

# 1955 Paper Reflects Different Era

*Tales of Earlier Days*  
By Bob Dewel

It's not that long ago for some of us—1955. World War II had now been in the history books for ten years. Baraboo had the makings of a remarkable recovery from its Depression doldrums. That sad period had been followed by the Ordnance Works high, and the subsequent let down when Badger downsized after the war.

Not that long ago for some local residents either, although even this scribe was not yet part of the Baraboo scene. Indeed, the great majority of our citizens today had never heard of Baraboo, or weren't even born yet. Yet it can be viewed as a significant turning point in local history.

We know a lot about 1955 thanks to alert reader Robert Fleming, who has donated a copy of the August 11, 1955 News-Republic for examination. In remarkable but faded condition, this was no ordinary edition of the News-Republic. Rather, it heralded the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this renowned daily. Few cities could, even then, support a newspaper printed in the frontier days of 1855.

Those first editions can be viewed today at the library, by means of the Microfilm, where each page of the old editions back to 1855 can be viewed on an enlarged screen. Many people use

this facility for genealogical research, and we use it for historical material.

## The Centennial Edition

This article, however, is interested only in the centennial edition of the News-Republic, not on film but an original copy. It is surprising how things have changed from then, in the 55 years leading up to today. For example, how many businesses that advertised then are still in existence today? Twenty? Ten?

Wrong! Only one advertiser from 1955 is still in business today! Any guesses? No, none of the banks advertised in the Centennial Section, though the old Savings and Loan had an ad. However that business has evolved through many changes into today's branch of the Harris bank, and there is hardly any resemblance to the little business operated out of an insurance agency office in 1955.

The one 1955 advertiser still extant isn't even in the city limits, but it is represented by an advertisement, featuring the familiar old iron kitchen stove. This is still featured occasionally in some of their advertising today. Operated firmly by Helen Baldwin and Lorene Ochsner, the Farm Kitchen had quickly developed a good reputation throughout the Midwest.

There is one other advertiser to be mentioned, not exactly commercial---the Chateau at Devils Lake had an ad in the paper. The lake was more of an amusement center in those days, so the ad promoted "Dancing Nightly through Labor Day". Yes, every night. More than one area marriage began as a chance meeting at the chateau!

As for other advertisers, gone are Red Goose, Fullmer Transfer, Lord's Shoes, Gem City Dairy, and Mobilgas. There were a host of insurance agents, hotel and supper club restaurants, and



hotel and supper club restaurants, and Wang's Drug Store, all gone now. But wait; here is a very tiny ad for The Barn, still operating today. So tiny I'd been over the paper four times before I noticed it. Good for them for lasting and thriving!

#### Local Promotion

So what was the news content, this being a centennial issue? It was mostly promotional for the area. As it did for decades, the paper's flag contained the phrase "Baraboo is the Hub of the Devils Lake-Dells Resort Region". Note the attached copy of the newspaper flag in 1855.

A few articles promoted the area as a tourist destination, but there is no mention of the Republic's Centennial. Perhaps this is because what we have is Section Four of the paper. Other sections presumably contained local and national news and some mention of the newspaper's history.

There are profuse pictures of Devils Lake over the years, some of which we wish we had today. There also are pictures of two dozen Baraboo homes, all extant today. All but two homes have different owners now. It would be interesting to compare building cost of those homes with similar structures today.

It is 55 years since 1955. The News-Republic is now 155 years old, a significant record in the publishing world. Though faded and yellow, the paper quality was better then, and this copy should last for sometime. The paper's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be in just 45 years. Time to start planning?

is a chapter of some novel! This is the publication they were celebrating in 1955. Now, in 2010 they could be celebrating the 155<sup>th</sup> year of the Republic, now called the News-Republic. Happy Birthday, Guys!

To The New Editor: Welcome to Baraboo. This story is a little different from my usual beat, but Richard Pulfuss thought it would be O.K.

#### FOR THE PHOTO

Here is the flag of the Republic of 1855. Note that most of the front age