

QUASQUICENTENNIAL

1870-1995

BEECHER, ILLINOIS



BY SHIRLEY BIERY

CHAPTER	YEAR	PAGE
THE EARLY YEARS	1870-1900	1
THE GROWTH YEARS	1900-1910	31
THE MATURING YEARS	1910-1920	53
THE TWENTIES	1920-1930	73
THE DEPRESSION YEARS	1930-1940	89
THE WAR YEARS	1940-1950	101
THE LATER YEARS	1950-1995	109



QUASQUICENTENNIAL

1870-1995

BEECHER, ILLINOIS

DEDICATION

To T.L. Miller, the founder of Beecher, for his vision;

To the early merchants, who carried on his dream;

and

To the many others, who contributed during 125 years of Beecher's History.



THE EARLY YEARS



1870-1900



WE ARE PROUD OF OUR 125 YEARS OF RICH HISTORY.



First Village Hall, Penfield & Woodward (1884)

VILLAGE OFFICIALS

Landis Wehling, Village President
Janett Conner, Village Clerk
Vicki J. Squier, Village Treasuer
Lawrence Luecke, Building Commissioner
Robert O. Barber, Village Administrator
Raymond T. Wroblewski, Chief of Police
William L. Merritt, Superintendent of Public Works

TRUSTEES

Gwen Dean Paul Lohmann

Roger Heldt James Rehborg

Robert Schmitt Ronald Bakhaus

THE EARLY YEARS

hen the first settlers arrived in what is now Washington Township, they found a rich, virgin prairie, filled with marshes, wildflowers, and an abundant wildlife.

As one pioneer remembered: "My earliest recollections bring to mind the big snows, howling wolves, long winters and delightful summers. At that time, the great fertile sheet of untouched prairie land... was a sight once seen, never to be forgotten.

"Here upon the prairie and in the bordering timber were wolves, foxes, squirrels, rabbits, raccoons, and now and then a stray deer, wildcat or bear, the latter generally a rambler from the Michigan woods.

"Nor would I forget the beautiful striped 'kitty' who nightly sought the hen roosts and made his presence known by a strong, pungent odor on the night air. These animals were either trapped or shot, some for food but the greater number for their pelts.

"On the prairie was the home and feeding ground of tens of thousands of wild geese, ducks, brants, cranes, plovers, quail, and prairie chicken. For a number of years early settlers lived well on wild game. One could stand by his cabin door and shoot to his heart's delight. Not only did the ducks and geese furnish food in abundance but every settler gloried in huge feather beds and fluffy pillows filled with the choicest of feathers. Mother had six of these beds, all from wild feathers.

"As far as the eye could see there was naught but great billows of waving prairie grass as the soft winds swept over the bosom of this virgin region. Here and there could be seen beautiful patches of prairie flowers.

"The winters in the early sixties (1860's) were very severe and the snow falls heavy... So severe was one winter that stock was known to freeze while in their stalls. Men went out and brought in whole coveys of quail and prairie chickens frozen stiff."

The original settlers or speculators purchased the land in Washington Township either from the government or the railroad. Some of it sold for as little as \$1.25 per acre. The Illinois Central Railroad Company had been granted 2,500,000 acres of land by the federal government for the purpose of establishing a railroad network throughout the state. By 1857 most of the land was occupied.

The first settler in the area was Jesse Dutcher, remembered as a "preacher of the Methodist persuasion" who built a log cabin in 1851. Little is known about Jesse Dutcher's origin, or how long he was in the area. His cabin was used for the first township election in April 1856 and was also the first public school house beginning in 1855, when Miss Sabina Graham was the school ma'am.

Other early settlers were John Rose, a native of Ireland, who arrived in 1851 and died in 1858. William Strain, also from Ireland, came in 1852. Philip Nolan came from Chicago, in 1851. Joseph White lived on the Dutcher land from 1854 to 1858.

The earliest settlers had arrived mainly from the east, many from the New England area. They were English and Irish. However, by 1856 the Germans were the major nationality, owning more than half of the land in Washington Township. They had left their homeland due to political and economical unrest and were anxious to live in a democracy where they could own their land.

T. L. (Timothy Lathrop) Miller, the founder of Beecher, arrived in Washington Township in 1862 and began purchasing land. His plan was to begin breeding and raising Hereford cattle. He knew the area offered good grazing lands; and he was convinced that the Hereford breed of beef cattle showed great promise for the future.

At the time, T. L. Miller lived in Chicago and was in the fire and life insurance business. He had left Summitt County, Ohio (north of Akron) in 1856, where he had been a successful businessman.

Mr. Miller purchased his first 320 acres of land from the government. Later he added another 400 acres. He began making improvements immediately on his property, which he called Highland Stock Farm.

The new residence was 204 feet long, built in three sections.

The main section faced west, with the office in the center behind a spacious porch. The eastern section, with a separate entrance, faced the farm area and contained 25 sleeping rooms for the farm and household help. The home also had guest rooms for the numerous visitors to Highland Stock Farm.

The 180-foot square stock barn was equally impressive. It was topped by a 30-foot, double-headed mill,

which was used for pumping water and cutting hay for the 300 cattle and horses, 200 sheep and 200 hogs.

The mill was used also for shelling corn and grinding grain.

His son, T. E. (Timothy Elliott)
Miller recalled: "On his beautiful farm, he established the finest and largest herd of Hereford cattle in America.
To him is due the credit of the wide dissemination of this great breed of beef cattle in the United States. A man of wonderful energy, his name was widely known in England and America in connection with the Hereford breed of cattle."

Mr. Miller exhibited his Hereford cattle at all the prominent fairs in the United States, winning a Herd Medal at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876.

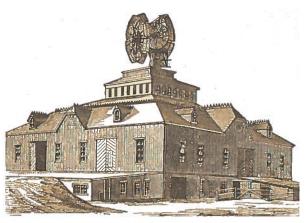
To further promote the Hereford cattle, he established

the "Breeders' Journal" in 1880 and published it for eight years. In addition, he gathered and assembled the pedigree of Hereford cattle in the first two volumes of the "Hereford Herd Book" (also known as the American Hereford Record). Both were published in Beecher.

Sometime after his initial purchase of land, T. L. Miller learned that the Chicago, Danville and Vincennes Railroad was coming through the area. He was able to acquire an



RESIDENCE OF HIGHLAND STOCK FARM — T. L. Miller built his imposing residence in the 1860's. It was 204 feet long and contained living quarters and an office for his Hereford business. It was razed in January, 1995.



HIGHLAND STOCK FARM BARN — The barn on the T. L. Miller farm was the largest in the country. It measured 180-foot square and was topped by a 30-foot, double-headed mill. The farm included more than 700 acres.



T.L. (TIMOTHY LATHROP) MILLER - The

founder of Beecher, born in Middletown, Connecticut

on April 7, 1817. Died on March 15, 1900, buried

in the family plot at Graceland Cemetery, Chicago.

additional 340 acres west of his original property and adjoining the proposed railroad on both sides. He secured the promise of a railroad station within his property.

Early in 1869, work began on the new Chicago, Danville, and Vincennes Railroad. It would run from Chicago, through Danville, and eventually cross the Wabash River to Vincennes, crossing through the easternmost tier of Illinois counties. Surveys had been made and contracts let for grading. On April 22, 1869, a public celebration was held in Momence for the ground breaking ceremonies; on May 21, 1869, workers began laying the track south from Dolton.

Sometime before October 1869, the track was laid through the future village of Beecher. By January 1870, there was complete rail service to Chicago.

The railroad assured Beecher's future. Chicago was just 37 miles to the north by rail, and from there connections could be made to any part of the country.

Then in 1870, Mr. Miller asked George Dolton to lay out the future village, with a business section on both sides of the railroad, and beyond that twelve blocks on each side for future development of homes and other businesses.

The new village was given the name "Beecher" in honor of Henry Ward Beecher, the most famous orator of the time. Mr. Miller was a great admirer of Henry Ward Beecher, and they shared similar backgrounds. Both were born in Connecticut, both spent early years in Ohio (Miller from 1842–1856, Beecher from 1834–1847), but it is not known if they were friends or even acquaintances.

When T. L. Miller founded the village of Beecher in 1870, there already was an earlier settlement in the area. This was clustered near the crossroads of the Vincennes Trail and a dirt road running east and west (Indiana Avenue) and was known as the Center. Later, after the formation of Washington Township in 1856, it was called Washington Center.

The Vincennes Trail had been an early thoroughfare for travelers. It ran from Vincennes, Indiana to Chicago, and it was originally an Indian foot path. Later it became known as Hubbard's Trail. Gurdon Hubbard was an early fur trader with the Indians. He was an employee of the American Fur Company and he helped establish trading posts along the trail from Chicago to Danville.

When the trail was made more accessible to Vincennes, Indiana, it was known as the Vincennes Trail and was one of the most used routes in the state. (It was later named Chicago Road, Dixie Highway, and finally Illinois Highway 1.)

In the early days of travel, residents along the Vincennes Trail made their homes available to overnight



HENRY WARD BEECHER — A famous and flamboyant orator, for whom the village of Beecher was named. Born in Litchfield, Connecticut on June 24, 1813, and died March 8, 1887, in Brooklyn, New York.

Henry Ward Beecher was a national figure, the most famous pulpit orator and lecturer in America when T. L. Miller chose to name the new village in his honor.

Born in Litchfield, Connecticut, in 1813, he graduated from Amherst College in Massachusetts in 1843 and studied divinity at Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, where his father was serving as its first president.

During his long, colorful life, Henry Ward Beecher was remembered for two unfavorable episodes, one of which was the "Beecher Bibles".

In 1854, Congress passed the Kansas—Nebraska Act which permitted the territories self—determination on the slavery question. Large numbers of New England abolitionists left for the Kansas territory in order to offset the influx of pro—slavery settlers who were moving in to declare it a slave state.

In a fiery speech in New Haven, Connecticut, Henry Ward Beecher warned: "The Northern settlers have gone there with rifles in their hands, which they are determined to use if necessary ... (they should) want for nothing while you have it in your hands to give it."

During his speech, several volunteers pledged rifles, and not to be outdone, Henry Ward Beecher pledged that Plymouth Church would contribute 25 rifles "to promote the just and peaceful settlement of the Kansas issue."

The rifles were shipped in boxes labeled "books" or "Bibles". Soon, they were referred to as "Beecher's Bibles" and his church as the "Church of the Holy Rifles".

In 1874, four years after the founding of Beecher, Henry Ward Beecher found himself involved in a sensational adultery scandal. The trial lasted six months and Henry Ward Beecher was acquitted. However, his reputation was scarred.

He died suddenly of a cerebral hemorrhage in Brooklyn, on March 8, 1887.

lodgers. Live stock and farm produce were driven or hauled by oxen and horse teams to market in Chicago. Washington Center was a popular stopping point since it was one day's journey from Chicago.

On the east side of the Vincennes Trail was Langreder's Blacksmith Shop, where Henry Langreder repaired carriages and wagons and shod horses. On the west side, Charles Holz had built his home. It contained extra sleeping quarters for overnight lodgers. Further west on Indiana Avenue, Samuel Loebstein operated a general store and George M. Harnish had a harness shop.

But with efficient rail service running through the new village, further development moved away from Washington Center and began to build up near the railroad.



One account states: "The period extending from 1870 to 1873 was a lively one... The sounds of the ax, hammer and saw were heard in all directions, new-comers were arriving almost daily, and by the end of the period named, the village had grown in size and importance to proportions hardly expected..."

The depot became the center of activity. It was located on Reed Street, between Hodges and Penfield. Built in 1881, it was an attractive structure, 64 feet long, 18 feet wide and 14 feet high. The first agent was T. E. Miller, son of Beecher's founder.

By the end of the century, there was a thriving business section in the heart of the new village.

On the east side of the tracks, Henning Bielfeldt built a hotel in 1871. The Bielfeldt House at 605 Reed Street

(present location of the Hiatt Clinic) offered lodging, meals and livery service. The ten sleeping rooms were occupied by residents who boarded there on a permanent basis or overnight guests.

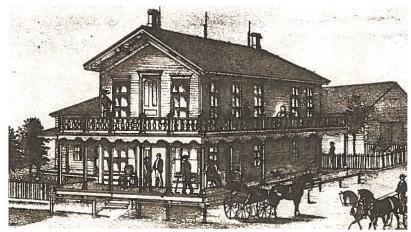
Traveling salesmen would arrive on the train, secure lodging at the hotel, rent a horse and buggy and travel throughout the countryside selling their wares. Others would use the front parlor to set up displays of their merchandise.

LANGREDER'S BLACKSMITH SHOP — Henry Langreder operated a blacksmith shop in the 1870's at the southeast corner of the Vincennes Trail and Indiana Avenue.



THE BIELFELDT HOUSE, — Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hack and son Albert (Pat) in front of the Bielfeldt House, sometime before 1900. Later know as the Hack Hotel, it is now the Hiatt Clinic at 605 Reed Street. Pat Hack was the grandfather of Greg Ohlendorf, Gwen Dean, village trustee, and Vicki Squier; village treasurer.





CHARLES HOLZ
RESIDENCE — Built in 1870, the
Charles Holz residence stood on the
northwest corner of the Vincennes Trail
and Indiana Avenue. In 1873, it was
purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Fred
Boltman and became the Old Stage
Tavern. Today, it is the Princess Cafe.



T. E. (TIMOTHY ELLIOTT) MILLER — Son of Beecher's founder, T. E. Miller served as the first station agent.



BEECHER DEPOT — The Beecher depot was built in 1881. It stood east of the tracks between Penfield and Hodges Streets. Twelve trains per day stopped in Beecher. The depot was purchased in the 1970's by the Thompson Winery, Monee, and moved to their location.



THE STREETS OF THE NEW VILLAGE WERE NAMED FOR RELATIVES AND BUSINESS ASSOCIATES OF T. L. MILLER.

Miller –	Family name of T. L. (Timothy Lathrop) Miller	Block -	Henry Block, business associate of T. L. Miller in the warehouse and
Elliott –	Abigail Starr Elliott, maiden name		grain business
	of Miller's first wife, and middle name of son, T. E. (Timothy Elliott) Miller.	Maxwell –	Joseph Maxwell, came from Ohio with T. L. Miller, and associated
Hodges -	Anna E. Hodges, maiden name of		with him in the Hereford business
	Miller's second wife	Dunbar –	David Dunbar, a settler who arrived
Woodward –	George B. Woodward, husband of daughter, Catherine Elliott		about 1856 and served as farm manager for T. L. Miller.
Gould –	Frank Gould, husband of daughter, Abby Almira	Penfield -	David S. Penfield, brother-in-law of Anna E. Hodges, in whose home
Reed -	Albert C. Reed, husband of daughter, Mary Phelps		Anna and T. L. Miller were married.



Later a visiting piano teacher gave music lessons to local students, and a Chicago optometrist made regular visits to offer eye exams and prescribe glasses, each using the hotel's parlor.

In 1880, Henry Hack took over the operation of the hotel and later the business became known as the Hack Hotel. (After 61 years of operation, it closed in 1932.)

T. L. Miller's new printing office was located a short distance to the north at 623 Reed Street. (The building exists as a residence today.) Here he printed the first two volumes of the "Hereford Herd Book", and the first eight volumes of the "Breeders' Journal". Later, from 1882 to 1889, Louis Metterhausen, who also had a general store at Woodward and Indiana, published "Das Volksblatt" (The

AUGUST EHRHARDT STORE — August Ehrhardt began operating a general store in 1880. He was a Civil War veteran and began Memorial Day services in Beecher, using his Civil War cannon in the parades. The cannon was donated to the Village in 1928 and is mounted in front of the Community Building.

People's Sheet), the only German paper in Will County. Some of the first ordinances of the newly-formed village board were published in the "Beecher Volksblatt" as it was known locally.

The Beecher Creamery Company was first located in the same building, with additions on the north side. Charles Bahlman began buying milk from the farmers who delivered it by horse and wagon, or in winter, by sleds. It was iced and stacked on hand trucks, then pulled across Reed Street and loaded in the baggage car of the forenoon north—bound passenger train. The milk went to the Englewood Dairy on Chicago's south side.

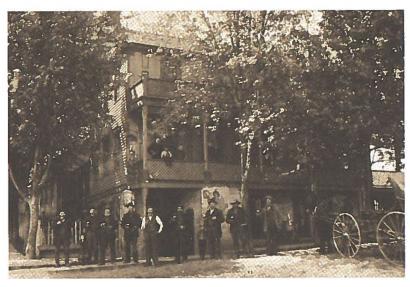
There was a drainage tile from the creamery east to Trim Creek, and early residents remember the "stench" this caused — thus possibly creating the popular term "slop ditch" for the otherwise colorful name, Trim Creek.

T. L. Miller and Henry Block built a warehouse and grain elevator on the southeast corner of Gould and Hodges Streets (adjacent to the railroad); and on the southwest corner, Johann Knuth built his home and opened a blacksmith shop.

In the center of the block on Gould Street, Henry Matthias opened a general store, which he operated until 1880 when it was purchased by August Ehrhardt, a Civil War veteran who would become Beecher's most patriotic citizen.

Also on Gould Street, Rudolph Hack opened the first hardware store, but sold it in 1895 to Henry Wehmhoefer. It continued to be operated by the Wehmhoefers until 1987. It closed in 1989, but the building stands at 606 Gould Street.

Around 1880, the Hoffmann Saloon was built on the northwest corner of Gould and Penfield Streets by Mr. and Mrs. William Wehmhoefer, Sr. This was an impressive three story structure. The saloon was located on the ground floor, with easy access off the sidewalk. The living quarters and parlor were on the second floor, with sleeping rooms on the third floor. A



HOFFMANN SALOON — Built about 1880, the Hoffmann Saloon had a large dance hall at the back. It was operated by Mr. and Mrs. William Wehmhoefer, Sr., and later by Carrie Hoffmann. The building still stands at the corner of Gould and Penfield.



JOHN BOYENS HOME — Mr. and Mrs. John Boyens and their children are shown in front of their home sometime before 1900. Mr. Boyens worked as a house painter. The home is located at 923 Indiana Avenue.



FRED CLOIDT RESIDENCE AND ELEVATOR — Fred Cloidt built an elevator in 1897 near the railroad between Penfield and Indiana.

This elevator burned in 1909. The Cloidt home is located at the corner of Gould and Indiana.



RUDOLPH PECHT HOME — Rudolph Pecht owned a furniture store, and built his home on 12 lots which contained many fruit trees and shrubbery.

The house still stands at 850 Penfield Street.



DR. D. D. VAN VOORHIS HOME — Dr. Van Voorhis came to Beecher in 1894. He practiced from an office on the side of his home, located at 536 Woodward Street. Dr. and Mrs. Van Voorhis are shown, the others are not family members.

large dance hall was located on the rear of the building. (The dance hall was dismantled later, but the building is still occupied.)

Directly across the street to the east of the Hoffmann Saloon, John Burns began a lumber business, but soon sold it to William Struve, a business man from Monee. He expanded the operation to include coal.

On the southwest corner of Gould and Penfield Streets, William Pecht opened another general merchandise store, which was later purchased by the Stade brothers.

Farther south and on the east side of Gould Street, another elevator was erected in 1897 by Fred G. Cloidt. The elevator had a capacity of 40,000 bushels of grain. Mr. Cloidt also shipped livestock from this location.

Rudolph Pecht, brother of William Pecht, opened the first furniture store in 1871, where he also made caskets and served as undertaker. His location was on the northeast corner of Woodward Street and Indiana Avenue. Mr. Pecht served as justice of the peace, postmaster, and supervisor.

On the southwest corner of Woodward Street and Indiana Avenue, John Hack opened a general store in 1878. Beginning in 1880, it was operated by his son, Frank Hack. The building now contains apartments at 734 Indiana Avenue.

One block north on the corner of Woodward and Penfield Streets, John Hinze began a business, which would become known fondly to many generations of Beecher residents as "Hinze's". He sold patent medicines, cigars and cigarettes, stationery, picture frames, all the school books, daily papers, magazines and periodicals. In addition, there was a large counter of penny candy and a soda fountain. In 1895, his son, William J. Hinze, took over the business. In 1913, a small addition was added to house the post office. Hinze's closed in 1967. The building is now occupied by the Beecher Florist at 720 Penfield Street.

With all the activity near the new railroad, changes were taking place also at the intersection of the Vincennes Trail and Indiana Avenue.

In 1873, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Boltman purchased the Charles Holz residence. Their new business was known as the Old Stage Tavern. Wine and liquor were sold, but the business became known for the excellent German food (Hassenphepher, Rinderwurst, Blutwurst, duck and sauerkraut). The Old Stage Tavern became an important location in the early days, as travelers made a stop on their way to or from Chicago. They would unhitch their oxen and let them graze alongside the road while they "partook of a meal and rested".

Fred Boltman had come from Hanover, Germany with his parents in 1853. He served during the Civil War with the 17th Regiment of the Illinois Volunteers. During a furlough, his fiance, Sophia Ohlenkamp appliqued a "broken" heart on his army blanket which he carried back with him. His descendants have the worn and faded blanket with the heart still in place.

Two years after his discharge, Fred Boltman and





Carrie Hoffmann Hoffmann Saloon



Sophia Boltman Old Stage Tavern



William J. Hinze Hinze's Store



Henry Wehmhoefer Wehmhoefer Hardware Store



OLD STAGE TAVERN — Sophia Boltman and members of her family on the porch of the Old Stage Tavern in the late 1890's. Mrs. Boltman operated the business for 21 years. She was the great-grandmother of Jim Scheiman and Barbara Kass.

Sophia Ohlenkamp were married on December 20, 1867. They lived on a farm southest of Beecher before purchasing the Charles Holz property and converting it into the Old Stage Tavern.

Fred Boltman died five years later, leaving his wife to manage the Old Stage Tavern. This she did for the next 21 years, while raising five children.

Sophia "Dodo" Boltman was known as a shrewd businesswoman. In 1899 at the age of 53, she sold the business to her son, Henry W. Boltman, and traveled to Germany to visit her old home. She built her retirement home on Indiana Avenue, just across the street from the Old Stage Tavern. Later in partnership with a Mrs. Springer of Chicago, she developed the Boltman–Springer addition. (Sophia Ohlenkamp Boltman was born in 1846 in Hanover, Germany and died on August 2, 1917, at the age of 70 years.)

The business begun by Fred and Sophia Boltman in the Old Stage Tavern would continue for the next 122 years. It is now know as The Princess Cafe, operated by Dino and Alex Dousias.

Just west of the Old Stage Tavern, the former general store of Samuel Loebstein had been purchased in 1897 by Frank Hunte. In addition to general merchandise, Mr. Hunte carried hardware and sold fire and life insurance. He also served as a notary public.

BEECHER'S FIRST DOCTORS



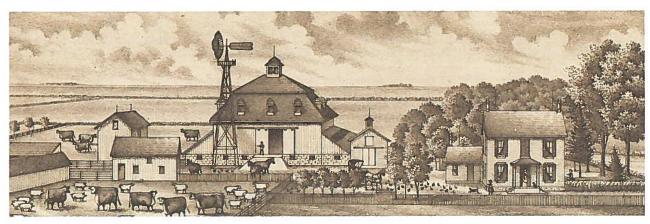
The first doctors to serve in Beecher were Dr. Charles F. Ruden and a Dr. Meyer, both lived on Indiana Avenue.

In 1894, Dr. D. D. Van Voorhis came to Beecher. He had received his degree from Bennett Medical College, Chicago, and then spent six months as an intern in Cook County Hospital.

Three years later, Dr. M. R. Miley began his practice. He was a graduate of Valparaiso University and had taught school before studying medicine at Rush Medical in Chicago.

Aside from serving their patients, both men were leaders in the community and Beecher greatly benefitted from their many contributions. Dr. Van Voorhis was an officer in several businesses and later founded Shady Lawn Golf Course on the former Highland Stock Farm of T. L. Miller. Dr. Miley served as village mayor, and as president of the school board when the new building was built in 1907.





THE EVERGREEN STOCK FARM — The farm of Thomas Clark where he raised prize winning Hereford cattle.

The barn was dismantled in 1985, but the home is still occupied.

THOMAS CLARK



Thomas Clark, who was to become one of Beecher's leading citizens, purchased his first 80 acres in 1877 from T. L. Miller. He had delivered three Hereford calves to the Highland Stock Farm and decided that the West (Illinois) showed promise for raising Hereford cattle.

Thomas Clark had established his herd in 1868. He was one of the first to import Hereford cattle from England. His first purchase was the bull, Sir Arthur, who won as a yearling at the Ohio State Fair of 1870. Upon leaving Ohio, Thomas Clark drove his herd of about 20 Herefords and a dozen Cotswold sheep across the country to Illinois.

Thomas Clark's farm, known as the Evergreen Stock Farm would eventually include 146 acres. It lay one mile north of the new village of Beecher. The large, impos-

ing barn measured 60 feet by 90 feet and was 60 feet in height. It was designed especially for the care and feeding of the livestock. Hay and feed were stored on the second story and dropped into the feeding area located in the center of the first floor.

THOMAS CLARK — This portrait hung in the Saddle and Sirloin Club of the Chicago Stock Yards, in recognition of Thomas Clark's contribution to the growth of American agriculture.

According to the agreement, Thomas Clark would travel to Herefordshire, England, to personally select and purchase 125 prize Herefords. He would then accompany them back to America and deliver them to the Indiana businessmen. For his commission, he would be permitted to select half a dozen heifers for himself.

A contemporary account records the event: "Mr. Clark took plenty of time in locating what he desired, and when he assembled his purchases for export to

America it was agreed by both press and public that no such lot of cattle had ever before left

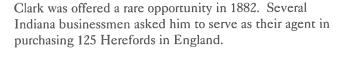
Herefordshire. It was a gaping crowd that watched the long line of Royal Winners and other top notches, 125 in number wind its way through the streets on the first stages of the journey to the New World. Not less then 50 leading breeders came to see the aggregation headed for America."

As a Hereford breeder, Thomas Clark would become known throughout the world. He served as judge in nearly every state fair and live stock show in the United

States and Canada. For 25 consecutive years, he was one of the board of directors for the International Live Stock Exposition in Chicago.

His Herefords won many prizes over the years.

Prior to 1905, he had won more prizes and ribbons than any other breeder. During one show in Madison Square Garden in New York, he won best bull, best heifer, and best herd, over all breeds. His famous bull, Perfection, a prize winner, sold for \$9,000, the highest price ever paid for a Hereford at that time.



As his reputation as a Hereford breeder grew, Thomas

During the 50 years he spent in the Beecher area, Thomas Clark was involved in all phases of its development. He was one of the organizers of the First National Bank of Beecher, a partner in the Clark & Bank Block building, served as a member of the village board, and was one of the strongest promoters of the village.

Thomas Clark was born in 1842 in Herefordshire, England, on his father's farm. His father raised cattle, but was not a breeder of the pedigreed strains.

He came to America when he was 20 years old and

first worked as a butcher in Cleveland. It was during this time that he became familiar with the anatomy of cattle and gained the knowledge that would prove so useful later in their breeding.

Thomas Clark and Margaret Heal were married March 16, 1869 in Ohio. They had two daughters, Annie (who would become Mrs. D. D. Van Voorhis) and Flora (who would marry Carl Ehrhardt). A son died in infancy.

Thomas Clark died November 2, 1927. He was 85 years old.

EARLY GOVERNMENT



On the first Tuesday of April 1856, a meeting was held in the cabin of Joseph White, for the purpose of organizing a township and selecting township officers. Thirty voters attended and the following officers were elected:

- Rensallear Richards supervisor and assessor
- ₹ E. C. Richards town clerk
- ₩. A. Connor collector
- ₩. A. Bliss overseer of the poor
- Henry Bahlman, Joseph Irish and Joseph Maxwell
 commissioners of highways
- ∀ Joseph White and William Watkins
 justices of the peace
- ₹ Isaiah Goodenow and J. H. Irish constables

The newly formed township was named Washington Township, apparently in honor of George Washington, the first U. S. President.

The new village of Beecher was officially recorded at the Will County Clerk's office in Joliet with the Recorder of Deeds on December 6, 1870. The Beecher Post Office was established on June 21, 1870. It had been Washington Center Post Office for the previous eight years.

However the first official village meeting was not held until 13 years later.

According to village records, all residents were invited to that first village meeting, held Monday, December 24, 1883, at 8 a.m. in the printing office owned by T. L. Miller on Reed Street. After selecting a temporary chairman, T. E. Miller, and a temporary clerk, W. C. Trowbridge, the



BEECHER POSTMASTERS AND DATES OF APPOINTMENT

Miles M. Johnson – 1862	Louis Mitterhausen – 1871	William J. Hinze - 1913
Aaron Johnson – 1863	Henry Matthias - 1877	John H. Wehrley – 1924
James J. Pierce – 1864	Rudolph Pecht - 1880	Mrs. Alfred Sperling - 1933
Henry Lepin - 1865	Louis Mitterhausen – 1885	Mrs. Harry Wehrmann - 1956
Henry R. Tarr - 1867	August Ehrhardt – 1889	Mrs. Barbara Tanner – 1979
John R. Miller – 1869	Henry Block - 1893	Robert Stier – 1993
	August Ehrhardt – 1897	

following officers were elected and sworn into office:

- ₹ President William Pecht

Others present at this meeting included Messrs. Bowles, Canfield, Ehrhardt, Hack and Stack.

The first order of business was to draft an ordinance to regulate the dram shops (local saloons). This new ordinance — recorded as No. 1 — was strict and comprehensive and it would prove to be difficult to enforce.

Alcohol was defined as "spirituous, vinous, fermented, intoxicating liquor". It did not permit sale to "any person who is intoxicated or to any person whose habit of getting intoxicated or to any habitual drunkard; or permit any person who is intoxicated in or about such house, shop, dram

shop or place; nor permit any riotously, disorderly, indecent or offensive conduct of any kind whatever to be practiced in or about any premises occupied by him or them for the purpose of selling of any said liquor". Saloons were permitted to be open from 5 a.m. until 10 p.m., except on Sunday and election days. Fines were \$25 or \$100 for each day of violation.

Following the adoption of the ordinance, the new village board reviewed a petition from Diedrich Schmadecke for a license for a dram shop in Beecher. The license was approved upon the payment of \$500 to the village treasury. This is the first known income of the village of Beecher.

Upon adjournment of the first board meeting, the residents went home to celebrate Christmas the following day.

However, they were back on Wednesday, December 26, 1883, to take care of additional business. Henry Block had been elected constable at the first meeting, but was



OFFICIALS OF THE VILLAGE OF BEECHER

VILLAGE PRES	IDENTS	VILLAGE CL	ERKS
William Pecht	1883 – 1889	W. C. Trowbridge	1883 – 1885
Rudolph Pecht	1889 - 1890	Frank Hack	1885 – 1889
Henry Bielfeldt	1890 - 1894	Frank Hunte	1889 – 1892
Fred Wilke	1894 – 1899	Arthur Storm	1892 - 1894
A. Struve	1899 – 1902	A. H. Rohe	1894 – 1896
Dr. Michael R. Miley	1902 – 1908	A. C. Hawkins	1896 – 1900
Herman Ruge	1908 – 1917	W. F. Myrick	1900 – 1912
C. B. Eskilson	1917 – 1923	D. J. Steevens	1912 – 1918
Dr. Michael R. Miley	1923 – 1926	George A. Batterman	1918 – 1932
C. B. Eskilson	1926 - 1933	Arthur Hack	1932 – 1944
George A. Batterman	1933 – 1944	Arthur H. Boyens	1944 – 1949
Arthur Hack	1945 – 1949	Harold Batterman	1949 –1959
Harry Wehling	1949 – 1956	Les Myrick	1959 – 1972
Norman Holdt	1956 – 1965	Violet Meeter	1972 – 1976
LeRoy Buck	1965 – 1972	Ruth Ohlendorf	1976 – 1993
Landis Wehling	1972 –	Janett Conner	1993 –

(Dates are approximate in some cases)

George A. Batterman and Arthur Hack were elected to both the office of Village Clerk and Village President.

Landis Wehling is the longest serving elected official in the history of the Village. He served as Village Trustee from 1959 to 1966 and 1969 to 1972; and as Village President from 1972 until the present.

Marcella Hameister was the first appointed female village official when she was appointed treasurer in 1958.

Violet Meeter became the first elected female village official when she was sworn in as clerk in May 1972.

Gwen Dean became the first female Village Trustee in May 1975.

not authorized a salary. This was approved at \$75 per year. Diedrich Schmadecke, the saloon keeper, returned to request that his dram shop be permitted to be open after 10 p.m. on New Year's Eve. The board approved this request, subject to a \$1 fee to the village treasury and a \$4 fee to the village constable. Just in case there might be problems, the village president appointed a special committee to make arrangement for a calaboose (village jail).

The new village board met twice more before the end of the year, on Saturday, December 29 and Monday,

December 31. President
Pecht appointed Carl Hack
village treasurer, and he was
approved by unanimous vote.
Rudolph Pecht and John
Hack acted as sureties for the
treasurer. The words of these
men were accepted by the
board as sufficient bond.

The year 1883 ended with four board meetings held, officers elected, and the foundation laid for a village form of government.

The founding fathers of Beecher probably selected the "village" form of government because of their German heritage. This form of self–governance had evolved in Europe among small German hamlets.

The "village" government has a village president and a board of trustees. The trustees establish and implement policies. Villages are traditionally small in size.

"Town" governments have an English background. Annual meetings are held and all interested

townspeople resolve issues and vote on budgets and appointments.

"City" governments have mayors, aldermen, and city councils. The city mayors have strong powers and they establish policies, which the city council can approve or disapprove.

The year of 1884 proved to be a busy one for the new village board. It continued to organize the village govern-

ment, deal with the growing community, and attempt to keep peace among residents.

On January 5, 1884, the first major item of business was to rent a building from Mr. Bielfeldt at \$3 per month for a calaboose. The following week, the village paid its first bills — the January rent for the calaboose and bills for the purchase of locks, blankets and benches for two cells in the calaboose.

In February, the village board embarked on the first public improvement when they passed an ordinance

> requiring those living along the west side of Woodward Street between Indiana and Hodges Streets to install a public sidewalk, consisting of wooden planks three feet wide, secured by four inch spikes, along the frontage of their property.

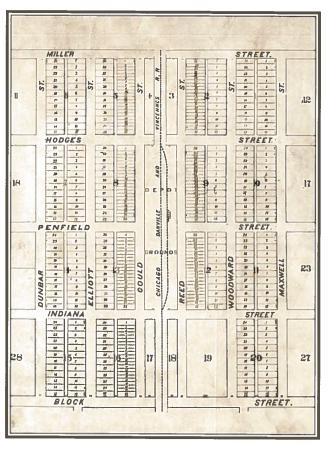
Either the sidewalks were not installed or they did not meet the standards because in March, Claus Babler was authorized to supervise the construction of additional sidewalks on Indiana Avenue between Woodward Street and Maxwell Street. He was to be paid \$1.25 per day. This is the first record of the village hiring a public works employee or "engineer".

Also in March, the president and board of trustees gave themselves power (in addition to the constable) to arrest those individuals violating the village ordinance on liquor. All arrests were to be taken

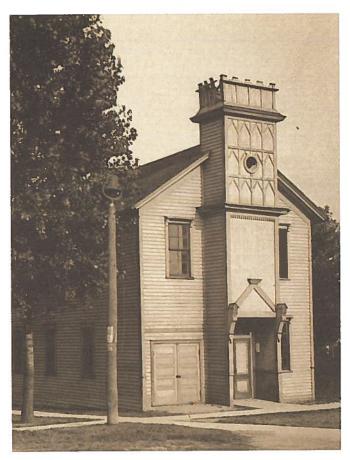
immediately to the police magistrate for judgement. If an arrest occurred after 7 o'clock, "it shall be lawful for said officer to confine the offender in the village calaboose in said village..."

A complaint had been received that the saloon in the Old Stage Tavern had been open after 10 o'clock on a Friday night.

On April 5, the village president called a special meeting



MAP OF BEECHER — Original map of Beecher, as laid out in 1870. The streets were named for relatives and business associates of T. L. Miller. The new Chicago, Danville, and Vincennes Railroad passed through the center of the Village.



BEECHER'S FIRST VILLAGE HALL — The first village hall was erected in 1884 on the corner of Penfield and Woodward, the same location as the present village hall.

A fire bell hung on a pole beside the village hall, which faced west.

to dispense with the village's law suit against Mrs. Sophia Boltman for keeping her saloon open past 10 o'clock on March 7. The board agreed to pay Carl Smith \$12.50 as a witness fee. Sam Rose was paid \$7.50 to prosecute the case. However, the fate of Mrs. Boltman is unknown.

An election was held on April 15 to elect six trustees, a constable, a police magistrate and a village clerk. William Peck, T. E. Miller, R. A. Canfield, Henry Hack, Claus Babler, and Carl Hack were elected as trustees. Lots were cast to determine which would serve one—year terms or two—year terms. W. C. Trowbridge was elected village clerk; Henry Block, constable; and Henry Matthias, police magistrate. This action formalized the first election for village officials in Beecher.

In May the board voted to hold meetings on the first and third Mondays of each month. These meeting dates are still in effect.

A Mr. Dunning was ordered to compensate the village constable for a the cost of burying dead animals left on village streets. Later an ordinance was passed prohibiting "horse, mule, ass, cattle, sheep, goat, swine to run at large in

the village". A fine of \$3 would be levied for each offense.

The following month, William Schultz was appointed village constable No. 2 to assist Constable Block as night police. The board voted that "he shall receive no salary but be allowed to retain one—half of all the fine monies received by him. The village shall also furnish a star".

Later, Henry Block was fired by the village board after special session. Apparently, Mr. Block was not willing to detain intoxicated subjects. After objections by the village president, assistant Schultz was appointed constable.

In June 1884, the first fire department committee was formed. The following supplies were ordered: five 14–foot single ladders, four 30–foot extension ladders, one 18–foot single ladder, one dozen fire hooks, and five dozen paper pails.

The following month, it was decided that one set of ladders and hooks should be kept at five locations within the village for easy access in case of fire. The locations were: Gould and Hodges, Gould and Penfield, Hodges and Woodward, Woodward and Indiana, and Indiana and State Road.

During the year (1884), the village board continued to receive complaints from the residents, and in response passed additional ordinances: "Whoever willfully disturbs the peace and quiet of any neighborhood or family by loud or unusual noises or tumultuous carriage, threatening, truculenting, quarreling, challenging to fight or fighting, or whoever shall carry concealed weapons or in a threatening manner display a pistol, knife, sling–shot, brass, steel or iron knuckles, or other deadly weapon" will be charged with a misdemeanor and fined.

Following a complaint about the social condition of a resident's living quarters above his place of business, the board passed an ordinance which stated: "Whoever keeps or maintains a house of ill fame or place for the practice of prostitution, lewdness, or whoever patronizes the same, or lets any house, room, or other premises for any such purpose, or shall keep a common, ill–governed, and disorderly house to the encouragement of idleness, gaming, drinking, fornication, or other misbehavior, shall be fined not less than \$25 nor more than \$200."

The resident promised to "send the woman away early Monday morning next" following the weekend business.

After two residents filed a complaint against a third, the board ruled that "stacking of hay bales within 500 feet of the railroad tracks" was prohibited due to danger of fire from cinders emitting from the railroad engines.

In order to improve the appearance of the village, an ordinance was passed to provide "free" labor: "Every able-bodied male inhabitant of the village above the age of 21 years and under the age of 50 years (except village

trustees, paupers, idiots, lunatics and such other as are exempt by laws) shall labor on the streets and alleys of said village two days in each year."

The village board sought its first legal advice when a committee of two was formed to "consult a first-class lawyer in regard to the legality of publishing ordinances in the 'Beecher Volksblatt', at the rate of 42 cents per 100 words."

The crowning achievement of the year 1884 for the village board was the erection of a village hall and calaboose on the southeast corner of Penfield and Woodward Streets (the same location as the present village hall).

In September, the building committee purchased the lot from T. L. Miller for \$150. The building was "24 feet wide and 40 feet long, with 20–foot studding on a good stone foundation". It was constructed by Simon Bielfeldt and John Hinze for a bid price of \$1,075.

The new village hall became occupied on December 22, 1884, nearly a year to the day of the first official village board meeting.

Once the village board, officers, and committees were in place and the village hall completed, the day-to-day operations consisted of administering to the expanding community and resolving its growing pains.

In June, 1885, the village board approved the \$68 pur-

chase of a "road scraper" for cleaning the streets. This is the first piece of public works equipment purchased by the village.

In the fall of that year oil street lamps were installed, and the constable was directed "to trim the lamps at dusk and turn them out at 2 a.m. each day".

The following year, May 1886, the village board adopted an ordinance to establish a pay rate of \$35 per month for the village constable and set the hours of duty from 1 p.m. to 3 a.m. (a 15-hour period), seven days per week. Frank Gromke was appointed, making him the first, full-time village employee.

Two months later, three trustees requested that Constable Gromke be removed from office for "derelict of duty". One trustee was absent and the motion failed, 3 to 3. Three trustees resigned, but the president refused to accept their resignation. The matter was voted on and discussed at three consecutive meetings. Apparently, Constable Gromke was allowed to remain on duty.

In June 1886, the street commission was given the authority to put up a building, 12 feet by 16 feet, for storing tools. It is unknown where this building was constructed, but it is the first public works garage for Beecher. Cost was \$92.64 for materials and labor.

Fires continued to be a problem; and in January 1887, a fire company was formed and Henry Hack was chosen as



THE FIRST VILLAGE HALL

The new Village Hall became the center for social activity.

The Pinafore Club of Beecher rents the hall for a dance. Rental fee is \$2. (June 1885)

A firemen's dance is held to raise money to equip the volunteers. (January 1887)

The Lodge of the Modern Woodmen rent the hall. (September 1895)

Mr. and Mrs. Henning Bielfeldt rent the hall to celebrate their golden wedding. The village board resolved "to let them have it free of charge, provided they use their own fuel and light and leave the hall in good order".

(September 1895)

Professor Hawkins is granted permission to give a school entertainment in the hall.
(December 1895)

School directors of District #7 are granted permission to use the second floor of the hall as a classroom.

(March 1897)

The Eighth Grade Graduation is held. The platform was "nicely decorated with the national colors and potted plants... and every inch of the hall was occupied by the patrons of the school." There were four graduates: Edwin Broocker, Rudolph F. Strelor, Emma C. Struve, and Beulah M. Tillman. Students presented Professor Hawkins with "a solid silver bread tray and a pair of gold cuff buttons set with opals."

(June 1, 1899)

the first fire marshall. There were 24 volunteers.

On January 20, the village purchased a fire engine hand pump and hose cart with 500 feet of hose from James W. Newkirk and Company of Chicago for \$585. This is probably the hand pump and hose cart in the Washington Township Museum.

The first Firemen's Dance was held in the village hall on Friday, January 21, 1887, to raise money for equipment.

The following month, the village board accepted a bid of \$117 from Simon Bielfeldt to construct a 14-foot by 24-foot building on the east side of Gould Street between Indiana and Penfield for a fire engine house. This was the first fire station in Beecher.

And in June, the board authorized the purchase of a steel fire alarm bell "to be made of No. 8 amalgam steel and to be 33 inches in diameter". It was purchased from the Gould and Austin Company in Chicago.

William Warneka was awarded a bid to dig three community wells at key points in the village for water supply and fire protection in September. This is the first public water supply offered by the village.

The village board heard many complaints about weeds and hedges growing on private property; and although an ordinance was passed the problem continued.

Another early problem was "cows running at large" in the village, and complaints of odor and disease resulted in an ordinance outlawing "the slaughtering of cattle, calves, sheep or swine" between May 1 and November 1 within the village limits.

A conflict began between the village board and T. L. Miller, Beecher's founding father, in 1885 when he was discharged as street commissioner by the board. The reason is not known.

On January 24, 1888, the board learned that T. L. Miller had filed a lawsuit against the village after being fined for not removing snow on the public sidewalk in front of his property. This was the first known lawsuit against the village.

There was more controversy from T. L. Miller in October 1888. The village president, William Pecht called a special meeting to inform the board that Mr. Miller claimed the engine house and cistern built the previous

year were on his property. The board instructed the village president to investigate the matter at Joliet. It was discovered that the improvements had indeed been made on Mr. Miller's property. The committee of three trustees was appointed to discuss terms of sale or rent with Mr. Miller.

In the spring of 1889, Constable Frank Gromke was in trouble again. "While on duty he was observed playing cards in Fred Schmitt's Saloon." A motion to have him

removed from office failed by a vote of 2 to 4.

In June, village president Rudolph Pecht replaced Frank Gromke with Henry Block as constable, but two trustees strongly disapproved. Dissension followed and the discussion continued into the next month. After a series of 12 motions and several hours, the meeting was adjourned without the appointment of a village constable.

At the next meeting, Frank Gromke filed suit against the village for back pay. Two trustees voted to pay Mr. Gromke \$35, but the motion failed. The meeting was adjourned without a resolution to the dispute.

In August, the village president and village clerk resigned. Frank Gromke was re–appointed village constable by the interim president, Peter Blaney.

As business and traffic increased in the village, the board made necessary improvements to the streets and roads.

The village board passed an ordinance in July 1897 issuing bonds in the amount of \$2,500 for street improvements to be used for graveling sections of Gould Street and Indiana Avenue. It is unknown who purchased the bonds, but this is the first bond issue offered by the village of Beecher.

The last major piece of business for the village before the turn of the century involved zoning for the future.

In the February 7, 1898 meeting, the president stated that Mrs. Sophia Boltman's subdivision (known as the Boltman–Springer addition located on the north side of Indiana Avenue between Catalpa Street and the State Road) needed the approval of the village board. A motion was passed that it be approved. This was the first documented occurrence of the village using its power to regulate the planning and zoning in the village.



onday, February 16, 1885:

Village Clerk W. C. Trowbridge enters
his official minutes: "The roll call
showed that trustee Pecht (William
Pecht, who also served as Village
President) to be the only member of
the board that was brave enough to
face the storm. The clerk and constable (Henry Block) present, and friend
Schmadecke. These four sat around
the stove chatting and smoking — the
president set 'em up — for an hour or
more, then they 'Doused the Glim'
and perambulated to their several
homes."

EARLY CHURCHES

و المعالمة ا

Religion played a very major role in the early settlers' life. They worshiped at church, their children attended the church school, and most of their social activities centered around their church.

The German settlers were anxious to establish their places of worship. Within ten years, 1854–1864, three active congregations were formed. They were St. John's Lutheran Church, St. Paul's Lutheran Church and St. John's German Evangelical Church

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sometime before July 1854, ten men organized St. John's Lutheran Church in Eagle Lake. Eight of them had been members of Trinity Lutheran Church in Crete and they asked to be released in order to form a new congregation farther south. They were assisted by Rev. C. August T. Salle, the pastor of Trinity.

The ten charter members were:

₹ Fr. Rotermund ₹ Christoph Wassmann

Worship services were held in the home of Hans Henry Tatge. On September 26, 1854, the Reverend W. Gustav Polack was installed. He was born in Berlin in 1825, came to America in 1840, and settled first near Cincinnati. Reverend Polack and his family moved in with the family of Hans Henry Tatge, where worship services were still being held.

On the first Sunday in October 1854, Reverend Polack preached his initial sermon; and the first voter's meeting was held. It was decided that "each family





ST. JOHN'S SOUTH SCHOOL — Students and their teacher, far right, stand in front of the south school. Other buildings include the teacher's house, the coal shed, and the barn. The school was located south of the church.

was to contribute \$5 annually for the pastor's salary, subject to change by the congregation if the salary is insufficient". The voters also agreed "to secure ground for the future church."

On January 1, 1855, the elders "were authorized to borrow the necessary amount of money not raised by the signers of a list for voluntary contributions for the building". By June 1855, the church had been built on 10 acres of land bought for \$50 from Conrad Tatge. The new church was a simple frame building, with four rooms on the rear to be used as a parsonage.

Education for the children was a concern since most of the members had received a good education in Germany. On June 10, 1855, plans

were made for a Christian Day School. The pastor would teach three days a week, throughout the entire year, unless official pastoral duties interfered.

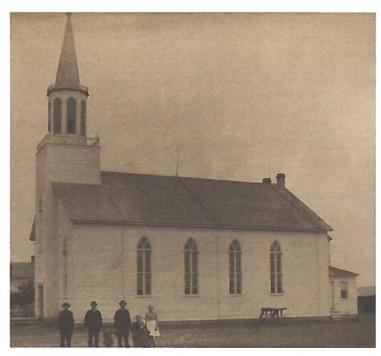
PASTORS OF ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

W. Gustav Polack	(1854–1868)
Jacob F. Nuoffer	(1869–1885)
Carl Brauer	(1885–1911)
Richard D. Piehler	(1911–1938)
Carl F. Salle	(1938-1947)
Walter J. Link	(1947-1952)
Herbert J. Teske	(1954-1961)
David Kramer	(1961-1969)
Gilbert Kuehn	(1970-1978)
Bradley V. Grover	(1979-1983)
Thomas Zimmerman	(1984–1988)
Michael G. Piper	(1988–)

The new congregation had accomplished much during its first year. In addition to the new building, church records show 29 baptisms, 5 confirmations, 7 marriages, 214 communicants, and 12 burials.

In 1858, there were 60 families in the congregation and a parochial school teacher, Ernest Vogel, who had relieved the pastor of the teaching duties. St. John's joined the Missouri Synod; and in 1860, sent John Scheiwe as its first delegate to the convention in St. Louis. In November, "it was resolved that the congregation build a new dwelling house" to house the school on the first floor and the teacher on the second floor.

By 1861, the congregation could boast of two Christian Day Schools — the north school and the south school. Teacher F. Fathauer of Terre Haute, Indiana was installed



ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH — The second church was dedicated in November 1866, and the parsonage was built in 1869.

The unloading platform was for those members arriving in buggys or wagons.

The horse sheds were located in the rear of the church.

in October 1861. A larger south school was built in 1870; and three years later a new north school was built. Enrollment reached its highest level in 1872, when 199 pupils of all ages were enrolled in both schools.

With the advent of the Civil War, records show farm help was "very scarce", and a motion was made by the congregation which stated: "In case any member is

drafted into military service he shall be exempted from contributing toward debts made by the congregation".

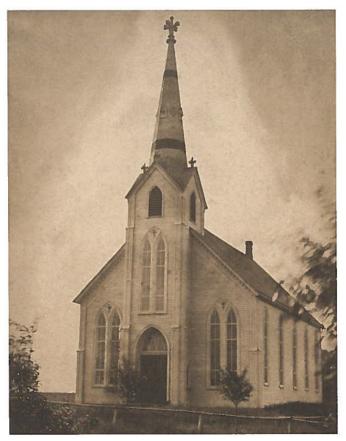
\$5,000 and complete worship i

Three a new part church, and complete worship in the complete worship i

REV. HERMAN LOSSNER — First pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, served from 1865 to 1879.

Records do not indicate how many young men from the congregation served in the Civil War, but Conrad Schweer's (1830–1907) monument in the church cemetery is distinguished by a "Grand Army of the Republic, 1861–1865" marker.

The congregation was outgrowing its original dwelling; and on July 20, 1865, final plans were made for a new and larger house of worship. Plans for the new church were taken from a popular magazine, "Die Abendschule".



ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH — The second house of worship was built in 1879. With few changes, this picturesque structure continues to grace the countryside, 116 years later. The hitching rail for horses was located in front of the church and along the dirt road.

The new church was dedicated in the latter part of November 1866. It had cost less than \$5,000 and all bills were paid by the time it was completed. The congregation continues to worship in this building — 129 years later.

Three years later, it was resolved to build a new parsonage on the south side of the church, and 95 subscribers raised \$1,647 for its

> construction. Pastor Polack and his growing family were still living in the original four-room parsonage.

St. John's Lutheran Church celebrated 25 years of worship in 1879.

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Beginning in 1862, a group of German Lutherans met periodically for worship in the home of John Haseman (about one-half mile east of the present church located northwest of Beecher). Rev. Gustav Polack from St. John's Lutheran Church served as their pastor.



ST. PAUL'S SCHOOL. — Located west of the church, the school was dedicated to the service of God in caring for the spiritual needs of the children.

In 1864, when more space was needed, worship services were moved to a public school house (probably the old Dutcher school) north of Washington Center on the Vincennes Trail.

Then in the spring of 1865, about 20 families, with the assistance of Reverend Polack, organized St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Eleven acres of land was acquired, half donated by a Mr. Busse, the other purchased for \$80. In early summer, construction was begun on the new church. It was a two story, 24 foot by 30 foot building, with a 12

foot by 16 foot addition. The first floor would serve as church and school. The second floor was living quarters for the pastor and his family. The addition contained the kitchen. Construction cost was \$1,700.

Some of the charter members were Carl Lange, Peter Pauls, Fred Plagge, Sr., Friedrich Seitz, and William Tegtmeyer.

The first pastor to serve the new congregation was the Reverend Herman Lossner, who arrived by horse and wagon from Jefferson, Missouri in August 1865. The

church dedication and the installation of Pastor Lossner occurred in mid-October 1865.

The parsonage was built in 1876 for \$1,250. (With remodeling over the years, the same parsonage is in use today.) By 1878 with membership growing, the congregation realized that the original building (serving both the church and school) was too small. Plans were made for a larger church with more seating capacity.

On May 11, 1879, the cornerstone was laid for a 40 foot by 60 foot church. On the main floor, there would be 14 long benches in the center with shorter benches on either side, thus providing seating capacity for 800 worshipers. Cost of the new church, including labor

and materials, was \$3,375. This is the picturesque building still in use today.

At the time the congregation was organized, a Christian Day School was established with about 20 pupils. Pastor Herman Lossner taught the children from 1865 until 1869 when the first teacher, Mr. J. Brackmann, was called. In the early years, enrollment was over 100 children, ranging in age from 6 to 14 years.

In the late 1860's, a second school was built to accommodate the increasing school enrollment. Both schools continued in use until 1904 when the enrollment dropped because many members left to join the new Zion Lutheran Church in Beecher.

The congregation celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1890. Dinner was served in a tent rented for the special

occasion and members brought their own silverware, marking each piece so it could be identified and returned. During the 25th anniversary celebration, the new church bell was dedicated. The words "Come To The Wedding" and the date of the casting were inscribed on the bell. Church records list over 450 members at this time.

ST. JOHN'S GERMAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH

St. John's German Evangelical Church (now known as St. John's United Church of Christ) was established in October 1863, under the leadership of Reverend Peter Lehmann from Hanover, Indiana. It is located southeast of Beecher. Early worship services were held in the Heller school house, until the new church was completed in October 1864.

The church was built on ten acres of land purchased from Friedrick Hasselbring for \$70. Foundation stone was hauled from Momence and lumber from Monee. Dimensions for the structure were 30 feet by 44 feet, with the foundation 2 feet wide. Total cost was \$1,960. Until the new parsonage was com-

pleted in 1879 for \$1,500, the pastor lived in separate quarters in the rear of the church. The Christian Day School was built in 1879 and operated until 1918.

There were eighteen charter members:

- ₹ Fred Bergmeir
- Heinrich Carsten
- ₹ Peter Carsten
- ∀ Iohn Fick
- ☆ Fritz Fiene
- Heinrich Fiene
- # Heinrich Filchner

PASTORS OF ST. PAUL'S

LUTHERAN CHURCH

Albert Heinrich Brauer (1880-1915)

Waldemar B. Streufert (1976–1978)

(1862 - 1865)

(1865 - 1879)

(1916 - 1922)

(1923 - 1926)

(1927 - 1942)

(1943 - 1965)

(1966-1970)

(1970 - 1976)

(1980 - 1990)

(1992 -)

W. Gustav Polack

Herman Lossner

Ernest Zucker

Enno A. Klaus

Roland Rakow

Karl Wellnitz

Marvin E. Hoyer

Paul J. Eickstaedt

Henry F. Hoffmeyer

Reinhart R. Steinly

(visiting pastor from St. John's)

- # Hans Frahm

- Heinrich Kappmeir
- # Heinrich Kirchoff
- Heinrich Langreder
- Friedrich Sennholtz
- Heinrich Vosshagan
- ₹ Friedrich Wehrmann

Reverend Philipp Jacob Albert became the first pastor in October 1864. His salary was \$300 a year, paid quarterly. Much of the surrounding country was still prairie land; and many of the members traveled many miles by horse and wagon to church. Others walked.

The first baptism was Sophie Friederika Charlotte Kransky on October 23, 1864; the first funeral, Fredrich Schweer on December 2, 1864; and the first marriage, Andreas Carstensen and Mary Winters on November 27, 1864. The first confirmation class of ten girls and seven boys was held on Palm Sunday, 1865.

Three men who fought in the Civil War are buried in St. John's cemetery: Fredrich Knust, Fred Pries and Conrad Bock.

In 1866, a church bell was purchased for \$124; and in 1882, the church organ was bought for \$225. The following year, a bell tower was erected on the school house. New church windows were installed in 1894; and a year later, the congregation

built an addition to the parsonage.

By 1900 when Reverend Gustav Koch, the fourth pastor, left, St. John's had recorded 1,177 baptisms, 641 confirmations, 217 marriages, and 444 funerals.



REV. PHILIPP JACOB ALBERT — First pastor of St. John's German Evangelical Church, served one year, from 1864 to 1865.

PASTORS OF ST. JOHN GERMAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH

DI-11:-- L.--I. All.--- (1064, 1065)

Philipp Jacob Albert	(1864–1865)
Friedrick Gottlieb	
Reinicke	(1866–1872)
Emil Daniel	
Richard Keuchen	(1872–1882)
Gustav Koch	(1882–1900)
Henry Siegfried	(1900-1910)
Kurt Seidenberg	(1910–1922)
Martin Weber	(1922–1925)
W. Joseph Schmidt	(1925–1928)
Carl Nauerth	(1928–1938)
John J. Merzdorf	(1938–1956)
Warner H. Siebert	(1957–1959)
Walter A. Hallerud	(1959-1960)
Glenn F. Schwerdt	(1960-1963)
John W. Merzdorf	(1964–1993)
Lois Lewis	(1993-)
	Interim Pastor

THE BEECHER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF CHRIST

The first church to be built within the village of Beecher was the Congregational Church of Christ. Leadership for its formation came from Beecher's founder, T. L. Miller.

He was a member and former deacon of the First Congregational Church in Chicago, and he wanted the new village to have a place of worship.

Mr. Miller donated the land and some of the materials; but he stipulated that if the property were used for any purpose other than worship, it should revert to the Miller estate.

A simple, wooden structure, measuring 24 feet by 38 feet, was erected at the corner of Elliott and Penfield Streets. It contained a frosted–glass front door and small, stained–glass windows.

The Beecher Congregational Church was organized January 20, 1872. It was recognized by Council on the following day — Sunday, January 21, 1872; and the church edifice was dedicated during the afternoon services. The main speaker was the Reverend William H. Beecher, brother of Henry Ward Beecher, who had been invited but was unable to attend.

The original members were Mr. and Mrs. T. L. Miller, from the First Congregational Church, Chicago; Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Smith, First Congregational Church, Belmont, Iowa; Mr. and Mrs William Powell, Episcopal Church, Oberline, Ohio;

Mrs. Elizabeth Adams, transferred from the Church of England; and F. J. Smith, a student at the Chicago Theological Seminary.

At the dedication, T. L. Miller was chosen deacon for the remainder of the year; and F. J. Smith was engaged to preach during the year, although no definite salary was set. The first new member to be admitted was Miss Elizabeth Sollitt on Sunday, May 12, 1872. The Sunday School was organized on Sunday, May 26, 1872; and 35 copies of "The Sabboth Hymn Book" were accepted from the First Congregational Church in Chicago.

The congregation voted to incorporate on Saturday, July 13, 1872, and elected three trustees: T. L. Miller, William Power, and the

pastor, F. J. Smith. The following day, the Reverend William H. Beecher returned and administered the Lord's Supper during the Sunday service.

A year later, Reverend Beecher made a third appearance when he preached the sermon following the ordainment of F. J. Smith on April 26, 1873. Reverend Smith agree to continue his services as minister for one more



ST. JOHN'S GERMAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH — The church was built in 1864 and the parsonage in 1879. The tall pole, beside the left unloading platform, held a lamp when services were in the evening.

year. His salary was \$600 with a house provided by the congregation.

The first baptisms occurred on July 6, 1873, when Louis Maxwell and Fred S. and William S., children of Ed and Nellie Graham, were baptized.

The first mention of a school within the village occurs in the church records when a Miss Dickey was granted use of the church for

one year for school purposes during 1873–74. The church edifice was painted and "if best, to fence the grounds" in 1874. The following year, it was decided to "Calcimine" the church.

Membership continued to grow among the English residents and others who were not members of the surrounding German Lutheran congregations.

EARLY FARMS



THE JOHN TEGTMEYER FARM

Some of the land in Washington Township has supported many succeeding generations. One such farm is the original John Tegtmeyer farm in the northeastern part of the township.

John Tegtmeier (the name was changed to Tegtmeyer when he became a citizen) was born in 1822 in Bremen,

Germany. He and Caroline Luecke were married in September 1834 and came to America in 1846.

They purchased their first land in 1851 and during the same year constructed a house. (The current home contains the original structure.)

John Tegtmeier became a United States Citizen on March 28, 1855, before Royal E. Barber, the clerk of the Circuit Court in Joliet.

TEGTMEYER FAMILY			
John Tegtmeyer	(1822–1911)	Carol Tegtmeyer Meyer	(1941–)
Fred Tegtmeyer	(1877–1957)	Jerry Meyer	(1961–)
John Tegtmeyer	(1910–1990)	Kristin Meyer	(1988–)
		Allison Meyer	(1992–)

His document states: "I, John Tegtmeier being desirous of becoming a naturalized citizen of the United

States of America and being an alien, born of free white parents, of the age of twenty-five years and upwards, do hereby report and declare that I was born in the Dukedom Hessen Cassel in Germany, that I immigrated from Bremen in the Year A.D. 1846 and that from and after the month of July in the year A.D. 1846, I have resided within the limits and under the jurisdiction of the United States; and that it is bona fide my intention to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to every foreign Prince, Potentate, State and Sovereignty whatever, and particularly to the Duke

of Hessen Cassel and the German Confederacy and to become a citizen of the United States of America; that I

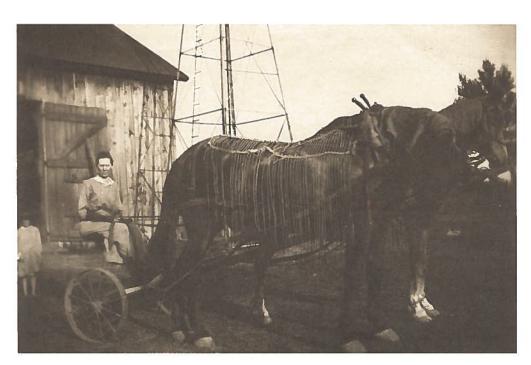
am friendly to the principles of the constitution thereof; and pray that this my declaration and report may be filed preparatory to my admission to the rights of citizenship, in conformity with the laws of Congress upon the subject."

Eleven children were born to John and Caroline Tegtmeyer, but five died during the smallpox epidemic. Those surviving were Millie, Henry, John, Louise, Tillie, and Fred.

In 1874, when his family could operate the farm without him, John traveled with



JOHN TEGTMEYER'S LICENSE — License #48 was issued to John Tegtmeyer for his team and wagon while he was hauling material during the rebuilding of Chicago, following the 1871 fire. John Tegtmeyer was the great, great—grandfather of Jerry Meyer, Washington Township Road Commissioner.



MILLIE TEGTMEYER — Daughter of John Tegtmeyer with a team of work horses. His family continued to operate the farm while he was working in Chicago.



CONRAD OSTERMEYER FAMILY — Conrad and Louise Ostermeyer are seated on the lawn of the homestead, with the family dog and three of their children, Henry, William, and Reka.

Conrad Ostermeyer was the great—grandfather of Bob Williamson, Will County board member.

his team and wagon to Chicago to supplement his farm income. Chicago was still rebuilding after the great fire in 1871 and needed extra help with the hauling of lumber and materials.

John Tegtmeyer was granted license #48 for his team and wagon. He was required to "forthwith cause the name of the owner and the number of his license to be plainly

painted in letters at least one and a half inches in size, in a conspicuous place on (the wagon)..." and he shall "wear conspicuously a badge of silver plate or plated metal... designating the kind of vehicle and the license number".

(Upon John's death, the farm passed to his son Fred, and onto succeeding generations. Kristin and Allison Meyer are the sixth generation to live on the land.)



WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP IN 1870

Population – 1,564 Horses – 596

Acres of Corn - 3,583 Mules - 4

Acres of Wheat – 1,891 Sheep – 631

Acres of Other Field Products – 5,407 Hogs – 819

Cattle - 1,485 Total Value of Domestic Animals - \$30,181



CONRAD OSTERMEYER FARM BUILDINGS — On a rainy day, the Ostermeyers proudly pose in the driveway of their farm.

Conrad and Louise are in the buggy, William stands beside them.

Henry and Reka are in the wagon and the hired man stands beside another wagon.

THE CONRAD OSTERMEYER FARM

Mr. and Mrs. Conrad Ostermeyer arrived in Washington Township in 1859. They had immigrated two years earlier from Germany and first settled in Hanover, Indiana. Conrad was from Holtensen and Louise from Hanover. They were married November 23, 1851.

They homesteaded in the southeast corner of the township on 120 acres of land; and immediately set about improving their land and constructing a home and outbuildings. Their family grew to include two sons and seven daughters.

Conrad and Louise Ostermeyer became successful farmers and highly respected members of the community. They were members of St. John's German Evangelical Church and they remained active during their lifetime.

When Conrad was 73 years old and Louise 71, they made plans for their retirement years. They had a legal contract drawn up between them and their son William. Dated July 10, 1897, it contained the following conditions:

William would receive the deed to the farm. In turn he would pay Conrad and Louise \$1,000 plus 6% interest per annum. Upon their death, the payment would be divided among his brothers and sisters or their survivors.

In addition to the yearly payment, Conrad and Louise would "be entitled to... the two south rooms on the ground floor and one south room upstairs and the south part of the basement and the summer kitchen... the east half of the garden, and one half of the fruit in said garden, and one half of the proceeds of all eggs sold from said premises".

They would have use of "the pasture, hay and stable room for two cows, and one horse... plus 30 bushels of oats and 20 bushels of corn".

They would be furnished with "one horse... and shed room for the top buggy and sleigh... and 15 bushels of potatoes and 500 pounds of dressed pork".

William would "haul free of charge the coal and wood necessary for heating and cooking" and they would have "the right to cut wood and trim the willows about the pond east of the house".

The purpose of the contract was stated: "To give (Conrad and Louise) a sufficient and comfortable home and an income to live on as long as they or either of them shall live and to that end it is agreed by all parties... that each will perform his part of the foregoing contract cheer-

fully and generously so that the purpose of this agreement may be carried out in both letter and spirit".

Conrad lived to the age of 90. When he died in 1914, he was Beecher's oldest citizen. In addition to Louise and seven of his nine children, he left 89 grandchildren and 20 great—grandchildren. Louise survived him by three years; she died in 1917, at the age of 90 also.

They were both eulogized. Conrad as "an ideal neighbor and Christian, an industrious farmer of the old German stock, honest and conscientious in all his dealings and a highly respected citizen". Louise as "a lady of excellent qualities, a good Christian, an exemplary neighbor, imbued with a kind motherly disposition."



FRIEDRICK HELLER FAMILY — Friedrick and Caroline Heller (center) are seated with their son, Albert, and his wife, Caroline.
Five grandchildren, Laura, Edward, Reinhard, Helena, and Holda stand in the back.
Friedrick Heller was the great, great, great-grandfather of John and Dave Knuth.



HENRY PAUL FARM — Henry Paul, Sr., and his half-sister, Fredericka Hossmann, are shown before the Paul Homestead on Western Avenue. Fredericka cared for Henry Paul's two small sons, Henry Paul, Jr., and William, following their mother's untimely death at 22 years of tuberculosis. Henry Paul, Sr. was the grandfather of Norbert Paul and Howard Paul.

THE FRIEDRICK HELLER FARM

In 1861, Friedrick Heller, his wife Caroline, and 19—year old son Albert arrived in the area. They had come from Pomerania, a province in northeastern Germany, where Friedrick was a shepherd. According to family legend, Caroline was a member of the Hohenzollern family, a royal family which had ruled in Prussia, Rumania and in the German Empire. Her family disowned her when she married a "poor" shepherd boy.

They settled in southeastern Washington Township and by 1870 owned 200 acres of farm land. Their farm buildings and home were impressive. Friedrick said, "The pastoral's house has to be a large one."

Their son, Albert married a neighbor girl, Caroline Homan in St. John's German Evangelical Church in 1870. The newly married couple lived on the family homestead. Five children, Helena, Holda, Laura, Reinhard, and Edward, joined their parents and grandparents.

The Heller country school was built on the southern portion of their land. The first meetings of the newly organized congregation of St. John's German Evangelical Church were held in the school building in 1863.

Friedrick Heller died in 1894 at the age of 83 and Caroline survived him until 1899. She was 80 years old at her death.

Albert and Caroline lived on the family farm until 1905 when they retired and built their spacious home at 606 Indiana Avenue. They celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary there on June 20, 1920, and continued to enjoy 18 more years together until Albert's death at 96 years in 1928. Caroline lived until 1941. She was 90 years old.

THE HENRY PAUL FARM

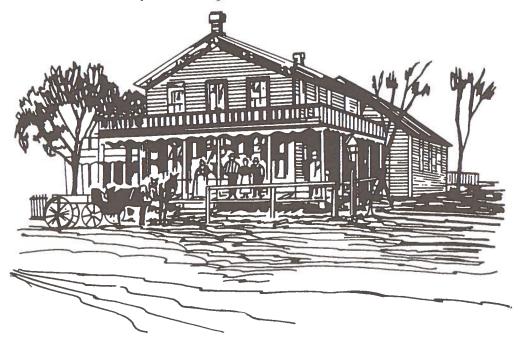
Another area farm which has been in the same family since it was purchased from the railroad is the Henry Paul farm on Western Avenue.

The land was purchased from the Illinois Central Railroad on May 26, 1869. The original Free Land Deed No. 13512 conveyed 80 acres at \$10 per acre to Mr. Paul.

The original house built on the property later became part of the present, enlarged and remodeled home.

The Norbert W. Paul family is the fourth generation to live on the homestead.

The Princess Cafe Beecher, Illinois



Over the years, at the Princess Cafe, we have built a reputation for serving quality food and cocktails in a warm, relaxing atmosphere.

We select only the finest meats and freshest vegetables. Our chefs take great pride in the preparation of each and every order. Our staff strives to provide you with friendly, courteous service and are eager to assure that your every visit is an enjoyable one.

Thanks to our many friends who visit us often and to our "first time" customers. We look forward to seeing you all again soon.

Your Hosts, The Dousias Family

502 Dixie Highway

708-946-3141