

written by
Maltbey

Greetings to my friends and neighbours! Although I have not lived in this area for over forty years, I still feel I am back home.

One day in August last year, I visited with Albert Kluge in the super-market, and he told me the old school house and contents had been sold, and I told him I must go out and see the place again before it was moved or torn down. The next Sunday I went to early church, then drove out; and when I saw a car at the door of the new school I stopped there first, and there I found Mr. & Mrs. Fredricks working like mad to bring order out of chaos. I introduced myself, found out who they were, and told them why I was so interested -- that I had been born and raised within stones' throw of the old schoolhouse, as was also my mother. I mentioned that I had never been inside the schoolhouse since we left the neighborhood on November 1, 1919. Mr. Fredricks said he had the key, and if I cared to, I might go over -- which I did. I was truly glad to see the place -- I did not see it as a large empty room -- long past the time when it should be replaced -- but as I stood and looked, I saw it as it was long years ago -- I saw the boys and girls -- most of whom are gone -- those who are left are widely scattered. When I returned the key, I told the folks a few things I remembered, and Mr. Fredricks said, "I think you should give a talk when we have Open House". A week or two later my niece from Milwaukee was here and I brought her out. Mrs. Balliet was just leaving; we had a chat and she, too, said, "You should tell some of these things at our Open House". Now you know why I am here, and I realize, more than ever, that "Silence is Golden" -- if you don't want to become involved in any project, keep still; and if you do know anything, keep it a secret.

Before I say much of anything about the school, I would like to tell you something of the early history of this community; and to do that I must be quite personal and give you a little of my family history -- I am sure you will pardon me and understand. You may have wondered how Spicer School and Spicer Cemetery got their names -- that is why I feel I should start at the beginning.

My grandfather, Avery T. Spicer, came from New York State in 1848, and homesteaded 80 acres, and paid \$1.25 an acre. It was all heavy oak timber and he had trees cut, lumber sawed, and built a log house right where the present house stands. A few years later he built the barn which is the present barn on the farm; but it stood west of all the buildings -- across the "ravine", as we always called it. My mother was born in the log house in 1863-- the only child of Avery Spicer and his wife, Laura Eastman. Avery died when mother was four years old -- "cancer of the stomach", said the specialist who came from Chicago -- the charge? \$25.00. Laura died six years later -- typhoid fever -- mother was ten, and an orphan. She went to live with her grandmother Eastman -- their home was in the clump of trees across from the Luck place.

Now, I must go back to my grandfather Avery. His parents followed him to Wisconsin, and they settled on a plot of ground, in a log house across the road from the Baerwolf place; and at their death in less than ten years, Avery gave the plot of ground out of his farm, which is Spicer Cemetery, and buried his parents there. Before that, burials had been made in the grove up at the corner -- then the remains and markers were removed to the new cemetery. I thought that should be of interest to area residents.

I want to tell you how the inside looked when I went to school. The blackboard in the front of the room extended from wainscoting to the ceiling, and it was made of wide boards and was painted with a dull, black paint when needed. While my parents were still in school, a teacher by the name of Eastman, who lived on the farm next north of ours, had the words "Peace on Earth, Goodwill to Men" put at the very top of the board next to the ceiling, and they were still there when I finished school. Later a slate board was added, or rather put over, the lower part of the wooden board, but -- we still needed the dusty erasers, and the chalk that would break. The first seats and desks were the original ones -- they were really quite crude. Then they were replaced with modern ones -- the ink wells in the desks were quite a novelty -- the teacher had control of a large bottle of ink (it held a couple of quarts) and it was really an accomplishment to lift out the little glass cup, fill it from the big bottle, and get the tiny container back in place without a mishap. A hinged metal cover protected anything from getting into the ink (or was supposed to) but I well remember it was not unusual for a mischievous boy, if a girl sat ahead of him, to get her hair ribbon or the end of her braid under that cover; and if it did get into the ink -- well, that was an accident. We had slates, and I can still hear the click of the wooden frames on the desk when they were brought out from the shelf below to start the day's work. I well remember when we began to get the ones with red felt binding, which were practically noiseless; but even then we lived in an age of progress, and we had tablets -- and the cost! -- what were we coming to? We could get the best buy at the Fair store -- about where Walgreens store is now -- Mr. Rohem sold big, thick tablets of coarse paper for five cents, and often he would include a lead pencil. In the center of the room, and about one third of the way back from the front, was the big old Round Oak Heater with its all-important fender. On cold mornings there would be a row of slates clear around it, warming up so they could be cleaned. Some used sponges, some rags, sometimes an elbow covered by the sleeve was pressed into action. Some of us kept small bottles of water to help in the cleaning job, and that was fine if we didn't leave the water in the bottle at night -- if we did, the next morning would find a broken bottle and an ill shaped ice cube. There was another method, not too sanitary, but often used. That was to spit on the slate and give it a quick job with sponge or rag -- that worked if the slate was warm -- if not, it took time to do the thawing job. There was a raised platform about three feet wide and a few inches high, clear across the back of the room, with a built-in bench the entire length -- no back, except the wall. This was referred to as the "recitation bench" but was used mostly for dinner pails and coats; though I remember the year there were sixty of us in school -- some had to sit there. My first teacher was Josephine Bendixen -- a saintly soul -- I could almost write a short book about her. There was Catherine Peck -- also a beautiful character -- they, as well as others, gave us so much outside of what we learned from our books; also, Isa Jarvis from near the old Fort, and Mary Cushman from Lewiston. We had two men teachers -- John Clark from Lewiston, whose sister was our County Superintendent later; Charles Sweaney, who lived with his uncle not too far south of here -- he believed in not only laying down the law but laying on the ruler, where he thought it was needed -- perhaps I needed it, but somehow I escaped. We almost always started the day by singing -- when we had a Christian teacher she would use the gospel hymns -- we all had paper-covered hymn books -- we sang such songs as "Work, for the Night is Coming", "Let the Lower Lights be Burning", "There's A Land That is Fairer Than Day", etc. Two of the older boys ran away from home one time. The teacher sadly announced it next morning, and asked that we stand and sing "Home Sweet Home", hoping somehow it would help to bring them home. They returned safe and sound in time, but I doubt our song did the trick.

"The first school was organized in the summer of 1849, a room rented of Asa Baldwin for school purposes". That is a quote from Ch. History. "In 1850 a log house was erected on Dec. 10 -- the first schoolhouse in the T'p. The house was built on the volunteer plan; all of the men of the neighborhood turning out to assist in the work; by 1880 the town had seven school districts with as many substantial school edifices".

In 1863, the schoolhouse which you have so recently replaced, was built. The carpenter who built it lived at grandfather Avery's while doing the work. In the home was a small homemade table with a loose shelf, and the carpenter used the under side of this shelf to sketch the seating arrangement, width of aisles, etc. I examined it recently, and the marks are all there after 99 years. You see, my folks lived to be 83 and 86; most of their friends had passed on, but they still had each other and their memories, and they would visit by the hour -- that is why so many things were kept fresh in my mind. I remember who three of their teachers were -- Anna Muir, sister of John Muir; K. B. Cook, father of the late J. B. Cook; and J. E. Jones, father of Mrs. Harlan B. Rogers. Religious services were held in the schoolhouse under the leadership of the early English preachers who settled in this part of the state. I mentioned the first services in the log house -- these were under the leadership of Rev. Isaac Smith of Moundville. Rev. Wm. Wells located at first near Humes Grove, but later bought the place up here at the corner on the left -- he and his wife and daughter are buried here in Spicer Cemetery. My folks said it was not uncommon to have a teacher who read from the Bible at the start of the school day and, if the teacher was a professing Christian, a short prayer would start the day. The school was their community center -- it was here the young people gathered for the meetings of their "Good Templars Society", which was a strong temperance organization, and my folks always felt it was of great value and showed lasting results. Many of you have read, or heard tell, of the Peshtigo fire in October of 1871, when thousands of acres of timber were destroyed in the area beyond Green Bay, near Marinette. At that time more than 1200 lives were lost -- 600 in the city of Peshtigo. My parents were 8 and 11 years old at the time, and well remembered it. Relief work was carried on everywhere, and for this area the Spicer Schoolhouse was used as a receiving station and work shop. People brought their contributions -- sacks of grain, corn, potatoes, flour, dried fruits and vegetables that had been prepared for their own use, smoked meat, clothing, bedding, anything that would help. Housewives brought old sheets and other materials that could be made into bandages and dressings -- everyone gave of their scanty supplies. Then everything was packed, loaded onto wagons, and taken by horses on the long trip to the stricken area. Then -- people were ever pushing westward, and a family who lived on the Luck farm were to go, by covered wagon, to Nebraska. There were three families leaving together, but I am not sure the other two were from this immediate neighborhood. A farewell was held at the schoolhouse, and how often I heard about that! Times were hard in Nebraska; there was wind and drought and grasshoppers, and again relief work to be done. Contributions of clothing, yard goods to be sewed, dried fruits and vegetables, non-perishables; and among other things sent from time to time, were seeds from our trees, think of it! And bundles of "cuttings" from willow and poplar trees -- "if only they could get trees to grow and help hold the soil and give them shade", that is what the folks back here said.

I am sure by now you wish I had never lived to go to Spicer school, or that I had passed on before the new one was built -- try and be patient just a little longer.

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I wonder how many know that the T'p. of Ft. Winnebago was organized and the first officers elected in the log house of my grandfather. Let me quote from the Col. Co. History of 1880: "On the 9th day of Jan. 1849, all of T'p 13, Range 9 lying East of Fox River, was organized into the town of Winnebago Portage by the county commissioners -- the balance of the T'p. being Menomonee Lands and, of course, not then surveyed by the United States. On the 8th of Jan. 1850 the County Board of Supervisors organized this T'p into a town by itself and named it Port Hope -- all west of the river being still unsurveyed. The house of Avery T. Spicer was designated as the place for holding the first town meeting, and Jonathan Whitney was elected the first Town Chairman". Again I quote, "On May 26, 1850, the first religious services held in the T'p were held at the log house of Avery T. Spicer, and the first Sunday School organized".

Jonathan Whitney had come from New York and at first settled near Kingston, but he believed a city would spring up near the Fox River, so he built a home on the French Creek, near the River, as a start for his city, and gave it the name of Port Hope. Then he established a Post Office there, and that is where we went to get our mail until we had rural delivery in the very early 1900's -- that and the telephone came about the same time.

Now, before I get started on the school, I want to tell you that my grandfather Maltbey came from New York State in 1867, and he bought the farm from which these school grounds were taken. My father was seven years old at the time. He and mother were here in school together; they married in 1883 and went on to mother's farm. That year they tore down the log house and built the home where my four brothers and I were born -- then in 1905 the home was rebuilt, and the exterior looks as it did when we left 43 years ago. After my parents built their home the year they were married, father had the barn moved from across the ravine to its present location. The barn was built in 1863, as was the schoolhouse. Grandfather Maltbey was a carpenter by trade, and he built the barn which still stands on his old farm; and he also built the Anacker schoolhouse.

Well, father finished 8th grade, and the year before he was married, he taught the Stone school in N. Marcellon, getting \$15.00 a month, and paying \$1.50 a week for room and board -- he walked over on Monday, home on Friday. Hattie Dates Peck was one of his pupils -- she was an aunt of Mrs. Balliet who helped to get me into this mess. I expect father, just out of 8th grade, did very well to get \$15.00 a month, for I find in the Co. History -- let me quote, "The first County report on schools was made in 1879; there were 146 schoolhouses in the county, valued at an average of \$500.00 each. The average wage paid male teachers was \$37.00 per month, and female teachers \$20.87".

I do want you to understand that my ancestors were not the only early settlers here -- far from it. Many came and, as the area was surveyed and opened up, the settlers located here and there. The Co. History tells us that quite a group came from Ireland and settled on the west side of the river; and among the names are Cushing, Hogan, Joyce, O'Keefe, Coughlin, Greer, and many other familiar names that have been carried on down through the years. Among those early settlers was Charles Baker, grandfather of Priscilla Potratz -- her uncle, E. S. Baker, was the first white child born in the T'p, and I have heard it claimed that he was born in a covered wagon on the Baker farm in Dates Mill area.

Our two really big days in the school year were Arbor Day and Decoration Day. On Arbor Day we would rake the yard, clean up everything outside and in -- even the rest rooms -- bring water from our well and scrub the floors with a broom. There was one Arbor Day, though, that was a record-breaker, and that was just close to 1900, when my brother Ray and Robert Bain were finishing eighth grade -- (the Bains lived on the farm that joined ours on the north). Father let them use our team and wagon, and they went down in a grove along the river right across from old Port Hope, and dug up trees; and we all did what we could to help the boys plant them on that Arbor Day. Those are the very same trees that are there now, and that have given shade through the years. They were always proud of what they did, and never lost their interest in the grove. On May 30th, each child brought flowers; and in the P.M. we marched to the cemetery, two by two; we had to be quiet and reverent as each laid their flowers on the soldier's grave and he or she recited a patriotic verse or quotation that had been learned for the occasion. From time to time we had entertainments of various kinds at the school. I remember a man who put on a puppet show. When the phonograph first came into existence, a man came out from town to give a demonstration. The room was full of folks who came to hear a talking machine for the first time. We had box socials in winter, and school programmes that were called "exhibitions". On those occasions a stage was put up at the northwest corner of the room -- curtains were put up, and the boys' entry room was used as a dressing room. We had spelling contests and arithmetic contests. I well remember one time, when we were having a spelling match, the teacher fainted. A fast runner went for my mother and the camphor bottle, and when she arrived, Marion Scholes was fanning the teacher so fast she couldn't even catch her breath to come out of her spell. Poor dear Marion could have assured you I was telling the truth had she not so recently joined other old school-mates.

Our drinking water was brought from our well -- the pail and dipper were kept on a bench in the northeast corner of the room, and everyone drank from the same dipper. No one had typhoid -- allergies and virus' were unknown. We had all the contagious diseases you will find in the dictionary -- shots to prevent them were unheard of. But as long as we five Maltbys were in school, there was never a death among the pupils. We lived a happy, carefree life, and didn't know enough to know it -- then. We almost always had Sunday School during the summer months and preaching service part of the time. We had no electricity -- no cars -- radios or T.V.'s -- we lived in an entirely different world than the youth of today.

I hope somehow I have transferred a little of my knowledge and my interest and my enthusiasm and appreciation of the past to you, who have been so kind and patient to listen to me. I do not want to live in the past; neither do I want to forget those who endured hardship and sacrificed so much to make the road ahead easier for us to travel. You people in Fort Winnebago are to be congratulated on what you have accomplished -- it has been hard work, mental and physical. I firmly believe we get back what we give, and you people who have and will carry the load, will surely "reap the fruits of your labor". I would urge every child who comes through these doors to do his very best in every way -- to set a goal, then with the help of home, church and school, press toward that goal.

Thank you so much!

THIS PERMIT MUST ACCOMPANY REMAINS TO DESTINATION

BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS

WISCONSIN STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

BURIAL—TRANSIT PERMIT

Full Name of Deceased Henry Vincent Kuflewski
Place of Death R.R. 1 Portage Columbia Wis.
(Town or City) (County) (State)
Date of Death Sept 7 19 68 Color W Sex M Age 73
Cause of Death (Completion is not necessary for Wisconsin burial)

Burial, Cremation, Removal (Specify)	Name of Cemetery or Crematory	Location (City, town or county)	(State)
<u>Burial</u>	<u>Spicer Cemetery</u>	<u>Twn. Fort Winnebago, Col County</u>	<u>Wis</u>

A certificate of death having been filed as required by laws of this state, permission is hereby given to Funeral Director, or person acting as such.

Frederick Port (Name) Address Portage, Wis
to dispose of said deceased as above stated.

Date Sept 9, 19 68 Signature N. B. Bishop (Registrar) cm.
Address Portage, Columbia (City and County)

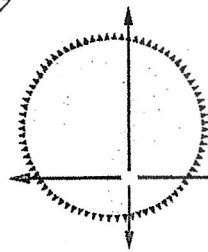
CEMETERY OR CREMATORY AUTHORITY SHALL FILL OUT SPACE BELOW

Body was _____ on _____, 19____, in _____
(Whether Cremated, Buried, Etc.) (Cemetery or Crematory)
Located at _____ Signature _____
(Sexton or Person in Charge)

SEE OTHER SIDE

This permit must be endorsed by the sexton (or by the Funeral Director where there is no sexton) and permanently retained in the Sexton's files.

FORM V.S. NO. 11-50M



COLUMBIA COUNTY

Veterans Services

Mary Lopez
608-742-9618
FAX: 608-742-9602
E-MAIL: donna.chrzas@co.columbia.wi.us

P.O. Box 232
Portage, WI 53901-0232

July 22, 2009

MEMO: Memorial Day Flags

TO: All Organizations Affected

FROM: DONNA CHRZAS
VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

It is with regret that I must inform all organizations who order Memorial Day flags from the Columbia County Veterans Service Office that due to budget constraints and staff time required to provide the service of ordering, sorting, preparing for delivery and collecting money for Memorial Day flags, beginning in 2010 our office will no longer be able to provide this service to townships, communities and veterans organizations.

It has become increasingly difficult over the past few years to manage this extremely time consuming task with very little staff in the Veterans Service Office and the increasing demands placed on this office to serve the multitude of new veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan who need to file claims for service connected disabilities, education benefits, health care benefits, etc. In an effort to keep up with the extra staff time required to meet the increasing demands of serving our returning war veterans in need of assistance, it has become necessary to discontinue providing a service that I understand has been important to all who participate.

Columbia County is one of only a few counties who have traditionally provided a service such as this. Typically in most counties, the flags are purchased and provided by the service organizations themselves or the cities or townships. While we have been proud to offer this service in the past it is simply no longer feasible to continue to burden our workload at the expense of timely service to the veterans of Columbia County.

To assist you in the transition, a list of providers from which flags may be acquired is attached.

Thank you for your understanding and willingness to support our efforts to serve Columbia County Veterans in the most efficient manner possible.

Should you have questions or require additional information, you may contact me at the address or telephone number listed above.

Respectfully,

DONNA J. CHRZAS
VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER
COLUMBIA COUNTY

Susan A. Wilcox, Clerk
Town of Fort Winnebago
R. R. # 1
Portage, Wisconsin 53901
January 29, 1981

Wisconsin Department of Revenue
P. O. Box 34
Madison, Wisconsin 53786

Dear Sirs:

A few years ago the Spicer Cemetary Association dissolved. The Cemetary is located in Fort Winnebago and the Town assumed the responsibility of it. We haven't been able to find a Wisconsin Exmplores Identification Number for the Cemetary and presume they never had one. The Cemetary Association has a Certificate of Deposit about to mature and the bank requires a tax identification number on it. What I am trying to find out is if we can use our Towns identification number (86077) on things pertaining to the Cemetary or does it need to have its own identification number and if so how do we go about obtaining a number for it?

Sincerely,

Susan A. Wilcox

Susan A. Wilcox, Clerk

The bank probably wants a federal Employer Identification number. We suggest that the contact a Internal Revenue Service office on this matter.

Thomas E. Hansen