

## **“ZERNICKE ENTERPRISES”**

Although not an official name for the activities of the Zernicke family it could have been Because of the many activities the family was involved with.

Martin Zernicke put together a number of parcels of land in the late 1800's and the early 1900's . This land provided the acreage for a family farm and also was critical in the platting of Zachow in 1906. The Zernicke Addition to the Village of Zachow was one of three Additions that made up the Village of Zachow. The other two were the Reinke Addition and the Zachow (Bonnin) Addition. Thus it could be said that Martin Zernicke was truly one of the founders of the Village of Zachow.

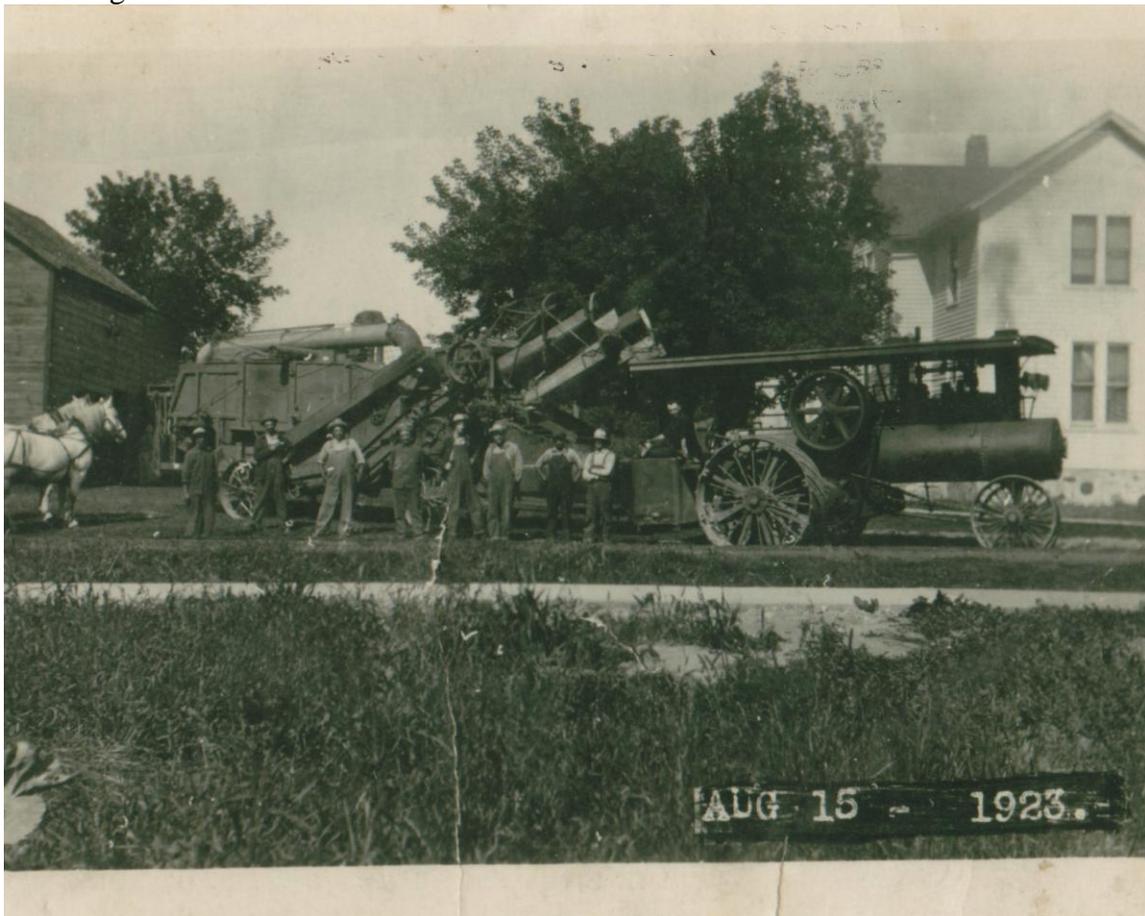


Martin Zernicke (on left) and Herman Genske (on right) At Specht House circa 20's  
Courtesy Irene Westphal (Zernicke)

Being a true entrepreneur Martin built a small sawmill in 1903 on the Pensaukee Creek in Zachow and used the steam engine purchased at the same time to power the mill. The sawmill was used by the farmers to cut logs for the construction of their farm buildings and homes. The logs were hauled in by horse and wagon and filled the east end of the property to what is now Hilbert Street and extended north to the C&NW railroad right-of-way. An upper level of the sawmill was set up to cut shingles which was a natural extension of the activity and provided the farmers with the needed roofing supplies. This activity was on a “second floor” of one end of the sawmill. The steam engine used for

power was fueled by the wood slabs that resulted from cutting the logs. Also some amount of coal was purchased for the Sawmill. Pensaukee Creek provided the water needed for the boiler.

Many of the men in the area worked at the sawmill. Art Cowden ran the steam engine for a time. Others included Fred Zernicke, Elmer Zernicke, Bill Radtke, William Busch, Oscar Jeske, H.A. Rueske, Rueben Schmidt, Louis Splitberger, Ed Deering, Aug. Westerfeld, Lester Beilfuss, Earnest Krause, Hilbert Specht, Aesoph Boerger, and others. team...Elmer Zernicke, Martin's son, was the Sawmill Manager in later years, and Martin became the business manager. In later years Elmers son Manton became active in the operation of the sawmill with the goal of running the unit that controlled the cutting of the logs.



Full Threshing Crew with Threshing Machine and Steam Engine 1923  
Courtesy Irene Westphal (Zernicke)

The sawmill remained active into the late 1950's although at a lesser pace than earlier years. The steam engine was sold in 1960? and in the process of moving the steam engine the Sawmill caught fire and burned to the ground. The steam engine survived and is still in existence today.

A second business was started for the Minneapolis-Moline steam engine in the early years when a threshing machine was purchased in 1918. This permitted further utilization of an expensive piece of equipment and fulfilled a need of the farming community. Thus began another business, albeit a seasonal one. Barrels of coal and wood slabs were transported with the threshing machine and steam engine as well as a wooden water tank with water for the boiler. An old caboose was also transported that was used as an office and a resting place for crew. When not in use it was kept at the sawmill where it became a recreational facility for the card playing citizens of Zachow. It was noted that a pony of beer was generally at hand.

Some of the early threshing crews included James Mahon, Fritz Lemke, Joe Griff, H.A. Rueske, Louis Kroening, Earl Mills, Lawrence Deering, Earnest Krause, and others..



Minneapolis-Moline Steam Engine -1960  
Courtesy Irene Westphal (Zernicke)

Another business developed using the resources at hand was the Ice Business. This developed around 1926. A pond was dredged off the PensaukeeCreek to create ice in the winter and an ice house was built on the north side of the Zernicke family farmhouse. Later the ice house was rebuilt on the south side of the farmhouse. The sawmill generated a lot of sawdust and this was used in the ice house to insulate the large blocks of ice cut from the pond. These blocks would last throughout the summer when covered with sawdust. The people that cut and transported the ice were neighbors from the surrounding area and many from Zachow. The large blocks of ice were hauled on big sleighs and teams of horses to their destination. The ice blocks were sold out of the farm house to Pauly & Pauly Cheese Company, the Creamery, the town taverns, the hotel and

also the individual residents of the area. The large blocks initially sold for 10 to 25 cents. Refrigeration was non-existent during this period of time and the ice business flourished until the larger businesses such as the Cheese company and the Creamery adopted the ammonia cooling system. Pauly & Pauly Cheese Company made this transition around 1938-1939 and the Creamery converted around the same time.

Individuals that were active in the Zernicke Ice Business were Henry Schultz, John Dingledein, Ewald Dobratz, William Quandt, Clarence Deering, Martin Laub, Herman Radtke, Bill Radtke, William Madson, John Deering, George Radtke, and others. Others later got in the ice business using the "Zernicke Pond". Albert Radtke built an ice house behind Radtke's Garage and used sawdust from the sawmill as insulation and continued to supply the residents of Zachow with ice well into the 1940's. It was a relatively short distance from this ice house to the pond and the blocks were dragged across the field in the winter time. This business probably picked up the remnants of the Zernicke ice business although the details of the transition are not known.

The ancillary businesses of thrashing, sawing logs, making lumber and shingles, and the ice business were seasonal and did not provide a steady stream of income but did provide extra income at a critical time in Zachow's history for the Zernicke's as well as others. Martin and Elmer Zernicke were indeed "Captains of Industry" for Zachow.



Winter in Wisconsin! Zernicke Sawmill looking across Pensaukee Creek Circa 1950's  
Courtesy of Dale Dirks

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