



historically speaking

# THE WAY IT WAS

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Greetings,

Our February meeting featured author Mike Sonnenberg, a Saginaw native. Mr. Sonnenberg shared his most recent book, *Lost in Michigan: History and Travel Stories from an Endless Road Trip*. Mike has traveled around Michigan starting at the bottom of the State and working his way north. He was searching the back roads for forgotten or overlooked places. He told of the interesting places he found and discussed the history about them. Some of the places included the old general store in Kilmanagh between Sebawaing and Bayport and also the Ste Anne De Detroit Church in Detroit, the oldest church in Michigan. His book has nice pictures of each find and the history about it. Thank you Mr. Sonnenberg for a very informative and interesting program.

The Cass City High School yearbooks are being digitized by the Oklahoma Correctional Institution. The 1950 to 1969 yearbooks are available at this time. ([ww2.rawson.lib.mi.us](http://ww2.rawson.lib.mi.us)) Click on CCHS Yearbooks on the left side of the screen. Remember, if you see blank pages, keep scrolling. As others are completed they will be added to the list.

Thank you again to Jim Ware for writing our newsletter.

We are always happy to see so many of you at our meetings!

## News From The Past

When the time comes to write another of these history letters it gets more difficult to pick a topic that hasn't been written about before. It is also sometimes difficult to fit the topic in the space available. This time, to solve the problem, a number of short "I Remember When" experiences are recalled.

I remember when the side streets were not yet paved, there was no curb and gutter, people walked on the sidewalks more than they do today, and Ben Kirton was a role model for many young boys. Ben was a friendly gentleman who had a team of horses and he worked for Railway Express hauling cargo from the train depot to destinations in town. He also worked for the village. He had a homemade plow on which he would stand behind his team of horses and plow the snow

from all the sidewalks in town, often with a boy or two following in his wake. My little brother would often say, "Just call me Ben."

I remember when some snow storms were so heavy that when the train came through town it would include two engines and a plow. That combination of power would plow the snow as high as the tops of the railway crossing signs.



I remember when most homes in town were heated with coal in the winter. Coal would be delivered to each home by truck. The

delivery man would run a coal chute down

"BIG CHIEF" (Unionville) coal is still available in lump, egg and stoker size. Let us have your order now. Don't forget last winter. Phone 15. Elkland Roller Mills. 8-25-4

through a basement window, and then slide the coal down the chute into a coal bin beside the furnace. Still today on many of the older houses with wooden siding you might notice just above one basement window that the siding still has the scars from chunks of coal hitting it many years ago.

I remember when many young people would often gather on Tuckey's Hill (where the condos are today) and have a good old snow party with skis, toboggans and sleds. Dead wood would be gathered and carried from the woods nearby. A fire would be built and kept burning to warm us up when we got too cold.

I remember when before we had refrigerators that milk would be delivered in the morning by Bud Burt or Basil Bingham to your porch in glass bottles sealed with cardboard caps. Homogenization was not yet the practice, and the cream would separate and rise to the top of the bottle. If you didn't retrieve the milk from the porch soon enough in the winter the milk would freeze and push the cap atop on a little tower of frozen cream up from the top of the bottle.

I remember when we didn't have a police department with cop cars, but had a night watchman named Tom Kenoy. Tom was a tall, erect figure of authority who carried a six-cell flashlight. He knew most of the people in town and their business of being where they were, as he walked his beat of the business district on Main Street. He checked the locks on all the doors of the businesses

and quelled any disturbance that might arise during the night.

Reminiscent of Longfellow's poem, The Village Blacksmith, I remember walking home from school past Roy McNeal's blacksmith



shop and seeing a flaming forge, and Roy hammering a glowing piece of iron on his anvil—ping, ping, ping—with sparks flying. Roy's shop stood just across the alley to the north of where Little Caesar's is today. The kids walking home on the other side of town probably had the same experience seeing blacksmith John West in his shop on East Main Street in the building now converted into the summertime ice cream store, The Village Grill and Chill.

I remember that when you went for a haircut you could go to Bailey and Graham (Lester and Chester) between the two drug stores, or to Tyo's Barber Shop (Alec and Clem) under John Corkins' Law Office, or Charley McCaslin and Bill Johnson's, next to Curley's Eat Shop. You would have to wait your turn sitting in a row of chairs and move up a chair every time a barber finished with a customer and hollered, "Next!" The trick was to time your sitting down or else letting someone go ahead of you in order to get the barber you wanted. You didn't want to get a bad hair cut. I found out later that none of those haircuts could compare to the first one I got at Fort Leonard Wood.

I remember when you didn't buy new shoes too often because you got your old ones repaired with new soles or heels at Carl Wright's or Joe



Riley's. Joe also sold new shoes and specialized in making corrective shoes for people with various foot problems. Often his ads in the Chronicle would ask, "Have you been walking sideways lately?"

I remember when we had a pickle station in town, and many people would raise pickles in their gardens to sell to the Squire Dingee Pickle Company. The pickles would be sorted according to their size, and the smaller pickles would bring the higher prices. I also remember that the pickle company had several large pickle brine vats aligned along beside of the railroad tracks just south of the train depot.

I remember when if you didn't go to the bank before noon on Saturday to draw out some money you might not have any that you needed for the weekend. If you didn't get to the gas station on Saturday you would not be able to get any gas on Sunday. Nearly all the businesses were closed on Sundays and there were no credit cards.

I remember when every fall the countryside would be invaded with pheasant hunters and hunting dogs. Pheasants were plentiful, and there were lots of fence rows for them to roost and hide in. Many meals were made of tasty pheasant, and hats were adorned with colorful feathers. Sadly today most of the pheasants, the fence rows, the hunters and the dogs are gone.



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