



EAGLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

October 2006

Eagle, Wisconsin

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EHS News

Membership

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New Members

Welcome to Barbara Jamieson, the Peter Jones Family and Arlene Schmielau

Donations

We thank the following:

Chase Bank of Eagle, Darlene Landmann, Elaine Ledrowski, Bea Marquardt, Peggy Moots, Welthy Mueller, Pat Wilton.

Sponsor \$50.00

Arthur & Betty Isleb, Arlene Schmielau

Memorial

Lyle Hamann, Retired Lt. Col. USAF

Southeastern Regional Convention

Board members Bea and Jeff Nowicki attended the Southeastern Regional convention at Delafield on August 19th. A Round Table discussion was part of the morning activities. Dan Finney, Executive Director of the Milwaukee Public Museum, was the luncheon guest speaker. He spoke about "His First Year at MPM." The afternoon concluded with tours of Hawks Inn, St John Northwest Military Academy and St. John Chrysostom "The Red Church on the Hill". It all made for a very interesting day.

Do your Christmas shopping early.

Looking for a gift for friends and relatives who have moved away from Eagle? Keep them in touch with Eagle History by giving them a membership to the Eagle Historical Society. Individual membership cost is \$10.00 (\$8.00 for seniors) and Family membership is \$15.00. We also have black Eagle, WI sweatshirts available for \$10.00 and T-shirts for \$5.00. Contact Don Ledrowski at 262-594-3301 or don4elaine@aol.com for more information.

It might interest you to know that just 53% of our membership is from Eagle. Twenty two of these United States from New Jersey to California and 52 communities in Wisconsin from nearby Palmyra to Eagle River have members. They all receive the newsletter quarterly.

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One Hundred Years and Counting

An interview with Louella Bowey

She wasn't always a farm girl. In fact for many years after she married Austin Bowey, Louella was known as that "city girl." When going to Eagle to purchase some baking goods, the clerk was surprised and asked "Do you bake?" "Certainly" Louella replied to which the clerk exclaimed, "But you're a city girl!" It wasn't long before Louella became a genuine country girl. When she married Austin Bowey in 1948, they moved to the farm that she still occupies today. They shared that house with Austin's parents, but the house was divided so that each had their separate living quarters. The farm had been purchased by Samuel Bowey, grandfather of Austin, from John Wilton, grandfather of Don, in 1906. The Wilton and the Bowey families have continued to be neighbors for the last 100 years, a fact of which Louella is very proud.

When asked what she liked most about the country, she replied without hesitation, "the peace." She had come from Milwaukee where she worked at Cutler-Hammer and supervised a force of twenty women in the office. She loved the peace that the country afforded, free from the hustle-bustle of the city, free from schedules and having to be places on time. Of course, some people might not consider getting up daily at 4:30 a.m. or preparing a noon meal for 15 threshers and at least as many children to be exactly peaceful.

The thing she liked least was that little house out back. It wasn't until 1964 that they had indoor plumbing. Before that Louella remembers carrying water from the milk house down hill to their home. Laundry was done in the kitchen with the old wringer washer, but still water had to be brought down and heated on the stove and transferred to the wash machine. Same with Saturday night baths. In the wintertime a rope was strung between the farm and milk house so they could pull themselves up the hill after a snowstorm.

One day while returning from the milk

house, she noticed smoke coming from the roof area of the house. She rushed inside to find her husband and father-in-law relaxing in the living room. She told them they had better get up pronto because the house was on fire. Much damage was done to the roof and upper level but they were able to save the lower level farm house. The rebuilding that needed to be done was done mostly by the family. Louella remembers that she and her brother-in-law held sheet rock slabs up so they wouldn't break. It was the only time she mentioned being very tired. She also remembers living under a plastic tarp for six months while the work was being done.

The farm had about forty cattle for milking and they used a milking machine, which was fortunate, because her try at milking by hand just didn't seem to work. Her husband told her she had to coax the animals but apparently she wasn't good at coaxing.

Her favorite spot on the farm was the pond overlooking the back 40 where she would sit on a Sunday afternoon. She visualized the Indians having an encampment there. She had good reason to imagine that since they found many Indian artifacts in that field.

One leaves Louella's place with a sense of complete awe. Her stories come so fast one can scarcely get them all down. Her memory at 91 is astounding. She has crammed several lifetimes into those 91 years, from having a poultry farm in the Sherman Park area when she was a child to playing in the Milwaukee Youth Orchestra alongside Liberace and his brother, George, right up to the present with her schedule of exercising and doing crossword puzzles to keep her mind active. Those puzzles are

really doing the job.



Down on The Farm –Then and Now

America's Breadbasket

Eagle wasn't always the bustling metropolis that we see today. The 1891 plat map shows that farms and cattle breeders dominated the area. There were a total of 31 businesses listed with 26 of them farms and/or cattle breeders, and sellers of farm products, such as wagons, feed, etc. Of the others, two were dealers of general merchandise, one hotel, one butcher, and one hardware dealer.

The mid nineteenth century was the height of agricultural prosperity in southern Wisconsin. While today we think of Wisconsin as "America's Dairyland", in the mid nineteenth century, Wisconsin was part of America's breadbasket, being second only to Illinois in the production of wheat. This was made possible by the rich soils that had not been subject to cultivation and the mechanization of wheat production. Not long after the initial Euro-American agricultural settlement in southern Wisconsin, farmers were producing for a world market economy. The volume was so great that it depressed the wheat prices in Germany, threatening to bankrupt German grain farmers: however it brought Wisconsin great prosperity.

During this period the Fredrick Von Rueden house was built, an excellent example of rural Italianate architecture. The house still stands today just west of the DNR station on Highway 59 and is currently occupied by one family.

This prosperity was short-lived, however as continuous production of wheat quickly exhausted the soil. By the end of the century this forced the diversification of agriculture in southern Wisconsin.

Prosperous or not, the work was *manual* (emphasis intended) labor.

From The History of Ward School District:

"At one time he (Jonathan Betts) raised 1100 bushels of wheat and sold it for \$1.00 a bushel. He cut the wheat with a scythe, bound it into sheaves, threshed it out with a flail on the barn floor, let the wind screen out the chaff and hauled it to Milwaukee with oxen. Sometimes he received only 36 cents a bushel. So they had ups and downs

the same as we do today."

Not An Easy Life

Around that same time –1850, an early settler reported about his last two years farming.

"The first fall I had to put in 20 acres wheat that I have had to harvest. I had to plow, sow and harrow in 6 acres of spring wheat, 11 acres barley, 10 acres Indian corn with the plow twice and hoe it twice. I have had to now save 10 acres of hay before I had time to hoe my corn and turnips and my harvest come. All this I did with my two boys and one yoke of oxen with the exception of 3 or 4 days my neighbors helped me."



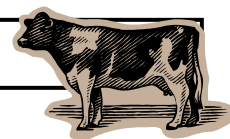
The Breidenbach Family, Standing: Bernard, Anna and Josephine. Children: Agnes and Louise. Boys by the horses are unidentified.

The Breidenbach Family

Among the earliest settlers to farm in the area were the Breidenbachs and the Von Ruedens. Under the Pre-emption Act of 1841, earlier settlers bought the land from the government for 1.25 an acre. Joseph Breidenbach was not a "first purchaser" of land, but rather bought it from those earlier settlers. His farm which was located just north of the railroad line on what is now Hwy 59 was approximately 70 acres for which he paid \$290.00. He purchased this in 1852. Joseph and his wife Maria-Gertrude had eight children. The youngest child, Bernard (Ben) later bought the farm where he was born from his (cont. on page 6)



When Women Had a Dowry



By Stephanie Kalnes

Today, my brother Eric, my parents and I got out and went next door for a tea party with Welthy Mueller, with fresh cookies and ice cream. Welthy is our soon to be 93 year-old neighbor. I love tea parties, especially with sages of another era. I gleaned a wealth of wisdom.

Welthy talked about growing up on the farm in Minnesota, where her father forbade the four girls from attending high school. Girls didn't need an education- they were supposed to get married. What'd they need schooling for? And when they did get married - they got a dowry of a cow. Welthy, having married Edward, a Wisconsin boy not owning a farm, didn't get a cow. She got \$1000.00 instead (maybe that's why they called her Welthy?) Welthy says that if she'd been allowed to go to high school, she could have landed an excellent job and made some money to help buy a farm sooner - like her four brothers had. Edward finished up at the 8th grade level as well, a common occurrence in the 1920's.

In those days, you were allowed to teach any grade you'd completed. But if you were a woman, as soon as you got married, you had to quit. It appears that it was unseemly for wives and mothers to be working (for pay anyway.)

Welthy was very proud of her mother, who had no fear, she said. She would see loose horses (with wagon careening in tow) racing down the road, and she would run out and catch them for her neighbors. I asked her what her family's first car had been. She was 7. And it was a Model T. In 1920, there was only one color choice. Even though old Henry Ford had said you could have any color you wanted-- as long as it was black. And basic black it was.

She was in a rollover car accident in 1935, crushing her pelvis, and was told by doctors that she would be in a wheel chair when she got older. She's 92. How much older? The only complaint she has is her knees, which undoubtedly took a beating from dairy farming for 70 years. One wonders how heavy those old steel milk pails are when they are full? They certainly are heavy when empty. They'd carry them two at a time up to the milk wagon and heave them on for delivery to the dairy.

They were the quintessential 'organic' farmers. It sounds so very quaint now, but then - it was the only way a good farmer farmed. Using everything. Naturally. No waste. Her garden was the pride of Eagle. And Edward's fields were plowed and harvested with a team of horses, Lady and Beauty (which I still remember even though I am younger than springtime). The horses also took us on sleigh rides and hayrides when we were little. Their *Friendly Farm* photos were frequently found in state newspapers as being 'picturesque Wisconsin.' You can line them up from 1947 on and it's hard to tell which year is which - they have looked exactly the same since we moved here.

They made butter and cottage cheese by hand, and churned ice cream as a special winter treat (you needed ice from the lake). Practically everything came off the farm which meant lots of growing, lots of canning, lots of chores. Flowers were her specialty - a small luxury afforded. The only items purchased from a store were flour, sugar and salt. Homemade bread, pies, cakes, cookies. Every single meal had to be prepared from scratch. And we won't get into what goes into having fresh meat.

A political telemarketer called her today (she loves calls but not of this variety) and asked if her husband was there. "He's over in the North Prairie cemetery," she chirped and hung up. I'm betting they don't call back.

Though not the youngest, Welthy is the last of her family, on Edward's side too. Her mental acuity, physical fitness and vibrant attitude can undoubtedly be attributed to her dedication to hard work and belief in her favorite Bible passage, Proverbs 16:9: "Men denks, Got length" -in German, the language she grew up with and still speaks. In English it is, "In his heart, a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his step."

All Creatures Great and Small

From the writings of Jack (Doc) Crawley

More than half of a lifetime working with the farm animals and pets of the Eagle and Palmyra area has given Doc enough stories to fill several books. These are just a few of his remembrances.

Temper, temper

Milking cows and a bad temper definitely do not mix. I knew from past experience that this customer had a bad temper because I had treated one of his cows with pitchfork marks from her heels to her hips. That temper would prove to be the ruination of him. Some-time later that very cow had her revenge. He was walking out of milking her with a full pail of milk when she kicked him and broke both bones in his leg. He suffered a great deal from that injury being in a cast for many months. He eventually returned to farming but things never went well for him after that and he ended up a bitter man.

Editor's note : All God's creatures deserve some kindness, (except maybe the mosquito.)

No Snow Days for the Vet

Some days it doesn't pay to get out of bed and I had such a day in February of 1974. When we were having a blizzard with winds about 30 miles an hour and snow blowing in from the north. It was the kind of day that Wisconsin is famous for and I hoped that the phone would not ring that day, but unfortunately it started out about 7:30 a.m. The farmer had a young heifer which he had been trying to get settled, and had been unsuccessful. This morning she was in heat, meaning she would ovulate in the next few hours. She had to be inseminated within the next four to six hours or we would have to wait 21 days until she was fertile again. I tried to persuade him to wait because of the weather but he pleaded would I please come and breed her that morn-

I told Howard we should drink the wine and rub the empty bottle on the horse and at least we would feel better, but he insisted we drench the animal with the wine.

ing. He lived about 25 miles from Palmyra and it was nearly 10:30 before I returned home. Three weeks later the heifer I had bred came back into season and I had to rebreed her and so that had been a wasted call.

I had no sooner got out of my insulated coveralls and boots when the phone started ringing again. This time it was a very excited woman from Paradise Springs, who had a horse down in the snow. She told me that her regular veterinarian couldn't get there because of the weather

and she needed help badly. I have often remarked I don't particularly like horses. Nevertheless, I answered the call. The buildings were about half a mile uphill from the road. I was driving a Volkswagen truck which would go through snow up over the bumpers. I had just started treating the prostrate animal when Dr. Howard Cook arrived on the scene. He had to

leave his car at the gate because of all the snow so any drugs we needed to use all came from me. He instructed me to give the animal cortisone, a shot of vitamin B complex, a bottle of protein IV and another bottle of glucose intravenously. Then he asked the woman owner if she had a bottle of wine, which she did because they ran a tavern. While she was gone to get it, I told Howard we should drink the wine and rub the empty bottle on the horse and at least we would feel better, but he insisted we drench the animal with the wine. We had gotten the horse onto a rug and pulled it back into the stable but that night it got up, fell out of the door and froze to death. Dr. Cook had gotten paid on the spot but I had to wait over three months to collect. I told him the next time I had to kill a horse I could do it without his help.

(cont. from p.3) father in 1884. Ben and his wife, Anna, continued the tradition by having eight children of their own. Joseph lived with them for the rest of his life in the house he originally built.

The Von Ruedens purchased land just across the road and a little farther west. They began with eighty acres, then added 40 more. They sold 4 acres to the railroad when it came through about that time.

The Breidenbachs and Von Ruedens had a number of marriages between the two families so they remained closely related.

Many of these early immigrants were from Germany, where there was unrest due to Prussian rule, crop failures, etc.

Wisconsin became a state in 1848 and the real influx of immigrants happened at this time. The majority of those settling in the Eagle area were German. From "The Breidenbach Family" by Patricia Jacobsen Breidenbach

The Ernest Loefer Family

As mentioned earlier, Ben Breidenbach, purchased the family farm from his father in 1884. He sold it to the Rudolf brothers in 1921. Just six years later in 1927 Ernest Loefer bought the farm from them. Loefer and his wife were dairy and truck farmers. They brought their products to the West Allis Farmers Market for many years. They were assisted only by their two children and one helper. When their son, Bob, married Carol they remodeled the upstairs of the farmhouse into an apartment. They continued working with the elder Loefers until 1979 when Bob and Carol took over the farm and continue working it right up until the present day. The livestock are gone but they are still truck farmers (which Carol says ranks right next to stupid. Sitting out in the hot sun or the rain.) However, they do raise some of the best corn in the area, to which their loyal customers can attest.

(Interview with Carol and Bob Loefer)

The Von Rueden Family

The Von Ruedens kept on farming. Jacob Von Rueden passed on the farm to his son, Frederick and he in turn passed it on to his son, John. John and his wife Katherine had three children, Joseph, Betty and Dorothy. Unfortunately John passed away in 1927 at an early age and Katherine was left to run the farm. She continued farming with the help of her children for another twenty years. Her daughter, Dorothy,

remembers she and her brother and sister milking 14 cows by hand and how happy they were to get a portable milking machine. That arrived about 1936 at the time that electricity became available. With the advent of the milking machine, they were able to add to their number of cattle and increase their production. (Interview with Dorothy Kau)

And The Matt Kau Family

As they were growing up, a new farmer moved into the area, one Matt Kau. Now the Kau family had two sons and one daughter and the Von Rueden family had one son and two daughters. One by one, a Von Rueden married a Kau until the whole group was one happy family. Joe Von Rueden stayed on the farm while his mother and sisters moved to Eagle. When Dorothy married Alvin Kau they moved to a farm on ZZ near the Grotjan Farm, where Dorothy still farms today with the help of her sons. They raise livestock for breeding.

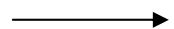
Back in the day, Clara Pierce lived across from that farm and saw that it was going to be auctioned off. Sam Engel came to buy eggs. Clara told him about the auction and to take a look. He did and ended up buying the farm. Matt Kau also was at the auction and he offered to buy it from Sam. They settled the deal right then and there. That was when deals were made with nothing more than a handshake and a dollar down. But we're much too sophisticated for that now. (Interview with Dorothy Kau)

The Heyday of the Family Farms

Family Farms thrived in the 40's, 50's and 60's. Every farm in the area did well. Twenty to thirty cows, pigs, chickens, ducks and geese were the norm on all the farms. Draft horses were still very popular doing a fair amount of field work. Cows, pigs, chickens and geese were taxed as personal property. Draft horses were exempt from that tax.

Farm prices were good for those times and taxes were low. People always had plenty of food, most of it raised at home. They sold eggs to the local grocer, butchered and sold pigs, beef and chickens to the villagers who weren't involved in farming. At one time 3 feed mills were present in the village and all did well.

Farmers would get feed ground at least once a week and then do other business in the village. (cont. page 7)



Back then there were five school districts in Eagle, one in the village and four in the town. Three were one room schools where all 8 grades were taught.

Not much money was spent on machinery in those days. A group of eight to ten farmers would use one threshing machine, one silo filler and one corn shredder. Neighbors would gather and go from one farm to the other with teams of horses, tractors and manpower to share their efforts to harvest the crops.

Member Contributor

DO YOU KNOW

Which school in Eagle was the last to exist as a one room school with grades one through eight and in what year did it close?

Coming in the next issue:

Windmills and Wood Stoves: Growing up in the 1920's.

By Jerry Baker

Newell Meyer

July 31, 1916-August 31, 2006



Newell G. Meyer died Aug. 31, 2006, at Waukesha Memorial Hospital of complications from an auto accident. He was 90 years old.

Newell was born on July 31, 1916, and lived much of his life in Milwaukee. He went to Marquette University and while still a student he took a part-time job as a tour guide at The Milwaukee Journal. This was in 1936. During World War II he served with the Army Air Corps. Having an instructor's rating for meteorology, aerodynamics and aerial navigation, he also taught electronics for the military.

After the war he returned to the Journal, eventually becoming a vice-president of the company. He retired after working there for 25 years. He was a great mentor to young people in the profession and was very supportive of women in the workplace. Early on, he recognized the value of new technology. He was said to be a visionary in that way.

He met his wife Ann, a widow, while working at the Journal. They made their first home in Wauwatosa, collecting antiques and installing pieces of Milwaukee history there.

Meyer, who called himself an "old time scavenger" was excited to acquire parts of the old Plankinton and Patrick Cudahy mansions, as well as cherry paneling from the Pillsbury house that once stood on Milwaukee's east side. With the help of expert Alan Pape, the Meyers acquired a turn-of-the-century log cabin from Michigan, reconstructing it on their farm in the Town of Eagle.

He was known as a history buff, serving as curator of the Wisconsin Historical Society board and on its executive committee. He served on other society committees, including the one that led to the development of Old World Wisconsin. In 1982, Meyer offered a gift of \$200,000 toward the construction of an outdoor amphitheater on the Old World Wisconsin grounds. He first made the offer anonymously but came forward as the donor when the issue of future expenses was debated.

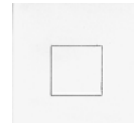
Professional honors included the Byline Award from the Marquette University College of Journalism. A former president of the International Newspaper Promotion Association, Meyer received its two highest honors: the Silver Shovel Award for promotion and the Sidney S. Goldish Award for research.

Meyer lectured at Marquette University and taught a University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee class on marketing research and sales analysis.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Ann. He is survived by nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends.

Funeral services were held on Thursday, Sept. 7, 2006, at the Family Center, South Chapel at Wisconsin Memorial Park, 12875 W. Capitol Drive, Brookfield. Entombment was at Wisconsin Memorial Park.

Eagle Historical Society, Inc.
217 Main Street
P.O. Box 454
Eagle, WI 53119-0454



DECEMBER EVENTS

Date: Sun., Dec. 3rd
Time: 7 p.m.
Place: Eagle Elementary
School, Eagle
Date: Mon., Dec 4th
Place: Palmyra Methodist
Church, Palmyra
Event: Palmyra-Eagle
Community Band Christ-
mas Concert
Admission: FREE
Punch and home made
Christmas goodies
served. Come and join the
spirit of the season.



Date: Saturday,
December 9, 2006
Time: Ticket Sales:
9 a.m.
Drawing : 8 p.m.
Location: The Munici-
pal Building, Main
Street (Hwy NN) Eagle
Event: Holiday Raffle

Sponsored by the
Eagle Historical
Society