

Foundry workers in 1920 from the Scott County Historical Society. The workers enjoy a break with drinks. They had a spot in the woods where they could sneak off for drinks with friends and coworkers.

Stills were usually in the woods around Shakopee, with large quantities of mash. Mash was fermented in a mixture of cornmeal, sugar, water, and yeast used to make moonshine.



Joe Jenn was orphaned as a child.

He worked on road construction crews and for Union Carbide before he took charge of maintenance for the K-12 Shakopee school.

He lived in Shakopee for 66 years.

Clifford Thibodeau remembered, “Joe was a great guy! I remember being in 5th grade, if I remember right. Me and some other boys were asking him about his job. I don’t know if he was supposed to, but he showed us areas of the school that may have normally been off limits to students, like the boiler room, and the pretty big basement the school had. In all the years I went to that school, he was always such a good humored guy!”



Shakopee High School, ca 1920 from Shakopee Heritage Society

Barb Stein also remembered Joe. “He was so cool, he would let us play with his retractable key chain, zing, zing, zing, the patience of a saint.”

“When we talk about Joe I always smile. I remember when we moved to Shakopee my sophomore year, my parents just had me walk to school and register myself. Joe was out cleaning the sidewalk and could tell I was lost. He took the time to walk me to the office,” said Marilyn Rein.

Joe recalled growing up in Shakopee. “Shakopee was really a community by itself, cut off by the Minnesota River and the river bottoms. Back in the 1930s, the town was a little Las Vegas!

“We had 33 beer joints at one time and notorious nightclubs like Rock Springs and the Riviera. People, including gangsters, came here for booze, women, and gambling; the mayor, sheriff, and city councilmen went along with it all.

“Then Luther Youngdahl became governor of the state, and told the sheriff to clean up his town.”

Joe said, “A garage was established on Lewis Street. In the rear door of the alley was a receiving depot for boxes of liquor.”

Joe noted, “There was also a bottling works in town; they delivered bottles of pop to St. Paul and return with bottles of whiskey,” according to an interview in *Midwest Highways and Byways* by Alice



Governor Luther Youngdahl



M. Vollmar. Rufus Jarman, in the *Saturday Evening Post*, noted in 1947, “In the Twin Cities region, Governor Youngdahl’s law enforcement is felt most emphatically at Shakopee, a small town about twenty miles away, where residents of Minneapolis and St. Paul used to go for their Sunday cocktails, which they couldn’t buy at home, and to dine at one of several restaurants that featured thick steaks and slot machines.”

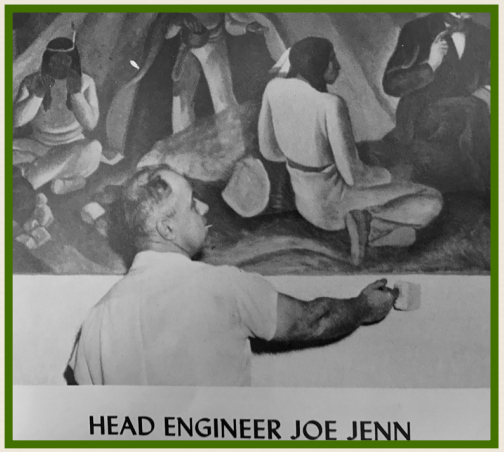
Deputy Sheriff J.P. Wermerskirchen was appointed acting sheriff and for a time the slot machines all disappeared. Sheriff Wermerskirchen and W. B. Rip Schroeder had a raid in October 1941.

But over time, they found their way back.

By 1951, eighteen years after Prohibition ended, Shakopee’s reputation as Little Chicago finally came to an end.



Sheriff J.P. Wermerskirchen and W. B. Rip Schroeder during a raid in October 1941



A picture of Joe Jenn from Shakopee’s *Waniyetu,* the 1962 yearbook.

Joe Jenn died in 1999.

Bibliography

Jarman, Rufus. *Saturday Evening Post*, 1947.

Vollmar, Alice M. *Midwest Highways and Byways*, Summer 1999.

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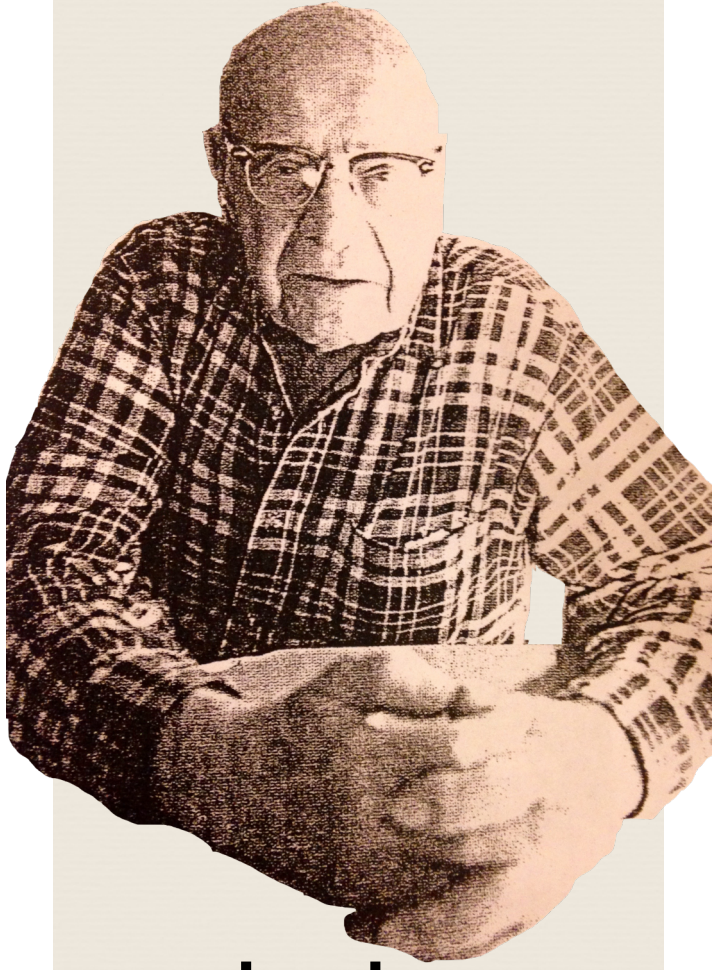

Joe Jenn

1907-1999

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