice age covered much of Wisconsin with ice up to a mile thick. Then a most remarkable thing happened. As the ice approached the Devils Lake gorge it developed two arms or tongues, one approaching the gorge from the north and one from the southeast.

All glaciers push millions of cubic feet of soil, etc., ahead of them, and in this case a fortuitous thing happened—both tongues of the glacier stopped a couple miles apart, each filling its end of the old river gulch. When we drive in the park, on either the North entrance or on the Southeast entrance, we are driving on that ground, called a terminal moraine. Between them, occupying the old river bed, is Devils Lake! Meantime, as the ice receded, the Wisconsin River cut a new channel to the east of the bluffs, near Portage.

Quartzite

During all the geologic upheaval and pressure, the sandstone of the lakes became compressed into the extremely dense and "unmanageable, not subject to heat" quartzite. It is this material which the refractory people saw as valuable if they could make it into bricks able to withstand the intense heat of blast furnaces.

Even today, trains from the Pink Lady mine at Rock Springs rumble through Baraboo carrying quartzite for various purposes. Sauk County's other quartzite mine, on highway 33 at the narrows, can produce similar quartzite. The story of the American Refractory is the story of how Devils Lake could look like that gash in the landscape, had not wise men intervened after the turn of the century.

QUARRY PEOPLE NOW REFUSE TO STOP OPERATIONS IN DEVIL'S LAKE PARK

DISSATISFIED WITH \$30,000 APPROPRIATION FROM STATE QUARRY COMPANY CONTINUES TO CUT AWAY BLUFF

Sept 19, 1917

Senator Staudenmayer, Who Worked in Legislature to Get Quarry Removed Says State Can Force Its Point—The Provisions of the Law

For some time there has been an earnest effort on the part of Sauk County citizens and its members in the legislature to secure the abolishment of the quarry nuisance, and the use of dynamite at Devil's lake park, and to save the natural picturesqueness of the bluff from being blasted away. To this end a provision was passed in the last session of the legislature forbidding the use of dynamite and other explosives in state parks, except for actual construction work. There was also an appropriation of \$30,000 provided for the construction of a side track and removal of quarry equipment to a new site.

It was supposed that satisfactory arrangements had been made with the quarry people, but blasting continues and now they claim that the \$30,000 appropriation will not meet the expense and that the blasting provision is of no effect. Senator Staudenmayer of the Sauk-Columbia district says the blasting can be stopped and he explains that the money for the removal was only granted after its adequacy seemed certain. He writes as follows:

To the Editor:

I enclose a copy of the dynamite law passed by the last session of the legislature. The passage of this law was intended to prevent the use of any explosive within the confines of any state park. The Martins property facing Devils Lake is entirely within the confines of Devils Lake State Park and therefore is clearly under the operation of the law.

When the agreement was made and the law passed to remove the refractories company about one and one-half miles east from its present location on the east bank of the lake a sufficient time had to be granted the company to operate its plant on its present location to enable the conservation commission to construct a spur track to a site secured for its re-location. The dynamite bill then pending was amended by inserting therein, "this act shall not prevent the use of such explosive on any property which is under development on July 1, 1917." It was clearly understood by all

parties connected with this agreement that work could go on as before on the company's own land, consisting of 57 acres, but no work should be begun on the Martin property which the refractories people held only under a lease.

Some little work was being done at that time in preparing to build an extension to their track on the Martin property, but no effort had been made or could be made to quarry stone on July 1 of this year.

Regarding an article which appeared in the Sauk County Weekly News in its issue of September 13 that the amount (30,000) appropriated by the state was not sufficient to build the proposed sidetrack, I can only say that an engineer in the employ of the state, under the direction of the state railroad commission, after due inspection estimated the cost \$20,000, and the amount of \$30,000 was deemed ample to carry out every provision of the act.

George Staudenmayer.

The Devils Lake location for mining the quartzite was especially attractive, for the Northwestern Railroad not only passed beside the exposed quartzite, but had actually removed part of it so as to construct their roadbed. There was little interest in the environment in those days, and environmental impact studies were unknown.

Mining had begun before 1892, well before the turn of the century, with a group called the Devils Lake Granite Company, a misnomer for quartzite. This appears to have taken place in the bluffs near the northeast corner of the lake. A proposal to run a rail spur across the Claude property to the west bluff was, fortunately, denied by the Claude family, who owned much of the north shore area.

American Refractory Co.

As related by Lange and others, blasting the bluffs and crushing the material became a big business at the Lake. All of the area was privately owned at the turn of the century, as the State Park did not exist then. In 1907 the American Refractory Company leased more land, but in 1911 Devils Lake State Park was formed from part of the land by the lake, setting up a conflict between the two entities that would last for decades.

Efforts to buy the property for the park at a reasonable price failed, and blasting continued at the northeast corner of the lake. The company leased the Cliff House Annex for its employees until 1912, when a lease renewal was denied. News items at the time bore such 1909 headlines as "Devil's Nose to be worked", and, in 1919, "Quarry People refuse to stop operations". This was in response to passage of a legislative bill which appropriated \$30,000 for purchase of the property. American Refractory wanted more. By this time their operation was at the south end of the East Bluff.

During much of this time, the Company had maintained offices in

downtown Baraboo "just west of the Warren House", so this was a downtown Baraboo business, employing local workmen. It was in conflict with the state, and also with a local committee supporting the park.

Apparently a large portion of the population supported conversion of the mostly privately owned property at the lake to a public park. A 1921 news item reports that a dozen new cottages had been built near the old north end quarry. These were on leased land, and a battle for renewal of the leases would ensue 50 years later—but that is another story!

There's more to the Refractory story, to be published in a future article, including interviews with some who worked there.

Origin of the Name, Shadow Town.

Down on the way to deep Devil's Lake,
Where three roads meet,
And birds sing sweet,
And oaks grow tall,
And deep shades fall;---
There Thompson's had
To make friends glad,
Their concerts free
Beneath the tree;
From that place came
Shadow Town's name,
Heard far and near,
Now many a year,
Down on the way to deep Devil's Lake.

The Shadow Town Co.
Jewelers and Opticians

Edison and Victor Dealers

109 OAK STREET

BARABOO, WIS.



SHADOW TOWN ON THE ROAD TO DEVIL'S LAKE

*From the collection
of John Mc-Nabb
See Volume II page 47
of Yesterday Revisited*

STATE WINS, AND THE REFRACTORY MOVES

Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

Continuing the story about the American Refractory Co. at Devils Lake, it will be remembered that the legislature empowered Governor Phillip to spend \$30,000 to induce the company to stop desecrating the natural beauty of Devils Lake and move elsewhere. However, the company felt that \$75,000 would be a more appropriate figure. By now, some half a million tons of quartzite had been removed and shipped away.

Attempts at compromise had failed in early 1917, the proposal being for the company to move a mile or so east of the south end of the lake. This would involve considerable expense of moving crushing machines, plus moving the work away from the railroad. That problem was to be solved by building a rail spur near the present rail crossing on the south shore road. The spur was to connect with a narrow gauge railroad from the new quarry, which crossed the east exit road.

By now the state had brought out its big guns, and the legislature prohibited blasting within the confines of a state park, but the company continued to blast away at the east bluff anyway. Penalties were small fines, with a possible jail sentence of 30 days, but were never imposed. A 1919 legislative act empowered the governor to oust the company completely from the area, but tempers cooled when additional property further east of the lake was purchased.

Problem solved

In 1920 the parties compromised, the state agreeing to pay the company the \$75,000 it demanded for relocation, and 1921 found news articles telling of the move. The state received the former mine property at the north end of the

lake, plus the eight acres of Shadowtown, mentioned in another article. Now began the laying of railroad tracks for half a mile, plus the narrow gauge tracks, to serve the new location of the quarry.

In an interesting sidelight, it was reported that they drilled a well 285 feet without ever reaching the bottom of the riverbed of the old pre-glacier river. A similar well at the north end of the lake had been drilled 283 feet deep, with the same outcome.

Blasting and shipping continued for 40 years, until the company closed the operation in 1967. If one heads east from the south shore road, you can see the tailings resulting from the blasting, and be thankful that wiser men of that early day were able to move the operation away from the scenic lake.

Interviews

Although 35 years have passed since the mine closed, there are still men in the area who worked in the mine, or who lived in the company village as children. This was a cluster of houses not far from the mine, owned by the company but leased to workmen. There was no company store, however.

One such worker was Sebastian Madalon, the father of Bob Madalon of Baraboo, and Bob was born in the company village. He recalls walking to highway 113, and on south to the country school, where the Merri-macs Campground is today. Children in later years were luckier, for Bill Stoekman of Rock Springs remembers taking the children in a company car to the school.

Stoekman worked at the mine while his father Ted was superintendent of the operation. He has motion pictures of some of the blasting, and other views of the operation. He says the mine employed up to 100 persons at times, including 40 during WWII, when the material was used in steel plants. The rock was shipped to Illinois, where it was made into firebrick.

Company responsibility to its workmen was primitive in those days,



At least 29 men can be seen in this refractory photo

and the state workmen's compensation legislation had not yet been passed. One dynamiter is known to have fallen, incurring severe back damage. Family recollections are that he was then forced to leave the company village, with the company not responsible for his injury. A newspaper report in about 1920 did state that the company was now requiring the men to use ropes when climbing the face of the blast area, a token response, perhaps, to the injury.

Another former workman, Milton Giese, recalls that the company kept a supply of band aids around for minor cuts from the sharp rock fragments. More severe injuries were transported to town, which had only small one-doctor hospitals until the opening of St. Mary-Ringling in 1922. Giese worked at the mine for 28 years.

Everett Zoll well remembers his two years (1940, 41) of back-breaking work at 78 cents per hour, loading the narrow gauge "dumpy" carts. They held 3.2 ton per load, and you were expected to load ten a day by hand. They lit their own dynamite fuses, and ran for a protective shed. The 30 inch narrow gauge railroad passed over the rail spur, and the dumpies were dumped into the rail cars. Work continued 10 hours a day for six days during the war, into which Zoll was drafted in 1942.

Other than Stoekman's movies, few if any pictures seem to be available. The Sauk County Historical Society is always on the lookout for local pictures of any nature, which can be copied or scanned and the originals returned to the owner if so desired. Pictures of the Cahoon iron mine just south of Baraboo are also solicited.



The Quarry at the Hwy 33 Narrows

Patriotism in Sauk County, 1917 and Today Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

Are there any World War One (WWI) veterans still living in Sauk County? That War to "Make the World Safe for Democracy" ended some 87 years ago. Now, in 2005, our President, in his State of the Union Address, mentioned the words "free, freedom, liberty", 43 times as our goal, but did not once mention the Iraq conflict by name!

WWI and Iraq

Like all wars, there are differences between the WWI and Iraq conflicts, but there are also similarities, especially in the matter of public opinion. There had indeed been vigorous opposition to our entry into WWI, and President Wilson had won the 1916 election with the slogan "He kept us out of war." He defeated Charles Evans Hughes with about 51% of the vote, the Electoral College vote being 275 to 244. This is remarkably similar to our 2004 election results!

Wilson's political slogan about keeping out of war, like so many political promises, was broken less than a month after his re-inauguration, with a declaration of war on April 6, 1917. The prospect of war with Germany was not popular, particularly in the upper Midwest with its high percentages of German-related citizens. Even among non-Germans, there was strong pre-war opposition to "foreign entanglements".

Here there is a difference, for opposition to the war then was denounced as unpatriotic, with physical attacks on persons and property where opposition was perceived. A march for peace such as we recently observed in Baraboo would have been unthinkable then once the war began.

Within the last few weeks an ABC News-Washington Post poll found that "70% of its respondents said, viz-a viz the speech, any U.S. 'freedom' gains in Iraq had come at the unacceptable cost of American and Iraq lives"; so reports the Washington Spectator.

War, too, has changed from 1917, when 116,576 soldiers lost their lives in just 17 months. We have had only about 1500 casualties so far in Iraq, with thousands wounded, about whom we are told very little. "Only?" Each casualty was a son or daughter, father or mother, a sister or brother, husband or wife—real people, not just numbers. Countless thousands of Iraqi's have also died, all of them real people also. Modern warfare is destructive beyond the imagination of those in 1917

Sauk County and Baraboo

Mayor Theurer's 1917 Proclamation called for a mass meeting on April 26 at 8 P.M. at the opera house, obviously the new Al Ringling Theatre, for "all citizens of Baraboo and vicinity". It asks all businesses and residences to decorate in a patriotic manner. He states "Let there be no lack of interest in this movement...show our duty and patriotism by attending this meeting".

That's not so bad, but at the meeting everyone was asked to sign a Declaration of "absolute and unconditional loyalty to the government." This is reminiscent of scenes in some churches during and even after Prohibition, when pledges of abstinence were passed down each pew, with your neighbors watching to see if you would sign.

Mayor Theurer faced opposition in the next election, but candidate Bates was careful to state that "He is intensely loyal to America and her allies, and never loses (words missing, apparently 'opposition to') Germany's silent allies in this country."

An article in another issue of the paper at that time has this headline: "Says Wisconsin Germans are now on side of U.S." The story states that "The German language newspapers and the few Prussian ministers in the small cities and towns are giving way to

a new healthy spirit of genuine Americanism." This was accompanied by strong attacks on Bob LaFollette, Wisconsin's leading political of the day.

With regard to Sauk County, the article states "Sauk County fell down worse than any other county in the state", and figures are quoted showing the failure to meet the county's quota of war bonds. Jefferson County, said to be 85% German, had oversubscribed its quota. The article goes on to state "the so-called Germans of Wisconsin are all right as soon as they understand. They will be there with the rest of the country from now on."

In Baraboo, students burned their German textbooks in a midnight fire on the corner of Oak and Second Streets, as reported extensively in a previous Yesteryear Revisited article. The German Methodist Church soon changed its name to the Second Street Church, later merging with the First United Methodist Church of today. Its former church building now houses the American Legion Post.

Today, thanks to civil rights organizations like Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, the greatly vilified ACLU, and dozens of other watchdog groups, it is safer than in 1917 to express one's opinion on public affairs, including unpopular wars. Such talk was unthinkable in 1917.



WHITE HOUSE PHOTO

During last month's State of the Union address, President George W. Bush mentioned the words "free," "freedom" and "liberty" 43 times as our goal, but did not once mention the Iraq conflict by name.

Baraboo's 21 were a Lucky Bunch

Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

They're gone now, those eager young men of 1917 who set out on a noble cause, to "Keep the World Safe for Democracy." By a quirk of the legendary fickle finger of fate, 21 Baraboo boys were spared when their ship was torpedoed. Some 200 of their shipmates never made it alive to European soil, despite their being within sight of Ireland. More on the torpedo attack in a moment.

The 107th Supply Train

Their unit was the 107th Supply Train, formed from the Wisconsin National Guard on Oct 15, 1917, and comprising 6 companies plus a headquarters company. Thanks to Capt. Oakley L. Parkhill of Fargo N.D., we have an excellent account of the Unit. His story was printed in the News-Republic on Feb. 5, 1935, on the occasion of the National Convention of the Tuscania Survivor's Association held in Baraboo that year.

The local group of 21 called their chapter the Last Man Club, or something like that, with a bottle of whiskey saved and becoming the property of the last man to survive over the years. Why such devotion to an army unit? The thing that they had most in common was that their ship, the Tuscania, was sunk by a German torpedo and all of the "boys" from Baraboo survived. WWI soldiers were usually called boys, nor men, another nickname being doughboys.

Local Soldiers in the 107th

Parkhill is a detail writer, and the names of each man in each company are listed, including the 21 from Baraboo in various companies. Only one Baraboo man, Donald Duncan, was lost later in Europe and that was due to pneumonia. By 1935 Parkhill listed 5 more as deceased in civilian life. They were Vernon Caffish, George Hattle, Arthur Bender, Ralph Sanderson, and also Russell Brody, who had died of pneumonia shortly after his return to the United States.

Those still living in 1935 were Richard Mahler, Wayland Kier, Edward Coughlin, Horace Cahoon, Earl Veerhusen, Otto Bates, Otto Amdt, Earl Powell, Charles Kellogg, John O'Brien, Randall Herfort, Herbert Steckenbauer, Paul Stewart, James Brady, and Clarence Braun. Although he enlisted in Reedsburg, Arthur Thayer joined the group as one of the survivors. The material in this article comes from the Braun family WWI Scrapbook, and we thank them for the use of it.

Torpedoed!

Briefly, the 107th Supply train was organized in Camp McArthur, WI (no longer extant), but with no trucks for their supply train! Immobilized for two days in a snowstorm near Waco, Texas, they finally reached New York for embarkation after some 12 days of on-again, off-again train travel. Because the ship assigned to them was not ready, fate decreed that they should ship on the Tuscania, a better and larger ship but therefore a bigger target for the German submarines.

All men were ordered below decks for the Jan 27 departure, not being allowed to even say farewell to the Statue of Liberty. An exception was a few officers who had portholes, but these were soon covered over for blackout purposes on the high seas. The Tuscania joined a naval convoy at Halifax, Nova Scotia, and zig-zagged across the Northern Atlantic, a maneuver familiar to all of us who crossed in a later war. This writer's ship even crossed with no convoy escorting it.

The Tuscania's crossing was uneventful and the coasts of Ireland and a Scottish Island were visible, when without warning a torpedo from German U Boat 77 struck the ship at 5:45 P.M. on Feb. 5. This was a serious matter, for the ship carried 2174 men and 119 officers, and was 650 feet long. It was struck slightly ahead of mid-ship, and very

low. Immediately on impact the rest of the convoy scattered, leaving the wounded vessel to fend for itself for a time.

Daily lifeboat drills were effective for discipline, but unfortunately the explosion had destroyed many lifeboats, and as the ship soon listed badly, others were not readily usable. Men assigned to those boats were lined up and awaited assignment to other boats. One loaded lifeboat broke from its ropes, landing on another and killing some of the occupants. Somehow 92 men in sick bay were evacuated safely and the human loss was held to about 200 soldiers losing their lives.

Survivors

Fortunately the boilers were shut down in time and did not explode, but the ship was in dire straits and would sink within four hours. By 7 P.M. all lifeboats had left and there ere still 1350 men on board the stricken ship! Parkhill says one lifeboat was commandeered by a few members of the ship's crew, who abandoned the ship rather than aiding the soldiers.

Finally a couple destroyers, after dropping water concussion bombs, came to the sinking ship and took on the waiting soldiers. Parkhill says the Supply Train men remained cool through out the ordeal. Survivors were taken ashore in many Irish and Scotch locations, and it was a few days before the various groups were assembled and the body count began. The Tuscania was the first American troopship to be sunk. The country was outraged, but its loss helped to solidify opinion in favor of the conflict.

Eventually the Supply Train soldiers crossed the Irish Sea to Holyhead, Wales, thence to England and France. Here at last they were finally assigned convoys of trucks, such as Packards, Fords, Dodges, a Dodge Auto, and two motorcycles. Their history in WWI after this time is not given in the article, but it is assumed that the Baraboo 21 had already had their fill of adventure and danger. Happily they did not suffer any combat casualties. They were lucky young men indeed!



WWI Diary lists Familiar Hardships

Tales of Other Days

By Bob Dewel

A previous article told of Dr. Clausen Stekl receiving the coveted French Croix d Guerre for bravery in the First World War. The medal was sent to me recently by his daughter, Marjorie Fancher of Columbus, OH, and she also included a transcription of his diary during that conflict.

There are almost daily entries, despite sometimes difficult days, but what struck this writer was the similarity between his diary and war experiences and a similar diary which I kept some 27 years later, in a different war. It is curious that we both were recently graduated dentists, and both served in France. Both of us were based in Field Hospitals (FH), now known as M.A.S.H units as publicized by the recent TV series. His was the 15th FH of WWI, mine the 57th FH of WWII. Both of us had detached service assignments with combat units, his being infantry and mine being combat engineers.

We were stationed in similar and often identical areas of France at times, though years and wars apart. Each of us was promoted to Captain, but here the war experience changes, for I neither earned nor received a Croix d Guerre! It did happen that I purchased Dr. Stekl's Baraboo practice in 1962, though neither of us was aware of our common war histories until years later. Incidentally, that practice was continued by Dr. Konen in 1985, and thus will be 100 years old in 2019.

The Setting

It is impossible to re-create accurately the experiences of a man when reading his transcribed notes 77 years later. Indeed, even a veteran with similar experiences cannot do so, for each soldier has his own story known to him alone, with or without a diary. Many veterans prefer not to dwell on the events of the past, and Stekl's diary is reserved and circumspect as well. Rather than attempt to chronicle the day by day events he alluded to, sometimes vaguely, we have elected to simply excerpt sentences which any soldier who spent time in or near the "front" in any war can relate to.

It might be explained, however, that as a dental officer we were expected to be able to set up a functional if minimally equipped dental operation. The drill was powered by foot, as in the old sewing machines, and light in the oral cavity might be supplied by a flashlight held by the next patient. All, including the tin chair, could be packed in 15 minutes into a small foot locker called a chest 60 for a quick departure.

Local anesthesia was limited to extractions usually. Demand was usually high, but during active periods of combat the dentist often worked with the physician in the aid station rather than acting in a dental capacity. As any soldier knows, there were endless periods of "hurry up and wait," and maddening indecision as to rapidly changing orders. It is in this manner, that many of the Stekl entries were made, excerpts of which we present herewith.

Some diary entries

The cold: There are dozens of entries reading "I nearly froze to death...damn near froze...only one blanket tonight, expect to freeze...swiped a stove and some wood...cold as sin at night...so cold I had to walk most of the way to keep warm"

The mud: "mud, mud, mud...nearly froze all day...all mud...this mud is a fright...18 inches of mud deep..."

The food: "piece of bread for breakfast...beans, bean sandwich, can of salmon,"

The mail: "First mail in six weeks...no mail..."

Christmas Dinner: "Doesn't seem like Christmas at all...soup, beans, pickles, bread, butter pie, coffee...I set up a tree and decorated...gave gifts to children...I wonder if we'll be alive next Christmas"

Bathing: "Shaved in hot water first time in 6 months...Oh how dirty I am, would give \$10 for a bath and change of clothes...went over to a town, first bath in three weeks...First tub bath I have had in 12 months"

Stress: "Couldn't go to sleep 'till late. Too much thinking...Had an awful case of the blues tonight"

The Wounded: "wounds serious, but all with a smile on their face and a joke" (I think he meant many, not all, from what I saw)

The officers: "The damn Lt. Col. of the new unit is raising hell...orders countermanded, don't know where we are going..."

Disease: "We slept in Boche (German) quarters and picked up beaucoup fleas and cooties...went down to the delouser, got some underwear...this is a nice place but full of cooties."

Time: "Somewhere, sometime, and somehow out here rustivating, I lost a day...up at 4:30, left at 6 to go 30 kilometers, got there 8 hours later."

Personnel: "A fellow I sleep near talks in his sleep all the time, and keeps everyone awake."

New Year's Eve: "too sleepy to see the New Year in"

Armistice: "At 8:45 came the word to cease firing at 11. Those were the longest hours I have ever spent."

Comment and Coincidence

I have not attempted to chronicle the battles, bombs and shells and trenches endured by Stekl. Each combat soldier has his own story in that respect. But there is another coincidence between Stekl and this writer besides those mentioned in the early paragraphs. On Sept. 22, 1918 Stekl wanted to go to Toul, France, to get dental equipment, but "Old Capt. McDonald gave orders I shouldn't."

In my diary 28 years later, on March 14, 1946, a Capt. McDonald turned down my requisition for additional dental equipment! Notice in both cases it is "Capt McDonald". Could it be, 27 years later, that the same bossy Capt. McDonald.....nooooo----that's too much of a coincidence!



*Dr. C.F. Stekl as a
World War I
Dental Officer*

A Croix de Guerre in Baraboo

Tales of Other Days

By Bob Dewel

This is a story I've waited forty years to write. I've waited because of the modesty of the man who was honored with the French the Croix de Guerre. I often saw the framed certificate on the wall of his study, but when I inquired, he only smiled. Now I have the actual medal, old, and with its Silver Star missing. I also have the story.

No one who knew him would call Dr. Clausen Stekl a retiring and reserved man. His dynamic personality found expression in such prestigious honors as Worshipful Master of the Free and Accepted Masons, Exalter Ruler of the Elks, President of the Community Chest, President and Lt. Governor of the Kiwanis Club, President of the Dental Society, District Commander of the American Legion, Shriner, and Lt. Colonel in the Wisconsin National Guard. Not exactly your Casper Milquetoast of the old comic strip! Yet, as befits a soldier, he was modest about this war honor.

He was an officer in WWI, serving in the Dental Corps of the Army from 1917 to 1919, and this is where our story begins. Thanks to the generosity of a daughter, Marjorie Anne (Stekl) Fancher of Columbus, Ohio, we have received not only the Croix de Guerre, but other medals and ribbons, plus a transcript of his war diary. They all will find permanent preservation in the Sauk County Historical Society archives.

The Croix de Guerre

So, what is the French Croix de Guerre? It is an award somewhat comparable to our Congressional Medal of Honor, which was won in WWII for example by Baraboo's Beryl Newman. Only 17 Wisconsin men were awarded that medal for bravery including Gen. Douglas McArthur. How many received the Croix de Guerre in either war is not known, but Clausen Stekl was one of them.

The Croix de Guerre was instituted by the French on April 15, 1915, to honor acts of bravery in the face of the enemy, and was open to men of all ranks of the armed forces on the Allied side. There are various types, and the Stekl award is bronze as awarded by the army. When an individual has been awarded a total of five bronze battle stars, he is entitled to have a silver star on the ribbon.

Mrs. Fancher included copies of several War Department documents, confirming Stekl's right to have not only a silver star, but a fourrager, a braided cord looped around the left shoulder, as shown in a picture accompanying this article. Clausen was a First Lieutenant in Co H, 128th Infantry, but also Dental Officer in a Field Hospital, now known as M.A.S.H hospitals.

The award

The award was made because "On October 4, 1918, near Blanc Mont, he assisted in taking care of the wounded and in evacuating them under an extremely violent fire, and by his coolness and courage rescued the wounded from a first aid station that was subjected to a bombardment." Stekl's other battle involvements included conflicts of WWI in Toulon-Troyon, Chateau-Thierry, Soissons, Marbache, St. Mihiel, Blanc-Mont

(mentioned above) and Meuse-Argonne.

As was reported in a Baraboo paper announcing his promotion to Captain, He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. J.E. Stekl and had gone through officer candidate school. The article is not dated, but states he had been overseas a year and a half, and included the text of a letter home to his parents. He complains about the ceremony, in which the recipients had to march up a hill, and wait in the cold from 8:30m until 10 for the awards..

Stekl said he might have enjoyed the ceremony more had it not been snowing and sleeting "and when we stood at attention during the presentation we nearly froze." (Nothing has changed, I hear you ex-soldiers saying). "I was glad to get the medal" he continued, "but I can tell you I don't need anything to remind me of that eventful day."

In 1919 the war veteran dentist began his practice in Baraboo, marrying Marjorie Fischer, Mrs. Fancher's Mother. He practiced dentistry until 1962, when he sold his dental practice to this writer. This was a coincidence, for I too served as a Dental Officer in a Field Hospital 25 years later, (different war!), with detached service to a combat unit—but alas, no Croix de Guerre!

The Mugging

There's an interesting sequel to this story. It happened about 50 years later on a residential street near the Washington Cathedral in Washington. D.C, when Dr. Stekl was 73 years old. While taking an evening stroll, the aged veteran was attacked by a hoodlum with a croquet mallet, the handle of which broke when Stekl was struck in the head. There was plenty of fight left in the former serviceman of

long ago, for despite the wound he put up a terrific struggle and the attacker fled from the scene!

We would like to hear from any other readers who know of local recipients of the Croix de Guerre. Mrs. Fancher generously included a transcript of Stalk's army diary, and if there is enough interest I will summarize it in another article.



*The Croix de Guerre (left
and a battle ribbon*



*Captain C.F Stekl wearing his
WWI officer's uniform and
the Fourrager over the
left shoulder*

Baraboo youths burned

"Here lies the remains of German in Baraboo H.S. '18."

German books

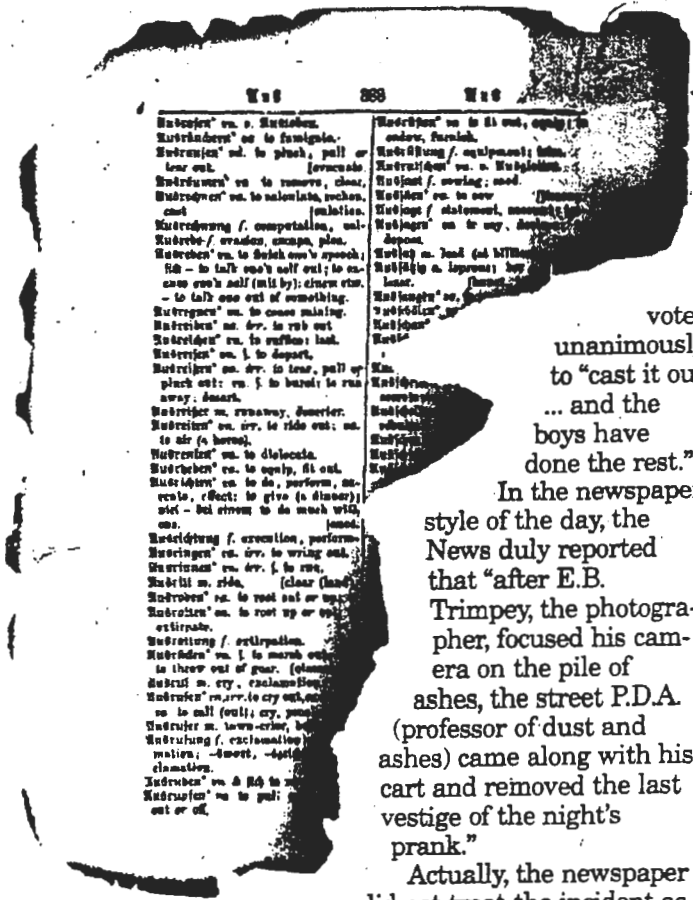
So read the crudely lettered inscription on the pavement of a street in Baraboo, accompanied by the ashes of the school's German books.

You've heard the phrase "Ban the Books in Boston?" In Baraboo, on the night of June 5, 1918, it was not ban, it was "Burn the Books." As the Baraboo Daily News reported the next day, "Pupils of the local high school make a clean sweep of German Language here."

The paper reported that early risers near downtown Baraboo found a smoldering fire at the intersection of Oak and Second streets, the corner on which the old red brick high school at the time was located. A small fragment of the remains, still extant, confirms that the fire was fueled by German textbooks.

The news report is somewhat confusing, as it indicated that German books had been removed "some weeks ago" and kept in a basket in the furnace room. The boiler was in the charge of Hugh Kelley, who said he had shoved the books into the fiery furnace at the time. The same basket was used to carry remaining German books for the midnight fire. Why there were two groups of books, one group of which was spared being consumed by Hugh Kelley's furnace, is not explained.

The Daily News did say, however, that the school board had earlier voted 3-1 not to abandon the teaching of German in the schools, but later reversed itself and



voted unanimously to "cast it out ... and the boys have done the rest."

In the newspaper style of the day, the News duly reported that "after E.B. Trimpey, the photographer, focused his camera on the pile of ashes, the street P.D.A. (professor of dust and ashes) came along with his cart and removed the last vestige of the night's prank."

Actually, the newspaper did not treat the incident as being very serious. People were still talking about the May 21 tornado which destroyed much farm property. Some telephone lines were down, and a Lone Rock man had been hurled 330 feet by the twister — though no twister had been sighted! Such was the local news in June 1918.

Background

Notice that date, 1918, and you will realize that America was in the height of action of World War I, called then The Great War, and things were not going well.

Allied and German trench locations remained essentially the same week after week, with barbed wire in the "no man's land" lying between them. Over and over, each side flung waves of its finest young soldiers into the withering fire of the opposing lines, to no avail.

All wars are fought with propaganda as well as with armaments, and on the Allied side the Germans were pictured as Huns, Boche, and butchers. Headlines in the Republic read "Flower of the Land Registers" (for the draft), and reminded people to buy bonds "For your boy or my boy or for some other Mother's boy ... New York fears enemy air raid ... Torpedo sinks a transport ... Kansas City woman guilty of espionage ... D.C. Capitol dome to be dulled to fool air raiders."

In Iowa, the governor had already banned the teaching of German, and the daughter of Wisconsin's Gov. Phillips, who was himself a Sauk County resident, had volunteered as a nurse. Not all of Wisconsin's residents were as zealous, however, and a local woman recalls that her German neighbors would no longer speak to their son because he joined the American armed forces.

In Milwaukee, the Germania Herald dropped the Germania name, and in Madison the German American Bank changed its name to American Exchange Bank. In Baraboo, the German Methodist Church dropped the name German, and eventually merged with the present First United Methodist Church.

The secret

Such was the setting on the night of June 5, 1918, when the books were burned on the streets of Baraboo.

Who burned them? This has apparently been a well-kept secret for the past 81 years, and the perpetrators are said to all be dead by now.

We do know of someone who knew the names, but he too is gone. His correspondence in 1985 with a Dr. Juergen Eichhoff of the University of Wisconsin German Department is preserved at the Sauk County Historical Society. Eichhoff reports that the Baraboo incident "is still being reported and discussed in Wisconsin and national publications."

Himself a fairly recent emigrant from Germany at the time, Eichhoff asks why books would be burned "when normally they would be used again the next year," apparently not realizing the warlike atmosphere of 1918. Eichhoff says that his letter, at the suggestion of Clark Wilkinson, went to Art Schadde, Al Dippel, and Lovey Stackhouse.

The reply

Clark Wilkinson's rather cryptic reply to Eichhoff confirms the incident, but reveals little not already known. He states that three high school seniors did the burning, one of whom had been studying German, and since they would be graduating in June, they would be subject to induction into the armed forces.



Shown at far left is a vestige of text from a German book burned by Baraboo High School students in 1918. Pictured above is the aftermath and a message students left on the pavement. It reads: "Here lies the remains of German in Baraboo H.S. '18." Below is a photo that has been presented as the burning of German books in Baraboo. If so, it's not the incident described in this article. The known event took place over a block south of the courthouse, which is clearly shown in the pic-

ture below. It also seems likely than on June 6, 1918, people would not be dressed as warmly as those shown below. This picture is more likely a war bond rally, with a bonfire for warmth and ambience. The fire seems to be fueled by wooden boxes and other objects, rather than books. However, two local residents recall old-timers telling that there was indeed a voluntary burning of German books at a rally, and this picture may be of that event.

Wilkinson does not reveal names, but does state in his 1986 letter that "as late as seven years ago (1979) two of the three met at a local funeral parlor. One of them brought up the subject of the burning, and the other, who did not want to discuss it, left immediately."

Eichoff's request, it seems, was to determine whether there was official or high-ranking involvement in the incident. In a reply to Wilkinson, he agrees that Clark's report at least lays to rest any such speculation.



In truth we don't

need to know who the perpetrators of the youthful incident were. Their patriotic gesture was perhaps inappropriate but understandable. After all, the governor of Iowa had banned German in his state, and the Baraboo school board had finally voted to discontinue German. Even La Valle had

its book burning.

If the incident is interpreted as a stain on freedom of speech in Baraboo, an understanding of the circumstances of its perpetration would certainly erase the stain.



Burning books by German authors, citizens of Baraboo, Wisconsin, express the chauvinism of an aroused nation. Some zealots banned even scholarly texts by German authors.

Sauk County Welcomes Home it's WWI Veterans

Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

They really knew how to welcome a soldier back home after World War I! Less than a year had passed since some of the men had been engaged in trench warfare and gas attacks in France. Now they were being feted on Honors Day in Baraboo.

The all-county celebration was held on Wednesday, September 24, 1919. The Sauk County Democrat said that "there were flags everywhere. The business houses and homes were beautifully decorated, the light poles were adorned with the colors, and at the corner of the principal streets were pillars of white. On main street, in large letters, was the word 'liberty' ". The great arch is pictured on this page.

There were acres of cars blocks from the business section, which was sectioned off for the events and parade. Some 800 veterans participated, but 58 brave men of Sauk County had given their lives in the conflict. At the Al. Ringling, families who had lost a soldier were given gold badges signifying their sacrifice. This was followed by martial selections by the Baraboo Marine Band and a talk by army Chaplain C.E. Batters. Another ceremony was held at the court house also.

The parade, reported the Daily News, "was all that could be expected. Cars (probably 1919 tin Lizzies) carried dignitaries, and the Baraboo Marine Band marched. Some 400 servicemen were in uniform, passing under a huge arch....Civil War veterans also participated, the latter carrying the banner 'we are the boys of '61 and '65 ' ".

Among the floats were those of groups such as the Elks, K.C.'s, Epworth League, and the Man Mound Club, which made a replica of the man mound made of straw. Dozens of other floats and bands and clubs were so numerous that one wonders who was left to see the parade.

The size of the event can be estimated by the fact that dinner at the fairgrounds was served to 1500 veterans and their wives or sweethearts. A balloon ascension was made there by a New York outfit, but at 4000 feet it tumbled over, losing its gas, so the occupant came back to earth by parachute. It was the balloonist's 188th ascension, hopefully not always concluded by parachute.

Of note is the fact that the veterans had not yet formed organizations such as the American Legion, VFW, 40 and 8, etc. A year later, in 1920, veterans organized a Labor Day event featuring auto races and a stage show at the fairgrounds. The latter event was staged as a Jazz Orgy by the Netgo Orchestra of Portage, and "proved very amusing."

Eventually veteran's groups were organized, and exist to this day, The 1919 veterans are gone, but veterans of other conflicts have taken their place. On Memorial Day at 11 A.M. the fallen and departed veterans will be remembered by some people, but the crowd at the 10:15 parade will be miniscule compared to the exuberance of 1919. A few caring souls will fly their flag. For some fallen soldiers, however, only the tombstone inscriptions will remember, where men forget.

At one point the parade in 1919 apparently passed over the spot on Oak and Second Street where, on June 5 of 1918, Baraboo High school boys had burned their German textbooks, as noted in a previous article. One wonders if, among the crowds watching the World War I soldiers and their parade on Honors Day, was a small boy named Beryl Newman. In a quarter of a century he too would be a soldier. He would become Sauk County's only Congressional Medal of Honor recipient for valor on the battlefield.

War remains the curse of mankind. Again today men, and now women, must arise to defend their liberty and their way of life. The men of 1919 would understand.



WW I Soldiers. Only information is: *Cred. T Wm Schutte & Smil Co Historical Society*
"Boys at Camp Douglas Cummings, Arthur Johnson, Ed Rommelfanger
in white shirt "

Please see next page



In 1919 eight hundred Sauk County veterans marched under this arch, which extended between the two downtown banks. The picture, enlarged by Bill Schuette, is from the Sauk Conty Historical Society archives. The picture looks east on third dtreet.

Big Traffic Problems in Early Baraboo Yesteryear Revisited By Bob Dewel

With the addition of a stoplight at the intersection of Broadway and Water Streets, Baraboo is now a 10 stoplight city. This is either a dubious honor or a traffic necessity, according to your point of view.

When this writer first arrived on the local scene in 1961, the city boasted only one light, at Broadway and Fourth Avenue. It appears, however, that the number of stop lights is not proportional to the growth of population. The city has doubled in population since that time, but the stoplights have increased ten-fold!

The reason, of course, is increased traffic due to more cars per family, retail establishments spread all over rather than concentrated in the downtown district, and increased tourism. All of those factors add to the need for traffic control by stoplights.

For example, it is hard to imagine the intersection of Broadway and Eighth Avenue without a stop light controlling traffic. The same is true of the intersection of East Street, (County A) and Eighth Street. The new lights facilitate the efficient moving of traffic, especially the new light at Broadway and Water Street, soon to be a turn for highway 113. Indeed, a light could be helpful at Jefferson and Eighth Street, which is an awkward traffic intersection.

The City Ordinance

Traffic regulation in a city is traditionally within the purview of the city council, and the newspaper of April 7, 1917 tells about a city traffic regulation which was challenged in court. It seems that the City Council had passed an ordinance previously which regulated the speed on the old High Bridge. This iron structure, of which

we have written several times previously, connected Oak Street, near downtown, with Vine Street on the south side of the river. By 1917 it had shown signs of age and instability.

The ordinance, passed in 1916, called for a maximum speed of 10 miles per hours on the bridge, both for horse-drawn vehicles and also for the automobile. The latter were becoming more numerous by this time, creating problems between those with horses and the auto owners and their gassy and noisy vehicles.

Court Rules Against City

It is not clear who challenged the ordinance. The city maintained that it had the right to regulate speeds on a bridge long before the automobile was invented. Judge o'Neill ruled against the city, however, stating "The court has carefully considered the arguments by counsel and the excellent brief filed by the attorney for the city....the ordinance is in conflict with state law...which prescribed a uniform rate of speed with certain exceptions therein provided."

Apparently speed on city bridges was not one of the exceptions. The newspaper concluded that the judge was putting bridges in the same category as streets as far as speed limits were concerned. The paper stated that the city would appeal, believing that a reasonable and proper limit was within its authority.

Horse-drawn Fire Trucks?

If the bridge argument seems trivial, consider the times. Only three years had passed since Mayor Theurer, in the 1913 annual Council meeting, had advocated that the city purchase an "auto fire truck." His reason was that "For some time we have been hampered in securing teams (horses for) fires, and while we have been fortunate in not having any fires of great consequence...it is high time this matter betaken up seriously." The Mayor quoted someone as saying that auto fire trucks "are so perfected that they are

thoroughly dependable" Other sources indicate that the fire hose wagons, etc. were drawn to fires only be the first team of horses to arrive at the station. Imagine the delay as the wagon was attached to the team and galloped noisily to the site of a fire!

Traffic in 1933

There is other traffic news. By 1933 an exasperated City Council held a 'General housecleaning of traffic signs, voting to "remove the stop and go sign at the bank corner, and to remove the 'turtle' keep-to-the right signs in the city." These objects in the center of an intersection, about the size of an inverted round dishpan, often provided a jolting bump to passengers in both cars and wagons. At that time it appears that highway 12 passed through downtown Baraboo, turning left onto Fifth Avenue, right on Angle Street, then onto Summit Street and thence west on Eighth Avenue.

We are indebted for part of this article to Bud Cady, who retains extensive scrapbooks made up by his grandfather, Virgil Cady. Cady was city attorney during some of the above events.

COURT DECIDES BRIDGE CASE

Judge O'Neill Holds Ordinance
Limiting Speed of Automobiles
Invalid; City Will Appeal to
Supreme Court 4-2-1917

Judge O'Neill has decided the so-called bridge case limiting the speed of automobiles on the Oak street bridge to ten miles per hour, his decision being as follows:

"The court is of the opinion that the only question in this case is whether the ordinance of the city of Baraboo is in conflict with the state law. The court has carefully considered the arguments by counsel and the excellent brief filed by the attorney for the city. It is the conclusion of the court that the ordinance is in conflict with the state law. The Wisconsin statute appears to prescribe a uniform rate of speed for automobiles, with certain exceptions therein provided. The court will not attempt to state reasons. The attorney for the defendant may prepare the proper form of order and judgment.

JAMES O'NEILL, Judge.

The court's decision apparently places bridges in the same class with ordinary streets and highways, as regards automobile traffic. The city will appeal from the decision, it being contended by the city that the law giving cities the right to regulate traffic on bridges existed long before automobiles were ever thought of and still exists, and should prevail over any subsequent legislation attempting to regulate highway traffic merely, and further the city contends that the ordinance is not in conflict with the state law, it being within the power of the municipality to determine what rate of speed is reasonable and proper under given circumstances, and this ordinance being an exercise of that right.

From Indian Trails to Superhighways 1840-1960

Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

Imagine you are a traveler in newly formed Sauk County in 1848—that's 157 years ago! You'd probably be walking, or riding a horse—the trails were too rough for any vehicles except the stagecoaches. Most were Indian paths, suited best for foot travel.

In his Sauk County history booklet, August Derleth tells of one such traveler, Moses M. Strong. At one point he encountered a boy, and inquired as to which road he should take. The boy replied "About two miles above you will see a fork in the road. You can take whichever you please, but whichever you take, you'll wish you had taken the other."

Stagecoaches

We have written in the past about one prominent stagecoach driver, Prescott Brigham, who also was a tavern owner, and sang in the church choir. Many coach lines connected the Baraboo Rapids settlement with Portage, Kilbourn (WI Dells), Mazomanie, and also to Madison via a ferry at Merrimac, spelled Merrimack in those days.

The fare is said to have been \$2.50, and the coach would probably be carrying mail and money, making the trip potentially hazardous. Schedules were subject to change at no notice. Brigham is said to have made only weekly trips to Baraboo, sometimes fortnightly in winter weather. The Wisconsin River not was bridged at Sauk City until the mid 1850's.

Life was not all that easy for a stagecoach driver. According to a short Sauk County history on the county web site, "severe cold was hazardous to stage coach travel, and it is recorded that a driver of a stagecoach from Portage to Newport was found frozen to death (in his seat). The horses reached their destination, and the passengers were safe, (but horrified)."

Roads improve

More developed parts of the country had trains, and Sauk citizens longed for the day when the railroad would come. Lines had brushed the county at Spring Green and for a short distance at Kilbourn. It would be 1871 before the Northwestern line would make a passage through the rather formidable bluffs to Baraboo. As is often the case, credit and thanks for the railroad are due largely to the volunteer work of local citizens organized as the "Baraboo Airline Company."

Trails became dirt and sometimes gravel roads, winding and sometimes abruptly hilly, but traversable by horse and carriage. It took the arrival of the horseless carriage at the turn of the century (1900) to create the demand for smooth hard surfaced highways. A few autos were even produced in shops in Baraboo and Portage, until local construction was preempted by mass production in Detroit by Ford and others. The demand for highways remained, and the huge project of paving the nation's highways was begun.

In Sauk County, as noted in the previous article, there was competition as to where such highways would go, and funds were raised to influence the state, hard-pressed for funds. As we saw in the last article, highway 12 might have come over the bluffs on what is now the South Shore Road had one group been able to raise sufficient funds, but instead crossed the bluffs at its present location. The eventual result was bypasses of Baraboo, a severe blow to business in the days of the Depression.

With the advent of highways came the need for traffic control, and the county web site says the first squad cars are said to have had sirens operated by hand cranks.



U.S. 12 was paved using both steam rollers and men with shovels.

L.R. Capener was hired for that position at a salary of \$233 per year. He more than paid for his salary, producing fines totaling \$275.

The first motorcycle cops appeared in 1922, according to the county web site, the deputies being Walter "Buddy" Bayer, and "Penny" Accola. Because of mobster activity, it is said that a vigilantes group was organized by the county in 1939-42 to aid in patrolling the highways.

Baraboo street work

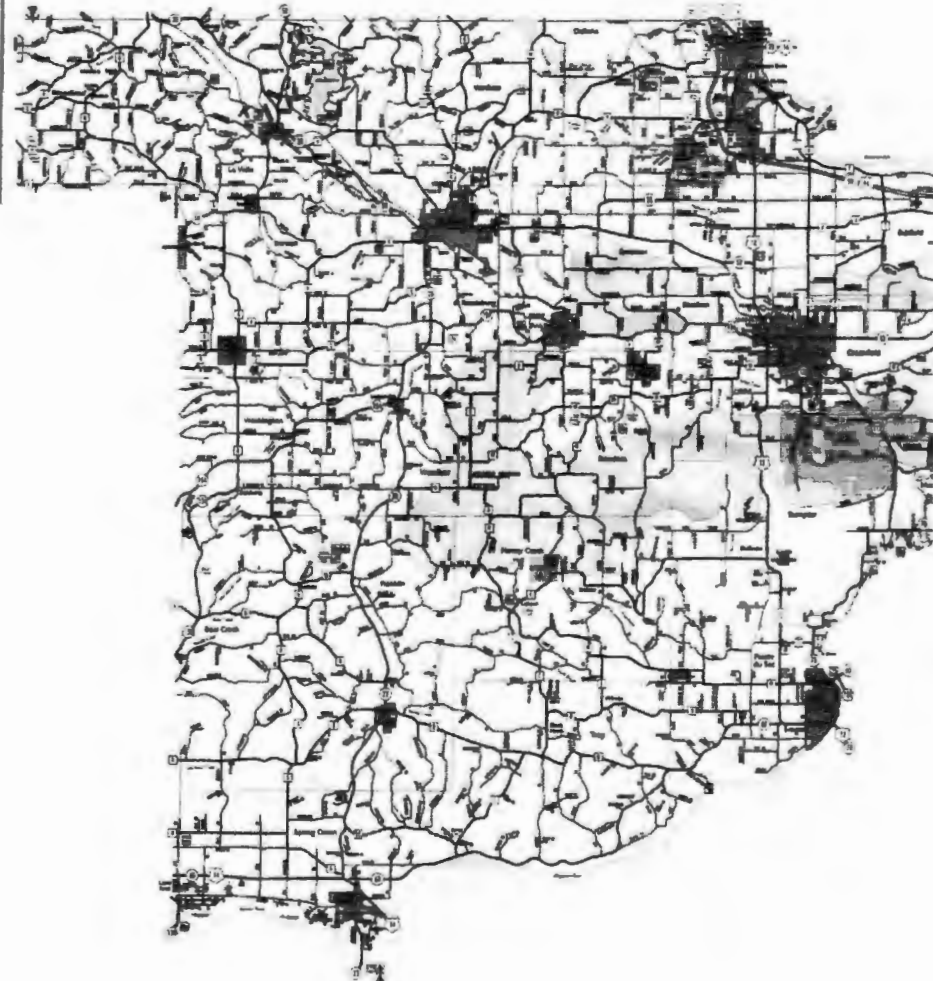
In Baraboo in 1933, it was agreed to pave Eighth street from Ash to Summit, to accommodate Highways 33, 12, and 33. This involved cutting down the hill on Eighth Avenue between Broadway and Birch. Federal aid was obtained as part of President Roosevelt's National Industrial Recovery Act, and the city agreed to maintain the thoroughfare. In 1935, the WPA, another Roosevelt innovation, widened Broadway between Fifth and Eighth Avenues, as it was now "a main arterial highway passing through the city."

It appears that both Highway 12 and Highway 33 passed through the downtown business section in those days. Evidence of this can be seen in Ochsner Park at the corner of Park and Eighth Avenue. This concrete pillar is said to have once been in the center of the street between the two Banks at Third and Oak. Some say it was at Fourth and Oak

The marker has an inscription all four sides, as if a traveler could stop in the middle of the street and read it for road directions. Each side of the badly damaged pillar reads either Highway 12 or Highway 33, one side saying 12R, indicating that the traveler should turn right there.

The same 1933 city council meeting provided for off-street parking for students behind the High school of that day, now the Civic Center. This same area is being rebuilt into a large modern parking lot as this article is being written. The City Council also vowed in 1933 to improve the sidewalk situation, a perennial problem in the city it seems! Some of the streets and alleys were gravel, and were oiled to keep down the dust. This met with mixed feelings by housewives when the children tracked it onto the kitchen linoleum.

Think of the amazement on the faces of the pioneer settlers if they could see the network of surfaced highways in Sauk County today, including Interstate 90-94. If gasoline prices continue to rise, the day may come when we will abandon some of the roads for lack of use. What a shame that we abandoned our railroads.





Downtown Baraboo, Fourth Street looking East

Guy Glazier Tells Of Old Paving Here

11-12-36

"Reading of the recent work of paving which is going on in Baraboo reminded me of the first paving that was ever done there", writes our old friend, Guy O. Glazier of La Mesa, California. A former resident of Baraboo, Mr. Glazier still keeps in touch with his home town through his Baraboo paper, other readers of which greatly enjoy his letters from time to time. In speaking of the paving he says:

"I wonder how many there are in Baraboo who remember it for it was nearly 50 years ago. The block on the south side of the courthouse park on Third street (now Third avenue) was paved with white cedar round blocks, about 7 inches long, set up on end on the smooth surfaced street. They were set as closely as possible together and chinked in between with sand. That was just a trial block but I wonder how long did it last?"

Mr. Glazier includes a photograph of himself for the oddity window, the picture having been taken when he stood in the famous old Picture Frame tree at Skyland, 5,000 feet up in the mountains above San Bernardino, California. Miss Hattie Gale, who has a summer cottage in a delightful picnic grove of stately pines nearby, took the picture of Mr. Glazier and the tree, an old dead sugar pine from which has grown in the form of a perfect square, and with even a notch to hang it up by on the upper part.

Mr. Glazier who still operates the Trading Post at La Mesa also includes a clipping about a skunk farm, apropos of which he writes: "An item in the San Diego Union this morning about a skunk farm up near Hollywood just reminded me of a skunk farm that some enterprising young business men of Baraboo some years ago started out in Fairfield, just east of Leach lake in the woods. They built a stockade of boards about six feet high and three feet in the ground and advertised to buy all the live skunks the boys would bring them. Well, they bought up about 100 skunks and were getting along fine when someone must have objected to the enterprise, for one morning there appeared a large hole in the fence and all the striped little "kitties" were gone.

"But as there is always a little good wind along with a bad breeze that little joke made good skunk trapping along down the bluff for H. H. Porter for several years. For Hite would always work at anything there was a "cent" in!

"Another little striped story of Baraboo history was when a couple of ministers came to town to hold revival meetings. "The Reverend Morrell Twins" were getting along fine, bringing sinners in. But their language was not as choice as men in this cloth should have used, some thought. So a couple of little "sinners", one night threw a skunk through a window and that was the end of the revival, at least so says Captain Howard of San Diego, formerly of Baraboo.

Epidemic once led to closing of Baraboo churches, schools

561

Suppose you heard today that some government bureaucrat had ordered all the theatres closed? Moreover, what if he or she also ordered all schools closed? And all the churches were ordered closed too! Time for a revolution?

Well, it happened in Wisconsin and Sauk County 82 years ago this fall, and there was hardly a whimper from the theatres and schools and churches. There was even a widespread campaign to urge compliance. So much for the much-vaunted independent spirit and freedom from government regulation that we sometimes attach to the old days.

The epidemic begins

There was good reason for compliance. All fall the story of the influenza epidemic had grown, from an occasional short note on the second page of the paper in the beginning to front page headlines by mid-October.

It was an emergency that would kill 8,459 people statewide and 20 million worldwide before it was over. More Americans died in the six months of the epidemic than were killed in World War I, the Korea War, and the Vietnam War put together. Only World War II and the Civil War had more casualties, and they lasted for four years.

There was no "flu shot" in those days. It would be 15 years before the virus would even be seen by an electron microscope. The only way known to fight the spread of the virus was to limit human-to-human contact, and the only agency that could enact and enforce compliance was the government.

In Wisconsin, the edict came from the state department of health and its director, Dr. Conelius Harper. These were the days of the great Progressive movement, which held that government was capable of benevolent management of many human affairs. It was a fortunate time for Wisconsin, for our epidemic management far surpassed that in most other states, according to a recent article in the Wisconsin Magazine of History.

Our state met the crisis skillfully, it says, and had one of the lowest death rates in the nation, thanks to an extensive health infrastructure. Every town, village, and city had a health board and a public health officer. Making the edict easier was the discipline of wartime, as well as the popular Progressive movement at its zenith, with its doctrine of faith in government.

These were also the waning days of World War I, and success in that venture was more newsworthy than the silent epidemic, though in the long run the epidemic ended up wasting more lives by far than did the war. All eyes were focused on the finally successful troop movements. It would be a victory that would unknowingly bring a flawed peace and the seeds for World War II, thanks in part to a conservative American Congress. The misery of displaced millions in Europe was also the perfect breeding ground for a virus that mutated from a normally mild affliction to a lethal medical emergency.

Sauk County

The news began innocently enough, but by Sept. 24, 1918, the Baraboo News saw fit to publish an eight-inch column on how to avoid the new sickness, not yet recognized as an epidemic. The advice in that dark age of medicine included suggestions to chew your food thoroughly and avoid tight clothes. More appropriately, readers were also advised to smother their coughs and sneezes, avoid crowds, and breathe deeply of fresh air.

The war still commanded the news, however, and the paper stated that 350 Yankee airplanes had hit the foe. Planes were still of the open cockpit type in those days, the first war in which airplanes were employed in Chicago; a youth had been fined five dollars and costs for singing "Die Wacht Am Rhein," a patriotic German song. The charge was disorderly conduct. Another headline read "Kaiser or Son, same to U.S." apparently the result of a report that the hated Kaiser would abdicate in favor of his son.

Nov. 2 incidentally brought cessation of all brewing of beer in the United States, the beginning of the ill-fated Prohibition amendment to the Constitution. Some had hoped that the coming Armistice might delay the proclamation so that there could be an alcoholic celebration of victory, but the News said they would be disappointed. Somehow the stock on hand would be sold, but the News opined "After that, what?"

INFLUENZA

All persons, except physicians, nurses and clergymen who are in attendance, are hereby cautioned not to enter or leave this house without permission from the Commissioner of Health.

This Placard is posted by order of the Commissioner of Health of the City of Milwaukee, and can be removed only by his order; if removed otherwise, occupant of house must report to the Health Office within 24 hours.



The epidemic deepens

By Oct. 10 the newspaper had been regularly printing obituaries, and a lady near Camp Grant in northern Illinois reported that soldiers were "dying by the hundreds, and bodies were piled sixteen deep." While obviously an exaggeration, Camp Grant ranked with Ft. Funston, Kan. as one of the worst military epidemic areas.

The next day the paper announced the institutional closures referred to in the beginning of this article. Acting on orders from the state Department of Health, the Baraboo Board of health proclaimed closure of all churches, schools, theatres and public meeting places, even though "the disease has not invaded this region to any great extent." Included in the proclamation was the order that all children under the age of 16 must remain at home unless they have a permit from the health officer.

The local board was headed by Dr. Sayles, and members included A.P. Cheek, A. Judevine and H.C. Graff. On the same page was reported the death of Henry Ringling, but the cause of death appears to be heart disease. This left only Charles, Alfred T. and John of the original brothers, and resulted in the diversion of the circus train to Bridgeport, Conn. instead of Baraboo. The paper took little notice of this.

Curiously the Al. Ringling Theatre was allowed to reopen three weeks later, on or about Nov. 3, though the churches remained closed until at least mid-November. No one with a cold or cough was to be admitted to the Al.

The paper stated, "folks have become hungry for good entertainment and are delighted with the removal of the 'lid.' The state of the art

ventilating system of the Al. was credited with the lifting of the lid, as it had the same type "that is employed in the largest and best theatres in the United States." Also, the air was said to be fumigated and perfumed.

By Nov. 16 the paper reported that there were 17,000 deaths from flu in the army camps, though influenza and pneumonia were grouped together in those days for purpose of reporting. On Nov. 18, a week after the Armistice which ended World War I the paper reported that 27,789 American doughboys had perished in the war (from all causes) over a two-year period, while in just two months the flu epidemic had taken 92,306 American lives.

NO MORE BREWING

11-2
1918 **BARABOO BEER**

Brewing of beer and other malt beverages all over the country ceased Saturday night when the presidential proclamation to this effect went into effect. Friends of the industry who had hoped for an eleventh hour recall of the ruling on account of the armistice were disappointed. For the first time in many, many years the industry has stopped in Baraboo. Some months ago the Ruhland company was forced to close on account of poor business and finances. A majority of the citizens hope they will never brew intoxicants again.

The breweries have a large stock on hand and this will now be sold. After that what?

CITY CHURCHES SUNDAY SERVICES

11- First Methodist Episcopal
16- Clarence E. Weed, Pastor.

18 While we would gladly meet together to express the praise and thanksgiving with which our hearts are filled, we cheerfully cooperate with the health department of our city. Let us "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," by directing our thoughts toward our heavenly Father and choosing our reading and busy-ing ourselves, so that at the day's close we may have grown to be more like Him. In these most momentous hours since the coming of Jesus Christ we ought to walk humbly before our God, sincerely praying in thought, word and action that He will continue to give direction and power to the constructive forces of the world. The greatest task ever entrusted to man is now ours. May we seek the Father's blessing and worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.

Despite the reopening of the theatre, a Methodist Episcopal Church notice on Nov. 16 showed it to still be closed, though "we cheerfully cooperate with the health department of our city." School, however, resumed on about Dec. 1.

By Dec. 15, 1918 a patriotic service was reported at the Advent Christian Church, so the ban apparently had been lifted in the interim. The paper was still warning citizens to avoid crowds.

HEALTH BOARD CLOSING ORDER IN FULL FORCE

Schools and Theaters Shut Their
Doors; Public Meetings Called
Off
10-11-18

NO CHURCH SERVICES
TO BE HELD SUNDAY

Step Taken Believing Preventive
Better Than Cure---Children to
Remain at Home s

With the proclamation of the state board of health closing the churches, schools, theaters and public meetings of all kinds, where it was thought advisable, the Baraboo board of health has taken action. There will be no more public meetings in Baraboo until further notice. This means theatres, churches, schools, clubs and social gatherings. There are many cases of influenza in Madison, Milwaukee and other places, although the disease has not invaded this region to any great extent.

Schools Close

The Baraboo public schools closed on Thursday evening. All children under sixteen years of age must remain at home unless they have a permit from the health officer.

The Baraboo board of health consists of A. P. Cheek, A. Judevine and H. C. Graff. Dr. L. W. Sayles is the health officer.

It is easy for us today to dismiss the influenza epidemic of 1918 as predating the miracles of modern medicine, but lurking in the wings today may be similar scourges such as AIDS, the Ebola virus, and the West Nile Encephalitis recently in the news. The question remains whether our population will be as cooperative as the good citizens of 1918 were.

So you think you know Baraboo?

Where is the Warner Memorial Road?

By Dr. Bob Dewel

Historian Robert Dewel has had a long-running love affair with the City of Baraboo. In his research he has sought out and publicized men and women over the last century and a half who have made significant and unusual contributions to the city, from stagecoach driver Preston Brigham to John and Murrel Lange.

This account takes us back to 1914 and the days before there was a road between Baraboo and Devils Lake.

Quick, now, you long-time Baraboo residents, when was the last time you drove on the Warner Memorial Road? For that matter, where is the Warner Memorial Road?

Yes, Baraboo has Ringling and Gollmar avenues, plus streets named after the first five Presidents — but none, unfortunately named after Benjamin Franklin. There are also streets named after Lincoln and Taft. But Warner Road?

Well, Warner Road, dedicated in October, 1921, was a gift to the Town of Baraboo, providing a direct link from Baraboo to Devils Lake. We know it now by the mundane designation of Highway 123.

Warner Road was among the first concrete roads in the State, and includes its State Park extension all the way to the Chateau, where a brass plaque can be seen. Additional plaques can be found on pillars on either side of the road near the present Baraboo city limits.

And Warner, who was he? Wilbur William Warner was not even a local resident, though he had been raised in the area. Fifty years later he put a clause in his will allocating \$40,000, a huge sum in those days, to the Town of Baraboo for a "concrete boulevard from Devils Lake to Baraboo."

For thirty-eight years Warner had owned a piano and phonograph store in Madison, but as a youth was a mining and gold prospector in

Colorado. He left Sauk County at the age of 11, going to Colorado by ox team with his parents.

The *Baraboo Daily News* of 1921 tells how Warner and a

close friend, O. D. Brandenburg, while motoring to Baraboo, remembered that a very prominent Baraboo business leader, wifeless

and childless, had left nothing to the city in his will.

The *News*, apparently quoting Brandenburg, reported the conversation: "What could he have done?" inquired Warner casually.

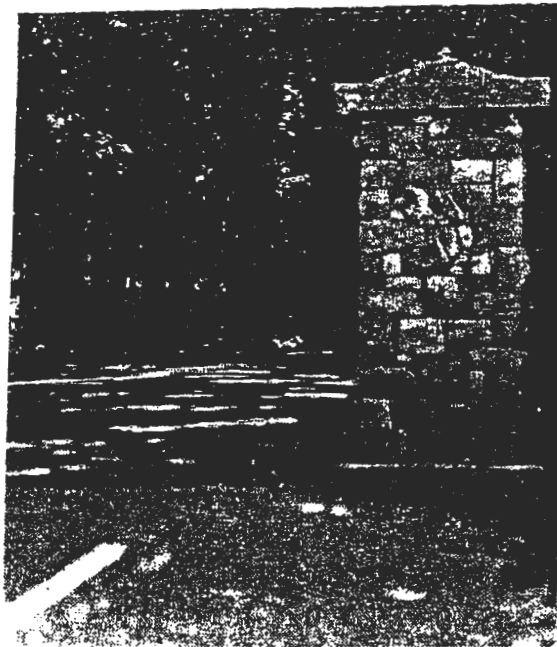
"Left enough to build a concrete boulevard from Devils Lake to Baraboo."

"What would it cost?"

"Oh, say \$10,000 a mile."

"Three miles. \$30,000," mused Warner, "and something more for maintenance. . . \$10,000."

And so, when a year or two later the Warner will was read, it was found to contain a legacy of \$40,000 for the lake road. Warner had put his money where his heart was.



Sun photo by Harold Wilfils
The north entrance of Devils Lake State Park was the destination of the Warner Memorial Road.

My First Story

---in Baraboo Sun

1997

This 1914 conversation, followed by Warner's death in 1916, did not see its fulfillment

until 1921 due to wartime shortages. In addition, the roadway presented problems to the County Board in securing a right of way since no roadway existed between the present Farm Kitchen area and the present park entrance, nor from that entrance to the Chateau area.

The road was to begin in Baraboo at the south end of the old High Bridge, now gone but an impressive structure in its day. It stood 30 to 40 feet above the Baraboo river at the south end of Oak Street. The abutments can still be seen. There is no record that the canoe club of its day found it unattractive.

Some realignment of streets appears to have been required. Indeed, the present Parkway for the swimming pool to Elm Street was not completed until 1929, thus finally connecting Broadway to the Warner Road. The deplorable condition of this four-block stretch today might qualify it to be Baraboo's "road from hell," even with last week's patch-over of the patches.

Warner's vision also required the cooperation of the state Conservation Commission in establishing a completely new park entrance and roadway. When all was done, a forward-looking city council had contributed \$11,164, the Town of Baraboo \$3,409, The Sauk County Board (unanimous) \$21,643, and the State Conservation Commission \$23,547.

Thus the concrete ribbon from the High Bridge to the Chateau area cost \$102,400, an astronomical sum in those days. In comparison, a little bridge on Highway 12 over Skillet Creek, scheduled for the year 2000, will cost the same amount!



The old High Bridge, which connected Oak Street and the South Side, is part of the Warner Memorial Highway story. submitted photo

The four governmental units of that day had the vision to work together and achieve Warner's dream, for the benefit of generations to follow — though there were undoubtedly citizens then who did not share that vision. Even the Legislature had to act on the matter, as well as the Highway Commission.

To be sure, there were other ways to reach Devils Lake, but the routes were circuitous, and often impassable. In "A Lake Where Spirits Live," Ken Lange reports, "The wheels sank to the hub in rust and clay filled in between the spokes solid. Rubbers were sucked from pedestrians' feet in the sticky mud."

Warner's plan provided a direct route, though his paving was only 12 feet wide — but good enough for Model T Fords to pass. The original concrete can be seen directly north of the Chateau. Warner had specified that a bicycle path be included, and a gravel shoulder was deemed sufficient as "bicycles are so little used."

Hardly had the road opened, before its dedication, there was an accident between a 1920 auto and a buggy. It happened at the top of the hill on Walnut street, between a farmer and a prominent local attorney. The latter was driving the car, and the *News* stated that "the attorney will generously settle the damages."

The idea of a direct route was not new, however. Back in the summer of 1894, the town was buzzing with the news that the Northwestern railroad line was to be double-tracked from Madison through Baraboo to Elroy. Ten men had painted the High Bridge in 7 days. The Palisades Company was planning a hotel atop the West Bluff. Two trains had brought 2,100 Illinois visitors to the park one day. Also, the Methodist ladies were having a fund raiser for a new building—chicken pie was 15 cents, and if you wanted ice cream and cake, it was 10 cents extra.

Besides those exciting events in the thriving city, a forward-looking Board of Supervisors was considering a petition to "lay out a new route to Devils Lake," using "the most direct and feasible route" and avoiding "several dangerous and at times impassable places on the



Sun photo by Harold Willis

This marker can be seen at the Devils Lake north shore Chateau.

present road.' Railroad tracks were also a hazard with the frequent trains of that time.

Despite the 1894 proposal, however, it took the beneficent will of W. W. Warner in 1916 to provide the sparkplug for construction of the road. Meanwhile, many local citizens took one of the many trains each day to the lake and back.

Warner is only one among many whose generosity with their material goods has made the Baraboo area rich in the public works that make our city a great place to live.

There are dozens of examples of philanthropy in our history, from Preston Brigham in the 1840's to John and Murrel Lange and the new University Center building in 1997. In the case of the Warner Road, the cooperation between the town, city, county and state serves as a guiding example from nearly 80 years ago.



Ochsner Park area might have been a hospital Abe Wood, Dr. Ochsner and

Ochsner Park

By Dr. Bob Dewel

This is the fourth in a series of articles about major benefactors of the Baraboo area.

There is no record that Abe Wood ever shot a bear or a wolf on his property in the 1840's.

He might be surprised now to learn that a bear and a wolf are permanent residents on what used to be his land.

Abe Wood

So if this is a story about Ochsner Park, where does Abe Wood come in? Well, it is hard to talk about the park without referring to the first resident on the land. Abe was not only the first resident of the future Baraboo, but perhaps the most colorful character in our history, and the first dam builder.

Abe arrived on the scene in 1839 and built his ramshackle 12-foot-square cabin where Ochsner Park is today. The tall woodsman with the very large head and six toes on one foot had a Native American wife, and had been an early

trapper in the area, then "on the outer fringe of civilization." His nearest neighbors were in Portage on the east, where Abe killed a man, and Sauk City on the South, where he killed a bear.

The irascible Wood, along with Wallace Rowan, built the first of the many dams that have been an integral part of this city, a heritage now threatened despite their historical and esthetic significance. Abe's dam washed away in 1844, but it was soon replaced.



From "Abe Wood" by Cole

Abe Wood

Eventually a dam of Frank Lloyd Wright design graced the head of the rapids, and was removed with great difficulty some twenty years ago. It had allowed boating all the way to North Freedom, traversed now only by an occasional canoe. Three dams continue to serve the city, withstanding with ease the great deluge of July 1993.

Other settlers had followed Wood, and his lawless character frequently brought him in conflict

with the frontier law. He once dug his way out of the local jail. He barricaded himself in the Western "hotel" after threatening the local land agent, and he also threatened historian Canfield. When unable to find the latter, he destroyed Mrs. Peck's entire picnic table of china, a rare possession on the prairie.

Wood and three others, known as the "Baraboo Rushers," once swam to and commandeered a Mississippi steamboat, overpowering the crew with their tomahawks, knives, and revolvers. For the "remainder of the trip the Baraboo Rushers had their own way."

When his wife left him to rejoin the Indians in 1850, Wood apparently abandoned his log cabin on what is now Ochsner Park. When his daughter married at a young age, Wood "shut his son-in-law up" for a time. Abe died in 1855.

The Ochsner Story

Erhart Mueller has published an 85-page booklet on the remarkable Ochsner families, and the following comments are taken from his chronicle. No doubt descendants live in the county today, many with different names due to marriage. During the last half of the 19th century, the name was prominent and for a time ubiquitous.

There is no way that Mueller's detailed account of the Ochsners can be summarized. Suffice to say that these brilliant and hard-work-

ing Swiss immigrants and descendants rose to preeminence nationally in the medical and other fields. Mueller lists 26 medical doctors, for example, and there are several inventions credited to them.

Moreover, there are local landmarks associated with the family, such as Nature Conservancy areas. In addition, there are close connections between the families and such greats as Owen Gromme, Aldo Leopold, August Derleth, and the Dr.'s Mayo in Rochester, Minn. There are also connections to the present day Farm Kitchen and Barn restaurants.

There seem to have been three major families, some in Honey Creek, some in Bear Valley, and some in Prairie du Sac. The first group had the most connection with Baraboo, where the five children were educated despite their residence in Honey Creek. Their Swiss immigrant father had learned English by reading German and English Bibles together, page by page. Most of the family were associated with the Freethinkers movement in Sauk City.

The Ochsner Park Property

There is some confusion as to how Ochsner Park became part of Baraboo. By 1883, the Honey Creek patriarch, Henry, had moved to Baraboo, building the red brick home now in the park. He died in 1889, followed by his wife in 1891. Erhart Mueller states, "In 1895, the Ochsner home and 12 acres of land in west Baraboo were deeded to the city, now Ochsner Park."

However, he later states, "In 1911, Dr. Albert J. Ochsner offered to donate the Ochsner homestead, now known as Ochsner Park, to the City of Baraboo for an up-to-date hospital on condition \$50,000 be raised . . ." This effort failed, and the \$15,000 that had been raised remained invested until 1929, when it was given to St. Mary's Ringling Hospital, then a frame building on 10th St. It was 1945 before a modern building such as envisioned by Dr. Ochsner was built.

To confuse the issue even more, another source states, "In 1918, Dr. Albert Ochsner donated his share of the Ochsner homestead to the city on condition it would buy the other Ochsners' interest in the land for \$3400." 28 acres were involved in the park eventually.

News reports from 1918 and 1919 may clear up the mystery, for it appears that the 1895 and other donations of land did not include the red brick home until 1918. The property was occupied for many years by the Campbell family, both before and after the 1918 donation.

In 1919, the park was dedicated, including the "new bandstand," from which the Baraboo Marine Band "gave their best," according to the paper. It was presumed the Park would retain the Ochsner name, as "it has been known as the Ochsner Park for some years."

Dr. Albert Ochsner

It seems obvious that Dr. Albert Ochsner was the driving force

behind the donation. This Honey Creek son of a Swiss immigrant had risen to international fame in his chosen profession, medicine, contributing many research papers and inventing surgical instruments. For his funeral in 1925, special railroad cars brought friends and associates from Chicago, some 60 persons in all, and Dr. Mayo of Rochester spoke at the funeral service.

The crowd of 500 mourners swamped the Denzer area. An idea of the Sauk County roads of the time can be noted by the warning of the *News-Republic*: "It is about 25 miles to Denzer, or over an hour's drive." Dr. Ochsner is buried in Honey Creek in the Freethinkers Cemetery.

A fine marble bench dedicated to his memory was later "removed by those whose ideals were not of the high caliber of Dr. Albert J. Ochsner." A monument to his memory was dedicated in the park on July 7, 1972.



A. J. Ochsner

Courtesy Sauk Co. Historical Museum

Dr. Albert J. Ochsner

Over the years many persons have donated to the park, and we hesitate to enumerate them for the real danger of overlooking some. A mention should be made of the plaque to Herman Grotophorst, a friend, who served many years on the Park Commission and donated the band shell and "stocks and bonds that were eventually worth approximately \$50,000."

The excellent zoo in the park is remarkable for a city the size of

Baraboo. It began in 1926 with two bear cubs caught in Wisconsin Dells, plus two deer from the Conservation Department. There are many memorial plaques in the zoo area, and the "Zoo Crew" has been of invaluable assistance.

Soon the only real rapids of the Baraboo river, which separate Ochsner and Attridge Parks, may be enhanced with an all-weather lighted walking and biking path, courtesy of the persistence and monetary contributions of the Kiwanis Club.

And Abe Wood? Abe is not a city benefactor, but it was he who first realized the beauty of these acres, and their potential for locating a city. His cabin is gone, but a bear and a wolf now languish contentedly on the property. Abe wouldn't know what to make of that!

Sources of information:

- Library, Historical Society and newspaper accounts
- "Abe Wood" by Cole, now owned by Soiltest
- "Ochsner" by Erhart Mueller



1930 The beginning of the Oschner Park Zoo

Looking west under the bridge, but over the dam. No Broadway Bridge then.
After prolonged controversy, the bridge would be removed before the end of the decade..