

# The History of the John Schuette Family

by EDWARD EHLERT

Fourteen Occupational Monographs have been issued since 1967. These monographs have related to the various industries and occupations that were important in the early history of Manitowoc County. Although we have by no means exhausted all the possibilities for discussion in this series of historical writings, we felt that perhaps a deviation from the accepted order might be considered as we concluded the 1971 series.

Some months ago our attention was called to a speech which John Schuette had given at a meeting of the Manitowoc County Historical Society on December 6, 1906. This speech related to conditions in Germany which caused the Schuettes to leave their homeland and to journey to America "where milk and honey flows." There was a recital of the experiences the family had in traveling across the ocean, how they traveled to the mid-west, and finally how they happened to establish their new home in Manitowoc. The speech indicated that the seemingly minor incidents of daily living assume great significance in a life. A military parade in a German village was one such incident that led them away from the place that the family always had known as "home", and a childhood disease was another that caused them to seek a place with a healthful climate.

The Schuette family became one of the prominent families in the early history of Manitowoc, and they have remained so through all the years. The article will show their involvement in the business life of this community, and their part in the numerous progressive developments in the early years. The article speaks of developments that failed and others that had great significance in the growth of the

city. It reflects the keen insight of this pioneer citizen.

Of course, there was much more that could have been said about John Schuette and his family. Eight years after giving this speech he wrote a book entitled "John and Rose" which relates to other details about his life. This book may be seen at the Manitowoc Public Library.

Mr. Schuette was involved in most of the progressive developments in early Manitowoc. He had a part in harbor development, in the establishment of a general merchandise store, a

## A SPEECH PRESENTED TO THE MANITOWOC HISTORICAL SOCIETY BY JOHN SCHUETTE - December 7, 1906

### Revolution of 1848

In the spring of 1848 the spirit of discontent hovered over all the German states, threatening serious results. Freedom and equality were the slogans. The revolutionary spirit was wafted from the southern states to the northern, among them the grand duchy of Oldenburg, where our family lived, and where I was born.

The actual warfare lasted only forty-eight hours, after the leaders were put to flight. Among the leading spirits were Schurz, Kinkel, Sigel, Hecker, all of whom took refuge in the United States, with many others of less renown, owing to which the years of 1848 and 1849 brought to our shores a larger number of this class of immigrants than ever before or after.

At this time Prussia was at war with Denmark. The soldiers marched through our village with fife and drum, prancing cavalry, rattling artillery, flags waving, band playing. Oh! what an exhilarating scene, what a treat for the boys!

bank, a food processing plant, the first electrical power company in the city, and numerous other developments.

While a community's industries play a major role in the growth and development of a city, in the final analysis the people in a city are its greatest assets. Thus, we take a close look at one of our prominent families as we present to you Occupational Monograph No. 15.

We are indebted to August Schuette who gave us permission to publish the speech heard at a Society meeting during the first year of its existence.

I was at that time eleven years of age and enjoyed the spectacle immensely. My mother, however, cried, and when my father inquired the reason she answered: "That which gives the boys the greatest enjoyment is to me the greatest grief. I hoped that I had nearly passed a mother's anxiety for her children's growth, but this reminds me of more to come, when in a few years our four growing boys, one after another, will be taken away by order of the duke and march like these, perhaps to death: then there will be worry to the end of my days."

My father in his younger days had followed the sea, had seen nearly every part of the globe, had lived at Charleston, South Carolina, where he had a grocery, then to Norfolk, Virginia, where he also had a grocery and owned a schooner. This embraced the years from 1818 to 1830, when he left again for Oldenburg, married, and in the nature of things, in a German family, was blessed with a large family.

He must always have longed to go back to America, because when he saw my mother in tears, the die was cast, which was disclosed by his ready consolation of mother, when he said, "Now, my dear, don't you worry about our boys; they will never serve a duke or potentate: we will take them to a land where the battles for freedom have already been fought out, where it really exists, where war is remote, where there are opportunities for young men; in brief, to a land where milk and honey flows."

### Preparation for Departure

In the early spring of 1848 everything was offered for sale and preparation made for our departure. In the few months intervening my older brother and I were sent to an English teacher, a Mr. Albrecht, to acquire the rudiments of the English language. Our teacher, who had never been out of Germany, taught us the pronunciation of words with a strong accent. My brother often after laughed at a little incident which happened while we were taking our English lessons, and my teacher admonished me for not having the lessons assigned to me prepared. I explained to him in a most serious manner: "Now, Herr Albrecht, don't you think this is asking too much of a boy of eleven years, who must go to the public school from nine to twelve in the morning, and from one to four o'clock in the afternoon, and again from half past four to six o'clock in your school, and then go through at home with the public lessons and yours too." He laughed right out, and admitted that I was about right. Later on I will give you a sample of my English as I learned it in Germany, and of its benefit in America.

Before the final hour of departure had arrived our school companions exchanged with us, as was customary then, a little memento, a verse expressive of good wishes for our future welfare, eternal friendship, etc., which I have retained to the present day.

There is only one of these sentimental friends living. Carl Roewekamp who was our neighbor and schoolmate, and two years my senior. He was a treasurer of the grand duchy of Oldenburg for many years and pensioned a few

years ago on his seventieth birthday. He then visited his two sons at Oshkosh, and also was my guest for about a week. We, of course, enjoyed each other's company, revived our boyhood days, with the greatest pleasure. I was curious to know how a person felt after being relegated from an active to a retired life.

As I had always looked with dread toward such an approaching period, which I imagined to be about the same as locking myself in and waiting, waiting for the final summons, I asked him: "Well, how do you enjoy retired life? Don't you feel sad and lonesome?" "Why, no; I enjoy it immensely, I never had a better time in my life: feel peaceful and content." "Am glad to hear you say so, you must be a millionaire." "Oh, no", he replied, "I am only comfortably fixed; have not much of this world's goods." "Not much of the world's goods? What do you care about the goods, which you could not consume or utilize if you had them all, as long as you have all you want and are happy and content, which is the real wealth, more than millions in dollars without it."

Yes, he agreed that in this sense he was a millionaire. "Now let me bring to your view again the little memento you gave me on our departure, fifty-six years ago, and see whether your endeared sentiments have come true. Here is yours." He looked at it first in silence, deeply affected, and then said: "So this I wrote fifty-six years ago", and was especially pleased by its neat penmanship.

The Germans are noted for their good penmanship, which they acquire by utilizing the time wasted by American in spelling lessons. Now, let us read it:

*Die Gottheit fuhre deine Jugend  
Selbst auf den steilen Pfad der Tugend  
Umstrahle dich mit ihrem Licht;  
Sie lass dich in den Lauf von Jahren  
Der Weisheit stilles Licht erfahren  
Verlass dich auch im Alter nicht.*

JULY 10, 1848 - Dein Freund  
Carl Roewekamp

Freely translated, this reads as follows:

*May God's wise illumined ways  
Lead you in your youthful days  
Into the righteous path;  
And if you follow His wise course  
'Twill ever be to you a source  
of pleasure to the last.*

"Quite appropriate," he remarked; "did you follow it, and if

so, did you enjoy the result?" I replied, "I thought I did."

In order, I suppose, to lighten our leave-taking, my father painted America in the most gorgeous colors. Among other things he said that partridges could be shot from the veranda. Just then an improved crossbow gun appeared on the market, with mahogany shaft and a bow of steel instead of wood; of course I must have one, especially as it would be serviceable in a country where game was plentiful. The chest in which this was packed I guarded with the utmost care. We lost one trunk in which were my father's seamanship certificate and charts, which he very much regretted, but what interested me more, my cross-bow gun chest was safe.

### The Final Hour Of Departure

On the 17th day of July, 1848, the final hour of leaving our old home had arrived. The neighbors and friends were on hand to say a last farewell; tears flowed in profusion. In those days anyone leaving for America was considered as about to pass into eternity, never to meet again on this earth. Our parting was not of such pathetic nature, because we left no near kindred behind, but in many cases where an only son, or all the children left their aged parents, a parting scene was sad and heart-rending. In our young hearts we even could not understand why tears should flow, and gloried in the thought and expectation of other worlds to conquer.

The hack drove up and we entered; that is, our parents, two sisters and two younger brothers; my older brother and I sat on the seat with the driver, and with a last farewell we drove to Bremen, reaching it in two hours, and from there by steamer to Bremer Haven, which took another six hours.

On arrival at this seaport we saw for the first time what we had so often longed to see, ships of all nations, in all colors, with symbolic figureheads, lofty, majestic spars — oh, how different from our inland town! These ships were the first we had seen, lying quietly under a forest of stately spars, what a grand and enchanting picture!

Here we also saw a curious sight.

Bremer Haven was just building its second harbor or basin. It was dug out by men with shovels, and carried away in wheelbarrows, on a network of plank-ways. The whole thing looked like a spider web, and the thousands of men like bees coming and going.

### Aboard Ship

After a few days we boarded the American bark Adele, hailing from Philadelphia, a Mr. Fountain, captain. The ship was small, about three hundred tons burden — some of our lake vessels will carry forty times that amount. The whole number of passengers was only sixty-seven souls. We sailed on an American ship because the German fleet was blockaded by Denmark. The passengers were all below deck, but my father had arranged special quarters for our family.

We were piloted out of the harbor into the North sea; how exciting to us boys, especially as we were not tormented by sea sickness, as others were.

Our progress was slow, as we had head winds, which seldom left us on our journey. We were nearly ten days on the North sea before we got into the English Channel. Going through this channel, on one side the English, on the other French shore line, with its pure white banks, meeting many ships of all kinds and sizes, coming and going, life and bustle everywhere and ever changing — this was to us the most interesting scene on our trip.

While going through this channel I must relate how I was the first time baptized a smoker. The lifeboat was our ship's stable; it harbored live sheep, poultry, etc. of which, as far as our meals are concerned, we had only a smell. The boat was covered with a canvas roof. My sister and I crawled in. I in some way got hold of a pipe. As smoking is second nature to English, I thought I could perfect my English by learning to smoke, which I enjoyed with greater pleasure than taking lessons of Mr. Albrecht. After triumphantly ending my first smoke we crawled out on deck and soon after heard the alarm of fire. We looked at each other in terror, but no one said a word, but instinctively hastened down below and into our bunks. The little blaze was soon extinguished, and after the

excitement had subsided we whispered to each other that the fire must have originated from my pipe, and were glad that it ever after remained under my clouded smoke, a mystery.

### On the Atlantic

Now we entered the broad Atlantic, especially broad in those days, because it took us over eleven weeks to cross it. We had all kinds of weather, mostly head winds.

Sea sickness among the passengers had nearly vanished and to make up for lost meals, the appetites were ravenous. Our menu consisted of dark rye bread, corned beef, potatoes, rice, coffee and tea; and, oh, when I think of it now, my mouth waters; every Thursday, plum pudding. How we looked forward to this delicious day!

The passengers were a happy crowd, mostly young people, full of life, with no worry for the morrow. They would congregate on deck on nice warm evenings and sing all the dear German national and folk songs to their hearts content. I, of course, joined in, as at school I had the reputation of being a star singer. On these occasions I learned most of the German songs, of which there is such a large selection. The most popular of these was "Jetzt ist die Zeit und Stunde Da", which translated, is:

*The time and hour now is near  
That I must part from all most dear  
From friends and my dear native home  
Wherein my youthful days I roamed.*

*The carriage awaits me at the door;  
The last time I shall walk this floor:  
The first step towards my new abode,  
America, on a foreign shore.*

*My dear old home, then now adieu,  
Although I love you, I cannot stay;  
Though sad the parting is to me,  
I long to live where I am free.*

And invariably on a nice moonlight evening we would serenade the moon with the following song:

*Guter Mond, du gehst so ruhig  
Durch die Abend Wolken hin.*

Translated:

*Dear Moon, you glide so gently  
Above the evening fleeting clouds.  
O, how often did you guide me  
When I wandered to be housed.*

*How kindly did you hide me  
When my sweetheart vowed  
That eternal should my love be,  
You crept behind a cloud.*

*Ever after, when you shine,  
'Twill illumine my mind  
Of that evening's happiness  
When love pledged the first kiss.*

So we ate and sang our way across the ocean. In spite of our most simple life, in food and lodging, we grew fat and hearty, with peace of mind and genuine happiness. The only time of fear was when a meeting was called for the purpose of consulting the captain to find out whether it would be advisable to make for the nearest port to replenish our stock of drinking water, because it was rumored that it was running low. As none of the passengers could speak English, excepting my father and I, he was delegated to confer with the captain in regard to this, who soon pacified all by the assurance that there was an abundant supply yet on hand. The fears originated in this wise:

All immigrant ships were at that time provisioned for thirteen weeks. We had been on the ocean ten weeks. Once while the cook was drawing water from a cask he remarked in the hearing of a passenger, "this is the last", meaning the last he would have to tap on the trip, and not the last on board, as the passenger had construed it.

### In Sight of Land

All were at rest again till we heard "land ahead". This announcement should be considered most welcome news, and hailed with greatest joy. Singular as it may seem, it received but a faint reception. But there is the explanation: So far we had been, so to speak, under the guardianship of the captain, who had to provide for our meals, comfort and safety. Now we would be thrown on our own responsibilities and resources. The latter in most cases were but meager and uncertain of replenishment. We entered a foreign land without friends and without knowledge of the language. What may our fate be there, where each must depend on his own resources? Besides, we would lose our new made friends, as one went here, the other there. All these uncertainties weighed on the minds of most of us. The serious stage of life, soon to enter, supplanted the former light spirits with a depressing one. All were more or less meditating on the uncertain future, and all gaiety and singing here ended.

## Pilot on Board

The pilot came on board and took charge of the ship, and we soon entered Delaware Bay. Here too, we had head winds and beat up the bay — on one tack neared Delaware and on the other the New Jersey shore. What beautiful scenery, farm buildings on both sides, apples just ripe on the trees. Small boats came alongside with fruit for sale, and we each got an apple. Oh, how delicious! Nothing like it in Germany! The change of fatherland looked promising before we touched land; how much more when we are once on it. We failed to taste or see the land of milk and honey, as father pictured to us, but still hoped we would farther inland.

## Landing at Philadelphia

After a few weeks sailing in Delaware Bay we landed on October 5, 1848, on terra firma in the old Quaker city of Philadelphia, after eleven week's journey on the ocean. The parting scene, with hand shaking and tears, was repeated on foreign shore, as nearly all separated, going to different places, and it is singular that we never met but a single one of our ship's companions thereafter. Our family remained on board a few days longer, when we had to board ourselves.

## My English Language Put to Test

I was sent to the grocery to buy eighteen cents worth of coffee. I do not know why it had to be just eighteen cents worth. Most likely we did not know if a pound might not cost one dollar, but let this be as it may, I proudly entered on my first American shopping expedition. I stepped into the store and addressed the grocer thus; "Good morning, sir, how do you do?" This was the first sentence I had translated while taking my English lessons. The grocer seemed at first nonplussed by my unusual politeness, but after recovering, answered; "Quite well. Now, my little fellow, what can I do for you?" "I want 18 cents of coffee". "No, no, you don't" he corrected; "you mean ateen". "Oh, no," I contradicted, "I mean eiteen. I learned English in Germany, eiteen." "Well, never mind, I know what you mean." But as I was not

sure that he did I showed him a two shilling piece (25 cents) and told him he must pay seven cents back, which proved the example.

I was sorry to find that acute edges of my contrary nature had not been rounded by the rolling, grinding Atlantic.

I took my coffee and seven cents change on board and told father that the people could not speak as good English as we had learned in Germany. The grocer attempted to correct me by saying eiteen was ateen, but I did not agree with him, nor did I stand corrected.

"Why," my father said, "he was right and you wrong. You ought not to dispute the pronunciation of the English language with a native born because you took a few lessons in Germany."

## In New York

After a few days we left and arrived in New York, at that time quite a city, but since then grown to immense proportions. My brother and I considered ourselves pretty good marble players and therefore awaited and sought an opportunity to show our mettle, which soon presented itself. We entered the game with the boys and it did not take long before we had them all broke. How they pleaded with us to loan them some, so that the game could be continued. We held a consultation and reached the conclusion as we had all they possessed, and in no event could gain any more, it would be foolish financiering; and so refused point blank the loan.

Now they called us hoggish Dutchmen, and in other ways showed a threatening attitude, which we did not care to see carried out, so putting our hands on our bulged pockets, in a bee line we scampered for our boarding house. What became of our marbles I never knew, most likely as the German proverb says: "Leicht gewonne, ist leicht zeronnen." Translated, "Easy won is easier gone". We remained in New York about a week, then left by steamer on the Hudson for Albany, from there by rail to Buffalo, and then boarded the large side-wheel steamer Globe for Milwaukee.

## Journey to Milwaukee

On the steamer our family occupied staterooms. My father,

appreciating the benefits of the first table for his gourmands, tipped the porter, who, before ringing for meals, would come to our doors with muffled gun, that is, his bell concealed under his coattail, after which we would rush to the front and take possession of the field before the enemy arrived. The trick for a time worked all right, till others detected it and became more alert, but nevertheless we managed not to be crowded out. What a delicious royal table — chicken, mutton, steak, white bread, cake; oh, my, and apple pie! All the things which on the Adele we only had a smell of we would now consume midst the daintiest surroundings. Only in one case were we disappointed. After having tested everything on the table we observed a new dish. It looked so tempting with its golden hue, my sister and I dashed for it. Say, this must be nice — we tasted only a mouthful, which more than satisfied us. It was corn cake, which afterwards we learned to relish.

A few days out of Buffalo the steamer broke its main shaft. Thus we were detained in Detroit for over a week, which we enjoyed. One day while my sister and I sauntered around the city, the children pelted us with Indian corn, which in Germany was a rarity, costing one cent per kernel. Why, this is about realizing the German saying, "There the fried ducks will fly into your mouth." We picked up all these costly kernels, with which my sister filled her apron and I my pockets.

Our shaft being completed, we proceeded on our way to Milwaukee. A German boy some years older than my older brother, and having been in this country several years, came on board at Detroit and seemed to enjoy teasing us by calling us Dutchmen, when we thought we were less so than he, whereupon we planned revenge. If we attacked him single-handed we agreed that we would get the worst of it, but by united action we could safely make the venture. My brother suggested that when the boy should climb over the shaft, as he was wont to do, I should then hold his legs, while he would do the pounding. This was nicely executed and our tormentor subsided.

## Landing at Milwaukee

On the 22nd day of October, 1848, on a clear, crisp morning, we landed on the north pier at Milwaukee and took lodgings in a small boarding house near by. The next day I was eager to have the trunk opened which held my dearest treasure — my new cross-bow gun. This was soon unpacked. Now I was prepared to shoot the partridges from the veranda, as father had told us in Germany we could do, but they failed to show up, which made me feel sorry, especially because I lost my unbounded faith in father's truthfulness. But after reflection I was pacified, for he said we could shoot them but did not say that they were there. So the next day I took my cross-bow gun and in company with my sister wended my way towards the woods to hunt. We went along the river, East Water Street, to where the city hall is now located, where they were grading down a street, and from there climbed up the hill. On top of this we were in a virgin forest. I spied what I took to be American partridges. I fired, and, behold, wounded one in such a way that it could not get away fast enough to escape my clutches. I put it in my sister's apron, and with my cross-gun on my shoulder we wended our way home. I must have appeared to a looker-on like a noble Indian, proudly walking to his wigwam, with his squaw toddling alongside, carrying his game.

On arrival I said to father: "Say, I got one of your American partridges." "Well, well, let me see. Why, boy, that is a tame chicken." "Oh, no, it is grey!" "Never mind, where did you shoot it?" "In the woods on the hill." "Take it back then; it must belong to someone near there." I had to obey, but only partly, as I set it at liberty a few blocks distant, in a pitiable, lame condition.

## Father Meets Youthful Friends

My father found in Milwaukee several of his youthful friends, among whom were a Mr. Hilgen and Schroeder, who had for several years been located at Cedarburg, a small village eighteen miles northwest of Milwaukee. They operated a saw and flour mill and store there. They persuaded my

father to locate in Cedarburg, as it was yet in the hopeful stage of development, plenty of room to grow, sure to grow with it, no reason why it should not outgrow Milwaukee, offering all the benefit accruing to all fast growing cities by the advance of real estate, which could still be bought for a song, etc.

## To Cedarburg

So on November 1st, on a cold morning, when the first frost on a muddy road had made it terribly rough, a team, not a hack, as we had left in Germany, drove up to our door, and we were again on our course westward. On the way we were surprised to see a Mr. Alfs working on a farm by the roadside. We had known that he intended to leave a month after we did, on a sailing vessel too, and already here? He explained that he did, but had only been on the ocean six weeks to our eleven, which explained the mystery. In the evening, after a rough and most tedious drive of eighteen miles, all frozen and with aching bones, we entered the only tavern at Cedarburg. This somewhat dampened our fond expectations of the country. The first time I read "Rattle the bones over the stones, it's only a pauper which no one owns," I was reminded of this drive.

As strict economy would not allow us to remain long in a luxurious tavern, other places were looked up, where we could keep house until we had our own, but none could be found. Finally the tavern keeper offered us his dance hall upstairs, with the proviso that whenever he had a dance we had to clear ship for action. As no opportunity presented itself, father reluctantly accepted. The hall was but one room, partitioned off into smaller rooms with blankets, sheets, etc. During our stay we had to clear out three times, on a Christmas, New Years and a Washington Birthday Ball.

On such occasions we would dump our partitions and all into our trunks and put these alongside the wall. We had free admission to the dances. Father and mother would look on for awhile and then retire below, but we children had a picnic of it and danced till the dawn of day — and in the free and easy unceremonious gaiety we regained our faith in the glory of

this country, which had been<sup>5</sup> somewhat shaken by our drive.

In Germany I would not have had the courage to attempt to dance without having first gotten my dancing master's diploma. But here, oh, my, I went right in, learned it in one night, and my little girl said I soared as graceful as an angel. After all had retired we opened the lids of our trunks on the wall, crept in and with the refrain of the dance music ringing in our ears like the harps of angels, we slept the sweet sleep of childhood.

Upon our arrival we were at once sent to the public school in which a Mr. Chamberlain was teacher. He was the grandfather of Mr. Chamberlain, the superintendent of the Denney's factory here, and died only a few years ago at Port Washington.

Here, too, I attempted to foist my English, as it ought to be spoken upon the school. I persisted in pronouncing certainly as cerTAINly, till I finally had to stand corrected.

During the winter, and in spite of deep snow, our little house was under construction, to be used as a dwelling and store, precisely on the same plan as our little frame store here on Eighth Street, which was torn down only a few years ago to make room for the present structure, after our mother passed away. As she had expressed the wish that it should remain as long as she lived, the wish was gladly respected.

When spring was on the wing and the sap of the maple was drawn upwards by the balmy air, my father tapped the maple trees behind our house for syrup and maple sugar. The ground was still under a mantle of snow. The scene at once brought to my mind father's description of this land. I said: "Father, I suppose from these scenes the phrase, 'the land where milk and honey flow' originated." He replied he did not know, but the application was not a bad one.

On the last of April, when our house was nearly completed, I was taken sick with fever and ague. When my father talked about this to his friends they told him, "That is nothing, it will all be over in a few weeks; we all get it regularly each spring; it is never fatal and is caused by a cedar swamp near by

us; you will have it soon, too." "What! I, too? Not by a long shot. So, then this is Feverburg? I'll leave my house behind and get away before it gets hold of me; this is a nice burg to raise a large family in," and in other words gave vent to his disappointed feelings.

The next day he had determined to leave, and having been informed that the fever fiend did not infest the lake shore towns, he wended his way on foot along the beach of Lake Michigan. First he walked to Port Ulao — three miles east, where there was a pier and store which he had in mind to buy, since he was always attached to a seaport. But as he could not agree on the price he continued on foot along the beach to Port Washington, then to Sheboygan and Centerville, and then to Manitowoc.

On his arrival here he surveyed the little village from the southern elevation and was at once struck by its beautiful location, as it nestled in a half moon valley, bounded by the blue lake on the east, the north, west and south a rising embankment, the river running through its center, a few vessels loading with lumber and shingles, a sawmill located at South Eighth Street bridge, with its saws, wafting to him the pleasing hum of industry, all combined made upon him such favorable impressions that he decided to locate here and returned for his family.

### Arrived at Manitowoc

Again our trunks were packed and by team we left Cedarburg for Port Washington, and from there by the little propeller Rossiter, the only boat running weekly trips between Chicago and Green Bay, arriving at Manitowoc on the 19th day of May, 1849.

We landed on the south pier. I had the cold spell of my fever. Father covered me with his long overcoat, in which I must have looked like a pasha. We walked through the deep lake sand along the beach to J. Roemer's tavern, near the corner of Jay and Sixth streets, which was to me the most fatiguing three blocks walk I have ever experienced. Now, here we were, all in good health except myself ailing with the fever and ague, but it left me a few days after our arrival. We say there is no loss without some gain. Who knows

whether my loss of health was not a gain in our family's destiny? In any event, my sickness was the cause that brought us to Manitowoc. How a small cause may affect the life of men. This is, then, why, how, when and from where the Schuette family came.

### My First Attempt for Growth

Before entering on the public spirit for the growth of Manitowoc, I wish to tell of my boyish effort in this behalf. After I was well again, I strolled around the village to find something which I could aid or nurse in its development. The first thing I found in this line was a robin's nest in a maple tree on the present courthouse site. This needed protection. I watched and guarded it every day, and when the young were about to take to their wings I climbed up the tree and took charge of the entire brood, consisting of four young robins, believing that the old folks could hatch out a new brood while I was nursing the first, thereby fostering the growth of population. But I was surprised that they did not appreciate my public spirit, as they remonstrated with terrific screechings about my head, while I made my way homeward with my little orphans in my cap.

Upon safe arrival I asked mother what I must feed them. She replied, "I don't know anything about birds, I have had my head and hands full to feed you babies." "Well," I asked, "what did you feed us?" "Why, don't you know? Milk and bread." Now, I thought if that is good enough for babies, it ought to be good enough for birds. So I made a spoon from a shingle, and a kind of milk mush with which I fed them and which they devoured in great fashion. Of course it must be good for them, else nature would not have given them an appetite for it. So the diet continued. After a few days, one died, then another, then another, and while I was feeding the last one, someone noticed it and so asked what I fed them. I told him and that three had died from it. "Of course", he said, "I don't wonder, boy, they are insect birds. You must feed them with worms or meat." Yes, but the advice came too late, the last one died and my guardianship here ended.

Although my first effort to aid in

our growth was a failure, it spurred me to more thoroughly study the problem so that in my mature years I would be better able to grapple with it. I shall now dismiss my growth and enter upon my main subject.

### Manitowoc's Public Spirit

Now let me come to the main point and review the history of Manitowoc's public spirit. Some may be astounded when I claim that what has been done in this line has been more than in a majority of cities of our size and wealth. Milwaukee, Racine, Sheboygan, Oshkosh and Green Bay, which have more or less outgrown us, in their earlier days some of these did not give a dollar nor make the efforts that Manitowoc did to stimulate their growth. In spite of this, and even lacking the best harbor on the lakes, they have outgrown us. Why is this?

Allow me to answer this in Yankee fashion. Why does one baby, with no particular care, grow quicker and better than another receiving the best of care? Why does one business man with but ordinary ability and effort, grow wealthy, while another, with extraordinary ability and effort, remains stationary?

My answer is — I don't know. It may be due to a combination of circumstances, it may be fate. I do not want to be understood as meaning that we should lie idle, waiting for fate to bring us growth. No, not by any means. If we had contented ourselves with this, we would be less than we are now, but I mean that fate enters into all relations of life, with varying results.

### First Donation

In the summer of 1853, when the county seat was removed from the Rapids to this city, the first instance of public spirit manifested itself in the collection of a fund to donate to the county for a courthouse site. This donation came wholly from the south sides and by reason thereof the courthouse is now on the south side. Thus public spirit, at its incipiency, created what has more or less remained to the present day, a dividing line between the north and the south sides, and which in a degree suppressed what otherwise

would have been a more harmonious cooperation. F. Goetzler was awarded the contract for building the courthouse and began work on the basement in 1854. But he was enjoined by the opposing interest in some technical claim that the work on the basement was faulty. Later his contract was declared void and another awarded John Meyer, who completed the building on the same basement by the end of 1856. And on January 1, 1857, Colonel Edwards, the first sheriff of our village, took possession.

### First Railroad

The next important improvement was the vote of April, 1854, to bond the village for \$150,000 in aid of the Manitowoc & Mississippi railroad, and which was carried by a large majority. Of these bonds, only \$13,000 were issued, being delivered as earned.

Besides these bonds, about \$100,000 in stock were subscribed by our citizens, the larger portion by the Lueps family. Through a disagreement in the directory, and the financial panic of 1857, the promising enterprise came to naught, entailing great losses. If this first effort in railroad building had been successful, Manitowoc might have become the metropolis of the state, as at that time there was but one railroad in operation, between Milwaukee and Watertown.

### Harbor Commissioners

In 1866, by an act of the legislature, a board of harbor commissioners was created, consisting of eight members, of which I am the only surviving member. Under this act the village and town of Manitowoc voted a tax of \$20,000 for the purpose of building a dredge. This dredge was to aid the national government, which had appropriated \$52,000 for our harbor. The government engineer claimed that by such aid — dredges in those days were scarce — we could more speedily get a harbor of sufficient depth for the then existing needs. This was afterwards proved to be well taken.

### Shipping Grain to Buffalo

As soon as our harbor had so far progressed as to give us an eight foot channel, in the spring of 1867, some of our business men formed a

corporation to ship grain direct from here to Buffalo. In all about seven cargoes were shipped. The venture proved a losing one, partly due to the want of elevators, it was discontinued. I am again the only one remaining of these grain shipping adventurers. Whether this is on the theory of the German proverb that "weeds will not perish", or the American "survival of the fittest", I can't guess but the fact remains that I am surviving most all my youthful associates, and no wonder that I should feel lonesome.

### Dry Dock

The next enterprise which naturally suggested itself after the improvement of our harbor, was the building of a dry dock. This was built wholly by stock subscriptions of the business men, and was completed in 1871. Shipbuilding had been our main industry from an early date. The ships built here had proved so seaworthy and so superior in construction, that they were known as "clippers", and from this came the nickname "Clipper City". Shipbuilding has remained to the present day the best labor giving industry.

The schooner Challenge, the second vessel built here in 1852 by Stephen Bates & Son., for J. E. Platt, traded in this harbor as late as two years ago. On my cruise last summer I found her dismantled at Marinette, most likely having made her last voyage. She is the oldest vessel on the lakes.

### Second Railroad

Railroad building was revived in 1870, when the county voted \$250,000 bonds in aid of the Milwaukee & Lake Shore railroad. Men of influence were sent into the different towns to electioneer for the bond issue and it was carried by a large majority. The main promoter in the enterprise was Joseph Vilas. After the road had been graded and practically completed from Milwaukee to Centerville, it suspended operation. It could not or did not pay for labor performed, professing to be without means to proceed further. It threatened to abandon the whole project and leave us in the lurch unless the city of Manitowoc would vote to issue \$75,000 in bonds and aid it. This \$75,000 was to be in

addition to the \$250,000 already given by the county.

Our people were at first very much incensed at what they termed a hold-up, believing they had been very liberal in a donation of \$250,000. Many meetings were held, at which the lawyers retained by the railroad company were in control. They argued that if the bonds be not voted, we would be left outside the bounds of civilization, but if they were issued, we would have a city of over 25,000 within two years. No concerted opposition developing, the bond issue of \$75,000 carried, part of which still remains unpaid at this day. With all this aid the road was finally completed and in operation in the fall of 1872.

### Elevator

In 1873 the business men united and built an elevator to enhance the facilities for shipping grain to Buffalo. It was located on a dock east of South Seventh Street and operated for several years. It, too, proved a losing venture, so that the buying and shipping of grain to Buffalo was again discontinued.

The elevator was then leased for a few years to the Oriental Mills. Afterwards the stock was sold for whatever it would bring, and the whole property passed into the hands of the William Rahr's Sons Company, which moved the building to its malting plant.

The Manitowoc Manufacturing Company was given inducement to locate here, and after its destruction by fire in 1892, our business men organized the Manitowoc Seating Company with a capital of \$80,000. They also subscribed for stock in the Smalley Manufacturing Company. Both of these are being operated with increased capacity and are quite a benefit to our city. Besides these, the first flour mill, named the Clipper City Mills, and owned by George Dwyer and located where Gehbe's Hotel now is, was subsidized.

Others of later date, which were more or less encouraged by stock subscription or otherwise, are the glue company, the boiler works, the toy factory, the glove factory, all of which, except the toy factory, are in active operation and add quite materially to the growth of the city.

The recent effort of our business men to get a piano factory located here, unfortunately proved unavailing. In addition to the efforts of the business men, our citizens in general have taxed themselves most liberally for docking and dredging, and thus maintain Manitowoc's prestige as the best harbor on the lakes.

The last successful effort in this regard was the \$50,000 bond issue, which will give us a turning basin, the only one on the lake, and in connection therewith, the only opportunity for a steel floating dry dock, and one of the largest and most modern type coal dock, which are now under construction. Besides this it will give us nearly double the dock front, of particular value, because the whole of the peninsula, an ideal factory site, is now easily made available for new enterprises. The whole project with docking, etc., will entail an expenditure of over \$300,000, and the accruing benefits therefrom promise well worthy the outlay.

Taking it all in all, if we have not grown as we expected, we cannot lay it to a lack of public spirit. Nor let us blame anyone in particular nor collectively for our slow growth, but as we like to put the blame somewhere, let us place it where it will hurt the least — to a combination of unfavorable circumstances over which we had no control. What were these? Let us try and analyse:

First — the lack of capital. This was especially true in the earlier years with the emigrants who had in most cases barely enough to pay for their homes. All their accumulations had to be acquired by the sweat of the brow. That accumulated by the more fortunate ones was invested in vessel property, which business at that was considerable and most profitable. But then came a transitory period, when vessels were constructed of larger and larger capacity, and later of steel, and these investments depreciated to such an extent as to become practically worthless, and consequently a great loss to Manitowoc.

Second — some of the surplus capital was in many cases sent out of the city and invested in speculative enterprises, which usually brought no return. It is

claimed that such investments have amounted to over \$300,000. If this amount had been invested in any kind of industry in our own community, it would in no event have proven as disastrous as this outside investment, but would probably have proven profitable to the investor, and at any rate, beneficial to the city.

Third — All stock subscribed to encourage manufacturing proved discouraging to the investor, although it was a benefit to the city, for it constitutes a large part of the factories existing today. But if these investments had yielded only four per cent dividends, it is safe to assume that four times as many factories would have been organized, because there has been for some time abundant capital which would have invested in such enterprises if a reasonable return were assured. It is this experience which has brought about the condition that anyone now soliciting stock subscriptions is looked upon as an imposter.

Fourth — Real estate was held at too high a price in our earlier days. Other things being equal, industries will locate where they can get real estate the cheapest.

Fifth — our greatest misfortune was undoubtedly the wrangle and quarrel among the directors of our first railroad attempt in 1855. If harmony had then prevailed and the road completed, Manitowoc would have been, if not the first, at least the second city in the state instead as of now, being the fifteenth of one hundred and fifteen cities in the state.

These are, I believe, the adverse circumstances on account of which we lost our opportunities.

### An Ideal City

But let this be as it may, Manitowoc is a most beautiful spot, an ideal socialistic city in the sense that we have no millionaires nor a poor class, that wealth is more uniformly distributed than in others, and if all were equally divided, it would not greatly change conditions.

## MANITOWOC COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Address all Communications to:

NEWSLETTER  
1115 North 18th Street  
Manitowoc, Wisconsin 54220

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Manitowoc, Wis.  
PERMIT NO. 388

Mr. George Frieder  
821 Jackson St.  
Manitowoc, Wis.