



Many businesses, buildings, and people were discussed at the Local History Round Table held at the St. Marys Community Public Library on Tuesday, November 22, 2022.

Beth Keunke, Adult Services Coordinator and facilitator of the Round Table shared two photos that were sent to her from Pat Elsass. One was of John Yacmett, who was a partner in the Two Johns restaurant/saloon, the other photo was of his wife the former Caroline Koehl. John died in July 1896 of pneumonia. After his death, his wife Caroline married John Helmstetter. The other proprietor of Two Johns was John "JJ" Diell who according to an article from the Evening Leader dated June 12, 1973, died in 1909. The Café was in the west room of the Diell Building. The Diell building was located in what is now the parking lot east of the Kellermeyer building. Marv Rupert remembers that when they tore the building down to make the parking lot they saved the "JJ Diell" sign and it was inserted into the green brick wall that bordered the parking lot. The wall was destroyed when someone ran their car into it.

Gladys Stroh recalled that the European Restaurant occupied that building. There were rooms upstairs that were used by railroad workers. Next door was a bar owned by Mark Maher called Mark's Bar or Mark's Place. Mark Maher's son Robert "Bob" Maher owned the Friendly Tavern.

Several bakeries were mentioned including Joyce's Bakery which was located at 301 E. Spring Street where the St. Marys Chamber of Commerce is now located. Sand's

Pastry Shoppe was once located at 135 W. Spring Street at the location formerly known as J.J. Diell and the European Restaurant. Sand's Bakery moved to 117 S. Main Street where Hometown Pizza, Burger's and More is now located. The bakery was bought by Jan Bonifas and the name changed to J B Pastries. That bakery later moved to Celina Road and was bought by Derek Vogel where it became the present day Vogel's Bake Shop.

Businesses that were located in the 100-129 block of South Main Street were discussed. Some of those businesses were: Mari's Beauty Shop; Dr. Brown's office; Harold's Flowers; Mark Cisco, CPA; Mrs. Gill; Harold's Flowers; Marv Rupert Insurance Agency; a waterbed store; Burd boys gun store; St. Marys Hobby Center; McBrown Cafeteria; and Parker Chevrolet Paint & Body Shop. The building where Denny Lauth had his Prudential office at 109 S. Main Street was once owned by Harold Mechling, owner of Harold's Flowers. He and his family lived in the building and during his ownership, he added onto the building. Marv Rupert bought the building and cut the building in two. The building now has an apartment and a studio apartment along with the business space.

The conversation moved to the businesses on Celina Road. Mike Homan asked about the Marsh grocery store. It was determined that Marsh grocery store occupied a long narrow building that ran North and South and was located on the east side of what is now Kern's Ford. Prior to this, it was Rhodes IGA, owned by Mr. Rhodes. It was recalled that Mr. Rhodes and his family came here from a western state and that his kids did not like it here so they moved back to that state. Marsh grocery built the building at the back of the lot. The old building was torn down and a gas station, Colonial Self Service and Rally's Sandwich Shop was located at the front of the lot. Brodbeck's grocery bought the Marsh building and used it until they moved into the shopping center on Indiana Avenue.

One of the participants remembers in the mid-1950's riding Penny the pony that was given to Barb Parker by her father, Jim Parker. Jim Parker owned Parker Motors which was where Kern's Ford is now located. The pony was kept behind a fence with barbed wire on the top.

A Clark's filling station was located across the street from the grocery store and it was recalled that Tom Craft was robbed there. It is now a vacant lot between America's Best Value Inn & Suites St. Marys and the St. Marys City Schools Bus garage. Eugene Koch lived behind the filling station and had Koch Tire Service where he retread tires.

The conversation moved back to the businesses on West Spring Street and to the Morris 5 & 10 to \$1.00 Store located next to the canal. The participants remembered that the toys were in the basement and that you could look out the window and see the canal. First Financial Bank is now located where this building once stood. Someone mentioned that there was a channel that went behind the store where shipments were delivered. The question was asked, "were there two sets of stairs inside the building?" No one seemed to remember. Someone else remembered that the clerks had brass tubes that they would speak into when they needed change from the upstairs office.

The Glass Block building located at 134 East Spring Street was discussed, along with the businesses that were to the east of this building. Businesses mentioned were: Bob's Pastry; Clear Shoe Store; Wilson's sewing machine store; and a hardware store. On the opposite side of the street was Rentz Barber Shop. In the next block east was Andreoni's Confectionary at 229 E. Spring, which was in the store front west of the Greene Room. The City Meat Market which was owned by Franklin J. Fortman was located at 221 E. Spring Street where The Hair Place is now located. Nancy Fortman said that her father-in-law, Franklin Fortman, told how when he was fourteen years old he and his dad, Frank Fortman, went in together and bought out the other men who owned the meat market, and going into business together. Pfenning Jewelry owned by Phillip J. Pfenning was located at 215 E. Spring Street where Laura Yelton's State Farm office is now located. Ideal Drug was located at 220 E. Spring where Guarnieris Pizzeria is now located.

Many in the group remembered that a lot of people came to town on Saturday evening, and if you didn't get there before 5:00 pm there were no parking spaces downtown. Many of the people who came to town were from the smaller towns and villages. Gladys Stroh remembers cars with rumble seats and how hard they were to get into especially with the dresses that they wore at the time. Marv Rupert remembers a lot of people were still coming to St. Marys on Saturday nights in 1979.

Pat Elsass changed the subject to interesting people who lived in St. Marys. She wondered about Eddie Meckstroth. Those who knew him said that he was very intelligent and very knowledgeable, especially about family and local history. Bob Hurm recalled that Eddie brought a wool suit into Paris Cleaners that he wanted to wear in the sesquicentennial parade. Bob sent it off to Chicago to have it refurbished. Bill Huber said that Eddie couldn't get a driver's license for some reason so Eddie bought himself a 1939 Pontiac and in the 1950's Bill became his chauffeur. Eddie spent part of the time in Switzerland and the other part in St. Marys.

Another interesting person was "Murph," whose real name was Robert L. Murray. Murph helped Mike Homan load and unload pianos and organs. Mike Homan recalled that when a medicine show came to town Murph was picked to sing and that is when Mike found out that although Murph never said much he had a beautiful voice. Someone else recalled that Murph was a handsome man and that there used to be a bench in front of The Evening Leader building where he would sit and wait for the new edition of the newspaper.

Another interesting person was called Lovie. No one seemed to know his real name but that he delivered the Penny Saver and picked up scrap using a wagon. Someone thought that he lived at the end of Cherry Street. Mike Homan who lived on 33A when he was growing up remembers that when the Auglaize County Fair started they would see Lovie with his wagon going towards the fair grounds and when the fair was over they would see him going back to St. Marys. Marv Rupert remembers hearing that for a quarter Lovie would stand on the counter of the bar and yodel and that he would also dance for a beer. On Findagrave.com he is listed as Lovie C. Dixon while on his World War II draft card he is listed as Love Charles Dixon.

Another interesting person was Robert "Bob" Sampson. He was smart and wrote poetry. Another named mentioned was Clyde Rupert who lived in his car and dogs would follow him. He had a black German Shepherd. Someone had heard that he was a World War II hero who had been wounded by throwing himself on a grenade.

The next Local History Round Table will be held on Tuesday, December 27, 2022, from 1:30 to 2:30 pm.