

## Edwards-Yurs Farm (as provided by Laura Yurs)

Featured in one of the "Elkhorn Christmas Card" paintings, this home is situated on the old Milwaukee to Janesville stage coach route. One of the very early houses in Sugar Creek township, it was built in Sec. 10 in 1830 by S. R. Edwards from Massachusetts. He went back and forth to be educated, bringing his family to Walworth County in 1839. He was the Justice of the Peace in 1855 for eleven years and Town Chairman for 4 years. He had two children, Julius A and Helen V. The home was featured in the 1873 Atlas of Walworth County. Edwards' son Julius, was one of the founders of Elkhorn Bank which soon became First National. He was also one of the founders of Sugar Creek Mutual Insurance. Because Julius was involved in banking and insurance there were several farm managers. Original to the home, it has always had a cupola on top. Mary Sheard, longtime Sugar Creek resident recalls the first farm manager perhaps being Walter Davis & his family. Lowe Dooley became manager in 1912 when he married Florence White. Doris and the twins, George and Jay, were born on the farm. Mary Sheard remembers playing with Doris Dooley on the farm.

Mary Sheard continues to write: Water is always a fun place to play and one summer day Florence looked out and saw George by the tank trying to get his leg over the edge of the tank. She and Doris rushed down to the tank and looked in and saw Jay floating. She got him out and with him in her arms ran to the road. It just happened that the road man was going by, Ollie Olson, an old Norwegian sea captain. He

grabbed Jay by the heels and swung him to get the water out of his lungs and brought him to consciousness. So thanks to Ollie Olson, Jay survived the incident. Ollie was the road man in those days and drove a team of horses with a gravel wagon with dump planks. He drove to the place he wanted the gravel, tipped the planks and let the gravel fall to the road. He probably filled the wagon by hand shoveling! Surmising he was going by with gravel from the pit just to the west owned by Albert Olson, father of Andy Olson and Alma Kittleson when Florence headed with Jay to the road! Alice Scharinger, who with her husband, lived on the Olson place (later purchased by Yurs) and says she remembers loading gravel by hand shoveling and her father, Richard Trickey bought the place in 1924.

The next people that she remembers managing the Edwards farm were Ed and Lenora Heth from 1934 to about 1948. At this time it became an estate by Porter Stone of Detroit, whose wife was an Edwards heir. Will Holloway of Millard was appointed farm manager. While the Heths were there the Stone's funded a lot of building and remodeling. The metal tag on the telephone pole in front of the home dated electricity coming to County Road A residents at about that time. A stone chimney was added to vent the new electric water heater in the basement and it's probably time when plumbing and closets were added to the home. Photos in the farm album show a new breakfast nook as well as the sun room being remodeled. Mary remembers when Florence Dooley lived there there the area remodeled had a dirt floor, probably because it was originally where all the cooking in the home used to take place. The cow barn was remodeled along with new heifer/horse barn and hog house built. In 1948, Claude Ragland and family

from southern Illinois followed the Heths as managers. The Stones put in irrigation and electricity out to a large garden for Fairy Ragland, east of the home.

William Yurs became the second owners, purchasing the farm in 1960 from Porter Stone of Detroit, who had inherited the farm from his mother, who was an Edwards daughter. William (known to friends as Bill) and his wife, Marilyn raised their four children over the 50 years of owning the farm, Dennis, Brenda, Laura & Nancy. Improvements were added as needed along with putting in a 20' x 40' swimming pool. Bill added the neighboring farm shown on the 1873 plat as belonging to Daniel Williams, later owned by Richard Trickey in 1924. Farming with Bill, his son, Dennis and his family lived and farmed there, building a new home on the property in 1981. A third farm, directly across from Trickey's, owned at the time by Karl & Violet Gahns, was purchased a few years later by Yurs.

Saturday night on Aug. 11th of 1984, word came over Mary Sheard's scanner that the Yurs barn at the home farm was on fire. Neighbor, Dick Heacox, driving by, saw the smoke and flames across the top of the barn and alerted Bill who was in the lower part of the barn, milking. They worked together, releasing all of the cows from the stanchions saving all 65 cows. Neighbors assisted throughout the night as they moved the cows to Dennis' barn where they were milked in shifts for quite some time. The Elkhorn fire department called in LaGrange and Whitewater departments for assistance and the house was spared with water being pulled from neighboring Silver Lake as well as the family swimming pool. When the fire started the wind was

blowing the heat and flames towards the house and actually warped the siding of the house but the house was spared when the wind changed direction to the west. The firemen were successful in saving all the buildings but the barn. The fire department stayed on site for days, as the barn that was completely full with hay, kept reigniting. A new metal barn with spancrete second floor replaced the old one and became the place for young stock and dry cows. Since that fire, the town of Sugar Creek built a spot on Silver Lake where tank trucks could get water for future fire fighting.

William Yurs was a dealer for the Golden Harvest Seed Company. Hew was a member of the Board of Directors of the Consumers Co-op of Walworth County. He was a member of the Holstein Association and worked with his son, Dennis and others to found the National Red & White Holstein Dairy Cattle Association (director). He was a trustee of the Mt. Pleasant Cemetery Association. Bill passed away in April of 2013.

Bill's daughter, Laura, and her husband, Wayne Dober bought the farm and surrounding 5 acres in 1996. Laura adds that in 1830 the ornate, hand hewn, 12" carved woodwork that surrounded each door and window on the first floor was immediately painted when it was put up due to the style of the time. She is credited for stripping the many layers of paint from the home. She remembers finding German handwriting on the top of a window and has been told there is a home with a similar, almost "art deco" style of woodwork original to a home in the town of Elkhorn. Perhaps created by the same German woodworkers. Wayne and Laura also added a 20' x 30' addition to the

west side of the home, matching the woodwork in the original part of the home.

Standing guard since that original plat book etching are two pine trees that have stood for over 150 years. There used to be two additional trees in between but they died around 1980 to a boring bug. Under the wood floors in the entry off the kitchen is an old cistern and an old hand pump still stands outside the back door which was part of the original water source/well.