

# *Linden* **HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Preserving the History of The Linden Wisconsin Area

## **A FIRE AT THE OLD BOWDEN FARM**

Remembered by Ralph Springer, written by Lisa Springer

When the January, 2015 Linden Historical Society issue featuring the Bowden car buying experience arrived it triggered a boyhood memory.

When I was preschool age emergencies were not handled by dialing 911. There was a two foot by eight inch wooden box on the wall with a black funnel-shaped object to talk into in the center, a black tube with an earpiece attached to a wire to listen to, a handle that if turned two or three times would have a long ring, and if turned about one time would have a short ring.

Our number at the Curtis Faull farm (our home) was 7F31 for a “farmer line number seven” with three long rings and one short. In those days an emergency was a series of short rings. When the emergency ring was heard everyone went to the phone, found out who needed help, what was needed, and then proceeded to the neighbors home to help.

I was out with my step-dad and a hired hand when the emergency call was sounded. Mom quickly informed us there was a house fire. We filled up every available milk can with water, put them in my step-dad’s old Chevy truck and joined the neighbors who came similarly prepared at the Bowden homestead. The water we brought was dumped in the fire engine truck to be used by the firemen. Fire departments in those days were pleased to have one truck.

When we arrived Mr. Brecken was throwing meat from a freezer out the window. Many pieces of furniture and other articles were already on the lawn surrounding the house. The Linden fire department truck was already there when we arrived. It had run out of gas upon arrival. It was later pieced together that someone had stolen the gas out of the truck sometime after its last fill. The fire truck storage in the early 1950’s was usually an open shed.

(continued on page two)

**An artistic rendition of the Bowden home by Lisa Springer.**



## Bowden Fire continued from front

The grass the morning of the fire was wet and very slippery. When the Mineral Point fire department arrived they slid right down the last part of the hill, through the house yard fence, and almost into the fire. This being backed out soon ran out of water.

Farms at that time had shallow wells with very small capacities. After a series of bad luck: no gas, lack of water, two fire truck but only one running to haul water, the house was soon reduced to a rock shell with vacant windows staring out over the rolling Wisconsin landscape.

The Freddy Brecken family lived in the house at the time as they rented the farmstead . After the fire they moved on to rent another farm. In the late 1990's the rock was retrieved by a builder to be used at a new site. Little remains of the Bowden homestead, a fallen barn, stones marking the size of the house, a root cellar that was attached to the back of the summer kitchen, and a beautiful view to the south that the Bowden family certainly enjoyed as they planned,built, and lived in their rock home.

## Linden Man Was A Baseball Star

When Springtime rolls around we all think of baseball, or at least many of us do. Elmer Rule was a legendary baseball figure whom I heard of from "old timers" when I was a kid. Someone once told me they thought he could have played in the major leagues.

I recently came across a June, 1914 newspaper article that added some credence to Elmer's stature as a famed baseball player from Linden.

Elmer played baseball on several very good Linden High School teams but achieved more renown by his play as a starting catcher for the University of Wisconsin Big Ten championship team.

After graduating from the UW in 1914, Elmer tried out for a semi-pro team in Madison in June. In his first game for the Madison Senators he banged out four hits in four times at bat.

## Elmer Rule (continued)

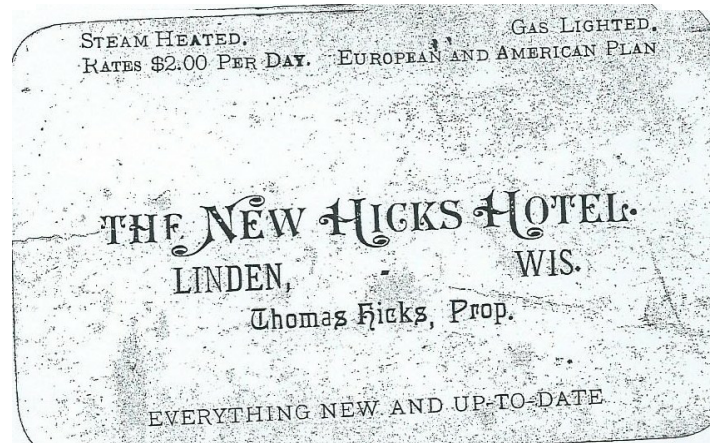
Baseball is the timeless All-American experience and while this historic "replay" happened over 100 years ago it is still possible to picture "Shorty" or "Golden" Rule as he was nicknamed by a Wisconsin State Journal reporter, making the big plays in his inaugural appearance as a semi-pro player.

In his first at-bat Rule drove a solid single over the third baseman; his second hit was a pop-up that dropped between two outfielders; third time up Rule doubled; and in his final at-bat in the ninth inning he hit a line drive single over the infielders.

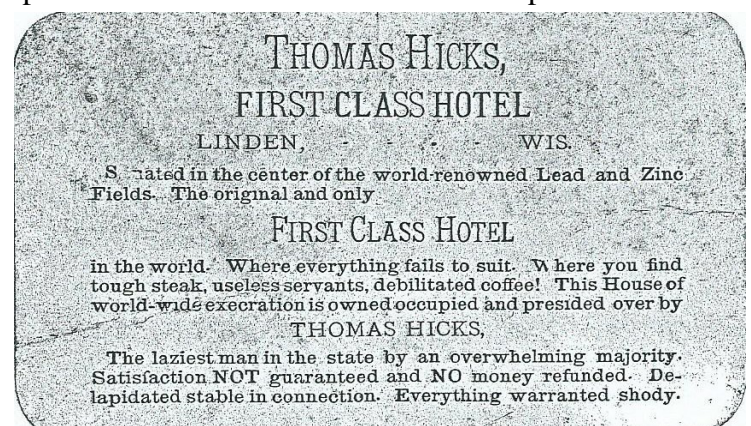
The reporter concluded that "Golden" Rule had, "clinched and double riveted his job behind the plate."

Sadly, Elmer died in 1918 as a result of the national flu epidemic that raged across the country. He is buried in the Linden cemetery.

Source for this article is *Dodgeville Sun-Republic*, June 26, 1914. Jim J.



The above business card was recently discovered in Linden and village President Tom Faull offered a peek at it. Front side is serious while flip side wasn't



100 Years Ago: May, 1915

## MIFFLIN MINING FATALITY

Mining was a major employer a century ago in the Linden area but it was a dangerous occupation. In the middle of May, 1915, 47 year-old Ernest Miller lost his life in the Grunow mine located on the South West edge of the then booming community of Mifflin.

Miller, who was the underground foreman of the mine, was highly respected and had earned the reputation of being both a skilled and careful miner.

In an underground drift a stream of pure water poured out of a wall and the miners used this as a drinking place with a tin cup that hung from a nail on a support timber nearby. At 2:30 on a Saturday afternoon, a couple of miners lined up for a drink. A miner just ahead of Miller took a swig of water and stepped back. While Miller was filling his cup a large stone four feet long, three feet wide and a foot thick suddenly fell from the roof and crushed him against the side and bottom of the drift.

Charles Wonn and the other miners worked rapidly to remove the rock, estimated to weigh several tons, to rescue Miller. The injured miner was taken to his home in Mifflin and attended to by Dr. Treglown, but died from his injuries three hours after the accident.

The *Dodgeville Chronicle* reported, "The cause of the accident has not been ascertained, but the rock is supposed to have been loosened by a blast a few days before and its condition had not been noticed by the men.

Funeral services were held from both the family home and the Mifflin Primitive Methodist Church. Miller was survived by a wife and four children. The *Dodgeville Chronicle* wrote, "Mr. Miller was a noble man, a kind husband, loving father, a good neighbor and friend and highly esteemed in the community."

Sources: *Mineral Point Democrat*, May 21, 1915 and *Dodgeville Chronicle*, May 21, 1915.



**Above photo, from our archives, is labeled only, "Mifflin mines" on the back. This would have been a typical drift that miners, such as Ernest Miller would have labored in. Ore car tracks in the center and timber supports are visible as well as pipes to keep water pumped out.**

Not long after the death of Miller, a ten year old boy was seriously injured above ground in a mining related accident. Gerald Vickerman, son of Mr. And Mrs. Frank Vickerman, as well as some other children in Mifflin had found a number of dynamite caps to play with.

On a Saturday evening Gerald thought he would experiment with one cap and applied a lighted match to it. The resulting explosion tore up his hand badly and he was slightly injured on his face and body. Dr. Treglown was called and he was forced to amputate the boy's thumb and finger. Other kids had taken the caps to school and placed them on the ends of lead pencils.

No doubt, the close knit village of Mifflin was abuzz after this mishap with talk that miners should be more careful with their blasting supplies and parents may have had the "talk" with their children on the dangers of both mining and dynamite caps.

Source, May 21, 1915 *Dodgeville Chronicle*

## **GOLDEN AGE OF STOCK CAR RACING IN LINDEN AREA WILL BE JUNE 14TH PROGRAM**

The Linden Historical Society will have the annual meeting and program on Sunday, June 14 at 1 PM. Location will be the Linden Fire Department and Municipal building.

We will have a panel of Linden area residents who have been involved in Stock Car racing plus audience participation is expected. It will likely be an interesting, lively and fun program. A reminder letter with more information will be sent to all LHS members.

Two board directors, Catherine Whitford and Judy Vivian have agreed to run for terms of two years on the board. Anyone interested in serving on the board can learn more by contacting any board member listed below. A brief business meeting and election of new officers will take place before the program.

Refreshments will be available after the program, public will be invited with posters of the event as well as publicity in local newspapers.

The Linden Historical book committee will meet briefly after the program ends, anyone interested in learning more about this project or writing a chapter on local history is invited to take part. This project has been delayed many times in the past but the President of the society vows to get the job done or resign in shame by the end of the year.

## **HOW TO CONTACT US**

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Secretary: Judy Vivian, 2178 Hwy 39, Dodgeville, WI 53533 Phone: (608) 623-2293

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

## **Check Your Mailing Label For Renewal Time**

If the date to the right of your name on the envelope your newsletter arrived in reads 6-15 your membership is due for renewal on June 1st. Some have paid for two years and other members joined up at a different month. The first number is the month you joined and the second number the year.

New or renewal memberships are \$10 per year for individual or family. Make check payable to Linden Historical Society. Send to Jim Jewell, 2073 Sunny Slope Road, Mineral Point, WI 53565.

## **BREAKING NEWS**

The Linden Historical Society officially became an affiliate with the State Historical Society of Wisconsin in late January. We are awaiting further details and should have more to report in the next newsletter.

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Digital access to at least part of our photo archives will start happening in the next few months. Our board will meet with Emily Pfothner director of the website [recollectionwisconsin.org](http://recollectionwisconsin.org) with the objective of learning how to upload and share some of our photos on that site.

Emily is the daughter of Mineral Point attorney Peter Pfothner and her mother, Nancy you may now as an archivist at the Mineral Point archives. The LHS board has voted to contract help from Chuck Pound to get photos uploaded.

## **MEMORIAL DAY 1915**

Marchers started at the high school with a flag parade to the Methodist Church lawn where the program was held. Ada Biswarrick wrote in the *Dodgeville Chronicle*, "Let us all turn out and show our appreciation to the veterans of '64. There will be a goodly number of the 'Old Guard' with us. Now that war seems an epidemic among 'Civilized Nations' let one and all come to Linden next Monday and look upon those fast disappearing veterans of our community whom we all cherish as this country's anti-toxin for the war period of fifty years ago."

Linden school children were in the parade and it was the custom to have a speaker for the day who in 1915 was attorney McGeever of Dodgeville.