

'Tomorrow's Saturday'

(Cont'd from P. 4)

were paid fifteen to eighteen dollars, possibly twenty.

Cook Brothers' Store carried everything. The store was seventy-five feet long and almost the entire east side was filled with shoes for men, women and children. A ladder ran on a track the full length of the store from the floor to the high ceiling giving easier access to the boxes of shoes filling the shelves. All kinds of warm underwear, footwear, heavy wool Soo pants, jackets and shirts were carried for the woodsmen. Stores were so crowded, clerks had to elbow their way through.

In May, 1914, Cooks added a new department in their store. Half of the basement in the present Vaughn's Store was made into a variety store. There were beautiful hand-painted dishes from Germany and Japan, imported dinnerware from England and lovely etched glassware. All kinds of toys, books for all ages, and games were a delight to see and an unbelievable treat if a purchase could be made.

There were salted peanuts, peanuts in the shell and pail after pail of every kind of candy for only ten cents per pound. In this place a child was caught up in a wonderland. There was electric service during the forenoons of Monday and Thursday only, so the basement was lit by oil lamps which had to be cleaned and filled every day.

THIS WAS SATURDAY on Gaylord's Main Street. For those on the farms Saturdays were not just a trip to town. There were other things to do and places to go. Some socializing began on Friday nights.

The Granges provided a social satisfaction on a weekend night. There were picnics in the summer and fun in the snow in the winter. Sunday was set aside for church and Sunday School and often as many as twenty friends were invited to enjoy Sunday dinner. Gallons of home made ice cream was served late in the afternoon as dessert.

All of their activities followed the pattern of good times with good friends. After a meal the men drew aside to enjoy each other's company while the women put things in order with perhaps a little gossiping or the exchanging of new recipes. The children were off at their games best suited to the seasons.

Gaylord had a variety of leisure-time activities to offer. On Saturday afternoons the libraries, located in the township halls, were opened. At one time both the Livingston and Bagley township halls were located in Gaylord; the Livingston hall one block north of Main Street on N. Otsego and the Bagley hall one block south on Court Street. If you lived north of Main Street you had to get your books from the Livingston Township library. If you lived south of Main Street your book borrowing was done at the Bagley library.

Gaylord had roller skating rinks as early as 1880 providing exercise and entertainment on a solid maple floor. In fact, any large floor could serve as a skating rink. In 1895 there was an enclosed ice rink just west of the present Gaylord State Bank. Around 1910 there was a roller rink at Quick's livery barn on the west side of Center Street which is now a city parking lot. A few years later there was the Heinzelman rink on Otsego Avenue in the first block north of Main Street.

With a sure guarantee of plenty of snow a stimulating sleigh ride provided gaiety of a winter's day. In a sleigh filled with straw, young and old enjoyed the exhilaration that came from cold sharp wind against the face and the gliding sensation as the sled runners slipped smoothly over the snow to the accompaniment of sleigh bells.

There were hot flat irons and bricks and a bit of hand-holding under the many blankets to provide warmth, and even on occasion, hot baked potatoes to keep the hands warm. When the heat failed, the ambitious would climb out and run along behind to stir up the circulation. Often a sleigh ride was followed with refreshments at someone's home to top off a perfect time.

As told by my father, Herbert A. Hutchins, one of the favorite excursions for the sleigh riders was to ride to Vanderbilt. They would call ahead to the Higgins Hotel and order oyster stew to be ready for them upon their arrival.

These happy junkets would leave Gaylord in the early evening and probably not return home until the early morning. Needless to say, the parties were always properly chaperoned. The sleighs and teams of horses used on these trips were hired from livery barns in Gaylord. On one occasion the livery had furnished them with a small team of horses. Earlier in the day it had been storming a little bit, but the group felt it was safe to make the trip. On the way home the sleigh riders found themselves stranded in a blizzard.

The storm had increased, piling up drifts too deep for the small team and they played out. The party, fortunately for them, had only a short walk through the storm before they were able to take refuge at the Alex Campbell farm which was about two and one-half miles north of Gaylord. Alex built a roaring fire in his parlor stove to help thaw them out, while he and his hired hands went back to the stranded team and dug them out. The horses were brought to the barn at Campbell's farm for rest and shelter. When it was daylight Alex hitched his team to a sleigh and returned the party to Gaylord.

After fire destroyed a number of buildings on Main Street in 1906 Frank Czapran built a double two-story building. The Gaylord Bakery and Faye's Dress Shop are currently located there. The west half of the first floor was occupied by Czapran's clothing store. Next door a combination business offered its services. In the front was a barbershop with one-time barbers Lew Qua and James Demerest. Behind this was a most popular place for men to gather and talk, a smoke shop. The proprietor was Jack Groesbeck who had his own cigar factory in the rear of the building. It was the second floor of this building that offered entertainment facilities. At one time it was a roller rink but in turn served as a dance hall and a meeting place for several fraternal orders.

AT ONE TIME Gaylord boasted a number of fine lodges for its men and women: The Royal Neighbors, Knights of the Maccabees, Knights of Pythias, Modern Woodmen of America, Oddfellows, Masons, Orangemen and the Independent Order of Foresters. Most of these were very social. Dinners and dances were often given for the members and their friends.

One of these, the Knights of Pythias, was for the socially elite. Located on the second floor of the old Rockwell building which is now the present site of the Gaylord State Bank, it provided the scene for many gala parties, usually on Friday nights.

Amid the luxury of beautiful hardwood floors and deep upholstered chairs the handsomely dressed men paid attendance to their wives. The ladies were equally elegant in their high fashion gowns with satin slippers to match and above-the-elbow white kid gloves.

Their banquets were elaborate affairs. Punch was served from beautiful cut-glass bowls and the tables were laid with Irish linen tablecloths and napkins. Hand-painted china, solid silverware and silver candelabra gave added brilliance to the well-appointed tables.

Hazel Huntley remembered that, as a teen-ager, she had played classical music on the piano for the programs following the banquets. She and a drummer, who drove up from Grayling, provided music for their dances. Occasionally the Knights of Pythias would hold open dances on Friday nights for the young people of Gaylord.

More open entertainment was offered for a time at the Opera House which occupied the second floor of the S. E. Qua building until it was destroyed by fire. This location is now the building occupied by the Big Boy Restaurant. It was splendid with its orchestra pit and stage curtain that rolled up and down.

While it never offered its stage for a bona fide opera it did provide a setting for many public holiday and private dances. There were home-talent plays and shows, lecturers, concerts, masquerade parties and once-a-month road shows. Reserved seats were nominally priced at thirty-five cents. In its time it provided a variety of entertainment for Gaylord's local people as they looked for enjoyment in their leisure moments.

Another source of entertainment was a fine musical organization begun in 1881. This was the Gaylord City Band composed of local musicians. It was through their endeavors that Gaylord citizens were able to enjoy good music well presented. In the summer weekly concerts were given in a small band stand that stood in the courthouse park. This practice was continued until sometime in the 1940's.

When the weather forced the musicians indoors, concerts were presented in various locations. Karslake's skating rink provided one such place. Later, concerts were given in the city auditorium which occupied the space behind the present Glasser building.

Some of the Saturday night entertainment was of a more private nature. The homes of many of Gaylord's leading citizens resounded with gaiety on the occasion of a dinner party or such fun as singing, playing games or dancing. These lovely homes were splendid in the design and decor of the time and were decorated in keeping with the occasion.

Early in the week the invitations were sent and the women spent much of their time prior to the event pondering which of the latest fashions would be most flattering. When the time arrived on a Saturday evening they either strolled or rode in a carriage to the home of their friends.

Whoever they were or wherever they lived in Otsego County, there was a lot of living to be done around 1900. Is it not the same today as we look forward to the weekends? While we have kept some of the old ways many of the activities have changed as the years have advanced. However, the enjoyment of leisure time is still a part of our lives. Like those who've gone before us, we feel the same ripple of excitement when the thought is registered, "Tomorrow's Saturday!"



LOVELY FACES, even if they aren't smiling. Beatrice Wyman Lux, top; Bessie Quay, left; Ethel McCormick, right, and Anna Jensen. These were the 1906 fashions.

FLOWERS BY MALCOLM



Flowers For
Every Occasion

Congratulations Otsego County

On Your 1st 100 Years.

Flowers By Malcolm

Member FTD & Teleflora

Owner: Mary Malcolm

S. Old 27 - Johnson Subdivision

Member M.S.F.A. 732-2044

