

Remembrances of the Past in Good Old River Grove.

River Grove came by its name in 1888. Before that it was known as Turnor Park.

I was born in River Grove in 1924, on Hessing Street. The first boy after 5 girls. From what I heard from my mother, I guess my dad really celebrated. My father was killed by the Grand Avenue rail road crossing in Elmwood Park, in 1926. Leaving my mother a widow with 8 kids. She raised us on a wing and a prayer, with help from good old River Grove neighbors.

I remember when Grand Avenue was a dirt road leading from the street car line on the east side of Harlem Avenue. The Little Loop, known in those days, with its dime stores. Woolworth's, Kressies, Niesners and McLellin's, plus a fruit market and a few sandwich and clothing stores.

They used to have horse drawn carriage funerals come down to Thatcher to Saint Joseph and Elmwood Park cemetaries. The big deal was James Kirie's father's old place known as the Fox Head Inn. ~~WHERE PEOPLE GATHERED AFTER FUNERALS~~

As a boy I used to sit up in the mulberry trees which lined the Milwaukee tracks for miles. One day, we watched a funeral just west of Kirie's—now Mr. B's—when a huge crowd of old touring cars and well-dressed men with loads of flowers came by. Little did we know then it was the funeral of Baby Face Nelson, killed in Illinois after the dicot out from Little Bohemia Wisconsin, all the way into Illinois. The head stone still reads Lester Gillis.

I vaguely remember thwn Grand Avenue was being paved from Grand and Harlem to Thatcher in River Grove. The street caved in and they found an old tunnel under Grand Avenue at Clinton, which led to a building disguised as a milk company. Guess what they were hauling? ~~Not milk.~~

I remember old Senf's Hall at Thatcher and Grand. The biggest thing in River Grove, where all doings from political dances and plays were held upstairs in the big hall. Downstairs was old Colb's drygoods store, which sold everything. I remember my mother buying us tennis shoes or gym shoes for 50¢ a pair. Overall pants cost 50¢. On the corner of the building was a bank. I will never forget the day I was standing by old doc Capu's drug store, later taken over by Mr. and Mrs. Al Johnson, well known folks of River Grove. Some men set fire to the Grove Monument place just across the tracks to draw the whole village down there. Then they held up the bank, which was run by old Jessie Reddow. As they made their getaway they dropped some coins which I picked up. Later on, Rudy Erish and Chris Murdel from Wood Street oppened up Leyden Currency there.

There was a theatre at River Terrace and Grand called the River Terrace. It burned down in about 1928 or '29.

I started school at River Grove School District 85½ which had two old wooden portable buildings. One building was from first grade through 4th. The other was from fifth through 8th grade. Meanwhile, they finished the original brick schoolhouse, and moved us in there in 1929. I was in the first first grade class to enter the new building. The cornerstone had the name of Mrs. Lewis Stark, of the school board. The greatest principal I've ever known was Mr. Jack Kellogg. Loved by every kid that ever went to that school. The two portable buildings were moved, one across from the school, which became a little school store for us. Run by the Larson's—~~inlaws~~ of Bill Wood, an old River Grove fireman. The other portable building was moved down to 8610 Grand Avenue, which became the old River Grove Euclid Hall. A meeting hall for the Legionnaires, the River Grove Women's Club and all other occasions. Back in 1928, '29 and '30 River Grove business men used to get together and hold an annual picnic, and 3 or 4 Leyden busses hauled half the town out to Lake Zurich. We all wore buttons and the signs on the busses read "Don't be a Rover, be a River Grover." We swam, had games, races, balloons, free hot dogs and soda pop. Each family brought a basket lunch. I remember one year my mother got a prize—a large Armour ham—for having the largest family there. Those were wonderful memories.

At ten years old, after school, I would start at doc Capu's drug store and go get

in 50 pounds of ice for his large Hires Root Beer wooden barrel up on the soda counter. Then I would go next store to Paul Guhl's Bakery and clean the baking table, the floor and clean all his dough and cream mixers. For that I received a loaf of bread and a dozen rolls. Then I would go next store to Stanley Cartwright's meat market and sit on a peddle driven grinder and sharpen all his cleavers and knives. For that I would get 1 pound of hamburger, some pork chops and usually a large soup bone. Then, next store, was an A & P store run by Mr. Adams. I would clean up his store, take out the garbage, and my pay was a pound of 5 o'clock coffee (its cost was 14¢ a pound), a package of potatoes, and some lard or fruit. Then, from there, to Ray Jones barber shop at 8340 Grand, where we lived in one of the flats upstairs. I would clean his shop, and got a dime and a free hair cut when needed. I then helped the shoemaker next door, and he would fix all our shoes for us. Then, where Mary's Grill is now, was Stolpe's old tailor shop. He used to chase me with a pair of shears because I would climb myself on his awning. Gil Palm and myself: I grew up with Gil when his father and mother, John and Mary, had a little wooden hardware store there. Gil's come a long way since that the little building I remember.

Across the street, where the Grand Tap now resides was a small National Tea store, run by a Mr. Kline.

We had a small local paper in those days called the River Grove Clarion. They had a popularity contest back in 1932 and my sister, who worked at the National Tea, won that Miss River Grove contest. She is now Mrs. Richard Pauwels of 2404 Rhodes. I won a bicycle in 1937 in a contest at Refiners Pride, given by old Montana Charlie Reed. The contest lasted 6 months, and you had to get people to turn in your name when they bought gasoline. I won unanimously. That was a proud day.

I remember when the old telephone company burned down on Thatcher, which is now Quarstoff's Florist. Illinois Bell erected a large quonset hut behind Quarstoff's on center street and in a matter of days had the service running smoothly while they were constructing the new building where they are now located. Great work by a great company.

We had many great past officials. Mayors, police and firemen, in this topnotch village. In my estimation one of River Grove's finest citizens was mayor Martin Enger. I think the Enger family is known and respected by all. Old Chief Frank Wiemerslage, back in the '30s, was quite a police chief. He rode a bicycle around town until the village got a motorcycle with a sidecar, and Jim Dougherty or Kip Davis would drive him around town. Another great guy was Al Schmitt, our village engineer and surveyor.

Later on, about 14 or 15 years old, 4 of us local boys formed a square dance band. Ernie Wozniak on the accordian, Rich Dembinski, the guitar, Harry Pugesek from Maple Street, the guitar, and myself, the fiddle and mandolin. Three of my sisters sang with us. We played often as guests on the old WLS Barn Dance. And also WJJD. We also played and sang over the radio for the Moody Bible Institute. Once we were asked by Art Haugen, an old River Grover and politician, to play for Governor Dwight Green. *AT A BIG DINNER IN THE LADY'S*

From here on I guess you know the rest of my life. I was hired over a Coko Cola in 1942 by acting postmaster Mr. Edward Jacobsen, 2500 Budd Street. My job consisted of meeting the train twice a day and wheel the mail in a cart I built to the post office, and twice a day I would wheel outgoing mail back and meet the mail coach. I used to hang up the pouch on the rack and the fast Hiawatha from Omaha would grab it, that arm. I also ran Special Deliveries on foot all over River Grove. I got 10¢ for each special. I was also the post office janitor for 18 years. For 15 dollars a month, extra. I was the town's second mail carrier. Bill Schultz and myself handled the whole town. I brought mail to the Village Hall, Police and Fire Departments, which were all in the old building for 33 years. As you know, I retired on New Year's Eve 1975. I miss you all. So listen River Grovers, we have the greatest village in the U.S. here, so lets all dig in and see what we can do for our village. Lets make this Bicentennial an occasion to be proud of. Bless you all.

Your old mail man,

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