

Retail Stores of Early Days in Nutley Homes

FROM FRANK SPEER

MANY stores, it is said, had their beginnings in the home, usually a basement room in one house in a neighborhood. Here the "peddler," who antedates the storekeeper, left an extra supply of his wares so that his wagon customers "when short" could run over to the neighbor who had the extra supply of goods.

Christmas shoppers in the late 1800's found in the local stores, according to the records, "ground nuts, candle cups and Marzipan cakes." Sugar toys were also popular. An advertisement in a New York newspaper dated November 7, 1878, read: "The subscriber is now manufacturing Sugar Toys of every description which he will dispose of Wholesale and Retail on the most reasonable terms. Country merchants are invited to give us a call."

While gifts for the most part were homemade, mail order house catalogues helped also in the selection of Christmas articles. In 1872, Montgomery Ward began its mail order business, followed in 1890 by Sears Roebuck.

It was about that time that Jane Cueman opened her store in the basement rooms in the Cunningham house at the corner of Chestnut and Prospect Streets. Later, together with her mother, she sold her "candy, tobacco, etc." farther up Chestnut Street.

Frank Speer, whose home is on Prospect Street, noted for his collection of articles and clippings about the days when Nutley was Franklin and North Belleville, tells in the following article of the stores he passed each day when he was a "paper boy."

"Jane Cueman who kept a small store (bread, canned goods, candy and tobacco) in the lower end of the Cunningham Building, corner of Prospect and Chestnut Streets, about 1891, helps me 'Remember when' my grandfather, Silas Chappell, handed me six cents, the nickel for a package of 'Green Turtle' tobacco, a penny for the errand boy. Some years later just up Prospect Street on the west side in the old Lichenstern house was a barber shop run by a man named Litehauser; this would be about 1908.

"Going down Chestnut to the corner of Franklin - no store had been built there yet, but later in 1908 a man named Boyd built a three-story building on the west corner, partly on the old foundation of the Mark Powelsson house, and it was here that William J. Lee opened a drug store. About 100 feet along Franklin Avenue, where the driveway goes into the Franklin School, was a one-room building, called the 'Pig's Ear,' a saloon run by Rae Powelsson, called 'Polly.' This place was also known as the 'Tub of Blood' and the building still stands at the corner of Franklin and William, where it was moved by Sam Ciardi. At the south end of the present Franklin School was a small white

house, back from the road some 75 feet. Here Frank Harrison (Fish Harrison) made his home and peddled fish from a wagon around town. 'Fish' was always known to drive only a Roman nose horse - claimed they were tougher. Where the vegetable store now is was a candy, groceries and tobacco store run by George and Will Jordan.

"Next door was the Searle Brothers meat market, Joe and Charles. Joe ran the wagon pulled by a pair of half wild mustangs - buckskins preferred. The wagon was loaded with meat hung on either side on large hooks, with large slabs of meat on the bottom. This moving market left about 6:00 a.m. six days a week and covered the town. The Stager Bros. (Francis and Will) Feed store was in the building farther down the street. At this address, along about 1898-1902, the feed store moved out in the barn and the Board of Education equipped the store for a classroom. This was mostly to impress the local voter with the dire need of an addition to the Park School, which project had been recently turned down by the people. Next door was the candy, supply and tobacco store of Henry Knabb, who was chief of police around 1890 (this was before the regular police department was organized).

"Just opposite New Street was the John Rusby grocery store, opened in 1851 and English money was still in use at that time, L-S-D (pounds, shilling and pence). This building was added to in 1866. John retired to his farm in 1880. Richard W. Booth (Uncle Dick) was a clerk there in 1876 and on until 1900. His Uncle Leonard ran the place from 1880. Along about 1900 Uncle Dick went to Newark as County Collector and the place ceased as a grocery. Dr. Henry Hurd Rusby of Columbia University was born there.

"There were no stores at this time at the corner of Franklin and Centre. Squire Sanford's, the first store down William Street on the right sold groceries, tobacco and candy, also clams and oysters. This was a typical country store and hangout for the gossipers. Oysters cost one cent each. It is told that the well on this property, 60 feet deep, froze the same as water on the surface.

"A few feet farther south on the same side of the street was Abe Paxton's (Snowball's saloon) where the rabbit and cat episode (then Stanfield's Place) took place. Next place below was the Gutherson shoe store, later run by Charles Kaufman and his wife, who sold candy, tobacco and supplies. The Military Hall, so named during the Civil War, was run by Enoch Booth's widow, Mary Magdaline Stager, a grand-daughter of Captain Speer.

"Retracing our steps to Franklin and Chestnut Street, we proceed east to Harry Otter's blacksmith shop, right where the present Elks Club now stands; then down to Vic Broadbent's meat market along corner of Warren Street, south side; then in a double building west, and Dr. Van Riper's drug store. The writer was vaccinated there December 19, 1891 (and February 19, 1892). Neither took. The doctor was post master there in 1889. Next door east was a candy, tobacco and stationery run by the Day twins, Winifred and Wilford

(1898). In another building south was the Henry Vreeland (Jimmy Vreeland's father) harness shop (1893). Alongside the brook, almost in front of the Woman's Club, was a one-story building where Tommy Day, local justice of the peace, ruled. He had no legs below the knees, so walked on his knees with the aid of crutches.

"In 1902, when the flood waters rose so high the question of the building staying there was in doubt, John Adams waded out and picked up Mr. Day to carry him to safety, Tommy beating John over the head and shoulders with his crutch. John did prove right, however, as the office did wash partly away but he got no thanks from Thomas.

"Some 200 yards back from Chestnut Street, to the rear of the Woman's Club, was a trim mill run by Alonzo Bross and Ray Stillman. Directly across the street from Police Court (Tommy Day's) was Tom Hayes' plumbing shop in one of the old mills. Across the brook on the north side was a blacksmith shop built by David Stirratt, great granddad of Allan. In the rear was the wheelwright shop of John Simpson and on the second floor the paint shop for wagons run by Tom Brandeth.

"A short distance to the rear was a Duncan Mill built and run by Henry B. and Livingston W. Duncan (1879). These lads were known as 'Hen' and 'Lev.' Henry lived where the Public Library now stands and Livingston lived where the Franklin School stands. They manufactured wool plaid linings for overcoats. Harry Brown built a barber shop on Chestnut Street, a few feet farther south, about 1905. Crossing the lane leading to 'Pig Tail Alley' (Willow Place) we come to the S. S. Davis hardware store. Seldon sold the first Ford cars hereabouts. Right next door was the Central Hotel corner Hamilton Place, run by a man named DeWall (1900). This building was erected for Isabel Duncan who married a Whitaker. The first post office in this end of town was opened there July 17, 1849, and Sebastian Duncan, postmaster, stayed for 10 years. It then moved to George and Jane Poinier Store February 9, 1859.

"Across the street was the John Dittig grocery store, later the Schaaf grocery. Next building east the Heinz bakery (1900). Farther up the street was the Louis Griasch building. In 1893 Louie ran a barber shop there, later securing a license for a hotel named the 'American House.' Dominic Ciccone had a shoe shop next door.

"The Poinier Store run by George and Jane Duncan (Jane was one of the Duncan clan) was just around the corner on Passaic Avenue. Frank Davis in later years had a hardware store there. Across the street on the corner was the W. O. Davis drygoods store, the only one in town then. He built a new store down the street about 1906 and Tom Hayes moved up from where he was to the corner. Abe Blum's meat market was on the east side of Passaic Avenue. His meat wagon was pulled by a pair of black horses and he and Joe Searle had many an argument as to who had the best team. Across the street was Herman Thierfelder's saloon and in the same building Paul Lauterhann's barber shop.

Next door in another double building was Dr. Dailey's drug store. His clerk was Fryne Cunningham. Patrick Guthrie had a store candy, cigars and newspapers in the north end (1893). Henry Lefferts had a drug store across the street some time later. Going on down Passaic Avenue, just south of Calico Lane, was the library.

"Another reason for the town being built east of the river and directly in the rear of Jimmy Hayes place now occupied by Walter Schaefer, was the town's first water system, a pump located in the spring by the cotton mill pond. Down on the corner of Highfield and Passaic, we find the Henry Connolly building. Here in the west end on September 28, 1895, the post office was installed with Henry, of course, the postmaster. In the east end was the Henry Connolly meat market. Farther up the street Patsy Guthrie built a new place and moved in next to Mr. Connolly. Guthrie had the first telephone installed in Nutley. This was on October 21, 1906. The writer, Frank Speer, carried papers (Newark Evening News) delivered by the Erie R.R. to Nutley station in 1893, from P. Guthrie's store, first from Passaic Avenue and later the new building on Highfield Lane, and was in and out of every place mentioned in this article. This includes the 'Pig's Ear' and 'Snowball's.'

"At the time the business center of the town threatened to centralize around Nutley Station, as can be readily seen from the foregoing description. Most of the business was east of the Third River (the Eastern District). These folks wished for Passaic Avenue to become Nutley's main street, but the Franklinites would not stand for it. The Western District won its first victory when the Public Service decided to lay its tracks on Franklin Avenue. The principal reason the tracks were not laid on Passaic Avenue was that Adrian Larkin, a prominent attorney, who owned an expensive house there, had staged a battle to keep the trolley off his street and won. There being no delivery service then at the P.O. it was a central point visited by every one in town, more or less. Avondale tossed in the sponge and the growth has been steady on Franklin Avenue, except for some slight flurries between the Centre and Franklin merchants and the up High Street way storekeepers who wanted business up that way nothing too serious. Lambert once inveigled the postoffice up there for a spell, but it found its way back where it belonged."

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