

Historically Speaking

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Millard and Marjorie Mead operated a gas station and cafe on the northeast edge of St. Paul, where Jim's Truck Stop and Skyline Cafe are now located

Here Today, Gone Tomorrow

By Julie Spilinek

This issue will conclude the tour of St. Paul as it looked 50 to 60 years ago and will feature the businesses that were located along Highway 281/92 and those that are located there now. We will travel from south to north.

As mentioned in a previous issue, Frank Blazek had the first drive-in in St. Paul, which was located on the right side of the highway, just north of the Middle Loup River. At the edge of town was, and still is, Gillham's Used Car Lot. Across the highway to the west we can find more vehicles for sale at Bockmans, which was established in 1990 at the present location. It began uptown in 1978. Across the street to the north is yet another car lot,

Jacob's Ford, which has been located on this corner for over 85 years. It now sells campers in addition to cars, pickups SUVs—a term unheard of 50 years ago. It originally featured a café, but it closed many years ago. Back across the highway to the east was another café originally known as the Whale, later as Louie's when Louie Jares purchased it. Still later it became known as Nesiba's Café. Today the building is home to Peters Funeral Home, owned and operated by Todd and Cindy Peters. A bit to the east of this was a metal building where Galen Falk had a welding and repair shop. North of the funeral home was another dealership owned by the Hall Brothers who sold Kaiser-Fraser automobiles

A Message From the President *Jessie Kiser*

I wish to thank all our visitors that came to see our Village, and all our volunteers that are there to keep the Village open.

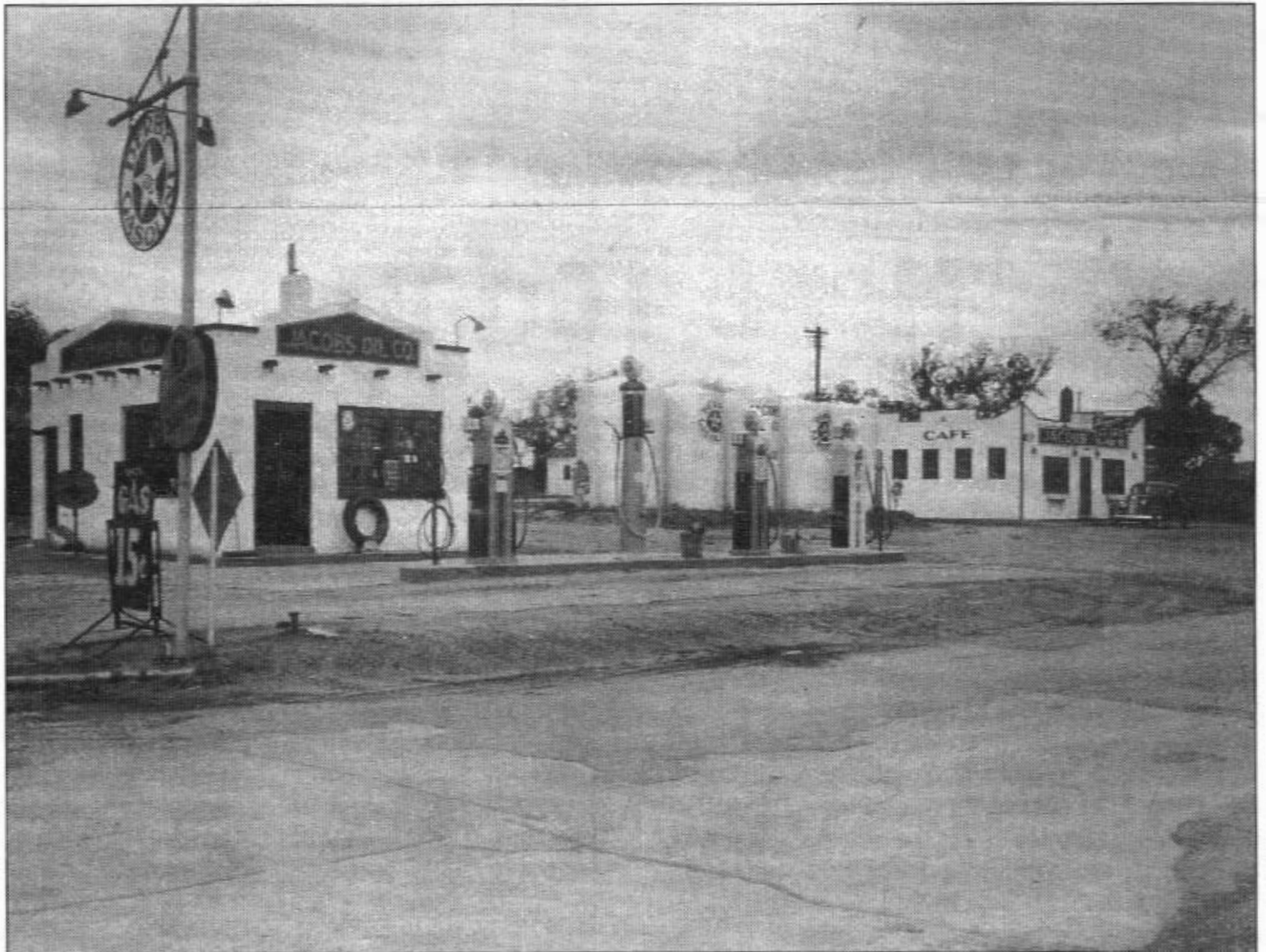
We have new roofs on all our buildings now, since the bad hail storm.

We have paid all our notes and are now debt free.

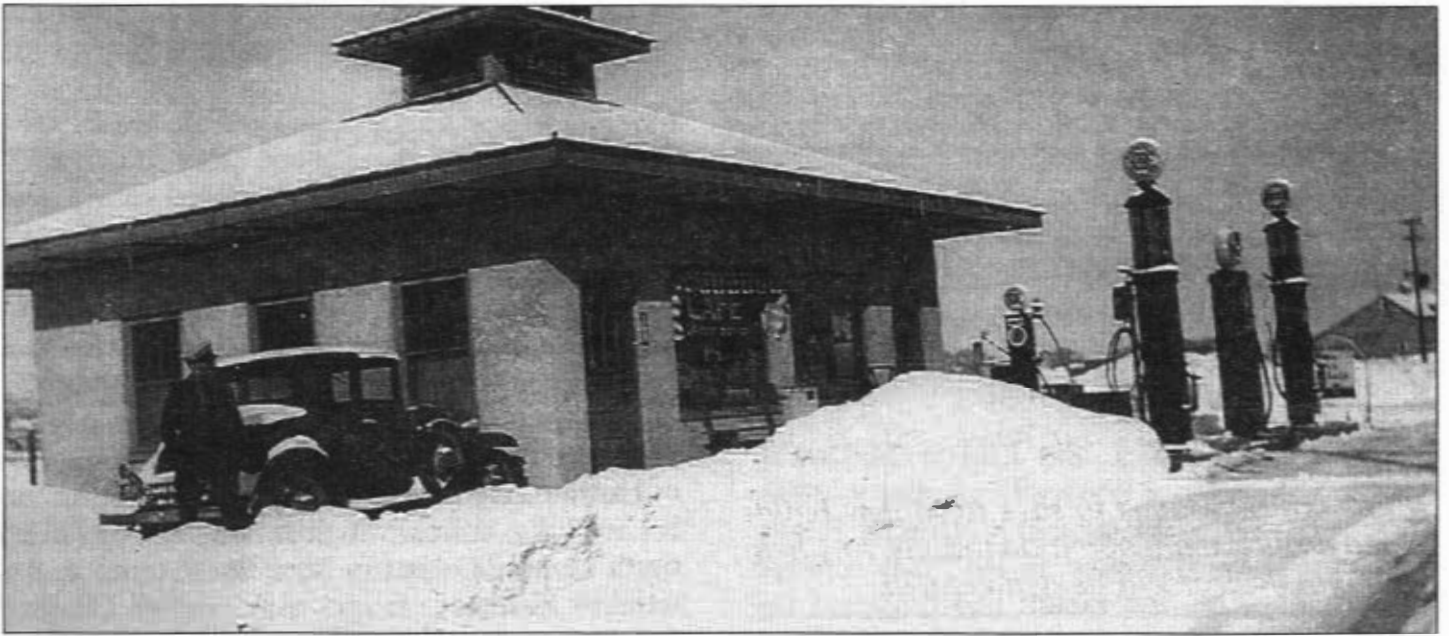
We will now start to save for a new building to display more of our donations. Any help with that project will be appreciated.

This building later became a welding shop run by Wendall Davis. This establishment and the one owned by Galen Falk were many a farmer's salvation during planting and harvesting seasons. Both were accomplished craftsmen.

Back across the highway to the west was a drive-in known as the Circle J. When it closed, it housed the Howard-Greeley Food Pantry for a short time, but was recently demolished and the lot is the "showroom" for Jacobs's campers. Moving on is Pro Lube, a business that provides oil changes and car washes, a Runza restaurant, Bomgaars and Family Chiropractic. This corner of Howard Avenue and Highway 281 was formerly the USDA office, which is now located farther north along 281, but on the east side of it in a building that is also occupied by the Natural



Jacobs Ford celebrated its 85th anniversary last year. The Jacobs family has had continuous ownership of their business at the same location for all of those 85 years.



The snow is piled high during this winter photograph of the Mead gas station and café, which was located where Jim's Truck Stop and Skyline Cafe are located today. The Meads began running the business in the 1930s

Resource District and the Howard County Medical Center's thrift store operated by the Hospital Auxiliary.

Back at the corner of Howard and 281, north across from the chiropractic office is the Pizza Hut, where the Dobish Garage stood for many years. It was established in 1934 by George and Mary Dobish. George worked on the cars and Mary did the bookkeeping. It also featured a small café in an attractive stucco building. North of this is Heritage Bank, formerly the location of Howard County Bank. Its birthplace was in Cotesfield as the Cotesfield Credit Union, later as the Sherman County Bank. Just north across Indian Street is a self-service car wash owned by Eric and Adam Blase. Between it and the Champlin Station are two residential homes and an empty lot on which Fred and Kay Meyer are building an office building. According to an article written by Janet Hruza for the *The Phonograph-Herald* in 2005, Millard and Marjorie Mead were the first operators of the Champlin gas station on the northern edge of St. Paul. They leased the station and café from Champlin in the 1930s. "There was a lot of work involved in running this station. On the window it also had printed CAFE, so that meant Marjorie had to cook meals and keep their business clean

and attractive to all who stopped by...Millard kept a daybed upstairs so that he could hear the knocking on their station door at night. He would then dutifully arise and fill the weary traveler's gas tank or even possibly fix his flat tire, which was quite common in those days. Times have changed and the little station is gone. It was replaced in 1960 with a larger building to be used as a coffee shop for truckers. The new managers were Paul and Dorothy Ambroz while Doris Forbes managed the 24-hour coffee shop/restaurant. This was again leased by Jim and Joann Urbanski in 1971 and they purchased it from Champlin in 1980."

The Champlin station and adjacent Skyline Cafe remain popular places today. To the north of it is the motel and liquor store owned and managed by Norman and Marcia Keller. They also operated a gas station as part of the enterprise until recently when it discontinued business.

Moving out of town a bit, to the north we noticed a large display of green machines when the John Deere business moved from its main street location (the building which is now the site of T.O. Haas). Leon Stanczyk purchased the John Deere business from Clarence Southard in 1970 and moved to the present location in 1975. Next is the state road yard, St. Paul Veterinary Clinic, the

Howard County Fairgrounds and last, a hog buying station.

Our last stop will be across the highway to the east where Smith Welding is in the process of erecting a large building and will be moving his welding and repair business from Third Street. Kelvin and RaNae Smith came to St. Paul in 1981 and purchased Wendall Davis's shop which originated along Highway 281, AKA Second Street, but moved to a new building at 820 3rd Street in 1977. Kelvin is now the sole owner of the business.

Further north, Mick and Loretta McDowell opened Miletta Vista Winery December 9, 2007. They had previously owned McDowell Realty located on Howard Avenue. In 2012 they suffered a devastating fire, but rebuilt and reopened the winery recently.

The first business one encounters within the city limits on the east side of 281 is the FSA complex that I mentioned above. Just south of it is a Dollar General Store that is comparable to the early dime store. It occupies the building in which Anthony's Market was located for a time. Next to it is another car lot, Fox Auto, which relocated to St. Paul from North Loup. Moving on is Wells Plumbing, which was moved from Elba about 1980 by Barb and the late Clyde Wells. The same building also houses Teresa's Floral and the State Farm Insurance Agency. Farther south is a building that features the St. Paul Physical Therapy, the Pinnacle Agency and Bootleggers liquor store. Moving along, Robyn Dvoracek has a title business; next to it is the Farm Bureau Insurance office. The building originally built by Art and Dorothy Lynch for their supper club is now occupied by NAPA Auto Parts. It was originally located along 7th Street. Slightly to the east is a Super 8 Motel. Moving south across Howard Avenue is Jay Obermiller's National Farmers Union Insurance office. This was built by his father, Harold Obermiller, who moved his office from Main Street. Employees there can walk a few feet for lunch at the Subway. This section of 281 is where Leon Nesiba had a lawn mowing sales and repair service in the 60s and 70s. Next to Subway is the Kwik Stop, formerly the Short Stop. Then it is Aurora Cooperative which was Farmer's Union for many years. Its original location was the cor-

ner of Indian and 7th. Then on to Pump and Pantry. A rather recent business known as Hardcore 4x4/St. Paul Tire Pros is next. If one is in need of a new or additional vehicle and haven't found it elsewhere, there is one more choice at U-Betcha Auto Sales which just moved into a new larger building. That brings us back to Peter's Funeral Home mentioned earlier. Fifty plus years ago this stretch of Highway 281 was devoted to more residential homes than businesses. Several businesses evolved from the homes of individuals who did repair work or selling of a product from the home.

Another long time business that isn't along the 281 corridor but can be seen from it—the S.E. Smith Lumber Company. Scott Smith purchased a lumber business from the Foster Lumber Company in Shelton, Nebraska. As was common with many early lumberyards, it also sold coal. In 1954 Paul Larsen, owner of Larsen Lumber Company, sold out to Rod Smith, son of Scott. The name was changed to S.E. Smith Lumber and Hardware. In 1997, Bill Gordon, Rod's son-in-law, moved the business to its present location.

Hair Today, Gone Tomorrow

There have been a variety of beauty and barber shops that have existed throughout the history of St. Paul—not necessarily along Main Street but located at various sites. The earliest ones were

simply part of one's home but as business and the government became involved with its rules and regulations, beauticians moved into separate buildings or a completely separate part of the house. As with so many trends, hair styles changed as often as the decades did—especially for the young.

Very early in the century women kept their hair long but wore it in braids rolled into a bun. By the 1920s it was fashionable to wear it short and often curly. During the 1930s short and plain was the rule for those suffering from the depression. By the late 40s and into the 1950s a style called the page boy was popular. Later pony tails with bangs

were the trend among the young while women wore their hair shorter—often visiting beauty shops for permanents. Girls were subject to home permanents—sometimes successful, sometimes not. The hippy culture of the 60s produced long and straight tresses. Head bands and beads accompanied this for the true hippies. During the 1970s the beehive was prominent with lots of teasing and hair spray. Later the beehive disappeared but the teasing and hair spray continued. Wigs were popular with the older women during the 70s and 80s. They were almost a fashion statement. During the 90s and into the 21st century the pony tail is once again on the scene but minus the



One of the early barber shops in St. Paul was French's Barber Shop. The men in the picture are, left, Bill Komsak, who later moved to Weston, Mr. French, and Stif Nelson.

bangs. This is probably due to their more casual lifestyle, involvement in sports and ease of care. However, they go "all out" for special events such as proms, weddings, etc.

For the male population the styles have been pretty much the same during most of the past 70 years except for an extreme change between the late 50s and mid 70s. They began spending time in front of the mirror before leaving the house. The Mohawk and duck tails required lots of hair grease and time to get the hair looking just right. By the mid 60s long hair for guys was acceptable as it, too, was part of the culture, which belonged to the young. Today many guys sport bald heads—by choice.

French's Barber Shop

(The following comments are from information from Louise and Cy Shaughnessy on February 11, 1994. Mr. French was Louise Shaughnessy's father.)

Mr. French's family lived in Kansas. He started barbering at age 16, working in a town in south central Nebraska. His family moved to Washington, but he stayed in Nebraska because he had a job.

When he came to St. Paul he worked in a shop that was in the basement of the K.C. building.

The picture on the previous page shows a bathroom in the back. Louise remembered as a child that they as a family went there for their baths.

Later the bathroom area was remodeled for a beauty shop. Mrs. Virgil Welsch and Ellen Mortensen (Mrs. Ray Paulsen) were some of the beauty operators.

Mr. French at the time of the picture charged 35 cents for a cut. He supported his family and paid his employees from this income. This is the only work Mr. French did. He was upset when he had to raise the price to 50 cents to keep up with the other shops.

Stif Nelson, the young man to the right in the

picture, was the shoe shine boy and was a brother-in-law to Bill Komsak. Louise said she remembered that the girls (she and her sister) would help clean the shop on Sunday. Their pay was a sack of candy!

Cy also commented on the wooden courthouse. When it was torn down the Wissbaum house was built from some of the lumber. The house is the one Kenneth Santin owns on Sixth Street.

School Days, Then and Now

By Julie Spilinek

By the time this is published, millions of children and young people will be sitting in classrooms around the country. I recently reread a list of Rules for Teachers from 1872 (see below) when the one room schoolhouse was the center of education, especially in Nebraska. For elementary students from the mid 1800s to early 1900s the core subjects taught were reading, writing, and arithmetic. The main reading text was the McGuffey Reader. By the beginning of the 20th century a variety of series had been introduced. During the 1940s and on into the 1950s many beginning readers were following the antics of Dick, Jane and Sally as well as Spot and Puff. Let's not forget Sally's teddy bear, Tim. As late as 1960 the McGuffey Readers were still being sold and reprints of Dick and Jane can be purchased today. Since about 1970 there have been numerous approaches to teaching kids to read. Most schools now incorporate reading as part of a comprehensive language arts program. Many of you reading this will remember how the memorization

As usual, if any information is incorrect or you have additional info, please let me know.

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of poetry was stressed. My own dad could recite the entire *Village Blacksmith* when he was young. My personal favorite is called *The Wind* by Robert Louis Stevenson that I learned in the second grade. Other name changes have occurred as arithmetic is now called math. Geography and history are often combined as social studies. Civics is replaced with Government. The slate has been replaced with the blackboard which is now the whiteboard requiring the use of markers rather than chalk. No more going outside to dust the erasers. Calculators took over for counters and typewriters eliminated pen and paper. Now computers have left this gathering dust in a closet.

Reel-to-reel picture shows and filmstrips became obsolete when VCR's and DVD's added an extra dimension to the classroom. Now it's the smart board, iPod, iPad and the Internet. These have also replaced the encyclopedia and the dictionary. Providing multiple items was first accomplished by the time consuming task of handwriting each item. Then the mimeograph machine came along, followed by the Xerox copiers. Now there are copy machines that can copy, collate, and staple materials. So teachers should have more time to teach. Not so. They now have to comply with a myriad of government regulations. After all—no child is to be left behind.

Rules for Teachers 1872

1. Teachers each day will fill lamps, clean chimneys.
2. Each teacher will bring a bucket of water and a scuttel of coal for the day's session.
3. Make your pens carefully. You may whittle nibs to the individual taste of the pupils.
4. Men teachers may take one evening each

week for courting purposes, or two evenings a week if they go to church regularly.

5. After ten hours in school, the teachers may spend the remaining time reading the Bible or other good books.

6. Women teachers who marry or engage in unseemly conduct will be dismissed.

7. Every teacher should lay aside from each pay a goodly sum of his earnings for his benefit during his declining years so that he will not become a burden on society.

8. Every teacher who smokes, uses liquor in any form, frequents pool or public halls, or gets shaved in a barber shop will give good reason to suspect his worth, intention, integrity, and honesty.

9. The teacher who performs his labor faithfully and without fault for five years will be given an increase of twenty-five cents per week in his pay, providing the Board of Education approves.

What Did You Say?

By Julie Spilinek

I recently heard an individual call into a radio station to say she had a hassock for sale. The receiving party had to ask what that was. Almost every home in the 1950s had one-- the fad of the time. Another name would be footstool. Recliners have made these items part of the past. Do you own a davenport, sofa or couch? We still refer to the last two items but no longer hear of furnishing our living room with a davenport. Family rooms or great rooms have replaced the rec room. The parlor has simply disappeared. We wash our clothes in a washer, not the washing machine. The refrigerator has simply become the fridge.

Men use to frequent a saloon, later referred to as a beer joint. More recently these establishments were known as taverns and now, bar is the most common reference. Drug stores are now known as pharmacies.

Due to restrictions of Bulk Mailings, we now have to send our newsletters First Class.

Because of the added expense, we will have only three issues sent of the "Historically Speaking" newsletter per year. We hope this doesn't discourage you from becoming a member.



HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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INSIDE: Businesses along Highway 281 are featured in this issue, which was researched and written by Julie Spilinek.

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