About Baraboo

To Archibald Barker and Andrew Dunn, in 1836, both friends of Henry Dodge, Jr., son of Wisconsin's first territorial governor, belongs the credit for being the first white men to attempt a permanent settlement within the confines of what is now known as the city of Baraboo. These two adventurous miners from Mineral Point, upon receiving anticipated information from their young friend, Dodge, that his father had succeeded in closing a treaty with the Winnebago, started construction of a rude cabin near an abandoned Indian cornfield near "the rapids" on the river we now know as the Baraboo. However, the neighboring Indians objected to this intrusion, particularly since they had not as yet received information about a treaty and their objection was sufficient to cause Barker and Dunn to leave forthwith. Barker later returned to become one of Baraboo's pioneer citizens.

The first permanent settlement of this area was in 1839 when Ebenezer Peck, Wallace Rowan, Abram Wood and James Van Slyke came here. Peck came here a little earlier than the others and took up the first claim at an area later to be known as Manchester. His wife, Rosaline, was the first white woman to make the valley her permanent home. Others had been here earlier but had left.

Abraham "Abe" Wood came as the first permanent resident of Baraboo, the exact date not being recorded, but it was about 1839. Waterpower and quick riches drew Abe Wood to the Baraboo rapids. He was a powerfully built man, rough and profane, impulsively ready to divide his last crust and equally ready to pick a quarrel. It was only the accident of his being the first settler that made him prominent in Baraboo's history.

Abe Wood built a log cabin, 12 by 12 feet on the bank of the Baraboo River. Mr. H. E. Cole, former president of the Sauk County Historical Society, was instrumental in having a bronze tablet placed to mark the spot, which reads:

"This tablet is one of many which will survive the years for future generations and will also perpetuate the name of one who worked so unselfishly and faithfully in the interest of Sauk County history:"

Mr. H. E. Cole.

"On this site in 1839, first permanent house was erected by Abraham Wood, who, with Wallace Rowan built nearby in 1840 the first sawmill and dam on the Baraboo River. Placed by the Sauk County Historical Society, June 14, 1926."

Abe Wood died September 1855, aged sixty years. The cabin he built was the beginning of Baraboo. Levi Moore was a close follower of Wallace Rowan, locating in 1840. A wheelwright and ship builder by trade, he operated a sawmill in the early days of Baraboo. Part of his land was known as Moore's Addition, bounded on the south and west by the Baraboo River, on the east by Center Street and on the north by 8th Avenue. Once a wild and picturesque tract, it is now intersected by paved and busy thoroughfares lined on each side by attractive, modern homes. It was platted in 1859. The home place on 2nd Avenue has never been out of the family. Levi Moore was the father of Mrs. Charles H. Williams and Valoo V. Moore and grandfather of Mrs. Oscar Doppler.

Dr. Charles Cowles was the first physician who located in Baraboo Valley. He came here in May of 1846. Dr. Cowles was in the prime of life, full of vigor and had a practice, which extended many miles. On one occasion at sundown, January 3, 1847, he was called to go sixty-four miles to visit a lumberman taken with pleura-pneumonia. On an Indian pony, he rode that distance by four o'clock the next morning without dismounting and the thermometer registered 26 degrees below zero; such a feat demonstrated a degree of physical endurance seldom seen in our time. He excelled in quick diagnosis, arriving at quick conclusions and was remarkably accurate as a rule.

About Baraboo

Ruth M. Southard wrote in 1934

"The story of the first funeral held in Baraboo is told in a letter written by my mother's youngest sister when she was fourteen years old. Baraboo was her home with Great Grandmother Crandall from 1846 until her marriage in 1851."

"Saturday, the l8th of December, 1848. A funeral was held over the corpse of George W. Brown, a friend of the poor, a loved and respected member of society. A large circle of brothers and sisters, a father and mother laments him. He was a single man but expected (reports say) to be married the night he was killed. His poor Maria is at most frantic with grief.

He was owner of the sawmill and in putting up an addition, a bent fell, killing him almost instantly. He never spoke again although he breathed for almost two hours. He was very rich, some say worth two thousand dollars ($2,000), but we do not know. The funeral was held at the new courthouse, the first that was ever held in it. The text was this: 'Truly as the Lord liveth and thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death.' He was followed to the grave by nearly two hundred people. His was the first interment in the village burying ground.

Hulda Van ValkenBurgh 1848

Archibald Barker was born in Tyrone, Ireland in 1916. He left home at the age of 14 and took a job on a sailing vessel where he spent several years sailing the seven seas. He landed in the United States about 1835 and took up residency in Chicago. The Indian fur trade drew him to Wisconsin where he engaged in a partnership with William Rowen at Fort Winnebago. He later became engaged to Rowen's daughter but she died of consumption before they could be married. In 1837 West Baraboo was an active Indian Trading Post and Wood, Barker and Rowen were the first whites to settle here. "Archie" Barker had a son, Samuel G. Barker. At the age of 17 in 1892 and on the day following Christmas, Sam became a dental assistant for Dr. Higgins. His apprenticeship was to be served in Higgin's office, located over the Wright Building on Oak Street. Barker remained with Higgins until October of 1893 when he enrolled in the Chicago College of Dental Surgery. He graduated in 1896, at the age of 21, in a class of 107. Barker retired in 1952.

Ebenezer Peck with his wife, Rosaline and two children, Victoria and Victor, also came in 1840. Mrs. Peck, who was well entrenched in the early history of Baraboo, was described by Levi Moore as: "Our lawyer, doctor and particular friend of the people - and never told a lie. "She herself is quoted as saying: "There were no deaths in Baraboo until the doctors came." Mrs. Peck was the first white woman in Madison as well as Baraboo. Her daughter, Victoria, was the first white child born in Madison.

The existence of lead mines in Wisconsin had been known since the seventeenth century. However, the opportunity to work these mines in any large way did not avail itself until after the war of 1812 and the Indian treaties, which followed it. In 1822 a Kentucky company was formed and took a lease on these mines. The Winnebago war of 1827 was largely occasioned by encroachment of prospectors on what Indians believed to be and in fact probably was, their land. Among these intruders was Wallace Rowan who showed up in Wisconsin as early as 1827 and possibly earlier and prospected in the area of Platteville. Wallace was a Kentuckian and probably was born around 1680.

Shortly after, others came and in 1842 there were fourteen families living here. Levi Moore, 1840, James H. Haines, W. H. Canfield and his wife came in 1842. The Canfields lived in a dry goods box for some weeks until their house was finished. The first mill on the river was built by Wallace Rowan and Abram Wood in 1839, at the "upper ox-bow."

The first hotel in the valley was kept in Lyons, later West Baraboo, by James Webster in 1842. Webster died in 1853.

Records indicate that in 1841, Rev. T. M. Fullerton, a Methodist preacher, delivered the first sermon in the valley in the log house of Wm. Hill, which stood half a mile above the ford of the Baraboo River. The area on the south side of the river, near the dam was known as Brown Town after Chauncey Brown, one of the first settlers in Baraboo. Brown, alone and single-handed, came to this area in 1842. This was before the days of bridges and ferries and his approach required swimming the Wisconsin River. He entered this site in the land office at Mineral Point and then promptly returned to Whitewater, his former home. There, he recruited a number of men and returned to what would later be called Baraboo. Once here, they

constructed the first house in the city proper. This no doubt was a log dwelling and has long since been eaten by the ravages of time.

Sometime between 1843 and 1845 a saw and gristmill was erected on the north side of the river by a young man named Geo. W. Brown on the site later occupied by the Baraboo Flouring Mill in 1892, which would have been about directly under the high bridge that later spanned the river off the lower end of Oak Street.

In 1845, Prescott Brigham was elected the first Register of Deeds in Sauk County and held that office for two years. The Sauk County treasury did not have any money at that time, so in June of 1847 (some records indicate August 1, 1848) Prescott purchased, with his private funds, a quarter of section 35 from the United States through the land office at Mineral Point.

Had you visited the settlement in 1845 you probably would have taken your meals in the basement of the old Baraboo House on the northwest corner of the intersection of Walnut and Lynn Street. The menu could have consisted of warmed up or fresh fried pork, fresh or cooked over fried potatoes, cold Johnny cake and something they referred to as tea, all for a price of about $0.75. If you wished to cross over the river to your north, you would have wound your way down Walnut Street where men would possibly be busy removing stumps from the middle of the Street. There was no bridge across the river but it was a good fording spot and the first bridge was constructed at this point in 1846. During that time, the Village south of the river was called Baraboo, the Township Baraboo and the post office Adams. Later the post office was named Baraboo, as there was already an Adams post office in Wisconsin. The census of the Township was taken in 1850 and included the incorporated village of Baraboo and altogether the census count was about 800 people.

At that time, if one was to circle the square you would find a series of little knolls and funnily twisted scrub Oak trees. You could gather wild berries or you could harvest your own. There were no milk wagons so a lot of people kept their own cows. As there were no restrictions on animals of any kind, cattle and horses were want to graze along the streets, nor was a big fat porker an unfamiliar figure. Farmers used oxen almost exclusively in their cultivation of the new soil, consequently often came to town with them and to see oxen hitched along the streets were as common then as it was to see horses later and automobiles now.

Getting to Baraboo from Prairie du Sac was not an easy chore and was an all day trip. The way was strewn with poles to lift the wheels of the wagons over rocks and people were required to walk along the side of the wagons with forked poles to keep the goods on the wagons.

Early on the south side was covered with a dense hardwood forest. The north side was not so heavily timbered and was known as “Oak Openings,” savannas, which have Oak trees that live side by side with a mixture of grasses, sedges, wildflowers and shrubs. The trees would take on an open branching pattern.

It is interesting to note that in the April 23, 1959 edition of the Baraboo Weekly News, Fred C. Gollmar, who turned 92 the same year, recalled his father, the late G. G. Gollmar telling about moving a house with oxen on a trail which ran diagonally across the courthouse square from the bank corner to the Methodist Church corner. The house was moved from the east side of town to the western part of Baraboo. It is thought that the shortcut across the park was included in the main westerly route through Baraboo. It probably continued west on what we now know as Fourth Avenue and then probably up Angle Street to what we now know as Eight Avenue.

Charles O. Baxter made the first village plat in April of 1847 and the same year a post office was established “under the hill” with Seth B. Angle postmaster.

That land north of the river was soon deeded by Brigham to the county, who then sold off all of the quarter-section except for the land later referred to as the “park,” the site of our present courthouse.

The transfer was made from the United States of America to Sauk County of Wisconsin. The County Commissioners gave Brigham the privilege of naming the village. He named it Adams due to his regard for the renowned Massachusetts family by that name and in honor of President John Adams of the same family.

This name did not include the settlement south of the river nor a portion of the area below the hill known as “Brown Town.”

About Baraboo

Two men, Harvey Canfield and C. C. Remington, were appointed commissioner and clerk to conduct the sale of lots. The county eventually sold all of this quarter section at from $5 to $10 per lot. Col. James Maxwell, Edward Sumner and others purchased lots and commenced building – Maxwell erecting the first building, which he later occupied as a store.

About $4,000 was realized and with this money a wooden courthouse and jail were subsequently put up on the north side of Fourth Avenue facing the now courthouse park area.

By 1850, there had been two additions to the village, one by Mrs. Peck, of six blocks, of twelve lots each; and the other by Mr. Wallace, about the same size. Good business lots for stores and shops could be readily obtained for $75 to $100; and good eligible lots for dwellings, $20 to $100.

Baraboo was incorporated as a village in 1856 by an act of the legislature. Baraboo's first officers were President, S. M. Burdick; Clerk, John Barker; Attorney, C. C. Remington; Treasurer, R. M. Strong; Constable, J. C. Dockham; Surveyor, W. H. Canfield; Fire Warden, M. C. Waite.

Baraboo became a city on March 28, 1882. For many years the village had been growing and it was decided to add the dignity of a city charter and officers. An act was approved in the Wisconsin legislature on February 25, 1882, to change from the village to the city form of government. It provided for an election to take place on March 6 and the change to take place on the fourth Tuesday of the month or March 28. The first city officers were, Mayor, C. A. Swineford; President, Frank Avery; Clerk, J. G. Train; Treasurer, E. O. Holden; Marshal, Henry Cowles; Attorney, John Barker.

In 1857 a hexagonal stone jail was constructed near the corner of Second Avenue and Broadway overlooking the river and the picturesque hills. Col. Sumner was the builder while J. E. Donovan was the first sheriff to occupy the new jail.

About this time the citizens of Baraboo turned their attention toward the improvement of the public square. A number of native Oaks were left and among them were planted other shade and ornamental trees, mostly Elm.

Where frog ponds giving off noisome vapors once were, fine residential districts began to appear. No trace was left of the green scum mud hole once an eyesore in the southeast corner of the courtyard as well as long deep gullies gouged out by the rains of unnumbered centuries.

The widest and deepest of these angled from Cheeks Hill, through the woodlands of western Baraboo, to the river just back of the jail lot at the corner of Second and Broadway. So wide and deep was it at Second Avenue and Birch Street, that a bridge reaching from the Weh's home on Second Avenue to the point beyond Birch spanned it for years.

Matilda Reul wrote in the following accounts of "Livestock in Baraboo," which was published in 1982.

"In pioneer days, milk strikes never struck Baraboo for the very good reason that the family cow was much in evidence. Also pigs and domestic fowl. Indeed there came a time when domestic animals running at large were a decided nuisance. Cows pastured in the courtyard nibbled holes in grain sacks lying on the farmers' wagons, or unlatched gates with their horns and foraged in kitchen gardens. Horses and mules ambled along highways unchecked. Geese waddled about the Streets, gobbled up the wheat let loose by the bag-nibbling cows, or squeezed through loopholes in garden fences. And pigs! Huh! They pilfered the meal stored in the lean-to of houses. Indeed it was such a pilfering, in the spring of 1862 that drove one villager to drastic measures.

The way it happened was this: A predatory hog had pestered him to exasperation. One slushy March day, he came home just as the hog, munching a mouthful of meal, rounded the corner of his house. The hog came alongside – an inviting broadside target for a vigorous kick. The invitation was not to be denied. The villager kicked hard, very hard. The hog side-stepped and the villager, losing his balance, sat down in the cold slithery slush, while the hog un-kicked sped homeward. That episode capped the climax. Bitter complaints against the nuisance moved the town board to adopt an ordinance prohibiting horses, mules, cows and hogs from running at

large in the village of Baraboo from November 1 to April 1 of each year."

1861

New Fire Protection Cistern

In April of 1861, the Baraboo Fire Company, more properly known as the "Baraboo Hook & Ladder Company", was placed upon a substantial footing. The County Board, during the prior cold months, voted it $100 for the purpose of building a cistern near the Court House, on condition that the town would donate the same amount.

In July of 1861, George Newson contracted to dig a cistern on the southeast corner of the courthouse square. It would be located about 40 feet southeast of the courthouse. The size was to be about 13 by 18 feet and would cost $175. The hopes were to have a reservoir of water to be used in case of a fire breakout in the village.

By June of 1861, the 35 members of the hook and Ladder Company were sporting new uniforms and were showing pride in their new truck.

1864

Letter to the Editor

To the Baraboo Republic—Dear Editor; -- When I "stopped" in Baraboo I had a very bad sidewalk for passengers, there was a large hog-wallow immediately before my door, and high dry places along for cows to roost on in muddy times. I hired men at large wages to wheel dirt into some places and out of some others. I placed some curb stones, more or less, leveled off, and set out some twenty shade trees, and when any died I replaced them with living ones, and now I have about a dozen rods of as good sidewalk as an incorporated village needs. I am satisfied with it, and I believe other foot passengers are.

Now, my Dear Sir, as Editors are supposed to know what good manners are in most cases, I wish to know whether it is good manners for people to lead or ride horses along on my sidewalk? You see I speak for myself, not for others.

Baraboo, May 20, 1864.

More by Ruth M. Southard

"In pioneer days, the home was a factory where everything was manufactured. Wool was sheared from the sheep, washed, carded, spun, dyed, woven and made into garments for the whole family and families were large in those days. Sewing machines were unknown and sewing was done by hand. Stockings, socks and mittens were knit by the busy fingers of the women; even little girls knit their own stockings. The moment a woman sat down, she picked up her knitting.

There was no fruit for years. Canning was unknown for many more years. When fruit was finally raised in the Baraboo valley, pickles and preserves were made after treasured recipes. Tallow candles first dipped, a slow process, then poured into molds, provided all the light.

There were no newspapers, no magazines, and few books. Letters were few and far between. Postage was 25¢ on a letter. Men made and mended tools, sowed grain by hand as there was no machinery to lighten the labor of men and women. Butter and cheese was part of the woman's work. A shoemaker came to the house once a year to make boots and shoes for the family but there were many bare feet in the summer time.

Pioneer women braided wheat straw and sewed it into hats for their men. They braided the finest straw into hats for their daughters. Sunbonnets were worn universally. These women, many of them, came from comfortable homes down east, New England or New York State. Some brought with them a silk drew and string of gold beads, which served for all gala occasions. Silk was pure and lasted a lifetime - was often handed down to descendants who treasured them and called them quaint. Old poke bonnets and ruffled dresses are perpetuated in every picture, story and song. Is there anything beautiful or quaint to perpetuate in the modern view of one's spine or the bare knees of a short period ago?

About Baraboo

In the early winter days, women wore shawls and warm hoods beautifully quilted. Men also wore shawls, large, double gray ones. Overcoats appeared with tailors and prosperity. Large shawl pins connected with a chain were used to pin them securely in place.

Quilting was an art. Piecing quilts and exchanging pieces was one of the highlights of uneventful days. Quilting bees were a social function with a banquet from the larder of that day in which pie was conspicuous and here the husbands were honored guests. Specimens of the quilters' art from that day to this are treasured by the fortunate possessor.

How those work-hardened fingers could take such tiny stitches so close together and provide such exquisite results with so little room and time and conveniences is one of the unsolved mysteries.

The young pioneers probably got more real fun out of their spelling and husking bees, their singing schools, skating and horseback riding than the modern youngsters, out of their automobile trips. Sleigh-rides were fun, too, with a long wagon box perched on bobsleds, clean straw packed in, covered with blankets and a hilarious singing crowd of boys and girls aboard, bound for some hospitable home where refreshments might have been only popcorn or it might have been a taffy-pull. Prancing steeds and jingling bells were a happy accompaniment. They were rare and simple pleasures, but they lingered long in one's memory. "

1884

Baraboo Fire Department

In the March 3, 1973 issue of the Baraboo News-Republic Mr. L. A. Nolan wrote regarding the formation of the Baraboo Fire department in 1884:

"The fire department was formed in 1884. The value of the department at that time was $3,000. The annual expenses were $700."

Another article in a 1932 paper, the Phoenix Hose Company's original secretary's book stated;

"The Phoenix Hose Company No. 1 was formed when a group of men met on December 30, 1886 for that purpose. Mr. Arthur T. Johnson, who in 1932, had been secretary of the department for the prior 15 years, held the original book of minutes dating from the earlier date mentioned. Charles Seamans chaired that early meeting and the charter members were A. G. Buckley, F. S. Waterman, William Marriott Sr., E. Jones, J. H. Welch, Charles Seaman, R. G. Evenson, F. E. Brewer, Albert Pfannstiehl, W. B. Richards, Aden Pratt and H. W. Abbott. Mr. J. G. Doppler was the president and Mr. J. G. Seaman was the chief over the 30-member force.

Leather buckets were used, by what was known as the bucket brigade before fire departments were formed. Buckets were made by the harness makers in town. The Ringling brothers' father was known to have made some of the best.

The Baraboo firemen were called to the station by a steam whistle. This was located on the roof of the Baraboo Electric Company building. This building stood on Water Street, just north of the high bridge, which spanned the river at Oak Street. This whistle could be heard for 5 miles.

The fire wagons of the first fire company consisted of two hose carts, and a hook and ladder wagon. One of these carts was kept on the south side of town.

There is nothing in the records to substantiate the story about the first department having trouble from painters borrowing the ladders. There is no record either of the big hearted city official who loaned out the fire hose and never got it back.

Horses were used to pull the old fire wagons. The first man with a team to reach the station was paid $5.00. The second one to arrive got $2.50. With the first moan of the fire whistle, all rigs stopped, and were unhitched and the race was on. Tugs were dragging on the Street, horses galloping, and the driver on the run, trying to keep up with them. Sometimes there were a dozen contestants. Some of these fellows had not run since they were discharged from the Union army; spirit took over where condition failed. There were cheering sections formed as the pedestrians lined the curb. Livery barns furnished the horses for the night calls.

Many men spent many years in the department. None gave more time than Arthur Johnson. He fought most of the large fires during the forty years that he was a member.

Wm. Marriott was overcome by smoke in fighting the blaze at the M. F. Foley home in 1902 and died a week later from the effects.

The courthouse burned in 1904. That night the temperature registered thirty-five degrees below zero. The firemen finally subdued the flame and guarded it for another twenty-four hours.

Baraboo had a celebration on July 4, 1902. The fireworks were the best that anyone could remember. A spark from this display lit on Hoyt's flour and feed mill. It lay dormant until 1:00 the next morning. As the story was told, "All hell broke loose." The blaze could be seen for miles around. There was great danger of the city burning. The firemen eventually contained the fire.

The Opera house burned in 1905. It was an old building in 1880, when the city started planning a new one. It was one of the hottest fires Baraboo had ever seen. Many firemen were burned. The heat was so intense that it melted the hose across the Street.

The high school was lost in 1906. This building stood where the red building, which housed the junior high, stood for many years after. The highlight of that fire was when the tower, and the bell which it housed, fell across the street.

In 1912 Baraboo purchased its first fire truck. The name of the truck was Wisconsin. It was purchased from Louis Helm, a local dealer. It had a chain drive and was somewhat faster than a horse. By 1918 Baraboo had a hook and ladder truck. The south side firehouse also had a truck. This ended the use of "old Dobin."

After WW I Baraboo had some drivers who had their experience in driving in France. Their speed and daring upset the peaceful tranquility of Baraboo. Fewer people went to fires and the more timid would not leave their front porches."

The first wedding in Baraboo took place in November 1884, when Justice of the Peace, Lorin Cowles, united Chauncey Brown's daughter, Martha, in marriage to Erastus Langdon. While the guests were still assembled, news came of the election of President Polk, which took place two weeks earlier. No telegraph facilities, no railroads, no telephones, nor wireless, nor airplanes those days to bring news quickly. To wind up the exciting events of that first wedding, there was an eclipse of the moon that night. Erastus Langdon was an uncle of H.C. and E.J. Langdon of Baraboo.

About 1886, Third Avenue, south of the courthouse, was paved with round White Cedar blocks about 7" long, stood on end and chinked in between with sand.

1902

Site Chosen for Library

In September of 1897, the mayor and common council appropriated $100 for the purpose of equipping and maintaining a public library in the city of Baraboo. This was done by levying a half-mill tax on all the taxable property in the city. A room for the library was set-aside in the city hall. There on September 27, the first directors' meeting was held.

The nucleus of the library was 300 books purchased by the "Club of 76". The "Club of 76" was made up of young people of the city. Miss Hattie Sanderson and Marie (Gattiker) Pfannstiehl were active members. They raised money to buy books by giving plays by home talent. One was "Dombey & Son" which was presented in the Free Congregational Hall, which stood where the library now stands. For the first few months Mrs. Evans and Emma Gattiker acted as librarians, keeping the room open three afternoons a week. Kate M. Potter was elected librarian beginning Jan. 1, 1898, for three months, at $12.00 per month. She served until her death in 1925. Her friends placed a handsome bronze tablet in the library to her memory.

In 1898, John True was elected president of the board and applied to the Carnegie Foundation for the donation of a public library. On March 14, 1902 the request was granted and the board received $12,000 for the new library. President E. G. Marriott of the Library board reported to the city council that the Board had selected lots 7 and 8 in block 21, on the northeast corner of the intersection of Fourth Avenue and Birch Street, as the site for the new library. The Free Congregational Society made a very generous offer of the land and building on that corner for $1,000 even though it was valued at

$2,500. H. M. Johnston offered an adjoining lot for $1,000 and also offered $300 for the old church, which he would move. In July 1903 the new building was ready for occupancy. (See Baraboo Weekly News, Oct. 7, 1926 for more details.)

1948

Parking a Problem in Baraboo

In the June 12, 1948 issue of the Milwaukee Journal, the following article appeared regarding the parking problem in Baraboo.

"So you think you have parking problems? Wait till you hear about Baraboo.

At the moment, to be sure, things are not as bad as they have been. The alert motorist, with a car also quick on the uptake, needs only to drive around and around the square until he sees an opening. He may then dart in and make himself at home—for just as long as he pleases.

The trouble is that the tourist season is just starting and Baraboo is increasingly a busy town. On Saturday nights the stores are open until 9 PM. It is the only shopping night of the week and the congestion is something special. John Nietz, assistant police chief, comments.

'Last Saturday night it was really bad and the worst is yet to come. All the parking space—on the square and on the streets coming in—is grabbed off in a hurry and after that people keep touring around looking for a place to roost. It looks to me as if parking meters are the only solution."

Words Bring a Wince

"Parking meters—these are fighting words in otherwise peaceful Baraboo and nobody knows it better than officer Nietz. He winced when he spoke them, but predicted to the reporter that someday they would have to be restored, no matter if they have been the bugaboo of Baraboo.

The clock now turns back to 1947. In that year, the Baraboo police were all but driven into lunacy by congestion in the heart of town. The city council threatened dire measures but the Chamber of Commerce said:

"Leave it to us, we'll get those cars off the street, wait and see."

The Chamber of Commerce referred particularly to the cars of merchants, clerks and office workers. Police were finding that from 60 to 90% of the available parking spaces downtown were being "hogged" by such motorists, who came early and stayed late, leaving very little for the general public.

So the chamber went to work and for a time succeeded in keeping such cars out of the choice spots. Soon, however, human nature again triumphed and parking spaces for outsiders were again at a premium.

City Council Votes Action

Came the spring of 1948 and violent headaches on the part of the police and the city council. The latter board was investigating parking meters all over the state. All of Wisconsin's 16 cities that have meters were asked how the system works.

"Do your people like parking meters?" every city was asked. The answer to that was "No" as often as "Yes".

"Would your people like the parking meters removed?" This was the next question, and the answer was a paradox. All of the 16 cities replied with an emphatic "No."

A memorable council meeting was held. Traffic problems and parking meters were the theme. The public attended and some got mad, especially when alderman I. C. Turner declared:

"Whether you like it or not, we're going to install parking meters."

A contract was made with the Park-O-Meter Co., of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, calling for installation of 256 meters at a total cost of $15,990. The company was to be paid half of the receipts until the debt was cleared. Then the city would own the meters and get all of the receipts.

Charges Cause Uproar

The meters were installed and started to collect in August of that summer at the rate of 5c an hour and 1c for 12 minutes. Immediately plaintive cries went up—from some, not all, of the people—and these yips swelled into a roar. The city council was

forced to call for a referendum on retention of the meters in connection with the November election.

Oscar Isenberg, a businessman, was a leader of the opposition. He was aided by Jack Epstein, George Martiny and Walter Kerndt, also businessmen. Isenberg, who had been feuding with the council on another issue, put up most of the money for the elaborate campaign that followed.

Over the signature of Epstein as chairman of the "Business Promotion Committee", big advertisements were taken in the Baraboo News Republic declaring that the meters should be removed for the following reasons:

"To keep Baraboo alive and prosperous."

"To be able to shop leisurely and without tension."

"The majority of prosperous Wisconsin cities have kept parking meters out. Many cities making the error of installing them have removed them."

The ads wound up with the further challenge: "Don't let Baraboo become a ghost town. Help keep it a prosperous city. Vote meters out."

Back on Merry Go Round

The day of triumph for Truman was disaster for the Baraboo meters. The count was 1,226 for the meters and 1576 against. That was on the epochal Tuesday. By Thursday morning all the meters had been removed, but the 256 standards are still in place, like so many iron policemen without heads.

With glad cries, Baraboo returned to free parking. The business people happily resumed their habit of taking over the best places early in the day and complacently staying there. Outsiders again went around and around.

More than 600 citizens signed a petition for another referendum. This time the effort was to reinstate the meters abolished in November. The vote was set for December 22.

Once again the friendly city was rent in the midst. Fists were shaken all over town and loud talk filled the air. The vote was more decisive than the first one. Anti-meter voters numbered 1,295 to 785 for the pro-meter side.

It then was close to Christmas and everybody thought: "Ah, at last, peace in Baraboo and good will toward men." But it didn't work that way. Parking problems got worse and worse, largely because of businessmen.

Chamber Gets an Idea

Finally, the Chamber of commerce, through H.L. Thompson, president, wrote a letter to the city council asking for an ordinance that would set up one hour and two hour parking zones in the heart of town. The letter further requested:

"That violations be enforced with no favoritism shown and that the name all violators be published with disposition of the case."

The council promptly acted and a good stiff ordinance was drawn. The police force of ten men sprang gleefully into action. The ordinance was voted Feb. 10 and took affect Feb. 16 of this year.

Bingo...the first man pinched for parking overtime in a one hour zone was alderman O.G. Thompson, son of the chamber of commerce head! Paul Stewart, the city clerk, was likewise caught in the net and "warped," as they say in Baraboo, for the standard dollar fine. Motorcycle policeman, A.M. Nessler snorted about the square handing out tickets right and left.

In February 12 parkers were fined. In March there were 190, in April the total soared to 261 and in May the count was 208. If Baraboo had suffered in the meter regime, this era of tickets and fines was absolute agony, the city rocked with lamination and the council relented. The stern parking ordinance was repealed May 26.

Fines Not Clear Profit

It is the curious custom in Baraboo for the city to pay for publication of such police news as traffic violations--5c a line is the rate—and the News-Republic profited as much as $35.60 in a single issue. Consequently the fines were not all gravy.

The ordinance now gone with the wind set up the one-hour limit for parts of seven streets, a total of 17-1/2 blocks. Now there is no limit at all—with the exemption of a few 15-minute zones in front of the post office, city hall and the like—and the careless days are returning.

"Our association is doing all we can to convince the business people that they are helping to stop their own trade" comments B.G. Leighton, new secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, "If they take over the best parking places and stay there. There has been a good deal of improvement and we hope we can make it stick, but you never can tell."

Asst. Chief Nietz is far more skeptical. Says he, on the subject; "Not a chance in the world. It's going to get worse and worse as the tourists come in and I can't see any way out, looks to me as if parking meters will simply have to come back." That is also the prediction of City Clerk Stewart, who points out that Baraboo, in common with other cities, is scraping the bottom of the barrel for added revenue.

"It's this way," says the city clerk; "The Badger Ordinance plant poured a lot of people in on us during the war. Many of them are still here. They don't pay taxes to the extent of the home people, but they cost the city just as much--$104 annually for a grade school pupil for example, and $164 for a high school pupil."

We've got about 9,000 residents, instead of less than 7,000 before the war. We're thinking about imposing a sewerage tax to help raise revenue.

When the meters went out, the city paid the Park-O-Meter company $2,730 for the standards that remained. That money will be refunded if and when the meters are returned.

Nobody in Baraboo now can say, "It can't happen here." Anything apparently can happen in Baraboo so far as parking is concerned.

Reedsburg, Portage, Wisconsin Dells, Prairie du Sac, Sauk City and Loganville have delighted in the turmoil and the anti-meter people say that all have profited some small extent in a business war.

"Don't be fooled by that," comments City Clerk Stewart, "Farmers are not opposed to meters and either are tourists."

Anyway, Baraboo is by no means alone in its parking muddle and the last laugh may be here as elsewhere.

In later years **Del-Tool Company's** president, **Joe Ward**, offered and had printed special die-cut decals to place on the window of the meters which promoted donations for the Baraboo Ocshner Park. The idea was that those parking would place a few coins in the meter....didn't work!

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Addendum....Of Interest

In 1887-1888 a so-called "jealousy table" compiled by Commissioner Flower of the Wisconsin Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, ranked cities and villages of Wisconsin by the average per capita wage. It also indicated the principal local industries. Milwaukee ranked fourteenth with an average $445.22.

Baraboo, population about 4,300, headed the list with $635.23. Fifty-six percent of its industrial jobs were in the Chicago and North Western Railway shops.

Only Madison ($496.00) and Stevens Point ($449.79), among the cities of over 5,000 population with appreciable industrial bases, ranked above Milwaukee. Like Baraboo, even a larger percentage of industrial jobs in Stevens Point were in the railroad repair shops of the West Wisconsin Railway. Railroad shops, with their relatively high wages and steady employment, also raised the average wage in such places as Green Bay, Fort Howard, Hudson, Altoona, Kaukauna and Waukesha