

PIGEON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# RECORDER

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*"If only the walls could talk"*

## A tale of Turn of the Century Baseball

By Denny Esch, Historical Society President

As described in the Pigeon Centennial Book, the pioneers, early settlers and first businessmen in Pigeon were a solid hard-working group, but found time in their busy week for recreation, amusement and socializing.

Baseball was a popular sport in the early days of Pigeon. It was on July 4, 1901 that a group of Pigeon businessmen met the businessmen of Sebewaing for a game played in Sebewaing. In the fourth inning the score was 10 to 9 in favor of Pigeon. Sebewaing was at bat and the umpire, from Sebewaing as the story is told, called a runner safe at home to tie the game. The Pigeon fans insisted the player was out by six feet. After a half hour of wrangling, Pigeon left the field promising never to play there again. A Bay Port resident, siding with Pigeon, became noisy and disorderly and was taken to "lock up" by the town Marshal. When this was discovered, the Pigeon and Bay Port fans stormed the jail and released the prisoner. That's be a story in itself!!

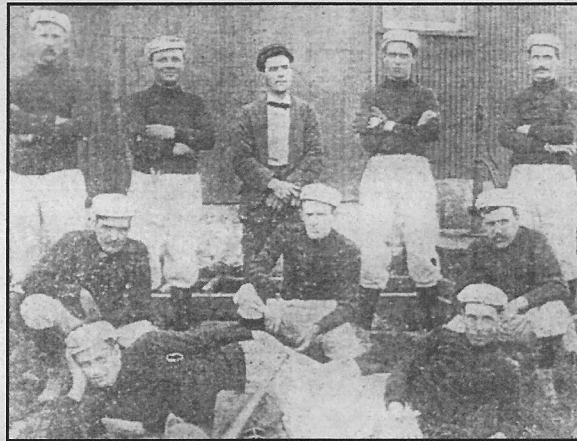
It took almost four years to get over that little ruckus, but the love of baseball prevailed and on April 29, 1905 the Pigeon Baseball Park

Association was formed. A group of players and fans leased twelve lots in the Nitz and Applegate Plat for a ball field. A fence around the field was erected as well as a grandstand. In June of 1906 the Huron County Baseball League was formed with six teams from the County. The season opener was Caseville against Pigeon.

I don't know who won the Caseville/Pigeon game, or if Pigeon and Sebewaing ever did play again in the following years. But I do know that baseball in the early 1900s was truly a "Gentlemen's Game". It was a time to socialize with friends and neighbors while cheering for both favorite teams. After the game, a cold lemonade or Barney pop along with a great baseball story was always told.

Here I am day dreaming about the early games of baseball in Pigeon. Give me an old glove and wooden bats, a baseball uniform and a cap. There is just something about baseball games in these early years. The old wood Grandstand is full of fans cheering for their favorite team.

I am setting there taking it all in... I can't help but think, "If Only The Walls Could Talk".



This Pigeon Baseball team only played ONE game! It was on July 4, 1901 in Sebewaing. The game ended in a ruckus.

## Returning to the Mud Creek School

When entering a school building we're often impressed by the solid construction, shining interior, expansive halls and classrooms that exist for modern education. Today's facilities almost resemble colleges compared to the schools of the past.

Imagine attending a school that was constructed out of logs from nearby available trees and had a roof made from cedar shake shingles from cedar trees cut along the Pigeon River.

The floor was hard-packed dirt, the desks were rough-sawn tables and chairs, and in the win-

ter a wood stove would keep you from freezing, although you might leave your coat and boots on during the worst of days. Be sure to place your ink bottle in the sawdust bin or it would freeze and break.

The Mud Creek School, originally located on Crown Road west of Brown Road, cost less than \$300.00 to build and furnish. The teacher was paid a whopping \$50 per school year.



Mrs. Maude Bauer was the first in Huron County to organize a modern concept called the P.T.A.

Visit the Woelke Center Library and peruse the pages of written history and pictures of the Mud Creek School and many other rural schools and their students.

Several third and fourth-generation families in the area will be sure to find information on family, friends and relatives.



# Orr's Drug Store

(Taken from the 2003 Pigeon Centennial Book)

Robert H. Orr, with his wife, Ethel, and their daughter, first arrived in Pigeon in the fall of 1917. Traveling by rail from Cass City, Robert was leaving his job at the Wood Drug Store to manage the Sutton Drug Store of Pigeon. Mr. Sutton was leaving his store to enter the armed services and support the war effort. Within a month of Mr. Sutton's return in January of 1919, his business was sold to Robert Orr and he left the area.

At that time, the store was located on the east side of Main Street in the building, which housed many businesses including the Pigeon Telephone Company, Spence Jewelers, and presently is the drive-through area at Independence Bank. Important merchandise at that time included Edison Phonographs and the cameras developed by George Eastman (Eastman Kodak Co.). Those cameras changed photography, making it possible for any family to own an easy to use camera and take their own pictures. Veterinary supplies were very important and the best milk shakes in town could be purchased at the fountain.

Customer service has always been important at Orr's Drug Store and in 1919 that meant having at least one German-speaking clerk. Schiller Kleinschmidt provided that expertise in the early 20's.

In the spring of 1932, Orr's Drug Store moved across the street into the building owned by Henry

McAulay, which had previously housed Sturm Motor Company. Presently the building is occupied by Huron Business Products.

Above the drug store had been the office of Dr. Thomas Sage and in 1934, Dr. C. A. Scheurer opened his practice in that location.

In 1932, after the end of prohibition, packaged liquor was sold in the drug store, a product line common to drug stores at that time. Liquor was carried for over 50 years.

Robert and his wife Ethel had four children: Ethel, Robert, John and Marjorie. Robert owned and operated Orr Appliance in Pigeon during the early 1950's.

The United States' entry into World War II lead to many area men leaving Pigeon to serve in the Armed Forces. In 1944, John Orr also would leave, having enlisted in the Army Air Force. At the close of the war he entered Wayne State University and earned a degree in pharmacy. In 1948, he returned to Pigeon with his wife Frances, and joined his father in the drug store, buying into the business in 1950 and assuming full ownership in 1957. Robert Orr worked actively in the business until his death in 1967.

In 1954, Orr's Drug Store moved to its present location after switching locations with Niebel's IGA Grocery Store.

John and his wife, Frances, had four children: Frances, Frederick, Robert and Susan.

In 1975, Orr's Drug Store entered its third generation when Fred Orr joined the business and later took ownership of the business.

Fred and his wife have two children: Robert and Heather.

Over the years, things that were traditional drug store items have made way for the new demands placed on drug stores. The soda



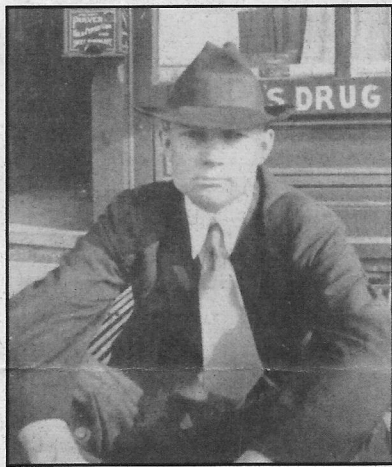
Orr's Drug Store about 1920. Shown here are Robert Orr (left) Schiller Kleinschmidt (right)

fountain – closed during World War II possibly due to a shortage of supplies – was removed some time after the war. The drug store's long partnership with Rexall Drugs ended as Rexall drifted away from the traditional family pharmacy. Liquor, which had been almost exclusively sold in drug stores, now was more appropriately stocked in convenience stores.

In their place has come a vast inventory of medications that were not yet developed when Robert Orr and John Orr started in business. The use of computers has rapidly gone from a convenience to an absolute necessity in running all aspects of the business. Administering programs from both the government and insurance companies has become a demanding part of the daily activity in the drug store.

The Orr family has been proud to do business in Pigeon and to be a part of the community for over 85 years. Pigeon has been a wonderful place to raise our children and we are sure it will continue to be long into the future.

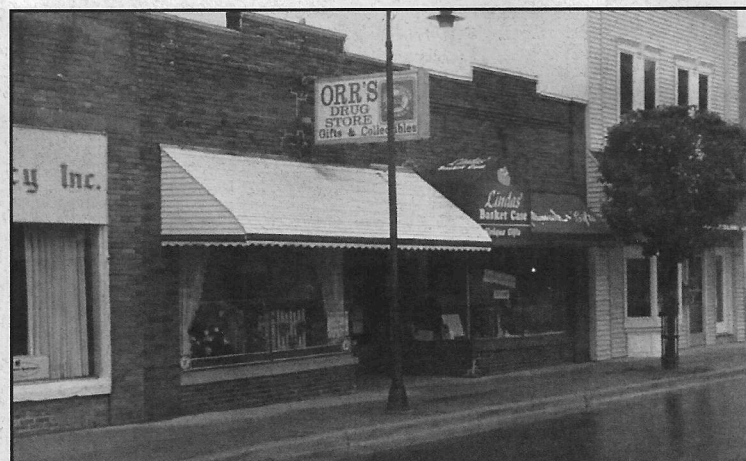
*A special thank you to Joann Haist for historical information provided.*



Robert H. Orr about 1917



Orr's Rexall Drug Store about 1949



Orr's Drug Store on Main Street in Pigeon, 2014.



### Weird Recipes:

#### How to make a McMerganser

Our last issue's recipe was for microwaved fish. How many readers tried it?

If you were skeptical about the fish recipe, you will let out a collective, "EWW!" at this one. However, you will find this recipe produces a delicious burger.

First, you'll need a merganser, buffle head, golden eye, hell diver, or any other fish duck.

Skin the duck and remove the breast. Discard all other parts.

Cut the breast into small pieces. Use a food processor to chop it into a mush. Be careful not to puree the meat. You can chop it into bits by hand if desired.

Place meat in a bowl and add chopped garlic, onion, salt, pepper, a little oregano and parsley along with a pat of butter.

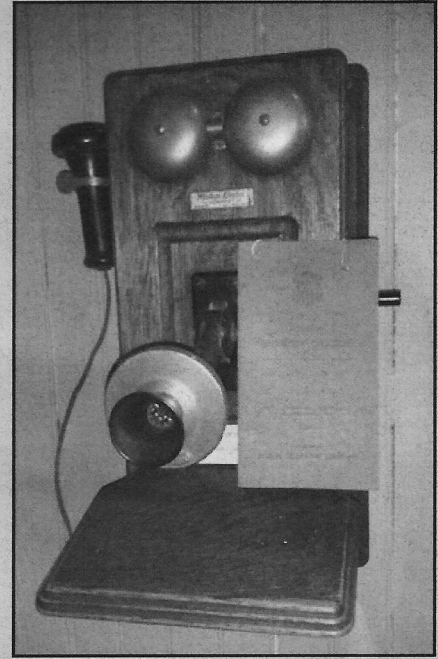
Knead the meat into a hamburger size patty and place it into the frying pan with cooking oil. If you like deep frying you can place the patty into hot grease.

Cook the patty until done and put it on a hamburger bun.

Add your favorite condiments and ENJOY!

You will be surprised how good fish duck tastes.

### From the Artifact Collection



This 1930s wooden, crank telephone (with a 1960 directory) is one of the first, of several thousands, artifacts on display at the Pigeon Historical Depot Museum in Downtown Pigeon.

## A kid growing up on Saginaw Bay: The Storm

Part 2 in a series  
by Jim Leinbach

In part 1, our fisherman had obtained his boat from Mr. Anderson, loaded in his meager equipment, locked in his oars and had proceeded west out toward Dynamite Cut.

The day was hot, still, and cloudless and the fisherman was already sweating as he approached the apex to the Weale Cut and Dynamite. He had already made up his mind to row all the way out to the main bay, knowing that a voyage that lengthy might take some time. But as we adults know, time means nothing to a twelve-year-old, so on he rowed.

The sun beat down as he passed several "fishy" spots loaded with lily pads and hidden holes that he knew would contain huge bass or perhaps fighting pike.

But big perch was his target this day and that meant reaching the "drop-off" out near Maisou Island.

Getting there was the main issue at the moment but no other fishermen were out that day so Dynamite was clear and unob-

structed and the travel was relatively fast.

As our boy arrived at the opening of the cut and the big bay he realized that the drop-off was still quite a ways away; however, undaunted, he pulled on the oars and was soon out in open water where one could see the bottom falling off into his prized spot.

Once there, he calculated the perfect location then lowered the cinder block anchor down into the depths and prepared his first night crawler presentation to the hopefully hungry perch.

He wasn't disappointed.

As he jigged the long cane pole up and down it was only moments before a golden, striped perch was being hoisted up and swung into the boat, a trophy eleven-incher. One after another followed and soon the clothesline rope stringer hanging off the side of the boat was stacked with huge lake perch -- something that fishermen nowadays would envy.

As the afternoon wore on, the fish kept biting and the sun beat down on the still water.

A twelve-year-old is often singularly focused and this kid was no exception. Putting perch

on the stringer was his only thought and he did not notice the haze that had gathered in the southwest.

Perch after perch along with an occasional enormous bullhead and bass was added to the now taught rope. Soon no more fish could be threaded onto the stack and it was getting time to row back to the landing.

Wishing he had brought another piece of clothesline to keep more fish on, the angler began arranging his gear for the journey home.

As he stepped up to the bow of the Molly to pull up the anchor he thought he heard a distant rumble of sorts and his thoughts went to the possibility of blasting at the quarry.

Again he heard the growling rumble. Now, in full consciousness, he looked toward the southwest and with uneasy surprise saw the sky had turned a deep black that stretched from the far south to the north almost to Charity Islands.

Far across the bay he watched lighting fork down again and again from the ebony sky. The air around him was dead still and

suppressingly hot.

The sun began to disappear into the growing front as the rumbles became more and more pronounced with lighting dancing across the background.

A surprisingly chilly easterly breeze rippled the slick, flat water. Further out the entire bay turned almost a florescent green dimpled with the white of what the boy recognized as whitecaps of growing size.

The fisherman dumped the anchor onto the floor of the boat. Pointing his boat toward where he thought was the mouth of Dynamite Cut, he leaned heavily into the oars.

Rowing a boat in the open waters of Saginaw Bay and Dynamite Cut is relatively easy on calm, windless water. However, the situation was changing dramatically for this kid.

He had misjudged the distance from the mouth of the cut to the drop-off. It was a lot farther away than he had thought and the towering, black wall with its flashing, exploding interior was closing in fast.

Facing west in his seat, he  
*See "KID" continued on page 4*



"KID" continued from page 3

could see the magnitude of the storm.

From the horizon to almost overhead, the sky was a viscous dark purple lit with lighting at every oar stroke. The monster storm was closing in on him a lot faster than he could row.

It seemed that something was holding his progress back and he realized that the fish stringer with its dozens of heavy perch was acting like an anchor.

Pulling in the fish meant lost rowing moments but it had to be done. So back to the stern he went and into the boat came the flopping fish.

Now, he hoped, progress would be faster and the mouth of the cut would appear sooner.

He was mistaken.

This kid had forgotten that Dynamite Cut entered the bay on an angle, without a well-defined approach. Getting to the drop-off earlier from the cut meant going south a ways toward Maisou.

Now, in haste and fear, the outline of the rushes presented a com-

pletely different picture than what he had envisioned hours earlier.

Pinpointing a destination was almost impossible.

Lighting was forking down quite close and our boy watched as a tree on Heisterman was hit with a terrific roar that split the tree wide, showering bark into the air and leaves twirling and spiraling into sky.

"I've got to get to the cattails," became the kid's only thought. He pulled on the oars so violently that the worn and water-rotted lock on his left side broke away causing him to lose his grip on the oar sending it whipping over the side and into the bay.

Panic was just below the surface of the kid's consciousness.

Thoughts of his father and grandfather and uncles came to him telling him not to venture too far out on the bay in a boat.

"That bay can turn on you in moments, so be careful and have respect for it," was the refrain from all the men in his family.

We know that few adults today or even back then had ever been in a situation now faced by this young man.

He must man-up if he were to survive.

*Next issue: Disaster!*

## Support the Historical Society

There are many ways to support the Historical Society. Donations of historical artifacts are always welcome.

The artifact, no matter what it is, always comes with a little story about its age, who owned it and how it was passed down throughout the years.

Of course, financial donations are always accepted, whether it is from a memorial gift, a donation dropped into the "box" at the door or a check sent in the mail from an anonymous donor.

Contributing nonactive members are always welcome. They can't support with time, but want to support the cause.

Another great way to support the Society is by becoming an active member. The dues are small but the rewards are great. Just give

it a try.

Meetings are held the second Monday of each month, at the Woelke Research Center starting at 6:30 p.m. sharp.

We strive to have short programs, active discussion of historical events of the Pigeon Area as well as plan for the future of the Historical Society.

We encourage new members to become active and share their ideas.

The Society would like to expand their activities in the Woelke Research Center, but we need some help to do that.

There is something interesting for everyone.

See you at the meeting or give us a call for more information: 989-453-2214 or email [eschdenny@yahoo.com](mailto:eschdenny@yahoo.com)

## Purpose of the Pigeon Historical Society

Article II of the Society Constitution reads: The purpose of this society shall be to discover, collect and preserve any material which may help to establish or illustrate the history of the Pigeon Community and surrounding region, as well as provide accessibility to the collected material for all who wish to examine or study it. The Society will also disseminate historical information to promote interest in the history of the Pigeon Community.

## Woelke Center Library filled with information

Inside the Woelke Center is a library filled with a huge assortment of information about Pigeon, the surrounding townships and Huron County including individual folders on every village and former village in the county.

Each folder contains newspaper clippings, pictures and stories on the villages and interesting information on their founding fathers, activities, industry, businesses and residents.

There are volumes dedicated to churches, schools, the Bay Port Quarry, Charity Island,

Indian Dave, the Petroglyphs, the sugar beet industry, railroads, the Fire of 1881, local tragedies, Scheurer Hospital, the Cooperative Elevator, Diebel Auto Company, and several of original copies of "The Pigeon Progress," and nearly fifty volumes of obituaries.

Everyone is encouraged to take time and visit the center library. Once you begin reading about our history it'll be difficult not to see yourself as an integral part of this evolving story of life.

## Times Have Changed!

*From the pages of the  
Progress-Advance, February 1, 1952*

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