



MAPLE GROVE HISTORICAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY
12800 Arbor Lakes Parkway, Maple Grove, MN 55311



MAPLE GROVE HISTORY MUSEUM
9030 Forestview Lane N, Door J, Maple Grove MN 55369
www.maplegrovehistorical.org

Purpose: To collect and preserve information and artifacts and to educate the community about the history of Maple Grove, MN.

FROM COUNTRY FARM TO CITY CHARM

VOLUME 118

FEBRUARY 2025

Maple Grove is a charming, vibrant city woven from the rich tapestry of our history.

Our earliest settlers were indigenous people as we have discovered in our Native burial sites. On March 3, 1849 the Minnesota Territory was formed, which includes all of present-day state of Minnesota. Our first territorial governor, Alexander Ramsey, requested and built five military roads to aide travel on land instead of by water.

The Watab Treaty was drafted in 1853 to swap the Ho-Chunk Long Prairie land for five hundred thousand acres on the Crow River, near the Mississippi River, and into Maple Grove. Opponents declared that a Ho-Chunk reservation, only twenty-five miles from St. Anthony, was a poor choice. The land should be used to support the Euro-American immigrants for business and farming.

"The Homestead Act of 1862, signed by President Abraham Lincoln, granted Americans 160-acre plots of public land, perhaps one of the United States' most important pieces of legislation, led to Western expansion. Citizens of all walks of life made a homestead claim by paying a \$18 filing fee, a \$10 temporary claim fee, a \$2 commission to the land agent and \$6 final payment to receive an official patent on the land. Additional requirements included five years of continuous residence on the land, building a home on it, farming the land and making improvements. Veterans could claim homesteads even if they did not meet the homesteading requirement of being 21 years of age or older.

Maple Grove is a changed landscape from the log cabin in the "Big Woods" to the garden and dairy farms of the 1900's to the city charm starting in the 1970's, to the bustling vibrant city of today.

Memories of Maple Grove's Past

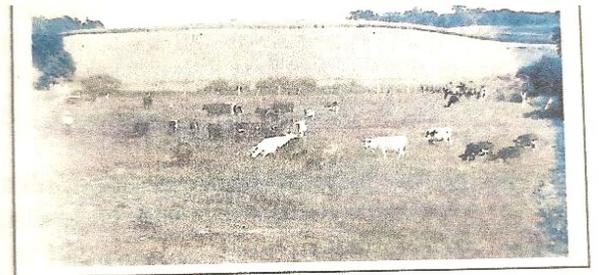
The last log cabin in Maple Grove built by Mr. Berg



From Farm Land to Park Land

My mother and I visited the farm several years ago. When we left, she was crying. She was very upset over what Larry Haeg and the park commission had done to her.

She had worked hard during the depression, with her dad, in haying and grain. The farm was to be her future investment.



Elm Creek tubing hill as it looked in the 1940's

As for me, I grew up on the farm. It will always be thought of as my home. Most of my youthful memories are from there.

James Reiser 5/09

THEN AND NOW: from the Krüssow Family Farming Operations to Cedar Island Elementary School amid a thriving suburban neighborhood.

by Kate Wodtke, with permission from Dave Krussow

This is the story of the **Krüssow Family**. Maple Grove Historical Preservation Society member Dave Krussow is the Great-Great-Grandson of Johann Joachim Christian Krüssow who settled in Maple Grove Township in 1870. In addition to his membership in MGSP, Dave is Treasurer of the Robbinsdale Historical Society and played an instrumental part in their restoration of the 1940 historic Graeser Park Beehive Fireplace (<https://restorelilacway.com/beehive-fireplaces/about/>).

The first known recorded Krüssow birth was in 1644 when Martin Krüssow was born in Freyenstein, Brandenburg Prussia, about 90 miles northwest of Berlin. Six to seven generations later Freyenstein remained the family base as his descendant, Johann Krüssow (1776-1846), and his wife Anna (Homüth) Krüssow (1787-1861), also raised their children in Freyenstein. Two of their sons, Johann Joachim and Ernst Heinrich, emigrated to the United States, broadening the family base to include a country an ocean away.



Ernst Heinrich Carl Krüssow
Circa 1892/1893



Johann Joachim Christian Krüssow
Circa 1889

First to arrive in the US, in **1853**, was Ernst Heinrich Krüssow (1817-1901). He and his wife Elizabeth (Steinhagen) Krüssow (1821-1888) settled just south of Milwaukee, WI. Known as 'Heinrich', the family with four sons and one daughter moved to Maple Grove Township in approximately 1862. Two years later, in April 1864, at the age of 47, Heinrich purchased 80 acres of land just north of Cedar Island Lake. In 1882 he purchased an additional 80 acres, land now occupied by Cedar Island Elementary School. In 1885 he deeded his original 80 acre farm to his youngest son, Heinrich "Henry" W. C. Krüssow. In 1887 Heinrich Krüssow, the first Krüssow to arrive in the United States, retired and sold his second 80 acre farm to someone outside of the family. He died in 1901 at the age of 84.

Two years apart in age, Heinrich and his older brother

Johann grew up in Prussia. As adults they reunited after seventeen years apart when Johann Krüssow (1815-1889) and his wife Maria (Heitman) Krüssow (1821-1888) settled in Maple Grove Township in **1870**. Johann was 55 when he purchased the land directly across the road from his younger brother, Heinrich.

Johann Krüssow and his wife were the parents of eight, including sons August Krüssow (1850-1931) and Louis Krüssow (1859-1927). With the help of their son, Louis - who was 11-years-old when he came to Maple Grove - Johann and Maria farmed their land in Maple Grove for nearly thirty years, until Johann's death in 1889. Their son, Louis Krüssow and his wife Emelie (Sandhoff) Krüssow (1870-1952) farmed the land until he sold it in 1920 when he retired.

Johann and Maria Krüssow's son, William Krüssow (1879-1964), was 20-years-old when he arrived with his parents from Prussia in 1870. With his brother Louis (far left) taking over the farm, William Krüssow (immediate left), the Great-Grandfather of Dave Krüssow, needed a different vocation. He left Maple Grove for the 'big city' of Minneapolis to work as a tailor.

William and his wife Margarethe (Dressel) Krüssow (1853-1928) were the parents of Henry John Krüssow, Sr. (1894-1977), a photo engraver. Henry Krüssow was the father of Henry John "Jack" Krüssow, Jr. (1924-2007). Jack was the father of Dave Krussow.

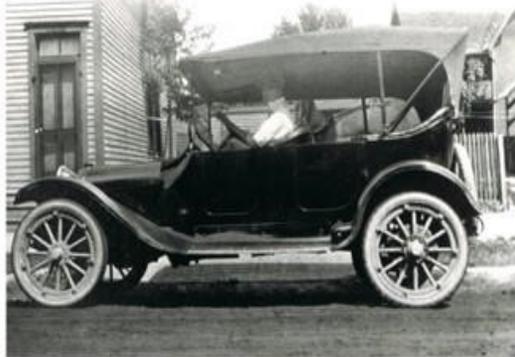
Although the senior Krüssow brothers, the original Maple Grove settlers, were both deceased, their remaining farm land stayed in the family, as their sons, Henry W.C. Krüssow and Louis Krüssow, continued the close family bond. From 1885 until 1906 the first-cousins owned, and worked, what were their fathers original farms, just across the road from each other. Henry W.C. Krüssow, son of Heinrich, sold his father's original 80 acres in 1906 and relocated his family to the Hood River Valley in Oregon where they established a long-running orchard growing and marketing apples and pears. When Louis sold his farm in 1920 none of the original Krüssow acres remained in the family.

In 1910 Louis and Emelie Krüssow's son - Johann and Maria's grandson - Frank Krüssow (1893-1977) had purchased a 160 acre farm near his father Louis. Located at the current intersection of East Fish Lake and Hemlock Roads the land purchased by Frank later became the thriving residential community it is today.

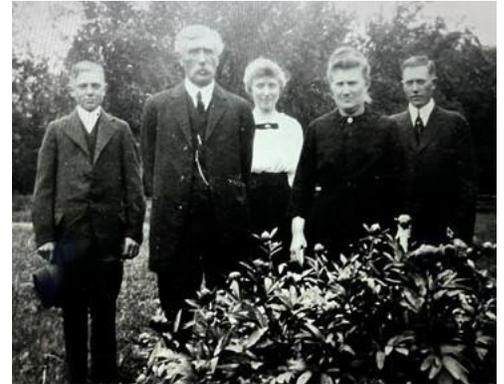
Krüssow con't Below is a circa-1949 photo of this last Krüssow farm. Pictured below (right) the farmhouse, now 6596 Jonquil Lane, still stands proudly among the 1970's and 80' style split-level homes that surrounded it as the farmland transformed into suburbia.



Johann Krüssow (1815-1889) and Martha (Heitman) Krüssow (1821-1888), with Ernst Krüssow (1817-1901) and Elizabeth (Steinhagen) Krüssow (1821-1888), founders of the Krüssow Family of Maple Grove, and beyond, are buried at the Maple Grove Union Cemetery. Hardworking, upstanding citizens, they set a high standard for generations to come.



Henry Krüssow in his 1918 touring car



circa-1910; the Louis and Emelie Krüssow Family: father Louis, son Walter, daughter Hattie, mother Emelie and son Frank



My family built 16908 Weaver Lake Drive in 1971, one of the first houses in that neighborhood. It was all gravel roads past farms to get there. The area is now remembered on this puzzle custom made to cover an area of 4 miles north to south and 6 miles east to west from the US Geological Survey map base. What a unique way to see your home from country farm to small town charm.

Linda Klapperich



16908 WEAVER LAKE DRIVE 85311-1434

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The Carl Sandburg Jr High Activity Bus Tour

of greater Plymouth/New Hope/Medicine Lake/Maple Grove/the future Clifton E. French Regional Park beach peninsula/the general store on Rockford Road and Fernbrook Av/the old Schmidt Lake Road past Ivy's and up the west side, over the Railroad tracks, past the west side of Bass Lake and north to Bass Lake road/east to Zachary Ln/south to Rockford Road...

The kids across the street to the north of our block went to the Osseo School district and didn't spend an hour on the activity bus, just us kids considered rural Robbinsdale School district residents. There were a dozen houses on and around the hill we lived on and another dozen on the southern half of Schmidt Lake otherwise we were surrounded by farms

Hosterman Jr. High was half as far away but the bus routes were set in stone. My little brother went to kindergarten school on the west side of Plymouth Road a half mile south of Hwy 12. A little ways south and across the road from where the Ridgedale Library is now.

In the springtime Zachary Lane was so muddy that everyone parked by Robeck's farm on the south end of Zachary (there was no Zachary Lane going south from Rockford Road) and either walked north or caught a ride with people who owned 4 wheel drive vehicles and lived by the hill.

Staying late at Carl Sandburg Jr High, not always by choice, meant taking the activity bus north to Medicine Lake Road, west to the east side of Medicine Lake, north to the Mission Farms road, west out to the road that went south to the houses on the peninsula where the Clifton E. French Regional Park's beach is now, also where my piano teacher lived, then north to Rockford Road, west to turn around at the general store on the corner of Fernbrook Av. and Rockford Road, then east on Rockford Road to turn north past Ivy's bar on up Schmidt Lake Road over the railroad tracks and through the woods to Bass Lake Road, then east to Zachary Lane then back south through the swamps east of Bass Lake, up the hill the stop sign at 49th Av N.

That Schmidt Lake Road goes east-west instead of north-south is only one of many changes. 49th has an exit on Hwy 169 which used to be Co Rd 18 but it swings around to the north side of the hill instead of climbing it.

Dave Hasse

The development of the Kerber area



Demolition of the Levens House— 3 houses are there now

65 years ago Jim Deane met Paul Kerber, a builder who had recently purchased 40 acres of land from the Levens family to start a building project. Unlike today's projects this was one house at a time built by Paul, his dad and brother. The Levens farm was on the NW corner of county Rd 30 and 130. The farm had horses, cows and chickens. Mrs. Levens kept meticulous records on all efforts at the farm. She sold eggs to the grocery store in Osseo, someone would pick up 12 dozen in a box. They grew much of the food they had for the family.

Our Road -130-had several names before the freeway cut thru maple Grove. It was East Fish Lake Road, Berkshire, County Road 130 and now Rice Lake Road. When we moved in we could see Rice Lake from our doorstep. Now the development of Tristan Bay homes prevent that. As Kerber's developed the area, Ernst House movers moved 4 houses into the area from North Minneapolis. Now a stop light controls traffic on 30 and Rice Lake Road. Water and Sewer arrived. The road in front of us was tarred eliminating the gravel road dust storm

Neighbors helped each other especially when the 1966 tornado lifted the Dolieslager house and blew it away. It also tossed our van across the yard like a child's toy. Ball teams were formed within neighborhoods, playing each other for the championship. Kids birthday parties were celebrated at homes with simple games, cake and ice cream. We got to know our neighbors.

Life changes and we grow older. My house is painted red now — a color that was only reserved for barns 60 year ago. I still love my neighborhood. Joyce Deane

Ben & Emma Miller

By Lois Caswell

Grandma was a 22 year old dress maker when she married Grandpa who was 34. There were twelve years between them. Grandma was the oldest of five girls born to Gustav & Wilhelmina Kuehn. They were married February 23, 1910.

Grandpa had previously farmed his family farm until 1908 when that farm was sold and he purchased 57 acres of land that became our family homestead. In 1910, Grandpa Kuehn who was a carpenter began building the buildings on the land. The Granary was built first, and they lived in that while the barn and farm buildings were built when the five-bedroom farm house was complete.

The Farmhouse was beautifully built with lots of oak trim, pillars and special touches. It had a full bathroom with a claw foot tub! I don't know the square footage, but all of the rooms were large.

In 1911 Grandpa and Grandma dealt with the loss of a stillborn baby girl. My Dad was born in 1913, Uncle Wes in 1915 and Aunt's Harriet & Helen in 1919. Helen died when she was 5 years old. She was born blind, but I do not know the exact cause of her death. I remember something about "stomach problems" but that could have been a lot of things.

I know the kids all went to country school and Osseo High School. As you will read in several places, there were lots of family get togethers especially with the Miller Family on the farm. The Kuehn family remained in North Minneapolis until the year Aunt Florence passed away which was 1994. The house still stands at 2601-26th Avenue North and was truly beautiful back in the day.

Ben and Emma's world turned upside down sometime around 1930 when Ben was attacked by a bull and badly injured. He was unable to carry on with the farm, so my Dad Harold had to run the farm. After Mom and Dad were married, they lived on the main floor of the house and Grandma and Grandpa and sometimes Harriet lived upstairs.

Church was very important to them, and they were very active. I am sure before he was hurt, Grandpa did much, but I know Grandma was church organist, Sunday School Superintendent and was active in many other activities. Dad later took over the Sunday school job and eventually it was passed down to me.

The church is Immanuel United Methodist Church of

Corcoran. All of my family members (Frederick & Augusta and their children) are buried in the Immanuel Cemetery on 101st Ave as well as my parents and brother and sister. My brother Jerry is buried with his wife in Rush Creek Cemetery near the Maple Grove School on Territorial Road. At this writing, the church is over 160 years old. My entire family were a wonderful Christian example for me as I was growing up.

Grandma used to give piano lessons, and continued with her dressmaking talent, she sewed and altered clothing for family and friends. She was a beautiful seamstress. I was 18 before I had a "store bought" dress. I didn't know how blessed I was.

I remember in particular a beautiful two pieced wedding dress she made for a lady that sang in the Minneapolis Chorale. They needed a plain white strapless dress for concerts, so the underneath part was that. The overlying jacket, however was a very fitted tuxedo like jacket with tiny one-inch scallops around the complete edge including a long train. Grandma sewed each tiny scallop by hand. It was beautiful. The lady's name was Joy Paczkowski and she was about the most beautiful gal I had ever seen. She loved the dress, however it was never used for her wedding (or at least that we knew of) because her groom to be backed out just before the wedding.

Today our lovely farm now contains beautiful custom homes and some town homes and just isn't the same.

The Library Truck

When I was young and growing up on the farm, books were very important to us. My grandfather who was hurt in a farm accident often read aloud to my grandmother as she sewed for her dress making clients.

Back in the day, I couldn't tell you where there was a library. What I do remember is our bi-weekly visit from the Hennepin County Library truck. It was a big dark green RV type coach that was fitted with benches and shelves of books

carefully arranged in order of subject and title just like a real library.

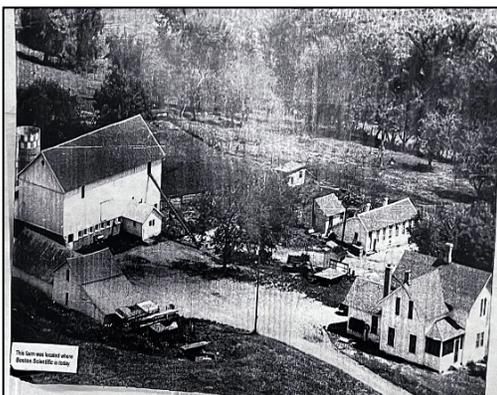
Mr. Olaf was always right on his scheduled day and time. With him was the "Library Lady" She was very prim and proper and always insisted we be very quiet and thoughtful as we carefully chose our books.

It was a whole new world because our two room rural school didn't have a library. We handled those books like they were gold, and to us they really were.

By Lois H. Caswell

**from the Wodtke family farm to the corporate conglomerate Boston Scientific
@Kate Wodtke, January 2025 (for the Maple Grove Historical Preservation Society)**

Before SciMed purchased the land currently occupied by



Boston Scientific and before the popular restaurant chain built Applebees on Weaver Lake Road, the land had been home to several local families, including my husband's

great-grandparents, Albert and Mathilde Bähr Wödtker who owned and farmed the land from 1906 to 1939.

One year prior to Albert and Mathilde Wödtker's 1882 arrival, seven members of Mathilde's extended family had already settled in Maple Grove: Mathilde's sister Albertina Bähr Krause (with her husband Friedrich Krause and their two children, Friedrich's father Michael Krause and Friedrich's sister Amelia Krause Lucht with her husband Reinhold Lucht.

Mathilde Friedericke Wilhelmine Bähr Wödtker (1862-1936) married Albert Carl Wilhelm Wödtker (1857-1948). Shortly after their March wedding, they joined a group of 19 people from Mathilde's family and traveled from Hamburg, Prussia on the ship "Viola" to Baltimore, Maryland in the United States, then traveling on to Maple Grove, Minnesota where they already had family.

As they had been in Prussia, the Krause, Rambow, Lucht, Berndt and Bähr families remained neighbors in the Maple Grove area. Albert and Mathilde Wödtker initially rented land, then later owned a small section of land in northwestern Maple Grove. Twenty four years after their arrival they purchased the land now occupied by Boston Scientific. It remained in their family until 1939, but through that time period portions were sold off – to the Rambows and others.

While the extended family readily acclimated to their new life in Minnesota, Albert Wödtker remained an 'outsider'. Although small in stature, he was a man who demanded big attention; quick to anger and prone to excessive drink, life would never be easy for his wife, Mathilde.

Between 1882 and 1905, over a period of 23 years, in addition to working the farm and caring for her home, family and elderly mother, Mathilde Friederike Wilhelmine Bähr Wödtker gave birth to ten children:



Amanda Laurette Wodtke (1882-1971) married Charles Reitz ~ a blacksmith in nearby Osseo. They were the parents of a daughter. They also raised their nephew, Charles, my father-in-law, when his mother was killed in a fire when he was just 3 months old.

Herman Frederick Wodtke (1883-1956) married Martha Tonn. They were the parents of five. In 1927 Herman was sentenced to a year at Leavenworth Penitentiary for possession of a still. Herman died when struck by a car as he was leaving a bar in North Minneapolis .

Mary Mathilda Wodtke (1886-1926) remained single .

Bertha Erna Wodtke (1888-1957) married Ed Little.

Frederich "Fred" Wilhelm Wodtke (1891-1950) served as a Pfc. with the Minnesota Pioneer Infantry in France during WWI. Fred and his wife, Elsie, had no descendants. In 1928 Fred, along with two other defendants, was charged with running a 40-gallon still in St. Louis Park.

Carolina "Lena" Theodora Wodtke (1894-1981) and her husband, Herman Liebnow, raised their two sons on their farm in South Dakota'



1910 Fred (17), Bill (15), Dorothy (5), Wally (9), Lena (16), Mathilde (48), Albert (53)

Family Farm to City Charm

– Karen Brajdich

Below is a portion of the 1880s plat map of Maple Grove showing the partial sections of Sections 26, 27, 34 and 35. This is the southeast corner of the city. In the northwest quadrant of Section 35, you will see an 80-acre parcel of land assigned to "H.W.C. Krussow." A wagon trail cuts off the southwest portion of the property and creates a triangle of land. Next to the wagon trail lies the rest of Henry Krussow's farmstead property. The little square next to the wagon trail is the homestead of Henry and Pauline Krussow. The Krussow family lived on this homestead of 80 acres from 1885 to March, 1906. The Krussows would be astonished to see how their farmstead was transformed to city charm.



Henry and Pauline sold their eighty acres in 1906. They moved to Oregon. Following the sale of their property, the land would be bought, sold and subdivided many times. In 1959,

the pace accelerated.

The triangle of land was subdivided and sold off. Home construction in the area began in earnest in the 1960s and continued into the 1980s. The triangle of land developed into residential dwellings. Homes were built on the south and north sides of East Fish Lake Road and in the triangle of the "Krussow 80."

In 1987, my husband and I bought a lot in the "Krussow 80." Our home is located across East Fish Lake Road from the original location of the Krussow home. The two other lots east of ours were also sold in 1987 and homes were built. The original grade level of the lot gently sloped from "street level" down to a small, sandy, washed-out depression area. We brought in land fill, as did our neighbors, to bring the front yard level of the lots up to street level.

In 1993, another major change was underway. The rest of the "Krussow 80," currently a field on the north side of East Fish Lake Road, was sold to School District #279 and construction of Oakview Elementary School campus started. The school is named for the oak trees found on the west side of the school yard.

As a follow-up to Oakview Elementary's construction, the City of Maple Grove redeveloped the depression at the back of our lot. They excavated the depression and made it into a pond that connects to the City's canal drainage system. The city also laid a tar walking path around the pond. The walking path connects to Oakview and Cedar Island Elementary Schools. Now, six residential properties border the pond. All kinds of birds and wildlife frequent the pond. As "birders," we've identified over 40 different species of bird in the pond, our yard and above. The wild life is bountiful.

Let's talk about East Fish Lake Road. It cuts diagonally through the Krussow property and was used as a wagon trail. Was this road constructed by farmers? My guess: it was originally a beaten path made by Indians and animals moving between the many lakes, forests and prairies in the area. After Maple Grove was surveyed and patents were sold, the trail morphed into a wagon trail to transport people, goods and services. When the township transformed into a village, the population grew. East Fish Lake Road was upgraded with asphalt and curbs. The northern stretch of East Fish Lake Road was re-routed when Interstate 694/494 was constructed in the late 1960s, but this stretch, in front of the original site of the Krussow home, always stayed the same. In 1992, Maple Grove Transit was formed, offering bus service to/from downtown Minneapolis. Route 780 claimed this stretch of East Fish Lake Road as a busway for twenty years. In 1996, the summer Olympic games were held in Atlanta and the Olympic torch was carried down this stretch of East Fish Lake Road.

Over the past 108 years, many changes and events have transformed the "Krussow 80" into city charm. Would Henry and Pauline Krussow be amazed and awestruck at the changes? I think they would!



The land was Fred Rohe's Farm

SCHWAPPACH FARM ARTICLE

From MG Newsletter # 75
5/2014

By Carl Pheil

Early one day, during the summer after fourth grade my mom said, "Why don't you and Frankie go out and play or ride your bikes until supper. I'll fix a lunch for the two of you."

In 1947 kids were expected to entertain themselves. My friend Frankie suggested we go and visit the Schwappach's at their farm. "Sonny, they have a huge pig farm. They have so many pigs you can't even count them all." The farm was about three and a half to four miles away. Not all that far when you have a bike and the roads are oiled.

We rode on the oiled road through the swamp to the old one room school. After a rest we took an old road through what s now the gravel pit area and eventually ended up at the pig farm. Frankie's dad knew the Schwappachs. We spent some time with the kid and looked at all the pigs.

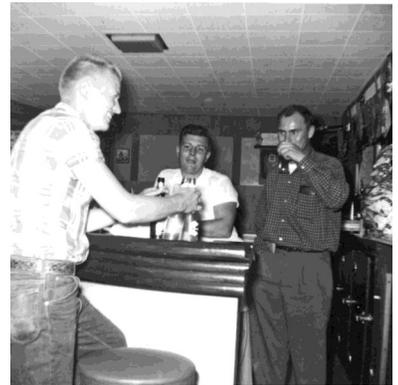
A couple of weeks later Frankie was at his Grandmothers for a few days and I was bored so I decided to go on an all day bike hike back to the pig farm. I got up really early, packed a lunch of jelly sandwiches and filled my canteen with water. I put everything in my bike basket and took off. I rode out our long driveway, turned onto Broadway by the Perry's vegetable stand and went down about three blocks to 68th. I headed west past Panschum's mum farm and the lawyer's sheep farm. Winding through the swamp past the Peterson's farm I finally got to my old school next to Eagle Lake. I stopped to rest for a bit. I grabbed a jelly sandwich, my canteen and sat on the merry-go-round for a rest and snack. After a bit I hopped on my bike and rode through the sunny countryside. Before I knew it I was at the end of the driveway at the pig farm.

Editor's note from 5/2014 newsletter: farm was where Lookout Bar and Grill is at 8672 Pineview LN, MG

Bob's Lookout

"In 1957, with the help of his family, founder Bob Kinnan transformed a building situated on the family farmland that was used to house farm implements and equipment into a small bar.

The doors of "Bob's Lookout" opened with a 3.2 beer and set-up license with a seating capacity of 55. Beer sold for 30 cents a bottle, set-ups were 20 cents a glass and cigarettes cost 15 cents a pack." (used permission of The Lookout)



PIZZA Pepperoni or Sausage \$1.30
Shrimp in the Basket 1.55

Sandwiches

Steak Sandwich80
Pork Tenderloin70
Hamburger40
Cheeseburger50
Grilled Cheese45
California55
Bacon, Lettuce, Tomato70
Pepper Steak70
Shrimp Steak70
Boneless Breaded Pork Chop80
Fried Egg45
H.M70
Cion Rings55
F inch Fries35
S ads40

Coffee15 Tea15 Milk15

Dinners

16oz. T Bone Steak \$3.95
Club Steak 3.00
Filet 3.35
Rib Eye Steak (aged) 2.30
Top Chopped Sirloin 2.30
Bar B. Q. Ribs 2.95
1/2 Bar B. Q. Chicken 2.95
1/2 Fried Chicken 2.35
1/4 Fried Chicken 1.75
2 Breaded Pork Chops... applesauce 2.60
Jumbo Shrimp 2.35
Stuffed Shrimp (oysters) 2.85

ABOVE ORDERS INCLUDE: SALAD, CHOICE OF BREAD, HASH BROWN, OR FRENCH FRIED POTATO
3% Sales Tax included in prices.

Kitchen Opens at 9:00 Sundays 3:00

Bar owner Robert G. Kinnan

Restaurant owner Myrtle K. Kinnan

Old Ben by Lois Caswell

For as long as I can remember, "Old Ben" lived in the woods on our farm in a little homemade shack with his two dogs, Sparky and Beno. Old Ben (Ben DeJarlis) was a French Canadian Indian and always was a trapper that lived alone in his shack and did hunting and trapping to make a living. His dark skin reminded me of wrinkled leather, but he had a warm and kind heart. He lived on rabbit and squirrel, and sold the skins on whatever he trapped. That was no problem until he trapped a skunk and then did he stink!

Old Ben came to the farm almost every day to get milk and eggs and always a cup of coffee from Mom and usually a meal or two, unless he had recently trapped a skunk then he was not allowed in the house for good reason.

Old Ben didn't say much, but he loved a good strong cup of coffee and after a gulp would sit back, wipe his face and say awe that's good! He was very kind hearted in his own funny way. He would let my brother Jerry and I come over to the woods to visit him and he would show us where the wild flowers and baby birds were in the spring. If he didn't want to see us, he and the dogs would hide, and we never would find him. Our favorite thing to do was to sit outside his shack on wood stumps and he would play the fiddle for us. He could play pretty well. I don't remember what kind of music he played, but he always enjoyed it and tapped his feet as he played.

The shack was just one room and his bed and chairs were bales of hay or straw Dad took over for him. He would put blankets over the bales and said it made a good bed. He also had a wood stove, a bucket of water and a bucket of kerosene to fuel stuff. He would bury his food so it would stay cool.

He could always control Sparky and Beno, but we sure didn't want to come in contact with them without Old Ben around. They were trained hunting dogs and they knew what they were supposed to do. Once and a while they would kill one of the barn cats which made my mother furious and then he wouldn't be allowed in the house for a while.

Mom used to do Ben's shopping for him such as it was, but sometimes he would go to town with us when he hadn't just caught a skunk.

He used to walk along the railroad track and see what he could find that came off the trains that ran frequently past the farm. One day he came over and brought the prettiest little pottery cup with pretty little flowers on it. He was very concerned that I didn't like to drink milk

when I was a little girl, so he told me I could have the cup if I would drink milk in it, but I could not drink anything else in it and had to have a cup with each meal. Mom and Dad made sure I kept my end of the bargain, and 70 years later, I still have the Bennie Cup.

One morning when I was about 10 years old I looked out the living room window across the field and saw flames coming from his shack. I ran screaming to the barn to tell Dad. I don't exactly remember what happened next, I think some of the neighbors saw it too and they all came over to help. Ben was safe, but his house was gone along with his fiddle and gun. Remember when I said he had a bucket of water and a bucket of kerosene? Well a spark from the stove flew into one of the bales and he picked up the bucket of kerosene to throw on the fire instead of the water. Of course the kerosene would ignite the fire.

By then, "old Ben" was probably well into his 90's and it was time for him to go to the mission home where he lived for a few years. It was neat growing up in a time when we could have told trappers be our friends and not be afraid to be their friends. I will never forget "Old Ben."

MAPLE GROVE HISTORICAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY

City of Maple Grove Government Center
12800 Arbor Lakes Parkway, Maple Grove MN 55369-7064

(renewable each January)

Annual Membership (tax deductible)

- \$15 Individual/Senior
- \$30 Family
- \$100 Supporting Member

I am interested in helping with

- Writing article
- Historic site maintenance
- Displays
- Educational Programs
- Publicity
- Cataloging artifacts
- Calling

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE _____

EMAIL _____