

Valentine SNIPPETS of SALEM

15 - WILMOT Bridging the Years

1837 to 1987

0-50 pages which cover
two of the booklet pages
per page of this collective

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and Rosemary Dietschweiler for typing.

History of Wilmot 1837-1937

Rural, rustic,
 With heart as proud
 As the flowing Fox,
 We pause to
 Look back
 And ahead,
 At this
 Our town.

T. Hausman



From 1833 to 1840, five Indian tribes played an important role in the history of the vicinity of Wisconsin and Wilmot. They were the Menomonees, The Winnebagos, the Chippewas, the Pottawattamies, the Fox and the Sacs. The predominant tribe was the Pottawattamies which means "people of the small prairies". Until 1840, it was the custom of bands of Indians numbering as high as 400 members to leave the reservations in northern Wisconsin and spend the winters around Wilmot and the Fox River hunting, fishing and trapping.

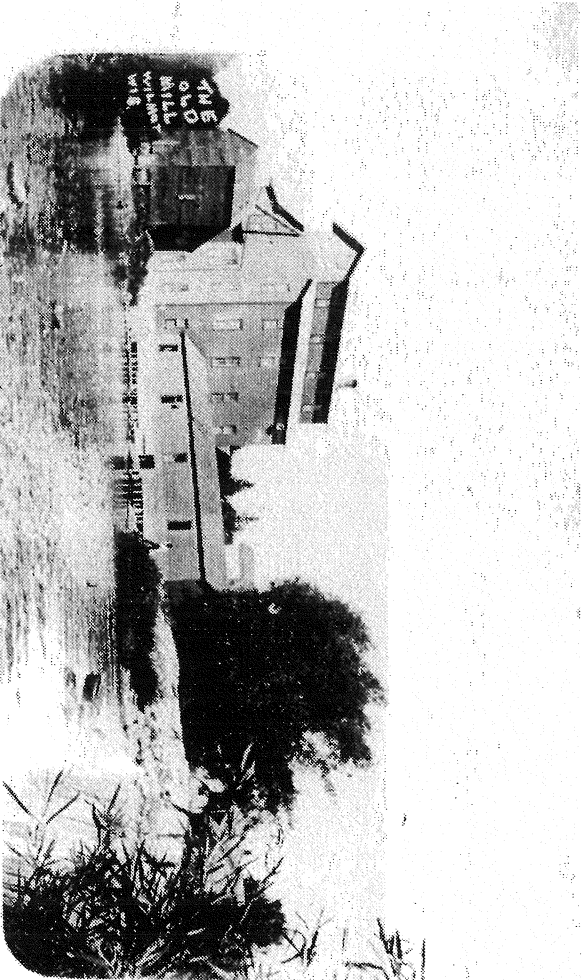
The first man to build in Wilmot was Lewis Hatch who was born in New York. He left New York state in 1837 and journeyed west by railroad, steamer, and finally by foot. That year, he built a log house in Wilmot and in 1839, he moved to English Prairie in Illinois and sold his land to Asabel Benham.

The first family to settle in Wilmot was the Asabel Benham family. He settled first at Liberty Corners and in 1844 moved to Wilmot and claimed nearly all the land in the vicinity. He built a frame house—the first in the village—and christened it "Gilead" in honor of the place in Connecticut where his parents came from. The same year, he erected a mill, the power furnished by water from the ditches through the marshes.

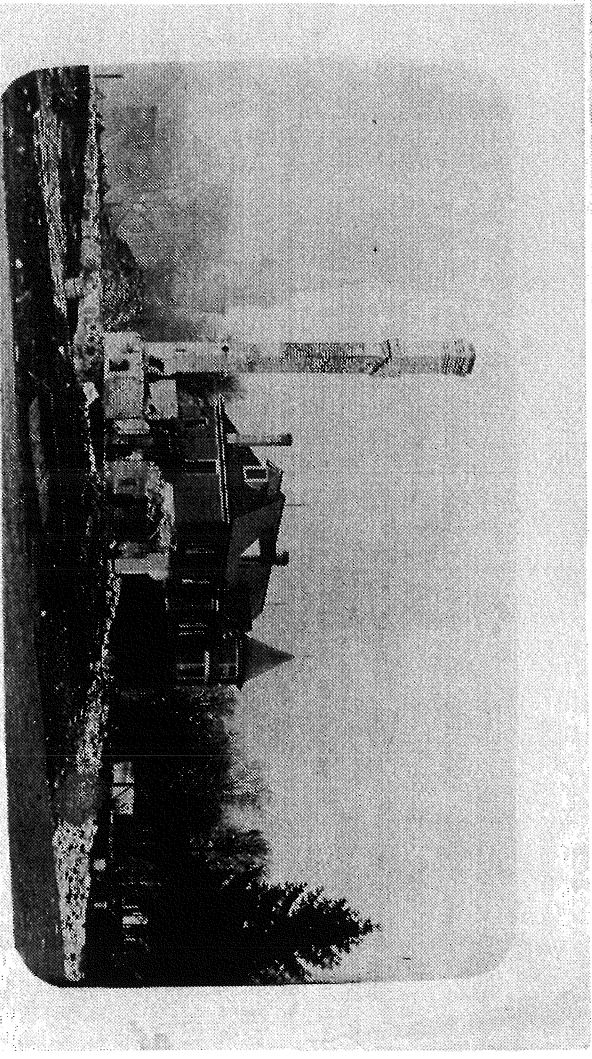
Benham was followed in 1846 by the Hugh McIntyre family. In 1847, Wilton Benham, a relative of Asabel arrived and built two brick houses—one of which still stands. The first store was opened in 1847 by Asabel Benham and John Marsh—an absentee partner. Two years later, Benham's interest in the store was sold to John Bullen, Jr., who retained possession until 1852 when the store burned destroying all goods.

The first hostelry was a temperance hotel erected in 1848 by Ephraim Wilcox and completed in time for the Fourth of July celebration in 1850.

The early history of Wilmot centers around the milling industry which was established in 1844 by A.H. Benham, the same year he moved to Wilmot. Benham dug ditches westward through the marshes to the hills known as the "Knobs". The water supplied by those ditches was sufficient to operate his small frame mill used both as a flour and feed mill. In 1846, he constructed the present dam on the Fox River and enlarged the mill. Tragedy struck when three men were drowned in the mill during the construction.



The old mill before
and after the fire
of 1900.



Stage Stop.

4

Farmers came to the mill from great distances and for many it was a two day trip. Many spent the night at the Wilmot hotel - formerly the Wilcox hotel. Mr. Watson bought the hotel in 1848 and sold it to John Hegeman in the early 1850's. It has been operated by the Hegeman family since that time.

Hegeman Hotel

Mr. Benham sold land a block south of his mill to John Barto and William Haythorn who erected a mill on the second ditch. At first, it was a frame flour and feed mill with power generated by an over shot water wheel. Later Julius Arnold purchased the mill and used it as a cording mill. Much later, this was the site of the creamery.

After operating the mill for twenty years, Mr. Benham sold it to John Carey who in turn sold it to John Voak. In 1866, Mr. Voak installed the roller system and increased the capacity to 1500 bushels a day. In 1879, the mill burned to the ground due to a defective chimney.

Mr. Voak rebuilt immediately with a building three stories high and having five water wheels with a capacity of 100 barrels a day. In 1893, Charles and Edward, sons of John Voak purchased the business from their father. Fire struck again and in 1900, the new mill was reduced to ruins. In addition, the M. Schlax blacksmith shop, the wagon shop of William Smith and son, and the Episcopal Church were destroyed. The Voak families sold their mill interest to Walter Carey and he superintended the construction of a new mill for grist and a stone process for grinding buck wheat, rye, and graham flour. At first, it was operated by water power and later by electricity. For several years, Mr. Carey ran a saw mill operated by water power in connection with the feed mill.

Although, the mill was the center of industry in Wilmot many other business establishments enacted their part in the history.

William Faulkner in partnership with Theodore Spiegeloff came to Wilmot in 1864 and opened a blacksmith shop at the corner of Bridge and Main Streets.

In 1867, Ransom M. Shotliff emigrated to America from England and settled in Wilmot. Being a mason there, he followed that trade here. In 1900, he built two, two-story brick buildings, one of which became a store building which was run by his son, Robert C. Shotliff. This was a general store and later when Mr. Shotliff was appointed Postmaster a part of the building became the Post Office. R.C. Shotliff was Postmaster for thirty four years.

theater his residence.

The Odd Fellows built a building and hall which was occupied by Mr. Strain until it was purchased by Walter Carey and John Nett in 1892. Carey sold his interest to Nett in 1899 who continued to operate the store until destroyed by fire in 1935.

It still stands

NW corner of State & Main



Mr. Nett was in business in one place for forty-three years.

Another blacksmith shop was operated by Mr. Schlax who sold out to Paul Ganzlin and was later sold to Fred Gauger. Herbert Sarbacker bought the building which became a garage. *Still stands at SW State/Mill*

A cheese factory was located on Mill St. and owned and operated by J.M. Wilbur.

A creamery was built by the Oatman Brothers on Mill St. in 1887. Later it was purchased by a group of farmers who issued stock under the name of Farmer's Producers Stock in 1898. It was operated by two other companies and by the Chicago Milk Producers until it was closed.

Theodore Thiels was the first village shoe maker in the early days. William Bufton who came to Wilmot in 1879 opened a shoe shop on Main Street which he ran until his death in 1919. *where?*

Hugh McIntyre built a plow and wagon factory in the early days. It was purchased in 1867 by William Smith but was burned in the fire of 1900. *where?*

A store was built on the corner of Mill and Main Streets and owned by J.W. Haythorne. Later it was operated by Frank Rudolph as a saloon and was one of the original Indian trading posts.

A carpenter shop was owned and operated by F.J. Owens. *where*

A drug store was opened in the early seventies by Dr. Ford. Frank Thompson purchased the drug store interests and erected a drug store building occupied by Rolland Hegeman. *Still stands directly east of Wilmot Cafe*

Mr. Bela Taber and Mr. Holiday opened a hardware store in the seventies on Main Street but sold to William Morgan in the nineties. Harry B. McDougall took over the business in 1924.

Mr. E.E. Wright had an undertaking establishment and furniture store. *Still stands just So of Wil Cafe*

A harness shop and shoe repair shop was operated by Mr. August Holtdorf. *where*

Mrs. Annabelle Coulman operated a notion and millinery shop. *where*

John Swenson constructed a tailoring shop. His sons, Richard and Chauncey, started a newspaper known as "The Agitator" in 1901. In 1903, they bought out their fathers tailoring business. *where*



Waiting their Turn at the Creamery.
WILMOT, WIS.

on Mill St 1887

August and Frederick Kruckman engaged in merchandising in 1867. After the death of August, his son Frank continued the business. *in a building West of home*

The Faulkner and Sutcliffe greenhouse was another Wilmot enterprise. *at NE corner of main's*

The first nuptials performed in Wilmot was that of J.M. Wilbur and Maria Carpenter in 1848. The Rev. J. Lathrop performed the ceremony. *No side of River east of school see pg 25*
which church
State

The first visit of the stork to Wilmot was in the spring of 1848, to deliver an infant son to Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Cushman and was a memorable occasion.

Several doctors practiced in the town of Wilmot. Some were Dr. Hyde, Dr. Sam McClellan, Dr. Sam McClellan, Jr., Dr. Ford and Dr. H.C. Darby.

In 1848, a meeting was called for the purpose of selecting a name for the village. Much discussion ensued. Finally Mr. Wilbur, father of Bessie Burroughs jokingly said, "Well since we are hearing so much about the Wilmot Proviso these days, why not call the town Wilmot". His suggestion was taken seriously and a motion to that effect was made and Wilmot it became.

The teaching of the youth of Wilmot was inaugurated about 1846 by Miss Caroline McCammons in a rough board shanty on the south west corner of Water and Main Streets. As school opened, she had seven scholars. *abt Wil Cafe*

Mr. A.H. Benham, pioneer settler, had donated a block of land to the village for park purposes but when this fell into disuse it was converted into a school site. The school building was moved there and an addition built. *on its site block 8*

Years later, this was removed to the business district where the primary building served as a wood working department of the Faulkner blacksmith shop. This was eventually torn down.

A new brick building *square w/ cupola* was constructed on the present site of Wilmot High School in 1878 and 1879. The course of study in the new building was the equivalent to nine grades of the present day. In 1903, the high school was extended to full four years. A year later an addition was added.

The union high school began functioning in 1912. In 1918, a two room addition was completed and in 1922, the separate gymnasium building was constructed. *(now gone)*

On New Year's morning in 1933 fire of an undetermined origin destroyed the school building. *also Liberty for new school*

The people of Wilmot accepted the task of rebuilding and a new school was build.

In 1874, the Wilmot Ladies' Sewing Circle was founded. Indirectly the organization was known as the Ladies' Hearse Society as their first efforts resulted in the raising of sufficient funds to purchase a hearse for the village which was used for many years. *where is it now?*

In May 1875, a Sons of Temperance Lodge was formed with a membership that soon grew to sixty. *met where*

A Wilmot Dramatic Club was formed in 1878. In 1879, a twelve piece band was organized as a branch of the Dramatic Club. *met where*

The Wilmot encampment of the Modern Woodmen was formed in 1888.

see page 22 7

The Wilmot Masonic Lodge began in 1889 while the Eastern Star formed in 1913.

The Fred Semrau Legion Post was organized in May 1922.

The Congregational Church was organized in 1853. In 1854, a subscription was started and a frame church costing \$1600, capable of accommodating 250 persons was erected, the land being donated by Mr. Benham. After the congregation disbanded, the Baptists used it for a time. In was razed in 1922. *it was located where.*

The Roman Catholics ^{#N05} organized a church in 1856 with about twenty members and in the following year erected a small frame church on the hill overlooking the village. That cost \$300, but in 1870, it was necessary to build a more commodious place to worship at a cost of \$1000-and in 1871 was dedicated. That building was torn down in 1905 and rebuilt. It was struck by lightning in 1913 and burned. The red brick church on the hill was built to replace it. *it is now gone & the church/school*

In the fall of 1866, about 30 German Lutherans organized a society and eight years ^{3rd} later purchased a private house from Mr. Schumacher that was remodeled for church ^{to} purposes at an expense of \$5000. *across street*

The Episcopal Church was organized in 1868 with twenty two communicants. In 1871, a church was built at a cost of \$3000. The first organ in the church cost \$150. It was burned in the mill fire of 1900. *where was it*

The church of the Methodist congregation was commencing June 1876 and dedicated in November of the same year. The church building was capable of accommodating three hundred worshipers and cost \$2650. The bell was purchased from Van Deuzen and Tift of Cincinnati, Ohio and was on exhibition during the Centennial at Philadelphia. *Still stands less original steps 2006* *(in Randaal townshp wilmot)*
Mr. A. Benham gave the village a plot of land for a community cemetery before 1850. This is still in use by the local churches with the exception of the Catholics who have their own cemetery. ^{#N05}

Twenty seven from the community were in the Civil War and twenty one in World War I.

Charles Orvis Ditch

Tom Madden. a life time resident of the area and now a permanent resident of Wilmot tells the following story: His great grandfather, Simeon Orvis lived in Wilmot in 1855. Three of his sons fought in the Civil War - one died. His grandfather, Sam Orvis was instrumental in the capturing of Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy. Years later he received \$400.00 for his share of the reward.

Founded on the Fox
Like the proud river
You change, yet remain;
We travel onward
But home you sustain.

T. Hausman

Wilmot 1937-1987

Fox River Park

At the time of our Centennial Celebration the entire country was suffering from a great depression. Two of the New Deal programs directly affected our community. The CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) brought a group of men from all over the state to the Fox River Park where they lived in barracks and worked on planting, landscaping, building shelters, and building fireplaces. Today we are still enjoying the beauty of their work in the park. The WPA (Public Works Administration) was also active in Wilmot where local men who could not find work built sidewalks, laid water pipes for our newly formed Fire Department, and improved the area around the dam, all for about 25¢ an hour.

In 1937 Wilmot had Sarbackers' Garage, Charley Schultz' Garage, Shotliffs' Store, Hegemans' Drug Store, Kruckmans' Store, Netts' Store, Sutcliffes' Florist, Kriskas' Meat Market, Fritzs' Barber Shop, Hegemans' Tavern, Bienemans' Tavern, Rudolphs' Tavern, and the Catholic, Lutheran and Methodist Churches.

Although the formation of a fire department has been discussed at various times, two major fires, the school and Netts' Store, provided the impetus for the actual formation of the Wilmot Volunteer Fire Department in 1936 and this has grown to one of the finest in the county today. The late 1930's also brought the Walter Stopa family to the Wilmot area where he bought land for a private ski slope for his family and friends. This, too, has grown to the well-known Wilmot Mountain, Incorporated of 1987. We lost one of our general stores after fire closed the John Nett Store. His son Ben opened another in the building next door but closed in 1939.

↳ the furniture/FA?

The 1940's brought World War II and with it gas and food rationing. It also took most of our young men, some to Europe and others to the Pacific. Many residents went to work in defense plants and once again there was a job for everyone. One young man, Art Scott, never returned from the war and others settled in other spots throughout the United States. When R.C. Shotliff retired from the Post Office he closed his store. In the early 40's Leland Hegeman purchased the building known as The Wright Place and opened a restaurant in part of it with a dance studio above it. The dance studio was run by Bessie Barnes who later taught music in many of the local schools. After the restaurant closed Mr. Hegeman started a bottle gas company in the building and after the war he also dealt in appliances. This business closed in the early 1960's.

where

↳ roof his home (brick on main)

↳ where

In the late 1940's the Kenosha County Fair found a permanent home in Wilmot where it has expanded each year and now has a number of permanent buildings. Stock Car Racing also came to Wilmot in the late 40's and is still a part of our summer Saturday nights. In the late 40's Emma Schultz built and opened a small lunch room on what is now 113th Street, and catered to the school children until her death in 1967.

The 1950's brought Wilmot's first subdivision, Fox River Springs, located along the west bank of the river south of the dam. Today there are 16 houses there. The Korean Conflict in 1950 took away another group of our boys. We lost our second and last general store, Kruckmans, but gained an addition to the High School and a new separate Grade School on the north edge of town. We lost a little piece of our identity when the familiar "number please" was replaced by dial telephones and we became part of the Trevor telephone exchange.

in Shotliff's store

In 1960 Gander Mountain came to Wilmot and grew rapidly. Our barber shop, run by Fred (Fritz) Albrecht since 1933, closed in 1960 and he passed away in 1964.

where

suppg 7

Our physical appearance changed drastically in the early 60's when all the towering maples along Main Street were cut down and curbs and gutters were built. In 1962 the old Hegeman Hotel was renovated and became the Stage Stop, a fine steak house with a museum on the second and third floors. It is still operated today by descendants of John Hegeman. In the early 60's the Hegeman Drug Store closed. It had been without a pharmacist for many years but still was a popular place among Wilmot residents.

where

where

The Wilmotel Development Corporation was founded in the 1960's and also brought the opening of many small shops in Wilmot such as Post House, This'n'That Shop, The Red Arrow, Trooping the Colours, The Blue Mushroom, The Enchanted Cottage, The Wright House, Beamans Lapidary, The Forge on the Fox, The Godey Girls, and others. Merchandise consisted of antiques, collectibles, jewelry, clothing, ceramics, wooden items, and art galleries. All of the shops were unique and prompted bus trips to Wilmot from Milwaukee and Chicago for a day of browsing. By the end of the 1970's most of the shops had closed their doors for one reason or another and the 80's find only two left, Rog and Jane Baileys Ye Possibility Shop and Augie Matejzels' Country Collector aka Sub Captains

where

where

The late 60's found another fine restaurant opening in the former George Faulkner home which had also served as a Catholic Grade School for some years. The Gilead House, as it was known is now called Dylan's, and is still operating. The 1970's also saw another addition to our High School and the opening of another subdivision, Deerpath, which lies south and west of Wilmot. Building is still going on there with about 30 homes completed at present. Two Oaks on 1st floor, converted as 2nd

After many years of controversy, sewers came to Wilmot in the 1980's and brought with it much digging, breaking up of roads, and also many complaints about users fee. McDougalls Hardware closed when Lyle McDougall retired and Lotus Light moved into the old hardware store. A new deck was put on the bridge across the Fox River and for a few months Wilmot boasted of having stop lights. Swaf Moun & State

The past 50 years have been a period of growth in the area of homes, schools, and recent job opportunities at Gander Mountain, Wilmot Mountain, and Lotus Light, but it has been sad to see so many of our businesses close and our old buildings torn down. We can only guess what the next 50 years will bring.



Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church and Cemetery

^{HNOS}
 The Roman Catholic Church in Wilmot, Wisconsin was organized in the year 1856 with about twenty members mostly Irish immigrants. In 1857 a small frame church, costing \$300 was erected under the supervision of Father Charles Schroudenback. The church was located on the hill just east of the village. *It burned, rebuilt brick + torn down, Probuilt*

The land for the church cemetery was purchased in 1856 from Thomas and Elizabeth Monaghan and consisted of two acres. The first recorded burial listed in the cemetery was that of Patrick Dugan of Silver Lake, in 1872.

In the 1890's Holy Name was a mission of New Munster with Father Henry Schiefen as pastor. Mass was held every two weeks at Wilmot, or once a month depending on weather conditions. In 1898, the local congregation petitioned the Archbishop of Milwaukee for a resident pastor. Rev. Christian Hausner was assigned to Wilmot and South Bristol.

Travel in those days was by horse and buggy and as Father Hausner's home was near South Bristol, he made Bristol the parish and Wilmot the mission. A new parish house was constructed at Bristol. Masses were held every Sunday at each church with an early mass at one and a late mass at the other alternating Sundays. The distance was so great that Father Hausner stayed at homes of Wilmot parishioners the Saturday nights previous to early mass.

Catechism classes were held on Saturdays. The first class to receive Holy Communion on July 1, 1900, consisted of the following: Elizabeth Milward Elkerton, Frances Elkerton, Elizabeth Schumacher Hammer, Susan Schumacher Murphy, Peter Schumacher, Frances McGuire (Sister M. Joesetta of the Franciscan order at St. Francis), William Dowell, Katherine Nett Schenning and Grace M. Carey.

Father Hausner was succeeded by Father Joseph Heller. The ²third church building was completed and dedicated in 1905.

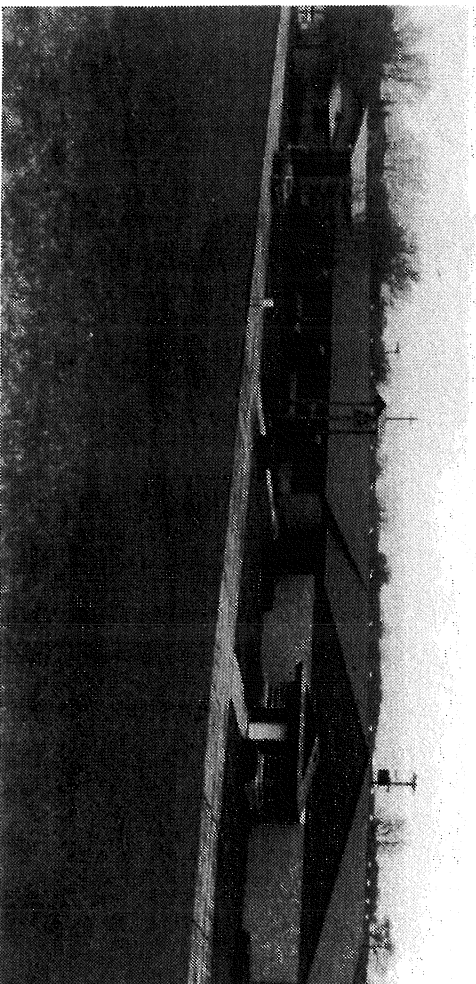
During a very bad summer thunderstorm in 1913 the ²third church was struck by lightning at the top of the steeple. A beautifully toned bell, the organ and choir books were lost in the fire.

Father Heller and his committee set ³about making plans to replace the burned out building, this time with a brick structure. The two Lutheran congregations in Wilmot had been combined into one so they kindly offered the use of an empty church building down near the Fox River dam until the new building was finished. Mass was held there under a large picture of Martin Luther which they had not removed. The new church was dedicated in November, 1914.

Father John Finan, assistant to St. James parish, Kenosha, was sent to Wilmot in 1932. Fr. Finan needed a permanent assistant and secured Rev. Joseph Savage from Antioch.

Father Harold O'Connor came to us in 1942 and the parish showed remarkable growth during the fifteen years of his pastorate.

The present pastor is Father R. Nawrocki who came in 1981.



Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church

The German Ev. Lutheran Church was organized in 1866 with nine charter members assisted by the pastor of St. John Ev. Lutheran Church, Slades Corners. During the first fifteen years the congregation experienced gradual and steady growth. Around 1880 a rift split the congregation. For thirty years the Lutherans were divided into two congregations, St. Peters Evangelical Lutheran and German Evangelical Lutheran. In 1909 the differences were settled and the two groups united naming the new church Peace. From 1909 until 1962 Peace Lutheran Church had just two pastors, S.A. Jedele 1909-1938 and R.P. Otto 1939-1962.

In 1956 a new church was built across the street from the old white frame church which was dismantled. The present pastor is George Swanson.



Wilmot United Methodist Church

The early settlers were serviced by circuit riders who worked on their farms or occupations during the week and on Saturday rode to their churches for the weekend of leading worship. It was Rev. Atkinsin who rode from Waukegan, IL to serve this area.

Land "in trust to be used as a place of worship by said church" was purchased in 1877 from Mr. & Mrs. Ward Benedict, one of the first trustees of the church.

A new red brick building was erected on this land in 1878. It was 28 x 50 feet and cost \$2650. The bell was purchased for Van Deuzen & Tift of Cincinnati, Ohio and had been at the Philadelphia Centennial and was mounted in the tall steeple. The building was dedicated in November of the same year.

As the years went by the steeple was struck by lightning and had to be lowered to where it is today. The bell still rings to call the people to worship.

There has been many changes to the interior and in 1966 an addition was added and dedicated on October 30, 1966, by Bishop Ralph Alton, Dist. Supt. William Riggs and Rev. David Kruse.

Through the years there have been many changes in leadership. Rev. Barbara Hine is now pastor.

The Wilmot United Methodist Church is the only church in Wilmot to be holding worship in the original structure. "The little red brick church" still gives a relaxed and restful atmosphere for worship.



The Wilmot Cemetery

A Mr. Benham gave the first land for a cemetery. Five subsequent acquisitions have been made since that time. The East Section was added in the 1930's. It was called the Renolds-Pacey addition as Alfred Renolds and G.C. Pacey were on the cemetery board at that time.

In April 1966 two more acres were purchased on the West from the Kroncke Estate and is referred to as the Kroncke addition.

This is a brief selection of some of the older markers found:

John O'Neil

Died Dec. 12, 1892

James O'Neil

Died March 2, 1850

Thomas Pacey

Died Oct. 2, 1875



Non Main St

There was also a John McAuthur of York, NY who died on January 14, 1856; 23 years old, the son of D.J. & E. McAuthur.

History of the Wilmot Grade School District

Records of the Wilmot Grade School, Jt. District Number 9, Salem, Randall go back to the 1880's. Mr. A.W. Benham, a pioneer settler had donated a block of land for a park. This fell into disuse and the first school, a rough wood building was moved there and an addition was added.

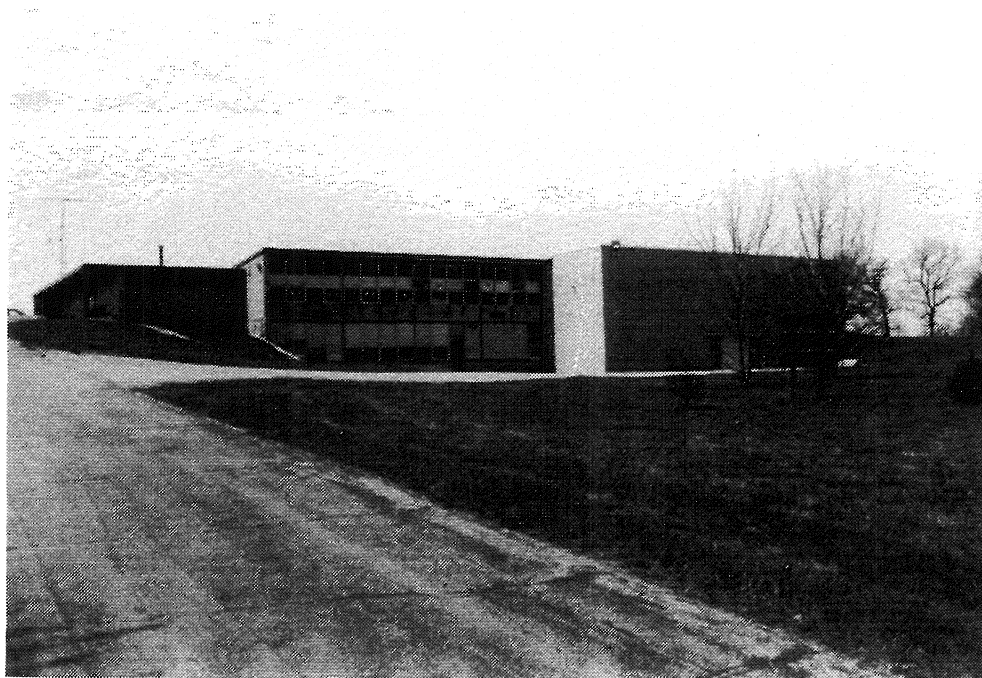
A new brick grade school building was constructed on the present site of the high school in 1878-1879. The high school was added in 1903 and basement furnace. A year later an addition was added. The first graduation of the high school is listed in 1905. More additions were built in the 1920's and remodeled in 1929 to make more room. The grade school maintained two rooms on the south lower floor of this building.

On New Year's Eve in 1932 the building burned to the ground. The new building was built in the same location. The grade school continued to use two and sometimes three rooms in the south wing.

In 1956 the High School needed more room. The High School took over the entire building and the school district built a four room school for the grade school north of Wilmot on a hill overlooking the Fox River. Only two rooms were needed in 1957-58. Two rooms were rented to Randall School while they were building their school.

The enrollment increased so that soon six rooms were needed. Two rooms were built in the basement. These in turn were divided into four smaller rooms. A portable classroom was purchased. There still was not enough room for the special programs needed such as speech and language, remedial reading, learning disabilities, guidance, physical education, art, music, etc.

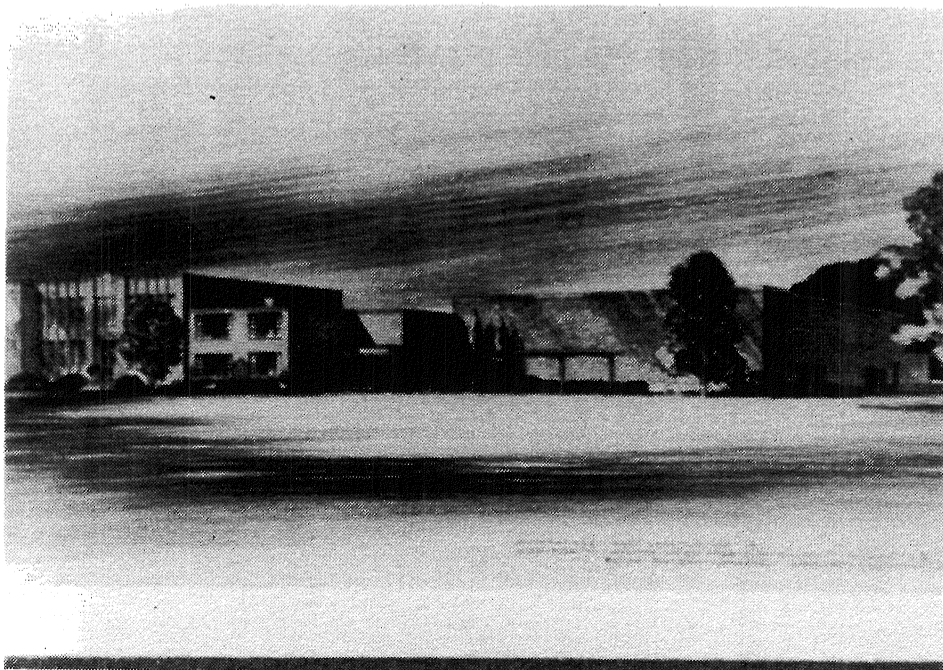
In 1978 the district voted to build an addition. It was completed and put to use during the 1979-1980 school year.



Wilmot High School

Wilmot High School had its beginnings as an outgrowth of the early Wilmot Graded School which extended its offerings to include the ninth and tenth grades in the late 1870's. In 1903 the program was enlarged again to provide a full four year high school curriculum. The first graduation was held in 1905 with seven graduates: Rose B. Bufton, Grace M. Carey, Helen Carey, Lillian E. Darby, Edith Hatch, Henry Blim, and Laura Loftus. A.O. Minsart was the school principal, and Rose M. Purdue the other high school teacher.

Following enactment of a law in 1908 which provided for the establishment of Union Free High Schools, a district was proposed for the area and in 1912 the district was mapped out from portions of the towns of Salem, Randall, and Wheatland. Additions to the building were made in 1918 and 1929. In 1922 the first gymnasium was erected. Then on New Year's morning of 1933 the entire building with the exception of the gym was destroyed by a fire of unknown origin. Rebuilding was begun in May of the same year while classes were continued in the gym. The new structure was completed and ready for occupancy by September.



The district was enlarged in 1950 to include all of the Village of Twin Lakes and all of the Town of Randall.

Additions to the building were made in 1951, 1962, and 1970. Presently it can accommodate a maximum of approximately 1000 students, with an actual enrollment reaching a high of 930 in the late 1970's.

Two superintendents have served the district since 1930. Marlin Schnurr from 1930 - 1967 and Gene Olsen 1967 to this time.

The Wilmot Pirates

The Wilmot Pirates were a group of former high school athletes playing baseball and basketball in the late 1920's and early 1930's. The team was formed and managed by Roland L. Hegeman, owner of the Wilmot Drug Store. Games were scheduled with teams of the surrounding towns and also from Kenosha, Racine and Waukegan. The baseball diamond was located south of Wilmot

The grand stand was built by the business men of Wilmot. The Basketball team played in the old gymnasium.

The team was very successful and played in many tournaments. At one time they played a preliminary basketball game against an Illinois team at the Chicago Stadium and won. The main event of that evening was the Chicago Stags professional team owned by George Halas.



Wilmot Volunteer Fire Department

The ground work for the Wilmot Volunteer Fire Department, the oldest Department of its kind in Kenosha County, was actually started in March of 1925, when citizens of Wilmot and vicinity met to elect officers and conduct business with regard to the Fire Department. The officers elected at this meeting were: Louis Hegemen, Fire Chief; Alfred Reynolds, 1st Asst. Fire Chief; William Stenzel, 2nd Asst. Fire Chief; R.C. Shotliff, Secretary; John Nett, Treasurer.

After two devastating fires, the department was activated in 1935. In April of the same year, the old fire engine was sold at auction, and purchased by Marlin Schnurr. A short time ago, Mr. Schnurr presented the Wilmot Fire Department with the bell from this engine, which is now on display in the fire station.

In June of 1940, a committee, consisting of Marlin Schnurr, Charles Schultz, Carl Sattersten, E. Varil and Ervin Rasch, was appointed to act with Herman Siedschlag on the possibility of obtaining the old Creamery for the purchase of a fire station. Shortly thereafter, the Creamery was obtained, and it was decided to tear down the old building and re-build on the same site. In August of 1941, plans for a new fire house were sent to Madison with the estimated cost of between \$2000 and \$3000. On August 29th, 1942, the Wilmot Firemen and their wives met at the new fire house for a Grand Opening Party.

The fire house has had several additions since that time, but the Department is still making history, with the erection of a modern fire station in March, 1981. The new building is located on Hwy "C" just east of the Fox River, and features a hose drying tower, office space, a meeting room and a great deal more space than the Department had in previous building.

The Wilmot Volunteer Fire Department is a non-profit organization, owned by its members, some of who were around when the Department first started.



Wilmot Volunteer Fire Department Auxiliary



The "new kid on the block" arrived when a group of super supporters of the Wilmot Volunteer Fire Department decided to assist the fire fighters by forming the Wilmot Volunteer Fire Department Auxiliary.

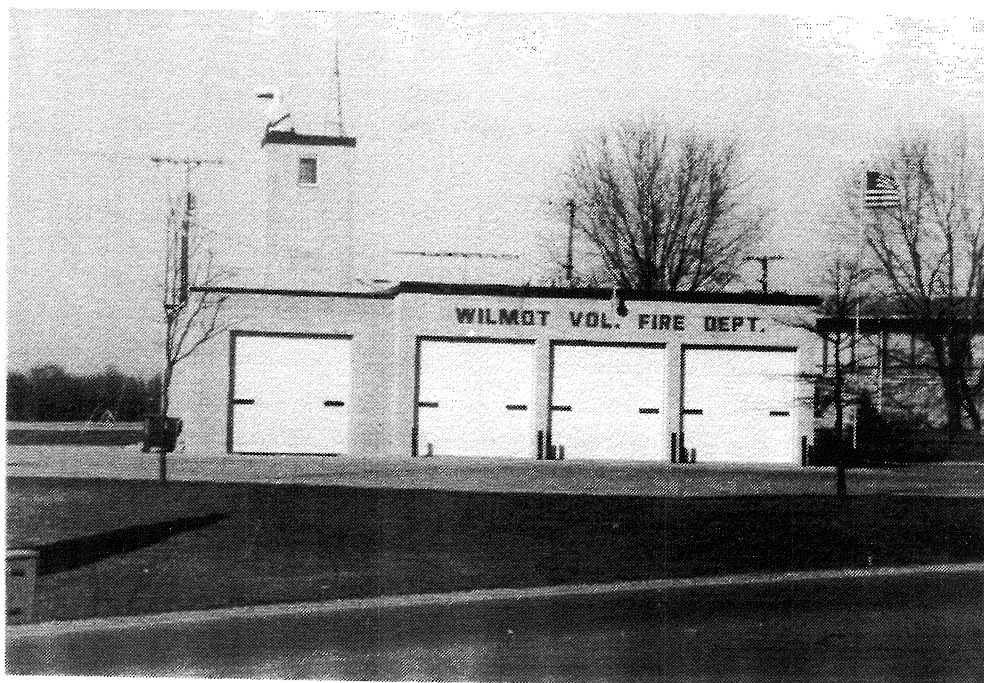
In early spring 1981 an "interest inquiry campaign" was organized. A committee drew up a tentative set of by-laws, and held the first formal meeting at which officers were elected and by-laws were adopted. The first officers were: Cindy Peal - President, Judy Kelly - Vice President, Cathy Brown - Treasurer

and Sue Gerber - Secretary.

Much ground work was done by the original organizational nucleus to give the group its start. Enthusiasm and devotion to this new project, and a wish to help got it quickly off the ground.

From serving coffee at 3:00 A.M., to helping raise funds for equipment with a bake sale and dance, to assisting the firemen at the annual street dance, the auxiliary gives its unfailing support to the Fire Department.

Today's officers are: Nancy Barranco - President, Marcie Badtke - Vice President, Colleen Oldenburg - Treasurer and Mary Meyers - Secretary.



Wilmot American Legion

The veterans of World War I started an American Legion post in Wilmot in February 1922. It was named Fred Semrau Post 361, the charter members were: Leland B. Hegeman, Rolland L. Hegeman, Henry B. Mecklenberg, Arthur E. Voss, Laurence J. Newbury, J.W. Lewis, Arthur E. Panknin, August Roepke, Tony Strike, Clarence White, John R. Mutz, Walter Bernholt, John A. Krueger, Max Schoor and Carl Gauger.

In May 1948 the veterans of World War II reactivated the post and revised the name to Semrau-Scott Post 361. The members worked hard at Kenosha Fair time and operated a lunch stand on the Wilmot Stock Car Racetrack. In 1951 the post purchased land on Hwy W, $\frac{1}{4}$ mile south of Wilmot from Anna Kroncke and built a cement block building. Now they could hold their meetings and social functions in their clubhouse instead of the Wilmot Firehouse.

The American Legion is one of the largest and strongest veterans organizations in the United States and its members are proud to be veterans and to work for veterans of all wars by contributing to the community, state and nation.

The officers of the Semrau-Scott Post 361 for the year 1986-87 are: Commander-Kenneth Kelley, 1st Vice Commander-Duane Cates, 2nd Vice Commander-Tom Lovrine, Finance Officer-Frank Kriska, Jr., Adjutant-Joe Rausch, Historian-Tim Rittmer, Sgt-at-Arms-Dave Haley and Sam Prestay.

American Legion Auxiliary

The dictionary defines Auxiliary as assisting. In the 1960's members of Semrau-Scott Post 361 of the American Legion were very busy operating a refreshment stand at the Stock Car Races when the drivers requested a stand in the pit area. The legionnaires asked their wives to organize an Auxiliary and help them to fulfill the request.

A meeting held in May 1965 resulted in 17 ladies filling out applications in order to charter a unit which would have the name Semrau-Scott Unit 361, American Legion Auxiliary. The charter members were Vera Brown, Marian Ehlert, Marilyn Ehlert, Corrine Gandt, Sophie Jones, Phyllis Kriska, Nelva Lynn, Mary Jane Miller, Laura Noradin, Viola Oldenburg, Claire Pearson, Jeanette Rausch, Rosemary Robinson, Helen Schneegas, Doris Shotliff, Arlene Techert, Terry Ann Techert.

The first meeting was held June 15, 1965 to elect officers: President-Jeanette Rausch, Vice President-Arlene Techert, Secretary-Doris Shotliff, Treasurer-Phyllis Kriska, Chaplain-Marian Ehlert, Historian-Marilyn Ehlert, Sgt-at-Arms-Nelva Lynn, Publicity-Claire Pearson. Minnie Scott, A Gold Star Mother became a life member of the unit.

the proceeds from the lunch stand sponsored a girl from Wilmot High School to Badger Girls State, financed Halloween parties for children of the Wilmot Grade School, purchased a flag for the Holy Name School and sent gifts to men from the Wilmot area serving in the Armed Forces just to name a few of the many services the organization performs.

The main interest of the American Legion Auxiliary is the veteran and his family, but its programs include Community Service, Americanism, Children and Youth, Poppy and Membership. The 1987 officers of this great organization are: President-Judy Kelley, Vice President-Jeanette Rausch, Secretary/Treasurer-Ann Tully, Historian-June Lovrine, Chaplain-Phyllis Kriska, Sgt-at-Arms-Jeanne Needham.

Wilmot Post Office

Information from the National Archives show that the first Post Office was established in Wilmot on July 24, 1849 and the first appointed Postmaster was J. Milton Benham. From that date until 1913 Wilmot had 17 different Postmasters, some serving for less than a year, and only one (Anson Pierce 1867-1886) serving for more than 4 years. On October 13, 1913 Robert C. Shotliff was commissioned and he remained in office until 1947. During this time the office was located in the Shotliff Store. The brick building which later housed Gander Mountain, Inc. still stands on Fox River Road.

On August 1, 1947 Elona Sarbacker was appointed and the office was moved to a building on the southeast corner of Fox River Road and 113th Street. This building had housed The Agitator, our weekly newspaper, a telephone office and a mens clothing store, and after the Post Office moved to its new building on 113th Street in 1961 it was the home of the Post House, an antique shop and art gallery. This building was razed in 1986. Mrs. Sarbacker retired in 1964 and Ruth Shotliff McDougall, who had served as a clerk for both her father and Mrs. Sarbacker, received her commission on April 23, 1964. During her years of service the Post Office grew to a 1st Class Office, due to the growth of Gander Mountain, Inc. Ruth retired in October 1982, and the present Postmaster is Eunice Cherven.



Wilmot Lodge No. 241 F. & A. M.

Supp 7

Wilmot Lodge was awarded a special dispensation by Grand Master Myron Reed and attested by Grand Secretary John W. Lafiur on the 23rd of November 1888. The charter members all being in good standing of Washburn Lodge No. 145 F. & A. M. of Bristol, Wisconsin were installed on the 27th day of December 1888 and are as follows: Worshipful Master Henry C. Darby, Senior Warden Newcomb Crowley, Junior Warden Edwin J. Carpenter, Treasurer William W. Winchell, Secretary Joshua M. Wilbur, Senior Decon James A. Owen, Junior Decon Joriah R. Hyde, Steward Edwin J. Hapgood, Steward Lewellyn A. Havens, Tyler Henry Watson, Members Simon A. Didama and Layfaette L. Owen.

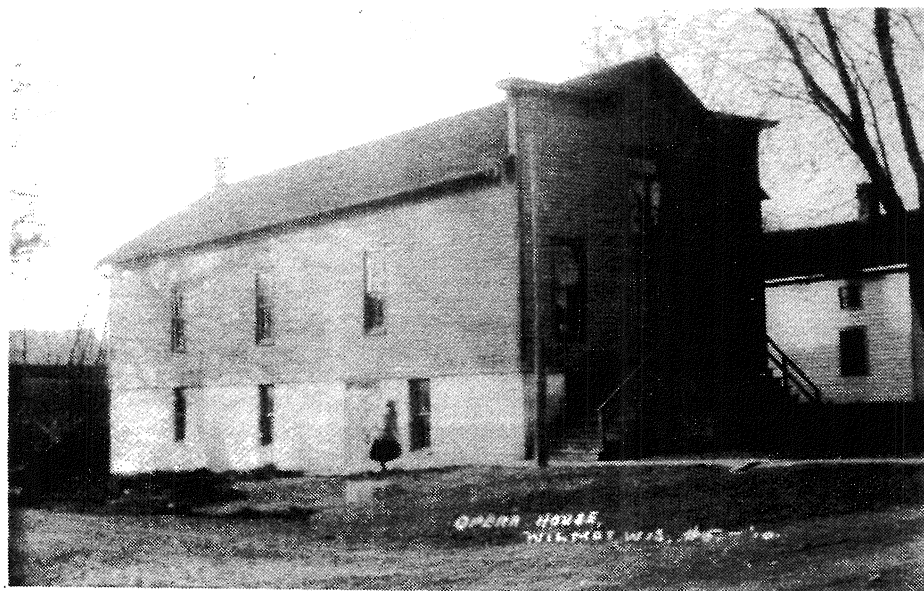
The lodge was off to a good start. On January 16, 1889 Alfred G. Pacey made history by being the first to be initiated an E. A. By May 18th two more were initiated and the Grand Master figured wē were here to stay and granted our charter on the 11th day of June 1889. All three of our E.A.'s went on to become master masons before the month of August.

During the early years of our history the lodge rented Odd Fellows Hall for \$25 per year. In May of 1930 the membership voted to move to the hall of the Modern Woodmen of America on the corner of Hwys. C & W. which they still occupy.

*was at first 1 story
Basement added*

Since the granting of the charter in June of 1889 Wilmot has met regularly and in 1989 will celebrate its 100th anniversary.

The current officers are Perry Campbell Worshipful Master, William D. Carr Senior Warden, Louis Greener Junior Warden, Fred Miller Treasurer, Milton Ketchum, Sr. Secretary, George Rougeau Senior Deacon, Eugene Kannin Junior Deacon, Gerald Hamholm Senior Steward, Jack Lynn Junior Steward, William Erdman Chaplin and Lester Shaffer Tyler.



I. O. O. F. of Wilmot

In the early days, the opportunities for men to congregate with his fellows were naturally restricted but the desire for social and fraternal relations prompted a group of nine pioneer men to request the formation of an Odd Fellows Lodge. A charter was issued on January 18, 1850.

These nine men held their first meeting on January 31, 1850 in a room in the home of Edwin Robbins of Liberty Corners. The meetings continued to be held there for nearly two years but as the lodge grew, they found it necessary to seek larger quarters and on September 4, 1851, they held their first meeting in the village of Wilmot. The lodge became more active and in 1878, they built a brick store building on Main Street using the upstairs of the building as their meeting rooms. As the members left, the lodge was forced to disband and the building was sold to Leland Hegeman.

became J. Nett's place

At present, the building is owned by Robert Brystosky of Palatine, IL.

Sad 2006



John Nett Store

In 1892 John Nett brought his family to Wilmot and entered into a partnership in a grocery store with Walter Carey. At a later date he became the sole proprietor and ran the grocery until January, 1935 when the business was destroyed by fire. John Nett died on January 31, 1941.

Country Collector

Since opening its door in 1980, the Country Collector has become known for its collection of over 10,000 hubcaps and its unique crafts and collectibles. Located on the southwest corner of Fox River Road and 112th Street, and owned by Augie Matejzel, it is easily recognizable because of the two Camperdown Elm Trees that grace the front lawn on either side of the sidewalk leading to the entrance of the shop. These two 100 year old peculiar looking trees are unique in the way that the branches twist and turn as they head skyward. The two Camperdown Elms are also listed as the two largest of their kind in Wisconsin.

*then Hubcap house now
the Johnson
Home*



Foxmoor Bed & Breakfast

where was the

Foxmoor Bed & Breakfast opened its doors on October 1, 1986 in a pre-Civil War, restored farmhouse, one-half mile North of the town of Wilmot, on the Fox River. It celebrates and intends to share the same beauty of the land that our ancestors shared in 1837.

The original and central portion of the house was built with all square (hand-made) nails and the standing barn is of all mortise and tenon construction.

A low hanging fog over the rolling hills makes the area still seem a rural heaven. It has been the residence of Fred & Marylyn Mayer since 1971 who purchased the farm from the Bernhoft family who purchased the farm from the Anton Sherf family in 1938.

Fox Valley Florists

Scopy 6

25

25

Fox Valley Florists has been operating in Wilmot since 1945. It was begun by Marlin and Charlotte Schnurr in what had been the Sutcliffe Greenhouse. The greenhouses were refurbished and the line of products changed to meet the demands of the time. John Schnurr and his wife Phyllis joined the firm in 1954 and currently own and operate it.

New greenhouses were added in 1957, 1960 and 1965. This provided space to grow carnations, roses and a complete line of bedding plants. Primary crops now are roses, snapdragons and bedding plants. The range consists of nearly 14,000 feet of growing area plus service and heating buildings.

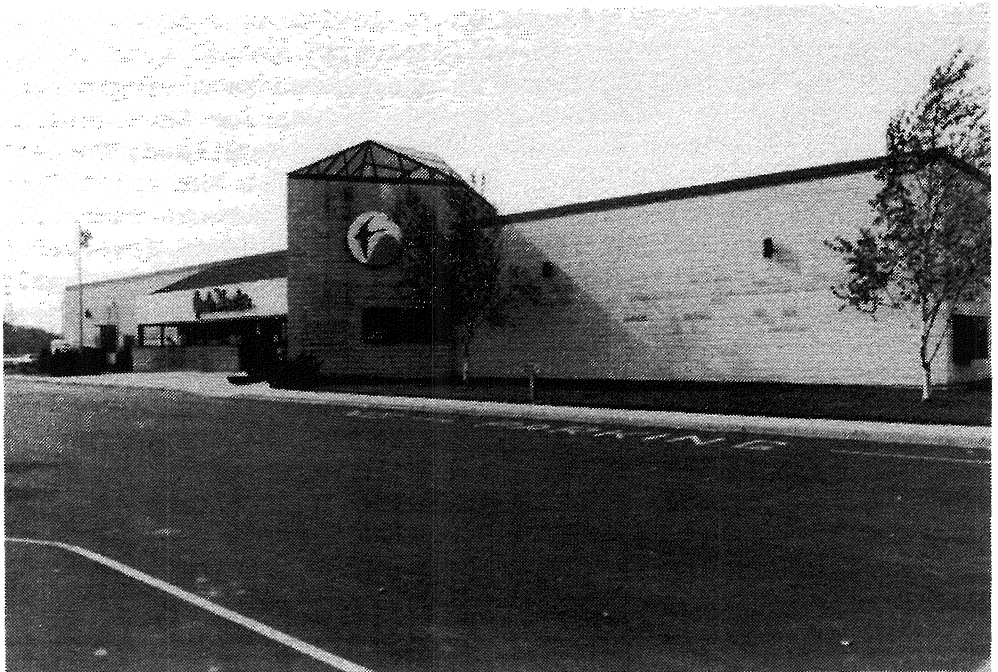
Both wholesale and retail production and sales are maintained through the full year with cut flowers sold on a regular basis in southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois.



Shattliffe

Gander Mountain

Gander Mountain was started in a small store in the center of Wilmot; the building still stands and had been recently purchased by Lotus Light. In 1960, Robert Sturgis began by marketing shooting supplies to gun dealers by mail order. He soon began mailing catalogues directly to consumers, building an image as a supplier to hunters and other serious sportsmen..



In 1968 federal legislation prohibited the sale of firearms through the mail and Gander Mountain was forced to expand and re-orient its product line.

A 20,000 square foot building was erected on the company's current site on Hwy. W. The image of the company has become that of a value providing retailer with merchandise for the serious sportsman.

The management team is Ralph Frietag - President, Fred Wojcik - executive Vice President, James Stewart - Vice President and general manager, and Tom Curry - Vice President, marketing.



Shattliffe
McDarg

New management affected several advancements-- increased product selection, improved product presentation, increased customer service and expansion of the in-house company base.

Approximately 40,000 square feet of warehouse space, 25,000 square feet of office space and 7000 square feet of retail store space were added in 1986.

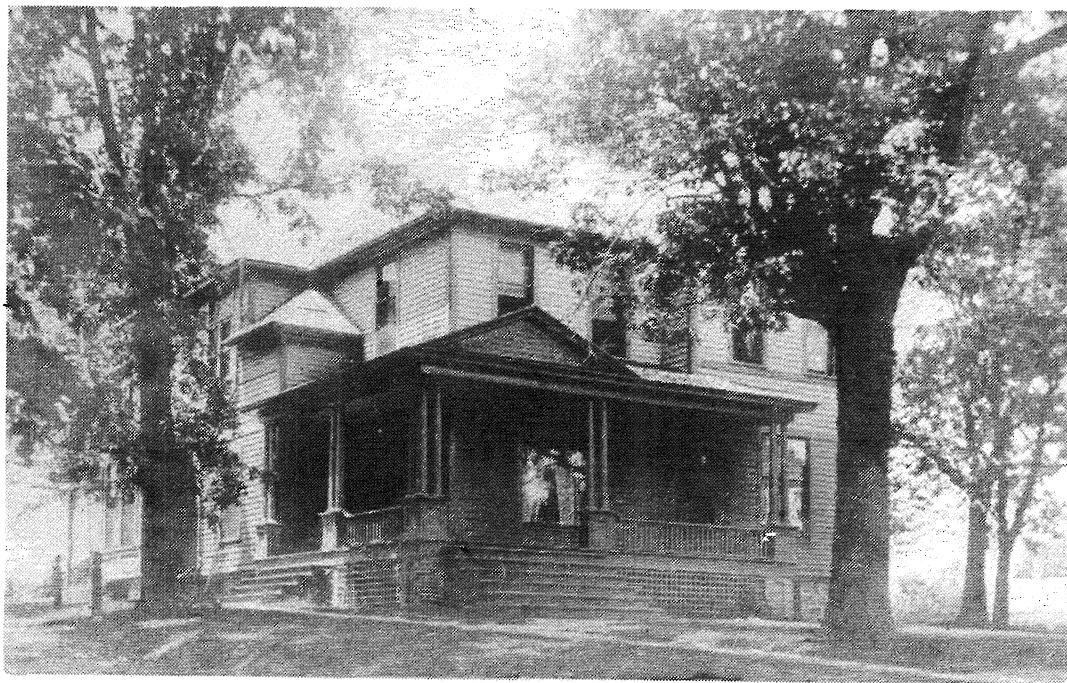
The company continues to believe that there is room for Company growth and for individual employee growth here at Gander Mountain.

The Gilead House / Dylans

aka Twencaloo

Gilead House crowns a hill and is surrounded by a virgin stand of native oak. The site was chosen by A.S. Benham in the 1830's for the construction of the first frame house in Gilead. Benham, who came from Gilead, Connecticut, named the area after his boyhood home town. Mr. Benham built the first flour mill and erected the first dam on the Fox River in Gilead. The town was named Wilmot some years later when Benham platted the community. When financial reverses hit Benham in the late 1850's he sold out his interests to J.W. Voak. Voak's family occupied that first house until they moved the original structure off the property up to their farm north of town and built the present "Gilead House" in 1891. They remained in the house until 1901 when a devastating fire destroyed their mills and the home was sold to settle claims. George Faulkner and his wife were the next owners and lived in the house until the mid 1940's when it then became the Holy Name Convent. The house was the wonder of the county when built and boasted an acetylene gas lighting system. The original fixtures were found in the attic and now once again light the dining rooms at Gilead House. In 1967 the house was purchased and converted into a restaurant retaining as much of its historical atmosphere as possible. The owner being John Straub. In 1986 the property was purchased by The Conlons and they have changed the name to "Dylans".

*1st floor = school HNOJ
2nd convent*



The Kenosha County Fair

Fairs and County Fairs have been part of Wilmot since shortly after the Civil War. The Fair was first identified as a County Fair sometime in the 1870's. Early Fairs were regularly held in September, though occasionally a summer fair was scheduled in July. The County Fair left Wilmot in about 1925 and was held for some years on what is now 60th Street in Kenosha and then later in Paddock Lake.

In 1936 the Fair returned to Wilmot as the West Kenosha County Fair and has continued here ever since. The County Fair Association reorganized in 1948 and subsequently purchased the property known as the Wilmot Farm for a permanent fairgrounds.

Livestock buildings, exhibit buildings, and other necessary facilities have been added over the years as the fair has grown and needs have expanded. The grounds now spread over ninety plus acres with nearly thirty buildings and an auto race track.

The Fair is governed by a board of directors of twenty-one persons elected by some 300 association members. Don Wienke of Bristol has been President of the association for the past several years and John Schnurr of Wilmot has been Fair Manager since 1967.

Currently, the annual Fair is held on the weekend of the second Friday of August, beginning on Wednesday and ending on Sunday. Attendance has reached about 80,000 during recent years making the Kenosha County Fair one of the largest in the state.



Kriska's Market

Frank Kriska Sr. purchased the store on December 1, 1937 from Frederick Beck. Frank Sr. worked at the Antioch Packing Company for 13 years before coming to Wilmot.

The store is still owned by the Kriska family. Frank Jr. started working full time when he was 19 years of age and after his discharge from the Navy in 1946. In 1949 he married Phyllis Richards from Bristol. Presently they run the store along with their son Tom, who has a daughter and son. Frank Jr. also has a daughter, Christine Hansen (Rory), who has three daughters. Christine helps on Saturdays through the summer months.

While Frank Jr. was in school, Art Scott worked in the store. Art was killed in action in World War II. Johnny Sutcliff also worked for Kriska's.

Frank and his father used to butcher pigs, calves and cows once a week for farmers. Frank Sr. also made hot dogs, liver sausage and bologna.

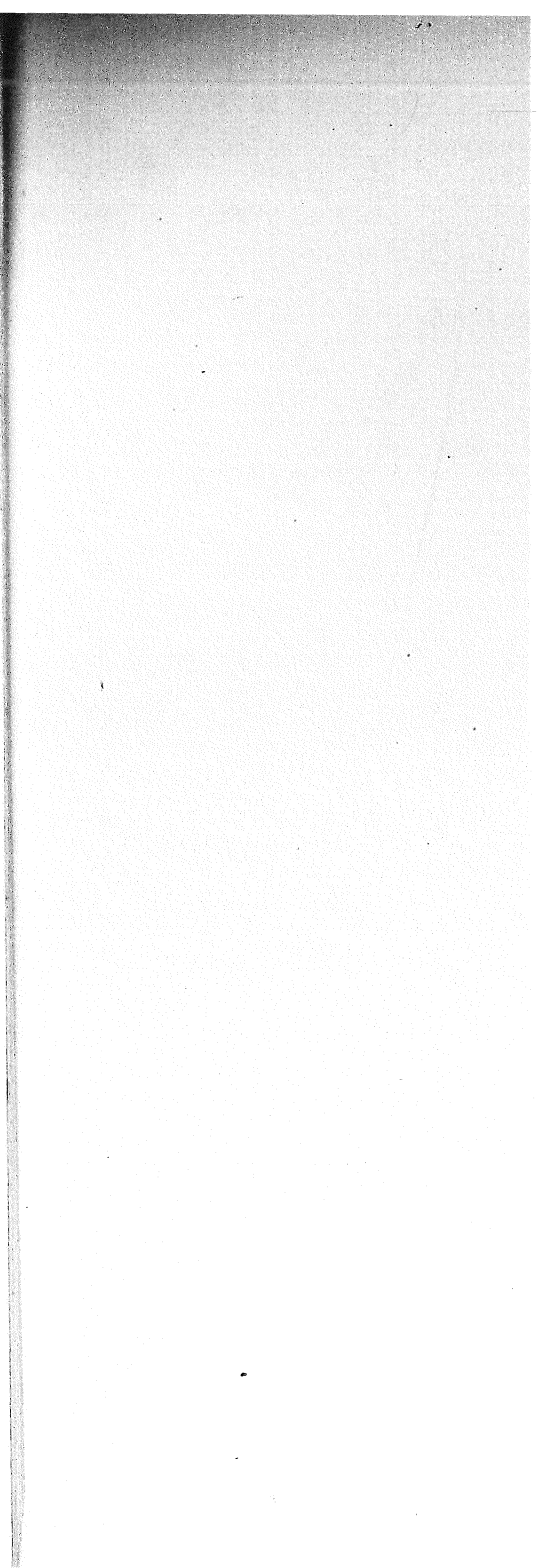
The business has changed a lot in the past 50 years with the coming of chain stores, warehouse stores, malls, and the introduction of frozen foods and instant products.

The Kriskas are well known today for their homemade sausage, brats, Italian and Polish and pork sausage. Frank also has home smoked bacon and hams.

Frank Sr. passed away February 5, 1962. His wife Hermina passed away May 21, 1983.

Frank Jr. begins his 50th year in Wilmot December 1, 1987.





Lotus Light Enterprises

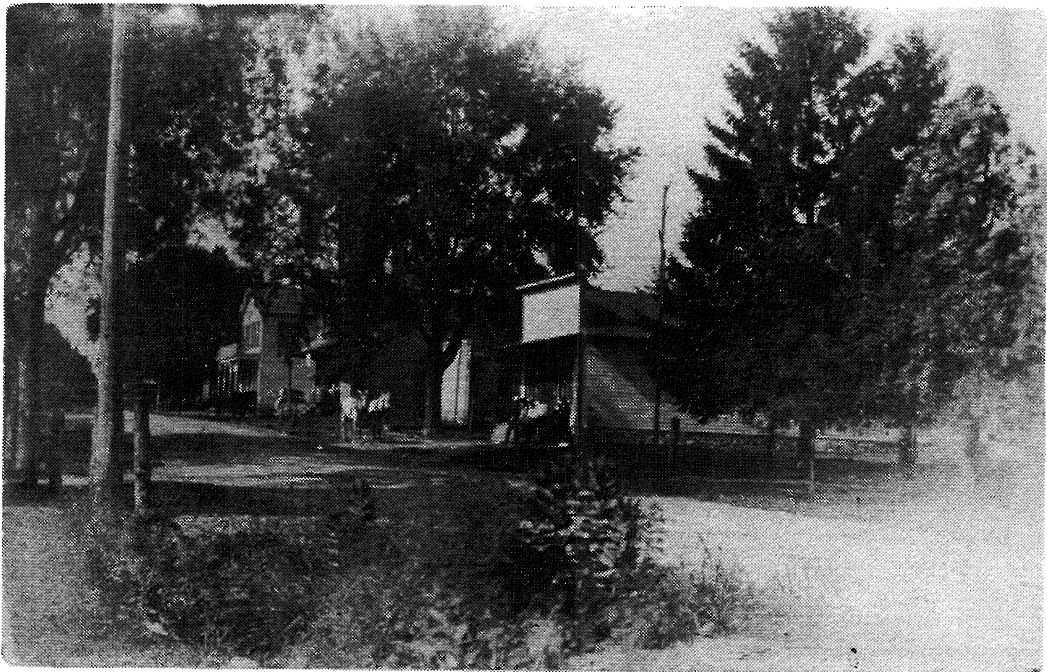
SW
Corner Gate/main

Santosh and Doris Krinsky purchased the McDougall Hardware Store in Wilmot as a warehouse for their new wholesale distributing business. By October 1983 the first Lotus Light catalog appeared and was distributed to gift stores, health food stores and other promising outlets in the area. The company was well received and eventually added more products and more customers and a wider sales base until today the company services several thousand stores nationwide out of a catalog having more than 3000 items.

Lotus Light specializes in body care and health oriented products, such as shampoo, toothpaste, etc. as well as bulk spices and herbs.

During April 1987 Lotus Light expanded again by purchasing a hair care line called Helix Henna and moving the production facilities to Wilmot into the Shotliff building immediately adjacent to the Hardware Store building. Employment is now up to about a dozen people and Keith and Pattie Prochnow, formerly of Boulder, CO, have taken over management of the company on a day to day basis. Warehouse manager, Joel Peters along with his wife Jeannie, keeps the packing and shipping operation running smoothly.

Lotus Light also runs a publishing division, a greeting card division and an importing division. The newest Lotus Light catalog now has 116 pages of merchandise available wholesale only, although several members of the staff have started a new Retail Mail Order company called Fox River Naturals to handle inquiries from consumers for these product lines.



McDougall Hardware

State

In the early 1860's, John W. Voak owned a considerable amount of land in Wilmot and constructed a two story building on the corner of Main and Water Streets. It was said the upper story of the building at one time was a roller skating rink. In the 1870's, Mr. Bela Taber and Mr. Holiday opened a hardware store in the building and operated it until 1896 when it was sold to William Morgan. His line was hardware, farm machinery, a tin shop, sewing machines, stoves and did furnace work. This remained in the Morgan family until 1924 when the business and building was bought by Harry B. McDougall. Later, his son Lyle (Mac) joined as a partner and it became McDougall Hardware. They sold general hardware and had contracts with the Allis Chalmers and New Idea farm machinery companies. In 1948, a cement block building -- forty feet by eighty feet -- was constructed to the present building to be used for farm machinery and included a work shop.

In 1983, Santosh Krinsky purchased the building and now has a business known as Lotus Light.



F & J Rausch Construction, Inc.

The F & J Rausch Construction, Inc. was born in 1946 in a barn on Highway B and was named Rausch Brothers Construction.

Jacob Rausch and wife Susan moved to Wilmot from Michigan. John Rausch and wife Margaret came here from Chicago, Louis Rausch, just discharged from the CeeBees of World War II and his wife Marjorie, Wilmot, Joe Rausch, discharged from the Army of World War II and his wife Jeanette, Wilmot, and Frank Rausch, the youngest and also just discharged from the Army, Wilmot, each took their savings, rented the barn, purchased a block machine and started the block business.

John Rausch, their father, had been in the construction business since 1923. When his sons left for the war, he purchased the tavern located west of the Wilmot Dam from Ray Rudolph.

After 3 years of hard work, long hours and newly gained knowledge, the Rausch Brothers purchased land on Highway C from Otto Stenzel. They built an all cement block building with two kilns, purchased a more modern and partially automatic block machine and divided their abilities and resources between producing cement blocks and constructing buildings. The Peace Ev. Lutheran Church built in 1956 is just one result of their decision.

The name changed to Rausch Concrete Products, Rausch Building & Supply and finally in 1973, after the death of Jake and retirement of John and Louie, the block plant was sold to Thelen Ready Mix and the present F & J Rausch Construction, Inc. came into existence. The business is located in the two structures near the dam. *Guman*
 These buildings began as a cheese factory in the 1800's but have housed a Lutheran Church, Lutheran Sunday School, Lutheran Ladies Aid and also used as a schoolhouse when the high school burned January 1, 1933.



Shotliff Store

Ransom M. Shotliff was born in Langrick, England and in the fall of 1867 emigrated to America coming directly to Wilmot. In England, he was apprenticed to learn the mason trade at the age of twelve years and followed that trade here. In 1900, in Wilmot on Main Street, he erected a brick store building with living quarters above. This became the Shotliff store with Robert C. (known as R.C.) as the owner. At one time all musical instruments and music was sold. Later, it became a general store as most in that era were. Ice cream, penny candy, school supplies, magazines and cards were the items sold.

On October 13, 1913, R.C. Shotliff received his commission as Postmaster and a Post Office was included in one corner of the store building. In 1948, after thirty four years with the Postal Service, R.C. retired leaving the store vacant for a time.

Two gentlemen from Chicago, Robert Sturgis and Alvin Melka who had previously worked in the gun department of a major store in the city came to Wilmot and decided to start a business. They rented the Shotliff store and this is where Gander Mountain, Inc., -- a wholesale sporting goods business was founded. At that time, most of the business was done through mail order. As the business grew, three additions were added to the former building but eventually the volume of business demanded larger quarters. After twelve years in their original building on Main Street, a new building south of Wilmot on Highway W was constructed where today Gander Mountain, Inc., remains doing a flourishing business.

The Shotliff building has just recently been purchased by Santosh Krinsky who is enlarging his business, Lotus Light.



Speedway an Important Part of Wilmot History
By Jack at Trackside

Wilmot history of 150 years ago did not include the horseless carriage. But just as soon as man developed the automobile, Wilmot became destined for a place in auto racing history.

From the time of the first auto racing on the quarter-mile speedway, located behind the Wilmot High School in 1949, auto racing became a very important part of Wilmot history. In the very beginning, while other tracks were racing stock cars, the Kenosha County Speedway raced open wheel modified stock cars and the conventional stock cars.

The speedway found solid promotional leadership in Pattenjim Auto racing. This husband and wife team from Milwaukee was made up of Jim and Pat Smith. In their years as promoter the track many times had out the "Standing Room Only" sign for the Saturday night modified stock car racing.

As auto racing grew, cars became faster and drew even larger crowds to Wilmot. Many times visitors at the Stage Stop Restaurant would interrupt their dinners to go outside and watch the traffic and race cars on trailers leaving the Fairgrounds after a big night of racing. The fame of Wilmot racing spread and many people made the Wilmot Speedway a "must" when their travels brought them near the town that once was a stop for stage coaches.

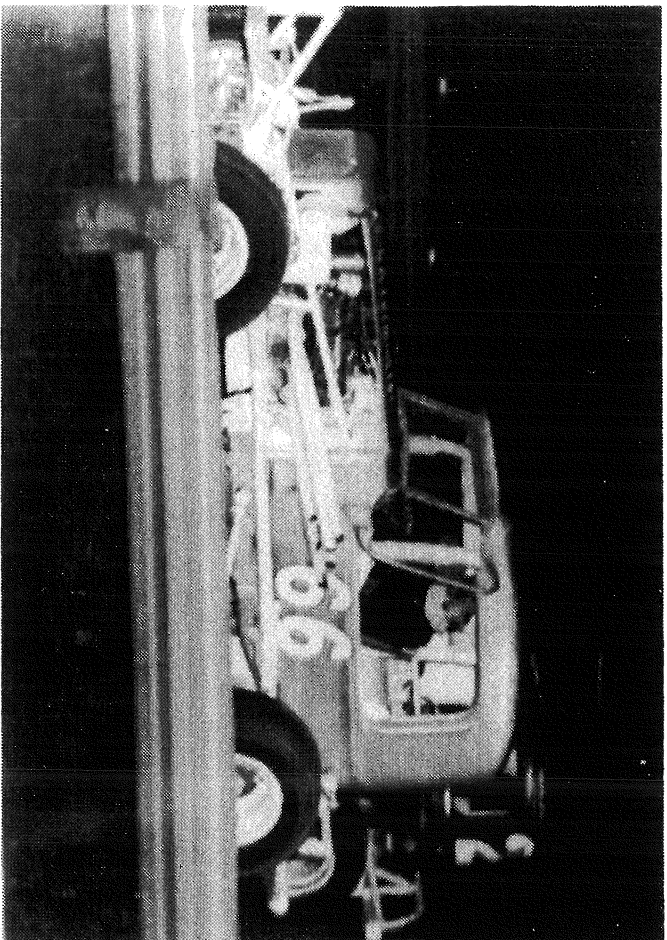
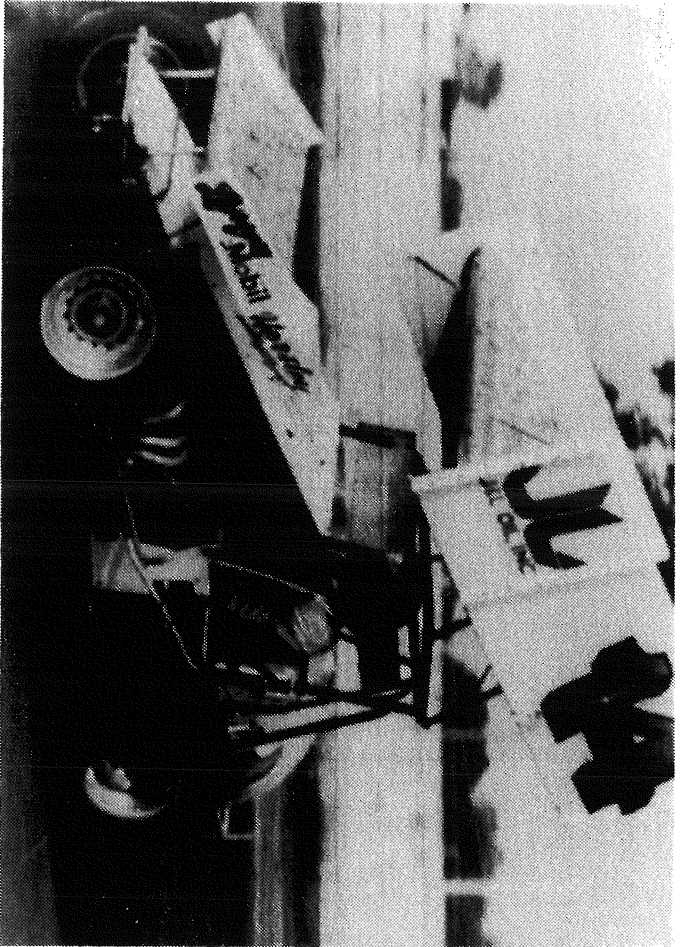
The needs of the High School for increased athletic programs for the students, led to a decision to move the speedway from the original site to the present location. The track and even the same surface that had been on the Kenosha County Speedway, was moved following the final race of 1972.

For a short period, before the move of the speedway, the track was promoted by the Kenosha County Fair Association and then by a drivers and car owners association under the direction of Ray Toft.

Ray Toft had been associated with the track since the middle fifties and soon became the promoter of the track and with his wife Joan, still holds and earns that position today as Toft Auto Racing.

Under their leadership the track has increased in fame and now attracts drivers of National fame to race in the annual Wilmot Open Winger Sprint car series. The pictures show how the cars have changed over the years but everyone who has visited Wilmot racing will tell you that the tradition that started on the old track and passed on from parents to children and they to their children, is alive and well today.

These pictures show the old and new of auto racing at the Wilmot Speedway. The number 66 is an early day modified stock car driven by Claude Potter and the number 2 car is Jim Lawrence racing on the old speedway located behind the high school on the Kenosha County Fairgrounds. Each of these drivers die as a result of highway accidents. The number 14 car is a winged sprint car driven by Joe Kristan on the new Wilmot Speedway. Over the years the cars changed from automobile body racers, to first speedway type tails, then to super-modifieds and are now sprints manufactured by leading builders from throughout the United States. Fans however, have not changed. They still love and support the best auto racing in the country on Saturday nights at the Wilmot Speedway.



"Sonnies"

The Dam at Wilmot even today remains at the top of the list for fish production. It has been the favorite spot in the Spring for walleye and northern, the April "run of the white bass", and later the crappies, bullheads, and catfish. On occasion a rainbow trout or small mouth bass wanders into the area also. As soon as the ice leaves the area above the Dam, the many watchful eyes of fishermen appear, seeking their first glimpse of the "run".

The original bait house was purchased from Clif Rasmussen in the fall of 1946, by Andy, Caroline and Joseph Kisner. It was a complicated matter, inasmuch as the site on which the building stood was partially County owned, and the west end sat on property owned by another individual. After unravelling the tangled web, agreements were reached, rents and options were made, and the purchase completed.

The little "Shack" soon grew very popular, probably because of the hours maintained. The doors remained open from 3 a.m. until midnight during the week, and from Friday morning until closing at 9 p.m. Sunday. The hours were long, but enjoyable, and soon the need for expansion approached. In 1951 the option to buy the adjoining property, which was also part of the original Mill, was exercised, to pave the way for future needs, if necessary. This came about in 1958, when that part of the property belonging to the County, plus a parcel south of the old Mill was obtained, thus clearing all of the land on which to re-build a new bait house. The Spring of 1959 saw a new building occupied with a complete line of live and artificial baits and lures, fly-tying materials, and almost any type of equipment used or needed for this particular type of fishing.

The lunch area had been expanded and the odor of fresh hamburgers on the grill literally drove the customers in. To this day remarks are made about "how good they were!" In the early 1970's the latest acquisition of land to the north of the original boundaries was made, doubling the parking area, which never seemed to be adequate.

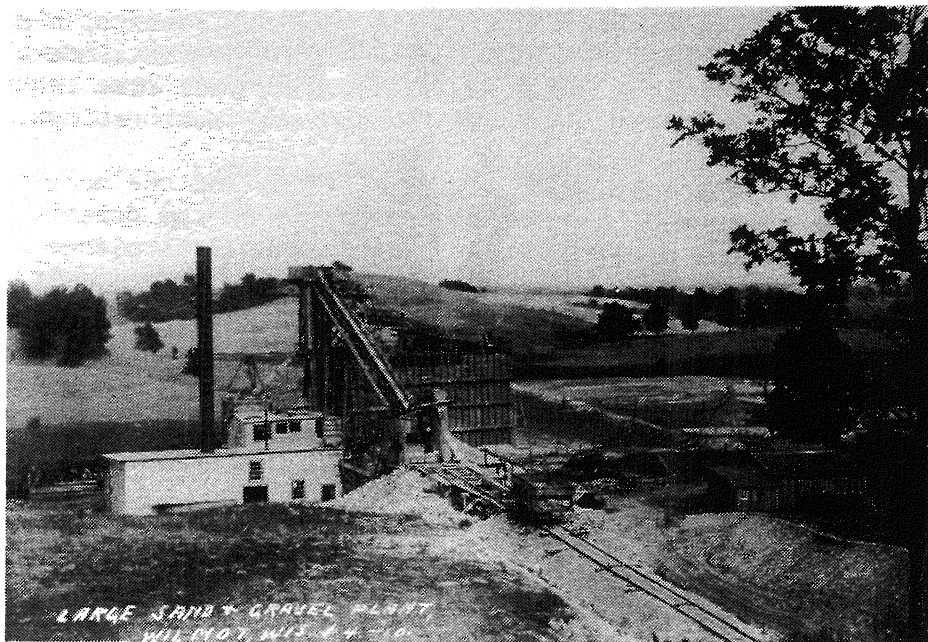


The Wertz Sand and Gravel Pit

The "Wertz Sand & Gravel Pit" was a dream come true for William "Bill" Wertz when he bought the land from Lester Siedschlag in 1935. He had been employed at that time by J.B. Buckley in a gravel pit on Hwy C in the late '20's. Bill and his two sons, Melvin and Raymond operated the pit until World War II took the sons into the service.

After the sons were discharged they made different occupational choices. Lyle Techert and his wife Arlene moved to Wilmot and Lyle became a gravel man. After many years of digging, washing and hauling sand, gravel and fill to the neighboring towns, as well as building the Wilmot Race Track, Lyle purchased the gravel pit located on Hwy W, $\frac{1}{4}$ mile south of town. It was purchased from Minnie Wertz after Bill's death. The name was never changed.

In 1986 Lyle sold the property to a person from Illinois who wished to use it as his summer retreat.



Gravel pit on
Hwy C

Wilmot Ready Mix

Located at the site of the former Rausch Concrete Products plant on Hwy C just east of Wilmot, Wilmot Ready Mix, Inc. opened its doors in 1979. The plant was purchased from the Rausch Brothers by Jack, Ray Jr., Tom, Peter and Steve Thelen.

Howard Gehrke is General Manager of the plant operations. Currently, they operate a fleet of four ready mix trucks and three gravel trucks, and six truck drivers are employed. A variety of services are provided, including the delivery of sand, gravel and freshly mixed concrete. In addition, Wilmot Ready Mix carries a line of concrete accessories, including wire mesh, reinforcing rods and chemical/sealers. Also, concrete blocks and car stops in a variety of sizes, and bags of portland and mason cement are stocked for the convenience of contractors and do-it-yourselfers.

Westosha Airport

The Westosha airport was born in 1956 from the fields of the "Old Pacey Farm", 1 mile west of Wilmot on Hwy C. It was purchased by Dick & Hermie Davis in 1946 primarily as a dairy farm. Dick's interest in flying turned into a reality when Bob Ellis, a flying instructor, based his plane on a hayfield and taught Dick and a few neighbors to fly in a J-3.

In 1956 the first airplane based at the farm was owned by Maynard Canright and Victor Flodin of Twin Lakes. Shortly after that, Dick and Hermie bought their first airplane and became very active in the "Wisconsin Flying Farmers", with the first North - South sod strip in use.

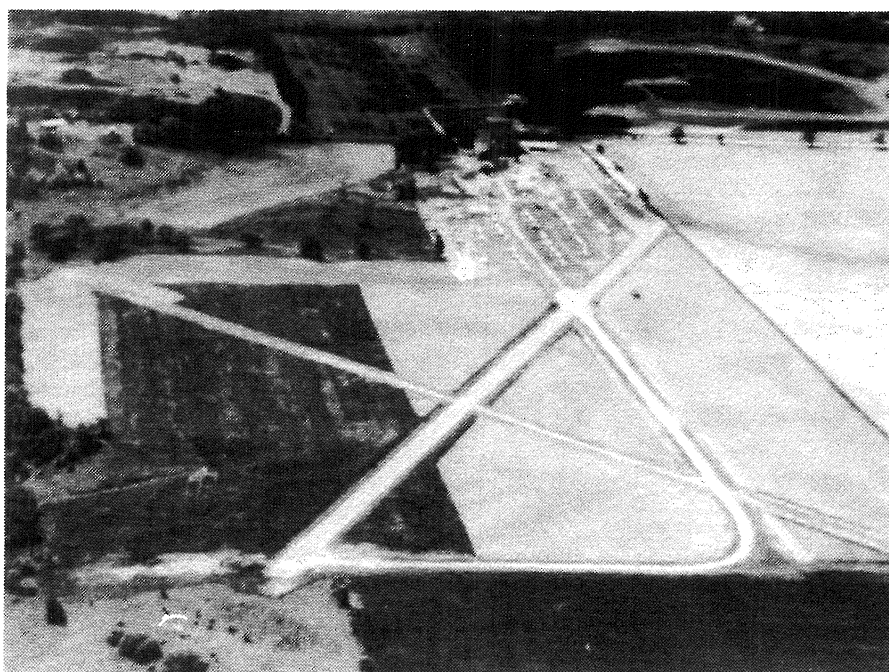
In 1960 there were five planes and five hangars had been built according to all the Federal regulations and permits. Katherine Gallagher of the Westosha Report gave close cooperation and attention to the advertising and promoting the fledgling airport.

The Westosha Flying Club was formed in 1969 with six original members, a used plane and one full time flying instructor; Cliff Cantwell. The club has since grown to a membership of 750 active and inactive members. The present full time instructor, Thomas Horton, has taught over 500 people to fly or advance their ratings.

By 1973 the airport has a flight room, two runways; one sod and one hard surface. All grades of aviation fuel are stocked, a full repair shop is on the premises and unicorn radios. At the present time the airport has 27 hangars and 70 airplanes based there.

At one time skydivers, acrobatic planes and gliders were good entertainment for everyone on weekends as well as the usual flight lessons and Club Activities. The first Sunday of June the Westosha Airport has a pancake breakfast that attracts up to 2000 flyers.

The airport was sold on November 1, 1979 to Vern Thelen who continues to operate it as an airport.



Westosha B. P. W.

In 1951 Elona Sarbacker, the Wilmot Postmaster, visited her cousin in Madison. While there she attended a monthly Business and Professional Women's Club meeting. She was so impressed with the organization that after returning to Wilmot and discussing it with other area women, the West Kenosha B.P.W. Chapter was formed. Club members agreed with Charlotte Schnurr's idea to shorten West Kenosha to "Westosha" and since that time many area businesses and clubs have also adopted the term.

Charter members, Elona Sarbacker, Daphne Loftus, Charlotte Schnurr, Mildren Swartz, Margaret Hovens, Florence Neunfeldt, Gladys Schmalfeldt, Virginia Lubkeman, Ruth McDougall and Carolyn Stoxen met in the homes of various members. The club's current 35-40 members reside in Twin Lakes, Silver Lake, Wilmot, Bassett, Trevor, Powers Lake and rural Burlington. Its members are engaged in a wide variety of jobs and share the goal of promoting full participation in the workforce, equity, and economic self-sufficiency for America's working women. Meetings are held the third Monday of the month in local restaurants and members' homes.

At a local level, members help their communities whenever their assistance is needed. Educational assistance is given yearly to a graduating senior and financial and volunteer help has been given to the Kenosha Achievement Center for many years.



Wilmot Cafe & Wilmot Auto Service

The Wilmot Cafe is presently operated by Russell and Edith Badtke. The property is owned by Harmon Garwood who originally bought and used the building as a garage and filling station until the early 1960's when he built the present Wilmot Auto Service.

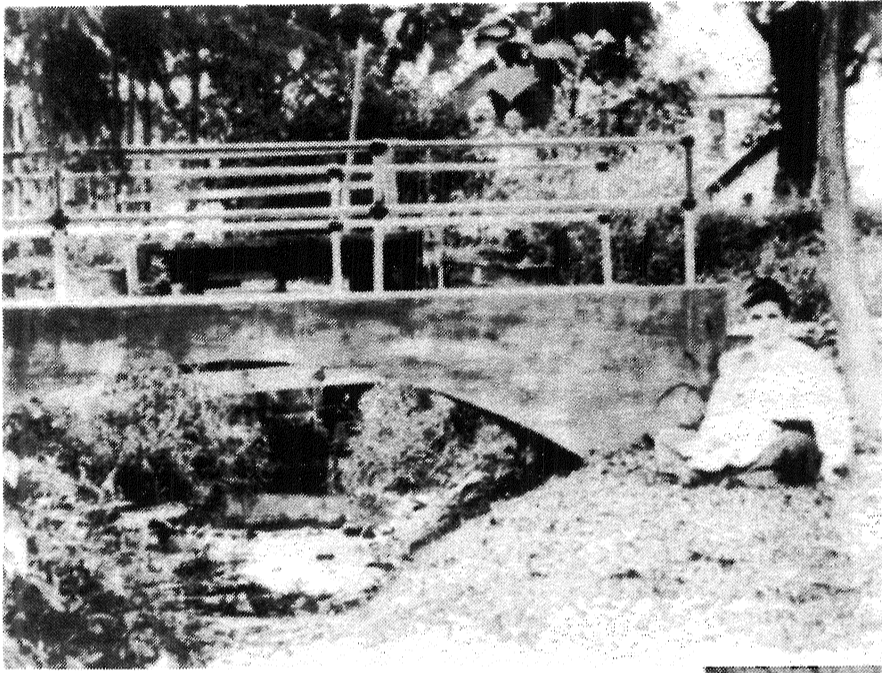
It is said that the original building was once a school house on another site in town and was moved to the present location. It may also at one time have been a furniture store.

One of the owners in the early part of the century was Charles Bruel. Other owners were Charles Schultz and Wally Miller.

After Garwood built his new garage he leased the old building to Russell and Fern Elwood in the early 1960's and thus the Wilmot Cafe came into existence. After the Elwoods came John and Marge Rausch for a very brief period of time and then the Garwood family operated the restaurant for a while until they leased the building to James and Marilyn Robinson in 1967. They were in business for 15 months and sold it to Eugene and Wynelle Jerde. They ran it for about 5 years and sold out leaving the place vacant for a brief period of time. Following that Edward and Joyce Ries occupied the building. Then in the spring of 1976 Richard and Constance Thompson ran the business, selling it to the Badtkes in November of the same year and they have operated until the present time.

So the building, possibly from school house to furniture store to gas station to restaurant, has had a long and varied existence in the community.





Bridge across the street from the original gas station

Original gas station



New gas station

Wilmot Mountain, Inc.

In 1932 Walter T. and Jeanne Stopa took up downhill skiing in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area where Walter was working as an architect. Upon their return to Chicago, they began a search of the topological maps of the area and visited the various sites. They finally agreed that the hills on the Pagel Farm met their specifications.

In 1938, they built a warming hut about the size of a two car garage and erected two rope tows near the State Line; by mid December they added a third tow up the steepest part of the hill, directly in front of the present day lodge. The original premise was to have a place where they and their friends would have a place to ski. Opening day, after the first snowfall, proved that wrong; there were 300 people waiting to ski. Rather than a personal retreat, they had a business.

In 1940 a larger and more complete building was built to handle the ever increasing crowds. During the war years things slowed down a bit, but after that, Wilmot Mountain grew just like Topsy. In 1939 it already had one of the best ski schools founded by Helmut Teichner. Although fully a business, it was still handled much like a hobby; Walter Stopa, Sr. was still a practicing architect in Chicago. 1952 changed all that when the Larchmont Corporation accidentally invented the first snow machine. Walter traveled east to see a demonstration; the next season Wilmot Mountain became the first ski area open to the general public in the world that no longer relied on nature for snow.

The earliest way to groom the slopes was to have the ski school and patrol sidestep up and down them until all the snow was packed. In the mid 50's a wide track Oliver Tractor with 2 x 4's bolted to the grousers replaced human power. Experimentation has continued up until the present day; the area now has a fleet of ten highly specialized snowgrooming tractors.

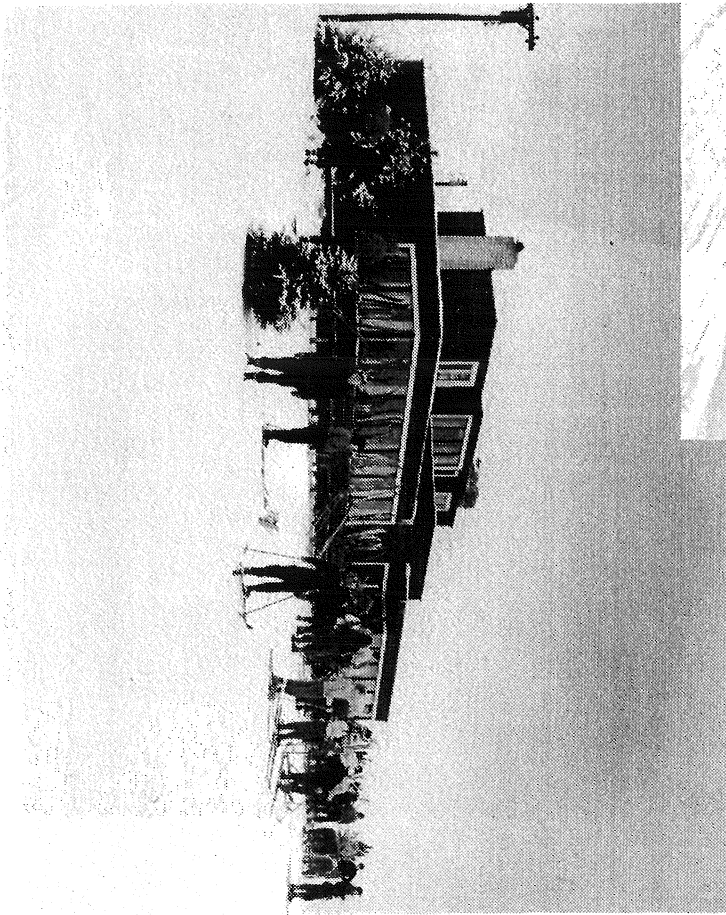
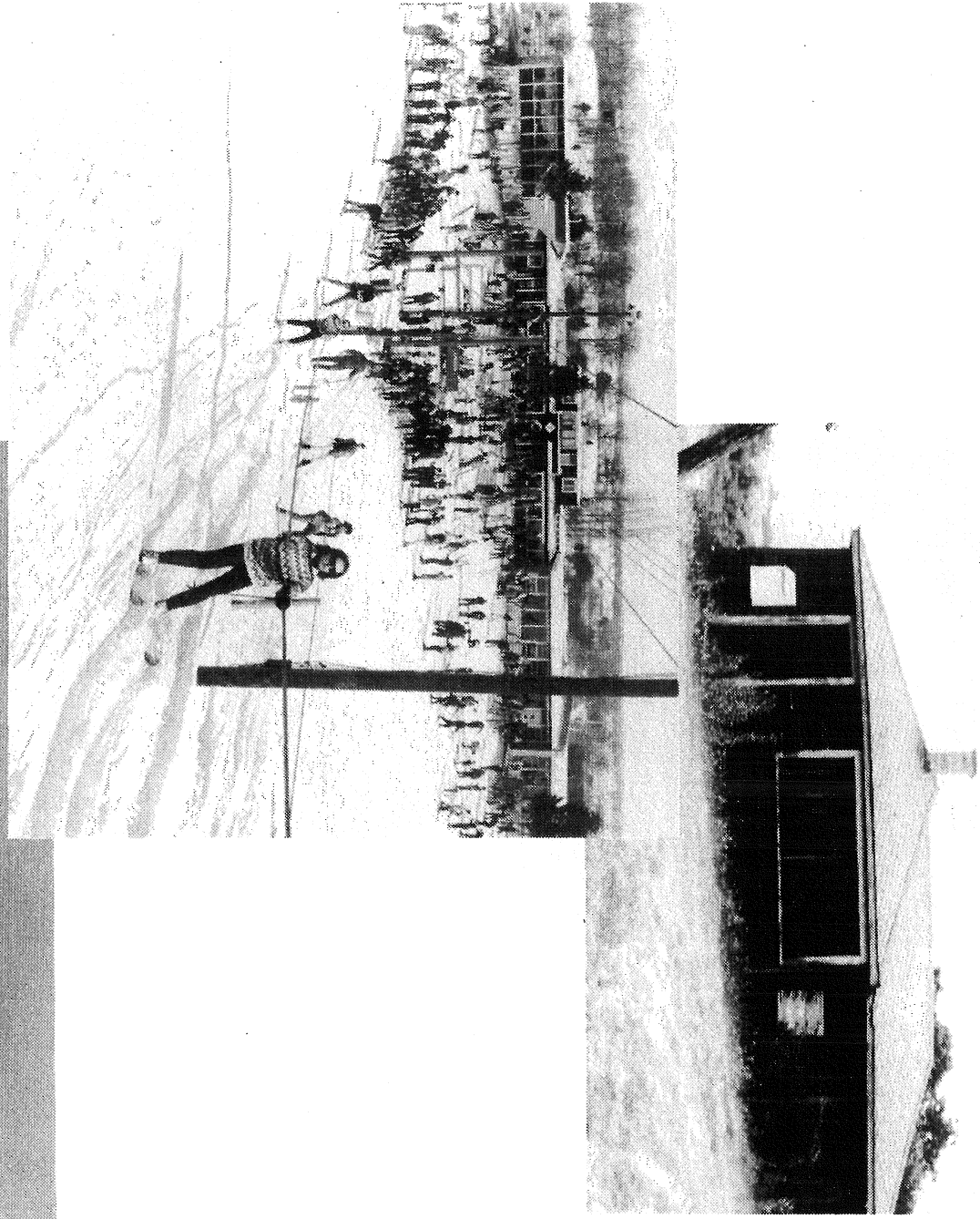
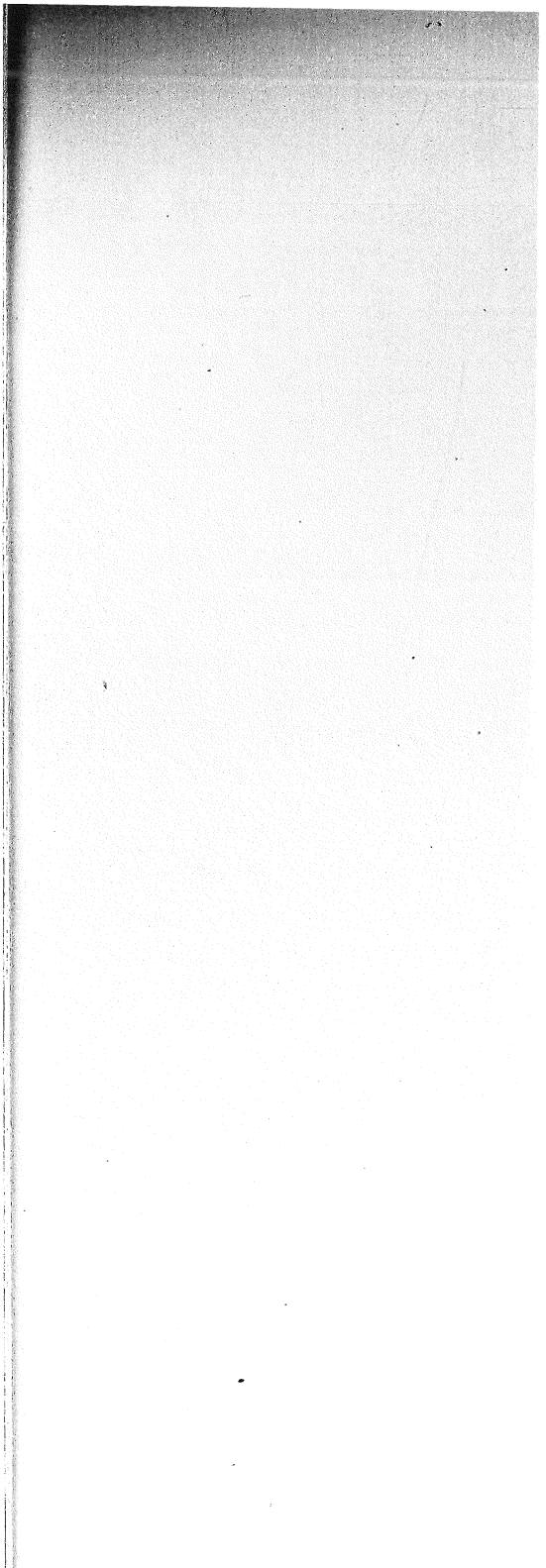
In 1954 Charles Pagel died and the estate and his farm had to be sold. The Stopa's, having already invested in the land, purchased it.

Jeanne Stopa opened one of the largest and most complete ski shops in the midwest and the Stopa men set out to be Hill Builders while raising the top of the hill to accomodate a new luxury, two mechanical lifts. No longer would Wilmot skiers have to strain their arms to keep a grasp on the rope tow, they could lean back on the T-Bar and have it pull them uphill.

Luxury grew on luxury; a sophisticated ski shop, two cafeterias, a lounge with a fireplace, and in 1961 the ultimate desire of the ski set was added; a chairlift. Since then seven more chairlifts have been added, and the hills built much higher.

Both T-Bars and six rope tows have been replaced by chairlifts. Currently the area has eight chairlifts and six rope tows.

The Stopa children, John, Conrad, Walter Jr. and Diane and their respective spouses Joni, Karen, Cyndi and Michael Reese are carrying out the family tradition.



The Wilmot Stage Stop

The Wilmot Stage Stop, Wisconsin's oldest tap and dining room was built in 1848 by Ephraim Wilcox.

John Hegeman, a native of Westphalia Germany, purchased the Wilmot Hotel, as it was originally named, in the early 1850's. The hotel served as an overnight stop for the stageline and the ox and mule trains that traveled between Galena, IL and Southport (Kenosha).

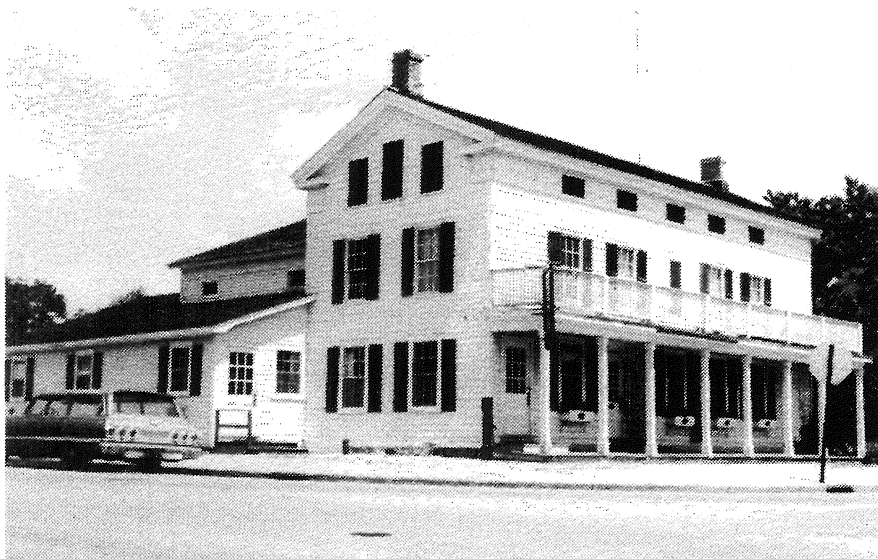
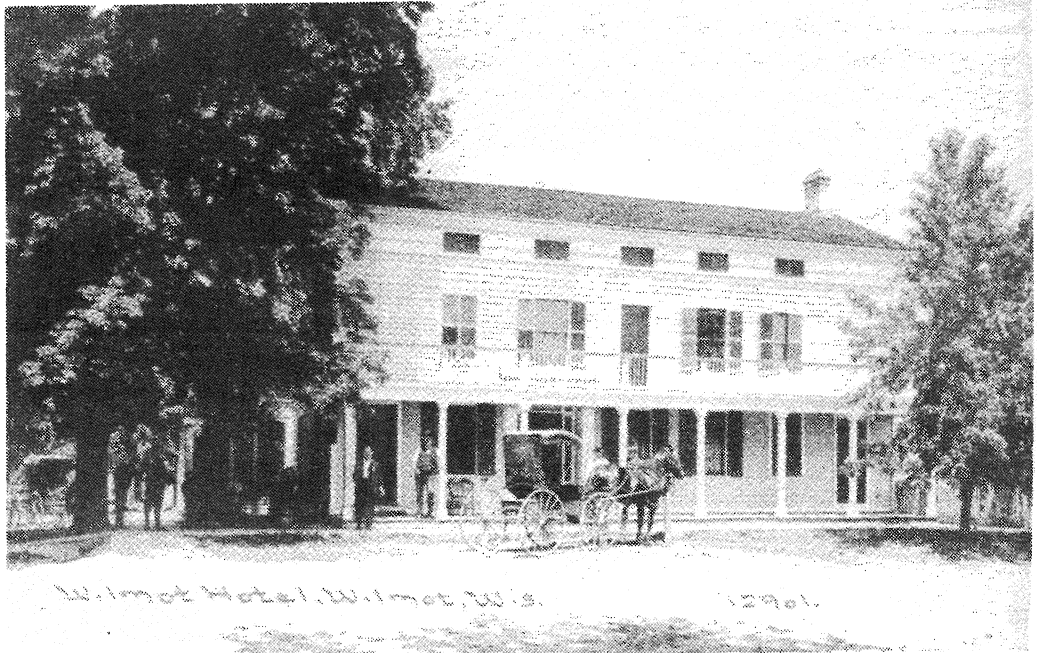
It also became a popular watering hole for the stevedores aboard the freighters on the nearby Fox River

Upon the death of John Hegeman in 1896, his son Louis Hegeman took over the operation of the hotel and restaurant. Louis closed off the guest rooms in the early 1930's.

The next in line was his son Rolland Hegeman and daughter Hazel Hegeman Winn who in turn passed it on to fourth generation Rolland K. Winn.

It was Rolland "Rod" Winn who in 1961 renovated the building, making every attempt to preserve the past and restore the inn to its former prominence.

Winn retired in 1971 passing the Stage Stop to his daughter Nancy Hackett and her husband Ron, who now continue the tradition of five generations of the Hegeman family and the inn which has never closed its doors.

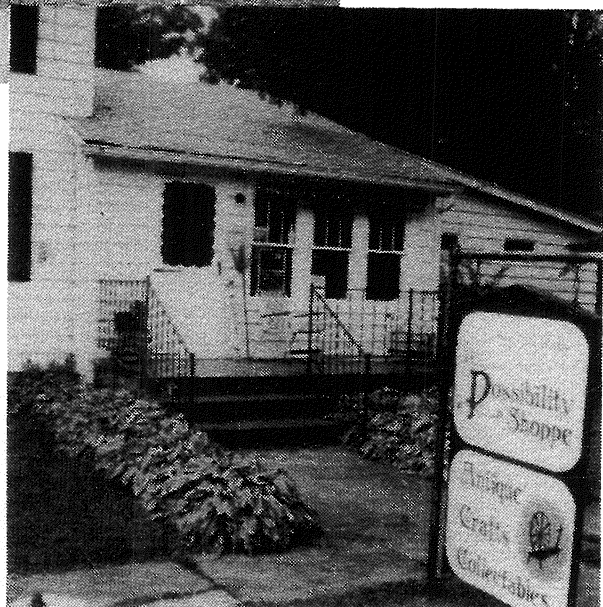


Ye Possibility Shoppe, Inc.

Ye Possibility Shoppe, Inc. downtown Wilmot was incorporated January 9, 1978. Jane and Rog Bailey purchased the "Blue Mushroom" from the Roger Buss family in November 1977. After much remodeling, our doors were opened to the public on March 11, 1978.

The part of the facility occupied by the gift shoppe and living quarters is one of the oldest buildings in Wilmot. The portion used to display furniture, antiques and collectibles and the family room was added in the early 70's by previous owners for an art gallery.

The business started as a hobby and became a permanent shop when Baileys moved to Wilmot. They specialize in Furniture Restoration - strip - refinish - upholstery - cane - rush, hand made gifts - wood items - candles - knit items and routed signs. We are open Wednesday thru Sunday before 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.



The Riverside Tavern

Located on the bank of the Fox River at The Wilmot Dam is the Riverside Tavern. The property dates back to 1839 and the building built over 125 years ago. This building was originally an Indian Trading Post.

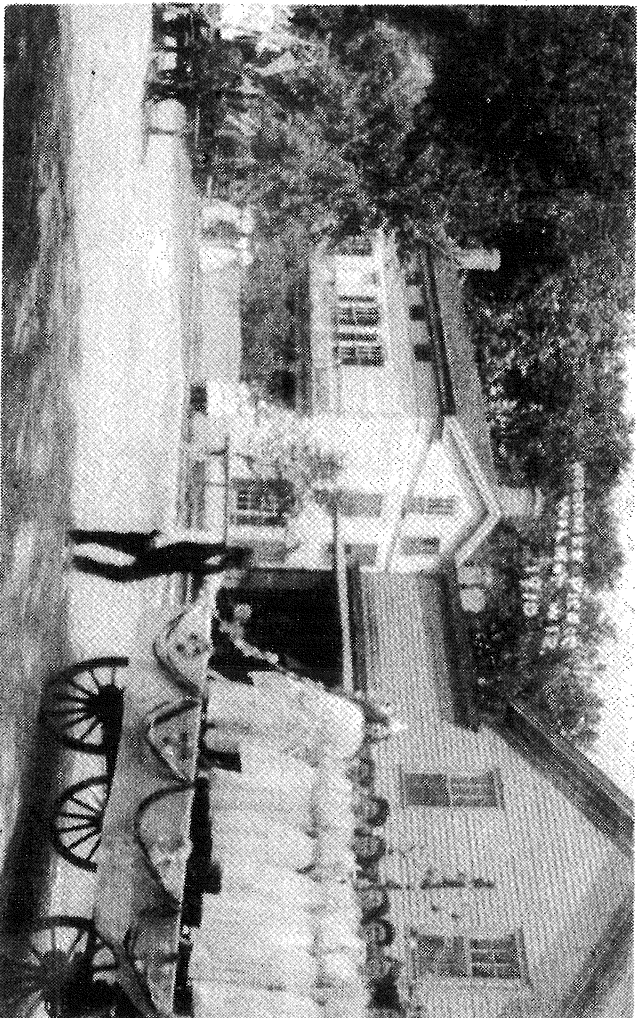
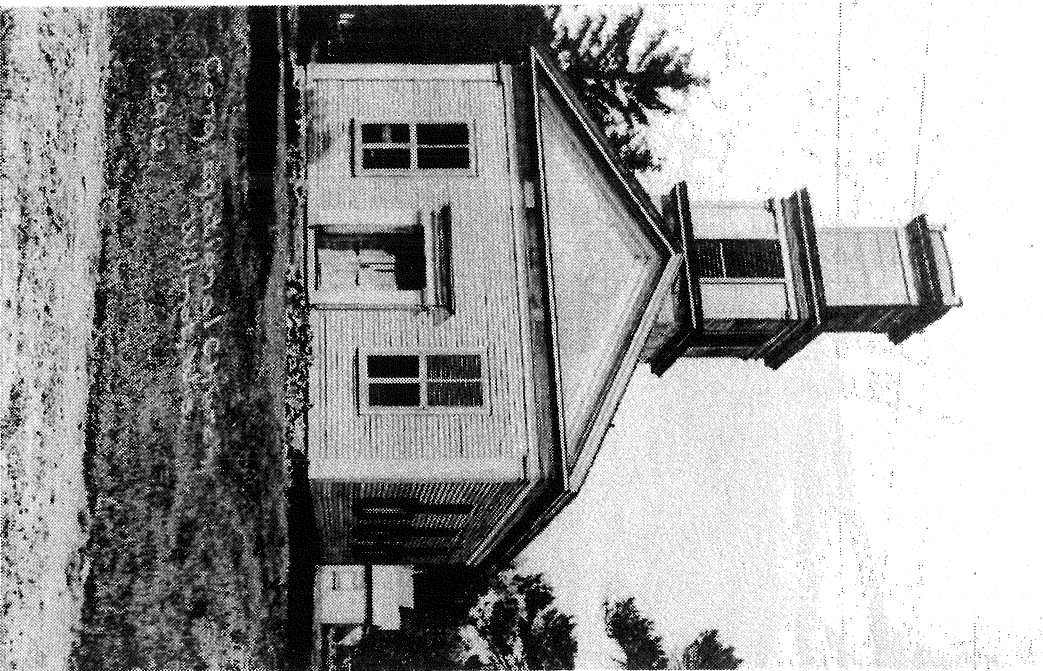
J.W. Haythorne was one of the first owners followed by Frank Rudolph at which time it became a saloon.

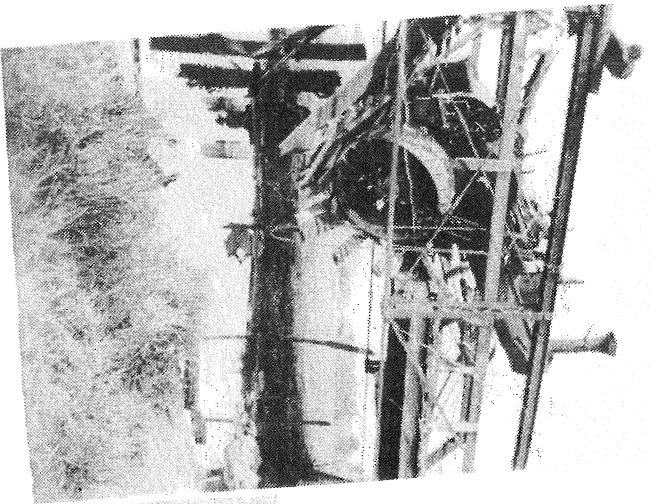
John Rausch Sr. was the next owner after which time it was operated by the Rausch heirs. It was then sold to John Schilz in the early 1970's. The next owner was James Minnis until 1987 when he sold the property to Edward and Kathy Clark.



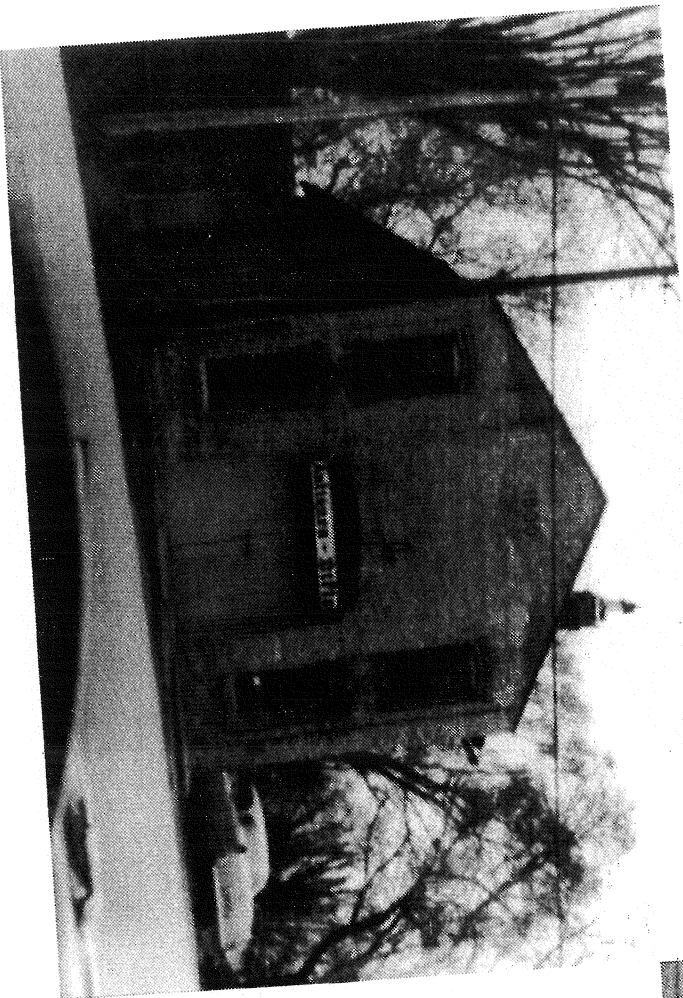
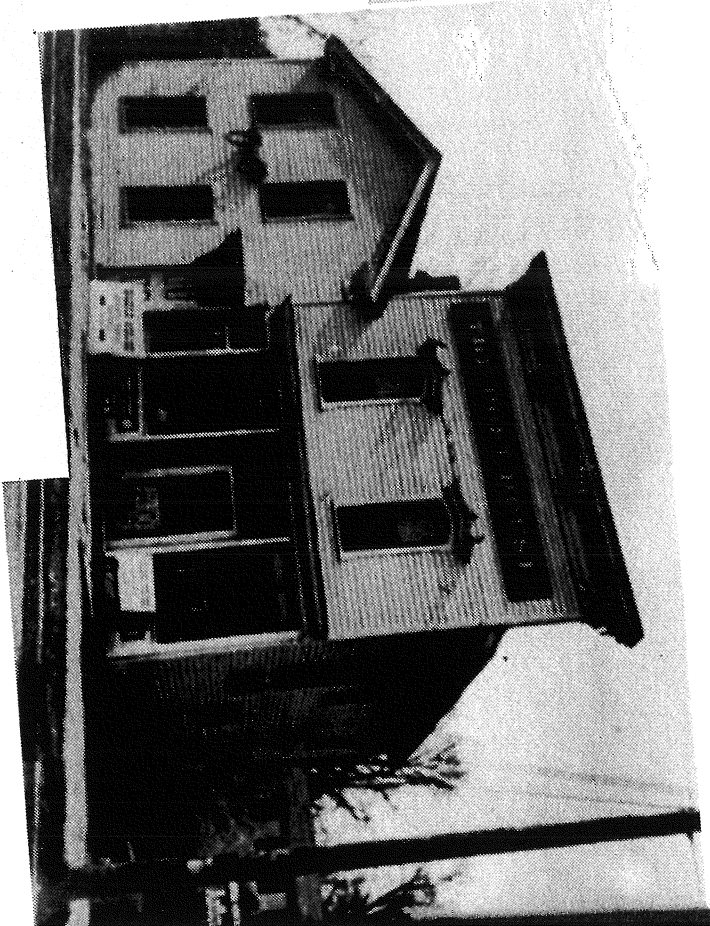


John Frank





Bridge collapsed under
steam engine owned by
Ben Kanis





MAP OF
WILMOT

KENOSHA COUNTY
 WIS.

SALE 16 RODS TO AN INCH

Circa 1895

FROM THE FILE OF
 KENOSHA COUNTY
 RECORD SOCIETY