

# THE LATER YEARS



1950 - 1995

# **HAPPY 125TH BIRTHDAY BEECHER**



**1958**



**1995**

***We've Also Come A Long Way...***

## **BEECHER POLICE ASSOCIATION**

## THE LATER YEARS

**T**he Later Years in Beecher.  
*How did they compare with the very early years in the Village?*

Beecher residents still were very proud of their village. They worked hard to keep it clean and attractive. Trees, which were so important to the early residents, continued to be planted. Beecher was honored as Tree City USA.

Landis Wehling was beginning his 23rd year as village president. Earlier, he had served 12 years as village trustee. There was now a village administrator to handle the day-to-day operations. Village officials continued to deal with sewer, street, and water problems, as in the early days.

The local organizations met on a regular basis and supported civic projects, while providing local entertainment and comradery.

The early churches were still serving their members and the local schools continued to provide a good educa-

tion for area students, many of whom attended college now.

The business section had experienced the most change. The railroad, once so vital to the early businesses and residents, still ran through the village, but no trains stopped. The depot, which was the scene of much activity for many years, had been moved to another location.

Over the years, the business section along the railroad declined. Some of the businesses offered goods and services which were no longer needed.

People now traveled north and south on the highway, and many new businesses were built there to take advantage of the increased traffic.

As Beecher area residents looked forward to the celebration of their 125th anniversary, they pondered the future of their village. What would the coming years bring?



*THE PAST & THE PRESENT — Original buildings along Reed Street include the livery stable, Hiatt Clinic (the former Bielfeldt House), Clark & Bank Building, and the Myrick Building. In the background are the newer structures — the municipal building, post office, and Farmers State Bank.*

# VILLAGE



The 1950 census figures showed a population 949 residents within the village. During the decade a new municipal building and post office would be built.

The original village hall, built in 1884, had served the growing community faithfully over the years. In April 1958, a special election was held to determine if the village hall should be replaced and the waterworks system modernized. Voters supported both issues overwhelmingly.

Work began in the summer. A new 100,000 gallon water tower was built on Gould Street. The old well on the site of the village hall was cleaned and flushed before the new turbine pumps were installed.

The razing of the old village hall began as soon as the village officials were certain that an adequate water supply could be furnished.

Village president Norman Holdt spoke at the dedication ceremonies held on June 5, 1960. He said: "We sincerely hope that the confidence you placed in us by supporting the bond issue by a 30 to 1 majority is reflected in the building you see before you".

With remodeling over the years, the structure continues to serve the village.

The new post office was constructed during the summer of 1958. Ground was broken in July, and the formal dedication held in April 1958 with 500 people attending. Two former Beecher Postmasters were present. They were William J. Hinze, appointed in 1913 and Mrs. Alfred Sperling, appointed in 1933. Mrs. Louise Wehrmann was the current postmaster.



**BEECHER'S NEW POST OFFICE AND MUNICIPAL BUILDING** —  
The new post office and municipal building were built in late 1950's.  
The municipal building replaced the original village hall built in 1884.

Also during the summer of 1958, natural gas lines were installed in the village. The first phase was to install an eight-inch supply main about 2 miles west of Beecher. The main distribution pipe was installed on Penfield Street. Another line ran south on Woodward Street to Indiana Avenue. Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin H. Scott at 522 Woodward Street were the first residents to receive natural gas.

In May 1973, the Beecher Fire Protection District was formed in order to levy taxes for the entire district. Previously, monies had been received by fund raisers or donations. The Firemen continued to sponsor the 4th of July celebration.



## BEECHER SUBDIVISIONS SINCE 1950

Konow-Graham, 1st Addition (Orchard and Meadow)	1952	Hillside Estates (Melrose Lane)	1972	Southfield Knoll (Woodward South)	1991
Lange's 1st Addition (Miller and Orchard)	1962	Apartment Buildings (Pasadena and Melrose)	1975	Lange's 3rd Addition (Orchard East)	1993
Country Terrace (Willow and Chestnut)	1972	Beecher Highlands (Pasadena East)	1979	Highlington Court (Indiana Avenue)	1994
		Lange's 2nd Addition (Miller East)	1980	Opal Beseke Subdivision (Woodward South)	1994



The west side fire station was built in 1972 at 640 Gould Street. It replaced the Holdt Iron Works, one of Beecher's oldest businesses. Johann Knuth had operated a blacksmith shop on the site beginning in the late 1800's. He lived next door to the shop on the southwest corner of Gould and Hodges Streets.

Three generations of Holdts had worked in the blacksmith shop – Fred, Norman and Terry. Fred Holdt learned the trade in Germany when he was 15 years old. After he came to America, he worked in St. Louis, then opened his own blacksmith shop in Lansing, and eventually came to Beecher in 1926.

Farmers from the surrounding area brought their plow shears to the shop for sharpening. Later ornamental iron railings were made in the shop. Elmer Becker recalls bringing his plow shears to the Holdts for sharpening. "In the fall of the year, the floor would be laying full (of shears to be sharpened). How he ever kept everybody's separated, I couldn't figure out..."

The Volunteer Firemen dedicated a new bandshell in Firemen's Park in October 1978. It was provided by a \$20,000 donation from Antoinette Werner and replaced the existing one which had begun to deteriorate.

A new fire station was built in 1987 at 711 Penfield Street by the Beecher Fire Protection District and the Beecher Volunteer Firemen. Open house was in March 1987. The building, supplies, and equipment cost approximately \$385,000.

## MR. BEECHER RESIGNS FOR HEALTH REASONS



FRED BERNHARD

*I was apparent that something was wrong as the village board members assembled in the Municipal Building (for the regular meeting). The chair to the left of the Mayor was vacant.*

*pant of that chair is not present, there is a very good reason, for he does not take his duties lightly.*

*"A letter from Fred Bernhard stating his resignation for health reasons prompted his actions."*

*"Anyone who has attended board meetings for the past 23 years knows that if the occu-*

*— Beecher Herald,  
April 4, 1974*



**BEECHER'S FIRST GAS METER** — Village President Norman Holdt turns on natural gas for Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Scott, 522 Woodward Street in September 1958. Duane Dronne, left, a Northern Illinois Gas employee, made the final connections. Two other NIGAS officials watch the procedure.



**HOLDT IRON WORKS** — Terry, Norman, and Fred Holdt take a break from their work in the Holdt Iron Works, located on the southwest corner of Gould and Hodges Streets. The building was replaced in 1972 by the West Side Fire Station and Garage.

In the fall of 1985, the Women's Welfare Club transferred their park to the village. Members of the club had created the park on the site of the former Beecher Creamery on Reed Street and had maintained it over the years.

The section of the municipal building which had housed the fire equipment was remodeled in August 1989 for an enlarged police department. Village President Landis Wehling announced in May 1988 that the village trustees had approved the appointment of Robert Barber as village administrator — the first for the village.

Later in August 1988, Police Chief Melvin Brewsey announced his retirement. His letter stated: "I have been with the village for 30 years as your Chief of Police. Over this time, I have seen many changes. When I replaced Herman Deeke as the village marshal, I became the police department, water department, sewer department and streets and alleys caretaker. We now have eight full time employees." His successor was Ray Wroblewski.

From the very early days Beecher residents planted trees to grace their surroundings. At that time, they had to locate saplings in natural settings and transport them back to Beecher in wagons.

Trees are still important in Beecher. The village has a tree department, a village tree ordinance, a forestry program, and observes Arbor Day.

In addition to maintaining the trees, village employees have planted over 200 trees in the past six years.

In 1995, for the sixth year, Beecher was named Tree City USA by the National Arbor Day Foundation.

## BEECHER BUSINESSES IN THE LATER YEARS

Changes continued to take place among the businesses in Beecher. The nature of some of the new businesses was unheard of in the early days.

During the year 1956, there were three major changes. Beecher Cash Grocery, operated for the past 11 years by L. J. Muehsler, was purchased by Harold Batterman, who had been employed as a meat cutter in the store since his release from the Army. Beecher Cash Grocery was located

in the old Stade Brothers Store on the corner of Gould and Penfield Streets.

Arnold Knuth purchased the Beecher Locker Plant, the former Frank Hunte Store on the corner of Indiana Avenue and Highway 1. He remodeled the store completely before moving his Midwest store from the Gould Street location. Mr. Knuth had begun his career working in the Hunte Store "under the tutelage" of Frank Hunte 42 years earlier.

Shady Lawn Golf Course was sold by Morris Van Voorhis, son of Dr. D. D. Van Voorhis. The new owners were five local people: Milford Hayden, Herman Ehlers, Roy Reising, Vern Henerberg, and Vern Loitz.

The Beecher and Grant Park offices of G. J. Koenning Insurance were merged in 1958. Gilbert Koenning had begun his insurance business in 1940. In 1961, the Koenning Insurance Company moved into the former First State Bank building on Gould Street. The First State Bank, founded by William Werner in 1916, had been sold to the American Savings Bank of Chicago Heights in 1959.

The Dari Delight opened in August 1956 along Dixie Highway. It was managed by Martin Firnhaber. The Dari continues to serve its customers, especially on warm summer evenings.

The Beecher Barber Shop, located in the Myrick Building since it was built in 1903, passed to a new generation of owners. In September 1958, Robert (Corky) Morgan, Jr. purchased the interest of R. H. (Rube) Wegert; and in June 1961, John Wierl bought Ernest Selk's interest in the business. The Barber Shop would make another move in February 1985, when Corky Morgan moved it to his home at 851 Penfield, ironically, the former home of Ernest Selk, built in 1924.

A new concept in the business community for Beecher was the Beecher Coin Wash, which opened in June 1960. It was located at 534 Gould Street in the former Koch Hardware Store. Managers were Milford Bunte and Robert Squier.

Bernard Welding moved to Beecher in 1960. For the past 15 years, they had been located in Chicago. As the company grew, a new plant was built south of Beecher in 1973.



*VILLAGE OFFICIALS — Robert Barber, village administrator; Ruth Ohlendorf, village clerk; and Melvin Brewsey, chief of police, share a light moment.*

Their original building became the home of H & R Industries.

The popular Nip & Sip on Penfield Street changed managers again in 1960. The new owners Lilburn and Louise Burgess did extensive redecorating and the name was changed to "L & L". Kenny and Lela Wehling had owned the business since 1952.

Herman's Tap at 528 Gould Street became Shippy's Tap in 1960 when Harold (Shippy) and Ruth Ohlendorf purchased it. The grand opening was held in January 1960.

In December 1962, the Beecher Herald was sold to Russell Publications, Peotone, by Mrs. C. H. Letterer following the death of her husband. The paper would continue to be printed in the Beecher plant at 522 Gould Street. Hamilton Circulation Supplies are now located in that building.

D. J. Steevens began publishing the Beecher Herald on September 6, 1907. Upon his death in 1933, his son Charles and Clarence Letterer became partners. Mr. Letterer became sole owner in 1953. Later, the Beecher Herald moved once again to the Myrick Building. Annamae Franks was editor and all printing was done in Peotone.

The old Club House at Shady Lawn Golf Course was dismantled in 1963 and a new multi-colored brick club house was completed before the spring season of 1964.

Wehling Well Works, Inc. was formed in 1963. Officers were E. C. Wehling, president; Wendell Wehling,

vice-president; Richard Wehling, treasurer; and Lydia Wehling, executive secretary. The company was begun by Gerhard Wehling, father of E. C. Wehling.

R. L. Reising Sales, Inc. moved into their new building 722 Dixie Highway in August 1965. It was at this time that the Thomas Clark home, built in the early 1900's on the corner of Miller Street and Dixie Highway, was razed.

Another new business in 1965 was the Beecher 25 Cent Auto Wash at 432 Dixie Highway. Lawrence

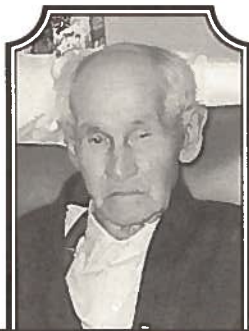
Sanders was manager.

In 1967, Paul and Marie Sharp opened "Steeple Treasure House" in the old Zion Lutheran Church on Indiana Avenue. They remodeled the building to accommodate living quarters upstairs and their large collection of antiques, including china and glassware, in the lower level.

The Beecher Pharmacy held its grand opening in May, 1970 offering "one-stop shopping". In March 1995, it moved to quarters in the St. James Medical Building.

Mel and Bud Fugett bought the Wilke & Rehn Company in January 1972. It would be renamed Will County Lumber & Supplies. Extensive remodeling took place, and the owners opened with a complete line of hardware and household items, in addition to lumber and building materials.

The Desenis Variety Store, located in the former Batterman Store on Gould Street, was purchased by Kurt and Joanne Schugt in February 1972. They operated it



—WILLIAM WIGGENHAUSER—  
Wigenhauser Cement, 1908-1958



BEECHER'S NEW BARBERS — John Wierl, left and Robert (Corky) Morgan, right became owners of the Beecher Barber Shop. They purchased the business interests of R. H. (Rube) Wegert, second from left, and Ernest Selk, second from right.



until 1977 when it became R & R Sales, owned by Ray Nabzdyk and Ron Speletich. It was sold in 1994 to Woodstills Antiques.

The Knuth Store was destroyed by fire on February 5, 1974. Firemen from four other towns aided the Beecher Firemen. The loss was estimated at \$250,000. The following week, Rodney Knuth with sons Tom and Dave mounted a new sign and announced that they would rebuild Knuths Kountry Korner. In 1990, the store was remodeled and enlarged by John and Dave Knuth.

In 1975, Jack and Dorothy Nicoson opened the Beecher Carpet and Bedding Shop on the corner of Dixie Highway and Indiana Avenue, in the former Oberheide building.

The Farmers State Bank moved into its new building at 660 Penfield Street in May 1976. The brick, one-and-a-half story, Colonial style building featured a white portico entrance with white shutters and trim. It had "on-site" parking and two drive-up banking windows. Garneta Ehlers was the new president of Farmers State

Bank. She was elected at the annual stockholders meeting in January 1976.

Fannies Victorian Gardens moved into the old bank building on the corner of Reed and Penfield Streets in May 1979. Marena Gleeson and Marilyn Mayer were owners, but many others rented space in the popular gathering place. It contained gifts, antiques, and a tea room. Fannies closed in the fall of 1986.

Harold Batterman retired and closed the Beecher Cash Grocery on December 24, 1983.

The landmark building was given a new life when Pat Thompson purchased it and began producing her one-of-a-kind Vlasta Dolls. Mrs. Thompson received a Dolls Award of Excellence

in 1987 and 1988, and three nominations for Awards of Excellence in 1989.

The 1980's brought more expansion along Dixie Highway. Piepho's Fairway Lanes opened in 1983, the Anchorage (1984), St. James Medical Center in (1985), Advance Bank (1986), K's Split Second Mini Mart (1986) which also houses Karen's Laundry Room and Tony's Pizza, and Ken Hameister's Complex (1987) which includes L&H Services, Automotive Parts Company, and JOLD. The Beecher Car Wash opened in 1991. The Beecher Home Furnishings moved to a new building on Indiana Avenue in 1989.



*FANNIES VICTORIAN GARDEN—Landis Wehling, village president, cuts the ribbon at the opening of Fannies Victorian Garden in May 1979. It was located in the Clark & Bank Building. Other are, left to right: Shirley Kaus, Mary Ann Nunn, Janice Braun, Jim Franks, Marena Gleeson, Marilyn Mayer, and Vickie Konopacki.*



*BEECHER'S NEW BOWLING LANES — Piepho's Fairway Lanes opened in 1983, at 643 South Dixie Highway. Others located in the building are Beecher Chiropractic, Dr. Edward Istel, Dolly's Donut Shop, and Callaway Cuts.*

*ST. JAMES HOSPITAL MEDICAL CLINIC — The new medical center opened in 1985 at 715 South Dixie Highway. The Beecher Pharmacy is located there also.*





## BEECHER CELEBRATES ITS CENTENNIAL

As the 100-year anniversary (1970) of the founding of Beecher drew near, residents began thinking of a celebration.

Mrs. Violet Eskilson Peterson (daughter of C. B. Eskilson) suggested a Centennial Celebration to the Beecher Women's Welfare Club in 1963. President Louise Schultz Wehrmann appointed a historical committee that began collecting material on Beecher's past.

Soon other organizations, churches, schools, and businesses were involved. The corporate officers were Robert Williamson, president; Howard Westerberg, vice-president; Dorothy Saller, secretary; Garneta Ehlers, treasurer; and Audrey Beseke, assistant treasurer.

The executive committee consisted of Henry Bock, general chairman; LeRoy Buck, headquarters chairman; Madelyn Kurth, secretary; and Herman Ehlers, treasurer.

Plans began to develop in typical Beecher fashion, and the celebration turned into an elaborate week-long cel-

ebration. The theme, "Schooners to Satellites", was submitted by Madelyn Kurth.

The celebration began on Saturday, June 27, 1970, with the Queen's Ball in the high school gym.

Pat Claus was crowned queen. Her court included Diane Heldt, Barbara Pugh, Laurie Franks, Rose Saller, Wanda Wehrman and Vernetta Hahn.

The highlight of Sunday was the dedication of the Centennial monument in Firemen's Park. The time capsule, that was placed inside, is not to be opened until Beecher's Bicentennial in the year 2070.

William Beecher Schville, M.D., from Hartford, Connecticut, a great-grandson of Henry Ward Beecher, was the special guest at the opening ceremonies in Firemen's Park on Tuesday, June 10. He cut the first piece of the 100 year birthday cake.

Later in the afternoon, the Midway opened in Firemen's Park. The Centennial pageant, "Schooners to Satellites" was presented on the school grounds at 8:30 p.m. It would be repeated the following four nights. The pageant was written and directed by John Dean, who had arrived in

A ranch owner near the South Platte River in Colorado makes a business decision in the spring of 1887: "I believe our ranch will best prosper if we speedily submerge our long-horns and shorthorns and change over completely to Herefords. From what I saw of our range, and its climate, the Hereford will thrive and we will prosper therefrom ...(Our manager) is to consult T. L. Miller of Beecher, Illinois, and acquire (the Hereford cattle)."

*(Excerpt from CENTENNIAL by James Michener, published in 1974.)*



**DEDICATION OF CENTENNIAL MONUMENT** — The Centennial monument was dedicated on Sunday, June 28, 1970. It contained a time capsule. Taking part in the ceremonies were left to right: Reverend Walter Coffee, St. Luke's Church; Larry Grim, Fire Chief; Roy York, Special Days Chairman; Henry Bock, General Chairman; LeRoy Buck, Village President; and Robert Williamson, Centennial Corporation Chairman.



*CENTENNIAL PAGEANT CAST — The pageant, "Schooners to Satellites", involved over 200 local men, women and children. It was presented five consecutive nights during the Beecher Centennial.*

Beecher as an employee of the John Rodgers Company of Fostoria, Ohio, to work with the community in organizing the Centennial Celebration. (He married a local girl and stayed in the community.)

"Schooners to Satellites" had a cast of over 200 local men, women, and children. The history of Beecher was told in twelve scenes, based on information from the historical committee of Women's Welfare Club.

The Women's Welfare Club furnished the former home of John Knuth at 745 Penfield Street in the period of 1870, the year of Beecher's founding. It was called "The House of Yesteryear" and visitors enjoyed a glimpse into the past. Later the house was razed and replaced by the new Illinois Bell building.

The Centennial Celebration ended on July 4th with the parade and a spectacular fireworks display in the evening followed by the final presentation of the pageant.

It had been a grand celebration. Residents would remember and cherish it for many years to come.

## BEECHER SCHOOLS

The original brick building built in 1907, with an addition completed in 1930, continued to house the grade school and high school students. Space was at a premium, but nothing was done during the war years of the 1940's.

In May 1951, a special election was held to determine if residents wanted to build a new high school. The 814 voters supported the plan. It was hoped that the new building would be completed by the fall of 1952.

However, open house and dedication services were not held until Sunday, November 1, 1953.

The new building, which still serves as Beecher High School, was a one story, light brick structure. It had many large windows, modern classrooms, and a large gymnasium. The board of education and the faculty were justly proud of their new high school.

Carl Peterson was president of the school board. Others serving with him were Arnold Brands, Henry Scheiwe, Walter Schmitt, Wilmer Selk, Raymond Wassman, and John Weber. John French was superintendent of the district.

Later in 1971, as enrollment increased, additional classrooms and a library were added to the original building.

Once the high school students were situated in their new building, attention turned to the grade school. After much consideration, the original 1907 structure was razed and new classrooms were built around the later addition. Dedication services for the new grade school were held Sunday, February 19, 1961. Guest speaker was the state superintendent of public instruction. More classrooms, a library, and physical education space were added in 1966 as enrollment continued to increase in the grade school.

The church schools which had instructed so many of their children from the earliest days were faced with changing times.

St. John's German Evangelical School, built in 1879, closed in 1918. St. Paul's Lutheran School was forced to close during the Depression when contributions were not

sufficient to cover salaries of both the pastor and teacher.

In the fall of 1952, the Christian day schools of Zion Lutheran Church and St. John's Church were consolidated into Central Lutheran School. Classrooms were located in the new Zion parish hall which had been completed in the spring of 1952.

Ten years later, the congregation of Zion Lutheran assumed full responsibility for the school. It became Zion Lutheran School.

## BEECHER PRE-SCHOOL CO-OP

The Beecher Pre-School Co-Op was organized in 1982 by a group of interested parents. Classes are held in the St. Luke Christian Education Building, 725 Penfield Street.

It is non-denominational and children three and four years old are welcome to attend.

Janet Cellarius is director and teacher.

## BEECHER CHURCHES

The six original churches, St. John's (founded before July 1854); St. John's German Evangelical (October 1863); St. Paul's (Spring 1865); Beecher Congregational (January 1872); St. Luke (January 1902); and Zion Lutheran (November 1903), all are still operating and serving their members.

### ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH (EAGLE LAKE)

The congregation celebrated their centennial in 1954. The church was remodeled at a cost of \$10,915 and new stained-glass windows were donated by the Mary-Martha Ladies Aid. The interior was dedicated on July 11, 1954. Pastor Herbert J. Teske's dedication scripture was Jude 25: "To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever". Additional celebrations were held on August 22 and September 12.

In 1979, the congregation again gathered to celebrate its 125th anniversary. Special ceremonies were held on September 9, 16, and 23. Bradley V. Grover was serving as pastor.

A new parsonage was built during 1969 and 1970. It replaced the original parsonage built in 1868 for \$1,647. A large multi-purpose building was completed in 1983.

### NEIGHBORS GIVE BEREAVED FAMILY A HELPING HAND

"Love Thy Neighbor — Twenty neighbors of the Milford Kenning family proved their belief in the excerpt from the Bible, 'Love Thy Neighbor', when they assembled at the Kenning farm, some as early as 6 a.m. to plant his crops during his recent bereavement.

"Quietly they gathered, totaling some 16 tractors, 4 plows, 10 discs, and 4 planters, and worked together until the entire field had been taken care of.

"Not so far behind these good neighbors were their wives who came laden with food to set up a temporary cafeteria to see that hearty meals were served and coffee ready at all times.

"When all work was completed they left as quietly as they came, but they should receive the eternal thankfulness of a family so deeply bereaved."

— *Beecher Herald*, June 27, 1957

*(Mrs. Leona Kenning, age 32, died suddenly following a short illness. She left her husband and six young children.)*

Michael G. Piper is the current pastor of St. John's. Worship services are held at 10 a.m., Sunday School and Bible Classes at 8:45 a.m.

### ST. JOHN'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST (SOUTHEAST OF BEECHER)

St. John's German Evangelical Church merged with the Congregational Christian Church in 1961 and became St. John's United Church of Christ.

In 1964, the congregation celebrated its 100th anniversary with the scriptural theme: "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform". John J. Merzdorf was serving as pastor. His father, John W. Merzdorf, had served the congregation from 1938 to 1956.

During the centennial celebration, the congregation built a new parsonage. It replaced the 1879 parsonage, built 15 years after the congregation was founded.

In May 1989, St. John's celebrated its 125th anniversary with a picnic on the church grounds. The public was invited.

The interim pastor of St. John's is the Reverend Lois Lewis. Worship is at 9 a.m. in the summer and 10:15

a.m. in winter. Sunday School is at 9 a.m. in winter.



ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH  
(NORTHWEST OF BEECHER)

St. Paul's Lutheran Church celebrated its 100 years of blessings in 1965 with the theme: Psalm 14: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. Thanks be to God for blessing the labour of our hands".

The congregation members undertook a huge task for their centennial year. They excavated a basement and then moved the church from its original foundation to rest over the completed basement. An addition was built for the furnace and kitchen.

Dedication services were held September 12 and 19, 1965. Henry F. Hoffmeyer was serving as pastor during this time. He served from 1943 until his death in October 1965.

On June 20, 1990, St. Paul's held a service of praise and thanksgiving to commemorate its 125th anniversary. The Reverend Marvin Hoyer was pastor.

The current pastor is the Reverend Karl Wellnitz. Worship services are held at 9:15 a.m., Sunday School and Adult Bible Class at 10:30 a.m.

BEECHER  
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
(PENFIELD AND ELLIOTT STREETS)

The Beecher Congregational Church was built on land donated by Beecher's founder, T. L. Miller, who was also an active member of the congregation.

In 1954, the congregation was officially released from the Congregational Association when Dr. and Mrs. Homer Hiatt paid the outstanding debt on the original grant.

The Beecher Community Church members recorded their constitution with the County Clerk in June 1955.

Members of the congregation affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of America in the spring of 1995, and the original church in Beecher is now known as Beecher Community Evangelical Free Church. Worship services are held at 10:15 a.m.

ST. LUKE  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
(PENFIELD AND WOODWARD STREETS)

St. Luke celebrated its 50th anniversary with morning and afternoon services on September 1952. Reverend Edwin Otte's theme was "The Test of Time".

The year before the anniversary a new tower was erected and new chimes were installed. The church basement was expanded from a crawl space to a full basement for the Sunday School in the spring of 1952.

The congregation merged with the Congregational Christian Church in 1959 and became St. Luke United Church of Christ. In 1970, a large education building was added. It included a church office, a pastor's office and other meeting rooms.

St. Luke celebrated the 75th anniversary of its founding in September 1977. Lydia Mussman arranged a special display, "Roots", which included the church history.

Reverend Timothy Rhodes is the current pastor. Worship service is at 10:15 a.m., Christian education at 9 a.m.

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH  
(INDIANA AND OAK PARK AVENUES)

By the early 1950's the congregation of Zion Lutheran Church and school had outgrown its original structure built in 1904.

The cornerstone for a parish hall and three classrooms was laid on May 20, 1951 on a site on Indiana and Oak

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL —  
*A new church and school was built on the corner of Indiana Avenue and Oak Park in 1963, when the congregation outgrew the original 1904 church.*



Park Avenues. Dedication was March 9, 1952. The new building also contained an office, library, kitchen, vestry, lavatories and supply rooms.

Zion Lutheran Church held its Golden Jubilee (50th Anniversary) on October 11, 1953, with morning, afternoon, and evening services. Harold Wunderlich was pastor. The anniversary prayer was Psalm 100:4: "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise".

Three founding fathers, W. J. Hinze, John Knuth, and Fred Schuette were present at the celebration.

Ground was broken on March 19, 1961, for the new church and school. Dedication was held on May 20, 1962. Speaker for the afternoon services was Dr. Oswald Hoffmann, International Lutheran Hour preacher.

Sunday Worship Service is at 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Sunday School and Bible classes are held at 9:15 a.m.. Reverend Mark Larson is the current pastor with Reverend William Royer as assistant pastor.

## BEECHER FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH (1160 ROMANS ROAD)

The Beecher Fellowship Baptist Church was convened on July 31, 1983, when the first service was held in the Beecher Elementary School. The charter was received on September 25, 1983.

Charter members were: Pastor Ed D'Andrea, Jacob D'Andrea, Jessica D'Andrea, Robert Livingston, Jean Warburton, Carolyn DeHart, James Peterson, Dorothy Peterson, George White, Scott White, Ann Grimm, Amanda Paape, Beth D'Andrea, Jori D'Andrea, Nora D'Andrea, Vicki Livingston, William Warburton, Richard DeHart, Scott Peterson, Edie Miller, Darlene White, Andrea White, Pat Choate. Ground breaking ceremonies for the new church were held on April 1987. Ralph Cresenzo donated the land. The first service in the new building was held on November 22, 1987. Edward M. D'Andrea is the pastor. Sunday School is at 10 a.m., worship at 11 a.m., and evening worship at 6:30 p.m.

## ORGANIZATIONS

### BEECHER SUMMER RECREATION COUNCIL

Beecher Summer Recreation Council was founded in 1950 by Welton Stedt, a Beecher coach and high school teacher. In 1951, Coach Stedt helped with the formation of the Will-Kan Baseball League which eventually included Beecher, Peotone, Frankfort, Tinley Park, Monee, Grant Park, and Manteno. He served as president of the league for six years.

Over the years, hundreds of children have passed through the baseball program which was begun by Coach Stedt. Kenn Krizan has headed the program since 1970.

Beecher organizations which supported the Summer Recreation programs in the first years were the Amvets, Amvet Auxiliary, Women's Welfare Club, Beecher Volunteer Fire Department, Sportsmen's Club and the PTA.

Coach Stedt, as he was affectionately called, had graduated from Beecher high school in 1941. He served in the U.S. Navy during World War II, then returned to Beecher. He was honored as "Man of the Year" in 1976 by the Beecher Chamber of Commerce for his work with Beecher's youth.



*KAN-WILL CONFERENCE CHAMPS 1957 — Front row, left to right: Jerry Kurth, Lester Latts, Eugene Bernhard, Curtis Wehling, Marvin Teske, Jerry Koenning. Second row, left to right: Don Schultz, Darryl Hayhurst, Harold Lange, Dennis Firnhaber, Bill Saller, Leroy Sennholtz. Coach Welton Stedt is in front.*

## CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The first meeting of the Chamber of Commerce was held in March 1954 in the Community Building. The officers elected were G. J. Koenning, president; L. J. Muehsler, vice-president; Irwin Stelling, treasurer; and Erwin Ohlendorf, secretary.

The charter members issued an invitation to all men and women owning or operating a retail business or selling a service in Beecher or Washington Township.

## BEECHER COMMUNITY SCHOLARSHIP ASSOCIATION

The Beecher Community Scholarship Association was organized in 1962 at the suggestion of Ray Wilke, a member of the school board. Ralph Seitz aided with input from community members. The first concern was fund raising; and four captains were chosen: Ralph Seitz, Wendell Ohlendorf, Les Heldt, and Robert Williamson. The fund raising drive was successful. Over \$1,000 was collected.

An association board was appointed to evaluate and determine the scholarship recipients. The first board consisted of Herman Ehlers, Norman Holdt, Dr. Richard Hiatt, Vernon Henerberg, Howard Wehmhoefer, Ralph Sietz and Ray Wilke. The faculty advisor was Don Schmitt, the high school principal.

The first scholarships were awarded in 1963 to graduates Virginia Wassman and Darryl Younker.

With a successful beginning, the Scholarship Association was well on its way to becoming a Beecher institution. During the 31 years of its existence, it had generated more than \$250,000 and awarded 420 scholarships to graduating high school students.

The Scholarship Association has been given three memorial trusts: James Churchill – \$15,000; Antoinette Werner – \$15,000; and James Wunderlich – \$7,500. The Amvet Post #67 makes a generous annual donation. Other civic organizations award individual scholarships. Additional monies are donated by individuals and businesses.

Madelyn Kurth handled the fund raising drive for many years. Herman Fisher, as school board president, served a director. Barbara Hodgett and Tawny Sipple are now serving as co-chairmen.

## BEECHER SENIOR CITIZENS

Howard Westerberg called the first meeting of the Senior Citizens in February 1973. He presided at the meeting which 58 interested seniors attended.

A steering committee was named to formulate plans for the organization and establish goals and objectives.



*MAN OF THE YEAR — Welton Stedt receives the 1976 Man of the Year Award from Louise Wehrmann, president of the Beecher Chamber of Commerce. Coach Stedt served as chairman of the Beecher Recreation Council for 20 years.*



*AMVET MEMORIAL PARK — Amvet Post #67 constructed a memorial park on the corner of Penfield and Reed Streets in 1992. Plaques on the boulders honor veterans of all wars for their service to our country.*



Those serving were Walter Nottorf, Margaret Soucie, Lee Atwater, Wilmer Selk, and Mrs. Gerhard Wehling.

## BEECHER LION'S CLUB

The Beecher Lion's Club received its charter of incorporation in January 1982. Grant Park was the sponsoring organization, and its president Jack Atwood presented a bell and gavel to be used in the Beecher meetings. Amvet Post #67 presented an American flag. John Dean was elected as the first president. There were 45 charter members.

## BEECHER COMMUNITY LIBRARY

The Beecher Women's Club had begun collecting books for a lending library for the community in 1987. The books were sorted, processed and placed in the high school library. They were available to all.

In early 1988, the Washington Township Trustees offered the seldom-used upper floor of the Community Building to civil organizations. The Women's Club proposed that they begin a Community Library in the area using their small lending library as a nucleus.

After several meetings, it was arranged that the space be divided between the library and a museum of the Beecher Historical Society. An open house was held on June 18, 1989.



LIONS CLUB CANDY DAY —  
Village President Landis Wehling donates to the Lions Club fund raiser.  
Club member Brian Hayhurst collects.

The library and museum have sponsored Christmas open houses and programs on China, Russia, and Egypt.

The library has held study groups, children's story hours, and welcomed visiting school classes.

In November 1994, a successful referendum was held to create a Beecher Public Library District. Within the coming year, the Beecher Community Library will become the Beecher Public Library

## BEECHER COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Twenty interested people attended a meeting in the Farmers State Bank in January 1985 to form a Beecher historical society. The following month officers were elected: Wayne Wiechen, president; Wilma Hisel, secretary; Walter Siebenmann, treasurer; and Annamae Franks, publicity.

At the August 1986 meeting, the Civil War cannon,



### BEECHER ORGANIZATIONS — 1995

Amvet Post #67 —  
*George Hartmann, Commander*

Amvet Post #67 Auxiliary —  
*Helen Teske, President*

Beecher Community  
Historical Society —  
*Jeanne Cooper, President*

Beecher Community Library —  
*Shirley Biery, President*

Beecher Volunteer  
Fire Association —  
*Jerry Cellarius, President*

CAPE —  
*Tom Augustine, President*  
(Citizens Against a  
Polluted Environment)

Chamber of Commerce —  
*Jeff Brink, President*

Cub Scouts —  
*Eric Hoffman, Scout Master*

Girl Scouts —  
Daisy Troop #501; Brownie  
Troops #18, #219, #643;  
Jr. Girl Scout Troop #437;  
Cadette Troops #447, #609

4-H Clubs —  
Agri Prairie 4-H Club —  
*Lin Scharnhorst, Leader*  
Prairie 4-H Club —  
*Lorraine Schwiesow, Leader*

Lions Club —  
*Russ Groot, President*

Part-Time Players —  
*John Dean, President*

Police Association —  
*Conrad Sweet, President*

Senior Citizens —  
*Wilma Hisel, President*

Sportsman Club —  
*John Dohmeier,*  
*President*

Summer Recreation  
Program —  
*Pat Schroeder, President*

Women's Club of  
Beecher —  
*Gwen Dean, President*

donated by the August Ehrhardt family to the village, was formally dedicated. The dedication plaque read: "Civil War cannon, owned by August Ehrhardt, 82nd Illinois Infantry (2nd Hacker Regiment) Company D". It was donated by Vivian Ehrhardt Vehrenkamp.

In November 1988, the Society received word that the Union Pacific Railroad would donate a "retired" caboose. Volunteers were asked to help in placing the caboose on a permanent site, near the original Beecher depot. The caboose was moved on April 6, 1989.

In June 1989, the Washington Township Museum opened on the second floor of the Washington Township Community Building. The facilities were provided by the trustees of Washington Township. Virginia Bath became curator.

The museum was awarded a Certificate of Excellence from the Association of Illinois Museums and Historical

### MODEL BLOOD-GIVING COUPLE

"Larry Luecke is one of the best examples of the 'caring type' who participated in the recent blood drive. He gave his 54th unit on March 11, 1989. Mr. Luecke has O negative blood and there are only six O negative type persons in every 100 people. His wife Gloria has given 38 times, giving them the title 'Model Blood - Giving Couple'."

— *Beecher Herald, March 29, 1989*

*(The Beecher Women's Club has sponsored the local Blood Drive since the mid-1970's.)*

Societies for the fifth anniversary show held June 18, 1994.

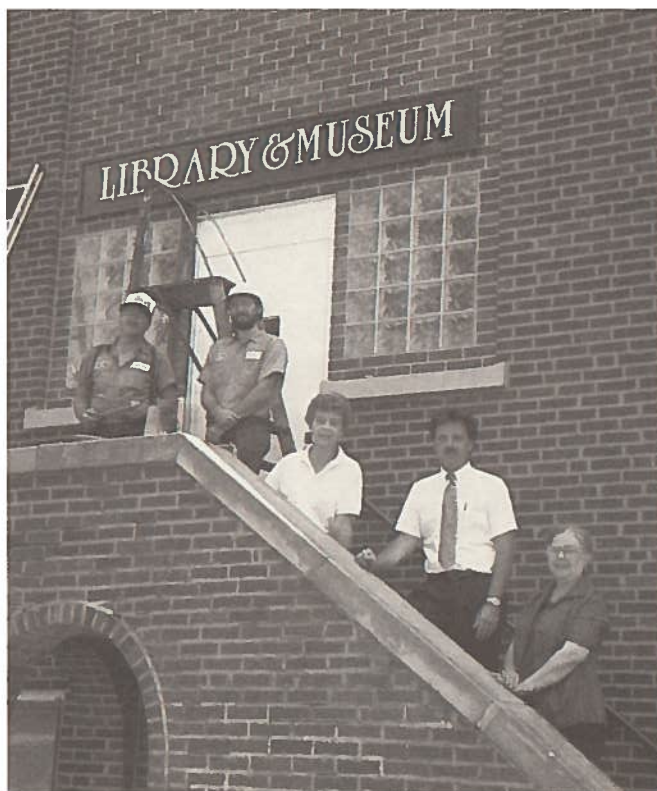
### BEECHER COMMUNITY PART-TIME PLAYERS

The Beecher Community Part-Time Players was incorporated in September 1993.

Officers are John Dean, president; Joe Burgess, vice-president; Melissa Ohlendorf, secretary; Marty Schmidt, Jr. and Greg Ohlendorf, treasurers.

The goal of the Part-Time Players is to provide live theatrical performances by amateur actors and actresses for the Beecher area. Membership is open to all Beecher area residents.

Productions have included "Plaza Suite" in February 1993; "Anything Goes" in August 1993; "Par for the Corpse" February 1994; "Pajama Game" in July 1994;



*NEW SIGN FOR LIBRARY AND MUSEUM — Village employees Bill Merritt and Mike Imig pause after installing a sign for the Beecher Community Library and Washington Township Museum at 673 Penfield Street. Others are Shirley Biery, president of the library; Martin Schmidt, Jr., supervisor of Washington Township; and Virginia Bath, curator of the museum.*

"Lend Me A Tenor" in February 1995. "Hello, Dolly!" will be presented in July 1995.

Over 125 people have been involved in various phases of the productions, and over \$10,000 has been reinvested in stage materials, lighting and sound equipment.

## BEECHER AREA QUASQUICENTENNIAL COMMISSION

The Beecher Area Quasquicentennial Commission was established in late 1992 in order to prepare for

Beecher's 125th anniversary in 1995. The main goal was to raise funds for the celebration by providing Beecher area residents with quality entertainment.

Officers are Greg Ohlendorf, president; Robert Barber, vice-president; Rosalind Willy, secretary; Martin Schmidt, Jr., treasurer.

Sponsored events have included five sold-out plays by the Beecher Part-Time Players, golf outings, 5K Run/Fitness Walks, New Year's Eve parties, a County Line Dance, a Historical Fashion Show, as well as offering a line of Quasquicentennial merchandise.



*"ANYTHING GOES " — Pat Claus, Kelly Padden, and Kathy Koehn appeared in the 1993 production of "Anything Goes" produced by the Beecher Part-Time Players.*

*QUASQUICENTENNIAL OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS — Front row, left to right: Greg Ohlendorf, president; Robert Barber, vice-president; Rosalind Willy, secretary; Martin Schmidt, Jr. treasurer. Second row, left to right: Directors Robert Williamson, Barbara Petersen, John Dean, Jenola Morgan, John Knuth and Joyce Horath.*





# CONGRATULATIONS FROM THE VILLAGE PRESIDENT



— LANDIS WEHLING —  
Village President

Congratulations to the residents of Beecher and to the Quasquicentennial Celebration Commission for planning a great 125th birthday party in 1995! There are still many descendants of Beecher's forefathers living in the area, and it is wonderful to remind ourselves of who we really are and why we are still here.

It is equally important to pass on this history to our children and to those who are new to the area. Those that have moved here recently have

done so for a reason: to enjoy the peaceful, family-oriented atmosphere of small town life. Of all the changes that have occurred, Beecher's small town image remains.

Will this be the case when Beecher reaches its Sesquicentennial in the year 2020? It can be, as long as the principles and standards our founding fathers shared in 1870 continue to be recognized and cherished.

*Landis Wehling, Village President*



*QUASQUICENTENNIAL SEAL —  
125 years of Beecher history is represented in the  
Quasquicentennial Seal. Symbols include a  
Hereford, steam locomotive, church steeple, wagon  
wheel, windmill, farm building, book, and the  
early settler with his plow.  
The Quasquicentennial Seal  
was designed by Donna Rodeghiero.*

# COMMISSION OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS



President: Greg M. Ohlendorf  
Vice-President: Robert Barber  
Secretary: Rosalind A. Willy  
Treasurer: Martin Schmidt, Jr.  
Directors: John C. Dean  
Joyce Horath  
John Knuth  
Jenola Morgan  
Barbara Peterson  
Robert Williamson

## 1995 EVENTS COMMITTEE

Alumni Baseball/Softball Committee  
Kenn Krizan and Rick Ratliff

Beecher Homecoming Committee  
Barbara Hodgett and Irene Brothers

Country Line Dancing Committee  
Dean Bettenhausen

Craft Fair Committee 1995  
Lonnie Segert

Golf Outing Committee 1995  
Robert Barber

Kiddie Parade Committee  
Lin Scharnhorst

Pancake Breakfast Committee  
Denise Majewski

Plays/Musicals Committee  
John C. Dean

Photography Committee  
David Stedt

Quasquicentennial Sign Committee  
Carole Stedt

Street Dance Committee  
Conrad Sweet

## BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE

Robert Williamson, Chairman

## HISTORICAL EVENTS COMMITTEE

Pat Sirbek, Chairman

Civil War Reenactment Committee  
Pat Sirbek

Alumni Choral/Band Concert Committee  
Ann Smith and Rick Preston

Historical Fashion Show Committee  
Gwen Dean

## MERCHANDISING COMMITTEE

Joyce Horath, Chairman

## PRE-1995 EVENTS COMMITTEE

Nelson Collins, Chairman

5K Run/Fitness Walk Committee  
1993, 1994, 1995

Joe Burgess and Tom Stluka

Corporate Fund Raising/Gifts  
Committee – Sally Love

Craft Fair Committee 1994  
Shirley Firnhaber

Float Committee 1994  
Robert Williamson

Golf Outing Committee 1993 & 1994  
Raymond LaPorte

New Year's Eve Committee 1993  
John Knuth

New Year's Eve Committee 1994  
Melissa Ohlendorf and Terri Schmidt

Plays/Musicals Committee  
John C. Dean

## PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

Paula Franke, Chairman

## QUASQUICENTENNIAL BOOK COMMITTEE

Shirley Biery, Chairman



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**Together, we look toward a promising future.**

**Congratulations, Beecher.**



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Special thanks to the following for their contribution to the Beecher Quasquicentennial Book:

Helen Becker, Robert Barber, Ruth Engleking, Karen Nelson, and Peggy Stoven, researchers;  
Rosalind Willy, typist; Paula Franke, special assistance; Russell Publications for the use of the Beecher Heralds;  
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It was especially kind of the following who loaned photographs:

Robert Barber	Fred Hoffmeyer	St. John's United Church of Christ
Helen Becker	Byron Hunte	St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Beecher High School	Barbara Kass	Rose Saller
Joyce Bernhard	Nathalie Kiedaisch	Emily Stedt Selk
Audrey Beseke	John Knuth	Robert Selk
Shirley Biery	Irene Martisek	Dave Stedt
Helene Boyens	Melvin Matthies	Shady Lawn Golf Course
Steve Braun	Herb Meyer	Paul Sharp
Lorraine Briggeman	Jenola Morgan	Tawny Sipple
Les Engleking	Richard Mulcahy	Adelie Tegtmeyer
Dennis Firnhaber	Lydia Mussman	Vivian Ehrhardt Vehrenkamp
Linda Fette	Leslie Nissen	Marion Wehmhoefer
Marena Gleeson	Greg Ohlendorf	Vera Westerberg
Helen Herlitz	Jean Ohlendorf	LaVern Wiggerhauser
Helen Heusing	Howard Paul	Warren Wiggerhauser
Veta Hiatt	Lois Paul	Robert Williamson
	Don Reising	Zion Lutheran Church
	St. John's Lutheran Church	

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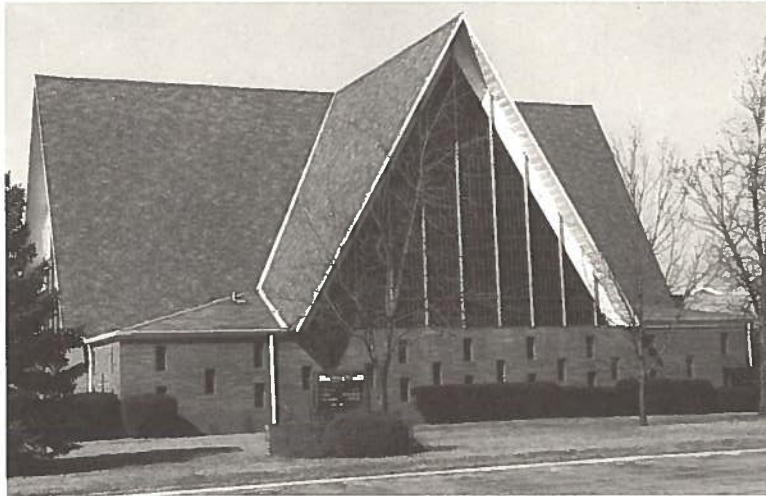
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#### June Schedule

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	



#### July-September Schedule

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
JULY						
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
AUGUST						
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		
SEPTEMBER						
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30



#### October-December Schedule

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
OCTOBER						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				
NOVEMBER						
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		
DECEMBER						
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

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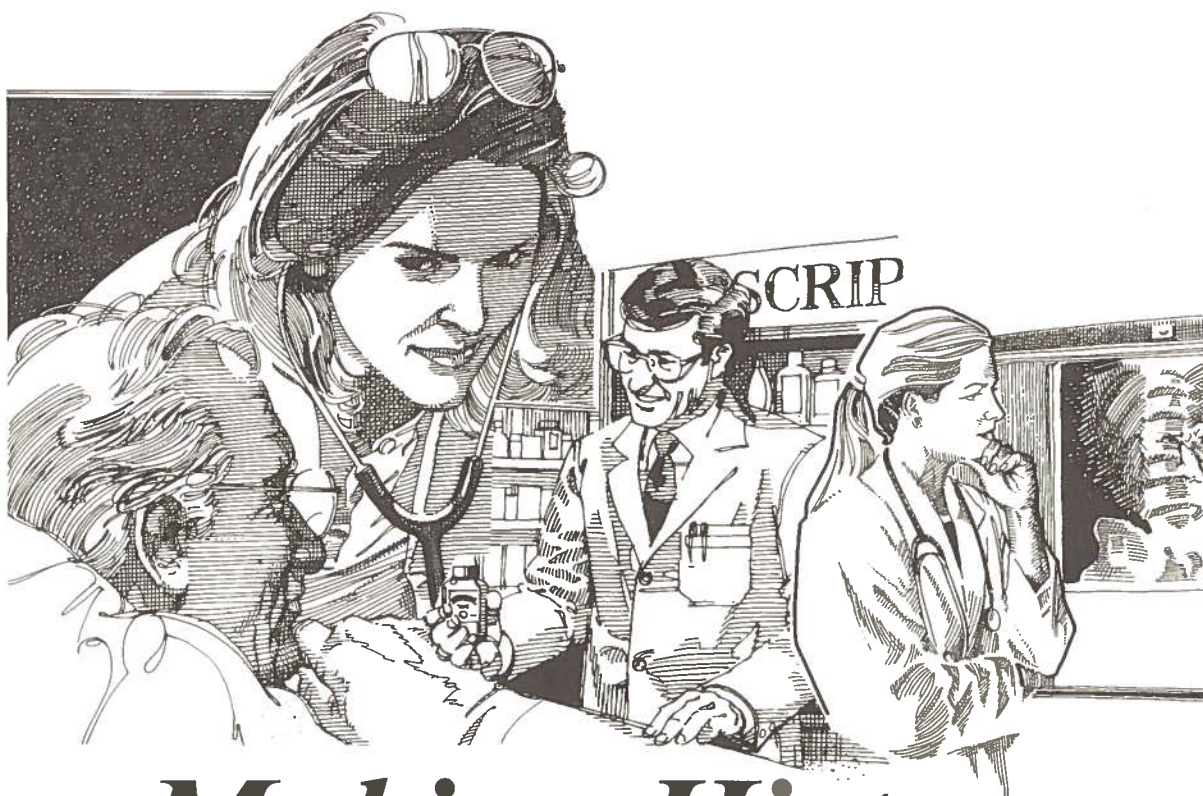
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Finding reliable, quality health care is a rewarding experience with this health-care provider.

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## Ministry

Sunday School  
Nursery - Adults  
Bible Study  
Prayer  
Bus Ministry  
Nursing Home  
Jr. Church  
Soul Winning  
Weekly Worship



## Services

Sunday School 10:00 A.M.  
Sunday Worship 11:00 A.M.  
Sunday Evening 6:30 P.M.  
Wed. Night 7:00 P.M.  
(Prayer and Bible study)  
Thurs. Visitation 7:00 P.M.  
Sat. Soul Winning 10:00 P.M.

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Pastor Ed M. D'Andrea

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Interim Pastor Lo Lewis

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and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28-30*

## Worship Service

Winter 10:15 a.m.

Summer 9:30 a.m.

## Sunday School

Winter 9:00 a.m.

Summer none

## Adult Bible Class

Sunday 9:00 a.m.

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1st Wednesday each month



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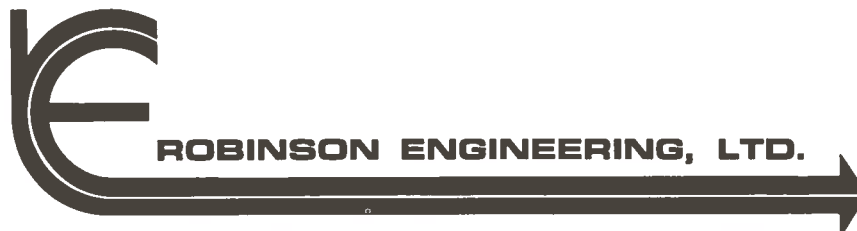
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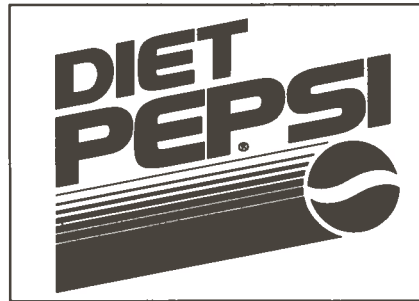


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CONGRATULATIONS, BEECHER



— WOODWARD STREET, BEECHER, EARLY 1900 —

*The Beecher Area Quasquicentennial Commission*



# COLOPHON



## TYPOGRAPHY

### BODY COPY

Caslon 540 Roman, 10 point

### HEADLINES

Trump Mediaeval, 16 point

### SUBHEADS

Trump Mediaeval, 10 point

### CAPTIONS

Caslon 540 Italic, 8 point

### INITIAL CAPS

Caslon OpenFace, 20 point

### ORNAMENTATION

Woodtype Ornaments, 38 point

## PAPER STOCK

### COVER

Lustro Dull, 100lb. cover  
Cream - Matte Finish

### BODY

Cougar Opaque, 70lb. text  
Natural - Smooth Finish

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Liberty Lithographers, Inc.

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