

SHOOTS A NOBLE BIRD

"John Blaschke (Blaska) Jr., of the township, shot a magnificent specimen of the American eagle last Sunday, 20 December 1903. The bird measured seven feet and one inch from tip to tip of wings.

The young man was sitting in an upstairs window of the house shooting crows as they came down to a tree about 12 rods distant. The great bird apparently did not see him as it slowly settled into the tree. John had his last shell in the gun which he fired at the eagle, and brought it to the ground.

The family dog made a run for the wounded bird who turned on him, and was rapidly worsting the animal when the young marksman arrived at the spot, and, after considerable difficulty, succeeded in clubbing the bird to death.

Mr. Blaschke took his quarry to Madison to have it mounted, and was there appraised of the fact of the killing of the bird."

(The Sun Prairie Countryman, Thursday, 24 December 1903)

John Matthew Blaska, born 14 May 1885, was age 18 at the time he shot the eagle. He and Rose Schuster were married on 11 May 1909, at which time they made their home on the farm adjacent to his father's in Sun Prairie Township, two and one-half miles east of Sun Prairie. Throughout the years, until John's death in 1957, the eagle was displayed in their home as a unique treasure, appreciated by both parents, and their family of nine children.

The original Wisconsin State Capitol, built in 1838, was destroyed by fire on 27 February 1904. Ground was broken for the new Capitol in 1907, and the building was completed in 1917, but formal opening was delayed until after World War I. (Madison—"A History of the Formative Years", by David V. Mollenhoff, p. 343)

As the new State Capitol was being furnished, a request was made to the Blaska family to purchase their eagle to replace a smaller, similar species of it lost in the fire. But, by that time, they were reluctant to part with it, and it was retained in the family home.