

INTERVIEW WITH OLGA HERBERG  
7/1/2003 BY ALAN FULLER AND STUDENTS OF MAYVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL  
SENSE OF PLACE SUMMER SCHOOL PROJECT

MRS. HERBERG: ....they had a brewery of their own. It was sort of a private place to begin with. Although they had a lot of community affairs there. I can't think of the name.

Somebody told us that they used to go roller skating there. Do you remember that?

MRS. HERBERG: Yes, oh yes. It was used for almost everything. In the wintertime for roller skating like you said, and of course dances, anniversary parties and things like that. In the summer time, all of the picnics happened there, the public and private ones. There were a lot of private groups who had their picnics in the building.

Mrs. Herberg's home actually overlooked the river. It was just a little bit ways down from the pavilion, right next to the Amoco station.

MRS. HERBERG: I lived there for fifty years.

MR. FULLER: Do you know if after the breweries gave up the pavilion, and after it wasn't private, did it just, was there every a time when it sat not being used? Was it picked up right away?

MRS. HERBERG: Not that, but there was a question; they wanted to sell it naturally, after they themselves were able to control it you might say, or take care of it. At that time there was just a bit of a problem with it. They didn't know, the city wasn't too anxious to buy it. I don't suppose they could get it free. It was just a bit of a problem. I am sorry, but I have a pamphlet that has pictures and info in it but I didn't bring it. I didn't know this was going to be this. Had you mentioned it...

Well it's not just about the Park Pavilion. It's anything that the kids wanted to know something about.

MRS. HERBERG: I think it was on our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary Mable published a little book on some of the different things. There was a picture in there of the original park pavilion. There never was much of a change from the very beginning. The biggest change was that there was an upstairs and a downstairs, or, a basement or whatever you want to call it. Of course the dance floor is on the second floor. There had been some little changes to that area. But other than that it's almost the original that was built, oh, I don't know about 75 years ago.

MR. FULLER: It's been used for a lot of different things hasn't it?

MRS. HERBERG: The people what built it had a brewery on S. Main Street. They really had built it more or less just for their parties and private concerns. But as I said, it gradually extended into more than that.

MR. FULLER: Would that have been the Zeigler Brewery?

MRS. HERBERG: They were not the original owners. I'm sorry I don't have that book here. The Zeigler's were connected to it, but they weren't the original people. We can call it the Zeigler Brewery and Pavilion. It was private, but because Mayville was a little bit small and didn't have too many places like that, it almost became public. One of the big public affairs was that when school was out, Picnic Day was always held down there. There was usually a parade going down to the pavilion.

On the day that school was out? Wow!

MRS. HERBERG: Not the day school was out, but when the picnic was held. It was a big event, even for Mayville as a whole because by that time you had a lot of outsiders coming in to Mayville schools. The outsiders from the whole area would come to enjoy themselves and the picnic.

MR. FULLER: Did everybody bring their own things to eat?

MRS. HERBERG: Yeah.

I think somebody had some questions about school? Was it you Ryan?

RYAN: What was school like?

MRS. HERBERG: Well, I tell you, my school was very different from yours. When I went we had grades one to eight all in one building. I was also a teacher and taught in schools like that for sixteen years. All eight grades were in one room. If you had a sister or brother who was older or younger than you, they would have been in the same room. Then you'd still be having your own 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> grade reader which ever it happened to be. You'd be in your seat studying while they were having the class in front of the room; usually with the teacher.

What school did you teach at?

MRS. HERBERG: I taught in my home district between Knolls and Brownsville for quite a few years. I started out down at the Marsh. I don't know if any of you have ever heard of Smutt's Point. All of you know what the Horicon Marsh is like. Well, many of the children that I had in school...I taught where there were all eight grades in one building. When I taught down at the marsh, many of the children that I had came from farms where half of the farm was just plain marsh area. The school was not in the marsh. It was some distance from it. But many of the families had farms bordering the marsh.

I taught there for three years, but that was quite a distance from home. Seventy some years ago, to have to go that far, well, we did have a car. I was fortunate to be able to drive my parent's car; when I was 16 years old even. During the winter months I had to stay overnight for the whole week. I'd go home on Saturdays and Sundays but during the week I stayed with a family that lived right in the district. It really was a nice set up. I got to know the families; the parents quite well by living among them for a while. In those days there were two big events in a country school like that. One was the Christmas program. Almost every year there was a Christmas program no matter at what school you taught. Of course the whole district, whether they had children in school or not came to the district programs. I think you even know about that.

I was in one of those!

MRS. HERBERG: The other big event was a big picnic on the last day of school. That was not a picnic just for the school. It was for the whole community, whether they had children in school or not. That didn't seem to make much difference. It was community event. Of course everyone brought the food. I taught there only three years simply because I was able to get a school closer to my home, and didn't have to go quite as far. Then, I taught between Knolls and LeRoy for a few years. Then I taught at our country school between Knolls and Brownsville. I don't know if you are acquainted with those areas at all, but it was almost mid way between Knolls and Brownsville. The building is still there, but it's all apartments now.

So did you teach in the Rural Leaders School then?

MRS. HERBERG: Oh yes, I taught there for many years.

I didn't know that. Then, the school between Knolls and LeRoy; what was the name of that one?

MRS. HERBERG: It was Shady Grove School.

That's where my Mom and my Uncles and Aunts went to school right?

MRS. HERBERG: That's right. I had Arnold and Martin as students. Those are some of your relatives.

Then, you had to start your own fire for heat when you got there, and clean the school and that kind of thing too?

MRS. HERBERG: I usually went to school and tried to get there about seven o'clock in the morning to get the fire started and get the school warm. School didn't start until nine o'clock. We had recess for only fifteen minutes and then dinner for an hour. Then there was another recess in the afternoon. School let out at four o'clock and the children went home. Of course, I then had to clean the blackboards. Now the children loved to stay

after school and help with the blackboards. They loved to take the erasers out and clap them together to get the chalk dust off.

Were some of the eighth graders older?

MRS. HERBERG: Yeah. It very often happened in those country schools that there would be a grade missing. If it so happened if there wasn't anybody in that grade....as a rule you didn't have more than twenty pupils. That was the average. That meant all eight grades. But if you have two or three in one grade, there could easily be one grade missing. It was kind of lucky for the teacher if that happened, because you could spend just that much more time. Imagine having eight grades and you have reading, arithmetic, social studies or geography for each grade, well, then there was some extra music and writing and different things. You had to divide that time into a day. Your classes are not very long. If a class, or grade is missing it was always sort of fortunate to have that happen.

Joey, did you have a question?

Joey, what did you enjoy doing as a kid with your family?

MRS. HERBERG: Well, we had a wonderful neighborhood. Neighbors would get together, even in the evenings. My Dad had happened to be a carpenter, and he made one of these swings where there were two sets of seats and you could swing back and forth. Neighbors got together. We had neighbors at our place almost every evening it seemed. Neighbors knew each other back in those days, very much so. Almost every birthday or anniversary was almost automatically celebrated. The neighbors would come and visit and we'd go over to see them. We'd sometimes take some extra sandwiches along, or bake a cake.

MR. FULLER: What about at night times, like in the winter when the days are so short with no television or things like that to do?

MRS. HERBERG: I tell you, that didn't affect it much. In fact, this is just one little instance, but one of our neighbors said that they could tell how got the most company from when all of the footsteps in the snow went to a certain place at night.

So there was a lot of visiting and maybe some card playing?

MRS. HERBERG: Yeah. Usually the evenings were spent playing cards, in winter. In summer ninety percent of the time you just sat outside and talked. We even put a blanket down on the grass and sat on the grass and just visited. I still get a letter from an old neighbor and they always say how things are so different from when I used to live there. The neighbors just aren't as much together. Not that they're not good neighbors, but there just isn't that companionship or neighborliness as there automatically was when you didn't have all of the TV and movies and things like that to distract.

Duffy, do you have a question?

DUFFY: What kind of animals did you take care of?

MRS. HERBERG: All of the farm animals. You can start naming them from the very beginning. Of course there were horses and cows and pigs. We had geese, ducks, chickens and even sheep for a while. Most of them were tame. They were some tame that they would just follow you around.

DUFFY: What would you do in your spare time?

MRS. HERBERG: Well, like I said, it was mainly visiting with neighbors in the evenings or even on Sunday afternoon. It seemed like all of the neighbors automatically knew when your birthday was. Anniversaries and birthdays were automatically celebrated. You'd just better be home because you knew they were going to come and visit you! It was just a nice gesture.

MR FULLER: What about kid's games?

MRS. HERBERG: We played 'drop the handkerchief'. I think most of you know that one. Did you ever play that? [All answer no] Well, there was baseball.

MR. FULLER: Could you tell us about 'drop the handkerchief'?

MRS. HERBERG: I tell you, you form a circle and one person has a handkerchief in back of somebody that's standing there. If it was dropped behind you, you had to run after that person and see if you can tag them before he gets all of the way around the circle and stand in your place. If he gets there, then you have to take the handkerchief and drop it somewhere and get a place to stand. If you got back to the place before he does well, then he has to drop it by somebody else again.

Oh yes, I remember. And Amber is saying that it is similar to the game Duck, Duck, Goose that they play now. So it is similar.

Would you ice skate?

MRS. HERBERG: I never did. Well, I would skate without skates probably. I did that way more than I wanted to. There was ice skating. But they didn't have special skate shoes. There were skates that fitted on to whatever shoes you happened to have on.

MR. FULLER: Was it the same with roller skates?

MRS. HERBERG: Not in our areas. There wasn't any concrete to do it on in our area.

MR. FULLER: But they had the kind where they just clipped onto your shoes?

MRS. HERBERG: I would say so. I never had roller skates. I only wore the clip on ice skates but a couple of times. I really don't know much about them. I guess I wore them once or twice. I guess I wasn't very stable on skates.

You were too busy doing other things! Amber, did you have a question?

AMBER: How do you feel about the Horicon Marsh and the Rock River?

MRS. HERBERG: Well, I never knew much about the Rock River until I went to High School. I graduated from Mayville High School even though I lived about seven miles away. There were no buses in those days so we had to see to it that we got down there ourselves. Many a time I walked the seven miles to go to school or seven miles to go back. I was a little lucky. A neighbor of mine was a senior when I was in one of the lower grades in high school. I was able to ride with him. Many and many a time I walked the distance.

MR. FULLER: That's dedication!

Did you go to Dodge County Normal School then?

MRS. HERBERG: Yes.

That was right in Mayville. It was a teacher's college.

MRS. HERBERG: I learned my profession as a teacher at Dodge County Teacher's College here. I continued my education at Oshkosh State Teacher's College mainly during the summer months and by correspondence. I am considered a graduate of Oshkosh because of the extra curricular work.

MR. FULLER: Do you remember things that they taught you about the Rock River? What were people's thoughts and perspectives on it then?

MRS. HERBERG: I don't really know too much. I should know more about it because for fifty years I lived where I could see it. The Rock River is what started Mayville. There were two people who came to Horicon. Then they walked or finally getting to the river and when they came to Mayville and saw the dam, there was already a waterfall naturally there. That was the start of Mayville because they were interested in having a saw mill, and that was their water power. Mayville started because the Rock River was here. Having the dam was the advantage.

AMBER: How long have you lived here?

MRS. HERBERG: I have lived here in Mayville for 52 years on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September. The reason I know that it because it was the day I was married and came to live here. In this place, I have lived five years on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March, I moved into the nursing home

here. I accidentally fell and broke a hip and I have an artificial part of a leg so we decided that that was it. The age was there. I don't know if you know how old I am. I'm 93. I'm 93 and a half!

Carissa, do you have another question?

CARISSA: What in your opinion draws people to the Marsh and River?

MRS. HERBERG: Well, there are several things. I can even say it's just plain geese, for instance. The homes of the muskrats are of interest in the marsh. As for the Rock River, it was the boating, now that's not so much anymore. There is some of course, but years ago when transportation wasn't so good as it is now, the Rock River was important for people getting from one place to another. The Rock River runs all of the way down to the Mississippi. The marsh area has always been of interest. Even to this day you drive through the marsh just to see the geese and mud huts and animals. It's of interest. It isn't what you have in your own backyard.

CARISSA: Do you know how the Rock River got its name?

MRS. HERBERG: Because of all of the rocks in the area. Naturally it was the rocks. When they came and wanted to use the water power, they had problems with the rocks. I suppose it was getting the rocks in their machinery and belts and things like that. I think it was just automatically was 'that's the river that's got all the rocks so you'd better be careful if you want to do something in that river'. I would imagine, I can't say for sure that that's true. Even in later years people would talk about how even if you took canoe out, you just better be careful where you ride that boat. Especially if you aren't acquainted with the river because you could easily hit a rock.

JOEY: Do you remember anything about the World Wars than happened?

MRS. HERBERG: I certainly do because my husband was in the war for four years. Incidentally he served during the war in Australia and New Guinea most of the time. He happened to have been a university graduate, so he did more book work than gun work you might say. He had quite a few Australians working under him in the office. We sit correspond with those Australians to this day. We correspond with four different people from Australia. Only one of them actually worked with him. The others are children of the families. That was in the 1940's so many of those people are no longer living. Just last week I got a letter from Australia.

You have been to visit there how many times?

MRS. HERBERG: I would know how many times. A lot! We've done a lot of traveling. I've been on every continent. I've gone around the world. [kids say "cool"]. Even to places like Antarctica, where you see all of the Penguins pictures of. When we were there unfortunately we were not able to get out of the boat. It was a very stormy day and they didn't trust us going. But the ship was going past, and we could see all of

the Penguins sitting there, so it was the same thing. I've always felt how lucky we were when we did our traveling to all of those countries. We've been in Thailand, and Siam, and all of those places where you wouldn't think of going there today. We felt it was lucky because in those days people were friendly. We had no problems. Although when we were in Asia, we did not really travel on our own; for two reasons. We weren't sure of the food and we weren't sure of overnight lodgings if you're out on your own like that. Then we would travel with a group and have a leader. But in Europe for instance, we would rent a car and travel by ourselves.

Getting back to the War; we were talking a little bit about the food rationing and things. Some of these children didn't hear that. Can you talk about how that affected Mayville and the area?

MRS. HERBERG: I would say that it didn't affect us as much. During the war I was not in Mayville. I was on the farm and we raised our own food. You see, we were not that much affected. There was the problem of not being able to use the car much because of the gas rationing. You could walk to the neighbors and visit.

Was the farm work still done with horse then? So you didn't need the gas?

MRS. HERBERG: Yes. The war didn't really affect the farms much.

ZACH: Have you ever fished on the Rock River? And if so did you catch anything? What bait did you use?

MR. FULLER: Are you a fisherperson?

MRS. HERBERG: No, unfortunately I didn't. My husband did. We lived right there and it was nothing for him to just go down and bring back a fish.

MR. FULLER: Do you know what he fished for?

MRS. HERBERG: No, I really don't. I don't know enough about fish to tell you. I think they've had pickerel in there, but unfortunately I just don't know enough about it.

There are some northern pike in there.

ZACH: Before the Carp.

The kids are fascinated with the story about the carp. A week ago they pulled out a nice big northern from there.

MRS. HERBERG: They have had some outstanding fish that were caught in the Rock River. I even was a fisherman. My husband was once it a while. He'd just go down for a little relaxation.



CARISSA: What is your fondest memory of the memory of the Horicon Marsh?

MRS. HERBERG: That also is hard to say. I was able one time to ride in a canoe. Well, I would say going around each one of those little beaver huts. You could see the fish. You would look down and it was nothing to see half a dozen fish swimming right beside you as you went in the canoe. The Horicon Marsh was always kind of fascinating: the geese and the different animals. Once in a while you'd see deer. They even came up here. The used to have a feeder right near the window of the room I am in. The deer would come there and look right in the window at me. Then, the DNR made them take the feeder away. But we still have deer come once in a while. In fact, about a week ago there was a deer that just kind of wandered along. He came from the marsh of course. And we see a lot of turkeys. When the turkeys spread their tails, that's a picture.

MR. FULLER: Oh yes, it is!

MRS. HERBERG: One time there were three male turkeys walking. There were going into the woods. We are on what is known as the Niagara Escarpment. It's sort of a hilly type area there. They didn't have their tails up. They were dragging and you could see all of the colors of all three of them. That's a picture no artist can paint. They walked sort of side by side.

CARISSA: How has this area changed from when you first remember it?

MRS. HERBERG: There are a lot more houses and building of all kinds. It was originally a really wooded area. Of course the natural woods has all been cut down you might say, except around here. When I look out of my window and see some of the trees around, many of them are still the very natural trees. Out that way when you look out you see mostly house. Well those trees have probably been planted. But if you are in my room and look out of the window, those are all still natural trees.

CARISSA: What information do you want to share with everyone?

MRS. HERBERG: I think I have said about everything there is to say!

AMBER: Do you have any advice for kids to know about the Horicon Marsh, the river or Mayville?

MRS. HERBERG: As long as you live, or are in the area I would say that you should enjoy it as much as possible. Because when you get to Milwaukee or any of the big cities you're not going to have the outdoors that you have around here. Even places that we consider very common like the marsh or the Rock River; enjoy it while you are here.

MR. FULLER: That's great advice! Thank you very much. Wasn't this interesting boys and girls?

ALL: Yes!