

# 1920 TO 1925

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## County Didn't Roar in the Roaring Twenties **Tales of Earlier Days**

By Bob Dewel

Like most wars, WWI produced its sequela of changing mores, and life in Baraboo, indeed in the whole county, was no exception. The song "How're going to keep 'em down on the farm, after they've seen Paree" says it all, in a way. After a short recession, the stock market had soared in the 20's, as did most people's standard of living, all to be brought down in 1929.

Baraboo and the county did not share completely in those happy days. Two big industries, the Gollmar and Ringling Circuses, were abruptly gone, the latter in 1918. Adding insult to injury was the gradual and by now serious loss of the division point of the railroad, absorbed into Madison as are so many things. Goc, in "Many a Fine Harvest" reports Baraboo's population dropped from 6324 in 1910 to 5538 in 1920, and only gained seven additional souls by 1930. The county lost 584 persons during that time.

We've already written of the battle of the bridge locations, culminating in a bridge, for the first time, on Broadway in Baraboo. A perusal of the Virgil Cady scrapbooks of city affairs in this decade did not reveal stories of great interest, though the lighting and sewer-ing of the city seems to have been a high priority. Cady had a nice sense of the extra-ordinary, however, and included many unusual clippings, none of which deserve a full article. Instead we will mention a few, to give a flavor of life as lived by our grandfathers in those somewhat muted halcyon days. So, here are some vignettes.

### WCTU and 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment

In 1926 the WCTU was a new political power to be reckoned with, so when they announced a reception that

year in honor of the anniversary of Prohibition, you can bet that every government official, clergyman, and school administrator and teacher made their attendance known. On January 18, 1926 such a scene occurred at the Presbyterian Church, and "King Alcohol" was vigorously assailed by all present. It was announced that Wisconsin had only 17 federal officers to enforce the law statewide!

It was also noted that the vacated saloon locations had been quickly filled with more savory occupants, keeping business alive in the community. All was not perfect, however, for some of those locations now housed pool halls, and the city council moved to regulate loitering there by underage boys. On the same day as the WCTU reception, an ordinance was published fining an owner \$25 for the offence of tolerating minors in his pool hall. For the second offense, he could lose his license. For some reason, loitering on the new Broadway Bridge was also prohibited.

### A Six Cent Verdict

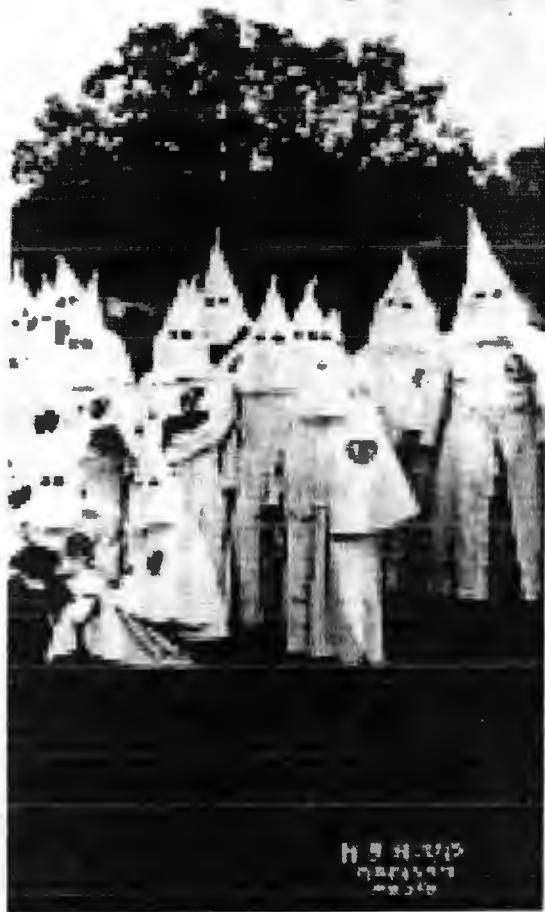
In a curious lawsuit, Judge Ray Stevens awarded only 6 cents damages to Louis Klagus because stones from a city quarry blast landed in his fields. He had claimed \$250, and declined a settlement from the City for \$200. Undaunted, however, Klagus took the matter to the State Supreme Court. Here he was vindicated, for the city was enjoined from "casting more stones" on the Klagus property. The quarry was on Quarry Street, and can still be seen.

### Dance Hall Regulation

Not only pool halls, as mentioned above, but dance halls came under the scrutiny of the council. The matter was first presented as a local option in Wisconsin, under the name Terpsichore, referring to the dance Muse of early Greek mythology. In an exceptionally long ordinance possessed in 1924, severe regulations were placed on such halls. The \$10 license fee was significant in those days, when reluctant males



Above:  
An unusual view of  
The High Bridge and  
McArthur Dam



Left: A portion of a  
Very large picture  
Showing hundreds of  
KKK members In a  
Madison Convention

paid 10 cents to awkwardly ask a girl to dance with them. You could not be present at a dance under the age of 16, unless chaperoned. Dance halls had to close before midnight on Saturday evenings, and by 1 A.M. on other nights, though they could reopen at 8 A.M.

#### The Ku Klux Klan in Baraboo

The references are rare, but the KKK had a presence in Baraboo, or at least in Sauk County, in the 1920's. In a previous article, (2003, page 74) we published a picture of a huge Klan gathering in Madison, purportedly including Baraboo men among those in sheets and pointed hats.

In an undated clipping on the Cady papers, in the 1924 section, a KKK cross was burned in Baraboo. The short article was headlined "Flaming Cross Looms in West", reporting that the cross was placed on a high point of land "near the vicinity of the bridge over the railroad near the Excelsior Creamery" This is probably near the Deppe Street in Baraboo today. Railroad men responded, thinking it was a telephone pole ablaze,

The newspaper reported that the cross was still standing the following morning, and had apparently been wound with rags and soaked with kerosene to ignite it. It disappeared later, but was believed to signify that a new chapter of KKK had been formed in the city. This was verified by the fact that literature had been circulated throughout the city the previous week, asking residents to take membership.

The paper casually mentioned that other crosses were burned throughout the city the same night. In a later brief mention, \$85.90 taxes on the KKK were refunded, as fraternal orders were not to be taxed. During an election in the mid-twenties, Ernest C. Mueller sued L.H. Guhl for slander, asserting that Guhl claimed Mueller was a KKK member. Both were running for sheriff!

Bridges, Replacements, and Bypasses

Bridges were a big civic improvement then, with replacement of the Walnut and Second Avenue Bridges a priority. At the same time, totally new bridges were built on Broadway and from Island Court to Lyons (West Baraboo), none having been there before. Soon to be built, in 1937, was the West Baraboo highway bridge, bypassing Baraboo and the new Broadway Bridge altogether. Like all of the others built in the 20's and 30's, the 1937 bridge on Highway 12 has been replaced recently.

So much replacement of short-lived bridges, yet a stone bridge in Spain is still in use. It was built by the Romans! So much for our vaunted civilization, at least as far as bridges are concerned. Now another bypass is proposed, to speed visitors even more rapidly past Baraboo and funnel them into the already congested Highway 12 "strip" to our North! Baraboo was denied an interstate exit on County A in the 1960's, but are being allowed all of two exits from the newest Highway 12 bypass, if it is constructed.

So there you have a glimpse of the 1920's in Baraboo, as the city recovered from its loss of two major industries, the circus and the railroad--the scrapbook can be seen at the Historical Society. Residents still loved their city, however, as evidenced by the will of Edward Farley. He left \$7000, a very neat sum in 1924, for the erection of a water fountain in the Courthouse Park. It served for many years. Baraboo and the county slowly drifted into the Great Depression, followed by the euphoria of the Powder Plant and WWII. You can't keep a good town down.

The Roaring Twenties and  
the Al. Ringling Theatre  
Yesteryear Revisited  
By Bob Dewel

When the Al. Ringling Theatre entered the roaring twenties, it already had established itself as a legitimate theatre with nationwide recognition. The previous article illustrated its frequent and varied stage presentations, but the new decade would see a great expansion, followed by a precipitous drop as talking pictures and radio began to dominate the entertainment world.

The decade of the twenties has been called the Roaring Twenties because it was a time of profound change in America. With women, not only could they vote now, but skirt length rose dramatically with the advent of the "flapper". Soldiers returning from World War I brought a new perspective on life and conduct, having been influenced by their European experiences.

True the conservative voters had, in the soldiers' absence, succeeded in passing the ill-fated Prohibition of alcoholic beverages, a classic example of the ineffectiveness of government in regulating social and moral issues. Moreover, the perfidy of unregulated big business had resulted in the Teapot Dome oil scandal, a forerunner of the Insull and, more recently, the savings and loan and current Enron scandals.

Silent movies, and later "talkies", were the major entertainment venue, accompanied by the Victrola craze, and later by the advent of radio. In Baraboo, life seemed to revolve around the Al. Ringling Theatre. The only surviving theatre, the Gem on Third Street, was closed. The building was sold at auction on Oct. 11, 1921, and for good reason—the Al. was bringing culture and entertainment to Baraboo

on a scale unequaled except in the major cities in the nation.

1921

In 1921, some 65 stage performances were listed in the Wilkinson scrapbooks, mentioned in the previous article. In addition, city and county school commencements occupied the stage. Benefit performances were freely given by the Al., a privately owned business, for the starving Armenians or other worthy causes. The entire entrance proceeds for a Mary Pickford movie were donated to the Armenians.

The theatre was closed for a time on March 24 when it was learned that two youths who developed scarlet fever had been at a performance. Scarlet fever was sometimes fatal in those days. Miss Lulu Betts, by Portage's Zona Gale, was one of the performances that year. Hamlet and The Mikado were also among the shows.

1922-23

These were golden years for Baraboo and for the Al. Rollicking vaudeville acts competed with Lyceum lectures, home talent shows, and dance programs. Benefits for the new high school band uniform fund were given, and Fred Terbilcox held forth on the Mighty Barton Organ when needed.

A highlight this year was the appearance on April 14, 1922, of Lionel Barrymore, renowned king of the legitimate stage, in "The Claw", a tragedy. Robert Ringling, son of Charles and Edith, sang in a benefit for the school library, and the Winnegar Players performed for seven nights, including Christmas. This Wisconsin troupe appeared regularly at the Al., sometimes twice a year for a full week of shows.

Another Ringling, Richard of Montana, the son of Alf. T and Della, appeared in 1923 in a farming and western ranch show. Bunn the Baker, a popular local figure then, served buns which were "bathed in Holstein butter." Fiske O'Hare and May Robson, popular Broadway actors, appeared on stage.

# AL RINGLING THEATRE

AMERICA'S PRETTIEST PLAYHOUSE

Mr. Barrymore's Minneapolis engagement starts Sun., Apr. 16th.

**Evening Only**  
at 8:15

**FRI., APR. 14**

Arthur Hopkins will Present

# LIONEL BARRYMORE

(Himself)

in Henry Bernstein's Great Play

## BARABOO PUT TO THE TEST

From Chicago Mr. Barrymore toured Louisville and Indianapolis last week, then to Kansas City all this week, and St. Louis all next week. Then follows one week enroute to Minneapolis—and Baraboo has been chosen as one of the six cities to be visited during the week between St. Louis and the Twin Cities.

## NOT CHOSEN BY ACCIDENT

The Al. Ringling Theatre is being given this attraction with an all-important test in mind. Theatregoers fully appreciate the necessity of giving these genuinely big-city attractions the packed attendance they MUST have if we are to hope to have these attractions sent to us. Baraboo is exceedingly fortunate in two respects: first in advantage of geographical or railroad location (between principal cities played by all big touring attractions, going to or from the coast), and second, the advantage of having "America's Prettiest Playhouse," to which all producers stand ready to send their attractions providing we will support them.

Shown above is part of the half page advertisement for the appearance of Lionel Barrymore, perhaps the most famous actor of his day. The show was a coup for the Al. Ringling.

On some nights, the high school quartet sang before a movie.

Robert Ringling returned in 1923, and his voice was described as "of the large and opulent nature generally found in Italians". The Ringlings, of course, were of German and French heritage. The Elks did a minstrel show, and both the Baraboo American Legion Band and the Baraboo Community Singers appeared on stage during the year.

## PRICES:

2.75 Boxes and 23 rows  
Main Floor; 2.20 last 2  
rows; 1.10 first & second  
boxes next to stage (un-  
der-priced acct. not good  
locations). Incl. Tax

Mail orders now filled in  
order received when accom-  
panied by self ad-  
dressed stamped envelope

1924-25-26

Perhaps by now the local appetite for culture and entertainment had been satiated, for the stage performances dropped to 32 in 1924 and 1925. The Firpo-Dempsey fight was announced by wire from the stage, as were election results, and it was announced that "the organ will stop when the fight begins". No radio coverage then, of course.



Credit: Jennifer McBride Baraboo News-Republic

City and county commencement exercises continued each year, and the YMCA and Community Singers and Legion Band continued their traditional appearances. Clergy were invited to a private showing of the Passion Play. Popular movie stars of the day were Jackie Coogan, Tom Mix, Harold Lloyd, and Richard Dix.

The George White Scandals best exemplified the roaring twenties. An ad promised "marvelous girls, see them in their underalls." There was a chorus of 60 of them, "all under the age of 18". Erle Faber, who was later to be recognized nationally as a tenor, appeared in a local talent show.

#### You Wouldn't Believe It

The stage saw less and less use in 1927 and 1928. Many of the local traditions continued, however, and some merchants put on a spring style show revue. The original Hope-Jones Wurlitzer organ was sold to the Evangelical Church, S.W. corner of Ash and Fifth, and the Mighty Barton was installed, perhaps to bolster flagging attendance. This event was most fortunate for Baraboo, for with talking pictures arriving the following year, the organ was not needed for silent movies. The Barton still speaks with authority, and is used frequently now for tours and warm ups before a performance.

There is, however, a human interest story regarding the theatre and former residents of Baraboo. It seems that somewhere in this early time frame, a small boy in Des Moines received a postcard from his father, who was a musician with a vaudeville group. The card simply said "You wouldn't believe the theatre in this small town in Wisconsin".

The small boy was Bill Mossman, who later, as an electrical engineer, became manager of the Wisconsin Power and Light area office in Baraboo. Bill frequently served as stage and lighting manager at the AI. for the Theatre Guild, and his late wife Sue appeared in several productions. Bill served for a time on the AI Ringling Theatre Friends board. Moreover, a son, John, not only appeared on the stage of the AI., but is now engaged in theatrical instruction in Chicago.

Some in Baraboo take the theatre for granted, but others, like the traveling musician, still marvel at this "theatre you wouldn't believe" in a small city in Wisconsin.

## ELIZA MORRIS AND THE MORRIS HOTEL

## Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

The name Eliza Morris is not exactly a household word in Baraboo or Sauk County. She was not even born in Wisconsin, yet an advantageous marriage brought her not only hard work but later brought her a share of the national and international fame of her affluent husband. And she lived in Baraboo for some six decades.

Eliza Morris? She is better known as Lou (or Louise) Ringling, wife of Al. the first circus king. Both knew each other as children in McGregor, Iowa, though Lou would have been one year ahead in school. After a few years the Ringling family left McGregor, ending up in Baraboo.

Life with Al.

Al. may have become the circus king of the world, but he wasn't a king when they met for the second time and married on Nov. 18, 1880. Her outlook in joining her life with his was one of long hours, constant travel, and only faint hopes of real wealth and power. One time that travel included driving a team of horses 350 miles pulling a circus wagon.

It is well known that Lou spent the early years of their marriage as a performer, and particularly as snake charmer, equestrienne, and mind reader. She later served as wardrobe mistress in the growing organization, supervising twenty women in the wardrobe headquarters at 532 Oak, over the present Corner on Wisconsin store.

In 1905, and now in relative affluence, they built the brown stone mansion now occupied by the Elks Club. Their 35th anniversary in 1915 found them in even greater affluence, though Lou is said to have remarked that Al. wasn't much fun now that he was rich. There was even some talk of divorce.

Now largely retired from active circus management, Al's great interest, fortunately for Baraboo, was the construction of his theatre, still a masterpiece of pre-revolutionary French decor to this day. Meant to be a gift to the city and a monument to himself, it was completed on Nov. 17, 1915.

The Theatre Historical Society of America recognizes the Al. Ringling Theatre as the first of the opulent movie palaces which spread across the country in the next decade. Sadly, six weeks after the opening of his palatial playhouse, Al. Ringling was dead.

The Delton Investment

It would seem that the inheritance of some \$365,000 plus in 1916 dollars, plus the Fourth Street house, a cottage at Mirror Lake, and \$100,000 in the bank, would have guaranteed Lou Ringling a happy and comfortable life in her remaining years. Al. had long since sold his share of the circus to his brothers. The records show, however, at least two failed financial ventures by Lou, and an estate valued at only \$6,500 at her death on October 14, 1941.

She had quickly moved from the huge home on the SW corner of Broadway and Fifth Avenue to a house on Fourth Avenue near the Methodist Church, and later to 720 Ash, in a house called the Wigwam.

Some say that Lou's hotel project was Lou's answer to Al's theatre, and was meant as some sort of memorial to herself, just as Al. had done. As early as June 14, 1917, she had opened what was called the Fern Dell pavillion, apparently a dance hall, at Mirror Lake.

A program from that date shows a concert by the Peterson Orchestra. This was wartime, and of the five opening numbers, at least two have military titles, such as "Her Soldier Boy, America First, and Let's All be Americans now", the latter listing "Berlin" (Irving) as one of the composers.

The dancing program followed, with such dances of the day as Two-step, fox trot, one step, square dance, and waltz. There were twenty such dances listed, followed by the word refreshments. Prohibition was about to be established, and there is no indication of a bar.

Apparently the enterprise was successful, for in three years the papers announced the opening of the Morris Hotel on July 3, 1920 with the headline "New Hotel at Mirror Lake Overflowing". Giving it her maiden name Morris, Lou had spent \$100,000 on the complex, which included the pavillion, a garage, gasoline plant, well, and launches.

All 37 rooms were taken on opening night, when 154

dinners were served. The pavillion was actually separate, for the paper speaks of it as being at the upper end of the lake, while the hotel was at the present corner of Xanadu and Ishnala, in the village of Delton. Lake Delton did not exist at that time, being developed later thanks to a dam on the creek.

The area is now occupied by Pine Cove, a modern condominium development, including the north and east foundation steps of the original hotel. Kathy Sperl, a resident there, supplied much of the material about the hotel and associated golf course, some of which came from the Dells County Historical Society.

The paper gushed that the hotel had excellent cuisine, quick service, and best of all "a box spring bed in every room." Because of a water pump failure, guests on July 4 had to make ablutions using water served in pitchers, pans, and dippers.

Misfortune lurked ahead for Lou, however, for in 1932 the hotel, now valued at only \$75,000. apparently a Depression price, burned to the ground. Only some ground floor furnishing were saved, despite water pumped from Mirror Lake. Even Lou had to flee the early morning blaze, and by 8 A.M. only smouldering ruins remained. The popular hotel, known by then as Mirror Lake Inn, was no more.

Curiously, it was empty of guests the night of the fire, though some were expected the following day. A garage was saved, and the golf course building remained untouched.

Mrs. Ringlins stated that the building was partially insured, although another newspaper report said there was no insurance.

#### The Dole House

This was not, however, Lou Ringling's first investment disaster. Thanks to alert reader Ginny Bower, I have a newspaper feature story from Crystal Lake Illinois, and it tells how Lou Ringling had already made a bad investment there.

Along with a few others, Lou had invested heavily in the proposed restoration of the Dole home in Crystal Lake Illinois, Built in 1865 for \$100,000. Following Dole's financial collapse in 1883, the property was owned by an ice company until its sale to Mrs. Ringling in 1922, as principal investor. Half a million dollars was then sunk into its restoration as a country club.

The Crystal Lake newspaper story says "She lost her investment and most of her inherited fortune." when the property fell into bankruptcy and receivership during the Depression. Various owners included a Catholic boys school, followed by a Congregational Church center. Undaunted, an historic preservation committee in Crystal Lake has now completed renovation of the estate, converting it to a community center and banquet area.

As was stated, Lou Ringling had to live modestly for her remaining years until her death in 1941 at age 91. The once magnificent estate had now dwindled to only \$6500, including the house, and it was willed to William Prielipp, long time chauffeur and



caretaker of the Ringling family. The Illinois newspaper states that within twelve days of her death, Prielipp married a Baraboo woman, apparently on the basis of his newly inherited fortune.

Thanks to her misfortunes and fall from financial security, Lou Ringling has no memorial such as the Ringling Theatre. She is well remembered as a gracious lady, fondly called Aunt Lou, by all who knew her. She is buried beside Al. in the imposing mausoleum in the Walnut Hill Cemetery.

## CONCERT

FROM 8:30 TO 9:00

1. Opening March—"America First" ----- Lossey
2. Selection—"Her Soldier Boy" ----- Romberg
3. Popular Number—"I'm Going Back to California"----- Brennan & Ball
4. Saxaphone Solo—"When the Grey of the Sky"----- Sterling
5. Closing Number—"Let's All Be Americans Now"----- Berlin, Leslie & Meyer

## DANCING

1. One Step ----- Cutey
  2. One Step ----- How's Every Little Thing In Dixie
  3. Waltz ----- Melodies from The Blue Paradise
  4. Square Dance
  5. Fox Trot ----- Mamma's Little Coal Black Rose
  6. Waltz ----- That's Why My Heart Is Calling You
  7. Two Step ----- Boola Boo
  8. Square Dance
  9. Waltz ----- Aloha Oe
  10. One Step ----- Sing Ling Ting
  11. One Step ----- I'm Going Back to California
  12. Square Dance
  13. Fox Trot ----- It's a Pippin
  14. One Step ----- Hilo
  15. Waltz ----- Just a Faded Flower
  16. Square Dance
  17. One Step ----- Since Maggie Dooley Learned the Hooley Hooley
  18. Waltz ----- The Sunshine of Your Smile
  19. One Step ----- When the Sun Goes Down in Romany
  20. Waltz ----- Il Trovatore
- Refreshments.

# The Goldilocks Burglars of 1920

## Tales from Other Days

By Bob Dewel

You've heard the phrase "History Repeats Itself"? Well, it seems that the years 1920 and 2006 in Baraboo have an historical happening in common—"Goldilocks" burglars! These unique burglars take their name from the old fairy tale story of Goldilocks, in which three bears enter Goldilocks home, eat her food and lie in her bed.

### The recent burglary

News-Republic readers may remember the recent (February 10) News-Republic article in which Washington County law enforcement officials allege that a man entered homes there, cooked meals, took a shower, and checked his e-mail on the owner's computer. The story relates that the intruder, dubbed the "Goldilocks burglar", also tried on and perhaps took clothes, but left behind various personal items, and failed to log out after using the computer in the home. The Baraboo connection is that the individual was apprehended here, but only after a somewhat dramatic 15 minute chase on foot through downtown Baraboo.

If this recent story seems bizarre, it caught the attention of ace local history research expert Paul Wolter in another way, for there is an historical precedent for such intrusions. It happened in 1920, and it happened in the home of a famous Baraboo name, Ringling. In this case it was the home of August Ringling's widow, Mrs. A.G. Ringling. Always generous with historical information, Wolter forwarded the article to me, and it reads as follows, somewhat edited for newspaper space requirements.

The 1920 Ringling burglary

December 23, 1920, the Baraboo Evening News: "Burglars have been in the home of Mrs. A. G. Ringling, 234 Eighth Avenue, and left it in topsy-turvy condition. Mrs. Ringling went to Chicago about Thanksgiving time to visit her daughters. On Saturday evening it was noticed by Frank Abbott, a neighbor, that a light was burning in the home and knowing that Mrs. Ringling had not returned, notified the police. Mr. Abbott takes care of Mrs. Ringling's horse and in that way knew she was not at home. Chief of Police S.A. Pelton and Officers Harmel and Buckley went to the residence and made a careful search, but no trace of the invaders could be found."

"A worse looking interior could not be imagined. The fellows had been sleeping in bed with their shoes on, they had pulled everything about, dirty dishes were in abundance, the floors are a sight to behold, forks were stuck in the shades to hold them against the window casings, pieces of uncooked meat were scattered about, and in general the house looked like it had been a tramp's paradise for some time. Mrs. Ringling will have no small task to get her house in order when she returns. On top of this there will be light and gas bills of no small amounts to pay."

The police set up a watch on the house, but the invaders did not return. The paper ends the article with an ominous note: "The members of the police department have their suspicions." A perusal of the Daily News for several days failed to find any additional references pertaining to the matter.

It would be easy to call this incident an aberration of the storied "good old days" when everyone supposedly knew everyone else, and houses were left unlocked because crime was (supposedly) so rare in those halcyon times. Don't be too sure. The Daily News reported a burglary at the Mrs. H.E. French residence only four days later, and burglaries were also reported



in the Mrs. W.E. Conway and E.F. Dithmar homes on the 28th of the same month! The paper reported that at the Conway house "they got into bed with a hot iron and burned the sheets. The iron was heated on a gas stove."

Dithmar, incidentally, was Lt Governor of Wisconsin at the time. In the 85 years since then, the city of Baraboo has inexplicably been a political, with no members of the state Assembly or Senate hailing from within the city limits. We have heard no explanation of this curious laid-back attitude of Baraboo citizens with regard to participation in state government.

#### Other Goldilocks legends

There are have been at least two other "Goldilocks" stories related to this writer. Both occurred a couple decades ago. In one story, it is alleged that a

couple on East Street had retired for the evening, when a stranger walked into the house and got in bed with them, presumably inebriated. The man of the house wisely remained in or near the bed to watch the stranger while the wife departed from the room and called the police.

In another incident, a couple returned to their home on Ash Street to find the doors locked. Looking into a window, they cold see a stranger consuming a can of beans in the living room. Both of these stories are now in the realm of folk tales, and we cannot confirm their authenticity, but are regularly repeated on occasion when referring to the "good old days". The Goldilocks fairy tale must have had a similar origin in its time of origin centuries ago. History does repeat itself!

The Min-ne-wa-kan of  
the Class of 1921  
**Tales from Other Days**  
By Bob Dewel

We can't write about all High School annuals, but an occasional sampling of them is useful to recreate the times and events and mores of other days. This article will be about the Baraboo High School Class of 1921, and more especially, about their high school annual, the Min-Ne-Wa-Kan.

This was published 85 years ago, and one wonders if any of those fresh young faces remain with us today. If so, they would be over 100 years old. Then, however, their life lay ahead of them, and life was good, even if somewhat stifling under the stern hand of the legendary Superintendent, A.C. Kingford.

This class graduated from the old red brick high school, only fourteen or fifteen years old then. It faced west on Oak Street, just north of the old High Bridge. Yet to be built was the Broadway Bridge, and a new high school, now in 2006 the Civic Center, was not even on the drawing boards.

Accompanying this article are scenes showing the closely packed desks in the study hall, with its stage and Greek or Roman statuary—where are they now? Also shown is the old gymnasium, decorated gaily for the Junior-Senior Prom.

Familiar names include John Ringling North, who later would own the circus still being operated in 1921 by his uncles, Charlie and John. His good friend Curt Page would become the respected long-time editor of the Baraboo News-Republic. Participating in the Junior-Senior Prom would be soon-to-be familiar Baraboo leaders such as Kenneth Conway, Ralph Pierce, Alton Cady, John Lange, and George Mc Arthur. Stuart Palmer would go on to considerable fame in Hollywood.



A.C. KINGSFORD  
Superintendent of Schools

Four years had passed since their predecessors staged a raid and burned all of the German textbooks in the middle of the nearby intersection of Oak and Second Street. These 1921 students, however, were more concerned with production of two plays at the new Al Ringling Theatre. The theater has now served the community for 90 years as a civic auditorium when needed. It is a private enterprise that has saved the taxpayers millions of dollars, tax money which would have been needed to build a suitable civic auditorium.

The sports teams were called the Baraboo Bears. Of all the advertisers in the 1921 annual, only the Baraboo National Bank, the Corner Drug Store, and the Mc Gann store remain. As is befitting an educational institution, there is a large section devoted to original prose and poetry.



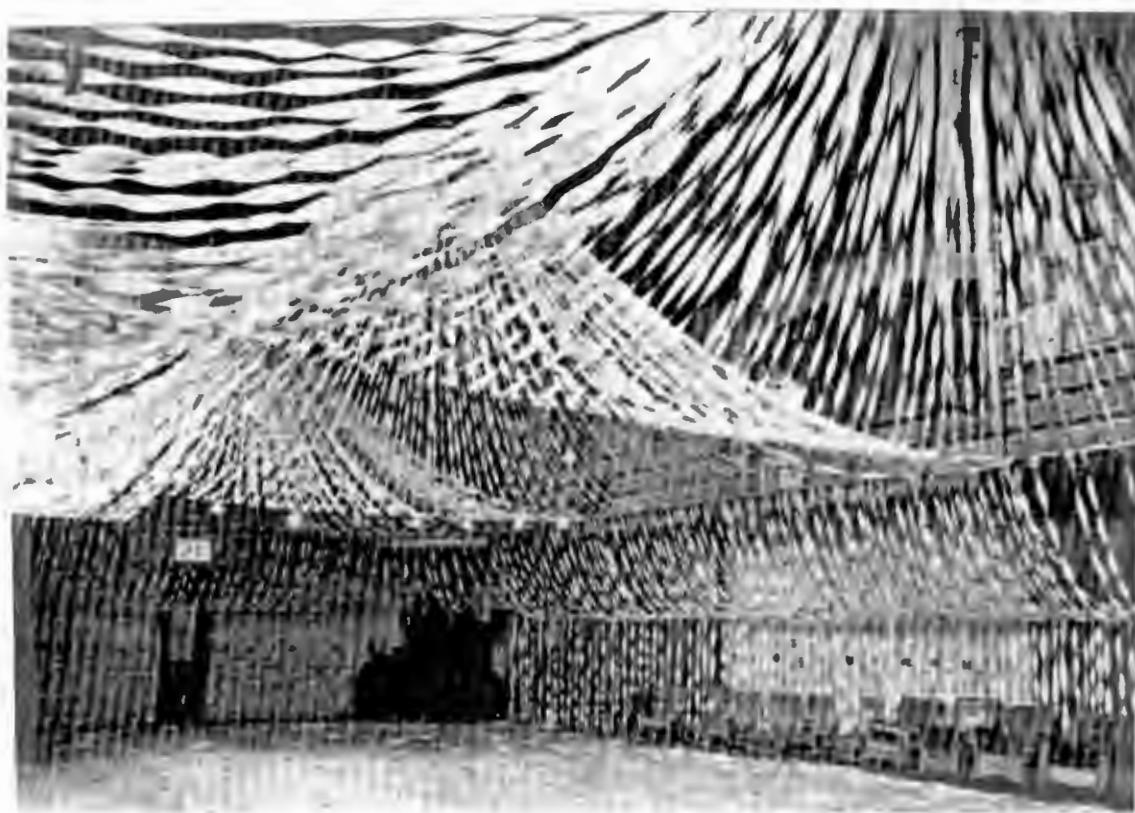
Girls' Basket Ball team

Julia Giffes, Business Manager; Susie Schaefer, Captain; Eleanor Rommelfanger,  
Dona Arnold; Mildred Eiser; Edna Schrieber; Elva Pribjov; Miss Sayles, Coach.

Not to be overlooked was the humor section, called "Sparks". Here one finds such knee-slappers as "If 32 is the freezing point, what is the squeezing point? Two in the shade." Supt Kingsford was gingerly featured in "What is a monologue—an interview with Supt. Kingsford." The mating urge weighed heavily over all of the all-male Sparks editors, and one of them submitted the following: "The boy stood on the burning deck, his head was all a whirl. His mouth and eyes were full of hair, his arms were full of girl."

The men in this class would for the most part escape military service, approaching 40 years of age at the time of Pearl Harbor, though some of their sons would surely be drafted, or volunteer. Lying ahead of all class members was the Flapper Age, and then the Great Depression, which would start in eight years. Baraboo would see little real growth for nearly 30 years.

But in 1921 life was good, and troubles were simply there to be overcome. That's the way it is to all generations.



*Ready for the Junior-Senior Prom*



Assembly Room



Sauk County Historical Society

Built as a HIgh School in 1907, this building became a Junior HIgh School in 1927. It was razed sometime after the present HIgh School was opened in 1962.

# 1921 Commission Fires Police Chief **Tales of Earlier Days**

By Bob Dewel

On a summer day, the 6<sup>th</sup> of June, 1921, the cashier of the First National Bank of Baraboo received quite a shock. He had just opened a note which read as follows:

"To you listen and mind what I say. You have from the time you receive this letter until 3 P.M. to deliver in person to the City Hotel the sum of \$63,000.00 (Sixty-three thousand dollars) address the package to Brookwalter W.B. Refuse or make any false move and you are a dead man. Enclose the money in a cigar box. Hand the same to the man at City Hotel, Baraboo. I will send an old man down after it this afternoon. He will ask for W.B. Brookwalter. This old man does not know the nature of our deal. I simply give him 50 cents, so don't bother him."

This article will tell how this strange letter figured in the downfall of the Baraboo Chief of Police. That event would not happen for some eight weeks, but in the meantime, consider the plight of the Cashier if the bank, one Elmer S Johnston (no relation to our contemporary Elmer Johnson in 2008). We don't know much about the 1921

cashier, but the Police and Fire Commission later stated that "upon the receipt of the letter, Elmer S. Johnston was greatly frightened and his peace of mind greatly disturbed".

So great was the Johnston's disturbance that "another officer of the bank, in the absence of Mr. Johnston," called the police Chief, S.A. Pelton to the bank to examine the letter. We are not told when Mr. Johnston re-appeared after his fright. With regard to the letter, one has to suspect that the letter was either a hoax or was prepared by a demented person. Or, was it prepared to set the Chief up for dismissal? We don't know, but it figured in his hearing.

Of interest is the attitude of Chief Pelton, who did indeed treat it as a hoax or as the work of a demented person. The problem is that this had been the attitude of Chief Pelton regarding most every infraction of the law for the past 11 years: ignore trouble or hope it goes away. This was just the event that broke the camel's back.

Apparently there was a firestorm of disapproval following the Chief's usual cavalier dismissal of the extortion threat, for a news item reports that on July 16, charges of incompetence were filed against Chief Pelton by such community luminaries as H. Grotophorst, J Van Orden, T.F. Risley, E.B., Trimpey, A. Reinking, John McGann, B.F. Gollmar, Mrs. A Ringling (the only woman) and about 20 other citizens. This list included Cashier Elmer Johnston, now back at his post in the bank, it is assumed.

Papers were served on Pelton July 20, and on August 1 a hearing was held. It is remarkable how many persons testified as to various incidents, serious and otherwise, where Pelton had shown little or no interest in pursuing the criminals. Former Mayor Thuerer testified that Pelton responded reluctantly or showed no interest when ordered to perform an investigation. Other examples of incompetence: Ignoring Presbyterian Rev, Henke's report on drunkenness at dances at the



Baraboo Police Force (1905). Officers from left to right: Walter Stone, <sup>Russell</sup> Walter Delap, Timothy Desmond, Charles Butterfield.

Credit, Derleth, Centennial History

fairgrounds (this was in Prohibition!); Burglaries at Mrs. Ringling's, Dithmars, Gollmars, and several other homes; Ignoring a known suspect in a burglary at the French home. Pelton also ignored several burglaries of the Peck store.

The Commission's August 15 report shows a remarkable fairness in the conduct of the investigation, which found Pelton, however, guilty of insubordination, incompetence, and neglect of duty. He was discharged effective Sept 1. There is no indication regarding who was in charge during that two week period.

Pelton did not take the discharge as lightly as he had taken the citizens' many previous requests for investigation of infractions of the law during his time as chief. His complaint was on the grounds that F.C. Peck, whose store was robbed, was related to Commissioner Peck. An attorney was hired by Pelton, but justice was rapid in those days! In a decision on Sept. 20, three weeks later, Justice Stevens upheld the Police and Fire Commission's decision to discharge Pelton.

And what of the blackmail letter with the weird proposal for obtaining the money? Was it a hoax? Was it, in the simple mind of its writer, based on Pelton's record of failing to obey the law and pursue those who commit crimes? We'll never know, unless a future scrap book, as kept by City Attorney Virgil Cady, reveals the instigator. In any event it helped in obtaining the discharge of a reluctant chief of police!

## Extortionist Arrested, and a Pullman Car *Tales of Other Days* By Bob Dewel

This column has two apparently unrelated stories. We'll attempt to loosely tie them together at the end (and we do mean loosely).

Readers will remember the April 23 story, wherein local bank teller Elmer Johnston received an extortion note in 1921. It resulted in the dismissal of a police chief for inattention to the matter, among other charges. No resolution of the extortion case could be found in our newspaper clippings, and we were left with the impression that the crude extortion note might have been a hoax, or even a setup to trap Chief Pelton.

Such was not the case, and current Police Chief Craig Olsen has kindly researched the matter. We quote from his letter of April 25:

### The Capture of the Extortionist

"Elmer Johnston reported the blackmail scheme not only to Chief Pelton, but also to William D. Burke, a detective with the Northwestern Railroad, and resident of Baraboo. Burke (later to become a Baraboo police officer) apparently took the matter more seriously than Pelton. Burke arranged for Johnston to prepare a package containing mostly blank paper, but with enough real bills to make it appear to be the full 63,000 that was demanded. They then waited as instructed at the City Hotel. Shortly after 7:00 P.M. the 'old man' arrived and claimed the money from the desk clerk. Burke followed the man along the railroad tracks to Devil's Lake, where he arrested him.

"The arrested man was found to be the blackmailer Daniel H. Rivers, age 74, of Lacrosse, Wisconsin. Rivers was arraigned in front of (Baraboo) Judge Adolph Andro the next morning and was

ultimately found guilty of blackmail and sentenced to two years at the state prison at Waupon." We thank Chief Olsen for this concise and well-composed account of the disposition of the case, which was not a hoax at all, if developed.

Chief Olsen also clarified the 1905 photo, in which the correct first name of Officer DeLap is Russell, not Walter. At that time the Police department was called the Marshall's office and was structured somewhat differently from the Police Department today. By 1921, the time of the extortion, it was a Police Department with all new officers, but still only consisted of four men, including Chief Pelton. Other Officers then consisted of Assistant Chief Otto F. Harmel, and Officers Jeremiah E. Buckley and Frank Schuster. Thanks again to Chief Olsen for this information.

### The Pullman Car "Baraboo"

In another recent surprise, Dick Goddard of North Freedom completed his search for an official photo of the Pullman Railway Car named "Baraboo", as pictured with this article. The car honored Baraboo as a Division Point on the Northwestern Line, as did the locomotive named "Baraboo" which we featured in an article earlier this year. Goddard knew of my hobby of collecting ways in which the rather unusual word Baraboo is used throughout the world.

Goddard is President of a recently formed group of railroad enthusiasts called the Lake States Railway Historical Association, appropriately headquartered in Baraboo. A museum of railroad lore, history, and research has already been established. It is located in the 1910 Ringling winter quarters shops, more recently known as the Industrial Coils Building, and now called the Baraboo Arts Building. Messages of inquiry can be made at 356-5555, and the web site is LSRHA.org. It qualifies as a 501 non-profit group.

## PAGE 593 IS MISSING

(A Photo of an old Interurban street car )

A recent dinner and program drew members from five different states, the principal speaker being Baraboo's John Geoghegan. Some of his talk centered around the local quartzite ranges, that stone being valued as railroad bed ballast as well as its use in fire clay. Though local quartzite mining may be coming to a close, there is sufficient commercial use of the railroad in Baraboo and Reedsburg that the line is economically sound and viable. Entertainment before dinner was provided by the appropriately named Jerry Stich Quartzite Band.

#### The Loose Connection

So how do the extortion note story and the Pullman car have a common theme? Admittedly, this

connection is pretty tenuous, but with the almost continual flow of trains through Baraboo in the halcyon railroad days of 1905, it is conceivable (sort of) that during the trek on foot from the City Hotel to Devils Lake, along the railroad tracks, the Pullman car passed by Baraboo's only extortionist as he was about to be captured. If it were Dillinger, we'd have endless details, so why not Daniel Rivers?

O.K., so that is a pretty remote connection, but I wanted to tie these two themes together into one article in one way or another, and perhaps you haven't read this far anyhow!

# Booze and School Bonds in Same Election **Tales of Earlier Days**

By Bob Dewel

Booze or Schools—and the winner is...

It was a classic match-up of different life-styles and beliefs, involving an election with a new and very large class of eligible voters, anxious to vote for the first time. There was the perennial question of a school referendum, plus a quirk in the new national Prohibition Amendment allowing a referendum on what later became known as Near Beer.

Add into the election mix a popular U.S. Senator (LaFollette) and a spirited Mayoral race, and you have lots of people coming out to vote on a smorgasbord of questions in 1920.

The Congress had the previous year passed the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment, America's ill-fated experiment in social control of citizens by the government. In order to get it passed, it appears the proponents agreed to also allow the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, allowing women to vote.

So for the first time this election would include limited but significant participation by a large, articulate, and newly enfranchised voting group. Intelligent and eager, this group also had a close and shall we say quite influential connection with the previously dominant male body of voters. Influential indeed, for the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, ratified on August 19, 1920 allowed the ladies to vote.

It is 1920, and City Attorney Virgil Cady's clippings reveal the questions which are demanding attention from the voters. As usual, some members of the electorate have been resisting a proposed school referendum. On the other hand, proponents wanted to erect

a \$200,0900 Junior High building. It would replace an aging "temporary" wood frame structure, construction date unknown. It was located near the Northwest corner of Ash and First Streets. Called the Annex, it was unsanitary, crowded, and improperly protected in case of fire. It begged for removal, they said.

The liquor question was unique, since the amendment allowed the manufacture of a very low alcoholic content beer, later called near beer. This was apparently a local option proposition, and Baraboo and the county were embroiled in the wet-dry argument whether to allow or restrict the mild version of the product.

The Volsted Act, proposed by a Minnesota Congressman, set the alcoholic content at one half of one percent. Perhaps that act had not been passed yet, for the Baraboo area proposal set the limit at 2.3 percent alcohol content.

Ancillary to this was a mayoral contest noted for the advertisements and letters to the Editor. In addition, the question of Senator Bob LaFollette's intention regarding the fall campaign loomed large. A lone voice against President Wilson and World War I, his popularity was uncertain. At any rate, a large and unpredictable turnout was expected, particularly with the women's vote. It all came to a head on April 6, 1920.

Regarding the women's vote, there were, in the school election, at least two ballots. One was clearly "for men", and an identical ballot was marked "for women". There are reproduced in the Cady scrapbooks. Voter identification must have been easy, for in that pre-flapper day men and women dressed differently for one another. The results provide an interesting look at how women and men viewed the school and booze proposals. The men voted 382 votes for the school proposal and 689 against. The ladies voted 311 for and a surprising 333



The temporary school building, right, was present when the high school burned in the winter of 1905-06. Though the red brick school was built in 1906-07, the temporary structure was still used as a junior high at the time of a failed 1920 referendum.



*Skip Blake Collection*

The Baraboo High School, built in 1907

against in the school issue. It appears that the women were only allowed to vote on social issues, and not on such manly activities as the liquor question. The all male liquor proposition was 595 for and 485 against, but the coming enactment of the Volsted act made the question moot. Perhaps because the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was not effective until August 19<sup>th</sup>, women were allowed to vote on some matters but not on others.

Lost in the Liquor and school referenda were the voting results in the contest for Mayor. We have not reason to question whether W.H. Aton would have been a good mayor, but Adolph Andro was chosen by a sizeable majority, and served several terms. Also, it is probably not fair to compare the liquor and school referenda too closely. Perhaps there were reasons to oppose the particular plan set forth by the school board, but it would be eight long years before a new school building would be built—eight years of teaching in a smelly poorly heated and unsanitary temporary structure before the voters did their duty, at considerably more expense.

The High School  
in Ableman, 1908



## EARLY DAYS AT OCHSNER PARK

Yesteryear Revisited  
By Bob Dewel

Had the original plans of Dr. Albert J. Ochsner been fulfilled, we probably wouldn't have the beautiful Ochsner Park today. It was he who proposed, in 1911, that the family donate the property as a site for a hospital. No one then questioned the need for one, but his requirement that the citizens raise \$50,000 failed to attract more than \$15,000, so the proposal failed.

Some parts of the property seemed to have been donated at the time anyway, and soon the Ochsner home of his parents was given, it being the red brick home that still stands. Not all was given, as some of the descendants required payment for their share. Dr. Albert Ocshner, a renowned Texas surgeon of whom we have written, donated his share, however, as did some of the others. The home had been built in 1883 as a retirement home for the Henry Ochsners, Honey Creek immigrants from Switzerland.

The area is significant in early Baraboo history, for in 1839 Abe Wood and Wallace Rowan became the first settlers and built a make shift dam near the Baraboo-West Baraboo city limits. The river remained dammed in this area for the following 130 years or so until, sadly, the dam designed by Frank Lloyd Wright was dynamited out with considerable difficulty. Before its removal, motorboats could travel all the way to North Freedom on the level surface of the placid river.

Wood's daughter Victoria told later of she and a friend sitting on the riverbank, watching the high waters demolish the first dam in 1844, it being constructed of rocks and logs only. Other dams were built, with other owners, and eventually the whole area became known as the Woolen Mill property. The mill was at one time Baraboo's largest employer, and it was said to be the largest woolen mill west of the Appalachians.

Abe Wood's cabin is memorialized by a brass plaque on a stone near the park shelter on the upper level of the park. From the dam, a wagon trail led downstream to the present Broadway area, and this was probably the first street in the little settlement that developed. Only a decade or so ago, cars could still drive that path. Now parts of it have been developed into a fine riverwalk, thanks to the City, the DNR, and the Kiwanis Club.

### Other Parks

Three other parks now adjoin the river. The Mary Rountree Evans area may have been a brickyard. Both that park and the Attridge Park were donated to the city. The Attridge Park once contained most of the woolen mill buildings. It is connected to Ochsner park by the old Manchester auto bridge, which was moved there from the east side of town with some difficulty a few years ago.

Near downtown is the Broadway ball park. Just over the village line to the west is West Baraboo's Haskins Park. A fourth park is proposed in long range plans of the Baraboo River Development group, to be located just east of the Broadway bridge. At this point the riverwalk is expected to pass under the new Broadway bridge, connecting the two parks.

A feature of the Ochsner Park, along with the excellent zoo, is a bandstand. It was donated, soon after the area became a city park, by Herman Grotophorst. It is still used on occasion, but the area does not lend itself to Concerts on The Square because of the lack of parking close by..

As reported in a previous article, the goal of the Kiwanis-sponsored project is a continuous river walk from the Highway 12 bridge on the west to the highway 113 bridge on the east. . It is a cooperative effort by Kiwanis, the city, and the DNR. It is Baraboo's fortune that the river level drops over 50 feet as it passes through the city, providing a fast-moving stream tumbling over a rock bottom. The rest of the Baraboo river, upstream and down, is pretty sluggish.

Already, the some half mile or so of paved walkway has gained favor with walkers, joggers, and baby carriage mothers. As more and more river walk develops, perhaps soon along Effinger Drive, local citizens can gain a greater appreciation of the land first seen by Abe Wood and Wallace Rowan. We can thank the Ochsners, too, for their foresight in donating much of it to the city.



Who needs to go to California to see the huge redwood trees? This is one of about a dozen trees at Ochsner Park along the riverwalk that are about six feet in diameter.

# Did Boston Blackie Get his Start in Baraboo?

## Tales From Earlier Days

By Bob Dewel

Suppose you were asked to name the most prolific writer of national renown who come from Sauk County. Whom would you nominate? Stuart Palmer might be a contender, with his screen work in the mid-century. Zona Gale's star shown for a time, but she was from Columbia County. August Derleth had a modest place in the sun for a little while. Cartoonist Briggs was born in Reedsburg, and Baraboo's Herb Risteen did crossword puzzles for the New Your Times. Even Alf T Ringling took pen in hand. But for significant national fame, we nominate John (Jack) Boyle.

Jack Boyle? Perhaps old timers would be more familiar with the term Boston Blackie. That intrepid defender of the public honor and truth and right was the name Boyle gave to his hero, and Boyle did some of his composing in the Baraboo-Sauk County area. As his fame and income grew, Boyle moved elsewhere, including Denver and Los Angelus, but we still have some claim on him as our own. More on Boyle's tumultuous personal life in a moment, but first, Boston Blackie.

### Boston Blackie

Boyle's first public appearance as a writer was in 1914, according to the OTR Podcast. It was a story in Cosmopolitan Magazine about his principal character, Boston Blackie, called "The Price of Principle". Stories soon appeared in Redbook Magazine. The first film appearance of this character was in a 1918 silent called Boston Blackie's Little Pal.

Literally dozens of films and TV episodes followed, and would you believe that Tuner Classic Movies recently featured Boston Blackie in one of its "Watching the Detectives" articles?

That's a span approaching 100 years in which Boyle's character has entertained the public on a national scale.

Interestingly, the Boston Blackie character started out as "opium-addicted safecracker for a series in American Magazine (in 1914)". Thrillingdetective.com/Boston says Blackie first appeared as a hardened criminal serving time in a hellish California prison. Gradually over the years Boyle transformed him into a private detective. This source says the first film was "Blackie's Redemption" in 1918. A host of actors, including Lionel Barrymore, played the part in subsequent movies.

Radio beckoned in 1944, with an NBC series, and in 1951 the character became a staple on early TV, lasting two years. Thrillingdetective.com/boston says "By this point Blackie's long twisted journey and transformation from con man to private eye was complete, with him tooling round L.A. in a snazzy convertible with his best girl Mary and their faithful canine companion, Whitey, by his side."

### Local connection

So what does all of this have to do with Baraboo and Delton (no Lake Delton then, in the early days)? We don't have a complete biography of author Jack Boyle. Turner Classic Movies quotes E.D. Koch as saying Boyle was born sometime before 1880, growing up in Chicago and then San Francisco, as a Chinatown reporter, perhaps during the 1906 earthquake. Koch says Boyle went to prison for bad checks and robbery and had been addicted to opium. His character, Boston Blackie, thus was first depicted as an addicted safecracker.

Koch says Boyle later moved to New York and died there in 1928. What is not mentioned by Koch is his relation to Baraboo and Lake Delton. We do not know if he was born and raised here, but historian Joe Ward reports that the Boyles' lived in the Ringling cottage on 11th St. in 1918-1919, and also in the Ringling cottage on Mirror Lake. They

*John "Jack" Boyle*



*Former resident Jack Boyle wrote  
Boston Blackie Stories*

also lived at 316 Fifth Avenue, then the residence of Mrs. George Gollmar.

There is mention of him in a Baraboo newspaper account in the August 19, 1921 issue. The mention was occasioned by receipt of an anonymous clipping from an unnamed Colorado paper, telling of Boyle's "divorce suit involving one of America's popular writers of fiction." His wife Violet, alleging cruelty and habitual drunkenness, stated that they had lived in Colorado for over a year. She said he received over \$1000 per story, a generous fee in 1921, as well as receiving pay for book and moving picture rights.

In commenting on the Colorado article, the unnamed Baraboo newspaper stated that "it will be recalled that the couple resided in Delton and Baraboo for some time", and while in this county, Boyle certainly wrote some of the Boston Blackie stories. There is mention of Boyle in the April 24 1919 Baraboo Weekly News. His Father died at Deltona "and the funeral was held here. The Mother afterward went to Philadelphia and the couple to Colorado, where he bought a sheep ranch."

There appears to be a sequel to this story, for an Oct. 7 1924 clipping says that Boyle, "who with his wife made their home in Baraboo a few years ago (was) now in a turmoil caused by two women who claim to be his wife." One was Violet, mentioned above, who not only claimed back alimony but alleged that the judge had never signed the Colorado divorce decree. The other woman was Elsie Thomas Boyle, said to be in a hospital in Los Angeles after two attempts to asphyxiate herself. The article went on to say that Boyle had vanished.

We cannot authenticate these facts beyond the news items, but reflect that it is unfortunate that a man with so much innate skill in writing fiction over several decades should have so many misfortunes in his personal life. We

don't know if he was raised in the county, but do know that he lived among us for many years, as well as in many of the larger cities. We suggest that if anyone has Boston Blackie books, one or more could be donated to the Historical Society, which is gathering publications by local authors for its library. If the book is signed, it is valuable. Good luck!

**POSSIBLE SIDEBAR:** Last week Joe Ward wrote that Bob Dewel's hardcover two-book stories on local history would "fly off the bookshelves", and indeed they sold out. If enough people sign up, a second printing will be made. Phone the author at 356 3791 to reserve the two books.

Oct 7, 1924

## JACK BOYLE LEAVES HOME LOS ANGELES

### Two Wives, Gas and Alimony To Much For Former Bara- boo Man Who Van- ishes

Jack Boyle, author of the "Boston Blackie" stories, and who with his wife made their home in Baraboo a few years ago found himself in a turmoil caused by two women who claim to be his wives, in Los Angeles.

Elsie Thomas Boyle, said to be wife No. 2, is in the hospital in Los Angeles recovering from two attempts to asphyxiate herself after admitted quarrels with the author.

Violet Charlotte Boyle (wife No. 1) has filed suit against Boyle for separate maintenance, claiming \$2,350 back alimony. She claims a divorce decree obtained in Colorado was never signed by the judge.

Boyle locked up his house, turned over his affairs to his attorney, and vanished.

MRS. 'JACK' BOYLE, WIFE OF THE AUTHOR OF  
THE BOSTON BLACKIE STORIES, SAYS HUSBAND  
DRINKS TOO MUCH--- ASKS DIVORCE BE GRANTED

8/192

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A clipping has been sent to this office which states that Mrs. "Jack" Boyle is suing for divorce at Colorado Springs, Colorado. It will be recalled the couple resided in Delton and Baraboo for some time and while in this county Mr. Boyle wrote the "Boston Blackie" stories. His father died at Delton and the funeral was held here. The mother afterward went to Philadelphia and the couple to

Colorado where he purchased a sheep ranch. The item from the Colorado paper reads as follows:

A divorce suit involving one of America's popular writers of fiction is scheduled for Colorado Springs.

John Alexander ("Jack") Boyle, author of the "Boston Blackie" stories which have been appearing in popular magazines for the last five years, is sued for divorce by Violet Charlotte Boyle in papers filed yesterday in the local district court. Mrs. Boyle is now living at the Acacia hotel where she has been a guest for the last several months. Mr. Boyle is understood to be in New York city.

Mrs. Boyle charges cruelty and habitual drunkenness and asks for alimony and division of real estate in Routt county, Colorado valued at \$15,000. The papers in the suit set forth that the couple were married at Crown Point, Ind., March 25, 1910 and that they have been residents of Colorado for more than a year.

Mrs. Boyle alleges in her action that Boyle is a successful writer of short stories which have appeared in the better magazines and that he often receives as much as \$1,000 for a story. She further asserts that in addition to being a writer of short stories he is an author of books which bring him much financial return and that the returns are further augmented by the sale of moving picture rights to the stories.

Mrs Boyle at her hotel yesterday refused to comment on the case other than to admit that she had started suit for divorce and that she expected to be a resident of Colorado Springs for some time.

"Jack" Boyle sprang into notice as a writer about five years ago with crook stories written around a character known as Boston Blackie. His writings have continuously landed in such magazines as the Cosmopolitan and the Red Book. Many of his stories have been made into moving pictures.

An Author is without Honor in his Hometown—Baraboo  
 Yesteryear Revisited  
 By Bob Dewel

According to the New Testament (Matthew 13:57) "A prophet is not without honor save in his own country and his own house." Perhaps "without honor" is too strong in reference to the subject of this article, but "without remembrance or recognition" would probably apply.

Consider: Portage has and honors its Zona Gale. Sauk Prairie eulogizes August Derleth. Reedsburg has its Agnes Morehead.. And Baraboo could recognize its Stuart Palmer.

Stuart Palmer

Stuart Palmer? Consider: Palmer replaced Thorne Smith, of the Topper stories, as chief copy writer for the prestigious Doremus and Company. Then he became editor of Brentano's, and wrote 22 screen plays in Hollywood including flicks about Bulldog Drummond. He played polo with Darryl Zanuck and Spencer Tracy and Jimmy Gleason. He also wrote dozens of books in his day, as well as collaborating in the Withers and Malone series with Craig Rice. He was at one time President of the Mystery Writers of America.

The Baraboo library still carries two of his books, and this writer has one donated by Glenn and Marilyn Quale. Other sources for this article include the Sauk County Historical Society, the Circus World Museum archives, the High School, and the UW Baraboo Sauk County Library.

Born in Baraboo in 1905, Palmer first published at age six, a story now out of print called "Shag, my Dog". A member of the Baraboo High School Class of 1922, his schoolmates included such well known Baraboo personalities as Ken Conway Sr., Curt Page Sr., Ralph

Pierce I, John Lange, George McArthur I, Alton Cady, John Ringling North, and Stanley Premo. Palmer died on Feb. 4, 1968.

#### High School

He worked on the high school annual of 1921, and perhaps 1922--no copy is available. In college at age nineteen he was a contributor to "College Humor". A biography accompanying his book reports that his full life included stints as an iceman, apple picker, taxi driver, investigative reporter, treasure hunter, and private investigator.

In World War II, Palmer, now in his forties, served as a Major in the Army. The book biography continues "And did you know that Stuart Palmer was once a clown with Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey, under the big top?" The Circus World Museum has been unable to verify this. Probably he and young North spent a summer on the road with the show.

#### Hollywood

His Hollywood stint found Palmer as a screenwriter for his Hildegard Withers series, played variously by Edna Mae Oliver, Helen Broderick, and Zazu Pitts. Even Mae West was considered for one of the parts. A biography credits him with 22 screenplays from 1936 to 1951. The Withers and Malone series by Palmer and Craig Rice were first published in the Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine. The biography also shows 19 mystery novels, and many short stories. There is an introduction by Ellery Queen in the Withers and Malone book. He also sometimes wrote as Jay Stewart.

In a jovial exchange of letters with his collaborator Craig Rice, she writes "You wear expensive suits and dribble cigar ashes all over the lapels, you follow the races and sit up all night playing poker, your secretaries all adore you, you have a taste for women and bad luck with them, and when you get high you always try and form a barbershop quartet!" Ellery Queen says this was all meant as a compliment!

The only recognition we found of Palmer in the Baraboo News-Republic is found in the February 21, 1933 edition. Still a young man at age 28, Palmer is featured as a screen writer for the Penguin Pool Murders series in Hollywood. The article speaks of his years at UW Madison, where he was active in the production of the campus humor magazine, The Octopus, as well as his column in the Cardinal, signed as "Stoo"

#### Marriages

Palmer's first marriage was to a Russian dancer. She was the first of five wives, four divorces, and three children by two of the wives. A bit of a showoff, he once returned to Madison with a beard and mustache, unusual in those days, as well as coats with velvet collars. This was about the time he was on the staff of College Humor magazine. He was said to have an ear for bright and clever dialog, and was a fine crafter of puzzle plots, according to Crime and Mystery Writers Magazine.

Of interest, the newspaper article, which was based on a Milwaukee Journal story, stated that Palmer's Hollywood house was once robbed and he never woke up during the process. Palmer's last known visit to Baraboo was in 1949, on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of Otto and Emma Thompson, parents of Neil and Harold Thompson.

The importance of the new Al. Ringling Theatre, only four years old at the time of the 1921 school annual, is evident in two ways. Without comment, a picture of the theatre is included in the 1921 annual. In addition, it is given as the location for the 1921 class play, "Springtime". As this story is being written, the stage of the Al. is occupied by the class play of 2002, presenting "I Haven't a Clue". That's 81 years of service to the community. Since there is no 1922 annual, we don't know if Palmer's movie career was inspired on the stage of the Al. or not.

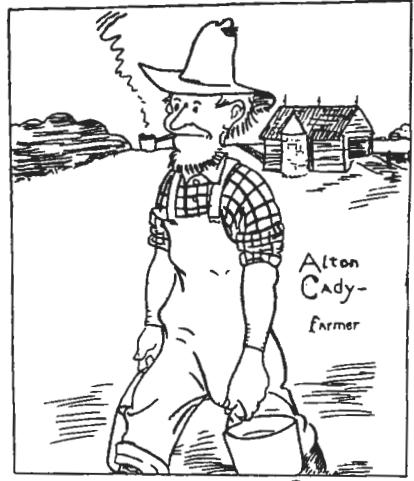
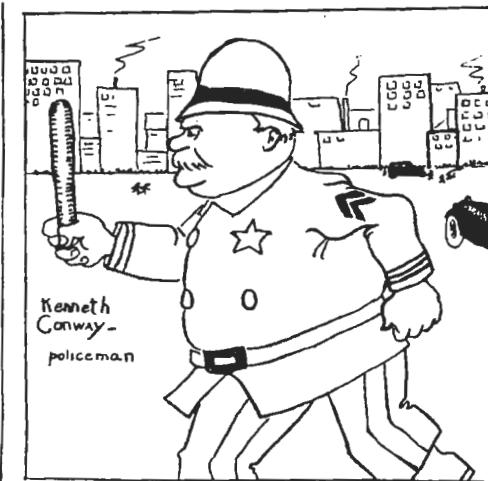
We do know, however, that Palmer returned to Baraboo in 1949 to visit his Mother. Learning of the new Theatre Guild, he made contact and appeared on stage in the 1949 production of "You Can't Take it With You." His part was minor, but he is said to have been fun to have on the set, and he also dated a few local young ladies.

Sauk County is not without its writers. The writers club recently published a 288 page booklet called Sauk County Journal, and another is planned. Perhaps they should consider having a Stuart Palmer day. The News-Republic features a generous stable of columnists, and Baraboo's Beth Drennan is now featured in the New York Times. Surely Stuart Palmer would be pleased with the literary and theatrical efforts in his home town.



## A PROPHECY - IN 20 YEARS.

BY STUART PALMER



PALMER





*The High School in 1921 or later*

## Horrendous 1922 Triple Murders Remain Unsolved

### Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

It would have been difficult in 1922 to find a more bucolic setting than that seen in Section 26, Town of Troy, Sauk County. Ten miles west of Sauk City, and traversed then and now by Highway 60, its hills and vales and fields and forests present a peaceful scene yet today.

Not so on August 16, 1922. On that day, or perhaps late the previous evening, there occurred what must be the greatest unsolved triple murders in Sauk County history. Although one of the victims lingered for ten days before expiring, his death qualified it as a triple murder.

#### The victims

The Balzar farm in the Town of Troy was operated by three wealthy farmers, Julius Balzar, 59, his brother William, 70, and their sister Mary, 65, all unmarried. As a gesture of public service, the Balzars had, some ten years previously, opened their farm on occasion to a Chicago group for deprived children called the Fresh Air Fund.

After the murders, friends recalled that a few weeks previously the Balzars had been the somewhat unwilling hosts to two young women who said they had been friends of the boys and were so impressed that they wanted to spend time on the farm. Mary had complained that they did a lot of "snooping around". The speculation now was that they were there to get the lay of the land and determine where the Balzars kept their money. Sauk City banker Oscar Buerki later stated that the Balzars did very little banking.

#### The Murders

Whatever the validity of that situation may be, the fact is that sometime during the late evening or early morning of August 16, horrendous events occurred. As pieced together by the investigation, it is believed that the murderers lured the brothers to their garage, across the road from the house, on the pretext of borrowing auto tools or parts for what they perhaps claimed was a stalled vehicle. Upon reaching the garage, Brother Julius was murdered by countless vicious blows to the skull, probably with a hammer, while William was left for dead under the family car, where he had crawled to escape a similar fate. His skull was also cracked, apparently by hammer blows.

It is believed that their Sister, Mary, was preparing for bed, for when her body was found, she was only partially dressed. Hearing the scuffle, she had run a quarter of a mile toward the Henry Meng farm for help, but was caught and murdered, also with blows to the head by a blunt instrument.

The exact circumstances of the vicious murders may never be known, but the fact is that it was mid-afternoon on Wednesday the 16<sup>th</sup> that neighboring farmer Henry Meng discovered Mary's body when he went to get his mail from the roadside mailbox. Summoning authorities from Sauk City and Baraboo, it was evening before the garage was searched and the body of Julius and the still breathing body of William were found. You can be sure that Henry Meng spent a sleepless night with his shotgun handy.

Officials hoped that William, age 70, would recover sufficiently to give a coherent account of the events, but such was not the case. Though he lingered at Sauk City's Turner Hospital for ten days, and at one time was even sitting up in bed while his dressings were changed, he was unable to give meaningful answers in German, his primary language, despite careful questioning.

He was buried beside his brother and sister following services at the Reformed Church in Sauk City, from which they had been eulogized in services a week before. Internment was in the Cassell Prairie Cemetery for all three victims.

### The Investigation

Among those investigating the murders were Sheriff H. C. Neitzel, District Attorney H.J. Bohn, Dr. Johnson of Sauk City, and later, a detective from Milwaukee. A jury composed of neighbors decided on a murder verdict. Although a pillow and mattress had been slashed, no other clues were found, or made public, if there were any. District Attorney Bohn went to Chicago and interviewed the Fresh Air visitors of ten years ago, now young men, whom he found were leading exemplary lives and not considered suspects.

It appears that hopes of solving the case died with the demise of William, the only witness, whose lips were now sealed. District Attorney Bohn remained confident, saying "the case is not in the least hopeless. We are not discouraged, we have only just begun." But it was not to be. Despite the efforts of Bohn and Neitzel and others, the case remains unsolved yet today.

Bohn went on to become a judge, and it was he and his wife who owned what is now the Seven Gables Bed and Breakfast. The murderers lived the rest of their lives with the visions of that terrible night etched in their memory, and the money they stole, if indeed they found any, was soon gone and forgotten.

Records of the case never moved from the Sheriff's Office to the Clerk of Courts, as no charges were filed. Most Sheriff's reports are discarded after a reasonable number of years, so all we have are the newspaper reports, from which this article was developed. Journalists are not perfect, and we recently failed to credit one of the Merrimac Ferry pictures to Carolyn Siberz, for example. Fallible though it may be on occasion, the print media is an invaluable reference as we explore the past and attempt to learn from it.

## Dr. O'Rourke and His Kissel Car

### Tales of Other Days

By Bob Dewel

Consider, if you will, the picture of a dapper man which accompanies this article. That dapper appearance takes a back seat, however, to the sports car in the picture which appears to be his pride and joy—perhaps rightly so when we learn the price!

When presented to us, little was known about the picture. On the back was written "Dr. O'Rourke", and the envelope in which the picture was kept had the notation "practiced in Baraboo a short time". It also said "a dandy physician", leaving it to the reader to determine whether they mean dandy as in stylish, or whether they meant dandy as in rakish.

#### Anita Carey and the Picture

It was John Geoghegan who presented the picture, and it belongs to Anita Carey, who resides presently in the Meadows Care Center at the young age of 102. It was first shown at the morning coffee group which your scribe attends on occasion, made up of local, national, and international experts in all matters large and small, though thy were stumped on this item. Not to be deterred from the challenge, men like John Imray and Jerry McCammond researched the matter for us. Jerry cane up with extensive information on the car and its manufacturer, though the Baraboo career of Dr. O'Rourke remained a mystery.

The latter question was solved, however, by Geohegan, who interviewed Anita Carey and learned that Dr. O'Rourke was an Osteopathic Physician form Portage. He maintained offices in Baraboo over what is now the Booksmith Book Store and Coffee House on Oak Street. Anita worked for young Dr. Al Dippel in that upstairs location, and also answered the telephone for

O'Rourke. Somehow Dr. Huth, who was also located in the same building, obtained possession of the picture, and Mrs. Huth gave it to Anita when cleaning out her house a number of years ago.

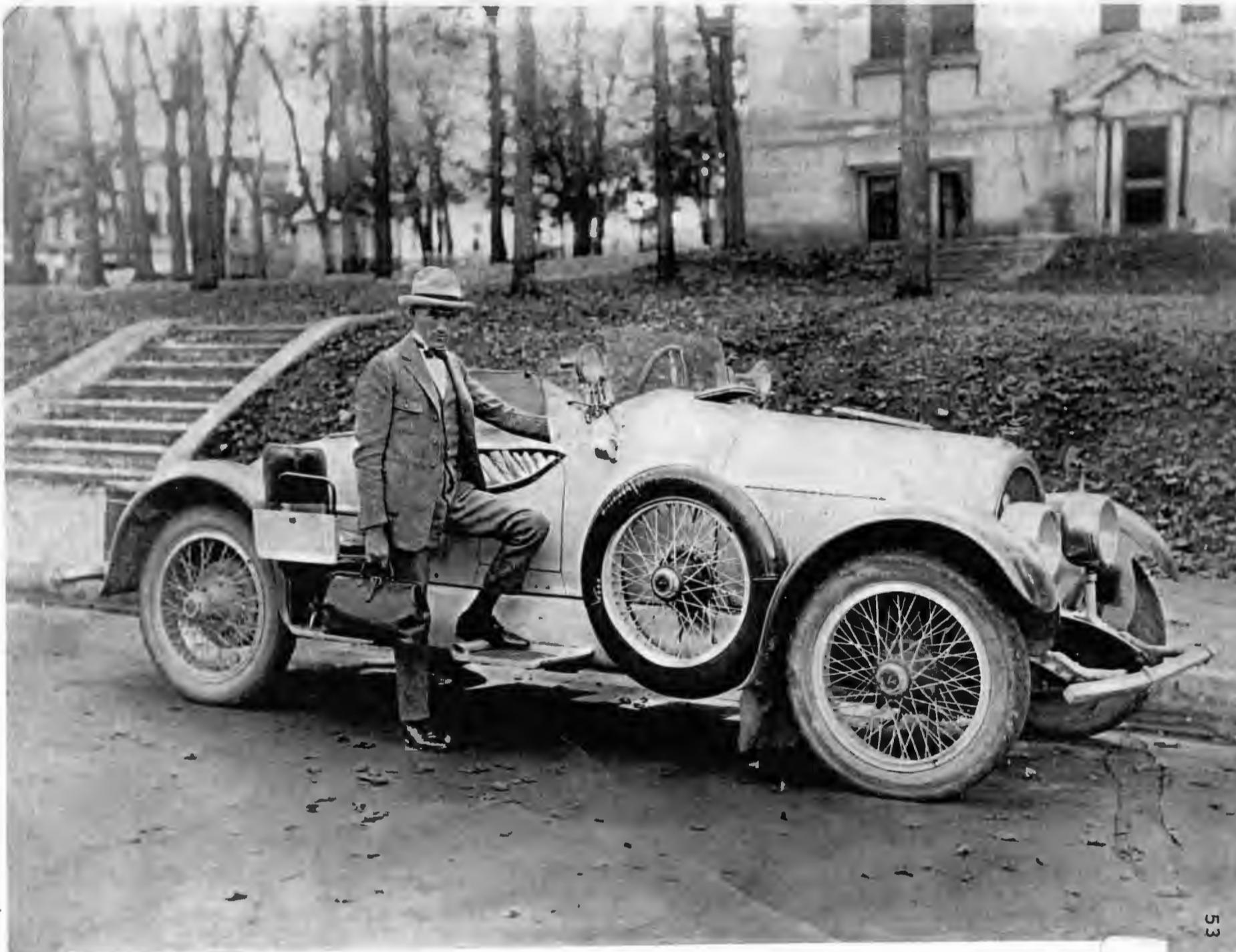
#### The Kissell Operation

We have already written about the early builders of automobiles in Baraboo, one of whom was C.H. Farnum (or Sarnum). Another Baraboo auto maker was Arthur Tavich (or Lanich). Our sources differ in the spelling of the names, as well as which man sold a car to Dr. English, and also who sold a car to one of the Ringling bohers. It is believed that only a very few cars were built by either man. Farnum's car was documented in the 1901 issue of The Motor Age magazine. More on them in the next article

McCammond's research verified the work of Farnum and Lanich, as told in the "Standard Catalog of American Cars, 1805-1942, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition." It soon appeared, however, that the car in the picture came from a factory in Hartford, Wisconsin operated by the Kissel brothers, George and Will. They were the enterprising sons of a German Immigrant farmer, a family with many other manufacturing interests already.

Manufacturing the Kissel Kar was no fly-by night organization, and records show that they made cars from 1907 to 1930, producing nearly 2000 cars per year in some of those years. Originally known as the Kissel Kar, the word Kar was dropped due to WWI and its anti-German sentiment.

At first they purchased the body and engine elsewhere, but soon they produced virtually the entire auto in Hartford, receiving single orders for as many as 100 cars due to their quality. By 1909 some of their models retailed for as much as \$3000, an astronomical figure for a car at the time. Geoghegan remembers seeing a picture of dozens of them lined up for use as taxicabs on New York City. Among their customers in later years were Amelia Earhart, Fatty



The Courthouse provided a classy background for Dr. O'Rourke's  
Kissel Speedster Car

Arbuckle, Al Jolson, and Ralph De Palma.

As early as 1909 the Kissels were producing cars with up to 128 inch wheelbase, including a six cylinder model, a truck line, and a funeral hearse line. Among their products in the "Roaring Twenties" was what the catalog calls a "Speedster...nicknamed the Goldbug". Production reached its zenith in 1923, when 2,123 cars of various models were produced. Re-tooling in 1924 dropped that year's production to 803 units. In 1925, the new models produced numbered 1406, but by 1930 dwindling production and the Depression forced discontinuance of the operation.

#### Dating the picture

The question then arises, assuming the car in the picture is a Kissel, what is its model year? If one studies the picture, and assumes the probable location of the photographer in the middle of Fourth Avenue, one can sight from the top of the staircase to the Civil War monument and beyond. The building just to the left of this line of sight is the old First National Bank, before its replacement in 1926 with the present structure, now the location of the Wells Fargo Bank. That, and the dead leaves and bare trees indicate that the picture is taken in the fall. The Hartford Heritage Museum believes the model is 1921 or 1923.

There's another interesting item in the picture: Note that behind Dr. O'Rourke there appears to be a padded seat which sticks out from the passenger side. It also appears that the seat folds down into a drawer, to be closed into the body of the car. There was an identical seat on the other side of the car. Notice the rear view mirror on the left front bumper, and the open vent on the hood for ventilation.

Riding in those seats must have been a thrill indeed, considering the limited shock absorbing capability of cars of that day, plus the generally bumpy gravel roads in the country and

many parts of town. We might add that it would be dangerous also. One wonders if there was a rudimentary seat belt of any nature, which seems unlikely. The catalog calls it an outrigger seat, and was featured on the Goldbug mentioned above.

This research shows how information may be gleaned from a photograph which is as first accompanied by virtually no information, or minimal almost. The coffee group experts, when challenged, can often come up with fairly authentic information in cases like this, though some of their tales and repartee must be taken with a grain or two of salt. (Note: Since this article was prepared, a wealth of material has surfaced on Baraboo and automobiles. Watch for the next article!)



Wisconsin Auto Museum Hartford WI

## Kissel Car Story Won't go Away

### Tales of Other Days

By Bob Dewel

Sometimes things seem to spin out of control. We never expected that a single picture in the hands of John Geoghegan would generate so much information for a historian and so much interest for non-historians.

Such is the case with Dr. O'Rourke and his Kissel Speedster auto, pictured in the article which preceded this one. I now have related information from the always-generous Joe Ward, and former Fire Chief Ron Federman, as well as more from Jerry McCammond. Expert information on Kissel Cars has also come from Dale Anderson of the Wisconsin Automotive Museum in Hartford. Dr. O'Rourke would be secretly pleased, we think, with the interest generated by the picture he had made about 80 years ago.

Let's begin with information on the car, as provided by Dale Anderson of the Hartford Museum. The O'Rourke car is of course a Kissel Speedster, either 1921 or 1923. The term Goldbug was a nickname, not a company name for the sporty car. The Kissel Company made some 35,000 cars in it's over two decades of operation in Hartford.

There still remain perhaps 50 Speedsters, of which the Hartford museum has one. There are also about 200 of their other models of various years in existence, and the museum has some on display also. They also feature early cars other than Kissel, which can be viewed at the Hartford Museum.

Another good source on early cars has been Jerry McCammond, whose information from the Standard Catalog of American Cars was mentioned in the previous story. The catalog lists two Baraboo automakers. They state: "That C.H. Farnum had built an automobile of his own design was documented in The Motor Age in August 1901." We wrote in more detail about him a few years ago in our Vol. II, page 53-56, using the spelling Sarnum which was given to me at the time.

Another local builder after the turn of the century was Arthur Lanich, and the News-Republic reported he and Farnum took a nine mile run "over the West Sauk Road. The trip over took them 45 minutes, while the trip back took them 55 minutes because of the head wind." The auto was an Oldsmobile, and Farnum gave several rides to local residents. On this particular run, they were accompanied by a reporter for the Republic, who stated that "The new machine was a winner."

McCammond's American Cars Catalog has information on Lanich also, reporting the he built "an experimental high wheeler in 1908, which he sold that summer to Dr. J.E. English, who purportedly was set to promote its commercial manufacture." Lanich also invented "a railway motor runabout that was used successfully by the Madison Division of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad." The magazine also reports that after 1918 Lanich invented a device to automatically open and close garage doors!

Dr. English already had owned an Oldsmobile, for the News-Republic in December, 1901 reported that he "met with an accident on Ash Street...with Gust's delivery rig...The horseless carriage stopped immediately, but the delivery horse was not under such control." Horses and cars didn't mix well in those days.

Baraboo's Joe Ward has voluminous information on the history of Downtown Baraboo which he has shared with me, information that, due to space requirements, must overflow into another article. Joe is putting together a book on downtown Baraboo, so I will simply summarize some of the information he has gathered about early locations of Farnum and Lanich.

Farnum's first known location was in 1899 at 135 Third Street, now Book World, this being a machine shop. By 1900 he was reported busy building a two cylinder automobile



This undated picture of 3rd street in Baraboo would have been a familiar scene to C.H. Farnum. In 1899 he operated a machine shop in the building to the far left, now Book World in 2006, and soon began building a few automobiles. The larger building in the picture was recently restored for dental offices for Dr. Robert Konen.

in the shop. By 1901 it was test-driven in Baraboo, being propelled by two gasoline engines and capable of thirty miles per hour.

In 1907 Arthur S. Lanich opened an automobile garage at 131 Fourth Street, now the location of part of the city Hall. In November of the same year he moved to Hartford to work for the Kissell Auto Works, but by March of 1908 he was back in town, located at 108 Fifth Street.

There's more on the enterprising young auto mechanics of Baraboo, including the building of Baraboo's first motorized fire truck, but it will have to wait for another article some day!

• C H Farnum was pleased with his new Oldsmobile and gave many residents a ride. To give it a severe test in hill climbing a representative of the *Republic* accompanied Arthur Lanich on a short trip on the south side. The most severe test was in going up Vine street from the depot where the pitch is nearly 40 degrees. The machine made it very nicely. Farnum and Lanich later went on a nine-mile trip over the west Sauk Road. The trip over took them 45 minutes while the trip back took them 55 minutes because of the head wind. The new machine was a winner.



Frank Terbilcox Jr. Collection

Right to Left: Orril Philbrick, Fred Terbilcox, Toby Clavardatcher John Von Wald, Dr ? Irwin ?

# When the 'Chautauqua' came to Baraboo

The Baraboo is coming ...  
the Baraboo is coming!

Suppose that phrase was commonplace all over the United States. What would it mean? Is there a connection to the circus? More about this later.

That cry doesn't make sense to us, but for three decades after the turn of the century, the folks of Chautauqua Lake, N.Y., thought nothing of the use their area's name. The cry "The Chautauqua is coming" was indeed a common news event throughout the country.

Indeed, the call was heard in Baraboo every summer for many years, for the Chautauqua stopped here regularly in those early 20th century times. So what is "the Chautauqua," and could there be a connection to the circus, for which Baraboo once again has a dominant share of worldwide fame?

## Background

Even before the turn of the century, the ungainly word Chautauqua, taken from the lake area of the same name, had meant a lot in the entertainment and educational world of that day.

As early as 1874 a Methodist minister organized a small institute there for the training of Sunday School teachers. His effort was eminently successful, and soon there were several summer schools of language and theology, and a Chautauqua University was founded. Correspondence courses were offered, also.

Although the university failed in 1898, both New York University and Syracuse University continued the summer school tradition, and may still do so. In any event, the word Chautauqua had come to mean education and refinement and morality.

## Tent Chautauquas

The association of the name with such aspiring ideals was so strong that it was adopted by completely different groups, which had no connection with the New York community or its university. They were traveling tent shows called Chautauquas, which moved from town to town much like the tent circus, though a Chautauqua tended to remain several days in one location. President Teddy Roosevelt called them "The most American thing in America."

In keeping with the tradition, tent Chautauquas were noted for their afternoon and evening programs, which included lectures, musical recitals and morality plays. It was a big event when the Chautauqua arrived in culture-starved small towns of the day like Baraboo and Portage. Remarkably, the fee for a ticket for all week was only \$2.50. Single-day admissions went for only 50 cents.

Although the shows were often of mixed quality, they served as enlightening and uplifting affairs, and only declined in the 1930s when radio and talking pictures took over the entertainment venues of the country, for better or for worse.

## Chautauquas in Baraboo

Thanks to an extensive collection of programs and leaflets owned by Janet Bjornsen of Baraboo, we know a lot about the Chautauqua. In her possession are the actual multi-page programs for 1922, 1923, and two undated years. Well illustrated are the moral and educational attitudes of the day, a contrast to those of our day.

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For example, the 1922 program, lasting six days, lists the following events: A theology lecture by "one of Chicago's most popular preachers," and lectures on self-improvement by others, plus an explanation of the Mexican situation.

In the musical field, one could hear Howard Russell (Canada's baritone king), accompanied by two young ladies on violin and piano. Not to be outdone in the musical area, a Croation Tamburica Orchestra was to appear, "following its appearance at the Paris Exposition." Then there was opera by Mml. Dora De Phillipes. They covered all bases!

Also in the entertainment venue one could view the "charming and amusing light opera" called the Mascot, complete with a six-piece orchestra and vocalists.

## Polly and the Circus'

But the most appropriate presentation in the 1922 program, for Baraboo at least, was another play, called "Polly and the Circus." Baraboo's Ringling winter quarters had only been vacated for four years, and circus memories were strong, so the play was appropriate.

This play had run for one full year in New York, with "elaborate scenic equipment and wonderful circus features," according to the advertising. It involves an injured circus performer, Polly, who is nursed back to health by a bachelor preacher. Moral vigilantes of the day drove her away, but guess what — the next time the circus came to town, the minister marries her and all is well.



Pictured above is a program from the Chautauqua.

Everything was different in the Chautauqua of 1923, the following year, of course, but there was a similar format. The play "Six Cylinder Love" featured "a point and a moral," as did another play, "The Country Cousin."

Part of the advertising pro-

motion was this gem: "If it pays to cultivate corn, to groom horses, to comfortably house and feed hogs, surely it pays to do something to cheer and inspire the wife and the children and create conditions for today that will make for bright memories tomorrow."

Speaking of 1923, we are informed by Mrs. Audrey Mead Walsh of Mauston that the boathouse, so identified in an article two weeks ago at the end of a pier in Devils Lake, was really the Green Tea Room. As Audrey Mead, Mrs. Walsh worked there in 1923, and writes that "it was a lovely place to eat." We suspect, that business was slow the week the Chautauqua was in town, attracting attention away from the lake and the cafe.

#### **Adjectives**

One of the Chautauqua programs unidentified by year really gets carried away with adjectives, for a speaker, Dr. Frank L. Loveland, is described as virile, magnetic, pungent, powerful, fearless, informing, impressive, courageous, original, and eloquent, and what's more, "a strong man's man."

Impressive now is the fact that William Jennings Bryan, later to gain fame in the Scopes monkey trial, is only casually billed as a minor speaker. A congressman, L.J. Dickinson of Iowa, later a senator and briefly a dark-horse candidate for the Republican nomination for president, at least had his picture in the program. Bryan didn't even get that.

#### **The Baraboo is coming?**

We have seen how the New York lake area with the unlikely name of Chautauqua became a household word for half a century due to its development of a reputation as an educational and cultural center. The name was so powerful that tent shows, with no connection to the original locality, used it as an emblem of refinement and information.

Baraboo is becoming a powerful name in the circus world again, as it was at the turn of the century. Circus World Museum is an acknowledged world center of circus memorabilia, research and live performances. Chautauqua Lake was a comparable leader in its fields, education and entertainment.

If we stretch our imagination a little (well, more than a little) we might imagine that someday small tent circuses will adopt the name Baraboo for their operation, cashing in on the city's reputation as a circus center. Perhaps then instead of just saying "The circus is coming," perhaps the cry would be "The Baraboo is coming."

Well, it happened to Chautauqua Lake, N.Y., and Chautauqua is a much stranger name for a town, or for an entertainment venue, than Baraboo!

# Mary Rountree: A park and an unfilled promise

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*Quick now, you Baraboo old-timers! Who was Mary Rountree Evans, and why is a park named after her? In addition, what promise was made and never kept?*

Everyone knows about Mary Rountree Evans, the park. For some 60 years it hosted Baraboo High School football games, probably some 300 altogether. That involved nearly three generations of Baraboo youth.

Moreover, one should include countless trips to the field by junior and senior high school gym classes, with eager and sometimes not-so-eager young men and women. They sometimes sprinted to the park on the rustic Baraboo riverwalk between Broadway and the park. Mary Rountree Evans was then a cramped but picturesque football field, the local football field of dreams.

No one has counted the wins versus losses on the six decades of use, but we do know that Baraboo played Portage on opening afternoon — no night games then or for many years thereafter.

Those eager and perspiring young men of 1923 would be approaching their 90s now, those still living that is, but one suspects there are still vivid memories of long forgotten games. Sports memories tend to grow, rather than fade away.

So yes, it is well established in Baraboo as to what Mary Rountree Evans was — a riverbank football field for some 60 years, and now a baseball and tennis center.

## Mary Rountree Evans

The question remains, then: Who was Mary Rountree Evans, that a major Baraboo park should be named after her? The answer is simple: she was the deceased wife of Judge Evan A. Evans, and he purchased and donated the land in her memory in 1923.

Other than the relatively new Ochsner Park, Baraboo had few if any other parks then, and the

advent of the Evans park was widely publicized by the Baraboo News as an important event of the day. Today, the Parks and Recreation Board lists 11 city parks, with Ochsner Park leading the pack as far as amenities go. Rountree Evans and two others vie for second place in that regard.

The News covered the 1923 dedication diligently, as follows: On a Saturday afternoon the field was dedicated to the memory "of a loving wife, a devoted Mother, and a noble woman." A letter from Judge Evans stated that the field was given "with the thought that if living it would meet with her approval and give her pleasure."

## The dedication

There was a high school band then, and it "opened the dedication ceremonies with spirited selections." This was followed by an extensively reported speech by Park Board President Herman Grotophorst.

In the custom of the time, the speaker emphasized, and the News duly reported, that "Through the generosity of one of our most distinguished citizens, honorable Evan A. Evans, and through the liberality of our common council, we were able to obtain this beautiful field ... (its) care has been placed under the supervision of the Board of Park Commissioners (which will) make it a place of beauty and a field for recreation."

Grotophorst called for a city-wide effort, inspired by the gift of the park, to "have a volunteer organization working for the beatification of Baraboo ... modeled after the Red Cross of our day. about \$5,000 for the use of the Park Board ... and contributions by putting on something at the Al. Ringling. Then, as now, the Al. Ringling was used for civic purposes, too.

Grotophorst's eloquence was supplemented by other speakers whose names loom large in the pantheon of Baraboo leaders of the past, names such as E.P. McFetridge, Robert Pease, Mayor Adolph Andro, F.E. Morey, and Superintendent A.C. Kingsford.

## Advice to youth

Grotophorst's remarks were not confined to the matter at hand, the dedication of a park, but again, in keeping with the custom of the times, he found an opportunity to address the youth of the community on success in life:



The current baseball diamond at Mary Rountree Evans Park (above) was the Baraboo High School football field for six decades. The park's entrance pillar (right) shows no sign of a war memorial plaque ever being attached thereto.

"You may elate over a victory rightly won ... do not glory and boast over your opponent's defeat. Only he who takes earnest, willing, and intelligent part in any game is likely to win. Remember that success in life depends upon the same principles that assure success upon this field. Only the youth who gets (in) the game can expect to win a victory. The youth who participates in combat is the youth who gains strength and self-reliance."

The eager young football players must have taken heed that afternoon, for they prevailed over Portage 7 to 3 despite the presence of the mayor of Portage and a large contingent of Portage fans.

#### **The soldier boys**

The enthusiasm of the day apparently carried over for a few days, for within a week it was proposed to erect "a memorial at the entrance of the new athletic field ... in memory of all the boys who participated in the (first) World War for the city of Baraboo.



"A tablet of bronze is to be fastened to the center of the memorial and will include the names of all the soldier boys in raised letters, some two hundred."

The money was to be raised by public subscription, and "everybody in the city hall shall have an opportunity to contribute toward the expense of the memorial."

One looks in vain, however, for the promised plaque memorializing the "soldier boys" at the entrance to or anywhere near the park. Was the cannon on the Courthouse Square substituted, or is there a first World War memorial somewhere else?

Certainly there is no memorial comparable to the glorious Civil War memorial on the Courthouse Square, either for World War I or World War II or our other national conflicts.

There are no remaining "soldier boys" now from World War I. Like good soldiers, they did not complain. They know what they did. You have to wonder, though, if there was some resentment at the constant reference to these war veterans as boys. Men who have seen combat are no longer boys.

# Yeggs in the bank, and the doldrums

by Bob Dewel

There was a chill in the air on the morning of November 4, 1924, as Catherine Schmidt walked briskly on her way to work. It was Monday morning, and she thought of work still unfinished from the previous Saturday — yes, professional offices were open on Saturday in those days!

Her employer was attorney F.R. Bently, and the office was in a prominent corner upstairs over the First National Bank. It afforded a pleasant view of downtown Baraboo. (It still does in 1998, for attorneys Greenhalgh and Hoffman.)

Miss Schmidt was probably reflecting that tomorrow would be election day, and the papers were speculating whether "Silent Cal" Coolidge would be elected President. After all, he was a vice-president who succeeded to the White House following the death of President Harding. There were rumors about Harding, but not about Coolidge.

Women had the vote now, and Catherine was probably undecided as to where her vote should go. In Baraboo, Harry Scott had one of the newfangled radio receivers, and since election results might be on the air, he planned to give out free bulletins in front of his home at 211 Fourth Avenue. It sounded pretty chilly to Catherine, standing outside on a cold November evening to hear what you could read in the papers the next day anyway.

The other choice would be the grand Al. Ringling Theatre, still sparkling nine years after it opened, for they would give election returns during the movie. Will Rogers was coming soon in some movie also. What a shame, she thought, that Al. Ringling only attended his theatre once before his death, and even then he was blind and could not see its magnificence.

## What a mess!

Nothing seemed out of order as Catherine ascended the long straight stairway between the bank and the barbershop on Third Street, but what a mess when she opened the door to the law office! The floor of the library had holes measuring 12 by 16 inches, with chips

and shavings scattered all over the room. She thought at first that the bank was making alterations, but it was soon clear that there had been a robbery, or at least an attempt at one.

As soon as bank officials were notified, detectives from out of town arrived, and they found plenty of evidence of an attempted robbery. There were fingerprints in the talow the yeggs had used. Moreover, their sledge, brace and bit and a chisel had been left behind! Some robbers they were!

Their object appeared to be to enter the bank vault from above, but their first try was too far west. The next of three openings was squarely over the vault, but its 16 inch thick cement ceiling foiled their efforts. It was concluded that there were at least two yeggs (safe-crackers), for a lookout chair had been placed by the window for a good view of both Third Street and Oak Street.

The *Daily News* reported that "officials familiar with the case claim the cracksmen sized up the Baraboo bank as an easy job from the building which houses it."

This building was to be replaced later by the handsome classic structure on the Northeast corner of Oak and Third Streets today. Actually, it is not even the same institution, for it was succeeded in later years by another bank of the same name. To further confuse the issue, the present Baraboo National Bank had been known as the First National Bank from 1873 to 1880.

## Suspicious characters

Regarding the robbery, the *Daily Republic* gravely announced that "suspicious characters were seen peeking in the bank Saturday, and some tough looking specimens of humanity were here Sunday and Monday."

It is not known if the yeggs were ever apprehended, but it must have been an anxious day for Catherine Schmidt!

## Dillinger and others

It would be ten years, however, before the most famous bank robber of modern times, John Dillinger, was reported seen at mass by Sister Liguori. Old timers say that Al Capone may have had a place at Mirror Lake, and Roger Touhy was said to have a lair in Sauk County also. Rumors? Chicago does not have a street named after Capone, but there is a Touhy avenue.

Catherine Schmidt may not have noticed it, but the third and fourth decades of the Twentieth Century did not look so promising for Baraboo. Michael Goc, in "Many A Fine Harvest," speaks of the Depression as beginning, for Baraboo, in 1918!

### The circus departs

The abrupt departure of the Ringling Circus in 1918 and the previous closing of the Gollmar circus in 1916 had hit the town hard, both economically and in terms of town pride. The city population dropped from 6,324 in 1910 to 5,538 in 1920. The grand old guard of circus brothers and cousins was fading rapidly from the scene, and the circus industry was gone.

The loss of the circus had also closed the Ringling car shops, though they were reopened in 1926 by the Northwestern Refrigerator Car Company, no relation to the railroad of the same name. In a few decades that was gone, but fittingly the car shops returned to their original purpose when the Circus World Museum acquired them in recent years through the efforts of Chappie Fox.

### More bad news

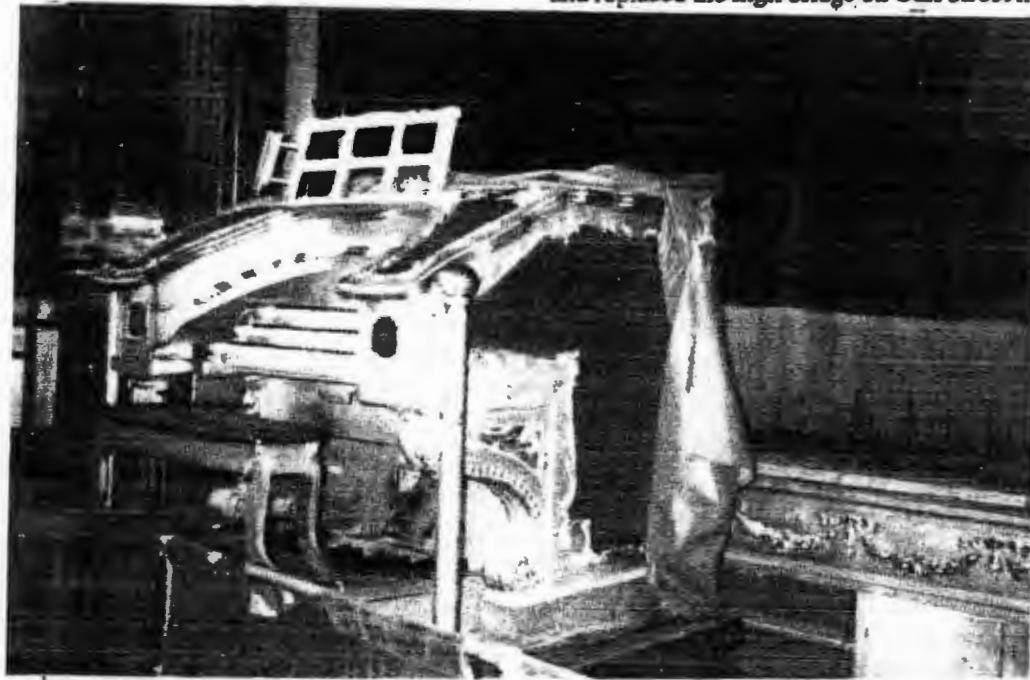
Truly bad news had come in 1924 when the elaborate railroad machine shops were moved to Madison, and soon all but six roundhouse stalls had moved to the capitol city also. By 1933 even the prestigious division headquarters was lost, and to top it off, the Cahoon iron mine had closed in 1925. All this meant loss of jobs and families to the city.

The theatre itself was going strong though, having closed for but a few days during the great flu epidemic, but even the churches had closed then. The Al. Ringling was now Baraboo's only claim to fame as America's Prettiest Playhouse. Al's heirs had offered it as a gift to the city, but the city council had rejected the offer. Undaunted, the heirs installed the "Mighty Barton Theatre Organ" in 1928. There are only half a dozen theatre organs in Wisconsin today!

A lesser claim to fame was the burning during the war of all school German textbooks one night on the square, an event for which no one has claimed credit even now, 70 years later. Several German-speaking churches switched to English about this time. Prohibition brought lessened respect for law and order, and the Baraboo area had its share of bootleggers. Wisconsin became the playground of Chicago hoodlums, and there were rumors of such activity in the county.

The news was not always bad. The C.C.C. camps of the Roosevelt New Deal gave food and shelter for the hapless railroad bums, as well as producing meaningful public works. Baraboo benefited especially due to the camp at Devils Lake, and much of the fine stonework around the courthouse square and Ochsner Park and Devils Lake still remains. Especially helpful was the present outdoor pool in Baraboo, a C.C.C. project in about 1936.

The pool had been preceded by the yellow brick high school in 1929 not 1907 as stated in the previous article. A fine new bridge extended Broadway across the river and replaced the high bridge on Oak street in



Contributed photo by Al. Ringling Theatre Friends  
The "Mighty Barton" still speaks with authority, as it did during the Great Depression.

Third Ave., looking East.



1928. Highways 12 and 33 no longer crossed downtown at Oak and Fourth, for the bypass of 1936 routed Highway 12 through West Baraboo, much to the dismay of downtown Baraboo merchants. The last covered bridge in the county, the Butterfield bridge, was replaced in 1930. Of interest in 1931 was the new concrete Oak Street dam.

Finally, a hospital worthy of the name had appeared on Oak Street between 10th and 11th in 1922, thanks to the donation of the Alf. T. Ringling home by his divorced wife. The new Ochsner Park, with its elegant band shell, was a fine addition to the city, but much of the social life revolved around the chateau at Devils Lake, where dozens of cottages ringed the lake at the time. The Warner Memorial Road had made access to the lake more convenient for Baraboo residents in 1921.

#### Running in place

Thus the '20s and '30s had brought serious losses, and some gains, to the city, fighting to survive the Depression. Baraboo sometimes seemed to be running in place, just keeping its head above water.

With the Circus gone and the railroad division point lost, a few small industries came and went. World news made people uneasy, and "America First" zealots like Gerald L.K. Smith, Father Coughlin (the Rush Limbaugh of his day) and even Lindberg, occupied the new radio airwaves and newscasts.

The ominous growth of the German and Japanese armies was to have a profound effect on Baraboo as the storm clouds of approaching World War II cast a chill over the general tranquility of the small city.

No one knew it, but Baraboo's economy was about to soar, and the city would soon bulge at the seams!



Looking West on Third Avenue and the Baraboo National Bank



James Adams Collection

# Affluent Ringlings and private varnish

There is a remarkable book at Circus World Museum's Robert Parkinson Library called "Born to Be," by Taylor Gordon.

Published in 1929 by Taylor, an African-American, a portion of the book is devoted to a few years during which he served as valet, chef and porter on the Wisconsin, John Ringling's private varnish Pullman car. (More about private varnish later.) As such, Gordon gives us a different insight into the lives of Ringling, his wife Mable, and even of Baraboo's Al. Ringling in his declining years.

#### On the Wisconsin

Gordon traveled over much of the country in the Wisconsin Pullman car, both with John Ringling and the circus, and also with Ringling in visiting his varied oil and railroad interests. Sometimes, Gordon traveled alone on assignment, and he relates a visit to Baraboo as follows:

"I took the (railroad car) to Baraboo, Wisconsin, to take old Al. Ringling and his family to Sarasota. They had a home not far from the bay. Old Al. was failing fast. He couldn't eat anything but special foods — clam broth and milk toast, a little breast of chicken, and a little fish, some vegetables.

"He'd sit and watch the others eat and tell me he used to eat like that also. The look on his face had me guessing whether to laugh or cry. He told me I was so good to him he'd give me a fine present, and when he was well, we could go to Montana and hunt and fish. But poor old Al. died and I never did get anything from him."

At several points in the narrative, Gordon gives us intimate glimpses into the personal lives of John and Mable Ringling, Robert Ringling and others, none of which is germane to this article, except for the following passage:

"I thought of Ed and Jesse, who worked for Otto Ringling for years before he died, yet they didn't get the first dime. I hadn't drawed on full salary since I worked for John the second time. Until I came to New York on that trip, I found myself \$260 short and I couldn't get a big loan from (John Ringling). I said, 'What's the use of working for a rich man if you can't get help from him?' So I quit Ringling again."

#### Private varnish

Private varnish is the name given to the excesses of the rich and robber barons of the time, and derives its name from the highly varnished and polished mahogany and other woods found on their private railroad cars. There is even a magazine for them today by that name, encompassing not only the less fashionable railroad cars of today, but the popular private airplanes, buses and yachts. Many of these are also illustrated in a publication called Millionaire Magazine.

The Ringlings didn't initiate the private Pullman fad, but quickly emulated the robber baron rich of the day by owning a series of elegant

private varnish-style Pullmans, both for travel with the circus and for private business interests and ventures.

Some of this is documented in pictures in the recent publication by Circus World Museum's Fred Dahlinger, called "Trains of the Circus, 1872-1956." There are more than 100 full-page illustrations, including some of the private varnish car interiors.

The earliest car for the Ringlings was named Caledonia, purchased in 1892 when the brothers adopted rail transportation. Generally regarded as Charlie Ringling's car, it was "decorated in rich reds and golds, with lace curtains, and conveyed an older era." After Charlie's death in 1925, his wife Edith used it, and it contained a piano for her musical skills.

John Ringling's car was named the Jomar, with the letters Jo from his first name, Ma from Mable, his wife's first name, and R for Ringling. As described in "Big Top Boss" by David Hamerstrom, the Jomar "was especially built for John by the Pullman Company, and was the largest private car in the world, with mahogany woodwork, brass chairs, and a double brass bed."

By 1929, John, as circus king of the world, owned 235 rail cars of various sizes and purposes, including flat cars 70 feet long and bunk cars for the employees. John had by this time over-invested and soon lost control of the



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CIRCUS WORLD MUSEUM

Above, the world's largest private varnish car, the Jomar, stands rusted and forlorn in a freight yard in 1992.

circus, but that is another story. Baraboo's Gollmar circus also traveled by rail, as did 27 other circuses shortly after the turn of the century.

Another private varnish car, the Wisconsin, was less opulent and more for business and convenience. It is now in a railroad museum in the Carolinas after a checkered career, having once been used as a hunting lodge.

#### The Jomar

John's Jomar, however, built in 1916-17, was the most famous of the cars. It was used well after John's decline and death by Aubrey and Jim Haley and Art Concello, circus managers. It eventually became the prop-

erty of John Ringling North, John's nephew and eventual successor in operating the circus. North later gave the Jomar to his longtime band leader friend, Rudy Bundy, for North by this time was living almost entirely in Europe.

In the 1930s, the Jomar had been vandalized, and was refurbished twice. North entertained Cecil B. DeMille, producer of the movie "Greatest Show on Earth" on the Jomar, including a stop in Madison. Owned recently by Harry Fraser of Ruston, La., it was sold to a Florida entity for restoration. Fraser says this has not been started so far.

There is another circus rail car, with the simple title RB 66, which was used by Bundy while attached to the Jomar. It had been built as a hospital car, the St. Louis, in World War II, and there are rumors that it may be in the news again. Its last circus run was in 1970.

#### Private varnish today

With regard to private varnish cars, most rail lines have them even yet, including the Wisconsin Southern. They are attached to the Great Circus Train every July for its trip to Milwaukee. When he traveled with the circus, animal trainer Frank Buck had his own private car. Although it was hardly private varnish in decor, the ape Gargantua's car was air-conditioned!

In addition, Time magazine for the week of Aug. 14 reports that several private rail cars were supplied to the



Not to be outdone, the Cole Brothers had a private varnish car also (at right), as did most owners (photo courtesy of the Kelley collection at Circus World).

Republican National Convention earlier this month. They were used for the more well-heeled delegates or supporters who were being solicited for donations by House Republican Whip Tom DeLay. Presumably, the rail car used for a few days by George W. Bush after the convention would be a private varnish car, also.

Due to our greatly abbreviated railroad system since World War II, there is less call for the private varnish

rail cars than in the earlier decades. The spell of their opulence still exists for some, as do some of the old cars.

The Jomar, however, stands stripped and rusted, a relic of the heady days when its ownership was alternately claimed as a prize by the successor operators of the greatest circus in the world.

*Bob Dewel's "Yesteryear Revisited" column is a regular feature of the News Republic.*



The queen of aerial gymnasts, Lillian Leitzel, and a young friend, Dolly John, enjoyed her commodious stateroom in a Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows sleeper. It was outfitted with a piano, radio, cylinder music box, and other amenities from home. Only the premier performers ever received such treatment. Print from original negative by Harry A. Atwell, circa 1928. Circus World Museum. All photos in this article are from "Trains of the Circus, 1872-1956".

by Fred Dahlinger

# Two similar tales of Ringling terra cotta

"Much of the terra cotta was damaged in one way or another. Some of it had to be replaced, and the rest had to be repaired. The work has become a nearly three-year project...the terra cotta was falling apart."

Sound familiar? No, it is not the Al. Ringling Theatre being discussed. The quote is from the Sarasota Herald-Tribune, and the structure is Ca'd'zan, John Ringling's fabulous home in that city. Their reporter wondered if it should be called Ca'd'terra cotta instead of ca'd'zan.

The parallels between the restoration of the Sarasota home and our Al. Ringling Theatre are remarkable. Both were constructed by Ringling Bros.; John in Sarasota and Al. in Baraboo. Al. was a product of hard labor as a young man, while much younger John was raised and entered into the circus business in relative affluence. The theater was a gift to the city (which was declined). John's was the home of a rich man.

Now, as we near the end of the century, both the Sarasota and Baraboo historical structures are in need of restoration, particularly their exterior terra cotta. This is a once-popular building material made of clay which, when shaped and fired and glazed, resembles marble or other natural stone products.

There are significant differences in the projects. The Al. Ringling, built in 1915, is only now requiring restoration of its terra cotta facade, while the Sarasota house already had its terra cotta restored once before. This is despite the fact that, built in 1929, it is 14 years newer than the theater. Apparently the freezing and thawing of our winters is less destructive than the salt spray and mold of Florida.



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There are still more differences. The Florida project, including interior restoration and renovation, is projected to cost nearly \$13 million, while the total Baraboo project, also including exterior work, will be less than half that cost. According to the Sarasota newspaper, the "Ringling Museum of Arts officials have asked the state for an additional \$2.5 million to finish the work. This is in addition to the \$10 million the entire project was...to cost."

The Florida workmen speak of it as slow tedious work. "You're working on something old, and people are going to be looking at it for years to come. You've got to make sure you do it right," said sculptor Michael Chomick. "It's not just a piece of brick I'm working with. It's a piece of history."

Here's another difference. The Sarasota structure was built as a private home, and now it is simply a tourist attraction with little or no public service function to justify its existence.

The Al. Ringling Theatre, however, even when in private hands, had civic functions and purposes, beginning with war bond rallies in 1917, and countless school graduations and other public service uses in its 83 years of existence. Thanks to the presence of the Al., the Baraboo area has never had to tax its citizens for a large public auditorium whether in its schools or elsewhere.

Financially, facade restoration is gaining ground, but slowly. The state of Wisconsin has made a grant, though not even close to the \$2.5 million that Sarasota expects from its state. It remains to be seen if our city and county make significant contributions to restoration of the Al.

In Sarasota, a proud workman was quoted as saying, "You should have seen it before. It was falling apart. But look at it (the finished portion) now. The quality of the reconstruction is something we're really proud of."

Hopefully Baraboo, West Baraboo, and Sauk County can say the same.

# The opulent Ringling Bros. homes, Part I

This is the first of three articles about the fabulous homes of the Ringling Brothers in Baraboo and Sarasota, Fla.

The articles will also be submitted to the Sarasota Herald-Tribune in hopes that Sarasotans can learn about the circus heritage that began and flourished and matured in Baraboo. Sarasota was hardly a pinpoint on the map of Florida during those glory years from 1884 to 1918. It owes much of what it is today to the Ringlings.

If you take the Circus World Museum's trolley ride around Baraboo this summer, you will learn that the fabulous homes of the Ringlings are among the historic attractions of the city.

Before the trolley, tourists were transported in a wagon with a circus motif, pulled by a Jeep which was often piloted by Lloyd "Red" Wyatt. Red liked to observe that if the flag was flying at the Henry Ringling home, it meant that Mrs. Ringling was "in residence," which attention alternately amused or annoyed her.

#### **Henry Ringling's home**

The elegant yellow Ringling home at the corner of Ash Street and Eighth St., also known as Ringling Boulevard, is still occupied by Ringling descendants. It was originally the home of Charles Ringling before he sold it to younger brother Henry.

This attractive Colonial Revival house, occupied in December 1900, has a wood-paneled formal dining room, as well as formal and inner parlors. To the northwest is an extensive library, doubling also as a music room. Nearby is the carriage house and former servants quarters, also yellow. A spacious lawn adds to the gracious ambiance.

#### **The Al. Ringling home**

Also in Baraboo is the Al. Ringling mansion, a Romanesque brownstone castle-like structure. Al. was the oldest of the brothers, and perhaps the moving force in the development of the circus. In 1915 he was the builder of the grand Al. Ringling Theatre in Baraboo.

This home is now occupied by the Elks Club, and that fraternal organization is making efforts to restore the structure to the grandeur of its original construction at the turn of the century.

Especially attractive is the recently renovated Lou Ringling room, done in gold fabric tapestry and Victorian-style furnishings. Mrs. Ringling was an integral part of the development of the family circus, and served at one time as a snake charmer. Like this room, the other parlors on the main floor are grand and spacious, with evidence still existing on the walls and elsewhere of the former elegance and charm.

The Elks have successfully restored the roof and tuck-pointed the brown sandstone exterior. When a large meeting room was added to the west a few years ago, care was taken to reuse the brown sandstone removed from that side of the house. That room is frequently used for community events.

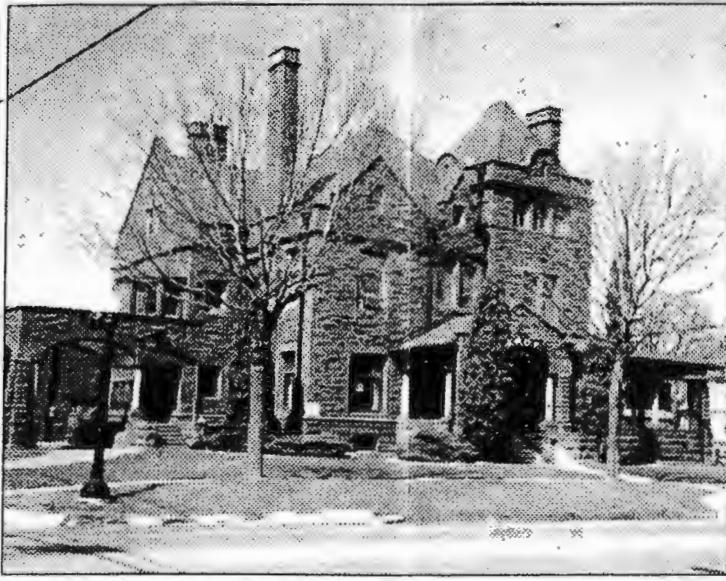
#### **The Al. Ringling Theatre**

From a second floor bedroom, in 1915, the dying owner could watch as his magnificent playhouse, the Al. Ringling, was being constructed across the street. According to the Theatre Historical Society of America, this was the very first of the palatial movie theaters to be constructed in the United States, and is still in regular use!

Al. intended it as a gift to the city, which had not only tolerated the potholes the elephants left in the gravel streets of the day, but also the distinctive odor of the circus animals which sometimes wafted over the business section:

For various reasons, the city declined the posthumous gift in 1917, and the theater remained with the Ringling family heirs until the 1950s. It then was in private hands until 1989, when the non-profit Al. Ringling Theatre Friends took possession. The theater's continuous tradition of service to the community has now been greatly enhanced, but restoration of the historical masterpiece of theater design is proceeding slowly.

Despite its 84 years, the theater remains much as it was built in 1915, and thankfully no one has remodeled it



CONTRIBUTED

Pictured above is the Al. Ringling Romanesque home, which was built in 1900 and now serves as a lodge for the Baraboo Elks Club. It lies on just off Courthouse Square on Broadway. Above right is Charles Ringling's Colonial Revival home, also built in 1900. It was later sold to his brother, Henry Ringling. At right is the Alfred T. Ringling home when it served as St. Mary's Ringling Hospital. That home, before being razed, was located in the city's high hills, near where the St. Mary's Convent operated until this year.

into an art decor or some other style. Its striking pre-revolutionary French decor retains a charming patina of gracious age.

#### Alfred T. Ringling's home

Gone now is the hillside manor of Alfred T. and Adele Ringling, donated by her to become the Ringling-St. Mary's Hospital in 1922. This followed by some years her separation from him. This large home served the city well, with a major addition to the hospital in 1945.

Following construction of St. Clare Hospital in 1962, the former hospital became a home for nuns, the original home part being torn down. The remaining addition of 1945 is currently empty. Adele had earlier donated the pipe organ to St. Joseph's Church, where it still serves. Alfred's connection to Sarasota will be discussed in Part II of this series, as will pipe organs.

#### August Ringling home

Still standing in Baraboo is the American Foursquare home of the Ringling parents. This was not the first home of the Ringling patriarch, a maker of harnesses, ships, valises and other accouterments of the horse-drawn wagons of the second half of the 19th century.

This carriage trimmer, whose original name was Rungeling, had lived in several Wisconsin and Iowa towns, struggling to make a living. In Baraboo his sign on his shop at Third and Broadway was a huge horse collar, and the city directories of the day show that he lived in smaller houses, on Bench (First) at Broadway, and 227 Second Ave. In 1895 Charles, Henry, and Ida appear to have still resided there also, but John and Otto lived at the Warren Hotel. By 1895 Al. lived at 131 Third Avenue, and Alfred T. was at 722 Oak.



By the turn of the century, it was evident that the Ringling brothers were now big-time showmen. Al., Charles, and Alfred T. felt secure enough to plan construction of their magnificent homes, and the winter quarters at "Ringlingville" along the Baraboo River were enlarged by the addition of the elephant barn, 1897, and the ring barn, 1901. Both remain extant.

#### Ringlings and Baraboo

The association of the Ringlings and Baraboo is well documented, the brothers having been raised here in the 19th century. Baraboo saw the birth of their circus and its first meager performance in 1884, and a brass plaque marks the site near downtown. With some astonishment, the population saw the enterprise grow, in the next 32 years, into the World's Greatest Show and the town's

major industry.

Their cousins, the Gollmars, also operated a circus which for many years was the third largest circus in the U. S.

Another set of cousins, the Moellers, made many of the circus wagons in Baraboo for both the Ringlings and the Gollmars.

Not all of the times have been good, and Baraboo National Bank documents contain a plea for a loan when the young circus became insolvent in 1888. The loan was granted, no doubt with some trepidation, and the show survived.

The Ringlings repaid the favor a few years later when the bank faced closure due to a panic "run" in 1907. The brothers marched downtown carrying bags of money for deposit, the populace was calmed, and the bank was saved. Both the bank and the circus survive to this day, about a century later.

#### Departure

The failure of the circus to return to its winter quarters in 1918 was precipitated partly by wartime shortages and by the consolidation with the Barnum and Bailey unit, which the Ringlings had owned for some 10 years. With little fanfare, the

announcement was made that the circus would now winter in Bridgeport, Conn. at the Barnum and Bailey facility.

The circus, nurtured by the hometown of the Ringling family, had been an integral part of Baraboo for 32 years. After a few years in Bridgeport, it was moved by John to Sarasota for about 32 years, followed by a similar period of time in Venice, Fla. Now headquartered in Tampa, it remains to be seen if the 32-year tradition will continue.

*When you are dealt a lemon you make lemonade, so they say. In Baraboo this is true, since for some 40 years the city has become the home of the world's largest circus museum and research center. Appropriately, it is located on the original grounds and occupies some of the old winter quarters buildings.*

Circus World Museum, with its vast collection of hundreds of circus wagons and other memorabilia and its twice daily summer circus shows, can be looked on with envy by Sarasota, Venice, and Bridgeport!

More on this later. The next article will deal with the Ringling homes and enterprises in Sarasota.



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The late August Ringling, Sr., father of the Ringling Brothers.

# Opulent Ringling homes,

BOB DEWEL  
YESTERYEAR REVISITED

As was mentioned in Article I of this series, three Ringling brothers felt secure enough in the turn of the century to build three magnificent but differently styled homes in Baraboo.

Two decades later, it was more than a feeling of security. It was a realization of great wealth and power that prevailed, and homes were built to reflect that wealth. Between 1919 and 1926, three surviving brothers built homes in Florida ranging from fabulous to opulent, and young Henry had long since taken over the Charles Ringling mansion in Baraboo. Like two of the homes in Baraboo, the three Florida homes survive today. Unlike Baraboo, no Sarasota home is occupied now by Ringling descendants. Baraboo still has descendants of the Gollmar Brothers circus residing in the city also.

#### The Gulf Coast

The Ringlings first visited the gulf coast Sarasota village in 1911, with a population then about an eighth of that of Baraboo, not counting the livestock on the streets. Always alert to commercial possibilities, the brothers were able to foresee how the harbor had great potential for development in the burgeoning America of the early 20th century.

Climate was of course a factor, as both Wisconsin and Bridgeport winters presenting problems with the care of the animals. Not so with the elephants, however — in Baraboo the only heat in the elephant barn was provided by the elephants themselves.

## Part II: Sarasota

Charles and John were the 1911 visitors to Sarasota, having been invited by some south Florida business interests. This was about the time the Ringlings were involved in the dispute with the state of Wisconsin, which they felt was asking that they share too much of their wealth with the home state. Although the circus retained its winter quarters in Baraboo until 1918, the seeds of future relocation may have been planted at this time.

These were heady years for the circus. The brothers now owned the Barnum and Bailey Circus, which headquartered in Bridgeport, and they were the circus kings of the world. Despite the attraction of the Florida climate, it would be eight years before the first home would be built. John, however, bought the Thompson Place, on the present site of his Ca' d'Zan, and wintered there. Within seven years of that first visit to Sarasota, four of the seven brothers, Gus, Otto, Al. and Henry, were dead.

#### Alfred T. Ringling Home

Alfred T. and his new wife, Elizabeth, built a smaller home in Sarasota than those he and his brothers had built in Baraboo, but nonetheless impressive for its time and setting. The home was on the market this spring, and a visit to the interior belied its modest exterior appearance.

Constructed in 1919-1920, this little-known house sat then on a plot of 218 acres some three miles north of town. Now some 80 years old, the building has long since been moved from its former bayfront location. It still retains a charm and coziness not found in some of the other Ringling homes.

A tour of the house, so unpretentious on the outside, reveals a reserved but grand style, featuring a two-story ballroom/living room on the main floor with a mezzanine balcony above, supported by a few Roman columns. Eight sets of French doors lead to various side rooms and entrances on the main floor.

Al. Ringling never saw his glorious Baraboo theater, as he was blind on opening night, his only visit before his death six weeks later, on Jan. 1, 1916. His brother, Alfred T., had a similar fate, for he died in 1919, before his house was completed in 1920. Even Mable, John's first wife, only had 3 1/2 years in Ca'd'Zan.

By 1922 his son Richard had possession, and planned for a time to graze cattle from his Montana ranch on the 218 acres. Whether this came to pass is not known, but he sold the entire property in 1926 for \$250,000. The original cost of the house had been \$35,000, and it now sits on about an acre of land, including the servants' quarters building. The asking price today is \$450,000. The home for several decades had been in private lands. Charles enjoyed less than a year in his new home, dying in 1926.



The present living room/ballroom of the Alf. T. Ringling home

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Exterior view, Alf. T. Ringling home

There is an interesting insight into Edith's character. When the Ringling Bank and Trust Company closed during the Depression, she is said to have used her personal savings to repay the depositors!

John, the surviving brother, died in some financial difficulty. For a time the circus was in the hands of John and Henry Ringling North, sons of Ida, the only sister to the original brothers. In 1960, after 32 years in Sarasota, the circus headquarters moved to nearby Venice, but the circus still retains a strong presence in the city. More on this in Article III.

### Pipe organs

Alfred T.'s home had a pipe organ, which in 1926 was donated by the new owners to a nearby Presbyterian church. Pipe organs seemed to be a Ringling priority, for Alfred had also had one in his Baraboo home, later donated by his former wife to St. Joseph's Church. Charles had one in his Sarasota home, discussed below, and John had one in Ca' d'Zan.

Al. had a Hope-Jones Wurlitzer organ in his Al. Ringling Theatre for its opening in 1915. It was donated to the Baraboo Evangelical United Brethren Church in 1928 when it was replaced with the mighty Barton.

### Ca' d'Zan

When it comes to opulence, John and Mable Ringling win the prize. Their "House of John," with 32 rooms, a tower, and a large marble terrace, would have been palatial even in Venice, Italy, whose style it emulated.

Because this house is a tourist attraction seen by many of our readers, Ca' d'Zan will not be discussed in detail. An article in March in this newspaper told of the difficulties in replacing or repairing the terra cotta exterior, much like the problems at the Al. Ringling Theatre in Baraboo. Interestingly, Ca' d'Zan is 10 years newer, but has already had one terra cotta makeover. Apparently cold winters are not as destructive as salt water spray and mold and mildew!

There is another difference. John's home is owned by the state of Florida, which is investing \$12.5 million in its restoration. Despite its fame as a tourist attraction, it was apparently a financial burden. It's currently closed until next year. Some \$2.5 million was recently requested of the state for repairs to just the marble terrace, the dock area, and some interior work. Also, \$200,000 has been allocated just for restoration of art dec-



John and Mable Ringling's Ca' d'Zan

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orations and collections within the building, according to the Sarasota Herald Tribune. Would that Wisconsin could give similar recognition to the local theater!

### Charles and Edith

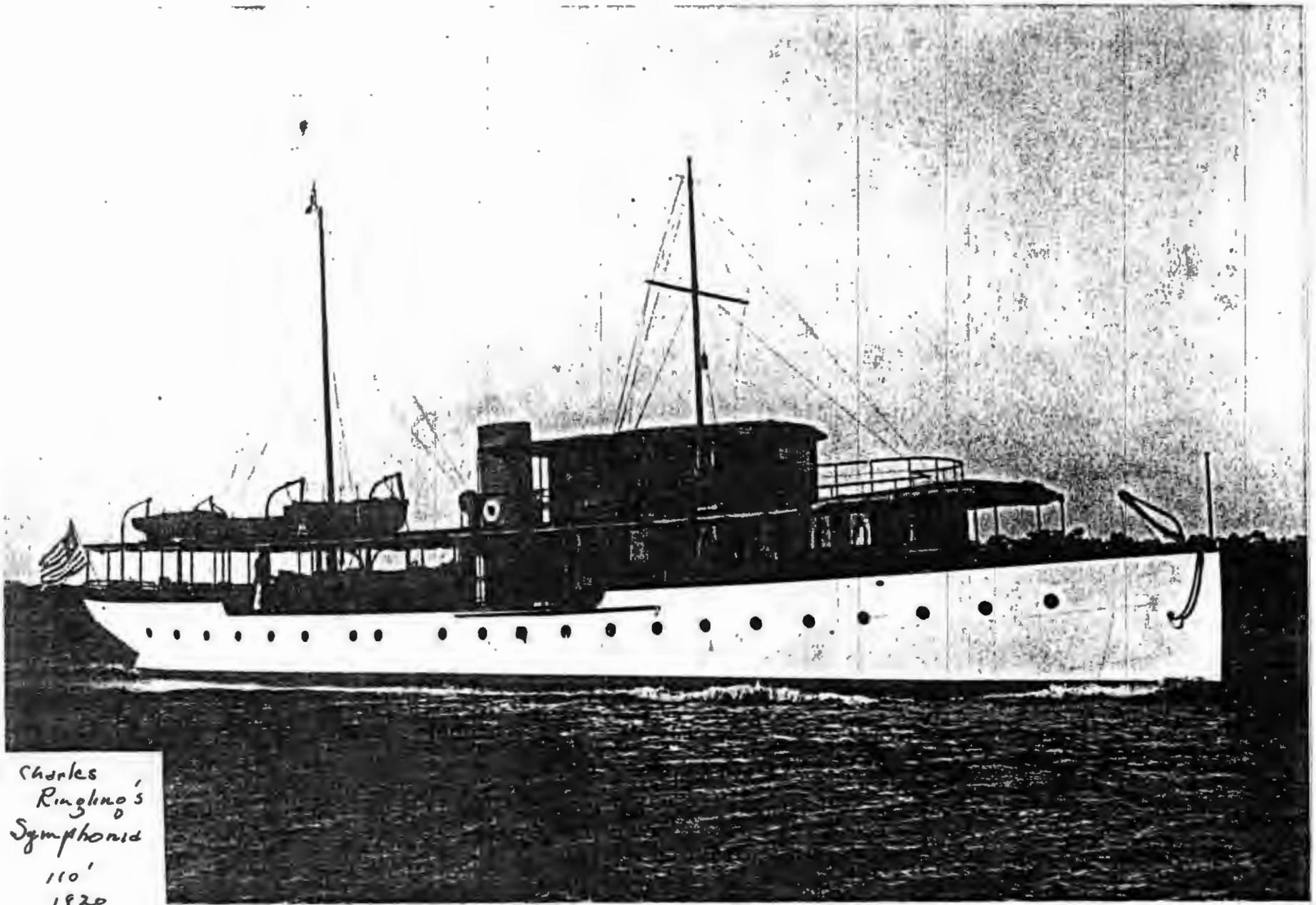
Lesser known and less gaudy and ostentatious when compared to Ca' d'Zan is the stately mansion of Charles Ringling. This elegant and attractive home, now a part of the New College in Sarasota, has two stories, and is perhaps 208 feet wide on the front. It's veneered in Etowah marble from Georgia, done in Italian Renaissance style.

Included in the 20-room home was a music room, billiard room, and an office. The pipe organ was an Aeolian-Skinner. The property had a mile of frontage on the bay, and a 2,000-foot driveway for cars and carriages.

Charles Ringling and Edith Conway were married in Baraboo in 1890, and he died in 1926, leaving John as the only surviving brother, since Henry, the youngest, passed away in Baraboo in 1918.

Florida readers may be surprised to learn that a home was built in Sarasota in 1912 by Baraboo contractor George Isenberg, in whom Charles evidently had great confidence. Later Ed. Schrang, a Baraboo resident until recently, did drawings and other work for a second residence in 1924, and reports that there was a circular stairway eight feet wide, and that later someone drove a car up the steps for a lark. Feeling that the steps were too high, they were later all torn out and replaced with steps with a lesser rise.

Edith was a remarkable woman, and maintained an active interest — personal as well as financial — in the family circus business. Often she was in charge of the operation in John's absence, but it is said she had some reservations about his leadership. She traveled with the circus in her private railroad car, but became involved in family conflicts over the operation of the circus and "disputes related to the disposition of the estate," disputes which continued even after her death in 1953, according to the Herald Tribune.



Charles  
Ringino's  
*Symphonie*  
110'  
1920

# Charles Ringling's grand

Sometimes a writer begins writing on some small topic, and before he knows it, the project has a hold on him and won't let him go.

That is what has happened to this writer with regard to the recent stories on the opulent Ringling homes of Baraboo and Sarasota. Originally inspired by a few articles in the Sarasota Herald-Tribune, the project was conceived as a short and light commentary on the homes. It soon snowballed into a projected three articles, two of which have now been published.

A few days ago it expanded into four articles with the reception of copious information on the little known Charles and Edith Ringling home, and its history. In addition, we received pictures and descriptions of the nearly equally grand home Charles built for their daughter, Hester Ringling Sanford. This, then, is Article III of the series.

### **Edith Ringling**

Perhaps this should be called the Edith Ringling home, for with Charles, like brothers Al. and Alfred T., death intervened before they could enjoy their homes — or the theater in the case of Al. Even John's wife Mable only enjoyed three years in Ca' d'Zan, and Charles died the same year his home was completed in Sarasota.

Edith was the daughter of a Methodist minister, and had taught school in or near Baraboo before their 1890 marriage. Their first mansion had been in Evanston, Ill.

# Florida home

Thanks to the courtesy and the camera of David Glaser, public affairs coordinator of the USF New College in Sarasota, the opulence and classical elegance of Charles' home can be revealed, as it has been an integral part of the campus for 37 years. This article also contains information from Pat Ringling Buck's booklet, "The Ringling Legacy," and from the Sarasota Herald-Tribune.

### **Charles Ringling's home**

Now used as a library and music center, the mansion cost \$880,000 in 1926, plus some \$300,000 for furnishings from around the world, including the Orient. Decorators from Marshall Field in Chicago assisted in the latter.

The home can be classified as Neoclassical Revival, typical of 18th century English estates. Its west facade and loggia stretch 208 feet along Sarasota Bay. The entire structure is faced with pink Etowah Georgia marble. The home is 66 feet deep.

To the east was, as in all Ringling homes, a parte cochere or carriage entrance, accessed by a circular drive and centered then with a pool and fountain. Nearby was the two-story carriage house, a caretaker's home, and a barn. All of these are now in use, even the barn, which is good enough to house faculty offices!

The main building, and perhaps others, were designed by a Milwaukee firm, Clas, Shepherd, and Clas, and "construction workers and their families were brought from the north for the mammoth undertaking." This includes Baraboo's Ed Schrang and perhaps other local people.

The property apparently measured about 2,000 feet by 1,000 feet more or less between Sarasota and Tamiami Trail. Adjoining it to the south was the John Ringling property. Both properties already had wood frame homes on them, occupied by John and Charles as winter homes until the new construction in 1926.

### **The interior**

Space is inadequate to describe the magnificent interior. The living room was a spacious 59 by 30 feet, with ornate crystal chandeliers and a fireplace of Botticino marble. The Florentine era dining room fireplace featured a French Caen stone mantle and a gray sienna hearth.

Nearby was the billiard room, with murals of scenes from Pompeii above a wainscote of Belgian black marble.

A music room was used by the musically accomplished owners, including son Robert Ringling, an opera singer of note who has appeared on stage of the Al. Ringling in Baraboo. The 60-by-30-foot music room was also used by Charles with his violin and Edith with her cello — both Stradivaris of course.

It is said that the music room once contained a piano flown in to Sarasota in an old Ford Tri-motor plane. This was for a concert by the well-known Mme. Schumann-Heink. The music room could also be used for dancing by having the servants remove the furnishings.

Like most of the brothers, Charles had a pipe organ, an Aeolian, with 2,520 pipes and some three stories in height for some of the pipes. This organ has recently been restored by the Manasota Theatre Organ Society, its original cost being \$40,000.

It is hard to fathom the affluence represented by this home. Floors were of marble or teak, with American walnut walls in some rooms. A huge carpet designed by Edith was constructed in Savigny, France, and there was a Verde antique marble fountain in the billiard room. Sheraton and Hepplewhite antiques were in evidence.

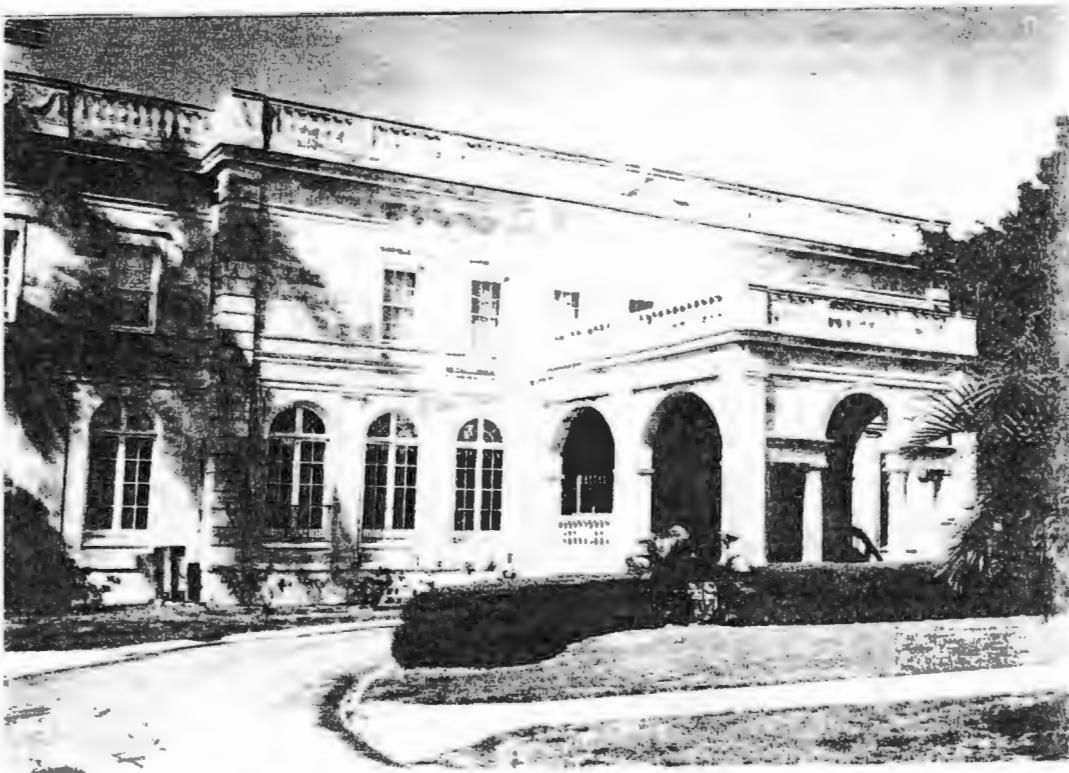
Balconies, terraces, patios, and loggia abound, and there was even a walk-in safe for valuables. The semicircular staircase has been mentioned in the previous article. Not too many homes in 1926 had an elevator also. A private swimming pool added to the exterior ambience.

Interestingly, access to his and her bedrooms was via a hallway with a wrought iron and brass-bound gate having a secure lock. A sitting room with a fireplace separated the bedrooms.

Edith occupied the house from 1926 until her death in 1953. After a short ownership by the Fred Wynons of Pennsylvania it was sold to New College in 1962.



Western (Bay) aspect of Chs. Ringling home



Entrance with porte cochere



A view of the Charles Ringling mansion in Sarasota, from the bayside



Although now remodeled, this was once the Charles Ringling Garage

### Hester's house

There's more to this story. Also in 1926, at a cost of about \$500,000, Charles had a home constructed for his daughter Hester Ringling to the south of his home, connected to his home by a cloister-like corridor.

This 22-room house stood between his home and John Ringling's Ca' d'Zan, and is Mediterranean Revival in style. The roof tiles were salvaged from a building in Spain. Robert Ringling had a more modest home to the north of Charles' residence.

Like the Ringlings, Hester's husband Louis Lancaster was slated for an early death, some seven years after moving into the home. Charles Sanford was her second marriage. Hester lived until 1965.

There was a wall between the John and Charles Ringling properties, near Hester's home. Buck states that the wall was not constructed in anger, but only to shut off the sounds of the servants in Hester's kitchen.

Article IV will consider the similarities and differences of the twin circus cities, Baraboo and Sarasota.



Western (Bay) aspect of Hester's house



Eastern (front) entrance of Hester's house



Rose garden statuary



CHARLES RINGLING

# Which town deserves title of 'Circus City'?

BOB DEWEL  
YESTERYEAR REVISITED

*"Cows and pigs still roamed Sarasota's downtown (in 1910)...then a town of 840 people...roaming cows and pigs were banned in 1911, and free-roaming chickens were banned in 1914."*

— Quote from the Sarasota (Fla.) Herald-Tribune, from which parts of this article are taken.

Sarasota, Fla. may have had its cows and pigs and chickens in 1910, but in Baraboo, population 6,314, it was elephants and camels and a whole menagerie parading in the streets, for the Ringling and Gollmar circus winter quarters dominated the business and industrial climate of the city.

In a downtown building the Moellers busily constructed circus wagons for both enterprises, and shrill calliope notes skirled the sky, mingling with the roars of lions and tigers. The Ringlings and Gollmars and Moellers were cousins, and all were hometown boys.

Baraboo was Circus City USA then, in those golden years of the circus. It was a title that passed to Bridgeport in 1918, then to Sarasota in 1927, not to be regained until the development of the Circus World Museum and Research Center in 1959. Baraboo is now the preeminent living circus museum and research center in the world, and can now regain the title.

They were different eras. The original Ringling boys created their circus with their own personal entertainment skills in 1884. After a few rough years, and with the help of a Baraboo bank, they evolved into the circus kings of the world, even buying out Barnum and Bailey by 1907. Wisconsin folks were not surprised, for Wisconsin holds the title of Mother of Circuses. Dozens of American circuses began here, including the first to carry the Barnum name.

By the time the Ringling winter quarters moved from Bridgeport to Sarasota in 1927, it was a one-man operation, with John Ringling, the only surviving brother, in control. It had long since combined into one operation with the Barnum and Bailey show, and also ran the Forepaugh-Sells operation.

Though some things were different, much was the same as when the winter quarters were in Baraboo. Elephants and acrobats, jugglers and clowns, and all the usual attractions and accouterments of the circus remained, including the rail travel facilities developed and first used by the Ringlings before the turn of the century. Sarasota had the Ringling circus from 1927 to 1959 and this circumstance, plus its growing attraction as a winter retreat, made it seem to a new generation as if Sarasota was the only circus town.

## Similarities

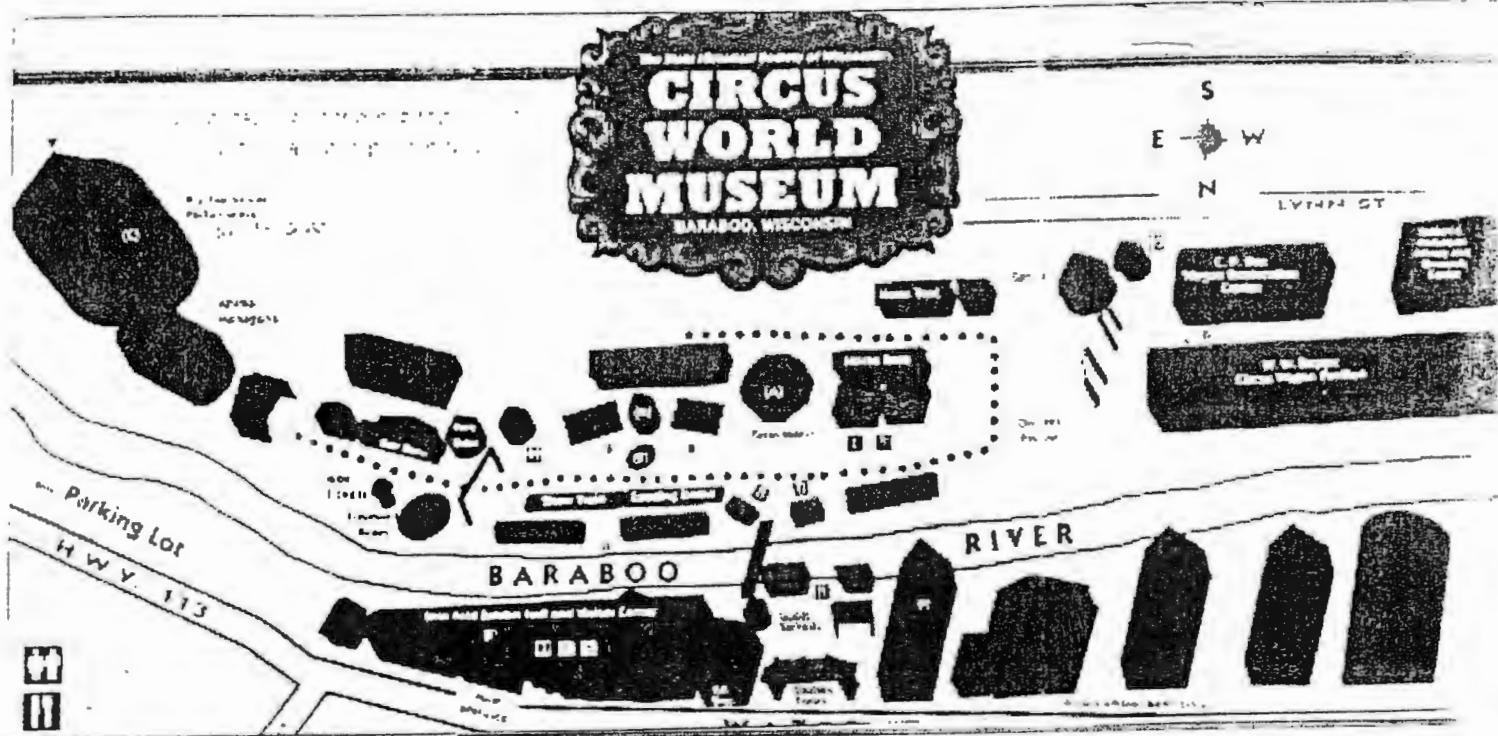
How, then, can these two cities from a different era and so different in climate, be considered sister cities? Actually there are many similarities. Already mentioned in previous articles have been the opulent Ringling homes, two of which survive in Baraboo and three in Sarasota. Ringling descendants still live in one of the Baraboo Ringling homes, but not so in Sarasota. There one is a private home, one a campus library, and one a tourist attraction. Both cities have family mausoleums.

## Twin cities?

Are Baraboo and Sarasota twin but not identical circus cities? It may surprise some folks in Sarasota to think so, with its circus heritage of 1927-1959 and its seeming lack of knowledge of the circus' origin in Baraboo.

In Baraboo, the Ringling circus was born in 1884 and reached its pinnacle in the second decade of the 20th century. Some local people regard the later years, in which the circus slowly slipped away from the Ringling heirs, as little deserving of the title, for the winter quarters moved from town to town over the decades. Baraboo's Al. Ringling has been recognized as the leader of the original group by Pat Ringling Buck, a Sarasota Ringling historian and author of "The Ringling Legacy." Al. died in 1915, but would never have allowed the circus to leave Baraboo.

Interestingly, both Baraboo and Sarasota had the Ringling circus winter quarters for a little over 30 years, but they were very different years and very different cities. As noted above, Sarasota was a village of only 840 people during the glory years of the Ringlings, while Baraboo in 1910 was some eight times larger with 6,324 citizens. Now Baraboo is only about 11,000, while Sarasota is many times that.



Just how much Baraboo contractor George Isenberg participated in building the Sarasota homes remains a mystery. It is known that his top foreman, Otto Kramer of Baraboo, moved to Sarasota for two years to supervise some of the work in 1926, probably for Charles Ringling. Isenberg had built Al. Ringling's Baraboo home in 1905, and had gone to Florida in 1912 for the Ringlings, probably Alfred T.

#### Circus museums

Both cities also have circus museums, but the Sarasota operation pales in comparison to the Circus World in Baraboo. With its 50 public acres, 220 original wagons restored or under restoration, and extensive exhibits in seven of the original winter quarters buildings, the Baraboo operation enjoys worldwide recognition.

The new and large reception building, exhibit hall, and theater was made possible by a gift from the present owners of the circus, the Feld family. There is also the huge

## 750 at Opening Of Museum Here

The Circus World Museum opened its fifth season Saturday. Despite the cool, cloudy weekend, 750 persons toured the museum and attended the first performances of the Circus World Museum Trained Animal circus.

The circus promises to be an important highlight of the current season with fresh new acts and clever innovations. During the cool weather, the show is being presented in the Winter-quarters and Sunday afternoon it was "standing room only".

John Herriott has accomplished remarkable results with the three baby elephants. Eva, Topsy and Susie can now perform with the best animal acts. They waltz, promenade, stand on their heads, sit up and do the twist. Topsy amused the audience yesterday with her back-talk and Susie charmingly plays coy.

The twelve pony act may soon be the best seen anywhere in this country. It is amazing to see the 12 respond to command, dancing, and precision drill.

An American Saddle horse, "American Anthem", is a newcomer to the museum. Herriott has been training it only a few months, and his wife Mary Ruth shows the animal. It proved most capable of Spanish dancing

Two poodles work with two of the shows' favorites, Snowball and Hans. The dog-and-pony routine open the show. Newcomer Pepi, is a very peppy little poodle and the children particularly like him.

In addition to the animal acts, Mary Ruth does a Spanish web routine and Hines and Patti Rucker do balancing and juggling. Pattie does some fancy footwork in the ancient art of foot juggling and Hines gains the audience admiration with his blind-folded juggling of burning rods.

Today is the first day for the loading of the railway flat cars. It will now be a daily feature at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

An important visitor for opening day was Walter Hohenadel, editor of "White Tops" magazine, the biggest publication for circus fans.

The museum has received a valued donation from the Cleaver-Brooks company. It is a continuous tape player which provides music throughout the day. "Bud" Potter of Milwaukee produced the tape which required much engineering. Included on the tape is band organ music heard with European circuses.

Deppe wagon display barn, and the new Chappie Fox wagon restoration center, where visitors may watch the accurate and authentic Baraboo River as of old, and the calliope still skirls the sky.

Full-scale circus performances are given twice, sometimes thrice daily in a tent seating 2,000. The tent was made, incidentally, in Sarasota. Circus musical instruments, a clown demonstration, and a small street parade make it a nearly all-day attraction. Many tents add to the circus atmosphere.

A summer tradition for years has been the circus train, using authentic wagons and original flatcars, wending its way to Milwaukee for the Great American Circus Parade. Great attention is paid to authenticity in the parade, all wagons being horse-drawn. One wonders if the parade has ever been telecast in Sarasota.

In Circus World's Library and Research Center you wear white gloves to handle the artifacts. Only pencils are allowed to take notes so as to avoid damaging the jumbo collection. This includes some 8,000 posters, 50,000 prints, and 200 payroll ledgers.

Sarasota nearly had a live circus this spring, but after two abortive attempts to open, the new Kaleidescape spectacle moved on to its California engagements.

*TO BE CONTINUED*



BOB  
DEWEL

▼  
YESTERYEAR  
REVISITED

*Dr. Bob Dewel is a retired Baraboo dentist and his column, "Yesteryear Revisited," is a regular feature of the News Republic.*

## — Baraboo or Sarasota?

*Note: This article is a continuation of Bob Dewel's comparisons of the circus heritage of Baraboo and Sarasota, Fla.*

When it comes to Ringling homes, Sarasota has the edge. Both Ca' D'Zan and the Charles Ringling home, now a library, outshine the impressive Baraboo homes. Both cities had Ringling hotels, but Sarasota's elegant structure has been demolished while Baraboo's much more modest hotel for performers has been converted to other uses.

Both cities have the Ringling name on a major street, and Sarasota also has the Ringling causeway to Lido Key. On St. Armand's Circle there, John Ringling's street is fed into by streets named after American presidents, possibly an indication of some ego. His street then melds grandly into Benjamin Franklin Boulevard, lined by quality gulf view accommodations on the gulf.

John was a major developer of the area, a story in itself. Of interest is the fact that one of his teachers in Baraboo, Belle Case, became the wife of Wisconsin's Sen. "Fighting Bob" LaFollette, and declined appointment to the U.S. Senate when her husband died. As a teacher, she remembered John Ringling as a "tall heavy dark-haired boy...good natured, full of fun...(with) little taste for lessons or books."

### Tourist attractions

Ca' D'Zan, John Ringling's fabulous Venetian mansion, is a tourist attraction, albeit a losing one financially. Baraboo has the Al. Ringling Theatre, recognized by the Theatre Historical Society as the first of the great movie palaces in the U.S. Faithfully done in pre-Revolutionary French decor, its studied elegance and restraint shine through despite its need for restoration.

Unlike Ca' D'Zan, with its \$12 million ongoing restoration, courtesy of the state of Florida, the Al. Ringling still waits for its angel for a mere \$4 or \$5 million restoration. Meanwhile, it operates seven days a week, with dozens of stage presentations interspersed with motion pictures. Hundreds of civic and patriotic and school events have been held there over the past 84 years, a great public service to the community.

Floridians and Wisconsinites may be surprised to learn that Florida once had a 25 percent claim on the Al. Ringling as a result of its attempts to untangle the complicated affairs of John Ringling after his death.

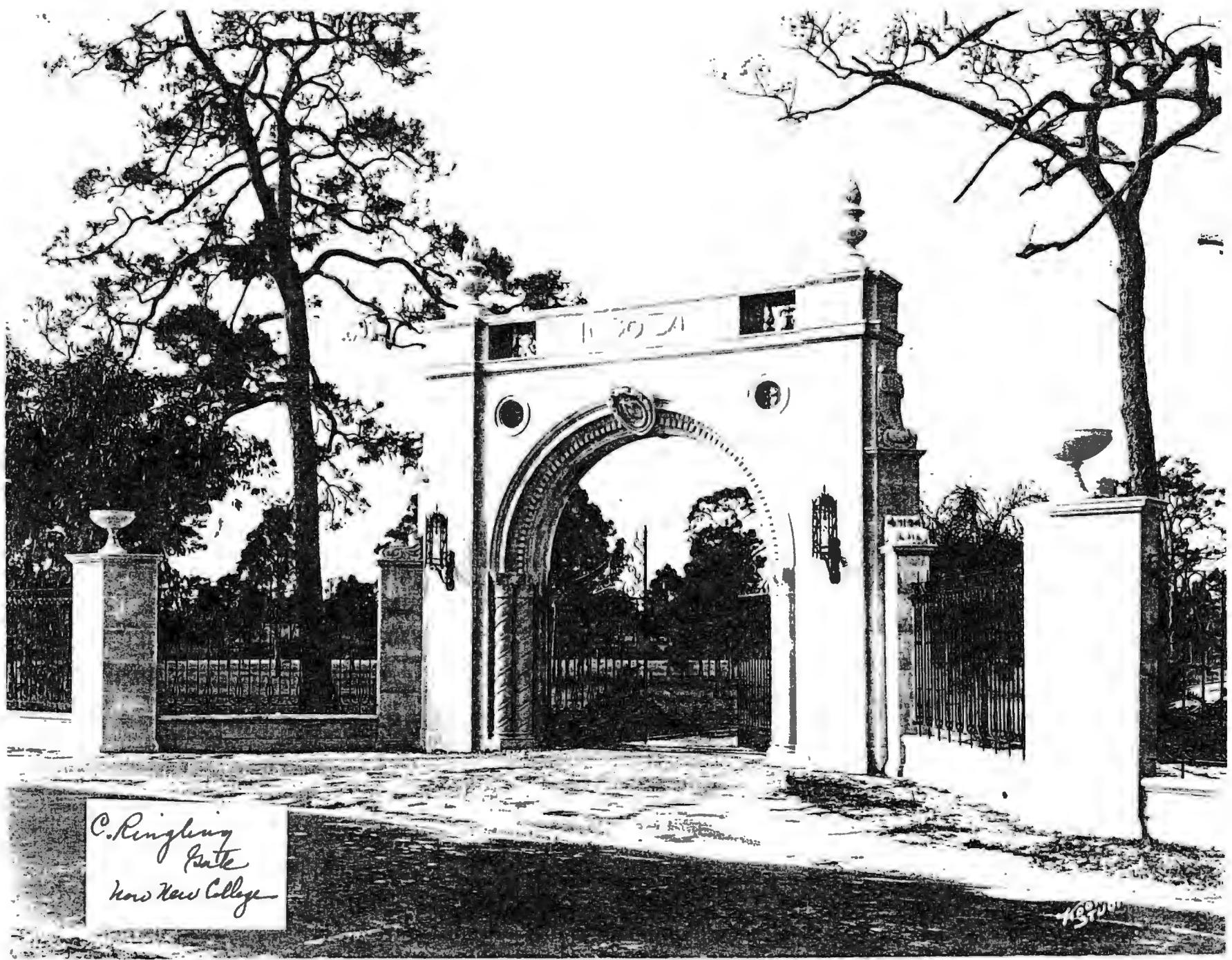
The theater was finally purchased outright by Baraboo's Henry Ringling Jr., but went into private hands following his death in 1956. After years of private ownership, and sometimes neglect, the Al. Ringling Theatre Friends assumed ownership in 1989 and now look forward to major restoration.

Although the Al. features nearly two dozen al fresco paintings, they cannot compare to the John and Mable Ringling Art Museum in Sarasota when it comes to art. According to an article in the Sarasota Herald-Tribune, the Sarasota museum could easily pay its debts and restoration needs by sale of some of its never exhibited art objects. Would that the Al. Ringling had such a resource!

Baraboo is small enough that one can easily walk from the theater to the nearby Al. Ringling home. The Charles (later Henry) Ringling home is only five blocks-away. The Circus World Museum Reception Center, funded in part by the Feld family, present owners of the Ringling circus, is only about 10 blocks away. Needless to say, Baraboo traffic is lighter than that in Sarasota!

### Climate and topography

Sarasota has its bay front, and Baraboo has four freshwater lakes within nine miles. In both areas, Ringlings built summer cottages on the water. The Baraboo cottage contained cypress lumber shipped from Florida. The Ringling Beach House on Siesta Key is now a small tourist hotel, and the manager had no idea how it got its name. A call to the Art Museum was not returned.



C. Ringling  
Gate  
New New College



When the circus came to Sarasota, Fla., elephants paraded through the streets and across bridges (above).

Climate and topography differ. Florida's mild winter attracts northerners, even a few snowbirds from Baraboo, but the compliment seems rarely returned in summer in the hurricane-free north. Motel taxes are lower in Baraboo also. Free from termites and mold and salt spray, the Al. Ringling terra cotta outlasted its newer version in Ca' d'Zan, but now both are in the process of replacement or repair.

Florida's oppressive flatness contrasts with the great hills and forests of the Baraboo range. Tumbled rock cliffs 500 feet high surround the lake at Devils Lake State Park, one of America's last great wilderness areas. The water levels of the lake, in the hills, is some 50 feet higher than downtown Baraboo. The city sits astride the rapids of the Baraboo River.

Sarasota has its problems. It failed to restore the aged Ringling Hotel, and the Ringling causeway to Lido Key now demands replacement, either with a high bridge or a \$66 million tunnel. The Art Museum wants a \$50 million foundation fund, and the historic Brickel House, once a Ringling office, must be demolished or moved.

Traffic chokes the streets in winter, but Sarasotans recognize that there is northern money in the pockets of those pokey drivers, money with which they may soon be parted. It is the same with nearby Wisconsin Dells, Baraboo's neighbor to the north. It's the nature of the tourist business.



In Baraboo's Al. Ringling Theatre, even the fire curtain carried out the theme of pre-Revolutionary France.

#### Comment

So, are these very different cities sisters, or rivals? Each seems to have a claim to different eras of the circus heritage. Sarasota's Ringling homes and Art Museum outshine anything in Baraboo, though the Art Museum has no circus theme.

In Baraboo the grand Al. Ringling Theatre has an aura of quality and style and period elegance that outshines the rather bizarre Venetian Palace of John. As for circus memorabilia and artifacts and research, surely the Circus World Museum, so pre-eminent in the world of the circus, takes the prize

#### CONTRIBUTED

over Sarasota's more modest exhibit.

From Baraboo's point of view, she alone can claim the title of Circus City USA, with her history, theater, and the Circus World Museum, and its unequalled library and research center. But one must agree, there's plenty of Ringling circus history and lore to go around, and Sarasota is a most worthy sister — though not an identical twin.

# John and Mable Ringling's Ca' d'Zan

BOB DEWEL  
YESTERYEAR REVISITED

In article II of this series, we indicated that Ca' d'Zan, the Venetian-style, palatial home of John and Mable Ringling in Sarasota, Fla., would not be described in detail since it was a tourist attraction which many readers have already seen.

Since the series of articles has expanded to five stories already, it now seems proper to include a more complete discussion of this important Ringling home. Some of the information in this article was taken from "The Ringling Legacy" by Sarasota Ringling historian Pat Ringling Buck. Buck is a granddaughter of August Ringling, second oldest of the brothers, who died in 1907. Some material is also taken from recent articles in the Sarasota Herald-Tribune.

### Sarasota

By 1924 Sarasota looked more and more like home to John and Mable, part-time residents who had been commuting from their home in New York City. The circus still wintered in Bridgeport, Conn., and its glorious past in Baraboo seemed to recede into the past more and more as the years rolled by, especially so since the death of young Henry in Baraboo in 1918.

True Ida Ringling North, sister to the brothers, still lived in Baraboo. So did Alfred's estranged wife Della, as did Henry's widow Ida and family, Al's widow Lou, and August's widow Anna.

The circus business, however was now centered in the east. And John, now in his late 50s and a longtime resident of New York, has succumbed to the attraction of the mild Florida winters as compared to the long but invigorating winter season in the north. Indeed, within three years he would move the entire winter quarters to Sarasota.

John and Mable had for some years used a large and commodious frame home in winter on the grounds of the present Sarasota structure, purchased in about 1912 from Charles Thompson. Brother Alfred has built nearby in 1919, though he died that same year. Brother Charles, with an impressive home in Evanston, Ill., was now joining John in building homes in Sarasota, making that city their permanent residence. His home is discussed in Article III.

### Ca' d'Zan

Finished in 1926, the Venetian theme of John and Mable's home is pervasive in both the interior and exterior aspects. The outside is faced largely with intricate terra

*\*cotta, similar to the less elaborate but more impressive terra cotta of the Al. Ringling Theatre facade in Baraboo.*

(\*Line missing  
from text)

There are balconies, cornices, and even an open kiosk in the tower, giving a panoramic view of the bay area. The Venetian-style terra cotta ornamentation is said by Buck to be "some of the finest of its kind ever done in this country."

A marble terrace on the bay side measures some 200 feet by 40 feet, and provided marble steps by which to board the Ringling yacht. Mable's gondola could also be reached in this way. According to a recent article in the Herald-Tribune, the restoration cost of the marble terrace area will be covered by the state of Florida.

The 30-room palazzo has a 2 1/2 story living room, the floor being alternate squares of black Belgian and white Alabama marble. The Aeolin pipe organ has 4,000 pipes, concealed by huge tapestries. Room lighting was provided partially by a chandelier from the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City. Second-floor balconies ring three sides of the room, as in Alfred's home but much more elaborate, and provide access to the guest rooms.

Mable had her own reception room on the main floor. Their guest list reads like a who's who of the times, ranging from actors to politicians in the short 3 1/2 years before Mable's death. It is said that after her death, John spent less than 100 days in the home in the seven years that elapsed before his own death.

Despite the Italian theme of the building, John's bedroom had French Empire furnishings, while Mable's was Louis XV in style.



Presented above is a postcard rendition of the view of Ca' d'Zan from the east. The home was that of John and Mable Ringling in Sarasota, Fla.

#### Today

As was reported in an article last winter, Ca' d'Zan is undergoing extensive restoration, particularly of the enormous amount of terra cotta on the exterior. At the present time even the restoration has been suspended, and the house is closed to the public.

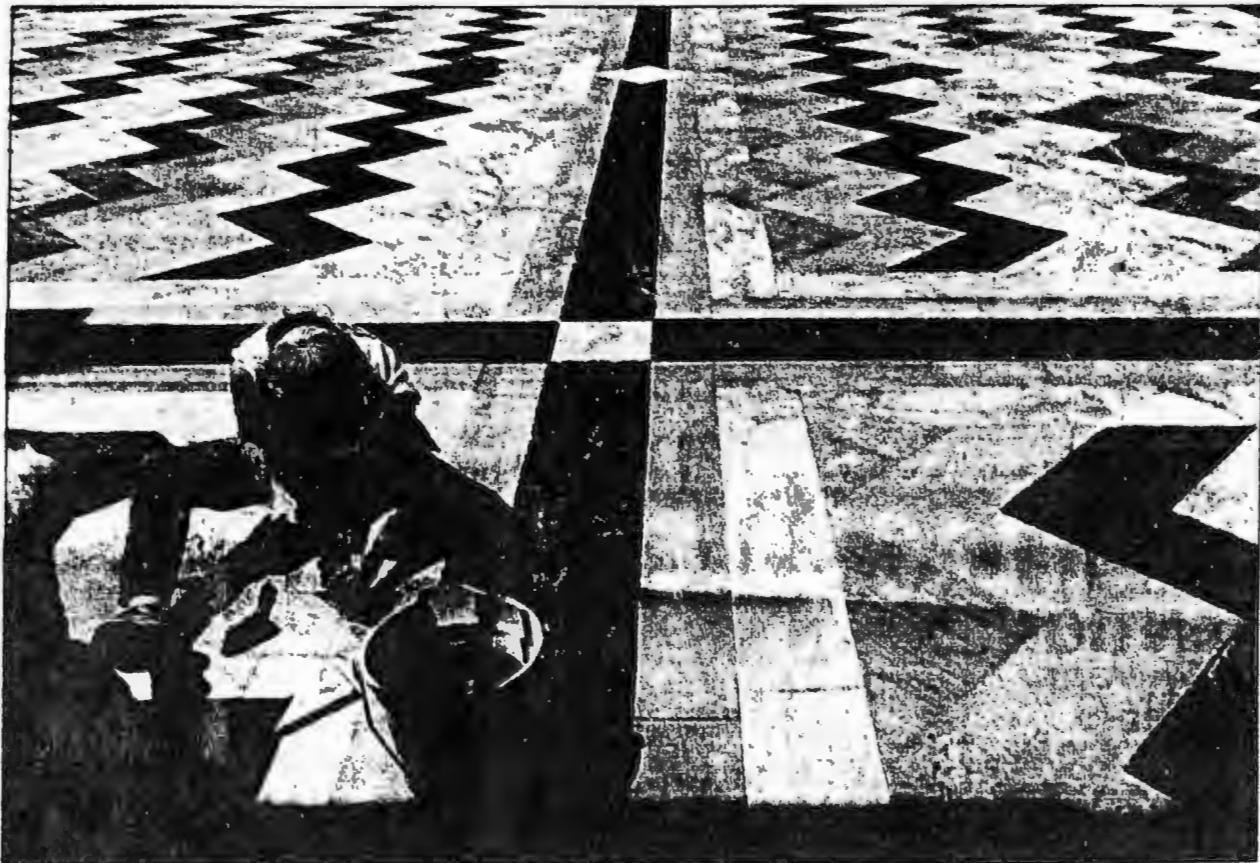
In private correspondence which was given to me, Buck has broken down the repair cost which we had attributed to the state of Florida. It seems that Florida is only expected to pay about \$8 million of the cost, with local supporters expected to supply up to \$4 million, including restoration of furnishings and other antiquities. Interest from the John Ringling trust will provide the \$200,000 needed for "art acquisitions and restorations of art objects in the collection."

These figures are of interest and envy to Al. Ringling Theatre supporters in Baraboo, where there is no Ringling trust, and where the state only partially finances the restoration so far. The Circus City has yet to make a



John sang comic songs.

# Fix-up funds all but set



commitment. Meantime, the theater operates 365 days a year for public and private occasions and for cultural presentations for the city and county.

Also in operation all year is the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, with the summer tent circus demonstration now well into the summer series. There is general agreement that this year's one-hour circus twice daily is perhaps the best ever.

In other Sarasota clarifications, an earlier article stated that Hestor Ringling's husband Louis Lancaster had died early, but it was her first husband Cliff Parks who met that fate. Lancaster was her second husband, and had worked at the Charles Ringling Bank in Sarasota. A third husband was John Patterson, and the four husband was Charles Sanford.

The final article in this series will discuss the often-neglected Gollmar family and its major circus.



JOHN RINGLING

*John's red and gold  
Bedroom at Ca d'Zan*



## Ringling Landmarks and a Cinderella Ball

### Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

Cinderella in a moment, but first some background information.

The flamboyant Ringlings of circus fame left several landmark structures to commemorate their success. What American State has spent some \$15 million to restore one of the major landmarks? Conversely, what other famous and historical Ringling landmark must depend almost entirely on private donations for its existence and restoration?

Continuing the comparison a bit further, which of the two landmarks has as its only purpose the dazzling of tourists with its opulence, while the other, more tastefully lavish, serves the public seven days a week with a mixture of culture, education, and entertainment?

#### Ca d'Zan

The first, of course, is John Ringling's garish Sarasota house, Ca d'Zan. Unlike his six brothers, John disdained Baraboo, which had financed and sustained the young circus, and which endured its sometimes curious entourage of performers and exotic animals during the formative years of 1884 to 1918. Instead, John spread his largess on Sarasota, Florida, a small fishing village at the time, but one in which he could be the big fish in a small pond.

Built in 1927, Ca d'Zan has been closed in recent years due to the deleterious effect of salt water on the stuccoing and terra cotta exterior, plus other problems. It was restored and refurnished in the past three years thanks to the generosity of the State of Florida, which spent \$15 million (our tourist dollars?) to restore a building that has no purpose other than to display the affluence of its owner, a man who soon went bankrupt.

#### The Al. Ringling Theatre

In contrast, the second major landmark of the Ringlings is the Al. Ringling Theatre, which in twelve years of public ownership has gratefully received only \$150,000 from the more impoverished State of Wisconsin. It has also received \$165,000, not from the city general tax funds but from the Alma Waite Fund which is administered by the city.

This was an appropriate distribution from her funds, for in her lifetime Alma disbursed significant funds to other entertainment venues such as the Circus World Museum and the Mid-Continent Railway. Because the Al. Ringling Theatre was in private (Milwaukee) hands during her lifetime, she did not contribute to it, but surely would be doing so now that it is publicly owned by the Friends.

Alma's money came from her bachelor uncles, cousins of the Ringlings and Gollmars, and who built circus wagons for the shows. Her will has a troublesome phrase in it. Having recently fallen, she and Attorney Jenks inserted the phrase "REPAIR of sidewalks" as a possible use of the money. Notice that she did not say replace, or put new sidewalks in front of city property, as some would like to believe.

#### Cinderella at the Ball

The restoration of Ca d'Zan was celebrated this past April 11 with a grand ball and dinner, and a description of the event has been elegantly and lengthily supplied to us by a Charles Ringling descendant, Mrs. Charles Ringling Lancaster of Sarasota.

A writer, poet, and onetime opera singer, Mrs. Lancaster prepared a 15 page description of the gala and opulent opening night. A bit of a romantic, she spins her tale in the guise of Cinderella attending the ball. Indeed, they did send a "carriage", a Rolls Royce, to transport her and her "fairy godmother".

Red-uniformed attendants escorted the ladies from their carriage to the building, where they were met by a tuxedo-clad welcoming committee, and escorted to their seats at table 14. This table, she reports, was not in the dining room, which was reserved for those who gave \$2500 instead of a mere \$1000 for the event.

Married to a Charles Ringling grandson, Charles Ringling Lancaster, Mrs. Lancaster had first entered Ca d'Zan in 1939, 63 years ago. The Charles Ringling residence, more tastefully opulent, was next door to the bizarre Ca d'Zan. Charles Ringling was the elder brother of John, and perhaps his best friend.

Less flamboyant, Charles and his Baraboo school-teacher wife, Edith Conway, had a palatial but tasteful home, now a part of New College. Mrs. Lancaster and her husband lived with Charles and Edith's daughter Hester, born and raised in Baraboo but now living in a beautiful home between the homes of John and Charles. As such, our Cinderella was well acquainted with the Ca d'Zan layout, even recognizing some of the shrubbery that had survived.

No one tried to put a glass slipper on Mrs. Lancaster's foot, but there is plenty to tell yet about her gala evening. To be continued.



Mrs. Charles Ringling Lancaster

Cinderella has a great  
time at the ball  
Yesteryear Revisited  
By Bob Dewel

As related in the previous article, Cinderella, alias Mrs. Charles Ringling Lancaster of Sarasota, attended a ball last April celebrating the re-opening of John Ringling's fabulous home, Ca d'Zan. In keeping with the opulence of the occasion, she was picked up, along with her "Fairy Godmother", in a modern day carriage, a Rolls Royce.

Alice Lancaster is known to one and all as Knobby, an abbreviation of her maiden name. As a family member, she had first entered Ca d'Zan in 1939, probably long before anyone else at the ball, and lived next door in the Charles Ringling compound until the 1960's when those properties were sold. So, for our Cinderella, it was *déjà vu*.

For her gown, Knobby chose a significant item from the past, a cape she wore at an opening night of a play in the 1950's which was performed in a little theatre patronized by her mother-in-law, Hester Ringling Lancaster. In a recent article, we highlighted a play from Baraboo High School in 1911 in which Hester was the star, and the entire Charles Ringling family was involved in Thespian arts over the years, including opera.

The aforesaid cape was black velvet, over a black silk dress, adorned by a long rope of pearls. She carried a museum quality black beaded purse, and wore an egret feather in her chignon. The beaded cape had attracted enough attention in the 1950's to be written up in the newspaper in a social column. Several of the guests wore period costumes, some impersonating Will Rogers, Flo Ziegfeld, Billie Burke, and others who had been guests at Ca d'Zan in its heyday.

Knobby listed some of the elegant hors d'oeuvres, such as maple-glazed duck breast with dried cranberries on sweet potato pancakes(!), prosciutto and phyllo wrapped asparagus. Or, how about shucked Pacific coast oysters on silver spoons with champagne? There was also an Osetra Caviar Station, with assorted condiments.

The hors d'oeuvres almost outshone the three course dinner, each with its own recommended wine in gold rimmed glasses. The first course was all exotic sea food, followed by New Zealand lamb with procini mushrooms, roasted squash, and grilled grape tomatoes. Dessert had many choices, including timbale panacotta or roasted pear and cashew pocket. The service was gold, and only one set was reported missing the next day, so she heard. Each guest received, as a favor, a heavy clear cut glass candy dish, with a Tiffany box for its protection.

With her memories of the earlier days, Knobby reported that room decors appeared to have been done correctly--\$15 million should go a long ways—and she noted that the Charles Ringling billiard table was in place. It had been loaned to the Museum several years ago.

There are secret rooms in the house, which still hold treasures from John and Mable's time. According to John's will, the state cannot sell anything from the home. Also in the home, but not played that evening, is an Aeolian pipe organ with 2220 pipes. The pipes are hidden by many tapestries. A special order 1920's Steinway piano was said to have 11,000 parts, and was restored!

In honor of the event, the Sarasota Herald-Tribune published a 48-page special color section on Ca d'Zan, complete with statistics. The home was originally designed to be a replica of the Doege's Palace in Venice Italy, but so many alterations were made that it can hardly be said to be more than a distant

replica. There are 22,000 sq feet of interior space, and it was built in 1924-25, but not occupied until 1927.

John's beautiful and talented but little-photographed wife, Mable, was featured in a previous article. She died in June, 1929, a bitter loss for John, who by then was facing possible bankruptcy and the advent of the Depression. He would linger for six or seven years, suffering not only financial disaster but a failed second marriage and strokes.

Despite his disdain for Baraboo, we can be grateful for one event, for Kathy Waddell, in a recent 75 years ago column, reported that word had been received from John, in his more affluent years of 1927, that a new Barton organ was approved for the Al Ringling Theatre in Baraboo, which he controlled at the time. There's something else interesting about John—he is probably the only Sauk County-born person to appear on the cover of Time Magazine.

Knobby found one flaw in her Cinderella evening, for despite 200 servants for 200 guests, dinner service was painfully slow, with dessert not arriving until 11 P.M. By this time our Cinderella had "had it", with no prince in sight, so she called for her Rolls Royce Carriage and she and the fairy godmother departed. No word if the Prince showed up the next day with the glass slipper, or even with dessert.

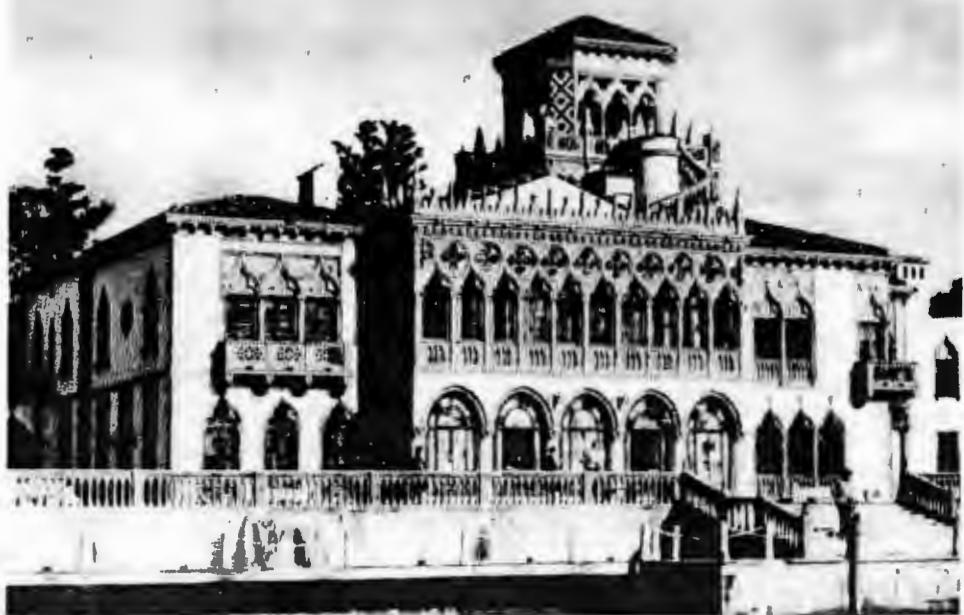


*April 6, 1932*

Ca'd' Zan

John Ringling's

Sarasota Home





John Ringling's Bedroom



Mable Ringling's Bedroom

Scenes from the  
Sarasota home of  
John Ringling



The Great Hall



The Ballroom

From a Sarasota  
Ringling Museums  
booklet



*John Ringling owned the Theatre when the  
Mighty Barton Organ was Installed  
in 1928*

## Famous Attorney Darrow Defended Case in Baraboo Yesteryear Revisited By Bob Dewel

*This column is dedicated to Carol Sorg, who suggested it shortly before her sudden and untimely death on June 21, 2005. Both she and this writer served on a committee which is observing this year's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the building of the Sauk County Courthouse. The following trial occurred in that building.*

Who would you say was the most famous defense attorney of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and why did he try a case in the Sauk County Courthouse in 1921? Hint: He would go on to participate in what may be the most famous trial of that century.

He was Clarence Darrow of Chicago, already recognized in 1921, and his lasting fame would come in 1925 in the defense of one John Skopes, a Tennessee schoolteacher who had dared to teach evolution in a rural town in Tennessee.

Clarence Darrow lost the case to three-time Presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan and a backwoods Tennessee jury in that famous trial, but the publicity established evolution as a respected science and exposed Bryan to ridicule. Modern attorneys, such as those in the recent O.J. Simpson trial, are quickly forgotten, but not Darrow.

### Allegations in the Case

Even in 1921, the Baraboo News spoke of Darrow as the "one of the most noted criminal lawyers in the U.S.," and he had been engaged locally by the family and friends of Archie Barber, believing that Barber's previous conviction was erroneous. Barber had been tried in 1919 and had already spent thirteen months in the prison in Waupon. The case was being retried now on a technicality. The Baraboo Newspapers covered the case in detail.

Briefly, Barber and his wife of 9 years had as a roomer, for a year and a half, a young schoolteacher named Susie Patterson. Though Mrs. Barber had on other times been absent without incident while both Barber and Patterson were in the house, it was alleged that Barber went to her room very late in the evening of April 13, 1919.

He said he went to see if Miss Patterson knew if Mrs. Barber had planned to be out so late, she having gone to a show at the then new Al Ringling Theatre. The Barbers had a store in the Lower Narrows area, where he was also a blacksmith and had a milk route.

What happened then was in dispute, but Patterson became frightened, removed the screen from an open window, and crawled onto the roof of the porch. A passing area resident, Jason Tumham, saw her and took her to the Millers, a neighboring home in the Narrows area.

In a hilarious journalistic misspelling, the News reported that there was not much "conservation" on the way! The misspelling was repeated three times in the article. Although the newspaper of the day delicately skirts the issue, the implication of the prosecution is that Barber approached Patterson with lustful intent, and Miss Patterson did not care to participate.

Barber then went to Baraboo and told his wife of the incident and of Miss Patterson's reaction, and they both started for the Miller home where Susie had been taken. Mrs. Barber, however, suggested that he not accompany her, and she would handle the matter, so he returned home. Apparently she failed to pacify Susie Patterson, for charges were pressed and Barber was convicted and sentenced to seven years in prison. He had already served thirteen months at the time of this second trial.

### The Trial

It is apparent that Baraboo citizens felt it was a miscarriage of justice, and during the following year it was arranged to retry the case on a technicality. A petition was circulated, which the judge later angrily denounced. One of the jurors had been approached to sign, apparently before he was chosen as a juror. It is notable that none of the twelve male jurors were from Baraboo, and the judge was brought in from Appleton to try the case, apparently because of local feelings.

This article will not cover the trial in detail, but the presence of Clarence Darrow was of great interest to the News, which devoted a column to his questioning of prospective jurors. When Charles Kruger of Loganville was considered for the jury, he told Darrow he was a well driller, Darrow asked if it was for water or oil, the latter question getting a laugh from the Sauk County crowd. He also wanted to know if Fred Gollmar worked for the Ringling Circus!

Darrow was assisted locally by attorney W.G. Evenson, while H.J. Bohn was the prosecuting District Attorney, assisted by John Baker of the State Attorney General's office. Darrow's closing argument lasted an hour and a half. At the conclusion of the case, Judge William Quinlan scolded the community for circulating the petition to try to influence the court and the jurors.

It took the jurors only four hours to return a verdict of guilty of assault without intent, and the judge sentenced him to an additional 6 months in jail. However, he reduced the sentence to parole on good behavior, and relieved the family of the expenses of the trial. Darrow thus lost the case technically, but at least he got Barber out of jail.

### Darrow in Baraboo

Clarence Darrow's participation in the trial was but part of his impact on Baraboo, for the paper reported at length about his guest appearance at the Fortnightly Literary Club. That group, which still exists today, was already some 40 years old at the time of the trial. In his speech to the group he spoke about man and his imperfections, and stated that punishment without education was useless.

In remarks presaging his appearance in the Skopes trial four years later, he discussed evolution. He also felt that human life is governed by certain inherited laws or traits inherited from our ancestors, and that our actions are not always under our total control.

It is interesting that Baraboo has over the years been host not only to Attorney Darrow, but to his rival attorney in the Skopes trial, William Jennings Bryan, both giants of their generation. Bryan had spoken here before. Indeed, both Darrow and Bryan later made fictionalized appearances in Baraboo in a Theatre Guild production, "Inherit the Wind," at the Al Ringling Theatre.

Our easy access to the Chicago rail hub and the many trains of that day made travel to the city easier and faster for Darrow and Bryan than do our crowded highways today. Our devotion to oil and the automobile led to the amazing and seemingly ubiquitous Interstate road system, but also to a crippling dependence on foreign oil. Now we do not have the railroads to fall back on. Our most famous visitors, it seems, are those who come to the Bob LaFollette meetings at the fairgrounds in late summer.

## Olympia Candy Kitchen Location is a Puzzle

### Yesteryear Revisited

By Bob Dewel

The Olympia Candy Kitchen, shown here in a photo supplied by Marty Zuch, was once one of downtown Baraboo's favorite places to visit. It featured not only candy but ice cream and a soda bar.

Cursory examination of the picture appears to show that it occupied the Oak Street location, part of the Wright block, now occupied by the Garden Party Café. In recent years this property was occupied by Vethe Music, and by Nessman Jewelry and other jewelers before that.

#### Street Numbers

But there is something wrong here. Directly over the door in the picture is a street marker indicating the location as 522 Oak, but today that is the street number of the Corner Drug Store, two doors to the south. The Garden Party is at 528 Oak. Baraboo's changing street numbers have sometimes been a problem for this writer and for downtown historian Joe Ward.

We'll try and sort that out, but back to the picture for a moment. In the window is a poster advertising a baseball game between Portage and Reedsburg. Was it a playoff, held in Baraboo as neutral territory? Note the signs on the staircase risers. One is for Dr. A.R. Dippel whose dental office was upstairs. A Plaque by the entrance to the stairway proclaims that Dr. Guchall (?) would give you an osteopathic consultation upstairs, that is if your back allowed you to negotiate the seemingly endless flight of stairs.



Is it or isn't it the present location of the Garden Party?

The Olympia Candy Kitchen, owned by John Stathis, no longer occupied this storefront, nor apparently any other, after 1935. Was it replaced by the Chocolate Shop on Third Street, which is now gone also? Or was there a Bluebird Confectionery? As related in a previous article about the 101 Fourth Street building, there is an unsubstantiated hint that the Olympia Candy Kitchen may have been located in that building, now Cornerstone Gallery, in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### Telephone Books

If old telephone books are consulted, one finds the Olympia Candy Kitchen listed from 1920 to 1936 at 522 Oak and with the telephone number 604. Live telephone operators greeted a caller then with "number, please." Later, dial systems were installed, followed by the touch tone service of today. Telephone operators had their finger on the pulse of the community, so to speak, and sometimes would tell a caller that the person they were calling was not home, or tell where a fire was, etc. The Olympia was quite up to date to have a telephone in 1920.

The trouble with all this is that downtown historian Joe Ward's research places jewelry stores firmly at this location, 528 Oak, and it is his belief that Olympia was really in a similar if not identical storefront at part of the present location of the Corner Drug Store, 522 Oak. Despite consultation with three lifetime residents, it remains a puzzle. Other old-timers are invited to add their remembrance of this location of the Olympia.

I am told that after the Olympia closed, apparently in 1935, the former operator, John Zutac, ran the popcorn stand on the NW corner of Oak Street and Third Avenue. It was still in operation with other owners in the early 1960's, with a monkey doll turning the crank of the popper.

So, was there a street numbering change, or not? This raises a question: Why don't Baraboo's street numbers going north correspond to the names of the streets? You would expect that the 500 block would be between Fifth and Sixth, not between Third and Fourth Streets! Visitors must be a little confused!

Go Back to the stairsteps in the picture. A magnifying glass shows that Dr. A.R. Dippel had a sign on a stair riser, as did a Dr. Nazum, but Dr. Dippel's son Al distinctly remembers that the staircase to his father's dental office was next to and just north of the alley in mid-block. He can name all of the tenants upstairs and describe the location of their offices. So, the puzzle deepens. Was there a stairway dividing the present Corner Drug Store in those days, before Woolworth's came in 1936? More on this question in the next article, if we can solve the problem with research.

## Olympia Candy Kitchen and Hoppe Clothing Yesteryear Revisited By Bob Dewel

Last Week's article on the Olympia Candy Kitchen cast confusion, if not doubt, on what at first seemed a certainty, namely that it was located at 528 Oak (Garden Party today), even though the store number in the picture said 522. We left you hanging because, frankly, we had not solved the question either. Now we feel we have solved it. The Olympia Candy Kitchen appears to have been in a virtually identical store front in the center of what is now the Corner Drug Store, 522 Oak!

The proof is in comparison of two pictures, one being the picture shown last week. On the right side of that picture is a glimpse of the rather ornate edge of the next building. When one examines the old woodcut of the Jones (later Hoppe) Clothing Company, one sees the same ornate pillar at the edge of that building. Hoppe is known by all to have been the first store north of the alley at number 518 Oak, and this puts the Olympia Candy Kitchen in the next storefront north, numbered 522. The confusing part is that Olympia happened to have a façade almost identical to that of the present Garden Party at 528 Oak.

Although both buildings still stand, the lower facades have been altered beyond recognition. Even the stairway on the north side of the picture is gone, and a stairway has been added next to the alley in 518, apparently in 1951 when Woolworth's bought the Hoppe front and expanded their dime store. The Olympia storefront and its neighbor to the north had already been altered in the 1936 move of Woolworth's to this location, discussed in another article.

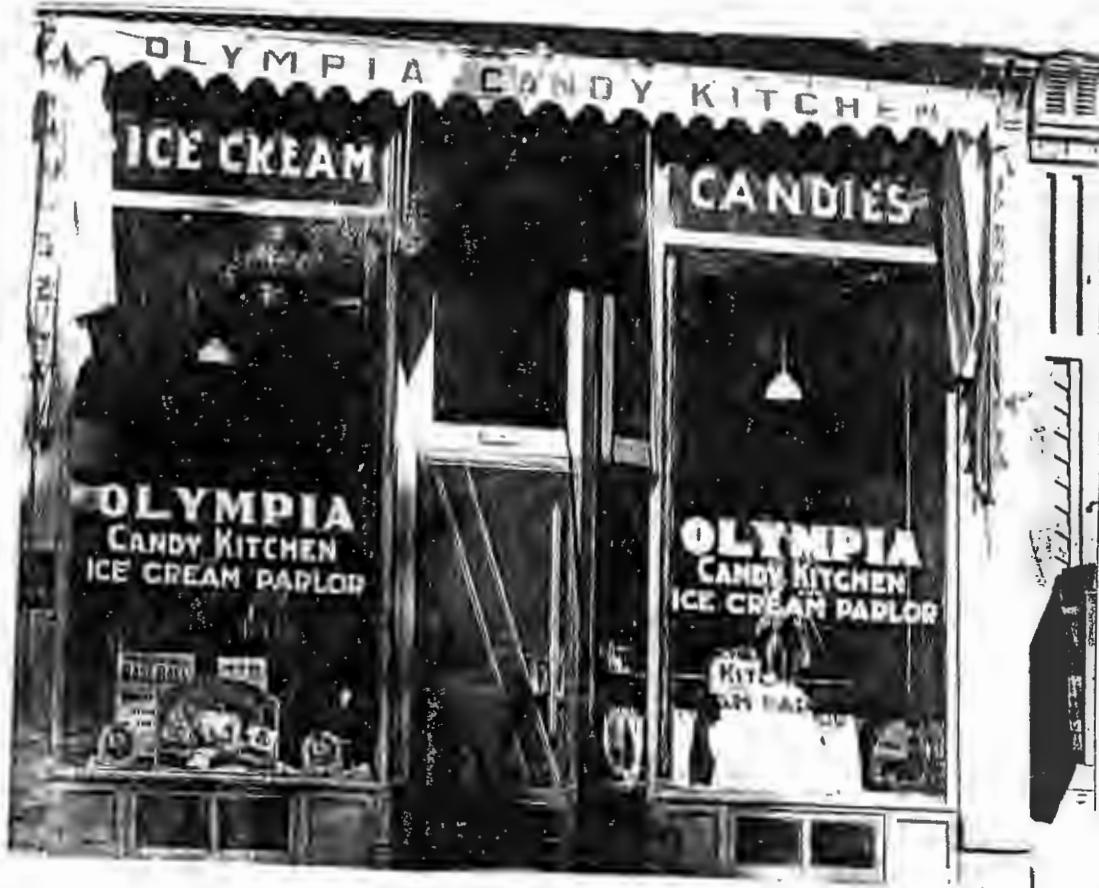
### Upstairs tenants

The 528 Oak address was also the address of the upstairs tenants, of whom there have been countless over the years. Several shops are located there today, and can thankfully be reached by elevator as well as the long staircase shown in the picture. In 1917 the following were located upstairs: the Theurer Bros. Dental suite, Bates Real Estate, Dr. Winslow M.D., Cahoon Mine Headquarters, The Sauk County Farmer (a newspaper?), and the Baraboo Typewriter Inspection Company.

### Bakeries

As was related in another story, Woolworth's occupied the next two storefronts to the south of the Olympia location, 522, beginning in 1937. These locations had for most of their existence been bakeries, it seems, for the occupancy records show a bewildering series of bakery establishments. Charles Phannsteil started it in 1864. His frame building was destroyed by fire, and he built the present building in 1879, with a 12 foot square bake oven in the basement and a dining room on the main floor behind the bakery shop.

This bakery was followed in succession by A. Doane in 1881, Blass Bakery, and then Henry Kaiser Bakery in 1886. H.O. Tibbets then had the City Bakery, followed by F. C. Leuth in 1888, whose son Ed succeeded him in 1892. By 1899 it was Green's Domestic Bakery, and in 1900, for a change, it housed George Graves Restaurant.



In the Olympia picture, the edge of the next building is shown. In the woodcut sketch of Hoppe Clothing, the same edge is shown, proving that they were adjacent. Since Hoppe Clothing is known to have been just north of the alley, at 518 Oak, the Candy Kitchen, at 522 Oak, is next door. Both facades were removed in the Woolworth expansion of 1951.

At last there was a real change, for the Risley Brothers dry goods firm occupied what was now known as the Brewer Block building on Sept 5, 1901, but moved to 129 Third Street in 1910, which they occupied for many years. Wouldn't you know it, the Oak Street location now became a bakery again in 1911, with Henry G. Schade as proprietor, and operated until at least 1918.

By 1920

By 1920 the Marinello Shop was located here, with the Olympia Candy Kitchen in the rear. Somewhere in this lineup there may have been a Bluebird Confectionary, or at least a Bluebird café on Third Avenue. The Dillenbeck Cigar Store and Pool Hall occupied what is now 526 Oak, occupied by the Village Booksmith. Later it moved to Fourth Street.

We are indebted to historian Joe Ward for much of the research on the above, and Joe was steadfast in his belief that Olympia could not have been at the Garden Party Location, 528 Oak. It was confusing as to just who occupied which storefront and what their street numbers were.

It is almost a relief to report that in 1937 Woolworth's combined two of the storefronts. Corner Drug now occupies the two storefronts nearest the alley, with the Village Booksmith between it and the Garden Party, apparently never the location of the Olympia Candy Company.