

SCHAUMBURG IN THE 1880S

One hundred and twenty years ago life in Schaumburg was very different than it is today. Here are a few differences between today and 1880.

1. All but one family in Schaumburg had come from Germany, they spoke German.
2. It was a farming community that grew lots of grain and milked many cows.
3. There were no big stores or businesses, very few roads and no cars to drive on them.
4. The farmers did not use electricity and gas-powered engines. Animals, water, wind and people provided the power to get the work done.
5. In 1880 about 1,000 people lived in the entire township, today 100,000 people live in that same space.

By 1880 the "Yankee" farmers had moved west seeking new lands. Immigrants from Germany moved into this area and farmed the prairie land. They wrote their families in Germany and encouraged them to come to Illinois. Soon, more people living in Schaumburg spoke German than English. School was taught in German. Church services were in German. The farm wife cooked the same foods that her mother did in Germany. The farmer took care of the land the same way his father had in Germany.

Most farms had several cows. The land grew a lot of grass for the cows to eat, the same prairie grasses it had grown for a thousand years. The grasses were cut and stored in the barn. Once this was done, the grass was called hay. New grasses like oats and wheat were also brought to Schaumburg and grown to feed people and animals. All year long, milk from the cows was sold to the creamery to be made into butter and cheese. During the summer, many farmers milked less cows because they had so much work to do in the fields. Some farmers made the milk into butter and cheese, others sold it to creameries to make butter and cheese. The butter and cheese were sold to people who lived in nearby cities-like Chicago and Elgin. Milk did not make people rich, but the money helped the family pay for land and buildings and buy the furniture in their house.

Schaumburg didn't have any large stores. Food that the family ate was produced on the farm. The children and

wife took care of a large garden. Fruits and vegetables from the garden were stored in the root cellar. The livestock on the farm provided meat, milk, and eggs for the family to eat. In fall and winter, hogs were butchered and the meat (like sausages and bacon) was smoked and stored in the smokehouse for the family to eat year round.

The family bought items they couldn't or didn't want to make, like kerosene for their lamps and fabric to make dresses. They did the shopping at the general store in Schaumburg Center. This center was where Roselle and Schaumburg Roads crossed. The general store was a good place to buy things, read the newspaper, or visit with neighbors. The local blacksmith could sharpen a plow or shoe a horse while the farmer got the local news at the store.

Farmers didn't work alone, all the members of the family helped out along with hired hands and neighbors when help was needed. Church was one of the places they went to visit with other people. They also got together to help each other mow the hay or thresh the wheat. They seldom traveled far from their homes. Travel was difficult and slow by wagon, and no train service came into Schaumburg.

In the 1880s, farmers didn't have electricity to power equipment like washing machines or engines to power vehicles. Horses and mules pulled plows and wagons. Most of all, the farmer, his wife and his children pushed, pulled, pumped, and lifted tools to get the work done.



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