

## CREATE CHEESE THEMED STORE AND HERITAGE CENTER

*We are sharing this information obtained from the website of the City of Plymouth, WI*

Plymouth, WI – A \$300,000 grant from the USDA will help renovate a building built in 1875 for a start-up cheese themed store and heritage center in downtown Plymouth at 133 E. Mill Street. The project was announced by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today. Vilsack stated that “USDA Rural Development’s field structure enables our community-based staff to engage with local partners and, in turn, enables these partners to provide their local small businesses and start-ups access the capital and technical assistance they need to be competitive in today’s global economy.”

Mayor Donald Pohlman said “this unique funding opportunity is one piece of the puzzle to saving perhaps the oldest building in downtown Plymouth as well as building upon our history as Cheese Capital of the World.”

Brian Yerges, City Administrator/Utilities Manager stated that “the USDA grant will establish a new business revolving loan fund (RLF) that will issue an initial 0% interest loan to the project at 133 E. Mill Street, a cheese-themed retail and heritage center.” The project is a collaboration of the Plymouth Redevelopment Authority (RDA), City of Plymouth, and the Sheboygan County Economic Development Corporation (SCEDC). The project is expected to be undertaken in 2016 contingent on funding. The Plymouth RDA previously announced that it had received an \$800,000 grant through the Lakeshore Community Foundation to support the project.

Dane Checolinski, Executive Director of SCEDC said “The SCEDC has a history of supporting creative financing to move economic development initiatives forward throughout the county. This is one project that will add another crown jewel to downtown Plymouth.” For more information or for updates, please contact the City of Plymouth City Administrator/Utilities Manager at (920) 893-1271, Ext. 311.

## WORKING TO PRESERVE PLYMOUTH’S HISTORY

October 8, 2015 By [Tanya](#)

The Plymouth Redevelopment Authority in 2014, with the assistance of the Lakeshore Community Foundation, established the Downtown Community Initiatives Fund as a donor directed to benefit downtown Plymouth. The aim of the fund is to assist with funding of downtown improvements to physical public spaces, redevelopment of downtown properties, and capacity building. Thus far, the fund has collected commitments of \$950,000 for the downtown business manager pilot project (\$150,000) and the rehabilitation and redevelopment of 133 E. Mill Street (\$800,000). Other downtown initiatives include the redevelopment of Stayer Park and the rebuilding of the historic Huson Water Tower that burned down in 2015. Please feel free to contact the City Administrator/Utilities Manager at (920) 893-1271, Ext. 311 regarding any questions you have about the fund or ongoing downtown initiatives. As a community, we hope to preserve the history that is a vital and vibrant component of Plymouth.

## A CHEESE CAPITAL IN LAND OF THE CROOKED RIVER

September 22, 2015 By [Tanya](#)

Continuing our series of articles about the history of the Cheese Capital of the World this article was first published in the Sheboygan Press June 1, 1976.

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The first settlers in the Plymouth area had to hack their way through thick underbrush all day just to get to the place, but today the city fathers can proudly say that it will never happen that way again. A new major highway passing just north of the city and a renovated main street through the downtown business section will assure that motorists won't encounter any of the obstacles those first travelers did 131 years ago. New roads, a stable economy built upon a diversified industrial base, and the usual and customary benefits of small city living all add up to progress for the 6,700 or so residents who will be observing their community's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1977.

In the year 1845, Plymouth was pure wilderness, known only as a place between Sheboygan and Fond du Lac where travelers might find water flowing from a cold spring on a hillside. Early in May that year, Isaac Thorpe, his sons John and Rensellaer, and son-in-law, William Bowen, loaded their two ox-drawn wagons with lumber and set out west from Sheboygan Falls seeking those springs.

After an arduous day-long journey, the four men from Pennsylvania did find the springs, but decided the land around them was not suitable for farming. They back-tracked about two miles and found another place near a stream. The older Mr. Thorpe, who was getting anxious to settle again, decided that it was home.

Two months later, a father and son came from Connecticut looking for a place to settle. They stopped at the Thorpe home and asked about the lay of the land in the area. The Thorpes told their visitors about the beauty of the springs and the Davidsons went to have a look.

**THE COUNTRY** around them was still wilderness, but it was rapidly filling up with settlers, and Henry and Thomas Davidson believed that even though the land around the springs might not be good for farming, it would be a good place to start a tavern. They built their two-story log structure next to the springs, and named it Cold Spring House. It was located on a new road between Sheboygan and Fond du Lac, at what would become years later, the intersection of Main and Milwaukee Streets.

Henry Davidson wanted to call the new settlement Springfield, but his son wanted something to commemorate his sweetheart who had died and was now buried in Plymouth, Connecticut. The matter was easily resolved when Mr. Davidson acquiesced to the wishes of his son, but it wasn't so easy a few years later when another disagreement about the name cropped up.

The pioneers who forged cities and towns out of the Sheboygan County wilderness were naturally strong-willed and independent people. They had to be in order to make it in this place where hardship and opportunity were paid out in equal shares. These traits were

responsible for the great Quit Qui Oc war of the early 1850's. The Indians who inhabited the region had a word for the meandering stream that flowed through the town not far from the Davidson's cold springs. It was "Ta Quit Qui Oc" which meant "crooked river."

In 1851 another plat was surveyed lying between the river and the eastern boundary of Plymouth. The inhabitants there suggested the name Quit Qui Oc, not only for their area, but for the entire community. The state legislature, willing to please, but not overly perceptive, named it Quitquire.

**THE FOLLOWING** year, outraged citizens demanded that the name of Plymouth be restored, and the legislature again accommodated, although it took considerable debate before the bill was adopted.

Plymouth's location, somewhat removed from other major trading centers, but centrally located in Sheboygan County, undoubtedly contributed to its economic development. In order to supply goods to the settlers, a variety of industries and businesses were started. Among them were foundries, wagon makers, flour and lumber mills and a brewery.

While Henry Davidson may have been blessed with foresight, he was apparently lacking in persistence. A year after he started the Cold Spring House, he sold it, and two years later he acquired the water rights on the Mullet River. On one side of the river, he built a sawmill, and on the other side, a grist mill. It took two years to complete the grist mill, but it was destined to become the first major industry of Plymouth, later bringing in as much as half a million dollars a year.

**BUT BUSINESS** was slow at first, and Davidson was apparently discouraged about his mill venture. He sold out of that too, this time doing it the day after it was opened.

Although Plymouth's industrial base is varied today, the city gained national prominence for one product – cheese. At one time, buyers and sellers of cheese there influenced market prices for the entire nation, and Plymouth became known as the cheese capital of the world. Much of Plymouth's economic life still revolves around this commodity and it's been estimated that there is still more traffic in cheese there than any place in the country.

Cheese-related businesses located in Plymouth today include S & R Cheese Corp. (said to be the nation's largest producer of Italian cheese), A & P Cheese, Bordens, Sargento, Kraft Foods, Inc., Plymouth Creameries, Tupper Cheese Co., Central Wrap, Inc., and Plymouth Cold Storage, Inc.

A 72-acre industrial park on the north side of the city is about two-thirds filled. City officials would like to see more tenants there, but the economy, in one respect, is almost too good, according to Mayor Bill Bruhy. "Plymouth, industrially, is strong, but we have a horribly low labor market," Bruhy said. "That makes it difficult to get industry."

**IN TODAY'S** mobile society, good streets and ample parking may be as important to a community as steady jobs. Plymouth civic leaders have been working on that situation for some time now, and their efforts have borne fruit. Two old buildings along Mill Street were purchased several years ago by the city and razed. Streets were cut through the lots and off-

street parking areas were installed in back of the downtown business places. "We're in good shape for parking now, except for the west-end of Mill Street," said Bruhy.

## Cheeseville: A History

September 17, 2015 By Tanya

With Plymouth's recent acquisition of its 'Cheese Capital of the World' trademark, some people may be curious about the history of cheese in Plymouth. Plymouth resident and Historical Society President Dan Buckman has written an essay detailing one segment of Plymouth's cheese history, an area of town known locally as Cheeseville:

Cheeseville was Plymouth's most distinctive feature in the 1930's and 1940's. It encompassed a section of Plymouth's south side (north of the Borden company along the railroad tracks off of Appleton street) where the most prominent cheese houses were once clustered.

Cheeseville included warehouses, cold storage, processing plants, and railroad facilities. It was home to cheese assemblers and cheese processors. It was the center in which cheese was collected, stored, cured, graded, packed, and shipped.

Cheeseville was the Wall Street of cheese. Cheese makers would bring their cheese to Cheeseville where the assemblers would paraffin it, cure it, and store it, then sell the cheese to processors like Kraft (formally Kraft-Phenix Co. and Pabst-ETT Co.), Borden Co., or Lakeshire-Marty (purchased by Borden Co. in 1929). The processing companies would blend cheese together to make a processed cheese or spread, then package it. Some of the assemblers were Blanke Cheese Co., Bamford Cheese Co., Davis Cheese Co., Plymouth Cheese Co., Conover Cheese Co., and Dairy State Cold Storage.

A second and smaller Cheeseville was located in the northwest part of the city. The Wisconsin Cheese Producers Federation Co-op (later known as Plymouth Creameries, Inc.), a cheese marketing organization, was located on Schwartz St. The Co-op was established in 1912 as the result of dissatisfaction farmers felt with selling their milk to cheese makers who in turn sold the cheese through dealers. The co-ops would either own the cheese factories or at least force them to sell to the Federation which the farmers would own. Membership in the Federation grew dramatically leading to the development of Cheeseville on the south side of Plymouth. The Federation began manufacturing cheese in 1932. Midwest Creamery located there and produced butter and smaller amounts of cheese.

**Why did Cheeseville develop?** It was due to the fact that early cheesemakers had no facilities in which to store their cheese. In 1871 there were twenty cheese factories in the county. By 1944 there were 65. In the 1930's the population of Plymouth was approximately 4,400. One thousand of those people were employed in Cheeseville. In the 1930's employees worked 12-hour days or longer and 10-hour days on Saturdays. Men earned 35 cents per hour while women earned 30 cents. Those women who were employed at the Lakeshire-Marty Company were not allowed to work once they were married.

Thus Plymouth became the Cheese Capital of the World. The Wisconsin Cheese Exchange formed in 1918 and was located in the upper floors of the Exchange Bank (corner of Mill and Stafford streets). The Exchange was where the daily price of cheese was determined. It moved to Green Bay in 1956.

In the 1950's smaller cheese factories closed while the larger factories expanded. The larger factories no longer needed a place for storage or assemblers. They began selling their cheese directly to processors and wholesalers and the businesses in Cheeseville gradually closed.

While no longer in Plymouth, Kraft has had an interesting history here. During prohibition, Kraft was making cheese in a Milwaukee brewery. When prohibition ended they moved their cheese making and processing equipment to Plymouth via rail. In Plymouth there were Kraft, Kraft-Phenix Co., and Pabst-Ett Co., the latter two having ties with Kraft. The former Plymouth Radio and Phonograph company building was purchased by Kraft and used for paraffining cheese. Racks of cheese would be dipped into large tanks of paraffin then stored. Plymouth Box Company, jointly owned by Kraft and Borden's Co., was located in Cheeseville. As the majority of cheese was shipped by rail, the box company made wooden boxes for their processed cheese.

Kraft was a civic oriented company and for years the Pabst-Ett and Kraft Choral Society provided musical concerts for the community and surrounding area. The company had a cafeteria with its own chef for the 200-plus employees who worked there. On June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1949, Kraft officially moved its headquarters to Chicago. Shortly after, plants at Green Bay and Freeport followed. When Kraft left Plymouth, 30 employees remained for a short time, operating a re-sale and storage facility. Today a few of the original buildings remain and are home to Glacier Transit & Storage Co.

References:

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-Dan Buckman, 4.20.2014