

How it Happened - A Rivertown

It was "all for progress and progress for all" in Southwestern Wisconsin at the turn of the century.

New ideas - new enterprise - new settlements were taking hold all along the Kickapoo Valley. River towns were thriving, community pride was boundless.

Soldiers Grove was one of these.

Founder of the village, a sawmill operator named Joseph Brightman, built a dam across the Kickapoo in 1864. Some 30 years later, when the railroad came to town, Main Street was extended across swamp-land to reach the tracks.

Even in those early days, the temperamental Kickapoo dealt many blows to Soldiers Grove; Kickapoo mud found its way into homes, businesses and memories.

Six major floods in 60 years left highwater marks on all of Main Street.

Finally, a temporary dike was built in 1968 to contain annual floodwaters within the river's banks. This served the village for 10 years. Then came 1978.

On the Fourth of July weekend that year, rampaging waters broke through the earthen levees and rushed to Main Street, through its buildings and on downstream, leaving ruin in its wake.

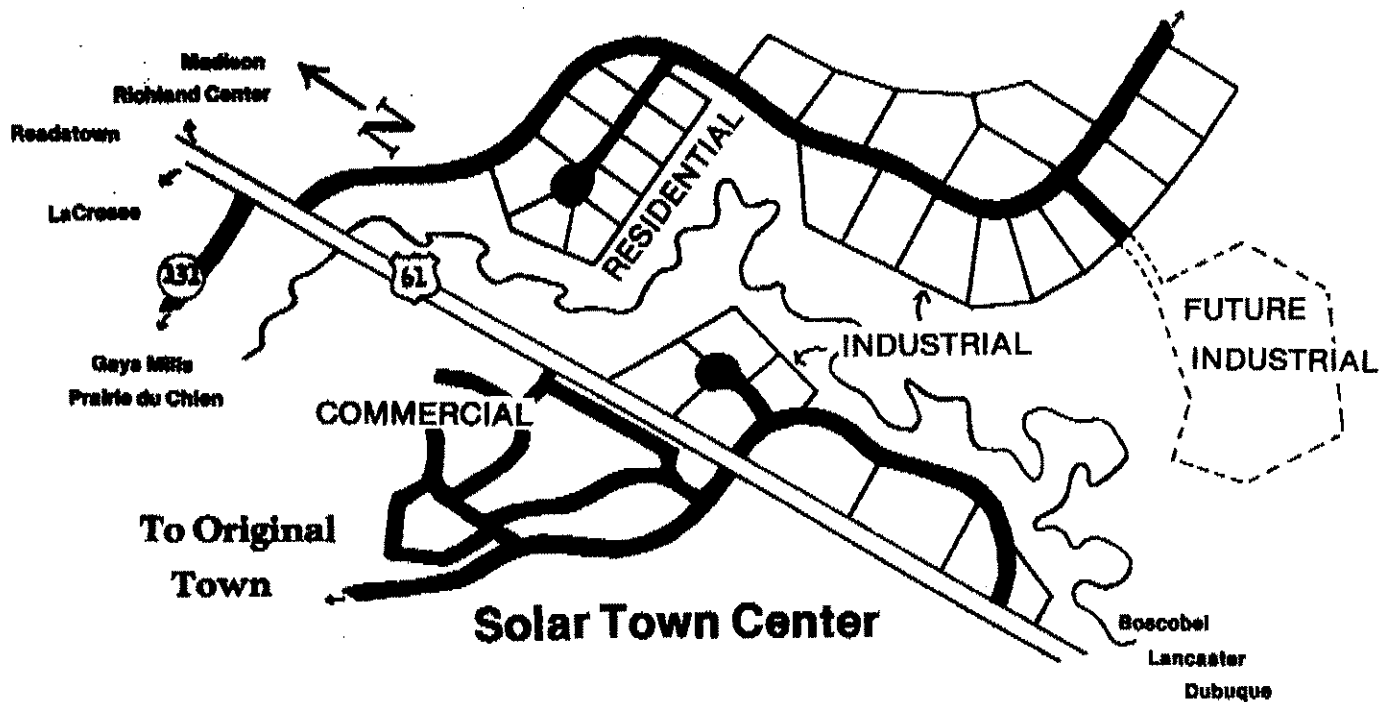
With that, Soldiers Grove had had enough.

Planning and Financing

The Relocation of the business district and a small number of residential properties was actually begun by the Village in 1977 with the purchase of the relocation site using \$82,500 of its own funds. Project completion funding followed from a number of federal agencies after the 1978 flood - Housing and Urban Development, Community Services Administration, Department of the Interior and Economic Development Administration - their contributions totaled \$3.25 million. Some of the project cost and planning and feasibility work was assisted by regional and state agencies - Regional Plan

Commission, Dept. of Development UW-Extension and the Governor's Discretionary Fund.

In addition, the Farmers Home Administration has provided loans for municipal facilities and public works and the Small Business Administration has been involved in private business relocations. Total project funding, excluding the private financing of the businesses, is nearly \$8.5 million, the share being split about 50% Federal/State and 50% local. The Village's Tax Increment Finance District, established in 1979, will be used to finance the public improvements and facilities.



New Business Invited

Adjacent to the existing commercial center the Village of Soldiers Grove has reasonably priced residential, commercial and industrial development areas served with water, sewer and access road frontage.

The Soldiers Grove Development Corporation, a non-profit organization exists to provide technical assistance for economic

development and job creation. They also administer a revolving loan fund to serve these needs.

A detailed Community Profile is available upon request. Those interested in more information may direct their inquiries to the Community Development Office, P.O. Box 121, Soldiers Grove, Wisconsin 54655. Telephone: 608/624-5209.

For Visitors

Soldiers Grove is nestled in the Kickapoo Valley along U.S. 61. Just 4 miles south of U.S. 14. It is not only beauty and tranquility that the valley offers, but the opportunity to make contact with a set of values and a way of life that are often missing from the urban scene.

While the Solar Town is the major attraction to visitors here you are reminded that other items of interest might be a tour of our ultra-modern cheese factory which sells both retail and wholesale, a stop at the Old Oak Inn which offers fine dining and lodging in a restored turn-of-the-century mansion, or a picnic in the village park along the peaceful Kickapoo. Annual events include Dairy Days (June) and Fall Harvest Festival (October). The Village also offers medical, dental, pharmaceutical and emergency transport services for the traveler.