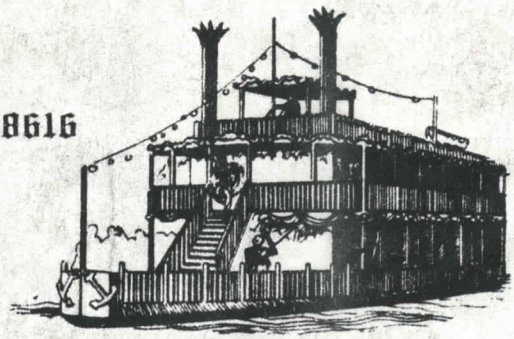


Chesaning Public Library

227 East Broad Street Chesaning, Michigan 48616

Phone 845-3211



I have been asked to participate in the Chesaning Public Library Oral History Project. I have agreed to a tape recording between a Library representative and myself. I take this opportunity to assure you that these recordings are the property of the Library and its historical collection, for use as the Library sees fit, and I agree that no monetary consideration need be paid me.

Emma Toess

Witness:

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Would you tell me your name?

Emma Foess.

Were you born here?

I was born in Blumfield Township.

That's in Michigan?

Yes.

When did you come to the Chesaning Territory?

In 1908.

I understand that you have been a pharmacist.

That's right.

Would you tell us something about your early experiences?

Working in a drugstore or any other store was much different than today. Our working hours were from seven in the morning until six at night, except Saturday night. We all worked on Saturday night. I worked nights every other week, then I would go to work at eight o'clock in the morning and work until closing time, which was any time from nine-thirty until eleven. In the summertime we often worked until twelve o'clock on Saturday nights. Saturday night was a busy night in the summertime. Farmers were busy during the day so they came to town at night. All stores were open on Saturday nights. No one complained about the long hours. We were all very thankful to have a job and we enjoyed working.

The drugstores were the ice cream parlors too. The ice cream came from Franke's in Saginaw by express in five gallon metal cans packed in ice in wooden containers. It had to be repacked twice a day. We had to chop the ice and mix it with salt and pack it around the cans; and also the cans that were in the soda fountain had to be packed the same way.

We also made the syrup that was used for the toppings. We made the simple syrup and that was mixed with fruit syrup concentrate of different flavors. We prepared and cooked the chocolate syrup. Ice cream sundaes and sodas were ten cents. Fancy dishes were fifteen and twenty-five cents. Small ice cream cones were two for a nickel, regular cones five cents, and double-dips ten cents. Ice cream sold for fifty cents a quart, and good chocolate candy sold in the bulk for fifty cents per pound.

In the fall of 1920 I went to the Practical Institute of Pharmacy at Sandusky, Michigan. At that time, with four years of experience in a drugstore, working with a registered pharmacist at drugs and prescriptions, you could take this short course. You studied nothing but drugs and prescriptions and studies relating to drugs. At the end of the course you went to Grand Rapids and took a two-day State examination. If you passed the exam, you were a registered pharmacist. If you were under twenty-one years old and had two years' experience in a drugstore you could write the exam for assistant pharmacist. Then when you were twenty-one you could get your full papers. I had four years of experience and was over twenty-one and passed the exam so I was a registered pharmacist.

Filling prescriptions was much different then. We had to mix the ingredients of a prescription, then fill the capsules; or some prescriptions called for powders. This we had to divide the powder into powder papers and fold them and put them in boxes. Also, the liquid prescriptions -- many of them contained several ingredients which had to be mixed together, and we had to mix the base for ointments. The prescriptions ranged in price from twenty-five cents to a dollar. Something special would be two dollars. A six ounce bottle of cough syrup on prescription was seventy-five or eighty-five cents.

My roommate at pharmacy school went to Detroit to work. She said they never filled a prescription for less than fifty cents. There were no

antibiotics or wonder drugs or vitamins in those days. Most of the drugs come prepared from the drugstore today.

The college boys dressed in suits, white shirts and ties every day, not like they do today. There were fifty-two students in the class of 1920, five girls. That was the largest class of girls that had written the State exam up to that time.

The wages were different too. I was getting ten dollars per week before I was a pharmacist. After I was a pharmacist I got twenty-five dollars a week. That was top wages. My roommate went to work in Detroit and she was getting the same wages. I enjoyed my work very much and was happy to have a job, and did not complain about the long hours.

At that time when I was working (from 1916-1920), Chesaning had its own power plant, and they would turn all the street lights off at twelve o'clock. ^{Laughter} That was right, because when I was working you know (I worked at Lutz's first for one year, then over to Roy ^{Smith}). We'd go for a walk, just you know to get out and get a little air and exercise -- we had exercise of course, in the store -- and we'd walk in the dark, because they'd be all out at twelve o'clock. What would you do today, huh? ^{Laughter}

Well, it isn't safe anymore.

No, that's what I mean. I know I boarded on this (East) side of the river. From the gas station where you turn this way (north), my aunt and uncle lived one block to the east and then about a block north down in there right at the end of the street. You wouldn't think of walking down there now in the dark, not alone, and I did often you know, if I didn't get done down there, and you know, when the street lights went out, that was it. ^{Laughter}

Well now, tell me again, about how old were you when you came to Chesaning?

It was 1908, I was ten.

Where did you go to school?

I went to the Albert School in Maple Grove, then Chesaning High School.

When you were younger, what did you do for fun? You know, I just can't get anybody to tell me what they did for fun.

Oh, the whole neighborhood, I say the whole neighborhood, there were probably eight, ten of us, would get together and my brother and cousin would play the mouth organ and we'd dance or we'd play games. You know I said if the kids today would play the games that we did they'd think we were out of our minds.

What did you play?

Well, we'd play Button, Button or Beast, Bird or Fish, or Spin the Tin. It was games, that today, as I said, children would think you were out of your mind.

Well, I think the younger children play them, but how old were you then?

Oh, we were fourteen, fifteen years old when we played those games; and there were some with us that were even older than that. But my brother played the accordian a lot for dances and we went to a lot of dances because he'd want us to go with him.

What was your maiden name?

~~Lytle~~. *Leitow*

Did you go for sleigh rides and things like that in the winter time?

Yes, our school did. We would go at least once every winter. ~~We would go at least once every winter.~~ We would go to visit other schools. We'd

usually go to about two or three schools in an afternoon. Some farmer would take the whole school. And then we would have spelling bees and arithmetic matches, just to see who would win. There would be no trophies or no prizes or anything like that, but just to see which school could win. And we really had... it was fun! Even as grownups, we used to go for sleigh rides to go to parties, from one place to another, you know, ^{probably} six, seven miles, ^{or} something like that.

How did you keep warm?

Oh, everybody brought their horse blankets and fur robes or whatever they had, you know, and they put straw into the sleigh box and everybody sat on that and covered up. It seems that everybody was alike, everybody had a good time.

Did you sing?

Oh yes, we would sing. We would at schools too. The teachers would always have us sing.

In your schools, did you ever use the old Knapsack books?

Yes, without any notes?

Yes, just the words.

Well, we didn't have any piano in our school or anything either, but we'd sing every day.

The teacher led you, didn't she, or somebody?

Somebody would, and somebody would choose a song, ^{you know} out of the book, and we'd all sing at it. I don't know if we were in tune or not, but we tried.

Did you skate?

I never did, no. I never skated or roller-skated, either one. Another thing we used to do, we would ask the teacher not to have any recess in either the forenoon or afternoon, and then we would go into the woods about a half a mile away to pick wintergreen berries. We'd have more than an hour then you see, and pick wintergreen berries.

What did you do with the berries?

Oh, just eat them. It was just the object of going, I guess, I don't know. Today it wouldn't be any thrill, but it was in those days.

Oh yes it would be I think, only I don't think children have the opportunity. There aren't that many wintergreen berries any more.

No, because those places are...in fact there are people living there. ^{you know} One time we went and after we just nicely got into the woods it started to rain and we were lost, and we crossed a fence and waded in water ~~to~~ get out. We just didn't know which way we were going, and we were not much further than from here to the road away from the road but we couldn't see it. And you know when you're lost, you just go around in circles, I guess, I don't know. We thought, "Oh! we were going to be so late for school," and it wasn't ~~wasn't~~ even time for the bell to ring, but you know you get nervous.

You got frantic.

Yes!

Well, that's interesting. I used to pick wintergreen berries when I was a child, too.

Oh, did you?

You had a lot more freedom then than you dare let a child have now. I used to live near, you know, over on the west side of the State there's a river called the Little Sauble. It empties into Lake Michigan, and I used to go and wade in that, not in the deep part, but where it began. I mean near where I lived it was not too deep, that's what I'm trying to say, and I used to walk a mile and a half maybe, and there wouldn't be a soul around, all by myself.

Well, this road back there where we used to go from the Albert School to the west, there was no one living there either, and why even during the... well it must have been World War, I don't know if it was One or Two, the neighbor that lived down there, she lived back there, (her folks did,) and she'd walk back to the corner every night alone to go on the late night shift. You know you wouldn't dare to do that today. The dog would go with her, and then he'd go back.'

Well, it's been very interesting. I certainly appreciate your giving us this tape, because well, we want to get as many as we can you know.