

Clearing This Writer's Desk is Hopeless Project

Tales of Earlier Days

By Bob Dewel Story No. 452

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In the 14 years we have been writing stories of Sauk County and Baraboo, alert readers have been generous with their suggestions of stories which I might write. Some tips were good for full columns, but others, while worthy, did not demand a lengthy consideration. Today we try and lower the pile of suggestions.

Reedsburg High School

For example, Kay Kruse lent me a copy of the Reedsburg High School Annual of 1912. There was plenty of humor, but mostly inside jokes no longer relevant today. I liked the sketch of a freshman, and reproduce it with this article. It is of course a caricature, but suggests the perennial plight of the new guy, in this case the new freshman, in school.

I was interested to note that of the 27 in the Reedsburg graduating class of 1912, at least two became leaders in rival Baraboo. Well known in their time were Harvey Weidman and W.E. Donahue. School colors then were purple and white. When were they changed, and why?

A Uranium Healing Parlor

Next we noted a brief mention in the Wisconsin Magazine of History about a new business in Lone Rock in 1954. It was established by Kenneth Crook and was named the Uranium Tunnel. "Lined with pulverized low grade uranium, patients could pay \$1 to sit and absorb the purportedly healthful radiation. Up to 200 visitors a day soon came to experience its effects, and imitators sprung up in other Wisconsin communities."

Crook was later charged with practicing medicine (being a crook?) without a license, and the government shut down his interstate shipments of uranium. Baraboo in the early years of the Twentieth Century had a magnetic healing emporium in what is now the Cornerstone Gallery, again of short duration. People paid to sit in a magnetic field. Even today many popular remedies do not fall under the strict standards of the Federal Drug Administration, and are widely touted for supposedly healing properties.

Saloons abounded in 1900

In July 1900 the city council approved saloon licenses for 15 individuals, as named in the newspaper of that day. There were also what were called Saloon Bonds, and it appears they were for what we now called surety bonds. The paper lists fifteen such bonds, and in each case the person getting the license is also named as principal. This is followed by another name listed as the sureties, usually a well-known business personality of the day.

Baraboo was a town of nearly 6000 then, so there was one saloon for every 400 men, women, and child. Eliminating the latter as customers, that's one saloon for about every 100 men! Several old timers say that the rear entrance to the present Cornerstone Gallery was really

FRESHMAN.



*Courtesy, Brenden Ratzell Uncle Al Ratzell
Garage - W Baraboo*



the ladies entrance to the Square tavern, which occupied that building in about the Depression years.

The only other license granted was to a George Claus for a stand to sell cigars and fruit on the sidewalk on the east side of his store on Ash Street on July 4th. Presumably there was the usual Fourth of July celebration that day and George wanted to pick up a couple extra bucks, or greenbacks as they were known then.

The Baraboo Family Name

In the past we have noted that there are families in the United States, and in Wisconsin as well, with the family name of Baraboo. We have on a couple occasions had Eugene and Marge Baraboo and family of Rothschild, WI as guests in the city, and they are members of the local Historical Society. Indeed their family history appears to trace back to the same source as the trader named Francois Barbeau, as researched by Mark Tully in his book "A Man Named Baraboo".

Interestingly, in both Eugene's and Francois' family history the name changed from Barbeau to Baraboo. Recently we noted a news item from Ocean Springs, Mississippi, in which someone named Nicki Baraboo was designated a South Mississippi hero for enriching the lives of hospitalized children in a rehabilitation center there.

Not only are there families named Baraboo, but ships, restaurants, license plates in Australia, and a host of other uses of the name. There's something about the word Baraboo! And here's another clipping—why does Hamilton Ohio have a street named Baraboo, as well as a Ringling Avenue?

Kathy Waddell's Column

Kathy Waddell's popular column of old newspaper clippings reminds us that you once had to call the fire dept., unless you had a rare telephone in 1911, by running to the fire call box on Fourth Avenue. The time lost, and malfunction of the box, resulted in John Hall, of Ridge Street, losing his home in October of that year.

Two years before, in August of 1909, the regular twice daily delivery of mail had been reduced to only once a day on Saturday due to a ruling change, limiting carriers to 44 hours a week. However, the local Post Office announced that the window would still be open Saturday afternoon for folks to pick up their mail. Today, in 2012, we face further restrictions in mail delivery from the venerable postal system, which in earlier decades had even been open on Sundays when the stagecoach came in.

Brenda Rotzoll

Recently Brenda sent a photo of her uncle Al Rotzoll and his garage in West Baraboo, where Al was also a car dealer. Brenda remembers it as being located on the north side of Linn St., somewhere to the east of the Connie Road corner when coming from Baraboo. Al and his brother, Brenda's dad, used to race cars at the county fair. Can anyone pinpoint the location?

Well, your scribe's desk is not clear yet, but the pile is a little lower!