

Rotzell Garage Location Responses Vary

Tales of Earlier Days

By Bob Dewel

As any columnist knows, you are often surprised by which item in your column may bring a response. I've had some stories I considered surprising and well-written which got no comments. Other times, a seeming trivial item draws considerable attention.

Such is the case with Monday's article, at the end of which is mentioned the possible location of the Al Rotzell Garage in West Baraboo. The phone calls were still coming in Tuesday afternoon. .

In the original story, we showed a picture of Al Rotzell, undated but proudly showing off what is believed to be a Packard convertible. In the background is his place of business, a garage regarding which Brenda Rotzell is asking for help in locating. Brenda is the niece of Al, being the daughter of Ben Rotzell. More on Ben in a moment.

I'd hardly finished my coffee Monday morning when John Geoghagan, always reliable, called to state that the garage in Brenda's picture was a building still standing today in West Baraboo, with a beauty parlor and other occupants. In an email, Joe Ward, also always reliable, had stated that Rotzell's garage was nearby, where the Subway stands today.

When I told Joe about John's recollection, he, always gentlemanly, replied "I stand corrected", a rarely needed

admission from this precise historian, and I thought the matter was settled. He later consulted Doug Hill, knowing the family's connection with the aforementioned building. I emailed Joe: "Your needing to stand corrected is a rare occurrence!"

Meantime, calls came in to the newspaper, relayed to me by the affable Annette Grossenbacher. I've lost the names of a couple callers but Evelyn Young, who grew up near the Rotzell garage, vehemently insisted it was on the South side of Linn Street, unlike the one mentioned by Geoghagan, Ward, and Hill.

When I consulted Ward, he sent a short and terse note, saying Ben Rotzell was on the South Side of Linn, where the Band Box Cleaners is today. Ben, who sold Graham cars, was also noted for his "Big Red Truck", also known as a wrecker.

This statement was confirmed by another caller, David Cafilish, and now I was really confused. The truth is I had not read Joe Ward's previous emails carefully. Had I done so, I would have recognized a coincidence: Two Rotzell brothers were involved, both with garages, one on the north side of Linn and one on the south side!

Meantime, other calls came in, too many to recall, and as I was writing this story, there was a call waiting from Joyce Alt, who grew up in the area and remembered only the Ben Rotzell garage on the South Side. She has clear memories of various stores on Linn, as well as who lived in most of the houses in Lyons, as it was called then.

She says that the building which occupied the area now occupied by Subway was sort of a general store, with the owners living upstairs. Then later it was a radiator shop, owned some of the time by Berkley,



Brenda
Rutledge
collection

Racing cars such as there were favorites at the Sauk County Fair



Joe
Ward
collection

before being removed by Doug Hill to make room for the Subway.

It turned out that Doug Hill, owner of Hill Electric, had the best information of all, being a lifetime resident. Attached is a photo of the two original buildings on the north side on or before 1910. Max Hill occupied it in 1916 for his electrical business. Others occupied it in succeeding years.

We thought we were done with this story, but Ward then sent me a three page dissertation by Brenda Rotzell. A distinguished journalist now residing in Baraboo, it was Brenda who first approached me on the buildings mentioned in this story... I'll save comments on Brenda's story about her father for another time.



At one time this was the Rotzell Garage