DURHAM HILL ....

Durham Hill is located in the southeastern corner of the Town of Muskego. History has woven itself throughout the lives of the neighbors around Durham Hill, the settlement named for the herd of blooded Durham cattle imported to the area by John P. Roe in pre-Civil War days.

Levi Graves Guild took his first big chunk of land from the government when John Tyler was President in 1843. Two years later, Guild deeded a small piece of land in the southeast corner for a schoolhouse, provided his neighbors built a school with a fence around it within a year's time. In June of 1836, Luther Parker drove his two horse team to Muskego from New Hampshire. He brought his wife, Alletta French Parker, their three daughters, Susan, Perse and Ellen and their son, Charles. Charles grew up to become lieutenant governor of Wisconsin in 1873. Baby Amanda, born after they came, sickened and died. They buried her on the shores of Little Muskego Lake not far from their cabin. Parker was one of those responsible for Waukesha County's secession from Milwaukee County in 1846. When the location of a county seat was being considered, Parker's farm at Muskego was suggested.

One year after Wisconsin became a state (1848), Alletta Parker died at the age of 46. Luther followed his wife to the grave four years later at the age of 53. Both were buried nine miles from their home in the Durham Hill neighborhood, skirting the then largest lake in the county, Big Muskego Lake. Durham Hill's half-acre cemetery had been given to the community in the early 1840's by Levi Guild. Located at the northeast corner of their farm, the cemetery was exempted each time the farm changed hands. Most of the burials in the tiny cemetery took place before, during and just after the Civil War. Its first grave was opened in 1847. Two Union soldiers were buried there, Johnathan Smiley, who died at Lexington, KY in 1862, and Lt. Homer Clark, who died at Nashville, TN in 1863. Other thoroughly English names listed on the cemetery stones are Hutchinson, Longstreet, Drought, Clark, Brice, Bentley and Fillmore. An interval of almost thirty years went by with no new graves in that peaceful ground. The last grave was opened in 1958 for Frank Brice, who died at the age of 91.

During the Civil War, Levi Guild sold his farm to Samuel A. Tenny, who became the first Postmaster of Durham Hill on February 9, 1863. He served the community until 1903 when the post office was discontinued. In 1883, Peter Blattner bought out Samuel Tenny and the farm remained in the family for many years. Also in the same year, John Bosch bought out John P. Roe. He then owned land at all four corners of the crossroads. The Bosch's operated a saloon, a farm implement agency, an inn and a general store.

When tracks of the new electric line (17.5 miles) came out from Milwaukee in 1908, the railroad bought four acres from the Blattner farm for a right-of-way. T.M.E.R.& L. Co. had a difficult time laying their tracks across the sinking swale and springs below the Blattner's barnyard. During construction, workmen would stay at the Peter's farm located at the southeast corner of the crossroads.

The first telephone connecting Durham Hill with the outside world was the line from John Bosch's place at Durham Hill to Schafer's at Windlake with no customers in between. Later a public line hooked onto it. Nellie Wall and Mary Wolf were the first "Centrals" to connect the neighbors' houses when a call was made.

Durham Hill once supported two general stores, two saloons, a hardware store, a farm implement agency, a blacksmith shop, a creamery, an inn, a school, a post office, two churches, a ballroom and several tradesmen.
INSPECTION OF LINE BEFORE OPENING MOTOR CAR AT DURHAM HILL 1909

CONSTRUCTION CREW AT DURHAM HILL 1908
LOOKING NORTH AT DURHAM HILL STATION CENTER OF PICTURE 1909

M.L.H.&Ry - VIEW FROM 200' W. OF XING AT DURHAM STATION.

LOOKING SOUTH AT DURHAM HILL 1913
LOOKING SOUTHWEST AT DURHAM HILL STATION 1913

The center was swampy land, marsh or muck soil. This land was not drained and in its virgin state was 1860 platbook, swampland consisted of 1,840 acres. In June of 1861, the Town of Norway had the authorization to sell the land at a dollar and a quarter per acre of $50 for forty acres. This swamp land of Wind Lake was at that time from 4 to 6 feet under water.

LOOKING NORTHEAST DURHAM HILL STATION 1938
MUSKEGO DAM ROAD LOOKING NORTHEAST  1938

CAR 1119 AT MUSKEGO CANAL GOING NORTHBOUND  1913