



Circa 1950

FARMERS STATE BANK OF ZACHOW

The emerging needs of the small village of Zachow dictated that a bank be organized to handle the business of the day. This business was primarily dairy farming and the attendant creameries, and the cattle and freight shipping business. The farmers also needed some sort of local accommodation for farm loans and their financial affairs since travel was not as easy as it is now.

The Farmers State Bank of Zachow was established on October 9, 1915. The capital base was a whopping \$10,000 and the total footings were \$15,632 at yearend 1915. (See Table of key financial statistics)

It was common for many years for the chief executive officer of the smaller banks to be named Cashier. J.R. Lutsey was the first Cashier (1915) followed by J.F. Zuehlsdorf (1920), L.E. Raisler (1924), August H. Sack(1929), M.J. Brunner (1930), with the last being Donald A. Proper (1934 to time of 1943 merger). (See table of Officers and Board Members)

The first five years of the banks existence saw a good trend in growth in the bank with loans getting up to \$98,634 in 1920 with total assets of \$114,832. This reflected the

growth in this small farm community and a bit of the roaring 20's. However, this early "burst" was dampened and the bank remained about the same size until the problems of the depression set in. By 1934 there had been a marked turndown in banking activity which was a sign of the times. Loans and deposits were down significantly and the bank was losing money. This situation brought on some amount of pressure from the State Banking Department to close the bank.

However, the community and key depositors remained loyal and Donald A. Proper found some effective arguments to support the bank. This included the needs identified with its founding nineteen years earlier and the fact that he had a new wife, and young son to support, and new house built next to the bank during a time of national depression. These arguments provided ammunition to keep the bank open. A number of area banks were forced to close.

One of the activities that supplemented the income of the bank officers and employees was the preparation of income tax returns for the community utilizing the bank facilities. This was a once a year activity that required hours late into the night until tax season was over. The bank was struggling financially and another way to help the bank and also to increase income of the Proper family was the employment of Mrs. Donald A. Proper. Florine T. Proper spent many years working in the Farmers State Bank of Zachow. Since the bank was located next door to the family residence this was a convenient arrangement. Young son Dean was frequently called upon to make lunch for the family and to perform janitorial duties at the bank.

Mr. Proper realized over time that the bank was too small to adequately provide for the needs of the farm trade, businesses, and depositors. The capital base of the bank was too small to meet the growing loan demands of the farms and businesses.

In 1944 Mr. Proper was able to engineer the merger of the Cecil State Bank with the Farmers State Bank of Zachow which would serve the banking needs of the Cecil and Zachow communities better. As a prelude to this and to give himself more control over his destiny after the scare of threatened bank closure, Mr. Proper had acquired effective control of the bank from a widely held stockholder base that resulted from the initial capitalization in 1915.

As of December 8, 1944 the new organization that emerged was the Farmers State Bank of Cecil with a branch bank in Zachow. Ms. Florine T. Proper became branch Manager with Mr. Proper spending time in both the the Cecil and Zachow offices. This arrangement lasted until around 1954.

In the meantime Ms. Ruth Radtke from Zachow had been hired and after some experience in the Cecil and Zachow office Ms. Ruth Radtke was named to head the branch bank in Zachow in 1955 which she did until called upon in 1972 to replace W.E. Malueg as head of the Farmers State Bank of Cecil. Mr. Malueg had replaced Mr. Proper in 1955 when Mr. Proper left the bank to take a banking position elsewhere while retaining ownership control of the bank. Ms. Radtke remained as the chief operating

officer of the bank until the bank was sold in 1981, while Mr. Proper functioned as an absentee chief executive officer..

When Ms. Radtke took over duties at the Cecil office of the bank in 1972 she was replaced in Zachow by Ms. Shirley Schreiber. Another event marked 1972 and that was that the bank had a late night robbery. Ms. Schreiber survived that trauma in her new position and went on as Branch Manager until she retired in 1989. Ms. Schreiber retired as an employee of the Valley Bancorporation since the Farmers State Bank of Cecil had been sold earlier to Valley on June 16, 1981. Both Ms. Radtke and Ms. Schreiber ran the Zachow branch for extended periods and put their mark on the personality of the bank and were well respected in the community.

When Ms. Schreiber retired in 1989 Ms. Ann Boerst took over the management of the Zachow office. Ms. Sue Witterholt followed Ms. Boerst as manager and the last manager was Ms. Tammy Liebergen. Five years after Ms. Boerst took command (1994) the Valley Bancorporation, and the Zachow branch, became part of the M & I bank of Milwaukee. Due to a perceived low level of business activity and a relatively high level of expense the decision was eventually made by the M & I organization to close the Zachow branch, This occurred at year end 1995. Thus ended the eighty year history of the Farmers State Bank of Zachow that ran from 1915 to 1995.

Zachow has been a declining community business-wise since the 60's as transportation became better and people learned how to commute and local businesses could not compete. However, the shadow of the Farmers State Bank lives on. The bank building was purchased by Mr. Donald Staszak in 1996 and is now a one unit apartment building functioning as a private residence.

Dean D. Proper
Zachow Historic Committee August 3, 2008

(Authors Note:)

It has been an interesting exercise gathering the data for this organization. My thanks go to all the people that suffered my assault on their memories. The Wisconsin Banking Commission was especially helpful. With the various mergers most of the local records have disappeared.

My personal recollections of the bank are much valued. I was called on occasionally to carry out trash, wax floors, dust, and shovel snow. These were responsible things for a young boy to do, but since the bank was next door to our house these things were convenient to do.

A robbery is mentioned above in 1972. It is my recollection that there were several attempts to rob the bank over the years.. However, the vault was an old time case hardened steel vault with an extraordinarily strong safe inside. The robbers would gain entry into the bank through by breaking a window, or the glass door. When they got to

the vault things generally stopped since the best drills readily available would not penetrate the steel. We would find small holes where someone had attempted to drill into the vault. However, the robbery of 1972 was successful but the robbers only got coins.

The rear of the bank had a wood addition that housed a pre-plumbing privy, the furnace for heating, and storage for “garage” type items. There was no running water in the bank in the 50’s. This appendage to the bank became the Club House for the Roy Rogers Club and met almost every Saturday for a couple of summers. Most of the boys in town were active in this wild west organization.

In later years I also worked in the bank as a “banker” in summers both in Zachow and Cecil. This provided some spending money and college funds.

The historic information is felt to be accurate but there is a possibility that some things are not quite right. Please let us know of any items that need to be corrected or clarified.

Farmers State Bank of Zachow Established October 9, 1915

Officers and Board Members

Note: The Cashier was generally the Chief Executive Officer for banks during this period of review. The following reflects the composition of the management and board of the bank over the years.

November 10, 1915

Cashier: J. E. Lutsey

Board: Ed. H. Erb Fred Hanstedt
 H. Radtke Albert Reinke
 Julius Simon Louis E. Raisler
 J.E. Lutsey

President: Louis E. Raisler, Vice President: Julius Simon

November 15, 1920

Cashier: J.F. Zuehlsdorf

Board: Ed. H. Erb Albert Reinke
 Julius Simon J.E. Lutsey
 Wm. Stanton

President: G.H. Frazer, Vice President: Herman Radtke

December 31, 1924

Cashier: L.E. Raisler

Board: Ed. H. Erb Juluis Simon
 L.E. Schoen L.E. Raisler
 Albert Reinke Robert Radtke
 Adolph Spengler

President: Julius Simon, Vice President: Robert Radtke

December 31, 1929

Cashier: August H. Sack

Board: A.H. Graf Robert Radtke
 Henry Dehn Wm Hanstedt
 A.H. Sack Adolph Spengler
 W.H. Kammerman

President: A.H. Graf, Vice President: Robert Radtke

December 31, 1930

Cashier: M.J. Brunner

Board: A.H. Graf Wm Hanstedt
 Henry Dehn Adolph Spengler

President: Robert Radtke, Vice President: W.H. Kammerman

December 31, 1934

Cashier: Donald A. Proper

Board: A.H. Graf Robert Radtke
 W.F. Reisner Adolph Spengler
 Wm Hanstedt Donald A. Proper

President: Robert Radtke, Vice President: A.H. Graf

December 31, 1943 (This was the last year before the bank was merged with the Cecil State Bank. It was then a branch of the Farmers State Bank of Cecil)

Cashier: Donald A. Proper

Board: A.H. Graf Robert Radtke
 Wm Hanstedt Henry Mehlberg
 Donald A. Proper

President: Robert Radtke, Vice President: A.H. Graf, Asst. Cashier: Florine T. Proper

Managers of the Zachow Branch

1944: Ms. Florine T. Proper

1954: Ms. Ruth Radtke (Farmers State Bank of Cecil)

1972: Ms. Shirley Schreiber (Farmers State Bank of Cecil, Valley Bancorporation)

1989: Ms. Ann Boerst (Valley Bancorporation, M&I Bank)

1992 Ms. Sue Witterholt (Valley Bancorporation, M&I Bank)

1994: Ms. Tammy Liebergen (M&I Bank- branch was closed in 1995.)

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Key Financial Statistics for Farmers State Bank of Zachow

Year Capital Base Total Assets Deposits Loans Bldgs & Furn.
Established in 1915 with \$10,000

1915	\$10,814	\$ 15,632	\$ 4,821	\$ 8,333	\$1,682
1920	\$15,883	\$114,832	\$ 78,144	\$98,634	\$3,258
1924	\$12,932	\$ 90,936	\$ 73,544	\$71,417	\$5,215

1929	\$14,236	\$ 92,515	\$ 73,220	\$74,459	\$5,123
1930	\$14,952	\$ 91,092	\$ 76,139	\$67,682	\$4,739
1934	\$12,100	\$ 91,840	\$ 79,730	\$32,481	\$4,982

1943	\$16,124	\$258,764	\$242,599	\$94,496	\$1,000
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(1943 was the last financial data of the Farmers State Bank of Zachow prior to the merger with the Cecil State Bank)

The effect of the Great Depression is apparent in the early 30's.

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