

THE TWENTIES



1920 - 1930

Congratulations Beecher on 125 Years



First 4th of July Float of the Women's Club
1922 — the year the club was organized.

Lillian Atwater
Barbara Bakhaus
Shirley Biery
Helene Boyens
Verda Churchill
Ernestine Daniels
Claudia Davidson
Gwen Dean
LaVerne Fanning
Jean Guild
Nancy Heldt
Viola Heldt
Veta Hiatt

Tillie Hoppensteadt
Betty Johnson
Mamie Kurth
Arlene Long
Berta McCabe
Judy Nissen
Erna Nordstrand
Jean Ohlendorf
Lisa Poth
Jean Reiman
Marilyn Rossler
Lois Ruder
Hilda Ruge

Ruthann Sanders
Lucile Satterthwaite
Mariln Selk
Pat Sirbek
Vicki Squier
Marion Von Alven
Beverly Wehling
Leyla Wehling
Ruth Wehling
Marion Wehmhoefer
Rosalind Willy
Esther Wunderlich
Agnès Yeransian

Women's Club
Serving the community for 73 years

THE TWENTIES

*A*mong the many activities during the “twenties”, there were three main events which would benefit the Beecher area for many years: the development of Firemen’s Park, the construction of Washington Township Community Building, and the arrival of a young doctor.

Beecher did not have a public park. The summer picnics and celebrations were held in surrounding groves. Many residents felt that a public park should be created in the center of the village. In the summer of 1921, the Firemen purchased a three-acre site and asked for help in landscaping it.

The Washington Township Community Building became a reality in 1929. It was heralded as the finest in all of Will County. Its auditorium featured a 25-foot stage, seating capacity for 850, and facilities for moving pictures. Downstairs there were meeting rooms, a banquet hall with modern kitchen, and bowling alleys — a very bold idea for the time.

The young doctor was looking for a good location to begin his practice when he drove through muddy roads to visit Beecher for the first time. He liked the people and the village.

Dr. Homer Hiatt served as Beecher’s faithful doctor for the next 41 years. His son Dr. Richard joined him later. Between father and son, they would serve the community for the next 75 years.

FIREMEN’S PARK

From the earliest of times, Beecher area residents enjoyed summertime picnics and gatherings. Churches and other organizations such as the Modern Woodmen and the Firemen used groves. Three of the popular ones were Stadt’s Grove, south of Zion Lutheran Church; Judy’s Grove on Dr. D. D. Van Voorhis’ property east of the village; or Lange’s Grove, northwest of Beecher.

In the early 1920’s talk began of a village park. Beecher was one of the few local towns which did not have a public park.



INTERSECTION OF INDIANA AVENUE AND DIXIE HIGHWAY — Village Marshall Fred Hinze and Frank Hunte watch traffic on Dixie Highway. At right is Oberheide’s Restaurant and Market. Wehmhoefer’s Garage is to the north. Frank Hunte’s General Store was on the southwest corner. The automobile at left is turning west on Indiana Avenue.

Some of the land in the center of the village was owned by Dr. Van Voorhis. He offered to sell a three-acre site, west of the creek adjoining the public school grounds, for a total of \$800.

An investigating committee was formed in May 1921 and a public meeting held to discuss the proposal. The committee felt the response was favorable. The site was centrally located and appeared to be the logical location for a public park.

Election was set for July 27, 1921; voters were encouraged to support the purchase of the land. The results were a complete surprise. Of 234 votes cast, 143 were against the plan, and only 91 in favor of it. (At the time, men's and women's votes were counted separately. The breakdown was men, 81 to 57; women, 62 to 34.)

The decisive defeat appeared to be based on three factors. The site was very low and might have water problems, Trim Creek was "contaminated, vile, and unhealthy", and a sewage system was more important.

However, all was not lost. Within two weeks of the park's defeat, the Beecher Volunteer Fire Department voted unanimously to purchase the site.

They paid \$700 for the three-acre site, \$100 less than the original asking price. They asked that a portion of the purchase price be made through public subscription since their treasury could not fund the entire amount.

A park commission was appointed: John Wehrley, William C. Hack, Henry Koch, George Batterman, and C. B. Eskilson. These men would have full charge of the new park.

Plans to beautify the area began immediately. In November, volunteers "motored to Armond Lattz's farm" and dug over 200 trees, loaded them onto trucks, and returned to Beecher. The following day they planted all 200 trees according to an overall landscape plan (stakes indicated where each tree should be placed). The trees were oak, birch, maple, ash, and elm. All were fine specimens and had been donated by Mr. Lattz.

The Firemen issued a heartfelt "Thank You" to all the citizens who had volunteered. Beecher would now have a public park in the center of the village.

WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY BUILDING

One of the first references to a township building was in the spring of 1921. Residents were encouraged to attend the annual township meeting on April 5 when the question of a new "town hall" would be discussed. Their sentiments were requested.

The proposal took some time to gain support. In the meantime, the Clark-Struve Hall was rented to the Masons. After five or six years, residents began to realize that there was a real need for a "community" building.

A special election was held in January 1927 asking Washington Township residents: "Shall an annual tax not to exceed two mills (a mill is one-tenth of one cent) on a dollar of the assessed evaluation on all taxable property be levied for the purpose of erecting and maintaining a community building in Washington Township." The referendum carried 185 to 47.



WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY BUILDING — Begun in 1928 and dedicated March 11, 1929, the Community Building was hailed as the best of its kind in Will County.

Work was begun in the summer of 1928. By the end of August, the building was "assuming proportions". The foundation was complete, and the bricklayers were beginning the outside walls. Once the shell was completed, the inside work could continue during the winter months.

The building was nearing completion in February 1929. The board of managers set Monday, March 11 at 7:30 p.m. as the day of dedication.

Beecher area citizens had always been proud, civic-minded people and this was to be the largest community celebration since the school dedication in 1907 and the Armistice Day celebration in 1919.

People began arriving two hours early. At the start of the dedication ceremonies, there were nearly 1,000 people filling the auditorium, balcony, and standing in any available space.

It was an exciting evening!

"At the appointed time, the beautiful plush curtain was drawn and Wegert's Band burst forth in all its might with the National Anthem... The audience in unison stood up. To make the point more impressive and picturesque, little Audrey Selk (Beseke), dressed as a goddess, bore a staff from which was suspended a flag of our country."

H. E. Ehlers, township supervisor, told of the cost and material of the building. He cited public cooperation and donations from public corporations which made the project possible.

C. B. Eskilson, village president, spoke on behalf of the village. He congratulated the voters and taxpayers for "their progressive accomplishment".

The main speaker of the evening was Judge Austin, from the County Court. He complimented the township on "their most beautiful building, and the community spirit which must have prevailed to acquire it".

The program also consisted of readings, sketches and musical selections by children from each school in the township. Four young ladies, Florence and Helen Batterman, Rosalind Hunte, and Bernice Greene presented songs and a drill. They were "appropriately and prettily costumed for the parts they took".

The star performer was Herman Fischer from the rural Deeke School. He gave a reading which "not only captivated but amazed the audience ... his reading was clear and forceful and heady".

Following the program, many of the people toured the building. The upper floor, or auditorium, had a seating capacity of 700 and a balcony which seated 150. The 25-foot stage was on the north end. It contained a wooden scene and a screen for moving pictures. The curtain was of the "heaviest and finest red plush". The fireproof moving picture booth was in the center of the balcony. Beneath the balcony were the women's reception room and the check room and ticket booth. The entire upper floor was inlaid with hardwood.



Minnie Bahlman
Bahlman Oil Company



Frank Hunte
General Store



BEECHER'S NEW DOCTOR — Dr. Homer Hiatt bought a new 1921 Model T Ford from Herman Bockelman. It had a special winter top, but no heater. Dr. Hiatt, his dog who accompanied him on his visits, and the Model T are shown in front of Wehrley's Drug Store on Penfield Street.

The first floor contained the banquet hall, a thoroughly equipped, modern kitchen, committee and election rooms, the ladies and gents lavatories, the boiler and furnace room.

In addition, there were bowling alleys along the east wall. They were installed by "the good will of 23 bowling enthusiasts". By special arrangement, the alleys would become the property of the Community Building when they earned enough to pay for themselves. After that, 25 percent of their earnings would go to the board of managers as rental.

The building had plenty of windows for daylight, and "scores of electric lights" for night. All the electrical work had been done by William Paul. General contractors were Koch and Wiggerhauser.

The board of managers were Fred Erichson, president; George Batterman, secretary; and George F. Hinze. The building was called "the most famous and best of its kind in Will County". Once again, the Beecher area people had undertaken an enormous task and were justifiably proud of their accomplishment.

The first large event to be held in the new Community Building was the June 15, 1929 banquet and dance celebrating the wedding of Ethel Eskilson and Frank Slivon and the 25th wedding anniversary of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. C. B. Eskilson.

The wedding was held at 4 o'clock in St. Luke's Church. The bride was attended by her sister Violet Eskilson as maid of honor. Following the ceremony, the party moved to the Community Building where 100 invited guests enjoyed an elaborate dinner among beautiful decorations in the banquet room. Toastmaster D. J. Steevens presided. He introduced a large group of distinguished guests.

At 8 o'clock, the party moved upstairs to the auditorium. Two hundred more guests joined the party. The evening was spent dancing and socializing.

THE HIATT FAMILY

A young man arrived in Beecher in May 1920, driving through muddy country roads in search of a location to begin his medical practice.

Dr. Homer Hiatt had been told that there was another doctor in Beecher (Dr. D. D. Van Voorhis), but he was very involved in his livestock business. Perhaps the area could support another doctor.

The young doctor liked the village; and before he left, he rented the first floor of Mrs. George Schaefflein's home at 851 Hodges Street for \$8 a month. He would use the parlor for his office, the dining room for the waiting room, and the pantry for the pill room. Dr. and Mrs. Hiatt would live in the other rooms.

Dr. Hiatt had graduated from the College of Medicine and Surgery (now Loyola University) in 1917. He spent the next two years in the Army Medical Corp during World War I. After his discharge, he took a review course, then passed the Illinois State Board examination. He was ready to establish his practice.

Dr. and Mrs. Hiatt lived on Hodges Street for one year. Mrs. Hiatt would often accompany her husband on his calls, including those made at night. She was always properly dressed; even on the night calls, she wore a "proper" hat. Dr. Hiatt had a used Model T Ford Roadster.

He recalled that he had only 50 cents left after equipping his first office. During that first year, he received potatoes as payment of services. He quipped that "his

wife could prepare potatoes in more ways than anyone”.

The following year, the Beecher area residents had grown so fond of the new doctor that they didn't want to lose him to another town. The bank arranged for the construction of a new home, complete with separate office space at 842 Penfield Street. Mrs. Hiatt remembered that they never even signed a note. The bank bought the lot, hired the carpenters and made most of the arrangements.

Dr. Hiatt conducted his practice from this office until August 1927, when he and his associate, E. H. Kupke, a former roommate from medical school, moved to their new quarters at the east end of the Clark & Bank Building, 751 Penfield Street. The new office had seven spacious rooms and a cement sidewalk in front.

The doctors practiced there for the next ten years, until they moved to the remodeled Hiatt Medical Center on Reed Street, the former Hack Hotel.

Beecher's new doctor was born on a farm near Albion, Indiana, September 20, 1893. He was one of seven boys. His father was a contractor, but Dr. Hiatt became interested in medicine as a young boy when he drove the horse and buggy for the local doctor. On cold days, he would be invited inside the patient's home and occasionally assist the doctor. He decided that was the profession he wished to pursue.

Homer Hiatt and Ermal Bender were married on April 18, 1918. He would practice in Beecher for 41 years, retiring in 1961. His son, Dr. Richard Hiatt, joined the practice in 1948.

In addition to his large medical practice, Dr. Hiatt served on the school board for 12 years and the Beecher Community Church board for 26 years. He enjoyed hunting, fishing, and working in his yard.

In April 1968, Dr. and Mrs. Homer Hiatt celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary. Dr. Hiatt said: "If I had to do it all over again, I'd go into the same profession, marry the same girl, and live in the same town."

Dr. Homer Hiatt died October 2, 1973.

BEECHER BUSINESSES

There were more changes taking place among the businesses during the 1920's.

A national firm, the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company (A&P) came to Beecher in 1922. It leased part of the Bockelman building, which formerly housed the Paul Jewelry Store on south Gould Street. Fred E. Heldt became manager in February 1923 for the "well-known cut-rate" grocery store. Later, Arnold Knuth became manager. He had been an employee in Frank Hunte's General Store.

John Storch and Irwin Stelling now owned and operated the Storch & Stelling General Store, formerly owned by August Ehrhardt. The Ehrhardt family sold the business in 1914, following Mr. Ehrhardt's death in 1912. It was operated by August Batterman until 1919 when Mr. Storch and William Nemitz purchased it. Mr. Nemitz sold his interest to Irwin Stelling in 1923, and the store became



INSIDE THE A&P STORE — Oscar Knuth and Arnold Knuth stand behind the counter of the A&P Store on south Gould Street. Before them is a carton containing "Fly Ribbon, 6 for 10 cents".

known as Storch & Stelling. It continued as Storch & Stelling until 1951, when Mr. Storch retired. Mr. and Mrs. Stelling continued the business until the late 1950's. The building was dismantled.

F. H. Wilke and Joliet Attorney Hjalmar Rehn purchased the interests of H. B. Ruge from his widow in September 1925, and the well-known business of Wilke & Ruge became Wilke and Rehn. Mr. Wilke continued as manager, selling lumber, coal, implements and building materials.

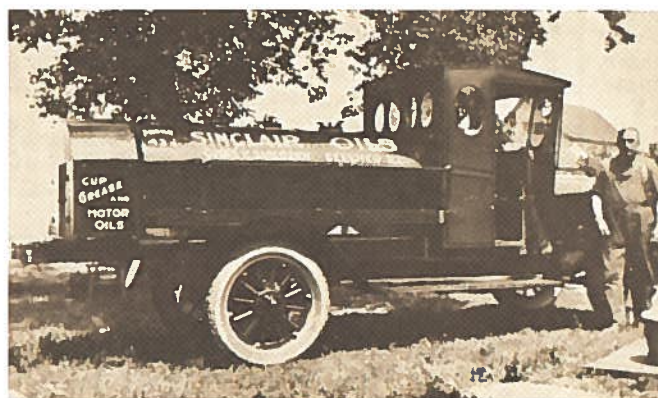
After 16 years in its first location on Reed Street, the Beecher Herald moved to a new home on Woodward Street, just south of the village hall. The two-story building, at 541 Woodward Street, is now an apartment building.

Arthur Hack took over the general merchandise store from Herman Hack at 734 Indiana Avenue. Mrs. Arthur Hack introduced her line of millinery. Her 1925 fall selection was "exceptionally modish, stylish, and with pleasing combination, sure to suit the individual tastes of the Beecher ladies".

Automobiles were fast replacing horses as a means of transportation. Beecher businessmen responded quickly to the change.

Charles H. Bahlman established the Bahlman Oil Company, selling Sinclair products, in August 1921, from a location west of his home at 747 Miller Street. A large new building could accommodate two trucks. The station included an 18,000 gallon gasoline tank and 12,900 gallon kerosene tank.

When Mr. Bahlman died in 1925, his widow Minnie Bahlman managed the business until her death in 1960. It continued with her daughter, Dorothy Saller and her



CHARLES H. BAHLMAN —
Mr. Bahlman stands beside one of the Bahlman Oil Company trucks, following the formation of the company in 1921.

grandson Herbert. The Bahlman Oil Company was sold to Gas City Limited on January 1, 1995.

The Bahlman Service Station at the intersection of Penfield Street and Dixie Highway was built in 1929. The manager was Herb Saller. Sixty-six years later, it is still operated by family members: William Saller and his sons, Lance and Douglas. They are grandson and great-grandsons of Minnie Bahlman.

One block south of the Bahlman Service Station, Ed Langreder replaced his old landmark building (Langreder's Blacksmith Shop) on the southeast corner of Indiana Avenue and Dixie Highway with a 40-foot by 50-foot cement block garage, spacious enough to accommodate 17 automobiles.

Wehmhoefer's also had a garage on Dixie Highway. It was on the east side, north of the Indiana Avenue intersection.



WILKE & RUGE — *The firm supplied coal and lumber in addition to wagons, buggies and carriages. In 1925, it became Wilke & Rehn when Mrs. H. B. Ruge sold her late husband's interests.*

In the center of the village on Reed Street, Henry Hack built a large showroom (with a public restroom) for his growing automobile business. The new Ford Service & Sales building was 28 feet by 82 feet, and was located one door to the north of the other Hack garage on Reed Street.

The new buildings were mostly constructed of cement block by the Hoff & Wigenhauser firm.

Druggist John Wehrley became postmaster in July 1924 under the Republican administration of Calvin Coolidge. For the previous eleven years, the post office had been located in the Hinze store.

The post office was now in a separate room, next to the Wehrley Drug Store, in the Clark & Bank Building. There were larger lock boxes to accommodate the business firms, a permanent writing desk against the east wall, and a parcel post window. Miss Louise Rump, who had

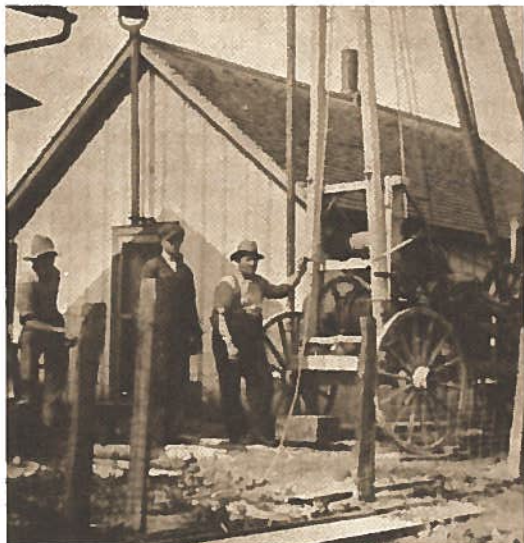
served as assistant to Mr. Hinze, continued in the same position. Hours were 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., except on Sundays and holidays.

The last business news of the decade was announced in 1929 when Dr. D. D. Van Voorhis opened a nine-hole golf course on his property, the original Highland Stock Farm of Beecher's founder T. L. Miller.

The new course would be known as Shady Lawn Golf Course. The clubhouse was built from lumber salvaged from an old barn on the property. The manager was C. Matt Melville, from the Southmoor Country Club. He was a golf course architect and had helped to lay out the course.

Shady Lawn Golf Course opened in April. Golfers were met at the Beecher depot and transported by hayrack to the course. Following their game, the golfers were provided with "all the chicken they could eat" before returning to the depot for their return trip.

Shady Lawn Golf Course is still offering a picturesque course for golfers. There are now 27 holes. It has operated continuously for the past 66 years.



WELL DRILLING RIG — Gerhard Wehling Sr. beside some of the early equipment of the Gerhard Wehling Well Driller Company, which was started in 1915. The company became Wehling Well Works in 1941 with E. C. Wehling as owner. It was sold to Layne Western Company in 1992.



SHADY LAWN CLUBHOUSE — Shady Lawn Golf Course opened in the spring of 1929 with nine holes. The clubhouse was built from lumber salvaged from an old barn on the property. The site was the former T. L. Miller Highland Stock Farm.

VILLAGE



The demand for electricity was again greater than the Beecher Municipal Electric Lighting Plant could supply. In May 1920, residents voted to sell the plant to the Momence Utilities Company for \$2,500. The sale included the generators, tank, switch-board, outside lines and poles.

The Momence Utilities Company extended their lines to Beecher from Grant Park, supplying "unlimited current for light, power, cooking, and heating".

During the summer of 1924, Hoff & Wiggerhauser constructed 24-foot bridges on Indiana Avenue and on Penfield Street. These were a big improvement as automobile traffic was increasing rapidly.

Chicago Road (formerly known as the Vincennes Trail) was now Dixie Highway. Work was begun in 1920 and by May 1921, there was a cement road from Chicago to

Danville. The official dedication was held in August with a parade of automobiles traveling from Chicago to Danville.

The procession was headed by an automobile "carrying a young lady characterized as Miss Dixie". Illinois Governor Len Small followed in another automobile. Miss Violet Heldt (Meeter) was chosen as Miss Beecher to greet the procession as it passed through Beecher.

THE BUILDING BOOM IN HOUSING

During the 1920's, many new houses were constructed; almost all of them in the popular bungalow style. During the one year of 1924, eight new residences were completed within the village.

C. B. Eskilson owned ten acres north of Miller

ONCE A BARBER, ALWAYS A BARBER

"That seems to be the slogan that fits the case of Ernest Selk, who years ago, started to learn barbering in Rube Wegert's tonsorial parlor. After serving his apprenticeship and becoming quite proficient at handling the razor, brush, and scissors, he retired to enter the mercantile business with the firm of Stade Brothers.

"Following this line of business for several years, he sold out the first of the year to Harry L. Stade.

"Since then he has been sort of 'bumming around' his old haunts until last week, when he no longer could stand the suspense and entered into partnership with Wegert & Stadt.

"Some say it is because the ladies now have their hair bobbed that he re-entered the trade, but we do not believe this.

"The firm name now is Wegert, Stadt & Selk."

— Beecher Herald, June 11, 1925



PENFIELD STREET — Older residents reported they had never experienced an Easter storm of such proportions. Henry Freerking operated the railroad crossing gates from the gate house until automatic controls were installed in 1930's.

Street surrounding his home at 631 Miller Street. He subdivided the area into lots from Catalpa Street to Dixie Highway. The first home was a bungalow which Mr. Eskilson built on the corner of Catalpa and Miller Streets. Later, two brick homes were constructed: Dr. Homer Hiatt's at 607 Miller Street and William Wiggerhauser's at 529 Miller Street.

William C. Hack and William Schultz both built on Indiana Avenue. John Wehrley's new home on the southwest corner of Penfield and Woodward Streets (546 Penfield Street) had a two-car garage, surely a sign of the times.

One of the most elaborate and modern bungalows was built by Ernest Selk on the northeast corner of Penfield and Elliott Street (851 Penfield Street). Gustav Batterman's new home was at 634 Dunbar Street.

Ruge & Wilke offered to build custom homes on lots they owned on Dunbar Street. The lots already had sewer, water and sidewalks.

Once Dixie Highway was completed in 1921, Beecher was touted as a "good town for homes ... with an excellent concrete road all the way to the city (Chicago). Residents can make the drive in an hour and a half, giving them ample time to get to work".

WELTON (RUBE) EHRHARDT – MAJOR LEAGUE PITCHER

Baseball was always a favorite sport in the Beecher area. The early teams had loyal fan support, with large attendance at all the home games. Many fans traveled by horse and wagon or buggy to the away games. Dances were given to raise money for team uniforms.

Players had "spiffy" team uniforms, purchased with money raised from the dances. The ball diamonds were located west of Chicago Road and north of Penfield Street.

One Beecher player became an early standout. Welton Ehrhardt began to receive attention in the spring of 1914, when he was a 19-year old, six-foot two-inch pitcher for the Beecher Green Sox.

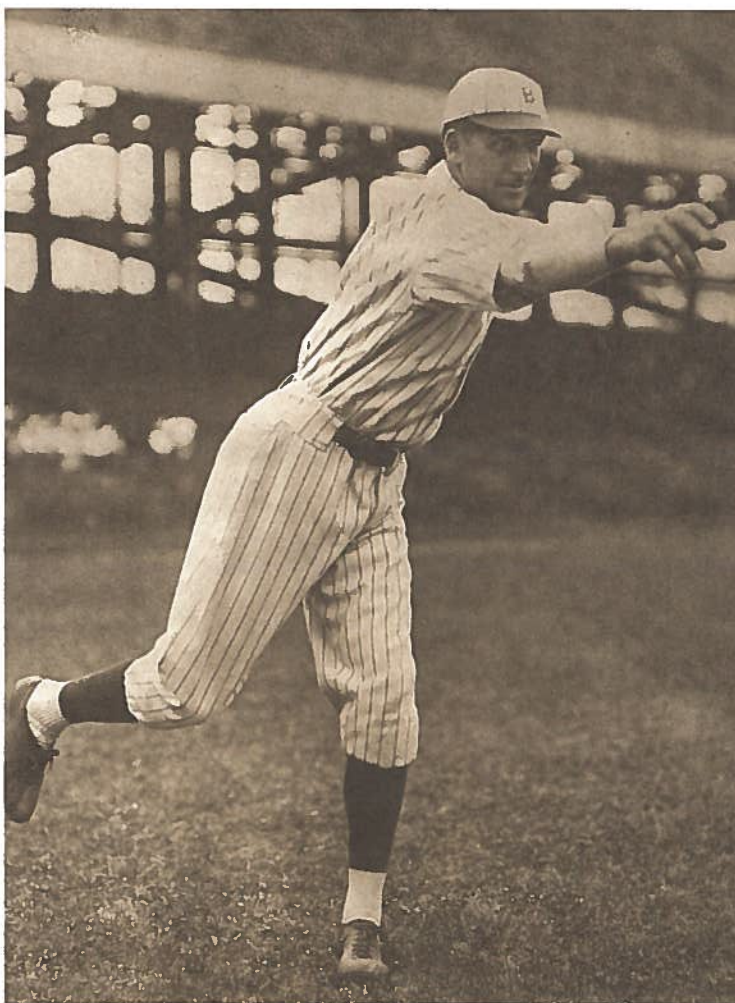
In June, he pitched a one-hitter and was referred to as "the local wizard". The following year, Welton left Beecher. He began pitching for the semi-pro Chicago Heights team. He made news that year by striking out 15 opponents, setting a record by striking out three batters with only 10 pitches.

Welton signed with Moline in 1916. He was sent to play with a Duluth team in the Northern League. He did well and became a favorite with the fans. It was about this time that he earned the affectionate nickname "Rube", meaning "unsophisticated countryman". One sports writer commented: "The fans took an immediate liking to him ... he was anything but a blushing, timid individual."

Based on his record with the Moline team, scouts from both the Sox and Cubs followed Welton's accomplishments. In September 1916, he was asked to report to Cub headquarters. It was an exciting time for him and for all his Beecher fans.

However, one week later while cranking his automobile, Welton dislocated his right wrist and tore several ligaments in his arm. In November, bone specialists on the Cub staff examined his injury, pronouncing it as sound as ever. He was signed by the Cubs, placed on their pitching staff, and told to report to spring training.

Welton Ehrhardt was farmed out to the Columbus team in the American Association when spring training arrived. During the season, he pitched for Columbus but finished the season with the Moline team, where he made



WELTON (RUBE) EHRHARDT — Beecher's major league baseball player demonstrates his form. He pitched for the Brooklyn Dodgers from 1924 to 1929.

news again when he pitched 19 innings, outlasting three pitchers on the opposing team.

The next two years were spent in the Navy (during World War I) where he pitched for the Great Lakes Naval Ball Club. Following his discharge, Welton played semi-pro ball during the 1920–1923 seasons. He was finally signed by the Brooklyn Dodgers National League Baseball Club where he played from 1924 to 1929. He finished his professional career with the Cincinnati Reds in 1930, where he beat the Cubs 9–0 on the last day of the season.

Rube Ehrhardt had three pitches, a fast ball, a curve, and a change-up. He explained: “Control and calmness are important. A pitcher must stay ahead of the hitter and if he doesn’t, he shouldn’t lose his head.”

Upon his retirement from the major league, Welton played semi-pro ball in Chicago Heights until about 1932.

Welton (Rube) Ehrhardt was the son of Arthur Ehrhardt, and the grandson of August Ehrhardt. He was born in Beecher on November 20, 1894 and died April 27, 1980.

A fan remembers him in his retirement years: “Rube was someone special. It was a thrill just to see him on the street, a big man, 6’2”, 180 pounds, taking those long strides... He gave the impression of a man filled with the joy of living.”

BEECHER ORGANIZATIONS IN THE 1920’S

The Washington Township Farm Bureau, a branch of the Will County Farm Bureau, was organized in January 1920 when 126 members joined.

The first meeting was held in the Clark–Struve Hall. The following were elected to office: William Herlitz, president; Fred Haseman, vice-president; August Rump, secretary; and directors, John Willie, William Wehling, and John Ekhoﬀ. They set 1 o’clock on the first Saturday of each month as their meeting date.

Fifteen local women organized a civic and charitable club, the Women’s Welfare Club, when they met on March 7, 1922, in the home of Mrs. Maude Stites. Officers were

Mrs. Maude Stites, president; Rose Hunte, treasurer; and Gertrude Hack, secretary. Other members included Ida Heldt, Marie Hack, Winnie Wegert, Pearl Schultz, Dorothy Bahlman (Saller), Myrtle Myrick (Scheiman), Violet Heldt (Meeter), Flora Ehrhardt, Vivian Ehrhardt (Vehrenkamp), Lena Wehling, Emma Knuth and Tillie Bielfeldt. Vivian Ehrhardt Vehrenkamp, the last surviving charter member, died March 10, 1995.

The new club decided to meet the first Tuesday of each month. Dues were 50 cents per year. Seventy-three

BEECHER FLOWER GARDEN WINS PRIZE

Mrs. George Batterman felt that her beautiful garden surrounding her home at 638 Elliott Street was worthy of consideration in a contest sponsored by the Chicago Tribune during the summer of 1927.

There were 2,000 contestants in the southern district. Judges made three trips to Beecher to study Mrs. Batterman’s garden.

She was awarded 4th place, a diploma, and a check for \$30.



HELENE HOPPENSTEADT
(Boyens)

TWO BEECHER BEAUTIES



MYRTLE MYRICK
(Scheiman)

years later, the club is still meeting on the same day. Due are now \$5 per year.

The club's first project was to install a water fountain in Firemen's Park. Members presented a play, "Clubbing a Husband", in the Clark-Struve Hall and raised \$168. They continued to add improvements to Firemen's Park. A flag pole, flag, and six benches were installed in 1923. Plans for a band shell were begun in 1924 and it was constructed the following year.

The Women's Welfare Club planned Boulder Park, east of the railroad tracks just north of Penfield Street. It contained a large boulder imbedded with a bronze tablet containing names of war veterans, a 35-foot iron flag pole, and appropriate landscaping. The park was dedicated in 1924. In 1974, Myrtle Myrick Scheiman was thanked by the club for raising and lowering the flag each day during the past 50 years.

By 1928, the club could afford to purchase two pianos, one for the public school kindergarden and another for the

MOONLIGHT PICNIC AND BAND CONCERT IS DELIGHTFUL

"The moonlight picnic and band concert last evening formally dedicated the new band stand in Firemen's Park, the gift of the Beecher Women's Welfare Club.

"Appropriate addresses were made by Reverend Gustav Horst, St. Luke's Church; C. B. Eskilson, village president; and Ewald Thuerman, who entertained with one of his mirth-provoking monologues.

"The band under the direction of 'Professor' R. H. Wegert did itself proud in rendering a splendid program of the latest and most popular pieces."

—Beecher Herald, September 11, 1926

new Community Building. They also purchased three dozen chairs for the new building.

In addition to plays, the Women's Welfare Club held box socials in order to raise money for their civic projects.

A Valentine Day Box Social in the Clark-Struve Hall featured prizes for the lady bringing the prettiest box and to the handsomest man purchasing a box. There were to be "competent lady judges". Coffee was served free with the boxes. In an imaginative twist, the ladies also presented "The Tableaus of Breathing Statuaries".

Wilmer (Hap) Selk recalled the box socials: "The ladies would take a shoe box or something like that, and decorate it, some were really beautiful. They would put sandwiches, pickles, radishes, in it for two people. Then you just bid on it at random. You ate with whoever's box (you bid on). It was sport. It was activity. Everybody enjoyed it. I think the last box I bid

on went for \$10. Everybody was out-bidding everybody else! The auctioneer (called), you put your finger up and you had it."



"BLOOM FOR ME" — Five young Beecher girls are dressed for their parts in the 1920 play, "Bloom for Me". They are left to right: Myrtle Myrick, Violet Heldt, Dorothy Bahlman, Alice Hinze, and Vivian Ehrhardt.



MAY QUEEN CELEBRATION — Seated before a fur rug, May Queen Myrtle Myrick is shown with her attendants: Warren Hack, Geraldine Hack, Audrey Selk, and Kenneth Wehling.

The Beecher Boy Scouts were organized in April 1925, assisted by the Chicago Heights Troop. Initiates were Sylvester Schultz, LaVern Schultz, Wesley Ruge, Gilbert Koch, Arnold Eskilson, Irwin Haseman, Marvin Graham, William Graham, Byron Hunte, and Charles Maxwell.

Scout master was Phil Robaska; assistant master, Vern Heckel. Committeemen were C. B. Eskilson, Frank Hunte and Dr. H. S. Hiatt. The Scouts first program covered a talk about "Camp Life" and two demonstrations, "Fire by Friction" and "First Aid".

The Girl Scout Troop was begun about the same time. They purchased a flag for Boulder Park and in 1925 decorated the tree in the park for the Christmas season. The "electrical colored lights" were a delight to the entire community.

WILLIAM PAUL'S AIR SHOTGUN

Although he owned and operated the jewelry store in Beecher, William Paul had other interests. From his teens, he had been working on the design for an air shotgun. By January 1924, he felt confident enough to apply for a patent. He was issued patent #1,481,526 covering the Paul Air Shotgun Model 420.

There were design problems with the first model, most likely with the cocking rod. Improvements were



A CARTON OF THE PAUL SHOTGUN SHELLS
— William Paul assembled both the shells and the guns
in a small building at 721 Indiana Avenue.

made, and a second patent #1,506,995 was issued on September 2, 1924.

Over a thousand of the Paul Air Shotguns were manufactured. The metal parts were made by Pratt Manufacturing Company, Joliet. Mr. Paul made the stocks from Mississippi walnut and assembled the guns in a small frame building at 721 Indiana Avenue.

In addition, he manufactured and sold shotgun shells. The first were cylindrical paper tubes. Later the shells were metal (probably cut from curtain rods). Shells were sold with the Paul Air Shotgun or as ammunition for other shotguns.

The Paul Air Shotgun was 43 inches long. It weighed only six pounds. It was promoted as "the ideal shot gun for all small game". The Paul family promoted it at local fairs and parks, including the Illinois State Fair. It was also sold through retail outlets.

Gun owners felt the Paul Air Shotgun had one serious fault. The valve seals became brittle, misshapen and often failed. Buyers returned the guns for repair.

The onset of the depression prevented further promotion and advertising of the guns. Mr. Paul ceased their manufacture during the 1930's but he continued to repair the Paul Air Shotgun and other models which were brought to his shop.



THE PAUL AIR SHOTGUN — William Paul stands beside his automobile advertising the Paul Air Shotgun, which he manufactured and sold during the 1920's.

HARVESTING ICE IN BEECHER

Beecher had two sites for harvesting ice in the early days. A large depression along the western bank of Trim Creek, just north of Penfield Street (known today as the sunken yard beside the Community Building) had been prepared. In winter, this was flooded and ice was harvested from there. The ice was probably stored in the ice house which originally occupied the location of the Community Building.

The second, and much larger, site for harvesting ice was the clay hole south of Indiana Avenue. This was the large hole which remained following the failure of the Eastern Illinois Brick Company in 1909. Wilmer (Hap) Selk remembers that it measured more than 100 feet wide and 200 to 300 feet long, with another section branching off to one side.

The ice was first skived (marked for cutting), then it was cut by an ice saw, and loaded onto a platform to drain. The blocks of ice were hauled to the ice house on bobsleds or trucks.

Once at the ice house, the blocks were pulled up a chute with tongs (horses supplied the power) and stacked by layers in the ice house. A couple of inches of sawdust was placed between each layer as insulation. The ice was stacked to the roof of the ice house. With this preparation, very little of the ice thawed before it was used during the summer months.

Beecher had several other ice houses besides the one along Trim Creek. W. F. Myrick had one south of his meat market and there was another one behind the First State Bank on Gould Street. The ice houses were well-insulated with double walls filled with either sawdust or straw. The hip roofs were also insulated.

At one time, Beecher had an ice man who would deliver ice to the homes. Each family had an ice card in the window, indicating the amount of ice they needed.

When the local supply of ice was depleted, it was shipped in by railroad cars.

With the arrival of electricity and refrigerators, the ice houses were moved or torn down. The Washington Township Community Building was built on the site of the ice house along Trim Creek.



HARVESTING ICE AT THE CLAY HOLE — Workers cut blocks of ice, which were then pulled up the ramp onto the loading platform. The ice was taken to one of the local ice houses, where it was packed in sawdust, and sold during the summer.



*Hiatt Medical Clinic
605 Reed Street
Beecher, Illinois*

Dr. Homer Hiatt came to Beecher in 1920. He bought the present office at 605 Reed Street in 1935. He retired in 1961.

Dr. Richard Hiatt joined his father in 1948.

Dr. Hiatt feels he has been blessed with a faithful staff for many years: Marilyn Hoffmeyer since 1952, Flora Cirks since 1958, and Emily Stedt Selk since 1967.

Dr. Hiatt is grateful for the many years he has served Beecher.

