Foreword

Ten years ago, when the Green County Historical society sponsored markers identifying exact sites of the first former cheese factories making Swiss and limburger cheese in Green county and Wisconsin, the dedication was witnessed by J. C. Steinman, who as a boy employed on the nearby Blum farm made the drives delivering the milk after the first factory opened on the Babler farm. Also attending was Mrs. Nick Gerber, widow of the founder of the factory system in Green county, each sharing the personal satisfaction the ceremony afforded them.

Dairying history appears to have reached the point where the past is more dependent upon the record in keeping alive the story of the origin of our unique cheese enterprise. Links between the living and the past are steadily reduced with the passing years.

Reminder of the passing of another decade prompted the current review. Passed on with it is what the writer considers the best picture of the Swiss cheese frontier as it appears today. The route here mapped combines both the old frontier and the new borders as extended and still representing much the same center of production in Washington township with both the old and the up-to-date and every mile of the improved highways filled with rural features sure to appeal to the interest of everyone.

Included are precious old landmarks. The trip, representing only small part of the cheeseland development, is well marked since the passing years have spared so many signs of pioneering days, to be seen together with much that is new and wonderful today. Reflection cannot fail to stimulate proper pride in the distinctive dairy industry still without equal anywhere after 80 years of constant expansion and improvement.

New Glarus, original objective of the old world movement here, gloriously celebrated a notable centennial in the security of its own
dairy kingdom and great milk condensery. Another similar colony from Bilten applied farm knowledge in utilizing timber land in the development of dairying. Nick Gerber, native of Switzerland, appeared at the right time to take hold with needed direction. The result has been that unquestioned leadership has been retained right here in the original center of production, with sufficient honor accruing to all interests and enough credit to be shared by all who have contributed to the forward progress.

A single story outlining a cheeseland sightseeing route grew into the series of articles combined in this pamphlet bridging the eighty years of Green county cheese history. The booklet results from demand for extra copies. We are grateful for the evidence of appreciation on the part of readers and take pleasure in extending circulation of the articles to further interest in the anniversary observance.

The Bilten phase and settlement of Washington township inspired expansion of the history. Up to now they have received no extended treatment in the printed record. The objective was to give the settlement recognition by the use of such factual information as is authoritative and the best to be obtained from reliable sources. It is tardy information long overdue, presented without effort to color, to glamorize or to favor. It is the plain story of Washington township with insistence on adhering to historical facts.

The Times is indebted to the state and local dairy division officials for cooperation in making available the information on present-day factory improvements.

The completed series represents an effort to preserve whatever possible remains to the credit of pioneers in Green county’s dairy enterprise.

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