

THE GROWTH YEARS



1900 - 1910

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We are proud to be a part of the heritage of Beecher. Henry Hack already was the proprietor of a hotel and livery stable when in 1882 he became the local "undertaker". His son Albert (Pat) received his license in 1918 and joined his Dad. Since then, the grandchildren have continued the funeral service. We are the oldest, one original family owned and operated business in the community.

We have served many people throughout the past 112 years and we deeply appreciate the loyalty and friendship that has been shown our family.

*Lives of all great men remind us,
We can make our lives sublime and,
Departing, leave behind us.
Footprints on the sands of time.*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
Psalm of Life, vs. 7

B. Jean (Hack) Ohlendorf • Erwin M. Ohlendorf • John C. Dean

THE GROWTH YEARS

*A*t the beginning of the 20th century, Beecher was 30 years old. It now had over 400 residents, who were confident and planning for a bright future.

The business section of Reed and Gould Streets was expanding, with either additions to existing buildings or with new construction. The new buildings were of brick, making them sturdier and more fire-proof than the original frame buildings.

A new school was built on a hill with plenty of space around it for growth.

A weekly newspaper was begun and the post office, formerly housed in a general store, now had separate quarters.

Three new churches were constructed during this period — St. Luke's, Zion Lutheran, and the new edifice for the Congregational Church.

The village officials began thinking about electric lights; and, as the threat of fires continued, serious talk began for a waterworks system.

Residents began driving motorized vehicles, and there was a whirlwind of social activities to keep everyone entertained. The Clark-Struve Hall on the second floor of the new bank building became the center of social activity.

The surrounding farms were prospering too. Farmers brought their milk to town each morning. They shipped their livestock and grain to market from one of the Beecher elevators, and they did all their shopping with the local merchants.

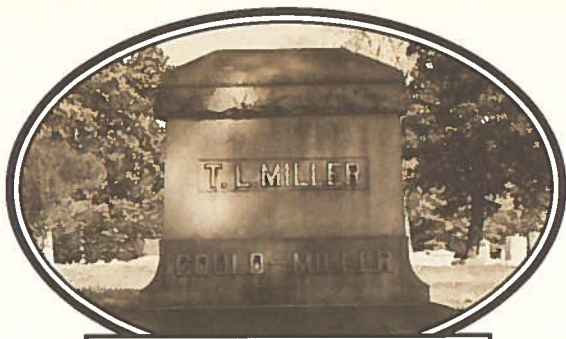
However, the man who had founded Beecher 30 years earlier and was largely responsible for spreading its name throughout the country, passed away. T. L. Miller died on March 15, 1900. He was 83 years old.

The Myrick Meat Market was the first business building to be constructed of brick. It was built on the southeast corner of Penfield and Reed Streets in 1903. The owner was W. F. Myrick who had come to Beecher in 1900. He was a graduate of Bryant & Statton's Business College and his father was in the meat business in Chicago. The family originally came from Vermont.

The Myrick Meat Market specialized in summer sausage. Fresh meat, fish, game, poultry, and vegetables were available also. The slaughter house was located south of the village.



EARLY STREET SCENE OF BEECHER — Buggies are parked on Reed Street in front of the livery stable and the Hack Hotel. The new Clark & Bank Block Building occupies the corner of Reed and Penfield Streets. The band shell was used for outdoor concerts. Farther north is the depot and the Beecher Creamery.



T. L. MILLER'S
MONUMENT

Beecher's founder, T. L. Miller died on March 15, 1900 at the age of 83 years in DeFuniak Springs, Florida, at the residence of his daughter, Mrs. George B. Woodward. Following a service at the Evanston home of another daughter, Mrs. Frank Gould, he was buried in the family plot at Graceland Cemetery, Chicago on March 18, 1900.

Mr. Miller's Highland Stock Farm was purchased by M. A. Judy, a breeder of Aberdeen Angus cattle, in 1903. Five years later, the property was sold to Dr. D. D. Van Voorhis for \$55,000. It eventually became the Shady Lawn Golf Course.

The unsold lots within the village were acquired in 1889 by T. E. Miller, the founder's son, who was treasurer of Jones & Laughlin Steel Company, Chicago. He lived in Oak Park, but also maintained a Beecher farm.

Following Mr. Miller's death in 1900, his widow, Anna Hodges Miller lived until 1916. She died at the age of 88 years at the residence of his son, T. E. Miller in Oak Park.

Both she and Abigail Starr Elliott Miller are buried in the Graceland Cemetery family plot, as are other family members.

T. L. Miller was born in Middletown, Connecticut on April 7, 1817 to Peter Miller and Eunice Joyce Miller. An older brother, Timothy Bishop Miller, was born in 1794.

T. L. Miller married Abigail Starr Elliott on March 2, 1842 in Middletown, Connecticut; and they moved to Cuyohoga Falls, Ohio, where their first four children were born. They were Catherine Elliott, Abby Almira, Mary Phelps and Timothy Elliott.

In April 1857, the family moved to Chicago and a second son, Henry Charles, was born a year later. Mrs. Miller died one week after the birth, and the son died before his third birthday.

T. L. Miller and Anne E. Hodges were married on June 6, 1861 in the home of her brother-in-law, David S. Penfield of Rockford, Illinois.

The family moved permanently to the Beecher Highland Stock Farm in March 1870.

A barber shop, operated R. H. (Rube) Wegert, was located in the eastern half of the Myrick building, at 750 Penfield Street. Mr. Wegert carried tobacco and cigars and was an agent for the White City Laundry.

Although he was the village barber, Rube Wegert's real love was music. His brass band played for many village functions. He was the cornet soloist in the Joliet Dellwood Band, and directed the Momence, Sollitt, and Beecher Bands. From 1930 to 1950, he was director of instrumental music in the Beecher Public Schools.

The upper floor of the Myrick building served as spacious living quarters for the family. The entire building was equipped with an acetylene gas plant.

Two other brick buildings were soon constructed on Reed Street: the Beecher Creamery and the Clark & Bank Block Building.

The Beecher Creamery was originally located on the east side of Reed Street, but as the supply of milk from the surrounding farmers increased, a larger plant was needed. In 1905, a modern 90-foot by 40-foot plant, equipped to bottle the milk, was constructed along the C.&E.I. railroad track on the west side of Reed Street, just north of Hodges Street. There was a separate railroad spur to facilitate the shipping of milk.

The new plant had a continuous-flow pasteurizing system and an automatic washer. A horizontal steam engine provided power for the pumps, separators, bottle brushes, and churns. There was a butter room, condensery, and an ice plant with the capacity of ten tons. Cost of the new plant was \$10,000.

Major shareholders were two Chicago businessmen, J. W. Dowd and J. Gregorson. However, the manager of the Beecher plant was C. B. Eskilson, a native of Denmark, who was experienced in the dairy business.

Mr. Eskilson would eventually purchase the Beecher Creamery, expanding the operation to include plants in Chicago Heights and Harvey. In 1922, the business was incorporated as the Dixie Dairy Company.

C. B. Eskilson also would become one of Beecher's leading citizens, serving as fire chief, president of the school board and as village president for six terms.

The third new brick building to be constructed was the Clark & Bank Block Building on the northeast corner of Reed and Penfield Streets. Its main occupant would be the First National Bank; additional space was provided for two other businesses. Major investors in the building were Thomas Clark and Arthur Struve.

The Bank of Beecher was begun in 1896 by Arthur Struve as a private enterprise. It was the first institution of



THE MYRICK MEAT MARKET — The first brick business building in Beecher was constructed in 1903 by W. F. Myrick. The Barber Shop was in the eastern section and the Myrick family lived on the second floor. The building is at 756 Penfield Street.



THE BEECHER CREAMERY — A modern plant, with a separate spur track, was built in 1905. The new creamery was equipped with bottling and pasteurizing facilities. It closed in 1932, and the building was demolished. The site, on north Reed Street, was donated to the Women's Club and turned into a park.

its kind in Washington Township. In 1905, it was nationalized and became the First National Bank. Its officers were Arthur Struve, president; Fred Wilke, vice-president; and Carl Ehrhardt, cashier. Those serving as directors were Mr. Struve, Mr. Wilke, Henry Stade, Thomas Clark, Fred Erichson, and Fred Haseman. Originally, the bank was located in a small stone structure at 604 Gould Street, between the Hoffmann Saloon and Wehmhoefer's Hardware Store.

John H. Wehrley opened a pharmacy in one section of the bank building at 757 Penfield Street. He stocked pipes, cigars, toiletry items, handpainted china, writing materials, candies, perfumes, and medicines. In the other section of the building, William Selk opened a saloon at

755 Penfield Street. In 1909, he sold to Art Longtin.

The upper floor, known as the Clark-Struve Hall, became the social center for the village. A stairway, leading up from Penfield Street, provided entrance to the hall. A large stage filled the east wall. Windows provided light and ventilation. For over 20 years, the Clark-Struve Hall was the setting for most of the indoor events held in Beecher.

There were two new brick buildings on Gould Street. Mr. and Mrs. John Harms operated a meat market in the basement of their new brick building, and William Ruge opened a clothing and dry goods store on the first floor. Later, he would be joined by George Batterman and the business would continue to operate successfully for the

next 30 years. Woodstills Classic Collections now occupy the building at 610 Gould Street.

One block south, at 534 Gould Street, Emil Koch added another brick building for his modern hardware business.

In addition to the five new brick buildings, there were other changes in the business section.

Next to the Hack Hotel, Henry Hack built a modern livery stable, with a cement block front, featuring a decorative horseshoe. He advertised "Good Rigs and Careful Drivers" for those staying at the hotel.

The lumber business, on the corner of Gould and Penfield Streets, was now owned by the partnership of Wilke & Ruge. They supplied lumber, coal, lime, cement, sand, wagons, and carriages. Just to the north, the elevator built by T. L. Miller and Henry Block had been purchased by William Werner. It later became the Beecher Grain Company.

Henry Wehmhoefer needed more space, so a shed was added to the north side of his hardware store. Here he sold tools and machinery, including: "Walking plow, \$11; corn planter, \$28; riding cultivator, \$20; mower, \$40; and hay loader, \$50."

Next door, William Paul opened a jewelry store in the former bank building. He carried watches and clocks, jewelry, silverware and crystal, pianos and many stringed instruments, and "talking machines".

August Ehrhardt remodeled his general store, and added a small room of cement block to accommodate the post office. Mr. Ehrhardt had served as postmaster from 1889 to 1893, under the Republican administration of President Benjamin Harrison. During the term of Democrat Grover Cleveland, the postmaster was Henry Block. When William McKinley, another Republican, entered office in 1897, the post office was returned to the Ehrhardt General Store.

The new post office was described as one of the finest in Will County. It had a large, plate-glass front, but the outstanding feature was separate lock boxes for the patrons. Three rural routes, each 25 miles, provided free mail delivery to the surrounding area.

During 1906 to 1910, Mr. Ehrhardt also served as county treasurer. While those duties occupied him in Joliet, his son, Arthur, operated the store. Another son, Carl, was cashier of the First National Bank.

"Beecher for Bricks" was the slogan of the Eastern Illinois Brick Company located south of Indiana and west of the railroad. It was established in 1902 with local businessmen holding all the stock: Thomas Clark, president; Dr. D. D. Van Voorhis, vice-president; Arthur Struve, secretary and treasurer; Henry Stade, superintendent. Also serving as directors were H. R. Wilke and Henry Wehmhoefer.

The company operated successfully in the beginning and probably supplied bricks used in the new Beecher



THE CLARK & BANK BLOCK BUILDING — Built before 1907, the building was an innovative and ambitious project. It provided quarters for the First National Bank, Wehrley's Drug Store and a saloon. The upper floor, known as the Clark-Struve Hall, was reserved for village functions. The building, at the corner of Reed and Penfield Streets, is still occupied.



RUGE & BATTERMAN STORE — Located on the first floor above the Harms Meat Market, the general merchandise store was in business for over 30 years. Shown are John Harms, Ernest Going, Arnold Claus, Herbert Going, William Ruge, and Joe Cloldt. Woodstills Classic Collections now occupy the building at 610 Gould Street.

buildings. During peak operation, it employed 75 skilled men and included 13 acres of available “brick land”. However, in August 1909, a bankruptcy sale was held for all the property — both real and personal. The area eventually became known as “The Clay Hole”. It offered good skating during the winter months.

accomplished using cement blocks. Free architectural plans were offered to anyone wishing to build their own cement block house.

The cement blocks were made on site, and it took only 18 days for the outside walls to be laid from basement to roof. The interior work was done by local businessmen. Emil Koch supplied the steam and hot water heating

HOFF & WIGGENHAUSER

Sometime around 1908, two young Peotone men, Gustav Hoff and William Wigenhauser came to Beecher and began manufacturing cement blocks. They first worked in the basement of the Beecher Herald office, but later moved across the street to the southeast corner of Gould and Hodges. Here they built a 40-foot by 60-foot factory for their molds and machinery.

Cement block was a new building material which was gaining popularity because it was durable, strong, and less expensive than other materials. It never had to be painted and it was fire-proof.

In the spring of 1908, the two men worked on their first house. It was built for August Ehrhardt and was an example of what could be



KOCH HARDWARE STORE — Mr. and Mrs. Emil Koch are ready for business in their new hardware store. The brick building was constructed in 1905. It is located at 534 Gould Street.

plant. Henry Wehmhoefer installed the plumbing, which included a full bath. A windmill to the south of the house furnished water which was stored in a large tank in the attic. The woodwork was let to Rudolph Pomrehn, and all the lumber was supplied by Wilke & Ruge. The house was wired for electricity and telephone, neither of which were available at the time. A large, stained-glass window, honoring the Grand Army of the Republic and Mr. Ehrhardt as a veteran, was placed on the landing of the stairs.

The house sat on the north end of the block bordered by Hodges, Elliott, Miller and Dunbar Streets. A three-story barn housed cattle, horses, and at one time, a pony. A hen house, also of cement block, was for the chickens and geese. The grounds included a pasture, an orchard, and a grape arbor. To the north of the house was a replica Civil War fort, a flag pole and Mr. Ehrhardt's cannon. The Ehrhardt home, at 741 Dunbar Street, has been restored.

Four other cement block homes were built by the Hoff & Wiggnehauser team. They are the Dr. M. R. Miley home, 619 Indiana Avenue in 1910; the Gustav Hoff

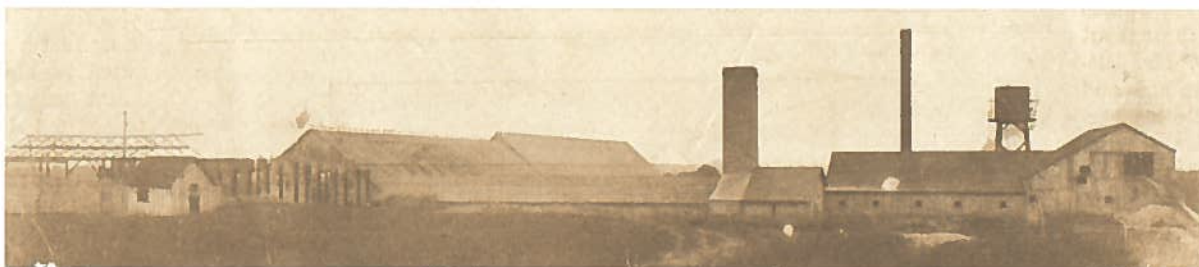
home, 617 Penfield Street in 1911; the William Wiggnehauser home, 850 Hodges in 1913; and the C. B. Eskilson home, 631 Miller Street in 1913. All homes are still being occupied.

Gustav Hoff died in 1914 and the business continued as Wiggnehausers until 1946 when LaVern Wiggnehauser managed the firm, calling it William Wiggnehauser and Son. It closed in 1958 after 50 years of operation. Many of Beecher's buildings are credited to the Wiggnehausers: the Community Hall, the Village Hall, and the Post Office, among others.

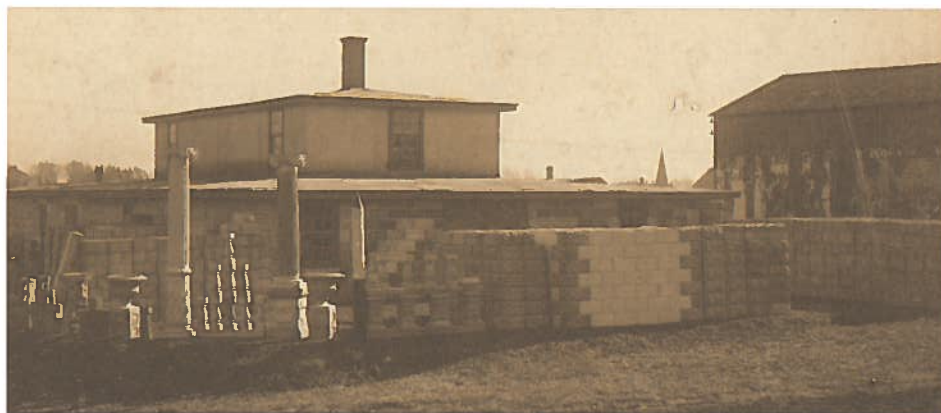
THE BEECHER HERALD

The growing community needed a newspaper; and in 1907, a man arrived to fill the void. He was D. J. Steevens from Arcadia, Wisconsin.

Mr. Steevens published the first issue of the Beecher Herald on September 6, 1907. It was an eight-page weekly. In it, Mr. Steevens reported all local and national news, also popular serials and feature stories. The paper was printed



EASTERN ILLINOIS BRICK COMPANY — "Beecher for Brick" was the slogan for the brick company. It was located south of the village, and employed 75 workmen. It closed in 1909.



HOFF & WIGGENHAUSER CEMENT BUSINESS — Located at the southeast corner of Gould and Hodges Streets, the firm made cement blocks and other cement ornaments. It also poured the cement sidewalks for the village.

in the old creamery building at 623 Reed Street. Mr. Steevens, his wife, son, and daughter lived above the office.

From the time he arrived in Beecher, until his death 25 years later, D. J. Steevens was one of the most visible and energetic promoters of the village. In appearance, he was "heavy-set and jovial". He had a little dog who accompanied him on his newspaper rounds. Each morning, he would walk across Reed Street from his office to the depot and talk to the passengers. He reported all their trips. He covered all the village board meetings, serving as clerk for six years, attended all the social events and ball games. He hunted and fished with the men, cheered on his fellow Republicans, and encouraged growth for the Beecher area.


He was editor and publisher of the Beecher Herald until his death in 1933. The paper he began in 1907 is still being published.

FIRES – A MAJOR THREAT

Fire was a major threat to everyone in the early years. Lightning struck houses and barns on a regular basis, and sparks from chimneys sometimes ignited rooftops. Once a fire started, there was little chance of extinguishing it.

In 1908 and 1909, two major fires prompted the residents and village officials to begin thinking seriously about a village water system, which would provide an adequate water supply in case of fire.

In November 1908, the large machine barn and hen house on the former T. L. Miller farm caught fire about 9:30 at night. The alarm was sounded and nearly every-



**BEECHER'S
CIVIL WAR CANNON**

Beecher's Civil War cannon belonged to August Ehrhardt, who served in Company D of the 82nd Illinois Infantry of the Grand Army of the Republic (Union) from October 25, 1862, until June 9, 1865.

The war left an indelible impact on August Ehrhardt. He organized the first Memorial Day Services in Beecher and assisted the surrounding towns in their observances. He was active in the G.A.R. until his death in 1912.

His Civil War cannon, purchased after the war as surplus equipment, was pulled in Memorial Day parades. It was fired at the cemetery as a salute to the Civil War Veterans.

The rest of the year, it sat in a replica Civil War fort to the north of his home or in front of his general store on Gould Street.

The Ehrhardt family donated the cannon to the village in 1928. The barrel was mounted on a permanent base where it rests in front of the Community Building, 673 Penfield Street.

AUGUST EHRHARDT HOME — Built in 1908, August Ehrhardt's home was the first building in Beecher to be constructed of cement blocks. It was furnished with the latest in plumbing and heating. It is at 741 Dunbar Street.



one in the village responded; many coming directly from the Clark- Struve Hall.

The village pumper and hose cart were not working, so a bucket and tin pan brigade was organized. There was a stiff wind; and in less than two hours, the large barn, filled with machinery, buggies, wagons, and two automobiles, had burned to the ground. The hen house and 200

chickens were destroyed also. The fire fighters were barely able to prevent the house and adjoining buildings from catching fire.

The following year, on September 13, 1909, the Cloldt Elevator burned. There was a strong southwest wind and flying embers were carried throughout the village. Wilke & Ruge suffered a loss of about \$450 in lumber and



GUSTAV HOFF HOME — Gustav Hoff was a partner in the firm of Hoff & Wiggenhauser. His home was one of five cement block homes built in Beecher. The Hoff family pose on their front porch at 617 Penfield Street.



*August Ehrhardt
Civil War Veteran*



*William Paul
Paul's Jewelry Store*



*C.B. Eskilson
Beecher Creamery*



*R.H. (Rube) Wegert
Barber & musician*

machinery. The railroad company lost a box car, some grain doors, and railroad ties. Flying embers spread to the roofs of the depot, Werner's elevator and surrounding homes. Other small fires started but were extinguished. The elevator contained several thousand bushels of corn, oats, and seed, valued at \$6,000. In addition, the elevator loss was estimated at \$9,000 to \$10,000.

All residents — men, women, and children — came to help. They established a bucket brigade, but the task was too great. After two hours, the elevator was "a smoldering mass of ruins" and three wells had been pumped dry.

It was a great loss, and everyone realized how vulnerable the entire village was. The next village project would be a waterworks system.

SOCIAL LIFE



Beecher residents led a very active social life in the early 1900's. Most of the large, indoor events were held in the Clark-Struve Hall above the bank. These included dances, church bazaars, box socials, plays, musicals, grade school and high school graduations, and political rallies. Everyone was invited, regardless of who was sponsoring the event.

A Valentine's Day Masquerade Ball was given by the Jolly Pleasure Seekers. Music was furnished by Larke's Orchestra of Chicago, and one of the best costume outfitters in Chicago set up a display and rented costumes.

The hall was "taxed to its utmost capacity" when the Ladies Aid of Zion Lutheran Church sponsored a stereoptican and moving picture show of a "Trip Through the United States".

William Paul's orchestra furnished the music for an annual Pentecost Dance, sponsored by the Selk Brothers. The Beecher Athletic Association held a dance to help pay for new uniforms for the Beecher Cubs.

A November bazaar was sponsored by the Ladies Aid of the Congregational Church. They served supper during the

evening hours. A program of musical solos, recitations, songs, and drills followed. In addition, there were booths offering country store items, notions, fancy goods, and ice cream.

A Grand Thanksgiving Ball was given at which nearly a hundred couples enjoyed "tripping of the light fantastic" to the music of Rube Wegert's four-piece orchestra.

Two grand balls were held in one week. The Christmas Ball on December 26 was given by Rube Wegert and a New Year's Eve Ball was organized by the Modern Woodmen of America.

During the summer, there were church picnics. In July 1909, St. Luke's Sunday School held a picnic in Lange's Grove, northwest of Beecher. The program featured songs by the children and the church choir. Later, there were foot races, jumping contests, and other sports. The Beecher Cornet Band furnished concerts during the afternoon. Refreshment stands were located throughout the grove and offered candy, soft drinks, ice cream, and popcorn. Later in the afternoon, the ladies of the congregation served a meal.

Sometimes the picnics included ball games in the after-



DR. M. R. MILEY RESIDENCE — Dr. and Mrs. Miley stand on the second-story porch of their home, built about 1901 of Tiffany-pressed brick. It was the first brick residence in Beecher. Dr. Miley's office was on the right, behind a separate porch. The home is at 524 Indiana Avenue.

noon and dancing in the evening. Special platforms were built for the dance floor.

There were Memorial Day and 4th of July parades and celebrations. The local baseball team, the Beecher Cubs, provided much excitement for the residents. When they traveled to other towns, more than 100 fans would accompany them.

The men formed a Beecher Gun Club and held tournaments with shooters from other towns. They traveled to Momence to fish along the banks of the Kankakee River. On one trip in July 1908, they returned with over 200 fish — including bull heads, sunfish, blue gills, pickerel, carp, and crappies.

The young people went sleighing in the winter, traveling as far as Chicago Heights to dine at the Victoria Hotel. Sometimes a group would “charivari” (appear unannounced late in the evening) a newly-married young couple. On one occasion, in their haste to return to town, the sleigh tipped over near the cemetery and “precipitated the whole ‘caboodle’ into a snow drift”.

In summer, they went “nutting” in the Goodenow woods, collecting sacks full of hickories “which would cause a squirrel to run green with envy”.

At the close of the school term, there were school picnics, as students bid their teachers and friends goodbye for the summer months.

Saturday nights were always a time for visiting and catching up on news as people came to the village to shop.

Ladies helped each other celebrate birthdays. In January 1909, Mrs. William Struve (mother of the bank president) celebrated her 72nd birthday at the Struve home on south Gould Street. The parlors were decorated with carnations, each guest receiving one as a remembrance of the occasion. An “elaborate and delicious luncheon was served at 5 o’clock after which the guests departed”.

The Ladies Aid Society of the Congregational Church were entertained one January day at Mrs. Thomas Clark’s home on the corner of Chicago Road and Miller Street. “They met at the depot and were conveyed to the residence by sleigh, enjoying the first sleigh ride of the season. The afternoon was spent in general conversation and sewing. A fine lunch was served, consisting of sandwiches, coffee, cake, apples, and candy. A jolly good time was reported.”

After Dr. and Mrs. D. D. Van Voorhis moved to the former T. L. Miller residence, they gave an elaborate reception one Friday evening for over 40 friends.

The house was completely decorated for the occasion; and in the early evening, cards and music were enjoyed. About midnight, a supper was served, with partners being chosen by matching verses. Once the companions were found, the band played a march and the “long line of guests were led mysteriously through a number of rooms, and winding stairways to the attic, where the spread was arranged... with bunting and evergreens among the festive banquet”. Afterwards, the guests moved to the new barn and “indulged in dancing”.

In addition to all the social activity in the village, resi-



THE THOMAS CLARK FAMILY — Thomas Clark sold his Evergreen Farm in 1901 and built a home in Beecher. It was located on the southwest corner of Miller Street and Chicago Road. The family is shown in 1903: (back row) D. D. Van Voorhis, a Clark nephew from England, Carl Ehrhardt, Flora Clark Ehrhardt, and Emma, the hired girl; (middle row) Annie Clark Van Voorhis holding Donald, Mrs. Clark and Mr. Clark; (front row) Morris Van Voorhis, Faith Van Voorhis, Lorraine Ehrhardt, Vician Ehrhardt, and Tat, the dog.

dents frequently traveled by train to sight-see, visit relatives, or conduct business. During several months in 1909, trips were planned to Momence, Hoopston, Joliet, Chicago, Blue Island, and Springfield. Out-of-state visits were to Madison, Wisconsin; Joplin, Missouri; Kansas City, Missouri; Denver, Colorado; and Stutgart, Arkansas.

In the fall of that year, Dr. M. R. Miley attended the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific exposition in Seattle. Mr. and Mrs. August Ehrhardt traveled to the Gettysburg battlefield and visited the monument of his 82nd Illinois Regiment. They completed the trip by going on to Washington, D. C.

BEECHER'S NEW SCHOOL

The first school to be built in Beecher was located at the far end of Hodges Street, east of the Woodward Street intersection. It was a handsome white frame building, with four large windows on each side and a tall bell tower. In 1902, there were approximately 35 students, covering all grades. Lyda B. Smith was the teacher. Graduation and other school functions were held in the village hall.

By the spring of 1905, residents began to realize that a larger school building was needed. Following several special elections to decide site location and methods of financing, five and one-half acres in the fields east of the creek were purchased for \$2,000. Dr. M. R. Miley was president of the school board and he worked diligently to spearhead all the efforts.

Construction began early in 1907 and was scheduled to be completed in time for the fall school term. The builder was George Cosgrove of Peotone, but most of the inside work was completed by Beecher businessmen. Henry Wehmhoefer installed the heating and water sys-

tems. Emil Koch added the lavatories and closets. Henry Hunte and Fred Hunte were responsible for all the woodwork, and Martin Arfmann did the plastering. The total cost was approximately \$13,000.

The new school faced south toward Penfield Street, and it was a massive, two-and-a-half story, brick building. A large memorial window, donated by August Ehrhardt to commemorate the Grand Army of the Republic, was located in the principal's office. From the outside, it offered a colorful highlight above the front door. The window has been restored and is in the Washington Township Museum.

Dedication was held on November 8, 1907. It was a proud and exciting day.

"The weather man exerted himself... furnishing us with an ideal autumn day, and it was apparently appreciated by the high audience which attended the exercises.

"Local citizens were not the only ones to make up the vast audience, many came from the surrounding villages



BEECHER SCHOOL — The new Beecher school, built in 1907, was a massive structure. It contained a stained-glass, Civil War memorial as a patriotic reminder to the children. It was at 629 Penfield Street.

and cities... Several G. A. R. comrades of August Ehrhardt were also present. The visitors looked over the school building, admiring its architecture, the memorial window, and the new flag donated by Dr. M. R. Miley, which was hoisted for the first time.

"The program was interesting, patriotic, and inspiring. The president's address by Dr. Miley and addresses by the various speakers commanding the deepest attention. The singing of the school children and choirs and cornet solos by R. H. Wegert were excellent and highly appreciated."

It had been a large undertaking for the Beecher resi-

dents, but they placed a high value on education and wanted their new school building to reflect that.

Later, C. B. Eskilson and William Bielfeldt drove to "the Kankakee bottoms to select trees to ornament the school grounds". They were able to find a large number of saplings which were placed on the school grounds.

The new building housed school children until the 1950's when increased enrollment required more expansion. The present Beecher Elementary Grade School, 629 Penfield Street, is located on the original site.



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ABOUT 1902 — Students and their teacher are shown outside the first elementary school in Beecher, near Hodges and Woodward Streets. First row, seated left to right: Carl Hunte, Arnold Knuth, George Ohlenkamp, Gerhard Wehling, Frank Ohlenkamp, Reinhold Hinze, Jim Bielfeldt, Paul Adolph. Second row: Rosie Hack, Rosamond Struve, Dorothy Hawkins, Grace Hunte, Cora Boltman, Alvina Boyens, unknown, Mary Moldenhauer, Edna Langreder. Third row: Esther Hack, unknown, Edmund Boyens, Henry Behrens, Welton Ehrhardt, Fred Boltman, Elsie Zenk, Clara Wilke. Fourth row: Lyda B. Smith, teacher; Martha Moldenhauer, unknown, Edna Stade, Amanda Dierking, Dehr girl, Fuhrsattler girl, Ella Batterman, Hilda Selk, Laura Dehr.



HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN 1903 — Although Beecher did not offer a high school curriculum until 1913, these young people studied high school subjects in 1903 in the upper floor of the village hall. They pose on the wooden sidewalk in front of St. Luke's Church. Front row, seated left to right: Ann Boyens, Carrie Hoffman, Ida Stade, Meyer girl, Hy Haltenhoff; second row: Emil Knuth, Pat Hack, unknown, Harry Stade, Hinze boy, Turner boy, Teacher Higgins, Harry Brucker; third row: Emil Werner, George Batterman, Fred Brucker, Mike Wilke, Emil Harnish, Albert Hunte; Fourth row: Antoinette Werner, Mary Lamberth, Emilie Wilke, Louise Tong.

VILLAGE

During the first decade of the 20th Century, the village officials strived to make the village a safer, more attractive place to live and conduct business.

The wooden sidewalks were in bad repair. They had begun to warp and rot; and in November 1901, an ordinance was adopted that required the installation of cement sidewalks. Later, the village board agreed to reimburse each resident for one-third the cost of installing cement sidewalks in front of his residence or place of business. Hoff & Wiggemhauser were given the contract for the work.

Property lines were questioned, and the village clerk was directed to hire a surveyor to resurvey the entire village "for the purpose of platting those pieces of property which were purchased and developed between 1870 and 1901".

In 1904, in an effort to improve the appearance of the village, the board passed the first ordinance regarding tree planting on public right-of-way. W. F. Myrick drafted the ordinance.

The first reference to motorized vehicles appears in the village records at this time. An ordinance stated that "all vehicles must travel a distance of 17 1/2 feet from property lines, and that the 17 1/2 feet from each property

line shall be considered a public road."

Apparently, there were some joyriders driving through private property.

In August 1908, Dr. D. D. Van Voorhis was "sporting a Cadillac automobile, which he acquired by trading his bob-tailed horse and giving a little to boot".

Two weeks later, the village board responded by passing a comprehensive ordinance regulating automobiles within the village limits:

"It shall be unlawful for any person or persons to drive, run, conduct or propel

any automobile or any other conveyance of a similar type or kind used for the purpose of transporting or conveying passengers or freight, or any other purposes, whether said automobile or conveyance or such other vehicle is propelled by steam, gasoline or electricity, or any other mechanical power, at a rate of speed in excess of ten (10) miles per hour upon any street, highway or alley in the village of Beecher.

"Whenever it shall appear that any horse driven or ridden by any person upon any of said streets, highways, or alley is about to become frightened by the approach of any such automobile or vehicle, it shall be the duty of the person driving or conducting such automobile or vehicle to cause the same to come to a full stop until such horse or horses have passed.



DR. MILEY AND HIS 1909 METZ RUNABOUT — Dr Miley assembled this 1909 vehicle himself. Known as the "Metz Plan", parts were shipped in 14 separate packages, each costing \$25, from the factory in Waltham, Massachusetts. The owner assembled the vehicle in stages as each package arrived. The Metz Runabout had a dual chain drive.

VILLAGE BUDGET FOR 1902-1903

Street and Alleys	\$1,000	Coal	10
Oil and Street Lamps	150	Fire Department	20
Bond and Interest	530	Drainage	100
Police Department	540	Continuance	100
Auxiliary Officers Salary	150	Total Village Appropriations	\$2,600

(Today, the amount exceeds \$1,500,000)

“Any person or persons violating any of the foregoing shall, upon conviction, be fined not less than five dollars nor more than two hundred dollars.”

As automobile traffic increased, there were numerous accidents caused by runaway horses, frightened by the noise and motion of the unfamiliar vehicles.

The first recorded audit of the village finances occurred in June 1906, when the village president appointed a special committee. The village had operated for 23 years without having an official audit of its books.

Streets needed repair and gravel was placed on Penfield Street, Gould Street, Indiana Avenue, and Dixie

Highway. Brick was laid in front of the new creamery on Reed Street. The street improvements caused flooding in some areas; and in 1908, work began on the village's first storm sewer.

The oil street lamps were not proving satisfactory for the growing village, and several had been damaged by runaway horse teams. The village marshal was required to light them at night and exhaust them at daybreak. Village trustees toured lighting plants in other towns; and on April 6, 1908, a franchise to construct the first electric lines for “lighting the village” was awarded to William Hinze, Dr. D. D. Van Voorhis, and Frank Hack.

CHURCHES



During the first years of 1900, two new congregations, St. Luke's and Zion Lutheran, were formed and built churches within the village. Members of the Congregational Church, founded in 1872, built a new brick building.

ST. LUKE'S GERMAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH

Since 1864, the German residents in the village had been attending St. John's German Evangelical Church about two miles southeast of Beecher.

Sometime around 1900, they began to consider establishing a church of their own within the village. On January 18, 1902, Reverend G. Koch of Chicago, presided at a meeting held in the village hall. At this meeting, the Deutsche Evangelische Saint Lucas Kirche (German Evangelical Saint Luke Church) was organized.

The following men were listed as founders:

- ✠ George Beseke
- ✠ Fred Brenker
- ✠ George Goetz
- ✠ Frank Hack



ST. LUKE'S GERMAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH — St. Luke's was the second church to be built in Beecher. The 1902 building still serves the congregation at the corner of Woodward and Penfield Streets.

 Fred Haseman
 Frank Hunte
 Fred Hunte
 Philip Kurz
 Rudolph Pecht

George Goetz was elected chairman; Fred Hunte, secretary; and Rudolph Pecht and Fred Brenker, trustees. A building committee was formed and three building sites were suggested. After careful consideration, the corner of Woodward and Penfield Streets was selected. The corner stone for the new church was laid on May 4, 1902.

The congregation called Reverend Daniel Bierbaum as its first pastor. Regular worship services were held in the village hall until the new church building was dedicated in September 1902. A new pipe organ was installed and dedicated in 1908.

All services were conducted in the native tongue of the German immigrants. The men sat on one side and the women on the other side during church services.

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

The Congregational Church members had been meeting in their original, small frame building for 31 years.

PASTORS OF ST. LUKE'S GERMAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH

Daniel Bierbaum	(1902–1909)
C. William Roth	(1909–1912)
Gustav Horst	(1912–1951)
Edwin Otte	(1951–1957)
John Melchert	(1957–1964)
William Wickart	(1964–1965)
Walter Coffey	(1966–1971)
Robert Cetina	(1971–1977)
Stephen Redman	(1978–1984)
Jeffrey Phillips	(1984–1988)
Timothy C. Rhodes	(1990–)

At a special meeting on December 20, 1903, H. F. Thielman moved that the trustees be authorized to secure a loan of \$500 and a grant of \$500 from the Church Building Loan Association for a new building. Thomas Clark seconded the motion.

Since the original building was still in good repair, the members decided to sell it. On June 11, 1904, at 3 o'clock an auction was held to sell "the Congregational Church to the highest bidder for cash". Dr. D. D. Van Voorhis purchased the building for \$200. It was moved to 648 Penfield Street and remodeled into a home. It is still occupied at this location.

The new brick Congregational Church with stained-glass windows was dedicated on Sunday, August 7, 1904. A special service of dedication was held at 10 a.m., addresses and special music at 2 p.m., and the closing service of song and sermon at 7:30 p.m.

The committee for the day-long service included Dr. D. D. Van Voorhis, chairman; Thomas Clark, Thomas Tong, and Carl Ehrhardt. Those conducting the services were the Congregational minister, T. V. Davies; Daniel Bierbaum of St. Luke's, Beecher; Reverend Atkinson of Crete; and J. E. Roy of Chicago.




















CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH — In 1904, a new brick church replaced the original frame church which had served the congregation since 1872. It is now the Beecher Community Evangelical Free Church at 546 Elliott Street.

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

On the first Sunday in Advent, November 29, 1903, a group of men from St. Paul's Lutheran Church, northwest of Beecher, asked their pastor, A. H. Brauer to draw up a constitution for a new Lutheran Church to be located in Beecher. The constitution was adopted on December 18, 1903; and the following week, the Articles of Incorporation were filed.

The charter members of the new congregation were:

 William Ahrens	 Ed. Langreder
 Martin Arfmann	 W. Rump
 H. Behrens	 Fred Schuette
 C. B. Boicken	 H. Seitz
 Ernest Fette	 Louis Stade
 Henry Hartman	 Henry Stade
 William J. Hinze	 Herman Thuernau
 Fred Kegebein	 H. F. Wilke
 J. W. Knuth	

In February 1904, a call was extended to Reverend L. J. F. Going of Elmore, Ohio. He was installed in June. The church services were held in the village hall for nearly a year until the new church was completed.

Three lots were purchased on the corner of Elliott and Indiana for \$400. The corner stone was laid on June 26, 1904; and the building was dedicated to the glory of God on October 16, 1904. The cost of the building and original furnishings was \$6,900. A year later, the church bell was dedicated on Pentecost Sunday, 1905.

The Christian Day School was begun in the fall of 1904 and held in the undercroft, with Pastor Going serving as teacher for the first ten years.

The Ladies Aid, the oldest women's organization of Zion, was started in November 1904. Its first officers were Mrs. H. F. Wilke, president; Mrs. Dietrich Wiechen, vice-president; Mrs. Edward Langreder, secretary; and Mrs. Emil Klein, treasurer.

The congregation joined the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. All services were conducted in German. The first English service was introduced in 1920 but German services continued until the 1950's.



L. J. F. GOING —
First pastor of Zion
Lutheran Church, from
1904 to 1923. Pastor Going
also taught school
for the first ten years.



ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH — Pastor L. J. F. Going and the school children pose before the new Zion Lutheran Church, erected in 1904. School was held in the undercroft. The building at 903 Indiana Avenue is now occupied by Steeple Antiques.

PASTORS OF ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

L. J. F. Going	(1904–1923)
William H. L. Schuetz	(1923–1943)
Harold J. Wunderlich	(1943–1956)
Robert Kamprath	(1957–1962)
Williams Stellwagen	(1963–1964)
Luther Russert	(1965–1967)
Armin C. Gottberg	(1969–1983)
Kenneth D. Lueke	(1981–1994)
Mark C. Larson	(1988–)

Toward Eternity in God's Love

(John 3:16)

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church

1407 West Church Road, Beecher, IL 60401

1865 - 1995

(Celebrating 130 Years)



Rev. Karl A. Wellnitz, Pastor

Home Phone: 708-946-2287

Church Phone: 708-946-2050

Sunday Morning

Worship Service 9:15 a.m.

Communion Service 2nd & 4th Sundays

Sunday School 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Adult Bible Class 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Choir Practice

Thursday night 7:30 p.m.

Ladies Aid

Second Thursday at 1:00 p.m.

Dart Ball

Monday nights as scheduled

AAL (Aid Assoc.
for Lutherans)

Meetings 2nd Sunday after church

**OUR DOORS ARE ALWAYS OPEN —
come worship with us**

Farmers State Bank of Beecher

Your Community Bank

Since 1916

The directors, officers and staff of Farmers State Bank of Beecher would like to congratulate Beecher on the celebration of its Quasquicentennial year. We have enjoyed being a part of the community for 79 years, and we look forward to continuing to serve its individuals and businesses in the years ahead.



Mr. Korthauer and Mr. Ruge chat behind the old teller line in the original bank building which was located at the corner of Penfield and Reed Streets.

660 Penfield St.

Beecher, Illinois 60401

(708) 946-2246

Member F.D.I.C.

Farmers State Bank of Beecher

Your Community Bank

For the Future!

In 1976, the bank moved to its present location at 660 Penfield Street. The new and modern banking facility was the dream of Herman and Garneta Ehlers, the major stockholders at the time. In 1982, a group of local investors formed a one bank holding company called Beecher Bancorp, Inc. to purchase the bank. Since that time, the holding company has sought to increase the number of local shareholders involved in its ownership. This was accomplished by two successful stock sales in 1991 and 1994.



The bank stands in the heart of Beecher.

This picture captures the building as it is decorated during the Christmas season.

*660 Penfield St.
Beecher, Illinois 60401
(708) 946-2246
Member F.D.I.C.*



The Beecher Community Church, at 546 Elliott Street, was recently accepted as a member of the Evangelical Free Church of America. Beecher Community Evangelical Free Church is the oldest Church in Beecher being organized in 1872.

The Ladies Aid is the oldest, active organization in Beecher since 1902.

We offer Sunday School for Children and young Adults.

Sunday School at 9:00 a.m.

Worship Service at 10:15 a.m.

The Friendly Church of Beecher.



St. Luke United Church of Christ

725 Penfield Street • Beecher, Illinois

(708) 946-6688

Faithfully serving Christ in Beecher and around the world.

— Since 1902 —