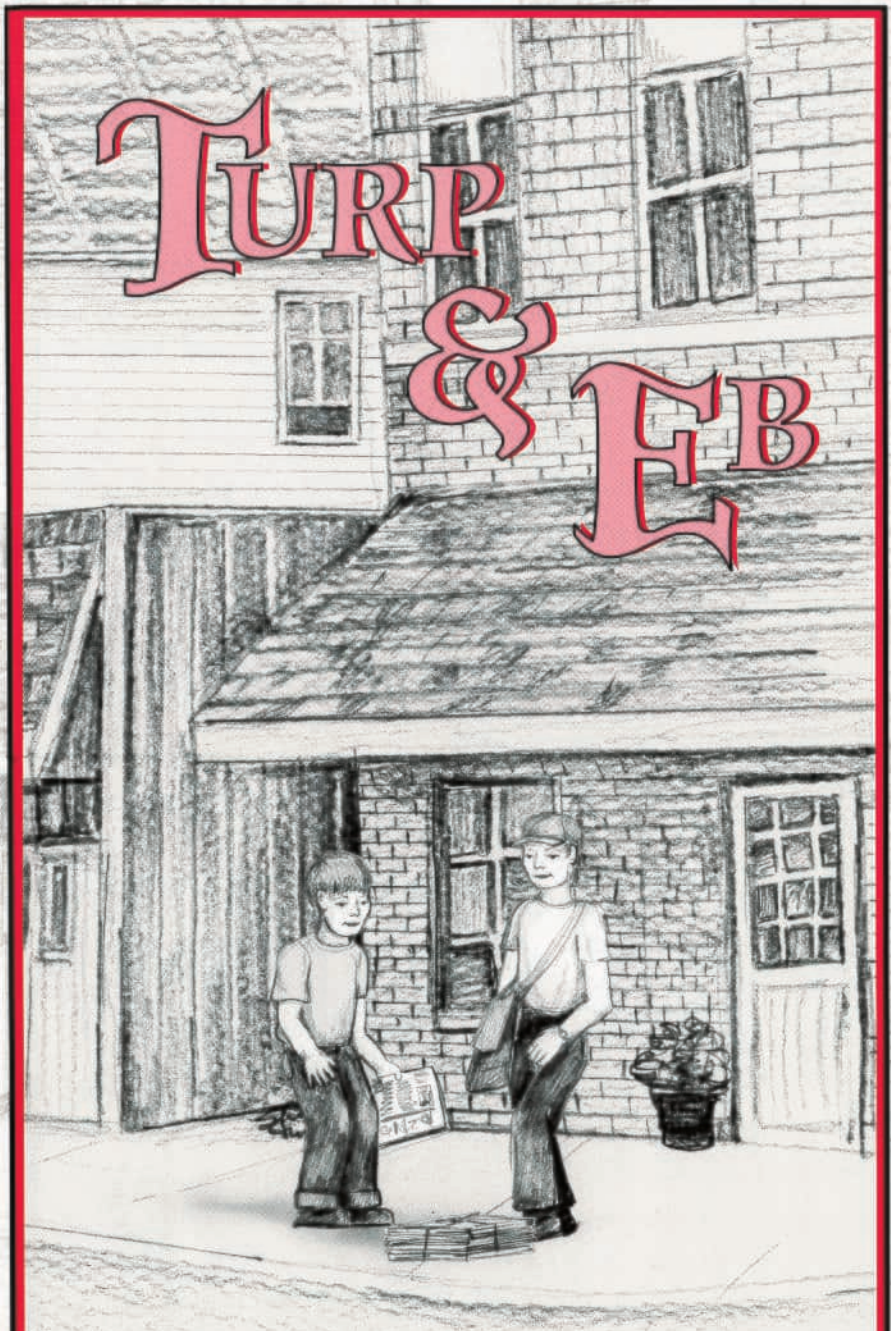
Turp & Eb



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Turp and Eb

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Turp and Eb

This is the story of a small town, 200 people in the 1930s, as seen through the eyes of a young boy. It's late afternoon and my friend, Turp Ratermann, stopped at my house and said, "How about going with me to deliver the papers?" Great! It was a good pastime for us as we always looked for things to do. So, he and I traipsed off with a paper bag between us.



Turp Ratermann

We took the long walk through the pasture field beside our house and back to Uncle Ferd's. Now that I look back on it, that was rather strange to walk through a pasture field to go to someone's house, let alone to an office. At that time, he had his architectural office upstairs, with a draftsman, sometimes two draftsmen, a secretary, and himself. His clients, plus various salesmen, would gingerly walk down the sidewalk, through the pasture, trying to miss the cow patties as they went back to see him. Something of an exciting activity for us!



Eb Freytag

We kind of hopped next door along the canal where Joe Winner had his barn. In that barn were two buggies; one a storm buggy, the other a

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summer buggy. We often got on the seat of the summer buggy and imagined driving a horse around town; imaginary horse, imaginary reins, but a real buggy.

He also had his Overland car parked in there. He lived up on Main Street, of course, but the barn was back by the canal because it was built during the canal days. I don't know why, but it had doors facing the canal. Then we would walk back through his garden, through his grape arbor where we had to take a peek down the stone walled well. It seemed to be miles deep but it was actually about 20 feet deep, for in later years I went down to clean the well for him. It was lined with stone and probably three to four feet across. We put plumbing in Uncle Ferd's house later and I was down in Winner's well for that reason. Later on, in the 1940's, the town got city water. We had to dig a trench all the way from Main Street to the canal. Then the plumber put in 20 foot lengths of pipe but they barely threaded them together. Of course, they sprung leaks later. The well wasn't used after that. There were a lot of dug wells in our little town.

We walked next door, tossed the paper on Leo Inderrieden's front porch. The house was built in the early 1930s and that was a memorable occasion, because there were very, very few houses built at that time due to the Depression, and this was one house to remember. Leo Inderrieden worked with his father in the hardware store. They sold lumber, roofing and so on and so forth. In fact, in the roofing department they sold tin shingle roofing which slid together, forming a good roof. There were oodles of this type roof around the town and in the countryside. Practically all of them are still in use, 70 years later.

At that time not everyone got the newspaper, in fact quite a few did not, but we did stop at every

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house to chat.

Next door lived Joe Winner and his family. Joe was a retired farmer. This being in the midst of the Depression, there were a lot of unexplained people living together. His son, Alex, who was the barber, lived at home. He gave haircuts back in their summer kitchen. That was always neat to go back there, to sit with the windows open on a hot day, to get your hair cut and give him that quarter. Luetta was living at home along with her sister. Later, the sisters got jobs in Dayton along with their brother, Alex, who I think was married at that time. Luetta married Art Cary from Sidney and he moved in with them where they raised a family. Art is still living in the home.

Next door to them lived our good friends and playmates, the Arkenbergs. Unique family. Virgil was a little bit older than us, Benny a little bit younger, and there were two sisters. The sisters were girls. You know, you didn't play with the girls, but we spent many, many hours with the Arkenberg boys. Their dad was ingenious. The Arkenbergs had this huge garden so their dad, Ferd, built a tractor to plow the garden — small like a garden tractor today. He also built a planter to plant potatoes. You would sit on the back of it, put 40 slices of potatoes in the planter and the wheel would come around to trip over, then "blip", down would go the potatoes, the little plow behind it would cover the potatoes back up. Amazing! Amazing, wonderful thing.

Also, Mr. Arkenberg built a lathe in his barn to make various things. The following year he built a saw. For all those things you needed more room so he built an addition to the barn that was made of poured concrete. It was very, very reasonable to build, especially the labor, as it cost nothing. Helping him mix the concrete for this building was fun.

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We also helped remodel his house, for his family was getting larger. The upstairs was one big room. First of all, he needed a new roof. He taught us boys how to split shingles. We ended up splitting all the shingles for the roof. We helped Virg and Benny use the old tools like the pioneers did.



Woods Polo Barns
Rich Freytag
Eb Freytag
Turp Ratermann

Next, they had to have partitions put in the upstairs to make more rooms. Using the saw that Ferd built, we cut out plaster lath, so the partitions could be nailed on and plastered. The entire house was remodeled in that same fashion.

The Arkenberg family owned a gravel pit north of Ft. Loramie, which we visited with the boys. This is where Ferd Fleckenstein now lives. We went out there almost every day to help "work", but mostly, we played out there. I'll tell you that story later on.

Next door to the Arkenbergs lived the Bollheimer family. Mrs. Bollheimer's mother and father, Frank and Fanny Nabor, lived right across the street. Henry Bollheimer did various kinds of work to make a living at that time. He raised unusual animals; like coon, fox, mink, and other wild animals. At one time he raised a lot of rabbits.

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It was intriguing for us to watch the animals' way of life. He also had the first refrigerator that we ever saw, because he was buying cream to make butter which he stored in the refrigerator. It had a round cooling unit up on top, a Frigidaire, of course. A refrigerator was a Frigidaire and vice-versa. Later in the forties, I was the ice-man. I probably was the last ice-man now that I think about it.

As the Bollheimers had a large family, mostly boys, we played with the Bollheimers quite a bit. But not quite as much as the Arkenbergs because, as I said, the Arkenbergs were intriguing, since they had so many wonderful things going on.

We traveled on. Next door to the Bollheimer's was Henry Varno, who was a retired farmer. Just he and his wife lived there. Occasionally, his children came in to visit. Obviously, we didn't spend any time there because there were no children. No fun.

Next door lived Elmer Vogelsang and Mary, or as we called her and most people in town called her, Meffie. Meffie was my mom's cousin and friend. She stopped to visit for many years to chat a bit then go on about her way. She later played the organ in church for a long period of time.

Some families were bootleggers, and they always seemed to know when the "dry dicks" were coming so the whiskey had to be hidden. All the kids in the neighborhood who happened to be near would help hide it and retrieve it later on. We helped many a time to throw the jugs of whiskey in the canal and tie a string on them and put a little stick on the string and bury it so no one could see it. Then we had to remember where that stick was to pull the string and the jug of whiskey back in, then wash it off, and we were back in business.

One favorite hiding place was a hole underneath the double swing out in the yard.

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Whiskey was buried in a hole, a rug laid over the hole, then three to four kids would sit on the swing and swing. Many of these kids were my sisters. My sister, Elsie, and Betty Vogelsang were big friends. My sister, Paula, and Phyllis Vogelsang were friends. So, my sisters spent a lot of time down there and we were down there quite often too.

When beer did come in, Vogelsangs opened up a little bit of a beer garden in their front rooms and sun porch. Pop and Mom and some of us kids would go down there and they'd drink a beer; I guess we had a coke. I don't know, maybe we had a beer. Also, the Vogelsangs had a huge car. I believe it was a LaSalle, or could it have been a Duesenberg? It had bullet-proof glass, heavier than the dickens. We were always intrigued by the big cars that would stop there to visit, drink, party or whatever.



Vogelsang's Cafe
Bartenders
Ralph Rieger Bob Vogelsang

The Ft. Loramie area had a number of farmers who made whiskey on their farms. They sold it to a few of the families in town. One farmer was promised a free car by a businessman. If the farmer would make whiskey for the businessman all winter, the farmer would receive a Ford in the spring. When spring came the farmer stopped by for his Ford and was told, "I don't know anything about a Ford." The farmer could not go to the law, so the businessman got 100% of the profit.

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Next to Vogelsang's was a large, empty field. And then came Ben Lump's which, oh my, was just better than anything in town. Ben Lump had a foot bridge across the canal. His property and buildings ran from Main Street to the canal. There was one building after another. Ben had, of all things, a Model-T Ford that he was driving 'til the day he died, I guess. None of the buildings were painted; the house wasn't painted, there was no electricity in it, no water, and, of course, no bathroom. That really was no big deal because very few people had baths. Winners did not; Arkenbergs did not; Bollheimers did not; Varnos did not; Vogelsangs did.

Back to Ben Lump. Ben was a bachelor who liked to drink and party. Many a night he'd come home from town with his Model-T, roaring in the driveway full steam. Somehow he'd get into the shed, park his Model-T, and then he'd pound on the door. He couldn't get the door to open, and he'd yell, "Mary, Mary, let me in, it's your Benny." Well, there was no Mary. It was an imaginary Mary. He surely had the best wife you could get!

Ben's house had a tin roof, and we just loved to throw pears on it. He'd come out, shooting his shotgun in the air and we'd all run. Guess we were pesky little devils then.

Ben's buildings were side by side. First he had a house, a shed, next a privy, another shed, then a pig stable, and finally a barn. These were all ramshackle buildings leading to a footbridge at the canal. You had to pull the plank up so the spooks wouldn't come and get you at night. Ben always wanted that board pulled in at night for good reasons.

A story they tell about Ben Lump was that they were partying while he worked for the Vondrell brothers out at the lake as a farmhand. The Vondrell brothers came in to visit, and then got to

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partying, celebrating Benny's birthday. There were men only, so they got to dancing with each other, like a clog dance. Ben was dancing the jig and he jumped up and down so much that the stovepipe came apart, spilling black soot over all of them.

Next door we didn't leave a newspaper because it was the Protestant church. The only non-Catholics were the Freytag family (my grandparents and Uncle Ferd) and the Keifer family. The Keifers went to this church. The Freytags went to New Bremen to church. Prior to that, they walked to Willowdell to church, but after having cars, they went to New Bremen to church. Many a time they walked to New Bremen. John Feldman told me of when he was a young man just married, living right south of Minster, that it was too cold, nearly zero, to go to church one Sunday morning. He saw the Freytags walking to New Bremen so he decided, "Well, I guess, maybe I had better go to church too."

The Protestant church on Main Street was exciting to us because on Sunday mornings we would sneak down there after having been to Mass and stand outside to listen to their sermons and the organ playing. The Keifer girls would play the organ and sing, which was for us, just wonderful. The church was later moved to the south edge of town and made into a home. Bob Barhorst built his home on this lot. Ben's house was torn down and that is where Ray Barhorst's home is now.

Next door to the Protestant church was also an intriguing place. These people did get the paper. This was Cindy Byer's place. She and her husband, Fred, had no children. He was a day laborer for farmers. They had very little money. In fact, they, like a lot of people, had to watch the cost of everything. They had a light bulb hanging down from the kitchen ceiling with a 25 watt bulb, which is exactly the size of a ping-pong ball today. They

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used this light when they saw that the meter was getting too close to the minimum fee (you had a flat rate of $2.00 a month, I believe, or $1.50) and when that was up they turned the lights off. They read the newspaper with a flashlight. They had no radio and, of course, they had no TV or phone.

Cindy Byer was a great storyteller and was forever telling us about ghosts, witchcraft, and how the ghosts would come around at night. She was the one that insisted that the footbridge plank be pulled up at night because the ghosts would come from across the canal back by the creek. She told about how the cats would jump through the window, right straight through the screen, but the screens were never broken. Black cats were the bad ones.

They had a woodstove and a big wood box. It was filled up at all times. Her husband, Fred, would split a lot of wood and had a woodshed out in back, like everyone. We all had woodsheds.

Cindy Byer had a brother, Windy Marshal, who lived out west of Newport He came into town with a spring wagon and horse. He came to town quite often, three or four times a week. He would go uptown and have a few drinks. He loved to drink, then he'd stop and visit his sister and I think one could tell a bigger lie than the next one; or stories, make that, not a lie. As children, we surely enjoyed stopping there to hear all the wild tales. Windy said to Cindy one time, "How dast you tell a bigger lie than me!"

Next door to them lived the Ernst family, Peanuts Ernst and his mother. Later Clara Inderrieden and her boys, Howard, Jim and Byron lived there. Clara was a wonderful woman. She took in washing for people and did ironing. When her husband, Ed, died she was left with the boys to raise along with one girl, Margaret. Margaret died of

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tuberculosis when she was young, in her 20s or teens. It was quite a shock to us. Any death was a big thing in our life in a small community — closely knit people. Clara was a beautiful person, very kind, always had time to listen to kids.

We didn't realize it at the time, but I remember on a Saturday morning, we were in our garden at home working close to the canal, hoeing corn or picking popcorn and here came Jim Inderrieden in a beautiful tin canoe; huge, maybe a 16 foot canoe. His father built it for him. Of course, not mindful that he no longer had a father but he had a canoe, I was jealous of him. It shows you how a child's brain works. I'm sure he was jealous of me for having a father.

Next door to the Inderriedens was Clem Ruhenkamp's filling station. It was a combination filling station and grocery store. Clem sold ice, cold meat, beer, whiskey, ticket jars, slot machines, you name it. Clem also had a lot of bulk items. Bananas came on a stick hung from the ceiling and were cut off with a butcher knife. Vinegar, white and dark, were in wood barrels in the basement, along with molasses in a barrel. Pickles were in a barrel; cookies in a large box; bacon, ham, cut or sliced; cigars in boxes of fifty with most of them two for a nickel or a nickel each; kerosene and oil were pumped out one quart at a time.



Clem's South Park Service Station

I later worked there during high school after my father died. After Howard Inderrieden went to the

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Army, I, being too young to join the Army myself, went to work at the station. I helped carry brick and laid brick during the day in the summertime. On Saturdays, evenings and Sundays I worked for Clem.

My Dad died when I was going to be a freshman in high school. It was quite a blow. I went to work at Clem's because I thought I needed to. In those days you went to work because you had to. There were no ifs, ands, or buts. We didn't have to find ourselves, the good Lord found us. There was no floundering about. I worked there evenings and on Tuesday and Friday night I drove a 1929 Ford truck to Piqua to get ice from the Piqua Ice Company. I brought it back, put it in the icehouse, and then on every third day I would deliver ice. During the summer months, I did it in the evenings. When I was in school, I would do it right after school. We had our regular customers. There were very few refrigerators. I had a lot of ice customers, being the only ice truck in town. Folks put a little sticker in the window if they needed 50 lbs. or 25 lbs. We'd chip it off, carry it in and put it in the icebox. We sold tickets that we punched, and that way they only bought a ticket maybe once a month.

I got a good lesson in life at the grocery. A man who had a large family and who had just gotten a job working in the foundry came in (this was later on in the forties). He earned $18.00 a week, which was a good salary at that time. He came in, bought ticket jars and drank whiskey. I cashed his check so that's how I knew how much money he made. Then he got so many slices of bologna, got a couple loaves of bread, and maybe a pound of coffee. The prices kept going up and going up but I kept on slicing a little more bologna — a little more bologna — and charging him the same amount for the bologna. I didn't even weigh it because he was going

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to spend his money there anyway.

One night he came in, just raising hell and said, "You're a thief!"

I said, "What, what is it?"

He said, "Well, I'm supposed to get so many slices of bologna for $4.00."

I got mad and said, "Why, nobody calls me a thief!" I said, "I was giving you more than you had coming; this bologna was costing you ten cents a slice. You were getting twice what you were supposed to get." Me with my German temper, told him to get out, and stay out. Well then, oh my God! What did I do here? I'm chasing people out of a business that is not mine. So, I went next door to the man that owned it, and said, "Clem!" I told him what I had done.

He said, "Don't worry about it. I probably would have done the same thing. So just go ahead and forget about it." I did not forget it as you can see fifty years later.

Clem and Josephine lived next door and his son lives there today.

Clem ran a ditch machine during the day and worked at the filling station in the evenings. I was off every other Sunday. I would usually work on Sundays until about four o'clock. He would stay open for a few hours and then close. When I look back on it, I made more money than most men with families. Of course, I was working all the time. I put a lot of money in the bank. Put everything in the bank except $5.00 a week — and I was rich with that $5.00, but I never had any time to spend it.

From there we went next to Riethman's, Frank Riethman's. His son, Tony and his wife and children all lived with them. Frank Riethman was German, as were most people in town. He was on the village council for a long, long time, until they finally found out he wasn't a citizen. So, that put an

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end to his political career.

We were ornery rascals, especially at Halloween. We regularly got into a lot of devilment, but when it was Halloween, it was just a little bit worse. We delighted in teasing the Riethmans by throwing pears on their big, long, sloping tin roof. It was like Ben Lump's roof which was corrugated tin. We would steal their pears and throw them up on their roof. It was adding insult to injury. We did this at night, nine or ten o'clock, usually on a Friday night. Can you imagine how those pears would rumble and roar down? If people did that to me, I don't know what I'd do. Probably have them in jail. I guess what with all the things that we did, we would end up in jail today. Anyway, they'd come out, shout at us and chase us away. The odd thing, when I think about it, we stood in my grandfather's front yard across the street doing it.



Eb Freytag 1935

The Riethmans were nice people, a nice family. Tony Riethman was a carpenter for years, and then he later went to work at the Minster Machine Company, as did most other people in town. They were all very, very glad to get a job.

The house next to them had another intriguing couple. They had a wire fence with steel posts around their yard. They had cats and dogs but no children that I remember. Chris and Susie Zackarius. Chris was a carpenter and a very nice

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gentleman. At one time before that, in the 20s, the Waglers lived there. Susie Zackarius was a Wagler.

The Zackarius owned the brickyard, which was to the south of them. The clay to make the brick was all scraped off where the cemetery is now located, south of town. To this day it is pretty barren ground and has no top soil at all as it was all scraped off.

My Grandpa Boerger was furious when they built the cemetery out there, but they did. His son Carl died and was buried out there. Grandpa planted two trees above his grave. He said he didn't want his son to be out there in the sun; he wanted his son to be in the shade. Father Moeller got mad and was going to cut them down, but Grandpa prevailed so they are still there to this day. One died and was replaced, but there are still two trees there.

To the south of the Waglers was a huge barn that was used for the brick making process but now is just used for storage. Chris Zackarius and Ed Reiss worked together as carpenters. They would go out to work on farm buildings, remodeling or whatever had to be done.

Next door to that barn was nothing but a field. Of course, at the canal was the dam. We traveled down to that dam many a time to watch the great wildlife; fish, frogs, and whatever was in the swampy area below the dam.

Next, were the Quatmans, the people that we always wanted to get in with, but never did. They raised animals for their fur; ermine, fox and various exotic animals. They didn't want anyone there because they'd scare the animals, causing the animals to eat their young. The Quatmans also were pretty good sized bootleggers and didn't want anyone around there for that reason, too. I remember going down to Quatmans with Pop to get

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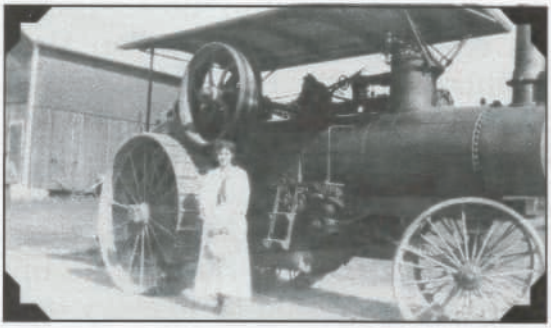
whiskey for various parties or whatever the case might be. Whenever it was threshing time we went down and got jugs of whiskey.

Next door to the Quatmans was Harry Wendeln. His house was right next to his business, which was making cement block. Later on they made ornamental concrete products. The business, Ft. Loramie Cast Stone, is run by his sons today. The house belonged to Kloeckers and John Kloecker lived in the north half of the house. He was a bachelor, quite a gentleman. The family farmed across the road, but he lived there. Prior to that, my Uncle Ferd lived there. John would go to every new movie that was on at the Crescent Theater in Minster. The movie changed three or four times a week and he would go to the 7 o'clock movies. So, at 6:30 any boy, no girls, who wanted to go to the movies in Minster and had the money to go, would be up at Phil Ernst's Filling Station on the north edge of town and John would pack in as many kids as he could get into the Hudson. Later on when he got a new Terraplane, he could pack as many as ten kids in there. Off we'd go to the movies in Minster. In later years, someone told him if he got in an accident he could be sued and be liable for those young kids. He stopped taking kids or picking up any kids after that. It was a sad thing because he was a man that was respected by everyone and is still respected almost 60 years later. Something! I often think about that. The Terraplane had the suicide doors that were hinged from the rear and would open from the front. What a crazy car!

The next building we went to was Ft. Loramie Cast Stone, which was always a great place. Harry Wendeln had all the little narrow gauge railroad tracks running around for cars filled with concrete block. Two hundred blocks were made at a time and they were pushed out on these cars to sit out

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and air dry. The forms were stripped off when they were dry, after two or three days. The forms were all cleaned and oiled. The forms had an odor from the oil, which I will never forget. Harry Wendeln had a 1920 Model T Truck. It was great to see that truck with a huge load of block pull out. It was probably 100 blocks because they were heavy. They weighed 55 pounds apiece. Frank Siegel drove the truck so we often watched him. The company got a rail car full of cement at Minster. Frank would go up there, haul it back and stack it all up by hand. Then he'd take the burlap sacks, shake them into the mixer, clean them, shake them out good, pack them in bundles of ten to 20. Next he'd take them back to the railroad to ship them back to Dayton to the cement plant. I spent many days watching all the activity and getting into things there, but we boys were pretty good. We didn't bother Frank or Harry too much.



Steam Engine at
Elmer Geier's Farm
West Side of the Canal

We went on down to the cemetery, which was a quarter mile walk out of town. We were always proud to see the entrance way with the stone walls and iron gates and the tile roof which was designed by Uncle Ferd, and built by my father and his brothers. We spent many, many days there with my grandparents, helping water the graves, carrying the water up from the canal. I say watered the graves; I watered the flowers on the graves.

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My uncle, Carl Boerger, was buried there and it was a must to go down there and take care of his flowers. Later on, my grandparents were buried there, aunts and uncles, my mother and my father. My father died in 1939 when he was 52. We wanted a nice sized stone cross with a German verse on it. My dad was born in Germany. My grandpa (Grossvater) had a verse he wanted to put on the stone but we had difficulty finding someone to do the carving. We finally found someone in Delphos that could carve the German letters. That cross and one copied from it, Margaret Gaier's, are the only two crosses in the cemetery.

Immediately to the west of the cemetery was the canal and immediately beyond that was the Loramie Creek, with an old iron bridge over it called Borchers' Bridge because the Borchers family farm was directly west of the bridge. We walked down there many, many Saturdays and played with the Borchers boys. We used to roll down the hill bank, the canal bank, or the creek bank, and go wading in the creek.

The field between the canal and creek was a great place to play cowboys as there were trails made by sheep (or was it Indians?), nice tall weeds (or was it cactus?). We spent hours riding our imaginary horses down there. They were the best horses in the world; no manure to haul out and no feeding.

On an unforgettable Saturday in 1936, we were at Borchers' farm playing in the fields with Johnny and his brother, Al, when we heard the church bells ring "The Angelus". We knew it was time to go home for dinner, as we called it at that time, now called lunch. So Turp, Rich Freytag, and I headed home for dinner and after dinner we went out to play again. Then we heard the church bells tolling of a death. In our small town the news spread very

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quickly that young John Borchers had died.

As we started home for dinner, Johnny's father was hauling manure out in the field, and Johnny jumped on the manure spreader to catch a ride back to their home to eat. Something scared the horses and they bolted away, and Johnny fell backwards into the manure spreader which was engaged and he went completely through the spreader. His father stopped the horses and picked the boy up and took him to the house. Doc Ratermann was called and they did their best to save him, but he died there on the dining room table. It was a sad, sad thing but accidents happened then, just as they do today. We now know the impact of tragedy, as this is still vivid in my mind 60 years later.

From the cemetery we went back directly east, across the highway from the entrance into the cemetery. That was Kloecker's woods and now it's torn down. You had to walk back across the field to get to it. That was our favorite spot for hunting berries, and for getting hickory nuts and walnuts out of the trees. We threw sticks up into the tree to loosen the nuts. One time Jim Vogelsang was throwing a stick up into a tree to knock the hickory nuts down and the stick came down and hit him right in the nose. What a lot of blood!

Somewhere around there we usually could find a bees' nest to fight, hidden in the grass along the roadside. Everyone had his bee paddle, and each person made their own. Some of them were painted, some of them were varnished, some of them were plain. There was a lot of sport to kill all the bumblebees you could get a hold of. Of course, you always got stung. I remember one time I thought I was so brave, and I went in and stood right by the holes as the bees were coming out. As fast as they could come out I swatted them, and boy, I ended up

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spending a half hour swatting them. But, I didn't get stung and that was the object of the game. That was always late summer-time play. Somebody always would find a beehive and all the boys in town had to go out and see how many bees they could kill.



Richard, Herman, & Albert Freytag

After we left Kloecker's woods (of course, we didn't carry the paper back there), we would stop in where Spin Barhorst last lived. That was Valentine Miller's home; he was a house mover. We always had to go back in his big, long shed where his equipment was stored and have a look at all of that. It was intriguing to boys. The best thing he had was this huge solid tire, chain driven, Mack truck. A few years ago, I went to a man's house and he was showing me his antique cars and, sure enough, there was that same identical truck with very faint lettering on the side of the door that said "Val Miller — Housemoving". I often wonder if it is <u>still</u> there.

After leaving Val Miller's, we hitched a ride with Tom Borchers, who would be driving the Albers' Lumber Company truck. At that time the Albers' truck was a hard-tired, chain-driven, International. It was a flatbed truck, and on it they had built a gable-like roof (a "V" on it) and sideboards. Tom was hauling ground to Johnny Albers' (his brother-in-law's) new house across from my home on Main

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Street. We all jumped on the back end of the truck. We had to hold on to the "V" as we roared down Route 66. We turned in at the basin, then over the canal, down into the bottom land, and over to Arling's Gravel Pit. The engine roared! We thought the truck was going 60 miles an hour but it was probably going eight miles an hour. Tom slammed on the brakes and turned sideways and we skidded right up to the 60 foot deep water, all scared shitless! But we pulled ourselves together and helped him shovel ground onto the truck.

We had to watch the operation of getting gravel out of Arling's Gravel Pit. The Arling brothers operated the pit. They had a coal-burning steam engine in a little shed to the north side of the gravel pit. That steam engine ran a winch with a cable wrapped around it. The cable went up over the top through a pulley, onto a telephone pole and then down into the water. On the cable was a drag line, a bucket that they allowed to go down until it had slack, and an overhead cable that ran on a pulley. This equipment dropped down into the water and then the winch was reversed and pulled it back up to get a scoop full of gravel. There were bins that were covered with screens. When the bucket got up to the point where it stopped directly above a bin, the bucket was dumped into the bin and the big stones rolled off to the side and the proper sized gravel went into the bin. This was a big deal for us to watch.

We especially liked to go down to see the fire burning underneath the boiler on the steam engine. This engine was on wheels; it was a typical one, like those used for threshing. It was a pretty good sized steam engine.

We shoveled the ground on that truck by hand, and then we rode along back to Johnny Albers' house and helped Tom Borchers pull the sides off

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the truck so the ground fell off, or slid off. It was easier than shoveling it on and then shoveling it off.

We went down to the gravel pit many, many evenings to swim. We would ride down with one of our older brothers, or maybe, in the afternoon we would take our bicycles when we got a little older. We never went swimming in the gravel pit until after evening. That's where all the young men went in lieu of taking a shower when they got home from work. They all went down to the gravel pit and scrubbed themselves and dove in. We would grab a good size chunk of rock and jump head first into the gravel pit. We'd hold onto the rock until our ears started to pop then we let go and fly back up to the surface. (Of course, if our children did that today we would probably lock them up!)

Many afternoons, when the gravel pit was in operation, we would go swimming in the basin which was right by the gravel pit. At that time the basin was full of water (the canal was full of water, too) and it was pretty deep, I imagine twelve feet deep. Turp and I were swimming one time. Being much smaller, we had to swim along the bank where we could touch bottom. Unbeknownst to us, there were pilings driven in the water where they had had a wash-out at one time. We kept playing and Turp fell over the piling, and down he went into the deep water. We were already in three feet of water but he fell into the deeper water and the others at the basin pulled him out by his hair. I remember that very distinctly. It surely put a bit of a scare into us. The following year we were right back down there, I guess.

The Bollheimers were one of the few families that had a footbridge across the canal. There was also one at Cindy Byer's. If anyone wanted to cross the canal to go back along the Loramie Creek, they had to use one of these footbridges. If you were

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brave, you went down to the Mile Creek. We walked back through Gaier's field, which a lot of times was flooded. There would be low spots and carp would be in these low spots, so we would go in with sticks to bash all the carp we could get a hold of. Great sport!

We spent many, many hours back at the creek, swimming and sliding down the mud bank. Where the two creeks met was a favorite swimming place because it was a bit deeper there. If we wanted to go over to Riethmans during the fall, summer, or spring, we had to use a swinging bridge that crossed the Mile Creek. We had to crawl up onto this bridge which hadn't been used in years. It was originally used when the Riethman children walked to school. After the children got older it fell into disuse. It had two steel rods suspended from one side to the other. These rods were fastened onto a wooden post. Between the steel rods were 2 x 4's and on that 1 x 8's and a slight guard rail up on top of another cable. We spent many hours jiggling across that bridge. It's a wonder we didn't fall in and break our necks, but we didn't.



Canal Bank 1930's

The Riethmans had a hill in back of their barn that was just ideal for sledding. All the boys and girls went back to Riethman's hill to ride their sleds. Some were risky, like Bob Slagle, as he put on ice skates to go down the hill. It was icy and full of snow, so that was a great adventure when he did that. Then one of the older guys decided he had to

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go skiing. I guess he saw a movie about skiing (he certainly didn't see it on television). So he took two slats out of a barrel, tied them to his feet and slid down the hill standing up. That was a great feat.

Riethmans also had a log house (an abandoned old home) with hogs in it or something. It was out in back of the barn and we used to go down there and poke around. Abandoned homes were always fun to poke into. Then we always had to traipse back toward home. Half the time we got our feet soaking wet crossing the creek or we fell in the holes or God knows what. We got a wild stretch of imagination for a few years. We were Indians or George Rogers Clark.

Every first of March we had to go down to the creek to go swimming, whether there was ice in it or whatever. No wonder we all have rheumatism now! The other fun we had down at the creek was pushing down trees. The saplings would die and rot from being in water and there might be four inches on the stump. You could go up with two kids and keep pushing on the tree and it came crashing down, which was great sport.

In the spring the creek would flood, since it had never been dredged. It flooded very easily. There would be a cold snap and the water would freeze maybe four inches thick. Sometimes the water would freeze while hanging on the trees; suspended in mid-air. That was a great place to go ice-skating because some of the chunks of ice would be up in the air. You could jump off after you came to the end of them. We spent many, many hours at this sport.

As I said, the Bollheimers had the only bridge to go across the canal. We followed the towpath and went up to Gaier's farm which was empty at that time, as no one was living in it. We played in their barn. Later Elmer Gaier moved there, got married,

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and lived on that farm and that put an end to that.

At Gaier's barn they had a good crop of burrs. We would make balls out of the burrs and throw them at each other. The older kids told the story of Dave Freytag from Columbus who took a crap in the box they stored the burrs in and covered it with burrs. You can imagine the kid that grabbed into that box of burrs! The kids in town called Dave "Turd" from then on.

From there we also went to the mill which is now Holthauses' Mill. Prior to that it was Middendorf's Mill, and prior to that it was Sherman's Mill. During the Depression, Sherman went bankrupt and the mill sat empty. It belonged to the bank. To us, it was owned by no one, you know. We spent a lot of hours sneaking in there and running the elevator up and down (a "man lift" which is probably still there). We went up one time with Charlie O'Conner's son. Charlie was superintendent of the schools. The son was up there with us as we tried to catch pigeons up in the top of the elevator, when he fell and broke his leg. We went over to get Doc Ratermann, who lived next door. He went up in the elevator, set the boy's leg and brought him down. Everybody was petrified. Now they'd have a hook and ladder truck there, 30 firemen, three ambulances and a helicopter. How easy things were then.



Indian on Canal Bank

We went back south on the towpath, walking

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down to the dam in the canal. It was not much of a dam, but it was to us. Below it was swampy land. Above it, of course, was water. That was always intriguing because there were snakes and bullfrogs; you name it — even alligators! We spent half our life on that canal. We did a lot of frog hunting and a lot of boating.

We had, somewhere along in the story, bought a boat for $2.50. We named it "Der Pfeil", which in German is "the arrow". We rowed that up and down the canal. You could go down to the dam or you could ride up as far as the end of North Main Street, at Ernst's Service Station, which was beside the canal. There was a bridge at this spot but it was too small to get through with a boat.

We also did a lot of fishing along with the frog hunting. One summer evening we were rowing; Rog Keifer, Turp, and I. We were frog hunting and we kept hearing this huge frog going "Beyumph, Beyumph, Beyumph". So, we went up there and, by golly, it was gone. It was up a little further. We went up there and the darn frog was gone again. We finally began to wonder what the heck kind of frog it was. And then we heard this snickering and here it was Rich Freytag and he was going along making "Beyumph, Beyumph" sounds. His voice changed before ours did so he was a very convincing frog. That was part of our adventures on the canal.

We used to have a raft in the back of our house. It was made out of railroad ties. Every year we made a raft. We spiked 2 x 4's across railroad ties. We kids made them. I don't know how we ever carried them, but we did. We nailed them together on the bank of the canal and then slid the raft in. Pop made a wire across the canal so we just got a hold of that wire and pulled ourselves across. It went very easily.

We were back at the creek fishing, Pop and I,

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this was in maybe 1935 or so. We got our line hooked on somebody's net so we pulled that net up and it was completely full of fish. We had two five gallon buckets; one to sit on, one to put the fish in. We stuck the fish in those buckets dry, without any water, head first and tail first. We had them in there packed like sardines and I said to Pop, "Gee, we'll come back here tomorrow and we'll get some more fish."

"No," he said, "It won't be here."

"What do you mean?" I asked. Well, Lud Busse was standing up in his house, watching us take them. So, we headed back on the canal, pulled across, and I guess I did a little jerking, or whatever, and one of the buckets fell over and half of the fish went into the canal. But, we did get them home.

Another time we were back there fishing and right out in the middle of the field (as I said, those fields flooded quite a bit, but it was dry enough to walk across) was this huge turtle. We ran and caught that turtle, brought him home and made turtle soup out of him. It was good eating.

The canal was a big source of entertainment for all the boys in town and particularly us because we lived on the canal. In the winter time, we went down in back of our house. In the winter we didn't have to worry about hunting for a bridge to get across. We walked down there, carrying our screw-on ice skates (they had clamps, and a wrench to tighten them with). We tightened the skates as best we could, and then we had straps come up from the heel that would wrap around the ankle to stiffen it. You would skate a hundred feet and then the skates would fall off. Then we'd have to sit down on the cold ice and put them back on again. Quite an aggravation. Some of the boys would put theirs on with a pair of pliers and they would get them on so tight they would bite into their shoes. We didn't

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Skating on Canal
1940

Margie DeLaet
Mary Freytag



Ice Skating on the Canal
1940

Lud Arelage
Miss Quinlin

dare do that because we'd ruin our shoes. A few of the boys, the Slagle boys for instance, had theirs screwed on an old pair of shoes, so they carried their shoes down with the skates, and put those on before they walked to their house. In later years, my brother Bob and I probably got the first pair of shoe skates in Fort Loramie.

A friend of the family, Father Tebbe, started a boys' and girls' camp in Cincinnati and had many ice skates, baseballs, gloves, and so forth donated. Some of those things accidentally fell off at our house and stayed there. You see, shoe skates were absolutely wonderful! We got so carried away with them that sometimes we put them on in the house and walked on our tippee toes down to the canal to go skating. Every whipstitch we got the idea to skate to Minster. So we would skate; starting at Ernst's Filling Station because it was literally built

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across the canal. We skated up to the aqueduct and pushed ourselves through it because it was nothing but a trough about three feet wide and we couldn't stroke. We went on up to Minster and we were careful to skirt around where the sewage came in because it never froze in those spots. That was true in Ft. Loramie also. We would skate up to Minster and stay for an hour or two and skate with some of those kids and then come back and maybe end up in a fight, but not too often.

Quite often we would skate down to Newport, where you had to go to the dam and then skate wherever there was ice. Sometimes we would walk, and at the cemetery we'd have to walk across the culvert. There would be stretches that would not have enough water to support ice so you would walk around those areas. Basically, we had a lot of fun skating between all the reeds and weeds growing up in the canal. That made skating a little more interesting. The girls never went down that far. It was too big an adventure for them.

Back again to where we leave the house across from Ft. Loramie Cast Stone Products, or Wendeln's, as we called it. The house mover lived there. Later Leo "Spin" Barhorst moved in there when he got married. It was always intriguing because he owned a digger (what we call a backhoe today). It was an Austin Western excavator and we always enjoyed watching him run it. Prior to that, we watched the people excavate with a team of horses. They came in and plowed out a section of ground and took a scoop with a team of horses to scoop ground out, took it to the back end of the lot and dumped it. They kept doing that until they would scoop out a basement. All the houses built prior to 1936 or 1937 were dug that way. No one had a power shovel until Spin Barhorst got one. In later years, Spin got involved in ready mix concrete

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and it evolved into Spring Creek Ready Mix as we know it today. The company no longer does any excavating.

The Johnny Albers house, the new Inderrieden house, the Ray DeLaet house, and the Lawrence Albers house, were all dug with a team and scoop.

We marveled to see Carl Steinemann (we called him Jim). He was a young man, wearing leather gloves and driving his beautiful team of horses to scoop out the ground to make a basement. It was so much fun to watch at that time. It still is fun to watch a team of horses working.

From Spin Barhorst's house we moseyed up to Tony's Place. It wasn't built at that time, but in the late thirties Tony Barhorst came off the farm and started a beer joint/restaurant with no booths to speak of. We weren't allowed to go in there until we were older, which I did quite a bit of during the war; World War II. There was nowhere else to go.

Next door to that building lived the Frank Larger family. Frank was involved in oil wells and one thing or another. He had a number of boys; Ralph and Ray, Clarence, and a number of girls; the youngest being Dorothy who was slightly older than we were. The mother died in the late '20s so Frank raised his family the best he could. Some of the girls married and lived in town. Esther was Gus Gaier's wife and Dorothy lived with her when she was in high school.

Edison Maurer's wife was one of the Larger girls. Ed Maurer lived next to the Larger's house, right along the highway, until he moved directly north. That house was the parish house at Newport originally.

The Maurer house always had a special memory because it was moved to Newport It was moved there in 1936 or 1937 (in that neighborhood). It was fun to watch Val Miller move that house. It probably

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was the last one that he moved.

Mrs. Maurer did ladies' hair. She washed the hair and put stuff on it and got the hair all kinky with those clamps on it. Mom went down there every couple of weeks, I suppose.

Next door to Maurer's was really exciting because that was where Charlie and Agnes Middendorf lived. Agnes was a Meyer. We were down there quite a bit because they had a son, Arthur, who was a few years younger than we. Pop and Charlie were good friends as Charlie hauled bricks and scaffolding for us. Quite often, we rode along with the truck to get a load of bricks or whatever. That was a big thrill for us (free entertainment!).



Albert Freytag
1937

Charlie hauled corn, produce, or whatever he could to Cincinnati. Coming back he would bring anything he could sell. One time he had a truckload of evergreens. I remember that distinctly. A lot of times he came back with a load of broken ice cream cones which he sold to the farmers for hog or cow feed. Quite often, Charlie couldn't sell it right away, or he got in late at night. We would go down there and in the barn that he built in back of his house, he would have his truck parked. It would be completely full of ice cream cones. We would jump up in the truck, sit right down and eat the ice cream cones. Of

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course, the pigeons would be sitting on the edge of the truck, crapping in it. We sure didn't know what health care was then. Maybe that was where we got some of our problems. Uncle Paul Boerger used the cones and we would go out to Uncle Paul's as he would have a wagon load. Those cones would sit there for months and we would be in there eating them. Ah! Charlie also had ice cream. He hauled milk and would bring back ice cream, butter, and the like.

A lot of the people in town would go down to Charlie's house and get butter from him or ice cream, which is what we would get from him. We would go down in the evening with Pop and Mom, or maybe just Pop. Charlie would get dishes out of their cupboard, dish up ice cream and we would sit at the kitchen table eating ice cream while he and Pop would probably drink a beer. I can't remember. Maybe they had ice cream. They discussed what had to be discussed and Pop would pay him for the ice cream and off we would go, traipsing home with a lot of good entertainment.

My cousin, Rich Freytag, lived with my grandparents, just a few doors up from the Middendorfs, so Rich and I would play with Art Middendorf. He was the oldest of the Middendorf kids, though he was a couple of years younger than we were. I guess he thought we were heroes. When the next Middendorf baby was born, Arthur insisted that he be named Richard and Albert. So Dick's name is Richard Albert.

His mother, Agnes, was a very jolly, cheerful soul. How she handled us boys around there all the time, I don't know. We played with Arthur, as I said. We were with him this one afternoon; I don't remember the day, but we went home and ate supper, did what we were doing, and went to bed. The next morning we heard that he was deathly ill,

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and by noon he had died. Encephalitis, if I remember right. I don't remember going to the funeral. I don't remember going to the church. I don't remember anything other than the shock and now that I look back on it, I suspect we were all quarantined and couldn't go to the funeral services or anything. But it was a big shock to us. We really never went back there much after that and I often think that poor woman may have needed some activity, I guess.

Grandma Middendorf was a widow living in Cincinnati and she married Mr. Zircher and they moved all the kids west of Newport. Her brother was Tony Herdeman who lived midway between Newport and Loramie. Someone asked him if he liked living out in the open like that. His reply, in broken German and English, "I don't like it so bad. The lambs go 'ba, ba' and the bees go 'buz, buz'; it just makes me so nervous!" At times he would ride with Elmer Zircher in a truck to Cincinnati just to see the trolleys run.

The Middendorfs later bought Sherman's elevator and it became Middendorf's elevator. Also, they bought cattle and hauled cattle to the market. It evolved into Middendorf's Stockyards. Now they have three or four stockyards, and their sons and grandsons are running the same enterprises.

Next to Middendorf's was a little bitsy wire fence with peonies growing along it (which everyone had). This is where George Keifer and his family lived. George Keifer was retired and was, I suppose, a day laborer. I don't know. He had two sons, Don and Clyde. There were also two or three girls. The girls worked in Piqua at the underwear factory. Most of the young girls worked there or at the box factory in Minster. It was hard for women to get a job and if they did have a job, it didn't pay much at all. The Keifer girls were very strong in their little

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church up the way. They had a pump organ in their living room. We used to love to walk by there to hear them playing music. Sometimes they would be singing various religious song; "Faith of Our Fathers", "A Mighty Fortress", "Amazing Grace", "Nearer My God to Thee", and other songs like, "Red River Valley", "Home on the Range", "Trail of the Lonesome Pine", and things like that. I enjoyed listening.

The Keifers had a summer kitchen, as almost everybody did, although we never had one. Anyway, they had a bench in back with a basin and that's where the boys washed their hands and face before they went in to eat. Of course, the water was pitched out onto the yard or on the flowers. They had a car which was kept in a shed that faced right onto Greenback Road.

Greenback Road was all graveled stone from Arling's Gravel Pit. They had some stones on the road that were one inch in diameter. This was a fun, fun place to ride a bicycle. It was a big deal to ride down Greenback. We always spilled off. There were always spots where the cars had worn it pretty smooth and packed it down so we had to stay in the track. If we got off the track, we got into the coarse gravel which was an automatic fall. We just couldn't steer, so down we would go. As I said, it was done constantly. That was a famous place to go; down the Greenback.

We walked down the Greenback, too. Turp didn't go with us, but my brother, Bob, and I and whoever, would go down the Greenback Road, and straight on out to hit the Sherman Road (where the present high school is). In the northwest corner of the land where the high school is now was an abandoned house with a deep well in back and, of course, a privy. That was the toll house to collect for the use of the Greenback Road. Mrs. Schwartz

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lived there and, I believe, she was John, Bill, and Lawrence Albers' grand-mother. From there we went east to the first farm. That was Uncle Paul and Aunt Bernie Boerger's home. We spent many, many a day there and many a day walking back and forth. That got us out of Mom's hair and put us into Aunt Bernie's hair, I guess. But no, we helped, we chased sheep around and rode them. We played with their collie dog and later on helped shock wheat and did various other types of work.



Eb Freytag
Rob Freytag

I also remember taking the cow we had into town (later we had two cows). My brother, Karl, and I had to take this damn cow, which was in heat, out to Uncle Paul's to get it bred to the bull. Well, that cow didn't have to be led. We had a rope around her so she drug us all the way out there. She was quite anxious to get out there to do "you know what" with the bull.

We went down that road many times with Grandpa Boerger in his buggy with his horse, Birdie. Birdie was the last surviving horse in town. He regularly took us out the Greenback Road and to the farm. From there maybe we went to the Stump farm or perhaps we would go down Route 66 south, where we'd turn to go into Arling's Gravel Pit, which was also known as Crows' Hollow. Grandpa Boerger always had cattle there when the cows were dry or they were steers or whatever. He had to feed them

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out there, but didn't have to go out to milk them.

Right on the corner of Paul Bergman's house was a windmill and cow tank. The cows would get water from the tank and then they went down to the dip in the road where there was a stone culvert high enough for a man to walk through. The cows would walk through underneath the highway and go over to the other side for pasture. If Grandpa Boerger didn't want them over there he would simply put a gate across the culvert and keep them on the east side of the road.

Uncle Paul Boerger owned the land on the west side of the road and in later years he leased it to the township as a dump. That was a great adventure to go down there every whipstitch, especially if we had to go and take junk down. Then we could snoop around to see what goodies we could find. Believe me, there weren't any goodies. There wasn't even what might be a wheel to a bicycle that you could bring home to roll around. We used to roll wheels or hoops off barrels. We would hit them with a stick and run after them. That was our automobile or bicycle or whatever. It could be all kinds of things, whatever was in our imagination. We would roll that down the street or down the dusty road. It was lots of fun. But the dump was a big attraction for everyone, as I said. Very little was thrown away; nothing was wasted. Everyone brought their junk down in the trunk of their car or, if they were lucky enough to have a pick up truck, they could use that.

Back to the Greenback Road. In the 1930s there were no houses built on it at all; just empty fields. Halfway down the road was a slight rise in the roadbed. There was a lone hickory nut tree which was always good for hickory nuts. Of course, it was also one of the first ones to get picked.

We came back after our walk down Greenback Road to Main Street and went into Grossmutter and

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Grossvater Freytag's house. They lived in the brick house on the corner. Grossvater was retired then from laying brick all of his life. He still did some work. The buildings on his property were a bit like the old country that he came from in Oppershausen, Germany. There was one building right after another, attached together. The brick house was comparatively new, built in 1914. It had no bathroom. It did, however, have a furnace, which brings up the story of furnaces. There were not too many furnaces in town. Oh, Adolph Ratermann had one, Ann Ratermann, Bruckens, Grandpa Boerger, Vogelsangs, we had one, but that was about it. So an awful lot of people still had the stove and wood burning stoves.

Grandpa Freytag's house was typical of many of the homes in Germany. Six feet away from the house was the garage, and a workshop/butcher shop where they had a butchering kettle, a chimney and a little fireplace for cooking. Attached to that was a woodshed, the back of which faced Greenback Road. They got slab wood from the sawmill, cut that up and threw that in there. Now of course, that had to be split so we always helped with the splitting, and carrying the wood into the house.



Eb Freytag
At Bruckens's Barn
in the distance

Next was a barn. They didn't have a cow at that time, but there was room for a cow and room to put a car in. Some of the boys had a car, I gather. Next

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to that was a chicken house and attached to that was another chicken house of sorts that Grandpa built to be like they were built in Germany. It had timbers, braces, posts, and in between that he had brick patched in, and white washed. Then, there was a separate little bit of a shed which was in the pasture so that the cow could go in to get some shade.

He had a big garden and a big patch in back to raise alfalfa, corn or whatever. They used cistern water for drinking and for cooking. The cistern was a typical round hole dug in the ground, lined with brick, with a wood platform put over it. Some cisterns were tapered to a narrow opening. All of them had the same kind of tin pump. It was kind of a box affair with a chain that went down in a tin tube and on that chain were washers with leather discs that would suck the water up to come out of the spout on the tin box. They had a cloth bag, like a salt bag, tied over the end of the spout to filter out any bugs, I assume, or craw dads, or worms. It wasn't all that bad though. It was fairly sanitary.

Grandpa had, unlike most people, a filter. There was none that I ever saw in Ft. Loramie or anywhere. He had a square box made out of brick, where the downspout came in. In the box was charcoal, stone, gravel, and then sand. That filtered the water before it went into the cistern. Inside the cistern was a brick partition that drew the water out of the one side, and it went into the other side, so we had to draw it through that brick partition. That type of cistern was very commonplace. My father built it. I built a number of them. Someone had to clean the cistern, and usually the youngest boy got the job. Or, if you were lucky and had no brothers, the girls had to do it. This was done in the middle of summer when the cistern ran out of water. You had to go down in the cistern to get all the water

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out, then scrub all the mud together to get it all out. Then, buckets of fresh water would be sent down, or if you had water under pressure, as we had at home, we hosed it down. Of course, you would have to take all of that dirty water out again. Then you're back in business and prayed for rain.

Grandpa's house had a typical square tin shingle roof that was prevalent in that area because they were sold by the Albers and also by John Inderrieden. They slid together and made a locking device, making it very hard to replace. Of course, there was no reason to do so. Most of those roofs are in use today. Some are almost ninety years old. As long as they were painted and had a good galvanized finish, they were fine. It took a long time before they had to be painted. I would assume the paint job lasted 20 years or better. Some of the roofs were standing seam roofs, like a barn roof. There were very, very few asphalt shingle roofs, like those you see so commonly today because that was something that just came into its own in the 30s; at least in our area.

The field north of Grossvater's was two lots belonging to my father. We used those for pasturing our cows. We had a cow and later, after Pop died, we had two cows. In the winter time we fed them at home. We had hay and grain, but we had very little pasture at home. It was directly in front of Uncle Ferd's house, so we had these two lots down at the south edge of Main Street. We had to bring our cows down there in the spring and had to go down there every other day or so to bring them water. Now bringing water was not the simple task of hooking up a hose and squirting. Few people had water under pressure. Grandpa Freytag had none, the people to the north side, Reinhardt Zircher, had no water, so we had to haul water from home. In the early 1930s, Pop had a Model-A Ford pick up

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truck that we would use to haul water. We couldn't use a hose because that used electricity and you had to have all these kids working and doing something. So, we had to pump it out by hand into a bucket, hand it up to another boy on the truck bed, and he dumped it into the barrel. They had two barrels on the truck. And we kept doing that until both barrels were nearly full. Then you put maybe a big, old piece of carpet or three or four layers of burlap sacks over the top so the water wouldn't swish out. We all piled on board and then we drove down to the north side of that field, down by Grossvater's. Then, we had to dip the water out with a bucket and swish it back into the cow tank. That kept boys busy for quite a while.

Later on, when my brother, Bob, and I got a pony, we hauled the water down with our pony wagon. We pestered and pestered Pop that we would like to have a pony. And oh! No, no, no. At that time it was a lot of money. I think it was $35.00. I got bitten by the "pony thrill" when my father was building a school at Lena (Conover to the east of Piqua). I went to work with him as a waterboy and to tinker around, I guess, to sweep and clean up. There was a young man next door who had a pony and a wagon so he would come over and I would ride on it. It was quite a thrill. So that's how I got tied up with ponies.



Bob Freytag and pony, Bill

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The house next to that was Rinehardt Zircher's. He was a bachelor and a very kind, nice gentleman. As long as I knew him, he was retired. When I worked at Clem Ruhenkamp's across the road at the filling station, he would come over probably four times a day, and twice a day he would buy two cigars, two for a nickel. They were Maple Leaf Canadian Club or some brand like that. He would come over four times a day; twice to buy two cigars (which would be four a day) and then maybe to buy a couple of slices of bologna or whatever. He came over mainly to visit and to see what was going on.

He would sit down and whoever came in, he would sit there and discuss whatever had to be discussed in those days. If a stranger came in, well, if the stranger talked; fine. We sold Gulf gasoline and oil. But anyway, we did get a few strangers. So after they left Rinehardt would say to me, "Now, it's none of my business, but who was that fellah?" Well, I didn't know who that fellow was, and sometimes I'd tell him some crazy name and sometimes I'd tell him I didn't know. But anyway, he was a kindly gentleman. He too had a light bulb like a ping-pong ball, and that was the extent of his light. If he exceeded the usage on the twentieth of the month, for ten days you didn't use any electricity. Of course, that was pretty rare. In back he had a typical barn with a chicken house or maybe a pig or two. This was the end of what was called Bucktown.

Next door was Pete Keifer's family with my friend, Roger, their grandson. Roger's mother died when he was quite young, and his father (Milton, I think) was in Chicago or somewhere like that, working so Roger lived with his grandparents. Later, Milton got married and moved back to Ft. Loramie. He lived in the very last house going west on Route 705 out of Ft. Loramie. The Keifers were

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all plasterers, and were good at their trade. Two of the boys weren't married; Carl and Rob. Carl later married and moved away from home. Rob lived there until he died. The father, Pete, was retired in those years and the boys, Carl and Bob, in particular, were great at reading pulp western magazines which was the forerunner of the cowboy shows. They would read those by the hours and had stacks of magazines. Of course, that intrigued us because we never saw one. I think that Pete smoked a corncob pipe and he was always interesting.

Every home on Main Street had a different odor. In the Keifer's house was the odor of coffee. They evidently had a pot of coffee going all the time, so when you went in you could smell coffee. My father and mother drank coffee, but not to a great extent, so we kids just didn't drink coffee, but anyway the Keifers did.

The Keifer's house was a typical saltbox style. It is still there and still in use. They had a barn in back, a chicken house and the whole ball of wax; a small corn crib and big garden. Roger was a friend of ours and would come up to our house quite often. He played with Rich Freytag because they were both in the same neighborhood. I don't know if I mentioned that Richard lived with Grandpa Freytag because his mother died. In about 1935, his father, Herman, remarried, moved up to West Main Street close to Gaier's Garage. Roger always made the remark in later years that he would come up to our house and he always felt bad because we always had something to do. He never had anything to do, and by "to do" he meant work. We had chores that we had to do. He never had chores, so usually he helped us clean our chicken house or something, just to have something to do. He was a nice, nice fellow. He had a couple of sisters and two or three

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step-brothers living uptown. But he chose to live there and lived there through high school. He went into the Navy. I would take him to Celina or Sidney or wherever to catch a bus to go to Great Lakes in Chicago.



Freytag Grandchildren at Grossvater's Birthday Party

To the north of Keifer's was an empty lot filled with weeds. Towards the back part of it was an old ramshackle barn that was ready to fall down. Inside the barn was an apple press. It was Pete Kessler's who was long gone. His house evidently had been back there somewhere, too. But it was gone in the early 30s. Charles Middendorf built a house on the lot in 1939. My father worked on it in August, got ill at work and was rushed to the hospital. He died a few weeks afterward. It was the last house my father worked on.

Next to that was an empty lot where Frank Boerger built a house in the 1940s.

Next to that was another typical saltbox with a porch across the front. These houses all had porches across the front. The entertainment was to sit on the porch to watch the cars go by, all of them, maybe twelve a day. It was nothing for us to walk to Newport and not see a car, or walk to Minster or New Bremen on Route 66 and not see a car; that was very, very common. Cars were so rare; well, I

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guess they weren't that rare, but at least everyone looked at them. Folks spent most evenings during the week sitting on the porch looking for people to go by. Sunday afternoon that was our favorite thing to do. Well, back to the story.

The Reiss brothers lived in this saltbox and they had a wire fence with fancy hoops on it. They had a typical vegetable garden and a beautiful flower garden. Many people had gardens but they had a really nice flower garden. Ed was a carpenter, and he worked with Chris Zakarius quite a bit. They did repair work mostly, for there wasn't much new work. They did a lot of wood shingle roofs. We helped them when they put on Grandpa Boerger's roof. We had to clean up, tear the shingles off and pick them up off the ground. Then we put a roof on the granary out at Mom's farm. Ed and Chris put that roof on and we would go along to help do whatever needed to be done. The house where Uncle Ferd lived got a new shingled roof. Today it would cost a fortune, I imagine. That is what everybody had originally, so they just put new shingles back on, or maybe they would patch it. Joe Winner's barn had shingles on it that they kept patching, patching, and patching.

Anyway, as I said, Ed was a carpenter. Leo was somewhat dwarfed; he was quite short He was less than five feet tall and was a very nice man. He was the cook and he took care of the house. The house was as neat as a pin. It had shingle siding which was painted white. He had flowers everywhere, always had time to talk to kids, always had time to talk about something or another. So, we spent time visiting with them. These men were quite gentlemanly, with the exception of the Fourth of July. The Fourth of July was a big celebration in town. There was a big parade, as there is now, and a picnic. Both of these men got roaring drunk, and

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their favorite expression was, "Pretty soon it's the Fourth of July, and the best is over!" Well, I guess they were right.

We went with Ed Reiss to the farm to put new slats on the corn crib. I don't know how old I was. I wasn't very old, but I was old enough to help drive nails. I will never forget when we put the doors on. Using a hand brace, Ed drilled holes through for bolts. We put the bolts on and they were about an inch and a half too long. So he very simply cut a piece of oak, put it on the outside over the hinge and used that as a washer to take up space. The block of wood was on there for thirty years afterward. I eventually took it off, replaced the bolt, but it had been on there for a long, long time. The reason that he did use the bolts was because he would have had to go into town to the hardware store and get shorter ones. He absolutely wouldn't spend the time or money for the gas to do such a thing. It was just unheard of. So, we made do with what we had.

Next door to the Reisses lived the John Luthman family. Paul Luthman was our age. There were Lawrence, Herman, Henry, and Paul. They had a good sized family. Mr. Luthman was the fireman and a licensed boiler operator for the mill uptown, Ft. Loramie Mills. By the time of the early 30s they had done away with the boiler and put in an oil engine that was similar to a diesel engine; it was probably the same thing. We call them oil pull. They made a terrible racket.

John did the milling. We spent half of our time playing there. They raised and sold rabbits. They sold the skins and ate the rabbits. They also had pigeons. We always had fun catching their pigeons. We would go back in the alley and build a bonfire in the evening out of leaves maybe, or whatever. We took the pigeons we had caught earlier, packed them in mud and stuck them in the hot ashes.

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When the mud cracked off, the feathers would stick with the mud. We would eat the drumsticks off the birds. Heck, it was a delicacy and we didn't know it. The Luthmans had apple trees in the back that we played in and just generally had a good time. The oldest girl was kind of a hired girl at our house. She later married Matt Schwieterman of Coldwater, Ohio, who became a very well known excavating contractor. He did a lot of work all over the state; sewage and that sort of business. His business is still operating today.

Somewhere along the road was a billy goat running around town, and, of course, somebody said, "Well, whoever catches it can have it; it doesn't belong to anybody." So, guess who catches it! I brought that dang billy goat home and Pop raised hell. He said, "You don't want that billy goat. Get rid of it. Those things are stinky."

Well, I had to put it in the calf stable we had in the barn and, dern, if that thing didn't buck out all the boards from the side of the barn, either that or he tore them all loose. Pop said, "You've got to get rid of it." So I gave it to the Luthman boys, maybe for a dime or something, I don't know. But I gave it away and they ended up with it. They made a harness out of rope and hitched this billy goat to a wagon. They had more fun with that billy goat and everybody in town had fun with it. Luthmans finally sold it.

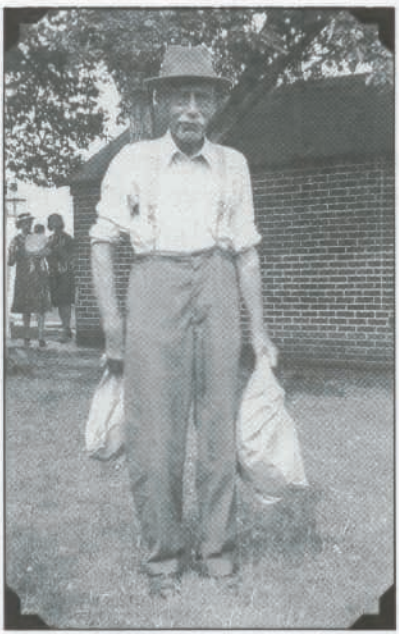
Next to Luthmans was a little bit of a pasture field where Don King lives now. It had corn on it or popcorn or whatever. I don't know who owned it. Next to the pasture field lived Therese and Bunny Busse. He was Louie Busse's son and worked at the meat market. Therese was from Frenchtown and was a young woman. She and Mrs. Luthman didn't get along just the best. Mrs. Luthman didn't approve of Therese's ways. We didn't stop too often

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at the Busses. They had a boy and a girl who were younger than us.

Next to them lived Albert Nabor and his mother and father, Frank and Fanny. Frank was a clerk in Willman's Department Store and Al worked for my father. He built all the scaffolding and mixed the mortar and one thing or another. He was quite a gentleman.

At one time there was a house north of Albert's where his grandfather, Mike Scheiltz, lived. Mr. Scheiltz was a Civil War veteran. We would sit on his doorstep and he would tell us stories about the Civil War; how he was in Andersonville Prison and so on. Everything that went on in the Civil War was of great interest to us. Later on, after that house was torn down, Al built a beautiful rock garden there, with flowers and fountains and ponds. Behind that, he made something similar to a putter golf today. I think we called it something else, but anyway, it was just exactly like a putter golf course. There were all these pathways and tiles and tunnels so that a player could knock his ball through. I don't think they had a golf club. I think they used a club or something similar to croquet mallet. Croquet was a big item. Oh my, everybody played croquet on Sunday afternoon or in the evening. It was a big thing then and also



Grossvater Karl Freytag
Grocery Shopping

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cheap entertainment. It didn't cost a thing. We also played in Nabor's orchard.

Al Nabor was a second father to me after my father died. We spent a lot of time down there. Al taught me to appreciate music. He had a wind-up Victrola with records of opera stars like Sir Harry Lauder, a Scottish singer. Another great singer was Madame Schumenheik. People wouldn't know who they were today. Anyway, we listened to the Victrola a lot. I often wondered what happened to all the records after he died. He had a really big collection. We spent hours there, talking about everything, and Al read and read and read. He probably knew the Civil War from back to front. I had a friend from Columbus who was a brick salesman. His grandfather was a Civil War general. I took him down to meet Al Nabor one time and he was there for seven hours, talking about the Civil War. It was always enjoyable to talk with Al Nabor.

Al had some funny stories. One story was about his father and mother, Frank and Fanny, and his 1929 Chevy coupe; a single seater. His father was a little, short fellow and his mother was quite broad beamed. Every morning he walked to work at Willman's and walked back at noon to eat his lunch and then walk back to work to get his exercise. They were all going for a ride one day but Fanny.. well...she couldn't get all of herself in the car, so the door couldn't be shut. She said to her husband, "Frank, take a tuck in your ass so I can get in." Finally, off they went in that little green and gray Chevy coupe.

Al was surely a kind and generous man. During World War II (he had been in World War I), he was in the American Legion and was instrumental in starting the one in Ft. Loramie. He also started a library in about 1940 or so. It was a couple of doors to the north of Borcher's store,

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where Al Anthony's barber shop used to be. It was tiny and had a little woodstove. I would go up there in the '40s to help him on the Friday nights that he was open. It would be colder than hell in the winter time. We would walk up there and have to build a fire. My God, we about froze to death until we got the fire built. He showed me the proper way to start a fire, ripping newspaper to shreds, throwing that in and then the kindling and then the match. I still build a fire that same way today, 50 years later.

I don't know where he got the books to start the library. There were some books in the school, but anyhow, he started a public library. We could tell when there was a juicy book just by who took it out. Al had one book that was called The Beggars of Life, written by Red Berry from St. Mary's, Ohio. One Friday night I was in there and Father Mueller came in and he said, "Albert, you'd better burn that." He said it was all about this fellow, Red Berry, who had red hair and would go to whorehouses where he would get it for nothing because he had red hair. Father said it was disgusting, but very interesting. I don't know if Al burned it, or what happened to it. Such is life. I read it; there wasn't that much to it really. It really got a lot of use.

Al's library was in operation until the town started a regular library. Al did all this work and did it for nothing. Actually he didn't even get a thank you for all his effort. It was really used heavily, very heavily, as the library is used today.

During World War II Al started writing a newsletter to the men that were in service. He started out innocently; he put a shoe box in Willman's store. The box had a slit in it with a little sign, "Write a note to your boys in the service." Then he put one in at Borcher's store, Clem Ruhenkamp's, and one in this bar and one in another bar and in various places around town.

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Then he decided, "Well, gee, we'll have one in Newport" So he put a box in Marshal's store. Marshal's girls ran the store on the east side of the highway by the canal. People came in there and wrote a note to Louie Marshal or whoever was in the service from their community. Al had a box in Houston, one in Oran in Penrod's store, one in Francis' store in Russia, and out at St. Patricks in the Plas' store. I don't know if he put one out in McCartyville, but I think that was about it. I helped him, but he did most everything.

Either Al or I would go out once a month to collect everything out of the boxes and bring it all in. He would edit it and would write a newsletter. Boy! The letters were mostly about anything, you know, "Dear Cousin Joe: Our dog had four pups.", "So and so went into the army", "So and so is doing this", "Somebody got married", and "Somebody else had a baby." It had newsy little things. My wife today, Margie DeLaet, and Martha Bollheimer, who lived across the street from Al, typed it up. They printed it on a mimeograph machine which is somewhat similar to a copier today. It was typed on a wax paper, and then printed from that. They printed all of the newsletters, stapled and folded them, and then stapled them again. They weren't in envelopes. We mailed hundreds of newsletters to the servicemen from the area. It was quite an undertaking for Al. First, he had to get all of the addresses from people. Al got the American Legion to sponsor the project. I believe the Legion paid for the postage, the paper and so on and so forth. This went on all during the war; up until the war was over and the boys were home. Many of them were so thankful for the newsletter. It was such a nice, neat thing for these men to get once a month. Some of them didn't get it all the time and some got six of them at one time. It was about like the mail today,

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Snow Fort 1936
East Yard of
Ft. Loramie Grade School

I guess. The girls did the work and, as I said, I helped Al gather the stuff. That was when there was gas rationing. We had a heck of a time getting enough gas to go out there and collect all this stuff. Sometimes we did a little finagling around and got gas from farmers or from "I don't know where". It was the same way with the oil, tires and one thing or another. Somehow we got it all done. My wife still has some of those newsletters. After she and Martha Bollheimer graduated from high school, and Margie went to work in Dayton, Rita Seger and Irene Dapore (Boerger) took over. A year or two after Rita and Irene took over the war ended.

It was quite interesting that Al did all that work for people and he got very little thanks when the boys came home. He was a little bitter about it. He got over it though. Al worked at Copeland and retired from there. He went uptown everyday, and walked when he was 80 years old. He walked faster than I can walk today. He went up and ate his lunch and went back up to eat supper. He sat around, maybe had a beer, and talked; talked to the guys and smoked a million cigars. He would have ash trays stacked up with ashes so high that they fell out on the floor.

Al's house was torn down after he died. I went to visit him in the hospital and asked what floor he

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was on. They said, "Are you a relative?"

I said, "No, just a friend."

"Well, you better go talk to the nurse up there."

So I went up there to talk to the nurse and she said, "Well, he just died and they took his body away." I hated that. Al was a good friend; a good friend to the whole town. He instigated so many things like a flagpole at the school. He talked the Legion into paying for the flagpole; he and Uncle Herman poured all the concrete, made lettering for it out of wood in the forms. He was quite, quite a gentleman.

North of the Nabors was a big thick hedge about five feet high. Rose and Nick Lachey lived there. It was a saltbox house with a porch across the front. Nick was a day laborer who worked for farmers; chopped corn, fixed fences, and did "whatever". The Lacheys had one child; a girl who married a Shilling from Piqua. There was an alley directly north of their house. People rumbled through that alley with wagons or whatever to get out to the fields. Anyway, it was kind of neat.

We went to the Lachey's every Sunday afternoon or morning to read the funny papers. Very few people got the paper and they were the only people that I knew that got the Sunday paper. I don't know how they could afford to buy it, but they did. We all sat on the swing or somewhere on the porch or the railings and took turns reading the funny papers. We did that for years.

We would often sit and talk to Rose and Nick. They always had time for kids. Nick always said, "Hillo", instead of "Hello". He was French, and was no relation to the Lacheys at Newport or Ft. Loramie.

The Lacheys had, as did a lot of people, a trap door in the kitchen floor which went down to the little root cellar. They kept their apples and goodies

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in the root cellar. Rose would often slip down to get apples for us. She was a jolly person. I don't know where the Lacheys came from. I would like to know. We spent hours and hours and hours over there. Nick always had time to explain things to me. He showed me how to prune grapes, how to graft trees, etc. Why that man would take the time to show neighborhood kids things, I'll never know. I really miss him. He was a big influence on my life. After he died Rose moved to Piqua, and lived with her daughter. They were really nice people.

Next to the alley lived John Eilerman, another Civil War veteran. He told us war stories about what went on during the Civil War, what he did and what happened and so on and so forth. We went over there, my brother Robert and I, for a long, long time. He was dying of cancer and was sick. Mom would make supper for him and we would take it over. He would eat his supper while it was hot and tell us some stories about the Civil War or one thing and another. You could smell the death in the house. We could smell the odor of what we thought was the cancer, I don't know. But it was a leery thing for a couple of young boys to be doing. John, too, was quite a nice gentleman. He was retired and didn't do anything that I know of.

North of John's was a big house which was right on the street. It had a porch across the front. It was a full two story house; the wood frame was peg construction and was filled in with brick. There were siding boards covering the outside. Loretta and Henry Cardo lived there. They were French also, but not first generation. He was married to one of the Arling girls, and worked down at the Arling's gravel pit. He ran the steam engine and did the work there. The Arling brothers, who were bachelors, did the farming, and he ran the pit for them. He had a Model-T Ford pick up truck which had a canvas top

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and folded down and, oh God, that was quite a deal. It was startling to see somebody having a truck. Obviously he had a truck before we had one, because he had a Model-T.

Cardos had a big yard out in back, and a barn. He had no cow in it that I ever knew so he kept his pick-up truck in there. He also had a car, so that was quite a thing. Loretta Cardo was tall and lanky, and was very nice to us kids. Henry was somewhat short. He was an uncle to Clarence Poeppelman who was a friend of my brother, Karl. Karl and Clarence were the same age. Clarence lived with his mother and father out at the Arling's farm by the gravel pit. Later they moved away somewhere else, but I suspect that is where he got his start. In fact, I know Clarence started reoperating that gravel pit. Clarence's family is in the gravel business today at Versailles and Bradford, Ohio.

Next to Cardo's was a lot with chickens in it. It was just an empty lot with a fence all the way around it and chickens. Paul Freytag built there in the 40s.

The next place was where the Lacheys live now, but prior to that it was Henry Arling's. Henry and his wife were both rather short. Henry was retired from the farm and he had a garden and herbs, as everybody did. Later on, Ira "Strunk" Griner lived there. Ira Griner was in the Spanish-American War. He was retired and when he got his government check, he would go uptown to drink a bit as he played the bugle. He would sit there and play on his horn. Somebody would walk by and he'd be sitting in the corner at Vogelsang's playing "beep, beep, beep". They would say to him, "Ain't that pretty?" Beep, Beep. He had a daughter, Martha, and three sons, Johnny, Leo and Bill. They were all at home at various times. Leo married Hilda Wise.

When we finally talked Mom into letting us buy

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a pony, we scraped up $35.00 from somewhere and she gave us the other $30.00. We had to pay her back. So, we did. Rob and I were industrious; selling manure to people; hauling this, doing that; we did everything. We got the money together and paid Mom back for it.

In the summer of 1939, I was in Cincinnati for the biggest part of the summer, staying with my sister, Louise Tebbe. Pop decided he was going to ride that pony. Well, he jumped on the pony. Problem was, the pony was jumping around. He flew off the pony's back. Ira Griner was just across the road, laughing like hell, sitting on his porch swing. He laughed so hard that he jumped up and down until the springs of the swing came out of the ceiling. The hook banged him on the head.

In later years, in the 1940s, Chick Lachey moved in. The Arlings had both died, and the house was sold. Chick was the janitor at the church. He moved there and had a large family, but only one girl, I believe. The rest were all boys. Chick got a job with the state highway department in Sidney so he kept the truck behind his house in the barn. In the winter he had a snow plow. It was very jolly. We were the very first people in the whole area that had the snow off the highway, right up to the curbs since we lived across the street from him. When he took off



1942
Ron Albers
Alvin Lachey

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at 4:00 in the morning (or 5:00 or whatever) we had clean driveways soon after. Mrs. Lachey is still living there with one of her sons.

Beside the next lot, north of Lachey's, was an alley. Johnny Albers built a house there in the late 1930s. John married Vic Borchers. They had a couple of girls and boys. One of the boys, Bucky Albers, has written sport articles for the Dayton Daily News for a number of years. The Albers were forever having a big time. They were laughing about something all the time. We often could hear John and Vic; they would laugh and carry on. He would tell a story but he couldn't get the story finished because he would be laughing and cackling.

When Johnny built the house they dug a cistern. That was too much work to suit Johnny. He had to use a pick. That clay was harder than hammered hell. So Johnny decided to drill a couple of holes down in the ground and put dynamite in the holes. Then he set off that dynamite. Clods of ground flew all over the whole area! Dirt landed on our house across the street, and Ray DeLaet's next door and the Lachey's. It blew a hole about as big as a bucket. Ha! Ha! Ha! He finally got the cistern dug but, God, what an ordeal.

A week later Pop was working on the chimney at Albers' house when I ran screaming over to get him. "Pop! Pop! Come home!"

My sister, Marie, was driving our 1934 Chevy and pulled into the driveway. She had my brother, Rob, with her. He was about six years old, I suppose. She said to Rob, "Can you drive?"

Rob said, "Sure I can drive."

"Why don't you just drive into the garage," Marie told him.

So Rob got behind the driver's seat, peeked over and under the steering wheel enough to see. Well, he scooched up there and he drove into the garage

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as nice as could be. I was in the front of the garage making monkeyshines at him. The good Lord told me, "Maybe you'd better just get out of the way." I got out of the way and he drove in the garage really nicely. Then, he let the clutch all the way out, and "BAMM", he hit the partition in the back of the garage. The car reared up, hit with the front wheels up off the ground and tried to climb over into the office behind the partition. The rear wheels were sitting there spinning on the bare concrete, so I reached in and shut the engine off. Rob got out quite shaken, of course. I ran over and got Pop. Oh God, was he mad. He raised hell with Marie.

She said, "Well, he said he could drive." A six year old kid could do anything if you ask him. Oh boy, what a big day! The desk behind the partition was all smashed up, everything was bashed in but luckily nobody was killed. Anyway, Pop came over, screamed, carried on, got things straightened out and I guess he went back and used up his mortar. I don't know if he finished up that day.

Johnny Albers was a big fisherman so he and Pop would go fishing quite often; or he and Ray DeLaet. Pop died shortly thereafter, but he and Johnny went fishing quite a bit together.

There were no houses east of Route 66 except the ones on Main Street. It was all fields. To the north of Johnny Albers' we would hop over a low hedge to Ray DeLaet's house. He ended up being my father-in-law and my friend. He had two good-looking daughters and a wife that canned and couldn't quit working. Ray was the rural mail carrier who came from Houston in 1935-36 and built a new house here. Prior to that it was an empty field where we played baseball. We slid around the cow patties (you did not slide into those). All the kids in that end of town came to play in what we called Gerling's field.

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Ray built the house which put an end to baseball. He did a lot of the work himself, but had the basement dug by somebody with a team of horses. The man that built the house wasn't any more of a carpenter than I am. He put 1 x 10 ship lap boards on the roof, and nailed asphalt shingles right on the ship lap; no tar paper, no nothing. Of course, that didn't last very long. He had to put a new roof on. In fact, that roof lasted less than ten years.

Ray enjoyed going uptown. He just dearly loved to go uptown and play cards. They called him Lucky. Lucky Daylo! Half of the people pronounced it "DeLaet" and the other half "Daylo". He was forever winning something in a ticket jar or playing cards. He was very active in the Legion and Fire Department. He was always glad to help with anything.

We used to get Ray so damn mad. He would get a new car every year. He was the only person I ever knew in my life who got a new car every year. As a rural mail carrier he put on 60 miles a day and wore the car out. He would trade for maybe $400 a year, or sometimes $200. He had a lot of people who would wait, who had their names in to get one of his cars. He wasn't hard on a car. He took care of them and so he could trade pretty reasonably. He would get a new car, and we'd jack it up or put blocks behind the wheels. He would get so damn mad, then he'd chase us. He would chase us back to the canal and sometimes catch us. He didn't want to bother Pop or Mom about it. In those days no one did do that; a person didn't run to the parents and complain. He paddled the kid and then went on regardless of whose kid it was. Ray used to chase us and give us hell and then we ended up marrying his daughters! My brother, Karl, married the older girl, Betty, and I married the younger daughter, Marj.

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We spent many an enjoyable evening at DeLaets, eating popcorn or drinking beer and playing cards with Ray. We went fishing a lot together, as did my dad and Ray. Pop would get home from work and he'd stick his head out around the garage and motion like he was fishing and Ray would say, "Half an hour." In half an hour the two of them would go out to the lake, get in a rowboat out at Pauwell's, row out and get themselves 20 or 30 crappies. Sometimes I went along, sometimes I didn't. They would stop in at Brucken's, get a half of a jug of beer, go home, fry the fish, eat rye bread and drink beer. It was one heck of an evening for 30 cents worth of beer! A lot of people got a jug of beer or a lard can of beer and went uptown to get it every night or every other night or once a week. We usually got a half a gallon because we got 3/4 of a gallon for a half so we could go in there twice and get more than if we'd gone in to get a gallon.



Big Fisherman
Ray DeLaet
1940

Ray had a huge garden with fruit trees in the back. He planted all kinds of shrubbery and trees. He really did the house up right. E.M. Leonard from Piqua Nursery, a landscape architect, planted all the shrubbery and it was quite, quite a show place. He built the house and he put in a hot water boiler system which, for a heating system, was probably the best. Very few of those systems

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are put in anymore. They were really a good heating system. Ray had Parkinsons disease and retired, but he didn't live too many years after that. He was a real, real gentleman and a good person.

North of Ray's was a street, just an alley at that time. Lawrence Albers built a house on the next lot. Prior to that it was part of the Gerling field. Lawrence worked at the hardware store, did mill work and one thing or another. He worked in the shop mostly and put on roofs. He and Ray put a lot of roofs on together. Ray worked for the Albers before he went to World War I and also after he got out. When he got the rural mail carrier job he would get in at two o'clock and then he would go up to help Albers in between times when they needed the help. Maybe he hauled coal, helped put on roofs, helped do whatever had to be done. At a place like the lumber yard, there was a lot of manual labor. One job was to go to Houston to get a load of coal from the railroad cars and haul that back to town. Another job was to go Minster to get lumber out of railroad cars there. There was a lot of manual labor involved that isn't part of the work today. There wasn't any such thing as a forklift or a dump truck. The coal had to be shoveled on and shoveled off by hand.

Lawrence Albers was born and raised on the east side of Ft. Loramie, next door to my father's house. Lawrence wanted a pony so badly when he was a child. That's all he talked about. For Christmas he wanted a pony. Uncle Herman Freytag and Bill Albers had their stockings hung out on the clothes line and when they got up early on Christmas morning, they told Lawrence, "Lawrence, you got a pony, you got a pony." He ran out there but no pony, there was a horse turd inside. They told him the pony got out and all he got was that horse turd. When finally his son was

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born, by God, that child wasn't three years old when Lawrence built a beautiful pony wagon and bought a pony.

We boys all had a lot of fun watching Lawrence and Elsie Albers' house being built. She was Fred Steinemann's daughter from west of Minster.

To the north of the Albers' new house was a very neat but tiny garden with a border of flowers. Grandma Gerling, her son, Frank, and daughter-in-law, Jenny, lived in the house. They had two boys and one or two girls. You note, I could not keep track of girls. I did learn to, later. We spent a lot of time with Leon, one of the boys, listening and playing the player piano. What a wonderful invention! There was an old house down the alley where we used to have boxing matches. Rags were stuffed in a cloth salt bag and tied the bag onto the fist. One time I hit Leon a smack and knocked him out the door into the arms of his mother. There were no more prize fights. I cannot remember where Frank worked. The Gerlings later moved to north of Sidney on Route 29.

The lot next door to Gerlings was a field of hay with a garden trimmed with flowers again.

Al and Edith Winner lived next to that lot with his father, Henry. They had a Model-A Ford which had the gas tank at the dashboard. That was a big fire hazard because gas would leak on the hot engine. Winners had a fairly new barn and late one Fourth of July night a can caught on fire, leveling the barn.

This reminds me of the sad story of the Kemper family who lived southeast of town on a farm. On a Sunday afternoon they were going to visit Mr. Kemper's parents in Minster. They got out on Route 66 north of the bridge, when the car caught fire. They all got out except the one little boy who had crawled up into the back behind the back seat.

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They couldn't get him out and he burned to death in that car. I'll never forget it.

Back to the Winners. It was summertime and one of their kids was screaming and carrying on so that all the neighbors ran over. Mom ran over with Mrs. Ratermann from across the street. The kid had fallen down one of the heat ducts into the furnace. Oh, my God! So much carrying on, but of course, there was no heat in the duct. The kid was screaming and everybody else was trying to figure how to get him/her out. I don't remember who it was, but somebody got tin snips to cut a hole in the side of the furnace to get the kid out. It was great excitement.

(Don't worry; we are still delivering papers!)

Paul Winner had a vivid imagination to say the least. He went along with his father out to the farm quite often to spend the whole day. He kept telling Turp, my brother, Bob, Rich Freytag and me that he was going to take us all out to the farm one day to ride. He said we could ride all day on his pony, Spot. Every day he'd tell us about Spot; Spot did this and Spot did that, and how wonderful Spot was. He would tell us that he rode Spot for two hours; how much Spot ate and how big Spot was getting. We kept pestering him to go out to the farm.

"Oh yeah! Yeah! Sure! Dad said we could go out any time we wanted to go."

"Well good; we'll go out tomorrow."

"No, tomorrow they have to make hay." He always had an excuse.

On Friday, he said we could go next Saturday. Next Saturday, he came down to our house, at five o'clock in the morning and woke my brother, Bob, and me up with his crying. He said we couldn't go out to ride. "Spot stepped in a hole in the pasture field last night, broke his leg and we had to shoot him."

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Oh my, we cried. It was just awful, and we felt so bad about it.

The next week I was going uptown to get our 35 cents worth of meat from the butcher shop. We never bought a pound or two, we bought so many dollars worth, or cents worth, etc. Now, 35 cents didn't buy much meat for a big family of eight, but we seemed to get along. But anyway, I saw Mrs. Winner and I said, "Oh, Mrs. Winner, I just feel so bad about Paul's pony, Spot, dying and you-all having to shoot it. It really is awful."



Ernst Service Station

She said, "What are talking about?"

I said, "Well, your pony, Spot, stepped into a hole and you had to shoot him."

She said, "We don't have a pony."

Well, that son-of-a-gun made all that up. I'm still mad at him for making that up. I never did get to ride that pony.

Across the alley and to the north lived Barney Ernst who was a retired farmer. His sons. Sammy and Tony lived with him. Sam was kind of a wild character. He liked to flit around. I don't know whether he particularly held a job at that time. Of course, it was hard to get a job in those days. He helped his brother, Phil, quite a bit selling cars and maybe driving to Detroit to get a car. Pop would hire him to take one or two of my sisters to Oxford for college rather than Pop taking off a day's work.

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Barney had lots of grandchildren come to visit. There was lots of activity at the Ernst house with people always coming in and out. Frank Boerger's wife, Emmie, was an Ernst daughter. They had a large family and would all come to gather at Ernst's.

One Sunday morning after ten o'clock Mass, Frank Boerger came from the north with his big Dodge car which had a heater, of all things, to keep warm in the winter. In those days there was no such thing as safety glass. There was just plain glass in cars. Frank made a left turn and somebody plowed right into him coming from the south. They ended up against a tree in Barney's yard. The kids were screaming, crying and carrying on, blood all over. They got the kids that were hurt inside the house. Evidently the parents, Frank and Emmie, weren't hurt but some of the kids were injured. Frank Jr. had a horrible gash on the side of his face so they laid him on the kitchen table and Doc Ratermann came down, sewed him up and that was that. Mary Boerger got cut up pretty badly with that glass flying around. Boy, that was a terrible thing and it shocked us to no end. It was the same place where Turp Ratermann's mother got hit one time walking across the road while coming home from a Fourth of July or Labor Day picnic. People drove pretty fast then given the conditions the cars and roads were in, because they didn't seem to realize what death was. We had an awful lot of accidents when we were kids with a lot of young people getting killed.

One accident in particular I remember really well. Mehmert and Feldman from Minster were driving a cattle truck (I suppose coming back from Decker's at Piqua) at about two o'clock in the morning. They were going north, driving too fast, and went through the stoplight. The truck didn't make that slight curve, hit a telephone pole,

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sheared the pole off and knocked part of it across the street smack into Busse's Meat Market. It penetrated right through the wall of the building. The truck ended up partially in the canal. Feldman was killed in the accident.

Back to the story. Next to Ernst's, where the lawyer's office is now, was an orchard and a big garden (most of it fenced in) with a big barn in back. They had a cow or two, if I remember rightly.

Next door to that was an alley which we used as a shortcut to go to school. We always seemed to be late for school so we had to make use of this shortcut a lot.

Willie and Josephine Inderrieden lived next door to the shortcut. Bill worked as a clerk in the Inderrieden Hardware Store. He was always happy and whistled most of the time. He whistled when he was coming at noon to eat lunch and he whistled on the way back to work. He sang in the choir and was quite a kindly gentleman.

Josephine was a big woman. She wasn't quite as kindly as Bill, especially to us. I never figured that out; we really were good boys. Turp, Rich, Rog and I would be walking to school and would go down that alley past their cow stable, cut through their pasture, through the park, and then to the school which was the shortest way. We couldn't jog out of the way ten feet, as we had to take the very shortest way to go to school. So we went through Inderrieden's property.

One day we happened to see a flat rock out in the middle of their pasture field. We picked up the rock and lo and behold there was a milk can filled with pints of whiskey underneath the rock. We took the pints out, sold them to the older guys for maybe a quarter and those guys would turn around and sell them for a dollar or two, or whatever they could get. We were doing really well and Josephine got

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madder than hell. She would just raise hell with us, but she couldn't very well call the sheriff to have us arrested. Josephine had her own enterprise going. She had a wicker basket (like a picnic basket) that she would carry over her arm. That basket was filled with bottles of whiskey and there was a towel draped over the top. She would walk the grounds whenever someone was having a picnic in Ft. Loramie; the Fireman's picnic, Fourth of July picnic or Labor Day picnic. She would sell the whiskey by slipping out a pint and collecting four or five dollars. She did a thriving business but we were stepping on her business a bit by stealing her whiskey. Oh well! It was a great life.

I don't know who lived next door to Willie's. August Wise lived there later. This was a double house, and for a while, Leo Griner lived in the north half. Various tenants lived in this half of the house. The Wises lived in the south half for a long time. This was a saltbox type house. There was no bathroom or furnace.

Next to that house was Barney Krampe's. It was a very tiny, little house. Barney had an implement business across from Brucken's Bar where he sold wagons, plows and that sort of thing.

Next door to Barney was a dry shed; a frame building with open doors in each end, facing the street and sitting up on stilts. It was called the dry shed because it belonged to the sawmill which was catty-cornered across the street. In the back of the lot was an open shed. It was closed on two ends, but the two sides were open. The owners of the sawmill kept their log wagons in there so they could drive in with the team and unhitch them, walk the horses out to put them away or take them home. Lumber and wagons were stored in this shed. Later, when the sawmill was owned by the bank, Pop and his brothers bought both buildings. They stored

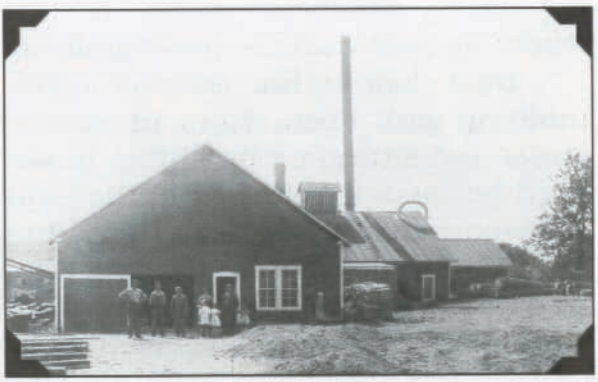
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their equipment in them. It was later sold to Segers and the front building was torn down.

Years ago the building was the movie house. That was before my time. It had a kind of a yellowish colored paint; mustard color, I guess, but it was unusual. By the time I came along the paint had weathered off until there was hardly any paint left.

Next to that building, directly across from the blacksmith shop, lived Frank Bornhorst and later Daddy Ream, who sharpened blades at the sawmill. North of there was an alley, and next to that was a house directly on the sidewalk. It had a porch roof across the sidewalk. This is where the Hazelbrook's lived. Clara Hazelbrook and her two sisters lived there, all of whom were nice, nice ladies. Whether they were married or had children, I don't know. They sat there when the kids went by to go to school and always had something to say to the kids.

All I remember about those people was that one of the daughters and her husband lived in Springfield. Trucks came through Ft. Loramie from Ft. Wayne hauling axles and bodies for International trucks bound for Springfield. The trucks were semis with a trailer, probably fifteen feet long. They weren't as long as they are today. The truck line was called Thomas Kapple. It was the biggest excitement to see a truck coming. For



Ft. Loramie Sawmill

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years, the trucks would stop at Hazelbrooks to visit or pick up someone. I remember one time when two guys got in a fight on the back of a truck. They were driving away fighting. Boy, that was something.

Next to Hazelbrooks, set back from the street some, was the Slagle's home. Mr. Slagle was with the oil fields in and around Ft. Loramie. He came there from Findlay, I think, and was probably an oil driller. They had two boys; Bob was the younger one, Ralph was the older one, and they had a girl who died. Of course, that was a big thing to have a child die. Betty Vogelsang and my sister, Elsie, would stop to pay their respects to all the families where someone had died, whether they knew them or not. I think the mother died, and then the family left Ft. Loramie.

The Slagle boys were quite athletic. Ralph stayed in Ft. Loramie and lived with the Busses since he worked at the Busse's Meat Market. He lived with Louie Busse until World War II and then he went into the army. He got married and moved to Findlay where he was a meat cutter. He still lives in Findlay and I see him occasionally. Mrs. Busse always said, "He was just like one of ours."

There was an empty lot between that house and the hotel. It had dropped down some below the sidewalk. By the way, the sidewalks were all herringbone brick and were quite arched, so when they had ice on them a person would slide right off the side because the sidewalk had such a hump in the center. The sidewalks were all torn out in 1937 and the WPA (Works Progress Administration) poured new sidewalks. The village bought a concrete mixer, mixed and poured the concrete, troweled it and kept going, doing a pretty decent job. It got too late, like November, and they were still pouring sidewalks down from the hotel past Bender's Park. They let it freeze when they poured

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it so the sidewalks didn't last ten years. They had to tear them out along that street and went to gravel walks instead. The rest of the sidewalks are still in, as far as I know.

That was quite a thing to watch these guys, mixing all this concrete and pouring it. They had wooden forms and wheelbarrows to push. My father bought the mixer and wheelbarrows when they got done. The WPA was instituted by President Roosevelt to give people work during the Depression. The WPA put in the water system in Ft. Loramie and the sidewalks. They built numerous bridges around the countryside on country roads. These bridges still have the WPA imprint in the side. One is east on Ft. Loramie Swanders Road on the way to Filburns.

The lot to the south of the hotel was a normal, plain old lot, but it had history. We were out partying when we were in high school and went to Kings. Angie King had a bar right to the south of Busse's Meat Market. We bought a gallon jug of wine (probably for $1.00) and drank part of it. It was in October and fairly cool. We had all the wine we wanted so we threw the rest in the shrubbery beside Slagle's house. This was probably on a Sunday night.

The next morning as we were going to school we saw that bottle of wine and thought, "Gee, that looks pretty good." It had a little frost on it. It looked so good we thought we would just have a drink. We figured we might as well get rid of it, didn't want to waste it. So we all had a slug of it.

We had a young boy with us that morning. His father had bought the sawmill. They lived in Al Winner's house at that time. Blaney was his name and he had a boy named Tom. Well, Tom was with us. He was maybe a year younger than us and he had a drink too. We walked to school and went

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about our business in school. Tom got in that warm school and got drunker than a monkey from the heat and wine. It didn't affect us because we were used to drinking wine and beer at home. It is not that we were alcoholics, but we had more tolerance for it.

Tom just got drunker than heck. He was jumping up and down in the school urinals and having a hell of a time. He came up to study hall and wanted to see me. He pounded on the door and the teacher said, "He has to see you." I went out in the hall and he had peed in his pants. I thought I should take him home.

Jim Dillehay, the superintendent, got wind of it. Ed Van Oss, the principal, got Tom, Turp, Roger, Rich and me in the office. He gave us a round of hell. "You should know better than to take a young guy like that, who didn't know anything and get him drunk. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves." So we were awfully ashamed of ourselves but that was our punishment. I guess today they'd kick us out of school, but they didn't then (because we were such nice boys!).

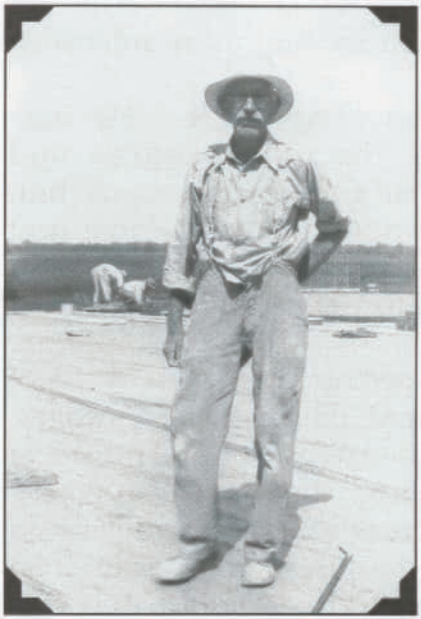
The next building was the hotel. There were very few people staying there, just a couple of guys who lived upstairs full-time. They had a big room on the south side of the first floor. When we were in high school all the kids went to the hotel to drink beer, carouse around, sing and play the piano, play the jukebox, and do everything we weren't supposed to do. We ate greasy hamburgers, but no french fries as they had not reached us as yet. It was quite a place. It was a bar and a hotel for a long time.

Next, we crossed Sherman Pike, which is Route 705 now; it was tarred then. Route 66 was concrete and had big stones along the side of it down South Main Street. In the business district it was paved up to the curbs. Sherman's Pike was a pretty good

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grade coming up to the stoplight. There was a stoplight there back then just as there is now.

We were always fascinated to watch Ben Schaefer driving his team of horses, beautiful horses with beautiful harness. He would be sitting up on top of a large log, or three logs, whatever the case may have been, coming up that hill. Boy, the horses would pull and strain because it was hard to get up that hill. In an automobile it is nothing today, but with horses it was something. If they had to stop they would slip; if it was wet the team couldn't get started. We would get out to hold them, coax them along and get them going. Then they would turn and go to the sawmill so we would jump on the tail pole and ride to the mill.



Karl Freytag tops of Ft. Loramie School Construction 1937

We had to stop in at Willman's to get some candy on our way to school, or at any other time, if anyone had a couple of pennies. We all went in to make a big decision at the rows of bins with different candy in them. Our favorite was the black licorice drops. Oh, they were expensive; they were terrible. The cost for one piece was a penny, I think. Frank Willman would tell us, "You children shouldn't buy those; they are too expensive." Well, we liked them. I suspect he was giving us more than what we were supposed to get for our money.

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Most people went to Willman's to buy clothes. They went upstairs to buy shirts and downstairs for shoes. Willmans had the old cash registers with a whole bunch of drawers. There was a cash register up on top with eight drawers below it; what fascinating things. There was a big open stairway that went upstairs. Quite often we got sent up to Willman's to buy groceries which were in the east end of the store. The stockroom was a great thing to see. They had an elevator in there. It could go from the basement to the second floor, and by golly, it was wonderful!

We would watch the UBC truck come in and they would back up to the elevator with a 20 foot long semi truck. The driver would cart all the groceries in. It was a lot of fun for us to watch. They were forever having a bankruptcy sale and about twice a year they would have some dude come in to have a big sale. Of course, he brought in a bunch of junk to sell cheap. I do not know if Willmans gained that much, but he did.

Frank Willman lived to be over 100 years old. Joe Willman got to be quite elderly. He finally married Rose Koverman after dating her for a quarter of a century, I think. Frank never did marry. Emmie Willman was in there quite a bit as a clerk. They lived across the canal, in a brick house beside Borcher's store. That was an odd combination; living next door to one's competitor.

Willmans had a huckster truck, which was like an enclosed school bus, full of various groceries. Henry Sanders drove it at that time. He went out in the country to sell whatever they had in the truck. They would either buy eggs and butter, or would trade. This went on until World War II, which is about when it stopped. I think that is about the time that Henry Sanders got a job at Minster Machine.

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Right behind Willman's, on Sherman Pike, was a building which is now a floral shop. It was a shoe repair shop then. The man that owned it was a Sauer. I don't remember his first name. He had a boy, Charlie Sauer. We called him Sweet, and boy, was he a roughneck. But, he finally got married and settled down. We would go in there, take off our high tops to have Sweet Sauer's dad repair our shoes while we were sitting there. We would put them back on and slop through all the water and all the snow that we could find. No wonder our shoes never lasted. Every boy was delighted to have high top boots because in the side was a little pocket which contained a pocket knife. That was the greatest thing in the world! It was better than having an automobile today. We didn't have rubber boots so much; at least kids didn't. Kids just wore shoes and the winters were hard on shoes, especially boys' shoes. We had to, as I said, tromp through the gutters. We just couldn't find the dry places to walk.

In the wintertime, walking to school was no easy task because it was about a mile walk from our house to the school. Rich and Rog had to walk from way down on the south end of town, or Buck Town as it was called. The Inderrieden boys and the Keifer boys, had to walk all that distance, too. The Romie family would take a horse with a "V" sled that would clean the snow off the sidewalk so we had clean sidewalks to walk on or we could walk on the road.

It wasn't all that bad, but when it was raining you would get pretty wet. I know one time Rog Keifer didn't come to school because it was raining like heck. The next day the teacher said, "Why weren't you in school?"

He said, "Why, it was raining hard!"

The teacher, being a smart ass, said, "Are you

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afraid you are going to melt?" The teachers didn't have to walk in it.

There were more absentees in school in those years, many more than there are today. We stayed home from school for any reason. Our Mom, in particular, was very lenient. If we had any excuse, like a cough, she would say, "You'd better stay home." Nothing was ever said whether we went to school or didn't go to school. If we felt bad in the morning and by noon we felt good, it didn't make any difference; we just stayed home. Many country kids were kept home to work during harvest time or planting time. They would get out of school two or three days and nothing was said to them. I often wonder whether it was good or bad, one way or the other.

In back of Willman's store was a double privy; one side for women; one side for men. Everybody had privies but this particular privy had a great advantage. Turp and I had to go to Sunday afternoon Vespers (we called it Benediction) and our favorite trick was to go in there to hide. I'd stop to pick up Turp and Mrs. Ratermann would say, "You boys go to church." Yeah, sure. So we would hide in the privy until church started and then we horsed around in the alleys. After church was out we would come back home all dressed up. That was our favorite hiding place on a Sunday afternoon; no one would come in there because Willman's was closed.

Next to Willman's was a brick building which held King's Bar. Everybody went in there to drink. Kids would go in there to buy a bottle of wine (nobody really cared then whether the kids were 12 or 25 years old). This building used to be the old post office. Florence Hilgefort (I think she was George Keifer's daughter) was the postmistress. From there the post office was moved to the north

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edge of Main Street beside the museum. That building was the post office for quite a few years. Later on, when I was out of high school, Alice Romie and her husband, Al, built the new post office where it is today. I laid all the brick on it and I think Uncle Ferd might have designed the building, I don't remember. It was one of the first buildings I ever built. It was probably 1945 or 1946; somewhere in there.

Next door was Busse's Meat Market. It was pretty much identical to what it was when it opened until they closed, including the same meat cooler. It was about half as big, however, because the north half of the building was an apartment where Charlie Sharp lived. Charlie was a school teacher who came from South Charleston, Ohio, to teach school at the Sherman school, which is on Sherman Pike or Route 705 a couple of miles east of Ft. Loramie. Later, he started to teach in the high school in Ft. Loramie; or maybe it was eighth grade.

Charlie was a great sportsman and promoted baseball. Sunday afternoon was time for baseball and he was great at it. The ball diamond was back behind where Ted Fleckenstein lives now, a little to the south and down in that low ground. The field was never plowed because it would flood. There was no use for it other than pasture. So that was the baseball field. A little bit of a shack fastened onto the barn was where they sold pop. There was no charge to get in. No one had money anyway. Sometimes there was a charge if it was a special ball game. We would always crawl through the fence. We kids weren't as much interested in the game as in just poking around doing "something". We didn't watch the games that much. I think it is kind of like kids today.

Joe Miller was a linoleum layer who did beautiful work. He came to all the games but he

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would get a bit tipsy and would buy every kid around candy or pop. So, boy, he could have been Jesus Christ. We would follow him around because he'd buy us things. He later quit drinking and pulled himself together. Those games were a big deal for us.

Anyway, Charlie Sharp lived next to the Busses after he got married. Poor Mrs. Sharp. She had to go back to use that privy with all those guys that worked in at Busse's. It was partitioned, but she didn't enjoy it one bit. The men would sit on the other side and carry on a conversation. Sharp's first child died and all the kids went into the house to look at the coffin. We went up to Busse's everyday to get our meat so we knew those people like our own family.

Gerhardt Tecklinburg would grind hamburger for Busse's all the time. He always had hamburger all over his arms, and his apron full of blood; that was interesting. We would go in to have Louie Busse give us a weiner to eat and get 30 cents worth of steak, or 35 cents worth of swiss steak. I remember buying that quite a lot. We bought a bit of everything. Old Louie Busse was a funny guy. He said he did not make any money off of his butcher shop but made all his money off driving a school bus. He said, "Wouldn't be about to exist if it weren't for driving a school bus too." He could tell all kinds of tales, you know. He would go



Charlie Sharp
Teacher
Mid 1940's

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"unghghghg" to clear his throat, and then he'd come out with the big tale.

One Saturday night a farmer came in to sell him a calf. Louie said, "No, no, come back Monday morning." He said, "I want to go to communion on Sunday.", and he said, "I just went to confession. I don't want to do any business 'til after that." True or not, I don't know.

Pop would go up to Busse's every Saturday night to give himself an out. During the week we went to Busse's. Sometimes Pop would stop up at Vogelsang's to get a jug of beer and have a beer there, I suppose. He would come home with a ring of bologna or a ring of goose liver (a kind of a grayish meat). We'd eat that with crackers and drink beer, then he would tell us all what went on in town. We would have to wait up sometimes. It would be 10:00 or 10:30 p.m. before he got home, depending on who he ran into, I suppose.

Next to Busse's Meat Market was the Loramie Banking Company. Well, that was a mysterious place with a big burglar alarm on the outside. Turp's father worked there. He was the head cashier and was very understanding if people couldn't make their payments on time. He would postpone the payments of farmers, and so on and so forth. When the bank holiday hit, the Depression, Roosevelt closed the banks. They sent a man in by the name of Elwood Day. The bank examiners suggested that the stockholders hire Mr. Day to help straighten out the bank and so Adolph Ratermann was let go. He started selling insurance and did very well with it. In later years the bank built the building where it is now and, of course, it remained the Loramie Banking Company. They asked people to buy stock in it to keep it from going under. They needed the money as the stock wasn't worth much. My father bought stock (not very

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much) and his brother Uncle Herman bought stock (a fair amount). For a period of 30 years it didn't pay anything and then it started to pay and finally they sold out to Sidney First National Bank, which later became Star Bank.

We always envied the Ratermann family. Adolph would stop at Willman's store, get all the rolls with the gooey icing on top to take home. The kids got to eat those good, delicious, nice, boughten rolls, and we had to eat all these dumb, old, homemade ones at home. Oh, boy! We didn't realize how good those homemade ones were until now.

Beside the bank was Romie's store. Romie's Shoe and Harness Repair, owned by Martin and Johnny Romie. Martin died in the early 40s and Johnny continued operating the store with his son. He is in there half days now. It was a fascinating place because they had all these harnesses hanging up to be repaired. There was a huge tank of neatsfoot oil where they would dip the whole harness in, so it was a pretty good size tank. This store was chuck full of baseball bats, gloves, all the nice things that kids really wanted but could never afford. They even had Daisy BB guns. Boy, they were neat. Every kid, well almost every kid, had a Daisy. Of course, with three boys in our family we had one, so we shared it. By the way, Romie's also had gas pumps in front of the building. In the back of the store there was a tank of engine oil for customers to crank out a quart for their vehicles. Romie's also had a wooden canopy over the sidewalks. In later years the canopy was removed. Under it was a gas pump that was pumped by hand into a glass container where the gas came out by gravity.

Next to Romie's store was a brick house. Julie Boerger's sisters, Clara and Ricky lived there. Ricky later moved to the farm. In the mid 1930s, my dad

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remodeled the house. Albert Anthony got married and moved in and had a barber shop in the one side.

Next door was John Inderrieden's house. J.D.I. lived there with the hardware store next door and the lumber company in the back of his yard. J.D.I. had some money and was one of the financiers who financed the railroad coming to Ft. Loramie. The railroad quit operation in the late '20s. I remember freight cars coming in the last few years. Their freight house was down "switch alley", we called it, which was directly across the canal from J.D.I.'s store. They had what we called a Toonerville Trolley. It was an International truck with a school bus body on it, iron wheels and little pieces of broom out in front of the wheels to brush the snow off.

Martin Romie was the motor man. People rode the trolley up to St. Marys, then got on another interurban to wherever they were going. The kids went to high school in Minster riding the trolley. When it went defunct, they parked it at the end of that switch. There it sat, behind Tom Borcher's house, back by their barn. Tom wanted to get it out of his backyard. So one Halloween, we got a bunch of kids together and we pushed it down the highway, across the bridge, and parked it in front of J.D.I.'s house. We figured it belonged to him. It took thirty kids or better, probably half grown men. J.D.I. hired someone with a cutting torch to cut it up and haul it away. It ended up a bunch of trash - nothing but junk.

Inderrieden's store had a ladder that rolled on the floor to get the things that were stored up high. A person could buy bicycle parts or tires for his bicycle. The tires could be taken in for repair, and then a kid could look at all the pocket knives in the cases, which was always a big, free attraction. In

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the back was a tin shop to make spoutings and the like. Jim and Howard Inderrieden's father was one of the sons who worked there. He made his boys a tin canoe. Everyone envied that canoe. Bill and Leo Inderrieden worked there, too. J.D.I. was retired by that time. They had a bench out in front, and when they weren't busy they sat and watched the people go by. A lot of people watching was done in those days.

Next to that was Mac Anderson's Drugstore. He came from Piqua and bought the building and opened up a drugstore. It was quite a thrill to go there to get sundaes and sodas. It was a meeting place for a number of people in town, a place to go to drink coffee or drink a coke or whatever. My favorite was chocolate ice cream with marshmallow on top of it. Boy, oh boy, that was a treat.



4 H Left to Right:
Millie Freytag
Harry Munger
Elizabeth Freytag
Mrs. Doc Katermann
Mrs. Gus Wise
Mrs. Adolph Katermann

On Friday nights they had a free movie show sponsored by the businessmen. It was supposed to bring in business, but whether it did or not, I don't know. Anderson's was always busy. The people sat on the west side of the canal across from J.D.I.'s store. The screen was on the east side of the canal. It was always kind of fun to sit over by Inderrieden's store to watch the movie from the backside just for

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craziness. There would be people coming in from the country, and all around, to sit on blankets in the grass and watch the free movie. When it was over everyone went home, of course. Usually cowboy shows were a great, great thrill.

Next to the drugstore, Al Winner built a building for his barber shop. Later on, it was added to and his brother-in-law, Joe Turner, started a men's store on the south side of the building. He had a nice store and it did well. He had quite a trade from the surrounding town because the nearest place of any consequence was New Bremen.

In the basement, Joe also had public showers for people who didn't have a bathtub or shower at home. They would come over there whenever they felt like it, pay a quarter or thirty cents or whatever it was and go down and take a shower. That went on for quite a number of years, until everyone had running water in Ft. Loramie.

Right next door to that was Danzig's Furniture Store, which was also an undertaking establishment. In the 1930s, it was Elmer Dapore's Furniture Store. He also had Alberts out of New Bremen come in for funerals. The Dapore family lived in the north half of that building, which had a nice yard with big cedar trees and an iron fence around it. Now the American Legion owns it. Dapores eventually moved to J.D.I.'s Hardware Store where the Ft. Loramie Furniture is still operating. Charlie Sharp and his wife Pauline would stay at Dapores while Elmer and his family went to their cottage at Carp Lake in Michigan. Then, Charlie was around in case somebody wanted furniture.

Across the alley from Danzig's Furniture lived Henry Larger. He sold cars and did a little bit of car repair back in his garage. He sold Ford cars for Westerheide of Minster and also sold used cars and

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farm machinery.

Next to Larger's place was the greatest place in the world. It was William Quinlin's drug store. When a youngster was in the first grade he or she had Marie Quinlin as a teacher. The student got a list of all the things that were needed; pencils and erasers, etc. The boys and girls could go up to Daddy's store (as Miss Quinlin called it) and Daddy would have the pencils, erasers and rulers that you needed. That's probably all the business that he had.

There is a funny story involving Bill Quinlin. Al Winner had the barbershop and Father Moeller came in to get his hair cut. Father laid his big cigar down on the ashtray while he got a haircut and shave. He had a paper bag with him, and Al said, "What have you got in there, Father?"

"Why," he said. "I'm going to see Mayor Quinlin." (Bill Quinlin was the mayor for a gumption of years.) Father said, "I'm going over to Mayor Quinlin's store to celebrate his birthday. I have a bottle of wine in here." Then he added, "Why don't you come along?"

With that Al said, "I'll just close up and go on with you." So they closed up and walked down the street to Bill's office. They walked in singing "Happy Birthday".

Father gave him the bottle of wine and Bill said, "Well, we'll just open it up, and we'll have a drink." So he looked around for a glass. There were a bunch of beakers lined up along the high shelves. He got three down, blew the dust out and wiped them out a little bit. Then he set them on the counter and poured the wine. It looked a bit yellowish.

Al said, "What do you use those glasses for anyway?"

"Oh, I test my urine everyday," Bill told him.

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Then Al said, "Oh golly, I just happened to remember that one of my kids has a birthday. I've got to go home; they're going to have cake and ice cream. I've got to leave." So he hurried out of there.

Well, I suppose Bill and Father drank out of the urine vials. They both lived to be pretty old. It didn't kill them.

Bill Quinlin had an intriguing place. I tell you, there was stuff in there that was out of the 1900s. That's a hell of an expression. Thirty-five years is not too far back, is it?

Next came the building where the library sat until recently. At that time, it was vacant quite a bit. This building housed the post office after it left the building south of Busse's. Alice Romie became the postmistress. Ray DeLaet carried rural route out of there. Emmie Borchers was the clerk. She married Dick Kaiser of Minster. They had all their mailboxes much as they have today. A lock combination was used to open them. When we had nothing to do, we stopped there. We usually stopped there when it was cold, to get warmed up a bit. Then we would mess with all the combinations and Mrs. Romie would give us heck along with a sermon.

The building next door to the post office is where the museum is now; it was an empty building then. It was purchased by Al Gehring from Cincinnati in about 1935-36. My father remodeled it for him. He built the fireplace and redid various things. I later enclosed the addition between the summer kitchen and the main building. In the early 1930's Charles Middendorf lived in the building. Al Gehring opened up a first-class restaurant there in about 1940-42. We had our wedding dinner there. He operated it for a number of years then he sold it to Margaret, Bill Albers' future wife. She ran it for a number of years. Then it finally closed, and the museum bought it and has done wonders with it.

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Down around the corner behind the museum was Boy Brucken's place. On Saturday and Sunday nights they did a tremendous business. Of course, they did really well during the week, too. A stairway came down between the house and the bar. Upstairs was our basketball court. They had all of this before the high school was built. All the high school games were played there. The high school team played Minster, Russia or whoever was in their league. The games were played on the second floor. Plays were also held there. Even graduations were held there, I believe, for a few years. There would be so many people up there watching and playing the ball games that they had to put props underneath the ceiling downstairs for fear the floor was going to collapse. From down below a person would look up and see the ceiling going up and down. It was a bit frightening! There was a tremendous amount of screaming! I don't know if we even had benches to sit on; I think maybe we stood and watched the game. It was great excitement for the kids. When I look back on it, they surely packed a lot of people into a little bit of a thing.



Loraine Bank
Adolph Ratermann
Ann Ratermann
Herman Bornhorst

Directly beside the bar was Boy Brucken's home (and his father's home before him). His sister, Elizabeth, worked at Willman's store for years and

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years and years and years. She later married Henry Seiters who was a paper hanger and painter. I remember him wallpapering back in Uncle Ferd's house. Pop had just put in a marble fireplace and, eh gads, didn't Henry Seiters spit chewing tobacco in there and stained all the marble. I never heard such screaming and hollering. Henry was quite a talker and a nice guy. He was a World War I veteran. After they got married they bought various houses and lived on the west side of the canal until he died.

Next door, east of Brucken's, was the township house. It was just a little brick building and in the 1940s it was torn down and the jail, fire department, council chambers and township meeting room were built. The jail has been torn out, luckily, because I learned to lay brick in the jail cells. It sounds strange but it is true.

Across the street was Albers' tin shop and hardware store. It was full of things; whatever was needed. The shop put on an awful lot of roofs; even up into the late 1940s they were still putting roofs on. Albers was always open on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights. So there was always an opportunity after work, or when we were younger and didn't have time, to go up there in the evening. A worker didn't have time to go during the day, so he'd buy his two pounds of nails or whatever he happened to need, especially if he was building a shack. I think that between the four of us (Turp, Roger, Richard, and me) we probably built 10 shacks. If somebody built a house, or if some scrap lumber was available, we would bang that together and make a shack. We had a big one in back of Bill Hilgefort's garage on the north edge of the sawmill property. Somebody was always tearing them down; maybe the marshal (police) tore them down, I can't remember. But it was great fun to build shacks!

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Next to Albers' store, to the west. was a blacksmith shop. Oh my, it was the most wonderful thing in the world to stop there on our way home from school (perhaps by then we were a little bit interested in girls, so we'd take the long way home). We would go straight out to Main Street and walk down Main Street with no short cuts. We'd stop there to watch the blacksmith shoeing horses. We would take a hair out of the horse's tail, throw it into the warm water. The hair would kind of wiggle when it hit that warm water and it looked like a snake. It was always very interesting to see the blacksmith make a shoe. He would bend it and hammer it just so to have it fit that hoof properly. The horse would stand so nice. I don't know, I never saw a mean horse until later on. Hasselman was the man that ran the blacksmith shop at that time. I don't remember who ran it before him.

The next place was a brick house where Morrie Frey lives now. At that time the Siegel maids lived there. Ed Van Oss, Joe Rinaldo, and quite a number of school teachers stayed there at one time.

To the west of that was Barney Krampe's place of business. He sold farm equipment, wagons, buggies, and all that good stuff. He quit selling buggies, but sold wagons, plows, and disks, all horse-drawn things. One of his wagons is in Dearborn, Michigan, in a museum there. It has "Barney Krampe, Ft. Loramie, Ohio" painted on its side.

After he got out of the business, someone came in there from out East who was a smart operator. That man started a furniture factory. Well, he made junky little bitty magazine stands, ashtray stands, and wooden cases for radios. He had nothing but kids working there. He paid them like 20 cents a day or 50 cents. It was peanuts even at that time. There were quite a few young boys working there.

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They slapped some varnish on this wood that was packed together. He finally skipped town in the middle of the night without paying half the people that worked there.

Next to the furniture factory was Phil Ernst's house. Phil had a garage to the east of the hotel. Barney Krampe built the house originally next door to his place of business. It was a nice brick house.

Next door was another brick house with a porch across the front. I think Boy Brucken's wife and daughter lived there at that time.

To the west was a driveway along the canal that went back to Mehmert's farm. They kept, bought and sold cattle there.

Phil Ernst's filling station was directly on the canal bed on the east side of the highway. There was a culvert under Route 66 which curved and went west. It's still possible to see the road bed behind Ernst's Filling Station where the two houses are located. Phil was always a jolly guy. On the east side of the building they did car repairs. In later years his son, Tom, came in and he eventually took over the business. The building was eventually torn down and Route 66 was straightened out.

Phil had a gas refrigerator in the station. You could see the little pilot light burning under there. It was one of the wonders of the world. If we wanted ice cream, we'd eat our supper and Pop would say, "Well, let's have some ice cream." Then he'd give us a quarter and we'd bicycle up to the station, get two pints of ice cream (or one pint depending on how many people were at home). We'd bicycle back home like crazy so we could eat it quickly. We had no refrigeration of any kind. We had an icebox, but it wouldn't keep ice cream.

At Ernst's Filling Station we sat and listened to all the wild tales of the men who came in to sit, talk and visit. A lot of sitting, talking and visiting was

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done years ago. We also sat there on the bridge abutment by the station and waited for John Kloecker to come and pick us up to take us to the movies at Minster.

Across the canal was the first house from the north which at that time belonged to the Kirners. Arnold and his mother lived there with his sisters. This was one of the oldest houses in town. This house and the museum were built about the same year. Kirner's house was torn down and the Gaiers now use it as a display lot for their automobiles.

Next door to the Kirners, in the south half of the home, lived Schulze. He married one of the Kirner girls. He moved down to South Main in the Cardo residence. The Schulzes loved to go over to Brucken's to get a jug of beer. As I mentioned before, most people would use a gallon lard can for their beer. They would go over and get the can half filled. The charge was 30 cents for a half a gallon and 60 cents for a full gallon. The tap wouldn't shut off quickly enough, so more than a half gallon of beer came out. For 30 cents a person got more than a half gallon of beer so it paid to ask for a half gallon.



Arkenberg's Snow Mobil
1930
Note: Airplane Engine + Prop

Next was an alley and to the south of the alley was Gaier's Bakery. When we were quite young, in

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about 1933 or 1934, it ceased operation. We'd go in there to look at all the goodies. (It sounds like we got all over town. I guess we did!) Gus Gaier married Esther Larger, Ralph and Ray's sister. They remodeled the north side of the building and lived in there. Mrs. Gaier is living in there today. They raised a large family of boys who are in the garage business there today.

Gaier's Garage was always a neat place to go. Number one, they were always glad to see us and always had time to sit down and talk to kids. In later years we used to go over there on Christmas to have a Christmas drink. We'd go down the street and stop to visit people. We would end up at Howard Inderrieden's down on South Main Street. Gaier had the best home brew I ever in my life tasted. It was really, really good.

We spent many hours in the garage watching Gus and Chub work on cars. Pop would go to get a little work done or just stop in to visit. He would watch them work on a 1929 Ford or a 1932 Chevy. Maybe they'd have it torn apart or maybe they just needed a spring to hold the accelerator in place. But it was always nice to see. We put a number of additions on this garage. My father built it originally and I put the additions on. Ed Van Oss worked for Louie Seger and helped make and install the beams and tie rods to support the roof. It developed into quite a large place. One day, Deckers got one of the chain driven trucks stuck after loading sawdust on it at the sawmill. Gaier's wrecker was a bit light, so Chub and Gusty Wise sat on the bumper of the wrecker to hold it down. It surely worked!

Next to that was Tom Kemper's house. It was just a very small, two room house. I think that he might have been a painter.

Next to Kempers lived the Kemper sisters.

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Later Ralph Vogelsang bought it and he lived there until he died. Across the alley to the south lived Mr. Barhorst; the father and two daughters lived there. He farmed right north of Ft. Loramie on the left beyond where the beer carry-out is now. He had a field that was flat and low. It got covered with water every spring so it wasn't suited for raising crops. It was used for a pasture field and all of the baseball games were played there.

Back to Barhorst's house. It was an unusual house because it was up six or seven feet off the ground. The basement was almost ground level; just a couple of steps down. It was plastered inside and probably someone lived in there at one time. In the front of the basement was a doctor's office. In 1934 or 1935 Uncle Herman, Pop and Uncle Ed bought the house to remodel it. Herman remarried and he and Rich left Grandpa's house on South Main Street to move in there. This house was always intriguing, as the front door had a deer hunting scene etched in the glass. It was very unusual for Ft. Loramie. It is still there.

Next to Barhorst's was Uncle Ed Freytag's house where he raised his family.

Next door to them was William Borcher's house. Joe, Willy, Tom, Vic and Carl lived there. Carl Borchers got married and opened the Tasty Freeze where it is today, in a little two room house where Henry Larger lived. Carl Borchers was quite a rounder when he was young. Later on he was in the Marines. He had one of the first convertibles I'd ever seen in my life, certainly the first one in Ft. Loramie. For a while he had a pet monkey that he carried around with him. After he got married he settled down like nobody's business.

By the way, in back of Borcher's house the alley ran north and south. It started right in back of Willman's house. It ran all the way to the north of

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Gaier's. It was a good place to ride a bicycle or whatever. The creek was fairly close and flooded up quite high.

Next to Borcher's house was the home of Ben Vogelsang's widow. For a while her daughter and son-in-law, the Walkups lived there with her. Mr. Walkup sold paint to farmers to paint their barns and, I think, he also did some painting. Later, he got into the paper business in Dayton. There were a lot of people during the Depression who came to live with "mom and pop" because there was no work and it was better than sleeping outside. Nowadays they sleep outside — it's our homeless people. Luckily, we were fortunate enough always in small towns to have a "mom and pop" to go to.

Mrs. Vogelsang was a sister to Mrs. Rulmann in Minster, Doc Rulmann's wife. The two women always went to all the funerals, and they cried and cried. But then, they'd go to the weddings and cry too. I don't know what possessed them, but they surely did!

Next to that was the switch alley. The railroad from Minster had a switch there and went down that alley to a freight house. The freight house was simply a boxcar up on brick piers. They unloaded whatever freight came in there. A lot of things were sent by railway express. In fact, it was the forerunner of the express that we have today by truck. The Toonerville Trolley came to its final rest in the switch alley.

Mom would save rags for years and years and when she had enough rags, she would send them to Olsen Rug Company in burlap bags. Olsen Rug Company in Chicago would weave a rug for her, a reversible rug. They charged an astronomical amount like $30.00, and shipped it back. She would have a nice rug for our living room. Cheap! I don't remember what it cost, but it wasn't that

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much. When it got too dirty or worn, she flipped the rug over and it was almost the same thing on the other side. A smart man devised that rug.

To the south was a brick house where Oliver Slattery lived for a time. He was J.D.I.'s son-in-law. He sold paint, I think, or did painting for farmers. He had a daughter, Pat, and one boy when they lived there. Oliver Slattery was the mayor for quite a few years after he defeated Bill Quinlin (Bill was 85, I guess). Politics was simple in Ft. Loramie; the whole town was Democratic except for two families.

Next door to Slattery's was Mrs. Reiger, who was a widow with a son, Ralph, and daughters, Catherine and Ruby. Ruby married John Anthony. The Reigers lived across from the church for years. Their son, Ralph, was a sort of caretaker for the church. He rang the bells and did whatever had to be done like shoveling the snow. I don't remember whether he fired up the furnace or not, but we would go with him quite often to ring the church bells. That was a great thrill. We could hang onto those ropes and fly halfway up to the ceiling. Then, down we would come again. Catherine married Bob Engleman and moved to Dayton, and then to Florida. She is living in Dayton again following her husband's death. The mother died and Ralph was killed in the army. It was tragic.



Millie + Albert Freytag in the flower garden

I can't remember who lived next door to the

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Reigers. There were a couple of houses in there. Mrs. Walkup lived there for awhile.

The next house I remember was the little building that housed the library. Before that it was Albert Anthony's barber shop, then the American Legion bought the building. As I said before, Albert Nabor started a library. They had their Legion meetings and the library both there. Legion meetings were on Wednesday night and the library was open on Friday night. Later on, the Legion bought Dapore's Furniture building and they left the library in that building.

To the side of that was the Wilkens' home. There were two sisters who worked at the underwear factory in Piqua for a number of years. There were two brothers, Norbert and Ed, who owned the plumbing company in Minster. Ed lived in the house back by the canal beside our house for awhile. That was before Uncle Ferd moving in and after Uncle Herman moved out. Ed Wilkins lived there with his wife, who was a school teacher, and their two children.

Next to Wilkens' was Borcher's Store. Bill Borchers and his sons, Willie and Joe, ran it. They had such a tremendous stock upstairs. I don't think they knew what all they had. It was a booming business years ago. We built quite an addition on the back of the main building to store food stuffs. During World War II it was so difficult because of all the rationing and food stamps. It was just utterly amazing but Borcher's usually had enough food there. There was not the problem with shortages that there was in the cities.

To the south was the Willman's home. Emmie lived there; a little short, fiery woman. She worked in the store quite a bit. They had a lady who lived with them who was an orphan, Eleanor Lehmkuhl. She took care of the house, did all the cooking,

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cleaning, washing, and so on and so forth. Emmie was sort of a lady. In fact, when I think about it, it was somewhat like the old Southern plantations. Joe and Frank Willman worked at the store; Emmie would go over there to work, and Eleanor took care of the house. Emmie in later years would (well I guess she always did) get into arguments about everything that went on in town. She had a running feud with the people who owned the mill. When they put in the diesel engine it went "poo pooo pooom poooom" all day. It would get on her nerves, so she would always have the sheriff over trying to get to them to stop the noise. Then, of course, the kids in town would antagonize her about something or the other — that never helped a thing.

Now we had to cross Route 705. We called it the North Star Road, I think. We went across to Doc Ratermann's house. Doc Ratermann had his office in his house. When anyone had to go in and have his tonsils checked or something, that was always a big deal. Doc Ratermann had three girls and one boy, Harry. Harry was killed in World War II. He was a fighter pilot and ejected out through the canopy of his airplane, if I remember correctly.

Down Route 705 in back of their house was Reinhardt Bollheimer's home. He was an inventor of sorts, and had, at one time, used Barney Krampe's building to build folding tin shutters to keep the sun out of houses. Some of those shutters are around today. He was manufacturing them in the middle of the Depression. He had no trouble manufacturing them, but he had trouble selling them. He was a bit before his time because now they make awnings out of aluminum or canvas. He also made a smokeless heater, as he called it. It was a device to take the smoke off the stove pipe, recirculate it and retrieve the heat from it. He was way ahead of his time in that case too because fuel

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costs were so low then it didn't make much difference if it was wasted. Anyway, the typical gas bill was only $1.80 a month. It didn't make much difference if it was saved or not because the most that could be saved was $1.80. When he was older, he was the night watchman for the village for years. He always had some sort of something he was inventing. I really don't know what he did for a living other than invent.

To the south of Doc Ratermann was Middendorf's elevator. Prior to that it was Sherman's elevator. Doc Ratermann's house was the old Sherman house. The elevator sat empty for as long as I can remember. I don't remember Sherman operating it, but anyway that was a great place to play. We got in there and would run the elevator up to the top; we were all over the place.

We took the tin off the building because it was half blown off anyway. Then we used it on a shack that we built across the canal on the ash pit of the sawmill. One afternoon we were in our shack doing whatever boys do in a shack when someone pounded on the building. We went to the door and there stood the sheriff from Sidney.

He said, "You guys got a nice shack here. Where did you get the tin?"

"Oh," we said, "we got it from the elevator over there."

He said, "Whose elevator is that?"

"We don't know; nobody's. Tin was just blowing on the ground and some was just hanging so we took it."

He said, "That belongs to the bank, and you stole that. It does not belong to you. I want you to take all that tin off your shack, take it back across the canal and put it back on. Then you get a step ladder, nails, and you nail down all the loose tin that you can find all the way around the building."

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Well, we did that with him watching a bit. We learned a real lesson on stealing and we never forgot it. I guess that was a better method of doing things than what they do today. They'd have you in court.

At the elevator, that's where the railroad stopped; it was a dead end. They would push the cars in with the engine and pull them back out. They had no method of turning the engine around.

To the south was Gaier's farm with a brick house. It was abandoned at that time. We would play there and have fights with burrs, make big balls and throw them at each other. I guess the object of the game was to get it in your opponent's hair. I can't remember. That was always a lot of fun. That barn and house were located directly across the canal from the sawmill. We would just sneak and poke along the canal. We could always find a lot of snail shells in back of the sawmill, then we would go back up to the ash pile. They burned wood so it was a big pile of ashes, probably five or six feet deep on the canal banks. We had tunnels built into that. My, it was a lot of fun. Now that I think about it, it was a wonder the tunnels didn't cave in and suffocate us all.

We traipsed back up to Vogelsang's. In the canal in back of Vogelsang's was a wooden crate of turtles that Ralph Vogelsang used to make his turtle soup. Actually, his wife made it. It was delicious soup! We later had a French boy living with us and he could not imagine eating reptile (turtle) soup. That soup just couldn't be beaten!

It was never quite safe to skate under the canal bridge at Vogelsang's because it never froze the best. We would just get up a lot of steam and slide through. We would get through as fast as we could.

Vogelsang's was a well-known watering hole for miles around. People would come down the highway, stop in and have a beer. We enjoyed going

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there with Pop. Maybe we'd get a jug of beer to take home. Later they had a soft ice cream machine which was a great thing. I remember Mary Freytag and my future wife, Margie DeLaet, would go down and visit Grossvater Freytag on Sunday afternoon. The girls would decide that they'd like to have some ice cream. Oh sure, so they'd walk up to Vogelsang's. Well, Mary got the ice cream and Grossvater and Margie would get beer because they enjoyed the beer more. It was an excuse for Grossvater to get out; especially with two young girls who made it more fun.



Playing Cards at Turp's House
Turp Ratermann
Rich Freytag
Eb Freytag

Everybody played cards at Vogelsang's. My father-in-law went up there almost every night to play cards. They had chairs and tables from back in the 1880s. There was a picture on the wall of the Andersonville prison, a Civil War prison camp. Mike Scheiltz brought the picture home and gave it to them. It hung on the wall for years and years.

To the south of Vogelsang's was the mill which had a steam engine at that time. The mill was always a fun place to go. Of course, that was an operation that never ceased, so we didn't get too many chances to ride up and down their elevator. Once in a while they'd let us, but that was a dangerous contraption. We enjoyed going in there

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and watching them mix up the feed. Later on John Siegel bought it and had a portable grinder service mounted on the truck. He went out to farmers, ground their feed at the farm. His family is still operating the business.

Next door to that was the blacksmith's shop. There was always plenty to see there. We'd stop and watch Dave Sargent shoeing horses. Prior to Dave there was a man named Zook. We used to watch them shoeing horses. Dave was a brawny man. I can still see him when the horse acted up. He would take the horse and smack it on the rear with a sledge hammer, then pick the horse up by the front feet. He would raise both feet right up off the ground and he would sock them down and the horse would get sense enough to stand still. He sure could handle a horse. It was quite a treat to see him do all that.

Dave had a wife, Minnie. He raised a nephew, Sam Sargent. Sam went to school with us (and with a number of other people). He was in the first grade for a while. One time, Marie Quinlin was giving him a spanking. She was spanking him and he was spanking her. They would go round and round in a circle. Her face got redder and redder. Finally she just quit.

Sam was a kind-hearted kid and if anything had to be done he always held his hand up. He was the first one to help. When the little metal chairs got broken he said, "I'll take it home, Uncle Dave will fix it." Well, Uncle Dave had an acetylene welder and he would braze bronze on it, so he'd have it all fixed. That was before they had electric welders in common use. We spent a lot of time there.

One time the place caught on fire with people living upstairs. The fire department came and they took their ladders, got their hoses, broke the windows out, and crawled up to the second floor.

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Smoke was just rolling out by then with the windows broken. All of a sudden, the sliding door above the main entrance opened up and there's Nig Quinlin. He said, "You guys want the fire?"

"Yeah!" was the answer.

So he just took a mattress and threw it out. They fought the fire out there in the yard. I never will forget it.

Next door to that was another place that was neat to see, Bill Hilgefort's Garage. They always had Model-T's and Model-A's to work on. Ed Hilgefort worked there. He always had to tease us kids and I suppose get us out of there. He'd crank up a magnet off a Model-T Ford, and grab one of us by the ear (or whatever he could grab) and that boy would get a hell of a shock. It kept us in our places after he did that!

Immediately next to the garage was what we called the milk station. It was a little frame building. A few of the farmers and Henry Bollheimer would bring cream in to store in that building. White Mountain Creamery from New Bremen would come to pick up the cream every day. It was kind of a station to gather cream.

Directly to the side of the milk station, along the sidewalk, was a frame building that belonged to the sawmill. They kept whatever equipment they had in there. Sometimes they had a planing mill or lumber stored in there. In later years, when Blaney bought it, he kept his bulldozer and trucks in there.

Behind that were huge stacks of logs that were moved into the sawmill. In later years, Blaney built a boom that could pick the logs up and swing them right into the saw. The wagons, loaded with logs, would come in there and they would simply pull the pins that held the side of the logs on at the front and back bolster. Then, they unhooked the chain so the logs would roll off. If the logs didn't all roll off, they

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would take a cant hook and roll them a bit and off would come the last ones. The method of loading was completely different. The logs were dragged in by teams from various parts of the woods all to one spot. They would pull the wagon horizontal to the log. The log would be wrapped with a long chain and then hooked with a sharp barb into the side of the log. Then they would take the team and pull the log crossways on the wagon and roll it right up on the timbers as a ramp. By the time it got up to the top the log had run out of chain, so it was just right. They had to figure enough wraps to what it would take to get the log up there. They'd do this until they had four or five logs on the wagon. If it was a huge log, only one of them would be put on. It was quite a thing to see.

The sawmill sat back from the road considerably; right in back of where the bank is now. It was a frame building in the shape of a "T". To the back of the building was the maintenance shed or what we called a "saw room". This is where they sharpened the blades. For some reason, it was slightly separated. When I was in high school I built a chimney for the stove that heated the shop. It bothered me tremendously when the building burned down one night. I worried that the chimney was not built properly which might have caused the building to burn. To my great relief they built a new building and used the chimney over. The chimney was still standing when they tore it down.

The sawmill had a small gauge railroad from Main Street, all the way back to the canal. Partway back it had a turntable which turned it north into the building or curved south towards Ratermann's back field. They stored the cut wood, timber, and lumber all along the track. They slid all the sawed lumber off and stacked it by hand. The tracks went into the north side of the building right beside

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where the saw was located. This was where they removed the sawed material, and put it onto the car. Then it was pushed to where they wanted to store it. Sometimes they would have a lot of slab wood ("off falls") from the log and they would put that on the car and push it to the south end of the building and unload it there. For a long time, Julie Gaier would saw the wood into firewood length, then it was thrown into a conveyor which took the wood across the railroad tracks into a pile. The people would come to haul wood out. We often helped to haul wood. Turp, Rog, Rich, and I would be around there and we would help somebody load and they would give us a dime, or a nickel, or fifteen cents to help load. We made our fortune by helping load firewood. The sawmill was like the best playground in the world. We spent half of our time split between Arkenberg's gravel pit and the sawmill. We had plenty to do.



Wise Sawmill

We had great fun on Sunday afternoons pushing the railroad cars around. They were about five feet long and thirty inches wide. We would start up at Main Street and jump on with four or five kids, with two kids pushing as fast as they could. We would slow down when we got to the turntable and turned it around. Then we went out to the south or went to the north. We sneaked into somewhere to unhook the door. When we got done

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playing with that, we would get back up to Main Street again, get a bunch of kids on and push it west, hold the turntable straight and go back to the canal. There was a barricade but it didn't hold very well. Every once in awhile the cars would fly off and the kids would all jump off the car before it landed in the canal. Gusty Wise, on Monday morning (knowing full well who did it but never giving us heck or anything) would get a team of horses and pull the car back out of the canal and they would be back in business again. There were a number of railroad cars so if one was in the canal, sometimes it would stay there for three or four days.

Gusty lived right next to the south side of the sawmill so he must have seen what we were doing. We would play with oil cans that we thought were huge. They would squirt oil eight feet so we'd have fights with those. We would squirt at each other to see who could squirt the most. We would crawl up inside the conveyor. It was a lot of fun. It was nothing to go up on top of the roof and crawl all over there. There was a valley which we thought was huge, too. Nobody could see us up there so we could spend a whole Sunday afternoon running all over, doing all kinds of things like taking a leak to see how far it would run down the roof in the hot summertime. In those days that was a contest.

In mid-winter, the night that my sister, Elsie, and Ed Van Oss got married, I woke up in the middle of the night to see that the entire room was red, just bright as day. I got up, looked out the window and, "Boy, it could only be one thing; the sawmill has to be on fire!" I put my clothes on and ran up to the mill. I got there just as the fire truck pulled up with Gus and Chub Gaier. Gus and I took the fire hose, unraveled it and ran inside the building. The fire had started by the electrical panels. We were inside when Chub turned the

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water on out at the fire hydrant and sure enough the hose broke. By the time we got back out there to replace the hose, there was so much fire in the building that we couldn't even get near it. It would just absolutely burn a person's face to get any closer. The frame building was saturated with oil and fine sawdust. There wasn't much anyone could do but keep an eye on it so it didn't catch the buildings around it on fire. It was raining that night and there was a huge puddle in front. The electric wires had fallen down in that puddle, and here came the Minster Fire Department to help. They had been partying a bit. They came out of the truck, one man drunker than a monkey and staggering around. We had all we could do to convince them to keep away from that water puddle or they would get electrocuted. So anyway, as I said before, they rebuilt the sawmill and used my chimney over again. So we lived happily ever after.

I mentioned before that people came to get firewood. I suppose it was fifty cents a load or something like that. One of our favorites, whom we called American Meyer from Minster, came with his one horse wagon to get firewood. That man could cuss more than anybody we'd ever heard. Usually we didn't hear men cuss, but he sure did. He had to go into the alley between Wise's and Ratermann's to open a gate as Gus Wise kept a cow or two back there. He had to go in there and the cow would leave cow patties all over the place. His wagon would drive over the patties and get cow crap on his wheels. He was a little bit older so he had to get a hold of the wheel to help himself get down. He would get his hand in the cow crap and boy, he cussed a blue streak. We would help him load up, then he'd tell us a few stories and give us our dime and away he would go.

Later on, when my brother, Bob, and I had a

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pony, that's how we would make money. We would go up to the mill and get kindling wood. We would haul it to people and sell it. They would pay us a dollar or something more than what we paid for it.

The sawmill had a neat little one-horse wagon, but it was very light. It had a handle on it so it could be pulled. Bob Bollheimer used that wagon all through high school. He would load firewood up, and then deliver the firewood to people.

Next to the Wise house was an alley that we used to get back to the firewood. We hauled firewood after my father died in 1939. There was no income to speak of so I thought I had to help. My brother, Bob, and I hauled firewood from there to burn in the furnace. Well, that certainly was hard on the furnace and took a tremendous amount of wood. Of course, it wasn't that costly. It certainly didn't have the expense compared to buying coal. Later on, we got corncobs from the elevator to burn. They would bring down a truckload or we would use their truck, haul a truckload down to the house and shovel it into the coal bin in the basement. We burned it in the furnace to get tremendous heat. In fact, it got so hot we melted the grates in the furnace. We did that for four or five years and finally replaced the grates. If I remember right, the corncobs were free and they charge us like $4.00 to deliver it.

At the sawmill, they also made a lot of things like apple and potato crates. They made stacks of those, I don't know who they shipped or sold them to. They made them in the shed that was in front of the sawmill. They also made wooden bobsleds which were used by farmers to pull logs or to put anything on in the wintertime instead of using a wagon. The runners and frame were wood, and it was always fun to watch them make bobsleds. There were a number of items made at the sawmill.

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It is a shame it went out of business, but it did.

South of the mill was the home of August Wise. It was a huge house that is still there. It was later bought by Ed Quinlin. In the Wise family there were three girls, Catherine, Esther, and Madge who married Vernon Westerheide. They had a boy, Ed, who had a pony. When the bank took over the mill, Gus Wise moved across the street beside Bill Inderrieden, leaving the house empty. So, being mischievous guys, one rainy day when we didn't know what else to do, we crawled in the basement window, unlatched the door and walked up to their attic which was full of toys. We went up there on rainy days to play with the toys. We left them right there as we always had a nice playhouse. Nig Quinlin came back from Chicago to move in and that was the end of our playhouse.

I often think about the sidewalks that were put in in Ft. Loramie. As I said, we had brick walks which were crowned quite a bit, so when it was icy you couldn't even stay on them. But being enterprising at that age, when they tore the sidewalks out, I gathered up all the free bricks that I could get. The used sidewalk brick I took out to Mom's farm and later on, Grossvater, my brother, Bob, and I went out there to lay the brick. I think Rich Freytag helped some. We built a summer kitchen, a wash house, and used all the scrap, glazed tile we could get. It was built primarily out of the sidewalk brick. It was a good learning experience for us. We took our pony and wagon, and went out there every day, taking our lunch. Our Grossvater showed us how to lay brick. We got almost a free building out of it.

I often think about how we used to do all this ice skating on the canal. Uptown, between the two bridges, they had lights so we could skate at night. It was great sport. Sometimes there would be an ice

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storm which would coat the highway (which was concrete) with ice. This was in 1928, so the highway was in good shape. We would skate right on the highway. Boy, that happened maybe a dozen times. It sure was a lot of fun.

Off to the side of the highway, about eight feet, on either side was stone about an inch round. They were not good for much play. It wasn't too long until they finally laid tar to smooth it out. Later, it turned to blacktop. There still is a strip of concrete down the middle of the highway. I don't remember building the highway at all, laying concrete down, but it was certainly a great improvement because the kids all went ice skating and roller skating on it. It was nice and smooth concrete at that time.

On the alley to the south of Wise's house were beautiful purple plum trees. They were the juiciest plums.

South of Wise's was the Ratermann's home which was our second home. Everybody in town was there as they had a lot of friends. Mrs. Ratermann was a kind woman. She didn't seem to care how many kids were around. She was a school teacher when she got married. Adolph's first wife died, leaving two boys. One was Paul, who went to Salt Lake City to live, which was a big thing for us. Albin became a priest. When he was ordained the neighbors were all invited, I presume, but Mom and Mrs. Ratermann were pretty good friends. Well, anyway, we were there and I can



Grossmutter Freytag
1942

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remember the party like it was yesterday. It was about 1932 or 1933 and they had a huge tent set up to the north of their house by the alley. At least we thought it was huge. They had cow tanks filled with pop (orange pop) on ice and, my Lord, they had chicken and, I don't know what all they had! Well, it was a big affair. We ate all we could eat and drank all the pop we could drink.

I wore at that time what they called sunsuits. Young boys had shorts but the top was attached to them. It had no sleeves and was the summer thing to wear. But anyway, I had one sunsuit that was pale green on the bottom and white at the top. Well, I spilled orange pop on it. I was mortified because I'm sure that it was bought simply for that affair as we didn't wear that kind of stuff. It was just a tremendous, tremendous dress up affair for the whole town.

The Ratermann boys always had to do the dishes. They had chores to do like we had chores to do. Cyril and Turp would do the dishes, swishing them around in the water. They stuck them in the oven to dry. We never dried the dishes as we always had to help. They invented the dishwasher and did not know it.

Adolph had chickens and he had the theory that you had to go to Versailles to bring back a bag full of tobacco dust from the cigar plant. We went over with him at different times to get it. Anyway, we had the bag of tobacco dust to kill the lice on the chickens. Turp and I thought that was a tremendous waste to put it on chickens, so we decided to smoke it. We took leaves out of the Sears and Roebuck catalogs, rolled this big cigar with the tobacco dust in it and proceeded up to the top of the barn that had three foot of hay in it. We sat down on the hay and smoked our cigars. Well, Cy Ratermann smelled it, I guess, so he came up there

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and caught us. We caught more hell from him.

"What a dumb bunch of nuts! And did you want to burn the barn down?", he said. Well, he was right. Sometimes our schemes were not too good.

Adolph planted strawberries so he had boxes and quart crates made out of real thin wood. He had oodles of them. Turp and I decided we would stack them up and build a hotel out of them. We built a big hotel and, of course, we got tired of that so we said, "Well heck, why don't we just burn them?" Luckily, we had sense enough to get far away from the buildings and we didn't burn anything down. We sure as hell burnt a lot of grass pasture up back there. Golly, how did we ever survive? (How did our parents survive?)

Sometimes, we would go in the chicken house and chase the chickens around for awhile. That was great fun. Usually somebody had to catch a chicken, and most people had a wire with a crook on one end. It was bent somewhat like a fish hook. The idea was to grab a chicken by the leg and flip him upside down so he couldn't get away. It was pretty neat.

Every family had a different method of killing chickens. Ratermanns used a hatchet, called a broad ax. It was real wide. It was probably 50 years old and duller than hell (like everyone's because they always had kids using the hatchets to chop in the ground, doing everything they weren't supposed to do). Turp would drive two nails in the stump. They were fairly close together so he'd put the neck of the chicken between these two nails, and pull on it and the head would stay because it couldn't get through the two spikes. He took the hatchet and chopped down to cut the chicken's head off. Then he'd flip the chicken out and let it flop around with blood getting all over, running around like, as they say, "a chicken with its head cut off." Well, that's

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what happened. The chicken's nerves were still working so it would do all kinds of contortions running around. At our house we would lay our chicken down to get it nice and calm, pet its neck, and then we'd lay its head just so. It was stupefied by then. We took a corn knife and whop, off it would come. We kept the corn knife sharp with a file because we had to use that dang knife to cut corn. Then we would just hold it steady until it stopped bleeding. We would stick the chicken in a bucket of hot water, soak it good then pick all the feathers off, cut the guts out, wash it by the pump and take it in to Mom to finish washing it. Ratermanns did the same.

Everyone had a different method. Keifers would grab the chicken by the neck, and swing it in a circle over their head. The body would fly off and they'd be holding the head. They let it run around until it stopped. Some of the other people would hang the chicken up by its feet from the clothes line, take a knife and just whack it off. They would let it hang that way until it bled out. Chickens were great fun to chase around. Everyone had a rooster and sometimes, a mean one. We would chase that one around and get it meaner yet.

Ratermanns had entertainment forever. They just had more things going. Adolph decided during the Depression that a furnace cost too much for coal. Instead of burning wood in it he got a stove. We had to help move that stove in the north room. Some farmer owed him money or he took insurance in exchange so he had a whole bunch of firewood in his barn. Well, he burned that about two years, and that was the end of it.

Later on, after we were in high school, we would play cards at the Ratermanns in the morning before we'd go to school. Mrs. Ratermann would insist we get to school or we were going to be late.

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So we would say, "Yes! Yes!", and then finally we'd go off to school. We played a card game called seven-up. We had a mark with a chalk on the table. Well, she didn't like that too well but she surely put up with a lot.

Ratermanns had the two older boys (Paul and Albin) who were gone when we were playing there. Adolph and his wife, Kate, had Leo, Celia, Rita, Turp (Urban) and Cy. They were a great family and we had a lot of fun at their house. Adolph and Kate were very understanding, very good people.

We would get to school and Jim Dillehay was superintendent at that time. He would get us in the office and say, "Well, you guys, why don't you get to school on time? You are a bad example for the rest of the kids. What if everybody did that coming to school?"

"Well, O.K.", we would say. So then, we'd be pretty good for a week or so and start all over again. I think we went all through high school that way. Being the only four boys in town in one grade, we got by with a little bit of murder, I guess.

Next door to Adolph and Kate was Aunt Anne Ratermann. Anne lived there for years and back in the corner of her house was the telephone exchange. We went over there in the evenings to spend time. Keifer girls worked there. There were so many girls that worked as operators. My sister, Margaret, worked there. We would go in there to visit with the girl or eat her apple or whatever; or bring her an apple and listen to all the magic over the telephone.

Hilda Surmann was the day operator since she was the chief operator. She was there probably forty or fifty years. Hilda would always work on Sunday mornings and when I started in business it was so nice. I would call Hilda and say, "I'd like to talk to so and so in Dayton and so and so in Pittsburgh."

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When she got these people for me, she would call back and say, "I got Mr. So-and-So for you." She was really a private secretary. It was very nice. (By the way, most of that was done in the evening; business was done in the evening after work. They didn't mind and we didn't mind.)

The president of the Goshen Brick Company called up one Sunday morning and wanted to speak to Albert Freytag at so and so number. Hilda said, "Well, he always goes to ten o'clock Mass. He is not home." Bill Patterson laughed about that for years. He wanted to know if I still went to ten o'clock Mass.



Country Auction 1950

Harry Wendeln
John Fogt

She was quite a gal. We could also pay our telephone bill there. That always gave the operators little breaks. It was somebody to talk to. It was so intriguing to see all these snakes plugged in and people talking to each other. Of course, if there was something that happened over here, well, you got that story, too. They were pretty good about it. They didn't repeat too much. Later on the exchange closed. Then the system went to direct dial.

My father built Anne Ratermann's house, too. They were all brick and all had tin shingle roofs. They were all somewhat similar. Eleanor Fleckenstein's house was one he designed and the Siegel ladies' house across from Brucken's saloon was another. Oh, there were a lot of them in town.

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There was the Winners' house, Grossvater's, our home and oodles more houses out in the country that he designed and built.

Next to Anne Ratermann was Al Brucken's home. Al was a jack-of-all-trades. He had some connection with Dayton Power & Light. If a person needed fuses or something went wrong with the electricity, we could call him and he would come down to put a fuse in or tell us what was wrong or get the Dayton Power & Light Company to come down to fix it. He also sold cars. Back in the barn he had a mechanic working. He did a little bit of repair. I think it was mostly on the cars that he bought to sell. In later years he sold cars in Sidney.

Some people were pretty good at selling whiskey. Many people went to Dayton quite often with an awful lot of weight in the trunk of their car. When they came back the trunk would be empty and the car would be riding much higher.

Next door to Brucken's house lived my Grandpa and Grandma Boerger and Aunt Gertie. Grandpa was retired for as long as I knew him. He would go out to oversee the farms that he had. He had the last horse and buggy in town. He also had a surrey that he kept back in the shed. After he died, we got the pony so we took the bed off of the surrey and used the running gear. We built a box bed for it. After we got rid of the pony we put it all back together again.

Aunt Gertie lived there with Grandma and Grandpa. She was a second mother to us. She helped Mom all of the time and used to come to babysit for us after we were married. She gave Robert and me the surrey. We didn't have sense enough to take it down and put it away, we just left it there. One day a guy came along and said he wanted to buy it, so she sold it to him. Then it was gone.

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Grandpa had a chest similar to an icebox down in the basement, but it was just a dry sink. They kept the milk and things like that down there. Grandpa had a bathroom added on to the south part of the house with an old fashioned water pump in the basement. The motor was all open. It was a big house and had been added onto at different times. Upstairs was one huge closet. We used it as a playroom. Grandpa stored his clover seed, and various other seeds for the farm, up there. I don't know why; I guess so the mice wouldn't get it.

Grandpa had a summer kitchen attached to the house. They used it for years. Never had a kitchen as such in the house, but they had a big dining room. Later on that was converted to a kitchen of sorts. So for a long time they did all their cooking in the summer kitchen.

In 1935 Grandpa and Grandma had their fiftieth wedding anniversary. Then it was a rarity, not like it is today. I don't mean because of divorce, but because of longevity. It was quite a thing to have a golden wedding anniversary, so they had a big celebration. They had orange pop, too. I could never really stand the stuff after that. I probably drank too much at that time.

Grandpa decided Aunt Gertie should learn to drive so he bought an Oldsmobile. We called it "Oatsmobile" because he always had oats on the back floor. She drove it into the barn with Grandpa in the car. I don't know what she did, but she went straight out the back again. That was the end of her driving. She never drove after that day, so he finally sold the car.

They did not have a large family. Grandpa and Grandma had my mother, Amelia, Teresa Rulmann, Mary Kremer, and a son, Johnny, and Uncle Paul who lived out on the farm east on Sherman Pike, now Route 705. Johnny died and a son, Carl, who

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lived to be 21 or 22 years old, died from heart problems which today wouldn't be a problem. Uncle Carl was a bachelor and never married. He went to Toledo and decorated store windows. He was home quite a bit, probably ill at the time but we didn't realize it. He always entertained us kids. He took us to the movies and took us for rides in his open touring car. One time we went to Minster and he decided he was going to drive across the railroad bridge so we went across that railroad bridge "bump, bump, bump, bump" all the way across. No one ever did it since. We did a lot of screaming and hollering; I remember that.

When he died it was very trying on the whole family. He was one of the first people buried out in the cemetery south of town. As I mentioned before, Grandpa planted trees by Carl's grave. Father Moeller wanted them cut down, but that has never happened to this day.

Grandpa Boerger was involved in a lot of things, like getting the railroad to Loramie. Uncle Paul was that way, too. He was one of the first ones to get rural electrification for the farms and he worked hard to get it. He went out and got all these people to sign up.

Next to Grandpa was an empty field where he kept his cows; we kept some cows in there also. In the back end of that field was a hill. The ground was piled there from when the canal was dug out and they didn't level it out. They just left it in a pile. That hill was fun to play on. The north side of it was ground that was taken away and it was a straight cliff there and that was used for Al Brucken's house to fill in around to make a yard. The hill had a big elm tree on it which blew down and laid there for years. That was after Grandpa died. It was a hard elm and couldn't be sawed easily. He didn't have any use for it so it just laid there.

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It was a great place for play and we had our imaginary horses in there and our imaginary ranch. The field was just a great place to play. On the back end of the place, big golden rods grew for years. We would take those weeds and break them off at the ground in the fall to use as spears. We could throw spears at each other. We had a lot of entertainment for nothing.

Up the street right in front of Joe Borcher's present house was a big tree. The house wasn't there at that time. The tree was probably forty inches across. One day we had quite a storm. It was a tornado, if I remember correctly. It took part of Ray DeLaet's roof off. I watched that tree going round and round in a big circle at the top. It just kept going round and round and round. Here came the Kesshin Motor Freight truck down from the north as slow as could be with his headlights on in the middle of the day. The driver saw the tree was going to fall so he locked the brakes up and jumped out. The truck went on ahead and, sure enough, the tree fell right in front of it. The truck went over the top of the tree and stopped half way along the tree. The driver came into our house and used the telephone. Some men came and cut the tree up. What a big deal!

Back at the canal we played for hours and hours nearly every day. When we were quite young we used to go swimming in the canal. At that time no one had bathrooms; there was not a toilet that went directly into a septic tank and then into the canal. Everyone had a privy and it had a vault that had to be emptied out once or twice. We really didn't have the pollution that there is today.

Behind Adolph Ratermann's house we decided we were going to build a roadway along the canal. It was about three feet wide at the most and ran along the edge of the canal, up high enough along the

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fences and the bank up in the back, and down various ways. We leveled out a roadway that was just wide enough for a wagon or bicycle. Every year we added to it so finally we got it down as far as our house. Then, we continued beyond Uncle Ferd's, along Winner's, and back up across behind Arkenberg's. Of course, that was no problem because they had fields so we just went along the edge of the field. Then we went to Bollheimer's and there we stopped because we couldn't go any further. Henry Varno had a fence for his pigs and chickens and the fence went into the canal. There was no way that anyone could get around it. So that put the end there.

We had a very generous Christmas one year when we got a wagon. We drilled holes in it and put sticks over the top of it like a covered wagon, got an old army blanket which we stretched over it that so we had a covered wagon. There weren't too many covered wagons around. We pulled that up and down the canal path. We were great at pulling out tin cans and junk that was in the canal. We cleaned the canal up pretty well as long as we could reach it with a rake. We used to go wading in it. My God, that thing was filthy. We tried to catch snakes, or whatever we could catch. It was a good place for entertainment.

We built a lot of rafts using railroad ties. Pop and his brothers had a big stack of railroad ties piled in the front of Grandpa's pasture. We would always snitch four or five to make a raft. We used the rafts to go up and down the canal. Pop split them in the wintertime and sold them to the farmers for fences. Sometimes they would have someone to saw them. The rails were stored by the dry shed until the price was right, then they sold them as scrap iron. They bought the rails and the ties from the railroad that ran between Minster and Ft.

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Loramie. The rails and ties were taken up in the wintertime. The rails they took out were in about twenty foot sections. It was a lot of work!

Finally we got to our home. Of course, there is never any place better than home. We had eight children in our family, three boys, five girls; Marie married Ed Winkeljohn; Louise married Jim Tebbe. Both lived in Findlay. Marie died a few years ago. Elsie married Ed Van Oss and lives in Minster. Paula married Pete Monahan and lives in Cincinnati. Margaret married Dr. Schrimpf and they live in Cincinnati. Also my brother, Bob, and I live in Minster. Karl lives in Sidney.

We had a woodshed in back of our house. We had a furnace and a bathroom, although we still had the privy out in back which we used so we wouldn't traipse through the house to go upstairs to use the toilet. The woodshed Pop tore down and used the lumber to build a stone garage. He put a tin roof on it and in the back of the garage he had a little office; to the side of that was a smoke house with a steel door where we smoked our sausage and ham.

Next to that was a privy, then a chicken house, then a little bit of a space for a chicken yard. Stone for the garage was taken out of the bridge west of Lindhaus Grove between Ft. Loramie and Newport. The timbers for the barn were taken out of a canal boat that sunk in the bottom of the basin south of Ft. Loramie. When the water was low they pulled it out to use the timbers. Louie and Tony Seger built that barn, Pop painted it bright orange. Gad!

It was really neat to have concrete floors for the cow stable, and a small stable for the calf or another cow or whatever the case may have been. The hay mow was nice, neat and clean. It had a trap door in that mow which went down into the corn bin. We would jump down in there every once in a while to hide. We did a lot of playing up there. We had to

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shovel the manure out, but we had a little door in the back and pitched through it. The floor was concrete which was neat as we had to shovel it off of there and haul it away to wherever it had to be hauled, or wheel it back on the garden to scatter it out.

We had a wooden wheelbarrow with sides that would come off. We just pulled the sides off and the manure would fall off. It had a steel wheel so we didn't do too much wheeling unless it was frozen because we couldn't push that thing in the soft ground.

We had no water in the barn. But, of course, we had plenty of boys, so we carried water. We carried it from the pump up at the house in two, five gallon buckets. We soon learned it was easier to carry two than one; with one a person is lopsided. I expect that is what is wrong with my hips now. We carried a lot of heavy stuff when we were kids. We had to carry water every day and dump it in a half a wooden barrel. In the summertime we had the tubs close to the house so we just carried it that length. Later on, we got real ritzy and got a hose.

Back by the runway where the cows were, Pop had a greenhouse. We planted cabbage and tomato plants in February or March. First we put manure in the greenhouse and then put manure all the way around, then we put ground over the top of the manure and planted. We had old glass windows to cover it all.

In the back of the barn was a field; half of it hay, half of it corn. Some of it was popcorn; some sweet corn, and hog corn. We had to hoe the corn to keep the weeds out, and in the fall we had to pick the corn, shock it, and let it dry out. Then we put it in the barn to feed the cows. The hay we cut with a scythe. We would rake the hay with a wood rake, haul it into the barn and throw it up in the top. In the other part of the lot was a typical orchard with

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grape arbors, apple, pear, cherry trees, and a lot of raspberries. This was pretty much a typical family thing in Ft. Loramie at that time.

In the area between the house and the barn was a large garden which had a walkway down the center. Usually one side was completely potatoes, and the other side was vegetables, and so on. We always had to spade that in the fall, winter, or spring. We would spade a row and put manure in it, spade another row, and so one. We were very careful to make sure that each one of us got our half done. We measured so we got our money's worth. It was a lot of work. But truthfully, in many ways, it gave us something to do.

We did not buy canned goods or buy potatoes. At one time Pop did some work for a farmer and got paid in potatoes. For five years we did not plant potatoes. There was a lot of that bartering going on at that time. In 1937, Pop built a house for Streaker in Minster and ended up with a 1937 Plymouth pick up truck as payment. It wasn't such a bad idea, now that I think about it.

One of our favorite things to do in the evening after Pop was back, was to take the Model-A pickup truck with all the kids that could possibly pile on it with one of my older sisters driving and we would wheel out to Filburn's to go swimming. The dust would fly. At that time the roads out to the lake were dirt. We ended up in the ditch once and we all got out to push the truck out. We all had to swear that we weren't going to tell Pop. I guess he never did know.

We did a lot of roller skating on Route 66. It was great fun as the road was new then. This was prior to concrete sidewalks as one couldn't roller skate on the brick sidewalks.

The biggest thing in our life was school and church. We always walked to church, we never

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drove. If a person had a car he didn't use it for that. In front of the church was the concrete fence that is there today. At each entrance was a steel pipe coming up and bent over with a shade over a light bulb. It didn't take some of the farm boys long to find out that one of the pipes had a short in it. They would stand there with five or six guys together and all hold hands. All of a sudden one guy would grab that steel pipe and the guy on the other end would grab a person by the ear and they'd get a hell of a shock. It didn't take us little boys long to figure out that when we saw four or five guys standing close to one of those steel pipes, to make a wide path around them.

On the east side of the church was the pump where everybody got his or her drink. It had a little cloth cover on it to keep out the bugs and all used the same tin cup. A couple of the heartier souls put their tongue on it in subzero weather, and risked being stuck there for life. Of course, that was the greatest fear in the world, to be stuck to a pump by the church for the rest of your life.

Most of the boys in town served Mass because it was simple for them to walk to church. The country boys couldn't very well do it. I served for a number of years, along with Turp. Every whip stitch we would get fired for some infraction of the rules. After Mass, Father would have servers practice. He would go in and his housekeeper, Margaret, would have a big breakfast for him. Then he'd come back for our practice. Well, if 15 boys were sitting there with nothing to do for 45 minutes it obviously got to be a problem. Quite often we had practice in the old church which had niches at the altar for statues, but no statues in them. So there was always somebody standing in the niches and one of us would be in the confessional saying confession. Tom Borchers would be playing the

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organ. Someone would be dressed in Father's robes, giving a sermon. Well, one day he walked in on it so everybody got fired. He called up, wanting to know why I wasn't there, I should come and serve. Well, I said, "Father, you fired me."

"Vell, we should just forget about that." I don't know how many times we were fired, but one time or another we were fired for good.

It was a big deal to serve at a funeral because we got out of school. Father had the Mass and the family went out into their cars, sat there and waited while Father had breakfast and got his overcoat and hat on and came back. Everybody got in the car and left for the cemetery then.

There was much more fun at the wedding Masses. If we served for a wedding, that was absolutely wonderful! First, we got out of school; after Mass we hightailed it down to the back of the church and stood in front of the main entrance doors. We had our hands together and would not let the bride and groom through until they gave us a tip. Sometimes we got as much as $10.00. Boy, to split that with four servers, that was next to a fortune.

Father Moeller was ahead of the church at that time. He went to Germany in 1935 to visit his mother. He came back, said "It vas a vonderful thing." He said the whole congregation in Germany sings so he said, "We vant to do that here." Well, it's about like it is now; they sang, half of them sang and half of them didn't. This went on for about five years and Father got up one Sunday and said, "That is the end of the singing. You vant to be a bunch of blockheads. You don't vant to sing, den ve don't sing." His favorite was Grosser Gott. We sang that every Sunday after ten o'clock Mass.

Father was a kind gentleman. He took his own funds to build a regulation size tennis court, and

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everything was the way it was supposed to be. There was a big high fence around it, sixteen feet high. I think he had lights for it and it was used heavily by the kids. We had to stand in line and wait to get in. We would go early in the morning so we could get in to play.

Somewhere along the line the girls started wearing shorts; short shorts. Father saw that and thought it was terrible, so he forbade anybody with shorts to play. Well, it didn't take long and the girls wouldn't come play. Well, if the girls didn't play, the boys wouldn't play, so nobody played. It fell into disuse with weeds growing up in it. Eventually they tore the fence down and made a parking lot out of the whole thing.

Father Moeller was ahead of his time in a lot of things. The Freytag family were German Lutheran and they went to church in New Bremen. My father joined the church and sang in the choir for 28 years. For years, he sang at five a.m Mass on Christmas. My Grossvater sang with Uncle Ferd and Uncle Ed played the violin. It was a strange thing at that time to have the Lutherans playing instruments in a Catholic Church. No one played an instrument in the church, let alone to have some Lutherans playing the violin. I asked the people in Ft. Loramie years later if that wasn't rather odd? Didn't they think it was funny?

"No", they said, "The Freytags were friends of Father Moeller and what he said went." They never gave it a thought.

On the other side of the family, Grandpa John Boerger had a center pew in church since they rented pews. He and Grandma had their pew. Father and Grandpa Boerger would get into quite a heated argument, and Father Moeller would get up on Sundays and give a sermon and raise heck about certain individuals and who thought they could run

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everything and, "blah, blah, blah". Grandpa Boerger would get mad and out he would go. Well, it got so bad that he got a pew in the west side of the church in the back and if we were sitting with him there and Father Moeller raised heck about him, he grabbed us by the hand and out we went too.

The crux of the whole thing was; the ladies were cleaning the priest house and they somehow surmised that Father was sleeping with someone. True or not true. Well, anyway, they told the men folk and all the men went down to see Archbishop McNicholas in Cincinnati; Grandpa Boerger with them. Archbishop McNicholas said, "That's terrible." He said, "Why don't you write me a letter so we have a record of all this and then I'll get back with you."

Well, they wrote a big fancy letter, and wanted Father removed. None of the other men would sign the letter, but Grandpa Boerger would! The Archbishop received the letter and sent it directly back to Father Moeller. That's what caused the problem. The feud went on until the day Grandpa Boerger died. Father did bury him and had a Mass for him, but it was under protest.

Years later, Karl, Ed Van Oss, and I were visiting Father Moeller because he was a family friend. We were sitting there drinking his wine, and smoking his big cigars, and eating his hard pumpernickel which he stored in the attic to get it good and hard and dry. All of a sudden he got up and went to the safe and he said, "Here, I want to show you something. This is what your grandfather tried to do to me. Here is that letter. Read it." Well, we read it. After Father Moeller died, Karl stopped to talk to Father Ratermann, who was the priest at that time.

He said, "Father, is that letter in the safe yet?"

"Oh yeah!" said Father Ratermann, "We look at

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it every once in a while and get a chuckle out of it." I suppose it is still in there to this day. So, don't ever put anything in writing.

The church, of course, was as gorgeous as it is today. The great thrill was to climb up in the belfry and on up into the tower to help ring the bells. Chick Lachey was the janitor, and prior to that it was Ralph Reiger. We would hang on the bells to help him ring the them. It was fun to climb all over the place; to climb up to the top as far as we could go and walk around. We enjoyed it. Father never told us not to. So we enjoyed it even more.

On down the road was the school. Of course, we had many good memories there and many bad memories, but mostly good. A creek ran catty-cornered across the property. There was a ditch that provided great fun and a place to try to catch frogs, toads, or whatever. We would attempt to jump across the ditch, and maybe not make it, or maybe we would land halfway in the mud and then have to stand by the radiator to get ourselves dried off.

We had an ice slide down the front sidewalk which was great fun. Twenty kids would line up to slide down the ice on the sidewalk. We would get water out of the pump and sprinkle more on it to let it freeze. It was a great art to do that. Of course, the janitor, Mr. Sommers, would come to throw ashes from the boiler on our ice; that ruined it. There was a constant battle between the boys and the janitor. In those times, they were called janitors, not custodians. They always give out titles.

So many things went on there it was just great. We often watched the people come with a truck to shovel coal down into the boiler room. We also watched the janitor shovel coal into the boiler. It was a great, mysterious thing to do.

At that time the school was just the old portion.

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The east additions weren't built yet. The east building was built in 1936 or 1937, which was great for us because Pop was building it. We spent a lot of time there, running wheelbarrows up and down the ramps, sweeping the ramps off, and helping wherever we could.

The two buildings were not connected, per se. There was a tunnel from one to the other. There was a heating plant between the two that was below ground level. Some years later when they scraped enough money together they built the connecting portion where the offices are now. At that time the bottom of the old school was storage. It was perhaps only five foot deep; one room for coal, the other room for the boiler.



Ft. Laramie High School Band
October 1941

Some years later, I built the west addition where the cafeteria is now. The school had a large privy to the east of the building, about where the gymnasium is now. Those were the only toilets that they had; no showers; no cafeteria. We went home at the noon hour to eat and the country kids carried their dinner buckets. Some of them had a paper bag, but very few. That wasn't in vogue yet. The kids had a little tin dinner bucket and if a student was really lucky they had a foldup tin cup to drink out of. That was really neat. The cup would collapse and could be pulled out to become a full-sized cup again. It was an amazing thing. There

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was no such thing as paper cups.

We played ball to the east of the building. Of course, as many kids as there were, there were very few chances of ever playing ball. The more timid kids got pushed back. The ball diamond was purchased; another area was purchased later in the 1940s which was made into a ball diamond. The ditch was covered with concrete where a big wide concrete walk is now.

Alphonse Stang, who was a few years older than we, always intrigued us back in Father Moeller's barn, which was close to the school. It was directly in back of St. Michael's Hall. Alphonse would carve things out of pine wood; pliers, chains, maybe the chain would be six or seven feet long, as long as whatever piece of wood he had. He would be whittling and, if we were a friend, we got one from him. It was always fun to watch him do the carving.

St. Michael's Hall was used for the third and fourth grades, I believe. When I look back on it, we were really packed in there. There were two grades in St. Michael's Hall; the high school was started in probably 1932. Prior to that, the kids went to Minster High School. My sister, Marie, was one of the first graduating classes from the Ft. Loramie High School. The high school had the second floor and the grade school had the first floor. Maybe the seventh and eighth grades were up there with the high school; I believe so. But it was well packed in.

Eleanor Fleckenstein was the third and fourth grade teacher. She could always grab a person's ear, give it a twist on the ear to straighten a kid out pretty quickly. Marie Quinlin was the first grade teacher, first and second, I suppose. She was great fun. She taught everybody to sing. She was a choir director for years. Later on when we were in high school, she had everybody at the gym on Friday afternoon to sing.

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People who lived out at the lake we called "reservoir brats", out of meanness, I guess. Quite often they didn't come to school because the water was too high. They couldn't get across the channel. That was a great excuse because all they had to do was to have the row boat go up to the house; but they didn't.

Turp Ratermann had his bicycle stolen so the sheriff came out and he surmised it might be somewhere out at the lake. So he went there and sure enough, there was the bicycle. He asked the boy that snitched the bike, "Why did you take it?"

Well, the boy said, "I just saw the bike sitting out there by the school and I took it home until somebody required for it." He didn't actually steal it, since he was just putting it in a safe place.

We used to spend a lot of time out at the lake. Pop would go fishing and quite often we would go along to row the boat and go fishing with him. Our old wooden row boat was kept out at Pauwell's. At that time none of the roads were there. It was just a farm lane going back to the lake. The road did not go to Minster.

One February afternoon it was bright and sunny but rather cold, like 20 degrees. We took the Model-T Ford out there to go fishing. It must have been a Saturday, at least we weren't in school. We caught so many fish by the spillway that we stuffed them in burlap bags and we put them under the back seat of the Model-T. We kids sat on them so the game wardens wouldn't see them when we brought them home. We brought them all home and fried them. It was a great thrill to bring that many fish home.

At that time the state park area was an island. The family living on it were squatters and when the state park was built they had to move. They usually went into town and had burlap sacks full of fish and

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sold fish. Somewhat like Indians, they would walk single file, one behind the other.

We always heard the story about when Matt Brucken had the bar. One of the families living at the lake walked into Brucken's and the father said to one of the boys, "Put your foot up on the rail and act like you know something."

Brucken was a politician on the town council. He was the president. They would have some big serious debate about whether they should do this, or gravel this street or what. Nobody could make a decision. Matt would say what he thought and the other guys would get up and say, "Well, I think like Matt Brucken thinks." Matt Brucken always furnished the drinks after the council meetings so it was wise to agree with him.

After dark in the evenings, we boys would congregate uptown and sit there doing as they do today, but we would have big games of round up which was a game of tag of sorts. It would go on until nine or ten o'clock and everybody had to get home and do his studies quickly before bed.

Ferd Fleckenstein told me the story of a Sunday afternoon he walked into Loramie. They had a car, but he walked. As he was walking south on Main Street he saw Doc Ratermann coming down the street in his car and turned in the alley beside Inderrieden's store. When he got up there he noticed trouble and tried to see what was going on. He looked down the alley to see a big bunch of guys standing. He walked down and sure enough there was a guy laying on the ground. "God, let me die, let me die.", he said. He had gotten a hold of some rotten whiskey. He moaned, "There is nothing you can do for me."

Doc said, "No, I'll take care of you."

"No", the guy said, "I don't have any money, I can't pay you. Just let me die."

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Doc got his bag out, slow, methodical man, and gave him something to induce vomiting; so he emptied his stomach. The man's eyes were rolling around in his head and he said, "Just let me die Doctor, I can't pay you."

Doc said, "Don't worry about that."

At that, Matt Brucken took his hat off, put a dollar in it and said, "We are taking up a collection to pay Doc." Well Lord, he put a dollar in so everybody else had to put something in. Ferd said he had a quarter, that's all he had. That's about all anybody ever had. We didn't have two of them to rub together. He put his quarter in and the total came to $7.00. They gave it to Doc then and he was all paid up. Of course, the bad whiskey probably came from Brucken's place and Matt felt bad.

We had the biggest thrill of all when the medicine show came to town. My God, it was wonderful! They packed in the front of the sawmill in the empty lot. In early years they had wagons and later on they had trucks with sides that would drop down to form a stage. Then they would give a play of sorts. Everybody came to sit or stand to watch the show. Then they sold their medicine. Well, it cured everything. It absolutely cured everything from toothache to what have you. There were always people like Cindy Byers who would jump up to buy some. Then her brother, Windy Marchal would buy some. Then they would tell how they were cured; how great they felt. That was probably 90% whiskey. Those things were always fun. Of course, the girls were told to stay away from there. "Don't go near there. They'll get you." Well, they never got us.

Maybe once a year, on a Sunday afternoon, Pop would give us a big thrill and would pile as many kids as he could into the '33 Chevy and off we'd go to Bradford, Ohio. In the middle of the Depression

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they had probably 50 or 60 locomotives sitting in the railroad yards, just rusting from lack of use. All of us kids, Pop and maybe Uncle Herman would go along. We would get into the locomotives and each kid had a locomotive to drive all afternoon. All we had to do was have the imagination and a loud voice for a whistle or bell. We spent the entire Sunday afternoon there. Pop would always tell us on the way home, "I'm going to buy a locomotive one of these days and put it in the back yard so you kids will have something to play with." Well, we thought it would come true, but I don't think he thought it would. We never got it anyway.

Quite often we would walk out to Fleckenstein's clay pits west of town. It was a great place to play. It was probably two feet deep, rather wide and long. In the wintertime it would freeze up quicker than the canal. There were reeds in it and it was really fun to skate between the reeds and in the summertime we could slop around in it to try to catch a frog or a turtle.

It was great fun to go over to the tile kilns and poke around there; to walk inside them and poke around the tile that were still piled. They ceased making farm tiles probably around 1930.

From there we had to go out to Frank Boerger's as we had to play with Bob and Frank. We were all over their yard and fields. We got a lot of free entertainment out there. We would go down to the creek to go fishing with them. It always was great fishing by Busse's slaughter house with the blood running out and down into the creek. Boy, that was fun! It was ideal. Often we would go inside to watch them butchering, maybe get some cracklings, and chomp on those while we were walking home. We'd stick them in our pockets which was the best place for them.

The other great entertainment place was

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Arkenberg's Gravel Pit, as I said before. We quite often rode our bikes or we walked or sometimes if we got up early enough we'd ride out with Ferd Arkenberg and his sons, Virgil and Benny. Many times we would spend the whole day there, swimming, playing, maybe we worked a little bit. We would pick up the mud balls that were in the gravel and throw them out. We watched all the contraptions they had running.

The backhoes that were made then are similar to those today. The only thing is, the old ones pulled the dirt away instead of towards the machine. They often bought old hearses from Meteor Company in Piqua, a company that made ambulances and hearses. They tore these down and used the chassis, which was a frame, to make a truck or whatever they had to have. They made everything. They had their own foundry and generating plant to make electricity. They also had a system to pump sand out of the pit, which was unheard of. They would force water down a pipe and it would come back up, bringing the sand along with it. It simply was pumped out into a bin. The water ran out and it was ready to use. There were so many things that they did it was impossible to imagine. They made lightweight concrete, concrete mixed with sawdust which was later used in industry. The pumping system for sand is widely used in the gravel business today. They were just way ahead of their time.

Quite often at noon, somebody would haul a load of gravel into Ft. Loramie or to Minster. The driver would stop to get a jug of beer, a box of crackers, and some sardines and that would be lunch. We all sat down too, had a drink of beer and ate our crackers and sardines. Then we were back to playing again.

Many times we walked to Minster, or if we were

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brave, we walked to New Bremen on a Sunday afternoon. It was rare to see one car between Loramie and Minster. We walked to the north of town to where the bridge goes over the Loramie creek. At that time, there was a humpbacked concrete bridge. Rare in the state, it was designed by Frantz of Sidney. It had a concrete box about 30 inches square which formed an arch on each side of the bridge. The bed of the roadway was at the bottom of this arch. The arches were probably 12 feet high. No one ever walked across the bridge. A person had to walk over the top of this hump because that was more of a thrill. It's a wonder we didn't all break our necks! The bridge was a great place to fish underneath or to go swimming.

Later on we got bicycles so we would ride our bikes to Minster or we'd ride them down to Arling's Gravel Pit south of Loramie and go swimming. The bicycle then, as today, had great use. The older people didn't ride it as much as they do today, but the young people did for it was their only transportation. A lot of kids didn't have bicycles. We had one bicycle for about five kids. We never had much problem with that. We grabbed the bike whenever it was there and left.

The time flew quickly by and in the summer of 1939 I went to Cincinnati to stay for a month or so with my sister. Then, I came home all ready to resume school. I had my clothes, my shoes and everything I had to have, including pencils. Everybody was ready to go back to school. I would be a freshman.

In early September my father was working on Charlie Middendorf's house, became ill and walked home. Mom called Doc Ratermann and he came. They decided they better get Pop to the hospital in Dayton. He had ruptured ulcers. He died and was buried on the fifth of September. That was the end

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of our childhood. From then on it was work with very little play.

One of the great things that I forgot to mention, but which sticks in my mind, is the sounds of a small town. In the evening we would walk up and down Main Street. At one house we would hear parts of Amos and Andy. The next house we would listen to part of Lowell Thomas or H.B. Kaltenborn. We would go by Grandma Boerger's house; they would be listening to Lum and Abner. Grandma would talk back. "Don't do it, Abner, they are trying to trick you." I think it was about like television today. Radio was our life.

So is life in a small town from 1933 to 1940!



Teachers 1940 - 1941
Left to Right:
Mr. Curtis
Mr. Dillehay
Miss Macken
Mr. Van Osc
Mr. Sharp
Mr. Schaad
Mr. Naveau
Miss Baron
Miss Quinlin

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Language:

The difference in language in the area was interesting to us kids in Ft. Loramie. Most of us had never been out of Shelby County, but we did notice in our large travels that in Newport they spoke some French, but mostly English. We went further south to Russia and the people spoke a lot of French with just the younger people speaking in English. There were a lot of first names that were strange to us: Valerius, Albertine, Bede, Romanus (just look at the names in the cemetery). On further west to Versailles there were a lot of French, no Germans. Then to Frenchtown with all French speaking. Over to Yorkshire very few Germans, mostly English. North to Osgood almost all German speaking, Low German farmers, and the same to Maria Stein. In Ft. Loramie most of the farmers spoke Low German and, in fact, when they closed the one room school in 1938, some of the kids could not speak English. To this day, some of those people are not comfortable with English. In town (Ft. Loramie) we had a few folks that spoke French and no Low German that I know of. A very few spoke High German and that was the Freytags as they came over 70 years after the other town folk. Now when we went to Minster, there was a large group that spoke Low German. When we were married in 1948, the store clerks would not believe that my wife and I could not speak Low German. When we went to New Bremen to work the people spoke Low German of a different dialect and it was not used as much in town as it was in Minster.

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Irish and the Rest:

In the early 1930s, we had a couple of Irishmen in Ft. Loramie. Among the Irish there was Steven Shannon, or as Tom Ernst named him, the "Irish Setter". Steve was a Spanish-American War veteran that somehow found his way to Loramie. He lived in the first mobile home that we'd ever seen. It was a wooden, one-room house on a farm wagon chassis with steel wheels. Much like the pictures you see of gypsy wagons. He had it parked across from the ballfield in the alley where Joe Turner lived. He went to every movie in Minster with John Kloecker. Somehow, and for a good reason, he was asked by the sheriff to leave town.

Bill Dunn came into town as a bartender at Brucken's Cafe. He became Hilda Schurman's boyfriend. Hilda was the phone operator. At the end of the 1930's came teacher and school superintendent, Jim Dillehay, and teacher, Geraldine McCarren. In the forties we were blessed with a true, born in Ireland, Irishman by the name of Jim McGowan. He still lives here. St. Patrick's had the Dundun brothers and sisters.

The French in town were limited to just a few French people, among who were Nick Lachey and Chick Lachey. They were of no relation to each other. There were also Elmer Dapore and his wife. At the lake on the west side we were happy to have one man from Holland, Ben Pauwell. Ben was 80 years old and still went ice skating. He and my father were good friends. We kept our row boat at this place.

We had no English, Polish, African-American or Italians in our village.

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School System:

Ft. Loramie had four one-room and one two-room schools. Walkup School was on Rt. 705 west of town and due south a few miles was the Grisez School. The Larger families all went to that school. My oldest sister taught at that school. She had one of the older boys build the fire and bring in a bucket of water. The Hopewell School was due east of Grisez School. It was located north of Oran and a bit west. North on Barhorst Road and Sherman Pike (east 705) was the Sherman School. The Seger, Siegel and Sherman families went to Sherman School. To the north of that school and east was St. Patrick's two-room school. All of the buildings are still standing, except St. Patrick's, which was torn down.

Loramie rural area schools were among the last to close. Houston, Russia, Versailles closed early as they had the money to do so. They all got money from the railroad. Loramie had no industry and no railroad for a tax base.

Some of the teachers were: Miss Marie Quinlin, Eleanor Fleckenstein, Adele Hoffstetter, Margaret Machen, Celia Ratermann (Turp's sister), Ruth Farno, Geraldine McCarren, Agnes Milliet, Marie Freytag, Pauline Freytag Bemus, Miss Miller, Ed Van Oss, Jim Dillehay, Charles Sharp, Bill Wiffler, Lawrence Curtis, Claire Naveau, Bill Shad and Joe Rinaldo.

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Village of Ft. Loramie

West & South Main St.



1. Gaier Garage Bakery
2. Bill Kemper Residence
3. Ralph Vogelsang Residence
4. Herman Freytag Residence
5. Ed Freytag Residence
6. Bill Borchers Residence
7. Ben Vogelsang Residence
8. Switch Alley
9. Borchers Store
10. Willman Residence
11. Dr. Ratermann
12. Sherman Elevator
13. Elmer Gaier Residence Farm
14. Canal Tow Path to Loramie Creek
15. Borchers Bridge
16. Arling Grave Pit
17. New Cemetery
18. Fort Loramie Cast Stone
19. Quatman Residence
20 Chris Zackarius Residence
21. Rethman Residence
22. Clem's South Park Static
23. Clara Inderrieden Residence

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orth Star Rd.–705 West

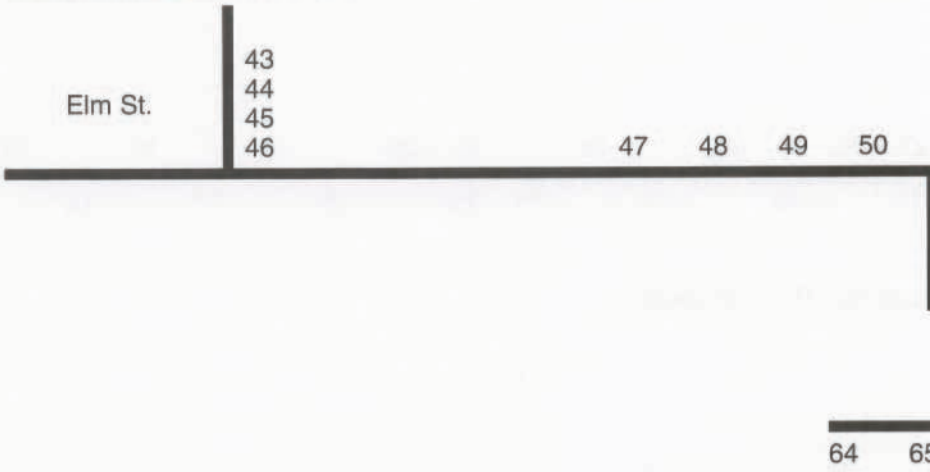
24. Cindy & Fred Byers Residence
25. Ben Lump
26. Evangelical Church
27. Elmer Vogelsang Residence
28. Farno & Henry Bollheimer Residence
29. Ferd Arkenberg Residence
30. Joe Winner Residence
31. Leo Inderrieden Residence
32. Ferd Freytag Residence
33. Albert & Millie Freytag Residence
34. John Boerger Residence
35. Anne Ratermann Residence
36. Adolph Ratermann Residence
37. Aug. Wise Residence
38. Wise Sawmill
39. Hilgefort Garage
40. Dave Sargent Blacksmith
41. Vogelsang Café

**There are omissions

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Village of Ft. Loramie

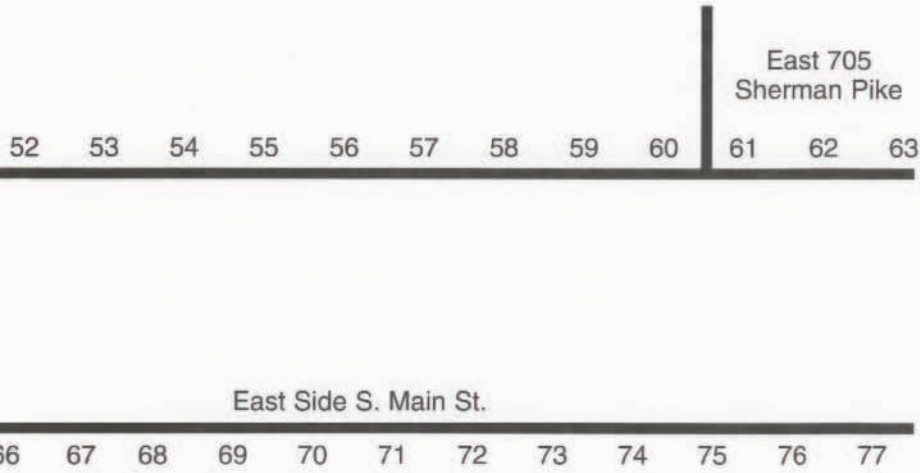
East Side S. Main St.



43. Romie Residence
44. School
45. Church
46. Albers Store
47. Bruckens Café
48. Gehrings Restaurant
49. Ernst Station
50. Old Post Office
51. Quinlins Store
52. Dapore Store
53. Winner Barber Shop
54. Inderrieden Store
55. Anthony Barber Shop
56. Romie Store
57. Bank
58. Busse Meat Market
59. Kings Bar
60. Williams Store
61. Hotel
62. Slagle Residence
63. Dry Shed Freytag
64. Daddy Ream Residence
65. Barney Krampe Residence

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66. Gus Wise Residence
67. Bill Inderrieden Residence
68. Al Winner Residence
69. Ray DeLaet Residence
70. Henry Cardo Residence
71. Nick Lachey Residence
72. Al Nabor Residence
73. Gerhardt Zircher Residence
74. Karl Freytag Residence
75. Geo. Keifer Residence
76. Chas. Middendorf Residence
77. Val Miller Residence

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