

Railroad Worker 40 Years; Born In Jenny In '77

By Roy Truax
206 Scott Street

I was born in Jenny in 1877 in a house located where St. John's church now is. My parents were Robert Truax and Amelia Marquardt Truax. My parents died a day apart, dad when he was 73 years old, and mother when she was 72. That was 25 years ago. Mother came here from Germany when she was three years old.

My older brother, Charles, who was born in 1886, was deaf and dumb. He was drowned above the dam while home for a week's vacation from a school he was attending at Delavan. He was 13 years old at the time.

Another brother, Myron, was killed when he was eight years old while riding on a wagon when the team ran away.

Two of my sisters, Mrs. Pete (Mary) Noel and Mrs. Frank (Eva) Taylor, and a brother, Louis Truax, live at St. Francis, Canada. Another sister, Mrs. Mike (Rhoda) Lemmer, lives at Little Forks, Minn., and another brother, Fred Truax, is a resident of Wauwatosa. Louis ran a dory here before moving to St. Francis. A sister, Mrs. Jim (Norah) McQuade has passed away.

My dad was a policeman on the Merrill department for many years.

My grandfather, August Marquardt, mother's father, lived on a farm seven miles south on what is now Highway 51. He would walk in to Jenny for supplies and carry a 75-pound sack of flour home on his back.

Grandmother made me my first pair of pants, thrashing the flax and spinning the linen herself.

In the early days, when this area was more or less virgin wilderness, there was not the variety of food that is to be had today. Out in the clearings, breakfast consisted of bread spread with lard, and coffee made from barley. The noon meal would be thick milk, and potatoes with their jackets on. Supper was a repetition of breakfast.

Even in the city, salt pork and beans, and cabbage made up many meals. Brown sugar was used.

I learned the butcher business and followed it for 13 years. I worked for McCarthy and slaughtered and made sausage for Thielmann's two shops. In 1899 I went to work for the railroad and after three years went to the switch yard, where I worked, and was in charge for 37 years.

I recall that the first engineer on the switch engine was Johnny Murphy and his son, John, was fireman. Cy Dewey was the first switch yard foreman.

Gil Little was conductor of the first work train between here and Tomahawk and Otto Gebert was engineer.

Among my early recollections are George Foster, with the first high-wheeled bicycle; an elderly lady named Kline, who lived at the corner of Court and Third streets and raised peanuts every year; the fire in 1881 which destroyed Sig. Heinemann's clothing store, and Strickland's jewelry store, located near the present stop light; Doc Berger, the dentist, with his trotting horses, and Frank Slinger and Charles Mihill, who also had trotting horses; the pop shop near the present Grund's tavern, which the late Andrew Millsbaugh's father operated; and the school so crowded that half of the pupils went in the morning and the other half in the afternoon.

Around 1884, old Doc Anderson had the first milk route and Oscar Frazier used to deliver for him. Hank Fuller, who was located where the Al Wendt farm now is, started a route about the same time.

Strasser ran one of the first restaurants, near the present stop light.

Some of the green horses that were brought here to be broken for driving and saddle, got loose one time and a bunch of fellows started to round them up. One of these "braves" backed through the door of Wakeley's Drug Store, at the site of the present A & P building, and all that could be seen of him was his head sticking out the front door. Some of the fellows went around to the back of the store, and chased this wild horse out and the remarkable part of it all was that nothing was broken.

I was married 37 years ago to Della Beas, who has been a resident here for 67 years.

Old Grist Mill

On the south side of the Wisconsin river, opposite the foot of Mill street was the site of the old Spiegelberg grist mill. Many Merrill people had hundreds of pounds of corn and other grain ground there. Pete Loysen was Spiegelberg's flour-maker.



Left to right: George Curtis, Jr., Dr. Arthur Curtis, Mrs. Arthur Curtis, A. T. Curtis, Mrs. A. T. Curtis, Jr., and Ernest Curtis. This picture was taken in Council Grounds State Forest about 1920. George G. Curtis was a great admirer of this park and spent many pleasant days in this natural beauty spot.

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