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## Addison Center: Then & Now by Scott Noegel

It is hard to believe that Addison Center was once home to one of the most bustling and intriguing immigrant villages in early Wisconsin. One barely notices it today, hiding amongst the trees just northeast of the intersection of Highways 33 and 175. Yet Addison once boasted a brewery, general store and post office, hotel, shoemaker, lumber mill, cheese factory, blacksmith shop, tin shop, and no less than three saloons and brothels, some of which, old timers say, were later frequented by the likes of Al Capone and members of the Milwaukee Braves. One of the saloons, until very recently, still contained a hidden network of cellars dug during Prohibition. Of course, in those days the main intersection was not where it is now, but in the very heart of Addison.

The colorful settlement history of Addison Center begins with Nicholas Nenno, an immigrant from Berus in the Rheinland, who built a brewery on the northwest corner of the intersection.

Soon many other immigrants flocked to Addison giving it a vital economic boost. In fact, Addison was a rapidly growing community and more than half of its residents at the time were under the

age of twenty. Just east and across the street from Nenno's saloon, August Zihlsdorf (the Zihlsdorf homestead is pictured, about 1858 *WCHS 060,189*) built the first general store in the 1860s. It doubled as a saloon and, in the 1880s, it also served as a post office. In 1902 it held a cheese factory as well.



In the 1870s, Carl Keidel built a sawmill east of the intersection, which he sold to Henry and William Kuhaupt in 1902. When Henry was elected County

Treasurer in 1906, his son Louis took over the mill. It was the first mill in all of Washington County to convert to steam power. The Kuhaupt home remains, but the sawmill no longer exists.

Since Addison Center had no church, the religious needs of the community were met in nearby Allenton, St. Lawrence, St. Anthony, and Nenno.

Little remains of Addison's once lively past. Most of its buildings fell into disrepair and were demolished. The intersection that once was a thriving focal point of commerce and exchange, of countless handshakes, toasts, and conversations, now keeps its stories, like its history, to itself.

*Scott Noegel is the great-great-great grandson of Nicholas Fohl, an early settler at Addison Center.*

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"There is more to life than increasing its speed."

-Mahatma Gandhi