

standing and still in use, known for eighty years as the "Four Mile House." Now utilized as a dwelling, the old tavern has an interesting history, and is one of the best known land-marks in this section of the country.

Four miles from Trempealeau, and a little less than that distance from Galesville, the Four Mile House has stood for more than three quarters of a century, guarding successive generations of people; silently watching the transition from travel with ox-teams, to horses, to motor vehicles; witnessing the cycles of inhabitants and the changing modes of life—the still sturdy old frame building has housed three or four generations of the owner's family, and will remain for many years more.

The tavern, conveniently located at a cross-roads, was on the then main highway from La Crosse to Winona, in the day when McGillvary's Ferry was the only means of crossing the Black River at that point. Christian Schmitz, "mine host" at the inn for a long period of years, entertained the traveling public, and as the stage-coaches rolled up to his door, his hearty greeting and the hospitality and fine cooking of his good wife, made a merry welcome for transients. There, too, scores of farmers tethered their oxen while they enjoyed a warm meal or a bit of hospitality from the bar of the hostelry, as they journeyed the long distance from their homes above Ettrick, past the then tiny settlement of Galesville, and on to Trempealeau, where their wheat was sold for shipment on the Mississippi.

Portrays Early History

Mrs. J. A. Salsman, old resident of Galesville, is a daughter of the former inn-keeper, and she obligingly recalled past days recently, giving a clear picture of life of sixty years ago, and told of the days of the old hotel and its part in the community life, where it served as a community gathering.

Mrs. Salsman told that her father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Christian Schmitz, came with the parents of Mrs. Schmitz from Watertown, seeking a location and a farm in 1852. Reaching the cross-roads near Trempealeau, the travelers found a little log tavern built and doing a fair business with the traveling public. The spot struck their fancy, and the older couple decided to purchase the place and set up in business. The Schmitz family journeyed on, locating for a time near Ettrick, then very much in the wilderness. Later, they returned and took over the hostelry themselves, and during the long years of her widowhood, Mrs. Simons remained with them.

When Theodore Simons bought the place, it was but a one-room log building, yet its possibilities appealed to the family, and they chose to make a hostelry there. The log part of the building still remains, but additions have nearly surrounded it, and few realize that the old place is partially of hewn logs. The traditions of the old hostelry have an appeal, and memories of the place are interesting. Mrs. Salsman dipped back into family history in reciting the tale of her parents business venture, told in her characteristic way.

Born in Germany

Her parents, she said, were both German born. Mrs. Schmitz, as a child of seven, came to America with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Simons, while her future husband was somewhat older when he journeyed to his new home. Though the families had lived not so distant in Germany, they were not acquainted, and queer circumstances brought them together in this country. Schmitz, as did many of his day, made a living by vending wares about the country, and with a pack of oil-cloth as his stock-in-trade, appeared at the door of the Simons home near Watertown, Wis., asking to display his wares and if possible to obtain a meal. The mother and daughter were embarrassed by their simple

between the young couple, and their marriage resulted. As host and hostess of the old Four Mile House, the couple had hundreds of acquaintances throughout the state, and their children remember the days of the hotel as their early home.

As business grew, Schmitz added to his tavern, until a total of fourteen rooms stood ready to house travelers brought to their door. An old style entrance hall greeted the guests, at one side of which was the bar and a post office, for the place was at one time the post office for the territory, and was for years called the "Scotia" post office. Living rooms occupied the other side of the ground floor, and above were many bedrooms. A huge dance hall in the second story provided room for many an old-fashioned ball, when musicians would gather to furnish music for square dances, reels, and the early "round" dances, as waltzes, two-steps and the schottische were called to designate them from the more popular quadrilles.

Old Oven Still Stands

"Our old bake-oven still stands," said Mrs. Salsman, "though it has not been used for years." The huge old oven was built in Dutch style, at a little distance from the house, and was of huge capacity. With two dozen loaves of bread in a pan, the wife of the inn-keeper would have four to six tins of bread at a baking. So famed did her rye bread become that she supplied it to certain customers, some in Milwaukee, where she shipped the delicious home-baked loaves. Flour, said Mrs. Salsman, came from the Galesville mill, earliest industry of Galesville, which supplied flour to all the settlers about. To heat the oven, the narrator said, a fire was built inside the brick oven. When a glowing bed of coals remained, they were raked out, and the bread or cakes were placed in the great fire-place. Its heat was retained sufficiently to bake the bread to a turn. Many a time, whole sheep or tender veal calves were baked at one time in the oven, and she well remembered when a huge celebration was in progress, and the meat supply threatened to run low. With the whole country-side depending upon the hospitality of the inn for a Fourth of July celebration or the like, an immense amount of baking was accomplished in the old oven. At this particular time, it became evident that the mutton would never serve the great company. "George Hayter, a brother of the late Thomas Hayter, helped dress a sheep in a hurry, and while some heated the oven, he dressed and cut up the meat of a young sheep. Before the first tables full of company were served, we had the sheep roasted to a turn, and saved the day." Of the luscious cakes of the day, Mrs. Salsman recalled the "pyramid" cake with something like a shudder. "I thought I would never want to see another of those," she said. For as the girl grew to womanhood, she assisted her mother with the strenuous baking required in the inn. The pyramid cakes were made as the name implies, layer upon layer in the style of a pyramid, with the smallest at the top. A half dozen of these toothsome mountains of cake were required to grace the table at the great meetings of the Grange, or the Fourth of July celebrations, and the young cook tired of the duty. In the old smoke-house, still standing, hams and sides of bacon from forty swine, butchered during a week of meat preparation during the winter, were smoked and preserved for summer use. Mrs. Salsman recalled the bread bowl where her mother mixed the great quantities of dough for her twice-weekly bakings. A great wooden bowl, some four feet long by two feet wide, was set on two chairs, and the mass of sponge was kneaded by hand and prepared for the baking. The pioneer woman made her own yeast cakes from a recipe of her own.

Court Crowded Hotel

Court days in Galesville brought an overflow to the Schmitz hotel,

be present that every bed would be taken, and the kitchen floor was used for the overflow. Beds were often set up in the old dance hall, and when guests came a great distance to attend the dances in the old house, often they remained over night, crowding the tavern to the utmost. During the winter, people from the Minnesota side of the river came to the good times at the hostelry, and even in the summer, they rowed over the river and enjoyed the hospitality of the Four Mile House. At one time, in the dead of winter, when the roads, at best little more than trails, were completely blocked, a company of people were forced to remain for two weeks in the old hotel. Arriving by stage-coach, the travelers were unable to continue, and for a fortnight, Landlord Schmitz and his good wife entertained the crowd. Until some thirty years ago, the community Christmas celebrations were still held in the old center, and many a program was given there for the enjoyment of the countryside. Mrs. Salsman recalled the orchestra, Carpenter's, from Blair, playing with their four pieces, and of the programs when the delightful music of a harp in the hands of Mrs. Ed Jonson, mother of Don Jonson, now of La Crosse, pleased the guests. Plays and dialogs, and many a recitation by young and old, were given in the old hall or ballroom, in the days when the Grange was the flourishing organization of rural life.

Raised Large Family

Mr. and Mrs. Schmitz were the parents of nine children, seven of whom grew to maturity, and four of whom are still living. In addition to rearing their own family, the Schmitz's took into their home three motherless children of a deceased sister. Mrs. Salsman, Mrs. C. A. Kellman, both of Galesville, and Theodore Schmitz, on the Center-ville country, and Peter, on the old homestead remain of the family, and of the foster children, Mrs. Charles Harris lives on Trempealeau Prairie, and her brother, Will Melchior, lives in Fargo, N. D. The third of that family, Theodore, died in 1922. Christian Schmitz died in 1876.

Mrs. Schmitz lived long after her husband, and many years after the Scotia postoffice had ceased to exist, and the Four Mile House, as a tavern, was but a memory. Gone were the crowds of farmers, stopping for a meal, while their oxen stood tethered to the rail fence; gone the merry crowds gathered for community observances, and the old oven and smoke house fell into disuse. Still the little woman loved her old home, and peopled it with flower friends. As long as she lived, she cultivated old-fashioned flowers about the place, and her garden was a gay sight from spring to fall. Verbenas, sweet William, lilies, pansies, poppies, and stately hollyhocks nodded across the fence at the passersby, and as she worked among the plants which grew to be her hobby, the former inn-keeper's wife dreamed of the days when her tavern was the center of the community. Her death occurred in 1915. No longer does the main thoroughfare pass the place. A modern bridge has replaced the old McGillvary's ferry, and though much traveled, it is not

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