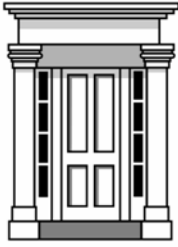


SHEBOYGAN COUNTY



HISTORICAL  
RESEARCH  
CENTER

Bring Back Prosperity

• EAT •  
**CHEESE**  
THIS WEEK

December 11th to 16th

 **Lakeshire Cheese Co.**   
Plymouth, Wisconsin

**Cheese mural**



Found in Plymouth's, United States Post Office, this mural was produced as part of a WWII WPS Federal Art Project

# The Researcher

The Newsletter of the Sheboygan County  
Historical Research Center

Volume XXXI Number 5 June 2021

*The Researcher is sponsored by Jay Christopher of Christopher Farm & Gardens.*

## Plymouth, Cheese Capital of the World



In the January 1940 edition of Kiwanis magazine, Plymouth, Wisconsin was first referred to as the Cheese Capital of the World, giving it the title it so much deserved. On May 22, 2021, the city erected an arch commemorating that designation.

The story of cheese began when dairy farming firmly took root in the 1870s. Milking shorthorns which produced only a small amount of milk, gave way to milking Holsteins who were bigger producers, which led to excess milk. Cheesemaking originated in farm kitchens, led by farm wives, as a way to use up that surplus milk. Cheese had a longer shelf life, and gave the farm family a treat.

Plymouth's first cheese factory was built around 1863 by Hiram Conover, and within fifty years, a score of cheese plants flourished in Plymouth along with hundreds located elsewhere in the county.

Seth Conover stands out as a pioneer in the field. After learning the cheese maker's trade in a wood shed built on his father's farm he was sent to Utica, N. Y., by his father to study scientific cheesemaking. He returned in about 1870 and after operating a cheese factory in the town of Lima came to Plymouth, where he became a prominent cheesemaker and dealer. It is said that he made the first overseas export of Wisconsin cheese and made several trips to Europe on business.

Conover's business was ideally situated, located just south of the depots between the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific and the Chicago & Northwestern railroads. As the rail lines provided transportation for the abundance of cheese products being produced, it was only natural that this area become the hub of the industry; ergo the name Cheeseville was coined; it soon became the common name for that southern section of town where cheese was

Continued on page 6

The Sheboygan County Historical Research Center is located at 518 Water Street in Sheboygan Falls.

Open Tuesday through Friday, 9:00am – 4:00pm.

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Website: [schrc.org](http://schrc.org)

**The Researcher** is the official newsletter of the Sheboygan County Historical Research Center, 518 Water Street, Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin 53085.

It is published six times per year in August, October, December, February, April and June.

The Research Center is the local history archive for Sheboygan County and areas surrounding the county. It is a repository for paper records of all kinds.

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#### **Welcome New Members**

Diane & Larry Apel, Sheboygan Falls  
Elizabeth Burchinal, Kohler  
Jon Koehn, Saint Charles, MO (LEGACY)  
Jack Kueter, Gillette, WY (LEGACY)  
Cesar & Kirsten Lemus, Sheboygan (sponsored by Steven Rogstad)  
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Michael Trier, Northbrook, IL  
Patti Van Cleave, Sheboygan

#### **Program Schedule**

##### **Taproom History**

Fat Cow, 406 Broadway, Sheboygan Falls  
6:30pm to 7:30pm  
Thursday, July 8, 2021  
Steven Rogstad: "Examining Lincoln Murder Conspiracies"  
Thursday, August 12, 2021  
Dr. Kerry A Trask: "Coming of Age: Wisconsin and the Civil War."

##### **History on the Move**

Generations, 1500 Douglas Drive, Plymouth 2:00pm to 3:30pm  
**Wednesday, Sept. 1, 2021      Lippers Mills, The Story of Franklin**  
Tucked away along the Sheboygan River in Town Herman, Sheboygan County, sits the unincorporated village of Franklin, founded in 1847. It was originally known as Lipper's Mills because the people that settled it came from the Lippe-Detmold region of what was later Germany. The residents were locally known as Lippers. This is their history. Learn about the settlement's beer cave, pottery, connection to Mission Haus College, and much more.

##### **Second Saturdays- Journeys Into Local History**

Plymouth Arts Center, 520 East Mill Street, Plymouth 9:30am to 11:30am  
**Saturday, September 11, 2021 - The History of Plymouth Hospital with Dan Buckman,**

The dream of Rev. Martin Schmidt of St. John Lutheran Church, the Plymouth Hospital opened in 1917 in a former cow pasture at the south end of Selma Street, three years after Rev. Schmidt began marshaling community support for the project. After additions in 1927 and 1956, continued growth and demand led to the construction of an all-new hospital to the south, connected to the original hospital by an underground passage, which opened in 1970. The facility is no longer a hospital but still serves as an acute care center and outpatient clinic. Dan Buckman, Plymouth Historical Society, will present a morning of memories.

**Lincoln Seminar –October 5, 12, 19, 26, 2021** - This year's theme is Lincoln romances, with special attention to the Lincoln marriage.

##### **2nd Annual History Symposium -**

The theme recent scholarship in Upper Midwest history. It is an all-day event with 4 speakers discussing an eclectic offering of subjects. More details forthcoming.

*The Researcher is sponsored by Jay Christopher of Christopher Farm & Gardens*



## “LET’S DEVELOP OUR CENTER”

Steven K. Rogstad  
Director of Development

As this issue of the newsletter goes to press, we are still in the midst of our Annual Campaign for this year.

Those of us who work at the Research Center are recognizing old friends and reaching out to establish new beginnings in 2021 with both our regular members and new potential supporters. It is crucial that the organization aggressively re-establishes familiar programs, looks for opportunities to introduce new activities and events, while seeking out gifts that will support the mission of the organization and make it financially sustainable for years to come.

You may have heard or read that 30-35% of non-profit organizations are expected to dissolve nationwide as a result of the pandemic and losses in support. I am happy to report that this is not the case with our organization!

We decided to come out strong this year by scheduling in-person programs, attracting new members, and promoting the Center in ways that establish our relevance in today’s modern post-pandemic, nonprofit world.

Our efforts have paid off! Our first in-person program for Second Saturdays drew over 60 people this past April. Dr. Patrick Jung attracted 40 people earlier this month when he discussed “Why Conspiracy Theories are Bunk and Need to be Debunked” at the first of three Taproom History presentations scheduled for this summer. The Center attracted 13 new memberships in May! The signs are pointing to a very good year for the Center.

We still have 3 months before the Annual Campaign officially ends. The organization still needs your financial help this year. Just so you know, a \$75.00 gift will purchase copy paper; \$100 will purchase 16 new binders for collections care; \$200 will provide funding to support our new Armchair Travelers program; \$250 will fund 2 genealogy classes or the Histo-

ry on the Move series; \$1,000 will sponsor the entire 4-session Lincoln Seminar this fall (I am partial to this program!). If you have not yet made a contribution, please do so TODAY. We have made it easier to donate than ever before. You can continue to send in checks, but you can also submit a payment by going to our website - [www.schrc.org](http://www.schrc.org). With just one click you can really help the Center out this year! One final word as it relates to fundraising: I would welcome the opportunity to put your name to a project or activity that the Center hosts. It is a wonderful way to show your support for the Center, and I would love to give you – or your family- full credit for helping out at this special, yet challenging, time. Please donate today!

Here are a few events I hope you will consider attending this summer and fall:

June 30: I will be signing copies of my book, *Lincoln Among the Badgers: Rediscovering Sites Associated with Abraham and Mary Lincoln in Wisconsin*, 6:30 – 8:00 pm, at an event sponsored by the Sheboygan County Museum.

July 8: “Taproom History” at The Fat Cow in Sheboygan Falls. I will be launching off from where Dr. Young ended his discussion concerning conspiracy theories by presenting a program, “Fake News & Fake Facts in the Lincoln Murder Conspiracies.”

August 12: Dr. Kerry A. Trask will be presenting “Coming of Age: Wisconsin and the Civil War,” for the final offering of Taproom History in 2021 at The Fat Cow in Sheboygan Falls.

Lincoln Seminar –October 5, 12, 19, 26. This year’s theme is Lincoln romances, with special attention to the Lincoln marriage.

November 6: The 2nd Annual History Symposium. The theme recent scholarship in Upper Midwest history. It is an all-day event with 4 speakers discussing an eclectic offering of subjects. More details forthcoming.

Let us work and give to make 2021 a profitable year for the Center in a variety of ways.

Thank you for all you do to support and help develop our Research Center!

Sincerely,  
Steven K. Rogstad  
Director of Development



## Schreier's 1911 Disaster



**The aftermath of the disastrous fire at the Konrad Schreier Co. on June 2, 1911.**

It took three charges of dynamite to bring down the fire-blackened walls of Konrad Schreier's malt house and grain elevators on the morning of June 3, 1911. Blasters from Sheboygan Lime Works set and ignited the series of three detonations. About 15 minutes after the third blast the huge 100-foot walls collapsed, spewing bricks in all directions.

After the previous day's catastrophic fire, the sole remaining wall of the plant had to be destroyed for safety reasons. So badly cracked, it was feared wind might bring it down in an uncontrolled manner. Hundreds of school children and most of the city's adults gathered to watch the demolition of the neighborhood landmark.

Now what led to the need for dynamite?

Fire broke out in the northwest corner of the Schreier malt house just before 4am on the morning of Friday, June 2, 1911. It seemed to originate in a spot on the second floor near an air vent. Employee, Paul Lemberger, tried to use a chemical suppressant to extinguish the flames, but to no avail. Proximity to the air system just enhanced the flames and rocketed the fire to the roof.

Within minutes, the entire structure was burning. Situated on the highest point in the city, towering eight stories above ground, the fire was visible for miles around.

Soon after ignition the fire jumped the space between the malt house and the first elevator to the north.

Once in flames, no power on earth could save the structure or its contents. Constructed of heavy timber covered in sheet metal, the elevators' bins were filled to capacity with malt.

As floors collapsed, grain and malt spilled out onto the C&NW tracks. Those piles would ignite given a fresh air supply. Finally, the second elevator caught fire.

Even though the city water was cranked up to its maximum pressure, the small streams of water did little to prevent spread. Later, the city would face legal action for failure to have an adequate water system, one capable of fighting such a fire.

Station #1 responded first. But it soon was apparent that the local fire department was not enough. Manitowoc's fire department was called in. Their biggest engine was loaded on a flat car and with six men the train brought help to Sheboygan within about 30 minutes. By 7am help arrived. C&NW gave the train the right of way for fast travel, holding the morning passenger train in Sheboygan.

After all was over, Fire Chief Edgar Bedford reported the Schreier fire as the heaviest loss for Sheboygan in 1911 at \$294,000 - \$98,000 buildings and \$196,000 in contents, nearly \$8,000,000 today.

Engineer Alfred Balzer said the shaft operating the air circulation system appeared to have broken, causing sparks which ignited the dust. Noises had been heard in the system earlier in the evening, but nothing was found after inspection.

William Rahr of Manitowoc Malting arrived to help the Schreier company in any way possible. Two carloads of malt were supplied by Rahr so the company could continue beer production. The brewing plant was unharmed even though the malting plant was destroyed. The capacity of the plant at the time was about 75,000 barrels of beer per year, with Edelbrau, Pilsener, Select and Perfection four their most popular brands.

A second indignity was suffered by some of the malt from Schreier. Much of what was salvageable was sent to Milwaukee and stored in Elevator B of the Rialto Co. owned by the C&NW railroad. On the morning of October 16, 1911, that elevator was also destroyed by fire. It appeared to have been smoldering quietly for

Continued on page 8

**Konrad Schreier Co. before the June 2, 1911 fire.**





Plymouth was also home to the Wisconsin Cheese Exchange, a progressive trading group that made sure that small farms and production facilities could get their product to market in a timely manner. Located on the second floor of the Exchange Bank at Mill and Stafford Streets, it set the price for domestic cheese. Chartered in 1918, the organization left Plymouth and moved to Green Bay in 1958. It was renamed the National Cheese Exchange in 1975. Image above, circa 1941.

manufactured, collected, stored, cured, graded, packed and shipped all over the world.

An abbreviated list of companies located there include the following:

Phenix Cheese Company was based in New York and Chicago, but had a branch plant in Plymouth. Phenix produced five-pound boxes of fancy American cheese, wrapped in tin foil and packed in large loaves. They also made Philadelphia brand cream cheese, the best selling packaged cheese in the world. Kraft Foods continued the tradition after they absorbed Phenix.

Pabst-Ett produced cheeses like Blue Label American and Cook Cheese. Beginning in 1934, they produced loaf or processed cheese in the Kraft-Phenix factory, which had just been vacated by Sheboygan Cheese. They employed 130 people at the time. A side note- At the same time Plymouth Box Company opened its doors in the former Plymouth Phonograph building on Cold Storage Street. Plymouth Box made five-pound cheese loaf boxes for Pabst-ett and Lakeshire Cheese. Pabst-ett employed a full-time nurse to take care of the employees and their

families; The factory also had a cafeteria, where meals could be obtained for a cost by the workers.

Four men, Henry Wheeler, Magnus Brinkman, H. Murray Scott and W.F. Hubert, moved their cheese operation to Plymouth in 1923, first calling their company the Brookshire Cheese Co. but changed it later to Lakeshire Co. The founders of Lakeshire Cheese patented a flash pasteurization process that enabled them to cook cheese in 45 seconds instead of the 45-minute process that had been required. Their success with the new process soon drew the interest of the Borden Co., which bought Lakeshire and Carl Marty Cheese Co. of Monroe, combining them into the Lakeshire-Marty Co.

After World War II, Borden consolidated its local cheese production in a new manufacturing plant built on South Street, just east of Cheeseville. Borden Foods eventually sold its cheese facilities to American Dairy Brands, which closed in 2016.

Also, within Cheeseville, mainly on Cold Storage Street, were located such prominent cheese concerns such as Bamford Cheese Co., H. Blanke Cheese Co., C. A. Straubel Cheese Co., The Federation and Brookshire. Other concerns were the popular Bond Pickle Company, and cheese support companies, Plymouth Bandage, Plymouth Box and Special Products Company.

Close to, but not quite in Cheeseville was Plymouth Cheese and Cream Company. Located in downtown Plymouth at 46-48 Stafford Street, this was one of the small dairy and specialty cheese product companies that appeared and disappeared over the years as the industry grew and consolidated. August Stoll was the owner.

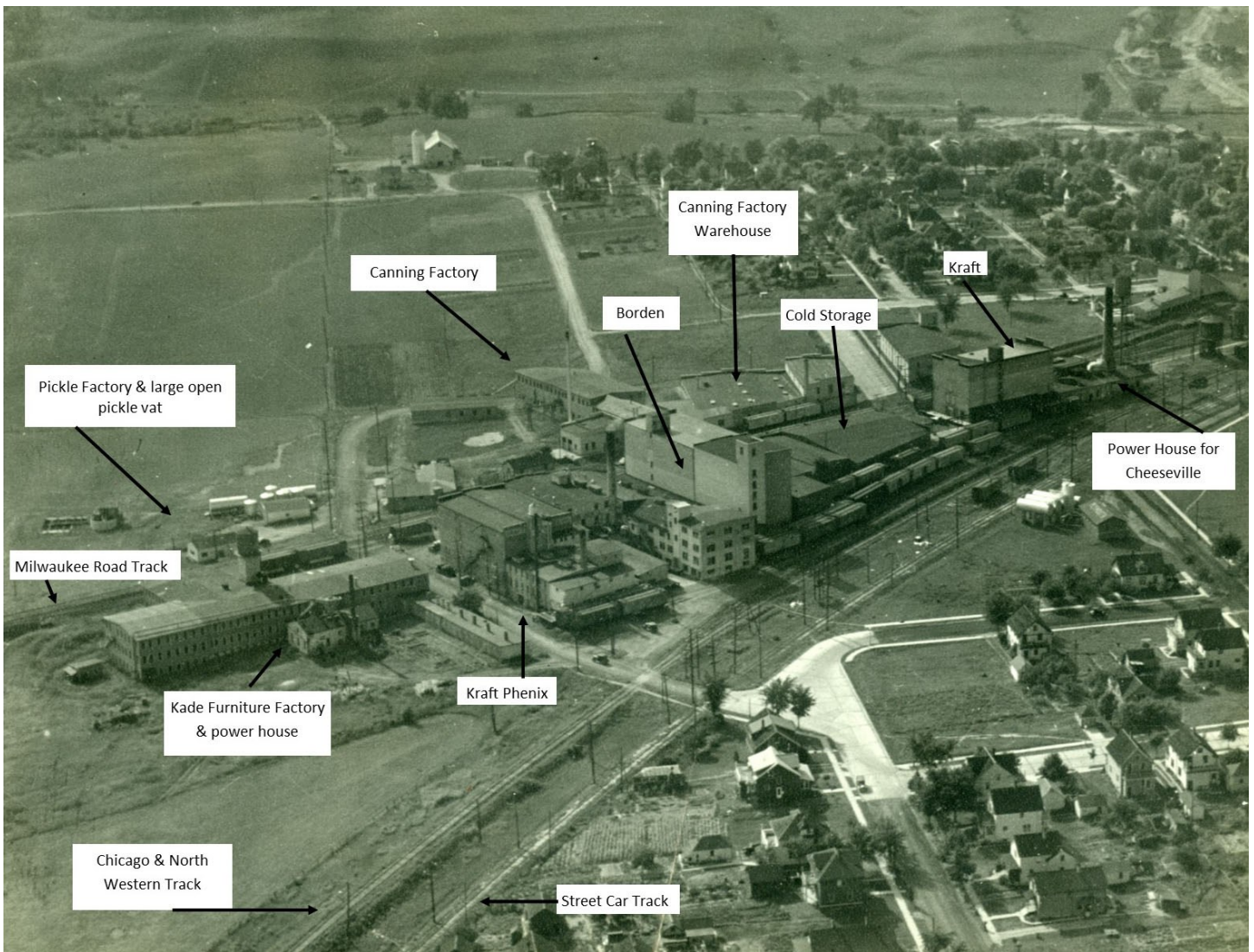
As cheese making grew in Plymouth, the demand for specific products needed in the making, packaging, storing and shipping of cheese grew as well. The Reinhold & Meyer Co. of Plymouth manufactured cheese vats that were widely used not only by cheese companies in Plymouth but throughout the nation.

In 1895, the first cold storage facility was built to take care of perishable products with accommodations for 75,000 pounds of cheese. In 1899 another cold storage was built. In 1892, the first warehouse was built and by 1899 three more were erected and rented to cheese dealers.

Although that southern portion of the city was known as Cheeseville, Plymouth also had a secondary area located in the northwestern part of the city that could also be called Cheeseville. From North Milwaukee Street to Factory and Schwartz on the west to Caroline on the east was a sort of Vee-shaped area that was home others.

Within this area were the Wisconsin Cheese Producers' Co-operative, Cleveland Container, the Land O' Lakes creamery, Plymouth Creamery and Plymouth Dairy products. Sartori, the only cheese producer remaining in the city, sits at the confluence of Main, North Milwaukee and Western.





An aerial view of Cheeseville once located on Plymouth's south side. Looking west.

Plymouth's cheese industry has evolved over the years, but it is no less impressive. Cheeseville has a different look. Most of those old industries are gone or have moved, but cheese and cold storage remain two of Plymouth's most important employers.

After a complete transformation in manufacturing, total Wisconsin cheese production in 2020 amounted to 3,389,763 lbs. from 127 plants, 26% of U.S. total production making it the leader nationwide in cheese production



Today, cheese is the primary focus of Wisconsin's dairy industry, using approximately 90 percent of the state's total milk production. More than 500 varieties, types, and styles of cheese are produced, more added each year. While Sartori is the sole producer of cheese, Masters Gallery Foods, Sargento Foods and Great Lakes Cheese are mammoth processors in the industry.

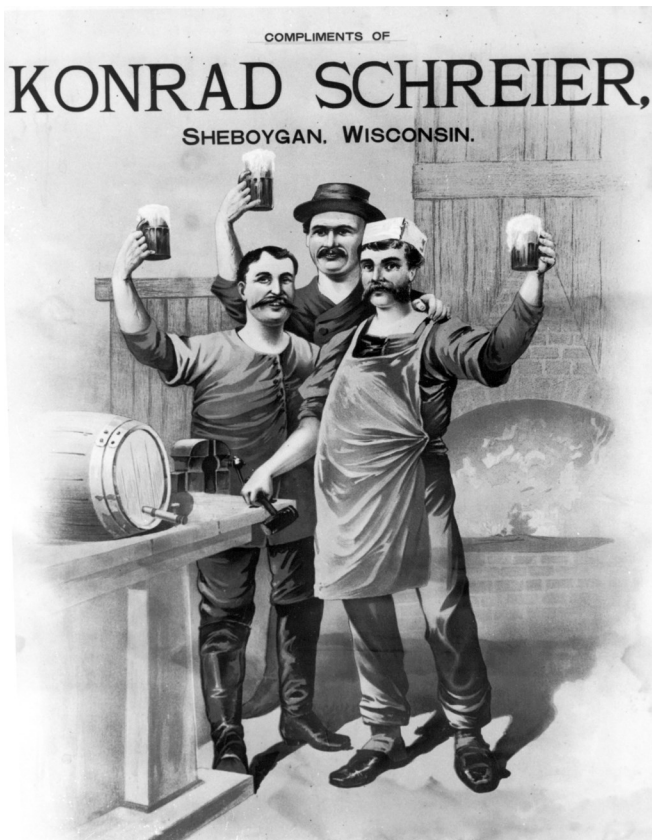
Whether you know it as formaggio, käse, queso or cheese, in Plymouth it's part of a grand and tasty tradition.

Joseph Sartori, at left, and Leonard Gentine with product display.

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more than a week.

The malting house and elevator would take months to replace, but in the end, the new factory was a state-of-the-art facility, one of the finest in Wisconsin. By 1913 the capacity of the Schreier's production was over 1,000,000 bushels.

Located on a 10-acre site between Maryland and New Jersey Avenues and North 15th and South River Streets, the company was founded in 1856 by Konrad Schreier, an immigrant from Hesse, now part of Germany. Konrad's sons managed the business at the time of the 1911 fire.

The successful company also owned 28 taverns before Prohibition, always in competition with Gutsch Brewing, Sheboygan's other large brewery. All was well until Prohibition ruined that gig. Forced into the soft drink and whole wheat flour business, the company lost money from 1920 to 1933, but bounced back and became one of America's premium maltsters.

An interesting aside is that during WWII Schreier's malt was used to make synthetic rubber.

Formerly part of Cargill, today, the company is a part of Boortmalt, a Belgian Company.

**Konrad Schreier Brewing Poster**



