



Middleton Area Historical Society Newsletter

Sept. 2016

Number 168

Middleton, Wisconsin

OUR MISSION: TO PRESERVE AND PUBLICIZE THE HISTORY OF THE MIDDLETON AREA.

Preserving the **HARVEST**



The Historical Society's collection of canning jars was featured in a mini-exhibit at the Senior Center during August. The exhibit, entitled "Putting Up Produce for the Winter," featured examples from the 19th century that illustrated improvements in canning technology, many iconic blue Ball Jars, chicken "fountains" that used the jars, and contemporary examples of the clever and decorative ways in which the jars are now being used. Research for this exhibit revealed, however, that the collections do not include any jars or jelly glasses produced by the Kerr company or a canner. Additions to fill those gaps are particularly welcomed. These donations need not be antique, but they must have a Middleton connection. They can be dropped off at the Rowley House when the Museum is open. (We cannot be responsible for items left on the porch.) Or send an email (cmattern@wisc.edu) and schedule a home appraisal.

In the 1970s Pearl Williams published her recollections of the busy canning season in the Middleton Times Tribune. The following are extracts from her memories.

Our thoughts go back to the early years of this century and the various methods used for preserving food supplies. The housewife was extremely busy during most of the summer, putting away a stock of fruit and vegetables for the following winter. Each crop was taken care of as it reached its harvest time. Rhubarb was perhaps the earliest to be ready for use. It was often just washed thoroughly, cut in inch lengths, put into glass jars and covered with cold water. No cooking and no sugar were added till it was to be used. The next crop of the season was strawberries which were usually canned with sugar as trying to preserve them without sugar made them less tasty. Sugar was five cents

a pound, but cash was often short and the weekly supply of eggs to sell (sometimes as low as eight cents per dozen) wouldn't buy too much, since all other groceries – flour, coffee, cheese, etc. had to come out of the egg money. That is the reason many fruits were canned without sugar--so as not to waste them.

Many fruits grew wild in our farm woodland or on the line fences, such as black raspberries, blackberries, elderberries, gooseberries and even strawberries. Children home from school were often given the job of picking these wild berries. In the later summer, there were wild plums, red or yellow, and in the fall, wild grapes. If these various fruits were not canned they were cooked and strained through a square of coarse muslin hung from a hook in the kitchen ceiling. When all the juice had dropped out, it was reheated to the boiling point and sealed in fruit jars for jelly-making in winter. The jars we used were the Mason type, sealed with a rubber ring and a zinc cover lined with porcelain.



Mason jar donated by Pearl Williams

In July we had a crop of red cherries to preserve. As they were usually pitted, it was a time-consuming job. We had a cherry pitter made of metal, which could be fastened to a shelf or table. After washing the fruit, you could feed it into the pitter, which had two sharp prongs to remove the stones from two cherries at a time.

The only food that was canned from the [vegetable] garden was tomatoes because of their acid content, or keeping quality. String beans, peas, or corn were non-acid so no one tried canning them because of fear of food poisoning. I have heard of adding

one tablespoonful of vinegar to the top of a full jar of these vegetables so as to render them acidic. We never did this, thinking the risk was too great. Even though some vegetables couldn't be canned we still had other ways to keep some garden produce. Carrots and beets were dug and covered with dry sand in a large crock on the cellar floor. Heads of cabbage and winter squash would keep many weeks in a cool place. Bursting [sic] cabbages were made into sauerkraut. Rutabagas, potatoes, and many kinds of apples were piled on the dirt floor of the cellar....

Another source of food for winter was dry shell beans--either lima, navy, great northern, or large white kidney beans. The latter and the lima beans were cooked on top of the stove, while the navy or great northern were baked in a gallon crock with a large piece of bacon, salt, and molasses. These had to be baked for hours and water added, as it boiled away. When properly baked the product of was a delight to eat.

Since we always had large quantities of apples, we made a mixture of ground sweet apples, green tomatoes, raisins, sugar, spices and vinegar to can for pie filling. Ripe tomatoes were peeled, quartered and cooked with a small amount of salt, but no sugar. One large batch was made into catsup and bottled and sealed with red sealing wax. This job required a full day because the catsup had to be boiled for several hours. The product was tasty and worth all the effort.

Since sweet corn was non-acid and liable to spoil it was cut from the cob and dried in the oven of the kitchen range.... The product was rather darkened in color, but appetites were not finicky, and so we ate it. Apples were also dried after peeling and slicing, then they were, placed on large oval platters and dried outdoors in the sun. They had to be covered with white mosquito netting to keep the insects off. These were darker than applesauce made from fresh apples, but edible. Whether the vitamins and minerals were lost, I do not know....

From the President

Membership on the MAHS Board of Directors has continued to change fairly frequently the last few months. In the June Newsletter I declared that all Board vacancies had been filled and announced the addition of 3 Board Members, Donna Park, Teresa Andrews and Anna Biermeier. However, things have changed a bit since then. Anna Biermeier decided to focus on other priorities and so resigned from the Board. In July, Jessica Contreras, a long-serving member of our Board, submitted her resignation.

NEW BOARD MEMBER-We have, however, just recently, welcomed a new Board Member, Kristi Warriner, to fill one of the vacancies and her biographical information follows: Kristi is a lifelong member of the Middleton area and has been involved in many community organizations including Middleton Chamber of Commerce, Tri for Schools, Kids triathlon, Middleton Gators, High Point Swim team, Middleton Good Neighbor Fest, and the National Charity League. She is the business manager for Cresa, which is a commercial real estate agency representing tenants. Kristi lives with her husband Adam, two kids Molly and Annie, two dogs and three chickens in Saks Woods.

PIE AND ICE CREAM SOCIAL-Our annual Pie and Ice Cream Social on June 15 was a big success again this year. We were fortunate that our local bakeries: Scott's Pastry, Hubbard Avenue Diner, Bloom's Bake Shop and Willy Street Coop continued their long-standing tradition of donating pies and other bake goods to this event. Of course many MAHS members also contributed their baked specialties as well. All told, we had 53 pies, 9 cakes, 4 dozen cupcakes, 7 dozen cookies and several other treats to serve our guests. The Madison New Horizons Band again provided the evening's entertainment as they played many favorite songs for our guests. The event also provides a financial boost to MAHS and this year our gross receipts were nearly \$1,400.

ANNUAL MEETING-This year our MAHS Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday, December 3rd at the Middleton Senior Center, and I'm pleased to announce that our guest speaker will be Rob Nurre, a Landscape Historian, Antiquarian and Naturalist from Baraboo. Nurre works for the Wisconsin Archeological Society and one of their land holdings is the Heim Mound property which is one of Middleton's Historic Landmarks. Nurre has indicated that he will talk about that mound and other effigy mounds in the Middleton area. Meeting details will be announced at a later date on our web site and Facebook pages and in our local newspapers.



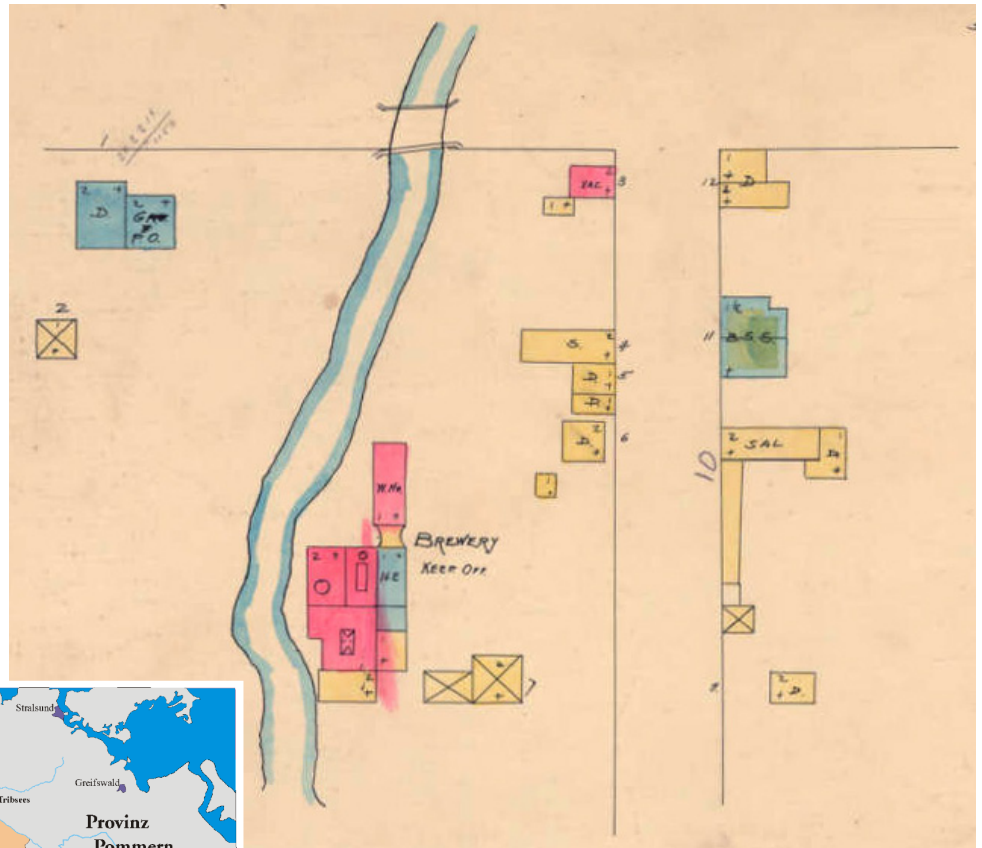
Fun
time
at
the
Pie and
Ice
Cream
Social

Jeff Martin
Middleton Area Historical Society President

THE MYSTERIES OF PHEASANT BRANCH- part 4

by Anita Taylor Doering

As you may recall, the first white settlers to Pheasant Branch were Yankees – people born on the East Coast of the United States. They were English speaking and were joined by a few immigrants from Ireland and England. By the mid-1850s as noted previously, this began to change with the first influx of German speaking immigrants who bought land from English speaking land speculators and the U. S. Government Land Office. By and large the rural Town of Middleton was farmed by folks from Mecklenburg-Schwerin, an area in Northern Germany that bordered the western boundary of Pommern (Pommerania). It has poor farming soil and thus the province never enjoyed much prosperity.



Theodore A. Marowsky, Hand drawn map of part of Pheasant Branch, 1894 Courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society. The lot numbering is odd but the Stamm House is located at the upper left corner with living quarters and the grocery and post office; the Pheasant Branch Brewery is prominent next to Pheasant Branch Creek. Here are some explanations: D = dwelling; SAL = saloon; BSS = blacksmith shop (in this case, Stroecker); the number 1 or 2 inside a structure's footprint means one or two floors tall; a building with an X through it generally means some sort of an outbuilding, like a barn or chicken coop. These generally became garages after the automobile became popular. The yellow color denotes a frame structure whereas the blue is stone; likely the red is brick or brick veneer.



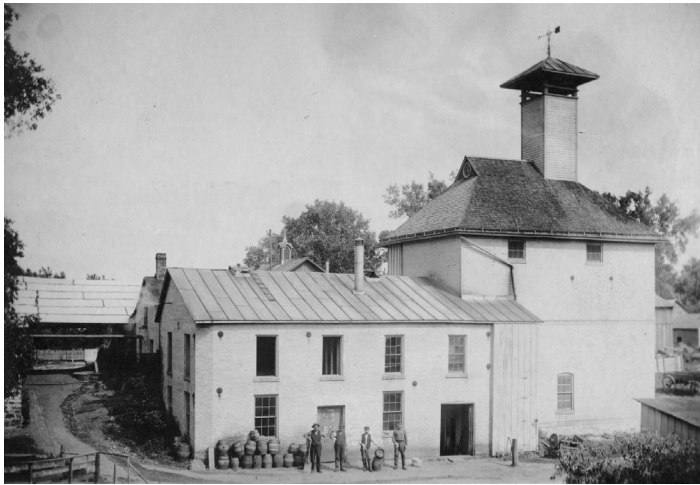
Karte von Mecklenburg 1866-1934 by de:Benutzer:Störfix - selbst gezeichnet, de: Benuter:Störfix

The first immigrants to Pheasant Branch from the German states were highly skilled craftsmen: a wagon maker (John Dohr) and two blacksmiths (Henry Prien and Karl Stoecker). Two of these men hailed from Mecklenburg and one from Württemberg. By the 1860 U. S. Federal Census for the village of Pheasant Branch, 70 souls were born in the United States. Of the native born total, 48 were children aged 18 and younger, all born in Wisconsin. The

children between the ages of 10-18 were off-spring of Yankee and Irish parents, while the younger set had immigrant parents. The German states were already well represented in 1860, with 50 immigrants living in the village. Of this total 23 hailed from Mecklenburg and 10 from Prussia. Other areas represented in smaller numbers were Baden, Bayern (Bavaria), Hesse Cassel, Saxony and Württemberg.

It was not unusual for villages or farms to have a brewery in the early days. Lacking refrigeration hampered not only the storage of the product at the brewery or elsewhere but

certainly during transport, especially over poor roads. Pheasant Branch was no exception and John Wagner, a person not from Germany, began a brewery by 1867, the first year he owned block 2, lots 3 and 4 in the village, and the total property value jumped from a combined \$375 to \$700 in one year. The following year, it was sold for \$8000 to J. Lenz and John Hess and more improvements were made to the facility, increasing its total real estate and capital improvement valuation to \$900 (exclusive of equipment, etc.).



Left to right: John Mueller & August Brunkow (owners), Phillip Traub, Albert Traub; likely taken 1907 when ownership was supposedly transferred Pheasant Branch Brewery (MAHS P74-31- 1) Courtesy of the Middleton Area Historical Society

Lenz left the Middleton area before 1870 but Hess, from Prussia originally, continued on as brewer. A written account says that the brewery passed into the hands of the First National Bank of Madison and was inactive for some time. By 1880, Hubert Bernhardt, an immigrant from Prussia, became the brewer and the enterprise was owned by Bernhardt and John Findorff, a farmer originally from Hanover. While there may have been other owners, in 1884 August Ferdinand Brunkow, with his brother-in-law John G. Mueller, obtained the Pheasant Branch Brewery. Brunkow spent his early years in Doelitz, Pommern, and was formally trained in the brewing business in Racine and then at the Best Brewery (later Pabst) in Milwaukee.

The pair built a new malt house and installed a 35-horsepower engine. They extended their market to surrounding villages and towns as road travel improved. Ice was harvested from Lake Mendota in the winter and packed in sawdust to keep the ice from melting during the warm months. In 1897 a new ice house accommodated Lake Mendota ice 14" thick. While wheat and barley were plentiful in the area, the third main ingredient for crafting lager beer was not up to German standards. Importing hops was not unusual and "a bale of Bremen hops...weighing nearly 1,000 pounds" was received although likely mixed with American hops. The brewery was constantly being improved in

machinery and running at capacity. After 1904, the Hess Cooperage manufactured beer barrels for Pheasant Branch although other larger Madison area breweries were their main customers.

Brunkow and Mueller had turned around a failing brewery. Things were going so well that August sold the brewery to "Milwaukee parties" in 1907 while August and his wife Louise were building a house at 7329 Whittlesey (University) Avenue. Phillip Traub of Freeport, IL, was announced in the paper as the new brewer and he moved into the Brunkow's former home by Thanksgiving of that year.

It is unclear what exactly happened, but the 1910 census taken in May has August listed as brewer of his own brewery and Phillip is back in Freeport, IL, renting a house and still working as brewer. It is likely that August continued in the brewing industry until Prohibition. John G. Mueller, Louise's brother, died in September of that same year. By 1920, August Brunkow retired.

The BRANCH COMPANY

PHEASANT BRANCH P. O. MIDDLETON, R. 1



Do you want fresh strawberries in January, or fresh fruit on the coldest day of the winter sweet corn on the cob at Thanksgiving time, or fresh meat, fish, and wild game at any time of the year? An efficient crew is maintained at the plant regularly to process the produce as it is brought to the plant, and to slaughter, dress and process livestock, poultry, game and fish, and prepare them for the locker the way you wish.

These are a few of the advantages of renting a locker from the Branch Locker Co. The Branch Company plant was established in 1945. From a few hundred lockers, it was enlarged until its present capacity is 1000 lockers.

The Branch Company also buys livestock, poultry, eggs and hides. Our plant is located at Pheasant Branch about 1½ mile from the Middleton Business Section.

The former brewery facility was remodeled and The Branch Company locker plant facility was established in 1945. Not only were lockers available for rent, but the plant employees slaughtered and processed livestock, poultry, game and

fish. The Company also bought livestock, poultry, eggs and hides. According to Jerry Schara, it provided “a valuable service before the advent of home freezers. Lockers could be rented in the large freezer and used to store all sorts of frozen foods. Livestock and game were butchered there and the meat, cut, packaged and frozen.” The building was likely removed about 1961 when Branch Street was paved.

There were retail businesses too at “The Branch” beside the Stamm House that has been previously discussed. On the same side of the street as the locker plant and just to its north was The Rennenberg Hotel at 2644 Branch Street was started by German immigrants John and Elisabeth (Lorch) Pieh from Hesse. Although they were already in Pheasant Branch by the late 1850s, they bought this property about 1861 and opened a meat market and saloon there, selling it in 1889. The Rennenberg family bought it and renamed the business the Rennenberg Hotel which operated as a restaurant and saloon.

In the 1940s to 1960s it was Mickey’s Tavern owned by the Voss family and they lived upstairs above the establishment. In the 1972 Clifford Voss renamed it Cliff’s Place after his wife’s death. Voss sold it and in 1978 Cliff’s Place

became the Cheeling Chinese Cuisine. In 1990s to 2014 the name was Branch Street Retreat and the Upper Branch. Cold Fusion took over for a few years, closing in 2016. A new I Love Tacos restaurant is slated to open in 2016.



Lakeside Hotel, Pheasant Branch, Wis., Fritz Muetz, Prop. Left to Right: sitting - John Albrecht (man), in foreground (unknown), Fritz Muetz and Mary Muetz, Mother Muetz.

Courtesy of the Middleton Area Historical Society.



Middleton Area Historical Society Photo Collection



Continuing north, the Lakeside Hotel, located at Branch St. and Century Avenue, was an old staple serving a beginning tourist trade. Mendota was an attraction and Middleton seemed close enough for a getaway weekend or other diversion. Excursion boats ran regularly in the summer and docked near where Middleton Beach Road is today.

Travelers might wander up the road to the Lakeside Hotel to stay the night and have a meal in Pheasant Branch. Middleton could not appeal to tourists in this way. The Muetz family owned and operated it.

At some point the saloon burned. Fred Muetz opened a store in 1928 at the same location. This was the year that Pheasant Branch got street lights and Highway 12 traffic was detoured through the Branch while concrete roads were laid in Middleton.

In 1936 Glen and Edith Cornwell built a new store on the Muetz site, with a two-story residence in back and gas pumps in the front, not unlike many gas stations of today that do not do vehicle repair. The store was located on the

thriving lake and local trade." On Oct. 10, 1941, the Webber's had a formal opening of their new restaurant called Webber's Rendezvous.

The Rendezvous Restaurant was later operated by Russ and Evie Bartholomew and Bud and Sally Bond. Chicken and steaks were their specialties. A story says that one night all the waitresses got mad and marched up to the Stamm House to get a job! Some of them stayed at the Stamm House for 18 years. The restaurant building was either replaced or heavily altered, and a variety of restaurants have occupied the building, including Gremminger's Goal Post/Goal Post, Emerald Isle, and today called the Bristled Boar.

Next time, the small community of Pheasant Branch fades into existence officially. The author did find a reference to a Fish Shop in Pheasant Branch that opened in 1930 operated by Burt and Lillian Edwards.

If anyone has further information about this restaurant, or photos of Pheasant Branch or the people who lived there, please contact Anita Doering at abdoering@gmail.com or by phone 608-784- 2492.

The Roaring 20s

Have you ever wondered what it was like to live during the Roaring '20s?

Well, get ready for some Roaring '20s fun at:

1847 at the Stamm House on **Thursday, October 27, from 5 p.m. until closing.**

This event is a fund-raiser to help the Middleton Area Historical Society keep Middleton's history alive as we seek to remodel and provide climate control for the Carriage House at the Rowley Museum. Price is \$50/person and will include food.

We'll also have a costume contest for the Roaring '20s theme as we prepare for Halloween!

Event Date:

Thursday, October 27,
from 5 p.m. until the last
person leaves.

Theme: Roaring '20s
with costume contest for those
who wish to dress up in '20s
styles.



Food: Heavy appetizers,
including Chicken & Dumplings
and Fried Fish.

Drinks: Cash Bar

Tickets: Available at the
Stamm House for \$50/person last-
ing from October 1-October 22.
Only 200 tickets will be available
so secure yours early!

Fundraising: Stamm
House will donate 50% of the
proceeds of the ticket sales.

Music: We'll have '20s era
music playing over the Stamm
House speaker system so that
folks can get up and dance!

Prize Drawing: 1847 at the
Stamm House has offered a door
prize drawing for a dinner for 4.



Photos courtesy of cinematreasures.org

If You Grew Up In Middleton Do You Remember...?

by Mary Lamm Felton

The Facebook post we are featuring in this issue was one of the most popular so far!

Someone posted a picture of the Middleton Theater. It is one of those Facebook posts that had many people wanting to share their memories of growing up in Middleton. I found it very difficult to pick a few comments to use in this article. There were so many memories to share! A few comments were repeated several times... sticky floors, rumors of mice, and bats flying through the air!

The Middleton Theater opened in 1946. It was one of a kind... with a 400-seat capacity it was a Quonset hut with a wraparound roof designed by architect Myles Belongia of the firm Peacock & Belongia in Milwaukee. The firm was noted for their Quonset hut theaters designed after World War 2. There was a cry room in the back of the theater where parents with young children could bring them to the movie and not worry about disturbing other moviegoers. Sadly, it was demolished in 1992.

- The Middleton Theater was a place where kids met on a Saturday afternoon and when they got older, they took their Saturday night dates.

- A friend and I went there to see "The Thing" in 1953... at night. Scared the livin' bejesus out of us, and we ran the half-mile from the theater to my house on Bristol and Franklin without stopping. It's given us a laugh or two in the years since to remember that night!

- I saw 2001 A Space Odyssey there, watched it once and couldn't leave, had to watch the second show right afterwards. Won't say who I saw it with... Always kept my feet up, I heard there were critters about.

- First movie I saw there was Wizard of Oz, Dad took us and when the Lion roared before the film I ran out of the theatre, but my dad who was smoking outside made me go back in....I was soooo scared. I think the theatre was used so that my parents would get a break from the kids LOL!

- Back in the early 50's and 60's you could get a summer punch card and see 20 movies for \$5.00. It was pretty much a Saturday afternoon ritual in those days.

- Fond memories of all the Saturday matinees in the 50s. Fun movies like Ma & Pa Kettle, Francis the Talking Mule, My Friend Flicka and many more. In later years, my mother lived in the senior apartments built on that spot. The old movie projector was on display in the social room.

- I think I was in 8th grade when I went there to watch Psycho. "Had to" go to the lobby for Milk Duds just before the shower scene.

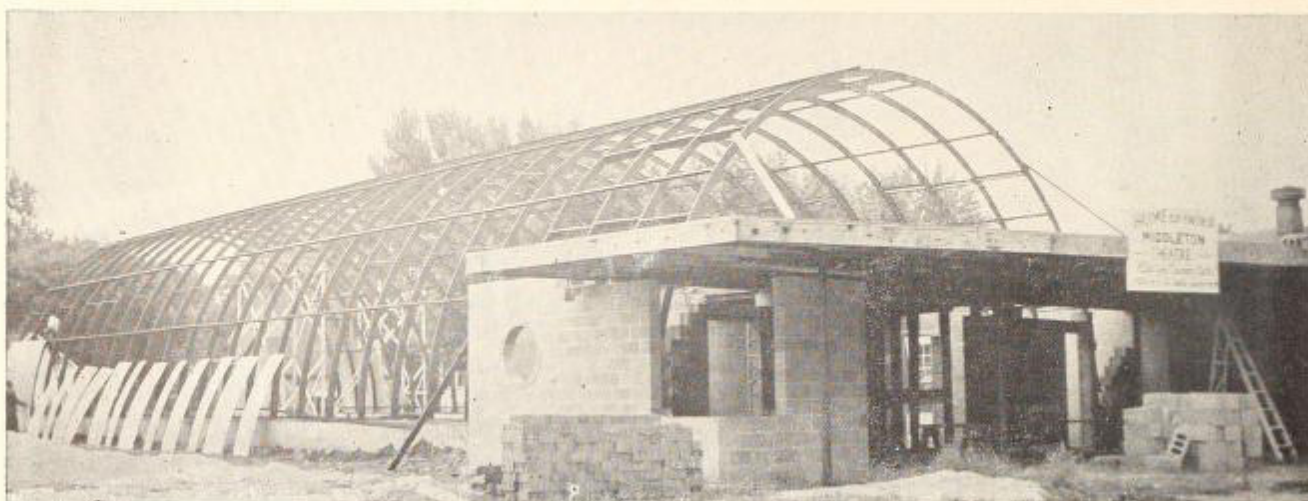
- I worked there part time around 1962. I was 16 and felt so grown up because the little kids would say "thank you ma'am or yes ma'am." Just made me feel like an adult.

- It was like a miracle.....when the nuns walked us down from school at St. Bernard's to see "Lilies of the Field" (1963). We thought we had died and gone to heaven! Out of school....to a movie?? A miracle on Parmenter St!

- I worked at the Middleton Theatre around 1979. My husband says that he was driving past and saw me in the ticket window and said to his buddy "That's the girl I'm going to marry!" Next month we will be married 34 years! Not sure I believe him but that's his story and he is sticking to it!!

- I well remember Mom giving us a dollar most weekends it was either the movies and/or swimming at Midview Motel. A dollar would cover the movie, popcorn and a drink! Wow! Flooded with good memories!

- More entertainment than a corrugated metal tube should be able to contain!



Built in less than a week, and very economical to construct in spite of currently inflated prices for labor and materials, Eskin Theatres' new Middleton presents the industry with another outstanding example of the remarkable possibilities of this type of pre-fabrication.

In the Middleton, the steel marquee is integrated with Quonset structure, and forms an extension of it. Under the marquee, and with no other roof, there was erected a small building of Waylite blocks to house the lobby, foyer, rest rooms and office. The little building was waterproofed with white cement paint, except the front wall, which is mostly plate glass doors and a huge plate glass window. (This tends to give the feeling that no separation exists between the outside and inside of the building).

The Quonset structure itself rests on footings of poured concrete. The floor of the auditorium also is concrete.

Construction was completed in six days.

The auditorium measures 40x100 feet; the little Waylite block building and marquee add another 20 feet to the overall depth.

Seating capacity is 550.

The theatre is located in a suburban

Another QUONSET THEATRE

The

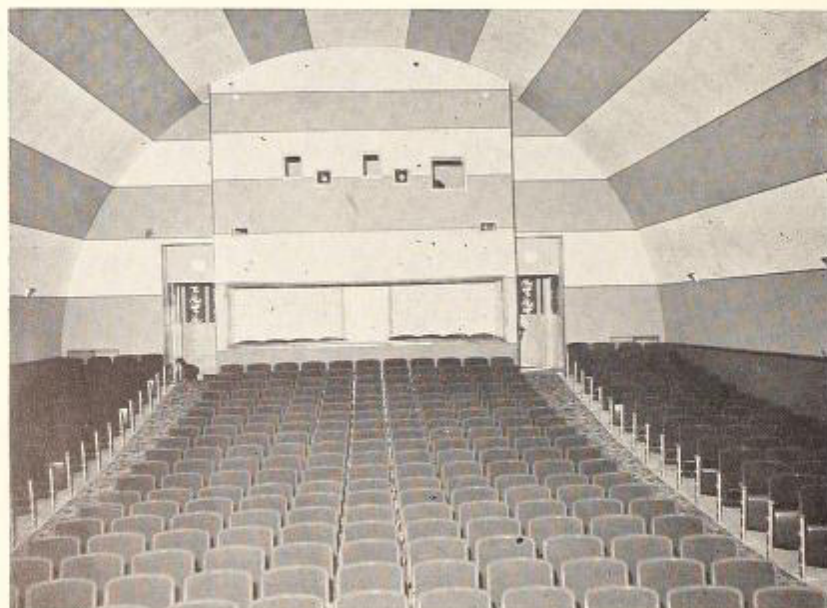
Middleton Middleton, Wisc.

community and draws patronage both from the town of Middleton and from surrounding territory. It is provided with a parking lot capable of accommodating 300 cars. This is flood lighted at night. The driveway entering the parking lot passes under the side canopy of the marquee; thus patrons can leave and re-enter their cars while protected against the weather, attendants putting each car in the lot and bringing it back again when wanted.

The upper illustration shows the Quonset hut and Waylite block building in process of construction. Below, is a view of the interior. The projection room extends out over the "loge" seats. The style of decoration used emphasizes the Quonset shape of the auditorium.

The Middleton is equipped with a neon-illuminated changeable letter sign purchased through Chicago Theatre Supply Company; International chairs obtained through the same source; and Crestwood carpet, curtains and curtain control equipment furnished by National Theatre Supply.

Peacock and Belongia, of Milwaukee, were the architects.



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Already a member -- you will be contacted by mail or email when it is time to renew.

Name _____ Address _____

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Annual Memberships

- Junior Historian (under 18) \$5.00
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- Special Donor \$500.00

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Total Enclosed \$ _____

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For those who itemize their taxes:
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