



HISTORICAL NOTES

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WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

by Jerry Abitz

All of us have experienced life as reflected in this story's title. Fortunately, most problems are usually short-term in duration. But can you even begin to imagine such a quandry lasting six years? Well, that happened to two brothers in Kewaunee who built a filling station in 1931, diagonally across the intersection from the Union State Bank.

Leo and Ed Salkowski, natives of Kewaunee, had migrated to Chicago for employment. When their father, Joseph, died, they returned home. In the estate was a lot located on the southwest corner of Ellis and Milwaukee Streets. (Individuals familiar with the area today will recognize it as the site of the gas station operated by the Parkos family.) The Salkowski brothers decided to turn that empty lot into an income-producing property; namely, a filling station.

To appreciate the situation, one needs some history to understand what was happening. By the 1930s, automobile ownership had become quite common, and an unregulated industry arose to service them. From gasoline pumps mounted curbside, filling and service stations evolved on the prominent thoroughfares, many of which were where the richest residents lived. Homes were demolished and filling stations erected.

A natural aversion to this situation resulted. Would you want something like that on your block, attracting seedy-looking characters or, at least, people with grease-covered hands? Quite naturally, these places were about as welcome as a bordello.¹ To counteract this revulsion, architects began designing stations that blended better into the landscape.

A series of accidents also plagued the early stations. In Madison, according to the authors of *Fill 'er Up*,² a house was torn down, the basement cavity backfilled with gravel, and a station built on the site. Unfortunately, gasoline fumes easily infiltrated the pore spaces and a fire, caused by an electrical short, leveled the station.

Statewide controls were introduced to combat some of these practices. On April 15, 1931, new Wisconsin regulations went into effect, to be overseen by the Wisconsin Industrial Commission. Unfortunately for the Salkowski brothers, they fell afoul of these codes when they decided to build their station. According to correspondence found in a file at the Wisconsin Historical Society, the Salkowskis had been told by their contractor, the Albrecht Manufacturing Co., that a copy of the new code would not be available before July 1st, and the old code would be in effect until it received a copy.

So their filling station was built, opening in June 1931. August 31 is when the correspondence with the Industrial Commission began. The file also included correspondence of the same date to both Mayor Karsten and the



Salkowski's Filling Station, as viewed in late 2011 from the east along Milwaukee Street (Hwy. 42) in Kewaunee. Photo by Jerry Abitz.

If you wish to receive the *Historical Notes* in color and online, send your request to skslk@centurytel.net with your name and email address.

(cont. on page 2)

When Things Go Wrong (cont. from page 1)

Albrecht Co., but did not include their respective answers. However, it must have seemed to the station owners as if it was all a bad dream.

The charges made by the Industrial Commission identified six problem areas: (1) The station must be fireproof construction. (2) The west wall of the building was on the lot line and contained windows. (3) No basement allowed unless the floor above it was of fireproof construction. (4) Complete plans were never submitted to the Industrial Commission. (5) The bearing walls did not have a masonry bond between every course. (6) Because of its size, the canopy ceiling covering the pumping area needed to be of incombustible materials.

The station was 42 inches from the wood-frame building which faced Ellis Street. The state wanted the windows

closed and a parapet wall erected [to be three feet higher than the roof] to protect the adjacent building. The concrete floor covering the basement was built using wooden beams rather than steel girders. The men's toilet area had no exterior vent, only a window to the service bay which was considered non-compliant.

How would you defend yourself against this powerful regulating group? In today's world, you would hire a lawyer and go from there. In the 1930s, it was Leo Salkowski who led the attack on the Commission. The plans for their Tudor Revival-style station³ were for a station actually built in Chicago, and no copy had been sent to the state. An architect was hired to draw plans for whatever already existed. The Salkowskis dawdled, thinking perhaps the Commission would change its mind. They pleaded innocence, that the Albrecht Co. should have been better informed, and blamed the Commission for not being on the spot to inform the Salkowskis when they were in town making sure the Hamachek building was built to code (also under construction in Kewaunee at that time). When all else failed, they argued it was an unnecessary expense during hard times. (It was the depths of the Great Depression.)

Madison demanded a face-to-face discussion. Leo responded that he had come through Madison on his way home from a trip, but it was Thanksgiving Day and did not wish to stay overnight. But he did appear later in person on December 8, 1931. A suggestion was made that he contact J. F. Martz, superintendent of construction for the Wadham Co.,⁴ to advise him.

On February 3, 1932, word was sent to Charles T. Wheeler, an inspector for the Commission in Green Bay, to make a detailed inspection and file a report. That, however, was delayed — the roads in spring were impassible; the only way Wheeler could get to Kewaunee was by way of Algoma and then head south. On May 16, he filed a report that, in essence, said, "No progress has been made." Fifteen violations were listed.

The file did not have any correspondence as to how the two sides came to an agreement. But an examination of the property the building to the west, which Salkowski was going to tear down and turn into a parking lot for his business, is still there. Neither is there a parapet wall. Obviously, compromises were made.

The final piece of correspondence, dated May 27, 1936, from Leo Salkowski, included this statement: "Apparently the Industrial Commission never forgets!" One thinks he got that right.



Another view of Salkowski's Filling Station, as seen from Ellis Street. **Insert and object circled in upper lefthand corner:** The Flying Red Horse logo, used by the Michigan-based Wadham Co. which serviced filling stations supplying Mobilgas to their customers. *Photo by Jerry Abitz.*

¹Another name for a house of prostitution.

²*Fill 'er Up: The Glory Days of Wisconsin Gas Stations.* Jim Draeger and Mark Speltz, Wisconsin Historical Society Press, Madison, WI. 2008.

³A style of architecture featuring brick on the ground floor with stucco and boards resembling post and beam/half-timbering on the second floor.

⁴Wadham Co. serviced the stations with Mobil Oil Co. products; their logo was the Flying Red Horse.

KEWAUNEE COUNTY CHURCHES: UNKNOWN OR UNRECORDED HISTORY

by Jerry Abitz

Back in 1996, I finished compilation of the combined histories of the Kewaunee County churches that resulted in three, large, three-ring binders located in the History Center. My late friend, Steve Kander, to whom I am gratefully indebted for all the history he uncovered, started this project. I thought I had a pretty good knowledge of this subject. But, at this point, I am no longer so sure.

For about five years, I have been searching for a ghost church, a mission to St. Joseph, in the Walhain area of the Town of Luxemburg, but to no avail. When I mention it to residents of the area, I draw blanks. I've come to the conclusion I will never know.

The latest mystery came about as the result of a phone call from Judy Carlsen of Norway, Michigan. She was working on an article for a recently-published *Voyageur* magazine.¹ Inquiring about a Lincoln Presbyterian church, she had already contacted Mose Alberts who lives a short distance north of Lincoln. My eyebrows arched when I heard her say, "Presbyterian church." *You have to be pulling my leg*, I thought; *there was never such a church in Lincoln*. The site she mentioned was diagonally across the road from the Alberts' residence. I immediately recognized the site of what I had considered to be a gospel church, the Bible Truth Hall. It closed and was razed after a consolidation that formed the Country Bible Church on Highway 54 at Hillside. The cemetery is the only evidence of its location.

Emails followed that revealed Carlsen was privy to information that the KCHS was not. A trip to the History Center to reread existing history did not mention anything about the church being Presbyterian; neither did a trip to the County Records shed any light. Stopping at the Algoma Library, I found a two-sentence listing in a 1911 newspaper under the heading of "News from Lincoln," sort of a folksy column about what was happening out there, which stated that the Lincoln Presbyterian church, built in the 1870s,

was being torn down and replaced with a new building. *How's that for a needle in a haystack?*

A subsequent reading of the history of the nearby St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church mentions that a number of their members had left in the 1860s and established a



Bible conference (circa 1936, 1937), conducted by Wm. Haige (man on the left with the hat). The pastor at the time was N. Belle. Photo courtesy of KCHS photo collection.

church nearby. Carlsen stated it was a French Presbyterian church affiliated with the Robinsonville Presbyterian, located in Champion just over the line in Brown County. I didn't know there was such a denomination, but my late friend, Cletus Bellin, had clarified the fact when he told me there was such a church in Belgium. Not a Huguenot² church, it was a Calvinist church based upon the teachings of John Calvin who held sway in Geneva, Switzerland. François Petinot³ and his group were of this denomination.

Carlsen also wrote that it became a Plymouth Brethren Church. Our history of this congregation agrees on that. This denomination does not have ordained ministers, but relies on the Bible as the sole source of faith and practice.

Why did this shift take place, going from a highly organized, structured group to one that relies on individual interpretations of the Bible? Our records indicate that the new church was taken over prior to 1916 by a Pentecostal group because the congregation appeared to be like "sheep without a shepherd." This "new" religion offered freedom from rituals. Joy and happiness was stressed in contrast to the somberness associated with many church groups.

All churches have breakaway groups. People feel slighted, feel under-valued, the congregation isn't friendly enough, the music isn't what they like, or they dislike the leadership (clergy or layperson). Disputes over the location of a new building when the old one burns down lead to rifts within the flock, causing some members to go elsewhere.

In the end, just when you think you know the history of the area, you find out that there are many unanswered questions that remain.



Bible Truth Hall (circa 1980), built in 1911. Photo courtesy of KCHS photo collection.

¹The magazine of history covering Northeastern Wisconsin, published biennially by the Brown County Historical Society.

²The name given to those protestant followers of John Calvin evicted from France by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 by King Louis XIV.

³The leader of the group of Belgians who first settled in this area.

CHRISTKINDLMARKT 2011

by Tom Schuller

As the sound of the horses hooves clip-clopped in the morning air, the Historical Society's Jail Museum opened its doors for another Christkindlmarkt held Friday evening and all day Saturday, Nov. 25-26.

This old-world traditional market, with its hand-crafted goods and specialty foods, was held in Hamachek Hall in downtown Kewaunee. The aroma of fresh-baked cookies wafted through the air as we enjoyed the slow-paced wagon ride through the Marquette Historical District on Saturday.



One of the many shopping options inside Hamachek Hall for the annual Christkindlmarkt. Photo by Kevin Kemp.

Our narrator and local historian, Tom Schuller, provided the estimated 40 riders with background information about the homeowners and their houses as we passed. Starting with the early history of the area and moving through the 1880s and beyond, he explained the reasoning behind why the types of houses were built and their current historical status.

Back at the Museum, upwards of 100 people came for a look around. Some came because of the recent publicity from the paranormal investigations that had been conducted. Others came because they had never been there before even though they live close by. Still others came from out of town and wanted to see the building because of the horse-and-wagon parked outside.

Our two volunteers, Tammy Etienne and Mary Reckelberg, were kept busy throughout the day. The wagon rides continued nonstop with only a half-

hour break for lunch. People came until it was time to close. As we locked up the Museum and thanked everyone for their help, the wagon driver, Steve Stnard, asked, "See you again next year?" Probably so!

VETERANS DAY

11-11-11

by Tom Schuller

ATTEN-HUT! As the bugle notes rang out in the crisp night air, the defenders of our freedom remembered the ones who stood with them in the wars in which they had served. Marching five abreast, they carried the flag they all had fought so bravely for. Some, too tired to march, rode to their place of honor in cars or a horse-drawn wagon.

Arriving at the Great Lakes shore, they heard the speeches honoring their service. Fireworks burst into the air, bringing back memories to some of past conflicts. Inside Hamachek Hall, hundreds of people gathered to partake of the free food and drink, donated in gratitude for the sacrifices made. Laughter filled the air as Ron Heuer and his friends provided the music that had young and old dancing until it was time to bid adieu.

We should all say "Thank You" to the people that made this night possible. To Kevin Kemp, and John Pagel, and Dan Ninedorf, and Nellie De Baker, and all the others who gave their time and expertise to honor these brave men and women, thank you for giving us a night to remember!



One of the speakers, Nellie De Baker, KCHS director (second from right), is seen here participating in the parade from the Courthouse down to Hamachek Hall on the end of Ellis Street along the shore of Lake Michigan. Photo by Doug Ramsay.

WINDMILLS: HARVESTING THE WIND FOR FARM POWER

by Jerry Abitz

As a farm kid growing up in the 1930s and '40s, the ever-present windmills on Wisconsin farms always fascinated me. I was also cognizant that many bore the brand name of "Monitor" on the vane. Before electricity came to their area, farmers used them to pump water from their wells to keep their dairy cows well watered.

But several decades earlier, the same company had manufactured windmills that extended above the barn roof in an era when round barns were being advertised as the most efficient and advocated by the scientists/professors at UW-Madison's School of Agriculture. They were multi-purpose machines capable of pumping water, grinding feed for the cattle, and running conveyors to move feed around. As someone whose college training led him to his first career as an agriculture teacher, I was very much aware of this bit of history.

Around 1976, two sites in Kewaunee County were added to the National Register of Historic Places — the Pilgrim Farm south of Norman and the Massart Farm near Rosiere. The Pilgrim Farm had such a windmill on its roof; such a windmill also exists on Humboldt Road on Green Bay's east side on the Fontaine farm's "round barn."

Time had a way of taking its toll on these windmills, and they stopped working. Additionally, with the advancement in farm technology in the form of tractors and electrification, such devices became obsolete. In the case of this particular windmill (rooftop type), the building to which it was attached needed lots of costly maintenance. Before the barn collapsed in a windstorm, Brian Rasmussen removed the windmill to have it restored.

His father, Ralph Rasmussen, had often remarked he would like to restore this machine, but never had the time nor resources to do so. Brian, as an act of love for his father, undertook the project and hired someone from Michigan to restore it. For at least a year, it was displayed in the threshing

barn at the Heritage Farm maintained by Agricultural Heritage and Resources on Highway 42 south of Kewaunee.

After the restoration, Rasmussen wanted a permanent place where it could be displayed. He approached Baker Manufacturing in Evansville, Wisconsin, the same company that manufactured this machine around 1900. They agreed to give him tax credits and put it on display. The word I had received was that it was in a museum.

When attending a meeting sponsored by the Wisconsin Historical Society over a year ago, I met the mayor of Evansville. Inquiring about the windmill, I was told it was located in a mall. Last spring, while visiting my son who lives in southern Wisconsin, the two of us drove over on a Sunday afternoon. The mall was an antiques mall on Main Street. The windmill is set up on the basement floor and extends through an opening in the ground floor. It is huge! Unfortunately, there are no signs identifying its origin, neither could I find anyone present to verify where it came from. One shopowner stated she thought it had come from the Wausau area.

A phone call to Rasmussen verified we had the right location. According to him, it was the largest windmill the company ever made and probably is the only one of this model still in existence. Baker Manufacturing, still in operation today, manufactures water pumps and other supplies related to pumps.

If you are ever in the Madison area, head out on South Park Street/U.S. 12 to Evansville, just over the line in Rock County. The display and ancillary items is a trip down Memory Lane. Thanks should be extended to Brian Rasmussen for his preservation of this bit of memorabilia.



Monitor rooftop windmill on display at Heritage Farm. Standing in front are Brian Rasmussen and family (left) and his father, Ralph Rasmussen. Photo by Jerry Sinkula.



Postcard showing rooftop windmill (circa 1905). Provided by Brian Rasmussen.

¹Monitor was the registered trademark of the windmills manufactured by Baker Manufacturing in Evansville, Wisc.

²The National Register for Historic Places uses the name of the original owner for naming sites.

³Although the barn technically is not round, its [approx.] 14 sides makes it appear round.

NEWS FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Report from the Trenches

by Jerry Abitz

NORTHEAST CONVENTION — Jerry and Althea Abitz attended the convention of historical societies held in New Holstein on August 27. This is an annual convention co-sponsored by the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) and the Wisconsin Council for Local History (WCLH). Various societies reported on their activities, and current problems and possible solutions were discussed. The WHS was represented by Rick Bernstein who chaired part of the meeting. A tour of the historic Timm House and the Pioneer Corner Museum ended the session. Jerry won an afghan as a door prize. The 2012 convention will be in Pulaski.

AG HERITAGE DAYS — As in the past, the KCHS had a display for this two-day event at the Luxemburg Fairgrounds on September 24-25. Sales materials were offered and photos displayed as well as a mystery object (a one-pound butter mold), that people were invited to name what it was or what it was used for. Cheese samples from Ron's Cheese, Krohn's Dairy Store, and Dairy Farmers of America were offered to visitors who stopped by. Staffing the display were Directors Arletta Bertrand, Bevan Laird, Mary Reckelberg, Marilyn Schleis, and Mark Teske.

WHS CONVENTION AT STEVENS POINT — Judy Srnka, along with Jerry and Althea Abitz attended this convention at the Holiday Inn. Workshops of interest to local historians as well as preservationists were held on both Friday and Saturday, Sept. 24-25. Jerry also attended the Thursday evening business meeting of the Wisconsin Council for Local History. He has served on this board for four years, two as secretary; his term expires December 31. Celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its founding, this group monitors and lobbies for the 387 local historical societies in Wisconsin.

AGRICULTURAL HISTORY & RESOURCES (AHR) OKTOBERFEST — Tom Schuller and Jerry Abitz set up and staffed the display at the Heritage

Farm south of Kewaunee on Sunday, Oct. 2. Historical family documents, an 1814 map from the Decker Collection, and books on Germany (both in English and German) were on display. Prepared by Abitz with Schuller's help, a six-page handout on German immigration was available, and a continuous VHS tape on Germany was shown.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION DINNER — The various volunteers who staff our museum plus individuals who have helped us move forward, along with their spouses, were invited to a dinner in recognition of their efforts at the Hotel Stebbins in Algoma on Saturday, Oct. 8. Gloria Peterson, History Center team leader, was honored for her work. She was awarded a framed certificate, and her name added to the KCHS Wall of Fame on display at the Jail Museum in Kewaunee. Mark Teske gave a presentation on the Civil War in which his ancestor fought on the Union side.

HISTORY CENTER (by PattySue Powell) — There has been a steady flow of people coming into the Kewaunee County History Center with a wide range of requests. Some folks just want general information about the area while others come in to find specific information about local history and/or genealogy for their family tree.

Thanks to Glennie Wilding-White's insistence, KCHS now has Internet access! Our email address is kchistory@yahoo.com. This also makes all the online records and information available to visitors doing research at the History Center. A grant proposal has been submitted to Dominion Power. If accepted, the KCHS would upgrade their computer setup with automatic backups on a server as well as on a "cloud" (a secure storage site on the Internet).

Church records from St. Peter's in Forestville are now available on flash drive, thanks to Carl Braun. He is also working on recording all the obituaries currently in the file cabinet.

There are always numerous projects going on, and volunteers are always welcome. For more information, call (920-487-2516) or send an email (kchistory@yahoo.com).

WINTER HISTORY SERIES (by PattySue Powell) — The annual lecture series is coming up quickly, with four programs scheduled for Saturdays in February at the History Center, starting at 1:00 p.m. (See next page for more info.)

KCHS JAIL MUSEUM —

Buy Local Volunteers — Early in October, five individuals from three Kewaunee businesses volunteered

(cont. on page 7)

Report from the Trenches *(cont. from page 6)*

at the KCHS Jail Museum where they took down the storyboards and put up new displays that can be used for special open houses and for next year's season. They also took apart the band display in a jail cell, thus preparing it for painting after the leak in the roof was fixed.

CHRISTKINDLMARKT *(see more on pg. 4)* — An annual tradition, the event was held on Friday evening and Saturday, Nov. 25-26. The Jail Museum, staffed by board members Tammy Etienne and Mary Reckelberg, was open to visitors. KCHS President, Tom Schuller, conducted tours on horse-drawn wagons through the Marquette Historic District that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Arts and crafts were on display for sale at Hamachek Hall on the lakefront off Ellis Street.

GOOD MORNING, WISCONSIN — On Channel 11 in Green Bay, this program broadcast a series of spots recorded live in our Jail Museum on October 27. They worked closely with SOS Investigating of Green Bay, a group that investigates paranormal activity. Readers of this newsletter will remember the article, "The Night at the Museum," in our OCTOBER 2011 issue where SOS reported on paranormal activity, also known as ghost hunting.

MORE GHOST HUNTING — Channel 38, WPNE, the Green Bay radio station affiliated with Wisconsin Public Radio, also taped ghost hunting at the

Museum. As a featured program on unique places in Wisconsin, its program will air at a later date, sometime in spring.

VETERANS DAY 11-11-11 *(see more on pg. 4)* — Nellie De Baker, KCHS board member, was one of the principal speakers for a program that began at the Veterans Memorial on Courthouse Square. Schuller set up a display on the military from the Civil War to World War II. The evening ended with fireworks on the lakefront.

WINTER HISTORY SERIES 1:00P EACH FEBRUARY SATURDAY AT THE HISTORY CENTER

**February 4 —
Causes of Death** with Judy Srnka

**February 11 —
After the Civil War** with Mark Teske

**February 18 —
Wool in Wisconsin** with Julie Bloor

**February 25 —
Immigration** with Tom Schuller

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For those of you who have donated, we thank you for helping us to achieve our goal of collecting, organizing, and housing the history of Kewaunee County. You cannot imagine the effort and countless hours that this takes. Since we are a 501(3)(c) non-profit organization, your gifts can be used as deductions on your income taxes to the amount the law allows.

Note: The listing below is based upon donations received between September 8 through November 17, 2011. If your gift has not been listed and was received at a later date, it will be acknowledged in the next issue. If your name is not listed and you gave, please contact the Treasurer, Arletta Bertrand (artie2003@netzero.com)

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(cont. on page 8)

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(cont. from page 7)

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KCHS

Historical Notes

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KEWAUNEE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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