

Wright Clothes at the Wright Price: Wright's Mens Store

By Denny Esch, Historical Society President

In our last edition of the "Recorder," I reminisced about Elsie Trowbridge and "The Coffee Shop". My mindset is in the early 1960s and my teen years and the business places that were Pigeon as I knew it.

The Pigeon Roost, Bushes Restaurant (then named Pigeon Lane's Restaurant, Schumacker Meat Market, People's Oil and Gas, Ben Franklin Store, Gambles Hardware, Oesch Shoe Store...the list goes on.

These businesses are long gone and many of their storefronts have had a major facelift. I sometimes have a hard time remembering where a certain store was located.

However, a store I do remember well is Wright's Mens Store with a wide range of clothing for men.

Having entered manhood, my mom and dad took me to Wright's to buy a new suit.

Being a chubby young teenager, they knew that Nelmer would alter the pants and jacket to fit perfectly.

Historical records tell us that Nelmer, his parents and siblings came to Pigeon from Paris, Illinois in 1931. His dad owned a bakery where Haist Flowers now located.

He married a local girl named Verna Eicher in 1939. Nelmer then worked for Eicher Cleaners for six and a-half years, always dreaming of owning his own business someday.

Being a talented tailor, it only made sense to have a clothing business.

Nelmer realized his dream in 1947 when he opened a clothing store with business partner Paul Racheter, on Main Street. Two years later he purchased Racheter's share of the



Nelmer Wright ready to wait on a clothing customer inside Wright's Mens Store.

business and the store was officially named Wright's Mens Store.

The clothing line included everything from Carhartt overalls to the best Sunday clothes, top hats, pajamas, gym attire, pants, shirts and local schools' varsity jackets.

"Wright Clothes at the Wright Price" was the store's slogan.

After many years of successful business in the Pigeon community, Wright's Men Store closed in January of 1973.

The building became occupied by Mutual Savings and Loan and was later torn down as

a new building was built.

Today the building houses Independent Bank.

I remember Nelmer well, as he and Verna raised a great family in this great town.

I'm in need a new altered suit. How I wish I could walk into his store again and to be greeted with a friendly smile and feel that small town friendliness from a hometown businessman.

And as I look back on the days of my youth, I can't help but to think, "If only the walls could talk."

Pigeon has \$14,000 Fire

Theatre to be rebuilt at once

Information taken from two news reports in the December 5, 1930 edition of the Pigeon Progress newspaper.

The Gem Theatre and the old Leipprandt store building were burned to the ground Thursday (Nov. 27, 1930).

The fire alarm was turned in about six o'clock in the morning. When the fire was discovered the rear of the theatre was falling in and the rear of the Leipprandt building was in flames. Both buildings

were of wooden construction and old structures. It was impossible for the fire department to save at least a part

of the buildings. The buildings were joined together by a covered stairway.

The Gem Theatre was owned by Wesley Thiel. The loss on the building was placed at \$5,000, covered by insurance of \$3,000.

The Leipprandt building was owned by the Huron County Creamery Co. The loss is placed at \$7,000 covered by an insurance of \$5,000.

J. W. Leipprandt & Son who recently vacated the

See "Gem," page 4



The rebuilt Gem Theater

PIGEON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 523 • Pigeon, Michigan 48755
989-453-3242

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Meeting Location:

Woelke Historical Research Center.

Tired of Living Unknown Man Shoots Himself Yesterday

The Tragedy occurred on Main Street, He Came From Saginaw on Morning Train

Pigeon Progress

One of the most shocking tragedies that has ever occurred in this village, happened yesterday forenoon in the very heart of the village, when an unknown man in sight of fully a dozen people took his life.

The fellow was first seen shortly after the 9:59 train from Saginaw came in. He strolled around town for some time and finally went into J. A. McLean's hardware store and asked to purchase a revolver, and after being told they had none, at once went to Leipprandt Bros. hardware store and purchased one, making the remark that he intended to shoot a dog out in the country.

He also requested the clerk to load the weapon but the clerk said there was no use loading it then, and the fellow said he guessed not.

He walked out of the store and seemed to be in good spirits.

After purchasing the revolver he visited a couple of bars but did not drink enough to make him intoxicated.

In fact there is no doubt that he was perfectly sober when he committed the act.

At about 20 minutes to 12 o'clock a number of people on the street saw a man standing in front of Silas Bedford's residence examining a revolver. All at once to their horror he raised the weapon to his breast and fired.

Immediately afterwards he fired the second shot in his breast, and then raised the revolver to his mouth firing the third shot. At that he made one step forward and then reeled and fell backward to the ground. The whole affair was done so quickly that everyone who saw it just watched in amazement. As soon as he fell a dozen people rushed to where he was laying and in less than a minute from the time he fell, life was extinct.

The body was at once taken to W. A. Schriber's undertaking rooms where at this writing it now is. In the afternoon an inquest was held by Justice Pruner and the finding of the jury was



"The man came to his death by his own hand, by shooting himself twice in the breast and once in the mouth with a .32 calibre double action revolver."

There was nothing found about the body to establish its identity. A pipe, handkerchief, two spools of thread and eleven cents in money, besides a few other articles were found in his pockets

He was a man of about thirty years of age, fair complexion, dark hair, light brown eyes, height five feet eight inches, weight about 190 pounds. He wore a dark blue serve suit and a gray hat.

Conductor Ward of the train on which the man arrived, stated that he got on at Saginaw and paid his fare to Sebewaing. At Sebewaing he again paid his fare to Bad Axe.

Those who saw him just be-

fore he committed the rash act say that he appeared sound mentally and quite an intelligent fellow.

Word was at once sent to Saginaw to see if anything was known of him there, but up to this time nothing has been received.

No cause is known of his rash act and probably never will be.

Unless his identity is established and the body sent for, the funeral will be conducted from Schriber's undertaking rooms at 5 o'clock Sunday afternoon.

Bay City Times IDENTIFIED BODY Pigeon Suicide a Brother of Mrs. McMorris

Wm. McMorris who went to Pigeon yesterday in the hopes of identifying the body of a man supposed to be Samuel Zeibeck.

Mrs. McMorris' husband re-

turned at noon today fully satisfied that the dead man was his brother-in-law. He made arrangements to have the body shipped here today, and the funerals which will be private, will be held from the undertaking rooms tomorrow.

Zeibeck shot himself about 12 days ago, and it is due to the action of the undertaker in Pigeon that the body was not interred before finding out who the man was and whether he had any relatives of not.

"We are very grateful to the undertaker for the course he pursued," said Mr. McMorris, "for the other authorities there insisted on having the man buried, and he was practically alone in declaring that it would not be held until all hope of identification had passed. The funeral, of course, will be private, on account of the length of time since death occurred."

Follow up in Pigeon Progress:

Zeibeck was about 37 years old and a single man. He had not been here for several years, and his relatives here had not heard from him in a long time.

They know of no reason why he should have taken his own life.

The remains were taken to Bay City Saturday afternoon, by undertaker Schriber, and the funeral took place Sunday. Zeibeck, the deceased had worked in a barber shop in Sebewaing for several weeks.



Pigeon Historical Society (Christmas) Gifts Ideas!

Pigeon 2003 Centennial Book (New).....	\$25.00
Pigeon 1978 Diamond Jubilee Book	
Uncirculated	\$50.00
Lightly Used	\$25.00
150 Years of Huron County	\$40.00
Huron County Museum Puzzle	\$15.00
Rails Around the Thumb	\$22.00
Every Photo Has A Story, by Bill Diller	\$27.50
Please contact any Historical Society member or call Clayton Esch at 989-453-2143.	

Make your tax deductible check to payable to:
Pigeon Historical Society

Family Photos part of Community's Heritage

The Pigeon Historical Society has a large collection of historical postcards and photographs. Many of these images have been enlarged, and are on display in the Depot Museum and the Arthur J. Woelke Historical Research Center. We are always on the lookout for other pictures that are not in our collection. It is true that a picture is worth a thousand words, and we are in search of those images.

During the September County Historical Weekend, Duane Wurst was in the Research Center scanning images. We had advertised that we were looking for historical Pigeon area family photographs and several people showed up with boxes of family pictures. Duane looked through the images and decided which ones were suitable for our collection. Once scanned, the images were returned to their owner.

One special images was brought in by Dorothy Schuette-Thummel. It was the picture shown at right of The Maplerose Dairy, a business owned and operated by Charles Heck, Dorothy's grandfather. The Dairy was located outside of Pigeon on what is now M-142. It is believed that the picture was taken sometime around 1923.

If you have family photographs which show anything that you would consider of interest to the community, please contact a board member. Duane will be holding scanning events again this winter and spring. Call him at 989-545-5240 for more information.



Standing in front of the Maplerose Dairy truck are, back row, front left, Christine Smith Tetreau, Harold McDougall. Front row, Cladys Smith Inscho, Alvin Heck, Helen Heck Krueger, Bernice McDougall Malpass, Rollie Smith, Viola Heck Schuette.



From the Pigeon Progress, June 18, 1937

Former Pigeon Man Loses Out On \$2,000 Rat Hunt Judgement

(From Detroit Free Press) Saginaw, June 12 -- The \$2,000 rat hunt of Edward Diefenbach is now just a rat hunt.

Two years ago last October Diefenbach went into a grocery store and found a rat hunt in progress.

When the rat took refuge in a shock of corn that was part of the store's decorations, Diefenbach rushed forward to stamp on the rat.

At that precise instant, the store's butcher hurled a fish knife at the rat, and struck Diefenbach in the leg.

A jury in Judge Alfred P. Pierson's court in April, 1936, awarded Diefenbach \$2,000 for injuries to his leg, against Earl Hester, the butcher, and the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co., owners of the store.

This week the Supreme Court reversed the judgement.

A kid growing up on Saginaw Bay:

"A Wrong Decision"

Part 7 in a series by Jim Leinbach

This stormy evening found our adventurous ice fisherman a quarter-mile off the North Shore on Sand Point, right in the teeth of a tremendous northeast winter storm. Once outside his shanty the kid was nearly paralyzed by the sheets of freezing rain and snow that were driven by an almost thirty mile-an-hour wind. These factors and the total blackness had obliterated any reference points for a safe return to the shore.

Blind surroundings, the howling wind and stinging rain immediately enveloped the boy into a sense of vertigo and confusion. Standing out in this maelstrom the boy's only source of reality was gripping the shanty's tow rope with all his might, for the slipperiness of the ice made movement almost impossible.

At one point the wind blew the kid away from his shack sending him sprawling onto the ice, and only by wrapping the tow rope around his arm was he able to pull himself back to his structure and stand up.

Panic was beginning to set in.

Feeling around the shanty with his frozen gloves he found the door and realized that it had been facing the ice mountain and in his mind he remembered that was the direction to salvation.

The boy knelt down and madly tore at his sled in an effort to release it from its icy grip.

Freeing it but without any light source, the boy was reduced to feeling around on the surface like a blind person for the sled's tow rope which had become frozen under an inch of slushy water. Locating it and wildly jerking on the rope and sled he was able to release his equipment, stand up and momentarily and get his meager bearings.

Now, with numb hands, soaked coat, and ice clogged boots, he let go of the shanty and took his first shuffling steps in the blackness toward where he thought the mountain must be.

Walking was tremendously difficult what with the wind, slashing rain and terrible footing and within a minute he had slipped and fallen twice

drenching his already freezing jeans and jacket. His boots seemed to weigh a ton each and were so enveloped in frozen slush his gait resembled that of Frankenstein's Monster.

Pulling the sled across these conditions had become a tremendous burden and the kid resorted to jerking and lunging ahead with the tow rope only to lose footing and fall again.

After these falls and the effort of again standing up, his bearings on the mountain were completely distorted and in near panic he tried to speed up his momentum, but in what direction?

After ten or so minutes of agonizing travel the ice terrain underfoot began to change slightly and the boy was certain he was approaching the mountain. Encouraged and excited with this discovery his panic subsided a bit and he struggled on in what he thought was a straight line.

But in the boy's confusion and fright he had completely forgotten about the crack that always formed on the northwest side of the hill.

He didn't think about the wind shift that had occurred and the dynamics of lake ice when subjected to wind force and temperature. His only thought was to reach the mountain which would afford him some measure of familiarity and guidance through the blackness and onto land.

The boy put his head down and lunged forward with the sled.

Yes, there appeared to be an incline to his steps, but without the ability to see down even to his boots his efforts were more like walking in space in a space suit rather than on ice.

As in life, tragedy befalls humans often without warning, and now – with sudden and absolute unexpectedness – the kid felt a slight downward pressure to his steps.

A wild surge of panic exploded in his brain, his feet fell out from under him, and just like dropping down an elevator shaft, he plunged through the ice skin that covered the pressure crack and the icy waters of Saginaw Bay closed over him.

Next: Man vs. Nature. The age-old struggle of life.

History of Pigeon: Waterworks

When village leaders discussed a water system at a meeting on May 13, 1899, they were more interested in for fire protection than household convenience.

A committee was appointed, but the issue lay dormant until August, 1910, when area villages again became seriously interested in providing water to the homes.

At a cost estimated at \$14,000, water would be available for anyone that desired it. To construct the system, each property owner would be assessed \$3.50 for each \$1,000 of valuation.

Thirteen bidders from Detroit and Chicago and Pigeon State Bank responded to the bond offer. Construction of the system began soon after, which included a 15' diameter by 45' deep reservoir at the well site. The water system was constructed of all wooden mains. A section of those wooden mains is on display at the Pigeon Historical Depot Museum.

A water tower was built at the well site on

North Main St. in 1921, to provide a gravity-fed water supply to the village. Wooden mains were replaced with iron pipes in 1925.

There were some negative opinions about this decision, stating that the wooden mains would hold under the fifty-four pounds pressure and the expense was therefore not warranted and unnecessary. However, in August of that year, a contract was awarded to T.C. Brooker & Son of Detroit to install 14,300 feet of iron main hydrants strategically located.

The water tower and the steeple of Cross Lutheran Church were identifying landmarks of Pigeon for several decades. The steeple was torn down in 1980 and the water tower in 1987. During its 64 years of existence, water service was interrupted only a few times because of pump failure and once on January 31, 1963, when the tank froze.

In 1985, a new water tank was constructed on village property on the west side of town.

Because of an inadequate supply of water for the village produced from its several wells, negotiations began with the Village of Caseville to bring water to Pigeon from Caseville's water intake in Saginaw Bay through pipes along Caseville Road. A \$3 million grant and loan was secured from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for this purpose. After a long period of construction and several delays, water from Saginaw Bay was introduced into the Pigeon system in late summer of 2000.

The old wells, which were no longer in use, were subsequently capped.

Pigeon Trivia:

Pigeon is the 9,652 second largest village in the U.S. As of 2014 its population stood at 1,173.

It's 3.4% smaller than it was in 1990 when its population peaked.

Its residents are primarily Caucasian and about half of them can claim middle-European (German) heritage.

Commerce is made up of mostly agriculture and small industry.

"Gem," from page 1

Leipprandt building say they had \$2,000 worth of merchandise stored in the second floor of the building which was destroyed.

The Leipprandt building was erected in 1887 by a man by the name of Applegate who was station agent here at the time. It was the oldest business building in Pigeon.

It was used as a creamery for a time and later purchased by Leipprandt Bros., who for many years occupied it for a general store.

The Gem Theatre building was built by Edward Hamm in 1886.

A Mr. McAulay used the first floor for a store for about three years, while the second floor was used as a meeting place for the English Methodist Church Society. Later it was occupied by McLean & Heasty as a hardware store, G. C. Heineman, as a furniture store and W. A. Schriber as a furniture store.

Theatre To Be Rebuilt, Will Be A House of Credit To Pigeon. Will Seat 400.

Wesley Thiel stated Tuesday that the Gem Theatre which was destroyed by fire last week, will be rebuilt a larger and much more beautiful play house.

Mr. Thiel, by purchase from the Huron County Creamery Co., will have more ground space on which to erect the new building.

The new Gem Theatre will be one of the best in the Thumb of Michigan. It will be of fire tile and brick construction and will have a seating capacity of 400. The destroyed theatre could seat 260.



Wesley Thiel at the entrance to the Gem Theatre with daughter Phillis.

Times Have Changed

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Koegel's	
Skinless Franks	
5 lb. Box	3.29
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Koegel's	
Ring Bologna	lb. .69
Small — Meaty	
Spare Ribs	lb. .55
Round — Boned	
Pot Roast	lb. .85
Whole — for freezer	
Pork Loin	lb. .68
Boneless — Rolled	
Pork Roast	lb. .59
Chuck Steak	lb. .65
Schumacher's Market	
Pigeon, Mich.	Phone 453-3421

Christmas Giving Idea! Historical DVDs

If you're looking for a unique Christmas gift, stocking stuffer or just love history, we have a nice selection of Historical DVDs produced by Pigeon Native Al Eicher.

At just \$22 each, these videos are the perfect gift for the history buff in your life.

Contact Clayton Esch at 453-2143 to purchase your copy today!



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.