

EAGLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Volume 7, Issue 2

Spring 2000

EHS News

Membership

Welcome to members who joined since our last newsletter:

Patrons - \$100 & over

Richard & Sally Harthun

Clifford & Janet Jensen

Sponsors - \$50-99

Howard Baker

Dorothy Clark

Heckel Tool & Mfg. Corp. (Gerald & Lori Heckel)

Harold & Mary Lou Hinkley

Sustaining - \$25-49

Richard & Valerie Cole

Larry & Diane Wilkinson

New Members

Orin Benson, Luella Bowey, Stewart & Carol Calkins, Heckel Tool & Mfg. Corp. (Gerald & Lori Heckel), Meryl Keisey, Alan & Erica Ledrowski, David & Julie Ledrowski, Jack Rolfe, and Annice Younger. ♦

Newsletter Committee

A committee was formed and met to discuss improving the newsletter. It was decided to select a unifying topic for each issue. The last issue focused on memories of the past century. This issue comprises transportation. Religion, courtship, and weddings will be covered in the July issue. Any donations for that issue should be submitted by July 1. Please send them to the attention of the newsletter committee at the museum. ♦

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Curator's Corner

By Elaine Ledrowski

Donations

Richard & Marjorie Friedman - \$25

James & Joan Pasterski - \$50

These and future donations will be kept in a separate fund for improvements to the museum.

Shirley Matters and Mildred Pipp donated a World War I uniform in memory of their parents, Ruby and Harry Edmonds. Dale Mueller's army uniform, trophies, and a copy of a document signed by President Clinton were some of the items donated by Ruth Ann Mueller. Additional donations were received from Dorothy Kramer, Donna and Ras Kalnes, Welthy and Edward Mueller, Topsy VonRueden, and Mildred Pipp.

Doing some spring cleaning? We are looking for newspaper articles about you, your family or your business. This would include birth announcements, engagements, weddings, anniversaries, awards, service records, and obituaries. Please allow us to copy these items. Carl and Eris Thurston co-chair a committee responsible for maintaining EHS's local history binders, which contain articles they have located in four newspapers. Feel free to browse through these books for information on Eagle residents, businesses, schools, churches, government, legal notices, and history.

Crazy Quilt Ready for Raffle

Crazy quilts, the Victorian rage, are a combination of appliqué and embroidery. They were originally made with velvet, wool, silk, satin, and brocade. No two were alike because there were no hard and fast rules for specific traditional patterns.

It took longer than anticipated to finish our quilt, but the results are fantastic. Perhaps you saw it at the municipal building on election day. Many people were involved in this project. Elaine Potrykus arranged by color 25 packets of donated materials and distributed

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Alice Betts Burdon

Alice Betts Burdon was born on the Betts homestead three and one-half miles southwest of Eagle. The Betts farm, which stayed in the family until 1961, was on what is now called Betts Road. The dairy cattle were registered Guernseys. Grandfather Betts had walked west from New York state in moccasins he had made and taken up a homestead in 1843. Alice's mother, Luella M. Betts, was married to Fremont Ambrus Betts, who was born on the farm in 1863. Like her father before her and her sons after, Alice attended the old one-room Ward School.

Alice loved the farm. Every day was a fresh delight and in the evenings there was music—her mother played the old foot pump organ, her father, the piccolo.

At 10, Alice was driving the hay fork horse and lifting hay into the mow of the barn. She drove the horse that hauled the stoneboat when they cleared new fields. She also drove the horse that pulled the potato spacer, a sort of harrow that dug the parallel rows for planting. While still a young girl, she sometimes drove a team to East Troy for lumber, a round trip of about 15 miles.

This always reminded her that some of the lumber for the house was hauled over the newly completed Milwaukee and St. Paul track before there was a station at Eagle. Grandfather Betts and some of his sons (he had nine children) simply went out into the fields and flagged down the train. ♦

(*From a "Jaunts with Jamie" column, date unknown.*)

Melendy's Prairie: Pioneer Travel

On July 4, 1836, Wisconsin Territory was organized by Congress and the next year everything seemed to favor the migration of pioneers to the rich farming land of Southern Wisconsin. A land office had been established in Milwaukee and a steamboat had arrived there—the first to assist in transportation on the Great Lakes. The immigrants were coming by the thousands from the eastern part of the U.S. and also Europe.

Milwaukee had very poor facilities at first for landing from the boats. Old letters tell how people reached shore by means of row-boats and how some of the horses were pushed overboard to swim to shore.

It was customary for the men to hire someone with a team and wagon to take several of them at one time out through the country to look for farm land to settle on. Then they would go back to Milwaukee where they had left their families and take them out to their "claim."

As there were no roads, the wagons went together to help each other. It was often necessary to put both yoke of oxen on one wagon and the men would push and lift while the women tried to coax the oxen along. When the ground was level and the going was good they attained the speed of about 2 miles an hour. However, the hours of travel a day were limited, as the oxen had to graze part of the day to supplement the small ration of grain allowed them.

The first settlers came to Melendy's Prairie in 1836. The land was not on the market then—neither had the Indians been removed from their old and favorite hunting grounds in this vicinity. The settlers located their claims—but it was not until 1839 that they were required to get a title to their land to hold their claim.

In 1851 the first railroad track was completed as far as Eagle. A crowd had gathered at the station to see the train with the engine "Iowa" arrive. Engines were then named after states in the Union. The locomotives were fired by wood in those days and great quantities were collected at every available station. People who lived near the railroad tracks kept watch for fires, which were started by the cinders from the queer and different looking smoke-stacks on the steam locomotives (with the cow-catcher on front). ♦

(*From Historical Gleanings of Melendy's Prairie by Clara Howell Pierce*)

Wagon Ho!

Picture a long string of wagons trailing a division of Union or Confederate soldiers down through a dusty valley. Protecting cavalry flanks each side of the train from huge Conestogas down to two-wheeled carts.

Soldier teamsters of the Civil War with their long snapping whips urging six or more teams of horses or mules in tandem on the trail were called wagoners or muleteers. Wagoners themselves carried guns beside them to defend themselves and their wagonloads. And their freight might have included anything from medicine to military equipment and supplies.

Though well guarded by cavalry and infantry, supply wagons were rich prizes for the enemy to cut off from opposing armies. The Union troops were said to have had 14,000 wagons of their own and had captured some 2,000 Confederate wagons.

Among the Waukesha County wagoners were John Hubbard, Eagle Centre, Co. I, 13th Infantry, discharged Sept., 1861 for disability; and William Core, Eagle, Co. D, 11th Inf., died Feb. 1865 of disease at Brashear City, La. ♦

(From an article by Charlie Phillips in the Waukesha County Historical Society Landmark, date unknown)

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Curator's Corner

them to the following: Topsy VonRueden*, Virginia Dudzek*, Jaye Snake, Sue Cusick, Nancy Manschot, Jessica Chamberlin*, Jean Dernell, Nada Moeller*, Jan Grotjan*, Rose Raiter*, Pat Chapman, Karen Kennedy, Mickey Nelson, Maxine Gapinski, Diane Peohnelt, Carol Thomas, Renee Hisey, Maureen Hisey, Eris Thurston*, Jean Bowey, and Joanne Loshaw. Welthy Mueller* and Bea Nowicki* finished extra squares and sewed the squares together. Jill Blaedow and all those with an asterisk behind their names spent three mornings finishing the embroidery on the quilt. Nancy Manschot donated the material for the backing and tied the quilt. Sarah Piepenpol, owner of Genesee Woolen Mills, donated the wool batting. Welthy Mueller sewed the black border around the edge. Raffle tickets were printed courtesy of Citizens Bank. THANK YOU all for your contributions!

The quilt will be displayed around Eagle and tickets will be available at Eagle Headquarters, Krestan's, and the museum or by calling me at 594-3301 or Pat Wilton at 594-2294. The raffle will be held on July 9 at the ice cream social and band concert. Any help selling tickets will be appreciated. The price is \$1 each or 6 for \$5. ♦

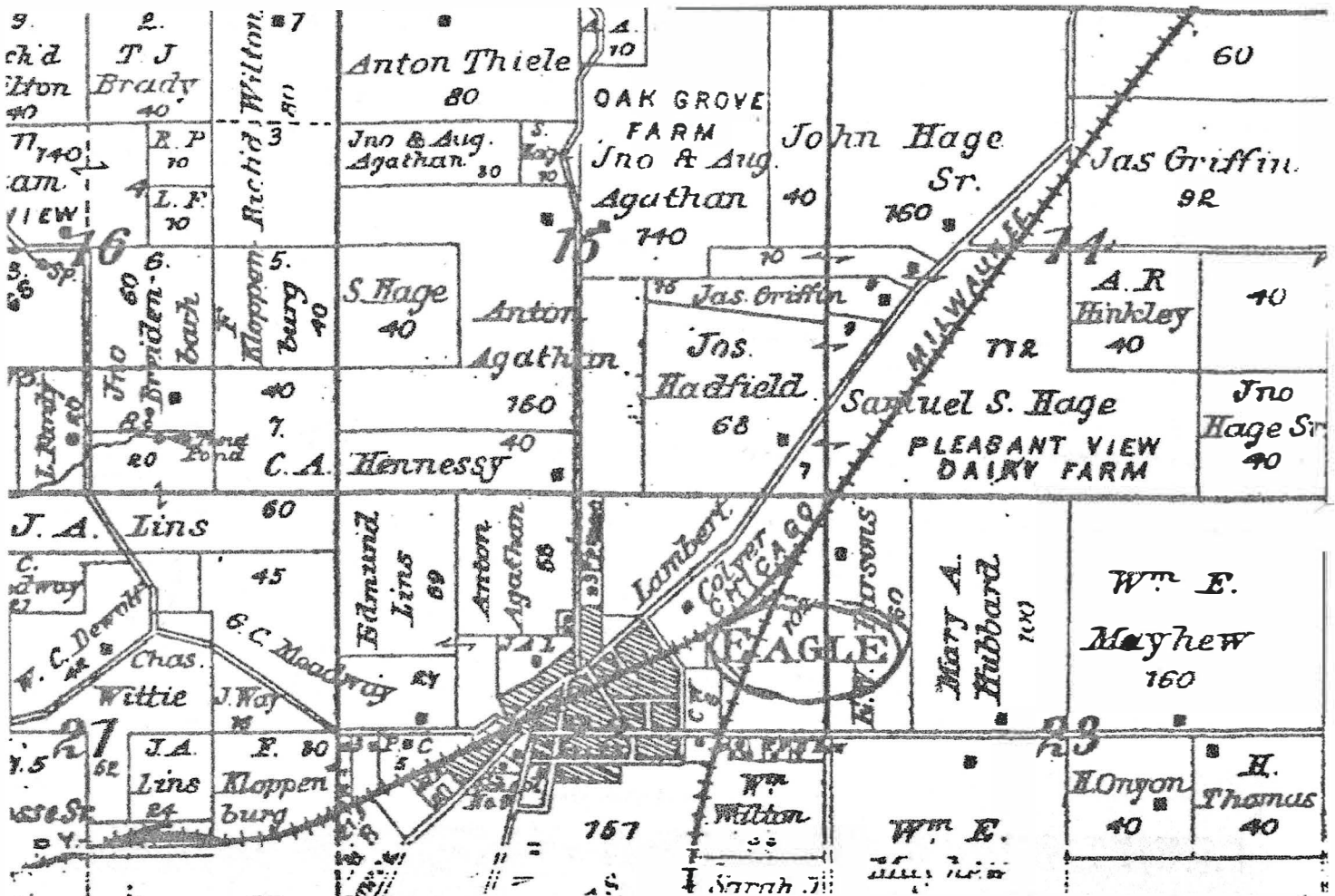
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MAY		
May 12-13	Community Rummage Sale	Plant/shirt sale at museum
May 16	EHS Board Mtg.	6:30p.m., 2 nd floor, museum*
JUNE		
June 20	EHS Board Mtg.	6:30p.m., 2 nd floor, museum*
JULY		
July 9	Band Concert/Ice Cream Social	2p.m., Village Park Quilt will be raffled
July 18	EHS Board Mtg.	6:30p.m., 2 nd floor, museum*
August		
August 4	Wine & Cheese Reception	6-8p.m., museum

*All members are invited to any meeting.

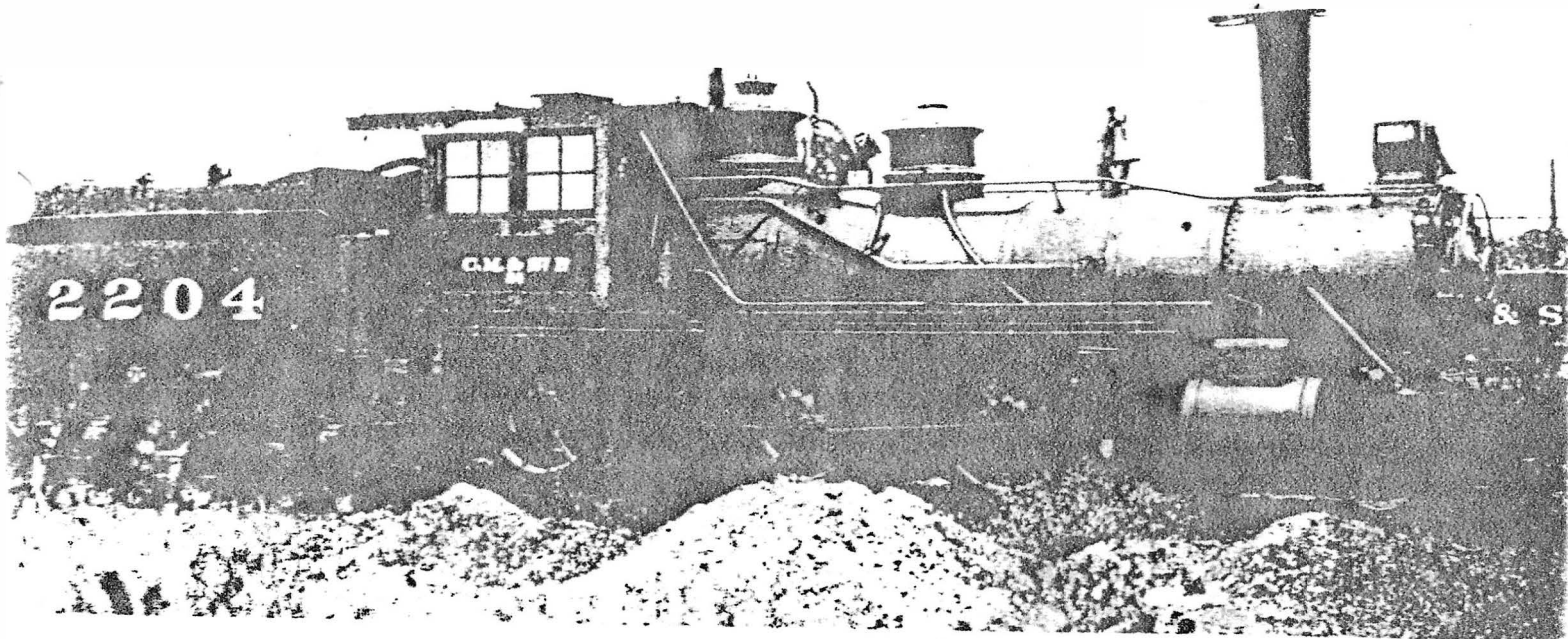
Railroads in Eagle

By Lindsay Fournier



1891 train map that ran through Eagle

Eagle became the center of attention when the railroads were built in Eagle. The railroads were built in 1851 from Eagle to Waukesha. The railroads were very busy with 8-10 passenger trains daily. The wages were \$1.50 for men and \$3.75 for teams. It took 3 men a day to handle the traffic that came through the depot. About 100 men were employed first with more being added as the days advanced toward spring. Trains were stopped in 1953 and the train depot was no longer needed. The depot was sold to Glen Adams and Hank Clark for \$600.00. The depot was razed in 1956. ♦



Bobby

A Train Called Bobby Milwaukee Road's Eagle Branch

By Paul H. Behrens

In the early months of 1869 several articles appeared in the *Northwestern Advance*, a Milwaukee newspaper, promoting construction of the Milwaukee and Beloit RR as an outlet to the southwest. M&B, chartered in the mid-1850s, had been planned to run from Milwaukee to a point near Elkhorn. A significant amount of construction had been done on the M&B, but it had collapsed in the financial panic of 1857.

As the decade of the 1860s drew to its close, the Western Union RR, formed by a reorganization of the failed Racine and Mississippi RR, consisted of track running 197 miles from Racine to Rock Island, Illinois. Nonetheless, as a link between the Great Lakes and the West it was in a position to attract a great deal of business from the rapidly growing territory across the river. During the winter of 1868-9 Alexander Mitchell, president of the Milwaukee & St. Paul RR, managed to purchase a controlling share. But nowhere did the tracks of the two railroads connect with each other, and at their closest point they were separated by about 15 miles.

A line to bring the two railroads together was obviously necessary. In August 1869 a survey, under the direction of a Mr. Smith, was made between Elkhorn and Eagle on the M&StP's Prairie du Chien line, where the railroads' tracks came closest to each other. In early December the decision was made to build the line between Elkhorn and Eagle; the construction contract was let December 10 to S. A. Harrison. Construction began almost immediately after New Year's 1870. About 100 men were employed at first. By early April about 400 men were at work. In late October 1870 there were as many trains traveling the Milwaukee-Elkhorn route as on the main line. It should be noted that the trains running between Elkhorn and Milwaukee ran through the entire distance, not merely making connections with the Prairie du Chien line at Eagle. Agricultural products shipped from these stations at first were mainly grain and wool. As years went by dairy farming played a more important role. Dairy plants served by railroad were sited at Elkhorn and Eagle.

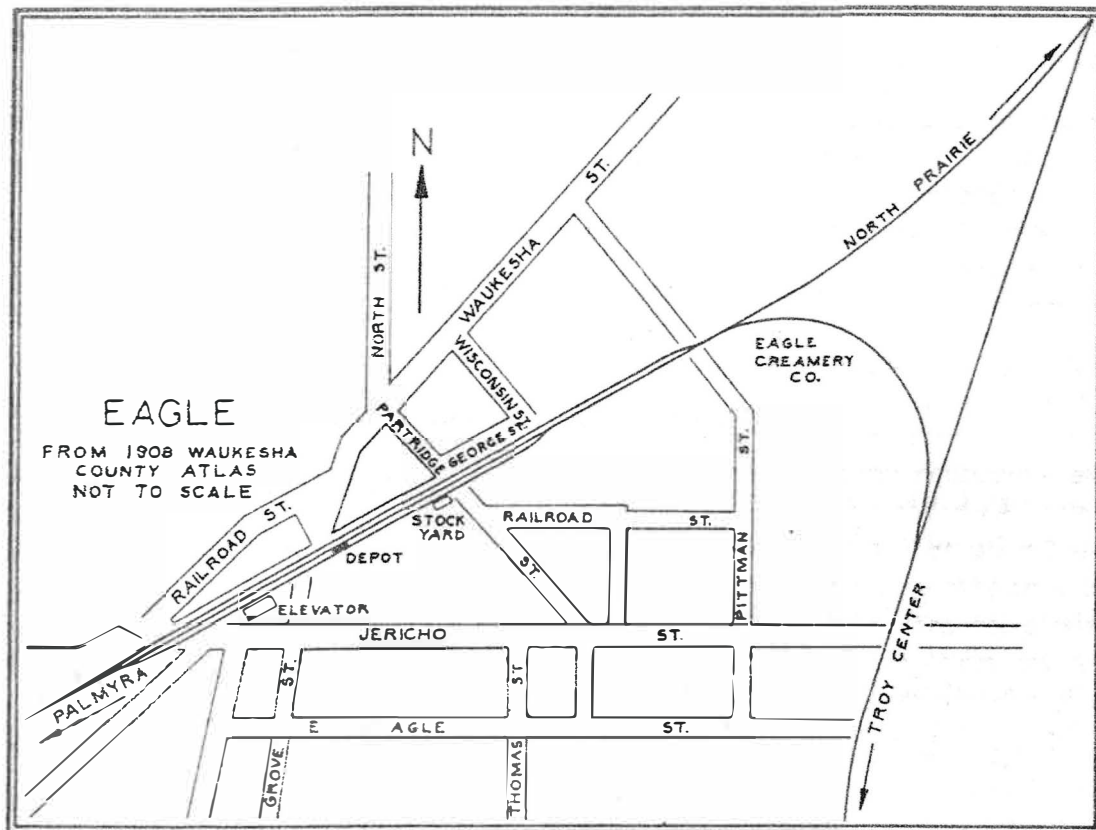
But the Eagle line's days as a main track were numbered. In mid-1871 it was announced that the M&StP would build its own line from Milwaukee to Chicago. At the point where it crossed the Western Union's track west of Racine (first named Western Union Junction, later renamed Corliss and now known as Sturtevant), a connecting track was built between the two lines. All main line traffic on the WU would be re-routed through the new junction.

Stopping at every little station, bringing many of the necessities of life, and being the chief contact with the outside world, the Eagle branch train touched the lives of the people along its route as no thundering freight or fast passenger limited could. As familiar local characters often do, it acquired a nickname, coming to be known to the public as "Bobby."

Before mechanical refrigeration, natural ice was used for cooling purposes, and from the late 19th century until around 1920, in southeastern Wisconsin the cutting of ice from lakes was a large industry. One and a half miles north of Troy Center the Eagle Branch passed by Lulu Lake, a body of water small in area but clear and deep, perfect for ice cutting. The Graydon Ice Co., a Chicago firm, erected ice storage houses next to the lake from which 1500 carloads of ice could be shipped annually. A one-half mile spur reached down to the lake from the north.

After the entry of the United States into the First World War all available passenger equipment was taken by the government for troop movements. By the time normal conditions resumed, the automobile had already moved in to the niche formerly occupied by excursion trains like those to the county fairs, and those trains never reappeared. As the highway system expanded, the little railroad correspondingly declined.

With no business left north of Troy Center, the Milwaukee Road sought permission in July 1929 from the Interstate Commerce Commission to abandon the portion between Troy Center and Eagle, and was granted it March 18, 1930. The Milwaukee Road applied to the ICC for permission to abandon the remainder of the Eagle branch March 23, 1932. The ICC issued a certificate approving abandonment October 31, 1932.



(From The Milwaukee Railroader, March 1987)



*Mrs. Mary Smart with sons Floyd and Robert and their collie at Eagle in 1920s.
The Smarts were some of the county's first Ford dealers. (From Landmark, Summer 1967)*

That Torpedo Roadster

By Libbie Nolan

"It was the most attractive model that Ford ever made," says Chester Wilson. If you look on page 9 of the Summer 1967 issue of LANDMARK, there is a picture of Mrs. Smart and her 1911 Model T. Mine was exactly like that. I bought it from Smart Brothers in Eagle in 1912, and went to work for them as a mechanic in 1914," Chet recalls.

Chet remembers that it was election year when he bought the beautiful shiny black car with brass head lamps. He had just turned 21 the same week of the 1912 election. He and his father drove to Mukwonago in Chet's new car to vote for President Woodrow Wilson. ♦

(From Landmark, Spring 1968)

The Model T Ford

By Gerald Neary, Automotive Historian

In 1920 Ford's Model T car was into its 22nd year of production. The car began to be a little more streamlined than the first year it was produced by changing the style of the radiator shells, hoods and fenders. Also the headlights became electric rather than gas. The mechanical parts, however, remained the same.

The Model T was advertised as a universal car because it could be used by so many different people regardless of life styles. The public could afford the Model T because it sold for only \$550. It came in many different models.

The most popular saying of Henry Ford was, "you can get a Model T in any color as long as it's black." ♦



IN MEMORIAM

Alvin Kau

Parodies

*Mary had a runabout, a snappy little motor,
And when she took her lamb to school,
The motor used to tote her.
So when the teacher turned it out
They didn't care a gram
But homeward in the runabout
Rode Mary and her lamb.*

*Sticky prickery wire,
The point ran through the tire;
The tire popped, the auto stopped;
Sticky prickery wire.*

(From Landmark, Summer 1987)

We notice a lot of little children at the depot at train time with no other purpose except to see the train come and go. The platform is sometimes so taken up that passengers and employes at the depot find it difficult to pass. Little children should not be allowed to go around promiscuously without their parents or elder sisters and this notice should serve to call the attention of parents to the need of keeping watch that their children will not be run over by trains or autos and be crippled for life or probably killed.

--Eagle Quill, November 10, 1922

Ford

THE UNIVERSAL CAR

Out of the more than 3,000,000 Ford cars now in use, about sixty percent have been sold to farmers. Probably no other one thing has brought to the farm so much of comfort and profit as has the Ford car. It has enlarged the social life, doubled the facilities for marketing, brought the town next door to the farm, multiplied for the farmer the pleasures of living. A family car without an equal in low cost of operation and maintenance. We solicit your order for one now because the demand is large and continually increasing.

SMART'S AUTO CO.
Eagle, Wisconsin



--Eagle Quill, March 19, 1920

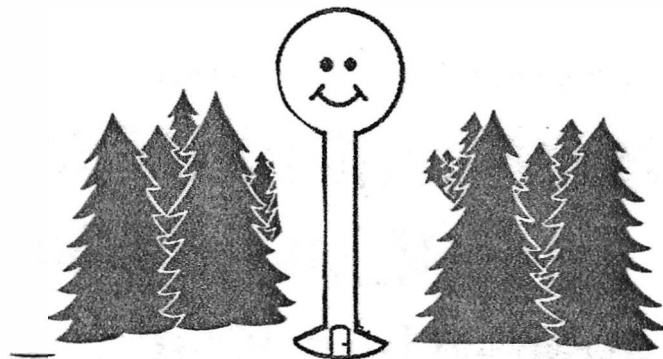
New T-Shirts Available

A committee consisting of Pat Wilton, Florence Neary, Bea Marquardt and Elaine Ledrowski selected a new t-shirt design that incorporates two distinctive features of Eagle — the green trees of the Kettle Moraine Forest and the yellow water tower, all outlined in black. It is available in five attractive colors at the museum. Or call Elaine at 594-3301 or Pat at 2294. We also have a few of last year's white shirts with the yellow water tower for \$10 for members and \$12 for non-members.

Adult

Members \$15

Non-Members \$17

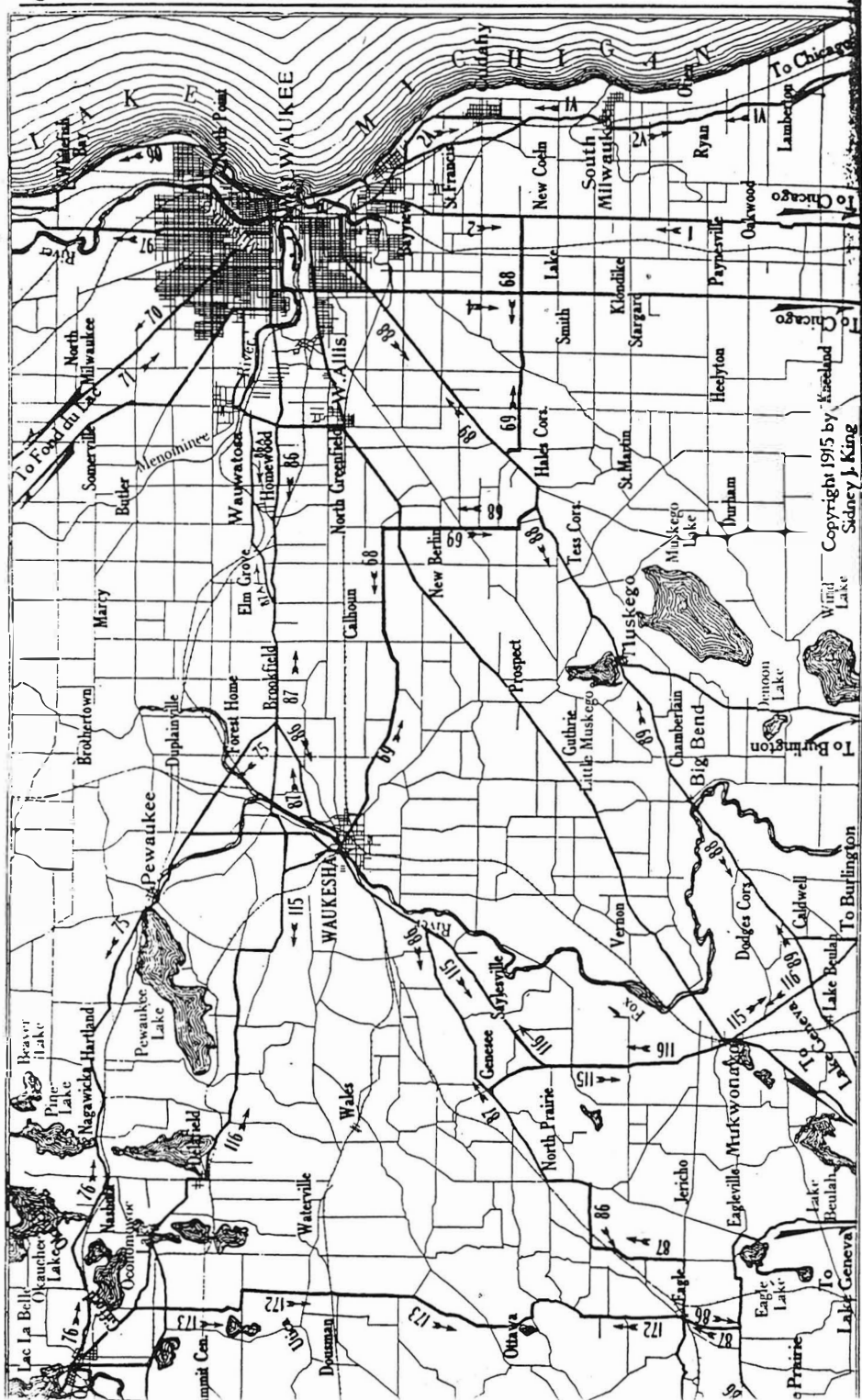


Child

Members \$12

Non-Members \$14

EAGLE, WISCONSIN



Waukesha, Wis., to Eagle, 17.0 miles

Road nearly all gravel

Route 86—Reverse Route 87

- .0 Leave Five Points, cor. Main and Broadway, go southwest on Main St.
- .1 Pass postoffice on right
- .3 Turn left on West Ave. to first turn right
- .5 Turn right on Wisconsin Ave., cross bridge and R. R.
- .6 Turn left, parallel with R. R.
- 1.6 Cross R. R.
- 3.2 Cross small bridge, up grade to top of grade
- 3.3 Turn right (road ahead optional way to Burlington)
- 5.0 Pass road on right
- 5.9 Pass road on left
- 6.1 Pass stone quarry on right
- 6.7 Cross small bridge
- 7.6 Curve left
- 7.8 Genesee mill on right and cross bridge
- 7.9 Pass creamery on right
- 8.0 Old Genesee, through crossroads going west (Road on left goes to Burlington, Elkhorn, etc.) (Road on right goes to Wales)
- 8.3 Pass stone school on left
- 9.7 Pass small lake on right, through
- 10.5 North Prairie
- 10.9 Cross R. R. on outskirts of town
- 11.5 Pass cemetery on right, parallel with R. R.
- 12.7 Through crossroads
- 12.9 Curve left
- 13.2 Cross R. R. and
- 13.9 Curve right, up grade
- 14.0 Curve left
- 14.5 Pass road on right

- 16.5 Pass road on left
- 16.7 Cross R. R.
- 16.8 Pass Methodist Episcopal church on left
- 16.9 Pass postoffice on left
- 17.0 Eagle elevator on right, parallel with R. R. on right through Eagle, Wis. Hotel and garage accommodations not the best (Road on right, across R. R., goes to Oconomowoc)

Eagle to Whitewater, Wis., 14.7 miles

Road nearly all gravel

Route 86—Reverse Route 87

- .0 Continue straight ahead, with R. R. on right
- .1 Large brick school on left
- .4 Catholic cemetery on left
- .5 Oak Ridge cemetery on right
- 1.2 Pass cemetery on right
- 1.7 Turn right to old school (built in 1849, still in use)
- 1.9 School on right above mentioned
- 2.0 Pass road on left, following telephone poles through
- 4.7 Little Prairie
- 4.9 Turn right at crossroads, leave telephone (Road straight ahead goes to Lauderdale Lake, Elkhorn. See Route Little Prairie to Elkhorn)
- 4.9 Turn right, west, leaving main line telephone poles
- 6.7 Through crossroads and pass school on left corner
- 7.2 Dangerous left curve through woods, follow telephone
- 7.4 Dangerous curve left to fork
- 8.2 Keep right (left road goes to Elkhorn, 12 miles)
- 9.0 Keep left at forks to end of road
- 9.2 Curve left, down grade
- 9.3 Keep to right
- 9.7 School on right corner
- 10.3 Curve right
- 10.5 Through crossroads

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

