

The Beginning of Clarno Lumber & Supply Co.

Our area has seen many lumber yards come and go in the last century and longer. One that has been here for more than 12 decades is Clarno Lumber, which originated when Ulrich Schar purchased an odd-shaped piece of land from Henry Trumpy, Sr. on September 22, 1899 for \$400. The property, located south of what is now County Highway P in Clarno, was bordered on the east by the Chicago, Madison & Northern railroad tracks.

The Monroe Sentinel had already reported on August 30 that Mr. Schar had decided to engage in business in Clarno, planning to put in a good stock of lumber on the three acres that he had purchased. He also planned to handle coal, feed, grain, and more. The editor added, “his patrons will always find what they need in these lines when calling on Mr. Schar.”

Ulrich Schar was born in Canton Bern, Switzerland on March 2, 1852. With his parents, he left from LeHavre, France and arrived in New York on October 4. The family settled in Ohio and eventually migrated to Green County. The 1899 article said that he had conducted an extensive lumber, coal, and feed business in Monroe for the past three years.” His obituary said that he and his brother, Sam, had operated the business on the “northwest edge of the city” where the Monroe Lumber and Fuel Company was located, now 500 14th Avenue (near the entrance to Twining Park). City directories are too scattered to verify this information. The 1895 city directory lists Ulrich as a stonemason living on the southwest corner of 12th Street and 20th Avenue.

Ulrich Schar, a man of about 48, fell a distance of about 16 feet from a ladder while assisting in the construction of his new house in Clarno in early October 1899. Fortunately, he only fractured a bone of his left shoulder, which Dr. Moyer attended to. His large lumber shed was completed and filled with fine lumber by mid-December.



This photo is taken from a postcard in the collection of Mary Ann Frautschy Stauffacher that was postmarked in 1910. It shows the Schar lumber yard in Clarno, the forerunner of Clarno Lumber & Supply Co., which was opened 125 years ago this fall. The sign on the front of the building says that they sell shingles, sash doors, coal, hardware, and other things that can not be read.

The Sentinel reported in July 1900 that Schar was “prospering and doing a square business in lumber, coal, lime, and general merchandise.”

It was reported in 1902 that unknown parties had pried open a window in Schar's general store on Monday evening, August 4. They gained entrance to the safe and secured about \$200, mostly in silver. Whether the robbers were "professional cracksmen" or "mere panhandlers of the general tramp" was unknown. Peculiarly, there were no signs that the safe had been tampered with in a violent manner. Officers concluded that either Schar had failed to lock "his strong box" when he closed up for the night or the thieves Schar 1910 RR CR s were able to work the combination.

It was unknown what time the robbery had taken place; not the slightest clue existed as to who the robbers were. No suspicious characters had been noticed around town. Sheriff Fessenden went to Clarno on Tuesday morning to look over the ground, but found nothing. Notices were sent to officers of other cities and towns giving instructions to be on the lookout for "suspicious characters with an undue amount of silver about their persons." No more information about this robbery was found in the newspapers.

Schar must have also owned a house that he rented out on 17th Avenue in Monroe in 1905. A short article in the newspaper said that he had "remembered the force at Borden's Condensed milk factory today [February 2] with a box of cigars as evidence of his appreciation of their efforts in fighting the fire" at his house.

It was reported on December 1, 1916 that Schar had sold his business and real estate to Samuel and John A. Grenzow after having engaged in the lumber, coal, feed, and hardware business for 17 years. Possession was to be given after the beginning of the new year. The transaction took place on January 6, 1917. The Grenzows paid Ulrich and his wife, Minnie, \$1 and other consideration. On the same day, Samuel and Margarethe Grenzow sold Ulrich about 89 acres in Section 5 of Spring Grove township for \$1.00 and exchange of real estate.

Ulrich, who had also served as the postmaster in Clarno, retired at the age of 65 and purchased property from Herman and Sophia Gloege on the south side of 16th Street that extended south to the railroad tracks on January 20 for \$1.00 and other consideration. The Sentinel reported on November 5 that the Schar's were moving their household goods into their "newly erected home."

Ulrich and Minnie Schar sold another small piece of land in Section 34 in Clarno that was 1 rod by 140 feet to F. G. Frautschy for \$5 on September 22, 1917.

Ulrich lived the rest of his life in Monroe. The 1922 and 1927 directories listed him on the south side of 16th Street between 22nd and 23rd Avenues. No occupation is listed in 1922, but he was a "fruit grower" in 1927. He was then listed at 1623 16th Avenue in 1930, but not listed in 1933. His obituary said that he had lived for six years with his daughter, Mrs. Alta Weeks, at 1510 15th Avenue. He had been bedfast for eight months at the time of his death on October 23, 1942.

The property that is now known as Clarno Lumber & Supply Co. has continued to operate at the same location for almost 125 years. I recently talked to Brian Reed who shared with me that the Grenzow Brothers, who had purchased the business from Schar in 1917, operated it until 1925. At that time they sold it to their sister's son, Harry Ammann. Harry then ran the business for 55 years, making him the longest owner. Harry sold the business to "his wife's nephews," Steve and Brian Reed, in 1980. The brothers then operated it for 36 years before selling it to Jason and Carmen Campbell in 2016. The property is now 5.25 acres.