

Chapter 43  
The Town at the Turn of the Century

Will try to bring back memories of some unforgettable old-timers as I found them when I arrive in St Clair in Nov. 1899. Will first describe the city business places.

Lumber Jacks and saw mills were gone. It was now a summer resort and camping place for glass blowers and steelworkers from Pittsburgh and Allegheny, Penn. They formed clubs and were camped along the river both north and south of town. Ceder block pavement from the Somerville Hotel north to the Oakland south of town. All wood sidewalks except in front of J. R. Whiting's store. City ordinance against riding a bicycle on the sidewalk \$2 [?] fine or 10 days in the pokey, depending on the judge.

Pine River was jammed full of boats of all kinds. Barges, steamers, sailing vessels, even tugboats laid up for the winter. The town was made up mostly of sailors, the reason for that, so many Captains lived in St. Clair. The Shipmaster's Club was over John Whiting hardware store where they recruited most of their crews from St. Clair County.

Will now describe the businesses on the East side of Front Street and on the river. Schwab brothers had a brewery on the hill north of town where the Inn hotel now stands. Dem Brines had a large ice house and delivered ice to camps along the river and all saloons in St. Clair. Some homes had ice boxes. Dem would drive the horses and wagon. His helpers would see that everyone was taken care of. It cost extra to clean and place the ice in your house. Gibson brothers worked for Dem Brines.

Next came Charlie Sheldon's Tannery with piles of tan bark in the yard for tanning all kinds of hides. Then the planing mill run by the Allen brothers, John and Sid. John Sawyer was engineer, then came Pat Murphy in the old red barn. He would say, "I buy anything." So everyone called him. He lived in the barn with his old black mare, Nellie, and his dog. Pat came from cork town in Detroit. He was the only man I ever knew who cursed his mother for bringing him into the world.

Next came the water works, William Barron in charge. St. Clair had its own Electric Light and Power Plant run by Walter and Jimmy Ash. Next Schwab brothers Saloon, now the Public Library. Cigar factory and poker rooms upstairs, soft drinks and bottling works in basement. John Wolf and Sons made the Our Choice and Red Bell 5 cent cigars. Then Jarvis Chamberlin electric shop and Hornberger Harness Shop where Albert Hisson repaired and sold bicycles.

Across the slip south, was the Post Office, Hannibal Hopkins, Postmaster and editor of the St. Clair Republican. Next Mike Charles Grace, bookstore and school supplies. Next to the Commercial and Savings Bank, Russ Jenks and Art Mau, was a saloon owned by George Beyschlag and Matt Simpson. Next T. J. Milliken Drugs and Groceries. Then the Express Office and Western Union Telegraph, Gray Cornell in charge. Next Jones Variety Store, then in the old bank building Dave and Alfred Ingles had a three chair barber shop, Phil Henley working for them. They helped to put over the Sunday closing law for barbershops. Next in the big building Charles Roberts and Frank Schrepferman started the newspaper called The County Press in 1900 and still going strong.

St. Clair, no place in the world where god did so much and man, so little.

Mrs.. P. Ingles kept a department store and millinery shop next to the County Press. In the basement Charlie Lafferty and Ben Recor had a saloon called the Hole in the Wall. Where the park is now Baby

and Dale had a warehouse, coal yard and ticket office, all passenger boats stopped at this large dock, The City of Toledo, Owana, Tashmoo, ? Tompson Line-Douglas Line-Pilgrim, Magruder Line, City of Mackinaw, Alpena, Capt. Dale Ran the Steamer Welcome, carry passengers, hay and salt across the river.

Next was Harry Recor and George Smith hardware, hay and grain. The Masons had their lodge rooms upstairs. Later Al Chase had a gym upstairs. The large grist mill was owned by Rankin and Davison, they shipped Royal Gem flour up and down the river ports. Shorty Roberson had a coal and wood yard. Next was W. R. Kemp coal, wood, hay, straw and grain. Next was the Central Livery Stable.

Then we cross Pine River, first the Tompson Salt Block, next the Diamond Crystal owned and operated by Charles and Franklin Moore. All of the office and book work was taken care of by young Frank and his sister Laura. Then came Schlinkers coal, wood and building supplies, John and Edward. Their father had a beer garden just north of the Oakland House. It was quite a showplace and beautiful gardens. Oliver Lafferty in charge, his son Bill would take fishing parties. Then came the Oakland Boathouse and dock where passenger boats stopped and all kinds of yachts tied up.

Below that was a good swimming beach, the another dock and warehouse where they shipped Salutarus Mineral Water all over the world. State Police Post there now.. Next the Michigan Central Station, just a branch from Richmond to St. Clair. Mr. Martin was station master. I will always remember him, a good looking man with a heavy black moustache. Mr. Lively, father of William, Art and Harry, ran the bus from the station to all the hotels. The train made the round trip everyday except Sunday, Mr. Crary, engineer, Jim Lightbody, conductor, Mr. Smith, fireman, Mr. Rollaw, brakeman.

Will now describe the Oakland Hotel as I remember it in the good old days. The North end, the grand ballroom. public and private dining rooms, ladies dressing room, men's smoking room. Then the large lobby with grand staircase leading to rooms up second and third floors, and one leading down to the billiard room and bar. From the lobby Salutarus Hall led over 200 feet to the big white marble fountain. Salutarus Mineral water flowing all the time. Guests were allowed to stroll the hall or porches at any and all times. To the west of the hall for ladies bath rooms, the east side for men. All kinds of baths, Turkish or Mineral. Mr. Schwartz was the rubber and attendant for the men, Mrs. Schwartz handled the ladies.

From 1902 to 1905 I managed the barbershop at the Oakland. At the south end of the hall Dr. Burtless had his office on the river side and a two chair barbershop was on the west side. Downstairs was the Salutarus Bottling Works. Mr. Hennesy managed steam heat and power plant and laundry. Across the street, west from the hotel were several guest houses. Back of them were riding stables, bridle paths through the Oakland Grove. A cinder path down to Hathaway Street, then called Rabbit Run. Just north of the hotel was a large clubhouse and bowling alley. Henry Fink and Grover Sawyer were pinsetters there. Next on the west side of the street was the Sherman House, John Biewer, proprietor. Next to the bridge was Limkie picture gallery, now the home of Peter Wood.

Will now go back to Rabbit Run. From there south to the McGregor Farm was called Jungle Town. Will name a few that lived there. Sid Boden, Dexter Lee and the Rumsey boys. Capt. McGregor had a 280 acre farm, a large brick and barns along the St Clair River. The Captain very seldom came home. He left his son George in charge. Gave him an allowance of \$400 a month and all he could make off the farm. Will write more of George later.

Out Pine River on the south side was Langell's Ship Yard, the Belknap and Phillips Brickyard. On the

north and west side was Bruno Stright's lime kiln and Conrad Elspass Brewery, then came Charlie Sheldon's Brickyard.

On the south corner of Clinton and Front Street Jake Westrick had a store, handled mostly fishing tackle and bicycles. Next out Clinton, Mr. Sewart ran the Oakland Livery Stables. Then Bill Ross and son, Art, blacksmith shop. Then the Farmer's Home, John Elspass. South side 7<sup>th</sup> and Clinton another saloon by Joe Elspass. On the hill 9<sup>th</sup> and Clinton Camy Dandron had a grocery store. Back down Clinton on the north side was Charlie Joachim's Grocery, corner of 7<sup>th</sup>. Between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Mr Hills Marble Shop. Between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, Tom Schwartz Saloon. On the north corner of Clinton and Front was the St. James Hotel.

Going north was Charles Gleim residence, the Gleim Brothers Butcher Shop. Then Jim Hamilton Bakery. On the corner of Witherell Street and Front Street Bruno Stright's Saloon. The Union Hotel burned down between Witherell and Cass Streets on Front before my time. The Union Hotel was a large brick building. The brick barn with a dance floor above still stands on Second Street back of the Ford Garage. South of the park was the Burtless Building, built for a hospital by Doctors. Burtless, Inches and Scholles. South of the City Hall was the Red Roller Skating Rink where they played indoor baseball. South of that was Mark Baldwin's Foundry. North of the City Hall was the St. Clair Republican owned by Hannibal Hopkins, no relation to Mark Hopkins. On Trumble going toward the river, Fred Schefferman's Laundry. Then Chris and Fred Stram's Grocery. On the corner of Front Street, Tom Moore Grocery. Going north Charles Hubel Real Estate, Andrew Currey Drug Store, Dave Sage Hardware, J. R. Writing Department Store. On Jay Street, Ben Crampton Boots, Shoes, lunchroom, Gus King Saloon, on the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> and Jay, Brenner Boot and Shoes, Nick Hines repairman.

West side of 2<sup>nd</sup>, Borntranger's Blacksmith and Wagon Works. John Whiting had a hardware on the north corner of Jay and Front Street. 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Shipmaster's Club, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor Castle Hall K of P Lodge. Next Beyschlag Butcher Shop. Upstairs Albert Draper Fly Net Factory. Then George Ward's Drug Store, Archie Ash Postal Telegraph. Next Ten Mayhew Barber Shop where I worked.. Next door north, Capt. Chamberlin had a cigar store. North side was Herman Pollex Taylor Shop. Benoit's Drygoods store, upstairs IOF Lodge. Where Becker's Store is now was Andrew Ebers Grocery and Saloon. Then Phin Carrol had a bakery and ice cream parlor. Next was J Moore Furniture Store, then the St. Clair House run by Joe Brown, better known as 'Red Nose Mike'.

The next block north was Porter Gilbert and John McAllister, undertakers. Then came the Cadillac Hotel, J Adams, proprietor. The only hotel where they had no bar. Out at 6<sup>th</sup> and Vine Joe Williams had a grocery and Butcher Shop. A busy place.

Central Baker, Carl Wolberg, Dan Dwyer Jr.

Livery Stables:

Central, at the bridge	Dan Engelgau
Union Hotel Barn	Dan Dwyer
Oakland Barn	Art Sewart
Red Barn, Front Street	Pat Galinaw

Blacksmiths:

Borntrangers	
Bill Ross and son Bill	
The Green Front	Drummond, dropped dead shoeing a horse

Bill Clark  
Harkness  
Sid Ripollie

Hitching posts everywhere. Nearly all hotels and churches had horse sheds where farmers could drive under in stormy weather.