Only In Sumpter

by Erhart Mueller

This is the first in a series of five books by this author on the subject of the people, places and events in the Town of Sumpter, Sauk County, Wisconsin. To give you an idea of what is between the covers we include here the author's introduction to the book and a listing of the chapters of the book, (listed by subject classification rather than book order).

Introduction

Every area has its history, past present and future. The Township of Sumpter is no exception. It is with the express intention of preserving this history that this book was written. Not that the history of Sumpter is of greater or less importance then that of any other location, but merely because here we have lived our entire life, and we know this area better than any other. We suppose it could be said with a degree of truth that we are slightly prejudiced in Sumpter's favor.

There are those who may consider these stories of little importance; people who feel it is the present and future that are important are those who chant, "forget the past". It has been wisely said that they who ignore the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them. True, we should not dwell entirely in the past; the very thought is revolting. Yet we can never wholly disregard what happened yesterday and consider it of no consequence. We build on the past — the roads, the farm sites and buildings, and the land with its fertility and contours. Yea, let him who would cast aside the past, invent and build his own car and tractor, as did his ancestor; and then having done so, we too will honor him.

We have attempted to write with a high degree of accuracy. Many times we were confronted with two or three dates, locations or variations of stories. At all times, we have tried to determine what was fact, what was fiction, and what was the most historically correct. We naturally assume that official records are accurate. When in doubt, we have added these or similar words: " it is believed", or " we have been told". It is not likely that we have at all times been factual.

Some will read this book because it gives them an opportunity to relive the past and savor it. Everyone loves to share the memories of a day gone by with family and friends. Not all will have known the episodes told herein. These stories may remind and evoke similar incidents in the life of the reader, so the memories flow in good old-fashioned "gemütlichkeit" (genial friendship and visiting).

No attempt has been made to arrange these tales in chronological order for that would have been impossible. Therefore this book is open-ended. Some of the chapters begin with pioneer days and end with the present. Others are definitely period stories. Some stories have been omitted because they were as yet incomplete, and needed further research. No doubt some narratives which have been included as final, will have information added to them by readers, who remember incidents of which the

writer knew nothing. We covet such data. Organizing in this fashion seemed to be the only way to avoid the chaotic confusion which might otherwise result and would be similar to trying to walk through a recently cut woodlot with the tree tops and branches piled high, everywhere, with briars and brambles growing through the entire wilderness.

We have retained some very interesting chapters to be included in future volumes, and have made no attempt to include all the outstanding characters and events in this first edition. How sad if these stories should forever perish from this earth (as so many have already escaped us). They are the warp of which we are made. They are our roots, and our wings of fancy, as well as our heritage.

We do not write with the intention of ridiculing or laughing at the past and its people. Rather the focus is on folks as we know they lived and laughed and enjoyed life, as well as had their more serious times of sadness and sorrow. Nor everything that is written can be saccharin sweet, but now and then we must include the incident which makes the story true. If we are to tell only the good, the story loses its value, and no lessons can be learned therefrom. The narrative becomes bland, tasteless and emasculated. As the villain, the clown and the hero strode the stage of life, they now appear on the stage of history.

"Roll the Curtain!"

People

Prescott Brigham Pioneer
They Who have here Softly Trod
Meletiah Willis: A Yankee
Mr. "Education" in Sumpter (the Haskins)
Miss Lu's Diary
The J.P. Kindschi Saga
King's Corner; its Houses and People
The Accola's of Schweitzer Thal
The Strange Disappearance of Mr. Preuss
A.K. of Ski-Hi
The Rattlesnake King

Poems

My Woodland Passion
Pearl's Choice
My Mother's Treasure Chest
To Be

Places

Pine Hollow
Farm Names - Past and Present
Silos: Lighthouses of Prosperity
...and Dooryards where the Lilacs Bloomed
The King's Corner School
The Sumpter Methodist Church

Events

The Coming of the Badger Ordnance Works
Light, Heat and Power - Before and After
Hops, the Boom and the Bust
History of the Lakeview School District
Murder at Shark's Hollow