

Clara Koehn

Hello, My name is Clara Koehn, daughter of Antone and Mary (Pekal) Seidel. I was born on Dec 30, 1888, in Sherwood, WI. I have 2 brothers and 2 sisters.

I married Antone Koehn and together we had 8 children: Merla, Anthony, Imogene, Frank, Roger, James, Clyde and Kenneth. We lived in Sherwood and my husband, Anton worked as a tavern owner, Insurance agent, and part owner of the Nash Garage. He was also a Master Barber, training young men who came over from Europe.

In 1925 we moved to Little Chute and purchased the show house from Antone's brother, John, which was located on the corner of Wilson and Main Streets, where the Bank of Little Chute's parking lot is today.

Anton passed away in 1929 at the age of 49 leaving me with the 8 children, the oldest being 17 and the youngest only one year old. We continued to manage and operated the show house with the boys working the projection room and at times ushering. The girls sold tickets, ushered, and did the cleaning. The worst job was getting all the gum off the floor!

When we started, there were silent movies during which our daughter, Merla played the piano. The serials, namely "The Santa Fe Trails" and "Perils of Pauline" were also popular at this time. Occasionally we booked a traveling vaudeville act or a special musician prior to the scheduled movie. I ordered the movies and managed the finances. No X-rated movies were ever shown with the most questionable one being "The Naked Truth", which was basically an explanation of the human

anatomy. Movies were shown Wednesdays, Thursdays, and the weekends at 7:00 and 9:00 pm and a Sunday Matinee.

The show house was also used for commencement ceremonies and plays.

There was no concession stand, but in the summer time the Lucassen family across the street set up a popcorn stand. Also there were no restrooms to start with, but later one was put in the basement next to the old furnace.

The original building itself was moved downtown after having served as a chapel in St. John's Cemetery. It later became a butcher shop before being the show house.

I was thinking of selling the business in the early 1940's when 4 of my sons were serving in the military. So in 1949, I sold it to the Henry Arts family. Later it became a temporary location for the St. Luke's Lutheran Church and later it was torn down.

The piano that was used in the show house is in the home of my grandson Les Lamers. It was used by two of my great granddaughters to learn piano.

I passed away in 1978 at the age of 90. My! How times have changed!

Thank you for coming. My name is Penny Stark, Clara's great grand daughter.

Little Chute Historical Society Cemetery Walk 2008

