

Wilmette Historical Museum Oral History

Abstract

Interviewee: Frank Meier
Interviewer: Cathy Weaver
Date of Interview: June 21, 1990

Thinks young people aren't interested in history and they can't afford to join civic clubs; kids have it easy.

Grandfather came from Switzerland, a carpenter, had nine children; Frank's dad was also named Frank and married Margaret Abing (related to Hoffmann's), they had 8 children.

Frank married Anna Huerter (related to Schaefer's), wife's grandfather was first white child baptized at St. Joe's.

Frank's father was a carpenter, started ice business in 1912 and farmed land from Illinois Road to Washington.

Bought ice from Hoffmann Bros. in summer (shipped by train from Wisc.); in winter cut it from pond at Illinois and Hibbard.

Northwestern train depot had a switching yard.

Ice business lasted till 1948, at end sold only ice cubes and beer.

Frank started tavern in 1935 in Glenview, sold it in 1962. Frank was "put" in the army even though had 4F classification; wife ran tavern then.

Grew up at 2103 Washington, built by father about 1905, had six bedrooms. Didn't have a house number till annexed by Wilmette; coal stove, wood cook stove.

Born in 1908, walked to school on wooden sidewalks.

Gross Point had no sewers, no water, no electricity, didn't even maintain the streets, did have 2 wheel fire cart (didn't use horses).

Barney Scholten, volunteer fireman, drove express wagon for RR; when fire whistle blew, horse would go home on his own.

Police had bicycles, big hats, billies, guns; Judge Falk had chambers on 1st floor of GPVH. Used to be jail cells in house on Birchwood (Nackel's house, she was a midwife); dances on 2nd floor of GPVH

Went to school at St. Joe's - 1st through 6th grade; 30 -40 in a class; hated Wilmette State Bank because it gave all the schools rulers; mean nuns; school punishments - hit on knuckles, stand in corner, go in dark cloak room, kept after school, had to pick apples. Nun said he wouldn't amount to much; he showed her.

Chores - clean outhouse every Sat., clean chicken barn, pig barn, wagon sheds; pump water for horses; girls cleaned the house, washed and ironed; milked the cow before school.

Baths - once a week, all in the same water.

Grocery man took orders and delivered weekly - McLean (Klinge?) & White; would walk to Bleser's grocery store for small items.

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Would play dominos, checkers, Parcheesi, ice skate

Raised carrots, cabbage, etc.; greenhouses for cucumbers and flowers, shipped to Chicago Orphanage at Central and River Road called Phensley - got orphan boys to help the farmers; farms were 20 -30 acres, work usually all done by the family.

Whole barn of tools burned down.

Transportation was horse and buggy and bicycles; kids didn't have bikes, only grown ups.

Dr. Koerper on Ridge, Dr. Sensel in Niles Center; home remedies

No public picnics, just family picnics; Schneider band; no sports teams, no church clubs, nothing special at the holidays; Father Netstraeter didn't help the kids.

Henry Schuett delivered newspapers - Daily News, Tribune - by horse and wagon.

WWI - uncles in service, always went to get the mail; stopped teaching German in the schools. Wife's only brother was Peter Huerter, died of flu on a ship, threw him overboard, no embalming fluid. Joe Engels was there.

Taverns - Micks, Winkels, Zeutschels, Schaefers, Meiers, Sesterhenn - all on west side of Ridge since east side was dry; there was no liquor tax, only a fee for the liquor license.

Depression - used lard on bread instead of butter. Only thing that kept father from losing everything was dairy farm he owned in Dundee; didn't lose any property; lots of farmers lost their farms. Rengels and Roemers lost some property.

A member of Legion, Knights of Columbus, Luxemburger Lodge, St. Joe's Mens Club, Elks - not active in any

Farmers left at midnight with horse and wagon to take produce to South Water St.; on way back stopped at a dairy barn and picked up a load of manure, got home at noon. Went one or two times a week.

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