

Building Housed First Movie And Bowling Alleys

Mrs. O. F. Nienow
1900 East Main Street

My father, a former business man of Merrill, was born in Jefferson county on November 24, 1858. He later moved to Reedburg. He had been a student at Elmhurst college but left school to go to work before he had completed his college career. He looked for work in Reedburg, but wages were so low he would not stay. Friends in Merrill wrote to him to come to this city and he followed their advice around 1885. Dad's father, the Rev. Ludwig Karl Knauss, was a minister at Reedburg.

Dad's first job in Merrill was as a clerk in the Champagne Department Store, which was located on the present site of the Boston Store building on East Main street. He later clerked at the Burlewitz Store, then located where the Citizens American Bank is now.

He was married to Ottilie Mootz in December of 1890. She was born January 3, 1870, in Cleveland and came to Hamburg about 60 years ago, when she was 14 years old. When the family landed in Hamburg they had to cut a clearing to erect a log house. Wild deer ate up their garden stuff repeatedly; porcupines gnawed at the doors and sometimes climbed the roof and gnawed at the eaves in their efforts to get inside the house. Bears were plentiful, she recalls, but they never really harmed or bothered anyone much.

The Mootz family arrived in Hamburg about 66 years ago. There were 13 children in the family, ten of whom reached manhood and womanhood.

Following his job with Burlewitz, dad entered his own business in a building near where Harrod's Jewelry Store is now located, or in that vicinity. He sold bicycles, cigars and candy and after a year he sold the business to W. D. Vandecar. He started a fruit store next, in the building now occupied by the Vogue Shoe Shop. He then moved to the building where the Kubasta Agency is now located and enlarged his business to include an ice cream parlor and the sale of groceries and fruit.

At that time the double brick building located on the courthouse property was offered to the highest bidder and father, who was the successful bidder, moved the structure across the road to the present site of the A. & P. and Woolworth stores. His family lived in the building during the entire moving operations and this was the first time that such a structure was moved in the city.

Gus Peterson and Anson Smith, with other helpers, supervised the moving. When the property was acquired for the courthouse, this building was on the southwest corner of the lot on Main street. Nick Grey-clading, also on the property, tore down his greenhouses and moved his flower shop to where Harry C. Green now does business.

After moving the building, father enlarged his business and when he retired he sold out to Albert and Gus Mootz, who ran a fruit store for many years. Albert Mootz died in California several years ago. Gus is still a resident of Merrill and lives on East Second street.

The first movie place, named the Cosmo, was in the building that was moved. This was in 1904. The Cosmo ran, there for about two years and then went to the Montgomery Ward store site until destroyed by fire in 1916. After the Cosmo moved away from the building, the bowling alleys went in, remaining for about two years. There were two alleys.

Dad died on January 17, 1919. Mother still makes her home in Merrill.

Those were, of course, the days of



This building, secured on high bid by E. G. Knauss, when the courthouse was to be built, was moved by Mr. Knauss from the courthouse property to the present site of the A. & P. and Woolworth stores. Gus Peterson and Anson Smith supervised the operation, the first of its kind in the city. This building housed the first movie and the first bowling alleys in Merrill. Mr. Knauss sold groceries, fruit, etc., and ran an ice cream parlor.

the silent films and at the Cosmo, folks were employed to stay behind the scenes and follow the picture, making such appropriate sounds as breaking glass and galloping horses when the screen called for such. A piano player was hired to play music that went with the action portrayed

—a stirring march for the arrival of the U. S. Cavalry in time to rescue the folks traveling by covered wagon and besieged by a band of mounted savage Redmen—"Hearts and Flowers" for the sentimental scenes. George Hunter would play a saxophone solo while the spotlight reflect-

ed the brilliance of his big diamond ring.

My sisters and brothers still living are Mrs. R. J. Hooek and Miss Estelle Knauss, Merrill; Ben Knauss, Marquette; Mich. Carl Knauss, Oshkosh; and Mrs. C. Z. (Rose) Williams, Stateville, N. C.

1847 A CENTURY OF PROGRESS 1947

The Centenarian recalls little of his early youth and very little is known of Merrill's beginning except such as was handed down in writing or by word of mouth by the early pioneers in this area. Some will recall the days of the log drives and the big sawmills that dotted the banks of the Wisconsin in our city; it was then that the forerunner of this business took shape in the form of a foundry and machine shop to take care of the repairs and other needs of those mills; later other services were added, and finally, when no large mills remained, a conversion was made to the manufacture of Wire Goods and Specialties, plus Contract Insulation, and Acoustical work.

And so in the years Merrill has changed and with it our business as well as others, until today Merrill is a proud and beautiful city with a variety of successful industries, stores, fine schools, churches, hospitals and beautiful parks surrounded by a great agricultural area. We are happy to be a part of such a community.



City Treasurer, Charles Kubasta, who came to Merrill many years ago.



Merrill Manufacturing Corp.
AND
Taylor Insulation Company