

Charles Bradley and Private Perkins Tales of Earlier Days

By Bob Dewel

This writer is often the recipient of material readers want publicized. This column, however, is dedicated to significant Sauk County history, and we often have to decline. This article features two tales that upon investigation do qualify to be told. They concern an environmentalist in the latter part of the twentieth century and a soldier in the 19th Century. First, the soldier.

Civil War Soldier Perkins

James Adams recently sent me a copy of a Civil War letter from a soldier named Hugh C. Perkins, the letter being in the collection of Dr. Jacobsen of Mequon. Although not a Sauk County resident, Perkins participated for five years in a majority of the Civil War battles, including service with the famous Iron Brigade.

The two page scrawled message is typical of soldiers of all wars, when one's "desk" was a tree stump or rock, with a stub of a pencil, perhaps borrowed. Perkins message is well composed and mostly free of misspelling, and refers to two or more visits with President Lincoln.

Though the connection with Sauk County is limited, we include it because of an amusing circumstance. It seems that Perkins and a chum ran away from home at the age of 18, and "not being able to get the consent of our parents, we walked 16 miles to Berlin, WI. My chum Jasper Vosberg said we will go

away boys and come home men." It would be five years before he returned as a man to Wisconsin.

Perkins continues, "my Father came after me with Mother's orders not to come back without me." This is somewhat surprising, since war fever in both the North and the South was intense, even more so in the Midwest than in the population centers of the East. Indeed, both Perkins and local Iron Brigade soldiers mention being threatened by Southern partisans as they marched through Baltimore. Apparently Mrs. Perkins did not share that enthusiasm.

Perkins final statement on the matter concerns his Father, under orders from the lady of the family "not to return without me". He casually continues, stating that his Father, "not being able to overtake me, enlisted" himself! Apparently the father preferred the perils of war to the wrath of his wife!

Charles Bradley, Environmentalist

When I read the detailed life story of Charles Bradley, written by his son Charles Bradley and supplied to me by Alan and Nancy Schmid, I skimmed the first three dozen pages, despairingly finding only sparse Sauk County references to Mr. Bradley, a highly educated and traveled achiever in many fields.

Not until page 34 (of 41) do we discover that it is he who in 1971 became the husband of our well-respected environmentalist, Nina Bradley, and his subsequent relationship with the acclaimed Leopold Foundation on Levee Road. Appropriately, the wedding took place at the famed "shack" on the Leopold property..

After some five years in Bozeman, Montana. the newlyweds returned to Sauk County and in 1976

built a log home near the shack, using timber planted in the '30s by Nina's Father, Aldo Leopold on the then desolate and sandy property. Solar panels and a rock storage area for heat were environmental features. The building was to be used as a study center.

In earlier years Bradley had graduated from UW with a degree in geology and photography, and played a part in the conservation movement. Now he was an environmentalist, instrumental in the development of the area into what is now the Leopold Foundation, based on Aldo Leopold's Sand County Almanac and other work.

Seminars for students and others were begun, working closely with Nina, who soon was honored with an honorary doctorate for her work on the developing Leopold Reserve. In addition, Charles found time to appear at the Al. Ringling Theatre in a Theatre Guild production of The Mikado.

Charles became a prolific writer, not only on the environment but, due to his love of skiing, of the use of wax on skis. A fun-loving man, amusing events in his life are reported in his son Charles' book. His writing continued into his later years, publishing as recently as 1994. He was still was skiing in 1998 at the age of 88.

As it must with all men, death finally claimed this remarkable man. His life was well chronicled by his son, from whom most of this material was taken. Charles' birthday was an interesting combination of numbers, 1-11-11.

A Memorial observance of what would be his 100th birthday will be held on this coming 1-11-11, which is this coming Tuesday. Friends and admirers

may gather at the Nina Leopold home on Levee Road from 12 noon to 2 P.M.

SIDEBAR

If You Go:

100 years since Birth of Charles Bradley
Where Bradley home on Levee Road
Hours 12 Noon to 2 P.M.

Note to Editor I learned of this memorial only this week. Bradley was an important part of the Leopold movement from 1971 on, and many people will be interested in this article.