FROM GLOOMY FOREST TO INDUSTRIAL CENTER

by WALTER J. PFISTER

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THE year 1833 was an eventful one.

James Fillmore was President of the United States. Russia and Turkey were at war. Napoleon III took over as emperor of France and married Empress Eugenia.

In Wisconsin Leonard J. Farwell was Governor of the state. The “underground railway” to help southern negro slaves escape was flourishing.

The University of Wisconsin, then five years old, was making preparations for its first graduation class of two men. At the time it also was under fire as an “atheistic” institution.

But in Sheboygan all of these occurrences were overshadowed by a more important one. That was the year that Sheboygan was chartered as a city by the State of Wisconsin.

Prior to the turn of the nineteenth century it had been little more then a gloomy forest, a wilderness that served as a battleground for the warring Chippewas who finally drove the peaceful Pottawatomie Indians from this area. It is believed to have been first sighted by Jean Nicolet in 1635 as his huge birchbark canoe, piloted by sturdy Huron braves, skirted the shores of Lake Michigan headed south from Green Bay.

While there are many versions as to how Sheboygan got its name, there is one that is more generally accepted than the others.

That is that the victorious Chippewas named the river Shawb-wa-way-gun, Indian terminology for wind or rumbling underground. The theory is that the rushing sound of the falls upstream prompted this nomenclature.

But regardless of how Sheboygan got its name, history says that it was not until the first quarter of the nineteenth century that the ring of the woodman’s axe was heard with any regularity and that it was then that a settlement actually began to spring up in this vicinity. Adventurers, fur traders, soldiers and priests no doubt hacked their way through the virgin wilderness and probably camped on the banks of the river, but it was not until 1818 that the Sheboygan area could claim its first white settler.

He was William Farnsworth, the founder of Sheboygan. Some years later William Paine and Col. Oliver Crocker built a sawmill and two log cabins in the Sheboygan area.

Some claim the sawmill was at the present site of Sheboygan Falls and others that it was nearer the mouth of Sheboygan river. There is no proof one way or the other, but there are historical writings to the effect that one of the log cabins was in the vicinity of the present Sheboygan County Court House which might give some preference to the latter school of thought.

At any event, this man Farnsworth became Sheboygan’s first booster. He not only foresaw a great future for this area, but he was willing to back up his beliefs with cold cash. At a government land sale at Green Bay he bought enough land to make him half owner of the village plat of Sheboygan.

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U. S. Post Office—takes its place among the many beautiful public buildings found in Sheboygan.

Majestic, modern and monumental—Sheboygan County Court House.
The H. C. Prange Co., is more than a store... it is a community institution, dedicated to the service of the citizens of this community... striving always to keep pace with the growth of the city of Sheboygan. Founded in 1887, with great vision and an unshakeable faith in the future of this city, by Mr. H. C. Prange Sr., this great store now enjoys an enviable reputation for honest and reliable merchandising throughout the entire state. As it has grown in the past, it will continue to grow in the future through faithful adherence to this customer policy, "You'll always come first with us".
Farnsworth also bought the sawmill from Paine and Crocker in 1835, and that was the year that the first white woman settler came to Sheboygan. She took over the feminine duties of the small settlement while her husband, Jonathan Pollett, helped Farnsworth with his work or looked after his interests when Farnsworth was away. More people became attracted to the settlement—a village was beginning to spring up!

As a result the village of Sheboygan was platted in 1836, and the first "hotel", known as the Sheboygan House, was built. Charles D. Cole organized a mercantile business and became the first postmaster of the community. Mail was delivered here twice a week from Milwaukee and Green Bay.

Further progress was indicated two years later when the Sheboygan County area, although still judiciously a part of Brown County, was organized for legal and executive activities. (Sheboygan County had been created by an act of the Territorial Legislature on Dec. 7, 1836, but it did not become independent of Brown County until 1846.)

The first election of county and town officers was held in March, 1839 and what might be called the first real store was built here in 1843.

The decade from 1840 to 1850 is one of the important ones in Sheboygan's history because the village received its charter as such on Feb. 9, 1846 and then a big era of expansion began. In 1845 the local pier was improved and a man named Capt. Swoll began building a fleet of lake-going vessels with their home port at Sheboygan Village. Steamships from Chicago and Buffalo visited the port daily from 1845 to 1848 bringing thousands of immigrants from Germany who became permanent residents here.

Included among these new citizens were many Lutherans driven from Germany by the Prussians because of religious differences. Another important group of immigrants were the Dutch who left Holland in search of religious freedom.

In the 1840's and early 1850's the Germans started doing the kind of work they had learned in their native land—farming. They cleared the land and raised phenomenal crops of oats, potatoes and wheat and found there was a good market for their grain with the result that the first of many grain elevators was built.

During this period Sheboygan really began to prosper, and the county population grew from 1,600 in 1846 to 8,300 in 1850. The Wade House was built at Greenbush

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Strong Banks

IN A STRONG COMMUNITY

A Matter Of Civic Pride

Progressive Business House

Beautiful Residence

Excellent Transportation

Facilities

Beautiful Churches

Stately Public Building

BANK OF SHEBOYGAN

CITIZENS STATE BANK

NORTH SIDE STATE BANK

SECURITY NATIONAL BANK

SOUTH-WEST STATE BANK

SHEBOYGAN TRUST COMPANY
establishments, offered $15,000 to aid Governor Randall in equipping and marshalling forces to assist in protecting property of the United States and in "putting down treason and rebellion." A recruiting office was opened, the local quota was pledged, and on Aug. 15, 1862 everything in the city was closed and all efforts were devoted to aiding recruiting that day.

It was in September of that same year that Sheboygan's classic "Indian Scare" took place. Somewhere the rumor got started that one thousand or more Indians were on the war path and were on their way to Sheboygan County to scalp every white man and woman in sight. As a result everybody got out their blunderbusses, pitchforks, scythes and every other conceivable weapon and converged on Sheboygan where they planned to make their last stand, if necessary.

But the "massacre" never materialized. As far as can be ascertained, the nearest Indians in this locality at that time were at Two Rivers, and they were friendly ones!

However, there are better reports to be gleaned about the year 1862. The first Board of Trade was organized, the first telegraph line came into Sheboygan, and 69 new buildings went up between then and the end of the decade. Among the industries started during this period were the Sheboygan Manufacturing Co., later known as the Sheboygan Chair Co., the Crocker Chair Co., and the Phoenix Chair Co.

There were other important signs of progress during the next decade from 1870 to 1880. Illuminating and cooking gas became available in 1871. The Milwaukee, Manitowoc & Green Bay railroad linked Sheboygan and Milwaukee by rail for the first time in 1872.

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ONE OF SHEBOYGAN'S OLDEST INVESTMENT ORGANIZATIONS SENDS GREETINGS . . . . . .

Our Good Wishes to Sheboygan on its 100th Birthday!

It is good to look back—and we are proud of a good record in a good community.

It is even better to look ahead—and we do so with great confidence. We believe that greater progress and investment opportunity lie ahead than have ever been enjoyed in the past. We invite you to let us help you plan for it TODAY!

WALTER J. BRAND & CO., INC.

Investments ✦ That Plan For Your Future
An era of expansion was under way. In addition to the chairs and furniture manufactured by the large woodworking factories other products included wagons, ships, brooms, and wooden shoes. The dairy industry expanded and in 1875 there were 45 cheese factories in the county. Besides cheese and chairs, other exports were wheat, clover seed, peas, limestone and lime, gloves and pianos.

The period between 1880 and 1900 was characterized by two outstanding developments. One was a phenomenal growth in population, and the other was development of large-scale industry. In 1875 Sheboygan had a population of less than 7,000, and this had leaped to 16,300 by 1890. The highwater mark of immigration was reached shortly after 1880 when within several years approximately 15,000 North German laborers and peasants came to Sheboygan. Their influence on the community is indicated by the fact that of the six newspapers published in Sheboygan in 1895 three were in the German Language.

Woodworking continued to dominate the scene, and the Garton Toy Co. and several large furniture factories were opened. The Kohler Co. which began manufacturing enameled plumbing fixtures here in 1883, moved to Riverside, now Kohler Village, in 1899.

Improvements during this era approaching the turn of the century included street railways, a water system, sewer system, and cedar block paving on the main streets. By this time the city had a library, hospital, and five school buildings.

The telephone had come to this city in 1881, but still was pretty much of a novelty and confined largely to commercial pursuits. It is interesting to note that the first telephone operator to reside at the local switchboard at 812 Pennsylvania Ave. was the late George Washington Leberman who later became prominent as one of the city’s most active members of the County Board of Supervisors.

Although electric lights first flickered on in Sheboygan in 1888, the community was still pretty much in the gas light era at the turn of the century. Most homes were lighted by gas light or with candles and kerosene lamps. Only a few important streets were paved.

Nevertheless electricity and the wonders it performed were starting to forge ahead and claim their part in the industrial and commercial picture. Street railways already existed in 1900, and during the same year an electric interurban street car line was built to Sheboygan Falls. Two years later this was extended to Plymouth and in 1909 to Elkhart Lake. For a number of years before automobiles became so prevalent that interurban railroads became unprofitable, the electric line to Elkhart and Crystal Lakes was popular for excursions for organizations and people who wanted to enjoy a day’s outing at either of the popular resorts.

During this period the Milwaukee Northern Electric Co. built an interurban line between Milwaukee and Sheboygan so that the two cities then had transportation by steam and electric line.

There were also several immigrations to Sheboygan early in the twentieth century. They were in such large groups that they erected their own churches. They included the Lithuanians in 1903 and the Slavonic Catholics from Carinola and Syria in 1910.

Naturally the various immigrations had their cultural and economic effects on the community, especially the large influx of people from Germany in the 1840s and 1880s. An industrious and a thrifty people, they earned money and saved their money to build homes which they owned and of which they were proud. Great music lovers, they also formed singing societies with German names and these groups still conduct saengerfest and saengerbunds. Their musical influence also has shown itself here (Continued on page 14)
it's still flame cooking...

but what a wonderful difference!

Yes, today's kitchen flame is a modern natural gas flame—clean, convenient and first choice of most every smart cook in town. No wonder, either, for no other cooking method gives you the same instant heat, pinpoint temperature control and perfect-every-time results.

Wisconsin Public Service is an "old hand" in Sheboygan kitchens, for we've been rendering dependable, economical gas service here for a mighty hefty part of Sheboygan's first century. It's a wonderful job, too, helping you do so many jobs better through the low-cost magic of Natural Gas.

Keeping that service good—making it even better, is our aim for the next 100 years. Just watch us!

WISCONSIN Public Service CORPORATION
in the many fine bands and symphony orchestras that have flourished here and through the excellent talent imported to Sheboygan for civic music entertainment.

Germans and people of German descent also usually are more interested in participating in sports rather than just viewing them, and as a result a branch of the Turner organization was formed here as far back as 1854 and is still an important part of the community.

No doubt the Germanic "gemuetlichkeit" also was responsible for the inimitable and irreplaceable Sheboygan bratwurst. Who invented this very special kind of pork sausage and when it made its debut nobody seems to know, but the fact remains that Sheboygan is the bratwurst center of the world and that Sheboygan and environs are the only place you can get this particular charcoal-broiled delicacy.

No doubt one of the reasons the bratwurst was invented was so that the good people of Sheboygan would have another excuse to drink a well known amber fluid that is reported to be especially palatable with bratwurst.

Certainly the bratwurst has exerted its influence on life in this community, especially during the spring, summer and autumn months. Most families possess their own bratwurst roasters from which huge clouds of smoke belch forth at any hour of the day or night. And for those who don't own their own, all of the city's beautiful parks are adequately equipped with such roasters for free use by the public.

Bratwurst frying definitely is the thing to do in Sheboygan!

Also along cultural lines, Sheboygan once was a great town for show business. Most of the old-timers among character actors and comedians in Hollywood or on Broadway will tell you that at some time or other they played Sheboygan. The best of road shows with the greatest Broadway stars also played "one night stands" here during the latter part of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth centuries.

When the cost of road shows became prohibitive and motion pictures rode the crest of the wave, this form of "live" stage entertainment was lost to Sheboygan, but during the past twenty years it has been brought back in an amazingly successful fashion through the little theatre movement.

Drawing upon the talent of a score of small dramatic organizations which used to compete with each other in one-act play tournaments, the Sheboygan Department of Public Recreation created the Community Players of Sheboygan which organization has won a nation-wide reputation as one of the largest and best of its kind anywhere.

Just as the people who came here had their influence on the cultural and social life of Sheboygan, so did the changing world have its effect on this community economically.

When Wisconsin's lumber supply was unlimited the manufacture of chairs here flourished, but when that supply waned and the industry became less profitable there were many such factories that went out of existence.

Fortunately there were other industries, many of them even bigger and better, to take their place. Besides its furniture Sheboygan now has many metal and plastic industries and a variety of many other products that includes, tannery goods, toys, shoes, clothing, bread wrapping machinery, enamel ware and malt. During this same period Sheboygan County became the cheese center of the world.

There have been other changes too. Practically every street in the city of Sheboygan is paved in some fashion or other, and a network of concrete or blacktop highways makes practically any community accessible by automobile or bus.

As a result street car and interurban tracks have been uprooted and this form of transportation has been supplanted by bus and automobile traffic. Radio and television have changed the habits of people here as well as elsewhere. Airplanes drone overhead and have made distance of any kind almost negligible from a time element view-point.

From a gloomy forest and wilderness populated only by Indian braves more than three centuries ago, Sheboygan has become a thriving manufacturing city on the beautiful shores of Lake Michigan.

If Mr. Nicolet and his Huron braves paddled past here now as they did back in 1635 they would really get an eyeful!
Sheboygan, one of the first cities in Wisconsin to enjoy the benefits of electricity, received service in 1888—65 years ago.

The generator, a saw mill drive shaft innovation, was located at S. Eighth St. on the Sheboygan River. Its capacity was 56 kilowatts. Service was poor and breakdowns caused outages sometimes lasting for three days.

Two years later the plant was moved to the Zschertzeche and Hoyer Tannery which was located at the present site of Sheboygan Dairy Products Company plant. This plant also went out of business in two years.

In 1892, the generators were set up in the G. B. Mattoon Woodworking factory where the present Rway Furniture Company is located. During Mr. Mattoon's ownership, lasting 12 years, the Sheboygan street railway was electrified. This new outlet brought a new name to his company—the Sheboygan Light, Power and Railway Co.

Later it was changed to the Sheboygan Electric Co.

In 1917 the Eastern Wisconsin Electric Co. built a 6,000 kilowatt plant, Riverside, which indicated electric service was here to stay and was growing steadily. This plant today serves as a reserve standby power source.

The Wisconsin Power and Light Company purchased the property in 1921. A 30,000 kilowatt plant was soon added to the system (December 1, 1931) to meet the ever-increasing demand. This came to be known as Edgewater. The second unit, 30,000 kilowatts, was added March 3, 1942. The latest addition, a 60,000 kilowatt unit, was put on the line July 16, 1951, bringing the total generating capacity to 120,000 kilowatts.

The present Edgewater plant is the largest in the Company system.

Today's 24-hour service is a far cry from the shaky part-time service of 65 years ago. Yes, today you enjoy—

ELECTRICITY FOR BETTER LIVING

WISCONSIN POWER AND LIGHT COMPANY
GREETINGS TO SHEBOYGAN

GROWING WITH OUR COMMUNITY SINCE 1847

Above: The Brewery
At Left: The Brew Kettle
Lower Left: Section of Boiling Department
Lower Right: One of the Aging Cellars

KINGSBURY BREWERIES CO.
MANITOWOC - - - - - SHEBOYGAN