

Landmarks Commission
Meeting Agenda
April 18, 2024 – 6:00 PM
Conference Room A/B
3805 S. Casper Drive

Amended: 4/17/2024 @ 8:20 AM

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

ROLL CALL, DECLARATION OF QUORUM, PUBLIC NOTICE

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

TREASURER’S REPORT: Treasurer Cheryl Warczak

COMMUNICATIONS: Chairperson Lori Doyle

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

1. Discussion & possible vote on replacement of failing Landmark signs and updated wording for cemetery properties.
 - a. Holy Apostles Cemetery
 - b. Sunnyside Cemetery
 - c. German Evangelical Protestant Cemetery
 - d. New Berlin Center Cemetery
2. Discussion on potential homes and businesses to target for 2024-25 landmarks status.

TABLED BUSINESS

1. Review and approval of updated write-ups for Properties for Landmark consideration as “Informational Markers”
 - a. Little Grove school: Commissioner Marquardt;
 - b. Miller property on S. Moorland Rd (Barn foundation exists): Commissioner Ament;
 - c. New Berlin Soap Box Derby Grounds: Commissioner Marquardt
 - d. Governor Julius Heil home: (ATTACHED)
 - a. Milwaukee Astronomical Society (ATTACHED)
 - b. Wisconsin Cheese & Butter Company Building (ATTACHED)
 - c. S. Calhoun Road—Site of Round Barn (Future Autumn Trace Subdivision) (ATTACHED)
 - d. Casper Inn (ATTACHED)
 - e. Hickory Grove (ATTACHED)
2. Discussion on Cultural & Historic Resources Chapter 4, Comprehensive Plan, City of New Berlin: Liaison Kelly W, DCD.

NEXT MEETING DATE

MINUTES OF THE LANDMARKS COMMISSION MEETING

March 21, 2024

CITY HALL

CONFERENCE ROOM A/B

I. Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lori Doyle at 6:05 PM.

Present: Chairperson Doyle, Commissioners Ament, Marquardt, Orzel,
Tyskiewicz and Warczak.

Excused: Alderman La Fever.

II. Approval of Minutes.

February 15, 2024 Landmarks Commission Minutes.

MOTION: Motion to Approve.

VOTE: Motion by Commissioner Warczak.

Second by Commissioner Ament.

**Motion passed unanimously, with votes of “Present” by
Commissioners Marquardt and Orzel, who were excused
from last month’s meeting.**

III. Treasurer’s Report – Commissioner Warczak – Treasury stands at
\$1960.00, after the payment of the \$40.00 yearly dues to
WAHPC.

IV. No Communications.

V. No OLD BUSINESS.

VI. NEW BUSINESS.

A. Review and Approval of Properties Listed Below as Items A – J on the
Agenda of 3/21/24, as to Adding as Write-ups to the City Website or
Pursuing Informational Marker Signs for the Properties.

1. Permission for an Informational Marker Sign might be pursued
for the New Berlin Soapbox Derby Grounds in the future.
2. Permission would be needed to post QR Codes at the
remainder of the locations, linking them to the city’s website
for additional information on them.
3. Permission is not needed to add any write-ups to the city
website.

4. An idea is to feature one of the locations in every “New Berlin Notes” online issues.

MOTION: Motion to Approve the Write-ups of Items A – J on the Agenda of 3/21/24 to be Added to the City Website.

VOTE: Motion by Commissioner Marquardt.
Second by Commissioner Ament.

Motion passed unanimously.

- B. Discussion on 2018 – 2019 Historical Property Survey.

Goals Pertaining to this Survey:

1. Ensure that signage is up-to-date repair-wise and verbiage-wise on all Landmarks.
2. Create letters to the home and business owners featured in the survey, (one letter per year to a homeowner and one letter per year to a business owner), to acquaint them with Landmark status and find out their interest in pursuing it. All Commissioners are asked to select a home or business from the survey to carry through with a letter to them in this capacity.
3. Reach out to current Landmark owners with a letter and survey to keep them engaged: for example, finding out how their Landmark experience has been, acquainting them with various grants available from the state, asking them for permission to use their Landmark on the front of a Landmarks Commission Christmas card. Each Commissioner is asked to formulate 2 questions for the survey.

VII. TABLED BUSINESS.

- A. Review and Approval of Updated Write-ups for Landmark Consideration as “Informational Markers” – **Status Pending.** (Agenda of 3/21/24, Items A – E).
- B. Discussion of Cultural and Historic Resources, Chapter 4 – **Status Pending.**
- C. Discussion and Vote on Replacement of Failing Landmark Signs With Updated Wording.

MOTION: Motion to Approve Removal of this Agenda Item from Tabled Business.

VOTE: Motion by Commissioner Orzel.
Second by Commissioner Ament.

Motion passed unanimously.

1. The Commission will begin work on the Historic Cemeteries Signage first. (To be on April Agenda).
2. Commissioner Ament will be able to obtain a cost for the replacement signage once the verbiage changes are complete.

VIII. NEXT MEETING: April 18, 2024 at 6:00 PM, City Hall Conference Room A/B.

IX. ADJOURN at 7:10 PM.

Motion by Commissioner Warczak.
Second by Commissioner Ament.

Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Tyskiewicz
Landmarks Commission Secretary

HOLY APOSTLES CEMETERY

In 1855, Bernard Casper, a farmer, cooper and proprietor of the Casper Inn, presented the Catholics of the community with a three-acre parcel of land to be used for a church and cemetery.

More land was added over the course of the next century to accommodate the needs of the growing Catholic congregation.

In 1889, the parish, with the permission and blessing of the archbishop, changed its name from St. Valerius to Holy Apostles.

The first burial in the cemetery was Mary Elizabeth Johann on September 26th, 1885. The members of many early pioneer families lie at rest in this cemetery: the Jungens, Kaus, Kohlers, Biwers, Beres, Jungbluths, Snyders, Stephens and Stiglers.

The veterans of several wars are also buried here including Mathias Stephens who fought in the Civil War.

SUNNYSIDE CEMETERY

This historic graveyard was opened in 1841 as a gift to church members by Yankee pioneer Rev. Rufus Cheney, founder of Wisconsin's First Freewill Baptist Church.

Among the first burials were Henry B. Cheney, the infant grandson of the pastor, on August 26th, 1841, and 33-year-old Anliza Cheney, the wife of the pastor's son, John, in December of 1842.

In contrast to these short lives, Rev. Cheney lived to age 89 (1780-1869), and his son to age 97.

In 1887, John Cheney formally deeded 1.3 acres to the newly-formed Sunnyside Cemetery Association, and additional land from the Blott Farm increased the acreage of the cemetery.

Veterans from six wars are buried here including eighteen from the Civil War. Notable is the monument of Dr. John Ingersoll listing three babies who were all named Robert in honor of the doctor's brother, Col. Robert Ingersoll. All three infants lived less than a year.

Other early pioneers who lie at rest here include the Hales, Blotts, Beardsleys and Parmenters.

Sunnyside Cemetery was designated as a historic landmark on November 21st, 2013.

German Evangelical Protestant Cemetery

This historic cemetery was built on land donated in 1842 by Christian Damm, an early German immigrant from Rhenish-Bavaria. The first burial took place later the same year. Barbara, the baby daughter of Henry and Barbara Luke, died of convulsions. She was 13 days old. Eventually, 93 of New Berlin's earliest pioneers were laid to rest in this cemetery; 65 of them, like Barbara, were infants or children. The families represented include Kramer, Korn, Sittle, and Wilde.

A frame church associated with the cemetery was built in 1848 and dedicated in 1849. It was the first permanent place of worship in New Berlin. A parsonage and parochial school were added in 1852. Within three years the congregation grew to 42 families, but doctrinal disagreements led to divisions within the community. A majority of members decided to leave. In 1865, they built a new brick church about a mile west from this site.

By 1867, 25 years after its founding, the original church was abandoned, although the last known burials in the cemetery occurred in the early 1870s. Through the years the gravestones became hidden under a dense cover of brush and debris. . . but the cemetery was not forgotten.

On April 17, 2003, the German Evangelical Protestant Cemetery was designated as an historic landmark. Ground-penetrating radar was used to locate the gravesites. Volunteers of all ages worked for many years to restore and revive the headstones and clean the grounds.

In 2010, thanks to their efforts, the cemetery was rededicated as a testament to the courage and determination of New Berlin's earliest residents.

New Berlin Landmarks Commission- 2024

New Berlin Center Cemetery

This historic cemetery was built on land donated around 1840 by Publius Virgil "P.V." Monroe who served as the first town clerk. Monroe is often credited with persuading the town council to change the name of the Town of Mentor to New Berlin in honor of the town in New York that many of the earliest settlers, including Monroe, called home.

New Berlin Center is the oldest cemetery in New Berlin. The large, ornate gate at the entrance serves as a reminder to visitors that they are leaving the everyday world and entering a spiritual realm.

The first recorded burial on February 15, 1841 was Harriet E. Monroe, the six-month-old daughter of P.V. Monroe and his wife, Cordelia. Cordelia was later buried in the family plot at the age of 41 in 1855. P.V. followed in 1861 at the age of 47.

A portion of the cemetery was reserved as a potter's field for the burial of transient and indigent individuals. There are no grave markers or monuments in the potter's field.

A cemetery association was established in 1857. Daniel Ewer was the first director. The Boyd family served as caretakers from 1910 until July 2021 when management of the cemetery was transferred to the City of New Berlin.

The family names of the early pioneers who lie at rest here include Boyd, Meidenbauer, Winton, Killips, Monroe, Church, and Korn. Veterans of several wars are also buried here including seven who fought in the Civil War.

New Berlin Center Cemetery was designated as a historic landmark on November 21, 2013. It remains an active cemetery.

New Berlin Landmarks Commission - 2024

Governor Julius Heil Home

Julius Heil was the 26th Governor of Wisconsin, serving from 1939 to 1943. Julius Heil was a successful businessman turned Governor. In 1901, Julius Heil founded the Heil Rail joint Company in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, pioneering the use of electric welding. As the company grew and prospered, Heil began building truck bodies, hydraulic hoists, and a variety of truck trailers for the newborn automotive industry.

THE HEIL HOMESTEAD

Julius Heil was born on January 24, 1876, in Germany and when he was five his family moved to a farm in New Berlin, Wisconsin. He served in the military during World War I. His service in the U.S. Army took place during the years of World War I, which occurred from 1917 to 1918. Heil was married to Margaret Richardson Heil, and they had two children together. He passed away on November 30, 1949, due to a heart attack and is buried at Wisconsin Memorial Cemetery in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

In 1910, Heil built his home in New Berlin, Wisconsin. According to the Historical Marker Database, the Heil Homestead is located at 42° 56.153' N, 88° 9.734' W. Marker is in New Berlin, Wisconsin, in Waukesha County. The marker is on West Julius Heil Drive, 0.2 miles west of South Racine Avenue, on the right when traveling west. The marker is at or near this postal address: 19890 W Julius Heil Dr, New Berlin WI 53146, United States of America.

The Heil Homestead is a historic property listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It's a distinctive part of Wisconsin's architectural history. It is an excellent example of Prairie School architecture, a style known for its horizontal lines, flat or hipped roofs with broad overhanging eaves, and integration with the natural environment. The Home was designed by the renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright and is one of the few Frank Lloyd Wright-designed homes in Wisconsin. The property also features extensive Prairie-style landscaping, which was also designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. It's an integral part of the overall architectural design.

Unique features about Frank Lloyd Wright's homes include built-in furniture which were part of Wright's philosophy of organic architecture. The home features custom-designed stained-glass windows, showcasing Frank Lloyd Wright's attention to detail and integration of art into his architectural designs. Natural materials such as wood and stone were used to create a harmonious connection between the building and its natural surroundings. The Fireplace design is a striking focal point of these type of homes. And while this residence is not available to the public its status as a historical landmark highlights its importance in the architectural and cultural history of New Berlin and Wisconsin as a whole.

CAREER

In 1938, after Julius Heil was elected Governor of Wisconsin, his son Joseph F. Heil became C.E.O. of the Heil Company and later became Chairman of the board. Joe Heil, Sr. served for 39 years until his son, Joseph F. Heil, Jr. took over. He served as the company's leader until 1993 when Heil was purchased by the Dover Corporation.

During his tenure as governor, Heil implemented innovative budgetary procedures that were seen as a model for other states. His efforts were aimed at improving efficiency in government spending. Heil was also known for his support of conservation efforts. He worked to protect Wisconsin's natural resources and promoted the creation of new state parks. Heil was an aviation enthusiast and helped establish airports and airfields in Wisconsin during his time in office. He promoted the development of aviation infrastructure. According to the Waukesha County Historical Society, he coined the phrase "America's Dairy Land" and he was known as "Julius, the Just".

For more information on Gov. Julius Peter Heil visit the following links:

- National Governors Association, <https://www.nga.org/governor/julius-peter-heil-2/>
- The Historical Marker Database, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=43299>
- Wisconsin Historical Society, <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS8619>

MILWAUKEE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY
Address: 18850 W Observatory Road, New Berlin WI 53146 *
www.milwaukeeastro.org, MAS history 1932-33

The Milwaukee Astronomical Society (MAS) built its first observatory at this location in 1937-38. Formed in September 1932, the MAS was established with eighteen charter members and observing sessions were held in the backyard of Luverne Armfield's home at 2046 S. 59th St., West Allis. In 1927 Luverne Armfield was an Equipment Engineer for the Wisconsin Telephone company whose first interest in astronomy was in building telescopes. In 1929 he built his first telescope, which was mounted in the backyard of his West Allis home. A membership of 130 by 1933 led to plans to build an observatory outside of that city. However, with funds low due to the Great Depression, those plans were put on indefinite hold. In the meantime, as of 1934, the group incorporated as a non-profit and began producing its own publication—'The MAS Bulletin,' that had a circulation of about 100. In 1935, publication was discontinued. It was decided instead to publish 'Amateur Astronomy,' a publication of the American Amateur Astronomical Association, that originally included groups from the states of Connecticut, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin (Wisconsin had groups in both Madison and Milwaukee, the only state with two groups).

Although 1.1 acre of land was gifted to the organization in 1934 by one of its members—Professors M.J.W. Phillips, the frame structure called the Armfield Observatory (or A-Dome) was not built until 1937. A telescope was installed the next year. Dedication was held on June 18, 1938, with the primary address being given by Charles Hetzer of the Yerkes Observatory.

A series of now extant buildings were gifted from the Milwaukee Public Museum and the City of Milwaukee during the late 1930's and early 1940's. Following their removal, in 1947-48, plans were made for a new double-domed observatory on expanded grounds, however those plans were never accomplished. Instead, a single-domed, cinder block structure called the Buckstaff Observatory or B-Dome, was nearly completed in 1951, but did not formally function until almost 1960. In 1953 a Quonset hut was obtained from the City of Milwaukee (loaned through the Milwaukee Public Museum), and attached to the north end of the A-Dome. In 1957, the MAS started the Saturday night open house program for members, from May to October each year, which is continuing to the present. In 1958, the newsletter that had been discontinued in 1938, was revived and re-named 'The Double Dome.' In 1963, two additional acres were gifted by the Phillips family and in 1964, 800 red pine trees were planted along the perimeter of the property. In 1965, heated restrooms and a heated darkroom were added to the Armfield Observatory. Construction of the concrete block Z dome began in 1980 and was fully completed in 1983. The remaining structures were built subsequently: Albrecht Observatory (C-Shed, 1990's); D-Shed (2000); Tangney observatory (2000's); Zit Observatory (2002); Toeller Observatory (2000's, with update in 2015); and the Solar Observatory (2016).

Located on 3.1 acres of land, the observatory grounds now include numerous structures, nine of which are observatories. The largest structure on the premises is the Armfield Observatory. The Milwaukee Astronomical Society identifies itself as among the oldest amateur astronomical societies and it operates 'one of the largest and most extensive amateur clubs in the entire world.' Of note is the fact that it was almost entirely funded and built by the membership. As of 2023, two or the buildings are fifty years old or older and are potentially eligible for the National Register under the category of Criterion A: History (Education). As time passes, additional structures might also be considered to contribute to the significance of the grounds.

*Edited by LDeMoss for Informational Landmark status

WISCONSIN CHEESE & BUTTER COMPANY BUILDING (1894) *
17351 W Cleveland Avenue, New Berlin WI

Constructed of fieldstone, this one-story plus raised basement, front-gabled structure includes a one-story, shed-roof wing to the west. Windows throughout the building are largely two-over-two-light, double-hung sash, while those along the north entrance elevation are topped with headers comprised of three rows of header brick. A wooden double door is located along the building's basement level, while the main floor includes a single door. The roof is covered with standing seam metal. A turn-of-the twentieth century photo of the building confirms that the structure has changed little since it was built.

Following purchase in November 1893 of a single acre from Fred and Mary Stigler, this structure was built in 1894 by the Wisconsin Cheese and Butter Company and was referenced at times as the Calhoun Creamery. Prior research on the building indicates that the structure served as a cooperative and that local farmers brought stones from their farms to help build the structure. In appearance, it resembles another creamery in the City that now houses the business known as Mustang Shelly's, a City of New Berlin Landmark located at 18540 W. National Avenue, established in 1892.

The lower level included a cheese factory room, boiler room, and a cold storage room, while the upper floor was the buttermaker's quarters. Although categorized as a cheese factory, the building on W. Cleveland Ave. reportedly served as a creamery/cheese factory until approximately 1904.

The following year, the building was purchased by Albert Elger (b. 1882), who at that time worked as a cattle dealer with his brother Gust. He used the structure as a holding location for cattle before driving them to the Milwaukee stockyards. He also built a gambrel-roof house east of the stone building, where he and his family resided.

The building is significant due to its direct association with the City of New Berlin's agricultural beginnings during its two periods of ownership.

*** from Historical & Architectural Resources Survey, 2018-2019, City of New Berlin/tes/
Historical Consulting LLC; edited by LDeMoss**

Suggested write-up:

Just south of the Gilbert property, at 4908 S Calhoun Rd., stood a round barn (no longer standing). Henry Schreiber built the barn in 1898, and the farm was the location of an experimental tractor tire. The Firestone Rubber Company and Allis Chalmers tested the first rubber tires ever put on a tractor in 1932.

Round or polygon-shaped barns are rare, with less than ^{ten}40 recorded in the state of Wisconsin. Round Barns require only center and outer supports, reducing the building materials required for the structure. A silo forms the interior support for the structure and provides ventilation through the cupola top thus reducing the risk of fire by spontaneous combustion.



CASPER INN/ALIDA'S ALPINE INN/ASIA HOUSE *

The restaurant currently known as the Asia House, located at 16150 W. National Avenue, New Berlin, WI, was originally built in 1858, and was known as the Bernard Casper Inn. It was subsequently owned by John Casper, who operated it as the New Berlin Central Motel and Independent Milwaukee Brewery. Three of Bernard Casper's thirteen children became hotel owners. Bernard Casper donated three acres of land for the original St. Valerius Parish. A sidewalk was built from the saloon establishment to the church due to one of Bernard Casper's daughter's weddings, qualifying it at one time for consideration in the Guinness Book of World Records as the only sidewalk connecting a church and a saloon. In 1865 a school was started. In 1889 a new brick church was built and dedicated to the Holy Apostles. It was rebuilt in 1908 after a fire and again in 1966, and is known as Holy Apostles Church and cemetery. In 1964, a group of citizens got together in the former Casper Inn to found the New Berlin Historical Society.

The second primary owners were the Gress family, specifically Lydia Gress, who came to the United States with her parents in 1952 from Bavaria. According to Gress, her family did not go into the restaurant business until they came to the United States. They purchased Alida's in the late 1970's after they had managed smaller businesses such as the Wisconsin Avenue Coffee Shop in Waukesha. After Lydia decided that she wanted to own a restaurant, she and her husband, Karl, came to New Berlin following the closure of what was then called the New Berlin Inn in 1978. Lydia and Karl worked to make Alida's Alpine Inn an attractive place from the outside, and a clean and comfortable place on the inside with Alpine or German motifs throughout. Contributing to the success of Alida's was a steady serving staff, and authentic German food similar to what was served in Lydia and Karl's homeland. They were featured at German Fest for the first time in 1989, and served rouladen, bratwurst, barbecued pork and Black Forest torte.

Asia House (owned by the Moy family) became the third and current restaurant at the original Casper Inn following the road widening project at W. Greenfield Avenue, and S. Barker Road. The Moy family's original restaurant location had occupied the former Tacl Roadhouse, now an extant City of New Berlin Landmark. When the road widening project required the removal of the Tacl Toadhouse, the decision was made to move their restaurant business to the available original Casper Inn/Alina's Alpine Inn property on National Avenue where it continues as the Asia House.

* 'New Berlin, The Honored City, 1989 Germanfest' newspaper article—July 1989

* Edited by LDeMoss for Informational Status

The Story of Hickory Grove Elementary School

Hickory Grove, located on the corner of Cleveland Avenue and Sunny Slope Road in New Berlin, served as a public elementary school from 1952 to 1979. Several other schools preceded Hickory Grove on this very same site and share in its story.



Figure 1: Hickory Grove, 1952 – 2023. Photo taken August 14, 2023

The Early Years

Ezra “E.F.” Bennett, like many of New Berlin’s earliest settlers, was a Yankee from Onondaga County, New York. Born in 1816, he came to Wisconsin in 1839, and staked his claim of one hundred acres on what is known today as Cleveland Avenue.

In October, 1851, Bennett deeded a half-acre of his property to be used for a school. A one-room log school house was built on the site and came to be known as Bennett School. It was replaced in 1867 by an old cooper shop which was moved to the school site from a previous location within the Township of New Berlin.

By 1890, the Township of New Berlin was divided into fourteen school districts. Eight were located within the Township’s geographic boundaries, while the other six

crossed into neighboring communities. Each district was required to have one elementary school which served students through eighth grade, and its own Board of Education, elected by the citizens at the annual meeting. During this annual meeting, the residents of each district were also required to vote on their own tax rate to support school operations. Bennett School was in District No. 2, which served the northeastern quadrant of the Town of New Berlin.

At that time, many children did not attend school regularly or at all, especially in rural areas. The older children were needed to help on their family farms. Dirt roads and bad weather made traveling to school difficult and sometimes dangerous, but attitudes toward education were changing as more young people transitioned from farming to jobs in manufacturing. In 1891, Wisconsin passed a compulsory attendance law requiring all children between the ages of seven and fourteen to attend public or private school for a minimum of twelve weeks per year.

In 1897, perhaps as a result of the state’s mandatory school attendance law, a referendum was approved to sell the repurposed cooper shop which served as Bennett School for \$15.00 (\$555 in today’s dollars), and build a new school on the same site. Three years later, a white, one-room frame school house was finished at a cost of \$1,000 (\$36,000 today’s dollars). A central wood-burning stove provided heat, but there was no source of water on the property. It was carried daily from a nearby farm.

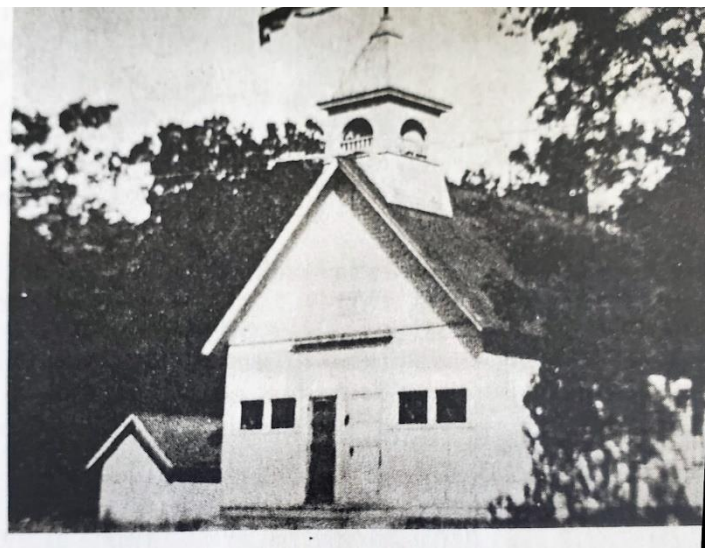


Figure 2: Bennet School, later Hickory Grove School, 1900-1951, Courtesy of the New Berlin Historical Society

A New Century Brings Change

The Board of Education voted to change the name of Bennett School to Hickory Grove School in 1914. The reason for the name change is lost in the annals of history. Perhaps it was a reference to the trees that still thrive on the school grounds or maybe it was inspired by the words of a popular song written for a Broadway musical in 1907:

School days, school days
Dear old Golden Rule days.
Readin' and 'riting and 'rithmetic
Taught to the tune of the hickory stick.

One thing, however, was certain...much more than the name of Hickory Grove School was about to change.

A couple of years earlier, in 1912, Otto (Wilbur) Conrad, a West Allis business man, purchased about 60 acres of land for development in the northeastern section of the Town of New Berlin. He believed this area, with its easy access to the interurban railway, would make ideal home sites for the families of blue-collar workers who commuted daily to the nearby Allis-Chalmers Manufacturing Plant in West Allis.

Wilbur Conrad was right. New Berlin's first subdivision, known as Conrad Park was a success. More land was purchased in 1928 for a second subdivision on the corner of Greenfield Avenue and Sunny Slope Road, with space for 188 lots. Even during the Great Depression of the 1930s, the home sites continued to sell.

These sales, of course, had a direct impact on the enrollment of Hickory Grove Elementary School. By 1932, its days as a one-room school house were over. The white, one-room frame school house was remodeled and expanded again in 1941 and 1946, but this was just a prelude to the challenges that lay ahead.



Figure 3: One of additions to Hickory Grove completed in the 1950s. Note the beautiful trees that still surround the school. Photo taken August 14, 2023

The years following the end of World War II, known as the Baby Boom Era, brought even more new homes and families to the area. In 1951, the Hickory Grove School Board approved plans to build an elementary school with four classrooms and a multi-purpose room for a total cost of \$76,500 (\$857,000 in today's dollars). The new Hickory Grove Elementary School opened its doors on April 7, 1952, to welcome 135 students, but the population continued to increase, and two more additions were made during the 1950s.

By 1960, the enrollment of Hickory Grove had grown to 780 students. It was one of the two largest school populations among non-consolidated school districts in Waukesha County; the other was the neighboring district of Calhoun. Barracks were erected at Hickory Grove for use as classrooms and four sections of kindergarten were housed at nearby Forest Park Presbyterian Church.

With no room available to expand Hickory Grove, the Board of Education opted to build a second elementary school. Located about one mile north of Hickory Grove on Sunny Slope Road, Orchard Lane, was opened in 1961. That year Hickory Grove and Orchard Lane shared an enrollment of 850 students.

Earlier that spring, the voters approved a referendum to consolidate twelve of New Berlin's fourteen elementary school districts into one with a district-wide school board. In 1958, town officials had filed a petition with Waukesha County to

form a New Berlin High School District, and the new high school, now known as New Berlin West, was scheduled to open in 1962. A more unified approach to school governance and planning was needed.

The consolidated School Board faced many challenges, but the most consequential continued to be enrollment. The number of students attending New Berlin's public schools increased from 1,500 in 1958 to 6,800, an astonishing rate of 450%. Glen Park Middle School was opened in 1966 and a second high school, New Berlin Eisenhower, was opened in 1969. By 1970, the total enrollment in New Berlin Public Schools peaked at about 7,000 students.

And just like that...the pattern of rapid growth was replaced with more than a decade of declining enrollment. There were several reasons. The children in the older subdivisions were growing older and graduating, but their parents didn't move. Many years of high inflation followed by a recession in the early 1980s made it difficult for young families to purchase homes. Families were having fewer children.

The School Board needed to shift gears. Buildings would be closed and school communities would be merged.

Hickory Grove: The Final Chapter

At the end of the 1978-79 school year, the Board of Education closed Hickory Grove. It was the first school closed in the consolidated school district. A church rented a portion of the building for a few years and it served as a home to the New Berlin Senior Center and Food Pantry. But in 1983, Hickory Grove began a new chapter. The City of New Berlin purchased the building from the school district for one dollar to serve as an Activity and Recreation Center. For many years, a wide variety of classes were taught for students of all ages and abilities. There was cooking, dancing, yoga, technology, sports and even a summer day camp, but eventually the building's limitations and aging infrastructure presented problems.

In 2020, the City Council approved the construction of a new Activity and Recreation Center, *The ARC*, located at 15321 W. National Avenue. This state-of-the-art facility opened in June 2022, and the long story of Hickory Grove has probably come to an end, but its impact on our community will be long remembered.

Sources

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<https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1897?amount=1>, cited September 16, 2023.