

Chicog-Then and Now for November, 2024  
JoAnn Malek

WE HAVE a new name! Hope you like it.

“IT’S A GREAT way to be neighborly,” quipped Jerry Brewer. “No one can turn down fresh vegetables.” He used to bring garden produce around to share with folks he knew, and with others he had not yet met. One nameless fellow was never home when he stopped but vegetables were left anyway. After several years the two finally crossed paths and Jerry was thanked with a huge hug.

Jerry Brewer was born in Aberdeen, Mississippi, “which is a lot like this area,” he says. He and wife Velma met in Kenosha when they were in the ninth grade. They were celebrating their fifty-ninth wedding anniversary on the day I stopped to talk with them.

Velma (Bard) Brewer was born in Chicog. William and Mary Frances (Nelson) Mack were her great-grandparents. Mack Lake bears their name. Across from their farm was the small Mack Lake Store and Tavern on the lake with a large pavilion to the side. Fourth of July dances on the pavilion were the big event of the year. “Grandma would sew them each a new dress, or they might even get new shoes.” Euen Pierce, grandson to William Mack, was caller for the circle two-step, a combination of two-step and square dance. “He travelled all over calling square dances, singing, and playing his harmonica. Even in Nashville.”

Velma’s grandparents were Gilbert and Ettie Mae (Stoneback) Mack. Her parents were Ernest and Phoeby (Mack) Bard. “Every house was a relative.”

“The Chicog cemetery is filled with family members. Gilbert and Ettie had ten children, all but three are there in the cemetery. Russell and Harry were their babies! Grandpa made their tombstones and hand-carved the names.” Earliest date of death in Chicog Cemetery burial records is 1907.



Before the cemetery, the dead might be buried anywhere. Jerry tells of a huge tamarack, "as big around as this kitchen table" in the middle of the family farm field. When it was taken down Phoeby Bard was quite angry. "You don't understand. There were two graves under there."

"Folks didn't have anything. They would come to Kenosha to make some money but they wouldn't last a month. They'd come back happy to be here and have something to eat. Their heartstrings were back in this country."

"The deer weren't so plentiful then," wrote Gilbert Mack, Jr. "Sharing a deer was necessary as families needed the meat. Deer would be hung in a tree for the winter as refrigeration wasn't available. When you needed some you took a saw and got a hunk." Eventually game laws were established but game warden, Ed Nelson, didn't always pursue the law because he understood hunger.

Ice blocks were cut from Mack Lake, covered with sawdust and buried, ready to be moved to little home ice boxes. Sometimes food was chilled in *Stunce* Brook.

Looking back, in 1970, Grandma Ettie penned: "The people here...visited their neighbors, went to each other's house for dinner after church. If anyone wanted to build a house they had a building party. Usually had a keg of beer and also had meals. If an old person needed wood, they got together and cut them a pile. Horse and buggy days were slow and harder to do, but if you met a friend on the road you usually stopped and passed the time of day. One went to town and they always bought a few things for their neighbors. It was a slower world but more friendly."

Chicog folk are neighborly. Velma wrote: "Country people with country beliefs. Be proud of it. I am."

OCTOBER FOLLOW-UP from Gary Bergh of South Twin Lake, who has been coming to Chicog since he was ten: "I believe it was Elsie Dahlgren's father who mowed parts of Middle Lake. This took place during the dust bowl years of the 1930s. All the lakes were very low at the time."

"As to the issue of the damming of the channel between North and Middle lakes, I will tell you this well-kept secret. Frank Tascione, previous owner of Watson's Resort, and my dad took out the dam. When the owner replaced it with a 2ft culvert, Tascione reported this to the DNR. They dynamited, and replaced with the current 6ft culvert."

TELL ME MORE of the old Chicog stories! [jojamalek@yahoo.com](mailto:jojamalek@yahoo.com)

### IMPORTANT NOVEMBER DATES

Wednesday 11/13, 6pm, monthly Chicog meeting

Wednesdays 11/13&27, Namekagon Transit Service

Thursday, 11/14, 11-1, Bibliodragon, town hall

Saturday, 11/23, 5-8pm, Hunter's Feed, town hall

Wednesday, 11/27, 10:30-12, Books&Bread, Beaverbrook

Town Website: [www.townofchicog.com](http://www.townofchicog.com)

*Thank you for reading Chicog-Then and Now*