

~ Memories of Arline Pierce ~

The following is from a paper Arline Pierce wrote to remember early life in Williams Bay.

My great grandfather, Jonas Southwick and family came to Wisconsin in 1840 living west of Delavan. Then they built the house where Fridlund's lived (Southwest corner of Golf Course) and farmed there many years. My father Oliver, and his two sisters, Hettie and Jennie, and brother Doric were born there. I am the only descendent of that family. Two brothers of George Southwick (my grand-father) also lived in the area. Charles lived in the house next to where we now live. (40 W. Geneva St.) They operated a boarding house there for several years, later moving to a house across the corner from the Mormon Church, which later became the Belfry Theater; and William H. lived on a farm just north of the village on Hwy. 67 (Elkhorn Rd.). His son Ernest and family also lived there. Ernest's daughter Mary (Mrs. John Ingersoll) and her family lived there until a couple of years ago. Several cousins of the Southwick family lived in the Delavan area.



left: Israel Williams Homestead

At the turn of the century building went on at a rapid rate. Families of several astronomers and employees at Yerkes Observatory moved to the area and built homes. Among the early ones were Edwin B. Frost, E.E. Barnard, Storrs B. Barrett, D.J. Oetjen and Francis Sullivan. Other residents of the area were Henry Francis, Alfred Piehl, Harry Brumgard, Festus Williams, Royal J. Williams (sons of Israel Williams), Edward Williams, and George Williams (grandsons of Israel Williams). George Williams lived in the Israel Williams house which was torn down several years ago and is now the Bayside Motel. George Williams did odd jobs, kept the village clean picking up papers (many of which were stored in his house). He was the first person to keep a fire in the library. The history of the library (at the library) can give much more information.

The first post office was located where the village park now is, and Mrs. Edward Williams was the postmistress. Various people would bring books which they had read to the post office to exchange with other people who had books which they had also read. It was at this time that Mr. Barrett became

interested in a library, and was instrumental in starting a traveling library (books borrowed from the state library and loaned for a three week period, then exchanged for another group). It was at that time that a building from the Sturges Estate was to be torn down, but several men from the Bay purchased the land where the present municipal building stands and the first library known as the Barrett Memorial Library which was moved from the Sturges estate. The library was in the front of the building and the back part of the building was a bowling alley for several years and then changed into a community room, complete with kitchen and wash rooms. This room served as a meeting place for many groups, was the polling place and where the first members of the Lutheran Church met. Ned Grim was one of the first Sunday School teachers. A wooden building just south of the village hall was operated by Mr. Schroeder as a livery stable. This building was later razed.



Barrett Memorial Library

My father operated a grocery store next to a hotel and tavern known as the Lake Vista House on the corner where the Lackey Building now stands (Geneva and Walworth). My parents built a general merchandise store in 1903. This is where the Hotton building now stands.

There was a wooden building just north of the Lackey building which was a harness shop, operated by Dan Beard. It later was a drug store and ice cream parlor operated by William Stein. A blacksmith shop stood just north of the present post office. It was owned by Oscar Roeker and later Louis Rasmussen, until he retired and the building was torn down.

Mr. DeGroff lived in a house which was remodeled many years ago into a dining room owned by Melvin Spence and is now Charlie O's. A meat market was where Doc's delicatessen is now located. It burned in the early 1900's. Edwin Hermanson built the present building and operated a bakery there, followed by George Anderson. Seth and Mary Stacy operated a delicatessen and liquor store in the building until Doc's Delicatessen (Doc. Boyd) took over.

The Lake Vista House burned on a cold night in Feb. or March 1903. Mr. Lackey (father of Vera Granath) built the present building in 1905 where the Lake Vista House stood. Mr. Lackey operated a hardware store where the present hardware store now is, and a dry goods store next door. Before that he had a business which later became Hollister and sons Lumber Company and was located near the railroad tracks so that lumber and feed could be brought in easily. The Office is now located on that part of the property.

The post office was located in the Lackey Building, Anna Peterson was appointed postmistress at Williams Bay in October, 1907. Prior to her appointment to the position Miss Peterson had been a clerk in the local post office. When she was appointed she was one of the youngest postmasters in the state of Wisconsin.

A pool hall operated by Roy Colby was where the present barber shop now is, and a grocery store operated by Granzow and Peterson was where the present grocery is located. (In 1996 a Carpet Store) A Tea Room was where the present Ice Cream Store is (In 2016 it was an antique store), it later was an ice cream store operated by Arthur Ohl followed by many others including W.H. and Gordon Burton, William Amundsen and Arthur Keach.

A restaurant operated by Loren Taylor was where the Laundromat now stands. The cement block building on the corner was built and operated by Leslie Sawyer and is now the Keg Room. (In the 40's and 50's it was Fish Line Grocery Store). A small room which is now part of the Keg Room was operated by Chauncey Grim as a restaurant. The building where the Beauty Parlor now located was an A&P Store for a short time. Then for many years it was a restaurant known as Lee's Kitchen. (Operated by Lela Hopkins)



Hopkins and Walker Garage

The present Mall on Geneva Street and Walworth Avenue was built and

operated as a garage by Hopkins and Walker for many years. The shop west of the Lackey Building (up Geneva St.) was originally a shoe repair shop, followed by an ice parlor and motor repair shop operated by Elmer Hopkins.

The Shell Station, across from the park, was originally owned by Arthur Anderson and the Country Store was originally operated by Ed Hollister. There was a hotel where the Condo-minium South now stands. It was originally Ferndale Inn, then Somerset Lodge. Fernwood Inn stood where Boro Spotz now lives. Condominium North stands where Rose Lane Lodge once stood.

The social life of the village, centered around churches: The Congregational, and Swedish, later the Gospel Tabernacle and then Calvary Community Church. The Tuesday Evening Study Club was the first Women's organization in the Bay. It consisted of single women originally, but later (1929) accepted married women. It was originally known as the Cross & Crescent Society & consisted of single women of the Congregational Church.

Conference Point Camp and the Y.M.C.A. (now George Williams) brought many groups to the village as they still do. Eleanor Camp for Girls no longer exists.

Probably what impressed me most was the development of Cedar Point Park. As a child I went there to Sunday School picnics. There was only one building at the very end of the point - used as the Lake Geneva Yacht Club Clubhouse in the summer.

As for me, I helped in my parents store until I went to Whitewater Normal and taught at Sheboygan for four years, then I married Harold Pierce and came back to Williams Bay to live. I was the librarian for twelve years and helped out part time until my retirement in November 1977.



Arline Pierce

Arline Pierce was born Nov. 3, 1904 in Williams Bay, the daughter of Oliver and Mary (Ladd) Southwick. She married Harold L. Pierce June 20, 1929 in Williams Bay. He preceded her in death in Sept of 1985. She died Jan. 27, 1988 at Sherwood Care Center, Williams Bay.