

SCHMIDTS TAVERN

: Lots 20 & 21 Reinke Addition

I am not sure when the actual building was built but it appears from some old pictures that show the buildings under construction in Zachow that it was built in 1907. Someone had marked the photo as 1907. These dates would indicate that Nick Metz built the side by side structures since he owned the land from 1906 to 1908. He was an entrepreneur and it is likely that he did the original buildings.



Zachow under construction-1907. "Schmidts" tavern in center with horse
Courtesy of Bonduel Community Archives



"Schmidt's Tavern" is the two-building structure above the W's in the above photo.
Circa 1915
Courtesy of Bonduel Community Archives

Nick Metz sold the tavern to W.C. Zachow in 1908 (another entrepreneur) and he in turn sold it to Amelia Rueckert in the same year. Zachow most likely acted as agent and maybe financier in this transaction since in 1910 the tavern was sold back to W.C. Zachow. Zachow then owned it until 1921. It is guessed that Zachow rented this property to someone from the period 1910 to 1921. Perhaps Ben F. Hoeffs since the tavern was sold to Ben F. Hoeffs in 1921 who that same year sold it to Henry Radtke. (Henry and Hattie Radtke) It is also possible that Mr. Hoeffs perhaps acted as agent or intermediary in this transaction.



“Schmidt’s Tavern” at time Henry Radtke owned it. Jean Dobratz is girl sitting on steps. Circa mid-30’s. Courtesy of Lorraine Gentz (Hoeffs)

The following was written by Pam Gardner (Radtke-Myron’s daughter) from information gathered from Myron Radtke.

MYRON J. RADTKE’S MEMORIES OF ZACHOW as shared with his daughter shortly before his passing on May 7th, 2009

On March 4th, 1922 a doctor from Shawano came to Henry Radtke’s saloon in Zachow to assist Henry’s wife Hattie Schwahn Radtke in the birth of their second child, Myron. Myron’s brother Gordon was born 2 years earlier.

The saloon was a 2 story building. The first floor was divided in half. On one side a kitchen, living room, and 1 bedroom were located, and the saloon occupied the other side. Additional bedrooms could be found upstairs.

The Radtkes owned the bar during the time of prohibition. Booze was “cooked” at Berry Lake, north of Shawano, and trips were made there by Henry to obtain the liquor. Henry was never arrested, but according to Myron, a few other buyers were arrested and spent time in jail.

At times, outlaw gangs would frequent the saloon and after drinking would begin to start some barroom brawls. Myron recalls his father needing to remove the Herms brothers from the bar on such an occasion.

Myron and Gordon were fortunate to have quite a number of toys during the time their parents owned the bar. Some of their toys included an electric train, a sled, trucks, and an easel with a blackboard.

According to Myron, baseball was a big deal in Zachow. Before Henry owned the tavern, around 1920, he played outfield in the diamond behind the general store. We have a picture of one of the teams he played with. From 1934-1938, Myron spent many Sunday afternoons and early week day evenings after chores playing softball for fun. The kids from east of Zachow competed against the kids from town. The names of some of the other players are Gordon, Denny, Harry, and Louie Radtke, Harold and Jack Boerst, Hilbert Schultz, Waldon Rueckert, and Bud Eckert.

Myron remembers watching the Saturday night free movies on a screen set on an angle in the middle of town from 1937-1938. The movies were sponsored by the local business places in Zachow. Businesses he frequented were Kammerman's General Store, the bank, the grain elevator, and Radtke's auto dealership where he purchased his first car—a Model T for \$20. He still recalls being out one night and at 10pm finding the tires all flat. That meant walking home.

Myron's first place of employment was the Pauly Cheese Co. , working in the warehouse. He was hired by Harry Hoefs in 1940 and Myron said Harry was a very good employer. That same year Myron was able to buy his second car from Radtke's Garage—a used 1935 Ford which he later traded to his cousin Louie for a 1939 Chevy.

In 1944, Myron married Lila Schultz from Manawa and began working at a cheese factory just outside of Zachow owned by Walden Mehlberg. After a few years, he sold his car to his brother Gordon and used the money as a down payment to purchase the cheese factory. Later, he sold the factory to Rodger Krueger and worked the family farm near Zachow. In 1950, Myron and his wife Lila purchased a cheese factory near Clintonville, WI. For quite a number of years, he made regular trips to Zachow to haul his cheese to the Pauly warehouse. I would accompany him and always looked forward to the stops at Mert and Dora Baker's Bar and Barbershop after the cheese was unloaded. Myron always spoke very fondly of his life in Zachow and the surrounding area.

Written by Pam Gardner (Radtke)

Henry Radtke ran the tavern until 1934 when he sold it Louis and Louise Dobratz. Louis Dobratz was Minnie Schmidt's father but Minnie and Rueben were the tavern keepers. In 1939 the tavern was finally sold to Rueben and Minnie Schmidt. It is possible that the Schmidts rented the tavern from the Dobratz's prior to this..

Headline in Sunday addition of Shawano Evening Leader

Couple operates Zachow bar for over half-century



SUNDAY photo by Joan Sousek

Reuben and Minnie Schmidt, owners of Schmidt's Bar in Zachow, have been in business for 56 years in May. They also marked their 60th wedding anniversary last year.

Courtesy of Shawano Leader

The above photo and the following article was featured in the Shawano Evening Leader on Sunday April 22, 1990

By JOAN SOUSEK
for SUNDAY

ZACHOW — Minnie Schmidt remembers looking out an upstairs window of the bar she and her husband own in Zachow, and seeing a sea of shiny car tops — more than she could count.

That was in the 1940s, when picture shows — held at the tavern several nights a week — attracted large crowds of up to 300 people.

The throngs are gone now, but Minnie and Reuben Schmidt still operate Schmidt's Bar and have done so continuously for 56 years.

"It's hard to tell when we'll be busy," Minnie said recently. "Our old customers are nearly all gone." In summer, business picks up a bit with tourists, she added, "But, most of our customers are still friends and relatives."

Schmidt's Bar is two doors down from Jim Pockat's Bar, which Minnie says has been there as long as she can remember — though there have been different owners over the years.

The Schmidts have seen numerous changes in Zachow, which was once home to a stock yard, saw mill, 13-room hotel with a saloon and dance hall, cheese factory, feed mill, several other taverns and a large general store, which Minnie says, "shipped everything."

Those were the days when the train depot was smack in the center of town, and Zachow residents could travel by rail to Green Bay to shop and return the same day.

Netley was the name originally given to

the village by the Chicago and North Western Railroad Company, when they built their line from Green Bay to Eland Junction about 1903.

It was later changed to Zachow in honor of W.C. Zachow, a prominent businessman and pioneer from Cecil. The community thrived as a cattle, sugar beet and grain shipping center.

Today, Graf Creamery is the largest employer. There is also a garage, grocery store, bank, gas station and feed mill.

Reuben and the former Minnie Dobratz were married on Nov. 30, 1929. In 1989, they celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary.

For four years after marriage, they lived on her parents' farm at Rt. 2, Bonduel. They took over the tavern business from Minnie's father, Louie Dobratz, in May of 1934 — shortly after prohibition ended.

The two-story building on Northwestern Street is also the couple's home, with living quarters in the rear and upstairs.

The bar's decor is typical of rural Wisconsin, with old and new trappings. Auction signs hang on the wall near a pool table and juke box. Photographs from the couple's travels and Reuben's horse-pulling ventures are randomly displayed around the bar. At one end of the room, there is a tin-shrouded wood burner. Nearby is Reuben's easy chair, where he often relaxes since hip replacement surgery, artificial knee operations and heart problems have slowed his pace.

Tucked in a corner, there's a radio bought by the couple in the 1938, which they say

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works as well as a new one. A customer once offered them \$350 for it, but they told him, "If it's worth that much to you, it's worth at least that much to us."

Customers at Schmidt's Bar belly-up to a classic solid wood counter made of cherry and oak. Minnie refinished the front and back bars, a task which included the tedious job of stripping everything, including fancy bone trim on the back bar.

In the early days, Minnie said, their tavern would sometimes stay open all night. "Farmers might come to town for a vacation and stay two or three days," she said. Liquor sold for 10¢ a glass and beer was a nickel.

Now they charge \$1 for a shot of whiskey and 40¢ for a tap beer, and "it really should be 50¢," Reuben said.

The bar opens about 8 a.m. and "No matter what, we close at 1 a.m. That's long enough," Minnie said.

At one time, the bar was licensed for slot machines, which were a lucrative venture. Minnie said, "We made enough from them to live on."

Though changes have been numerous and dramatic, one thing has remained constant at Schmidt's Bar — Minnie's role as bartender.

In the early days, women were not seen in front of the bar, but Minnie worked right along Reuben behind it.

"That was the style," Minnie said. "It was the same at the dance hall. The women drank in the hall, not at the bar."

During the day, Minnie was bar keep and homemaker — and business was a priority.

"If things got busy, the housework stayed put," she said. Reuben worked several day jobs, including on farms, in the woods and at the Cheese House in town for 28 years. At night, they both worked in the bar.

On weekends, they took time for other pursuits.

For over 20 years, Reuben competed in horse pulling contests and just recently sold his prize halter. They both tend a large vegetable garden and are members of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Bonduel.

They also like to travel, but a slower pace suits them.

Minnie said, "I worked in Chicago and Milwaukee for a few years, but city life is too fast for me. I'd never want to live there."

Rueben and Minnie were always there to serve and to listen. It was one of the primary stops for the folks trading in Zachow. One of Rueben's favorite hobby's was a team of horses that he had. There was always some excitement when this team came to town.

The Schmidt's ran the tavern until 1992 when Rueben passed away. Minnie ran it alone for a period but the structure was converted into an apartment for Minnie to live out her years in. She sold the tavern to Donald and Carol Staszak in 1998 who added the facility to their many real estate holdings in Zachow that function as rental units. Minnie rented from them until 2003 when she passed away.



Courtesy Darlene Heller-circa mid 2000's

Dale Dirks passed along a story about Rueben Schmidt that deserves retelling. When the Stark Hotel was demolished around 1940 to make room for the Henry Dirks home Rueben expressed some interest in the bar in the hotel since it would be an upgrade from the bar he had in his tavern. Henry wanted \$4.00 for the bar but Rueben would not pay \$4.00. They went back and forth for a year or so on the price issue when Rueben finally came around to pay the \$4.00, but only on the condition that Henry would move the bar to the new location. The bar was duly moved to its new home and the \$4.00 changed hands.

Dean D. Proper 1-15-2010