

Delving Dutch Hollow History

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What's the first ethnic group you picture when someone says: Green County? Do you visualize Swiss costumes, music, and folk festivals? Or, is it English frontier families, descendants of Atlantic seaboard colonists, who were responsible for the design of Monroe's courthouse and central business square surrounding it, and who had a passion for independence, freedom of worship, separation of church and state? Perhaps you see images of Irish fleeing famine or Germans evading military service. But did you imagine Holland Dutch families pioneering in south-central Wisconsin?

A county map locates Dutch Hollow road. It lies north-south, seemingly on the quarter section line, which bisects the west half section 5 in Sylvester Township. Manuel Elmer describes Dutch Hollow as being six miles long and including all the land drained by Dutch Hollow creek and its tributaries into the Sugar River. Near its source (extreme south) is a forty-acre projection known as Rudy's Hill with the small valleys on either side being Witt's Hollow and Miller's Hollow. English pioneers in Section 5, Sylvester Township were Sutherland, Thompson, Tallman, and Ludlow.

Beginning in 1845, Swiss immigrants purchased or rented farms from the first settlers. Most of the Swiss knew little about farming. They had rented small plots, usually smaller than a Monroe city lot, which they cultivated with hand tools. They learned skills and hoped to earn a little cash doing day labor for their neighbors, who often were as short of cash as the Swiss so paid them in produce.

The Swiss were accustomed to living in communities established in the river valleys of the Alps. Many families came to America in groups under the auspices of emigration societies. When possible, the society purchased contiguous acres on the frontier. Upon arrival, the immigrant's first need was shelter. Unlike the American emigrants, they had no wagon and few had livestock. In New Glarus, a communal shelter was erected. However, most of those who espoused Luther's Catechism moved into Sylvester or Washington Townships, the fringe of fertile lands. In Sylvester Township they erected individual homes on their farms, many of which were small or long and narrow. Elmer recalls that 15 families lived on Dutch Hollow road and all within a half mile of church.

George Legler worked in the Exeter lead mines where he earned \$12. He then bought his own cow and made Schab Zigger cheese which he flavored with dried clover. In the autumn he built a cart, borrowed the neighbor's ox to yoke with his cow and marketed his cheese in St. Louis. For the return trip, he discarded the cart, loaded his cow with supplies for his family and the ox with those for the neighbor for the use of the ox, and drove them home; this was the first break in the joint colony efforts, the beginning of individual enterprise.

One of the first community needs was a cemetery. For \$5, Jacob and Elsbeth Stauffacher sold the Evangelical cemetery Association half an acre for a burying ground on 17 December 1859. (SE ¼, NW ¼, SE ¼, Sec. 5, Sylvester Township) Various sources indicate there was a nearby log school, but no land transfer was located. So the cemetery is the anchor of the community, the first formally deeded property for Dutch Hollow community use, and the only one to fulfill a contract's "forever."

[School] "District No. 4 includes sections 5, 6, 7, and 8. A stone building was erected in 1850, on section 5, which is still in use." It was near the Mt. Pleasant Town line. Yolanda Richards says her great-grandfather (Immigrant John Ulrich Elmer) lived in a stone house east of today's Witt Road, which is the town line. So there may have been habitation not education, but the building was in use. The tax cards show no land transfer for school this early. Elmer relates that in the winter of 1856, Dr. John Addams, Cedarville, Ill., began a subscription school with tuition at 50¢ per student per week. The teacher often rotated boarding in the student's homes. "Later a new one room building [was erected] just south of the new church, about one-half mile south of the town line." Matthias Hauert and his wife, Lydia, on 18 November 1863, sold to School District No. 4 a half-acre for \$10. (Begin at the NNW corner of SE ¼, NW ¼, of Sec. 5, go S 8 rods (rod=16 ½ feet), E 10 rods, N 8 rods, W 10 rods to beginning. The school records prior to 1912 seem to have become lost or destroyed. There was a log school, which was first used for worship, but it may have been a frontiersman's first cabin used for school when it was abandoned as a home. On the 9 February 1866, Matthias Hauert, now a widower, sold Conrad Elmer and Abraham Kubli 800 acres except the school site.

"The little valley congregation was started about 1853." They met in "the old log school house." The earliest recorded minutes found for the class in Dutch Hollow begin, "At a meeting of the male persons of full age attached to the Evangelical association of the United States of North America, residing in the towns of Sylvester and Mt. Pleasant in the County of Green and State of Wisconsin on the 24 August AD 1860, at their usual place of worship...on motion the Rev. Andrew Tarnutzer was appointed chair and J. U. Elmer, Secretary." The first trustees elected were J. U. Elmer, Anton Stauffacher, and Henry Babler. Jacob Stauffacher was class leader. The 1860 census reveals that Andrew Tarnutzer was a 26 year old, single, Swiss clergyman. He was an itinerant for the Evangelical Association stationed in New Glarus. Census indicates he lived alone in a second house (cabin?) on a farm. The Sabbath School was organized by Father Howard. From the organizational meeting until 1881, only the election of a trustee is recorded. "During the same year (1860) they erected a neat frame house." On 20 March 1861, Jacob and Elsbeth Stauffacher sold for \$1 to Anton Stauffacher, J. U. Elmer, Henry Babler, and the State Trustees of the Zion Evangelical Association of North America, in trust, 96 square rods for the purpose of a church site for the use of the Evangelical association of North America and no other purpose whatsoever. (Start at S ¼ post, N 46 chains, 30 links to SE corner of said site, N 8 rods, W 12 rods, S 8 rods, E 12 rods.

Following the Swiss tradition, the men and boys ages 8 to 12 sat on the right side of the center aisle and the ladies, girls and children on the other. Sometimes a couple of boys managed to delay entering so they could sit near the door and slip out after the preacher

read the test. They repeated it all the way to the creek so they could give a proper accounting. The men allowed the ladies to leave first.

Eunice Witt, now 84, says her husband was a grandson of Fred W. Schultz. The Schultz's lived about a half mile north of the town line between Sylvester and Mt. Pleasant Townships and on the west side of the Mt. Pleasant and Washington town line at the Illinois Central Railroad crossing. There was a small depot house from which passengers on freight could arrive or depart. The family had a little general store in their home. The early days, the mail would be taken to the church where parishioners picked it up after worship.

Rev. Johann Hammeter, who was born in Ausbach, Austria, in 1836, came to Wisconsin in 1856. He spoke a dialect similar to the Swiss. Newspapers were rare in this area. Rev. Hammeter subscribed to the New York Tribune. John Ulrich Elmer was accustomed to discussing affairs of state and advising representatives how he'd like them to vote after Sunday worship in Matt. A platform was erected outside the church. After meeting, Rev. Hammeter would mount the platform and read Horace Greeley's editorials on "going to war" and items of world affairs. The platform was torn down about 1900. It had become a gathering place for youths to laugh and talk during worship. Ant the space was needed. Few walked or rode horseback. Buggy parking room was needed. While at Dutch Hollow, Rev. Hammeter organized the class at New Glarus to become Mt. Pisgas Church 11 February 1864. They erected their building on a hill two miles outside the village due to the prejudice of the Reformed [Heidelberg Catechism} Evangelicals. Rev. Hammeter was transferred to Monroe in 1869. {Immanuel Centennial Brochure}

After the Civil War, it was proposed to build an addition to the church for an entrance hall topped with a steeple. John Ulrich Elmer desired a bell for the steeple. Others opposed his vision. At this time, bells were an important means of communication when few had timepieces and there were no phones. Elmer was from Matt, in Glarus, where the villagers were proud of their church bell. The Elmer name is first recorded in 1289. "Elm: is a Swiss derivative of the German "alm" meaning a meadow near everlasting snow. Duke Albert, son of Austrian Emperor Rudolph, appointed Elmer "Ammon" (supervisor/tax collector) of the province. Successive Grandfathers held high posts. His ancestors were active in the late fourteenth century when protestant Glarners purchased their land and their religious freedom from the Convent of Sackingen, which though subservient to Austria, controlled all the land in Glarus except the holdings of 12 noblemen with recognized coats-of-arms until 1392. The Protestant purchasers included: Rotte, Tschudi, Vogle, Stucki, Elmer, and others. Reformer, Ulrich Zwingli, (1484-1531) from Zurich, preached on Glarus for ten years. Grandfather Fridli Elmer attended the Baden Conference, supported Zwingli, and defended the "New Believers." The civil government regularly alternated between Protestants and Catholics. Everyone was expected to observe the Catholic holy days, but many Protestants "forgot." In the seventeenth century, Elmers who were elected governor of Glarus paid a fee of 300 florins to the church and became head of the Evangelical church when taking the civil office of governor. The Elmer Family, M. C. Elmer)

With a heritage of generations having served their church and their community, John Ulrich Elmer obeyed the saw with which he goaded his children, "Find a way, or make it!" The bell was ordered, paid for, cast in Belgium, arrived in Dutch Hollow via Milwaukee and Madison, and installed in the steeple/belfry. For sixty years it rang a half hour before meetings to alert the community, just before the meeting began, and a farewell of six strikes when the people departed. Meetings varied from worship services to debates, singing school, baptisms, and weddings, to Sabbath School and tree trimming. For funerals, it was tolled by striking the outside with a hammer. At the closing of the church, the bell was carried by Elmer's grandson to Africa, where he was a medical missionary.

A new preacher, quite formal and correct, came to Dutch Hollow. He did not like it that the five cheesemakers in the valley were expected to make cheese twice a day on Sunday. He drove out to discuss the matter with John Elmer. They agreed that the cows must be milked on Sunday and the milk properly cared for or it would sour or at least not produce quality cheese. Elmer offered to pay the preacher double wages to come out from five to seven, morning and evening, carry the milk to the spring-house and stir it until it was cooled. The Elmer boys would do the extra chores on Monday morning. The pastor worked for Elmer only one Sunday and relented.

At the 1881 annual church conference, it was moved that, "the church fees are to be leveled (sic) on the members by the class leader and the trustees, and collected by the admin[illegible]. This was Swiss tradition rather than our free-will offerings. They further moved that Rev. Von Wald and J. U. Elmer should buy a suitable organ. This is a mystery. Yolanda Richards used to play piano for the three Sunday services at Dutch Hollow during the summer. The rest of the year they attended Immanuel. When she taught at Dutch Hollow in the fall of 1923, there was an organ in the school.

When smallpox was reported in the community, all the children were ordered to report to the schoolhouse. A school board member, with his daughters, who had been previously vaccinated near by, used a jack-knife to cut four little slits, like a tic-tac-toe game, on a child's arm, then took scab from his daughter's arm and placed it on the cuts and said to the child, "You are safe now."

Dr. Flowers forbade funerals in the church when there was diphtheria in the upper valley. He ordered immediate burial rather than waiting the usual three days. He took the communal water buckets and dippers from the schools and ordered all the children to bring their own milk or water and to only drink from their own containers. The diphtheria did not spread to the lower valley.

After the Franco-Prussian war, many German families settled in the area, including: Witt, Coplien, Feldt, Ohm, Wendler, and Mueller. The old membership was largely composed of casual Swiss. Everyone spoke their own dialect with considerable English and some French (the children were taught it at home) added to the mix. The Germans became the majority in the church. They expected a more formal liturgy and all meetings conducted in High German. In haste, they ordered Sabbath School materials in German. They bought German reading texts and offered an hour of German beginning at three every school day.

When the religious literature arrived, it was written in eighteen nineties style of our comic books. One old Swiss was heard to say, "They cooked their own goose." Meetings soon reverted to more casual language and the youths were in English. But the singing school which had previously always received approval, caused such heated debate, it was deferred to the trustees. Is this why the school had an organ? Was singing school (not mentioned again in the church minutes) moved to the schoolhouse and the organ with it??? It would be an "Elmer" style of problem solving... Find a way or make one.

I found nothing in the minutes relative to providing housing for the pastor. However, 22 June, 1891, Henry and Louisa Stauffacher for \$140 gave a deed for about 175 square rods to the New Glarus Circuit of the Wisconsin conference of the Evangelical Association of North America, in trust, to be kept and used as a place of residence for use and occupancy of the preacher of the Evangelical Association of North America, who may from time to time be stationed in said place with power to dispose of and convey the same subject to the Discipline and Usage of said association. (SW ¼, NW ¼, Sect 5, 19 rods 3 feet by 9 rods. When the church closed, Conrad Elmer purchased the parsonage. His estate sold it to Arnold Mueller and his son, Gus, in 1945. They carefully dismantled it and used the lumber to construct the home on West Stauffacher Road where Gus now resides. His sister, Cleo Rufi, says it had all narrow oak flooring, which was installed, in the bedrooms of their home.

On 28 December 1911, the opening sentence first records the Zion Church of "Dutch Hollow." They move that the janitor shall be paid \$75 per year. Times are changing. After the panic of '82, the salary was only \$14.50 in 1884, but by 1890 it had increased to \$34.50. They further moved in 1911 that the janitor would be responsible for opening the church an hour before meeting time, sweeping the steps and floor, and dusting the seats. It is unsaid; perhaps "understood" that he would build fire when the weather required it, as provisions were made for buying wood. There is no reason given, but on 28 December 1912, the trustees are to get a key for the church. The lock cost 40¢ in the 1913 report. The minutes for 31 December 1914, give the first indication of financial difficulties. To the west, 12 miles, in Washington Township, "Berner" membership had dwindled due to transfers to Monroe and families moving west. When it closed, the Dutch hollow membership roll only lists two transfers: Mae Lemon and Charles Loertscher. None-the-less, the 1914 record reads: "motion made and carried that we wait until 10 January, 1915, and if not paid then raise the money some other way."

They first substituted grape juice for communion wine in 1915. After the "German language" difficulties, motion number eight stated: "The trustees should get an English Bible." I noted that in 1916 the cost for "Exchange of Bible" was 75¢. They had high hopes of continuing to operate. In 1917 they purchased \$32.74 worth of lumber and built a shed. They repaired the church and hired the preacher, Rev. Mehn, to paper the church for \$80. The final church conference minutes are dated December (26 erased), 1920. They close with: "adjourned until the last week in March 1922." After the church closed, the pews were donated to the little Monticello united brethren Church. When the EUB merged with some Methodist denominations, the members remaining there voted to disband rather than merge with Monroe. Many, in spite of that once divisive Heidelberg Catechism,

chose to join with the Reformed worshippers at Zwingli in Monticello. They now donated the comfortable pews from Dutch Hollow to Zwingli Church.

In the fall of 1923, the Dutch Hollow school board hired Jacob Peter Elmer's daughter, Yolanda (now Richards) to teach the school that term. (Jacob was grandson of John Ulrich, the immigrant.) The Monroe Sentinel reports that on Monday, January 21, fire broke out in Dutch Hollow School house completely destroying the building and its contents. The fire, which was blamed on a faulty stove, gained too much headway before being discovered by John Meinen who resided west of the school. By pouring water and shoveling snow, the neighbors were able to save the woodshed, which was located about 15 feet from the school. The minutes record that the board met on January 23, 1924 and voted to install a furnace in the old vacant church and keep school there for the remainder of the year. There were 13 voters present and the motion carried. Everyone 'perched' on a church pew to do their lessons for the rest of the term, including Eunice Loeffel Witt who was in first grade.

The next public meeting was called for May 16. They passed and recorded only a motion to buy the church for \$200, //there was evidently much earnest discussion as the meeting was recalled to order. Motions were made and approved to hire a carpenter to advise them as to whether to move or tear down the church, and to pay 40¢ per hour for labor and 30¢ per hour for use of teams. Sixteen voters were present.

The first decision at the 19 June 1924 meeting was to tear down the old church and use the lumber. Expense for the 1924-25 school year show that they paid the Evangelical Association \$150 for the Church building, \$118 for labor for the painters, \$2688 to Karlen Steinmann Lumber, \$247 for seats, \$945 for the teacher's salary, and about \$876 for all other labor and supplies related to rebuilding for a grand total of \$5044, Usually the school budget was a tad over a thousand dollars. On 24 July 1961 the board was instructed at the annual meeting to contact Monroe School district Superintendent, D. J. Heunich, to discuss consolidation for the fall of 1962. After it closed, Dutch Hollow School was sold to be used as a dwelling. Kevin Phillips was residing there when this second frame school, now remodeled into a home, also burned.

There are many legends surrounding the name Howard. M. C. Elmer relates that in order for John Ulrich's entire family to attend the fourth-of-July picnic and celebration they traveled in a bobsled drawn by a yoke of oxen over the dry buffalo grass to Howard's Grove the year Dad became a citizen. (Elmer family) The 1884 history records that Father Howard established the Sabbath School at Dutch Hollow. Marvin Siedschlag recalls that his Grandfather August Siedschlag purchased a farm in section 21 (where Alice and forest Ladwig presently reside) and his father, Frank (1887-1970), and Mary were born there. August and his family often attended the special meetings held at Dutch Hollow, but he's uncertain about the grove where they attended outdoor meetings. In Rudy's Hill Elmer related that they purchased a circus tent from Barnum for shelter. Harrison Butenhoff, now deceased, said in 1999 that he was raised in Dutch Hollow by his grandparents, the George Stauffachers, because his mother died when he was a week old. He was at that time the proud owner of the farm surrounding the Dutch Hollow sites of cemetery, school, and

parsonage, Rudy's Hill and Howard's Grove. But he had a customer and I didn't pursue the location or origin of Howard

S Woods until it was too late. Now I have found no one who can answer: who was Howard? It had to have been a last name. Elmer listed a Howard as coming from New York.

My initial premise upon reading the names on the tax cards for section 5 was that Dutch Hollow was similar to my home community, Dutch Fuddle, a name used derisively by the early English for the later arriving Swiss/German speakers. Eureka! I noted that on the first transfer by Matthias I copied his surname: Hauert. I recalled my struggle. Now then, if a Dutchman introduced himself as "Hauert," might an English speaker hear and spell "Howard." My grandmother Tharp had called Siedschlag classmates six-o-clocks. First settlers who were Dutch from New York (think New Amsterdam) were: Van Slykes, van Oaken, Pengra, Howard, Rolph, and Cotton (Colton). That's right! Von is German. So it is likely that Matthias Hauert is the Dutch Hollow Howard. Both he and Lydia signed the school lot sale. He was a widower on the farm sale deed of 1866. In 1868, he was laid to rest beside Lydia in Dutch Hollow Cemetery. We now have bound a Holland Dutch first owner and a "Howard" (Hauert) for Dutch Hollow Community.

Factories produced more goods at lower cost than individuals. Farming operations mechanized and expanded. Excess population gravitated to the cities or frontier. Mobility increased. Rural communities consisting of cottage industries on small subsistence plots with school, church, cemetery, cheese factory, and general store with a post office in a home dwindled and died. But their families, their heritage, are the driving force in the mission churches, which they established in the cities.

