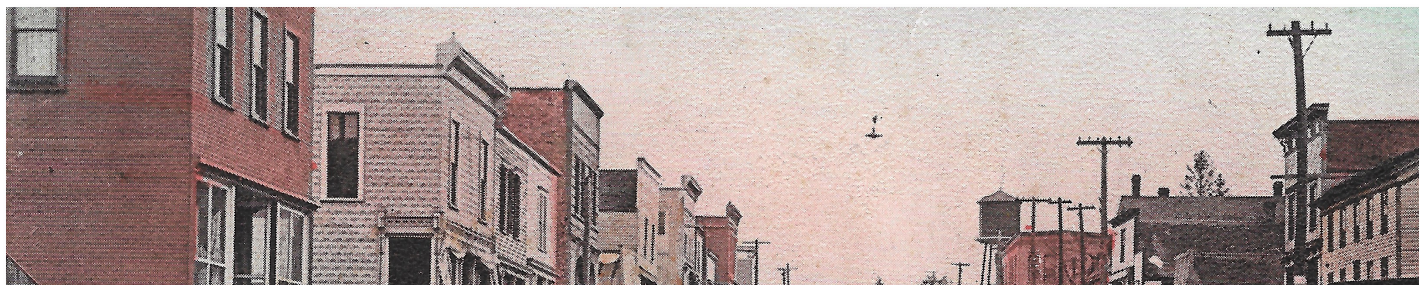


LINDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY



HWY 39 PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

The stretch of highway 39 from Linden to Mineral Point is currently a rough road to travel, jarring to both people and cars. I reached out in an email to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to find out when an upgrade might be expected.

Timothy Verhagen replied, "WIS 39 between US 18 and Mineral Point is currently scheduled for resurfacing in 2024 with possible advancement to 2023." Informational letters have been sent to residents living near Hwy 39. There will be a public involvement meeting in the summer of 2021.

Until then, would it help to know there were times in the past when travel on the road was worse? B. J. Bennett of the Mineral Point Tribune commented on the road to Linden in his Jan. 12, 1876 paper, "If there is a worse piece of road in Wisconsin, that is so much used, as that from Mineral Point to Linden, we don't want to travel it."

A few years later Bennett poked fun at a Linden resident when he stated, "Tommy Kislenbury says the Linden road is 'tolerably good again;' he must enjoy chuckholes, or else can be easily pleased."

Inside This Issue:

Page 1:

- HWY 39

Page 2

- HWY 39, continued

Page 3

- HWY 39, continued

Page 4

- HWY 39, continued

Page 5

- Linden Park is 100!

Page 6

- Linden Park, continued
- Linden Frolic

Page 7

- In Memoriam
- Annual Meeting Notice

From the earliest days of settlement the Linden road as it was known before the State of Wisconsin took it over, took a different route that made it an adventure and sometimes a challenge for travelers.

The landscape and path of the original road, dating from the early 1830's, took were different from today. You can retrace part of that road currently by turning right onto County highway QQ when leaving Mineral Point. On your left is a stone house and outbuildings constructed for James Spensley around 1860 who also operated a smelting furnace to your right, of which a small part of the foundation remains in the farm field.

To the right is a steep hill known for generations as Spensley Hill, mother nature has taken over the former road bed with vegetation and trees but a power line serves as a marker of the direction the road took into Mineral Point. Spensley Hill was the most dangerous section of the road, it was the mother of all hills in Mineral Point, subject to erosion with a washboard effect that at times literally shook a wagon loose.

Continued page 2

HWY 39, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

One of those incidents was reported by the Linden newspaper in 1896 of Linden residents headed home going down Spensley's hill. "Last Saturday morning Mrs. Elisha Tredinnick, Miss Rena Wearing and Miss Maggie Anderson started for Mineral Point. Mrs. Tredinnick had along with her, her little baby boy, Milton. The women had one horse hitched to a light delivery wagon. Everything went splendidly until the party reached Spensley's hill. There one of the bolts that held the shafts in place came out and—then there was trouble.

The horse had become a runaway horse, and entirely unmanageable. Miss Rena Wearing was thrown out, getting one arm considerably bruised. Miss Anderson, who had the care of the baby, managed to get out and upon her feet at the rear of the wagon in a way and manner that she cannot describe, herself and baby entirely unhurt. Mrs. Tredinnick, who was driving undertook to jump but her clothes caught in the rod of the brake and she fell heavily to the ground though happily free of the vehicle."

In May, 1905 Mr. A. Avenell and young son were returning to Linden and while going down Spensley's hill one of the single trees came loose from the double tree and the point of the wagon tongue dropped causing an accident and destroying the wagon. Avenell was thrown an estimated twenty feet and seriously injured with head and back injuries. His son was unhurt.

Other times horses were responsible for accidents on this legendary hill either by being naturally high spirited and taking the decline too fast or becoming spooked and scared by an oncoming team. In one weekend in May, 1870 while William Rule was leading a team of horses up Spensley hill into Mineral Point he was seriously injured after receiving a kick from a horse. The next day, Frank Batten age 19, of Linden was kicked in the abdomen by a horse and later died from his injuries.

Also in November, 1870 a Linden township resident, Toliff Syvertson, was leaving Mineral Point with a load of lumber and while descending Spensley's Hill, his horses ran away and he was thrown under the wagon with a fatal result.

There were numerous other close calls on Spensley's hill and at least six fatal accidents that I am aware of , the last one in 1934. Winter time brought out sleigh runners and cutters pulled by horses and also a temptation by kids and teenagers to use Spensley's Hill as an adrenaline rush experience for coasting sleighs and bobsleds, sometimes with serious accidents.

The road from Linden to Mineral Point was very important in a commercial sense because agricultural crops, livestock, mineral ore and supplies were all transported on this route. Catherine (Hawke) Whitford remembers her Dad telling her that as a boy he would ride a horse alongside a load of ore and going up Spensley hill he would dismount, hitch up his horse to the others for extra horsepower and then lead them up the hill.



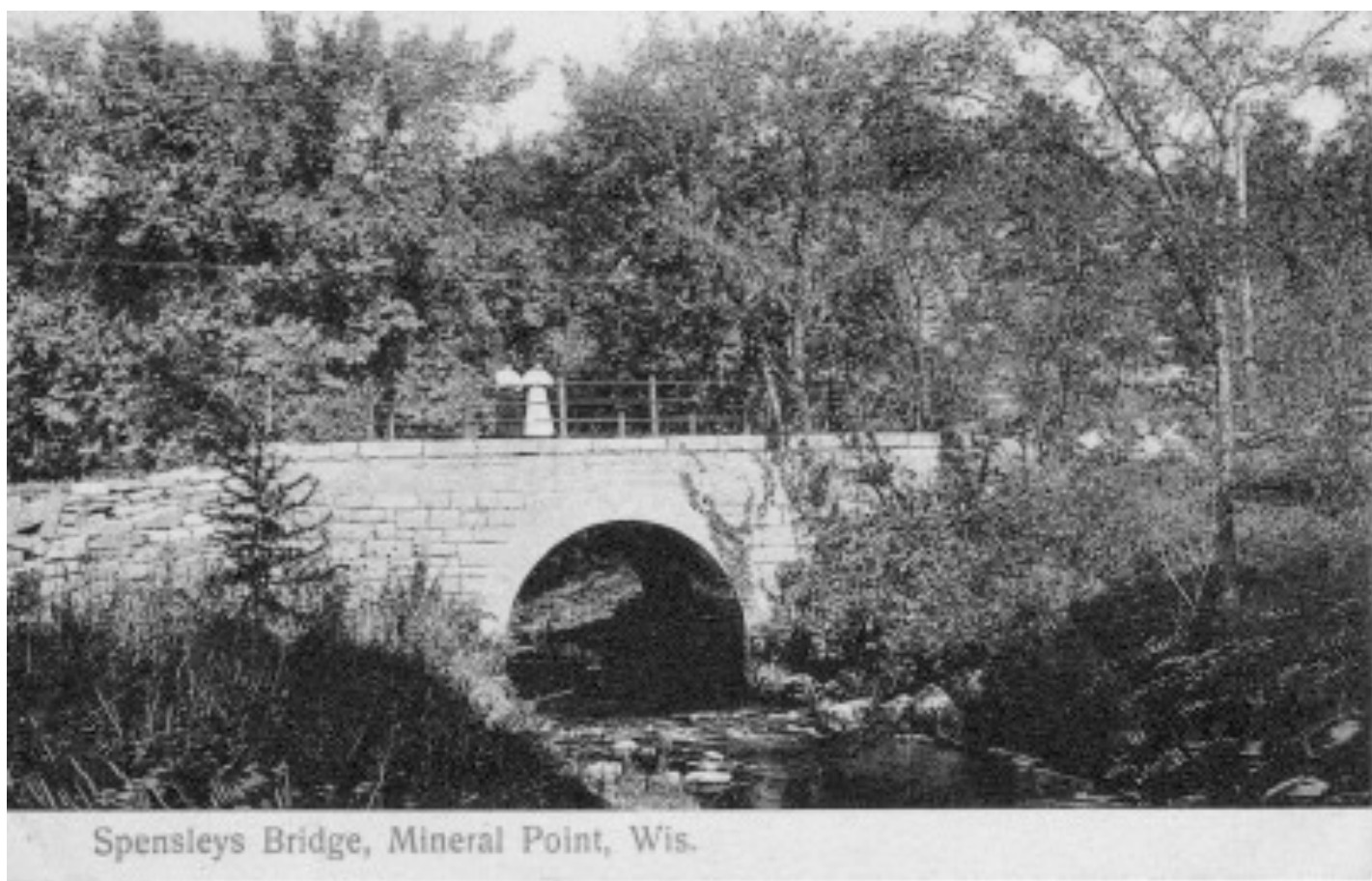
This faded highway 39 sign on the Western edge of Mineral Point gives a hint of what is ahead on a road that has been in decline for several years.

HWY 39, CONTINUED

Starting in 1869 efforts, led by James Spensley, were made to make a new improved road to Linden by a different route. After public hearings and discussion it was finally agreed by a committee to vacate part of the road going up the hill on today's QQ and putting in a new route starting to the right of QQ where the Ludden Lake dam is now located, up that valley, coming out near Vivian's rock house. Also called the half way house because it approximately measured the equal distance between the two towns.

When traveling County QQ today after ascending the hill you will notice the road is on a natural ridge. The new road, not visible today, had a series of eight smaller but still difficult hills to traverse rather than one long hill. Ludden Lake covers most of this new- in -1870 road today, the rock house still stands on QQ, where the new road joined back up with the old one.

The old road went through a portion of James Spensley's land and likely separated his pastures and crops. The people of Linden were outraged over the new road and they weren't about to take it. In fact they raised their voices loud and



This stone bridge was at the foot of Spensley hill over the creek that runs slower today due to the Ludden Lake dam. This bridge was washed out or damaged several times because of severe flooding.

clear and at one point of contention took the law into their own hands.

James Spensley fenced in both the upper and lower entrances to the old road, which he had a legal right to do, after he had petitioned the town of Mineral Point board to vacate the road. In what may not have been Linden's proudest moment, a group of teamsters broke down the upper fence on the old road and proceeded downhill. James Spensley was there waiting for the trespassers.

HWY 39, CONTINUED

George Wearing, of Linden, led the group and he confronted Spensley and told him they were coming through. Spensley went into his house and returned with a shotgun. The story of what happened next differs, according to accounts in both Mineral Point newspapers—The Tribune and the Democrat. In The Tribune it was reported that Spensley claimed Wearing came at him, clinched him and tried to grab the gun. Spensley said while acting in defense in the scuffle he threw Wearing to the ground. Bennett of the Tribune stated the group of Linden people constituted a “lawless mob” and that they created a “riot.”

Wearing made an assault complaint against Spensley to the Justice of the Peace in Mineral Point. Rather than go to trial Spensley pled guilty and paid a fine of \$10. Spensley also agreed to reopen the old road and was paid for expenses incurred on the new road. James Spensley was a popular and respected person in the area and served in many capacities of civil trust including a term in the state legislature. To Spensley’s credit he agreed quickly to reversal back to the old road rather than fight through the courts. The controversy soon faded with a return to the road on the ridge as we know as County QQ.

In 1926 another new and improved change came to the Linden road. At the bottom of Spensley hill travelers could opt to turn left and follow the Mifflin road going West and then turn North past what is today the Iowa County airport, following more of the current route and at that time named Highway 62. What is today Highway E was the remainder of the original Mifflin road.

The venerable Bennett, still at the helm of the Mineral Point Tribune, opined in a October 14, 1926 editorial, “Citizens of Linden and Mineral Point are unanimous in their opinion relative to the new highway between the two towns—that it is an outrageously expensive affair, is a tedious, hard road to travel, and entirely void of the splendid scenery which the old road afforded.”

Travelers to Mifflin and Linden still had to negotiate the formidable Spensley’s hill coming out of or going into Mineral Point. Hard rains and erosion took its toll on the hill which created gullies and a washboard effect with a bounce, rattle and shake.

The Mifflin correspondent to the Mineral Point Tribune compared the experience to a carnival ride in a August 15, 1929 paper in this wry comment: “From the number of complaints heard we imagine that the many people from Mifflin and vicinity failed to appreciate one of the free attractions in traveling to the Mineral Point Fair, namely: the ride on the ‘Bump the Bumps’ going up and down the Spensley Hill. A ride in the ‘Whip’ is a fair sample of what it is like. If there’s a rougher or tougher piece of public highway in the county, please name it.”

Ah, but in April, 1936 State of Wisconsin D.O.T. surveyors mapped the way for a brand new exit/entrance to Mineral Point that would allow Highway 62 (now 39) to forever bypass Spensley hill. An article in a June, 1936 Mineral Point Tribune reported, “State Engineer Callyn was in our city to arrange for changing Highway 62 from its present location to Fountain street. This highway will be extended west along the course of the street and will cross the river bottom near Castle Rock and after making a gradual curve will connect with the regular 62 roadway a short distance west of the barn on the former James Spensley property.”

In 1937 the Highway 39 route we are familiar with today carried traffic from Mineral Point to Linden and Edmund. Further improvements were made over the following years including major ones I remember in 1960 and 1975.

LINDEN PARK CELEBRATES 100 YEARS OF SERVICE

In March, 1920 the Linden village board agreed to buy 15 acres of the Hicks estate on Franklin street for a village park. Soon after the village sold ten acres and kept the remaining five for the park site we have today.

At the May 18, 1920 village board meeting Ordinance number 23 was passed to provide a public park and to create a park commission. That very first park board consisted of James Summers, Fred Wicks, Henry James, Ed Rolling, and Thomas Hicks. Thomas Caygill was village President.

It appears the creation of the village park expected and relied heavily on volunteer labor. The Linden Enterprise newspaper of May 28, 1920 stated, "The park board are asking for volunteers to help put the park into shape and you will be welcome to come and bring your teams, plows, rakes, drags, shovels, etc., and help out. Every day will be park day until it is completed ready for use. See any member of the Board and notify them when you will come."

The volunteers worked hard and planned an opening celebration of the park for the village's 4th of July festivities. However on the day of the 4th a torrential downpour cancelled all events at the park including an inaugural baseball game with the city team from Montfort.

Harley Hicks wrote in the July 9, 1920 issue of the Linden Enterprise, "Due to the inclement weather on Monday, Linden was unable to carry out the full program of her celebration. The speaker of the day, Prof. H. L. Miller, of the University of Wisconsin and the Rev. Dunlevy, each gave interesting talks at the church, the weather not permitting the use of the grounds. Music was rendered by the choir. Montfort baseball fans were here and the Linden boys were in readiness to combat them, but of course the game could not be played. Consequently, the opening of the new park is postponed indefinitely."



From Left to Right, Village President, Bob Spurley, Kevin Liddicoat, and Randy Kitelinger make sure everything is working and looking well at the century old park

However, there was a four day Chautauqua assembly at the new park from June 22-25.

The Chautauqua gatherings were a popular national traveling group of lecturers, musicians, vaudeville performers all meant for family entertainment under a tent. The Mutual Chautauqua company out of Chicago brought the four day variety show here. This would have been the first large scale use of the park.

Prior to 1920, baseball games and some celebrations were hosted in a field south of Linden near Richards road. Other events such as family reunions, veterans reunions, church picnics and others were held in various tree shaded areas called Groves, and named after landowners of the grove so people knew where the event would be. These groves

would have shade trees and with a gentle breeze would have natural air conditioning. Some of the common village groves were Heathcock's; Dinsdale and Ross.

LINDEN PARK 100, CONTINUED



This shelter near the ball diamond was provided by the Linden American Legion Post.

With the opening of the new park the Linden area now had one central location for gatherings of all kinds and baseball. A Park Notice published in the local press, stated, in part: "The Park Board welcomes the business men, the churches, the High School, the various fraternal organizations and in fact the whole community, to join with them to make Linden's park second to none in the county."

For the past 100 years many people have enjoyed the use of the park for either special events, baseball or softball games, and village kids using the play ground equipment. It is hard to imagine Linden without the park.

Village President Bob Spurley credits village employees Randy Kitelinger and Kevin Liddicoat for their work in keeping the park looking good. Spurley also said the park has benefited from volunteers who have helped out as well as people and families who have given donations for the park.

A number of years ago, for example, the Army Reserve unit from Dodgeville donated time and equipment to regrade the ball field. The Linden American Legion constructed a shelter near the ball field and the late Stan Griffiths of the Legion worked to get the park welcome sign put up.

The good looking Linden ball diamond has been used in recent years for softball, little league baseball, Iowa-Grant high school junior varsity and some varsity baseball games.

The park is popular for family reunions and with three shelters on site is used often. Shelters can be reserved through the village clerk.

68TH ANNUAL LINDEN FROLIC DAYS STILL ON JULY 23 - 26

A Linden summer tradition, the Frolic Days will continue this year. For updated information check out the Linden Frolic Days 2020 facebook page. The event which starts on Thursday, July 23 through Sunday July 26 will include six musical acts, the Sunday morning Chicken barbecue and the parade at 2 PM on Sunday.



IN MEMORIAM

DON ADAMS, age 76, of La Farge, passed away May 3, 2020. His parents were Curtis “Pepper” Adams and Fern (Normington) Adams with Linden connections. Don joined the Madison Fire Department after serving his country in Vietnam as a U.S. Marine. One of his siblings, Cathi (Bob) Fischer is a member of the Linden Historical Society.

MAGDALENA MARIANNA “LENY” GIBBON, age 95, died May 3, 2020 at Bloomfield HRC. Leny was a former Linden resident and volunteer at the Linden Senior meal site. She was preceded in death by her husbands, Aldro Gibbon and James Graber. A private graveside services was held at the Linden cemetery.

MARLENE (DOLPHIN) WOOD, age 80, passed away on May 5, 2020. She was born to Bert and Virginia (Roberts) Dolphin. She was preceded in death by her husband Don Wood; her parents; her brother Danny Dolphin and her children Joe Wood, Debbie Popp and infant Evelyn Wood. Marlene is survived by her daughter Cindy (Dan) Kitelinger. Marlene was a good friend to all and a loyal supporter of the Linden Historical Society. Burial was in the Linden cemetery.

SCOTTY J. REDDELL, age 58, passed away May 6, 2020. Scott was known and loved by many in Linden over the years. He graduated from Iowa-Grant high school in 1980. Scott is survived by his wife Pam (Caygill); son Lucas; daughters Leslie Bollant and Alyssa Burbach.

DAWN SCHULTZ, age 53 passed away on May 11, 2020. Dawn was born to Gloria Schultz and Albert Channing. Dawn was raised in Linden by Gloria and was a graduate of Iowa-Grant High School. Dawn is survived by her boyfriend Dave Clauer of Linden and her four children: Amanda Ramsey, Holly Niemann, Jennifer Goke and Matthew Goke and her grandchildren.

JOY MAE PEAT LARSEN, age 76, passed away on her birthday, June 20, 2020. Joy was born in Dodgeville to Bill and Merrilda Stacey. She was a graduate of Iowa-Grant High School. Joy was an important member of the Linden community and much loved by all who knew her. She was preceded in death by her parents, her stepfather Wally Scott, her son Ron, her husband Bob, her sister Phyllis Reddell, brother-in-law Roger Reddell and nephew Scott Reddell. Burial was in the Linden cemetery.

ANNUAL MEETING AND PROGRAM SHELVED FOR THIS YEAR

We will not be having the annual meeting and program of the Linden Historical Society during 2020. We are all living in a historical pandemic that shows no signs of completely fading out.

On our five member board of directors, the terms of two people—Randy Baker and Jim Jewell expire this year. I will check with the State Historical Society to see what we need to do in these unusual times. Next year in 2021 the terms of the other three board members will expire, and it is not a good idea for all five members to come up for re-election in one year. We might do a mail ballot and online ballot for this year only.

I believe that one year from now we will have a much better idea on exactly what the Coronavirus is and how to treat it. The good news is that scientists and laboratories all over the world are working 24 hours a day to find either a vaccine or drugs to treat the disease.

The next newsletter is due out the first week of October, if you have ideas for a topic you would like covered let me know.

*******PHOTO AND DOCUMENT DONATIONS ALWAYS APPRECIATED*******

If you have any photos or documents on Linden area history we would love to make a copy for our archives. Photos and documents can be scanned and returned to you if desired. Contact either the President or Vice-President listed below. Membership in the Linden Historical Society is \$10 per year, lifetime membership \$100. Make check payable to Linden Historical Society and send to Treasurer Robin Lindner.

How To Contact Us

LINDENHISTORICALSOCIETY.COM

President & Newsletter editor:

Jim Jewell, 2073 Sunny Slope Road, Mineral Point, WI 53565. Phone: (608) 623-2772

Email: minerjim7@gmail.com

Vice-President:

Randy Baker, 2212 Sunny Slope Road, Mineral Point, WI 53565, Phone: (608) 574-4067

Treasurer:

Robin Lindner, 3465 Sinbad Road, Dodgeville, WI 53533

Secretary:

Florence Wasley, 415 W. Chapel St. Dodgeville, WI 53533

Board member:

Lisa Springer, 2776 Wearne Rd., Mineral Point, WI 53565, Phone: (608) 341-8686

LINDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2073 Sunny Slope Road

Mineral Point, WI 53565

