

12 The EVENING LEADER, St. Marys, O., Tues., June 12, 1973

No Stools In Two Johns

There were no stools in front of the bar at the Two Johns cafe, West Spring street, but there was a spittoon or cuspidor at regular intervals along the bar where the customers stood.

John Diell, one of the two Johns, is the third man from the right. He died in 1909 so that the picture had to have been taken before that year. The last man back of the bar is his partner, the other John, John Yaemett.

Note the hats worn by the customers.

The Two Johns Cafe was in the west room of the Diell Building, torn down to make way for the First National Bank office and parking lot. The concrete block J. J. Diell - 1900 was salvaged and now appears in the front wall at the bank's parking lot. (The photo is the courtesy of Mr. Diell's daughter, Mrs. V. J. (Matilda) Rable, East Spring street).



Residents of St. Marys and the local area met at the St. Marys Community Public Library on Tuesday, October 25, 2022, to talk about and discuss local history.

Jim Cooper shared that he has done research on the St. Marys Banking and Trust Company and is looking for more information. He passed around the information that he had collected thus far. What prompted him to research this bank was a metal coin box that he found when digging for fish worms in his neighbor's yard when he was ten years old. He passed around the box for the group to see. When he found the box it was locked and there were coins inside. He went to a neighbor, Charlie Clifford, who did upholstery work and often found keys in the furniture that he recovered. Mr. Clifford allowed Jim to try these keys and he found one that opened up the box. On the box is a plate with the name of the bank and a number. He believes that the box was made sometime between 1901 and 1907 and that there were a limited number of boxes made, thus the number. According to his research, the St. Marys Banking and Trust Company started in 1903 and was in the Wendelin Building on the Island. The building was torn down around 1972 after which the Union Savings and Loan Building was built. Much of the information from this period is missing as the newspapers did not escape the flood of 1913 and very few have been found.

Bill Huber mentioned that The First National Bank was closed down permanently because they refused to close for the Bank Holiday in 1933. According to the article, "Why did FDR's Bank Holiday succeed?" by William L. Silber, "After a month-long run on banks, on March 5, 1933, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared a nationwide Bank Holiday that shut down the banking system. The following week, in his first Fireside Chat, Roosevelt appealed directly to Americans to prevent a resumption of bank withdrawals; when the banks reopened on March 13, depositors stood in line to return their hoarded cash. The success of the Bank Holiday and the turnaround in public confidence can be attributed to the Emergency Banking Act of 1933, passed by Congress on March 9."

Beth Keuneke presented pictures of former St. Marys' banks from her scanned files. One of the pictures was a news article from the Evening Leader dated June 12, 1973, that shows the inside of Two Johns café showing no stools but they had spittoons. This business was located in the west room of the Diell Building which was "torn down to make way for the First National Bank of Wapakoneta office and parking lot," most recently Chase Bank. According to the article concrete block J.J. Diell – 1900 was salvaged and now appears in the front wall at the bank's parking lot. It was unclear what happened to this sign.

Julie Graves recalls that the Huwer Bar had no bar stools. They also had spittoons. So, the setup was much like the Two Johns café. She recalls a story about a farmer who lived north of town and would come to town and go to this bar. At that time the owners had bowls of crackers set out for their customers. This man would come and mix the crackers with ketchup and clean the bowls out leaving only the dirt from his shoes behind on the floor as he left. The barkeepers got wise to this and when they saw him coming they put the cracker bowls away. Julie doesn't think he ever bought anything.

One of the other buildings that was torn down in this area was the Limbacker building. Participants at the meeting shared names of businesses that were in these buildings, those named were: C & E Bar, Copper Kettle, Dog House, Shorty's, the novelty store run by Micky McCann. This is also where Sand's Pastry Shoppe started their business. Mike Homan remembers an antique store there in 1966 or 1967. According to the 1967 St. Marys directory the Pleasant Valley Antique and Used Furniture store was located at 133 W. Spring Street. Participants remembered that one of the stores had steps that went up and down and had a landing at the top.

Marv Rupert asked why a lot of the buildings downtown had their top floors removed. Bill Huber talked about the Huber Building on the northwest corner of East Spring and South Spruce, where Circle K is now located. At one time there were three floors. On the third floor was the opera house, which had high ceilings. When the talking movies, or talkies, became popular there was no need for the opera house so the roof was removed and the ceilings lowered, this would have been in the 1920's. Two-story apartments were created using the second and third floors. There were 30 apartments created. The building burnt in December 1997. Prior to the 1997 fire, there were two other fires ruled arson. The elevator shaft and the back wall were the only remaining walls that remained after the fire. Once the fire reached the attic there was no hope of saving the building. At one time the City Café was located on the east end of the building and this section became the unemployment office. Bill Huber said that one of the conditions for getting unemployment was that the people had to be actively looking for work and the first place they inquired about employment was at the Huber Furniture store. Other businesses in the building were a kid's clothing store and a plumbing shop. Bill Huber's father had his furniture store in this building since 1939. In 1962, the Huber family bought the building. At that time building was owned by the Andrew Makely Family, Harold Neeley and Holy Rosary Catholic Church, Bill remembers having to get signatures from these people or their representatives so they could purchase the building. Bill remembers exploring the basement of what was the former City Café. In the basement was the original bar, it was in good condition but was very heavy, so they did not know how it got there. They tried to sell it but as far as he knows it was still there when the building burnt as there was no way to get it out of the basement. Prior to the 1939 there was a car dealership located in the building. Bill always wondered why there were stains on the carpet and he was told by a Mr. Sneithkamp that he had had a car dealership in the building at one time. Two questions about the Huber building were unanswered by the group: whatever happened to the arch that survived the fire; and why was it called the Camille building?

The Horse Shoe Saloon and the Bloody Bucket were discussed. Paul G. Smith believes that the Bloody Bucket was on the southwest corner of East Spring and South Pear Streets. He recalls that there was a building with one or two businesses catty cornered from what was the Kattman Feed Store and next to the Sister's Home. The 1939 Directory shows that the Wank Food Market and the Big Bun Tavern were located on this corner.

Paul G. Smith also was looking for the names or types of businesses that were located on the West Spring Streets, between North Main and Court Streets, with addresses of 302-314 West Spring Street.

As time was drawing to a close for the meeting, Beth Keuneke said that she would look at the old directories and see what she could find. In the 1915 Directory, there was a grocery, a shoe store, a meat shop, a confectionary/ice cream parlor, and a barber. The 1929 directory lists a leather store, a meat market, and a creamery. The 1939 directory lists a service station, a beauty shop, a leather store, a meat market, a barber shop, and a creamery. By 1959 there was only a service station listed.

The next Local History Round Table will be held from 1:30 to 2:30 pm on November 22, 2022 in the St. Marys Community Public Library meeting room. The public is invited to come to listen and share and ask questions about the history of the local area.