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Merry Christmas in Couillardville~1952

Couillardville School

Christmas parties were held at the Community Club Hall after its conversion from the church. This school program photo was likely taken in 1952 when the teacher was Janice Detaeje.

For most from Couillardville in this era, Christmas parties bring back warm memories of a special time with friends and neighbors. How many can you recognize? For many of us this was the peak of our "performing on stage" lives.



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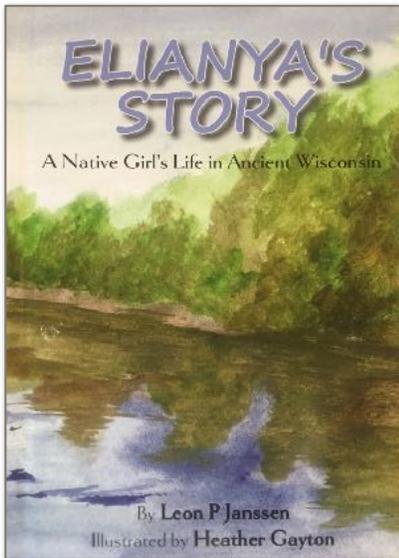
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Memories of Christmas

By Helen Janssen Jelinske in her book; *Once Upon a Lifetime*

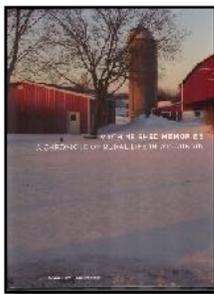
"Christmas can be only one bright day in a long winter, unless we live it in our hearts every day of the year"

Long before Thanksgiving "Christmas dress." We looked plans were made for the wonderfully at the ones in the Wards wonderful Christmas season. catalog but more likely it was made There were school, church by mother hopefully looking as and community programs and much as possible like the one in the parties with recitations and book. You wore that dress to all songs to be practiced. As a important winter activities. small child we always had a (Continued on page 3)



Set around the year A.D. 1000, long before the arrival of non-Native settlers in the region, "Elianya's Story" paints a picture of what daily life may have been like for a young girl growing up in the traditional culture of that era. Though the episodes are fictional, they are based upon careful research into the likely social conditions of that time.

This book is being used in schools around WI to support 5th grade Wisconsin history.



Learn About the Families of Couillardville

MACHINE SHED MEMORIES - A Chronicle of Rural Life in Wisconsin
www.machineshedmemories.com
 \$29.95.

Contact Leon Janssen if you have questions at leonpjanssen@yahoo.com or 262.442.6447.

Meadow Brook Farm Publishing



2020
Change in Plans for Meadow Brook Farm

During the past several years I have been shaping a vision for Meadow Brook Farm of a rural life center and museum to serve as a focal point for rural life history in Oconto County. During that time, I benchmarked other rural life museums as well. In January of 2020 a group of volunteers met with me to begin the tasks of creating a separate not-for-profit entity to operate a rural life center to carry out the vision for a place to celebrate Oconto County rural history. The volunteers; Lara Nichols, Mike Donlevy, John Matravers, Greg Senn and Bill Funk, became the Board of Directors of the "Rural Life Center at Meadow Brook Farm Inc."

At the end of the summer, for a number of reasons, I decided that the structure and plans of the Rural Life Center were not going to fulfill my vision and expectations for a countywide resource. For those reasons, I decided to not make Meadow Brook Farm available for the Rural Life Center in the future.

In many respects this means little has changed from 2019. Meadow Brook Farm will continue to welcome and serve as a gathering place for the Families of Couillardville and will keep its focus on Couillardville and the local area history rather than a public place with a County-wide scope.

Leon

Thanks to this group who committed a huge amount of time and effort through the year and who carried out a wonderfully successful "Autumn Historic Farm Day" on September 26, 2020.



Merry Christmas
from Meadow Brook Farm

Couillardville Memories of the Great Flu

By Helen Janssen Jelinske from *Once Upon a Lifetime*

Our most difficult childhood Christmas was the one at the time of the Great Flu epidemic during World War I. This covered the whole country and a great number of people died. My mother was so ill on Christmas Eve that they feared for her life. All of us had the flu and we were so ill that Dad had attracted the attention of a passing neighbor by pounding on a window. We had no telephone. Marion was a toddler at the time. We didn't want Grandpa and Grandma Couillard to come in as it was very contagious. They finally obtained a practical nurse that came out from Oconto. She ordered us all around and had a bottle of brandy delivered to the house every little while to keep the flu germs under control, she said. We later learned she drank a lot.

When my mother finally recovered, her long dark hair had mostly fallen out and she was weak for a long time. I never thought Santa would come that year but as always Grandpa Couillard had an arrangement with Santa and the usual amount of gifts were under the tree.

See Video Interview: <http://www.ocontoctyhistosoc.org/videos>

That same year at Christmas time my little school chum, Holly Erdman died. She and I had been in school for the Christmas program and I never saw her again. I stood watching out the window at our house in Brookside as a logging sleigh and team carried her casket to the cemetery. Roads were filled with snow and cars didn't run in the winter. They said her mother placed her Christmas doll in her arms and I have always pictured her that way.

Continued from Page 1 Memories of Christmas by Helen Jelinske

I have wonderful memories of Christmases in my lifetime. By today's standards they were quite simple and humble, but only so far as the lavishness of the gifts. There was a bountiful spirit of family and community involvement that could never be duplicated with an outlay of money. It was a busy time with mountains of cookies to bake as well as fruit cake made with home made candied orange peel. We made many pounds of home made candy and it was not unusual to order a pail of 25 pounds of mixed nuts for Christmas. These things were ready for endless visiting relatives and friends who never needed a special invitation to

come and stay to eat. Friends would go back and forth for every evening during the holidays and everyone would sit around the big dining room table eating candy and nuts.

We always spent Christmas with the Couillard grandparents as I grew up. You may wonder why I can't write more about holiday celebrations with the Laduron Grandparents. They were a large family. My mother was the oldest of 3 children, my father the second youngest of 17. The Laduron Grandparents were much older and I never remember them having a Christmas tree or giving Christmas gifts. There was one exception when Grandpa and Grandma Laduron bought me a beautiful little piano about 3 feet long when they made a trip to Green Bay. I was the youngest granddaughter. I cherished this gift and planned to always keep it, but it, like many of my treasures was missing from their storage place after we rented the downstairs of our Brookside house.

In the early 1900's most farm children did not get an assortment of gifts. Girls would usually get a doll and boys skates or a sled. The candy and nuts and the wonderful

Continued on page 4

Continued from Page 3 Memories of
Christmas by Helen Jelinske

celebrations were the important parts. Then there was the beautiful tree.

I remember as a small child that Grandpa Couillard always made a trip to Oconto right before Christmas for his shopping and he always came in with mysteriously wrapped packages. On Christmas morning there would be a large bottle of Lilac or Violet perfume for grandma. She would always say, "Oh, Pa, you shouldn't have done that" but I know it pleased her as most men in those days didn't buy Christmas gifts for their wives. That bottle of perfume always was on Grandma's dresser and I had some of it on my dress on important occasions. By the end of the year it was about gone.

Grandpa would also buy hard mixed candy and each year a toy horn. Now that I'm older I wonder if he wanted a toy horn when he was a little boy and fulfilled that childhood wish each Christmas. I remember Grandpa said that one Christmas when he was a child, the other 3 children each got a gift but he was the oldest and got nothing. That has always made me feel sad. One year when I emptied out the stocking I hung up, there was a little square box in the toe. Grandpa had bought a little birthstone ring for me.

I can remember beautiful china dolls that Aunt Nell brought from Milwaukee when she was teaching there. With two younger sisters these dolls did not survive.

The Christmas tree at the Couillard farm was always in Grandma's parlor. In the winter the room was only heated on Sundays and Holidays. I thought Grandma's parlor was elegant with the lace curtains, green plush sofa and flowered carpet. All the ancestors looked sternly from their pictures on the wall and I was a little in awe of them. Then there would be the wonderful Christmas tree never put up and trimmed till Christmas Eve. It was cut at the lower place and put up fresh. There was the heavenly smell of the fresh evergreens and the wax candles lit under supervision. They seemed so beautiful to us then as we never heard of Christmas tree lights.

Our Christmas menu was much like Thanksgiving except that we always had oyster stew after the men came in from milking and doing chores on Christmas night. Our big feast was at noon and with munching on candy and nuts all afternoon we only needed a light supper. The fresh oysters were Uncle Asa's contribution.

The oysters would be shipped to Oconto from the East at the holiday time and he would always bring a quart or more for that stew.

The Lutheran church in Brookside always had a tall balsam Christmas tree. They always had their church program Christmas Eve. The tree would have the beautiful old German trimmings and would be covered with lighted candles. Only the Lord's intercession kept that tree from catching on fire. The boys and girls of that church all received a great treat and I can close my eyes and see that tree in the cool church with the wonderful smell of balsam and oranges

Helen Laduron Janssen Jelinske.
1910-2001



Helen is the granddaughter of Thomas Edwin and Mary Ann Couillard. She has written "Once Upon a Lifetime." And "Stories of Life's Winding Pathways." Both books focus significantly on her life in Couillardville.