



# **The history of the village of East Two Creeks.**

## **Monograph 55 1985**

Spevacek, Clarence J.

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## *The History of the Village of East Two Creeks*

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by: *Clarence J. Spevacek*  
MAY 27 1985

### *My Interests in the Village*

I have always been interested in the Village of East Two Creeks. To me it was an intriguing village. Born and raised about 2½ miles west from there, I accompanied my father many times with a team of horses, grain or hay wagon, or horse and buggy or cutter. I fished off of the pier many, many times for perch and white fish, and I even dove off the pier several times with the boys when we thought no one was looking; because we were swimming in natures suit; but we forgot about the fish, they scattered in every direction, and then came back not only to look, but to stare at us with their unblinking eyes.

My interests were revived while serving on the Manitowoc County Planning and Park Commission, we established a boat landing and a boat landing park, with the cooperation of the Township of Two Creeks, on the very spot where the village once stood.

My interests were doubly revived with my conversations with Winifred Smith, regarding the nuclear plants when they came into being, and when Jerry Kirchner, our county planner asked me to talk about the history of the Village to the Manitowoc County Planning and Park Commission.

Clarence J. Spevacek

### Preface

The history of the Village of East Two Creeks is being compiled for the Bicentennial to re-acquaint the present generation, and acquaint the future generations of a thriving, enterprising, and prosperous village that existed in the Township of Two Creeks, County of Manitowoc, State of Wisconsin, which was wiped out by fire October 5, 1918, and exists no more.

The material for this compilation has been resourced from the book "The Township of Two Creeks," by Joseph F. Wojta, Professor Emeritus University of Wisconsin College of Agriculture, and much of the wording of this history pertinent to the Village has been copied from his book, also the "The History of Manitowoc County", Volume 1, by Louis Falge; "The Centennial History of Manitowoc County School Districts 1848 to 1948; "The 1975 Almanac and Book of Facts." "The Manitowoc County Official Plat Book;" "The Centennial Article in the Reporter, Saturday, September 12, 1959," by Francis X. Murphy; "The Historical Atlas of Manitowoc County of 1878;" "The History of Wisconsin Volume 1, page 201," by Alice E. Smith, "The Manitowoc Herald Times of October 5, 1968; and from interviews with the Mathiesen Family, Ira, George, Otto, Anna, and Lucey, Ben Urbanek Family, Edward Lodi Family all of Two Rivers, Wisconsin, and Emil Kocian of Route 2, Two Rivers.

I wish to express my gratitude to these people who were so thoughtful to write up articles of this history, and I

especially thank the Mathiesen Family; who are natives of the Town of Two Creeks, living approximately a half mile north of the Village of East Two Creeks, involved and closely associated with the business and social affairs of the Village, prior, and at the time of the fire, and who have contributed numerous pictures of the Village of East Two Creeks. I also wish to thank Mr. & Mrs. Emil Kocian who were residents of the Village at the time of its prosperity, and who owned and operated a blacksmith shop in the Village, where it is said the fire started.

Like perhaps many areas in the United States, immigration became the main process for the formation and development of the Village of East Two Creeks. The coming of immigrants from various countries, acclimating themselves to the new and diversified environments, bringing with them the experience and knowledge of the old world in religion, mechanics, art, farming, industry, management, and many other elements of their own heritage, gave rise to this progressive Village.

It is virtually impossible to compile a history of the Village of East Two Creeks without involving portions of the history of the Township of Two Creeks, that had an environmental affect upon the Village.

It might be well for us to remember in celebrating the 200th anniversary of our nation, to endure and preserve the ethnic diversity of which the Village of East Two Creeks, and the entire country was built.

With this information at hand, one may proceed to compile a history of the Village of East Two Creeks, how it came into being, why it flourished, why it burnt, and why it is no more.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the western shore of this lake, about midway between Chicago and the tip of Green Bay, a village was born, located in the now identified Township of Two Creeks; township 21, range 24 east, section 11, of Manitowoc County, State of Wisconsin. Although the Township of Two Creeks is the northern most township in Manitowoc County, is the second smallest in the County, it is getting smaller each year because of the erosion of its shore line by as much as two to two on one half feet per year, depending on the type of soil, conditions of it, the rise and fall of the lake water, and the wind velocities which affect the wave action.

The area comprising the Village of East Two Creeks was originally owned by the Indians. The Pottawatomi and the Menomini tribes roamed and occupied the entire township. The descendants of the former are now located in sections of land near Laona, Forest County, and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The latter group occupy a reservation covering five townships with headquarters at Keshena, Shawano County.

Early in the seventh century the French took possession of the area. At the conclusion of the French and Indian War in 1763, and as a result of it, the area was taken over by Great Britain. After the Revolutionary War of 1783, it was ceded to the United States. In 1789, it became a part of the Northwest Territory.

The Township of Two Creeks is the first township to be visited by a white man in Manitowoc County. Jacques Vieau; an agent of the Northwest Fur Company, landed on the shore of section 11, in the area where East Two Creeks got its rise. He landed in a small boat from the straits of Mackinaw in the year 1795, with the boat heavily loaded with goods to be traded with the Indians for furs. Twelve men, his wife

Madeline, and two sons Paul and Jacques came with him, trailing in a Mackinaw boat, a large bark canoe, carrying camping equipment. Vieau built trading posts at Jambo Creek, and later at Manitowoc Rapids. He was an explorer and trader, but not a settler and claimed no territory.

The territorial history continued. In 1800 it became a part of the Indian territory, in 1809 it passed to the Illinois territory, and in 1818 it was a part of Michigan territory. In 1836 a portion of Michigan territory was organized into Wisconsin territory, of which the township and village of East Two Creeks became a part. The entire area then became a part of Brown County, but in 1838 a separate county government was organized by an act of the territorial legislature.

In 1842 Peter Rowley built the first house in section 24 of the township. Not until February 9, 1850, by an act of the legislature was the northern tier of towns, now Two Creeks, Cooperstown, Gibson, and a portion of Mishicot within township 21, taken from Brown County, and added to Manitowoc County. On July 28, 1859, the Town of Rowley was set off, which represents the area now in the Town of Two Creeks, as was the body of water bordering on its lake shore. Today it is still known as Rowley's Bay, doubtless named after the Rowley Family that settled there.

Evidently, the appellation, "Rowley," did not appear satisfactory to the voters of the town, and they requested the County Board of Supervisors to change the name to the town of "Two Creeks." The name was officially changed as requested with respect to the area and boundary on November 2, 1861. Since two separate creeks, within a short distance apart, emptied into Lake Michigan at a point where a village was about to be started, it seemed an appropriate name. It was the last, the eighteenth township, to be organized in Manitowoc County. The first chairman was H. Luebke, the town clerk August Zerlaut, and the town treasurer was P. Flynn. The two supervisors were N. McMillen, and A.V. Walker. The first school superintendent was P. Luebke.

Prior to 1852, few patent rights were secured on United States government lands in the township. However, at the close of the decade entries were made on public lands almost in every section. Guido Pfister of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, made twenty-two entries on various parcels of land in section 11, 13, and 24 respectively; much of which bordered on Lake Michigan, in hemlock growing areas. His holdings represented a total of 1,429.9 acres of land.

The highly extensive use of hemlock; useful for its bark and lumber; and the facilities for the development of a

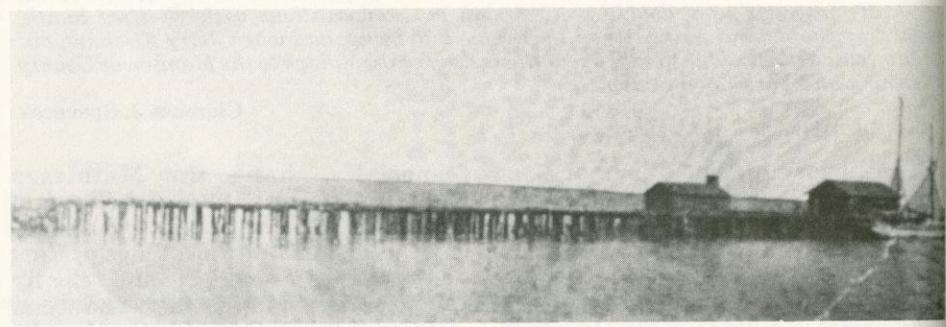
shipping port, prompted Guido Pfister, and the Leather Company of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to establish a tannery in the Town of Two Creeks in 1858, between the two distinct creeks. Trained laborers were imported, who were trained and experienced in tanning hides. Soon there followed an influx of people who sought employment in the area.

In addition to the tannery, the Pfister Leather Company built a sawmill, and homes for some of their employees; those who were directly employed by the Company. These homes were located mainly at the intersection of the two nearest cross roads, with a few scattering homes about the premises and the tannery.

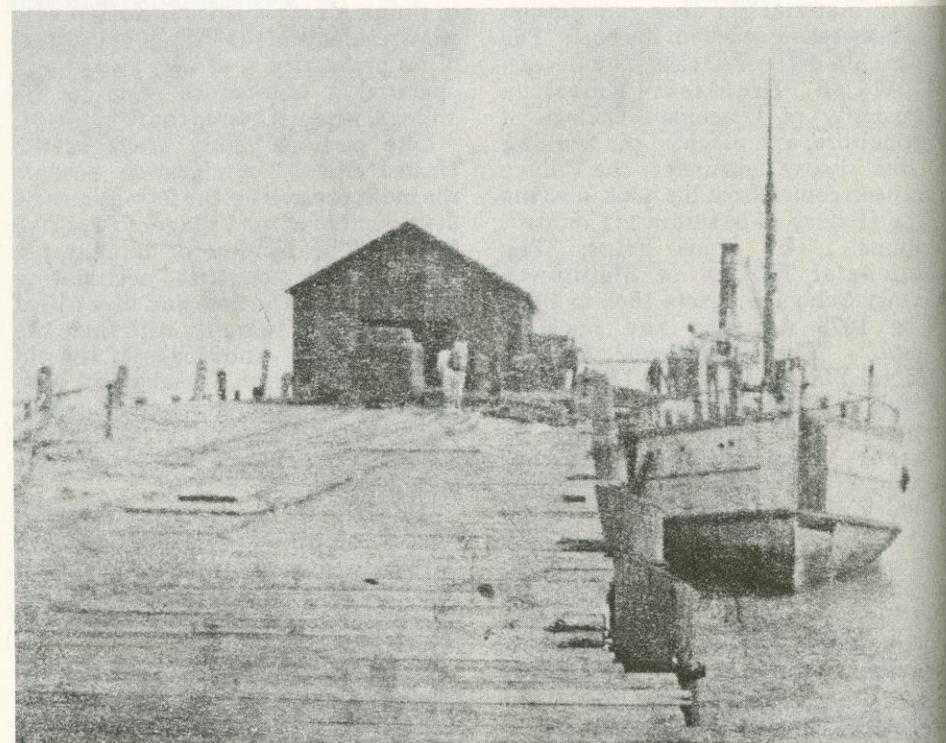
By 1861, the unincorporated village was flourishing, and the industry grew rapidly. The first resident of the Village was K.K. Jones. By 1866; at the height of its prosperity; the village population was estimated to be between 150 to 200 people, comprised of

approximately 60 families, with a tannery, sawmill, public school, general store, which was built and owned by the Pfister Leather Company, and boarding house, saloon, blacksmith shop, a wagon maker, telegraph office, shingle maker, tailor, shoemaker, a meat market, post office, and dance hall. It is evident, that the Village of East Two Creeks became very much of a self sustaining village because of its industry, business, and the advantage to being located in an area that had good facilities for exports and imports. The only thing it lacked was, "Go-Go Girls".

According to reports, Fred Vogel, Jr. took over the management of the Pfister Leather Company since his father purchased it the summer of 1869, and he made his residence in the Village of East Two Creeks. In 1872, the leather tanning company was incorporated under the name of Pfister Vogel Leather Company, and Fred Vogel, Jr. was one of the incorporators,



*The wooden pier showing the pilings and the two sheds at the far end, with a typical sail boat near the far end.*



*On the pier loading bales of hay unto a scow. Tons of hay and grain were shipped out to other ports on the Great Lakes, as well as furs and hides.*

and was elected president of the Company. He later moved to Milwaukee, and died there at the age of 84 years.

Simultaneously, with the erection of the tannery, the Vogel Leather Company; now known as the Pfister Vogel Leather Company; built a pier at this point to accommodate ships for shipping tannery, forest, and farm products. Since the area bounding East Two Creeks was heavily wooded with soft and hard timber land, infested with fur bearing animals such as, bear, wolves, lynx, wild cat, badger, coons, foxes, deer, rabbit, squirrel, plus various land and water fowl, it is conceivable that the community would flourish.

The company was prompted to build a general merchandise store. The settlers and land owners, produced hemlock bark, ties, fence posts, cordwood, and other products which the company purchased and paid for in exchange with store money. It gave the people a source of income, and at the same time proved profitable for the company. The average settlers progress in farm development was very slow at this time, because many of his hours were spent in cutting down trees for bark and lumber, burning the brush, and preparing other wood products.

It was about this time when the Village of East Two Creeks was named Nero. This happened when the United States post office was set-up in the village. As three men were sitting around a belly stove in the general merchandise store, discussing what name to give the post office, and pondering over the question, a huge dog, belonging to one of the three, began to bark. The owner yelled at him, "Nero, go lie down." One of the other men jumped up and said, "that's it, we'll call the post office, Nero." As a result the entire village assumed the name of Nero.

It was a common sight to see twenty-four or more ox or horse teams drawing loads of hemlock tan bark, pilings, and lumber to the village to be sold at the company store. To facilitate better transportation of these products the company maintained a so-called logging train operating westward from the village for a distance of from three to five miles. The track was built of rails made from hardwood. There was no locomotive to operate the train. The cars were loaded at the source of the west end, and since the slope of the terrain was toward the east; toward Lake Michigan; the train would move after being set off, on its own inertia, until it would stop at an elevation. The resistance would then be overcome by a team of oxen or horses to pull the cars over the elevation, when again the cars would be set-off, and by their own momentum would reach their destination.

In the company yards, in the village, huge piles of hemlock bark, cordwood, and railroad ties were piled up. The peeled bark was 4' long, piled up to six tiers, one tier 4' x 16' x 300', grouped side by side to form huge bark piles, covered with a tilted roof of bark to shed water. These bark piles were arranged in rows; six in a row; near the tannery, approximately 24' wide x 300' long. There were frequently from six to ten or more of these piles, and hundreds of cords of wood, and railroad ties on the grounds at one time.

It is interesting to note that the pupils of the school which was located nearby took every opportunity to use the surroundings as a playground. The boys crept on top of the piles and used them for imaginary battle fields, pitching snowballs as instruments of destruction. The girls utilized the open spaces between piles, playing, "Ring Around The Rosy," and, "London Bridge Is Falling Down." Baseball would be played by these pupils, and occasionally a ball would be lost among those piles of tan bark and wood, and so would some of the boys and girls, and what kind of game they played was never published.

The hemlock bark when used in tanning would be broken up in little pieces, like crushed stone, and accorded many uses. After being utilized at the mill, much of it was spread on walkways, driveways, playgrounds, instead of wooden sidewalks and gravel. In those days there were no basements underneath homes, but some houses had cold cellars. To protect these cellars, and other foundations from freezing during the cold winter months, boards fastened to stakes about two feet from the foundation, and about two feet high, were placed to hold the tan bark around the foundation. This furnished very good insulation, and kept foods such as meats, fruits, and vegetables from freezing. If there was not enough tan bark available cow or horse manure would be used. Horse manure was preferable because it had more heat during the time of fermentation. This manure had a dual purpose. In the spring of the year it was spread in the gardens for fertilizer.

School records depict a school district organized about 1860. It was in 1861, that the first school house was erected, in the unincorporated village of Nero; and was called the Nero School. It was built under contract by H. Luebke, on a half acre tract of land given to the district by Mr. Luebke. The building was approximately 30 x 60 feet; rectangular in shape; having an exterior of brick over a double boarded wood frame, with eight windows having 10 x 14 inch panes. The entire structure without the furnishings was built for \$275.00.

The furnishings included benches, seating eight pupils to a bench, a box stove, two black boards, limited number of recitation benches, a couple of tables and chairs, a map of the United States, State of Wisconsin, and Manitowoc County and Township of Two Creeks, an American flag, books for the school officers, a glove, a picture of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and several pictures of Civil War generals. The sum of fifteen dollars was raised to pay for these furnishings.

G.E. Baker taught the school in 1868, with Ignatz Wojta as district clerk. The following year J.E. Leonard served as teacher for the next nine months. His letter of application to the district clerk of September 19, 1868, which follows, is particularly interesting for the information it contains on the salary expected of a teacher in the early days:

*Mr. Wojta,*

*I hereby make application to you for the school of this district for the coming year. I offer you two separate proposals, which you will see in the contracts I have written, and which accompany this application. As you will observe, one proposal is to teach for forty-five dollars per month, and teach but twenty days to the month; this is on the same conditions which Mr. G.C. Baker taught the school last winter. The other proposal is to teach twenty-two days during the summer term for forty-five dollars, but as everyone knows a winter school is harder to teach than a summer school and teachers wages are always higher in the winter than in the summer.*

*The difference per day of the two proposals is small, being as follows: 20 days for forty-five dollars equals \$2.25 per day. 22 days for \$50.00 equals \$2.27 6/22 per day. The latter would give you 3 weeks more school at an additional expense of \$35.00 and I think would therefore be the best for the district. I shall be pleased to receive your answer at as early date as possible.*

The school had approximately 60 pupils to be taught by one teacher. John Nagel of Manitowoc; later County Superintendent of Schools, and editor of Manitowoc Pilot; taught the school for two terms (1872-73).

During the winter months the attendance at the school was largely by girls and boys in their teens when work on the farm and village was at its ebb. The younger children would attend in the fall, and in the spring, when the roads were in better shape, for some children had to walk three or four miles to get to school.

The attendance at the school grew continually with each succeeding year so that in 1878 there was a total enrollment of 110 pupils, with a daily

average attendance of 65 pupils. Thomas J. Walsh of Two Rivers, Wisconsin, who later was United States Senator from Montana, taught this school during this period for two successive years. From twenty-four to twenty-eight recitation periods were conducted daily, so as to accommodate the pupils. It was necessary to alternate recitations, especially in the upper classes, to every other day.

Among the leading exercises conducted were spelling contests, rapid calculation, memory work in geographical terms, word building matches, recitation, dialogues, orations, drawing contests, and patriotic singing of songs. Prizes were usually awarded to the winners by members of the school board, or by some enterprising citizen in the district.

It has been noted that the school building was so cold in the winter that children's lunches froze. To be able to eat it the children had to put the lunches on the stove, where most of it would toast.

The second school building was erected in the summer of 1880 at a cost of \$1,000.00, and located on the southwest side of the present school site. The building again was a frame structure with brick on the outside. Much of the equipment in the old building was transferred to the new one. The old building, woodshed, and outhouses were sold to Herman Thiem for \$18.00. Nero was still the post office address in 1898. Wencil Tomek taught the school about 1900 for several years. After that, Louis Trossen was the teacher.

The third school building was built in 1915, but was built west and north of Nero. The old woodshed and outhouses at Nero were sold at public auction for the total sum of \$7.00. This school building still stands today, but is not being used as a school any more.

The people that affected the business, industrial, and social life of the Village of East Two Creeks (Nero), came from England, Scotland, Ireland, Norway, Germany, Austria, Bohemia, Poland, and from some of the eastern states, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut. Some settled in the village, while others settled in the township. They were sailors, fishermen, farmers, boatmen, lumbermen, sheep herders, blacksmiths, woodsmen, weavers, all rugged and aggressive people. It was this diversity of entrepreneurs that made East Two Creeks (Nero), what it was. More information on these people, and the Township of Two Creeks, are contained in a book written by Professor Joseph Wojta, "The Township of Two Creeks."

The pioneer families that inhabited the Township of Two Creeks did most of their business in the Village of Nero.

Many of them worked in the sawmill or tannery, and lived in the village, while many of these settlers lived on small farms nearby. The names of some of these pioneer families were the Rowley, McMillan, Luebke, Butterfield, Fisk, Harding, Wagenen, Flynn, Crowley, and McNeils. The Mc Neils of the huge packing firm of Libby McNeil are descendants of the Two Creeks McNeils. Another native was a man by the name of Pfunder, who made himself a fortune in patent medicine in St. Paul. More natives that are remembered are the Mathisen Family, Micelson, Johnson, Kraase, Schroeder, and the Wojta Families. The later immigrants to the Two Creeks township were the Lasts, Christian, Messman, Schmock, Mattek, Blaha, Larson, Olson, Krah, Strutz, Stangel, Rathsack, Lndl, Urbanek, Barta, Yohanek and Lehrman

In about 1870, the Germans and their descendants made up about 78% of the total population of the township. Although a strong foreign hatred still existed among the different nationalities, it didn't take too long for the Bohemians, Germans, Polish, and other nationalities, to begin associating with each other, and before too long they were exchanging views and ideas, and soon love affairs developed, and inter-marriages resulted.

The social life in the Village of Nero was characteristic of the Township of Two Creeks. House and barn raising celebrations were always in order. When a building was "roughed in," the floors were laid, a dance was sure to be held. There was always a musician available who could play a mouth organ, accordian, or a fiddle. Liquid refreshments flowed freely. After a few drinks of beer and whiskey, singing became a jovial past time. The later the

hour the louder the voices. The tones of voices varied and changed to the time of the night. The Germans would sing, Die Lorelei, or at Christmas time, Heilige Nacht (Holy Night). Favorites among the Norwegians were: Jeg Ladge Mig Saa Sildig (I Laid Me Down To Rest), Ja Vi Elske Dette Landet (Yes, We Love This Land Of Ours), or Mit Faderland (My Native Land). The Bohemians offered Kdedomuv Muy (Where Is My Home), or Sly Panenky Siliice (The Tripping Maidens), while "My Country Tis Of Thee", "Home Sweet Home", or some other folk song were enjoyed by the English speaking group.

Whenever there was a birthday celebration, wedding, or a farewell, and there was a musician in the crowd; even if he could only play the mouth organ, the rugs were rolled aside, furniture moved, and dancing would follow. There was sure to be a square dance or two before the evening was over. Waltzes and polkas were commonly danced. The popular bands were Schleis Two Creeks Band, Schauer's Band, and Yohanek's Band.

The first public dances where the people of East Two Creeks, and the neighboring areas attended, were at the Joseph Bartosh Dance Hall and Saloon, which was located near the Village of East Two Creeks. Schauer's Bohemian Band usually furnished the music for the occasion. In the early seventies, Franz Immler and Mike Bartleme also held dances in their respective halls in the township. The Masquerade dance which was held preceding the Lenten season was the high light of the year.

Joe Lndl, known to his friends; as Bi-Jingo-Joe, operated the saloon, in the village for thirteen years. His dance hall was on the southwest corner of the village. A Messman family, two boys



**Schleis's Two Creeks Band**

From left facing the picture: Joe Karman, Joe Stangel, Frank Schauer; Sitting at the drum: Id Gary Sinkula. Rest of band players unidentified.

and the old man; lived a little north of the creek. On the westside of the road, was Lndl's Saloon, and one of the boys being rugged and burly, would pull out his revolver, and shoot into the blocks of fire wood laying near the stove. A fellow by the name of Dose would tend bar for Joe Lndl, and when asked how business was, he said, "Small crowd, but they sucked like hell."

When I interviewed Mr. & Mrs. Edward Lndl who now reside at 1926, 29th Street, Two Rivers, Wis., I was informed of an incident in Ed's early life; at the age of about 6 or 7 years. It appears that in those days a dentist would come to the area to pull teeth when enough people would need his services, which would probably be two or three times a year. On the day the dentist was to come to the Two Creeks village area, Ed hid himself on a cross beam underneath the pier, and the people searched for him all day, until he came out.

Another incident that occurred was a tragedy in the Joe Lndl Family. Otto with Ben Urbanek, and his brother were playing and running very hard on an extremely hot day near the Sporer Farm. They ran to the pump and Otto took a big drink of water before Mrs. Sporer saw and could stop them, and before the day was over Otto was dead.

Jack Herbert took over the operation of the saloon in 1912. It was at this time that the construction of the dance hall adjacent to the saloon was started. Henry Kappelman moved to the Village in 1913, and took over the completion of the dance hall, and management of the hall and saloon.

The general merchandise store; owned by Pfister Vogel Leather Company; was managed by the Otto



#### **The Schauer Band**

*From left to right: Emil Schleis, Joe Stangel, Joe Konop, Joe Schauer, Joe Karman, Ben Urbanek. The fourth man from the left is Joe Schauer, who at one time played in the Ringling Brothers Circus Band in Florida, was offered a permanent position with the firm but turned it down. Ben Urbanek played in the band since 1907 when he was 13-years-old.*

**Busch Family.** Business was flourishing because of the tanning industry, and the fact that merchandise could be redeemed with store money.

During the cold wintery evenings, geese and duck feather stripping bees were held in the homes. Neighbors, friends, and relatives would be invited. When all were present, the men would play cards in the living room, drink beer and whiskey freely, and the women would gather around a large kitchen table, that was piled full of feathers, and would strip. Fun was had by all. After the merriment, the tables in the kitchen where the women

stripped, were cleared of feathers and quills, and a great big dinner; usually after midnight; would be served to all the women that stripped, and then to the men who were still able to eat. It has been said, that some of the men who had plenty to drink, even ate some of the feathers that were flying around the room after the woman got thru stripping. Boy what fun.

#### **Ships and Shipping**

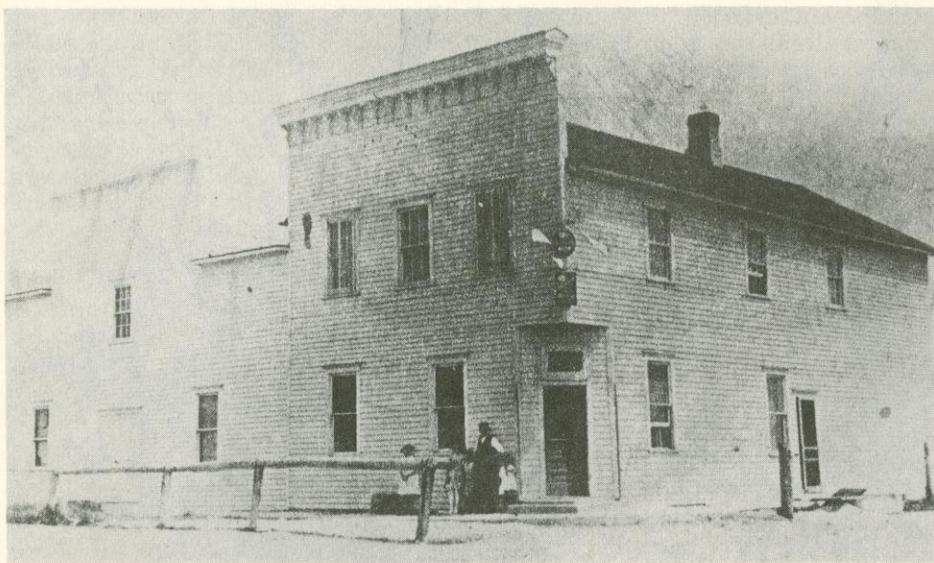
The Village of East Two Creeks at one time ranked among the leading ports for the shipping of baled hay, and seed peas, to distant markets. One of the early shipping operators was the

THE VILLAGE OF EAST TWO CREEKS (NERO)



PFISTER VOGEL TANNING COMPANY  
AT LEFT

DANCE HALL SOUTH WEST COR.



Tavern after being remodeled, with dance hall attached on east end.

late Joseph Scheuer; father of Edmund Scheuer of Manitowoc. Ralph Scheuer of Two Rivers, and a brother of Nic Scheuer of Mishicot.

After Scheuer moved to Milwaukee, and became a developer of Whitefish Bay, Jay Hall of Manitowoc became a prominent hay buyer, engaging the steamer Crouse to ship the product. Barley also became an important product after 1880, both for feeding cattle and brewing purposes. Emil Kocian recalls the skipper of the J.J. Crouse of Sheboygan was Captain Andersen, who also was the blacksmith in the Village at the time.

In the early days two or three masted vessels unloaded freight at the pier, and loaded wood products to be shipped out, almost daily. Following this epic, East Two Creeks had a scheduled tri-weekly steamboat service. The names of the boats that landed settlers here were the Sea Bird, the Alpena, and the Propeller; which was not the name, but so designated because it was the first boat that had its propeller shifted to the rear. All three boats were lost in Lake Michigan.

The Sea Bird went down on April 9, 1868. This Goodrich Steamer, enroute from Chicago, burned some eight miles from Waukegan, and it was reported that thirty-five crew members and passengers lost their lives. This incident caused much excitement in East Two Creeks, since many of the people living in the town had arrived on this steamer in previous years. One young man named, Legro, who resided in the vicinity, together with a number of other young men heading for the Colorado gold rush, all lost their lives in this disaster. Only three of the crew members on board escaped.

Chief among two and three masted sailboats that came to the Two Creeks pier frequently were the Josephine Lawrence, the Traverse City, and the Alaska. They employed men coming

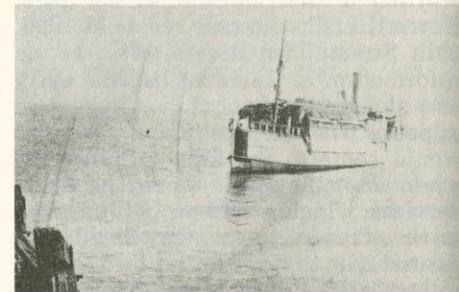
from the neighborhood; Stevedores and others, to load and unload cargoes of lumber, hemlock bark, ties, corwood, baled hay, grain, and other farm products. The more experienced men were paid from 15 to 25 cents per hour. It would generally take from six to ten hours to load a boat. Depending on the tonnage it would carry.

The Alaska; with a cargo of wheat; foundered about one mile south from the Lake Shore at East Two Creeks, and only a small portion of the cargo was saved. It was reported that most of it went over board, and was washed ashore. Farmers in the vicinity scooped it up and hauled it home in wagon loads, and fed it to chickens and hogs. All three ships above mentioned were lost in storms on the lake.

Halvor Johnson; one of the early prominent farmers of the town, built a scow in 1890 and named it Emily Taylor for his married daughter. Captain Johnson also operated a fine farm bordering on the lake. His family operated the farm during the summer while he was sailing hauling cargoes of lumber, shingles, slabs, and baled hay to different ports on the western shores of Lake Michigan.

On one occasion particularly, the Scow with her cargo of freight was tied

to the pier of East Two Creeks, ready to be unloaded, when a heavy storm ensued. In order to save the boat from being battered against the spiles, the ropes anchoring it were severed, and the boat was beached. Both the cargo and the boat were recovered. After sailing for more than a decade, this boat too was lost in a storm.



It was about this time that tons of dried peas in bags were hauled in a large shed on the pier and unloaded there to wait for the ship to come in, and protect it from rain. Evidently the tonnage exceeded the weight of what the pier could hold, and as the floor gave way the bags of dried peas fell into Lake Michigan. Unable to get them out, after the peas in the bags got saturated, they swelled, bursting the bags and all the peas went in the lake. Some of it was scooped up and fed to hogs and other animals, but much of it got to other ports without being shipped.

Another incident that transpired during this shipping era, and taught the farmers how to make big money on hay, was when, a fellow by the name of Harding; evidently came from nowhere; anchored two huge schooners at the pier and went among the farmers to buy hay. He told the farmers he would show them how to make real money on hay. He loaded the schooners to the capacity of two hundred fifty ton, sailed away at night, never paid for the hay, and was never again seen or heard from.

Much of the areas timber was destroyed by what was known as the Great Fire more commonly known as the Peshtigo Fire which killed 1,182



A PASSING LANDMARK  
THE PIER AT TWO CREEKS

people in October of 1871, and covered a portion of the Township of Two Creeks, starting about four or five miles south of East Two Creeks and spread north. There were no known casualties, but damage of timber was extensive. Tanbark was becoming more scarce, and had to be imported from other areas to keep the tanning factory in operation. Thus it became unprofitable to continue to operate. The Pfister Vogel Leather Company moved its operation to Milwaukee in 1882, but continued to operate the general merchandise store which was still run by the Busch Family.

It is interesting to note some of the prices at the Busch Company Store. Eggs were 12¢ a dozen. It was possible to get 1 lb. of coffee and 1 lb. of sugar, for 1 dozen of eggs, and then the clerk would throw in several pieces of candy.

At about this time, the United States Telegraph Company; that constructed the telegraph line connecting the cities of Two Rivers, Kewaunee, Algoma, Sturgeon Bay, and the outside world, passed thru the village in 1864. In the year 1885 the company discontinued the operation of the telegraph office. The line continued to pass thru the village but no office was maintained. This, somewhat hindered the industrial and business operation in the village.

Although the tanning company moved out, business, although it dropped off for awhile, still prospered. The trend seemed to have changed from lumbering to farming as more land was cleared in the vicinity. More grain, hay, peas, and other farm products were raised, sold at the company store, and shipped to other ports. Transportation was improved with the arrival of the stage coach, which operated between Two Rivers to Sturgeon Bay by way of Two Creeks.

Sports fishing in canoes, and off the pier, was very popular. Fishing for suckers in the Two Creeks when schools of them would enter from the lake and swim up stream to spawn. A short distance from the mouth of the north creek, a dam, a flume, and a flood gate were constructed so as to regulate the water above the dam. This was also used for water power in the sawmill, for tan-liquor in the tannery, and other uses. When the flood gate was raised, the water in the creek below the dam would rise, at which time large numbers of suckers would come up the stream. By closing the flood gate, the water was shut off, and the fish in the creek would be left in shallow water, and would be trapped.

It was then that the spectators and fishermen would get in the creek, catch the fish with their bare hands, with spears or net or stun them with sticks, and land them on the banks of the creek. Much excitement would prevail among those engaged. The fishing

period would last from 15 to 20 minutes when the real fun was over. Every fisherman would usually have his catch. Fish that were not consumed would be smoked for later use.

There were always a few commercial fishermen in town. Seines with regulation meshes were used in lake waters close to the shore, while gill nets were used farther out in the lake. The catch would consist of whitefish, trout, herring, suckers, perch, and other lake fish.

Fishing from the pier for perch and white fish was also a great sport during the summer months. It was common to see a barefoot boy, or some older man, wending his way with hook and line toward the pier. Fishing from the pier not only appealed to the people of the village but to the neighboring cities and villages as well.

Hunting in the East Two Creek area was also a good sport, as well as a means of securing meat for consumption at a time when most needed. A pioneer of the town; a well known enthusiastic hunter; Ignatz Wojta, in 1857; when a boy twelve-years-old, received his first hunting lesson from the Indians who were then numerous in the area. Some of the fundamentals in hunting were to know the topography of the land, the coverage, natural habitat, the instinct of the animal, and the direction of the wind so that the animal did not get the

direct scent of the pursuer.

On one occasion, Ignatz mortally wounded a deer when an Indian appeared and accompanied the boy in pursuit of the wounded animal. The Indian, at the first opportunity dispatched the deer. Immediately he proceeded to drag the deer away. Ignatz protested and asked for his share of the venison. The Indian refused to yield and directed him to proceed homeward. The boy further pleaded for at least a small portion of the venison, which vexed the Indian, and he removed the ramrod from his gun and indicated he would use it if Ignatz lingered much longer. The Indian directed the boy to follow an old logging road, and this brought him safely home.

An incident that was of great interest to the people of the Village of East Two Creeks and the surrounding communities, was the freezing of an Ann Arbor carferry approximately two to three miles off the coast of the village. The winter was a severe one with temperatures ranging between 20 to 30 degrees below zero for a period of weeks. When Ann Arbor Number 3 came to the rescue of an Ann Arbor Number 1, it too froze in. It was then that Ann Arbor Number 2 moved in near the ships but it too froze, but was able to release itself, and Ann Arbor Number 3, but Number 1 remained solidly frozen.



This picture portrays the Joe Lodi Family at the time when they lived in the Village of East Two Creeks, and operated the saloon and dance hall. Starting from the left facing

the picture is Lucey; who married Paul Seibold, sitting on the lap os his father is Edward, and standing in front of his mother is Otto.

In an article of the Manitowoc Daily Herald of Feb. 13, 1904, I quote, "Lake a solid ice field. Lake Michigan is practically one mass of ice from shore to shore according to Captains, who make no pretense of running their vessels on any kind of scheduled runs."

In an article of the same paper on February 15, 1904; I quote, "Ann Arbor Ferries Number 1 and 3 which are imprisoned off of Two Creeks are still fast and the prospects are they will not be released today. Passengers on the boats walked to shore on the ice, hired teams at Two Creeks, for Two Rivers, and then boarded the train for Milwaukee."

In an other article of the Daily Herald of February 17, 1904, I quote; "The Ann Arbor Carferries #1 an 3 are still fast in the ice off Two Creeks, and no attempt is being made to release the boats because of the belief it would be useless and too expensive. A change of wind is awaited to accomplish this purpose. The boats are daily visited by large crowds, and the crew is well supplied with provisions and fuel, and suffer none."

In still another article of the same paper of February 18, 1904 I quote; "The Ann Arbor boats which have been in the ice off Two Creeks for a week past, are still prisoners with no prospects of being released at this time. The Company is making no effort to assist the boats, except the Number 2 which continues in commission has approached near, and attempted to break the ice surrounding, but failing in this has resumed its trip. A change of the wind is awaited by the crews on board, and as soon as this condition comes to pass, there will be little trouble in effecting the release of the boats. Officers of the boats, and members of the crew have made visits here almost daily, and report they have suffered none in their exile."

The Two Rivers Chronicle of February 16, 1904, carried an article as follows: for several days past a large carferry of the Ann Arbor line has been imprisoned in the ice about two miles off of Two Creeks, and passengers and crew have been coming ashore to get A.; "Hot Mixture"; at the Jos. Lndl's Tavern, and as many late newspapers as postmaster Busch can spare. Lndl says, "He don't care how long the boat remains locked in the ice, if the money of those on board only lasts as long.

In the Two Rivers Chronicle of March 1, 1904, we find this article. The two carferries in the ice off Two Creeks are held in a bed of ice said to be 35 feet deep. Ice has to be melted to supply the boilers with water so that steam may be kept in readiness for the break-up which is to release them.

On Tuesday, March 8, 1904, the Chronicle stated in an article. "The two carferries that were imprisoned so long in the ice at Two Creeks were released

last week. A heavy west wind separated the ice along the west shore, so that another carferry of the same line could get to them, and help to break their way through."

The residents of East Two Creeks and the community many times related to the boat freezing incident. Charles Lndl; who managed the butcher shop at Tisch Mills; hauled meat with a sleigh and a team of horses to the boats. The groceries and other supplies were purchased at the Busch Store in East Two Creeks. It has also been said that a steer had been taken up to the boats, and butchered right on the ice.

To make it possible to haul coal, food, and other supplies to the boat with sleighs, roads had to be chopped through the ice because of the irregularity of the surface as shown in the picture of the Ann Arbor #1. It has also been noted that large Canadian timber wolves came down from Canada across the ice with some landing in the East Two Creeks area.

In the year of 1912 Charles Swetil took over the management of the grocery store. It has been said that six fires started in the store during the time he was there. The mysterious



*The Otto Busch Family*

causes of the fires have not been determined.

Since hemlock became scarce, and the Pfister Vogel Leather Company moved out, the area land owners turned more and more to farming. The thriving shipping port of East Two Creeks became even more popular for the shipping of farm products. A 200 foot track built on the pier facilitated easier handling of grain and other products which were temporarily



*Ann Arbor Number 1 entombed in the ice at East Two Creeks.*

stored in the sheds at the end of the pier, to be safe from the weather before loading.

It was in September 1915 that Emil Kocian; a native of Sioux Falls, South Dakota; who operated a blacksmith shop at Skubal's Corners for 2 years, and Tisch Mills for 2 years, came to East Two Creeks, and was induced by the citizens to take over the operation of the then vacant blacksmith shop, on a trial bases. On October 3, of the same year Emil attended a dance at the Henry Kappelman Dance Hall, where the Hansen Band was playing (Hugo Hamernik was a member of the band) and there he met Ella Lehrman. That meeting in itself was enough reason to stay blacksmithing in the village.

In November a huge storm came up, blew the shed at the end of the pier into the lake, and completely demolished it. This somewhat inconvenienced and hampered shipping for awhile, but did not affect blacksmithing. Emil was safe in his shop already developing a nice business.

Two boats were very popular at the pier about this time. The Susie Chipman; a large steamer; with a loading capacity of over 200 tons, hauled hay to Chicago. The Kraus; a smaller steamer; took on about 120 tons, also hauled hay to Chicago.

In the year 1916, Emil Kocian purchased the blacksmith shop with a parcel of land for \$700.00. By this time he had developed a big business, adding a wood shop to the establishment for wagon making and for sleighs. The nails for shoeing horses were purchased from Jake Stangel, Manitowoc, Wisconsin, and were imported from Sweden. Those were the best nails to be had at the time. He was told that nails would be going up in price, so he purchased \$700.00 worth which he figured would last him about two years.

A humorous incident that Emil



*Preparing to shoe a horse at the blacksmith shop in Two Creeks.*

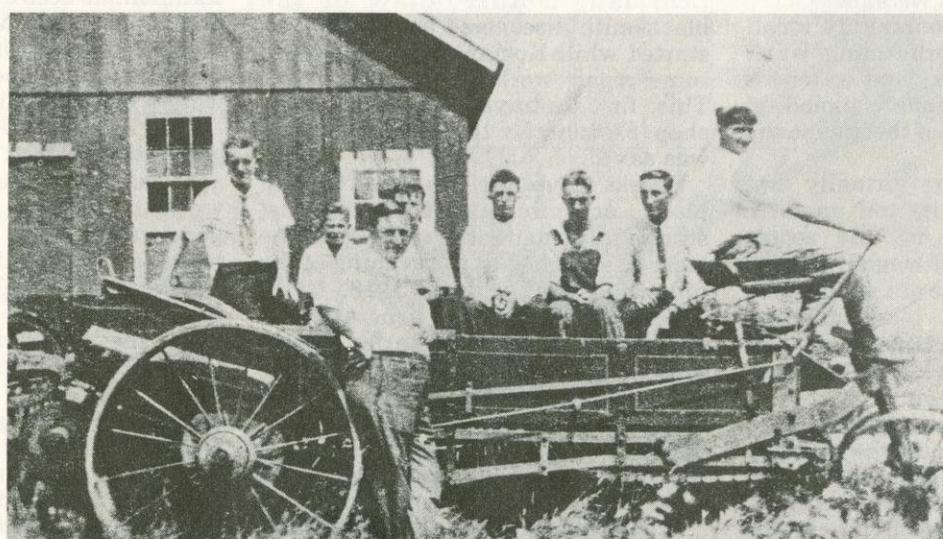
recalls was when Louis Frasch and Henry Taylor were living it up in the saloon all day. Ed Matheisen and he sneaked out and exchanged the wheels on Louis Frasch's Milk Wagon, by placing the large wheels in the front and the small wheels in the back, then hid and watched the two take off. It has been said, that the words expounded from that wagon are never to be published.

By this time there was no post office in the village. There was, however, a mailman by the name of John Goedjen, who made his rounds daily. Prominent in the village was also a hay buyer by the name of Joseph Scheuer; father of Edmund Scheuer of Manitowoc, and Ralph Scheuer of Two Rivers; who became well known as a shipping magnate in the area. Later he moved to

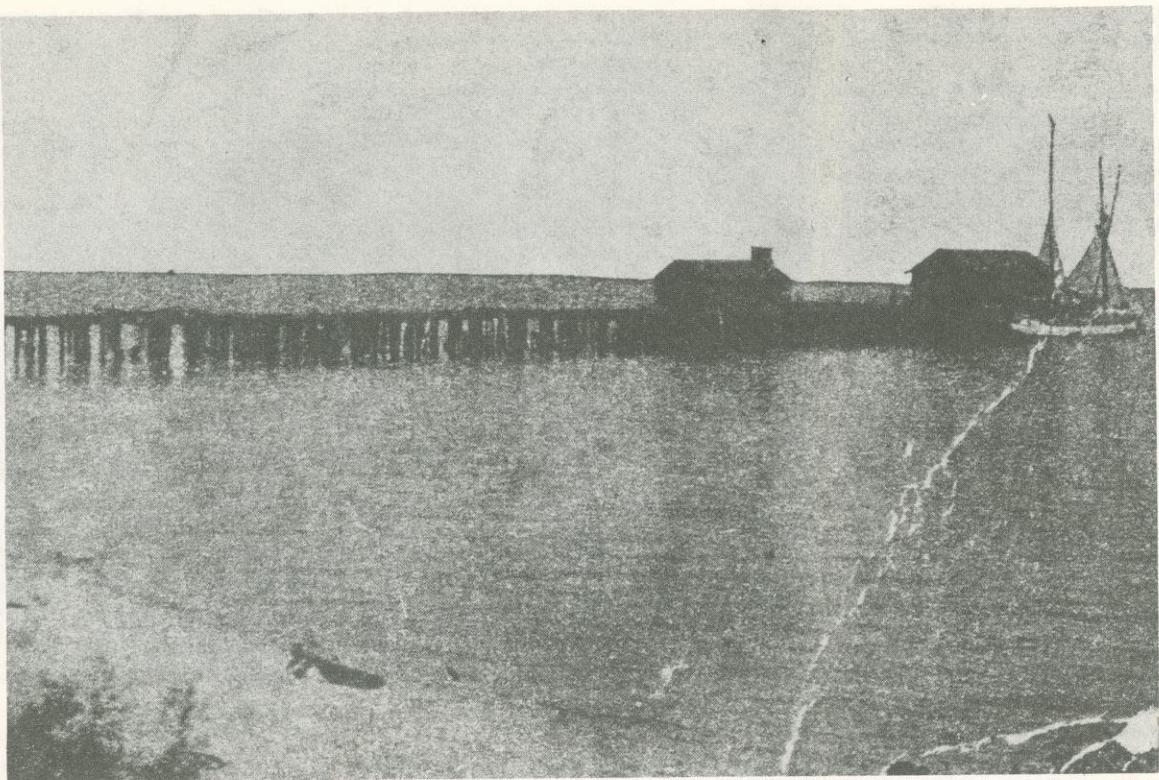
Milwaukee and became a developer of Whitefish Bay. J. Hill of Manitowoc then became prominent as a hay buyer and engaged the steamer Crouse to shop the product.

As busy as Emil Kocian was in his flourishing business, he could not resist the temptations of married life, and on March 14, 1917 he married Ella Lehrman. He never stated whether she was his first love, but it sure appeared to be his last.

He bought a house, barn, and 4 acres of land in April 1918. He lived in the village of East Two Creeks for seven years, and recalls that by 1915 approximately 150 feet of shore line had already eroded.



*Emil Kocian; as a young man; on the seat of the manure spreader, with friends surrounding the vehicle.*



*The pier with the two sheds.*

### **The Fire of East Two Creeks**

An article in the Manitowoc Herald Times of October 5, 1968, is noted: It was hot and arid here in the Fall of 1918, probably the most arid period in the history of this community. And, for the thriving Village of East Two Creeks; then the leading shipping port on Lake Michigan's west shore, but now changed to farmland; it meant disaster.

Fifty years ago, late in the evening of October 5, 1918, a disasterous fire roared through the thriving port community. With no water available to fight the blaze, nine buildings of three major establishments were leveled.

Old-timers of the community recall those difficult days for farming, when top soil was tinder dry and water for livestock was a precious commodity, despite the proximity of the area to the lake.

At times wells were virtually dry. The heat also took its toll on farm machinery as tires by the scores slipped off the rims of wagon wheels.

Flourishing because of the hot spell, however, was the blacksmithing business of Emil Kocian, a native of Cooperstown area and a former Two Rivers City Councilman.

Now living in retirement at Route 2, Two Rivers, Kocian spent the morning the day before the big blaze occurred retiring rims of some 27 wagon wheels brought in by farmers living in the area.

Bonfires were required for the reti-

ng operation and Kocian built three on the ground of tan bark on which East Two Creeks was built. The tan bark comes from the former Pfister Vogel Leather Company of Milwaukee which had operated a tannery at East Two Creeks, largely on the Kocian property.

Kocian recalls that the water supply was so low that he required the assistance in the re-tiring job from Edward Mathiesen, a neighboring farmer who was engaged in threshing and carried water in a tank wagon for such work.

When the wagon wheel re-tiring was completed, Kocian extinguished the bonfires. However, Mrs. Henry Lehrman, mother-in-law of the blacksmith discovered a new fire had started while Kocian was away doing some repair work at a nearby farm. This fire destroyed the blacksmith shop. Fortunately the adjoining home was saved.

Sparks from the blacksmith shop blaze; according to some reports; started a fire under the stairway of the general store late in the evening of the following day, October 5, 1918.

Before midnight the general store; operated by the late Charles Swetil; and the dance hall and tavern; operated by the late Henry Kappelman, a former Two Rivers School Commissioner; were destroyed. In all nine buildings, including Kocian's vanished from the scene.

The surprising thing about the fire was that an outhouse between the buildings remained standing, Emil Kocian recalled. "We watched all the

other buildings crumble with plenty of water on the east side of us, with no facilities to fight the fire."

It has also been noted that this outhouse stood all alone in the desolate atmosphere that followed the fire, seemingly proud of the service it had rendered, and it stood as a sentinel would stand, ready to be of further service to any accustomed or foreign traveler, that had the urge to avail themselves of it's assets. Embossed testimonials on tissue, and unglazed pages of Sears & Roebuck catalogues are evidence of it's service within it's sacred walls. Very rarely; only now and then; have some of these testimonials been discovered in foreign ports on Lake Michigan, perhaps blown by the wind onto Lake Michigan waters, and transported by these same waters without being shipped.

East Two Creeks was a village, and a generation in that village; ladies and gentlemen; that developed sanitation without pollution, contrary to our generation, that created pollution because of our sanitation.

After the fire, Emil purchased the grain warehouse; which remained from the Reynolds Company from Chicago, and remodeled it into a blacksmith shop. In the shop that burned, he recalled that he had a \$4000.00 inventory with only \$1000.00 worth of insurance coverage. He sustained a terrific loss.

He then tired to organize a committee to rebuild the store. Members of this committee were Richard Matheisen, Emil Zerzow, and

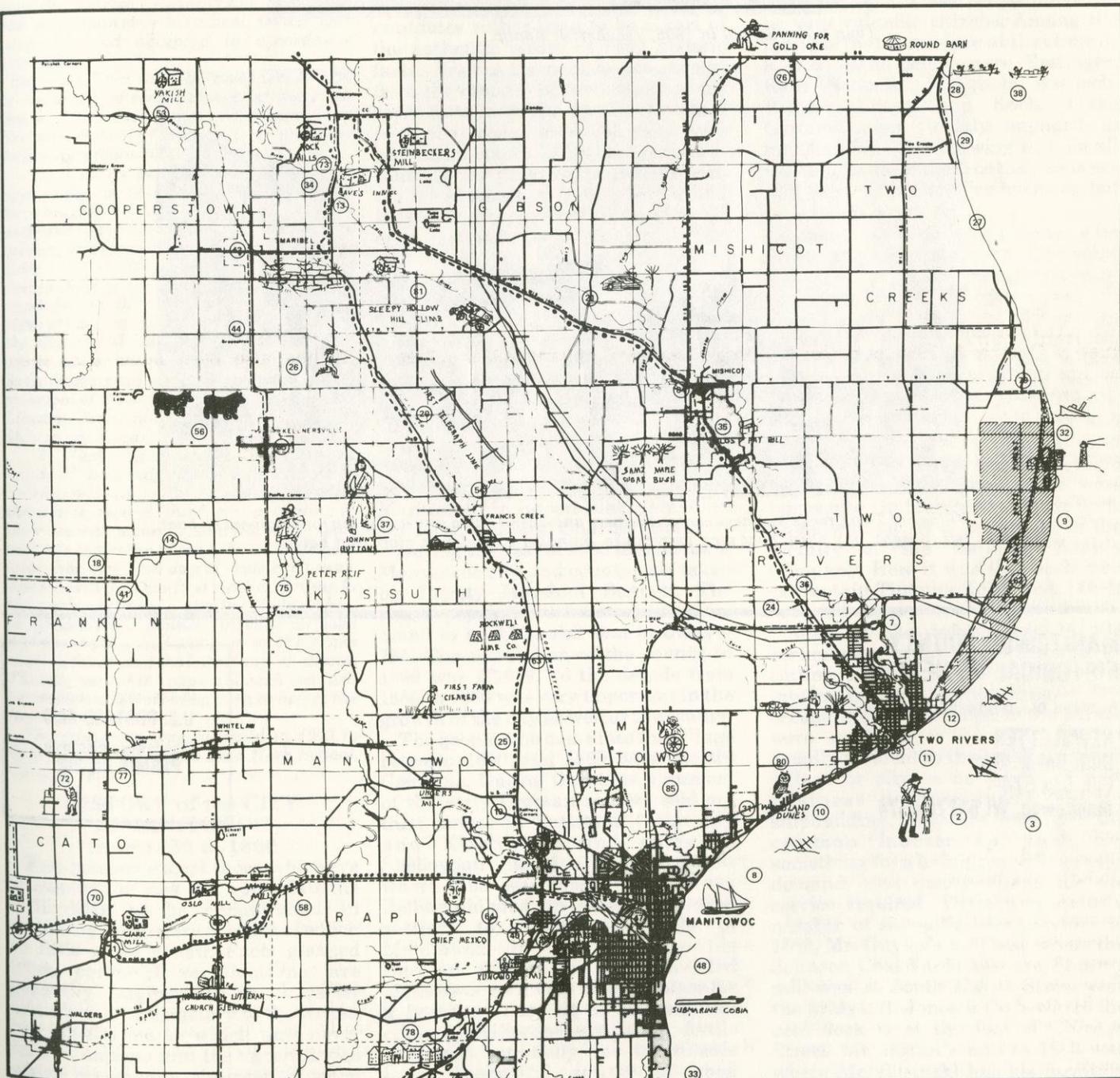
Emil Kocian. They purchased the land where the old store stood from William Krase. This is as far as it got. Because of varied opinion, and lack of interest, Emil was left alone. He then sold the house to William Lehrman, the shop to Thomas Yohanek; who built a house out of it; and the barn to Bill Ihlenfeld; a farmer; and moved out of what remained the Village of East Two Creeks.

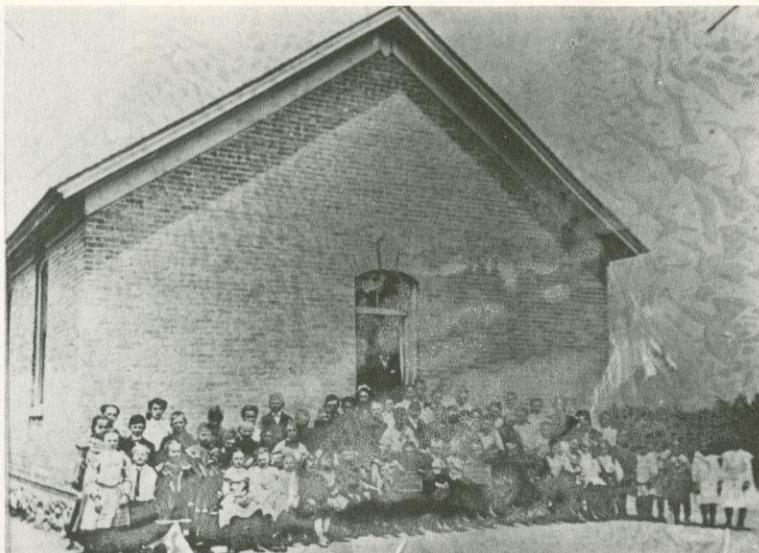
It was Mr. Pfister, of the Pfister Vogel Leather Company that made the village, the diversity of nationalities that sustained it, and the fire of October 5, 1918 that destroyed it, but the image of this progressive village will remain immortal.

*This monograph was written by Clarence Spevacek about ten years ago and was found among papers which had been given to the Manitowoc County Historical Society some years before his death on Sept. 6, 1979. We are pleased to make his reminiscences of the early history of Two Creeks as part of our Occupational Monograph series.*

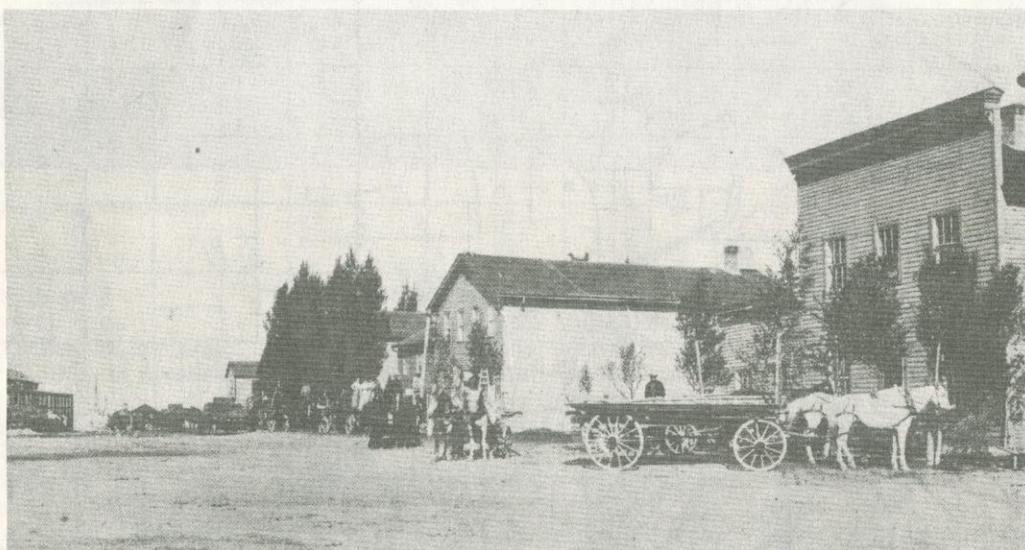
*We are indebted to the Manitowoc Public Schools principal Robert Rosinsky for the use of some of the pictures contained in this monograph.*

*Photo at right: Guido Pfister, the Founder of the Village of Two Creeks.*





*Twin Elder School in 1906, Teacher: J. Konop.*



*Village of Two Creeks business center; farmers unloading baled hay and grain for shipment by boat; left to right, hay shed, boat pier, warehouse, manager's residence, store and hotel.*

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