

Fred E. Braun, 83, Recalls Flocks Of Passenger Pigeons

By Fred E. Braun,
1700 East Second Street.

A recent editorial in the Herald put me in mind of an incident that happened to me in 1876 in the Town of Scott, when I was a boy of 11 years. Our farm was three and one-half miles south of Merrill. I'll come to this incident a little later.



Fred Braun

I was born in Germany in 1864, and with my father, mother, two sisters and a brother, came to the United States when I was six years old. It was springtime in 1871 when we left Bremenhaven on a boat 200 feet long. It took us eight weeks to make the crossing of the Atlantic to New York.

We remained in Brooklyn, N. Y., for three weeks as father had to earn money to go further. Brooklyn was a village then and they used mules to pull the street cars.

We then went to Rochester, N. Y., to the home of my father's cousin. We were in Rochester for three months and while there we could see the Chicago fire. At the end of three months father had earned enough money to go to Wisconsin.

I remember on the trip to Chicago that the train stopped at that city at some place where there was no depot and we were moved by wagons to another station. No depot, nor any houses were seen by us in Chicago.

We went by train from Chicago to Stevens Point and there we took the stage to Big Bull (Wausau). Fred Lemke was there. He was the grandfather of the present Lemke of the Lemke Ice Cream and Dairy Products Co. Lemke was a neighbor of ours in Germany.

We stayed in the Town of Berlin during the winter and then moved to the Town of Scott, where father bought a 120-acre farm, the present Ernst Hoff farm. We lived in the granary of Carl Schulz, a neighbor.

Father was cutting elm logs for a house and cleared a little place to build. When everything was ready, all the farmers—about 25 to 30—from around came one day and staked a building-bee. They worked so they could almost finish the good old log house in one day. We soon cleared

ed enough land to sow wheat. That was the best crop for us. We had about 15 acres clear and had a nice crop of wheat stubble to plow in the fall of 1876.

To return to the incident mentioned at the beginning of this story: Father was plowing with oxen and I was hoeing near the stumps. I was tired of hoeing and asked my father to let me plow. He told me I could but I would have to push right along as it would soon freeze. He told me not to let the oxen stop.

Now it happened that a large flock of those passenger pigeons you mentioned in your editorial flew on to our wheat stubble. I let the oxen stand and ran to the house to get the old Army muzzle loader. I got the gun and started crawling along on my knees behind some stumps. By that time my father had noticed that the plow had stopped and he was close behind me with a long elm root that he had picked up. He raised the root and started to say something. The pigeons, startled by the noise, flew up and I let loose with the gun into the flock. So many pigeons fell that my father dropped the elm root on the ground instead of on my back. He told me to hurry back to the house and get some more shot while he watched where the pigeons lighted. When I got back he had picked up 14 killed by the first shot. I got too close to them on my next shot and only brought down seven, but my father was not there to say "I told you not to stop plowing."

Those pigeons never came back to the U.S.A. They used to cover all the wheat growing states. Whenever I see some writing about those pigeons I can not help but think back to the good old days on the farm and how all the farmers worked together, building and threshing.

When the pigeons migrated south they would cover the sun. Some writers think the Pacific Ocean must have swallowed them up in a storm.

I do not remember the year of another incident, but there was a great demand for lumber. I was with Livingston's then. Jack O'Day was foreman for the Scott Lumber Co. He came to the store one day and said to me: "Fred, I can sell more rubbers than you can, but I wish you would buy them for me. I will give you ten per cent profit. We have 50 rups this winter. But you'll have to take back in the spring what is not sold. I asked him to give me two weeks time. I went to St. Paul and in order to be considered as a jobber had to buy 500 cases, 24 pairs to a case. I got 15 per cent off as a jobber. We sold them all and had to buy some more and he did not return one pair in the spring according to our agreement.

That year they very near cleared all the woods in Wisconsin and fires finished the rest. A number of other loggers were around then, including Langley & Alderson, Fred Smith and a lot of others.

I voted for Wm. McKinley for president. His "dinner pail" slogan elected him. Mark Hanna was his campaign manager, and the German papers would write it Hannah. Mrs. Raasch explained it in the store one day when she said "William is all right, but his wife Hannah, she wears the pants."

A Paul Bunyan story might be of interest to some young readers. Paul Bunyan was logging up at Rhinelander and made a contract with a St. Louis firm. Logs in rafts were to be shipped. So, he shipped them. When the logs arrived in St. Louis the company wrote to Paul and said the logs did not meet specifications. Paul wondered what he could do to get the logs back. So he bought several barrels of salt and fed it to Babe, the Blue Ox. Babe ate the salt and then rushed to the Wisconsin river. He drank the Wisconsin and the Mississippi rivers dry and as he

drank the rafts floated back to Rhinelander.

I hope you readers will excuse me as a writer. Most of you in Merrill will remember me as a shoe salesman for 48 years. I started with S. Heinemann at 15 years.

Merrill was founded in 1847 when Andrew Warren built the first dam and mill at the foot of what is now Mill street. That was the same year the U. S. government started issuing postage stamps.

Started Career Here

Hon. Alexander Stewart, for three terms a member of Congress from this, the then Ninth Congressional District, started his business career in Merrill as a woodsman. The first lumber J. and A. Stewart owned was manufactured in Merrill.

The first blacksmith in town was S. S. "Tug" Ives. He was followed by John T. Adams, Larson, and Gus F. Koehler. Tug Lake was named after Mr. Ives.

LUMBER

*Built This City And
Made Possible This*

CENTENNIAL

HOMES

We take a certain pride in the fact that our company has played an important part in the building and modernizing of Merrill. The materials we sell are famous for quality and durability. It is our intention that every piece of lumber that leaves our yard will be a perfect example of the nature of our merchandise. If you're planning a home or modernization program, let us help you at no additional cost.

"SEE WEISS WHEN YOU MODERNIZE"

Weiss Wood Products

Congratulations Merrill!

THE GAMBLE STORES ARE THIS YEAR CELEBRATING
THEIR 27TH ANNIVERSARY

Side by side—a city and a store! Although we are far from being as old as Merrill we have been part of the picture since 1943, growing with the

city and serving an ever increasing number of customers from this vicinity. We hope that we may continue to grow and serve you in the coming years.

GAMBLES
1920-1947

Gamble's

MERRILL
1847-1947