

HISTORIC *Deephaven*

Chowen's Corner

A SHORT HISTORY 1853-1967

BY BARBARA M. SYKORA

*Historic Photos from the
Deephaven Historical Society*

Current photos by Julie Sturek
that moment. frozen. photography



I think many people would be surprised at how one family, the Chowens, owned so much of Deephaven and Minnetonka property at one time.

In 1852 James Shaver, Jr. was employed in the building of the Minnetonka Mills saw mill. His son and wife Sarah Chowen Shaver (d.o.b 7/5/1824) arrived at the Mill in November 1852, making them the first settler family to live in the lake area. In 1853, the family moved west of Minnetonka Mills and into their unfinished cabin. Sarah Shaver became the first white woman to give birth in the lake area to twin boys, Baynard T. and Bernard G. Shaver in August 1853. James enlisted in the army on August 27, 1864. Sarah died in 1884. In 1885, he moved away to Alexandria, Minnesota, and was in the furniture business. He married again after the death of his first wife.

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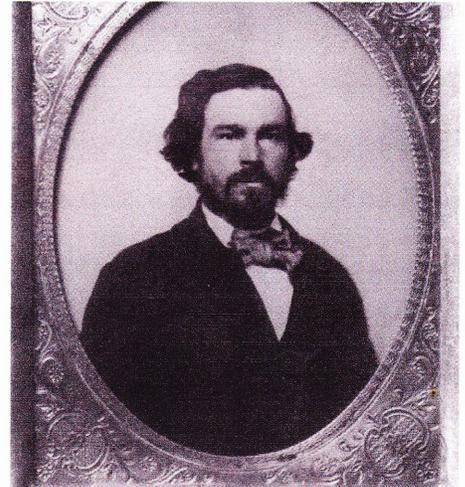
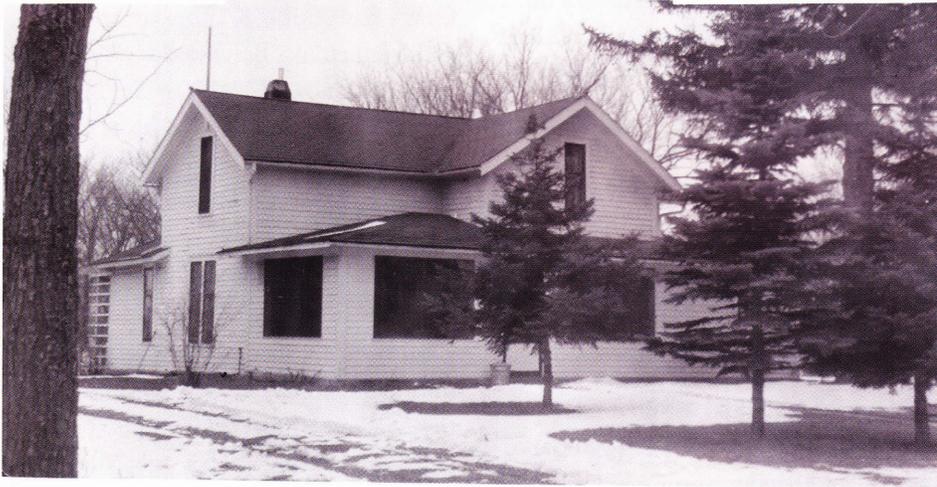
101 and Minnetonka Boulevard. He was born in Green County, New York, on June 22, 1826. William married Mary M. Frear on May 25, 1855, and they had six children.

It is said that William came to St. Anthony Village in 1850 and purchased sites for himself and his family: brother Joseph Chowen, sister Mary C. Chowen and brother George W. Chowen. He also bought land for his brothers-in-law, James I. Shaver and Amos N. Gray. From what I have researched, Amos Gray was the first of the Chowen family to get to the General Land Office and register his claim for 140 acres on January 15, 1856. Joseph (160 acres, according to the 1857 census, Joseph was living with William and Mary), George (103 acres in two locations), William Chowen (160 acres), and James Shaver (83 acres) all registered their claims on April 2, 1857. Local history reflects that William donated land in 1854 for the first schoolhouse in the area. (The first school was across the street from the present Groveland School). He was in the Minnesota legislature in 1857-

58. He enlisted in the Army on August 3, 1864 and had the rank of a Sergeant and reported to Fort Snelling.

The Land Act of 1820 required full payment at the time of registering your land, and the law abandoned the credit system for buying public lands. Now as little as 80 acres could be purchased. Also, the 1841 Preemption Act established preferential right to settlers and squatters on public lands. Under the conditions of building a home, settling on the land and "improving" it, a claimant could buy up to 160 acres at not less than \$1.25 an acre. All you had to be was the head of a family or widow or single man over the age of 21. So I am not sure who got here first in the Chowen family, but I feel that the families were probably improving their land before they fully purchased their property.

By the 1870s, the corner of 101 and Minnetonka Boulevard was a real corner with a developed wagon road where Minnetonka Boulevard is now; 101 ran north and south, but there was no bridge at Gray's Bay until 1887. The corner of 101



and Minnetonka Boulevard took on the name of "Chowen." Also by the 1870s, the area east of Chowen and south of Gray's Bay took on the old school district No. 53 name, "Groveland," which was in turn adopted by the nearby graveyard (since 1871). In 1882, William was appointed the postmaster of Chowen, a Hennepin County Post Office which was in-home until 1891. The first Chowen corner took on the name "Groveland Corner" probably by 1890. William and his wife, Mary Frear Chowen (1828-1884), lived there until 1908 when they built a frame house south of their log cabin.

George Washington Chowen (1822-1887) lived in Minneapolis with his wife

Susan Hawkins Chowen and their three children. His occupation was an abstract agent. He was the first Deputy of Registrar of Deeds in 1850 in Hennepin County.

Joseph Chowen settled on his 160 acres, built a cabin and this area took on the name of "Chowen's Corner." Joseph was born in Monroe, PA, on May 1, 1831 (died 1898). At 23 years old, he moved to Minnesota. He married Jane Fuller in March 1859, who died in 1872. He married again to Carolyn E. Gunn, and they raised seven children in all, four being from his first wife. His youngest daughter was Annie Chowen who lived in the family clapboard home, which was built in 1884 when she was ten years old until

it was torn down in 1955 and replaced by a store. She finished school at the 5th grade level. She was well-known to the community and led an active social life. She died in 1961.

Amos Gray and his wife Susan Ann Chowen Gray's (1828-1904) house was built just to the west of the northwest corner of 101 and Minnetonka Boulevard.

The Shaver cabin was located up 101 and Minnetonka Boulevard from the northeast corner (Ty Abel's gas station), and the farmhouse and barn were across the road, near Shaver's Lake.

The business history of Chowen's Corner

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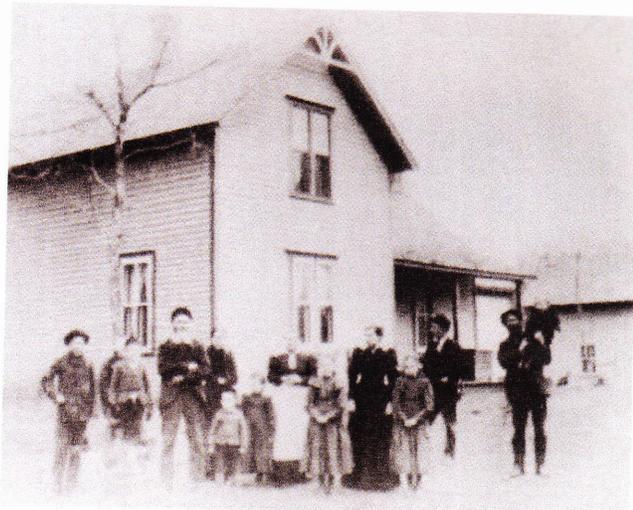
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Another view of Joseph Chownen's house and family.

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THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, 4

Prescription
CERTIFICATE
 No. 647

To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting:

Whereas *William Struter Chowen, of Hennepin County, Minnesota Territory*

has deposited in the GENERAL LAND OFFICE of the United States, a Certificate of the REGISTER OF THE LAND OFFICE at *Minneapolis* whereby it appears that full payment has been made by the said *William Struter Chowen* according to the provisions of the Act of Congress of the 24th of April, 1820, entitled "An act making further provision for the sale of the Public Lands," for the *west half of the South West quarter of Section Sixteen and the East half of the South West quarter of Section Eighteen, in Township One Hundred and Sixty and Range Twenty Two, in the District of Lands subject to sale at Minneapolis, Minnesota, the Entry having been confirmed under the Act of Congress approved June 26, 1836, entitled "An Act to amend and continue in force the Provisions of the Act of 1835, in Relation to Suspended Entries of Public Lands and the Act of 1846, in Relation to Suspended Exemption Land Claims"* said entry containing *One Hundred and Thirty acres*

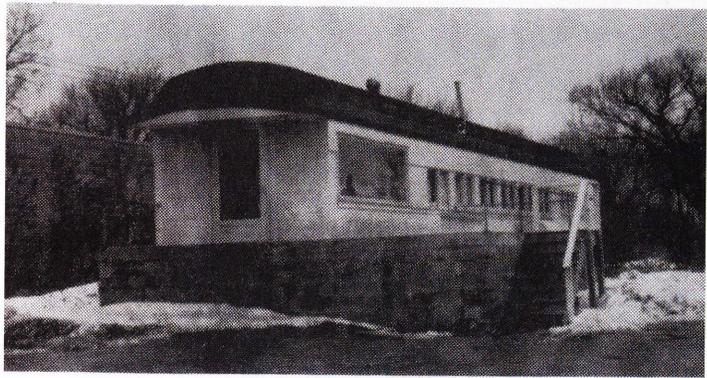
according to the official plat of the Survey of the said Lands, returned to the General Land Office by the SURVEYOR GENERAL, which said tract has been purchased by the said *William Struter Chowen*

NOW KNOW YE, That the United States of America, in consideration of the premises, and in conformity with the several acts of Congress in such case made and provided, HAVE GIVEN AND GRANTED, and by these presents DO GIVE AND GRANT, unto the said *William Struter Chowen* and to his heirs, the said tract above described: To have and to hold the same, together with all the rights, privileges, immunities, and appurtenances of whatsoever nature, thereunto belonging, unto the said *William Struter Chowen* and to his heirs and assigns forever.

In Testimony Whereof, I, *James Buchanan* PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, have caused these Letters to be made PATENT, and the SEAL of the GENERAL LAND OFFICE to be hereunto affixed.

GIVEN under my hand, at the CITY OF WASHINGTON, the *Second* day of *April* in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and *fifty seven*, and of the INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES the *Eighty first*

BY THE PRESIDENT: *James Buchanan*
 By *G. H. Jones* Secretary.
J. N. Granger Recorder of the General Land Office.



raised seven children in all, four being from his first wife. His youngest daughter was Annie Chowen who lived in the family clapboard home, which was built in 1884 when she was ten years old until it was torn down in 1955 and replaced by a store. She finished school at the 5th grade level. She was well-known to the community and led an active social life. She died in 1961.

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The Shaver cabin was located up 101 and Minnetonka Boulevard from the northeast corner (Ty Abel's gas station), and the farmhouse and barn were across

the road, near Shaver's Lake. The business history of Chowen's Corner was started in 1906 when the Deephaven Store was moved to the corner of Northome and Minnetonka Boulevard. The building was originally owned by W. S. Frear, father of Lake Minnetonka historian, Dana Frear. The building was built by Ed Eidam for a general store at Minnetonka Mills in 1879. It was moved from Minnetonka Mills by W.S. Frear. Frear may have owned it in conjunction with Edward H. Eidam (maybe or maybe not, depending upon what you read). Frear opened the store in 1903 and ran the store for a number of years with his son Henry, and then sold the building to John Mason, who had a lot to do with development of the corner. Mason was a builder and bought the building from Frear in 1920 and Harry Mason, John's son, bought land from Frear that same

the road, near Shaver's Lake.

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year to build a garage and body shop behind the store. Mason subsequently sold it to Oscar Dahlberg and in turn, he sold it to Clarence Laymen. In 1926, Clarence opened Layman's Deephaven Market at Chowen's Corner. When Layman opened the store, the only business places at Chowen's Corner were Mason's Garage and the grocery store. Laymen sold the store to Paul and Marion Reifenger after being in business for 22 years. The Reifengerbers lived above their business and ran the store until it was torn down in 1965.

John Mason also built the building known as Schroeder's Dairy. (The Creamery, Ted's Meats and Bumbershute, a woman's clothing store, also occupied this building). He also built the restaurant and barber shop that stood between the dairy (the Creamery) and the Deephaven Store. The Log Cabin was owned by Heinie Mueller, and the barber shop was operated by Louis Vietz and then by Jerry DeVork.

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In 1939, a fire completely destroyed the old Sand Service Station on Minnetonka Boulevard between 101 and Chowen's Corner. The building was a total loss. The fire departments arrived too late to do any good because there was no guarantee on the building, and the matter had to be arranged with the fire department before the firemen would come and assist putting it out.

Herb Miller bought the Mobil Station in 1940. People recall that there was also another station owned by Levi Derks, an all-metal construction service station on the southwest corner of Minnetonka Boulevard and Northome. Mueller's original restaurant stood next to it, later moving the dairy site (Creamery).

A small article in the *Deephaven Argus* read: In 1940 Deephaven has opened their 13th business at Chowen's Corner. Deephaven newest store is the Deep-

haven Hardware in a story and a half building. The business is owned by Carlos F. Wheaton and will be managed by William St. Amant. The hardware store is the fourth business to open in Deephaven in the past year. Other businesses at Chowen's Corner are: Deephaven Grocery, Mobilgas Station, Deephaven Garage, Carter's Barber and Beauty Shop, Betty Mae Shaffer Nursery, Schroeder's Dairy, Elliott's Standard Service, Log Cabin Inn, Deephaven Service Station, Pullman, Pure Oil Station, and Bassett Dairy. *The Deephaven Argus*: September 27th, 1940

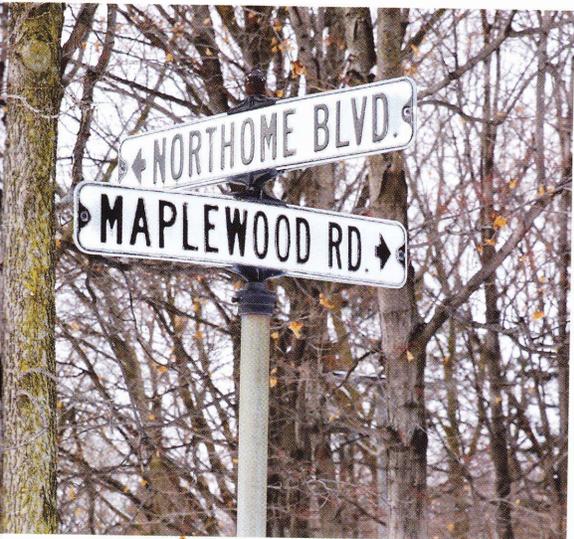
In 1941, the Deephaven Hardware business was purchased by Leonard Heinecke of St. Louis Park. He purchased the entire stock from C. F. Wheaton, founder of Deephaven Hardware Company. He actively engaged in an air conditioning company and general equipment business in Minneapolis and store took too much of his time. Because of this, he decided

to sell the business but not the building. Another station, Buster Timmer's Pure Oil, stood on the site of Verne's Alignment and Brake Service at 18308 Minnetonka Boulevard. In 1943, Peterson Shoe Repair opened at Chowen's Corner. They stayed in business for 49 years. In 1945, there were new proprietors at the Deephaven Market. The Laymens had retired and turned their business over to Mr. and Mrs. Norman Cornish.

The Argus, January 10th, 1947: A new business opened next to Buster Timmer's Station at Chowen's Corner. It will be called "Top of the World," a frozen food store. It will feature a complete line of frozen foods, including pastries, fruits, vegetables, and prepared foods and frozen food packaging supplies.

The Argus, October 31st, 1947: A new supermarket called the The Four Way Mart will open on November 15, 1947.

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The new market will be 50 x 100 foot made of concrete block with a brick front and a 48 x 22 foot garage. It will be located half block south of Chowen's Corner, next to the Tonkaway Cleaners. The market will be completely self-service.

At 18320 Minnetonka Boulevard was The Minnetonka Woodcraft Building. It was apparently owned and possibly built by Gerber Hoekstra. It once housed a drugstore, and it also held a Red Owl Grocery Store. Mrs. Hoekstra ran a small restaurant there.

The Argus September 7th, 1956: Plans for a new parking lot came under fire by some property owners involved at the last meeting of the Deephaven Village Council meeting last Wednesday night. Village Engineer William Scholl displayed a detailed sketch of the proposed parking lot which consists of a 100 foot strip

behind the stores extending from Minnetonka Boulevard down past Anderson's Plumbing and its adjacent property with street access from two or three places. The lot would accommodate 97 cars. Most of the business owners admitted that Chowen's Corner could use some clean up but felt that the size of the lot was too large. They particularly balked at the suggested method of financing the \$18,000 necessary to buy up the back footage, level and asphalt it. The method suggested as most feasible was a plan whereby the village would buy the property, financing it by 10 year bonds and assessing each owner on the value of his property. The property value would be arrived at by going to the tax assessor's record and taking the assessed value and multiplying this figure by three. At the following Deephaven Village Council meeting, the proposed plan for the parking lot was turned over to the businessmen in the area.

Next to the Minnetonka Woodcraft-Sign of the Eagle building, was an old wood construction Pullman car that stood for years. Bill Thul operated a small luncheon restaurant there. It later was a pottery workshop. It was damaged in a gas explosion and removed. At one time, a small grocery store owned by John Mason's brother, Henry, was also operated at the corner north of the Claudette's Building, which has since been removed.

The building that once housed the Plush Horse and the Boulevard Cleaners was originally a grocery store called Ramsey Grocery. Later it housed Deephaven Hardware in 1945 which was owned by Bert and Toots Kenyon until the hardware store moved to its location in 1967.

1. Shaver was born in 1829 at Wyoming Valley, Pa. He was 5'10", blue eyes, black hair.
2. D.L. Rodum, Sun Sailor, 9/30/1985 (courtesy of the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society).
3. He was 5'4", black hair, Eyes: hazel
4. George E. Warner, Charles M. Foote, History of Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis, 1881, Page 243
5. "Chowen Boys of East Remembered in Naming Streets," date of article & newspaper unknown. Article has George arriving here in Minnesota in 1850. The article mentions William arriving here in 1852, after receiving a letter from his cousin George, telling him of the glowing opportunities here in Minnesota. In another article, date & newspaper unknown "Chowen Home is Landmark of Minnetonka History," Annie Chowen mentions in the article, George W. Chowen as her uncle (both newspaper clippings courtesy of the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society).
6. George E. Warner, Charles M. Foote, History of Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis 1881, Page 243
7. The Deephaven Argus, June 25th, 1965, pages 1 & 8
8. Mason and his son also ran the Minnetonka Trailer Company which was started in 1933. They built an average of 10 trailers a year. John did the cabinet and finishing work, and Harry built the frames and did all the metal work and painting.
9. The Deephaven Argus, May 3rd, 1940: Clarence Layman worked with his father, Isaac Laymen, who had a store he opened in 1983 in Minneapolis. It was located near

- Cedar Avenue and Lake Street
10. The Deephaven Argus, November 17th, 1939. You had to have a contract with the local Fire Department before they would save your building.
11. Betty Mae Shaffer was university trained. The nursery itself is a Deephaven landmark, which began in 1910 when its first owner began raising plants and trees for sale there. One of the unusual features of the place is the large storage cellar where shrubs and plants can be kept all winter. The temperature in the cave is always the same, just a few degrees above freezing. A large pine grove with many old trees helps make it one of Deephaven's more beautiful spots.
12. *Argus*, June 20th, 1941
13. *Argus*, January 20th, 1956: Timmer's Service Station opened in 1925 was located at the northwest corner of the intersection. Five years later, the station moved its present location three doors south of the corner.
14. *Argus*, July 13th, 1945. Author Note: I read earlier that the Reifenger's over the store in 1948? What's true? Maybe the Reifenger's took the store over from the Cornish's.
15. *Argus*, 1951, The Four Way Mart changed names to Erhard's Red and White Food Store
16. Laurie Forsberg, 2/5/1975, "Chowen's Corners: In Business since 1906. (Courtesy of the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society).