

THE WAY IT WAS

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There was no public meeting of the Cass City Historical Society presented last month due to a shortage of a program to present, but we hope to present one soon.

Two Men Of Their Time

Christian Schwaderer was born in Tonawanda, New York in 1853. Tonawanda is a little south of Niagara Falls. He was the son of Johannes Schwaderer who was born in Burgstall, Germany in 1806 and Eva Anthes Schwaderer who was born in Alsace. Alsace was a small piece of land between Germany, France and Switzerland, and is now a part of France.

Christian married Mary Jane Blaine in Wardsville, Ontario, Canada on Christmas Day in 1876. They came to Cass City the following year and lived on the western outskirts of the town. During their marriage they had three daughters - Mabel, Jane, and Liota, and three sons - William, Edward and Eugene.

Christian opened a meat market just west of the township hall in 1884 and was probably selling meat raised on his own farm. You can imagine what



Christian Schwaderer

probably happened. Other farmers needing a market for their live stock were likely trying to sell to him. Cass City was a small town and the ability to sell much locally

was very limited.

Refrigeration methods were becoming available and the market for fresh meat in the metropolitan areas was growing. The railroad depot with cattle cars couldn't have been much closer. Chris closed his meat market and went into the cattle buying and shipping business. He ran his



Live Stock and a Cattle Car

own stock yard business for many years probably with help from his sons and maybe also his grandson, Curtis Hunt, who came to live with him for a while.

The meat market business resumed in Cass City with Reed and Patterson's on the west side of town and Gross and Maier's on the east side. Later it was incorporated into the supermarkets of the IGA and Erla's.

Mrs. Schwaderer passed away in 1940 and Christian died in 1942.

One son, Eugene Blaine Schwaderer, born and raised in Cass City was tagged with the nickname "Chick", probably by his

siblings when he was younger and had the chicken pox. He was one of thirteen students graduating from Cass City High School in 1913. He then enrolled in the Michigan College of Mines and Technology in Houghton in the Upper Peninsula. Although he didn't graduate from there he was awarded an honorary master's degree later from the school in 1954.

He left school to accept a position in a copper mine in South Africa in 1915. When World War One broke out he joined the British Army supervising the building of roads and bridges and contending with bouts of malaria in East Africa. When America entered the war he was released by the Brits to join the U.S. Army and served as a 1st Lieutenant with the 21st Field Artillery Battalion in France.

After the war he returned home and married Isabelle May McIntyre on Armistice Day in 1925. Belle was the daughter of George and Sarah Jane MacIntyre who lived north of town in Grant Township. George was born in Scotland and Sara Jane was born in Canada. During their marriage Chick and Belle had two children, Nancy and Tom.

Chick entered into the sand and gravel business with a partner from Sandusky.

but later bought him out and started his own E.B. Schwaderer Construction Company in Cass City. The business was located on the South West corner of Pine and West Streets.

Conditions were changing. Cars and trucks were getting more durable and going faster. The average road speed in 1942 was 36 mph, and increased by 1948 to 48 mph. If you pulled into a gas station then an attendant would come out to pump your gas, wash your windshield of dust and mud, check your tire pressures, your fan belt and the level of oil, and the water in your radiator. You would have to pay in cash or you could charge it to the owner of the station if you had established credit with him. There were no credit cards. Car and truck tires and inner tubes were very poor quality by today's standards. Flat tires and blow outs were common occurrences. Having a jack and a spare was not optional. Most of the roads were gravel and full of pot holes and mud puddles.

The E.B. Schwaderer Construction Company did not hurt for opportunity. Chick built up a work crew mostly of local workers and they rebuilt and paved roads and built bridges for portions of M-81, M-53, M-24, M-46 and M-19, and probably others plus building up many graveled side roads.



E.B. "Chick" Schwaderer

Chick also found the time to serve as the village president and engineer the village's water and sewer lines. Most of those trenches

were dug by hand with picks and shovels by DPW crew. He also built the first swimming pool in 1937 along with the running track and football field. That swimming pool was unique for the area and many boys and girls learned to swim and have a very much enjoyment in that pool.

When World War 2 broke out the need for construction companies was crucial especially for airports. The E.B. Schwaderer Company was awarded the contract to pave runways for the new Willow Run Air Port and manufacturing plant of the B-24 Bomber Plane near Ypsilanti.



B-24 Liberator Bomber

When a contract was taken beyond commuting distance the crew would have to move and live near the construction site.

One lady can recall living with her parents at that time in a small trailer house in that area while her father worked in the crew.

The company and crew also paved the runways at the Gross Isle Naval Air Station near Detroit. Many navel pilots took their flight training there including former President George H.W. Bush.

A third runway the company built was in the upper peninsula of Michigan at Kincheloe Air Force Base near Sault St. Marie. The construction equipment and supplies must have been transported on ferries across the straits because there was no Mackinaw Bridge then. This spot was considered a strategic sight for refueling military planes flying between the east coast and Alaska, and also to protect the Soo Locks and the iron ore freighters that were coming down

through them to the steel plants near Detroit. It has been said that runways were also paved for an airport in Canton, Ohio but not much information could be found.

If you would watch road construction work being done today you might not have the appreciation for the work that was done back then. The equipment and materials being used today makes the work much easier. Although the steam shovel had been upgraded to diesel power, hydraulics were not yet available for back hoes, bulldozers, dump trucks and graders. You couldn't call on a cell phone and order yards of ready mixed concrete to be delivered on site at a certain time. It had to be mixed on site with the concrete, gravel and water already on hand. Extra tires for the trucks and other maintenance supplies would also need to be readily available to avoid delays and diver-



Concrete mixer

sions. Although the E.B. Schwaderer Construction Company continued for many years, and later sold to his nephew, Curt Hunt, but Chick never retired. He took on the su-pervising of the building of the Hills and Dales Hospital and the Rawson Memorial Library.

Aside from all this with the business Chick also found time to serve as President of the Village, the Michigan Road Builders Association, and the Rotary Club. He was named "Cass City's Citizen Of The Year" in 1967.

If you wonder where these two men got their spunk, it might have been from their Scottish wives. MacIntyre means "son of a carpenter" or a skilled craftsman, and Blaine is the name of a Scottish clan whose motto is "Peace is won through war" or "Success is gained by overcoming your limitations".