

Wheeling's roots are in food, drink

By Cissi Falligant

IT HAS ALWAYS been food and liquor and fun.

Since the 1830s, Wheeling's heart has been Milwaukee Avenue. Its restaurants and saloons, which first served pioneers and German farmers on their way to Milwaukee, and later gangsters and wealthy families out for a Sunday drive, still offer good times.

But historical leftovers are nearly lost today in a motley hodgepodge of utility lines, billboards, restaurants, and automotive services.

THE VILLAGE is trying this year to plan the rehabilitation of Milwaukee Avenue, to make it look like the historical landmark officials think it is. But no one knows how to repair the damage that fast growth and poor foresight in the last 20 years have wrought.

Wheeling is paying \$20,000 to an urban planner, David Outhred, who helped redesign Palatine and Des Plaines. He has surveyed merchants and citizens but probably won't formulate a plan for the avenue's rehabilitation until early summer, according to village officials.

Filkin's Tavern started it all in 1836. The avenue was still a muddy path along the Des Plaines River, adopted from the Indians by white men and called "the Milwaukee and Chicago Plank Road." The federal government designated it as the route for postal stagecoaches.

THAT FIRST tavern lined its section of the road with wooden sidewalks and took advantage of the hungry people and horses who were a half-day's ride from Chicago. Soon blacksmith shops appeared nearby to repair broken carriages.

Travelers used the avenue instead of
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Historical photos courtesy of Wheeling Historical Society

Periolat Bros. Brewery, shown here in a turn-of-the-century photo, supplied the beer for Wheeling's taverns.

2d grand jury to probe disappearance of teen

By Sue Treiman

A **COOK COUNTY** Grand Jury has subpoenaed a number of persons, including friends of Thomas Urlacher, in the case of missing Mt. Prospect teen-ager Barbara Glueckert.

Urlacher, 25, of Algonquin Shores, is the key suspect in 14-year-old Barbara's disappearance Aug. 21 from a rock concert near Huntley, in Kane County.

The Cook County Grand jury issued its subpoenas in mid-January. A similar grand jury investigation is to begin Tuesday in Kane County, where authorities suspect a crime may have been committed in connection with Barbara's disappearance.

TERRY SULLIVAN, an assistant Cook County state's attorney, said Friday the Cook County Grand Jury won't be taking testimony during the Kane County Grand Jury investigation. He said a special grand jury wasn't convened in Cook County for the Glueckert cast. The case instead went to the regular grand jury.

A source close to the investigation specu-

lated Thursday that the grand jury investigation in the case will be based in Cook County, rather than Kane County, because the Cook County state's attorney's office contends the number of investigators available is greater in Cook than in Kane County.

Urlacher faces a jury trial in the Des Plaines branch of Cook County Circuit Court Feb. 14 on a misdemeanor charge of contributing to the delinquency of a minor in connection with Barbara.

He is believed to be the last person who saw Barbara.

IN A LETTER written to a friend after Barbara disappeared and intercepted by police, Urlacher is said to have told of "burying a girl in the ground."

Kane County authorities said they expect to begin digging at possible grave sites when the ground thaws.

Meanwhile, sources say a number of Urlacher's friends are being threatened with unrelated drug charges if they do not bring forward more information on the case.



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See Sports

Plank road paved way for Wheeling

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journeying along the lake because they wanted to be near the German farmers settling rich land who needed mail and goods delivered and could offer food and repairs. No one wanted to homestead the ravines along Lake Michigan where crops couldn't be grown. German was taught in the schools and some of the church services were in German.

The thrifty, hard-working German families, noting the thriving roadhouse business, set up taverns of their own. Soon the Periolat Brothers Brewery, established along the river, was providing those taverns with beer.

DOROTHY FORKE, whose grandparents owned 125 acres on both sides of Milwaukee Avenue south of Dundee Road, was born in Wheeling in 1907. She remembers the aroma of green hops [an ingredient of beer] growing in fields along the avenue — a smell "more beautiful than the best perfume."

"When I was a child," she said, "all the businesses were located on Milwaukee Avenue. It was lined with wooden sidewalks and hitching posts. On a typical weekday afternoon, you'd take a horse and buggy or horse and sleigh [depending on the season] and pass maybe one or two horses [on Milwaukee]."

"Wheeling was so beautiful then," she recalled. "The river was clean, we went swimming, ate fish from the Des Plaines. In the winter we had very large parties down by the river, went skating, and had weenie roasts. People would come from all around the area."

IN THE WINTER, children late for school would hitch rides on the bobsleds hauling ice from the river to the taverns' icehouses where it would be packed in sawdust and straw to last the summer, Forke remembered. The "eating houses" had to have ice to keep their dairy products and beer cold.

The good times she remembers were shared not only by the German settlers, but also by the Irish, said Marshall Balling, historian of the Wheeling Historical Society.

The railroads had brought the Irishmen to America to work on the rails, and they had settled temporarily in western Lake Forest, then known as Everett, Balling said. They loved to come to Wheeling, drinking and picking fights from bar to bar. Tavern owners would tolerate only so much, and then they locked the doors.

CALLING THE police didn't do any good against the Irish, Balling said, because there were too many of them and they were too big.

The character of the village grew up around the tavern business, Balling said. He was 6 when his family moved to Wheeling in 1914. The village was fast becoming the place people from the North Side of Chicago, which was dry, came to make merry. All the industry — the brewery, sawmills, and

cheese factories supported the taverns. Many of Wheeling's women worked as cooks, waitresses, and chamber maids.

"Wheeling has never lost its lower middle class character, even today," Balling said. "There are no management people. It's a good place to make money, not a prestige place to live."

THE BANKER'S wife in the early 1920s was scandalized when she realized she had to raise her son in a town of 350 people and 17 taverns, Balling remembered.

Wheeling's golden age began right after World War I, when wealthy families from Chicago and the Lake Shore would motor out west on Sundays, sometimes as far as Fox Lake, and stop in Wheeling for dinner on their way home.

That was the "cream of the chicken dinner business," according to Balling and June Orłowski, curator of the Wheeling Historical Society, who waited tables at the Union Hotel



Favorite eating and drinking places for travelers to Wheeling were the Union Hotel, now Cafe Angelo (1925 photo, above), Filkin's Tavern (1905 photo, left) and Papa Bouche's Villa Venice (1930s photo).



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and Ray's Tavern, two of the biggest old restaurants. Her mother cooked at the hotel.

IN THE 1920S, men who didn't have cars borrowed their bosses' trucks and drove their families out to Wheeling for "truck parties." They swam in the pristine river, picnicked on the banks, and wandered through the woods playing concertinas. There were rowboats, merry-go-rounds, and pony rides for them to enjoy. In the evenings, they ate dinner in the restaurants before going home.

Wheeling then was a "sleepy little town with cattle," and its own baseball team. Without television, baseball, Christmas plays, bonfires, and summer carnivals were how people had fun, Orlowski and Balling agreed.

In the summer, Italian opera stars singing at Ravinia Park in Highland Park had Mondays off, and they came to Wheeling, rented flat-bottomed boats, and rowed up and down the river singing all the way. The villagers walked down to the water to listen.

ON SATURDAY nights, after their home games, the Chicago Cubs came out to Wheeling to eat the homemade pies, and bread, cheeses, and big bowls of homegrown salads and vegetables. They ate chickens that had been raised by local farmers and had never been frozen. They ate steaks, roast beef, and pork from local butcher shops. Only the fish was brought in.

"Some of the restaurants were elegant in a family way," Balling remembered. "They had varnished, polished wainscoting, and starched curtains, not expensive drapery. Everything was clean and neat, not gaudy, but substantial."

Balling said he is sorry now that the restaurateurs simply put porches around old farmhouses, "instead of building significant buildings that would have made Wheeling distinctive in Midwest architecture." The restaurants were family operations, where "the wife did the cooking, the husband did the bartending, and the half-witted brother did the flunky work."

ONE RESTAURANT owner was president of the International Waiters Union. Some people in Wheeling looked down on him, Balling said, because he was poor and because some suspected he was Jewish and were biased. His friends from the union would tip off famous people visiting Chicago that "if you really want to eat come out to Wheeling." And traveling companies of theater productions followed those tips and came out en masse.

Prohibition actually helped the village's business. People didn't mind driving that far from Chicago for a drink. Restaurant owners bought whisky by the barrel and hid it in cellars and barns. They brought it into the taverns in coffee pots and a variety of other containers.

"The word would come down from the state's attorney's office about every four



Someone who remembers Wheeling from the 1940s (above) might have trouble recognizing this intersection now. Both views are looking south down Milwaukee Ave-

nue from Dundee Road. The water tower, though modernized, still stands, as do the village hall beneath it, and the building on the corner.



months that there was going to be a raid," Balling said. "Then, the government would seal off the bar room. Afterwards, the Union Hotel [for example] would open a bar in another room. Eventually it set up a bar in a woodshed — it was a nice little bar."

THE SYNDICATE gangs competed with each other to supply liquor, and the tavern owners were caught in the middle. Balling said the practice of beer runners was to walk quietly into a restaurant, place a sawed-off

shotgun on the bar in front of the owner, and say, "We're putting in some beer here."

The owner often resented that he already had all he could use, but no one refused a reply when the runner demanded to know "how many barrels you want?"

The syndicate also ran bookie operations in the backs of some taverns. There were slot machines in the bars too.

WHEN SOMEBODY didn't pay off the right people, Balling and Orlowski said, the

slot machines were smashed up. Eventually, the machines were built into special wall cabinets that looked like roll-top desks and were kept locked.

One fellow, found dead and tied to a tree in the woods by Lake-Cook Road and Milwaukee Avenue, was assumed to be a victim of the bootleg wars.

After Prohibition was over, the federal government created jobs for people in the

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Where travelers eat, drink

Wheeling's heart still Milwaukee Av.

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area by opening a dam and draining the Des Plaines to clean out all the rotted logs and matted vegetation. One man found five or six slot machines under the Milwaukee Avenue bridge. They had been tossed there in a moment of panic, and despite their damp condition, he sold them for quite a bit of money, Balling said.

THE DEPRESSION hit some people hard in Wheeling. Many who had bought subdivision lots were caught without enough money to pay for a house. They lived in cardboard houses and stole corn from farmers for food.

But for those who served the travelers, this was still part of the age of great restaurants. Dance halls and bands attracted young people. And two restaurants brought people from as far away as Wisconsin and Indiana.

The Polska Weis [Polish Village] with its language, costumes, food, and entertainment, attracted Poles from a three-state area, as did Papa Bouchett's Villa Venice, which boasted green grassy grounds sloping down to the river, gondolas, chorus lines, and big stars.

THE END OF THE great age came with World War II. The federal government imposed an entertainment tax during the war that made it too costly for most restaurants to provide shows and dances. Old families stopped driving out to the country for dinner and when the old restaurant

owners died, their families didn't continue the businesses.

And the suburban growth that nearby communities were experiencing passed Wheeling by because it didn't have a commuter railroad.

There are still great restaurants in Wheeling. Although some, like the Chicago House, have been demolished, most have only changed names. The Union Hotel is now Cafe Angelo; the Wensloff Inn is now Tien Tsin Restaurant; the Hartman House is the temporarily closed Roadhouse. Le Francais restaurant and Fulton Street Fishery & Market are recent additions to the more than 15 restaurants that continue Wheeling's gastronomic heritage on Milwaukee Avenue.

THE NAMES AND faces have changed, but the food's still good. The pastoral setting that attracted Chicago's elite, however, has been replaced by haphazard, unsightly development as the old farmsteads have been subdivided.

The old-time residents don't know how Milwaukee Avenue can be reclaimed. They're waiting hopefully and they're remembering.



Historian Marshall Balling with the door of the first Wheeling jail.



Orlowski: family fun without TV

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Cold forces basketball 'weekend that wasn't'

By Gary Reinmuth

JANUARY 28-29 WILL go down as the weekend that wasn't in high school basketball.

From Aurora to Oak Park and from Waukegan to Joliet, high winds, ridiculously cold temperatures, and slippery roads forced either postponement or cancellation of nearly 100 suburban games. Not since the Big Snow of 1967 have so many jump balls, double dribbles, and twisting 20-footers been frozen out.

Bundled up in sweaters, slippers, and terricloth robes, the sensible kept warm by staying home to catch up on the latest episode of "Roots."

Only in the Mid-Suburban League [where they actually played a full slate of games] and a few outlying precincts did a few hearty souls venture forth into the blizzard that gripped the city.

IN ALL CASES, the decision to play or not to play was an individual one, arrived at through negotiations between athletic directors, principals, and, in some cases

district superintendents of the schools involved.

"We decided there was no way we were going to risk serious injury to our students by sending them out into that weather," said Immaculate Conception athletic director Jack Lewis, who had a hand in postponing IC's game with Benet Academy.

"Our gym is warm enough," said Downers Grove North athletic director Steve Oracko. "But the big fear was the possibility of the buses breaking down and the danger of frostbite."

Given the same conditions and possible dangers, however, the MSL decided to go ahead. Such unanimity of opinion hasn't been seen since Mayor Daley's days as head of the Democratic Central Committee.

"**WE HAD NOTHING** at all agreed on," said Forest View athletic director Bill Beckman. "It just worked out that way."

"One guy heard the other guy was going to play and from that the whole idea

developed. I figured with the heat we had, we wouldn't be in too bad a shape. It's getting to the time of year when events are piling on top of events, and it doesn't leave you too many days to reschedule things. We just felt we'd go ahead and play and hope it wasn't too uncomfortable. I'm glad we played."

If there was any trend to the postponements, it seemed that the further a game was from Chicago, the less likely it was to be played.

"The reason we played LT [Lyons Township] is that they're close by," said Riverside-Brookfield athletic director Bill VandeMerkt. "We're in close [to Chicago] and not out in the boondocks. The roads weren't as bad."

BY CONTRAST, THE ENTIRE Fox Valley schedule [Upstate Eight, Little Seven] never had a chance, simply because many highways were impassable.

Surprisingly, the games that were played drew well. More than 2,000 people showed up to watch Buffalo Grove beat

Arlington and R-B had its biggest crowd of the year. Which must prove something.

But what now?

Well, the rescheduling of snowed-out games has already begun. Most will be played Tuesday or Saturday. A full slate of games is planned Tuesday in the Upstate Eight and the Chicago Catholic League. Other contests have been reset as part of a double weekend of conference games later in the season.

But they say there's a silver lining to every cloud. Even a snowy one. And Benet coach Bill Geist seems to have found it.

Thank goodness for all that cold, says Geist, whose Redwings are a half game behind St. Edward in the West Suburban Catholic Conference race.

"I think it helped us. We've got a few people sick, including me," said Geist between coughs. "I've been on the kids all week. We've just been flat. The second group's been outplaying the first group. I think we kind of lucked out. I'll take it." He can have it.

TONIGHT'S GAME

LITTLE EIGHT CONFERENCE TOURNAMENT

At Burlington Central

Hampshire vs. Wheaton Christian, 6:30 p.m.

Genoa-Kingston vs. Huntley, 8 p.m.

LITTLE SEVEN CONFERENCE

Waubensie Valley at Sycamore

TUESDAY'S GAMES

LITTLE EIGHT CONFERENCE TOURNAMENT

Championship game, 8 p.m.

DES PLAINES VALLEY LEAGUE

Addison Trail at Downers Grove South

West Leyden at Glenbard East

DU PAGE VALLEY CONFERENCE

Naperville Central at Wheaton Central

Glenbard South at Naperville North

Wheaton North at West Chicago

Glenbard North at Wheaton-Warrenville

ILLINI EIGHT CONFERENCE

Argo at Romeoville

Lockport at Bolingbrook

Marian Catholic at Joliet West

Joliet Catholic at Joliet East

MID-SUBURBAN LEAGUE

North Division

Buffalo Grove at Fremd

South Division

Schaumburg at Rolling Meadows

CENTRAL SUBURBAN LEAGUE

South Division

Maine West at Niles East

Maine East at Niles North

Niles West at Glenbrook North

North Division

Waukegan East at Waukegan West

WEST SUBURBAN CONFERENCE

Downers Grove North at Glenbard West

UPSTATE EIGHT CONFERENCE

Larkin at East Aurora

West Aurora at Elgin

St. Charles at De Kalb

CHICAGO CATHOLIC LEAGUE

Gordon Tech at St. Rita

Mendel at Loyola

Leo at Brother Rice

St. Ignatius at St. Laurence

Hales Franciscan at Mt. Carmel

Weber at St. Francis de Sales

De La Salle at Fenwick

O'HARE SUBURBAN CONFERENCE

Lake Park at Elmwood Park

LITTLE SEVEN CONFERENCE

Oswego at Kaneland

WEST SUBURBAN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

Montini at Marian Central

NORTHWEST SUBURBAN CONFERENCE

Wauconda at Antioch

Carv-Grove at Woodstock

Dundee at Grant

NORTH SUBURBAN CONFERENCE

Crown at Barrington

OTHER GAMES

Forest View at Palatine

Wheeling at Conant

Hinckley-Big Rock at Lisle

Waterman at Wheaton Christian (tentative)

Valley Lutheran at Richmond-Burton

Hinsdale South at Timothy Christian

WEDNESDAY'S GAMES

NORTHWEST SUBURBAN CONFERENCE

Lake Zurich at Grayslake

OTHER GAMES

St. Vincent de Paul at La Lumiere, Ind.

THURSDAY'S GAMES

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL LEAGUE

Lake Forest Academy at University High

Glenwood School at North Shore Country Day

Additional games may also be played Tuesday, subject to agreements reached today between officials at schools involved.

Wildcat wrestlers near MSL title showdown

By John Grochowski

FOLLOWERS OF WRESTLING in the Mid-Suburban League are just going to have to wait until this weekend's conference meet to find out who has the MSL's best team this year.

Friday's match between South Division leader Conant and North Division leader Wheeling was supposed to provide something of a preview of the league tournament, but the subzero weather forced the cancellation of the dual meet.

So Wheeling, with a 14-3 record in dual meets, will enter the tournament in the unaccustomed position of being one of the league favorites. The Wildcats finished fifth last year, and that was one of the better teams Bob Schulze has had in his 11 years as head coach.

"It's not really a surprise to our wrestlers that they're there," Schulze said. "They're taking it in stride. They've been building up to it from the beginning of the season. They've beaten the teams they've had to beat, and they've really had to work for it."

THE TEAMS THEY'VE HAD to beat include everyone in the MSL North. That means defending conference champion Hersey, a strong Buffalo Grove team, everyone. The three losses have all been to potential state championship contenders — undefeated Highland Park and Loves Park Harlem and once-beaten Barrington. In the two tournaments they've entered, the Wildcats have finished second at Glenbrook South and first at Lake Forest.

Leading the way is a nucleus of six wrestlers with five or fewer losses. Mike Reif, a 132-pounder, and heavyweight Kenny Kent each have lost only one match. Kent's lone defeat has been to Maine West's Dave

Kavazos, a sectional qualifier last year, and Kent has tied state qualifier Greg Gilbaugh of Loves Park Harlem.

Dale Walters, a junior, has a record almost as good as those of Reif and Kent. A 155-pounder who will drop to 145, Walters is 22-2 and has lost only to state place-winners Bob Moore of Barrington and Todd Whitfield of Glenbrook South.

Seniors Ray Auger and Dave Pearlman are 20-5 at 112 and 167, respectively, and junior Tim Miller is 19-4-1 at 145.

"**WE JUST HAVE** some top-rate kids this year," Schulze said. "They're good kids, very coachable, and tremendous athletes. In Auger, Reif, and Kent, we have three great leaders. Seemingly it's hard to find one good leader on a team. It's a tremendous asset to have three leaders like that, leaders to push the others, to drive 'em. They're great kids to work with."

Schulze hasn't always had as much with which to work. He admits that Wheeling has really been respectable only for the last five seasons, and that this is really the first year his Wildcats have challenged for the championship.

"It's kind of hard to pinpoint why," Schulze said. "The kids we have right now overall are probably more dedicated. We have more kids who like wrestling, and this team has a maturity our other teams haven't had. We have five seniors in the lineup. For me, that's a senior-dominated team."

"These things go in cycles. Why isn't Hersey as strong as they had been? Rick Mann is still a good coach, the same coach he was when they won the league last year and the year before and the year before that. Some years you're up, and some years you're down. I don't know of any real solution or reason for it."

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