

historically speaking

THE WAY IT WAS

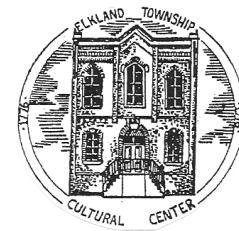
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There have been no recent Historical Society meetings yet due to virus restrictions.

A Few More Drug Store Building Memories

In April the Cass City Chronicle published an article entitled "The End of an Era" about the closing of The Home Town Pharmacy with the history contributed by Tyler Perry. Before The Home Town Pharmacy consolidated two drug stores into one there had been several businesses operating in this building complex over the years that people would remember depending on their age and memory.

Going back to the late 1940s,



the 1950s and early 1960s on the corner was The Wood Rexall Drug Store run by Warren Wood. Facing the building from the east, the south half was a separate two story building housing the library on the north half and two truck bays of the Elkland Township Fire Department on the south

half of the first story, and two meeting rooms on the second story used for various community purposes including scouting programs. This building was later rebuilt in a single story and incorporated into The Old Wood Pharmacy by pharmacist Tom Proctor.

Facing the complex from the north there were four businesses. Next the Wood Drug Store to the west was the Bailey and Graham (Lester and Chester) Barber Shop. The west wall was covered with mirrors to see yourself. They had a row of chairs for waiting shaggy customers, and every time a barber finished with a customer those sitting and waiting moved up a chair. You never knew which barber you were going to get. If you had a favorite you could trade with the guy behind you, but it wasn't considered very polite.

Behind the barber shop was a broad stairway that led up to the second and third floors.

On the second floor above the Wood Drug Store was the office of attorney Albin Stevens. When the Walbro Corporation came to town in the early 50s Mr. Stevens did the legal work for the new company for which he was compensated in Walbro Corporation stock. Over the years that stock grew in value,

and when Mr. Stevens' wife, who survived him, sold the stock she contributed the proceeds to the village for the building of the Helen Stevens Swimming Pool.

Also on the second floor in front corner was the dental office of Dr. Pearl Schenck. You could sit in his dental chair and look down on the happenings on the main corner of town while you got your teeth attended to. Dr. Delbert Rawson started his practice working with Dr. Skenck in this office and later built his own dental office building.

The third floor was most likely unused hotel rooms from the earlier era and a stairway to the roof where there was a cupola. The only known use of this addition was during the second world war when people were assigned to watch for enemy air planes. Evidently the Luftwaffe couldn't fly this far.

There was also a cupola built on top of the opera house three story building a block to the west. Being these two buildings were built about the same time you have to wonder if there wasn't competition for owning the tallest building.

Next to the west of the barber shop was the old Post Office. Stamps were 3 cents. Air Mail was maybe a dime, and post cards a penny. Most

people or families living in town had one of the wall of combination postal lock boxes assigned to them, and they would come into the post office to get their mail. On the wall were mug shots of the most "Wanted" criminals of the time. If you ordered something from a catalogue you could buy a money order there to pay for it, or you could have it sent COD (cash on delivery), and you'd pay for it at the post office when it arrived. In that era people didn't have checking accounts or credit cards. Times were changing, and as the post office grew to need more room, so a new separate building was built.

The vacancy left by the post office made a place for a new store, Asher's Men's Wear, operated by Alden Asher. At Asher's you could buy yourself a fine suit of clothes with all the necessities to go with it. It was a time when people dressed up to go to events, to church, and to work in many professions. There were no casual Fridays. That was an era that seems also to have ended as fashion became more relaxed. This space would later be incorporated into the "Coach Light Pharmacy" by Pharmacist Mike Weaver.

Next, to the west, was a doorway and a stairway up to the second floor where Dr. Edwin Fritz had his dental office. Like Dr. Schenck's office you could sit in Dr. Fritz's dental chair and look down on the happenings on Main Street.

Later, the enacted regulations for accommodating the handicapped rendered the use of these upper story facilities for public activities no longer usable, unless an elevator is installed. This has created a waste of space in many fine old buildings.

Next to the west was the Mac and Scotty's Drug Store run by two pharmacist McCullough brothers. Like Warren Wood at the Wood Drug Store prescriptions were not

as easy to prepare as they are today, although there were many fewer of them. A pharmacist had to

compile a prescription from its component ingredients which he would have in store in containers such as this bottle that was found

in a thrift store which belonged to Louis Wood, Warren Wood's father, who preceded him in the profession.

Both drug stores had soda fountains from which they sold sodas, sundaes, banana splits, milk shakes and ice cream cones. As Tyler mentioned in his article Mac and Scotty's was noted for their malted milk shakes. Warren Wood had a concoction consisting of some of every flavor he had called the graveyard float. There were also soda bars at Fort's Confectionery Store to the west and Parrott's Dairy Bar across the street.

These treats from the soda bars were targets for selling ads in the high school news paper, "The Cosmopolitan" as was Curley's Eat Shop's hamburgers across the street. The paper was a product of Frank Weatherhead's journalism class. These ads had to be drawn by hand by an artist with a stylus on a stencil for printing on the school's mimeograph machine.

The drug stores were the primary place to purchase school supplies, and because the druggists were often busy filling prescriptions they often hired older high schoolers as clerks to work the busy hours after school. Some personal things you would buy at the drug store were a little personal. If a guy wanted to



buy a special sports undergarment he didn't want to ask a girl for it. Girls had similar problems with some of their purchases. These are another example of a bygone era.

Mac and Scotty's was also a designated bus stop. The Greyhound line had a route from Detroit to Port Austin with a stop in Cass City, and Indian Trails had a bus line throughout the Thumb. Tickets were sold at the drug store where you would also board or exit the bus.

When the busses came in they brought bundles of daily news papers. There was the Detroit News, and Free Press, the Port Huron Times Herald, the Saginaw News and the Bay City Times. The paper boys would gather after school, open the bundles of papers, fold them into their paper bags, and deliver them throughout the town on their bicycles. Most every house in town received one of these news papers. Newspapers were the main source of the news at that time.

In 1966 the railroad terminal closed down and along with it the Western Union Telegraph Office. The service was then transferred to Mac and Scotty's with a new technical upgrade. Until then all telegrams and wire transfers were sent by an experienced operator tapping out messages in Morse code. The new system used a teletype machine, and several employees learned to operate it.

These are a few memories that came to mind. Depending on your age and your memory there are probably many more. The end of an era brings a nostalgia for many things of a bygone era, but also a greater appreciation for the many advances that have come to pass.