New Berlin Wisconsin

From Country To City

A 20th Century History

Audrey Juds & David Totten

On behalf of the

NEW BERLIN, WISCONSIN

From Country to City: A 20th Century History

By

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New Berlin Historical Society

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Unless otherwise noted, images are from the New Berlin Historical Society archives.

On the Cover

The Sunday afternoon drive on dusty roads through the sparsely populated countryside was a popular pastime for the Swartz brothers and friends in their 1911 Mitchell automobile. The scene transitions to modern dual lane roads, subdivisions, and shopping centers.

Picturesque farmsteads, grazing cattle, and green pastures give way to industrial parks and water towers.

A symbol of limited government, the one room New Berlin Town Hall is replaced by increasingly larger City Halls to house the growing bureaucracy.

New Berlin, Wisconsin: From Country to City
A 20th Century History

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Acknowledgements

Major sources for this work included planning reports and records that reside in city hall archives. The authors are grateful for the cooperation of Mayor Dave Ament, city clerk Daniel Green, Planning Services Manager Nikki Jones, and other staff members for the time and effort expended on our behalf to provide requested information to us.

Considerable use was made of information found in the New Berlin Almanack, a publication of the New Berlin Historical Society. The many Almanack authors deserve great credit for their contribution to recording New Berlin history.

We thank Nancy Mulhern at the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, for tracking down the 1930 farm census, and John Schoenknecht at the Waukesha County Museum for help on other issues.

We express our appreciation to those who, over the years, have shared their experiences through interviews and donated photographs that add another dimension to the story. A valuable resource has been the Swartz diaries that provide commentary on a farm family's activities from 1864-1964. Through the efforts of numerous volunteers, but principally the dedication of Dale Ziemer to the process, these have been transcribed and made accessible as searchable records.

The New Berlin Citizen's weekly coverage provided news and insights starting with the transition from town to city. Copies and microfilm records are archived at the New Berlin Public Library. Unfortunately, a searchable record is not yet available.

Finally, the authors thank Joan Totten, Eric Totten, Sue Hemmen, and Lu Ziemer for proof reading the manuscript.

While care has been taken to recount accurately the history of New Berlin based on the sources available, no independent review of the data was undertaken. The authors apologize for any inadvertent errors.

The New Berlin Historical Society is grateful for the bequest from the estate of the late Mary Ella Milham that has funded, in part, the cost of publishing this book.

Preface

This book is the second to be published by the New Berlin Historical Society to document the history of New Berlin. The first book, *New Berlin, Wisconsin to 1900, Not as German as You'd Think*, was authored by the late society member and scholar Mary Ella Milham and published in 2003. This book endeavors to cover New Berlin's history during the next century, 1900 to 2000, during which most of the rural landscape was transformed to a suburban community of homes and business as the population dramatically expanded.

The book is divided into two parts. Part I, authored by David Totten, is a succinct overview of the events that shaped this transformation and is intended to be a reference for the timeline minded reader. Photographs, primarily from the New Berlin Historical Society collections, help the reader visualize the changing scene.

Part II contains contributions by Audrey Juds, longtime journalist and resident of New Berlin. Included here are edited excerpts from her original newspaper articles augmented with additional research for this book. This section not only adds further detail, but contains personal stories and anecdotes that add flavor and perspective to our appreciation of New Berlin's transformation.

Part I

Introduction

New Berlin's 20th century history can be divided into two phases. As Figure 1 shows, population changes were quite modest during the first half of the century but became very rapid after WWII. As would be expected, housing subdivisions accompanied this population growth, and rural land acreage was reduced as seen in Figure 2. This rapid growth was accompanied by significant changes in government and services, including the town's conversion to city status in 1959. Our overview is thus divided into two sections.

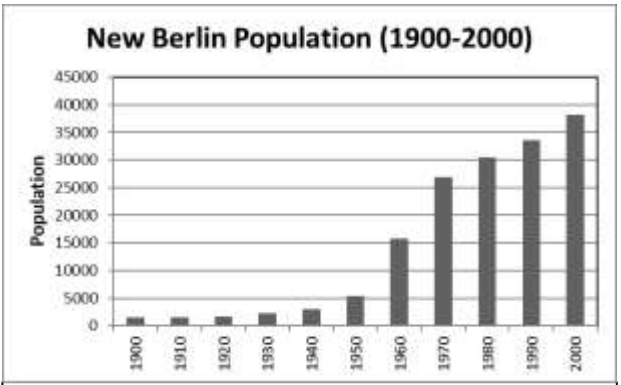

Figure 1. US census data for the town/city of New Berlin. Population growth increased markedly after WWII.

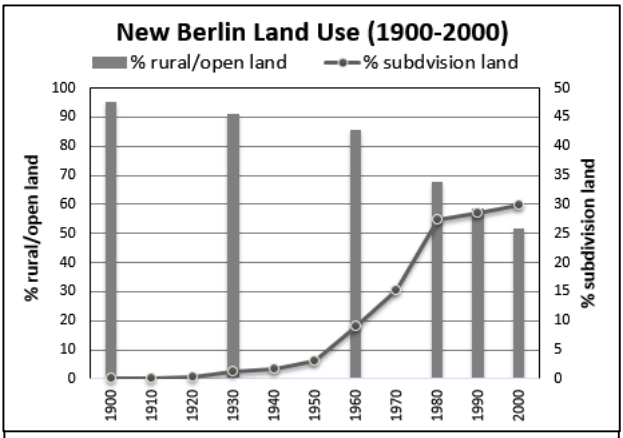

Figure 2. Estimated reduction in rural land area (left axis) and the increase in subdivision acreage (right axis) from 1930-2000. The rapid increase of subdivision acreage after WWII corresponds with the rapid population growth. By 2000 subdivisions covered about 30 percent of the land area, but 50 percent remained undeveloped land. Data compiled from various planning reports.

The first section describes the first 50 years of the century when the landscape was clearly country, the tax base was farms and local stores, and the government was a town board whose primary responsibility was local road maintenance. Each of the eight school districts had their own board and levied taxes in their district.

The second section encompasses the time of transition and growth from country to "city living with a touch of country", to a tax base of suburban homes and business parks, and to a representative government providing the services an urban community expects. The school districts were consolidated and high schools constructed.

The First 50:1900-1950

Prelude to Growth

At the turn of the century, New Berlin farmers had put 60 years into clearing land and improving their farms. The transition to a market economy was well underway, facilitated by the township's location between Milwaukee and Waukesha and

linked by railroad and interurban transport. As with much of Waukesha county, the milk check was becoming the dominant source of cash income on many farms, and this trend was to continue. Although the horse was the prime mover, farm implements had already become available to significantly improve productivity. These included the grain seeder, binder, thresher, hay mower, rake, baler, corn binder and chopper. But major innovations yet to come would affect rural life dramatically in the first 50 years of the century, although the rural atmosphere remained largely intact during this period.

In 1900 there were about 1600 residents in the town. By 1930 the population had grown to 2200, and all of this increase occurred after 1920. The 1930 benchmark is highlighted here because we have data from an agricultural census of 1930 to provide some perspective on the rural scene. (1) This census reports the township contained 327 farms totaling about 21,000 acres. This represents 91% of the total acreage in the 36 square mile township. Presumably the remaining 9% of the land was devoted to roads and nonagricultural lots.

This report also states 2500 acres, or 12% of the area, was woodland. This compares to an estimate that 80% of the township land was forested in settlement days. Farmers maintained woodlots because wood was commonly used in the early years for heat and cooking. Some of the woodlots remain today, such as the Swartz "Meyers" woods bordering on Swartz road and now part of Minooka Park.

The picture emerges then of a town of farms and farm families that retained its sparsely populated rural character throughout these first 50 years of the 20th century. Nevertheless, rural life gradually changed as these families were able to take advantage of telephones, radios, electricity, automobiles, and better roads.

Technology-One Farmer's View

Although we have only a few documented examples, we can expect the rural community of New Berlin participated fully in the technological and social changes that were introduced during the first 30 years of the new century. Peter C. Swartz of Cornfalfa Farms presents a prescient summation of the past and future expectations in 1921. He writes:

"Today our great power is the tractor, truck, autos, and several gasoline engines. The horse does still some of the light, handy, work, and always will come in handy on odd little jobs. Manure spreaders, hay-loaders, sweep rakes, side deliver rakes, hay hoists, 8-foot binder, 4 bottom plows, 14-foot tandem discs, corn binders, 2-row corn cultivator, power sheep shearing machine, self-feeding hay bailer, grain thresher, dirt loader, concrete mixer, dump wagons, wagon scales, air pressure water system, acetylene lights, 2-tub power washing machine, bath room, phonograph, 500-gallon gasoline tank and many other small modern machines are the things we have today to make a living and success in farming."

"It seems each generation must travel again as fast to keep pace with the times. And my sonny in the future to make a success on this same land will have to travel more than again as fast as our truck does, and he will easily make 100 miles an hour with the air ship[1] or

[1] Aside from a few incidents in the "barn storming" era, New Berlin's relationship to aviation was most evident in the "Biwer Beacon". This navigational aid for air mail flights was erected on the Biwer Farm at National, ½ mile east of Sunnyslope, in the summer of 1927. The flashing light, mounted on a 65-foot tower, was a local landmark until it was shut down in 1949. (210) A nearby tavern, at Sunnyslope and National, adopted the name Beacon Bar that gave rise to the Beacon Bowl, a very popular teen venue for the bobby socks generation. (211)

something like it. …..my grandsons will farm in the future with electricity, growing and warming things, driving machinery and riding with a flash of electricity. …. It's coming, or something like it, as sure as the world is round." (2)

Our information on the introduction and adaptation of the telephone, radio, and high-line electric is largely anecdotal, based on family diaries and old photographs. These do, however, provide a general idea of when these modern conveniences came to affect life on the New Berlin farm.

Telephone

Although Bell's patent was issued in 1876 (3), the first reference we have to the telephone in the Swartz diaries was recorded by Peter Morgan in his 1898 diary when, while in Waukesha, he used a telephone to call a veterinarian for his sick horse. At about that time a telephone line was strung between Winton's store at Prospect Hill and the Vernon and Big Bend stores. (4) However, a 1908 postcard photo of National Avenue at Prospect Hill (Figure 9) shows a line of poles on each side of the road with many wires each, suggesting commercial phone service was not long in coming to this area. The Swartz family acquired phone service in 1906. (5) The Meidenbauer family acquired phone service in 1918 (6), one of seven families on their party line[2].

Local telephone companies maintained switchboards to route calls. Eventually direct dialing was developed although the party line remained. Gradually local companies merged with the Wisconsin Telephone Company, which introduced a new system of private phone lines in 1959.

Radio

While the telephone enhanced personal communication in rural New Berlin, consider what must have been the amazement of the first families to acquire a "wireless." Clearly there would be no demand, of course, until radio broadcasts were available. In Wisconsin, the first wireless broadcasts began over what is now WHA, Madison in 1919. Peter Charles Swartz installed a crystal radio in the Cornfalfa Farms farmhouse about 1921. He writes, "It took less than three hours to install ours. We just put a baled hay wire around the cupola of one of the barns and another around the chimney of the house and stretched our copper antenna wire from these baled hay wires……connected the A and B batteries and then tuned on the machine. Behold there was a man talking from Madison."

Peter continues to extol the virtues of radio for the farmer; how it provides marketing news in advance of the local papers, music for entertainment, and sermons on Sunday. "*Sunday evening, March 25th, 1923, our machine had five different ministers cooped up in it at one time from five different cities. If we did not like one we tuned him out and tuned in another."* And for the future: *"(Radio) has come to stay. It will keep the thousands and thousands of boys and girls on the farm. It gives them the music, songs, and talks of the bright lights in the city, and they can have their choice*." (7)

[2] The party line transitioned to the private line and proliferation of overhead wires abated when AT&T perfected and introduced multiplexing technology after 1920. (209)

Fig. 3. Two Swartz brothers and friends out to explore the New Berlin country side in the 1911 Mitchel automobile. The following images provide a glimpse of rural New Berlin a traveler would encounter in that era of the duster coat and dirt roads.

Fig. 4. Stone fences built from rocks cleared from farm fields would have been a common rural scene in western New Berlin. Here we see an unusually large fence, but its location is not known. The utility poles suggest this was a public road.

Fig. 5. The traveler passing through the Prospect Hill community ca. 1908 would have this view looking west along National Ave (once known as the road to Mukwonago and here called Main St.). At right are the Prospect school and Freewill Baptist Church. At left is the Winton store.

Fig. 6. This bucolic scene of early New Berlin shows the view from Prospect Hill looking SE toward Muskego lakes.

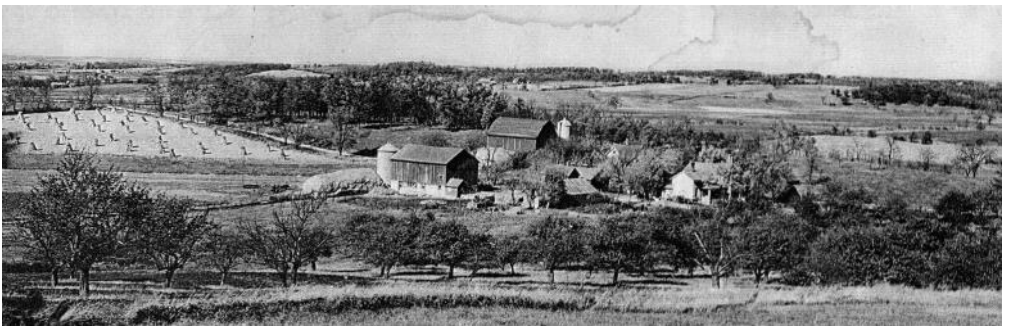

Fig. 7. Rolling terrain of fields and farmsteads mark this view taken from Prospect Hill looking NW. The farms front on Barton Rd. Farm orchards, such as the one in the foreground were common. Ca. 1938.

Fig. 8. At the western edge of New Berlin, now 21795 W National Ave, one would pass this stately farm house built in 1902. Spacious, and solid, farm houses built to house large families would be found throughout the community. It appears only three reside here.

The next few figures are scenes our traveler would witness after reversing course and heading east on National Ave.

Fig. 9. This winter scene looking east along National Avenue at Prospect Hill has a 1908 postmark. On the left is a farm house followed by the Freewill Baptist Church and the school house. On the right is the Winton house and store and the Rindt barn. Telephone poles on each side support multiple circuits, attesting to the rapid growth of telephone service from the single line strung to the Winton store around 1900. These were multi-party lines each connecting many families to the switching station.

The Next 50: 1950-2000

The first twenty years of this period saw the rapid transition of this rural community to "city living with a touch of country.". Note from Figure 1 the population grew from 5000 to about 27000 from 1950 to 1970. The consequences of such growth include additional burdens on local government and the school system, as well as the visible landscape changes.

The means proposed to manage this growth would be controversial. To many, the town government model, with its dependence on county oversight and support, would have to change. Furthermore, a town with urban sprawl adjacent to incorporated communities would be subject to annexation, carving up the political boundaries. Also, the school system with its independent eight districts would be subject to additional inequities as those in more populated areas, and a greater tax base, would modernize. School population growth and increasing demand for secondary education sparked interest in building a local high school.

New Berlin township had remained a 36 square mile political entity for over 100 years. Nevertheless, it would seem there were few factors to foster a sense of town level community. Surely the annual town meeting would favor community spirit, but otherwise the independent local schools, taverns, and halls of the hamlets of Prospect Hill, Calhoun Station, and New Berlin Center were not the unifying factors that might be expected had there been a central town center district, a local police force, or a high school. There was not even a local community newspaper.[10] As the new residents rapidly gained the majority, did they care to retain the 100 year boundaries, and at what cost?

New community organizations did appear. The Prospect Lions club was organized in 1950. (35) The New Berlin Civic Association was formed to provide a forum for education and debate on issues confronting the growing community. For example, the group organized an October 1955 forum to discuss the need for a new town hall in which the town board participated. However, turnout was light; only 26 persons attended. (36)

Indeed, town government duties had expanded considerably from the "early days". The 1938 building code necessitated a building inspector, the 1947 zoning ordinance required a planning commission and board of appeals. In addition to these, the 1957 Civic and Business directory compiled by the New Berlin Lions lists these town offices: Constable, Health Officer, and Justice of the Peace. There was also a Town Board of Health and a five-man Town Hall Building Committee. Clearly the bureaucracy was on the move!

Whatever the sentiments of the population at large, there was a small core that did not want New Berlin to be carved up by annexation as had happened to towns on its eastern and northern borders. An ancillary issue was interest in establishing a New Berlin high school.

The High School Issue and its Impact

In 1954, Muskego residents voted to form a high school district that included the New Berlin area served by the joint Mill Valley and Tess Corners school districts. "A vociferous block of New Berliners, however, was strongly opposed." They had previously submitted a petition, generated by the New Berlin town board, opposing the plan. (37)

[10] The Waukesha Freeman covered New Berlin to some extent, and often carried news from social correspondents.

A few months later town board chairman Stigler found himself in circuit court arguing in favor of repeal of county authorization for the new district. He announced New Berlin was actively seeking a site for its own high school, and that detachment of the joint district areas would "definitely lower our valuation and would create hardship for the balance of residents." (38) The court did rule the Muskego district "void" in March 1955. (39)

Thus marked the beginning of many steps to be taken by New Berlin officials to accommodate the reality of a rapidly growing population while retaining the town's historic boundaries.

The rapid urban growth of towns to the east and north was accompanied by annexation and incorporation activity that was unsettling to New Berlin officials. In the spring of 1958, Chairman Stigler and other officials decided to take action to thwart annexation attempts by neighboring communities. On April 3, 1958 notices were posted, as required by law, notifying the public that a referendum on a proposal for incorporation to city status would be held in one year. At the same time, town officials were forced to take quick action to again avoid a school district intrusion from Muskego by quickly filing a petition with the county to establish a New Berlin high school district. (40)

Debate over the merits of incorporation ensued. The Committee for Incorporation, consisting of 39 members, but without a source of funding, held more than 25 public meetings to present the case for incorporation. Arguments included immunity from piecemeal annexation and anticipated reduction in the local tax levy because city status would bring greater road tax payments from the state. Little formal opposition was voiced until suddenly, within a few weeks of election day, the Committee for Better Government emerged. (41) This group, led by three residents, argued moving to city status was premature, would be costly, and the first step should be village status. Polls suggested the referendum would pass by a small margin, with many longtime residents in favor.

Becoming a City

The referendum question "Shall the territory comprising the town of New Berlin be incorporated as a city of the fourth class" was put to vote in February 1959. A very small majority, 40 votes (1.4%) of the 3167 cast, passed the measure. Although only two of the five precincts voted in favor, the margin in these was sufficient to overcome the negative votes in the remaining three. (42) The town thus became a fourth class Wisconsin city, but soon was elevated to a third class city on the basis of the 1960 census reporting a population of just over 15,000.

A reprise of the close vote has not been discovered; indeed, drawing conclusions from ward voting tallies requires recognition that some urban development had reached all quadrants of the town. The newly established New Berlin Citizen editorialized that one could take the positive view that all the "no" votes suggested satisfaction with the performance of the town government. Given the large population increase of the past ten years driven by urban development, one might suggest many of these newer residents must have voted "no" also. As reported from a later poll, many who had moved to New Berlin for its rural atmosphere were opposed to further development and may have felt retaining town status would better preserve this environment.

There were likely many long time farm residents who could imagine only negative consequences if their operations were subject to city government. We know that the Swartz family voted against incorporation, but not why. They had already established a growing housing subdivision on their property and thus were contributing to "urban sprawl."

It is well worth noting that town chairman Tony Stigler, himself a farmer from a long line of farmers rooted in New Berlin history, took the initiatives described above. Had he not taken these actions, the community would likely not have emerged in the new millennium with its historical boundaries intact nor justify the slogan "city living with a touch of country."

The New City Government

As a city, New Berlin was required to follow state statutes to form a government structure totally different from the former town organization. Rather than expressing their will directly at town meeting elections, citizens would elect a district alderman to represent them at regular city council meetings. The council was comprised of six aldermen and the mayor, who also administered city government on a part time basis. All were elected for two year, concurrent, terms[11]. Although the mayor was elected city wide, as was the former town board supervisor, clerk and assessor were now appointive positions subject to council approval. The mayor's office remained a part time position until 1977. Other offices to be filled by appointment included a treasurer, attorney, building inspector, plumbing inspector, electrical inspector, weed commissioner, and dog catcher. Appointments were also required to the five-member appeal board and seven-member planning commission. (43)

The first election for city government took place in April 1959. Tony Stigler, former town board chairman, was elected mayor. In addition to six aldermen, voters also elected six representatives to the county board, and a justice of the peace.

City status grants far more authority to local government to exercise "home rule", and the new bureaucratic structure was intended to provide the means. To provide guidance and citizen input, additional commissions were to be established. Commission members were to be appointed by the mayor with Common Council concurrence. Important to the problems at hand was formation of a police and fire commission as required by state law.

Realizing the need for city government to have technical expertise and oversight of the infrastructure development envisioned, the council established the position of city engineer, which was filled in June, 1960. (43)

Annexation: The Battle of the Bulge

Throughout its existence as a township, New Berlin's boundaries had remained the six-mile by six-mile square set by the US surveyors. To prevent portions of the town becoming annexed to other communities, New Berlin incorporated in 1959. In early 1964, however, New Berlin officials found themselves involved in an annexation dispute with the Town of Muskego. (14)

Quarry owners who held property in both Muskego and New Berlin petitioned New Berlin to annex their Muskego property. Muskego officials viewed New Berlin's favorable response to the petitioners as a hostile takeover and filed a court suit. The threat of land loss galvanized the Town of Muskego to initiate a drive to incorporate as a city to protect its boundaries.

[11] Hence there was a potential for a complete turnover of elected government every two years. Also, with six aldermen, tie votes were decided by the mayor. The latter was significantly mitigated when a seventh aldermanic district was created in 1972. The potential for complete turnover was eliminated when staggered three year terms were ordained in 1980-81. At that time the mayor's term was increased to four years.

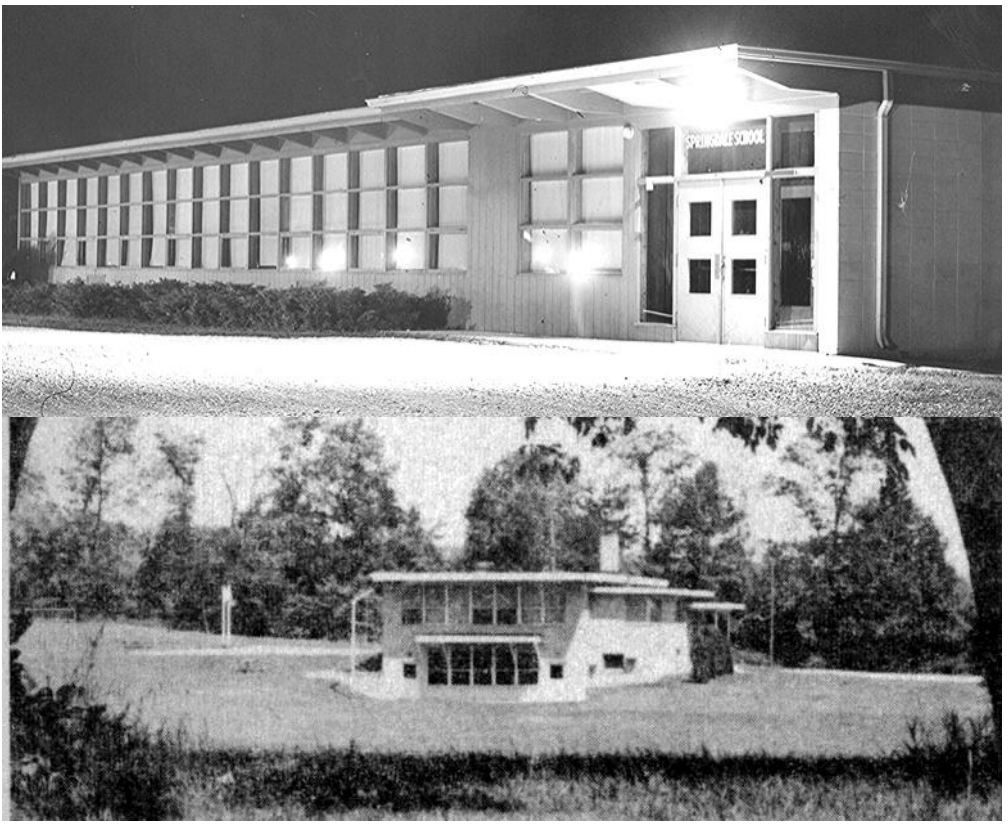

Fig. 51. In 1953 the two room Springdale school (top) and in 1956 the two room Little Grove school (bottom) each replaced their respective one room schools. In 1965 these schools were both closed, the last of New Berlin's two room schools in operation. The one room schools had served about 100 years, their replacements only about ten, clearly indicative of the upheaval related to the city's rapid growth. The Little Grove building later served briefly as a teen center.

Fig. 52. The Prospect Hill school district #3 decided they too needed a "modern" school and opened this two room school (inset) on Racine Ave. in 1953. Over the years improvements and additions resulted in this sprawling complex that served into the new millennial.

Fig. 53. Hickory Grove school as it appeared in late 1959. This modern complex, on Sunny Slope at Cleveland, was built and expanded in response to large urban growth in the NE portion of New Berlin. However, at this time the district was forced to use additional temporary and off site classrooms to accommodate students in District 2. Because of site limitations, the school board decided to add capacity by constructing a new school on a separate site. Orchard Lane school was opened in 1961 just up the street. At this time, the Calhoun and Hickory Grove districts were considered to be the largest non-consolidated school districts in Waukesha County. Because of declining student population, Hickory Grove school was closed in 1979. The building was taken over by the city in 1983. Along with other uses, it housed the Senior Center.

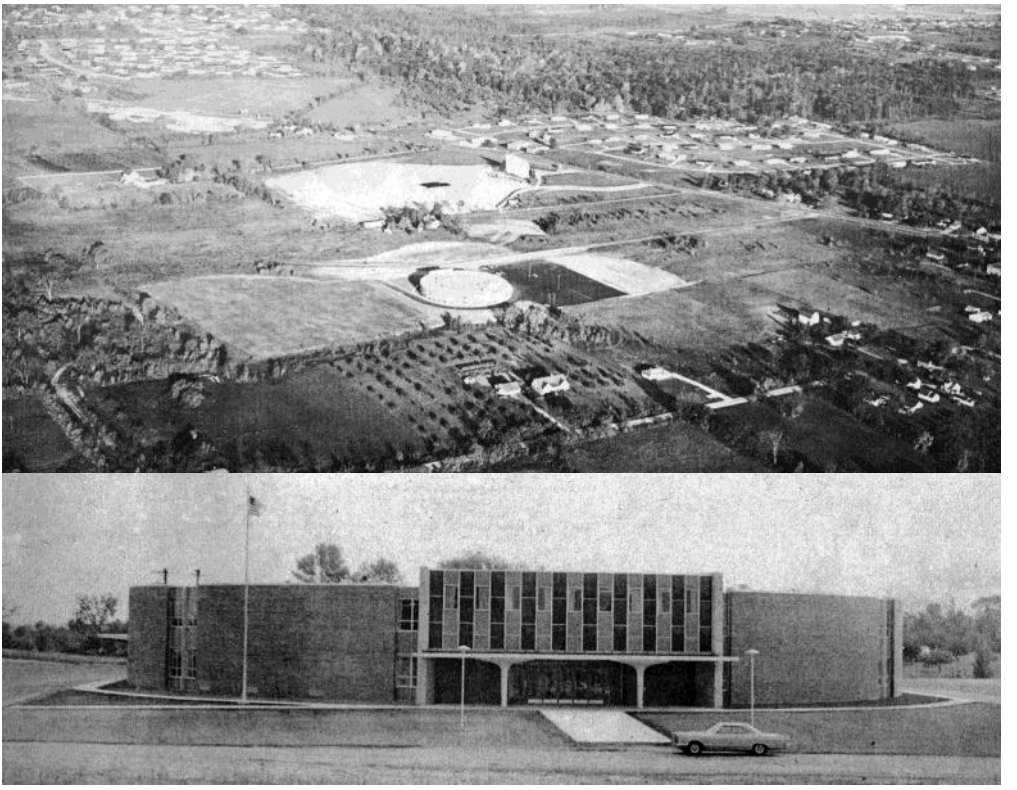

Fig 54. The Glen Park middle school opened in 1966. Built to house 750 students, the unique circular structure was claimed to be a more economical design. At the start capacity was inadequate to house all district 7th and 8th grade students. Eventually intermediate level students were housed in the high schools, and Glen Park became an elementary school. The aerial view looking NW across Sunny Slope toward National includes Glen Park and the drive-in movie theater that was operating at that time. Upper: Milwaukee Journal photo

Fig. 55. In 1959, at the time of incorporation as a city, the town owned two municipal buildings; the 100 year old town hall (left) and the town garage (above). The 32 acre parcel became the site of other municipal buildings and Malone Park. A new city hall (below, 1983 photo), already in the planning phases, opened in 1960 at 16300 W National Ave. It soon proved inadequate to house all departments of the growing city government.

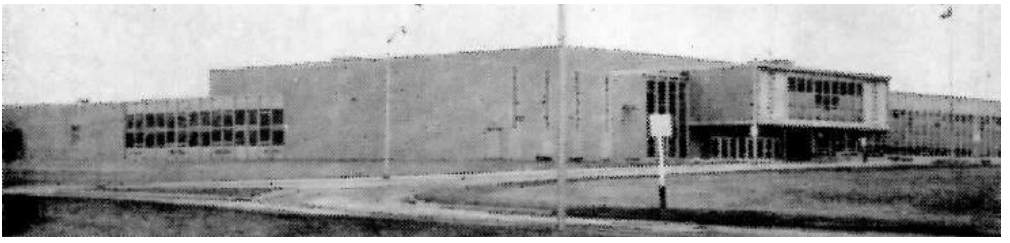

Fig. 56 Formation of the high school district in 1958 was the first step to consolidating all grade schools and modernizing educational facilities in the new city. The first New Berlin high school, later known as New Berlin West, opened in 1961 on a site off Cleveland Avenue, west of Calhoun Road. An expansion authorized in 1965 included a pool facility. In later years, the building also housed an intermediate school of seventh and eighth grades.

Part II

Stories of the Old Days: Families, Farms, and Schools

The Swartz family and Cornfalfa Farms

What was to become the largest family owned and operated farm in New Berlin began when William and Anna Swartz purchased 80 acres near Racine Avenue and Coffee Road in 1844. Their only child, Peter Morgan Swartz, expanded the operation and adopted practices setting the stage for its rise to prominence after 1900. The early history of the "Cornfalfa" Farms was covered by Milham (95 p. 138)

In 1906 Peter Morgan Swartz arranged for his three youngest sons to operate the farm. In 1910 they decided to abandon the dairy operation and concentrate on raising alfalfa commercially. The "Cornfalfa" patent was received in 1912.

In an article by the Waukesha Daily Freeman covering the 50th wedding anniversary celebration of Peter M. to Catherine, Peter Morgan was described "as a very enterprising and progressive farmer, exhibiting at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893, and at the St. Louis Exposition in 1904 (where) he received diplomas and medals for the best wheat exhibited by the grower."

The Swartz brothers were known for being equally successful as their father. They won a gold medal for their alfalfa exhibit at the San Francisco Exposition in 1915. They grew corn, alfalfa and small purebred grains. By 1913 they were the largest alfalfa growers in Wisconsin and were considered authorities on the culture of alfalfa plants.

After Peter Morgan's death in 1919, son Lewis became an independent dairyman. Peter Charles and Jayson remained partners who decided an orchard operation could be more profitable than alfalfa.

In the 1920s they started planting apple trees, which by 1938 were yielding 10,000 bushels on nearly 100 acres. In 1926 they acquired their first breeding stock of black Karakul Asiatic sheep, which won them more international awards for the finest Persian lamb wool. They also raised the lighter Shopshires. They called their grazing sheep "power lawnmowers that manufactured wool out of grass."

Interview with Peter Lewis Swartz

Peter Charles son, Peter Lewis., was born on November 7, 1920. He became the fourth generation to run the farm. Audrey Juds interviewed Peter in 2005 at his retirement home in Cecil, a small town on Shawano Lake. (96)

Recalling his childhood, he said, "The biggest thing was the apple orchard." His dad and uncles planted about 100 acres of apple trees and shipped apples across the U.S. During winter his father would be touring the state speaking about farming to all the county agents.

"I remember going to Chicago for the International Livestock Show," Peter L. said. "We took sheep down by train and stayed for the whole week." Of course close to any boy's heart was driving the tractors, and he emphasized that they had one of the biggest tractors around.

The picnics were memorable. He recalled how busloads of people would come up from Chicago for the Farm Bureau Picnic, which attracted manufacturing dealers. "It was like a fair with all the equipment and demonstrations," he said. They also had a merry-go-round and train to entertain the kids, and a food stand. Another innovation was a drinking fountain plus

a dozen water faucets by the windmill. Church services and church dinners often were held on the property.

Before retiring, Peter L. took on another activity, trucking. "I hauled dairy cows all over the U.S." he added. But he decided to sell the property in 1968 when he had trouble hiring help to work it, and the taxes were getting too high. A portion of the land had been subdivided. The rest was eventually acquired by the Waukesha County Park system.

Tim Herrick, society board member, was overjoyed with the records, photos and other items Peter L. donated to the Historical Society. While sorting through boxes of receipts dating back to the early 1900s, he noted they had saved every receipt by placing it on a nail in the kitchen. "Each one has a hole in the middle," he said. "When the nail was full, they would band them together and stuff them into a box." Peter L. noted this occurred before his time.

Shortly after this interview the couple moved to a new retirement complex on the edge of the city of Shawano, still near the lake.

Although crops are raised on a few of the former fields, the former orchards have disappeared. A clearing in Minooka Park marks the spot of this once elegant farmstead.

The Salentine family

Many a venerable farm home met their demise as subdivisions and other developments replaced farmland. For those with happy childhood memories associated with the farm, this can be a sad time. One example was the destruction of a historic farm home that stood on the south side of National Avenue just east of Calhoun Road to make room for more apartment buildings. (97)

To Judy Salentine, who grew up in that house, the loss was devastating even though she lives nearby in the subdivision on the former farmland.

The family heritage in New Berlin dates back to 1857 when Judy's grandfather, Joseph Salentine, came here from Germany and settled on this 144-acre piece of land. His cousin, Al Salentine, owned the adjoining farm, and the two properties later formed Hearthside Acres Subdivision.

Joseph married Elizabeth Snyder, another family name out of New Berlin history, and built their temporary house about 25 feet south of the one torn down.

Although Judy's grandparents had six children, her father, Norbert (Norbie), was the only one who stayed home and farmed. After his parents died he married Margaret Mehl, who had grown up on a Milwaukee farm. The birth of Judy was followed by Richard and Robert (Rich and Bob).

In 1957, the year the family was given the Century Farm Award, the stucco house, with a porch on the front, was enlarged and remodeled. "We lived in the basement, and when you went upstairs you could look right through all the 2 by 4's," said Judy, who was 14 at the time. The house had five bedrooms, of which three were upstairs along with a bath and three walk-in attics, which Judy said were loaded.

"Rich stayed there until he was married -- Bob, until he went off to college -- and I moved out for a couple of years after I started working, about 1964, when I got an apartment," she said.

All three of them built homes in this new subdivision. Judy lives on Crescent Drive, Rich and Kathleen lived on Brennan before moving to Eagle River, and Bob and Linda, who were on Mary Ross Dr., located near East Troy.

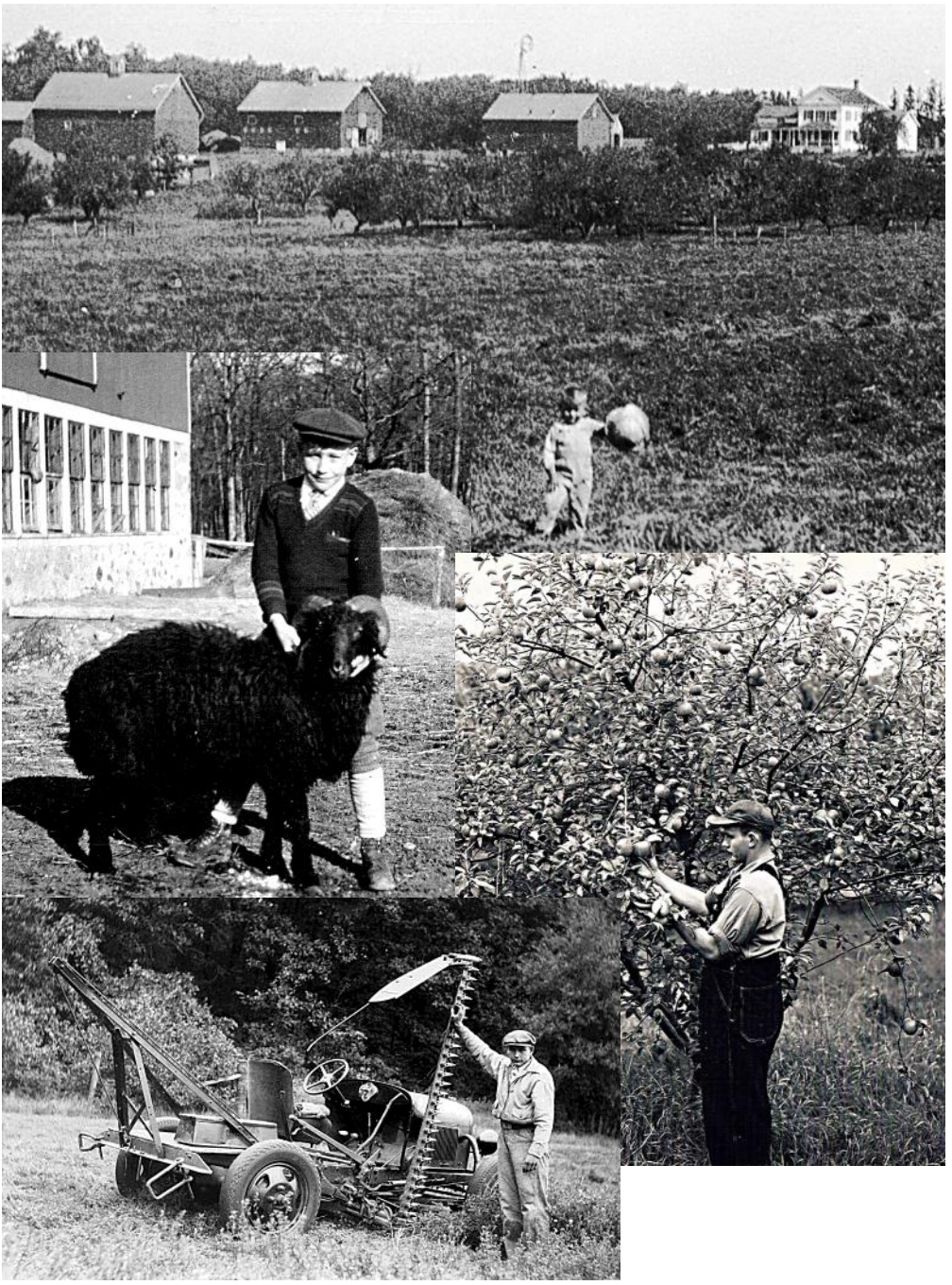

Fig. 74. Peter L. Swartz waves his hat while standing in an alfalfa field in front of the Cornfalfa Farms farmstead ca. 1923. As a boy he took part in all the farm activities, including raising Karakul sheep as 4-H projects. One vehicle he drove extensively was this modified Ford truck that was used for most field operations, including mowing at a very high speed. The extensive orchards were started when Peter was a baby. Peter's father died in 1938, and his partner, Uncle Jayson, died in 1961. The land was sold in 1966, ultimately becoming part of Minooka Park. Thus ended the life of this once prominent New Berlin farm.

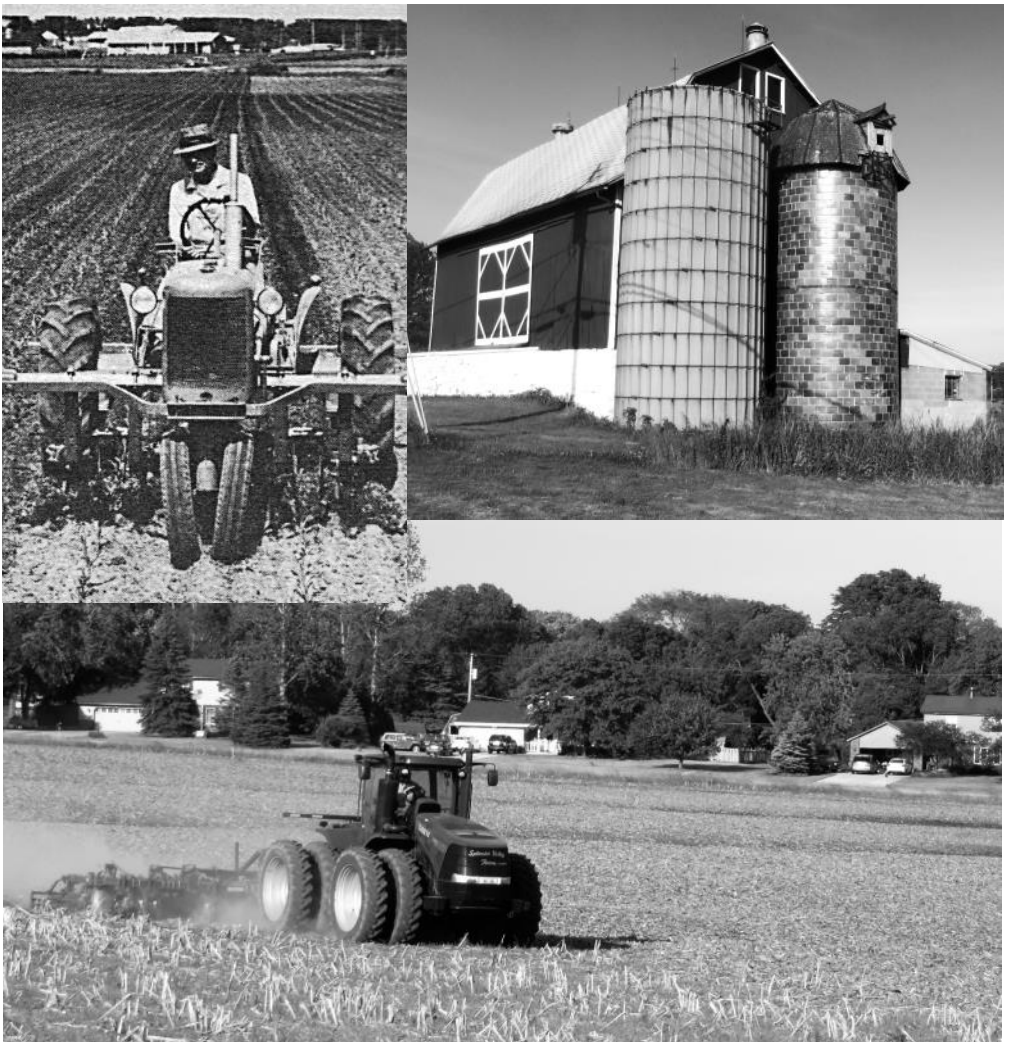

Fig. 75. Chris Salentine cultivates corn on the his farm in 1970. In the background, across Calhoun Rd is the subdivision developed from the farm that was Judy Salentine's girlhood home. This Salentine farmstead on National Avenue remains much as it was in those days, but the same field is tilled by much larger equipment.

Fig. 76. View looking NE of the Hearthside subdivision built on the former Salentine farm. In the right background is the city garage, on the left the barn on the old Salentine farmstead. Septic system problems were a serious issue here and elsewhere in new subdivisions. - - NB Citizen

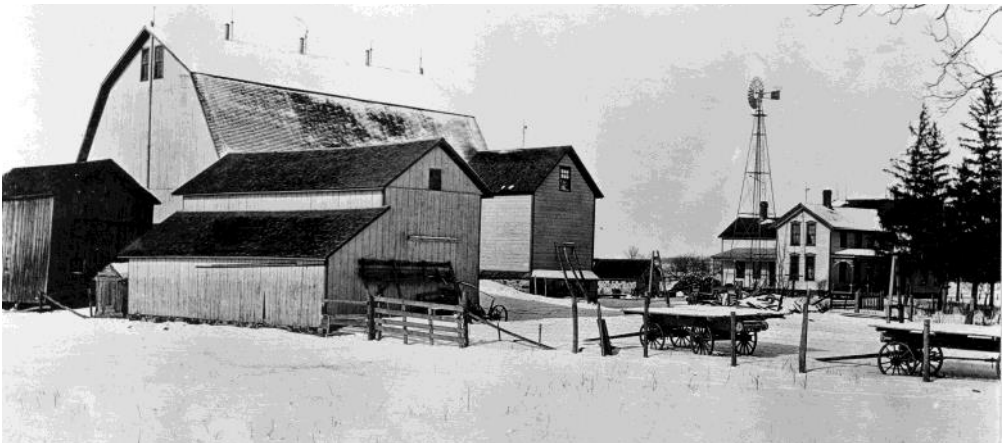

Fig. 77. The Mike Stigler farm on Calhoun Road about 1910. Future mayor Tony Stigler, along with eight siblings, grew up on this farm settled by grandfather Frederick in 1856.

Fig. 78. The Stigler steam engine takes on water from a tank mounted on the truck. At right, a young Tony Stigler, who became the city's first mayor, works in the barnyard, ca. 1920.

Fig. 79. View of the Stigler farm and orchard, ca. 1942. By the 1970s land subdivision had begun; the big house succumbed to the torch in 1984. The Stigler family donated 43 acres to the city, known as the Stigler Nature Preserve.

Fig. 80. Irma and Joseph Bensing, along with Frank Miller (right) display produce to be taken to the market. Joseph's father, George, began the garden farm on Sunnyslope Road in 1896. When the Bensing sons Donald and Gerald went off to war in 1943, Joe and Irma decided to give up truck farming for dairying. Bensing land is now the site of Eisenhower High School.

Fig. 81. Cauliflower is harvested on the Paul Wilm produce farm on Martin Rd in the 1930s. As with the Bensings, he lost the help of his sons who were off to war. In 1942 he decided to sell the farm.

Fig. 82. Aerial view, ca. 1990, of Eisenhower High School and grounds on Sunnyslope Road. The 75 acre parcel was once the Bensing farm where fruit and vegetables were grown for Milwaukee and West Allis markets. In the background, upper center, grading is underway for the shopping center on the SE corner of National Avenue and Moorland Road. -Plale photo

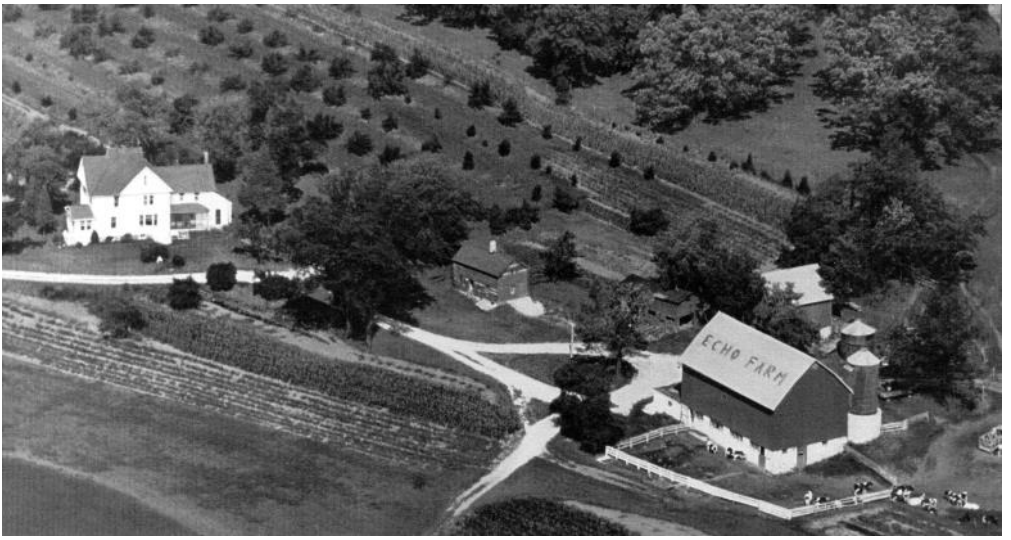

Fig. 83. A 1965 aerial view of the Meidenbauer farm on Lawnsdale Road shows the log house, center, that served the large family until the spacious farm house was completed in 1905. The family sold eggs, vegetables, and fruits in addition to operating a substantial dairy. Meidenbauer's owned this land since 1848 and received a Century Farm award in 1954. The log house was donated by the family to the Historical Society and moved to Historical Park in 1987. The farm land was subdivided in the 1990s. The parcel containing the house and barn have been well maintained by the new owner .

Early settlers to the New Berlin area were able to purchase land from the Federal Government beginning in 1839. In her book *New Berlin, Wisconsin to 1900; Not as German as You'd Think,* Mary Ella Milham tells the story of New Berlin's transition from forest to farmland as the community grew to about 1600 residents.

The present book continues the story through the 20th century. During this period, population grew to 39,000 residents and the Town of New Berlin became a city. The growth, however, was marked by a period after WWII of extraordinarily rapid population increase and severe challenges to the new city government.

Through word and pictures the authors take the reader from the placid early years as a rural community with limited town government and one-room schools through the controversies that developed as the rookie city government dealt with the demand for increased services and infrastructure improvements, and the school board dealt with the need to rapidly expand, and then rapidly contract, the school system.

The reader learns of the remarkable launch of a nationally recognized industrial park, the formation of a police force, a fire department, and a hospital, and the proliferation of churches and service organizations. These stories, along with reminisces of the old days, guide the reader to the new millennium when the community adopted the banner "City living with a touch of country. "

NEW BERLIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

is dedicated to the four Rs: Rescuing, Recording, Restoring and Re-creating authentic New Berlin history