

Glimpses of the past

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SHOPPING IN THE VILLAGE - 50 YEARS AGO - Penny Candy

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In the Village of Powell 50 years ago there were three grocery stores to serve the area. The nearest town to shop was 10-12 miles to Worthington, Delaware or 20 miles to Columbus. Graceland was the first shopping center to come to the area, but in 1947 Graceland was still farm land. The three grocery stores to serve Powell and the surrounding area were ClaraBell's, Reeves Red & White and Plummer's Confectionery.

The owner usually lived in rooms behind the store and the family was expected to help. The typical store had a pot-bellied stove for heat and hang down type of incandescent lights. Rest rooms were non-existent. Running water came from a well or cistern. Windows were up high to let in light and hot air out. Screen doors in front and back let fresh air in to circulate with help of fans. In mid-summer, hanging sticky ribbons with flies were not uncommon. There was usually a big ball of string up high hanging down to tie packages of meat, etc. You told the grocer what you wanted and he got it down off the shelf for you. Those who lived in the village walked to the store daily or sent the children. The children might have a few pennies change to choose candy from the penny candy case. Farmers in the country drove into town. Many times the men brought the list and while the grocer filled the order the men visited, gossiped or solved the problems of the world.

The stores were stocked with canned goods, but only one brand of an item, fresh meats, (lunch meat sliced by hand) produce in season, cereals, milk, ice cream, and soaps like Fels-Naptha, Lifebuoy, Camay, Ivory, and penny candy! Also available was gloves, caps, socks, yellow tablets, pencils, crayons, sewing thread. Patent medicines like aspirin, Ex-Lax, Hadacol Elixir, cough syrup, Vapor rub, iodine, bandages, adhesive tape (not band aids). At Plummer's you could get Shell gas and oil as well as ice for the ice box. Ice cream cones were two dips for a nickel. They had two tables so you could sit and eat a chocolate sundae while your order was being filled. Soda pop came in 6 oz bottles like coca-cola, 7-up, orange, grape and root beer.

In 1947 stores had not changed much for many years due to the great depression and then World War II. But in the next 10 years things changed rapidly. Stores started to remodel and put in central heating and air conditioning and open shelving so customers could serve themselves. Reeves and Plummer's remodeled in 1950. Gone were the gas pumps and ice house. Added was magazines, greeting cards, costume jewelry, watches, home permanents, band-aids, baby gifts, Pot pies and frozen vegetables, warm nuts by the pound, pop by the carton, packaged ice cream, 45 RPM records, more school supplies, toys and games. Later they added work pants, shirts, underwear, flannel shirts, blue jeans, straw hats, yard goods, sewing notions, paint, license plate agency and they still had Penny Candy!

By the mid-fifties super markets were being built rapidly and people were beginning to get second cars and the family general store was finding it hard to compete. People liked having a choice of brands to choose from and serving themselves. The Mom and Pop type general stores as I knew them were the forerunner of the big super markets of today. But there is no such thing as Penny Candy!

- Evalyn Plummer Anderson -

Additional facts if you care to use them.

Walter and Eliza Weaver run the grocery "on the corner" for many years. Ben and Clara Bell bought it in 1946. They had two sons, Donald and Victor. Ben died in 1948. Clara continued to run the store and later married Lanny Landstrum. Clara stayed in the store until 1985. These owners did not live in the back of the store.

Fred and Rhea Reeves and son Mac came to town in 1937 and opened the Red and White store. Reeves did live behind the store for awhile. Not sure of the year Reeves remodeled. They closed in 1973.

Harold and Elsie Plummer came to town in 1941 and opened Plummer's Confectionery. They had two daughters Evalyn and Carol and they all lived in the back rooms of the store until 1946 when they moved into a new house next door. The store was remodeled in 1950. Harold died in 1955 and Elsie continued running the store with daughter Evalyn and her husband Andy Anderson. The store closed in 1973.

Evalyn Plummer Anderson moved to Powell with her parents when she was 10 years old. She graduated from Powell High School, married her high school sweetheart and raised four children in the small community atmosphere. She and Andy remained an active part of the community until they moved near Delaware in 1990. They are members of the Powell-Liberty Historical Society .