Runge Gas Service, Inc.

Milton R. Runge, Board Chairman of Runge Gas Service, Inc. is a descendant of probably one of the oldest settlers in Caledonia. His great grandfather, Daniel B. Rork settled in the area just east of Franksville in June of 1837. Mr. Rork bought the claim of Jacques Vieau, who asked $2,000 for it but finally sold it for $525. It was fenced in 1834 and was probably the first claim to be fenced east of the Rock River. It was said that Dan Rork knew all of the settlers in this area and is credited in the assistance and erection of the first frame house to be built in Milwaukee.

Dan Rork's occupation was largely farming and he owned most of the land on Highway K east of the railroad tracks including that that is now the Caledonia-Mt. Pleasant Memorial Park. His son, Marshall, was also a farmer, however, his property was on what is now known as Kraut road and was located just west of the Frank Pure Food Company.

It was in the late 1800's that Rudolph Runge, Milton's father, came to Franksville and met Marshall Rork's daughter, Marietta. He had been a bookkeeper in Milwaukee and because of failing health believed that a change in location would aid in the restoration of his health problem. After going into the general store business Rudolph married Marietta Rork in 1892 and their first son, Milton, was born on September 17, 1894. The Runge's had four additional children including Edwin who was born in 1900.

Rudolph died in 1914 and the experience that Milton had gained while working for his father proved to be most valuable. At the age of 21 he left the only other job he had ever had and took over the responsibilities of not only the store but of his brothers and sisters as well. Trouble continued to plague him, however, because four years later the store, located where the Franksville Food Center is now, burned to the ground with all of its contents.

Milton Runge is a man of great intestinal fortitude and within a short time was again operating a general store in Franksville, this time on Highway K across from the bank. It was there that he sold appliances and hardware.

The old General Store on Howell Road
along with the other necessities of daily life. In 1935 he converted the first gasoline cooking stove to bottle gas, an effort that his oldest son, Ralph, would later expand into a thriving business. His first love, however, was animals and wild life and in addition to having a back yard full of various birds, he purchased a trio of mink and launched another son, Marshall, into the mink business. Although the store was sold in 1944, Milton's sons, along with some help from a son-in-law, continued their respective businesses. The mink business that at one time produced over 5,000 dark and mutation pelts was discontinued in 1969 but the LP-gas operation continues to flourish. A new office building was built on Robert's Street in 1965 and the firm now employees 15 people.

Milton Rork Runge is now nearly 81 and lives on Highway K across from the new Racine County National Bank. His sons, Ralph and Marshall, as well as his daughter and son-in-law, Elaine and Bud Wieman, live nearby on the land that their great-great grandfather, Daniel B. Rork, settled and laid claim to over 135 years ago.

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Clem's Barber Shop

This barber shop in Franksville has been around for a mighty long time... since around 1903, in fact. In it's early days it had no running water and a potbellied stove provided the central heating.

The late Bernard Hansen built and operated the shop for 50 years, and being a versatile and enterprising gent, used the backroom to solder milk cans and sharpen saws for the farmers.

Then along came modern minded Clem Lueneburg, noted the building's prime location right next to the bank, and purchased the barber shop. Clem was not new to the community having barbered across the street for many years. He liked the location and not being one to stand still, he remodelled the shop several times always keeping pace with the progress of the town.