

CHERRY VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER December, 2011

Now you can enjoy reading our newsletter since the busy season of Christmas is over. I hope you enjoyed the company of family & friends during this time. Just to remind you that our internet contact to our museum computer is found by entering cvhistorical86@frontier.com and our telephone number at the museum is 815-332-5200. We also have an answering machine. To pull up our link with the C. V. Library click on www.cherryvalley.lib.il.us/historicalsociety.html

Our membership dues will be due in January, 2012. We have eighty-six members now. However, we are always short of volunteers. Much still needs to be finished in our museum. We held a profitable bake sale in September, but we don't seem to have enough volunteers to host holiday walks, garden walks, or other fund raisers. This is your society folks. If we don't pull together, we can't continue with only a few helpers.

Our new officers as of January are President--Lyle Wilt, Vice-President-- John Larson, Secretary--Delores Moore, & Treasure--Erma Horn. We appreciate their willingness to give of their time for our society.

Lyle Wilt, John Larson, & Frank Horn are continuing to digitally photograph our hundreds of artifacts with the help of Fred Johnson. Erma Horn & I have completed almost 400 of C. V.'s obituaries by entering them into a spreadsheet. They will eventually be sent to our link.

The following have passed away since our last newsletter:

Joan Ronk (Knox/Purvis)	91	Dec. 6, 2011
Helen Knox (wife of Vincent T.)	91	Dec. 8, 2011
Leland L. Baxter	69	Dec. 13, 2011

CONFECTIONERY STORES IN CHERRY VALLEY

The earliest store (then called a drug store) that we have a record of was Oscar King's Drugs & Medicines. This business existed in 1873. The following was mentioned in the 1877 History of Winnebago County: King, Oscar, Druggist, Cherry Valley, was born in Broome County, New York, March 9, 1832. He married Annie E. Swits October 22, 1873. She was born in Schenectady, New York March 2, 1852. They have two children, Arthur H. & Lizzie B. He served about seven months in the late rebellion in Company C., 15th I.V.I.

Between 1905 & 1908 we have a listing in Our Memories Are Warm book that the King Brothers--L. W. & Oscar King operated a drug store located on the south side of East State Street. One of the Kings had an ice cream parlor in a tent across the street, on a corner (where Salamones is now) per John Larson.

Also mentioned in our book is a confectionery run by E. J. Carlson. His was one of the few store buildings on the north side of the street. It was next to the interurban station. This was a one story building.

Mary Lofquist (granddaughter of Len Johnson) donated an account book from Len Johnson & Charlie Swatek's confectionery business to our museum. They also operated a pool hall. All the entries were from 1916. They built a two story building (still standing) where the Carlson Confectionery was. Many pages show purchases by C.V. residents. Some of the purchases were:

- marshmallows - 15¢
- oysters - 30¢
- Camels - 20¢
- candy bar & popcorn - 20¢
- watermelon - 50¢
- dinner & tobacco - 50¢
- 1 gal. cream - \$1.75
- hall rent - \$5
- pool - 10¢
- cider keg - 50¢
- stove burner, drinks, & cough drops - 55¢
- 5 gals. high test gas, oysters, & crax - \$1.30
- 1 gal milk - \$1
- transmission grease - 95¢
- snuff - 5¢
- matches - 7¢

On March 1, 1919 William Clarence Oberg was discharged from the U. S. Army at Camp Grant in Rockford, IL. Then he purchased the confectionery business, pool hall, & two story building from Len Johnson & Charlie Swatek. The confectionery was called The Busy Bee. A few years later it became The Cricket.

Len Johnson was married to Mamie Chesak. She was Kathryn Chesak's sister. Kathryn Chesak lived in Cherry Valley on the farm with her folks Martin & Anna Chesak on River Road. She started working for William Oberg some time after he opened his business. They were married in September, 1926. He was 39 & she was 27. Beverly Mae was born September, 1930. I was their only child.

It was a grand store in this little town of 600 folks. The ceilings were tin, painted white, & designed so artistic. There were two ceiling fans (no air conditioning back then). The linoleum floor had a pattern in it. There were two large, front windows on each side of the entrance door. These windows were decorated by Allens Ice Cream Company once a month with colorful, stretchable, crepe paper. It was quite artistically done. There was a red popcorn wagon in one window which made popcorn to sell.

On the left side of the store we sold cigarettes, cigars, pipe tobacco, pipes, snuff, & tobacco & papers for "rolling your own". During the war, cigarettes were rationed. Dad would put a person's name on a pack as they came in. They could only have one pack a week, as our store could only buy so many. They were never sold by the carton. They cost fifteen & twenty cents a package.

Newspapers, a good variety of magazines, & comic books were also sold from this side of the store. The large, gold cash register stood on the back counter behind the soda fountain. Dad & mother took care of the sales at this one, until I was old enough to work the soda fountain. I really enjoyed making cherry cokes, sundaes, sodas, malted milks, & banana splits.

On the right side of the store, we sold candy bars, candy in bulk, boxes of chocolate candy, gum, & Cracker Jack (with a prize in the package)--we kids always enjoyed the anticipation of the prize. We also handled post cards, aspirin, Vicks Vapo Rub, body lotions, perfume, cosmetics, cotton, adhesive tape, (band aids weren't around yet), & non-prescription medicines. There were many of these items in glassed-in cases showing the merchandise & on many shelves from counter top to the ceiling. Also, on this side was the smaller, gold cash register. This is the one I learned on. I also learned how to make change, & count it back at a very young age.

Just behind all of the last paragraph, along the wall were three card tables for the senior men to play cards & cribbage. They really enjoyed coming in & getting together. I can still hear them saying "15 2, 15 4, etc.", & they would pound the table & laugh. No one ever got angry, so they obviously played for enjoyment. There were spittoons on the floor. I don't remember, but I hope mother didn't have to clean them.

In the back there was an "ice cream parlor". On the left side there were two sets of benches with tables, one more set on the right side, plus a player piano. This was played with a token, which I believe cost five cents.

In the middle of all the above in the last paragraph there were two round tables with four "ice cream" chairs with wooden, curved backs at each one. This is where the public would sit & enjoy the food. The parlor also had a coal stove for the extremely cold winters we had. This had to be fired by hand.

There was a huge basement with a dirt floor. I thought it was spooky. I only went down there with dad, but not very often. He kept some cats there to take care of the mice.

More of my favorite jobs were sorting & stacking the comic books, & selling the candy bars & gum. My salary was reading comic books & eating goodies (when my folk's backs were turned). Kids didn't receive any allowances in those days. Dad always said "The work comes first, then pleasure." I felt mother would have enjoyed some time off to visit relatives. They were open 9am to 9pm seven days a week. Can you believe it?

Dad died of esophagus cancer in September, 1944. He was 58. Mother ran the store, I'm guessing, about two years more, & then sold everything to Charlie Robinson. I will write an article about his life in the next newsletter.

Your newsletter reporter, Beverly M. (Oberg) Scholz,

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