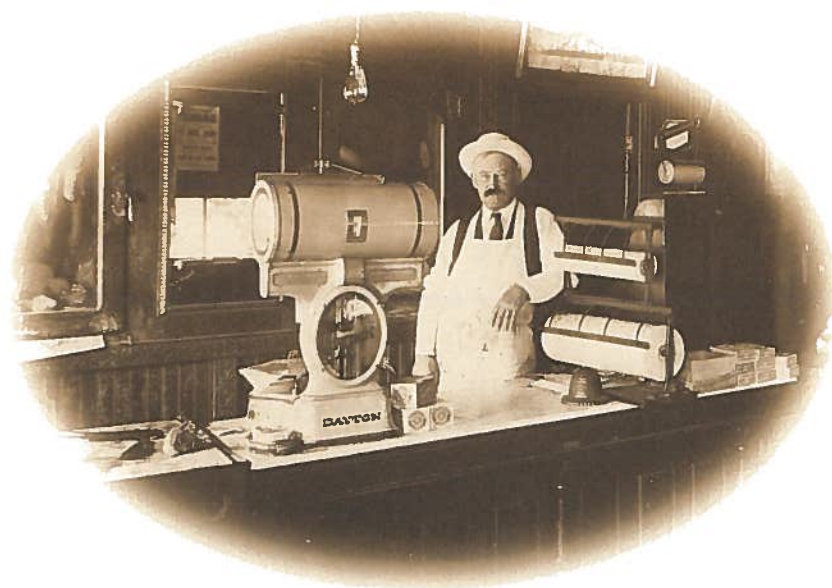


# THE MATURING YEARS



1910-1920



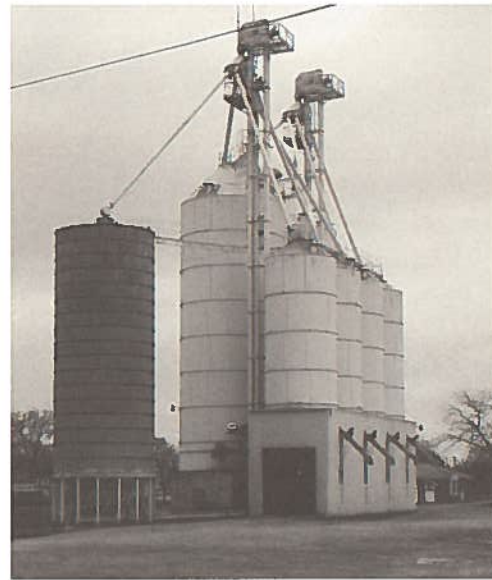
Cloidt Elevator built in 1897.  
Destroyed by fire on September 13, 1909.

## Farmers Grain Co. Inc.

### 1915-1995



Second Elevator built in 1909-1910.



Third Elevator built in 1976.

## THE MATURING YEARS

*A*s a village, Beecher came of age during the decade of 1910 to 1920.  
*It was a time for maturing; when the decade closed, the village was 50 years old.*

The period began with a flourish. Businesses were well established and successful enough to expand. The new watersystem had been installed. Telephones and electricity were available to all.

Merchants who had lived above the store built modern homes. Five new bungalow-style homes were built within five years on Elliott Street. Residents called it the "silk-stocking" section, referring to the affluence of silk stockings vs. cotton stockings.

Beecher suffered its first major scandal when the Reverend John Horton was arrested on charges of bigamy and taken to jail.

More clouds began to drift over the peaceful village with news from Europe of the impending conflict. Many of the people still had relatives in Germany. It was a troubling time.

Boys had to register for the draft. Women joined the Red Cross and began knitting. Family and friends met at the depot to bid farewell to Beecher boys as they left for Europe.

World War I finally ended and all Beecher boys returned safely. Everyone participated in a grand celebration held on Armistice Day, November 1919.

Beecher was now a mature village.



*GOULD STREET, AUGUST 27, 1913 — About 350 farmers listen to representatives from Will County Crop and Soil Improvement Association. Speakers urged farmers to plow under their clover crop instead of harvesting it; thus providing fertilizer to the soil for higher corn yields. The day began in Joliet with over 75 automobiles furnishing transportation for a tour of Will County farms. H.F. Bahlman, Ed Rump, and Welton Ehrhardt drove automobiles filled with Beecher farmers.*



## BEECHER'S PROGRESSIVE BUSINESSMEN

Changes continued in the business district during 1910 to 1920.

The Cloidt elevator had been rebuilt after the original one was destroyed by fire in September 1909. It was purchased in May 1910 by Fred E. and Charles E. Heldt for \$8,500. They also purchased the Cloidt residence for \$5,000. Five years later in March 1915, a group of farmers subscribed 167 shares or \$8,350 worth of stock and purchased the elevator, incorporating as Farmers Grain Company of Beecher.

There were changes in the banking business also. In December 1910, Arthur Struve resigned as president of the First National Bank, an institution he had founded in 1896. He was succeeded by Thomas Clark. In November 1916, the Farmers State Bank of Beecher was organized to take over the operations of the First National Bank housed in the Clark & Bank Block Building. The building itself was purchased for \$10,500.

Later the same month, the new First State Bank of Beecher opened for business in the old bank building at 604 Gould Street. Its officers were William Werner, president; Carl Beseke, vice-president; and John Werner, cashier. Three years later, the First State Bank moved to its new Bedford cut stone and brick building at 618 Gould Street. Koenning Insurance now occupies the building.

As their cement business continued to prosper, Hoff & Wigenhouser invested in modern equipment. A new

mixer was mounted on a truck and operated with a five-horse power gasoline engine. It could easily be moved to any location. Next they purchased a cement block tamper and a stationary mixer. Previously all work had been done by hand.

Gerhard Wehling purchased a well drilling machine and started his business in January 1913. He offered to drill wells, and repair wells and pumps.

In 1915, Ruge & Batterman expanded into the second story, where they displayed clothing, trunks and valises, rugs, lace curtains and crockery. Their main feature now was a cozy dressing room, so their customers could try on clothing while in the store. Before, they had to take the merchandise home to try it on.

Herman Bockelman built a second garage between his present building and Emil Koch's hardware store on south Gould Street. His display room carried a line of tires, chains, spark plugs, and batteries. He was the local agent for the Jeffery, Paige, Rambler, and Overland automobiles.

William Paul, the jeweler, moved from the old bank building (now occupied by the First State Bank of Beecher) into another section of Herman Bockelman's new building. His elegant furnishings included wall cabinets and new glass show cases.

Rube Wegert, the barber, remodeled his "tonorial parlor", adding a new 16-foot back mirror and a third barber chair. His newest feature was an electric machine used for massage or shampoo. The price for a haircut on Saturday was raised to 35 cents because of increased business. The price on all other days remained at 25 cents.



MYRICK MEAT MARKET — W. F. Myrick stands behind his counter in 1914. He specialized in summer sausage. The store was at 765 Penfield Street.



*THE BOCKELMAN GARAGE —  
Herman Bockelman stands among several motorized  
vehicles and a motorcycle in his garage in 1913.  
The garage was located on south Gould Street.*



*THE FRANK HACK STORE —  
Workers prepare to move the  
original building to the rear of  
the property in 1911 to make  
room for a larger, more modern  
structure. The new store now  
contains apartments at 734  
Indiana Avenue.*

The Beecher Creamery announced that it was adding a buttermaking department in 1915 with George Hoppensteadt from the Eagle Lake Creamery in charge. He had won top honors for his butter at the State Fair the previous year. A \$12,000 condensing plant, enabling the company to store surplus milk, was installed in June 1918.

In November 1919, C. B. Eskilson became sole owner of the Beecher Creamery when he purchased it and the creameries at Sollitt and Creamburg for \$25,000.

Changes were taking place in the funeral business also. Hack & Hinze, local undertakers, offered an "auto hearse" service in the fall of 1915. They felt that "the old style funeral by buggy and wagon" was outdated since

roads were improved and nearly everyone owned an automobile. Apparently, the "auto hearse" was rented because it was not until August 1917 when the first motorized hearse arrived in Beecher.

It was an eight-cylinder, light gray Cadillac, with hand-carved panels. It was purchased by the new undertaking firm of Henry Hack & Son. Albert (Pat) Hack received his embalming license from the state board in May 1917 and became the junior member of the new firm. The partnership of Hack & Hinze (Henry Hack and William F. Hinze) had been dissolved in April 1916. Previous to that, Fred Hunte and Henry Hack had served as undertakers and funeral directors in the partnership of Hunte & Hack.

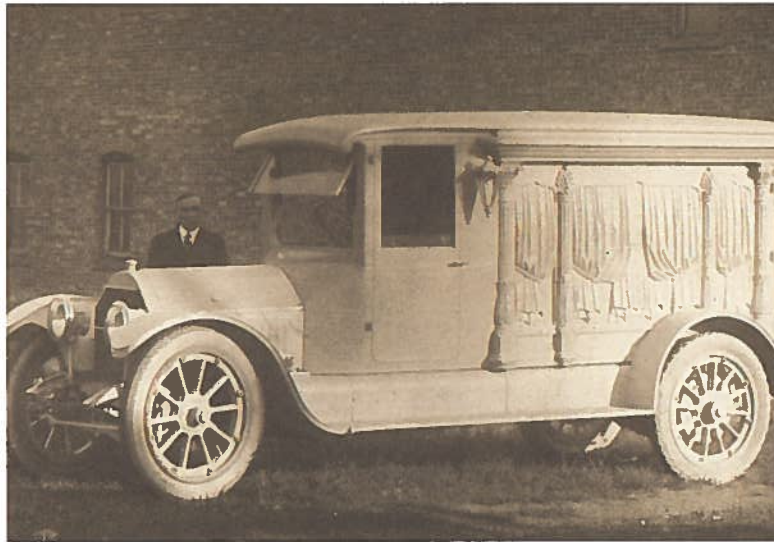


The new firm, Henry Hack & Son would occupy the remodeled second floor of the livery stable. It was stocked with an up-to-date line of caskets.

Later, the business moved to the original H.F Thielman brick home at 753 Hodges Street, where it is still located today.

The following year, the Hacks discontinued their “equine” livery stable and converted the building into a garage for “auto” livery. There was a growing need for chauffeur-driven automobiles.

There were changes taking place at the intersection of Indiana Avenue and Chicago Road. In 1915, Frank Hunte built a new store on the southwest corner. It was a mod-



*HACK'S NEW AUTO HEARSE — Pat Hack stands beside a 1913 Cadillac hearse, which replaced the horse-drawn hearse. It displayed hand-carved panels and was powered by an eight-cylinder engine.*



*ED WEHLING AND ARNOLD KNUTH — Preparing to deliver a load of chickens and calves to market in Chicago. The men would deliver groceries on rural routes and pick up eggs, chickens and other livestock. They are standing beside the Frank Hunte General Merchandise Store on the southwest corner of Indiana Avenue and Chicago Road.*

ern brick building 37 feet by 80 feet, with full glass windows facing Indiana Avenue and a row of windows to the east. At the rear were three rooms, one for packing and two for storage. There was a toilet and washroom for the customers. An elevator provided access to the basement. The store was equipped with electric lights and heated with steam.

The Old Stage Tavern was now owned by Herman Von Engeln. He built a two story addition to the north in 1912. The first floor served as a garage, and the upper floor was a dance hall. He still operated the bar and hotel, but increased traffic along Chicago Road justified the expansion.



*THE OLD STAGE TAVERN — Herman Von Engeln built an addition to the Old Stage Tavern in 1912 to house a garage on the first floor and a dance hall upstairs. C. F. Stadt later purchased the property. The upstairs was called Stadt's Hall.*



#### BEECHER IN 1917

General Stores (5)	Book Store	Cement Block Factory
Hardware Stores (2)	Undertakers (2)	Jewelry Store and Music House
Markets (3)	Furniture Store	Well Driller
Drug Store	Hotels (2)	Newspaper
Harness Shop	Shoe Store	Physicians (2)
Blacksmith Shops (2)	Barber Shop	Public Halls (2)
Wagonmaker and Blacksmith	Garages (3)	Churches (3)
Elevators (2)	Auto and Horse Livery	Public School, 8 grades and 3 years of high school
Banks (2)	Lumber Yard and Implement House	Parochial Schools (2)
Dram Shops (4)	Bottling Plant and Creamery	Railroads (2)
	Broom Factory	





*LAYING THE WATER MAIN ON INDIANA AVENUE — The digging machine prepares the trenches for the water mains along Indiana Avenue in the spring of 1911. Dr. M. R. Miley's new home and large barn were just completed. A worker draws a drink of water from the water keg.*



*INDIANA AVENUE LOOKING WEST TOWARD ZION — Hoff & Wiggerhauser were responsible for all the cement sidewalks in the village. They were completed before the streets were improved.*



*CORNER OF HODGES AND REED STREETS — Pipes for the water mains lay at the corner. The creamery is on the left, H. F. Thielman's brick home, now the Hack Funeral Home, in the center, and the original frame school house at the far right.*



# VILLAGE



## THE NEW WATERWORKS SYSTEM

After the Cloldt elevator burned to the ground and a large portion of the village was threatened in September 1909, village officials realized that a waterworks system was a necessity.

They passed an ordinance to establish a waterworks system on June 17, 1910. The purpose was to provide fire protection, first and foremost, but also to provide water for the use by the inhabitants.

In September, Thomas Clark officiated at an auction of the bonds for the waterworks plant. Bonds worth \$5,000 were sold at \$500 each, with 5% interest over a seven-year period. All were taken by local residents.

Charles Bahlman drilled the 163-foot well, to the east of the village hall, and tests proved satisfactory. Later the hydrant at the corner of Penfield and Woodward was tested. It was a grand demonstration for all those standing by as "two husky men held the nozzle, and a good-sized stream was thrown

— which cleared the steeple of St. Luke's church by a number of feet ...". Certainly the system would be more effective in case of fire than the earlier bucket brigades.

Activity on the waterworks system gained momentum in March 1911 when a digging machine arrived on the scene. It was an impressive machine, capable of preparing 500 feet of trenches each day.

Pipe for the water mains was shipped in daily by railroad car. After the workers laid the pipes, the trenches were left open for a block or so until they could be tested for leaks. After careful inspection, the pipes were covered.

The waterworks was completed by May 1911. It had a 20 horsepower International Harvester Company gasoline engine for the pump and air compressor. The pressure tanks had a capacity of 28,000 gallons. The entire system contained 5,721 feet of 8-inch water pipes and 10,810 feet of 6-inch pipes. There were 34 hydrants

### VILLAGE ORDINANCE

#### *Relating to Peddlers' Licenses*

Foot Peddler	\$1.50
One-horse Vehicle	\$2.50
Two-horse Vehicle	\$3.00
Motor-Vehicle, Touring	\$4.00
Motor-Vehicle, Truck	\$6.00

*Licenses apply to any person offering goods, wares, or merchandise, or other articles of value for sale, upon any of the streets or public or private property within the village of Beecher, for each day, or part of a day.*

— January 1919



BAUMGARTNER'S TAVERN — Edwin Ostermeyer and William Baumgartner, behind the bar, visit with two customers. During prohibition, the bar area was cleared, except for apples, hard-boiled eggs and packaged snacks. Other refreshments were served in the basement.

throughout the village. The machinery was housed in a cement block structure behind the village hall. It was constructed by Hoff & Wiggenhauser. The cost of the water-works system was about \$25,000.

The small electrical plant constructed in 1908 was not proving adequate for village needs. The village board pleaded with the ladies to use a little discretion in doing their ironing because storage batteries were being drained. Finally in an attempt to regulate the current, Tuesday and Wednesday mornings were set aside for ironing.

Eventually a new lighting plant, with more than double the capacity of the original plant was put into operation in November 1914. It was powered by a 50 horsepower gasoline engine and a 30 kilowatt generator. Village officials hoped it would be sufficient for lighting the streets, businesses, and residences for some time.

As more and more people purchased motorized vehicles, traffic increased within the village. A new speed limit was posted: 10 m.p.h. in the business district; 15 m.p.h. in the thickly populated residential areas; not more than 6 m.p.h. in turning corners; and opening of mufflers on the streets would not be tolerated.

With the increase in motorized vehicles, the need for improved streets and roads become more urgent. During the spring and winter, many country roads and some village streets were impassable.

Road building was a big expensive project involving much labor. However, in June 1914, a unique solution was found.

Camp Allen was organized with 60 honor men from the Joliet penitentiary. The camp was located in Dr. Van Voorhis' grove east of Beecher and set up like any other construction camp. The men would sleep, eat, and live there for four months while they worked on the roads. Except for clergy on Sunday, visitors were not allowed. From all reports, Camp Allen was success.

Residents remember the "dinky", small rail cars running along side the roadbed. They were powered with a Model T Ford motor built on a chassis with rail wheels.

Stone arrived in railroad cars and was then moved to the site by the "dinky". The roadbed was prepared by "scrapers" pulled by two horses.

When the men returned to the Joliet penitentiary in November, stone roads were complete from the Indiana state line to the Will Township line, and from Crete south to the county line, giving Beecher area residents stone roads in all four directions.

In the fall of 1917, Miller Street was stoned providing the village another entrance from Chicago Road other than Indiana Avenue. Miller Street had been a dirt road, but the middle was low and many trucks and automobiles became "stalled in the mud" especially in the spring.

## PROHIBITION IN BEECHER

The 18th Amendment of the United States Constitution prohibiting the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors was ratified on January 29, 1919. It went into effect on January 16, 1920.

At the time, Beecher had four dram shops (or saloons) and they were well patronized. The manufacture and sale of liquor continued; it just occurred by different methods. At least one residence within the village had a still in the basement, complete with a supply of bottles.

The Baumgartner Tavern at 755 Penfield Street, cleared the bar and displayed apples, hard boiled eggs, and packaged snacks. For loyal patrons, there was the basement room.

## BEECHER HIGH SCHOOL

Beecher High School became a reality in September 1913 when first-year courses were offered. Professor H. L. Liberty was teacher. He was assisted by Miss Bressy who also taught seventh and eighth grade. Miss Lillian Bahlman taught the intermediate students and Miss Frances Morrissey taught primary grades.

### JOHN BARLEYCORN PASSES AWAY QUIETLY

"Old John Barleycorn was quietly laid away, Monday evening (June 30, 1919). The final ceremony, however, was largely attended, the streets of the village being lined up with automobiles from far and near, the occupants of which had come to pay their last respect to old John.

"The ceremony started about 7 o'clock, and lasted until midnight. Many of the visitors ... practically all ... took home souvenirs as a remembrance of the occasion, in jugs and bottles, and some in kegs.

"The passing of old John Barleycorn did not come unexpected, as the end was looked forward to the past couple of weeks and he did not die of loneliness, as every evening during the week days, the streets have been lined with automobiles containing visitors to their soon-retiring friend."

—Beecher Herald, July 3, 1919

*("John Barleycorn" was the humorous personification of liquor, especially at the beginning of prohibition.)*



Second and third year courses would be added later, but students would have to take their fourth year either at Bloom High School or Peotone High School.

The first, third-year high school graduates received their diplomas at Commencement, June 6, 1916, in the Clark-Struve Hall. They were Lorraine Ehrhardt, Ethel Wehmhoefer, and Mae Steevens.

Also graduating that evening were the eighth graders: Henry Bahlman, Elmer Deneke, Harry Korthauer, Paul Kruse, Mildred Meier, Myrtle Myrick, Lydia Rump, and Lawrence Wehmhoefer.



*BEECHER'S BASEBALL TEAM — Front row, left to right: Ernie Going, Henry Stade, George Ohlenkamp, Butch Stade, Carl Bunte. Back row, left to right: Mike Wilke, Richard Kurth, Welton Ehrhardt, Ed Nargin, Reinhold Ruwalt, Ernie Selk.*

## BEECHER VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

The waterworks system was nearly complete when the first meeting to organize a volunteer fire department was held on April 21, 1911.

Over 30 enthusiastic citizens attended and nearly all enrolled as charter members. D. J. Steevens was elected president and W. D. Graham, clerk. C. B. Eskilson became chief and continued to serve for many years.

Three companies were formed. Captains were Henry Wehmhoefer, William Bielfeldt, and William Boderias.

Later one of the first fire practices was staged, under the able supervision of Chief Eskilson. During the drill, which was held on three consecutive nights, each company had "to come out, make the run, unreel 250 feet of hose, make a coupling to the hydrant, and be ready to run the water". The winning company accomplished the drill in 30 seconds — an impressive feat.

The first 4th of July Celebration sponsored by the Volunteer Fire Department was held in 1913. It was a huge event and attracted a record-breaking crowd. The firemen printed large, three-color posters which were displayed throughout the area.

The celebration was held in Stadt's Grove, south of Indiana Avenue opposite Zion Lutheran Church. The main feature was a water fight between local firemen and the visiting Crete team. The rules were simple: "Half a dozen fear-



*BEECHER'S BRASS BAND — Left to right: Fred Kegelbine, William Wehmhoefer, H. H. Wegert, William Paul, Charles Adolph, Frank Hack, Ernie Selk, Rube Wegert, and Herman Matson.*



less lads on each side face each other at close range and turn the hose on full force. The side that can stand it the longest and best is declared the winner." Beecher won the \$15 prize.

Other events included a half-mile foot race for boys under 17 years, and a 300 yard dash for boys under 12 years. There was a ball game between Beecher and Momence, which Beecher won 14-1. Refreshment stands, a wheel of fortune, and guessing contests were located throughout the grove.

In the evening an open-air, moving picture show, "The Story of the Civil War", provided more entertainment.

Dancing began in the evening and continued until the morning hours. A large pavilion was built especially for the occasion. Rube Wegert's and William Paul's orchestras took turns providing music.

It had been a very successful 4th of July Celebration and the firemen were grateful for the support they received.

### BEECHER'S BIGAMY SCANDAL

For over a year, residents of Beecher and the surrounding area were obsessed with the bigamy charge against the Reverend John Horton, minister of the Congregational Church.

Reverend Horton arrived in Beecher in June 1911

with "splendid credentials"; he had traveled England, Ireland, and Scotland as an evangelist. He had also served as a prison chaplain.

He was welcomed at a large party held on the lawn of Dr. and Mrs. Van Voorhis' home. Over 50 members of the congregation attended the reception.

It was not long before Reverend Horton became enamored with Amanda Brenker, a young school ma'am in his congregation. They were married in Chicago.

Two days after the wedding, it was discovered that the Reverend Horton had a wife and children in England. He was arrested and taken to the county jail in Joliet.

Mail began to arrive from England. John Horton's two sons sent him postal cards for his birthday, and Mrs. Horton wrote that she forgave him and "would greet him with open arms" upon his return to England. He asked the people of Beecher to withdraw the bigamy charges against him so he could return to England. They refused.

In the meantime, Amanda filed for divorce. John Horton was indicted by the grand jury on the charge of bigamy; Amanda Brenker was indicted by the grand jury for marrying a bigamist.

John Horton asked that he be deported, preferring that to a sentence in the penitentiary. He based his plea for leniency on "the fact that his family in Bolton, England, are in destitute circumstances and are living on charity". His request was denied.



*THE REVEREND JOHN HORTON ENROUTE TO JAIL — Two young boys take a quick peek at the bigamist. Pat Hack serves as chauffeur and two village officials sit on either side of John Horton, as they leave for Joliet.*

The trial was held in February 1912 in the Circuit Court in Joliet. It lasted three days. Many Beecher residents appeared as witnesses.

John Horton's attorneys planned to have the case dismissed because Reverend Horton reported that he had not lived with Amanda Brenker. However, when Miss Brenker testified, she stated that they had indeed lived together "as man and wife".

Reverend Horton was found guilty of bigamy and sentenced to one to five years in the penitentiary.

In June, Amanda was granted a divorce from "the erstwhile preacher". She appeared "in court wearing a white dress and black silk Charlotte Corday hat that made her appear very girlish ..." She answered the questions of her attorney in a faint voice saying "she was very much shocked when she learned that he had deceived her ...".

John Horton was released after serving one year. He was given a new suit of clothes, a hair cut, \$20 and a ticket for England.

He acknowledged "his failure as a minister and will return to his family at Bolton, England, and will work as a common laborer in the woolen mills at \$9 per week, where he earned his first money to gain an education for the ministry".

## BEECHER'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE WAR EFFORT

World War I had been raging in Europe since July 28, 1914, but it was not until April 6, 1917 that President Woodrow Wilson signed the joint resolution of Congress declaring a state of war between the United States and Germany.

It was a troubling time for the Beecher community. Many of them were German immigrants, who still had families in Germany. Some had not become naturalized United States citizens. Some secretly supported the "Kaiser".

Newspapers and radio kept people informed of the war but it was not until June 1916 that Beecher area residents were able to "witness" the actual fighting.

A "moving picture show" was held in Washington Theatre (in the Clark-Struve Hall). The film had been taken by a Berlin film company, and showed the German battle fronts, "the paths of the well-equipped and greatly organized German armies ... the charges of infantry and the action of heavy artillery ... and the marching of the soldiers behind firing lines and trenches".



*FAREWELL SCENE AT DEPOT — Family and friends leave the depot after bidding good-bye to the first Beecher boys to be drafted for World War I in September 1917. The creamery smoke stack can be seen in the background.*



## EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS OF BEECHER BOYS SERVING IN WORLD WAR I

SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE,  
SOMETIME IN SEPTEMBER, 1918

<sup>66</sup>Arrived at last somewhere in France and am in the best of health, so do not worry. I will take good care of myself, keeping my faith in God and hoping for the best, that we will all come back as healthy as we are now.

"Some days I sit and dream, picturing myself back working in the store, dusting shoe boxes, and can almost see the streets crowded with cars like it used to be of nights about 8 o'clock.

"Don't forget to save a spring chicken for me, Mother, as I think we will have the 'Huns' beaten soon."

Arthur Ruge, Battalion B. 72nd Artillery,  
A. E. F. (American Expeditionary Forces)

SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE,  
OCTOBER 30, 1918

"The other night I met a small boy who could talk some English and we had quite a talk with him. His mother and brother and sister fled from Verdun three years ago when the Germans invaded the city. His father is a German prisoner. We asked this boy to show us a place where we could have our clothes washed.

Last Sunday our band played for some Liberty Loan doings. There must have been more than 25,000 people there."

Arnold J. Knuth, 149th Infantry Band, A. E. F.



ARNOLD KNUTH — serving in France during World War I as a member of the 149th Infantry Band, American Expeditionary Forces.

CHAWARANDES, FRANCE,  
DECEMBER 6, 1918

"It was rather a surprise to us when we received the news (of the Armistice on November 11, 1918). On the night of Sunday, November 10, we went from Beaumont up to a position on the Meuse River near Mouzon and took part in the final operation during which the engineers succeeded in throwing several bridges across and the doughboys reached their objective on the other side of the river. The operation as of that night did not seem to indicate that the end was so close for 'Jerry' made a stubborn stand and threw almost everything he had at us ..."

Corporal Charles A. Steevens, Co. D., 1st Gas  
Regiment, A. E. F.

COLUMBEY, FRANCE,  
DECEMBER 21, 1918

"I hope you had a good Christmas. I had a pretty good one, but it was not like being at home. We got presents from the Y. M. C. A. ... two packages cigarettes, one cigar, one can Prince Albert, one bar chocolate, and a box of candy.

"I'm learning a little French now, as we stay with a French farmer and sleep in his barn and warm our feet at his stove ... I have seen fields and towns destroyed. The night before the Armistice was signed, we were ten

miles from the firing lines and we could hear the guns bang away all night."

Private Albert Hartman, Co. A. 306th Infantry, A. E. F.

Fourteen months after the U.S. had declared war on Germany (June 5, 1917), all young men in Washington Township were required to register either at their polling place or at the village hall. They were warned that failure to do so could result in a penalty of one year in the penitentiary.

Those who were not naturalized American citizens were classified as "German Aliens". All of them who were 14 years and older were required to register also.

Registrars were H. F. Bahlman, William Rump, Fred Heldt, and H. S. Stade, who had volunteered their services.

Five Beecher boys enlisted: Ed Nargin and Walter Hinze in the spring, and Raymond Bielfeldt, Ernest Going, and Charles Steevens in November.

On September 18, 1917, the first contingent of those

drafted left the Beecher depot for Joliet, then on to Camp Dodge, Des Moines, Iowa. They were George Ohlenkamp, Amos Monk, Grover Bielfeldt, James Babcock, Martin Hinze, and Elmer Stade. A large number of friends and relatives were at the depot to bid them good-bye.

The night before, they had been given a farewell at the Clark-Struve Hall. Following several speeches and well wishes, the boys were treated to ice cream and cake, and provided with a "goodly supply of smokes to take with them".

Eventually, 39 boys from Washington Township would serve in the American Expeditionary Forces, and all would return home safely.

While the boys were serving overseas, the local citizens were busy supporting the war effort.



The local branch of the American Red Cross Society was organized at the end of 1917, with the following as officers: Carl Ehrhardt, chairman; Tillie Bielfeldt, vice-chairman; Lillian Ohlenkamp, treasurer; and Lorraine Ehrhardt, secretary.

By May 1918, there were 815 local members. The ladies decided to hold weekly meetings every Wednesday afternoon in the Clark-Struve Hall, beginning at 1 o'clock when "all members will be expected to do their bit".

During its existence, the local Red Cross branch was credited with 58 pairs of socks, six pairs of wristlets, 19 sweaters and 1,089 cotton swabs.

On July 4th, Zion Lutheran Church dedicated a Service Flag with ten blue stars, each star representing one individual from the congregation who was serving in the war. Pastor Going expressed the sentiments of the congregation: "We are sorrowful that our boys have parted from us ... but it is with feelings of pride and gladness that we recognize that they have gone from us to serve the most glorious country on God's earth, to battle for it, and, if God wills, to die for it".

The ten Zion boys were Henry Behrens, William Froreich, Ernest Going, Arthur Hinze, Martin Hinze, Arnold Knuth, Amos Monk, Edward Nargin, Alfred Stade, and Harry Wiechen.

There was excitement and some concern also when a young man was apprehended on Charles Maxwell's farm in August 1918 as a deserter from the U. S. Army. He was taken to the county jail in Joliet, then to Camp Grant in Rockford by Deputy Sheriff Henry Hack.

Later, Otto Werner, an "alien enemy", who had been working in the area, was taken by a couple of Federal officers to Chicago and charged "with making seditious statements against the government and displaying a German flag ...".

Washington Township's quota for the Salvation Army Drive was \$225. The citizens worked hard and collected \$237.51.

At harvest time in 1918, there was a shortage of railroad cars, and an embargo was placed on all grains. Local elevator operators had to make application for cars. The farmers were required to store their grains at home until the embargo was lifted.

The Red Cross released instructions on Christmas packages to be sent overseas. Boxes, measuring nine inches by four inches by three inches, were supplied by the Red Cross. Each service man could receive one. Contents could not exceed three pounds and notes or messages could not be included. All packages had to be mailed before November 15.

The war ended November 11, 1918; and it was a day of celebration in Beecher.

D. J. Steevens, editor of the Beecher Herald, received the news by telephone at 3:20 a.m. He called village president, C. B. Eskilson, who asked the village marshall to blow the fire whistle.

By nine o'clock, a large parade had formed, headed by a firing squad, the fire department, members of the village board, the Beecher band, ladies of the Red Cross, school children and citizens.



RED CROSS KNITTERS — Minnie Bockelman, Lillie Pecht, Lizzie Knuth, Emma Kirchhoff, and Tillie Bielfeldt, knit socks and sweaters for soldiers during World War I.

At the home of each service man, the parade stopped and salutes were fired. "The school children sang national selections at intervals and the parade stopped many times to give three cheers for General Pershing and the boys in France, for the United States, and for its allies."

All businesses were closed for the day. Residences and businesses were elaborately decorated with flags and bunting. In the evening a Thanksgiving Service was held at St. Luke's Church. It was well attended by church members of all denominations, who "had assembled to thank God for the cessation of over four years of hostilities among the nations".

Elsie Paul remembered: "Thank God, it was over. I'll never forget that day. It was the 11th of November. Never forget. Church bells began to ring ... The shouting began, 'War's over, the war's over.' Everybody out. It was just breaking daylight ...".

One year later on Armistice Day, November 11, 1919, Beecher celebrated a homecoming for those who had served in World War I.

The day-long event had been planned by Chairman Thomas Clark. Nearly 2,000 people attended. The weather was mild and all the events were held outdoors.

The parade began at 12:30 and wound through the principal business streets. It was headed by the band, but the main attraction was the veterans in their uniforms.



*ARMISTICE DAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1919 — The grand celebration began with a parade up Penfield Street. The village hall is on the right. Hinze's, St. Luke's Church, and the ice house (located where the community building now stands) are visible on the left.*

The speaker's platform and the dining tent were at the corner of Penfield and Reed Streets. There were speeches, musical selections (including a choir of 40 voices rendering "Triumphant America"), plays, and humorous skits. Paid entertainment included sensational wire acts and an Uncle Sam on 15-foot stilts.

The soldiers and "their ladies" were served on a long table decorated with cut flowers and national emblems. They received badges inscribed "Welcome home, soldiers of Beecher, Nov. 11, 1919". Everyone else was served cafeteria style.

During the evening there were outside movies, and the young people spontaneously arranged a dance in the Clark-Struve Hall.

One local observer reported: "It was a beautiful, but deserving tribute paid to our returned soldiers and it has made them feel that they are truly welcomed home".

The event marked the grandest celebration the town ever experienced.

## SOCIAL SCENE

The Clark-Struve Hall continued to be the setting for the social activities of the village and surrounding area.

In February 1911, the Beecher Dramatic Club presented a three-act, rural comedy "The Heiress of Hoetown". It featured eight males and four females, all local talents. Rube Wegert's orchestra furnished music. Proceeds of the play were given to the public school library.

Later, "moving picture shows" were introduced to the appreciative Beecher audience by William Baumgartner and F. E. Heldt in the Washington Theatre. When the show was a serial, arrangements were made to print the story each week in the Beecher Herald. Patrons were encouraged to read it, then go to the movie and "see what

you have read acted out on the screen". Movies were held on a regular basis on Tuesday and Saturday nights.

The Thanksgiving Ball in 1912 was billed as an extraordinary event because the orchestra would include three fine musicians from Chicago, to compliment William Paul and his orchestra. They would play the harp, trombone, and trap drum.

Because of the added expense, each couple was charged admission of 75 cents. Single ladies were admitted free. It was a mild and pleasant Thanksgiving day; and the dance that evening was a great success, many coming from the surrounding towns.

Residents were never at a loss in creative ways to raise money; and in the fall of 1917, members of the Farmers



Grain Company decided to sponsor an Oyster Supper in the Clark-Struve Hall. Admission for the evening was 25 cents per person. Children were admitted free if they were with their parents.

The evening began with instrumental and vocal numbers, recitations, and a drill. "Tillie's Terrible Troubles", a side-splitting, moving picture show concluded the program. Afterwards the "big fat oysters" were served. The evening was such a success that even before the entertainment began, people were left standing; the hall was "taxed to its capacity".

Residents also used their spacious new homes to entertain. Ladies often met in the afternoons; couples would gather in the evening for meals, cards and music. Elliott Street became known as the "silk stocking" section of the village.

As more people acquired "automobiles" (the popular term, as opposed to the earlier "motorized vehicle"), Beecher area residents ventured out of the area in their new, convenient mode of transportation.

In July 1918, a group of men journeyed to Rantoul to visit the aviation field. They left Beecher at 6 in the

morning, and returned at 6 in the evening, having traveled 200 miles. It was an educational trip. They reported:

"Bi-planes were numerous circling above, the air being literally filled with the man-birds. It was a pretty sight, especially when they come soaring down birdlike to the ground".

Two hundred residents in 50 automobiles traveled to the Garden of Eden on the banks of the Kankakee River for a picnic in September 1919. The event was planned by C. B. Eskilson, village president.

Everyone brought basket lunches. Ice cream, lemonade, and buttermilk were furnished by Mr. Eskilson. William Wehmhoefer supplied soft drinks.

The afternoon was spent boating, bathing (swimming), fishing, or playing croquet, handball, cards, or "Drop the Handkerchief". The Beecher Band was in attendance and supplied music all afternoon and evening.

Sometimes, the open automobiles were a problem. Mr. and Mrs. W. F. Myrick "autoed" to Fernwood one Sunday and spent the day visiting with relatives. Late in the afternoon, a heavy storm arose, and they were "obliged to leave their automobile and return home by train ...".

**PRIZES AWARDED AT THE  
LABOR DAY PICNIC  
ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH,  
SEPTEMBER 4, 1911**

Prettiest Baby – Gold Ring  
Smallest Baby – Pair of Booties  
Largest Family – Postcard Album  
Champion Lady Bowler – Quilt  
Champion Gent Bowler – Cuckoo Clock  
Winner, Wheelbarrow Race – Fine Briar Pipe



*HERMAN BOCKELMAN'S NEW HOME AT 622 ELLIOTT — Five modern bungalow-style homes were built on Elliott Street during 1913 to 1918, thus creating the term "silk stocking aristocracy". Other homes belonged to William Selk (626 Elliott), Emil Koch (632 Elliott), George Batterman (638 Elliott), and Henry Wehmhoefer (644 Elliott).*



"I REMEMBER IT LIKE YESTERDAY..."



HERB MEYER — standing on the north side of Stade Brothers store, with Henry Stade in the background, about 1915.

*“We went grocery shopping once, maybe twice, a week. I’d be outside playing with the coaster wagon. It had wooden wheels, and that’s how they delivered the groceries to the old widow ladies. Eventually, Henry Stade got himself a Model T Roadster. They put a box in the back of it and started making deliveries that way.*

*“(Beside me) that’s a vinegar barrel. Everybody came to town with a quart or gallon jug and bought their vinegar out of the barrels. Kerosene for lamps was bought the same way. They had some kind of*

*tank down in the basement and they’d pump it up into the jugs and you’d take it home for your lamps.*

*“The shelter on the side, that was a flour shed. That’s where they kept all the flour. It came in 50# bags. Wingold and Pillsbury Best were only ones on the market at the time ... Coffee beans came in 100# bags.*

*“We would take in eggs, churned butter and chickens and trade them for groceries. That’s how we did it in them days ... There was very little money.”*

Christmas had always been a festive time in Beecher. The merchants carried a wide assortment of Christmas items and most people shopped in the village. Churches held Christmas programs and Christmas Eve services. Families gathered to celebrate the holiday, and there was usually a Christmas dance.

The celebrations were special in 1919. The war was over and all the Beecher boys were home. D. J. Steevens, editor of the Beecher Herald, reported: “Christmas in Beecher was a truly joyous one in every sense of the word. Everybody seemed to imbibe with the spirit of good will and Christmas cheer ... the day (was) fittingly observed with trees and programs at the churches, the homes (were) the scenes of happy family gatherings...”

## ST. PAUL’S GOLDEN JUBILEE

St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, northwest of Beecher, celebrated its 50th Anniversary on June 29, 1915. Members of all area churches were invited.

The day of the celebration, special railroad cars were provided. They stopped at Eagle Lake Road and the people walked from there to the church for the day long activities, returning to the cars at the end of the day.

The main speaker was Reverend Pfothenhauer, president of the Synod. He exhorted “the sons and daughters of the founders to heartily thank the Lord for the manifold blessings which He had bestowed upon the fathers, and to follow in the footsteps of our fathers.”

At the close of the service, guests were invited to “partake of a bountiful dinner” prepared by the Ladies’ Aid. It was served under a large tent. Over 1,000 were served following the morning service and 2,000 following the afternoon service.

The celebration was reported to be the largest “gathering of Lutherans” in the history of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Will County.

Before the celebration, the steeple had been renewed and a larger finial placed on top. A cement sidewalk was laid around the church. Improvements inside included a new floor in the vestry and a new front hall.

The gala celebration was marred in September when Pastor A. H. Bauer collapsed in the pulpit and died. In his last prayer, he had “commended himself, his loved ones, and his flock to the grace and mercy of his God and Savior”. He had served the congregation for 35 years.

## EARLY WEDDINGS IN BEECHER

Weddings in the Beecher area were festive events. They were held in the church, parsonage, or bride's home. Sometimes, they were small intimate ceremonies. Other times, they were large celebrations lasting well into the night.

Howard Paul remembers the young girls coming into his father's jewelry store and looking through the many cases of engagement rings. When they settled on the perfect ring, they would confide their choice to Mr. Paul.

Later the girl's father would suggest to the prospective groom that Mr. Paul might be able to make a suggestion as to an appropriate engagement ring. Mr. Paul would then tell the young man, "Oh, I think she would like this..."

In June 1911, Caroline Wilke and Ernest Milow were married in an 8 o'clock ceremony at Zion Lutheran Church. The bridal party was taken to church in automobiles by chauffeurs Albert Hack and Harry Thielman.

The church was decorated with ferns and cut flowers. The bride wore a gown of white, silk-embroidered marquisette over white messaline. After the ceremony, the bridal party returned to the bride's home where a seven course dinner was served, prepared by "cooks hired for the occasion". Later ice cream and wedding cake were served. There was vocal and instrumental music and games before gifts were opened.

A year later in February 1912, George Batterman and Josephine Apking were married in St. Luke's Church, which was filled to capacity. Miss Apking's dress was white satin with pearl trimmings. She was attended by a maid of honor and two bridesmaids.

Following the ceremony, the bridal party and invited guests retired to the home of the bride's mother at Woodward and Miller Streets. "A bountiful and elaborate banquet" was served at 6 o'clock "which was followed at intervals with many dainty luncheons". Cards and other games were enjoyed until midnight when William Paul's orchestra furnished music for several hours of dancing.

The newlyweds received numerous wedding gifts, including silver tableware, cut glass, a Batterburg luncheon cloth, Irish Point lace curtains, a clock, rocker, leather couch, rug, bed spread, and a large, hand-painted picture. In addition, their friends wished them "fortune and smooth sailing over the matrimonial sea".

## EARLY COURTSHIP



ELSIE STOSENTINE IN 1913 — the year before her marriage to William Paul. At her death on September 13, 1994, Elsie Paul was 100 years old, the oldest resident in Beecher.

### ELSIE STOSENTINE PAUL REMINISCES ABOUT HER COURTSHIP, ENGAGEMENT, AND MARRIAGE:

*"I met him (William Paul) at a picnic in Beecher. (Later) he came to see me (in Chicago Heights). We went to the show. There we met the other guy I went with. Then I was in trouble! The other guy said, 'If I'm not good enough during the week'... So that was the end of that!"*

*"My folks liked him (Mr. Paul) better. They were German and my father and him, they could converse like nobody's business."*

*"We broke up one time and he went to see my father. My father said, 'Why did you break up with him?' I said, 'I didn't break up with him, I just got tired.' So we came back again."*

*"He said 'I can't buy you much of a ring, so we'll have to do without.'"*

*"I said, 'Well, that's okay.' Next time he came, he had a big diamond!"*

*"We didn't get married right away, 'cause I didn't want to. I was too young. I was only 20 years old. I liked to go to dances and stuff. Finally he said, 'You have to make up your mind.'"*

*"Well, I said, 'Let's get married.' So we went to my mother — we never said anything until we were ready to go — then we went (and told her). She was kneading bread, I can still see her today. She was crying like nobody. 'Well, now, that's all right, we'll be back on Thursday and eat some of the bread.'"*

*William Paul and Elsie Stogentine were married October 29, 1914 in Gary, Indiana. Following the ceremony, which was in German, they traveled by train to Chicago for their honeymoon."*



EARLY WEDDINGS



**ALBERT HACK AND MARIE DENEKE** — were married Sunday afternoon, December 29, 1913, at the home of the bride's mother. The bride's dress was white charmeuse satin, trimmed with fur, shadow lace, and rhinestones. She wore a veil draped with lilies of the valley and carried a bouquet of white roses. They were the parents of Jean Hack Ohlendorf.



**ERNEST SELK AND IDA STADE** — were married in the Lutheran parsonage, June 3, 1915. The bride wore a navy blue tailored suit and carried a bouquet of lilies of the valley. They took a honeymoon trip through the eastern states. They were the parents of Audrey Selk Beske.



**ARTHUR HACK AND ETHEL WEHMHOEFER** — were married at noon, January 1, 1920, at the St. Luke's parsonage. Following the wedding, the couple boarded the train for their honeymoon in Chicago. They were the parents of Geraldine Hack Imholz.



**WILLIAM PAUL AND ELSIE STOGENTINE** — were married October 29, 1914, in Gary, Indiana. Herman Bockelman drove the couple to their wedding. Afterwards, they took the train to Chicago for their honeymoon. They were the parents of Howard Paul.