LANDMARK

$3.50

AUTUMN 2005 VOLUME 48 NO. 3

In This Issue

WAUKESHA COUNTY
Historical Historical
SOCIETY & MUSEUM

101 W. MAIN STREET
WAUKESHA, WI 53186

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
Paid
Permit #665
Waukesha, WI

Donald and Carolyn Voskuil
W194 S7449 Racine Ave.
Muskego, WI 53150-9577

2011.22.10

(ISSN 0458-6972)
Published quarterly by the
Waukesha County Historical Society & Museum, Inc.
101 W. Main Street
Waukesha, Wisconsin 53186-4811
262-521-2859
http://www.wchsm.org

AUTUMN 2005 **Vol. 48, No. 3**

EDITOR
John M. Schoenknecht
801 Chicago Avenue
Waukesha, WI 53188
262-547-0429
email address: thbolt@execpc.com

***LANDMARK* COMMITTEE**
John Schoenknecht, Patricia Church,
Myra Leverson, Eloise Morris, Marion Heinisch, Sue Baker

Landmark was originated and edited by Adell Krebs from 1958 - 1960
and edited by Libbie Nolan from 1960 - 1995

THE LIGHTNING ROD...

Sometimes the mail brings surprises! Such was the case when Mary Hooper Hirst sent an article about six early Welsh pioneers. I know you will enjoy her story.

Former *Landmark* editor and historian Libbie Nolan was inspired to write her memories of Old Coffee Street after she read a story in *Landmark*. I think the neighborhood she described will come alive to you with the sights and smells and memories of her childhood on Coffee Road.

I found a story about the pioneer women in the town of Eagle in the museum archives. This paper was originally read before our society in 1910. It is interesting to read the meaning of "modern" in 1910.

I am proud to present a series of stories about growing up on a farm in the town of Summit. The stories were written by Jo Buth and begin with a portrait of her father,

John Schoenknecht

Cover Picture

Downtown Eagle in the 1920s

photo from Waukesha County Historical Society & Museum Archives

parents Adam and Carrie (Caroline) Link Graser.

Ron Hause, grandson of Ed and Edith Hause, is one of few descendants of the old German neighborhood of the 1920s to live there now. His home at Coffee and Wehr Roads is built on what was once part of my family's orchard. Loren Graser, son of Adam and Carrie Graser, lives on part of his family homestead and Don Hanke, son of Emil Hanke, lives at Coffee and Swartz Roads where Florence Meidenbauer's family had lived.

A reclaimed landfill site stretches along the west end area of the historic road.

And the once famous Cornfalfa Farms of the Swartzes is now part of the county's extended Minooka Park.

"Minooka" is the Potawatomi word for "maples." Winner of the county-wide school contest to name the original new park was, coincidentally, Jane Kusler, daughter of Rev. Howard Kusler of Waukesha's Evangelical and Reformed Church which had absorbed the little congregation of the Coffee Street neighborhood church after it had closed.

- And that's where the old New Berlin church records are now stored, said church member Roy Meidenbauer, who is president of the New Berlin Historical Society. Roy is Florence Meidenbauer Berg's first cousin.

SOURCES

Portrait and Biographical Record of Waukesha County, 1894.

The Farm Journal Illustrated Rural Directory of Waukesha County, Wisconsin, 1918.

Prairie Farmer's Home and County Directory of Waukesha County, Wisconsin, 1928.

Plat Book of Waukesha County, Wisconsin, 1873.

Plat Book of Waukesha County, Wisconsin, 1891.

Plat Book of Waukesha County, Wisconsin, 1914.

Plat Book of Waukesha County, Wisconsin, 1955.

Harold Koeffler, youngest son of George and Katie Graser Koeffler, who, at 90-plus years, lives in Mukwonago.

Roy Meidenbauer, a grandson of John M. and Anna Schoenwalder Meidenbauer.

❑

PIONEER WOMEN OF EAGLE

by Luella Parks Edwards, 1910

This manuscript was read to the Waukesha County Historical Society at their meeting in March 1910. I thought it would be interesting for our readers to see how women at that time viewed the pioneer women in our county. - JMS, editor

In looking over the histories of our county which I have been able to obtain, I wonder where the pioneer women were. There is always a tale, of course merited, of the accomplishments of the man. He left his home and came west into the forests, transversed the barren prairies, followed the Indian trails, built the cabins, teamed it back and forth for provisions, tilled the lands and at the end was the possessor of a fine farm, stock or other fortune. Incidentally, it is mentioned that he married so and so back east and brought her here, either on the first or a later trip. Usually it mentions that children were born to them, stating the names and in case of girls, giving whom they married and what their husbands had accomplished in the business world, so at least we are to infer that there were wives of pioneer men. There were a few exceptions, of course, but they had their history in the reflected light of the men of the family.

But we know without the historian that there were brave women who left homes of luxury and comfort and came to live, not a few weeks or months, but the best years of their young lives, out in the isolation of the forests and the prairies, cut off from all frequent association with the dear ones at home. This means much to a woman though she may have her loved husband by her side.

The isolation was one of the hardships for those young women in the first few years. Add to this the hard toil, the privations and sacrifices of which we in our present-day homes have no conception, the caring for and rearing of her children for whom she had the same ambitions as the mother of today - ambitions for education, culture and pleasure with limitations so very, very great. Surely our pioneer women did their share and, I believe, the men would not have stayed or have accomplished anything worthwhile had they not had the faithful wives to share the experiences with them.

But for all the hardships, they were happy years. To me there is an indescribable pathos in it all, this brave struggle of our pioneer women, but everyone with whom you have ever talked and everyone living today - few there are—will tell you they were the happiest days of her life. From her you will learn that the pioneer housewife went merrily about her work as she swept her puncheon floor with a splint broom made from a nearby hickory tree. She had no need of a carpet sweeper and the broom corn shortage did not bother her. She cheerily spun the thread for her cloth from flax and wool and fashioned her garments by hand, the ball bearing electrically run sewing machine being then unthought of. She made her bed of straw and feathers on a cord laced bedstead. Sometimes the bedstead was crudely made of poles chinked into the sides of the wall and supported by poles on the other side, but her sleep was just as sweet as on the hair mattress of the modern four poster. She brewed her dinner in the huge fireplace built of mud and sticks and baked her corn cakes, biscuits and bread in a tin oven set in front of the fire or in a flat bottom kettle set on the coals with coals piled on the cover, if she hadn't been fortunate enough to have brought a stove with her and then she sometimes baked her bread on top of the stove by turning a tin pan over it.

Cooking schools were the home kitchen and experience the teacher, the kitchen being all the other rooms combined. There was no knowledge then out in the new land of the balanced ration - under that name - for man or beast. Proteins, fats and carbohydrates were things unstudied by them.

There were no combines of housekeepers pledging to use oleomargarine instead of butter and their abstaining from meat was not due to a meat trust. It didn't take governmental action to tell them why. The story is told of a family being given a small piece of pork and a sack of buckwheat. The man immediately started on foot for the mill at Eagleville to get it ground. He hurried home with his flour, thinking as he went along of those delicious pancakes and pork with pork gravy that he used to have "back home" and what a treat was in store. When he got home, he found his wife had eaten all the pork. She had abstained so long she was tempted by her hunger and he had to have his pancakes minus the pork. Often corn meal was the only

flour to be had, which they used for bread and mush, and eating mush and milk for supper was so temporarily satisfying that one woman tells of getting up in the night to eat more mush and milk because she was so hungry.

The pioneer women waged their war against bacteria, although they didn't know it by that name; they called it just plain housecleaning. It is said of Mrs. John Parsons, the first white woman married in the town, that she used to sweep the floor of her log cabin, and dust her pine table, chairs and mud chinked walls with cap and gloves on. An extraordinary thing to do then. Their marketing was not just around the corner or a call over the phone, but with jar of butter and basket of eggs, if they had any. They would walk to Mukwonago, a distance of eight to twelve miles, to do their trading and walk back again.

We frown over the little flicker of the electric light. They reveled in the reflected glare of the tallow dip, sometimes two when there was company. We are impatient over the five minutes' delay of the trolley or steam car that takes us rushing to our destination, while they were happy to take a cross country ride on a stone boat (a stone boat was a rude wooden sled used to clear stones from a field - ed.) or other crudely devised vehicles behind a yoke of oxen. Their messages were not talked over the telephone wire to a neighbor a few rods away but miles across the trail went the infrequent carrier of a neighbor's greeting.

One woman, full of her youth and strength and hope, walked to Milwaukee to attend a dance, danced all night, and walked home the next day. A bit different from the electric carriage that is now expected for our modern day Miss when she attends a ball.

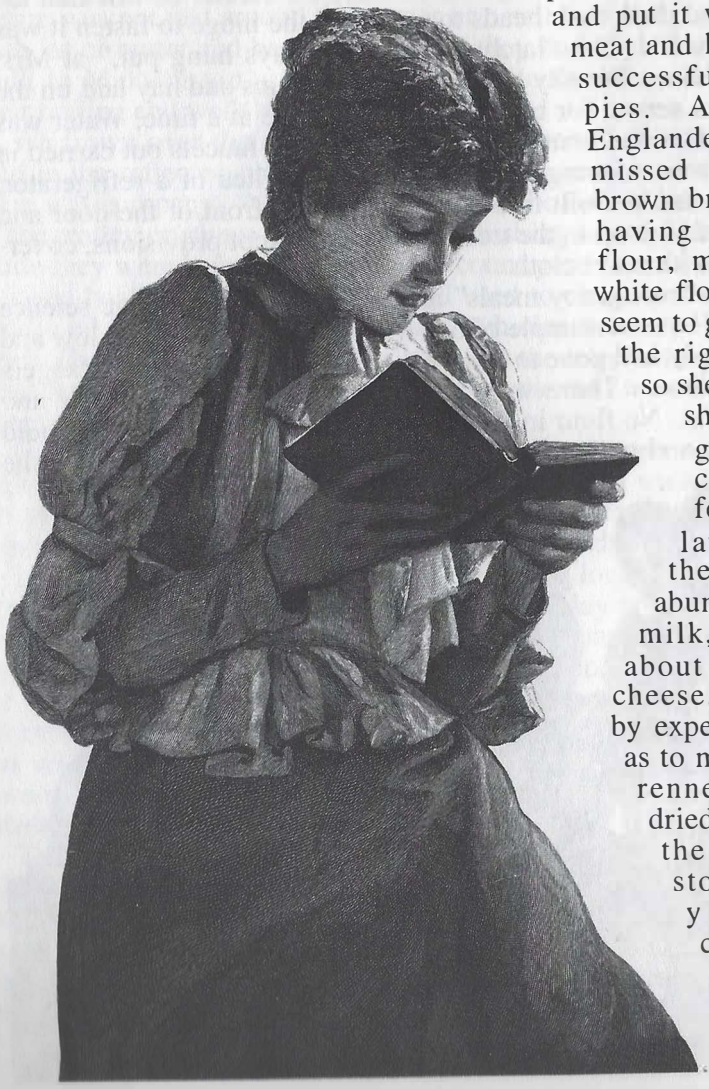
Letters cost 25 cents postage, and the ardent lover did not send his missives to the best girl back home thrice a day or once. If they got their mail once a fortnight, they thought themselves fortunate and some letters from "home" had to lie in the post office untaken for many days for want of the two shillings to pay the postage. There was no locking of doors against the chance tramp or thief, but wide-open welcome to whosoever came. Oftentimes the housewife found the larder emptied because of her generous hospitality to the passing prospector.

The women of those days were also nurses, doctors and undertakers. They went miles across the country when the cry of distress came, rode if they could, walked if they could not. With gentle hand they smoothed the pillow, administered the home remedies, nursed the patient, helped with the housework and in case the grim messenger had come, they dressed the body for the grave and were everywhere the good angels that God intended a woman to be.

It is claimed that women are not inventive. These pioneers were at least resourceful and ingenious. To give you a little sketch of some of the things Mrs. D. F. Melendy did is illustrative of how many of them met their needs and overcame them. Coming as a bride in 1841 from Pewaukee, her wedding carriage was a lumber wagon drawn, not over asphalt pavement, but part of the way over corduroy road laid with tamarack poles and in such a condition that she had to help pry the wheels out of the mud, but finally arrived at her new home of the usual one-room log cabin, built without nails, door and roof of shakes, the former so low that the men had to duck their heads to enter and the hinge to fasten it was made of wood. The "latch string that always hung put," at Mrs. Melendy's was literally true of all these cabins and hay laid on the floor often served for beds when many came at a time. Water was not piped into the house to be drawn through faucets but carried in buckets from a spring half a mile away. In lieu of a refrigerator, she had a ladder built into a big oak tree in front of the door and put a shelf high up in the tree on which she kept provisions, covering them with a wet cloth.

Today, "emergency meals" are taught by our domestic science teachers. Here is a sample of one in 1841. Provisions were low and Mr. Melendy had gone to Milwaukee for more when two strangers came to dinner. There were three potatoes, very little bread and half a rabbit. No flour in the house. She wondered what she could give them and going into the store room for an inspiration - she

had acquired a store room by this time - she saw a keg of something that proved to be shorts (a byproduct of wheat processing, consisting of bran mixed with course wheat or flour). She took some of it and made griddle cakes and served them with honey, cooked the rabbit and her guests thought they had a very fine dinner. Later, at Christmas time, they wondered what Christmas would be without mince pies. There was no fruit, but Mrs. Melendy sliced some turnips, cooked until tender, made them into sweet pickles with plenty of spices, chopped this and put it with the meat and had very successful mince pies. As New Englanders, they missed their brown bread, but having no rye flour, meal and white flour didn't seem to give quite the right taste, so she used the shorts with great success. A few years later when there was abundance of milk, she set about to make cheese, starting by experimenting as to making the rennet (the dried lining of the fourth stomach of young calves used to curdle milk) from one of the calves they killed; she succeeded after a trial or two in making the curd and again with the aid of a visitor made a crude but efficient press from a peck measure, a plank and some stones to weight it down.



From the daughter of a pioneer who later lived to have all the luxuries that money could obtain, comes the following:

So rigid were the practices of economy that I have heard my mother say that in some places where she sewed, she was required to keep a clipping of cloth into which were drawn the remnants of thread that remained in the needle when cut from the work. This when filled with threads went into the paper rags. Many are the stitches she took for her own family by the light of a bit of candlewick placed in a saucer of lard. It was many years before her change of dress for the house could be anything better than a clean calico of the plainest kind with, instead of a collar, a handkerchief folded crossways and ends crossed in front. And once when father had taken some odds and ends from a store as an equivalent for money, not having enough of one kind of calico for a whole dress she let in a piece of another kind the size and shape of a apron. More frequently than not, an outfit gotten for the first baby was made to last "for best" with all succeeding ones in a large family, often being loaned in its period of idleness to some relative or friend.

From Miss Elmore of Green Bay, daughter of the "Sage of Mukwonago," comes an item that is of particular interest to those who are working to obtain woman's recognition in school matters. The first school in Mukwonago was taught by Mrs. Andrew Elmore in the sitting room of the home of her brother Martin, afterward Judge Field. She was hired by the women of the township who did not like to have their children grow up without schooling and they therefore established the school and hired the teacher.

Miss Elmore also sends another item of interest. Her grandmother, Mrs. Stephen Field, was invited the fall of 1838 to take tea with Mrs. Munger when the hostess served seven kinds of preserves and honey to let Mrs. Field know what could be obtained in the new country. The preserves were strawberry, raspberry, gooseberry, blackberry, crab apple, plum and mandrake, all wild and picked in the woods.

In an interesting letter from Mrs. Delia Sherman Allen of Lake Geneva, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Sherman, among the first settlers of our town, she says,

In those days the neighbors stood by each other. Joys and sorrow were shared in common and dissensions in the neighbor-

hood were seldom known. Husbands and wives did not suffer from 'incompatibility of temper' and divorces were unheard of."

She closes with this fine tribute:

"All honor to the sturdy pioneers who came to develop the country. Not to make money but to build a home so that they and their children might enjoy its blessings. God bless the brave men and brave women who stood shoulder to shoulder to make this possible.

Mrs. Charles Hill of Whitewater, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Trow, wrote a fine history of her parents in the early days. In it she tells of a ride her mother took.

Mr. Trow, having no money to buy a wagon, made a cart by sawing the wheels out of a large oak log, fastening a small seat on it and a tongue. He felt very elated over it; it seemed as nice to him at that time as the auto does to its owner today. Soon after this they started gaily off in it to a meeting some miles away but the cart did not seem to want to go to church and its moanings and wailings as it went along could be heard for half a mile. The absurd variance between the cart and the dress of its occupants they had not thought of until arriving at the place for the meeting when the looks of astonishment on the faces of the women present when Father helped Mother down from her seat on the cart dressed in black silk dress, low shoes, stylish hat and gloves made mother think she was not dressed appropriately, as all the rest had on calico dresses and sun bonnets. But like all the others, after their good clothes were gone, she willingly adopted the fashions of her new home.

They have so many calls for hospitality that their nice stock of groceries and provisions, brought from the East, was soon exhausted and all the sweetening Mother had for a year was one dollar's worth of sugar and five gallons of molasses.

Their little crop of grain being a failure for the first two years, Father was very glad to get work on the mill race at Eagleville, (Eagle) but it was so far he could only come home Saturday nights, so that in the dreary winter, eight miles from neighbors, Mother had to stay alone while the wolves at night struck terror to her heart by their incessant howlings and frantic efforts to break down the door of the little cabin, which she was afraid they might do. One day a number of Indians came in, sat down by the stove, looked all around, then took out their hunting knives and began sharpening them, talking to themselves and looking at mother and pointing to me, a little babe sleeping in the cradle. Mother was greatly alarmed, not knowing what they might do, but she did not intend they should know she was afraid, so she went to setting the table as if for dinner, then went to the door and called dinner as if Father was close by, when he was actually miles and miles away. But that they did not know and they got up and went away.

Mrs. Hill closes with this tribute:

When we think of the sacrifices of these pioneer women, we can truly say that they filled as important a part in the history of those days as the women of today do now, for the advantages we enjoy came to us from their heroic courage and great sacrifices. We should gladly honor their memory for they were brave to meet all the needs of the pioneer days.

Not counting the children, there are now living in our township but three of the pioneer women of Eagle. Mrs. Wm. Kline, who lives with family friends, has every care and attention possible. She counts her years as ninety and has passed almost beyond the memory of those days.

Mrs. Charles Cole, called most affectionately "Grandma Cole" by family and friends, is highly revered by the granddaughters with whom she lives. When I went to see her the other day she told me so brightly and keenly of what the pioneer years meant to her both then and now. She has seen the changes of nearly a century. She is 93 and one can but marvel at the power of mind and activity in her little body.

Mrs. Ann Crawley is a dear old Irish lady whose welcome is genuine and cordial. She will tell you with a little laugh and a "God bless you, my dear" of those days when as a young wife she came over into the hills and worked side by side with her husband, faced and passed through hardships that seem a dream to her now. Her cabin door, now a modern one, looks out upon a high hill on the main road to Oconomowoc. Over it she has seen the traveler go to and fro for sixty-six years, the traveler behind the slow-moving oxen to the scorcher in the auto today. And now at the age of nearly ninety, she is surrounded by comforts and tenderly cared for by son and daughters.

These three women, who can at best be with us for but a few years, stand out among us all as among the creators of and makers of Eagle township history.

But for such pioneer women as these and others all over our county, there would be no history to write and but for them there would be no purpose in the Waukesha County Historical Society. ❑

ERNEST HERMAN KRAFT: TOWN OF SUMMIT

by Joanne Kraft Buth

My dad was called Ernie by everyone who knew him. He was a farmer most of his life. It was a job he didn't always like, but he inherited it. His parents just assumed he would do it when they retired. His older brother, Harry, joined the army or maybe was drafted in World War I, so he was gone. His younger brother, Herb, was not interested in the farm so he left. That left my dad with no choice. He saw it as his duty and he accepted it. It was what sons did in those days. There was a lot he did like about farming when he was young, but I think as he looked around, he began to realize there was an easier and more reliable way to earn a living. Being tied down to milking cows twice a day for over 50 years could wear on a person.

His parents, Herman and Ida, first farmed in the Town of Concord where my dad was born. In 1904, when he was two years old, they bought a 127 acre farm south of Oconomowoc just west of Silver Lake on what is now called Valley Road. That is where he grew up, married, raised his three children and farmed. He and our mom were married on June 20, 1929. They met while she was a teacher at Summit Valley Grade School – the grade school he attended as a child and the same school his three children later attended.

ERNIE KRAFT ABOUT 1904

He was a good farmer who studied journals and state agricultural mailings to learn the best ways of farming. He had an open mind and was always ready to try new things. However, if it cost money, well, that could be a problem. He was very "tight," my mom said. We were always behind the neighbors with new machinery or tractors to replace horses. If it

THE WAUKESHA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

The Waukesha County Historical Society & Museum is a not-for-profit, educational institution dedicated to preserving, promoting and interpreting the history of Waukesha County and to preserving the 1893 Waukesha County Courthouse complex.

Landmark is devoted to publishing Waukesha County historical records and articles and is funded in part through the Henry M. Youmans Memorial Fund.

The museum exhibits its collections and has data for research purposes in the historic courthouse in downtown Waukesha at 101 W. Main Street. The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The research center is open Tuesday, Friday and Saturday 10 - 12 and 12:30 - 4:30 and Thursday 12:30 - 4:30. The museum store is open during museum hours. Members always have free admission to the exhibits and the Research Center

Single copies of *LANDMARK* are $3.50 each ($7.00 double issues) at the Museum Store.

Membership Classifications

Membership runs for one year from month of application

Visionary	$250.00
Educator	$100.00
Builder	$50.00
Institution	$30.00
Preservationist	$30.00

The Editor's Box

I can hardly believe that Summer is past and Autumn is upon us.

On a hot, July Sunday, the museum staff honored the many volunteers who help the museum. It was amazing to see all of the people who give their time, effort and love to keep the museum running. There were tours of the collections, games, ice cream and fun. Thank you to everyone who organized this fun event, and to all of our volunteers. We could not be a successful organization without you!

During the summer, I was fortunate to participate in Strategic Planning for the Society. The Board and Staff of the Museum met several times to clarify our mission statement and goals.

Please be sure to visit the Museum. There is always something new to see. Have you seen the expanded store? Have you visited the Research library in the new location? Remember, your membership entitles you to FREE admission!