

YESTERDAY

News from the Tavistock and District Historical Society

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WINTER 2006



Photo: Interior of Weitzel's General Store located at 4 Woodstock Street North, Tavistock.
Emerson Weitzel (right) and Ruby Quehl. Man behind with moustache is unknown.

"CHRISTMAS AT THE GENERAL STORE"

Museum Display – November 25, 2006 to January 6, 2007

**Tavistock & District
Historical Society Inc.**

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Emerson Weitzel's General Store

by Marilyn Pearson, granddaughter of Emerson Weitzel

In 1918, Emerson Weitzel opened the General Store on Woodstock Street North in the Roth Block, Phone 54. As General Merchant, he sold clothing, footwear, hats, gloves, dry goods, material and linens, confectionery, linoleum floor covering, rugs, dishes, china, groceries, drapery, and tobacco products.

During 46 years in business, Emerson employed Henry Heinbuch, Fred Heinbuch, Clarence Neeb, and Ruby Quehl, all dedicated workers that worked tireless hours at the store providing personal attention to each customer when filling their weekly order. Clarence Neeb specialized in the flooring part of the business, measuring and laying linoleum. Fred Heinbuch made deliveries by bicycle. He was often seen riding his bicycle with a 50-pound sack of potatoes on his shoulder.

Emerson and his wife Sarah lived at 164 Woodstock Street North in Tavistock and raised three children: Dorothy, Beatrice, and Henry. They all worked eagerly in the store after school and on weekends unloading boxes of goods in the basement and carrying supplies to the main floor, and climbing ladders to stock shelves from the floor to the ceiling. They also filled phone orders by measuring large



Woodstock Street looking north with Weitzel's store, centre right, darker awning.

quantities of oatmeal, flour and sugar. If a customer had items such as peppers, or tomatoes on the list, which Emerson did not carry, grandchildren helped out on Saturday taking change over to Peppler Bros. to purchase fresh vegetables to fill the order. Loyal customers would then travel into town after their long day on the farm to pick up their order. Socializing and catching up on news around the pot belly stove on a Saturday evening was part of the outing. The store remained open until all business was complete – often until 10:00 p.m.

Beatrice spent countless hours adding up sales bills. She also walked door-to-door delivering sales flyers to each home in the village. Henry was his father's right hand helper. Henry learned the business and was counted on to complete any job. Even after completing high school, Henry would travel from his home in Kitchener to help his Dad at the store.

If you needed a new suit, from time to time a salesman would come to the store to measure you. Only the finest fabric was selected and a quality suit would be ready in a few weeks. The smell of leather lingered in the footwear department where boxes of shoes made of only the finest leather were piled from floor to ceiling.

The candy counter was a favourite spot for all of the Berg, Kaufman, and Weitzel grandchildren. Five cents would buy an adequate supply of jawbreakers and hard candy. Only on a special occasion, such as your birthday, were the grandchildren allowed a "free" chocolate bar of their choice!! What a fine treat this was.

So how much did items cost at the General Store? Ads in the Tavistock Gazette listed specials and bargains on a weekly basis. Descriptive ads are a delight to read as follows:

1918 – 1920 – Weitzel & Heinbuch General Merchants

- Mens suits, sizes 36 to 42 - Regular price \$15, on sale for \$12
- 500 yards of Lace and Insertion at 4 cents per yard.
- Lennox Soap - 5 cents a bar
- Salmon, 1 grade - 24 cents a tin
- October 1920 – The season is here when you want a good suit of Underwear.

We have a fine assortment of Men's & Boy's, Ladies' and Children's. Come and get your needs.

Tavistock & District Historical Society Inc.

37 Maria Street,
Box 280,
Tavistock, Ontario,
Canada NOB 2R0

**MUSEUM
HOURS:**
Saturdays
10am-12 noon

Other times
by appointment

continued on next page

MUSEUM CALENDAR:

Nov. 25/06 – Jan. 6/07
Christmas at the
General Store

Jan. 13 – Feb. 24
Dear Old Golden
School Days

March 3 – April 28
Tavistock – A Trip
Back In Time

May 5 – June 30
Quilts Galore

July 7 – August 25
Strike Up The Band!
Tavistock's Tattoos

Sept. 1 – October 20
Land of Milk,
Cheese and Honey

October 27 – Nov. 17
Honouring Our Veterans

Nov. 24 – Jan 5/08
Bless This House –
Our Churches

Speaker Series

January 17, 2007
The Flax Industry
In Tavistock

June 20, 2007
(to be announced)

Annual General Meeting

March 31, 2007
Tavistock – A Trip
Back In Time

- Just arrived - A car of sugar, Buy Now!
- Toys – Don't miss looking them over for the variety is here that will convince you to buy
- Handkerchiefs – In endless profusion for young and old. An ever popular gift.

1962 – 1964 - E. Weitzel General Merchant

- Clark Beans - 2 tins for 33 cents,
- Free chinaware was included with Quaker Oats - 49 cents a package
- Oxydol and Breeze Laundry Soap – giant box, 75 cents
- Hush Puppies Shoes \$8.95 pair
- “Bargains at Weitzels” - Silk and Nylon thread – all colors 5 cents a spool
- “For the Easter Parade” – Whisper nylon hose in new Spring Shades – 89 cents
- Quality was a priority “Troutman Garments” are guaranteed to give satisfaction or money refunded.



Emerson and Sarah Weitzel

Christmas was a special time at the store. Quality gift items included linen tablecloths made in Ireland, pillowcases, viscose and nylon blankets, and Forsyth ties were top sellers. Simply wonderful Christmas tree decorations, bells, pinecones, balls, tinsel, candles, garland, and foil stars created beautiful Christmas displays. Items were selected with care by bustling shoppers.

Emerson was generous to his workers at Christmas. As a bonus, they each received one dozen oranges! Complimentary calendars were given to customers each year as a token of thanks and appreciation. Emerson and Sarah always took care in selecting calendars with meaningful pictures. One in particular was of two young girls who looked like their daughters, Dorothy and Beatrice. Today, grandchildren cherish these framed calendars in their homes. No cost is too high to pay when “E. Weitzel” calendars come up for sale at estate auction sales.

Emerson kept meticulous hand written accounts and records for each year of business. Thanks to son Henry, financial records have been preserved. Analyzing the General Ledger brings business transactions over a 46 year period into perspective. It is interesting to note that in 1923 sales for the year totaled \$24,844.76, approximately \$2,000.00 per month. Sales peaked in 1948 with a grand total of \$56,220.91 per year.

As owner of the store, Emerson accounted for all goods taken from the store. In 1964, \$503.60 in goods were taken for home use, along with \$671.00 in paid services. It has also been told that if farm customers did not have cash to pay for their weekly orders, they often brought eggs or fresh meat or cured sausage in exchange for their weekly groceries and supplies.

A *Farewell Sale* started in March 1964 with a Public Auction in June. All remaining stock, store fixtures, and chattels were sold with goods being passed out the back door beside the railway line. It was a three day event. With this closing, the last general store in the Village of Tavistock passed out of existence.



Emerson Weitzel (left) and son, Henry Weitzel

Notice in the *Tavistock Gazette* – June 10, 1964

My Sincere Thank you

For more then 45 years it was my privilege to serve the people of Tavistock and community as General Merchant, and during those years it gave me great pleasure to do so. To all those who entrusted their business to me, please accept my sincere appreciation and warmest thanks.

Emerson Weitzel



Tavistock Fall Fair Display

Behind the Scenes

This year has been, and continues to be, a very busy year behind the scenes at the museum and archives building. In 2005, a total of 86 donations from 55 donors were numbered and catalogued. These donations consisted of 256 items for the archives and 129 items for the museum.

In 2006, an additional 114 donations from 66 donors have been processed. These donations consisted of an additional 370 items for the archives and 176 items for the museum. The accessions committee includes Roy Erb and Mary Nicklas along with volunteers Barb Quehl and Jane Chesney.

Images in Glass

The Lemp Studio Collection of some 4,000 glass plate and plastic negatives now resides in the Society's facilities. The method of cataloguing and describing each individual item in the collection has been finalized. Now begins the long and careful process of handling each negative. First each negative must be inspected for cracks and chips and then cleaned of dust using a very soft brush, compressed air and if possible distilled water on the non-emulsion side of the glass plate. The emulsion is the actual dried chemical solution that is the image. Great care must be taken to avoid finger contact with the emulsion since the natural oils on the fingers may damage the emulsion.

Once a group of negatives have been cleaned they can be scanned into a computer, processed using image editing software and then printed at roughly 8 inches by 10 inches to fit in a 3-ring binder. In addition lists are made describing each image and assigning it a number, description, category and sub-category. These listings are then used both to create a label for the image as well as input for a future searchable database so that images of different types can be searched and listed using a computer.

Finished images are then stored on DVD's to keep a permanent record. The equipment (scanners, computers and printers), their use and providing the finished images are being provided by two of the society's members. The process to handle this collection has been tested on approximately 300 images so far, but obviously much remains to be done.

Hopefully, through your donations to the Society, we will have adequate funds available to pay for the materials used to print (ink, paper) and store/display (DVD's, binders, storage sleeves) the finished images of Tavistock's historical past.

Honouring Our Veterans

by Susan Pellow

The theme for the November display at the Tavistock Historical Museum was Honouring Our Veterans. This exhibition included uniforms, medals and personal war memorabilia of local Veterans. Also posters, pictures and newspapers from both world wars decorated the walls and show cases. Special tours were held for the residents of the Maples Home for Seniors as well as the Grade 4 class at Tavistock Public School.

The Year of the Veteran project is in the process of being compiled into a book for the Museum/ Archives. Also a second DVD containing all photographs collected of the Tavistock and District Veterans is being made and will be for sale soon.

We would like to thank everyone who loaned and donated items for this display.

Museum Themes

Our monthly displays feature items related to the theme as well as artifacts from the Historical Society's permanent collection of Tavistock and area memorabilia.



Grandma's Kitchen - Museum Display