



SandHill Marketing photo

Earl Sugden Home, 15620 Woodstock Drive – Henrietta Township.

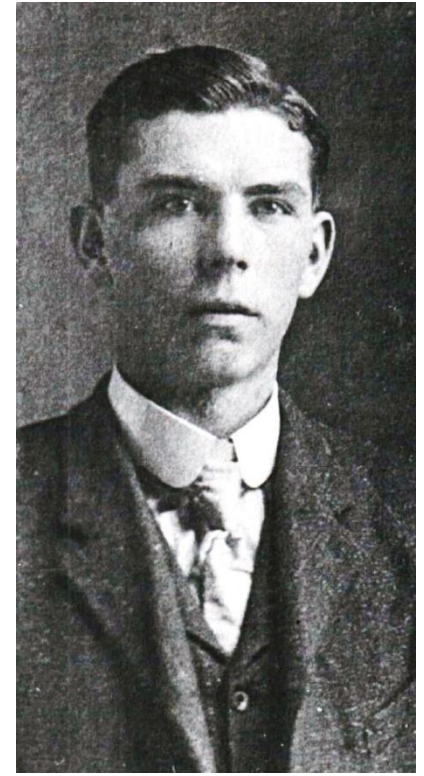
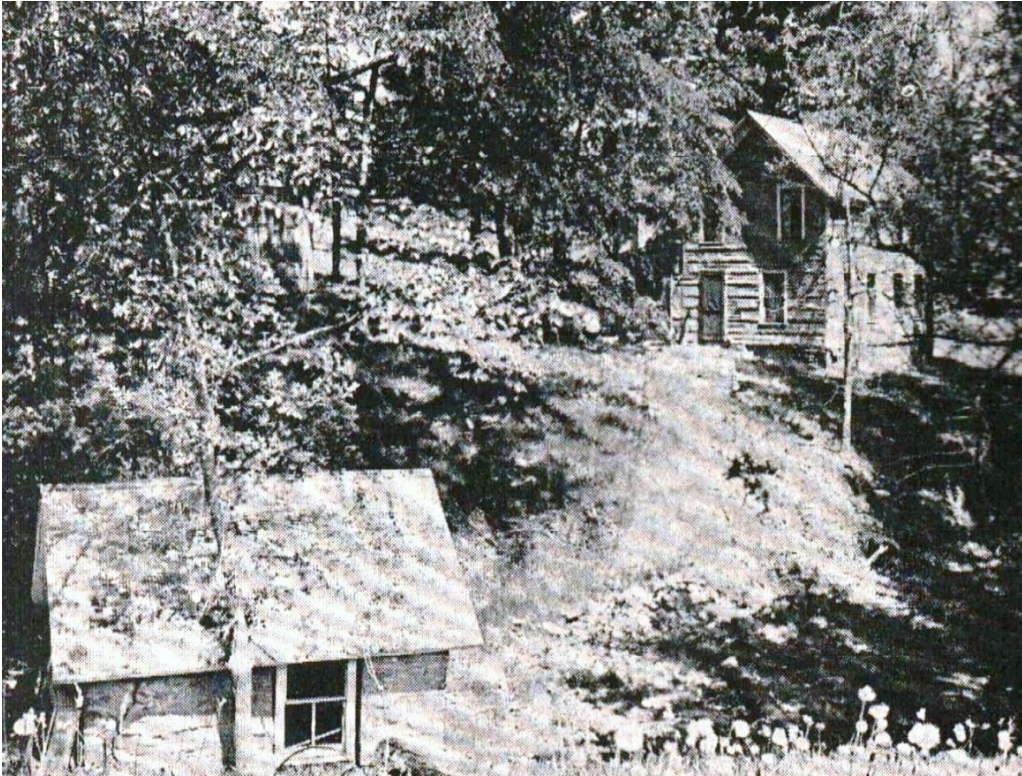
This house is indicative of a structure not designed by an architect and exhibits some stylistic features suggestive of Greek Revival Style in its simple 2 story box configuration, but does not otherwise conform to the pattern typical of that style. It has none of the artistry of decoration but it gives an appearance of dignity in its simplicity.

This two story wood-frame house is an excellent example of the Gablefront vernacular house located in the village of Woodstock in Henrietta Township. Well-preserved, it exhibits the gable roof entrance on the street facing the gable end of the house, open porch with classical influenced columns that is typical of this vernacular house form built in the early decades of the twentieth century. The Gablefront house developed after 1825 and coincided with the popularity of the Greek Revival style, which placed emphasis on the gable-end of the house in the form of a pediment; often associated with Greek temples

The Gablefront house allows the narrow part of the house to face the street, usually on a rectangular lot. The Gablefront house became a uniquely American house type. The Gablefront appears in a wide variety of styles ranging from Greek Revival, to Gothic Revival, to Queen Anne, to a simpler vernacular style home such as the Sugden House. The Gablefront house form remained popular into the early 20th century when its popularity was diminished by the Bungalow Style house.

Earl Sugden was an unusual man; a self-taught teacher, philosopher, composer, scientist, artist, musician and historian. He was born on April 17, 1885, in Sauk County. He farmed most of his life and had been a rural school teacher. He became well-known for his paintings as well as his life-size models of birds and his work in sand bottle painting. He had also written poetry. He died at the age of 89 on July 4, 1974, and was buried in Soules Creek Cemetery in Richland County.

Sugden lived a very simple life. He and his sister Emma never were married and lived much of their adult lives on a small farm just north of Hub City before moving to the house in Woodstock. He made his living as a farmer on 40 acres and a few Jersey cows. He worked the farm with an Allis Chalmers C model tractor and had a Model A Ford for years. He and Emma were very frugal and raised most of what they ate outside of some coffee, tea and sugar and the like.



Above: The Hub City farmstead Right: Sugden at 21 - Richland County History Room photos.

Sugden's formal education was short. He began the first grade with his siblings, but on the first day of school the kids laughed at him. As a result, he would not go back until he was in the eighth grade. In the intervening years he had studied the elementary school subjects and was able to graduate from the eighth grade in three month's time. After completing the eighth grade, he went on to the County Normal and graduated in 1906. He then taught intermittently in Richland County rural schools for 16 years; the Ryan School, Hub City School, the Syresville School, the Lower Hawkins Creek School and the Rockbridge School.

Starting in 1939, The University of Wisconsin's College of Agriculture hosted "Farm and Home Week" which consisted not only of stock exhibits, but an art show. Three simple criteria for the projected exhibit were drawn up: all participants were to be rural farm people, they were to be lay artists, or non-professionals, making their living through other occupations; and their work was to be original.

An intensive search was conducted throughout the state, directly by extension trips from Madison and indirectly through publicity, correspondence, and the offices of county agricultural and home extension agents. Some county agents had become aware of farm painters, a few of whom had already exhibited at county fairs.

The first exhibit, in 1939, was held at the Memorial Union on the University of Wisconsin campus and organized by a Rural Art Committee, in cooperation with the Student Union Gallery Committee. The art work was surprisingly good, although only thirty people from seventeen counties participated. The second year, forty-four men and women entered

ninety-one works of art. By 1942 the number of people submitting work had grown to fifty-nine.



Above: Oil painting on cardboard scrap-John Seymour collection.

The March 31, 1941, issue of LIFE magazine contains a description of "Farm and Home Week" along with a narrative featuring Earl Sugden and his creations. "Through his art Sugden does not escape from his workaday world of farm chores, but rather increases his enjoyment of it. Most of his paintings are familiar country landscapes. He paints with brushes made out of hair from his own horses' tails, sometimes makes his own paints from vegetable juices. He knows Latin names for all Wisconsin birds and plants. Among his other hobbies are making tiny jack knives out of scrap metal, making Indian arrowheads by pressure chipping. Self-taught in everything. Sugden translates poetry from French and German, and also writes poetry himself. Living with his sister, he farms the land where he was brought up and hopes to die there."

The Richland County History Room located in the Brewer Public Library at 325 North Central Ave. Richland Center has an extensive collection of Sugden's artwork on display. For more information call 608-647-6033.



Left: Earl Sugden playing home-made flute. Above: Sand bottle painting. Richland County History Room.

