

East Main Street Was Speedway For Horse Racing During The Eighties

By John Borchardt

603 Liberty Street
I was four months old when my parents, Herman Borchardt and

Louise Borchardt, nee Wendorf, came here from their farm in Marathon county, just below what is now Brokaw. It was July 10, 1882 when they came to Merrill, where they purchased the corner where the Co-op Grocery Store is now located.

In 1887 the railroad was built to Tomahawk. I can just remember the wheel scrapers and the mules pulling them.

Main street, from Stuyvesant street east to Kyes street, was the speedway for horse racing in the 80's. Nearly all the business men had driving horses and on Sunday afternoons and holidays they would stage races. J. W. Scott, who had a livery stable where the Solver Sales Stable is now located, always had some good drivers, as did D. D. Tarr, J. N. Cotter, Curly Kaiser and the Porkeys, down the river between Pine River and the Trappe River.

Columbus Day celebration on October 12, 1892, four hundred years after the discovery of America, was quite an affair. All the school children were in the parade and we all carried a flag. We had programs in the school in the forenoon and the parade in the afternoon.

It was this same year, 1892, that the electric street car began in Merrill and it provided quite a treat for the youngsters. The street car ran from Stuyvesant street to Cottage street. John Akey used to enjoy himself when he would have to change trolleys at the end of the line. He would throw a dime for Hartley Deering and myself to fight over. Finally we got wise and would divide the dime, or whatever he threw at us without fighting over it, so he quit that.

The lumberjacks at the Robinson house, which stood next to Amy Hall's tavern, and the lumberjacks in front of the Patzer House, now the Ruprecht tavern, used to have some sport. One day the Robinson bunch would give us kids a nickel and have us call the bunch across the way some unprintable name. Then the bunch in front of the Patzer House would catch us and give us a little bigger tip to call the Robinson bunch some names.

I always had quite a gang of kids to play with. East of home were the Rhodes, the Riebes, the Rupprechts and Leslie and Albert Nusbaum. On the other side of the street were the Bobbs boys, John and Frank, Louis Boucher, Ed Kerslake, Frank Hotz, Henry Patzer, Paul Busch, the Froelich boys and the Neubachers.

Sunday afternoons it was great fun to play around the T. B. Scott lumber yard and the old shingle shed until the watchman would spy us. He would try to drive us out but the place was so big he hardly ever suc-

ceeded in getting us all out. We would split up and some of us would go to each end of the yard. It ran from Nast street, in front of the Children home, up to where the power house now is; and from the railroad track to the river.

East of our house was Zamnow's blacksmith shop and Jake Kerble's wagon shop. These were great hangouts for us kids. August Rex lived across the street. He had a dray line with his two sons, Henry and Fred. John was too young to do much of the draying.

As we got older we ventured further away from home.

There were the Roche boys, Ashley, Edward, Fred and Tad. We all went to the Second Ward, now the Lincoln school. In 1898 I was taught in the 9th grade, the only year they had a 9th grade.

In the summer vacations of 1896 and 1897 I delivered for Huber and Stanke, who had a meat market where the Wisconsin Public Service Corp. now has its office. Huber and Stanke built that brick building.

In 1899 my mother died and I stayed out of school to help my dad.

In 1902 I was sent to the Williams Business College at Oshkosh, where I took-up courses in bookkeeping and stenography, which I never re-

gretted. With me at Oshkosh were Ed Kerslake, Richard Kamke, Louis Boucher, William Braun and young Howard, whose father had a paint and lime store on West Main street.

At that time, Henry Patzer and Louis Leidiger were going to Lawrence College at Appleton.

When I came back from college I stayed home with my father. In 1904 he began to get sickly and we were building a new building on the corner where the old building stood. The old building was moved over next to the blacksmith shop. We used it for the saloon until the new building was finished in the summer of 1905. That fall my father died and I ran the business until 1906, when I sold out to Hartley Deering and Nig Talbot, the latter who had married Myrtle Deering. In 1908 I sold the property to George Fuchs and I worked around the hotels until 1913, when I got married. Then I followed up my bookkeeping profession which I am doing at the present time.

My wife has lived here for 53 years, always in the same house, though it has been remodelled.

Merrill used to be some live city when all the lumberjacks would come to the town in the spring of the year; and then after the log drive down the river.



John Borchardt at the age of four months, when he came to Merrill with his parents.



A picture of Mr. Borchardt taken at the time he graduated from the Williams Business College, Oshkosh.



John, at the age of four years, is standing in front of the Borchardt building at the corner where the Co-op Grocery Store is now located.



Mr. and Mrs. Borchardt in a picture taken recently. Mrs. Borchardt has been a resident of Merrill for 53 years.

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