

ABSTRACT

Tape No. 53

Interviewee: Mathilda Marie Kempe

Interviewer: Brigs Maselli

Abstract by: Rhea S. Adler

Date of interview: November 4, 1979

Born on Ridge Road across the street

Father Otto L. Kempe came via New York, Niles to Wilmette - was a shoemaker from Saxony - came as a young man in 1881 with a group of young men - Mother was from Chicago

Started a shoe repair business on west side of Ridge Road - put in a stock of shoes for sale

Built a new building at 418 Ridge (on east side) and moved and incorporated the first building within it

Mathilda one of four children - 2 boys and 2 girls - Mother died in 1923 - Father lost interest in store - sister and brothers not interested in operating it so Mathilda tried and continued operation (43 years) until 1933

Moving day from west to east side of Ridge Rd. - Lived upstairs - all children worked in store until old enough to go from there and take jobs with other people - boys became plumbers - schooling - dressmaking in Evanston with a Frenchwoman

Contents of store - shoes - all rubber footwear - men's and boys' clothing and headware - grocery goods

Father gardened and had fruit trees and sold fruits and vegetables - he had made shoes as well as repaired them

Gross Point School - eight grades - 1 through 4 on first floor in one room - 5 through 8 on second floor - east side of Ridge Rd. within Wilmette School District so Miss Kempe finished at Central School.

Home life while growing up - Mother canned fruits - made jams and jellies - knit woolen stockings - made sheets and pillowcases - girls' clothing - quilts made with neighbors' help - hot bricks and feather beds in winter

Elaborates on holiday celebration and father's shoemaking.