

Even a Newspaper Column has a History

Tales of Earlier Days

By Bob Dewel

This is article number 512 or so, as best we can count, of our 16 year series of stories about Sauk County and Baraboo. It is also our final article. Titled originally as “Yesteryear Revisited” and subsequently as “Tales of Earlier Days”, our column has presented stories ranging from pioneer days in the 1830s to events as recent as 2013.

Written in anecdotal form rather than statistical history, the stories often provide a more intimate view of life among our predecessors in this very beautiful and historic Sauk County. All stories were first published in the Baraboo News-Republic or in the short-lived Baraboo Sun. I thank the editors for their publication of what is hopefully an important contribution to Sauk County and Baraboo history.

Book Publication History

Four years ago we rearranged the 372 articles existing at that time into chronological order, with a dozen or more stories for each decade. The result was 1188 pages in three handsomely hard-bound volumes. Each library and historical society in the county, as well as the state historical society, was given copies of the books. Only a handful of copies exist otherwise. Some books can be checked out from the Baraboo Public Library., and perhaps the University Library

Then in 2012 we produced the matching Volume IV, with 106 new stories in 317 pages. In 2013 we produced 24 additional articles, but these have been published only in the News-Republic so far. There are a grand total 512 known articles to date. . There is no volume V however.

The small number of copies of Volume IV made the book price of \$79.50 per volume unreasonable--only two copies remain. If a reader wants to order a copy despite the price, a republication is possible. If enough readers want a cheaper soft-cover edition, or just want information, I can be reached at Oak Park Place.

There have been other minor publications. In earlier years I compiled the stories of each year in less elegant and poorly illustrated spiral-bound books. Other publications include the more recent and whimsical “Best of Bob” spiral publication. I quickly learned that there is no profit in low volume book publication. Other than perhaps a few of those early publications at the Booksmith, everything is out of print except for the two remaining copies of Volume IV.

Photo Credit---Dewel

Photo text: Bob Dewel has written and the News-Republic has printed some 512 local history stories over the past 16 years. Nearly all can be found in quality book form at libraries, though they are otherwise out of print. Republication is possible if there is enough demand.



Reflections

As readers might guess, the time has come for this 94 year old scribe to lay down his pen, or at least to give it a rest. There are still stories to be told, and future writers may want to retell some of our tales in a better fashion. I'm neither an educated journalist nor trained historian. However, I have a strong attachment to Baraboo and the County, adopted by me in 1961 as the place to spend the rest of my life.

A recent series of four articles analyzed the city and county. The first of these articles described the local scene, as I found it upon arrival in 1961. The second article recounted the spectacular attractions and improvements added in the ensuing 52 years, 1961 to 2013. This was followed with my detailing some of the present community needs. In the fourth story I presented ideas and encouragement for further improvement, along with a little prodding of the civic officials.

Growth and Change

Baraboo has come a long way from the simple promotional efforts of another era such as "See YOO in Bara-BOO" bumper stickers. Beautiful quality brochures now invite visitors to the city, extolling some of the many amenities that gave Baraboo Fourth Place in the Smithsonian's rating of "Small Towns to Visit in 2013".

Some 15 years ago another national magazine placed us as 54th best town, so we show a great continued improvement. This January, 2014, a national economic researcher's book places us among the 100 outstanding small cities for economic growth.

Population has doubled since our arrival in the city in 1961, to a surprising 14,000 persons, including contiguous West Baraboo. Our zip code lists 50% more people than Reedsburg and close to double that of Prairie du Sac-Sauk City combined. Yes, we've come a long way from that corny "See YOO in Bara-BOO" bumper sticker of earlier days to the handsomely published brochures of recent years. However, we have much to learn about how to attract and entertain visitors.

So, my writing affliction is arrested but not cured. There is still a little printer's ink flowing in my veins, and perhaps the editors will permit an occasional story in my remaining time. There seems to be a large number of loyal readers with an appetite for more knowledge of our highly favored spot on the earth. So, sincere thanks for reading my stuff, and altogether now...GO BARABOO!

Your scribe, Bob Dewel

Editor; Please see next page for photo information
