

From Farmers to Cowboys: Rural American Identity and Community in Manawa,
Wisconsin, 1848 to 1970

By

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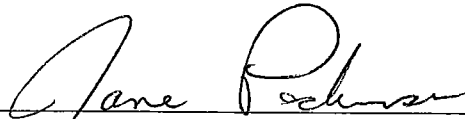
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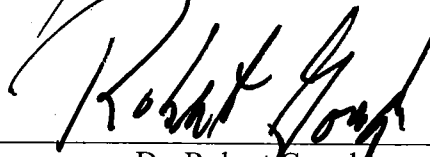
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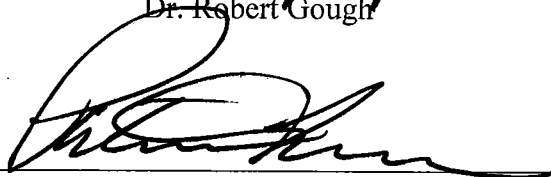
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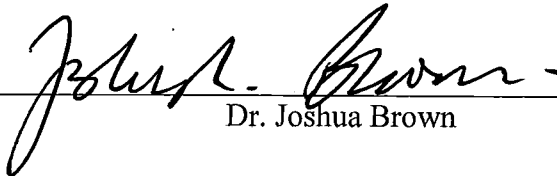
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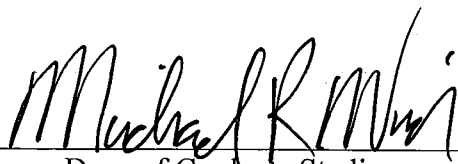


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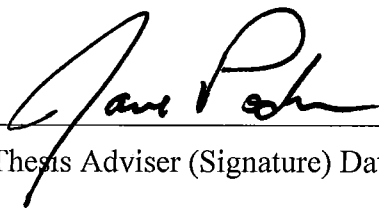
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The University of Wisconsin—Eau Claire, 2014
Under the Supervision of Dr. Jane Pederson

Farming and lumber production figuratively and literally shaped the landscape of Waupaca County, Wisconsin between 1848 and 1948. Ethnic identity further shaped these rural Waupaca County neighborhoods as immigrants and old-stock Americans lived in rural neighborhoods amongst others of the same or similar ethnic backgrounds. However, as the 1950s began, changes in technology and cultural identity began changing life in rural Waupaca County. Inventions like the combine lead to the end of community shared work like threshing, and neighborhoods no longer needed to work together to harvest crops or perform other essential duties on the farm. Rural schools began consolidating because of better bus transportation. Ethnic traditions that were community unifiers, such as German-language church services ended in this time period as younger generations discontinued ethnic language use. However, these practices fostered and anchored their communities. Manawa, Wisconsin and the surrounding rural townships of Little Wolf and Union, Wisconsin are a case study for how settlers built a community between 1848 and 1890, their children and grandchildren maintained it

between 1890 and 1950, and their descendants redefined it beginning in the 1950s. In 1959, the people of Manawa inadvertently created a community unifying event when their chapter of the Lions Club decided to host a rodeo in the middle of Wisconsin in a community surrounded by farms, not ranches. Yet, rodeo resounded with people in and around Manawa because it appealed their common rural identity, and became a new community-unifying tradition in Manawa.

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Thesis Adviser (Signature) Date

For Maddie and Aiden

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PREFACE

“While much of that distinctive community life has recently dissolved, this is less surprising than the fact that it lasted so long.”

~Jane Marie Pederson, *Between Memory and Reality*

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INTRODUCTION: A Bronze Cowboy and Memory

In the summer of 2000, the Manawa Chamber of Commerce, the Manawa Development Corp, the Manawa Lions Club, and a number of community business people erected a replica of Frederic Remington's famous statue *The Broncho Buster* in the center of Manawa, Wisconsin. The statue emphasized the contribution of the town's modern businesspeople to Manawa's history: the creation of the Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo, an annual tradition since 1959. The city also uses the cowboy as a symbol on street lamp banners and their police department logo. However, Manawa is located far from Western ranches. Its history is full of lumberjacks and farmers—not cowboys. Yet, the community's business leaders wanted to redefine Manawa and set it apart from neighboring communities by drawing on its notoriety as a rodeo venue.

Manawa proclaimed itself "Wisconsin's Rodeo City," but from the 1850s until recently, Manawa and the surrounding rural townships, Little Wolf and Union, were a farming communities. The population of this area is small. The State of Wisconsin's 2015 projected population numbers estimated the population of Manawa at 1,360, the Town of Little Wolf at 1,445, and the Town of Union (including the population of Symco, an unincorporated village) at 830. The combined total population for the parameters of the study area was 3,577.¹ This is the type of community where everybody knows everybody and almost everyone is somehow related. Farming and lumbering built the community's economy, yet their importance was muted in local memory. There is not a statue memorializing the Yankee and Irish founders who created a community in

¹ State of Wisconsin-Department of Administration "Population and Household Projections, Produced in 2013, Based from 2010 Census; State Population Projections, 2010-2014; MCD and Municipal Population Projections, 2010-2040 (Excel Workbook)" doa.state.wi.us/divisions/intergovernmental-relations/demographic-services-center/projections [accessed October 11, 2014].

the wilderness between 1850 and 1860.² Nor is there a statue honoring the German and Danish immigrants who joined those original Yankee and Irish settlers in fashioning farmland from dense forest between 1870 and 1920. These settlers and their Wisconsin-born children established churches and schools, and in doing so, formalized interdependent neighborhood and kinship connections.

These were neither independent, nor dependent people, but rather they were interdependent, relying on the skills and labor of each person—man, woman, and child—to meet the social and economic needs of each: nuclear family, extended family, kinship network, neighborhood, school, church and ethnic community. These social circles almost always overlapped. Immediate, extended families and kinship networks were often part of the same neighborhood, school, and church communities. Furthermore, churches were founded by each ethnic group that settled in the area. These overlapping circles amplified the fundamental importance of each individual's role in the survival of the community and each individual's reliance on others in Manawa and the townships of Little Wolf and Union. Throughout Manawa's history, the original pioneers, their children, and grandchildren depended on one another for camaraderie, to harvest crops, to educate children, and to meet spiritual needs.

However, in the 1950s, Manawa, the Town of Little Wolf, and the Town of Union faced the cultural, technological, and economic changes typical of rural Midwestern communities in that era.³ Yet, the foundation of interdependent community networks laid

² "Yankees," refers to settlers from New England, New York, and the rest of the Northeastern United States.

³ See Jane Pederson, *Between Memory and Reality Family and Community in Rural Wisconsin, 1870-1970*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992); Mary Neth *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900-1940*, (Baltimore, MD:

by Manawa's forefathers and foremothers helped leaders reinvent Manawa into a community known for rodeo. These interdependent community connections played a key role in the initial success of the Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo. However, as community members adopted a rodeo identity, they began to lose sight of their history as an interdependent lumbering and farming community and the important role of interdependence throughout that history.

In the 1950s, Manawa was one of many rural communities in flux. Traditions that united many community members and fostered interdependence in Manawa disappeared. Unlike previous generations, German-American community members moved away from German language and cultural practices and began culturally identifying themselves as Americans rather than German-Americans. During the same time period technological innovations created better farm equipment like combines, tractors, and barn cleaners that allowed farmers to work more independently and efficiently with less reliance on their neighbors. In the 1950s, the roads and transportation in rural Wisconsin greatly improved, and made travel easier for rural Wisconsinites, but also made country school consolidation viable. As Manawa's rural neighborhood schools consolidated between the mid-1950s and 1969, rural, ethnic neighborhoods in the townships of Little Wolf and Union lost important community centers.⁴ Seemingly positive innovations like better farming equipment, better roads, and country school consolidation had negative

Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Katherine Jellison's *Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913-1963*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993) offers a similar argument, but allows that these changes in technology also allowed women to play a bigger role in the farm economy.

⁴ Marjorie (Herman) Havard, interview by author, Township of Union, Waupaca County, Wisconsin, June 16, 2012; Dantzi (Taggart) Steinbach interview by author, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, Wisconsin, May 25, 2012.

consequences for these rural neighborhoods. According to community member interviews, neighborhood ties were no longer as essential or tight as in previous generations, and it became possible for neighbors to be strangers and for ethnic identity to fade.⁵

Yet, Manawa's solution to these challenges left a unique legacy that symbolized both innovation and tradition. Community members created a celebratory weekend for gathering with friends and family that included: horses, a parade, fireworks, cowboy hats and boots, beer, cowboys riding angry bulls, chicken dinners, dances, more beer, and a mechanical bull. They created a rodeo and a new rural American cultural identity for Manawa. While Manawa's residents redefined their community, and celebrated a new beginning for it, in doing so, they also connected this new beginning to their pioneer past. Thus, they revitalized and redefined their community in a way that echoed the pioneer character of their ancestors.

For over fifty years, Manawa's past and present residents annually gather to enjoy rodeo weekend events, but more importantly they work together in large and small ways to promote and execute the rodeo itself. Although Manawa's rodeo is held only one weekend a year, locals chose rodeo instead of lumber and agriculture to symbolize the community in a downtown statue. However, the cooperative, interdependent values formed during the lumbering and agricultural eras of shared work and collaboration ultimately led to the longevity and success of the commemorated rodeo. At the same time, the rodeo preserved some of the essential feelings of neighborly interdependent community. For over fifty years, the neighborhood and kinship connections forged by

⁵ Elaine J. (Sturm) Ferg, interview by author, Township of Union, Waupaca County, Wisconsin, April 6, 2012; David Lindsay interview by author, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, Wisconsin, June 9, 2012.

past generations are rekindled annually by community members every summer during rodeo weekend.

Throughout its history, cultural, social, and economic forces molded how the people of Manawa viewed themselves, their neighbors, and their community. At times, tradition constructed these identities, and at others, self-determination did. Historically, Manawa was not a cowboy or rodeo town, but pop-culture and values surrounding the cowboy appealed to the traditional values of a determined group of community members. Manawa's rodeo was created because its Lions Club chapter wanted to host a unique fundraiser for charitable works in the area.⁶ While boosterism and a bump in tourism were welcomed residual results, at its core, the Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo succeeded because it became a conduit to build, rekindle, and continue interdependent community connections in the area.

The mythic American West became the backdrop for this event and a new identity for Manawa's residents. While the vast majority of the town's citizens could not claim an Old-West heritage, they could claim a pioneer one. Inventing a rodeo culture in Manawa honored that pioneer heritage and provided an avenue to continue building the types of interdependent community connections that the people of Manawa's Yankee (old-stock Americans from New England and New York State) and immigrant (mostly German and Irish) pioneer ancestors valued. While the bronze copy of the *Broncho Buster* is an askew portrayal of Manawa's pioneer past, it memorializes a pivotal point in the community's history; a time in the late 1950s when interdependent community connections did not fade, but instead, were reinvigorated for a time by the introduction of

⁶ Tom Hutchison, *The Land of Milk and Money* (Green Bay, WI: HVS Advertising-Marketing, 2009), 72.

a cowboy culture. For Manawa, the lone bronze cowboy, which is typically a symbol for rugged individualism, ironically symbolizes interdependent community.

Historians from John Bodnar to Diane Barthels to the recent scholarship of Cynthia Culver Prescott explain that what a community chooses to commemorate in statue demonstrates more about how community leaders want to be remembered than how they want to remember their ancestors.⁷ As noted by Jeffery Merriwether in *We Are What We Remember: The American Past Through Commemoration*, “Perception is reality, and this reality further informs and shapes consequent perceptions and historical memories. Commemoration and memory shape who we are, thus shaping our relationship to the rest of the world.”⁸ In adding the bronze cowboy to Manawa’s Triangle Park, the business community shaped an interpretation of the community’s past. In a speech at the statue’s dedication community leaders spoke about their hopes for Manawa’s future; Manawa Chamber of Commerce President Tom Squires noted:

Remington, a nineteenth century American who lived most of his life between 1861 and 1909 in the Western Frontier, helped to create the idea of the Wild West in all its rugged beauty. He sparked America, and now, with this statue here, he helped spark Manawa as well.⁹

Despite inaccuracies in Squires’ historical account of Remington, it is clear that Manawa’s business community claimed the spirit of the mythic West at the statue’s dedication in 2000. Redefining Manawa as a rodeo town honored the pioneer spirit of its

⁷ See John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Diane Barthel *Historic Preservation: Collective Memory and Historical Identity* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996); and Cynthia Culver Prescott “The Case of the Missing Pioneer Mother Statue,” presented at the Triennial Rural Women’s Studies Conference: Rhymes, Rhythms and Rituals: Twenty-Five Years of Rural Women’s Studies Revisited (Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada: July, 2012).

⁸ Jeffery Lee Meriwether, “Preface” in *We Are What We Remember: The American Past Through Commemoration* (New Castle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), iv.

⁹ “Remington Statue Officially Dedicated,” *Manawa Advocate*, July 20, 2000.

ancestors, but neglected their stories of interdependence in the founding of their community. Nevertheless, the bronze cowboy honors a spirit of innovation and adaptation—the legacy of the town’s pioneer lumbering and farming ancestors.

The story of Manawa is not well-known outside of Waupaca County, Wisconsin, but it is important for a number of reasons. The history of west-central Wisconsin’s Norwegian-American rural communities is well-documented, but historians are only beginning to look as closely at the rural German-American communities in east-central Wisconsin.¹⁰ While there were many similarities between the rural communities of these regions, German-American community life in east-central Wisconsin was not the same as rural Norwegian-American community life in west-central Wisconsin. While author Jerry Apps wrote a number of books based on farm and rural life in nearby Waushara County, and there are a number of well-researched, in-depth, local histories, few scholarly studies tie the themes of these east-central Wisconsin memoirs and histories to the greater patterns and themes of Wisconsin, Midwestern, and American history. Although there is scholarship on urban German-American socialists in Milwaukee, the historical scholarship on rural German-Americans in Wisconsin, and how they built and maintained community life is only just beginning in works by scholars like Kathleen Conzen, Joan Jensen, and Johannes Strohschänk. Urban Milwaukee German-American communities are the prominent model for German-American Wisconsin community life; yet rural German-American community life in Wisconsin differed from the lives of their urban counterparts and their story is not as well-known.

¹⁰ See Jane Pederson, *Between Memory and Reality*; and Frank Smoot, *Farm Life: A Century of Change for Farm Families and Their Neighbors* (Eau Claire, WI: Chippewa Valley Museum Press, 2004).

The history of an ordinary small town like Manawa and its rodeo, exemplifies the crux of a problem faced by many rural communities in Wisconsin and the Midwest in the mid-to-late twentieth century. In essence: How did rural people adapt once long-established rural centers of community such as country schools and shared work disappeared as a result of new technologies and innovations? Many historical studies show that the technological changes between the 1940 and 1970 disrupted rural life. Few begin to explain what happened next in rural America. Like many other histories, this study details the creation of a small community on the Midwestern frontier, documents the construction of a community's neighborhood networks, and gives accounts of what rural life looked like before technological changes dramatically altered it by the 1970s. While the aim is not to give a thorough account of what happened to rural Wisconsin identity, it points to one event in one community that in many subtle ways preserved rural interdependent networks, and with them, rural identity.

The Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo demonstrates that the interdependent rural community connections formed between 1850 and 1890, while threatened since the 1950s, are not extinguished. Today, the Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo is equivalent to a cowboy-themed, weekend-long, blend of a family reunion, a class reunion, and a neighborhood block party. While to outsiders the rodeo and the jovial hijinks that occur after the beer flows appear frivolous—and to some even a public nuisance—the fact that multiple generations of past and present Manawa community members with long-standing kin, neighborhood, church, and school connections annually gather to enjoy each other's company is significant. In a small way, it demonstrates the resiliency of rural interdependent communities. The rodeo created a vehicle that ensured kin and

neighborhood connections remained preserved for generations to come. While many rural scholars believe that interdependent rural community life waned, faded, and disappeared between 1950 and 1980, the creation and longevity of the Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo, and events like it in other rural Wisconsin and Midwestern communities, offer tangible proof that community, neighborhood, and kinship connections did not disappear but evolved. Manawa, Wisconsin is a case study of how community connections developed, were maintained, and remained resilient over the arch of one community's history.

This thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter one covers the frontier period and early settlement, approximately 1848 to 1870, and explains the role of natural resources, particularly white pine and farmland, in attracting early settlers. Chapter two explains the creation of Manawa's important formal institutions, primarily churches and schools and their roles in building and maintaining community between 1870 and 1920. Chapter three, which covers 1920 to 1970, explains how community institutions and traditions evolved. The mid-to-late 1950s brought a particularly large number of changes for rural people in Manawa. German ethnic traditions like German language usage faded. New farm technologies made shared community labor no longer necessary. And country neighborhood schools, an important center for rural community were consolidated. Chapter four details the creation of the Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo, a community event and an innovative solution to the problem of how to maintain rural interdependent community life as important community structures diminished.

While the stories presented in this paper took place in Manawa, Wisconsin, similar stories took place in other rural, and even urban, communities. Settlers put down

roots and established a community in an unknown place. Immigrants, their children, and some of their grandchildren resisted assimilation and clung tightly to their ethnic cultural identity. The descendants of immigrants adopted what they perceived as an American identity—in the case of Manawa, the mythic American West and a conservative political ideology—yet fragments of their ethnic and cultural identities persisted in their daily lives. In the case of Manawa’s German- and Irish-American rural people, this was exemplified and is in their continued membership in the churches their ancestors founded, the value they placed on hard work, and their continued ownership and adaptive use of the family farms their ancestors first settled in the townships of Little Wolf and Union.

In Manawa, Wisconsin, like other small rural communities, rural interdependent identity was transplanted from the rural Northeastern United States, the counties of Ireland and German peasant villages. Yet beginning in the late 1940s, modern technology began changing fundamental components of rural identity, specifically the interdependent nature of rural life. In Manawa interdependent community life did not simply disappear, it was too deeply ingrained in the people of Manawa and its surrounding townships; rather, it evolved. In the early days of rodeo in Manawa, this celebration of the rugged individual was only successful because it relied on the deeply ingrained interdependent nature and culture of the community.

CHAPTER 1: Establishing Community: Settling the Townships of Little Wolf and Union on the Wisconsin Frontier 1848-1870

Like many rural communities in central Wisconsin, Manawa's first European-American settlers left the northeastern United States and Atlantic Canada in search of timber and farmland. When they arrived in the area that later became Manawa in the 1850s, they found a thick, unaltered forest. These settlers quickly worked to clear land and re-establish the same types of community bonds based on those they left behind in upstate New York, New England and Atlantic Canada. They soon established farms, businesses, and social and neighborhood networks, including religious meetings, schools, kinship (family connections by blood or marriage), and neighborhood shared labor. In founding these connections, they founded a community. These networks were initially established for survival on the Wisconsin frontier, but they endured as Manawa became a settled, permanent community. In founding a new community and establishing familiar community connections, these early settlers lived out the story of pioneer settlement in the American West and Midwest. In doing so, they changed the landscape from forest to fields and established for themselves an interdependent community on the edge of the frontier.

When one thinks of the American frontier, east-central Wisconsin is not what comes to mind. Instead, places like the gold fields of California or the South Dakota prairie towns are generally envisioned. Yet settlement in east-central Wisconsin was akin to settlement west of the Mississippi. As historian Joan Jensen noted, "Both frontiers shared common characteristics: a swift and ruthless exploitation and destruction of natural resources, settlement by non-Native peoples, enclosure and containment of Native communities in circumscribed areas which the national government attempted to

control.”¹¹ Before the late-1840s, few European-American settlers appeared in north-central Wisconsin. Although Wisconsin gained statehood in 1848, the U.S. Census for 1850 recorded only 305,391 people living in the entire state.¹² The majority of those lived in Wisconsin’s southern third—essentially the area between Milwaukee and Madison and the lead mining district in the southwestern portion of the state.

Meanwhile, central and northern Wisconsin was a dense forest. Laura Ingalls Wilder called it “The Big Woods” in the book based on her early life in west-central Wisconsin. Although simple, the name was fitting for the wilderness that covered most of the state. As one early settler in Little Chute, Wisconsin (about thirty miles east of Manawa) wrote to a family member in Holland, “I was very much disappointed at first; the country appeared too wild—wild, woods, nothing but woods, and only a small clearing here and there with a ramshackle building upon it.”¹³

As timber disappeared from eastern Canada and the northeastern United States, lumber speculators moved west to these newly opened lands, specifically for the white pine desired by lumbermen. White pine resisted rot because of high levels of natural resin, and its light weight made it easy to harvest on the frontier, as rivers were used to

¹¹ Joan Jensen, *Calling This Place Home: Women on the Wisconsin Frontier 1850-1925* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2005), ix.

¹² US Bureau of the Census, *Seventh US Census of Housing and the Population 1850* accessed via the University of Virginia Census Browser mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/county.php; [December 10, 2011]; it is unclear what the American Indian population of Wisconsin at the time of the 1850 US Census; if that number would be added to census figures, the population would have been much greater.

¹³ Arnold Verstegen quoted in Richard N. Current, *The Civil War Era: 1848-1873*, vol. 2 of *The History of Wisconsin*, edited by William Fletcher Thompson (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1976), 70, Current does not give a date for this quote by Verstegen, it is assumed that the letter is written in the 1850s.

transport it to existing trade centers.¹⁴ Robert Nesbit explained in *Wisconsin: A History*, “The true forest area of Wisconsin lay in roughly the northern three-fourths of the state.” He continued, “North of a rough line drawn southwest of Manitowoc to Portage and thence a on a northwesterly course to the fall line of the St. Croix lay a tremendous virgin forest inviting exploration.” Settlers founded Manawa on the edge of that vast forest. The movement of settlers into the American West sparked a demand for light, easy-to-transport lumber in the treeless Great Plains. Wisconsin’s bounty of white pine and network of rivers offered an ideal solution for the West’s lumber demands. Robert Nesbit mused in *Wisconsin: A History*, “If Michigan pine found a ready market in the upper Ohio valley where hardwoods were abundant, it can be readily understood why Wisconsin pine lumber met an insatiable demand on the prairies of Illinois and westward.”¹⁵

While lumber speculators knew that the Wisconsin Territory held a lush forest of virgin pine, they had to wait to take advantage of it. Large portions of northern and central Wisconsin were still under the control of American Indian nations and tribes until the late 1840s. In far northern and west-central Wisconsin, the timberlands belonged to the Ojibwa. In east-central Wisconsin, the Menominee controlled the forests. In 1837 and 1842, the Ojibwa signed treaties ceding their west-central and northern Wisconsin territories to the United States.¹⁶ The Menominee Nation ceded its lands in east-central

¹⁴ “Pine, because of its desirable characteristics, could be brought a considerable distance and still compete successfully with more easily available hardwoods. Pine is a soft wood, straight-grained, light but strong for its weight, easily worked with a handsaw or edged tool, maintains its dimensions when properly seasoned, and being resinous, resists rot.” Robert Nesbit, *Wisconsin: A History* (Madison, WI; The University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), 297.

¹⁵ Robert Nesbit, *Wisconsin*, 297.

Wisconsin to the United States in 1848—the same year Wisconsin became a state.¹⁷ This opened Manawa for settlement. Prior to this cession, the Wolf River was the boundary of a previous treaty between the Menominee and the United States; the lands on the east bank of the river were open to European-American settlement, while the lands on west bank of the river remained under Menominee control.¹⁸

While the 1848 treaty ceded this land to the United States, settlement was not allowed until 1852.¹⁹ Even then, the land survey took longer than expected and was officially completed in 1857.²⁰ However, many settlers and lumber speculators did not wait for land to officially open and quickly claimed desirable land and timber stands in the area. The Town of Little Wolf's first lumber speculator, William Goldberg, violated the Federal Government's moratorium on settlement. He arrived in the future Town of Little Wolf in 1848, and established his sawmill, Goldberg & Co, on the Little Wolf River in 1849, three years before the land legally opened.²¹

Josephus Wakefield, historian for Waupaca County's Old Settlers Society during the 1880s and 1890s, explained why this land was valuable to lumber speculators in his

¹⁶ Tim Pfaff, *Paths of the People: The Ojibwe in the Chippewa Valley* (Eau Claire, WI.: Chippewa Valley Museum Press, 1993), 34.

¹⁷ John M. Ware, *A Standard History of Waupaca County, Wisconsin: An Authentic Narrative of the Past with Particular Attention to the Modern Era in the Commercial, Industrial, Educational, Civic and Social Development* (Chicago: Lewis Pub. Co, 1917), 47.

¹⁸ Josephus Wakefield, *History of Waupaca County, Wisconsin*. (Waupaca, WI: D.L. Stinchfield, 1890), 40.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Waupaca County Historical Society. *'Ghost' Towns of Waupaca County* (Royalton, WI: Waupaca County Historical Society, 1991), 48.

²¹ Evelyn M. Wegener, ed. *The Pioneers of Little Wolf Township 1848-1973* (Manawa, WI: Manawa Centennial Committee, 1973), 6 -7.

History of Waupaca County, “In the eastern and northern portion of this county there was much valuable pine, especially along the banks of the principal streams and their tributaries, and much lumbering was done, giving employment to many hands.”

Wakefield wrote in 1890, “the supply is far from being exhausted, and it will be many years before the vast forests will be entirely stripped, and the last log floated to market.”²²

The Little Wolf River, a tributary of the Wolf River, became the principal river for lumber production in the townships of Little Wolf and Union. It snakes through Waupaca County from its northwest corner to its southeast corner, where it drains into the Wolf River south of the village of Royalton. In local and regional terms, the Little Wolf and Wolf became important rivers for Wisconsin lumber production, as logs and finished lumber were floated downstream to Oshkosh, an early Wisconsin manufacturing center.²³ In the early-to-mid-1850s, the village of Centerville (renamed Little Wolf in 1859) grew around the Goldberg & Co. sawmill and the Little Wolf River, and became a small trading hub on the edge of the frontier.²⁴ Shortly after, settlers founded the Village of Union Bridge, later renamed Symco, a few miles north of Centerville, also on the Little Wolf River.²⁵

²² Wakefield, *Waupaca County*, 35

²³ Ibid, 36.

²⁴ Wegener, *Pioneers of Little Wolf Township*, 57; The original name of the Township of Little Wolf was the Township of Centerville; Also, the original name of the Township of Centerville’s first village was also named Centerville; The name of the Township of Centerville changed in 1854 to the Township of Little Wolf; Yet the name of the village remained Centerville until it was also changed to Little Wolf in 1859; Also, local residents used the proper name Little Wolf interchangeably with the nickname for the village, Meiklejohn’s Mills, after the sawmill and grist mill that the Meiklejohn brothers established on the Little Wolf River.

²⁵ Waupaca County Historical Society, *‘Ghost’ Towns of Waupaca County*, 99. Symco there are only foggy memories of what Symco’s original name was. Some say it was Unionville, others say Union,

Most of the first residents of Centerville, the Town of Little Wolf, and the Town of Union came from the lumber regions of the northeastern United States and Atlantic Canada: New York, Vermont, Maine, and New Brunswick, fitting the pattern of early Wisconsin Euro-American settlement.²⁶ Lumbermen and farmers brought their wives and children with them to what became the townships of Little Wolf and Union, signifying that they not only wanted to harvest the area's natural resources, but they intended to establish a community there. In 1860, Yankees or Canadians headed thirty-five of the fifty-two households in the Town of Little Wolf, and nineteen of the twenty-one households in the Town of Union. In both townships, the majority of these Yankee settlers were from New York State.²⁷

Elizur and Susan (Baker) Stanley, Yankee settlers in the Manawa area, were typical of the community's early residents. He was born in the State of New York. She was a sixth-generation American, born in Vermont.²⁸ When they arrived in what became the Town of Little Wolf in February 1852, "a vast unbroken wilderness extended in every direction." The family found a "crude" shack on their property, "which they believed was abandoned by some homesick landseeker." The shack became their temporary home

still others say Union Bridge. For this thesis, I have gone with Union Bridge, which appears in the book *Ghost Towns of Waupaca County* by the Waupaca County Historical Society.

²⁶ US Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, WI, 1860 (accessed via Ancestry.com, May 6, 2012); Nesbit, *Wisconsin*, 297.

²⁷ U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Townships of Little Wolf and Union, Waupaca County, WI, 1860 (accessed via Ancestry.com, May 6, 2012).

²⁸ Wegener, *Pioneers of Little Wolf Township*, 11; 1860 U.S. Census records accessed via Ancestry.com, January 31, 2013.

until they built a permanent structure. The Stanley home became an outpost in the back country for “woodsmen and pioneer travelers.”²⁹

Elizur Stanley formed the habit of taking down his musket every evening at sunset and firing it three times so that if anyone was lost in the woods within hearing distance, would know that they were near the Stanley homestead where they would find shelter, food and comfort.³⁰

This gesture demonstrated the importance of interdependent community to the Stanley family and other pioneers. Before they knew their neighbors, they felt a need to protect them and provide for their needs. Even potential community bonds and networks were important to families like the Stanleys on the Midwestern frontier. In guiding new settlers to safety, shelter, and a meal with his rifle signal, Stanley offered the beginning of an interdependent community bond, which could last for years to come. With neighbors few and far between, it was important to connect with the few people within the sound of the rifle. If there was anyone travelling in the wilderness, it was important for the Stanleys to connect with them right away, and make sure their basic needs were met in the spirit of community building. In doing so, their early kindness to a stranger became a debt of gratitude from a new neighbor.³¹

The Stanley family was soon joined by more families arriving in the Town of Little Wolf. Many of these new settlers were, like the Stanley family, old-stock Americans from New York. However, amidst these old-stock Americans, a sizeable Irish-immigrant minority was also a part of the Town of Little Wolf’s first wave of

²⁹ Wegener, *Pioneers of Little Wolf Township*, 11.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

settlement.³² By 1860, twelve of the Town of Little Wolf's fifty-two households, roughly 23 percent, were headed by Irish immigrants.³³ Like many others, these Irish immigrants were refugees of the potato famine and political tumult of 1840s Ireland.³⁴ Current Manawa resident, Robert Conroy's, ancestors from County Offaly, was one of these original Irish-Catholic families. Conroy recalled that they settled first in the Town of Mukwa in Waupaca County, until land opened in the Town of Little Wolf in 1857. Conroy noted, "When they came here, they never looked back, the conditions they left were undesirable, they just got out of there and said, 'To Hell with that.'"³⁵ By 1860, the townships of Little Wolf and Union were transforming from the wilderness the Stanley family found in 1852, to a young, settled community with a combined population of just under three hundred people.³⁶ Although the area was thoroughly forested, the majority of

³² U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, WI, 1860 (accessed via Ancestry.com, April, 2012); Wegener, *Pioneers of Little Wolf Township*, 8; Robert Conroy, interview by author, Township of Little Wolf, WI, May 25, 2012; David Lindsay, interview.

³³ U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, WI, 1860 (accessed via Ancestry.com, March 5, 2013).

³⁴ Conroy, interview; Lindsay, interview.

³⁵ U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, WI, 1860 (accessed via Ancestry.com, March 5, 2013); Conroy, interview; Lindsay, interview; Nesbit, *Wisconsin*, 299.

³⁶ Another example of Easterners founding a settlement akin to Manawa and other central Wisconsin communities is found in John Mack Faragher's book, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie*; Faragher looks at a community on the Illinois frontier founded by a similar demographic of native-born Yankee settlers as those that originally established civic community in Manawa; However, the obvious difference between settlement in Sugar Creek, Illinois, that Faragher discusses and Manawa, Wisconsin, was that in Wisconsin, the lumber trade and the timbered landscape played important roles in settlement; Jane Pederson in *Between Memory and Reality Family and Community in Rural Wisconsin, 1870-1970* and Joan Jensen in *Calling This Place Home: Women on the Wisconsin Frontier 1850-1925*, each showed the importance of the lumber trade and life in the early Wisconsin settlements; Another key difference between Faragher's work on Illinois and Pederson and Jensen's works on Wisconsin is that Faragher ends his story of settlement where most historians end their discussion of rural communities, with the 1860s Pederson and Jensen bring their narratives into the twentieth century; U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Townships of Little Wolf and Union, Waupaca County, WI, 1860 (accessed

residents in both townships defined themselves as farmers, and planned on making this their permanent home after they cleared farmland.

However, the local lumber economy was under-represented in these numbers because the 1860 U.S. Census for the townships of Little Wolf and Union took place in July and August, but lumber camps operated seasonally in the winter, as it was easier to haul trees out of the woods on frozen ground.³⁷ Frozen lakes, rivers, and ponds were holding places for timber, which lumberjacks drove downstream as ice thawed in spring. For Wisconsin's young farmers, seasonal work as a lumberjack dovetailed nicely with work on family farms, which slowed after the fall harvest. Conversely, work slowed in lumber camps just in time for the planting and growing season in the spring. Thus, young men often worked as lumberjacks in the winter and farmers in the summer.

For the vast majority of Manawa's permanent settlers, whether they were Yankees, Irish immigrants, or German immigrants, farming was their chief economic aim.³⁸ For the most part, settlers whose economic identity involved lumber production moved west after the area's timber resources were exhausted. In fact, the majority of the population identified themselves as farmers, even while they lived on untillable land. This suggests that working as lumberjacks provided income, but farming was at the core of their identity. Indeed, the money that young men earned in the woods helped them purchase farms of their own or improve farms they inherited. Even densely forested land

via Ancestry.com, May 6, 2012); There were 204 people living in the Township of Little Wolf, and 89 people living the Township of Union in 1860.

³⁷ U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Townships of Little Wolf and Union, Waupaca County, WI, 1860 and 1870 (accessed via Ancestry.com, February 3, 2013- May 6, 2012).

³⁸ U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Townships of Little Wolf and Union, Waupaca County, WI, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910 (accessed via Ancestry.com, February 3, 2013).

was valuable to these agrarian settlers from the eastern United States, Ireland, and Germany.³⁹ What is also clear from occupational data is that, unlike some other Wisconsin regions, such as the Chippewa Valley, in Waupaca County, Wisconsin, farming did not follow lumber production, but rather, they occurred concurrently.

Early farmers in the townships of Little Wolf and Union were economic pluralists. Throughout Wisconsin, the lumber industry provided farmers supplemental income, whether by working in the logging camps during the winter or by felling the timber on their own property and selling it to area lumber companies.⁴⁰ Selling timber to local sawmills provided capital for settlers to establish their farms on the Wisconsin frontier. In the townships of Union and Little Wolf in 1860, sixty-one residents identified their occupation as farmers or farm laborers.⁴¹ Nine residents identified themselves as lumbermen or as tradesmen associated with the lumber trade, including: lumberman, lumber merchant, carpenter and joiner, mill sawyer, millwright, and sailor.⁴² Two residents identified themselves in trades that did business with both lumber mills and farmers—blacksmith and mason. The final five occupations demonstrate that this was a new and growing community with an economically diverse population: domestic, miller,

³⁹ "There were a variety of reasons why Wisconsin became New England's frontier in this period. With a rapidly growing native population and a considerable influx of foreigners, New England had little desirable land for agricultural expansion. The small amount of prime land, in fact, was converting into intensive farming, while the rocky hillside farms began producing a surplus of young people who moved either to growing industrial towns or westward." Robert Nesbit, *Wisconsin*, 151.

⁴⁰ Waupaca County Historical Society. *'Ghost' Towns of Waupaca County*, 100; Ware, *History of Waupaca County*, 580.

⁴¹ U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Townships of Little Wolf and Union, Waupaca County, WI, 1860, (accessed via Ancestry.com, February 3, 2013).

⁴² In our modern context, a sailor is generally someone who works in large lakes and on the oceans; However, before widespread railroad transportation, sailors worked on rivers as well and during this the 1850s and 1860s sailing in Wisconsin was tied to transporting lumber to market.

justice of the peace, shoemaker, and school teacher.⁴³ The large percentage of farmers in this community undeniably shows that agriculture played a foundational role in the Manawa area.

As early settlers in the Manawa area established farms and businesses, they also created interdependent institutions that provided for the community's social, emotional, and spiritual needs. These institutions, primarily church meetings and schools, were based on the ones they left behind in the eastern United States and Ireland.⁴⁴ As early as 1850, Methodist circuit riders held church services in the village of Centerville (renamed the Village of Little Wolf) in the home of Peter Meiklejohn.⁴⁵ In the early 1860s, Methodist church services moved into a school house located in what is now Manawa.⁴⁶ Like the Protestants meeting in the Meiklejohn home, the area's Catholic residents held Mass and other rites and sacraments in each other's homes, officiated by a priest from the community of Lebanon.⁴⁷

Around the same time, in 1853, a school began in the Town of Little Wolf home of Peter Meiklejohn.⁴⁸ According to Robert Nesbit, it was typical in the early history of

⁴³ U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Townships of Little Wolf and Union, Waupaca County, WI, 1860, (accessed via Ancestry.com, February 3, 2013).

⁴⁴ "Wisconsin pioneers belonged to a religious generation for whom the church or meeting was first among the institutions fostering a sense of community in new surroundings," Robert Nesbit, *Wisconsin*, 173.

⁴⁵ Waupaca County Historical Society, *'Ghost' Towns of Waupaca County*, 49; Wegener, *Pioneers of Little Wolf Township*, 37; Wakefield, *Waupaca County*, 185.

⁴⁶ Wegener, *Pioneers of Little Wolf Township*, 37.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 25-26, U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Townships of Little Wolf and Union, Waupaca County, WI, 1860 (accessed via Ancestry.com, November 19, 2013).

⁴⁸ Wakefield, *Waupaca County*, 184; Ware, *History of Waupaca County*, 376.

Wisconsin for schools to quickly follow churches, “The school was the second institution that helped to draw pioneer society together, often appearing almost simultaneously with the church.”⁴⁹ In 1857, settlers built Little Wolf’s first schoolhouse.⁵⁰ Shortly thereafter, between November of 1858 and 1860, early settlers established five more schools in the townships of Little Wolf and Union.⁵¹ Each of these schools played an important role establishing of their respective interdependent neighborhoods. Neighbors worked together to build, fund, and govern these schools. A school was not only a permanent structure, but a permanent neighborhood bond that endured beyond the settlers who constructed the initial schoolhouse.

In the founding churches and schools, the settlers of the townships of Little Wolf and Union established some of the community’s first interdependent networks and bonds.⁵² Around schools and churches, interconnected circles of kinship, neighborhood,

⁴⁹ Robert Nesbit, *Wisconsin*, 174.

⁵⁰ Waupaca County Historical Society, *‘Ghost’ Towns of Waupaca County*, 48.

⁵¹ These schools included: Spring Brook School in the Township of Little Wolf and a school in Union Bridge (Symco) in the Township of Union in 1858; Marble School in the Marble settlement of The Township of Union in 1859, a schoolhouse in the southern portion of present-day Manawa. Donald Hanson and Joan Paulson, *Rural Schools of Waupaca County* (Iola, WI: Waupaca County Historical Society, 2006), 194, 275; Waupaca County Historical Society, *‘Ghost’ Towns of Waupaca County*, 100; Wegener, *Pioneers of Little Wolf Township*, 37.

⁵² These church and school networks resembled those presented by Grey Osterud *Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); In *Bonds of Community*, Osterud describes the importance and interconnection of kinship, neighborhood, and labor in one rural community in upstate New York; While Osterud delves into the story of one community and the connections within it during the mid-to-late nineteenth century, her analysis is applicable to many communities in the rural Midwest in the twentieth and early twenty-first century, including Manawa; Afterall, Manawa and many other Midwestern communities are the civic descendants of communities in upstate New York, New England, and Atlantic Canada, as the founders of many of these Midwestern communities were originally from or at least settled for a time, in the Eastern United States and Canada; These settlers brought their community frameworks with them to the Midwest, established communities like Manawa, and then, often, moved further west, leaving the communities they established and patterns for civic government behind them.

and interdependent labor formed. It is likely that chain migrations occurred in Manawa among settlers from New York, New England, Atlantic Canada, and Irish immigrant settlers. They may have brought some of these kinship and community bonds with them to their new home.⁵³ These settlers established churches and schools based on the institutions they were accustomed to in New York, New England, Atlantic Canada, and Ireland. In doing so, they created interdependent connections with fellow settlers around churches, schools, and neighborhoods. Through these connections, young people found spouses, and thus, interdependent kinship bonds were woven into church, school, and neighborhood networks.

Settlement paused during the Civil War, and most of the men living in the area enlisted.⁵⁴ One Manawa resident, William W. Wells belonged to the 14th Wisconsin Regiment and fought in a long list of battles that included: Shiloh, Corinth, Vicksburg, Kennesaw Mountain, Nashville and Atlanta to name only a few.⁵⁵ Following the Civil War, the populations of the townships of Little Wolf and Union grew significantly as area men returned from the war and community building continued. However, after the war the original settlers were joined by a small group of German-speaking immigrants, and Manawa entered another stage of community growth and development. The community was no longer on the frontier, but still needed formalization. Historians of Wisconsin and Midwestern history disagree on when the frontier period ended in northern and central

⁵³ I have yet to establish if these were chain migrations from upstate New York and Ireland; As for the German settlers in Manawa, while I still have not established if these are chain migrations, I do know that many of them came from the neighboring German provinces of Pomerania and Posen.

⁵⁴ Conroy, interview; Ware, *History of Waupaca County*, 168, 375.

⁵⁵ "Saw Much Service: The Late W.W. Wells in the Thick of the war which Saved the Union," *Manawa Advocate*, March 12, 1896, 1.

Wisconsin.⁵⁶ Historian Jane Pederson argued that by 1870, the rural portions of west-central Wisconsin, notably the townships of Pigeon and Lincoln in Trempealeau County, Wisconsin were neither frontier, nor modern. She asserted, “While the rural culture of this phase had much in common with the frontier years, it also included distinct characteristics of its own.”⁵⁷

While the Norwegian-American community Pederson studied was located in western-central Wisconsin, it bears some similarities to Manawa and the rural townships surrounding it in east-central Wisconsin. Like the Norwegian immigrant and Norwegian-American settlers described in Pederson’s book, the German immigrant and German-American settlers in Manawa settled in a community founded by Yankee settlers and quickly became the largest ethnic group in that community.⁵⁸ Like rural Trempealeau County in northwestern Wisconsin, rural Waupaca County in northeastern Wisconsin was not settled by, nor stocked with, rugged individualists, but rather the individuals living in these communities were interdependent. Like the townships of Pigeon and Lincoln in

⁵⁶ Robert Nesbit in *Wisconsin* chose the onset of the U.S. Civil War as the end of Wisconsin’s frontier period; However, in doing so, he only considered Yankee and Irish settlers in the southern portion of the state—essentially, Milwaukee, Madison and the mining district of southwestern Wisconsin as pioneers, and he did not address the settlement of central and northern Wisconsin; Mark Wyman in *The Wisconsin Frontier* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998) addressed the settlement of Wisconsin starting with the southern Wisconsin, but expanded his historical interpretation to include settlement in northern and central Wisconsin; While Wyman does not give a definitive end date for Wisconsin’s frontier period, he ends his book with the end of the lumber boom, around 1920; He did note that the extinction of the passenger pigeon in the 1914 was a symbolic end of the Wisconsin frontier; Joan Jensen’s book, *Calling This Place Home: Women on the Wisconsin Frontier 1850-1925*, also expanded the historical interpretation of Wisconsin’s frontier history to include Central and Northern Wisconsin. She expanded that interpretation further by focusing on the lives of native-born, ethnic immigrant settler, and Native American women in North-Central Wisconsin; Jensen ends her study with 1925, the year her mother left Northern Wisconsin for Minneapolis, Minnesota, but this date is also roughly the end of Wisconsin’s lumber boom.

⁵⁷ Pederson, *Between Memory and Reality*, 6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 21-25, 33.

west-central Wisconsin, the townships of Union and Little Wolf in east-central Wisconsin entered a stage between frontier and modern following the Civil War.

Between 1860 and 1870, the total population of the Town of Little Wolf more than tripled from 204 to 707.⁵⁹ While some of this population increase came from the children born in the townships between 1860 and 1870, the majority of this growth came from new settlers who arrived between the censuses.⁶⁰ There were 132 households in the Town of Little Wolf in 1870.⁶¹ Of these 132 households, eighty-eight were Yankees or Canadians, twenty-two were Irish, six were German, one was German-American, three were French, and one was Danish.⁶² In the Town of Union, there were thirty-eight households, thirty-one of which were Yankee or Canadian. Three families were German; and the remaining four families were Swiss, French, Irish, and Scottish respectively.⁶³ During the next ten years, the number of non-English speaking immigrants significantly

⁵⁹ U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, WI, 1860, 1870 U.S. Census (accessed via Ancestry.com, May 15, 2012); Jane Pederson in *Between Memory and Reality Family and Community in Rural Wisconsin, 1870-1970*. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992) argued that by 1870, rural portions of west-central Wisconsin, notably the Townships of Pigeon and Lincoln in Trempealeau County, Wisconsin, were neither frontier, nor modern; And while the Norwegian-American community Pederson studied was located in the western-central Wisconsin, it bears some similarities to Manawa and the rural townships surrounding it in east-central Wisconsin; Like the Townships of Pigeon and Lincoln, the Townships of Union and Little Wolf in east-central Wisconsin entered that stage between frontier and modern following the Civil War.

⁶⁰ U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, WI, 1860, 1870 (accessed via Ancestry.com May 15, 2012), Calculated by the author.

⁶¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, WI, 1870 (accessed via Ancestry.com, March 7, 2013), Calculated by the author.

⁶² Ibid. I consider households headed by German immigrant to be German and households that are headed by the child or descendant of a German immigrant to be German-American; Calculated by the author.

⁶³ U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Union, Waupaca County, WI, 1860, 1870 (accessed via Ancestry.com, May 15, 2012); Calculated by the author.

increased in the townships of Little Wolf and Union. Most of these immigrants came from Germany.⁶⁴

As German immigrants arrived in the townships of Little Wolf and Union, building community networks and bonds became especially important to them as they resettled in their new country. In 1870, ten settlers in the Town of Little Wolf and eight settlers in the Town of Union were born in Prussia. One settler in the Town of Union identified Baden as his homeland.⁶⁵ The Sturm family was one of these first German families to settle in the Town of Little Wolf. Christopher and Juliana Sturm immigrated to the United States in 1856 from Saxony with four small children; three boys, Wilhelm, August, and Emil and a baby girl, Auguste.⁶⁶ By 1860, the family lived in Milwaukee and their daughter was deceased.⁶⁷ Christopher and Juliana's family grew with the birth of their son Henry.⁶⁸ In Milwaukee, Christopher Sturm found work as a wagon maker, but in the 1860 Census and the *Gem of the Ocean* ship manifest, he listed farmer as his occupation.⁶⁹ In the mid-1860s, the Sturm family moved from Milwaukee to their farm just north of Manawa.

⁶⁴ U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Union, Waupaca County, WI, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910 (accessed via Ancestry.com, May 15, 2012).

⁶⁵ U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, WI, 1860, 1870 (accessed via Ancestry.com, February 13, 2013).

⁶⁶ U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, WI, 1870 (accessed via Ancestry.com, February 15, 2013); Ship Manifest for *The Gem of the Ocean*, October 13, 1856 (accessed via Ancestry.com, February 15, 2013)

⁶⁷ U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, WI, 1860 (accessed via Ancestry.com, February 13, 2013).

⁶⁸ U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, WI, 1860 (accessed via Ancestry.com, February 13, 2013); U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, WI, 1870, 1880 (accessed via Ancestry.com, February 15, 2013).

Although the Sturm family arrived ten years into the settlement of the Town of Little Wolf, their farm resembled the wilderness the Stanleys found a few miles to the south in 1852. In 1919, local historian John Ware wrote in his history of Waupaca County that, “The forest was so dense that Mr. Sturm found no unoccupied space large enough to build his log cabin.”⁷⁰ Ware also noted that on several occasions Sturm walked to Oshkosh for supplies, maybe to purchase them from German-speaking merchants.⁷¹ Juliana died in May 1864, shortly after the birth of her son, Milo.⁷² Like many other women on the American frontier Juliana died as a result of childbirth. Within his first ten years in the United States, immigrant Christopher Sturm lost both his infant daughter and his wife. Meanwhile, his five sons ranging in age from newborn to fifteen depended on him while the family turned timberland into farmland. The tragedy of the Sturms’ early life in the Town of Little Wolf exemplifies why interdependent community connections were vitally important on the Wisconsin frontier. Since the Sturms were one of the few German-speaking families in the area in 1864, it is unlikely that they had this type of community support. Difficult times, as the Sturms faced in the spring of 1864, were common on the Midwestern frontier. There was little-to-no access to medical treatment and the environment itself was harsh and unforgiving.

⁶⁹ Ware, *History of Waupaca County*, 580; U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, WI, 1860 (accessed via Ancestry.com, February 13, 2013); and Ship Manifest for *Gem of the Ocean*, October 13, 1856 (accessed via Ancestry.com, February 13, 2013).

⁷⁰ Ware, *History of Waupaca County*, 580.

⁷¹ *Ibid*; Oshkosh is about forty-five miles southeast of Manawa.

⁷² Ware, *History of Waupaca County*, 580; US Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, WI, 1870 (accessed via Ancestry.com, February 15, 2013); Juliana Sturm headstone, Township of Little Wolf Cemetery.

Community life eased the certain tragedies of the Wisconsin frontier.

Interdependent community bonds of kinship, neighborhoods, and churches served as a type of insurance for individuals in the community. When a mother died in childbirth, kin cared for the infant and older children. By 1874, when the German immigrant population in Manawa began increasing, Sturm married a twenty-three-year-old German-immigrant named Matilda Mengert and had six more children. As the Sturms remained in the community, Christopher Sturm and his descendants became proponents of institutions like churches, schools, and libraries that built interdependent community bonds in Manawa, notably St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Manawa and Sturm's Hill School adjacent to the Sturm homestead. A century later, some of Sturm's descendants were benefactors of both St. Paul's parochial school and Manawa's library.⁷³

Between 1870 and 1880, the Sturms were joined in the townships of Little Wolf and Union by other German immigrants. In 1870 there were only seven families headed by German immigrants or the American-born children of German immigrants in the townships of Little Wolf and Union combined. By 1880, out of the 242 families in the Town of Little Wolf and Village of Manawa, forty-four were German immigrant or German-American families, roughly 18 percent of the township's population. Ten years before, German immigrant and German-American families only made up about 4.5 percent of the same township's population. By 1900, the Town of Little Wolf and Manawa had a total of 422 families. Of these, 155 households were German immigrants or German-Americans. With 37 percent of the population, German immigrants and

⁷³ U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, WI, 1880, (accessed via Ancestry.com, February 24, 2013); Ware, *History of Waupaca County*, 580.

German-Americans became the largest population group in the township, Yankees and Canadians fell close behind with 32 percent of the population.⁷⁴

In the Town of Union, there was significant growth in the population overall, as the number of households grew from thirty-eight in 1870 to 141 in 1880. Of these new households a good number were German immigrant and German-American; although, the majority of households were still headed by migrants from the Eastern United States or Eastern Canada and their children. Of the Town of Union's 141 households in 1880, seventy-four were headed by either Yankees or Canadians and forty-three were headed by German immigrants or their German-American children. Overall, Yankees or Canadians still constituted the majority of the population, about 52 percent, but German immigrant and German American families constituted 30 percent of the Town of Union's population by 1880. By 1900 the ethnic landscape of the Town of Union looked dramatically different. Of the township's 238 households, 156, about 66 percent, were German immigrants or German-Americans. Only fifty households, 21 percent, were of Yankee or Canadian descent.⁷⁵

Between 1848 and 1860, settlers from the Eastern United States, Atlantic Canada and Ireland established the community that became Manawa on the edge of the Wisconsin frontier on land recently ceded to the U.S. Government by the Menominee people. Lumbermen and farmers alike were attracted to Manawa by the abundance of white pine and the hope of finding fertile farmland. For many of these early settlers,

⁷⁴ U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, WI, 1870, 1880, and 1900, (accessed via Ancestry.com, March 2013); Percentages calculated by the author.

⁷⁵ U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Union, Waupaca County, WI, 1870, 1880, and 1900 (accessed via Ancestry.com, March 2013); Percentages calculated by the author.

lumber production became a means to supplement their incomes as they built farms. As these settlers created lumber mills and farms, they also established interdependent community networks. Formal community networks like church meetings and schools produced informal community networks like kinship, friendship and neighborhood connections, and vice versa. These interdependent community connections were essential for the harsh realities of the Midwestern frontier such as high mortality rates and demanding labor that often required neighborhood help. In the late 1860s and early 1870s, the English-speaking founders of Manawa were joined by a small number of German settlers. The German settlers who settled in Manawa after the Civil War continued to build on to the interdependent community connections that Manawa's first settlers established. Like the English-speaking pioneers that came before them, these German immigrant pioneers struggled, often with fewer economic resources, began the hard work of establishing community bonds mirroring those they left behind in their homeland.

CHAPTER 2: Yankees, Irish-Americans and German-Americans Develop Churches and Schools in the Townships of Little Wolf and Union, 1870-1900

In 1874, the small villages of Elberton and Brickley Bridge combined to form the Village of Manawa.⁷⁶ According to local legend, the village was named after an Indian brave, the son of a former chief, who challenged the authority of Chief Waupaca. Manawa was killed by Chief Waupaca on the banks of the Little Wolf River shortly after the first Yankee settlers arrived in the area. Local lore notes that early Yankee settlers “heard the braves singing dirges of the departed youth and the name, which the pines seemed to murmur to the breezes of the night, is perpetuated in that of our fair city.”⁷⁷

Shortly before the Village of Manawa was incorporated, it became the main trading center for farms in the townships of Little Wolf and Union when the Green Bay & Lake Pepin Railway laid a track through the community in 1872.⁷⁸ It also became the center for many of the area’s churches and its high school. Churches and schools continued to serve the same functions they did in Manawa’s frontier era as centers of community life that bolstered neighborhood and kin connections. As Manawa moved out of its frontier period, these institutions became formalized. While the previous generation arranged the first informal community connections, this generation sought to formalize these networks and institutions. Informal church meetings became formalized church congregations with official constitutions and new buildings. At the same time, more and more neighborhoods were created in the townships of Little Wolf and Union; a

⁷⁶ Waupaca County Historical Society. *‘Ghost’ Towns of Waupaca County*, 14-15; Wegener, *Pioneers of Little Wolf Township*, 57.

⁷⁷ Wegener, *Pioneers of Little Wolf Township*, 10.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 52-53.

neighborhood became complete with the introduction of a formal institution—a neighborhood school. Church life required rituals, sacraments, and rites of passage. Churches in the Manawa area were initially established along ethnic lines. The Yankees and Irish Protestants formed the community's Methodist and Baptist churches. The community's Irish-Catholic and French-Canadian families joined together for the community's earliest Catholic services, and were later joined by German-Catholic settlers. The bulk of the community's German immigrants and their children formed two Lutheran churches.

The Town of Little Wolf's old-stock-American and Irish-Protestant settlers held informal church gatherings led by a Methodist circuit preacher in each other's homes starting in the 1850s. Early Irish-Catholic and French-Canadian-Catholic community members shared a similar story, as priests from the nearby communities of Lebanon and New London conducted church meetings in the homes of Catholic community members. In 1874 they decided to build a mission in town—the community's first church building. Mary Davy, who previously opened her home for Mass and other rites and sacraments, donated the land for the Catholic mission named Mary Help of Christians.⁷⁹ Within twenty years the mission became Sacred Heart Catholic Church. From 1874 to 1895, the congregation shared a priest with St. Patrick's in Lebanon and with Catholic missions in Waupaca and Weyawega.⁸⁰ On April 14, 1894, the Sacred Heart parish officially incorporated. The parish out-grew their original church building that same spring and, on land donated by local lumberman W.H. Hatten, built the church building that continued

⁷⁹ "A Building 100 Years Old, A Faith Everlasting: A Summary of the History of Sacred Heart Parish, 1994," 1-2.

⁸⁰ Wegener, 26; *Manawa Advocate* "To Come Here," April 18, 1895.

to house the parish in 2014. Members of the church volunteered their time to excavate the basement and do other tasks under the guidance of contractors. By October 1894 parishioners held their first mass in the new Sacred Heart Catholic Church; and by the spring of 1895, the church had its own full-time priest.⁸¹

Little is known about Sacred Heart's ethnic make-up by the mid-1890s. However, Manawa's German population had grown substantially by then and the community's priest was of German descent. Also, newspaper articles about church happenings mention parishioners with German surnames, and the church history shows a mix of German and Irish surnames. Thus, it can be readily assumed that the ethnic make-up of the congregation had grown to include German as well as Irish and French-Canadian Catholics by the 1890s.⁸² Manawa's Catholic Church was a place where Irish, Germans, and French-Canadians could find common ground in their shared Catholic religious background. Furthermore, it is also likely that the common language of the church, Latin, broke down language barriers between English and German speakers so that they could attend a mass together.

As German immigrants became more familiar with the English language there could be even more cultural exchange with their Irish and French Canadian fellow parishioners. This is significant because church membership was an integral part of community life in Manawa and rural communities like it. Frequently, church membership anchored other community networks, as young people often found friends and spouses within their church congregation; thus, church, labor, kin, and social

⁸¹ A Building 100 Years Old, a Faith Everlasting, 3; "To Come Here," *Manawa Advocate*, April 18, 1895.

⁸² "The Catholic Fair," *Manawa Advocate*, October 22, 1896; "Local Happenings." *Manawa Advocate 1895-1897*.

networks shared members. Therefore, a congregation that had members of multiple ethnic groups was often a unifier in a community.

The church held several socials and card parties for the members to enjoy each other's company outside of worship services.⁸³ The May 9, 1895 issue of the *Manawa Advocate* reported about one of these well-attended Sacred Heart Catholic Church socials at the Odd Fellows Hall. The three-day long fair included: music, a quilt raffle, lemonade, cakes and ice-cream, and a chicken-pie supper.⁸⁴ A year later, the July 23, 1896 issue of the *Manawa Advocate* reported on another one of these social events, "A very pretty and decidedly successful lawn festival was given by the confraternity of Christian Mothers of Sacred Heart Church of Manawa at the residence of Mrs. M McCarthy in the village of Little Wolf." Members of the parish enjoyed fellowship and music at the event, "while mingled with the merry laugh and jest from old and young on the lawn, came the music of organ and violin from the house which in short time was accompanied by sweeter music issuing from the lips of men and maidens."⁸⁵ The evening also included dancing, recitations, and cake and ice cream. The *Advocate* recounted a lengthy list of community members who attended the event.⁸⁶

Although the area's Catholics enjoyed thriving community life in Manawa at the end of the nineteenth century, it seems that the Catholics and Protestants of the community misunderstand one another's religious beliefs during this time period, but

⁸³ "A Building 100 Years Old, A Faith Everlasting: A Summary of Sacred Heart Parish," 1994, 1-15.

⁸⁴ "The Fair Is On: Local Catholics are in Line at Oddfellows' Hall," *Manawa Advocate*, May 9, 1895.

⁸⁵ "It Was a Success," *Manawa Advocate*, July 23, 1896.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

sought to better understand each other. The Thursday January 30, 1896, issue of the *Manawa Advocate* noted that a special service open to Catholics and Protestants would be held at Sacred Heart the following Sunday to address some common questions about the Catholic faith. During the service, Father Steinbrecher, addressed questions that were anonymously dropped into a box at the church by its parishioners and other community members, these questions included:

Can the bible alone rule our faith? Will Protestants go to heaven? Why does the Catholic Church use the Latin language? Is there a real hell and do the damned suffer by material fire? What is the future state of children who die without baptism? Are we justified in keeping Sunday instead of the Sabbath? Has the Catholic bible been preserved pure and unadulterated? Why do priests not marry?⁸⁷

While some of these questions are still asked of Christian clergy, other questions indicate that there were conversations on religious topics between Catholics and Protestants in the community. Since Father Steinbrecher felt the need to hold such a service, it is likely that conversations between Catholics and Protestants about matters of faith took place, and, maybe, that contact between Catholics and Protestants in the Manawa area raised these questions.

According to the February 6, 1896 issue of the *Manawa Advocate* Protestants and Catholics alike attended the special Sunday evening service, which due to the volume of questions asked was extended into another special Sunday evening service the following week.⁸⁸ One letter to the editor titled "Question Box at Manawa," signed Observer, noted of Father Steinbrecher's question box:

But few important events in the history of Manawa have been received with such marked demonstrations of popular favor, and educed such a universal spirit of

⁸⁷ "A Special Service," *Manawa Advocate*, January 30, 1896

⁸⁸ "Future Punishment: Was One of the Topics of Father Steinbrecher's Discourse—A Communication," *Manawa Advocate*, Thursday February 6, 1896.

enquiry in to matters of faith and fundamental principles of Christian doctrine, as the "Question Box instituted by Rev. Fr. Steinbrecher of Sacred Heart Church."⁸⁹

It is clear from this letter that some community members welcomed these meetings as a way to better understand the spiritual perspective of others in their community. Another anonymous letter to the editor makes it clear that Catholics and Protestants alike attended the special service that extended into a several-week lecture series.⁹⁰ These question-and-answer sessions demonstrated that as Catholics and Protestants lived in close proximity to one another in small, rural communities like Manawa, they needed to renegotiate their beliefs toward others of differing faith traditions. As more Catholics and Protestants arrived in Manawa and lived closely with one another these groups were curious about one another's traditions and fundamental beliefs. Certainly, the arrival of a large group of German-speaking immigrants added to the cultural confusion already taking place in the community.

While some of the Manawa area's German settlers joined the community's Catholic Church, the bulk of these German settlers were Lutherans. Eventually these Lutherans and their descendants founded Lutheran churches in the area. In 1875, there was the first outcry from the new, but growing, German-Lutheran population of the townships of Little Wolf and Union for a church of their own.⁹¹ Christopher Sturm heard rumors about German-Lutheran Church services held in the Town of Bear Creek, thirteen miles away.⁹² Sturm informed other German Lutherans in the area. While with modern

⁸⁹ "Question Box at Manawa" *Manawa Advocate*, Thursday February 6. 1896.

⁹⁰ "Letter to the Editor," "Question Box at Manawa," *Manawa Advocate*, Thursday February 6. 1896.

⁹¹ Wegener, *Pioneers of Little Wolf Township*, 30.

roads and transportation, this would be a small, easy distance to travel today for regular worship, in the 1870s it was not. Never-the-less, they traveled to Bear Creek for the church service.

According to *History of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation at Manawa, Waupaca County, Wisconsin*, published in 1926, "On the following Sunday, a goodly number of those sturdy pioneers journeyed thither to hear a sermon and have their children baptized." In Bear Creek, the Manawa Lutherans met Reverend J.J. Walker, a Lutheran missionary based out of New London, Wisconsin. The German-Lutheran settlers from Manawa asked Reverend Walker to add Manawa to the list of settlements he served, and the first Lutheran service was held in a Manawa schoolhouse on October 16, 1875. The church steadily grew, and on March 11, 1876, St. Paul's Lutheran Church members adopted its constitution. Since St. Paul's was one of several churches under Pastor Walker's care, services were only held every third Saturday. Although services were only held once a month, they were a time for the German-Lutherans in the area to meet and build community connections.⁹³

That small log schoolhouse, and each member's personal investment in it, symbolized that these German immigrants were establishing themselves as a permanent, interdependent community within the community of Manawa. By investing in a church,

⁹² Wegener, *Pioneers of Little Wolf Township*, 30; *Geschichte der Evangelisch Lutherischen St. Paul's Gemeinde zu Manawa, Waupaca County, Wisconsin/History of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation at Manawa Waupaca County, Wisconsin* (Manawa, WI: St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 1926), 25.

⁹³ Wegener, *Pioneers of Little Wolf Township*, 30; *History St. Paul's Lutheran Church*, 25. The German immigrants who founded St. Paul's were, "without an exception very poor." Despite this poverty, these immigrants valued the refuge a German-Lutheran-church community offered them from the uncertainties of their new homeland. The congregation decided to pay Pastor Walker an annual salary of \$25.00; according to the St. Paul's Church History, "A stately sum it was, considering the extreme poverty of the people." They also desired a church building of their own to house the congregation instead of meeting in homes and schoolhouses, as a church building offered them a sense of security and permanence; The congregation bought an old log schoolhouse for \$100 to serve as their first church.

each German immigrant rooted themselves and their descendants in this community. Not only were they creating a new community institution in their new, American homeland, they were, in a sense, breaking an essential tie with the German communities from which they originated. Creating a church, even more than investing in their individual farmsteads, demonstrated that these immigrants and their descendants were now permanently invested in Manawa. Individual members and Reverend Walker bought the items needed for the church including a Bible, communion utensils and a baptismal bowl. These items were necessities to continue the basic rituals of their faith and religious community life. Communion, a tradition rooted in the Biblical story of Christ's Last Supper with his disciples was a ritual in which church members ate a small piece of bread and drank a sip of wine together to show their community's unity in their devotion to Christ.⁹⁴

In the Town of Union, more and more German-Lutheran immigrants settled near Symco. The *History of St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation at Symco, Waupaca County, Wisconsin*, originally published in 1930, stated that these German settlers, "found no true-believing Lutheran church" in Symco. While there was no Lutheran church in the village when these first German settlers arrived, there was a Methodist one in Symco. Yet, it seems that the Germans would not attend the Methodist church founded by Symco's original Yankee settlers, and it is unknown whether the English-speaking Methodist church welcomed their new German-speaking neighbors into their church fold. What is known, according to the St. Mark's church history written in 1930, is that Symco's first German settlers "were obligated to attend the services of St. Paul's congregation at Manawa." While their Yankee, Methodist neighbors may have

⁹⁴ *History of St. Paul's Lutheran Church*, 25-26.

been equally devout Christians, it is likely that the German Lutherans of Symco preferred to attend church services with people who shared their culture, worship style, and language. Maybe they felt more welcome attending services with other recent German immigrants than with old-stock American Methodists. And maybe they felt they were more likely to find spouses for their children and establish neighborhood connections amongst other recent German immigrants than among their Yankee neighbors.⁹⁵

However, while today the four-mile trip between Symco and Manawa only takes a matter of minutes, in the late 1870s, it could be a difficult trek. According to the St. Mark's church history, "soon the complaint arose, that the roads in the spring and fall of the year were in impassable, and under such conditions too far, so that they could not regularly attend the divine services every Sunday." The Lutheran families in the area asked Reverend Walker to conduct church services in Symco.⁹⁶

The Symco German Lutherans remained members of St. Paul's, but beginning in the spring of 1879, German-Lutheran church services were conducted near Symco in the home of Ludwig and Mary Pickruhl, German-Lutheran farmers who immigrated to the United States in 1871.⁹⁷ In the spring of 1880, as the German-speaking population continued to grow near Symco; and the area had enough German settlers for a Lutheran

⁹⁵ *Geßchichte der Evangelißch Lutherißchen St. Marcus Gemeinde zu Symco, Waupaca County, Wisconsin/ History of St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation at Symco, Waupaca County, Wisconsin* (Symco, WI: St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 1930), reprinted in *One Hundred Twenty-Five Years of Grace!: 1880-2005 One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of St. Mark Lutheran Church, Symco, Wisconsin* (Symco, WI: St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 2005), 20; *Commemorative Biographical Record of the Upper Wisconsin Counties of Waupaca, Portage, Wood, Marathon, Lincoln, Oneida, Vilas, Langlade, and Shawano: Containing Biographical Sketches of Prominent and Representative Citizens, and of Many of the Early Settled Families* (Chicago, IL.: J.H. Beers & Co., 1895), 821

⁹⁶ *History of St. Mark's Lutheran Church*, 20.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*; U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Union, Waupaca County, WI, 1900, (accessed via Ancestry.com, February 17, 2013).

congregation of its own. The Symco congregants officially broke away from St. Paul's and formed St. Mark's Lutheran Church, and signed a church constitution on July 18, 1880.⁹⁸ The congregants of St. Mark's immediately set to work on building plans for their own church building, which was dedicated in the winter of 1881.⁹⁹

Throughout the 1880s, the Manawa and Symco German-Lutheran churches continued to grow. In 1890, St. Paul's congregation in Manawa outgrew the old school house that housed the congregation for its first sixteen years. Congregants pledged both money and labor to the building project. They dedicated the new church on November 4, 1890, with a number of festivities, including German and English services.¹⁰⁰ While St. Paul's in Manawa and St. Mark's in Symco were separate congregations, they kept the costs of running the churches manageable by sharing a pastor with the German-Lutheran church in Bear Creek for many years.¹⁰¹

The area's German-Lutheran young people travelled to Bear Creek, (thirteen miles from Manawa, nine from Symco) sometimes on foot, for their catechism instruction. The congregants' willingness to allow their children to walk nine to thirteen miles for their catechism instruction showed the importance of the ritual of confirmation in the lives of German Lutherans. While the journey was difficult for these young people, it connected them, and their families, to a larger community of German Lutherans in the area, and thus a larger pool of marriage partners as well as friendship and possible

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ *History St. Mark's Lutheran Church*, 21.

¹⁰⁰ *History St. Paul's Lutheran Church*, 27.

¹⁰¹ Wegener, *Pioneers of Little Wolf Township*, 31; *History St. Paul's Lutheran Church* 26; *History St. Mark's Lutheran Church*, 21.

neighborhood connections. However, by the early 1890s the people of St. Paul's began to see the need for their own pastor, and called their first unshared pastor and parochial school teacher in 1891.¹⁰²

For German-Lutherans, having their own schools was nearly as essential as having their own churches. Confirmation and catechism instruction played a dominant role in the Lutheran parochial school curriculum. Students learned and memorized the tenants of the Lutheran faith covered in *Luther's Small Catechism* verbatim.¹⁰³ For German-Lutherans, confirmation at age thirteen or fourteen was an essential rite of passage marking the beginning of adulthood in the church and community. After confirmation, young people were expected to tithe. Young men became voting members of the church as well. Just as Jane Pederson wrote about Norwegian-American Lutherans in west-central Wisconsin, "Before high school became a common experience for rural young, confirmation was often followed by a departure from the family hearth for work or education." Beginning in the 1940s the high school graduation ceremony began to usurp confirmation as this official departure from adolescence to adulthood.¹⁰⁴

In addition to preparing young people for confirmation, some German-Lutherans desired to "keep youth involved in church activities and safe from outside secular influence," which was easier to accomplish if Lutherans ran their own parochial

¹⁰² Wegener, *Pioneers of Little Wolf Township*, 31- 32.

¹⁰³ See Carol K. Coburn, *Life at Four Corners: Religion, Gender, and Education in a German-Lutheran Community, 1868-1945* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 76-77; While Coburn talks about a Missouri Synod German-American community in Kansas, Confirmation instruction in east-central Wisconsin Missouri Synod German-American community was much the same.

¹⁰⁴ Pederson, *Between Memory and Reality*, 137

schools.¹⁰⁵ For German-Lutherans this reflected the idea of providing an environment that created productive adult community members who shared a common religious worldview and valued church community. This also kept their children involved in an ethnically German community and separated from their old-stock American and Irish neighbors. St. Mark formed the area's first parochial schools in Symco in 1884, six years prior to St. Paul's in Manawa. During the school's first years, the children at St. Mark parochial school were taught "German reading and writing and some arithmetic," in addition to their religious education. In the summer of 1897, a schoolhouse was finally built for St. Mark Christian Day School. By 1899, the curriculum included "six months of catechism and bible history instruction" for confirmation-aged children and "German reading and writing completed the work of a half a day in the Christian School."¹⁰⁶

Germans were the last major ethnic group to settle in the area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but they were among the first to build churches and officially incorporate them. This shows how vitally important building and founding community institutions were to ethnic immigrant groups as they arrived in their new country. As they started this new chapter of their lives community institutions such as churches and schools offered assurance that they would, with the help of kin and neighbors, make a life in their new homeland.

While Yankee migrants from New York, New England, and Atlantic Canada arrived first in the community, they were much slower to formally establish formal churches. Although they built formal, public schools and held informal church meetings in people's homes and in schoolhouses since the 1850s, there was not a formal Methodist

¹⁰⁵ Coburn, *Life at Four Corners*, 76.

¹⁰⁶ *History St. Mark's Lutheran Church*, 26-27.

Church in Manawa before 1882. However, there was an organized Methodist church in Symco prior to that date.¹⁰⁷ In 1882, the descendants of many of the community's first Yankee settlers built Manawa's first Methodist church, and the Symco and Manawa Methodist congregations began sharing a minister.¹⁰⁸ There was also a short-lived Baptist church in Manawa between 1880 and 1900.¹⁰⁹ While the early Yankee and Canadian settlers in the Manawa area clearly valued community connections and ties, as exemplified in their establishment of neighborhood schools and informal church meetings, they did not feel the need to quickly formalize their church institutions as they did with their neighborhood public schools.

However, by the mid-1890s both the Methodist and Baptist churches in Manawa formalized and established social organizations within the church. Like the women of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, the women of Manawa's Methodist church formed societies and held socials. The "Local Happenings" sections of the August 20, 1896, and March 11, 1897, issues of the *Manawa Advocate* mention both an ice cream social and a dinner hosted by the M.E. Ladies Aid Society.¹¹⁰ The *Advocate* reported that the latter was well-attended, "About forty ladies attended the dinner given by the M.E. ladies last Saturday, at the home of Mrs. Schroeder."¹¹¹ The Methodist church was an especially active place on Sundays, with a "Class meeting at 9:45 A.M., Preaching at 10:30 A.M., Sunday School at 11:45 A.M., Junior League at 3:00 P.M., Epworth League at 6:30 P.M.;

¹⁰⁷ *Commemorative Biographical Record*, 821; Wegener, *Pioneers of Little Wolf Township*, 30;

¹⁰⁸ Wegener, *Pioneers of Little Wolf Township*, 39.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹¹⁰ "Local Happenings" *Manawa Advocate* August 20, 1896; March 18, 1897.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* March 18, 1897.

Preaching at 7:30 P.M.” Some active members of the church attended regional as well as local meetings for the Epworth League.¹¹²

There was also a weekly prayer service on Thursday nights and occasionally the church held special services like the Week of Prayer services held nightly during the first week of January 1897.¹¹³ Members of the church also gathered together outside of the church grounds for prayer. The “Local Happenings” section of March 18, 1897 issue of the *Manawa Advocate* mentions one of these meetings; “Nineteen members of the M.E. church drove to Little Wolf Monday night to attend a prayer meeting.”¹¹⁴ In addition, church members actively preached the gospel to the greater community of Manawa; the “Local Happenings” section of the January 14, 1897, issue of the *Manawa Advocate* notes, “Revival meetings are in progress at the M.E. church and are having good success. Quite a number of conversions are reported, among them J.B. Smith and wife, Mrs. Clements and Mrs. Molly Hughes.”¹¹⁵

Although church was an important part of community life for the citizens of Manawa and the townships of Little Wolf and Union, each ethnic group created its own community within their township. Indeed, churches were the centers of ethnic community life in this rural area. German and the Scandinavian Protestants generally attended one of the Lutheran churches, St. Paul’s or St. Mark’s. Old-stock Americans and Irish-Protestants attended either the Baptist or Methodist churches. The exception to this was the community’s Catholic Church, Sacred Heart, which in many ways was the

¹¹² Ibid. February 25, 1897.

¹¹³ Ibid, January 7, 1897; “Church Notices” *Manawa Advocate*, January 7, 1897

¹¹⁴ “Local Happenings,” *Manawa Advocate*, March 18, 1897.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, January 14, 1897.

community's proverbial melting pot, as people from Irish, German, and French-Canadian ethnic backgrounds attended mass together and its parishioners undoubtedly created community bonds that went beyond simply worshipping together on Sunday, and it is more than likely that these community bonds eventually became kinship bonds as well.

As historian Richard M. Bernard explained in his book, *The Melting Pot and the Altar: Marital Assimilation in Early Twentieth-Century Wisconsin*, the true test of whether ethnic groups in a community were truly engaging with one another was if members from those ethnic groups intermarried. Furthermore, Bernard asserts that small rural communities like Manawa and the townships of Little Wolf and Union rather than large cities like Milwaukee or Chicago are where the majority of ethnic intermarriage took place, "historians and sociologists generally agree that it was Turner's frontier, not Schlesinger's city, that was the crucible for intermarriage."¹¹⁶ That being said, while intermarriage was more common in small communities, the majority of marriages were indeed between members of the same ethnic group. For the most part, people met their marriage partners in their various social, which were often made of people from the same ethnic group.

Marriage between first-and second-generation German-Americans was common in the Manawa area, and showed the resistance of some German-Americans toward assimilation. Henry Sturm, a Wisconsin-born child of German immigrants, did not look to his old-stock American neighbors for a marriage partner, but rather chose a newly arrived German immigrant for his wife. Martha (Beckmann) Sturm arrived in 1882 from

¹¹⁶ Richard M. Bernard, *The Melting Pot and the Altar: Marital Assimilation in Early Twentieth-Century Wisconsin*. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1980) 66.

Brandenburg, and the couple was married in 1886.¹¹⁷ While the Sturm family had been in Wisconsin since 1860 they retained their ethnic German identity due to their interaction with new arrivals from Germany, who streamed into Manawa, Wisconsin, between the 1870s to about 1920.¹¹⁸ Like Henry, other Wisconsin-born German-Americans in Manawa married recent German immigrants.¹¹⁹

Yet there were a few interethnic marriages in Manawa during this time period. William and Augusta (Raschke) Dent was one such couple. He was born in Moors, New York of a Canadian father and American mother in 1850, and like many old-stock Americans, his family slowly migrated across the United States, and eventually settled in the Manawa area between 1870 and 1875. William's father, Joseph Dent, is listed as a "laborer" in the 1880 census, thus this was a working-class family. Even so, the fact that they were English-speaking, old-stock Americans may have given them a higher social status among other old-stock Americans than their immigrant neighbors.¹²⁰ Augusta's family background was somewhat different. She was born in Prussia in about 1845. She immigrated with her parents and siblings to the United States in 1865.¹²¹ Her family settled on a farm in the Town of Union by 1870. However, while the other members of her family are listed in the 1870 census as residing at the family's Town of Union farm,

¹¹⁷ U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, WI, 1900, (accessed via Ancestry.com April 5, 2013).

¹¹⁸ U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Townships of Little Wolf and Union, Waupaca County, WI, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, (accessed via Ancestry.com, February 3, 2013).

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Townships of Little Wolf and Union, Waupaca County, WI, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880. (accessed via Ancestry.com, June 11, 2014).

¹²¹ Ship Manifest for Saxonia July 10, 1865; U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Townships of Little Wolf and Union, Waupaca County, WI, 1870, 1880, (accessed via Ancestry.com, June 11, 2014), *Index to Waupaca County, Wisconsin, Pre-1907 Marriages*, compiled by Judy Vezzetti, 2007, 31.

Augusta was absent. As she would have been twenty-five in 1870, it is likely that she was working somewhere during this time period to support herself.

Generally, rural young people met their marriage partners through the community institutions to which they belonged, churches, schools and neighborhoods. However that is not the case with William and Augusta. Her German family lived in the Town of Union, but his lived in the Town of Little Wolf.¹²² Her family was Lutheran, his family was Methodist. It is unlikely that they attended school together. There is no evidence showing where and when William and Augusta met, what attracted them to one another, or why they chose each other as marriage partners. What we do know is that on December 29, 1874, the couple married in Town of Little Wolf. Augusta was almost thirty years old and William was almost twenty-five.¹²³ At thirty, Augusta was above the average age of marriage, which may have contributed to choosing a marriage partner outside of her ethnic group. Richard Bernard's study of interethnic Wisconsin marriages noted that greater age was one of the common characteristics of those who married outside their ethnic group. Other factors included: being born in the United States to immigrant parents, having parents who themselves had an ethnically mixed marriage, having a previous marriage, coming from a Protestant country, being part of a higher social class, "a background among English- or German-speaking peoples," and residing in a small community.¹²⁴

¹²² U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Townships of Little Wolf and Union, Waupaca County, WI, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920 (accessed via Ancestry.com, June 11, 2014).

¹²³ Ship Manifest for Saxonia July 10, 1865; U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Townships of Little Wolf and Union, Waupaca County, WI, 1870, 1880, (accessed via Ancestry.com, June 11, 2014), *Index to Waupaca County, Wisconsin, Pre-1907 Marriages*, compiled by Judy Vezzetti, 2007, 31.

¹²⁴ Bernard, *Melting Pot and the Altar*, 77.

Indeed, Augusta's age was a factor in her choice to marry William. By marrying an old-stock American, Augusta also gained status in the community in the eyes of old-stock Americans in the community. According to census information for the couple, they eventually became Manawa business owners.¹²⁵ The couple, who attended the Methodist church and their children, who attended Little Wolf High School, were regularly mentioned in the "Local Happenings" section of the *Manawa Advocate*. From these snippets, it seems that the Dent family identified more with community institutions typical of old-stock Americans rather than those of German Americans.¹²⁶ For Augusta and other immigrant women like her in communities like Manawa throughout the rural Midwest, marrying a native-born American allowed her to gain social mobility for herself and for her children in the eyes of old-stock Americans, as she entered their social circles through her marriage to an old-stock American. After marrying a native-born American, she joined the merchant class and her children were among the few in the community who had the opportunity to attend Little Wolf High School.¹²⁷ Attending high school gave the Dent children an advantage over other young people in Manawa in competing for jobs and in networking in social circles.

Schools were important community institutions, but they were also vehicles for social mobility and community connectivity. As noted earlier, Lutherans in both Manawa and Symco chose to incorporate the school community into the church community by creating parochial elementary schools. Population growth in the

¹²⁵ U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Townships of Little Wolf and Union, Waupaca County, WI, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920 (accessed via Ancestry.com, June 11, 2014).

¹²⁶ "Local Happenings" *Manawa Advocate*, 1895-1897.

¹²⁷ "School Notes" *Manawa Advocate*, 1895-1897.

townships of Little Wolf and Union led to building additional public country schools as well as the aforementioned parochial schools. These country public schools became significant community unifying institutions as children from various religious denominational backgrounds and ethnic backgrounds attended school together, and as children do, made friends with one another.

Between 1873 and 1891, the townships of Little Wolf and Union, built eight schools, four in each township.¹²⁸ Country schools in the Manawa area were not just a place for children to learn how to live in community; they were, themselves, a center for neighborhood community until the country schools consolidated in the 1960s. Dantzi (Taggart) Steinbach attended Sunnyview School in the Town of Waupaca in the 1930s. She recalled that if there was a play or a Christmas program at the school, the whole neighborhood attended, not just the people who had children or grandchildren attending the school.¹²⁹ For the most part, the children of the community did not see each other as Catholics, Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans and any other religious backgrounds or children of old-stock American, Irish-American, German-American, Danish-American, French-Canadian-American families, but as children who shared the common bond of their country schools. There was camaraderie amongst these children around that neighborhood country school; and as these children became adults, they shared the same common memories and inside jokes—forging lasting community and neighborhood

¹²⁸ Hanson and Paulson, *Rural Schools*, 184-200, 265-284. There were a few country schools that were built in the Townships of Little Wolf and Union prior to 1873 that were noted earlier in this thesis. The others include: Green Valley School (1876), Little Creek School (1877), Vaughan School (1877), Sturm's Hill School (1880) in the Township of Little Wolf; and Knowledge Hill (1873), State Road (1874), Little Mountain School (1880), and Dellwood (1891) in the Township of Union.

¹²⁹ Steinbach, interview.

bonds.¹³⁰ As many adults who attended the last generations of these country schools noted, these schools groups were like a family—in fact, many children who attended these schools were literally family, as siblings and cousins only sat a few desks away from each other.¹³¹

School life was a little different in the village of Manawa itself, and more closely resembled modern schools in the way classrooms were separated by age groups. In 1877, Manawa replaced its two one-room schoolhouses with a large two-story frame building that served as both a grade school and high school.¹³² However, the developing community quickly outgrew the building. By 1895, an editorial in the *Manawa Advocate* stated: “A new school is needed. The present structure, built without ventilation and with a defective floor plan, makes the building a dangerous fire trap. It is old, rickety and unsafe.” *The Advocate* editorial explained that the school was over-crowded and the “building sways back and forth in a most alarming manner” on windy days. In 1896, the community built a new brick school building.¹³³

The vast majority of Manawa’s young people, especially those from farming families, ended their education with the eighth grade until the 1930s.¹³⁴ However, some young people were able to attend high school during the late nineteenth century. High

¹³⁰ Not all Lutheran families in the Townships of Little Wolf and Union sent their children to parochial schools in Manawa and Symco, as some Lutheran family farms were not conveniently located near enough to their churches and parochial schools for daily attendance.

¹³¹ Arnold R. Heideman Jr. interview by author, Township of Union, Waupaca County, Wisconsin, April 6, 2012.

¹³² Wegener, *Pioneers of Little Wolf Township*, 19.

¹³³ “Improver Speaks His Mind Very Freely on the Schoolhouse Question,” *Manawa Advocate*, Thursday, September 19, 1896.

¹³⁴ U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Townships of Little Wolf and Union, Waupaca County, WI, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940 (accessed via Ancestry.com, June 11, 2014).

school was another community unifying institution as young people from the village and a few young people from the rural country schools attended Little Wolf High School. The May 16, 1895, issue of the *Manawa Advocate* boasted of Little Wolf High School's larger-than-average class of 1895, "The class has eleven members, three of whom are young ladies, the remainder being gentlemen. They range in age from 16 to 19 years."¹³⁵ The June 13, 1895, issue of the *Manawa Advocate* detailed the graduation exercises and noted, "Various members of the class are of French, Irish and German descent, but all of them are true Americans."¹³⁶ There is a subtle touch of nativism in this comment, as most of the area's farming families were recent ethnic immigrants, while a good number of the families living in the Village of Manawa were of old-stock American decent. Thus in a way, this comment and similar ones like it found in the *Manawa Advocate* indicate that in the eyes of some, young people from those ethnic backgrounds shed their ethnic identities and found American identities through educational achievements.

Yet, the influence of some students' ethnic identity is present in the high school athletic association's fundraiser—a St. Patrick's Day chicken pie social. Since at the time Manawa had a good number of Irish-American residents, it's not surprising that the day was an ideal opportunity to hold a fundraiser for the high school athletic association.

According to the March 18, 1897, issue of the *Manawa Advocate*:

The St. Patrick's Sociable given by the H.S. Athletic Ass'n was a decided success. They served chicken pie, and what went with it, from six to ten o'clock. The program consisted of vocal and instrumental music, declamations, etc, ending up with a reproduction of the Corbett-Fitzsimmons fight. After the entertainment, the young people danced until about 12 o'clock. The Ass'n

¹³⁵ "A Large Class: Eleven Will Graduate From Manawa's High School Next June," *Manawa Advocate* Thursday, May 16, 1895.

¹³⁶ "A Goodly Number: Manawa's High School Graduates Its Largest Class This Year," *Manawa Advocate* Thursday, June 13, 1895.

cleared about \$13 which will be used toward the purchase of an organ for the High School.”¹³⁷

While Little Wolf High School neutralized ethnic identity, as noted in the *Manawa Advocate* article about the 1895 high school commencement exercises, in other instances, the ethnic identity of some of Manawa’s earliest settlers became a springboard for a school fundraiser and community gathering. Apparently, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Manawa’s young people received mixed messages about their immigrant heritage and ethnic identities. At times they received the message to set it aside, but at others they were allowed to celebrate it. In general this inconsistent message must have added the confusion that these groups clearly had about one another’s customs and traditions.

Regardless of the place of ethnic identity in the community’s high school in the late 1890s, one thing is clear, even at a time when an eleven-member graduating class was considered large, the village of Manawa and the surrounding rural townships were clearly supporting Little Wolf High School’s athletic programs. Athletics was important to the community. Regardless of ethnic identity, athletic ability and talent transcended ethnic cultural barriers. Over a century later, Manawa Wolves athletics continues to be such a center of community in Manawa and its surrounding townships that it is almost taken for granted. Athleticism would continue to be highly valued by Manawa community members.

As valuable as the high school was a community center, only a privileged few attended Little Wolf High School. Meanwhile, until the 1940s, the majority of Manawa’s young people worked on family farms for part of the year and often headed lumber

¹³⁷ “Local Happenings,” *Manawa Advocate* March 18, 1897.

camps, or they worked at the local sawmills. Occupational data from the 1870 and 1880 censuses shows that even in 1880, the lumber industry continued to grow in Manawa and Symco. A sawmill and a stave-and-shingle shop opened in the Town of Union, and the lumber industry gained economic importance in the two townships over time. While lumber production took place in the community since its beginning, and was an important part of its economy until 1919, farming was the area's chief occupation even in the 1860s. Farming, while not as lucrative, was the main livelihood for the majority of the residents of the townships of Little Wolf and Union.

The Village of Manawa became the main trading hub for these farmers, especially after 1872 when the planners of the Green Bay & Lake Pepin Railway chose to lay its track through it. As Manawa became a hub for agricultural trade, it grew and both Little Wolf and Symco declined.¹³⁸ Like other communities throughout the Midwest and West, communities thrived where trade took place. The advent of the railroad led to the decline of river trade, and thus Little Wolf's importance as a trading community waned. Surprisingly, Symco survived for a time as a smaller trade hub. Its church, cheese factory, feed mill, and taverns kept the village active into the twentieth century.¹³⁹ Manawa became the area's dominant center for lumber production and agricultural trade after the railroad arrived.¹⁴⁰ The railroad also fueled Manawa's lumber economy, and in October

¹³⁸ Wakefield, *Waupaca County*, 185; Wegener, *Pioneers of Little Wolf Township*, 52.

¹³⁹ Arnold Heideman, interview; Havard, interview.

¹⁴⁰ Lindsay, interview; Elaine J. (Sturm) Ferg, interview by author, Township of Union, Waupaca County, Wisconsin, April 6, 2012.; Conroy, interview; Steinbach, interview; Jean (Wegener) Schuelke, interview by author, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, Wisconsin, June 5, 2012.

1897 alone, the “Little Wolf Lumber Company shipped 245 carloads of material from their Manawa yards.”¹⁴¹

In the 1870s, Manawa became a community center when the railroad was built there. As Manawa became a center for trade, it also became a center for religious life as Catholics, Lutherans, and Methodists began building congregations and churches there. Immigrants, while impoverished, felt it was especially important to create churches as a center for their immigrant communities. Churches became a place to build kin and neighborhood connections, and for German-Lutherans, a sanctuary for ethnic and cultural identity. Conversely, old-stock American Methodists, while meeting informally for many years, were among the last community members to formally incorporate and build a church in Manawa. As neighborhoods continued to grow, neighborhood schools also continued to be established and played an important role in building and maintaining an interdependent community in Manawa, Symco, and the townships of Little Wolf and Union.

¹⁴¹ Wegener, *Pioneers of Little Wolf Township*, 22.

CHAPTER 3: A Time of Transition: Rural Community, Ethnic Identity and Political Ideology in Manawa 1900-1959

One afternoon in the late 1920s, Elaine Sturm, a first grader at St. Paul's parochial school walked home from school. Her route started at St. Paul's and went through downtown Manawa to her grandparent's home on Union Street. Elaine lived with her grandparents during the school week in order to attend parochial school, as her parent's farm was too far away from town for the girl to easily walk to school each day. On that particular day, she saw a team of draft horses hitched to a cart and tied in front of one of the downtown hardware stores. She decided to pet them. Her grandfather, Fred Mengert, was "uptown visiting with his old country friends" and looked out of a window from a restaurant across the street. Fearing for the safety of his grand-daughter, he rushed out of the restaurant. As Elaine described it, "Oh, Grandpa was having a fit, I was going to get hurt." Soon her father, Arnold Sturm, who was in town picking up supplies, came out of the hardware store and assured his father-in-law that Elaine knew how to handle draft horses—especially her own. "He told him that it was alright, I knew those horses, and they knew me."¹⁴²

Elaine (Sturm) Ferg's childhood memories illustrate rural life during the mid-to-late 1920s in Manawa and the surrounding townships. While Elaine was only in first grade, she had already put in a great deal of work on the farm, enough to be familiar with her family's draft horses and for them to be familiar with her. She came from a rural family and culture that valued hard work, even from its youngest members. She continued to live out that value throughout her life. In 2012, she was 90 years old and living on the small farm where she was reared in the Town of Union, only a few miles

¹⁴² Ferg, interview.

from the original Sturm homestead. She was still fluent in German, and a member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, the German-Lutheran church her family attended since the late 1870s.

Elaine (Sturm) Ferg was the great-granddaughter of Christopher and Juliana Sturm, two of Manawa's earliest German-immigrant settlers. She was born in 1922 into a German-American farming family that earnestly clung to German language and cultural practices. While her paternal grandfather, Henry Sturm, was born in Milwaukee in 1860, her paternal grandmother, Martha (Beckmann) Sturm, was a German immigrant.¹⁴³ Elaine's mother, Clara (Mengert) Sturm was also the daughter of German immigrants.¹⁴⁴ Although Elaine was a fourth-generation American via her paternal family, her early memories as a school-age child in Manawa provide an example of how German-American identity permeated the lives of everyday people in Manawa even after the First World War.

Although Elaine's parents, Arnold and Clara Sturm, were bilingual, German language and culture had a dominant presence in their home. After an older immigrant relative, who did not understand English, told Elaine as a little girl that "English was the devil's language," she took the admonishment literally and refused to speak or even learn English. This admonishment by the elderly relative reveals that tensions between the German-Americans and old-stock-Americans of the community were likely at the time. These tensions were common when a group of immigrants settled in a community with

¹⁴³ U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, WI, 1920, (accessed via Ancestry.com, June 10, 2012); U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, WI, 1860, (accessed via Ancestry.com June 10, 2012).

¹⁴⁴ U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, WI, 1900, 1910, 1920, (accessed via Ancestry.com, June 10, 2012).

old-stock Americans, as the language and cultural differences between them made both groups wary of each other. By the 1920s, Elaine's neighborhood country school, Knowledge Hill, only taught lessons in English. The Sturms decided to send their daughter to St. Paul's Parochial School in Manawa for first grade, where a teacher, Miss Karpinsky, was fluent in German and English. Elaine was expected to learn enough English to enroll at Knowledge Hill country school in second grade.¹⁴⁵ Elaine (Sturm) Ferg's lifetime retention of the German language is not common, her stories of life in Manawa in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s demonstrate that German-American cultural practices endured in kinship, neighborhood, and church networks during her childhood and young adulthood. Another area woman, Eleanor (Denke) Dretzke, who also grew up in the 1920s, but in rural Marion, also recalled that as a child, she spoke German with her grandparents and parents, but was unable to speak it in June 2012.¹⁴⁶

In the 1920s and 1930s, it was not uncommon to hear German spoken in the local hardware store.¹⁴⁷ Even into the 1950s one would occasionally hear older community members chatting amongst each other in German at the local hardware store or at church.¹⁴⁸ For some rural German-Americans, German cultural practices were alive and well, even after World War I, which caused many urban German-Americans to depart from their German-American identity and embrace an American one.¹⁴⁹ For German-

¹⁴⁵ Ferg, interview.

¹⁴⁶ Eleanor (Denke) Dretzke, interview by author, Manawa, Waupaca County, Wisconsin, June 23, 2012.

¹⁴⁷ Ferg, interview; Conroy, interview.

¹⁴⁸ Arnold Heideman, interview.

¹⁴⁹ Coburn, *Life at Four Corners*, 136-151.

Americans in rural Manawa acculturation from a German to an American identity was a slow, gradual process that began with its very first German settlers in the 1860s and ended when area churches no longer felt a need to hold German-language church services in the early 1960s.¹⁵⁰ German-Lutherans who settled in the American Upper Midwest tended to hold on to German language and customs longer than most other immigrant groups.¹⁵¹ In rural Manawa, church, kinship, and farm life were interwoven, and church life reinforced German-American ethnic identity, which resulted in the ongoing use of the German language into the early 1960s.¹⁵²

Three interviews with Manawa-area women born between 1922 and 1928 revealed that among German-Americans in the townships of Little Wolf and Union and in the neighboring Town of Dupont, women were expected to work hard on the farm, in the house, and off the farm at school and in the workplace. For example, Elaine (Sturm) Ferg, an only child, helped her father with farm work from her early elementary school

¹⁵⁰ Arnold Heideman, interview; Havard, interview; Phyllis Ann (Ferg) Heideman, interview with the author, Township of Union, April 6, 2012.

¹⁵¹ Kathleen Neils Conzen "Making Their Own America: Assimilation Theory and the German Peasant Pioneer," *German Historical Institute Annual Lecture Series No. 3*. (Washington DC: German Historical Institute, 1990), and Carol K. Coburn, *Life at Four Corners: Religion, Gender, and Education in a German-Lutheran Community, 1868-1945* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992).

¹⁵² Kathleen Neils Conzen "Making Their Own America: Assimilation Theory and the German Peasant Pioneer," *German Historical Institute Annual Lecture Series No. 3*. (Washington DC: German Historical Institute, 1990); Carol K. Coburn, *Life at Four Corners: Religion, Gender, and Education in a German-Lutheran Community, 1868-1945* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992); Linda Schelbitzki Pickle, *Contented among Strangers: Rural German-Speaking Women and Their Families in the Nineteenth-Century Midwest*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996); These texts discuss the tendency of rural German-Americans to resist assimilation. Kathleen Neils Conzen "Making Their Own America: Assimilation Theory and the German Peasant Pioneer," *German Historical Institute Annual Lecture Series No. 3*. (Washington DC: German Historical Institute, 1990) and Carol Coburn in *Life at Four Corners, Life at Four Corners: Religion, Gender, and Education in a German-Lutheran Community, 1868-1945* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992) studied similar rural communities in Minnesota and Kansas, respectively; While German-Americans in urban areas were often forced to adopt a solely American cultural identity during the First World War, rural German-Americans, in communities like Manawa, were able to maintain their ethnic German-American identity, and shared it with their children and grandchildren into the 1920s and beyond.

years until she married at the age of thirty. As of 2012, she fondly remembered working with the draft horses, King and Queen, and other outside duties on her father's farm. Arnold and Elaine Sturm had a strong father-daughter bond as a result of working together on their farm. Elaine's hard work may have been the deciding factor in sending her to high school in Manawa in the fall of 1936. When Elaine graduated from eighth grade, she did not expect to go to high school. She knew that high school would incur extra expenses that her small farm family could not afford—especially at the height of the Great Depression. Nonetheless, Arnold Sturm insisted that his daughter enroll in high school in the fall of 1936, against her own objections. Not only was high school an added financial expense for the family, but as Elaine was an only child and her “dad's helper,” sending the teenage girl to high school equaled a loss of production on the family farm—production the financially strapped family needed. However, Elaine recalled that her father “saw to it that I go to high school.” Clearly, Elaine's early experiences on the farm gave her a sense of empowerment and independence, and won the appreciation of her father.¹⁵³

After graduating from high school in 1940, she secured a full-time job as a bookkeeper at Eastling's Insurance Company and Eastling's Pickle Station; she also continued to help her father on the family farm. In her early twenties, Elaine purchased a car, which she paid for in part from her savings and in part from a bank loan in her name. In her choices of what to do with her free time, she showed her characteristic independence. She would go with a group of local young people to the various dance halls in the area and regularly went on road trips when she had extended time off from work. When rationing began during World War II, Elaine used her bicycle to commute

¹⁵³ Ferg, interview.

to work, saving her gas rations for her travels. Between 1940 and 1953, she visited each of the continental forty-eight states and parts of Canada. In 1953, a few months before she turned thirty-one, Elaine married Alvern Ferg, a childless widower. Between 1953 when she married, and 1984 when she retired, she continued to work part-time in downtown Manawa, helped her husband in the barn, cared for her home, raised three children and, later, helped care for her grandchildren.¹⁵⁴

Eleanor (Denke) Dretzke shared a similar story to Elaine (Sturm) Ferg. Eleanor was born on a farm in 1922 in the Town of Dupont, Waupaca County, about ten miles north of the Sturm's Town of Union farm. Eleanor parents, Ernst and Lillian Denke, were Wisconsin-born children of German-immigrant parents. Like Elaine (Sturm) Ferg, Eleanor came from an ethnically German family and participated in similar German cultural practices. They attended St. Paul's Lutheran Church in the Town of Dupont and the German language was regularly spoken in their home. Eleanor was the eldest of three children, and expected to help with milking cows in the barn and driving horses in the fields.¹⁵⁵

Like Elaine, Eleanor went on to high school, but unlike Elaine, there was never a question that Eleanor would go on to high school after graduating from her country school. Eleanor noted "My parents expected us to go" to high school. However, many of her country-school classmates were not given the opportunity to attend high school. For Eleanor, this made the transition from country school to high school more difficult. Her country school class split; many ended their education at eighth grade. For Eleanor, this meant fewer familiar faces when she entered Marion High School in the fall of 1936. As

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Dretzke, interview

she noted in a June 2012 interview, “I felt strange going to high school because I didn’t know the people.”¹⁵⁶

After graduating from high school, Eleanor continued to work both in the house and in the barn on the family farm until she married Carl Dretzke, and moved to the Dretzke farm in the Town of Union in 1943. After her marriage, Eleanor emphasized that she no longer “had to” work on the farm. Rather, her work was strictly in the house, which she preferred. In addition to being a farmer, Eleanor’s husband, Carl, was a tinkerer and an inventor. Carl Dretzke was one of the people credited with the invention of the automatic barn cleaner system. In 1953, after ten years on the farm, the Dretzke’s business, Farmway, became profitable enough for the Dretzkes to leave farming and go into business full-time. The family sold the farm and moved into the village of Manawa.¹⁵⁷

Starting in 1958, Eleanor joined her husband in the Farmway office, as her youngest child started school. For fifteen years, Eleanor did office work for her husband’s businesses. First with Farmway, which was sold to New Holland Machinery; and then with her husband’s second business, Trade Winds Campers, which revolved around Carl’s next invention, pop-up campers. In the mid-1970s, after her children were grown, Eleanor ran for county clerk on the Republican ticket in 1974 and won in conservative Waupaca County, Wisconsin. She served as County Clerk from 1974 until her retirement in 1990.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

Jean (Wegener) Schuelke, was born in the Town of Little Wolf in 1928, and eventually married into a family that continued German-American traditions. However, her family of origin did not embrace German-American social or cultural practices. Nor did she and her husband, Harold, continue ethnic German traditions in their family. Although her paternal grandparents were German immigrants, her Wisconsin-born father, Herbert Helmuth Charles Wegener, was a World War I veteran and married Wisconsin-born Evelyn Mae Winkler, whose maternal grandparents were Irish immigrants and whose paternal family was of Yankee descent.¹⁵⁹ Since Evelyn was descended from old-stock Americans and Irish immigrants, she likely did not know how to speak German. What is certain is that Jean never spoke German, nor did she attend a German-Lutheran church as a child. Rather, her family belonged to her mother's Methodist church.¹⁶⁰ While the Wegener family did not embrace a German-American ethnic identity, they did embrace a rural one.¹⁶¹

Jean was reared on a small dairy farm in the Town of Little Wolf. She was one of two children, and although she did have an older brother, she still did quite a bit of work in the fields and in the barn. Jean remembered, "I helped my mom some in the house, but I was mostly outside with my dad." Life on the farm spurred a life-long love of horses, and she showed an interest and talent in working with them from a rather young age. When Herbert worked in the fields, he would set Jean atop a draft horse and she would

¹⁵⁹ Schuelke, interview; US Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, WI, 1900,1910,1920, 1930 (accessed via Ancestry.com, Oct 19 2012 and April 15, 2013); Wegener, *Pioneers of Little Wolf Township*, 140.

¹⁶⁰ Schuelke, interview.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

ride. Jean was able to drive teams of draft horses on her parents' farm and her neighbors' farms at a young age. When Jean was about ten years old, she was driving a team of horses in a neighbor's field when the neighbor's brother stopped to visit. Seeing the horses in the field, but unable to see their petite driver, he ran to tell his brother that the team was loose. The neighbor reassured his brother, "Just wait, you'll see there's somebody there."¹⁶² Rural life was important to Jean (Wegener) Schuelke, but she did not marry a farmer. While her husband Harold Schuelke grew up on a farm as well, Jean and Harold did not continue the family farm tradition. Instead, she worked in a factory in a neighboring town and, later, in one of Manawa's downtown businesses while she raised her children. Harold was a truck driver. The couple bought a few acres in the country just outside of Manawa, and Jean kept one or two riding horses until the late 1990s.¹⁶³

For farmers, whether they were of German, Irish, or Yankee descent, there were places in the community where rural people gathered. Fred Gehrke's hardware and implement store in downtown Manawa became a center for rural community by the 1930s.¹⁶⁴ David Lindsay recalled his father, Stuart Lindsay, buying their farm's first modern tractor, a Farmall H, in 1939; after a rod went through the crank case of their Rumely Oil Pull.¹⁶⁵ While the Rumely worked well for some field work, like plowing, disking, and powering a threshing machine, it was too unwieldy for most field work, and the Lindsays still kept two teams of draft horses. When the Rumely became unusable,

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Lindsay, interview; Donald Knudsen interview by author, Township of Little Wolf, Waupaca County, WI, June 4, 2012.

¹⁶⁵ Lindsay, interview.

the elder Lindsay knew he needed a new tractor, but debated whether or not to make the \$900 investment in a new Farmall. Gehrke was willing to give Lindsay \$450 in trade for one of his Percheron horse teams, which he would not need after buying the tractor. However, Lindsay still did not have the remaining \$450 for the tractor.¹⁶⁶ Hesitantly, he went down to the bank and inquired about taking out a loan. For days, he mulled over whether the tractor was worth taking on debt. As Lindsay was deliberating over whether or not to take out the loan, his wife Amy offered her thoughts on the matter, “Why don’t you go down to the bank tomorrow and arrange for the loan and sign the papers. I’m sick of hearing about this tractor and the cost of it, and whether you can justify it or not.” He did. With that purchase the Lindsay farm transitioned technologically from horses to tractors.¹⁶⁷ Throughout the 1940 and 1950s other area farmers made the same transition to modern tractors and machinery.

Developments in farm technology between 1939 and 1959 radically changed farm and community life in Manawa. One major technological change was the advent of the combine. Prior to the combine, threshing oats was a major chore that required the work of the entire farm neighborhood. In the 1940s and 1950s, and in some cases the 1960s, farmers in the Manawa area engaged in this shared task.¹⁶⁸ Like all other farm tasks, every member of the farm family or, in this case, farm neighborhood, male and female, from the very youngest to the very oldest, had a set of tasks assigned to them.¹⁶⁹ David Lindsay recalled that usually four or five neighboring farms would exchange work with

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Lindsay, interview; Knudsen, interview; Havard, interview.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

one another.¹⁷⁰ Donald Knudsen recalled being a hired hand on Fred Gehrke's farm as a teenager and going from one neighborhood farm to the next, threshing and putting in a full day of hard work as a farm community before each farm family went back to their own farm to milk their cows.¹⁷¹

There were large meals that the neighborhood ate together at breakfast, lunch, and supper. These meals were always a friendly competition between farm women, who took pride in the meals they served, "It seemed that each housewife tried to outdo the one before."¹⁷² And there was always beer and a good time laced in with the hard work.¹⁷³ However, David Lindsay insisted that "the beer did not appear until the work was done."¹⁷⁴ It is clear that these neighborhoods both worked and played hard together as a multiple-generation community. In rural Manawa until the late 1950s, neighbors knew each other well and not only did they work together for the economic benefit of the community, but amidst the hard work, they enjoyed good food, beer, and each other's company. With better farm equipment and technology, neighbors no longer got to know each on the deep level that working side by side fostered.

As technology undermined traditional community rituals like shared work, other foundational components of Manawa's neighborhood communities declined. Country schools once strengthened interdependent neighborhood and kinship bonds. Arnold Heideman Jr. attended Marble country school and State Road country school in the Town

¹⁷⁰ Lindsay, interview.

¹⁷¹ Knudsen, interview.

¹⁷² Lindsay, interview.

¹⁷³ Knudsen, interview.

¹⁷⁴ Lindsay, interview.

of Union during the 1950s and 1960s. He noted, “The older kids treated the younger kids like little brothers and sisters.”¹⁷⁵ David Lindsay grew up in the Town of Little Wolf in the 1930s and 1940s and attended Springbrook country school, and noted that in his country school, older children would often tutor the younger children “without really being told.”¹⁷⁶ In the late-1930s, Dantzi (Taggart) Steinbach attended Sunnyview country school in the Town of Waupaca before moving to Manawa in third grade. Steinbach remembered that the children in her school put on a number of plays, which were attended by the entire neighborhood, whether they had children or grandchildren attending the school or not. She also developed strong relationships with children in her neighborhood, “In the country you learned to do whatever with whoever you had to. You were friends with everybody and anybody.” She also recalled that she broke her arm as a young girl during her two years at Sunnyview, but she remembered that time fondly because her neighborhood classmates helped her with tasks that were difficult with one arm.¹⁷⁷ Simply put, in the area’s country schools, students learned to live together in community.

A good amount of recess and physical education time involved games played in a large group, like Duck, Duck, Goose and The Farmer in the Dell, or team sports with classmates of all ages.¹⁷⁸ Softball and baseball were staples in the country schools in the Town of Union.¹⁷⁹ The emphasis on large group games and team sports at neighborhood

¹⁷⁵ Arnold Heideman, interview.

¹⁷⁶ Lindsay, interview.

¹⁷⁷ Steinbach, interview.

¹⁷⁸ Arnold Heideman, interview; Phyllis Heideman, interview; Havard, interview.

country schools showed that students of all ages learned to work together as an interdependent group. Large group games and team sports were training not only for a life lived in community, but a life lived in that specific community. Through sports and games at the country school, children learned the strengths and weaknesses of the individual children in their community. As children, this knowledge was useful for winning a baseball or softball game. As adults, this knowledge helped them to survive economically and socially together as a community.

Marjorie (Herman) Havard's class was the last one to graduate from eighth grade at Knowledge Hill country school in the Town of Union in 1969. In conjunction with her class' eighth grade graduation, the class hosted a school farewell party for the school and its alumni. To raise money for the farewell celebration, Knowledge Hill hosted its typical fundraiser—a card party and bake sale. The favorite game at that and other card parties was sheep's head, a German card game. Havard commented, "It was always sheep's head, you had to know it, and I didn't." The farewell celebration was well-attended by a crowd that included young and old members of the community, all graduates of Knowledge Hill. Havard recalled that the school closing "affected a lot of people's lives, there were a lot of good memories there and people did a lot of reminiscing." With the closing of this and the few remaining country schools in the Manawa School District in 1969, the Town of Little Wolf and Town of Union lost key foundational community institutions.¹⁸⁰

The loss of these country schools sped the loss of ethnic identity in rural neighborhoods. While instruction in these schools was conducted in English, and

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Havard interview.

neighborhood ethnic languages were not spoken at school, the fact that these schools were strongly supported by each neighborhood family created a school environment that maintained ethnic and rural cultural identity. For example, Marjorie (Herman) Havard's recollection that fundraisers for her country schools were often card parties with traditional German card games like sheep's head shows one small way that an ethnic German cultural practice was transmitted from one generation to another. Historians often note that in general, German immigrants in the Midwest, their children, and grandchildren resisted assimilation and took pride in their German ethnic and cultural identity. While there are a few examples of individual German Americans in the Manawa area who did not fit into that mold, they were a minority. Meanwhile the vast majority of German Americans in the Manawa area did, indeed, hold on to their German ethnic and cultural identity for several generations after immigration, some into the 1950s. This was especially true of German-Lutherans. However, the World Wars marked German-Americans—even in rural communities like Manawa—and the generation born in the interwar period began to move away from overt displays of their German-American cultural identity. For example, they stopped speaking German and did not teach the language to their children

In German-American neighborhoods the use of the German language was once an important community unifier. Arnold Heideman Jr., Phyllis (Ferg) Heideman, and Marjorie (Herman) Havard recalled attending German-language church services with their respective grandparents at St. Mark's in the 1950s and early 1960s.¹⁸¹ Phyllis (Ferg) Heideman also remembered attending German-language church services at St. Paul's

¹⁸¹ Arnold Heideman , interview; Phyllis Heideman, interview; Havard,interview.

with her maternal grandparents, Arnold and Clara Sturm during that same time period.¹⁸² However, they also recalled that these German language services ended at St. Mark's and St. Paul's as members of their grandparents' generation began passing away.¹⁸³

Arnold Heideman Jr. recalled that both sets of his grandparents were fluent in German and used it in everyday conversation, "When my grandparents on my father's side and grandparents on my mother's side got together, they would always converse in German." He also noted that when he visited his paternal grandparents' home as a child, his grandmother was often visited by one or more of her brothers and their spouses; the dialogue among the adults was always in German. He noted that his grandparents were not atypical in their use of the German language, as it was common to hear elderly people conversing with each other in German at St. Mark's in Symco and at stores in Symco, Manawa, and Clintonville.¹⁸⁴

As Heideman noted, it was his parents' generation, born between the World Wars, who discontinued casual use of the German language in their homes and places of worship. He explained, "My grandparents spoke fluent German. My parents could understand German, but didn't speak it. And I have only a few words that I say in German." His parents, Arnold Sr. and Gertrude Heideman, came from homes where German was spoken daily, but when they married in 1945, they broke from the tradition

¹⁸² Phyllis Heideman, interview.

¹⁸³ Arnold Heideman , interview; Phyllis Heideman, interview; Havard,interview.

¹⁸⁴ Arnold Heideman, interview.

of speaking German in their home with their children. As a result, Arnold Jr. grew up in the 1950s and 1960s, retaining very little of the German language.¹⁸⁵

Arnold Heideman Jr.'s paternal grandfather, Adolph Heideman, was born in Posen, Germany in 1885, and immigrated to the United States as a toddler in 1887.¹⁸⁶ However, Heideman's maternal family, the Krenkes, arrived in the United States thirty years earlier in the 1850s.¹⁸⁷ This is significant because Heideman vividly remembers his maternal third-generation grandfather, Arnold Krenke, fluently conversing in German with his German-immigrant paternal grandfather, Adolph Heideman, in the 1950s and 1960s. German language usage in the Manawa area in homes, German-Lutheran churches, and in public ended with the passing of that generation. With the end of German language usage, German-American ethnic identity slowly faded in rural Manawa during in the 1950s and 1960s.

In Manawa, Wisconsin, rural and German-American ethnic identity not only manifested itself in German language usage into the 1950s, but it also showed up in the voting booth. Rural people, German-American, Irish-American and Yankee alike in the Manawa area tended to vote for Republican candidates.¹⁸⁸ This was not only the case in Manawa, but in other rural, especially rural German-American communities throughout the United States as well. In 1951, writer Samuel Lubell published an article in *Harper's Magazine* that studied voting patterns in the 1920, 1940 and 1944 elections entitled "Who

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ship Manifest for the Gothia, Oct 18, 1887 (accessed via Ancestry.com, Jan 23, 2013).

¹⁸⁷ US Census of Population, Manuscript Census, Township of Caledonia, Waupaca County, WI, 1920, (accessed via Ancestry.com April 5, 2013).

¹⁸⁸ Industrial Commission of Wisconsin, and Wisconsin, *The Wisconsin Blue Book* (Madison, WI: Industrial Commission) 1913, 1917 1921, 1925, 1929, 1933, 1937, 1942, 1946, 1950, 1954.

Votes Isolationist and Why.” Lubell looked at voting patterns at the state and local level, and identified communities where “Democratic losses were three, five and even eight times the national average, ” and where he thought voters “could be considered to have isolationist potential.”¹⁸⁹ After looking at the numbers, he found that as he suspected, possible isolationist communities were found in the Midwest. However, to his surprise, he found isolationist communities outside the Midwest as well.

Lubell discovered that isolationism in 1920 and 1940 was not caused by the geographic location of voters, but by the ethnic identities of voters. As Lubell explained, “Possibly because it seemed to concentrate in the Midwest, the notion has grown up that isolationism was a product of the peculiar insularity of the American interior.”¹⁹⁰ Rather, Lubell discovered that isolationism at its core was “ethnic and emotional.”¹⁹¹ He stated, “The strongest common characteristic of the counties with the heaviest ‘isolationist’ vote is that they are inhabited by ethnic groups with an inherited pro-German or anti-British bias.” Lubell also asserted that these areas supported Harding strongly in 1920, in part by the urging of the German-language press, which Lubell claimed, “drummed at the theme that ‘a vote for Harding is a vote against the persecutions suffered by German-Americans during the war.’”¹⁹²

If this is the case, it accounts for the growth in the number of Republican votes in the Village of Manawa, the Town of Little Wolf, and the Town of Union during this time period. It also could explain in part why the number of Democratic votes stayed roughly

¹⁸⁹ Samuel Lubell, “Who Votes Isolationist and Why,” *Harper’s Magazine* 202 (April 1951): 29-30.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 30.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, 31.

the same in the Village of Manawa, where more old-stock Americans tended to live, but noticeably declined in the townships of Little Wolf and Union for the 1920 election.

Lubell found that ethnicity “emerged even more strongly in World War II than in World War I.”¹⁹³ He noted that German-Americans made a huge impact on the 1940 election:

In Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, this German American defection was strong enough to swing those states Republican. Nor was the Midwest alone affected. In states as different as Texas and Ohio, Washington and Wisconsin, Minnesota and Indiana, Idaho and Missouri, the sharpest Democratic declines invariably came in German-background counties.¹⁹⁴

Based on this hypothesis, Manawa and the townships of Little Wolf and Union with their high German-American and Irish-American populations, should have fit into that isolationist category. And according to the voting numbers recorded in the *Wisconsin Blue Books* for the 1920, 1940, and 1944 elections, they did indeed fit into a similar pattern of Lubell’s hypothesis. Lubell noted, almost accusingly, “The Midwest’s defections from the Democratic party in 1940 was largely a revolt of German-American farmers against involvement in war with Germany.”¹⁹⁵ In *Wisconsin Votes*, Robert Booth Fowler verified Lubell’s assertion, and even pointed to Waupaca County’s Town of Union as a specific example of this shift in German-American Wisconsin farmers, noting that the township went from forty percent of the population voting for Roosevelt in 1936 to fourteen percent of the population voting for him in 1940.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, 30.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁹⁶ Robert Booth Fowler, *Wisconsin Votes: And Electoral History* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 155.

However, there was one key difference in Manawa's voting patterns from Lubell's hypothesis. Where Lubell believed that most isolationists returned to voting for the Democratic Party in 1948, voters in the townships of Little Wolf and Union and the village of Manawa continued to vote for the Republican ticket from 1940 onward.¹⁹⁷ In the case of the conservative German-Americans and their Irish-American and Danish-American neighbors, it appears that they voted Republican for isolationist reasons, as the numbers of Republican votes increased dramatically during the World Wars and immediately following them. However, the people of Manawa and the townships of Little Wolf and Union continued voting Republican into the 1950s and beyond out of party loyalty.

Lubell's thoughts on isolationism seem to be the case in Manawa, and the townships of Little Wolf and Union, as a greater number of community members voted Republican in crucial years of foreign policy that dealt with Germany. Overall, Manawa and the townships of Union and Little Wolf voted solidly for Republicans. The exceptions are the 1932 and 1936 elections. Voters' German-American identity accounts for the voting patterns in the 1920s and 1940s; the agrarian identity of the community, regardless of ethnicity, explains voting results in 1932 during the height of the Great Depression. While Roosevelt won by only thirty-four votes in Manawa, Roosevelt won by 153 and 166 votes in Little Wolf and Union, respectively.¹⁹⁸ Clearly, rural Wisconsinites looked to Roosevelt to provide relief for rural Americans.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Samuel Lubell, "Who Votes Isolationist and Why," *Harper's Magazine* 202 (April 1951): *Wisconsin Blue Book*, 1950, 1954; See appendix.

¹⁹⁸ *Wisconsin Blue Book*, 1933.

¹⁹⁹ Fowler, *Wisconsin Votes*, 148-150.

By 1936, voters in Manawa, the Town of Little Wolf, and the Town of Union were, like the majority of rural Wisconsin voters, disillusioned with Roosevelt, as the Agricultural Adjustment Act did little-to-nothing for dairy farmers.²⁰⁰ What is most interesting about the 1936 voting results is that North Dakotan William Lemke, a “quasi-socialist,” who believed in debt avoidance and radical help for farmers, won 5 percent of the vote in the State of Wisconsin, but an average of 13.4 percent in Wisconsin’s rural German-American communities.²⁰¹ Lemke captured 18 percent of the vote in Manawa, 22 percent in Little Wolf, and 17 percent in Union, higher-than-average percentages even for rural German-American communities. Between 1936 and 1952, not only did the number of voters in Manawa, Little Wolf and Union increase, but the number of votes cast for Republicans increased while the numbers of votes for Democrats and third parties gradually decreased. Voting patterns in Manawa, the Town of Little Wolf, and Town of Union show that community members valued their ethnic and rural, agricultural identities. Clearly, by the 1930s this was a community that was centered on farming. A politician who understood how to identify with and relate to his rural, agricultural constituents won loyal and consistent voters. This could explain why area voters supported Joe McCarthy, a politician who had local connections to the Manawa area, and identified with his conservative ideology.

In the Manawa area, the generation born and raised between the First and Second World Wars voted Republican. One reason for this may have been that they were literally well-acquainted with one of the key figures in Wisconsin and national politics of the time, as the infamous Senator Joseph McCarthy had strong local ties in the Manawa

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 152.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, 152-153.

area, as he graduated from the community's high school and had formerly managed a local grocery store. Joe McCarthy was an Irish-American farm boy originally from Grand Chute, Wisconsin, which was about thirty miles from Manawa. Like many young men who grew up on Wisconsin farms during that time period, McCarthy initially ended his education with the eighth grade, and became a farmer. Specifically Joe McCarthy became a chicken farmer.²⁰²

Had Joe McCarthy been a successful farmer, Wisconsin and national history may have taken a very different course. However he was not successful. Bad luck and mistakes plagued McCarthy's poultry farm; for example, among the many episodes of bad luck, an overloaded truck carrying his chickens flipped on the way to market. Finally, the death knell of his chicken enterprise came 1928 when McCarthy became seriously ill and was bed-ridden for several weeks. The hired hands in charge of McCarthy's flock took poor care of the birds during his absence, and most of the flock died. McCarthy left poultry farming and took a stocking and clerking job at Cash-Way, an Appleton grocery store. At Cash-Way, McCarthy's strong work ethic was noticed and rewarded. He was quickly promoted to manager and then became the manager of the new Cash-Way store in Manawa in the spring of 1929.²⁰³

McCarthy drummed up business for Manawa's new Cash-Way store by reaching out to the people of rural Manawa, by going door to door to the farmers who lived outside of the village to introduced himself. He told them about his new store and welcomed

²⁰² Thomas C. Reeves, *The Life and Times of Joe McCarthy: A Biography* (New York: Stein and Day, 1982), 5-6; Michael O'Brien "Young Joe McCarthy, 1908-1944." *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 63, no.3 (Spring 1980), 182.

²⁰³ Reeves, *Life and Times of Joe McCarthy*, 5-6; O'Brien, *Young Joe*, 183-184.

them to visit him there.²⁰⁴ As McCarthy had himself supplied grocery stores when he operated his poultry business, he saw the benefit of cultivating a good relationship with area farmers. One area resident, David Lindsay, shared that young Joe McCarthy even occasionally worked on the Lindsay family's farm when they were short-handed.²⁰⁵ Since McCarthy took the time to visit farmers and help them when they needed an extra hand on the farm, he became a popular young man in Manawa.

According to McCarthy biographer Jim Reeves, Manawa's Cash-Way and its charismatic manager were popular with young and old alike, "He was a hit, especially with elderly ladies, who enjoyed his flattery and special attention, and teenagers, who hung around the store in such number that it seemed to be a community center."²⁰⁶ Another McCarthy biographer, Michael O'Brien noted that, "He quickly became a popular town figure, the center of attention. Jovial and friendly, he stood at the store entrance greeting everybody and trading wisecracks and pleasantries."²⁰⁷ In turn, local residents chose to shop at his grocery store at a time when Manawa had several grocery stores to choose from.²⁰⁸ While it was the smallest of Cash-Way's twenty-five stores, the Manawa store ranked first in sales above the other branches under McCarthy's

²⁰⁴ Reeves, *Life and Times of Joe McCarthy*, 6.

²⁰⁵ Lindsay interview.

²⁰⁶ Reeves, *Life and Times of Joe McCarthy*, 6.

²⁰⁷ O'Brien, *Young Joe*, 184

²⁰⁸ Today, Manawa only has one grocery store, and it is almost difficult to imagine having a choice between downtown businesses, but prior to big box stores like Wal-mart, or even large supermarkets in neighboring towns like Waupaca, New London and Clintonville, downtown Manawa offered a greater number of shopping choices for its local consumers.

management.²⁰⁹ Although McCarthy was successful, he realized soon after the store opened that he wanted more for himself than being a small-town store manager.

McCarthy joined formal and informal community networks in Manawa, as noted earlier he occasionally helped at local farms engaging in community shared work, he regularly played poker with young businessmen in Manawa and he occasionally joined groups of young people on outings. He regularly attended Mass at Sacred Heart and befriended the parish's priest.²¹⁰ He also developed a strong relationship with his landlady who encouraged him to enroll in Little Wolf High School so that he could achieve more for himself than simply managing a small-town grocery store.²¹¹ It is well-documented that McCarthy worked his way through four-years' worth of the Little Wolf High School's curriculum in just one year²¹² After graduating from Little Wolf High School in the spring of 1930, McCarthy attended Marquette University in Milwaukee. In 1935, he opened a law practice in Waupaca, a community about fourteen miles from Manawa.²¹³ McCarthy was a Democrat in law school at Marquette and early in his law career; and a supporter of Roosevelt's work relief programs.²¹⁴ However, after he moved to the community of Shawano, Wisconsin, (thirty-seven miles north of Manawa) in 1936, he had political ambitions. Since Shawano County was a Republican stronghold in the

²⁰⁹ Reeves, *Life and Times of Joe McCarthy*, 6.

²¹⁰ Reeves, *Life and Times of Joe McCarthy*, 6-7; O'Brien, *Young Joe*, 188.

²¹¹ O'Brien, *Young Joe*, 185.

²¹² Reeves, *Life and Times of Joe McCarthy*, 7-9; O'Brien *Young Joe*, 185-188.

²¹³ O'Brien, *Young Joe*, 196.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, 198-199.

1930s, McCarthy knew he would never win an election there as a Democrat and changed his party affiliation to Republican.²¹⁵

In 1946, Joe McCarthy was elected as a Republican to the United States Senate. In that election he won Waupaca County by a landslide vote with 7,930 votes to his opponent's 2,072 votes.²¹⁶ Part of the reason for this win may have been that McCarthy knew how to talk to farmers as equals, like he did when he walked the rural roads of the Town of Little Wolf gathering customers for his grocery store fifteen years earlier. Six years later in 1952, as his anti-communist campaign was already well-underway, McCarthy was re-elected by an even wider margin by the citizens of Waupaca County. He gained votes in the county, as 13,718 were cast for McCarthy, while his opponent only received 3,210 votes. In general, it appears that during his re-election in 1952, it was the votes cast by the people of Wisconsin's rural counties that re-elected Joe McCarthy to the United States Senate in 1952.²¹⁷ McCarthy appealed to rural voters in Manawa and elsewhere in Wisconsin as some rural people began to forgo their ethnic identities for a conservative American one.

Between 1900 and 1969 rural and ethnic cultural identity changed for the people of the townships of Little Wolf and Union. Whether old-stock-, Irish-, or German-American their unique cultural identities seemed to give way to a common rural identity for a number of social and political reasons. However that common rural identity also evolved due to changes in technology that eased farm labor and rural travel. Farm

²¹⁵ Ibid, 203-205.

²¹⁶ Industrial Commission of Wisconsin, and Wisconsin. *The Wisconsin Blue Book*, (Madison, WI: Industrial Commission, 1948) 675.

²¹⁷ Industrial Commission of Wisconsin, and Wisconsin. *The Wisconsin Blue Book* (Madison, WI: Industrial Commission, 1954) 757.

equipment like better tractors, combines and barn cleaners made work easier on the farm and more work could be done by fewer people. While this was economically beneficial, it caused neighbors to become independent competitors rather than cooperative interdependents. Better roads and transportation led to school consolidation, as it was cheaper and more efficient to bus children into a central community like Manawa than sending them to neighborhood country schools. Yet the country school was a foundational piece and nucleus of each rural neighborhood. Without shared work and country schools, neighbors drifted away from one another, and it became possible for rural neighbors to become strangers.

CHAPTER 4: “This Ain’t a Wild West Show,” But What Is It?: Manawa Adopts Rodeo:
1959-1965²¹⁸

The walls of Eleanor Dretzke’s home were covered with her late husband’s drawings and paintings, idyllic scenes of the mythic Western frontier, in June 2012. Her husband, Carl Dretzke, was a third-generation German-American. Carl married Eleanor Denke in 1943 and operated a dairy farm for several years. In addition to being a farmer, Carl was a tinkerer and looked for a way to make his least favorite task on the farm, cleaning the barn, easier. To do so, he invented the automatic barn cleaner system. Basically, Dretzke’s invention was a chained-together system of paddles that was placed in an approximately 18-inch wide, 6-inch deep gutter between the barn’s center walkway and the stanchions where the cows were milked. The system circled the barn and carried the manure collected in the gutter up a shallow ramp to a manure spreader underneath it. While not a glamorous invention, it was incredibly practical for Wisconsin dairy farms. Prior to this invention, farmers had to pitch out the manure in their barns using rudimentary tools. Cleaning up after even a small herd was a time-consuming and arduous process. While the barn cleaner did not completely alleviate farmers from the essential chore of cleaning the barn, it did make the job considerably easier and allowed a single farmer and his family to manage a larger herd with less hired help.²¹⁹

The automatic barn cleaner was something that every dairy farmer in the 1950s wanted. Dretzke’s business, Farmway, mass-produced and sold these barn-cleaning systems to other farms in the area and throughout the Midwest. The Dretzkes left farming in 1958 to pursue Farmway full-time. Around this same time, Carl attended the

²¹⁸ The quote “This ain’t a Wild West show” is taken from advertising from 1959 issues of the *Manawa Advocate* for the Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo.

²¹⁹ Dretzke, interview.

Spoooner Rodeo during a vacation in far-northern Wisconsin.²²⁰ In the winter of 1958 and 1959, the Manawa Lions Club began searching for an idea for its annual fundraiser, as a raffle the year before was unsuccessful.²²¹ Dretzke felt that rodeo would be a perfect idea for the fundraiser. An interesting, and sometimes comic, chain-of-events ensued that led to Manawa adopting a new, Western twist on its rural identity within a very short timeframe. Indeed, in March of 1958, Carl was the only member of the Lions Club, and possibly one of the few people in the Manawa community, who had ever actually been to a rodeo.²²²

The editor of the town's newspaper, Tom Hutchison, recalled in his memoir, "I thought it was one of the dumbest things I ever heard of and told him that it would be impossible to do. No one we knew had ever seen a rodeo, much less put one on."²²³ Yet, Carl Dretzke persuaded two other Lions Club members to support the idea: Charlie Hoffmann, the owner of the local auction company, and Casey Klemm, the town's barber. Dretzke, Hoffmann, and Klemm met push-back at first from the members of the Manawa Lions Club about the idea.²²⁴ However, they eventually won enough support, and the club voted on March 16, 1959 to hold a rodeo in Manawa in that summer.²²⁵ The club then invited Iowa-based rodeo stock contractor Bob Barnes to meet with them.²²⁶

²²⁰ Dretzke, interview.

²²¹ Hutchison, *Land of Milk and Money*, 72.

²²² Dretzke, interview.

²²³ Hutchison, *Land of Milk and Money*, 72.

²²⁴ Dretzke, interview.

²²⁵ "Lions Vote to Sponsor Rodeo," *Manawa Advocate*, March 19, 1959.

²²⁶ "World Championship Rodeo Will be Held Here," *Manawa Advocate*, May 7, 1959.

When rodeo was introduced to the Manawa Lions Club in the spring of 1959, it offered an opportunity to re-invigorate community connections. While the sport of rodeo was new to the community, the elements that surrounded it were not. Many community members already had a love of horses. Although they had been raised with draft horses, those who could afford it, made the switch to riding horses after draft horses were no longer a necessity on the farm.²²⁷ A sense of community was also important to area residents, as well as conservative values and rural identity. And for them, the western mythos displayed in film, literature, and other media between the 1920s to the 1950s hit a chord. Pop culture stirred curiosity about the West in the minds of most Americans in the early- and mid-twentieth century; rural Americans may have been especially attuned to these representations.

On Friday, May 1, 1959, Manawa Lions Club members fully invested themselves in this venture. In one meeting with Barnes and his colleague, Dittmann Mitchell, the entire framework and scope of the Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo was planned.²²⁸ The date was set: July 18 and 19, a week after an already established rodeo about 230 miles away in Spooner, Wisconsin (which was in its sixth year in 1959).²²⁹ Barnes was also the promoter and stock contractor for the Spooner Rodeo, a registered Rodeo Cowboy Association (RCA) event. This recognition enabled the Spooner Rodeo to attract quality rodeo talent, as its results counted toward national rankings. For this reason, it was

²²⁷ Schuelke, interview; Knudsen, interview.

²²⁸ This is not a typo; The official name of the Manawa rodeo is The Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo, as opposed to the Manawa Midwestern rodeo; The name is meant to emphasize the Western nature of the event.

²²⁹ Spooner Rodeo, "Heart of the North, Spooner Rodeo" Homepage, Spooner Rodeo, Spoonerrodeo.com (accessed December 2, 2011); A few years later the rodeo dates were changed to Fourth of July Weekend.

essential that the Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo join the Spooner Rodeo as an RCA event, and also follow it on the calendar. Planning these two rodeos on back-to-back weekends was beneficial for Barnes, as it enticed more professional cowboys to make the trip to Wisconsin if they competed in two rodeos.²³⁰

The Lions Club made other key decisions that night as well. Since multiple members of the board of Farmer's State Bank attended, they "agreed that the bank would lend the Lions Club the money for the down payment and the contractor."²³¹ Plans commenced for a parade, a rodeo queen pageant, and a dance to accompany the rodeo. The club formed multiple committees, including the "Western Style Committee." The May 7, 1959, edition of *The Manawa Advocate* reported, "Members of the club are already making plans to create a Western Atmosphere in Manawa. Lions members and businessmen are planning to be decked out in Western Attire." The paper assured readers that "Manawa stores will have Western hats, shirts, ties and other clothing available in a short time."²³²

At that May 1, 1959, meeting members discussed how to attract enough spectators to the rodeo. Some argued that they needed to advertise at least as far away as Milwaukee. However rodeo promoter and announcer, Dittmann Mitchell, disagreed, arguing the rodeo must first and foremost be a community event. According to Hutchison, Mitchell said something like this:

You're going to have to do it right here. You get everybody in this town excited about rodeo and you'll have a thousand people talking. I'll tell you one fact for sure. When those cowboys hit this town, if there's one person here who doesn't

²³⁰ "World Championship Rodeo Will be Held Here July 18-19," *Manawa Advocate*, May 7, 1959.

²³¹ Hutchison, *Land of Milk and Money*, 73

²³² "World Championship Rodeo Will be Held Here July 18-19," *Manawa Advocate*, May 7, 1959.

know why we've come, we might as well dust off our chaps and ride home, cause that ol' rodeo just won't be pulled off.²³³

The Lions Club took Mitchell's comments to heart and worked tirelessly to promote rodeo in Manawa that summer. What ensued was an ambitious grassroots promotional campaign in Manawa and the surrounding area. They did everything and anything they could think of to build momentum for the rodeo. Every member of the Lions Club promised to buy western attire and wear it when they went out in public in the weeks leading up to the first rodeo. Howard Hazen transformed his bar into the "Cowboy Saloon," by installing swinging doors and spreading sawdust on the floor to give it an Old West feel.²³⁴

Even the skeptical Tom Hutchison became a zealous convert, as he consistently ran articles about the upcoming rodeo on the front page of almost every issue of the *Manawa Advocate* from May 14, 1959 to July 16, 1959. Most likely, the rodeo would have made the front page of the May 7, 1959, issue if a devastating tornado had not also occurred in the community that week. Justifiably, the tornado monopolized the entire front page.²³⁵ However, the rodeo still had a substantial amount of coverage on subsequent pages.²³⁶ For the July 16, 1959, paper, the first *Rodeo Edition* of the *Manawa Advocate*, Hutchison saw to it that every local business that regularly advertised—even the funeral home—had a rodeo-themed advertisement. The local funeral home's advertisement that week was a macabre photo of a cowboy falling head first off a

²³³ Dittmann Mitchell quoted in Hutchison, *Land of Milk and Money*, 73.

²³⁴ Hutchison, *Land of Milk and Money*, 74.

²³⁵ "World Championship Rodeo Will be Held Here July 18-19," *The Manawa Advocate*, May 7, 1959.

²³⁶ *The Manawa Advocate*, May 7, 1959.

bucking horse.²³⁷ In the weeks preceding the rodeo, the Lions Club asked all fifty of the downtown businesses to decorate their windows and storefronts with a rodeo theme. Every merchant graciously complied. Many merchants had rodeo specials, and a few gave away free rodeo tickets as a premium with big ticket items. Farmer's State Bank even ran a contest that gave ten children ages twelve and under the chance to win a free ticket for creatively finishing this sentence, "I would like to see the Barnes World Championship Rodeo in Manawa on July 18-19, 1959 because..."²³⁸ Rodeo fever hit Manawa.

The people of Manawa embraced the event, or at the least the novelty of it, but no one imagined the turnout for the Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo's inaugural year. The Saturday morning main street parade kicked off the festivities, and drew a crowd of 3,000 people, more than double the city of Manawa's population.²³⁹ The crowd made its way down Bridge Street (Manawa's main street) to the original rodeo grounds for the 2:00 p.m. performance to which 3,000 tickets were sold. The Lions Club not only made enough to pay their debts, they profited during that first performance. Sunday's 2:00 p.m. performance drew an even bigger crowd; the club sold 4,000 tickets to a standing-room-only audience and turned away an additional 500 people at the gate. Tom Hutchison wrote on the front page of the July 23, 1959 edition of *The Manawa Advocate*, "The largest crowd in Manawa's history over 7,000 flocked here to watch the first Lions

²³⁷ "Booth's Furniture & Funeral Home Ad," *Manawa Advocate*, July 16, 1959.

²³⁸ Hutchison, *Land of Milk and Money*, 74; *Manawa Advocate*, May 7, 1959-July 23, 1959.

²³⁹ "Over 7,000 People Watch Rodeo," *Manawa Advocate*, July 23, 1959; The population at the time was 1,200; Wisconsin Legislative Reference Library. *The Wisconsin Blue Book* (Madison, WI: State of Wisconsin, 1960), 526; This does not include the population of the surrounding townships.

World Championship Rodeo Saturday and Sunday.”²⁴⁰ With that sell-out crowd, the Manawa Mid-Western rodeo became an annual tradition.

Throughout the early years, in the weeks leading up to the rodeo, Lions Club member Lyle Spiegelberg would fix speakers to the top of his car hooked to a record player in the passenger seat. Spiegelberg would drive through downtown Manawa and other nearby communities, playing rodeo-themed music and invite anyone within listening range of his speakers to “Come to the Manawa Rodeo.”²⁴¹ Spiegelberg also promoted the Manawa Mid-Western rodeo by entering a small float in parades all over Wisconsin and as far as Chicago.²⁴² Downtown businesses promoted their business and the rodeo with rodeo specials in the days before and during the rodeo. The bakery made over-sized doughnuts that it called “Texas doughnuts;” and the Manawa Steakhouse sold a larger-than-average “Texas-sized” cut of steak.²⁴³ Promoting the rodeo was also a duty of the Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo Queen.

Carol (Woldt) Spiegelberg was the 1965 Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo Queen. From winning the contest in May to the time of the Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo during the July Fourth weekend, she promoted the 1965 rodeo. After the July Fourth weekend she traveled throughout Wisconsin to rodeos, horse shows, and other festivals to promote the 1966 Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo and the sport of rodeo in general. She noted, “Of

²⁴⁰ “Over 7,000 People Watch Rodeo,” *Manawa Advocate*, July 23, 1959.

²⁴¹ Knudson, interview.

²⁴² Carol (Woldt) Spiegelberg, interview by author, Township of St. Lawrence, Waupaca County, Wisconsin, June 5, 2012.

²⁴³ Ken Groholski, interview by author, Manawa, Waupaca County, Wisconsin, May 29, 2012.

course, I and my friends were so excited because this is what we wanted to do. We wanted to be out there in the horse world, in the rodeo world, and working with our horses.” During her reign as rodeo queen, she had a rather exhausting schedule, as she remembers, “There was one Sunday that I went to three horse shows in one day.” Regardless of the busy schedule Carol recalls, “It was just a wonderful experience, and, like I said, it gave us girls a chance to achieve when we weren’t getting that in school, and we weren’t getting that at home.”²⁴⁴

Along with the rodeo performances and the rodeo queen contest, the parade and dance continued. The rodeo clown and the pony rides entertained children. Ponies were actually given away to children for a few years, but this was discontinued, as the ponies were occasionally abandoned at the rodeo grounds.²⁴⁵ The street dance took place in downtown Manawa for the first few years on a side street adjacent to one of the local taverns. The beer flowed and hijinks ensued.²⁴⁶ Generally these shenanigans were benign; however, there was a fatal stabbing during the 1965 rodeo dance.²⁴⁷ Eventually, the dance and the beer sales were moved to the rodeo grounds and security was increased. All-in-all, the rodeo became an outlet for Manawa community members to gather with family and friends to enjoy each other’s company during the rodeo parade, performances, and dance.

By 1964, some Manawa community members established a saddle club. While the saddle club was not directly affiliated with the Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo, it also

²⁴⁴ Spiegelberg, interview.

²⁴⁵ Spiegelberg, interview; Groholski, Interview.

²⁴⁶ Knudson, interview; Groholski, interview; Schuelke, interview.

²⁴⁷ “Man Stabbed at Manawa Rodeo Dies,” *Appleton Post-Crescent*, July 15, 1965, 1.

promoted equestrian activities in the Manawa area, hosted a number of horse shows at the Manawa rodeo grounds and organized trail rides for club members. They also wanted to introduce young people in the community to horsemanship and horse culture. Jean Schuelke was one of the founding members of the club and suggested its name, the Rodeo City Riders (RCR).²⁴⁸ All-in-all the Rodeo City Riders became another outlet to connect community members in a way that honored the community's rural traditions.

In the 1950s and 1960s community life in Manawa was changing for several reasons. The Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo produced an outlet for some of these community connections to continue. While the rodeo did not replace past community connections, it did create a way for community members to work together to make an event that captured the spirit of their community. In 1959, the Manawa Lions Club was able to network with Manawa's community members and business people to promote and carry out Manawa's first rodeo. Community members positively responded to the event by attending the rodeo, the parade, and dance in unanticipated numbers. The Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo became a way for the community to continue to work together to accomplish a common goal.

²⁴⁸ Rodeo City Riders, "Minutes for the Manawa Area Saddle Club" Dianne Smith, Secretary.

CONCLUSION

In Manawa it is possible to have a group of Little Wolf High School classmates whose parents and grandparents were also Little Wolf High School Classmates. While this would be unusual in a more suburban school, it happens all the time in Manawa. For some residents of Manawa, it is very likely that church and neighborhood ties go back to the now-forgotten communities in Eastern Central Europe, Ireland, or upstate New York from where their ancestors came, most likely, together. If this thesis were extended into a dissertation or a book, those chain-migration patterns, for which there is some scant evidence, would be further researched. In addition, out migration would be explored as well, since the *Manawa Advocate* provides fragmentary evidence showing where the young people who left Manawa and the surrounding townships settled. There is some information on how local churches functioned as community centers in the 1950s and 1960s, but there was not enough to compile into a section on church life during that time period.²⁴⁹ In a larger work, Symco and the Symco Thresheree, a festival that focuses on antique farm technology would be discussed. Stories of life in the community from 1970 to 2010 would be included, such as more on the decline of family farming in the townships of Little Wolf and Union. More farmers would be interviewed for their stories of life between 1970 and 2000 and how they were able to continue farming, or why they chose to leave that way of life. In general, these farm crisis years are just beginning to be studied by rural historians.

Community life in the United States as a whole—regardless of whether those communities were urban, suburban, or rural—declined after the 1960s. Is this the case

²⁴⁹In a larger work, Zion Lutheran Church was not touched on at all in this thesis because it was a bit of an outlier; while the community's other churches were founded within the same window of time, Zion was founded later.

for Manawa? Indeed it is. Yet In the summer of 2014, the Manawa Lions Club hosted its fifty-sixth annual rodeo. The event endures as a landmark summer community event. Like any large event in a small town, over the years it has united some within the community and divided others. Even the Manawa Lions Club, for a number of reasons, finds it more difficult to get volunteers for the Mid-Western Rodeo.²⁵⁰ Some quickly point out that today, “Volunteers want to get paid,” but in reality, volunteers want their community organizations to be paid.²⁵¹ In the past, an organization volunteered its time and efforts so that a greater percentage of rodeo proceeds went to the charities that the Lions Club funded. Today, a community organization volunteers to raise money for its organization’s needs. For example, St. Paul’s Lutheran Church youth group cleaned up the rodeo grounds in the late 1990s to raise money to fund its trip to its denomination’s national youth gathering.²⁵²

While the Manawa Lions Club remains the primary sponsor of the Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo, many area organizations in Manawa play or played some part in the rodeo. Today, the FFA and the FFA Alumni run the food stand. Area volunteer firemen sell beer and soda. Zion Lutheran Church ran the popcorn stand for a number of years. The Rodeo City Riders’ drill team performs during each rodeo performance. The volunteer-run Manawa Rural Ambulance Service is always on hand during rodeo performances and dances. And one of the 4-H clubs cleans the grounds on the Monday following the event. Simply put, the Manawa Lions Club needs the support of

²⁵⁰ Groholski, interview; Connie Klotzbuecher interview by author, Manawa, Waupaca County, Wisconsin, June 16, 2012.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Klotzbuecher, interview.

community businesses, groups, and volunteers for the rodeo to succeed. Even as this paper is written in 2014, Manawa's largest community event and fundraiser depends on the interdependent community networks created by Manawa's first settlers over 160 years ago.

By the old fundraising model or the new fundraising model, individual community members from several generations are still coming together, engaging in a common goal, and funding groups and projects that continue an interdependent spirit of community in Manawa. The fact that organizations like church youth groups, 4-H clubs, Manawa's FFA, and the Little Wolf High School football team use the Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo as one of its fundraisers further demonstrates the rodeo's role in continuing interdependent community life. Not only is the rodeo a magnet for all of these community groups to work together, the rodeo provides funds to keep these vital community groups running so that interdependent community can continue within these organizations.

Ultimately, the rodeo preserved something fundamental in Manawa: community, neighborhood and kin connections. While interdependent community remains threatened in rural Manawa, it will persist as long as Manawa continues to hold its annual rodeo and community groups continue to volunteer for support roles. A common belief among rural scholars is that rural interdependent community faded away in the 1970s. Yet communities like Manawa, Wisconsin, are still continuing to put on events like the Manawa Rodeo that depend on interdependent community for success. Decades-old (and possibly longer) kinship, neighborhood, church, and community ties are annually re-kindled during Manawa's Rodeo Weekend both in the volunteers who work together to

put it on, and in community members who enjoy the parade, rodeo performance, and dance.

The Manawa Mid-Western Rodeo serves several important purposes in and for the community. It adds a bit of flavor and fun during the summer months and provides a fundraiser for the community's nonprofit groups. The founding of the Manawa Mid-Western rodeo demonstrated that the values of the community's ancestors were still alive in their descendants. They too shared that spirit of rural grit, innovation, and community collaboration that the original Yankee and immigrant settlers used to found a community on the edge of the frontier. It was a generation with determination, imagination, and—most importantly—an interdependent sense of community who dreamed of and successfully executed a rodeo in the center of America's Dairyland.

In Manawa, the rodeo was and is an outlet for community building and involvement, which came at a time when the structures that served those purposes were fading. The rodeo needed the involvement of the community. However, the community also needed the rodeo to build and maintain relationships. Beginning in 1959, Manawa marked itself using the cowboy—the rugged individual—as its symbol. This symbolism is almost poetic because the members of this community have always been caught between two identities—rugged individualists or rural interdependents, and the friction between which identity to claim became more acute in the 1950s, when new technologies seemingly made it easier to be completely independent from one another.

Manawa's history tells the story of this friction—independent farmers and lumbermen lived off the land, but depended on neighbors and kin for social connection and economic security. William Goldberg and his business partners founded a sawmill

on the Little Wolf River in 1848, but invisible community connections built by the Yankees and Irish immigrants who settled around that sawmill were the foundations of a community. That community wrestled with issues of ethnic and religious identity. Yankees, Irish immigrants, German immigrants and their children, grandchildren and descendants faced questions relating to how they would interact with one another. Yankees certainly looked at Irish and German immigrants, saw groups who were different than themselves, and had to either accept or dismiss their new neighbors. Ultimately they had to come to terms with the fact that those groups were forever part of Manawa and the townships of Little Wolf and Union. Lutherans, Catholics, and Methodists had to find ways to tolerate each other's religious differences while holding to their own faith traditions.

German immigrants, their children and their descendants walked the line between assimilating into an American identity and celebrating a German ethnic identity. In the 1950s and 1960s the last generation that regularly used the German language in everyday conversation passed away and with them, German-language church services and the last overt signs of German cultural identity faded from this community. However, German ethnic identity still remains in the community in small ways. German-American families still attended historically German-Lutheran churches like St. Paul's in Manawa and St. Mark's in Symco, whose membership lists, as of 2013, were still filled with German-American surnames. St. Mark's and St. Paul's each annually hold polka services to celebrate their German heritage. Some German-American couples chose polka bands as the entertainment at their weddings into the early 1980s. Polkas like the "The Chicken Dance" and "The Beer Barrel Polka" are still played at most local weddings, and "The

Chicken Dance” was played at every Little Wolf High School dance until at least 1998. A few German foodways never left the community. Attendees of the Manawa Mid-West Rodeo cannot find beef brisket at the food stand, but they can find bratwurst with onions and sauerkraut. Brat-fry fundraisers are still common in the community. St. Mark’s Lutheran Church still serves traditional German potato pancakes with warm applesauce at their annual pancake-supper fundraiser. Families still prepare traditional sauerkraut and dill-pickle recipes that were passed down through generations. Pickled herring and beets, German-American favorites, are still a salad bar staples at one Town of Union supper club. Sheep’s Head is a favorite card game, and beer is served at neighborhood and family events. Germans, male and female, expected and respected hard work. The German-Americans in the Manawa area, for the most part, continue to hold conservative values and demonstrate those conservative values in their voting patterns.

Rural identity was changing during the same time period that German-American identity was changing. From the very beginnings of this community, neighbors and kin of every ethnic group helped each other harvest crops and with other labor on farms. They came to one another’s aid in times of tragedy by offering not just comfort but practical things, like casseroles or a fundraiser to cover an unexpected expense. Yet, beginning in the 1950s, rural community members in places like Manawa became more independent of one another as a result of new agricultural technologies, such as the combine, new entertainment technologies, such as the radio and television, and new technologies that improved roads and personal vehicles.

These new technologies changed the traditional dynamics of this rural community from the need for interdependence to the ability to have full independence. While these

technologies made rural work and life more manageable, they also slowly frayed rural community ties. These community bonds gradually declined as farm machinery became increasingly mechanized, and there was less demand for neighborhoods to engage in community labor on a regular basis. In the 1950s, Manawa, like other rural Wisconsin communities, was lured by the siren song of rugged individualism. Ironically, the community preserved interdependence by embracing a cowboy culture with a Wisconsin-farm-town spin. Although the rodeo's founders and subsequent generations would don cowboy hats and boots, their costumes could not undo their customs, or hide who they really were at heart: men and women reared on Wisconsin dairy farms who knew the value of community and gathering with their neighbors and families.

For fifty-some years authentic cowboys have visited Manawa for one weekend a summer. And while some community members ride horses and even compete in rodeos, the vast majority only plays cowboy or cowgirl by dressing up in Western boots and hats for one weekend out of a year. As for every other weekend, many of this community's men and women return to the family farm, most now devoid of dairy cows. They are riding or fixing tractors, cutting hay, hunting and fishing, tending to gardens, or sewing quilts. Each, in their own way, is fixing what is broken and holding on to what remains of their authentic rural identity. While continuing these activities are an important part of keeping rural traditions alive, it is an event that surrounds a contrived Western identity that annually brings this community back to its essential value: interdependent community.

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APPENDIX

Voting Results 1912-1952 for the Village of Manawa and the Townships of Little Wolf and Union, Waupaca County, Wisconsin.									
Elect Year	Village of Manawa			Town of Little Wolf			Town of Union		
	Rep	Dem	Ind	Rep	Dem	Ind	Rep	Dem	Ind
1912	Taft 59	Wilson 48	T.Roosevelt (Bull Moose) 21 Other Ind 6	Taft 55	Wilson 56	T.Roosevelt (Bull Moose) 68 Other Ind 0	Taft 44	Wilson 31	T.Roosevelt (Bull Moose) 75 Other Ind 4
1916	Hughes 103	Wilson 48	Other Ind 4	Hughes 147	Wilson 63	Other Ind 3	Hughes 103	Wilson 25	Other Ind 4
1920	Harding 228	Cox 46	Debs (Socialist) 4 Other Ind 2	Harding 220	Cox 26	Debs (Socialist) 35 Other Ind 0	Harding 239	Cox 7	Debs (Socialist) 33 Other Ind 1
1924	Wisconsin Blue Book Only Breaks Down By County: 1,603 Coolidge (Rep); 663 Davis (Dem)								
1928	Wisconsin Blue Book Only Breaks Down By County: 8,928 Hoover (Rep); 3,307 Smith (Dem); 28 Varney (Ind. Prohibition); 68 Thompson (Ind. Socialist); 8 Foster (Ind. Independent Workers of the World); 6 Reynolds (Ind. Labor)								
1932	Hoover 148	F.Roosevelt 182	Independ 3	Hoover 60	F.Roosevelt 213	Independ 2	Hoover 68	F.Roosevelt 234	Independ 1
1936	Landon 203	F.Roosevelt 122	Lemke (Union) 70 Other Independ 0	Landon 152	F.Roosevelt 115	Lemke (Union) 79 Other Independ 1	Landon 153	F.Roosevelt 141	Lemke (Union) 61 Other Independ 1
1940	Willkie 306	F.Roosevelt 86	Independ 3	Willkie 311	F.Roosevelt 46	Independ 11	Willkie 317	F.Roosevelt 54	Independ 8
1944	Dewey 311	F.Roosevelt 103	Independ 4	Dewey 315	F.Roosevelt 43	Independ 3	Dewey 375	F.Roosevelt 21	Independ 5
1948	Dewey 243	Truman 103	Independ 5	Dewey 173	Truman 69	Independ 2	Dewey 224	Truman 49	Independ 3
1952	Eisenhower 456	Stevenson 96	Independ 1	Eisenhower 299	Stevenson 35	Independ 1	Eisenhower 330	Stevenson 31	Independ 0

Source: Industrial Commission of Wisconsin, and Wisconsin, *The Wisconsin Blue Book* (Madison, WI: Industrial Commission) 1913, 1917 1921, 1925, 1929, 1933, 1937, 1942, 1946, 1950, 1954.