Historian's Pen

Excerpted from the Oct. 1995 Lansing Hist Assoc. Newsletter

Grocery Stores in South Lansing & Myers

Before the days of the big grocery stores with their many check-out aisles, small stores with one person serving behind the counter were the common scene. In 1921, John and Emma Benson, of Myers, owned a red painted two-story building at 50 Myers Rd known as the Red Onion. Oliver Holden's aunt ran the store in 1924-25 and sold bread. milk and sundries. She used to put "Bud" Holden in a playpen while she was busy with customers. The next people to manage the Red Onion were Freida and Ab Caliel who had it for a year or so. Francis Brown roomed upstairs when she taught school in Ludlowville. Alice Gorton, Veda Holden's aunt, also rented the upstairs at one time. After the Caliels left the store, the building was made into a complete house.

The store and post office in downtown Myers was first owned by the Maines, then the Hraneks and then the Gettigs. Abe George and Mike George also had stores in downtown Myers, but Maines was by far the largest.

George Bardo's IGA in So. Lansing stood near Howland's Red and White in the area where Cortland Paving now has its business in what was the original So. Lansing Fire Department building. Almost all the people at Portland Point shopped at the IGA and at Christmas time George would take them Christmas treats as he delivered their groceries. One time his car nearly slipped off the steep hill on the ice and was saved from going into the gorge only by running into a clothesline.

Originally the Bardo family lived on the land now built up by Bob Leathers with its big, expensive homes. The Bardo farm was across the road and a little south of the RINK. They sold the little yellow stucco house and bought Charlie Egbert's store. when they took inventory they found buggy whips and peach basket hats in the attic. The store was heated with a wood stove that had come from Treman king Hardware in Ithaca. many a grocery bill was paid with an amount of wood.

This stove was the cause of the fire in the spring of '37. George went outside and discovered the chimney to be on fire. Because of the close proximity of the store to several houses, Mrs. Bardo had to leave her home and lovely furnishings. The house was beginning to scorch and a town truck pulled it down to save the Howland house next door from catching fire. There was no fire company in So. Lansing until 1940 and although the Ithaca Fire Company was called, there was little they could do as there was no water available to speak of. This fire prompted the building of the So. Lansing Fire Company.

Frank Howland started the Red & White store in 1928. before it was a grocery store it had been his blacksmith shop. Then, for a short while, it was an ice cream shop which his wife and son ran. For a while, Freddy Christopher was a partner in the grocery store. In 1957, Art and Freida Wilson took over the management of the store from Freida's father who died in 1958. Art and Freida ran the store until their son Floyd and his wife Charlotte took over for about a year. the store closed in 1973 and now houses Gene's machines.

For about 20 years, the store behind Rogue's Harbor was known as Egan's IGA, Lansing IGA, Lansing Foodliner and Lansing Shurfine. Beginning in the mid-70's, Alyce and Jim Egan provided employment for many high school students and older residents. The 1990's were the biggest years of business when they employed 25 people. The emphasis was always to be a neighborhood store.

One of the part-time employees who will always be remembered is Gossa Tsegaye, an American of Ethiopian origin. Jim met Gossa when Jim ran a store in Danby. Gossa had come to the US with some missionaries in order to go to school here. While living in Danby and going to school in Ithaca, he worked in the Danby store. He continued to work part-time for Jim through college and graduate school and became an Ithaca College professor.

The weekend chicken barbeques that Alyce ran were very popular. Alyce kind of backed into that business. Originally, the BBQs had been run by the baseball teams. Then the Masons and Deanco ran some. When no one wanted to run them anymore and the customers asked for their weekend chicken, Alyce stepped into the breach. The Lansing Shurfine finally closed in October of 1995.

Until recently, three convenience stores served the southern end of Lansing with groceries and gasoline. they are the "C&Y" (formerly Bucky's), the Extra Mart (formerly "Day & Night") and the Pit Stop.

Just this week, a new grocery, the "One-Of-A-Kind Farm Market" is opening. Run by Ray Reynolds on Buck Road (caddie-corner from the Methodist Church), Ray intends to provide fresh fruit and produce, lunch meats, and daily staples. Apparently, what goes around, comes around.

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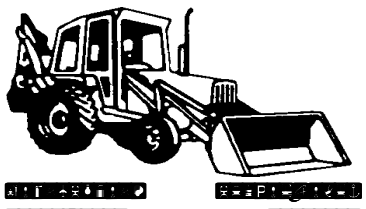

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