Local Area History

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Frontier FlavorThe City of Warden incorporated in 1910 and flourished with a definite frontief flavor up to the year of 1917. During this time, the town's population reached 300, and boasted two hotels, two banks, two saloons, two livery stables, a blacksmith shoppe, a large lumber yard, three grocery stores, two barber shops, a newspaper office--The Herald--, and, of course, Doc. Harris' drug store an physician services. The block in which the Corral Cafe and the Bank are now situated, formed Main Street, which ran east to west. The location of the present Five Food Store is remembered by some old-timers as the city Stock Pond. There, it has been said, was where Old Andy Glacon sat with a wad of tabacco in his mouth and served the city as Cattle Watcher, Marshall, and Water Commissioner. Any cattle or horses roaming at large were snared, and kept at Andy's Cow Pond until forfeited by the owner.First Civic ResidentNow, the first civic resident of Warden seemed to be a sturdy, pioneer druggist, call Doc Harris, who established his Drugs and Sundries store, along with physician services, about 1905, during the time the railroad camps were set up to build the Milwaukee Railroad. His haven for aches and pains was set up one-fourth mile north of Warden on the other side of the Milwaukee tracks, near the railroad camp. This camp was located at the edge of the field which now, you may have noticed, has a new sprinkler system, and is known as part of the Adolph Jeske farm. We will take this opportunity to explain the origin of Warden's name.Doctor Harris had a son by the name of Ward, and, it seemed, the proud father wished his son to be remembered, and thus, attached an "en" to his name, thus inventing the name, Warden. The name of the city.Two railroads were destined to come. The Harris' were here on the strenght of that, as well as serving the settlers, who had been here since 1901 grubbing brush and cleariing land in a new frontier. The settlers hauled all of thier water from 12 miles west of town from a spring or water-hole. The women drove the wagons or hacks to wash clothes in the water-hole. Desperadoes Rob SaloonIt was during this combustive stage, that true western melodrama struck, and stunned this small city into submission. It came in the form of two desperadoes, who rode into town one day on a trusty box car of the Milwaukee Railroad, and proceeded to hold up the leading saloon, which stood where the present Warden Tavern is located. The two bearded boys strode into the unsuspecting group, who were, no doubt, "whooping it up" and lining the customers against the wall, relieved ther proprietor of a pretty penny. Then, because of the very frightened customers reaching up to brush away an imaginary fly, the bandit grazed his cheek with a bullet, shot and killed the proprietor's dog, who happened to be in the way, and then, fired through the ceiling for good measure. This dampened the customer' spirits, and, also, the proprietor's, for retrieving any of the cash. The robber hopped a handy freight and were off in a cloud of coal smoke, still shooting thier fire irons into the air, and yelling that they would be back someday, as a good-bye to this fair city. This was an authentic account as witnessed by Walter Suko. He was, unhappily, in that vacinity, and found courage enough to peek around the corner of the depot. Incidently, the bullet holes were still in evidence on the ceiling of the building up until the time it was torn down. It has also been related, and while on this subject, that a "Six-Shooter Pete" did lend a hand to some of the bullet holes shot into the Tavern ceiling, which occurred on the first Fourth of July celebrated here in 1910. Boot-legging had plenty of Columbus's--those who landed here and those in jail.First School in 1903In 1903, the first school was established in a small building three-and-one-half miles northeast of Warden which ws in reality, a railroad camp. The teacher, a Miss Lena Stone, rode the distance back and forth on horse to teach her thirty-two students, who attended sporadically when they could be spared from the grueling farm work. This school was known as the Peter schoolhouse, and served the community until 1911. Another country school, the Widmer School, was located south of town.Fire Destroys Part of WardenAbout 1917, a fire destroyed part of Warden business district which ran norht and south along the main street as we know it now. It was never re-built and the town began to decline as other small towns sprung up near-by. Drought and depression years set in. When the second World War began, Warden was mistaken for a practice bomb site, and was bombed twice with sandbags. Yes, it was not enough that Warden was blast by years of sand storms, but the dwindling population was bombed by dud bombs from our own planes. T weighted bags sliced off someone's porch and jolt them out of several nights of peaceful sleep. It found a few people under their beds. But, finding themselves still in one piece after a time of suspence, they crawled out and were very grateful to be alive in this fair city Warden made big headlines that day.