

Werner Blum, Sr.

Nov. 15, 1858 – March 1939

Werner Blum, Sr., Answers Summons

Identified Since Youth With Cheese Industry; Last Rites Friday

Werner Blum, Sr., aged 80, identified since his youth with Green county's cheese industry, passed away at 2:40 this morning in his home, 1124 Eleventh avenue. He suffered a heart attack Jan. 1 but recovered sufficiently to be about the house a part of each day and appeared for a time to have regained his former strength. Last Friday he was seized with an asthmatic attack and declined rapidly.

Mr. Blum appeared much younger than his years. Even after he passed the age of 70 he was active in Limburger cheese making, retiring only six years ago to his Monroe residence, where he continued active physically until recently and alert mentally to the last. Mr. Blum had the distinction of being an American-born cheesemaker, in a region where the field was especially, in the earlier years, dominated by men born in Switzerland and Germany.

He was a native of Washington township, Green county, born Nov. 15, 1858, the son of Werner and Barbara Zwicky Blum. He attended rural school in his home vicinity.

Early Interest In Cheese

Between the ages of 14 to 16, while assisting on the Washington township farm of the late Adam Blumer, Mr. Blum first became interested in the manufacture of cheese. In the evenings and on Sundays he watched Dave Tschabold, then maker at the Blumer farm. He received two months of actual instruction at the age of 18 when he worked for Joe Wittwer, cheesemaker, Washington township. Then for three years he worked at the John Benkert factory, to which three Washington township farmers hauled milk. Later, his brothers, Fred Blum and Jacob Blum, Monticello, built a factory on the Blum farm in Washington township. For two years Mr. Blum made cheese at this factory in the morning and at the Ezra Blumer factory in the afternoon, walking the three and half miles distance between them each day.

60-65 Cents A Hundred

He was able to purchase milk for 60 and 65 cents a hundred pounds when he took over the Hawthorne factory, now known as Fairview, in Clarno township. Other factories where Mr. Blum made cheese are: Washington township, Lemon factory; Clarno township, Klondike factory, one year, Shueytown, one year; Jordan township, Spring Valley, two years; near Monticello, Cross Roads, five years, Clark and Rhyner, two years, Wittenwyler and Burgi, two years; Monroe township, Prosper; Cold Springs farm, when owned by the Theiler brothers; and Wyss cheese factory. The Badger Cheese company factory, formerly opposite the Milwaukee station here, was first operated with Mr. Blum as maker. He was also associated with Fred Stauffacher, the firm being known as Blum and Stauffacher. Later he was in business for himself as a wholesale dealer.

Was Quality Maker

Mr. Blum returned to cheesemaking late in life and served last at the Wyss factory, north of Monroe, where twice before he was maker. He retired from his final 6-year term there late in 1932. Mr. Blum was an exponent of farmer-cheesemaker cooperation and a firm believer in the idea that quality cheese production is the salvation of the Green county industry. He insisted on cleanliness in cheese operations on the farm and in the factory. The success of his methods was proved by the high ratings that his Limburger cheese were given in local and state contests over a long period of time. He kept pace with improvements in cheesemaking methods and took pride, too, in the general appearance of his factories, inside and outside. He continued this pride in late years at his city home, enjoying activities in his large garden. His other diversions were reading and enjoyment of the radio.

Married In 1897

Mr. Blum was married Nov. 11, 1897, to Elizabeth Kuenzie in Washington township, Rev. Henrich Rousterholz conducting the ceremony. The widow survives, with four daughters and two sons, three grandchildren, a brother and a sister. The daughters are Misses Marie and Frances, at home; Mrs. Leslie H. Andrews, Tamaqua, Pa., and Mrs. Carl H. Walter, Chicago; the sons, Werner W., at home; and Dr. Benjamin B., Petoskey, Mich.; the brother, Fred Blum, Washington township; and the sister, Mrs. John Blumer, Monticello. The grandchildren are Peter Andrews, Tamaqua; and Marcia and Elizabeth Blum, Petoskey.

Funeral on Friday

Preceding Mr. Blum in death were the parents, a son, Wennie, Oct. 22, 1905; two sisters, Rosa Blum Benkert, and Mrs. John Benkert, and a brother, Jacob Blum.

Mr. Blum was a member of St. John's Evangelical church. He was confirmed in the Washington township church by Rev. Hirtz. Mr. Blum's father was one of the founders of that church. The funeral will be at 2 Friday afternoon in the Shriner-Neushwander funeral home. Rev. Paul C. Kehle, of St. John's Evangelical church, will officiate. Burial will be in Greenwood cemetery.

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