

Belgian Heritage





FACTS OF BELGIUM

Capitol - Brussels

Divisions - 9 Provinces

Head of State - King

Official Languages - Flemish and French

Area - 11,781 square miles

Population - (1961 Census) 9,189,741

Chief Products - Manufacturing - chemicals, glass,
sugar, textiles
Agriculture - cattle, oats, potatoes,
sugar beets
Mining - coal, copper, lead, zinc

Principal religion - Roman Catholic

Currency Unit - Belgium franc (50.34 per US \$1)

National Anthem - "La Brabanconne"

The Belgian Heritage
is not forgotten
by
the children and grandchildren
of the first Belgian settlers.
This book was written by
women of Belgian descent
who received their information
from interviews with their
relatives and friends
in Lincoln and Red River Townships.

We thank all the
grandfathers and grandmothers
who helped us.

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Lincoln Homemakers
Dyckesville Homemakers

BELGIUM TODAY

Belgium today is a country with a zest for work and play. As one of the three low countries in Northwest Europe, Belgium is slightly larger than our own state of Maryland.

The capital of Belgium is Brussels. It is a modern city of shops and cafes with a network of express roadways. It hosts places of historic sites and artistic interest. It is ruled by the King as Head of State.

Belgium is divided into nine provinces. Each province is ruled by a governor and elected legislative body. The provinces are: Antwerp, Brabant, East and West Flanders, Namur, Hainut, Liege, Limburg, and Luxembourg.

The area of Belgium is 11,781 square miles and the population, as of 1969, was 9,701,000 people - a density of 823 persons to the square mile.

Two types of people live here. The Flemish settled in the northern area of Belgium and speak Flemish which resembles the French language. They are a tall fair-haired, light-complected people with large families. The Walloons settled in the southern area. They are a short, dark-haired, dark-skinned people and generally have smaller families.

Belgium hosts many industries. One of the oldest is the textile industry although they also manufacture glass and chemicals and mine coal, copper, lead and zinc.

Agriculture plays an important part of their economy, together with the raising of cattle, grain, potatoes, and sugar

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beets. Orchards and the raising of fruits are common.

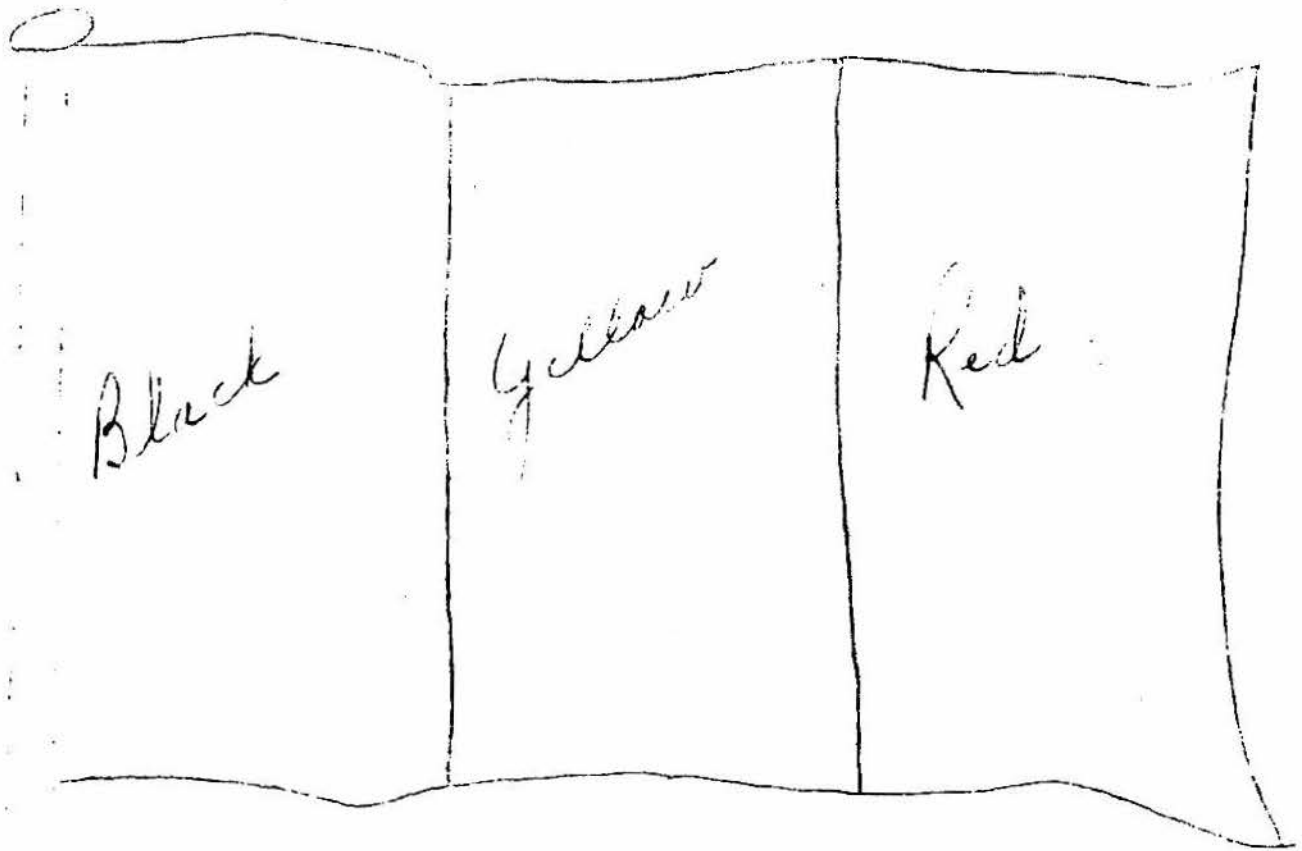
The Belgium people are mostly Roman Catholic. The country has great cathedrals and churches.

The Belgium flag has three vertical stripes - one red, one black, and one gold - which represent the three provinces that led a revolution in 1789. It is a symbol of Republicanism.

The national holiday is July 21 and is called Independence Day. The country has many museums of art, history and science. It also has great theatres for music, opera and ballets.

The Belgian food is very rich and the food is well presented when served. Thus, the city hosts many fine cafes and restaurants.





BELGIUM FLAG

The Belgium flag was adopted in 1831. The colors are said to represent the three provinces that led a revolution in 1789.

Black stands for force.
Yellow stands for maturity.
Red stands for victory.

DATES OF REIGN

1831-1865	Leopold I
1865-1909	Leopold II
1909-1934	Albert I
1934-1940	Leopold III
1940-1944	German Occupation
1944-1950	Leopold III exiled
1950	Leopold III returned to Belgium
1951	Leopold III abdicated
1951-	Baudouin I

WISCONSIN'S BELGIAN COMMUNITY

The Belgians of Wisconsin are a people of rather short but very stocky frame with black hair and brown eyes. About twenty percent have blue eyes.

Their most noticeable characteristic is their friendly convivial disposition. They are a smiling people and should be good merchants but they are not inclined to enter business and prefer life on the farm. Their sociable attitude seeks an outlet in special festive occasions, such as weddings, christenings and family anniversaries. The phrase "to split one's sides with laughing" must have had its origin among the Belgians for they are constantly laughing heartily.

Their craving for garrulous companionship is perhaps a partial cause for church attendance. All Belgians go to church regularly. For this reason, tavern owners have found that a good location for a dance hall and bar is near a church. Belgians love to linger after church over a glass of beer and exchange the gossip of the week. At these times, it was the custom to play a game called conion.

The big celebration of the year is the Kermis. This festival comes at the end of the harvest in September. The Kermis lasts three days during each week for six successive weeks, a different parish center being the headquarters each in turn.

WHY DOOR AND KEWAUNEE COUNTY?

In 1852 the office of Immigration Commissioner of Wisconsin was created. This office prepared a pamphlet in the Flemish language as there is no written Belgian language. In it they described how the United States Government would sell land for only \$1.25 an acre and of the wonderful homestead opportunities that Wisconsin offered.

Ten Belgian farmers joined together and decided to come over here to settle. On board ship they met nearly one hundred more who were also coming here. Their initial destination was to be Sheboygan, Wisconsin. When they arrived there they found that all the good land had already been bought by the Hollanders who had settled there. Because of language difficulties, the Belgian colonists decided to continue on to the French settlement at Green Bay. There they found people who could understand them. They bargained for land near Kaukauna, but before they completed the deal they met Father Edward Daems, a priest from Bay Settlement. He advised them to go to the rich, unoccupied land that lay just beyond his parish. They grabbed the chance and settled near the present site known as Robinsonville.

They wrote home of their good fortune and soon more immigrants came. But, as was often the case, hardships came too. Many contracted cholera and other sicknesses and many died from them. Food was scarce so the men cut lumber and made shingles to help support their families.

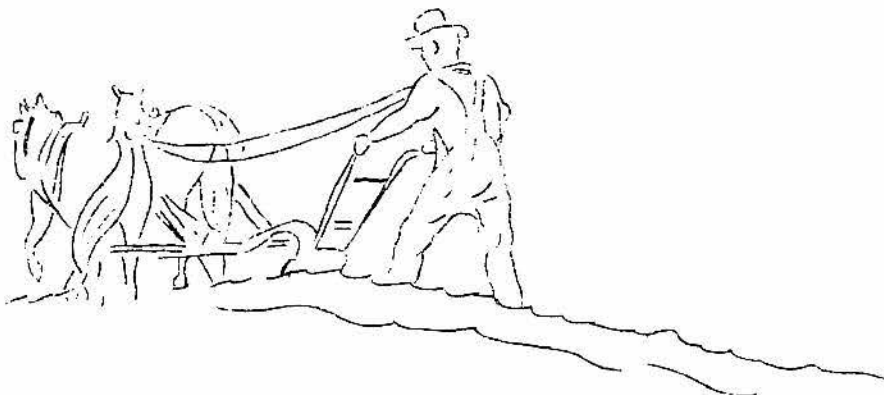
In 1871 when the settlers had been doing very well for some years, the area was swept by fire. The autumn had been

dry, their barns were filled and the corn was in the shocks. In a short time the roar and the spread of the fire was a terrible sight. Before rain came and quenched the fire a thousand people were dead and four thousand were homeless. The beautiful land of the Belgians had turned to ashes.

They accepted the fire as the will of God and started the gigantic task of rebuilding their homes, restoring the churches and praying at their wayside shrines. This time instead of using logs, many used red brick to construct the buildings. The bricks were made from the red clay soil found in some of these areas.

Belgians are a thrifty people. Farming is their life. From it they make a good living. They are also a friendly people; hospitality is their by-word. And above all else they are a religious people. Since 1894 all parishes in the Belgian Peninsula have been under the care of the Norbertine Fathers of West DePere, or as they are more commonly called here, the "White Fathers".

- From "Old World Wisconsin"
by Fred Holmes

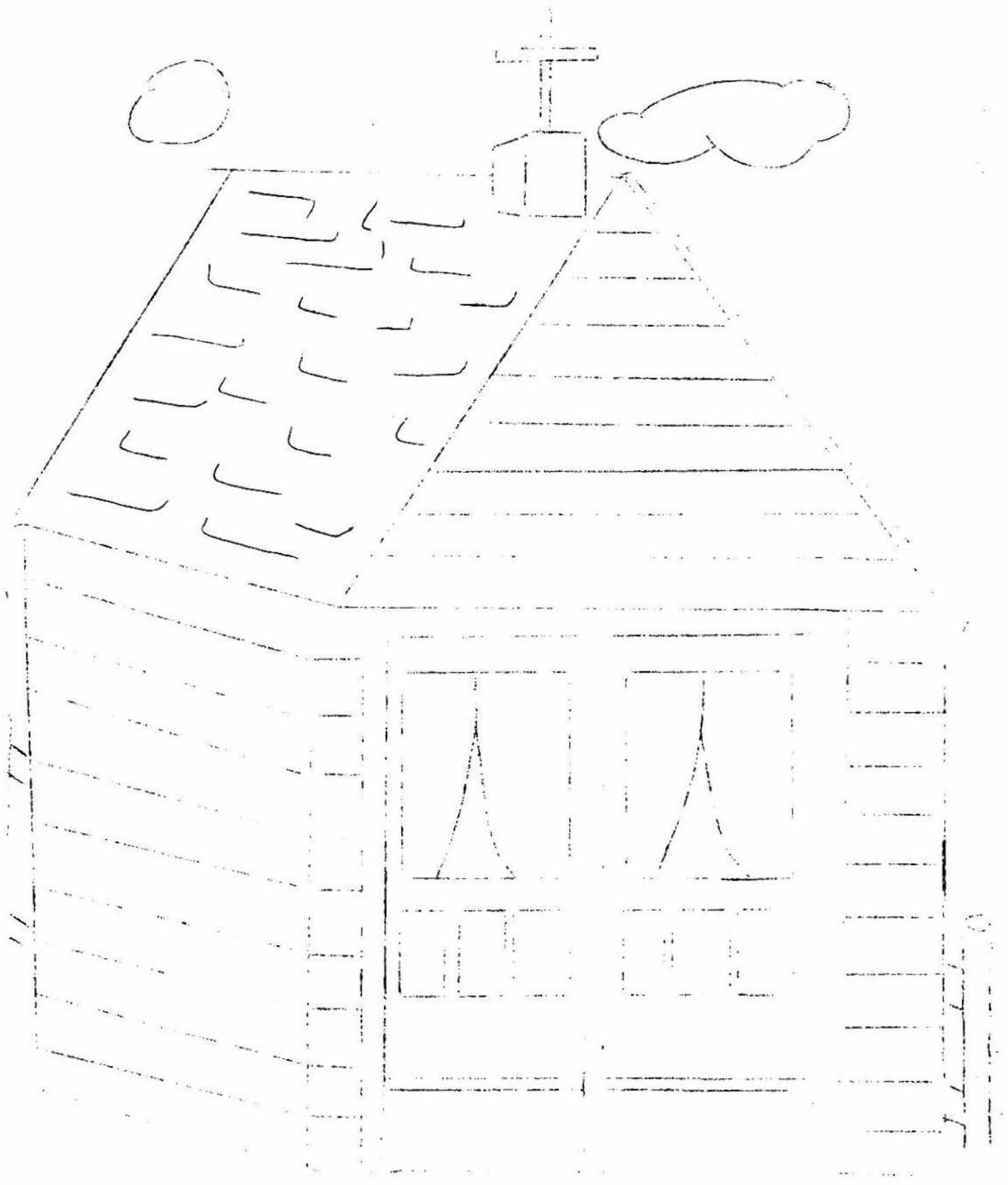


WAYSIDE CHAPELS

The Belgians were a very religious people who practiced the Catholic religion. Signs of this deep faith is still in evidence in the many little roadside shrines that are scattered throughout the countryside. Most of them are located at the crossroads.

People built these little prayer-houses so that they would have a place to go and pray in times of hardship and trouble - of which they had plenty. The churches were too far away to reach very often and so the chapels took the place of the churches. Each was equipped with an altar and statues of saints. Even today, many of the chapels are still well cared for by the people who own the land on which the chapel stands. Some are also left open so that anyone who wants to stop for a few moments on their way past may find peace and quiet to say a prayer or to just stand and be thankful for all they have received.

So if you are driving through the Belgian settlements and see one of the roadside shrines, stop for a while. You will be most welcome there.



Wayside Shrine

THE CHAPEL - ROBINSONVILLE

The Belgian people have always had a special love and devotion to Mary, the Blessed Mother. So it would seem to be especially fitting that the Shrine of Mary at Robinsonville would be in the first Belgian settlement in Wisconsin. The shrine was built after a miracle reportedly took place on the spot where the chapel stands.

On August 15, 1858 the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, the Virgin Mary appeared to a little Belgian girl, Adele Brice. On her way home from church at Bay Settlement between two small trees, Mary commanded her to enter her service and to build a chapel on that very spot. One week later the same thing happened.

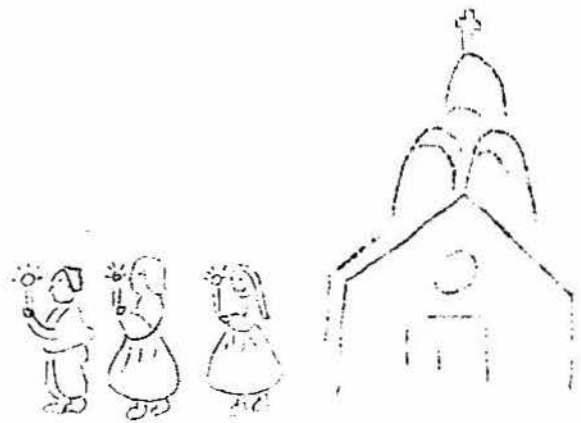
Her Belgian neighbors believed her story and immediately started building the chapel. It wasn't long before the first building was too small and a larger one had to be constructed. Later a home for crippled children was added. In later years the building became the novitiate for the Sisters of St. Francis of Bay Settlement.

Miracles are said to have occurred there. At the time of the big fire when Sister Adele was in charge (she had entered the convent at Bay Settlement) these buildings were saved from the flames. Crutches that have been discarded by people who believed and came to pray for help are in evidence in the chapel basement.

On two days of the year special services are held at the chapel. The last Monday in May devout Belgians assemble here

to pray for abundant crops. This is a solemn occasion and no festivities occur on this day. On August 15 the second service is held. This is a more colorful ceremony and a joyous one. As many as 15,000 people assemble here to make the procession, to recite the rosary, and to attend Benediction. These two days are special, but on any day of the year many people go to the chapel just to pray or to ask for special favors. In time of sickness novenas are made there by ladies who at one time would walk the whole distance from all the neighboring settlements.

The chapel at Robinsonville is truly a popular shrine for the whole Mid-West. Sister Adele Brice is buried right next to the chapel building. It is a great honor for such a favor to have been granted to a small Belgian girl.



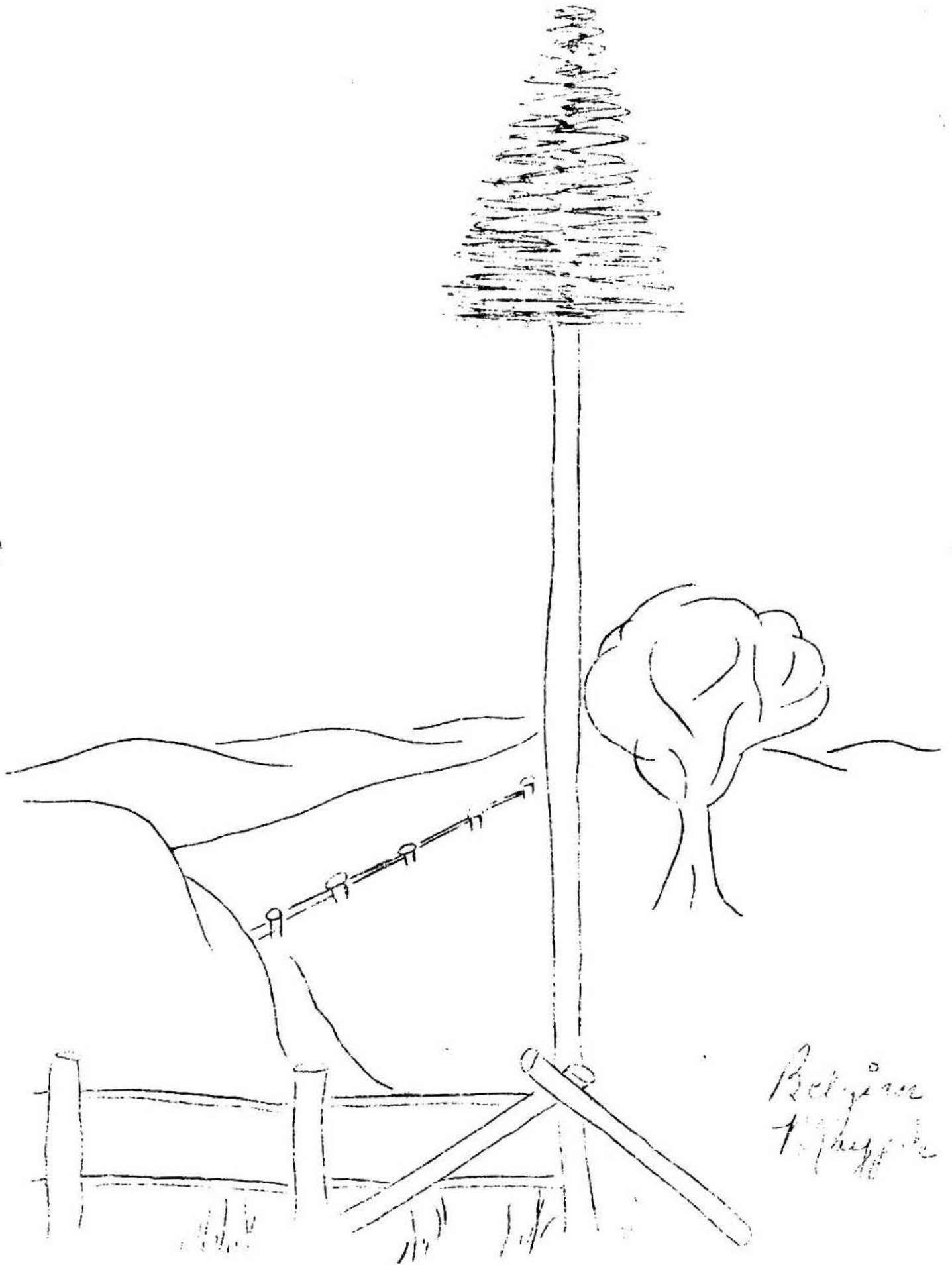
MAYPOLES

The area 40 miles along the Green Bay shore, east to Casco, and north to Sturgeon Bay was peopled almost entirely by Belgians. It is the largest rural settlement of the Belgian nationality in America. Because of the compactness of the area, the customs and the language of the people were retained through the years.

Every May Day the people of the towns marched to the homes of their newly elected town officers. They carried a balsam tree that had been stripped of bark and of all but the topmost branches and decorated with colored ribbons, streamers and an American flag. This 'maypole' was placed in the front yard of the citizen who was being honored.

The maypole was a symbol of authority and expressed a public pledge of allegiance and obedience, not only to the state laws but to a custom that requires even family disputes to be submitted to these officials for settlement. When the crowd had finished erecting the pole, the official furnished a barrel of beer or a dance hall or both and everyone spent the evening celebrating the occasion.

Up until the past 10 or 15 years this custom was still followed in many communities, but like many other Old World customs, it is gradually fading away.



Belgian
T. Huppé

KERMISS

As the autumn season approaches, one of the most unique celebrations of any nationality in Wisconsin gets under way. It is "Kermis" time.

Kermis has been celebrated here in the Belgian settlements of Door and Kewaunee counties since 1858. The word kermis comes from "Kirk-Messe" or "church mass" and so denotes a religious origin as well as a time of fun-making.

The kermis was started as a day of thanksgiving for a bountiful harvest and for the mere fact that some of them were still alive. Times had been hard for these early immigrants and though the harvests weren't always so good, they gave thanks for all they had received.

The first kermis is held on the last Sunday of August and the place is always Lincoln. On consecutive Sundays they follow at Brussels and Namur, Rosiere and Champion, Dykesville, San Sauveur and Tonet, Duvall and Thiry Daems and Missiere. On this day all the women and girls wore their new fall outfits - even though the temperature may hit 90°!

How do you celebrate a kermis? All festivities start by going to Mass on Sunday morning. Of course, the women have been preparing for this occasion most of the week. There were Belgian pies to make - as many as 70 or 80 - cleaning to be done, as old friends and relatives were invited to the homes to help celebrate, and much food to be prepared for the meals.

The meals usually featured a beef soup made with beef bones or ribs, celery, onions, seasonings and home-made noodles,

beef stew, Belgian tripe (pork sausage made with cabbage in it), jut, and, of course, the Belgian pie. Belgian pie is made with raised dough and a filling of either cooked dried apples or prunes and then covered with cottage cheese. Today raisins or rice are also used as filling.

Now let's get to the celebration! Everyone attends Mass to start the day of thanksgiving. Immediately afterwards a dance called the "Dust Dance" was performed as the first dance of the kermis and had to be held in the roadway. This gave recognition to the soil from which the harvest had sprung. From the roadway the people went to the tavern and dancehall which were usually very near to the church. A brass band would be playing and the dancing and beer drinking went on till it was time to go home for dinner. After the meal, which took several hours because of all the relatives and friends to be served, it was back to the tavern for more beer and dancing. When supper and chores time came, everyone went home, did the chores in a big hurry, ate, and went back to the hall for more dancing.

Belgian people like to dance so on Monday evening another dance was held. They are also a very musical people so most settlements had their own brass bands to provide the music. In the wee hours of Tuesday morning the last tired celebrant finally decided to depart for home.

And so another kermis is over, but you can always go to another one next week at your neighboring Belgian settlement.

NEW BELGIAN VILLAGE SUBJECT OF VANDERTIE LETTER - IN BELGIAN*

EDITOR'S NOTE - Al Vandertie recently attempted what many Belgian descendants regard as an impossible fete. He wrote a letter in the tongue of his forefathers, putting down the words as they sound to him.

The little country of Belgium, bordered by France, the Netherlands, Germany and Luxembourg, has no official language, Vandertie explained, as various factions speak various languages, depending upon the country adjoining.

Vandertie offers his letter as a challenge to others who learned to speak Belgian during their childhood and asks that they try to translate his letter. One hint: It's about the new Belgian Village planned for Namur, formerly Fairland.

The article follows (in part):

Bujou taartau, nau zestong vessi, pau siai divvau zes-plicky sikkillon liddaey deffy, a Namur. Li non namur, va replassy li non di Fairland, diddeul Town di Union, diddeul sitt dell Door County, dissill mais voui di merro sic-cont-sett aviae dihhw mill o wess di Brissell.

Innare on mouson pau le vieh ejjen, e ippouron traavaie si vollne, e sikki le vieh ejjen faegne, i pouron vient di dein li stoor ki laaron vaelah, innare on sallon, ki serre couri kumm deill veetieu, innaare on sienns, ki serre couri diumm deill veetieu, koutfiegn bie aavou on paer di boue. Taataafe va es couri pa de soour.

VANDERTIE, TRUE TO WORD, GIVES TRANSLATION TO BELGIAN LETTER*

Bujou!

How did you do in your first (and last) lesson in translating Belgian to English?

Not so good? Well, don't fret, because we have the English translation for you.

Last week the Record Herald printed a letter which Al Vandertie wrote in the tongue of his forefathers, putting down the words as they sounded to him in Belgian. He challenged other Belgian descendants to attempt a translation.

He also promised to provide the Record Herald with a translation of the letter, which, Vandertie said, had to do with the new development at Namur. And, according to the translation, it did. Read it for yourself.

Good Day, Everybody:

We are here to try to explain to you what their idea is to do in Namur. The name, Namur, is going to replace the name of

Fairland in the Town of Union, in Southern Door County, on the main highway number 57 about two miles west of Brussels.

There will be a house for the old people and they will be able to work if they like. And what the old people make, they will be able to sell in the store they will have there. There will be a saloon that will be run like old times. There will be a farm that will be run like old times, maybe a pair of oxen. Everything will be run by Sisters.

* — From Algoma Record Herald

IN FLANDERS FIELD

In Flanders Field the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; And in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly,
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Field.

Take up our quarrel with the foe;
To you from falling hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If you break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies blow
In Flanders Field.

- John McCrae

BELGIAN LACE

Lace making, one of the finer of the Belgian arts, began in the section of Belgium called Flanders in about the 16th century. Here the laces were almost all bobbin-made.

Bobbin-made lace is done by braiding the threads instead of using a needle. The lace maker pricked a pattern on paper which was held firm by two layers of linen cloth fastened underneath. Next she pasted the parchment and cloth to a thick cushion - giving it also the name of "pillow lace" - and stuck pins upright into the design at various important points. Then she attached a bobbin full of thread to every pin and suspended the bobbins over her pattern. She began tossing the bobbins over and under one another making the braids of thread follow the pattern that lay underneath. From time to time she moved some pins along so that they guided the thread and held it in place. When her lace was finished it lay on top of the paper pattern and she set it free by sliding a sharp knife between the two pieces of linen to cut all the basting threads. And so we call it "bobbin lace".

This sounds like an intricate and hard way to make lace but it can be done much faster than working with a needle. A skillful bobbin lace maker's hands go as swiftly and accurately as any pianist. She learns to know each bobbin by touch, as no two are alike.

The daintiest and airiest of Belgian laces was the "Mechlin" or, as the English called it, "Malines". The pieces are always narrow because they were made especially for trimming dresses. In this lace the pattern and the background is made at the same time instead of being joined together after each is finished.

From Antwerp, Belgium, a curious design called "potten kant" or pot lace became popular. In it we find a row of flower pots at regular intervals and flowers spring out of the pots on stiff stalks.

Many designs were used on the laces including vases and urns, lilies, bouquets of roses, sprigs, or shaded blossoms. The stitches were almost always infinitely small.

The handsome laces were used most often in the churches in vestments and altar cloths. It wasn't long before they were used on handkerchiefs, table cloths, napkins and bed linens. The women used them as collars and cuffs and even some of the gay young blades of the 1600 and 1700's used lace lavishly on their clothes, some even being found on the battlefield.

BELGIUM TRIPE SAUSAGE

5# lean ground pork	8 cups finely chopped cabbage
1# ground beef	1 tsp sage
3 medium size onions	1 tsp sausage seasoning

Salt and pepper to taste. Cook cabbage until it is about half done and chop fine or grind. Combine all ingredients and fill casings. Cook in boiling water for ten to fifteen minutes and cool. Refrigerate or freeze. To serve, fry or bake until brown.

CHICKEN BOOYAH



1 large stewing chicken - disjointed	
3 onions, sliced	5 carrots
1 gallon of water	6 potatoes
1 small bunch of celery	1 large can of peas

Salt and pepper to taste. Simmer chicken and onions in water until tender. Cool and remove meat from the bones. Dice the vegetables and cook in broth until they are well cooked. Then add the cut up chicken and peas. Season to taste.

GULLETS OR NEW YEAR WAFFLES

2 cups sugar	2 tsp. baking powder
3/4 cup lard	1/2 tsp. salt
3 eggs	1.2 tsp. cinnamon
1 cup milk	

Heat waffle iron and pour on batter. When waffles are baked, heat to boiling point about 2 quarts milk, 3/4 cup sugar and a dash of cinnamon. Pour over baked waffles in a baking dish. These can be eaten hot or put in the refrigerator and eaten cold. They are often called New Years Waffles because they are made on New Years Eve.

NOODLES

2 eggs

1/4 tsp. salt

1-1/4 c. flour

Mix egg yolks and whites. Add salt and enough flour to make a stiff dough. Shape into ball and roll thin on a floured board to form a long sheet. Allow to dry slightly. Cut into desired shapes (squares, fine, or coarse). Allow to dry slightly more. Makes about 3 cups dry noodles.

BREAD PUDDING

4 cups bread crumbs
4 cups scalded milk
3/4 cup sugar
1 tsp. vanilla

2 egg yolks (save whites
for meringue)
1 T. butter

Soak bread in milk, then add sugar, eggs, then vanilla and butter. Bake one hour.

Meringue

Beat egg whites until stiff, then add 1 T. powdered sugar. Put on pudding and place back in oven to brown.

BEEF SOUP - BOOYAH

1 or 2# of beef stew meat or short ribs

Brown in butter with 1-1/2 tsp. salt. Add 3-1/2 to 4 quarts of water and bring to boil. Cover and simmer for about 1-1/2 hours.

Add 2 cups diced celery and 1 onion cut up. Simmer another 1/2 hour. Add 2 cups home-made noodles and simmer till noodles are done or 20 minutes.



JUTT

Cut cabbage in small wedges. Remove the core. Boil 20 minutes in salt water. Drain in colander until cool.

In the frying pan put 2 tbsp. bacon drippings and 1 small onion diced. Cook onion slightly but do not brown. Add the cooled cabbage and chop while frying. Keep mixing it over a slow fire about 10 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste.

BELGIAN RATATOILLE

1½# round steak cut into serving size pieces.
10 medium potatoes, peeled 1 large can tomatoes
6 carrots, scraped 1 can No. 2 peas
2 onions, quartered Salt and pepper
1 cup tomato juice Cornstarch

Pound steak and brown well in hot fat. Add tomato juice and 1 cup water. Simmer for about 1/2 hour.

Add tomatoes and transfer pan to oven set at 350°. Cover and let cook for an hour, then add potatoes, carrots and onion.

Let cook uncovered until potatoes and carrots are tender. Add dash of cayenne and peas, including liquid. Allow to heat to bubbling again and thicken slightly with small amount of cornstarch mixed with tomato juice.

It's best to cook this in an attractive casserole or pan that can be brought right to the table so the colorful vegetables are not disarranged.

This recipe reheats well and even tastes better the next day.

FLEMISH WHITE SAUSAGE

7# ground pork, more lean than fat
4 eggs 2 tsp. ground black pepper
2 tsp. nutmeg 3 T. salt

Mix well with hands; stuff in casings. Place in boiling water. Simmer 15 minutes. Remove, cool, and fry before serving.

21

BELGIAN PIE

(20 pies)



Crust: Raised Dough

1 cup lard	2 tsp. salt
2 cups warm milk	1 cup sugar
4 eggs	8 cups flour
2 cups mashed potatoes	2 oz. or 1/4 large bar yeast

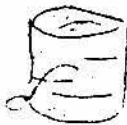
Heat milk until lukewarm. Add sugar and yeast. Have flour ready in bowl while the yeast rises or gets bubbly. Add lard, eggs, mashed potatoes and salt. Add this mixture to the flour. Mix to form a soft dough. Let rise until doubled in bulk. Form into balls, (20) let rise again. When doubled size pat into pie tins or roll to fit tin. Let rise again slightly. Pick with fork and bake until brown. Add filling and cottage cheese and return to oven till cheese is cooked. Remove from pans and grease the edges.

Prune Filling
(1# makes 3)

Cook 1# prunes and remove stones. Put through the food chopper. Add sugar to taste and 1/2 tsp. cinnamon and 1/2 tsp. salt. If filling is thick add enough prune juice so the filling spreads easily.

Cheese Topping
(for 5 pies)

1# dry cottage cheese - grind fine
1 cup sugar
2 eggs
1/2 tsp salt
Add cream to thin so it spreads



CRUST FOR BELGIAN PIE
(for 12 pies)

1 cup cream	2 oz. yeast
1 cup butter	1/2 cup warm water
1 tbsp. sugar	6 eggs
1/4 cup sugar	1 tsp. salt
5 cups flour (about)	

Scald cream and cool slightly. Soften butter to room temperature. Dissolve yeast in 1/2 cup warm water and the 1 tbsp. sugar and let stand until bubbly. Beat eggs

with 1/4 cup sugar and the salt. Add cream and butter. Add yeast mixture and about 5 cups flour. Dough will be very soft. Divide into 12 balls and let stand for 5 minutes. Roll or press each ball into a well greased pie tin. Spread fruit filling over crust and then cheese topping. Bake 12-15 minutes at 350° or until delicate brown.

Dried apples or fresh apples can be used instead of prunes.

MOLASSES COOKIES

1-1/2 cups white sugar	2 tsp. soda in 5 T. boiling water
3/4 cup molasses	1/2 tsp. ginger
3/4 cup soft shortening	1 tsp. vanilla
2 eggs beaten	4 cups flour

Cream shortening and sugar. Add molasses and eggs and mix well. Add the soda mixture, ginger, vanilla and flour. Roll out on floured board and cut into desired shapes. Bake on greased cookie sheet for 12-15 minutes at 350°.

WHITE LEMON COOKIE

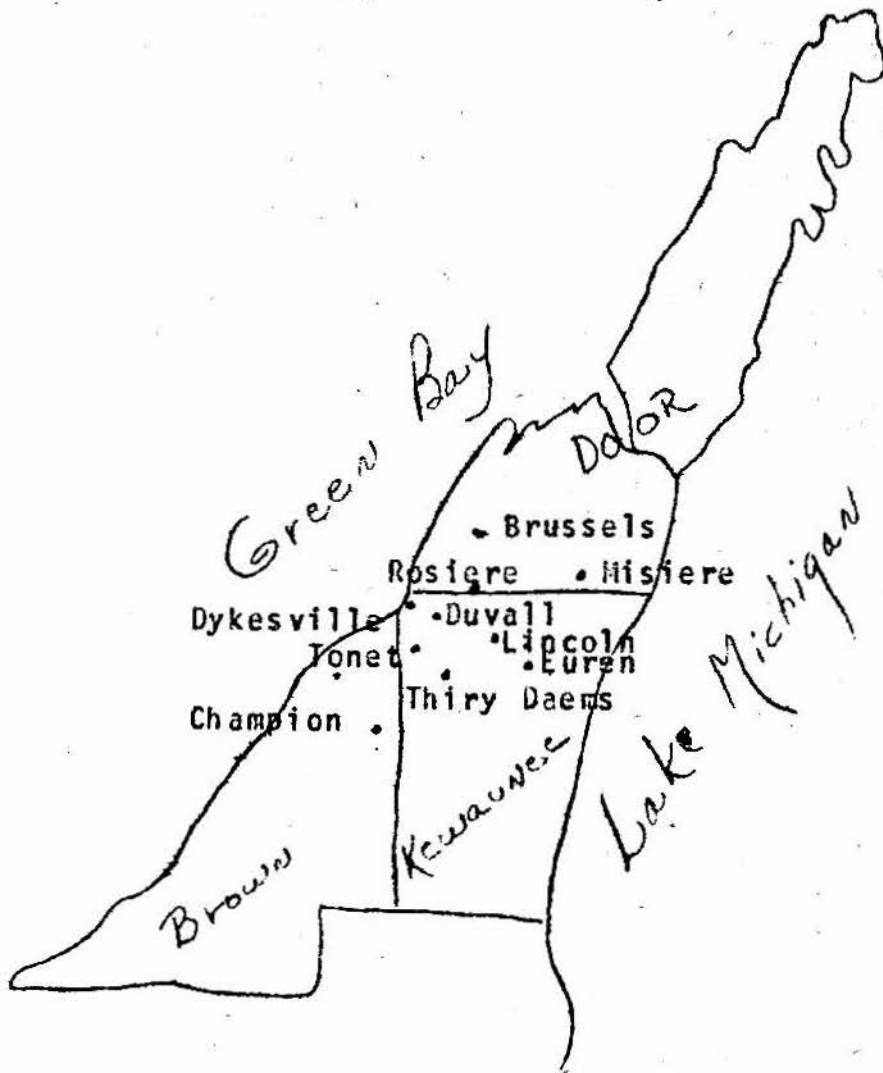
1 cup butter	5 cups flour
2 cups sugar	1/2 tsp. soda
1 or 2 tsp. lemon extract	2 tsp. baking powder
3 eggs slightly beaten	1 cup sour cream

Blend butter and sugar. Add flavoring and eggs. Combine soda, baking powder and flour and add alternately with the sour cream. Roll out and cut into desired shapes. Bake at 350°.

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LARGEST BELGIAN SETTLEMENT IN UNITED STATES

Kewaunee Homemakers Council
Rosalie Ofstie
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