

*(From Will J. Baker, Robert Baker's father, per Jerry Baker 2/16/02  
(postmarked Feb ? 1972)*

Walworth Co. Home  
Elkhorn Wis 53121  
Mr. And Mrs. L.A. Johnson  
Route 2  
Eagle WI

February 1972

Dear Friends

Am thinking about the old cemetery, (sic) which I have known all my life yet know so little about it.

Why the newer cemetery (sic) was begun unless the old one was full.

I can't remember ever attending a burial there.

Father could tell of many funerals there.

Whether all the burial lots in the old cemetery had been sold and they bought the new land to find room for the dead I know not.

The old cemetery must have some record (sic) of burials as well as when the land was obtained and from whom.

If I ever get away from here and can walk, I will be tempted to tour the old ground and read the names of many people whom he knew long before he ever knew me.

I went to an old neighbor's funeral in the old Catholic Cemetery west of the village of Eagle many years ago.

Big changes since then. Railroad cars puffing and whistling as they made the grade. Automobiles unknown then.

There may or should be a record in Waukesha who sold the land for the old cemetery and when.

I have no idea when the last burial was performed there.

Must stop this as you won't be able to read it anyway.

Sincerely, Will J. Baker

Old Graverd (sic) Continued

Somebody I would think should have a record all about the old cemetery. It would seem that there were still burials in the old yard at times after the new yard was begun.

If I ever get so I can walk will be tempted to tour the old yard to read the names of so many whom grandfather knew many years before he knew me.

I should think the Recording Office in Waukesha could tell when and from whom the old yard was purchased.

Some of the early white burials had to be anywhere and there is no trace of them now.

On my place after the public road was put through two children were buried. Smallpox victims.

You can never read this.

W. Baker

*(From Will J. Baker, Robert Baker's father, per Jerry Baker 2/16/02)  
(addressed to Route 2 Box 13 and postmarked May 17 1972)*

May 1972

Mr. L.A. Johnson and Family

Dear Friends,

Am disgusted at my stupidity when I got back here from supper when you folks were here there was that big sack of nice fruit. I was so glad to see you folks I must have grabbed that sack and set it up mechanically while meeting you folks.

Still wet, but how lovely this lawn and big piece of oats at the west of this building would have looked to many hundreds of us about the end of July 1910!

The freight with my horses and goods was side-tracked for a passenger at a little place with a water tank, small depot and stock-yards.

What I first thought was a big celebration was people moving like a big hill of stirred up ants. Horses tied to the sides of their wagons. Many saddled horses with their heads turned aside and fastened to their tails.

*NOTE ATTACHED TO LETTER: Bill Baker age 95 He and his family went to Canada to settle but met a full hard drought. Bill rode in a freight car with horses and possessions. (Rented one car) Wife rode in passenger car. No children yet. They went spring 1910 came back August 1910. No crops no water. People came to railroad wells trying to get water. The crowd wanted water.*

I don't mean to say I am the only one who remembers the Spring of 1892. There surely are some, but sadly the "Grim Reaper" has taken a heavy toll of them.

Warm south east winds had blown for days but no rain. Not too much snow had fallen the previous winter. Finally rain began to fall. Fogs, mists and heavy down-pours began. One morning the heavens were covered with a thick blanket except for a blood red ribbon near the earth for a fourth of the circumference of the horizon. Then the rain began anew and I don't remember now many days it was before we saw the sun again.

When the rain let up for a day or two father sowed about 20 acres of barley. Father was an expert at sowing grain. Had to do it when grandfather got so badly crippled he could do it no more.

It rained more and sort of pelted the seed in and the hot weather brought it right along. Father hired a man to cut it with a binder.

Thanking you again for your generous gift and hope you will all keep well.

I am, your old neighbor, Will J. Baker

P.S. My eldest daughter is taking me to her home tomorrow if the weather is fine.

Old man who broke his arm can now wiggle his fingers a little. He is older than I am.

The people milling around the "Tank Town" in Dakota were there to beg water or buy it if they had to. All they could get was water for people to drink. I don't know whether anybody got any to get away with.

*(From Will J. Baker, Robert Baker's father, per Jerry Baker 2/16/02)  
(postmarked Jun 9 1972)*

June 8, 1972

Mr. And Mrs. Johnson,

You do not realize how much I enjoy getting a letter from friends.

Sight so bad probaly (sic) will have to stop.

Asked a nurse today if she knew the nurse you mentioned and she told me to go across the road. I did not realize there is so much there until my wife's brother showed up there. I had heard about the cattle and did see the corn cribs and silos. This is sort of a high priced loafers (sic) place and not much else. Our ages are so high here that the death rate is higher than among younger people.

Wish I had a record of the wet spring of 1892. Timothy hay was tall and rank. Father had seeder that never was much good and he sowed grain on the wet land. Father was good at that. He sowed grain between the stumps after grandfather was so badly crippled when dad was a boy.

Dad was the eldest of the children and he had the most responsibility.

How are the tenants in the house you put up for them? Did they come? Just old enough to be interested in your birds.

Lately heard something that I am sorry to hear. Wm De Witt many years lived with his family in the first frame house in our community. Before he got it and the public road was put through the builder and his family fixed the place up with flowers and raised many vegetables. The last family and his women did not like to be so far from the road. Wm De Witt bought the farm to the west and snaked a part of the first fram (sic) house in this community up through the fields where it still stands with its grain tight floor being stomped by horses.

Will J. Baker

*NOTE ATTACHED TO LETTER: The house now is a grainery (sic) where De Witt moved it and is getting in had shape. The house snaked through the fields on the William Schilling (sp?) property. Formerly Linda Geinter. Before Geinter, Ambrose Schlitz farmed. Before Schlitz was Bill Baker's brother Tom. Before that, Bill Baker's father, William B. Baker. He bought from De Witt, who moved the house. Cox build the house and lived in it. Others lived in between.*

*(From Will J. Baker, Robert Baker's father, per Jerry Baker 2/16/02)  
(postmarked Jul 11 1972)*

July 1972

Mr. And Mrs. L.A. Johnson

Dear Friends

Can't see what I am trying to write but can't help myself.

You put a lump in my throat and a tear in my eyes when you speak of my wife. She stood right by me through thick and thin.

Could not get out of U.S. A. on account of R.R. Strike (sic) in fall. Forced to remain in Wis all winter with 4 horses and a cow and feed sold. Luckily for me a big crib of my corn was sold to a stock buyer who got it a load at a time and paid for it that way all winter. So that way he paid only for the corn he got.

Got away from Eagle in March. Relatives and friendly neighbors helped me load a box car more than 62 years ago are all gone now.

The depot and grain elevators, blacksmith shops, and other things of that day are things of the past. I had been here but a few days when three well dressed men met in the east sun room introduced themselves to one another and looked out the window at all the north and east of this building.

The eldest man seemed to be entertaing (sic) the two younger fellows as they all smoked about what he knew about farming and the great changes in farming.

He tried to describe to them a scythe or sickle fixed below four woven sticks with a very crooked handle and cut all their hay with it.

I didn't know better than tell the big man they cut wheat and other small grain with that. The big giant looked surprised and almost mad at me. Made ready to vow to keep my mouth shut in the future.

However, the two younger men showed considerable interest in what I said about the queer harvest tool.

Grandfather Baker was a man with a wife and six children before he had ever had anything to do with training steers and working them. Have heard it said that an expert with cattle should let horses alone and vis (sic) versa with oxen.

Don't know what year grandfather was hurt nor his age. How I wish now I had taken interest in tales of the past.

Father was a slim light boy when he and grandfather started to pull stumps that day. A big white oak stump had a root showing on one side. Grandfather put the chain around this side root and started the oxen to walk around the great stump, thinking that it would turn the stump around. It only spit that root off, frightened the oxen and they started to run and the chain hit grandfather's thigh an (sic) wrapped around it so tight it nearly squeezed it off. The thigh bone was splintered.

Can't see good enough to punish you further.

Sincerely, W.J. Baker

*(From Will J. Baker, Robert Baker's father, per Jerry Baker 2/16/02)  
(postmarked Jul 11 1972)*

*NOTE ATTACHED TO LETTER: Bill Baker's father William B Baker had the accident. Bill rode a horse to Milwaukee to get a doctor. Bill was young. William B. lived in a log cabin near the Baker School with 6 children. The doctor set the bone as best he could and had pail with stones in it as traction to keep the leg from getting short while it healed. After healed he could walk but had a bad leg. He was about 43 or 44 years old. Born in 1807.*

*(From Will J. Baker, Robert Baker's father, per Jerry Baker 2/16/02)  
(postmarked Aug 28 1972)*

August 25, 1972

Dear Friends

You can put it all over me on letter writing, I can't see and have nothing but the bed that I can't get my feet under.

Grandfather was handicapped the remainder of his life after his accident. A (sic) expert at stack-grain he was finished. He could no longer walk behind a team and riding machines were unknown and could (sic) be used between the stumps of the "openings" anyway.

I was born too late to remember or see the pioneers or hear many of their tales.

Andrew Underhill's house where the fire was a few weeks (sic), was the finest farm house around (?) of years. Frank Lake's house where I was born about 96 years ago was one of the six fine farm houses around here. *NOTE ATTACHED: Underhill's farm on Bluff rd just before Eagle rd (Shearer rd) North Side. Frank Lake house from 67 first farm on right on Scout rd from 67.*

Am almost afraid to mention a few of the happenings years before my time is (sic) I may have mentioned them before.

When the T.P. of Eagle was organized a town treasurer was elected. The fellow lived in a very, very rud (sic) sort of a shelter of poles and bark. The treasurer was required to give a bond.

Someone said "Draper here will do that for such an honest citizen." Draper said "Shore Wood (sic)" and signed the bond.

Mrs. Draper wondered how the honest fellow could keep the money safely. Mr. Draper secretly wondered too.

By the time Draper believed the fellow had collected all of the money he paid the fellow a visit and found no trace of the honest "trustworthy."

Running home Draper ran across a fellow who had seen the honest man going south in a hurry.

Mr. Draper ran home as fast as he could, grabbed his rifle, bullets and powder horn and left in a hurry. The fellow had some times (sic) told of some place west of Chicago.

Next day Draper saw a man ahead of him. Draper caught up with the "honest (sic) chap as he was climbing a fence. Draper told him to drop the money or he would fire. The fellow was surprised and obeyed.

That is a tale of Eagle Township many years before I was born in the Frank Lake house.

W. Baker

*Letter in same envelope:*

Mr. And Mrs. Johnson

Dear Friends:

It is terrible bungling and almost shaming to write when one can't see what he is doing. Still I am hoping I get no worse.

De Witts

Grandfather of the fellows who started the fruit orchard most like have grandchildren before now or even greatgrand children by now.

*(From Will J. Baker, Robert Baker's father, per Jerry Baker 2/16/02)  
(postmarked Aug 28 1972)*

*Letter in same envelope continued:*

The house in question was built by Guerdon Cox in what is now my pasture. The spot where a deep cllar (sic) has been filled in is still visible.

No public roads had been laid out at that time. De Witt owned this frame house. The first Wm De Witt bought the Morrison farm with the nice big Morrison (sic) that is still there. At least much of it. Almost every woman that has lived in (sic) during the last century has had something pulled off from it or partitions pulled out. It was a big house but not big enough, he told Dad for so many women. He sold it to father and we moved in March 1877.

Many years after a man showed up at Palmyra and met the senior Wm Dewitt (sic) and in their talks the senior told the stranger there were two other old couples there just as old. The stranger gave them a big writeup and got their pictures in the papers.

*NOTE ATTACHED: Bill and Bob Baker's farm.*

*(From Will J. Baker, Robert Baker's father, per Jerry Baker 2/16/02)  
(postmarked Oct 10 1972)*

October 9, 1972

Mr. and Mrs. Johnson

Dear Friends:

Glad to get your fine letters. Wish I could write like you. I just can't do it and fear there will be no use in trying to write at all.

Some here born around 1910 or before think I am giving them some "hogwash" when they ask me something about that time.

Kid fashion I paid little heed about Frank Lane's house or when it was built.

It probably (sic) was in the autumn of 1874 that Father and Mother moved in Lake's house. I think Father taught the Ward School two winters and worked some of or all of the plow land for two years while they lived in Lake's house.

I never heard that Lake had more than two children a boy and a girl.

The boy was a Scout or soldier of some sort. Mrs. Lake died before her husband, I think.

After Lake died I have a feeling that the house was empty for a short spell.

Grandfather told the Lake daughter came to see him and said with all his boys he was just the man to buy the farm. She said she wanted him to have it. He asked what she wanted for it and she told what she had been offered and if (sic) would take it for \$500.00 (*pencil note: less*) she would let him have it.

Grandfather exploded. Asked her what kind of fool she took him for. She said she knew the fellow would pay for (*pencil note: it*) and he or any of his family were (sic) fit to live in a pig pen and would never pay a cent after they got in and would only (*pencil note: ruin*) mother's house that she had truly loved.

Hope all are well.

Will punish you no further by trying to write.

Sincerely Will J. Baker

Just can't see.

Hope you are all well.

P.S. Miss Lake sold her father's farm to John Baker. *NOTE ATTACHED: John Baker is Bob Baker's great-grandfather.*