

PRAIRIE ROOTS

One of the perks of PCGS Membership



Peoria County Genealogical Society



Mary Gury & Siblings
Early 1950s



Grandma Schmitt's Birthday
January 8, 1927



1955 - Barb Castelli &
brother Jim Keyser

Since 1974, *Prairie Roots* has been the signature magazine of the Peoria County Genealogical Society. Each issue is filled with member stories about their ancestors that include the steps these dedicated researchers have taken to investigate their lives and document their findings for future generations. Priceless photographs accompany many of these unique articles. Over the years, readers have discovered new sources to pursue and on occasion, have found they too are related to a fellow member.

In the Fall-Winter 2015 issue, an Oral History Collection was added to the magazine. Each story is published in *Prairie Roots* and a copy is added to a binder in the Society's archive at the Peoria Public Library's Local History and Genealogy Room. These stories give future genealogists a taste of life in those simpler times of old.

Prairie Roots has become a research tool too. Through the years, a variety of databases have been published for researchers. Marriage Licenses Issued in Peoria County 1925-1835; burials recorded in the Peoria County Undertaker Books for defunct cemeteries (City Cemetery, Old St. Mary's, and Moffatt Cemetery), church records, including extensive records for Trinity Lutheran Church can be found in past issues.

Please enjoy this sample from Volumes 52 and 53 published in 2018. Hopefully, you'll decide to join PCGS and contribute to *Prairie Roots*!



Barb Cramer Benner's uncle (left) and father (right)
J.M. Cramer Dairy - January, 1918



Kickapoo Council Girl Scouts Troop 103
circa 1953

Prairie Roots

Peoria, Illinois

Spring & Summer 2018 — Volume 52

Celebrating

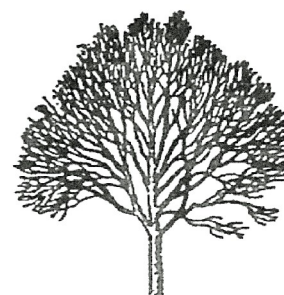


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Peddling

Submitted by Randy Couri

How much thought have you given to the type of work immigrants did when they first arrived in the United States, their brave *New World*? The majority of my ancestors, from Aytou, Lebanon, arrived in the Peoria area between 1886 and 1914. Many of the different immigrant groups peddled goods, but have you ever given much thought about what they experienced? Compared to the work prospects in the old countries, the opportunities here in the Peoria and surrounding areas were amazing. That doesn't mean they had their pick of jobs; it meant they could have any of the low-paying, back-breaking jobs that were abandoned by earlier immigrant groups before them. Now don't get me wrong; I know my ancestors were happy to be able to work and provide for their families, but the thought of a meager subsistence in a factory was not what many of them were looking for, and I like to think that it did not sit well with their Phoenician heritage. One way for them to get ahead was to peddle door to door or on street corners.

The men were able to spend nights away from home, so they would peddle for weeks at a time throughout the countryside. I know of one man, **John Peters**, who had a wagon; he was able to travel farther and carry more products. Most of them walked and peddled out of a trunk or suitcases, and a few would stand on street corners hawking their wares. At times the men would simply find a farmer's field to sleep in. If they were lucky, they might be given a little food for supper and told they could sleep in a barn. For the men, peddling pretty much ended around 1905, except for my grandfather, **Tom Kouri**, who peddled in northern Minnesota until 1918 and **Hanna Jibreen Slyman** who peddled into the 1920s.

The women were a different story. Many of the women and their older daughters had no choice but to supplement the family income by peddling. Unlike the men, the women, of course, had to be home each night, out of modesty for sure but just as likely to take care of their husband or father (we're back to that patriarchal discussion of last month), so the routes they had were not as far-ranging as the men. The women did not peddle every day; they would trade off with each other to spread the income around. One day several women would go out, and when it was time to go out selling again a few days later, a few others would go.

In the Midwest, peddling was a seasonal job. They had to make sure they saved enough money during the months they were able to sell their products to hold them over through the long winter months. In the early 1900s, the immigrants did not trust the banks so they usually designated someone to act as the banker. The banker would keep a record of each man's account, and in a time of need he would lend money to those who

needed it, with interest of course. In St. Louis, it was a Lebanese man named **George Kerry**. In Minnesota the miners gave their money to my great-great-aunt, **Rose Joseph**, to hold for them.

There were quite a few different routes around the Peoria area countryside that the women used, but there were three specific routes that I know of. Before 1914, most of the Lebanese community lived in a two-block section of South Washington Street centered on the 1800 block which is located behind the UFS store on Adams Street.

The East Peoria route: They walked north on Washington Street to the Franklin Street Bridge (the place where the Bob Michael Bridge is), crossed the river, walked to East Peoria's Main Street and turned north. From there they walked all the way to the Upper Free Bridge (where the McClugage Bridge stands) and crossed back to Peoria. If they had a good day selling their wares, they would pay to ride the street car back home; if it was a slow day for sales, they walked back. This route was approximately 9.5 miles of walking if they took the street car one way and 13.5 miles if they walked all the way.

The Bartonville route: They walked to Lincoln Street and turned south. When they reached the top of Lincoln hill, the road became Plank Road (this intersection is near the Madison Park Shopping Center). They continued walking past what is now Airport Road but remember the Wright Brothers made their first powered flight in 1903 so this was before routine powered air-flights, and at that time there was no Peoria Airport. They continued out Plank Road, turned south on Maxwell Road, and at Smithville Road turned east. Eventually, they arrived at Adams Street in Bartonville. From there they headed back home. This route was approximately 13 miles long walking all the way.

The Mossville route: They rode the street car from the 1800 block of South Washington Street to the end of the line at Al Fresco Park on Galena Road (it was located near the Ivy Club). From there they would walk along Galena Road to Mossville and then turn around and walk all the way back to Al Fresco. If they had a good day of sales, they would ride the street car back home; if not, then they would walk back. This route was approximately 10 miles of walking if they rode the street car both ways and 16.25 miles if they took the street car one way.

Stop and think about this: they weren't simply strolling along these routes; they were lugging a big, bulky, heavy trunk with no wheels that had square corners that would rub against their leg with every step! Considering the weight of the trunk and its contents, the trunks must have weighed a minimum of 35 to 40 pounds. Peddling was a grueling job, the routes were long and hard, but it was a job where you could usually make decent money if you put in the miles.

Here are a few stories that represent some of the peddlers in the late 1800s and early 1900s and what they experienced:



Kemla (Farrah) Couri



Until her passing in 1988, my Sithu (Grandmother), **Kemla Couri**, prayed the Rosary for hours, every day. One of the people she prayed for was a lady who lived out Plank Road in a farmhouse. Kemla began peddling shortly after arriving in Peoria in May of 1907. She could not speak English and did not understand the money system so it followed that she did not know how to make change. Kemla sold the farmer's wife a thimble and some thread. After she was paid, all Kemla could do was hold out a handful of coins so that the woman could take what was owed her in return. The farmer's wife took Kemla by the hand, brought her into the house, and sat her down at the table. Over several cups of coffee, the kind woman showed Kemla how pennies added up to nickels, and nickels added up to dimes, and so on. For more than eighty years, Kemla did not forget the kindness this stranger had shown her, and she prayed a Rosary for her every day.

Effie (Joseph) Williams



Effie often spoke about when she was a little girl, she and her sister **Sadie** would go peddling with their mother, **Kharma Joseph**. Effie spoke of going on the Bartonville route. When asked if she knew why the road was named Plank Road, she said that in the area where the railroad tracks were, the road was surfaced with wood planks. In 1910, Effie would have been 6 years old, and Sadie would have been 8 years old.

Lizzie (Slyman) Stevens



After Lizzie's husband, **Mike LaHood**, passed away from Tuberculosis in 1910, Lizzie was faced with the possibility of her children, two-year-old **Harry** and one-year-old **Freda**, being put in an orphanage. To protect her children, Lizzie took them and moved to St. Louis where her parents lived. Leaving her children for periods of time with her parents, Lizzie would peddle throughout the country sides of Missouri and Oklahoma to earn an income to support herself and her children.

John Peters

written by **Vera Peters**

It was 1896 when **John** and **Mary** arrived back in America. They settled in Mankato, Minnesota; and John



went into salesman work. He had a team of horses and a wagon that appeared like a covered wagon. On the sides were printed in big letters "Chicago Merchandise Co." He traveled out of Mankato selling to smaller towns and farmers. He sold all sorts of supplies from pots and pans to dry goods to fitting glasses.

Katour Williams, Asma and Yousef Williams

written by **Amelia (Williams) Unes**

By that time all cities and towns were connected by a vast network of railroads which made it very easy to expand their selling area. Mother, Uncle Yousef, and Aunt Asma headed west into Montana and Wyoming, and the trips were financially successful, netting no less than \$1500.00 each trip. I do not know how many trips were made. A trip from St. Paul to one of the larger cities in Montana could be made in less than two days. The length of each trip depended on how soon they sold their goods. Their best



Katour

customers were the girls in the "red light districts." They made their headquarters in two bustling towns, Butte and Missoula, where they rented small apartments. Whenever they spoke of the time spent in these western states, they would mention how kind these girls were to them. They advised Mother and Aunt Asma to carry the best grade of silks, satins, lace and linens, also where to go and what places not to go near.



Asma and Yousef

Rose (Nazha) Joseph

written by **Amelia (Williams) Unes**

Mikkail [Rose's husband] was bothered by severe headaches while in St. Paul and decided to return to Lebanon. He left in 1905, taking the four children with him. Nazha stayed behind to earn money - peddling. She traveled the northern Minnesota mining towns and lumber areas. Father told me that no woman ever worked as hard under the most severe conditions than did his sister Nazha. She had arthritis and would have painful cramps that paralyzed her. Once while I was rubbing her legs, I noticed on both





thighs indentations over an inch deep. When I asked her about this, she said the indentations were caused by her suitcases rubbing against her legs. All the money she earned was sent to her husband. When the camps in northern Minnesota were closed during times in winter, the men would head for St. Paul. Aunt Rose was their bank. Whenever they needed more money, they would come to Aunt Rose, and withdraw from the horde that was entrusted to her care.

Khaliel (Mike) Williams

written by **Amelia (Williams) Unes**

[Khalil arrived in New Orleans when he immigrated to the United States in 1881]



Without any knowledge of the English language, it was incredible how they managed; no mention of meeting any Arabic-speaking people in New Orleans. They managed somehow by peddling small items such as rosaries, hairpins, and handkerchiefs. The boys did not know that it was necessary to obtain a license to peddle in the city. It was here in New Orleans that Khaliel spent the first and only night of his life in a jail because he did not have the required license. Not until after the trial did he realize there was a different jail for white and colored people. He was put in the colored men's jail. Why? He was a very light-complexioned man. The fact that he was a white man in their jail brought about the scorn of the colored inmates upon Khaliel. They took turns spitting on him into the long hours of the night. The next morning, he was taken into the court in this horrible condition. Upon seeing him in this condition, the judge flew into a livid rage. The judge not only released Khaliel without fining him, but he also ordered a completely new outfit of clothes for Khaliel and had him taken to a hotel for a bath, some food, and rest.

Tom Kouri



My maternal grandfather, **Tom Kouri**, arrived in St. Paul in late summer of 1909. For many years, Tom peddled in northern Minnesota; he was based in Virginia, Minnesota, an area of vast iron ore mines and lumber mills. The mines were spread out across a wide area with immigrant workers from many countries living in the mining towns. One of the routes that Tom peddled ranged for many miles from town to town: Virginia, Mountain Iron, Chisholm, Hibbing, Eveleth; a round trip of roughly 60 miles. Tom worked this route and others until he went into the US Army in 1918 to fight in World War One. After he was discharged, he moved to

Peoria and opened a dry goods store. **Rose Joseph**, who was still peddling in the 1920s, bought her wares from Tom.

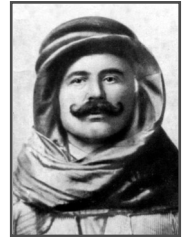
George Anthony



Charles George started peddling when he first arrived in Mankato, Minnesota in 1896. In 1912, George and his son **Charles Anthony** left Minnesota and began a journey across the Midwest heading east. They worked their way through parts of Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and into Pennsylvania. They were in Pittsburgh when George died suddenly. Fifteen-year old Charles knew there was an Aytou community living in Peoria, Illinois. After seeing to the burial of his father, Charles began walking west. He walked for many months, doing odd jobs along the way to support himself, and he eventually arrived in Peoria.

Hanna Jibreen Slyman

Hanna Jibreen made thirty-six trips between the United States and Lebanon. During the voyages, Hanna would sell rosaries and other wares to the passengers. Hanna's source of income while he was in the United States was peddling; he peddled all around the Midwest: Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, Ohio, and other locations.



There is no doubt about it, peddling was a hard, grueling job. But it was a hard life back then; railroad jobs paid 11 cents an hour, and factory work at the Peoria Cordage paid by the amount that could be produced on a shift. In those days, work shifts were 12 to 14 hours long. Other immigrant groups had peddled before the Lebanese, but the vast majority of them went on to other types of work. Many of our ancestors adapted from peddling their wares door to door to opening dry goods stores, confectionery stores, grocery stores, restaurants, and taverns. They worked hard, and they put in the miles to better the lives of their families in their *New World* and in *Aytou*.

My forebears played a significant part in making me who I am. I honor their legacy. I will never forget what they gave me. I will love them until the day I die. And no one can take them away from me.

~ Laurence Overmire



The Ryan Family of Shelley Street

Submitted by Mary Ann (Ryan) O'Connor

Grandchildren can usually get their grandparents to do just about anything. Our 8-year old grandson, **Matthieu Barnier**, came for a visit over Memorial Day weekend. He brought along a book he was reading, Great Irish Legends for Children. Recently, his mother had mentioned that he was part Irish, and Matthieu wanted the full story. How was it that he was part Irish if he was born in France and was a citizen in the USA? The kid wanted stories!

Now, I have researched much of my family's background, but the majority of it is composed of historical dates, locations, census records, and photos. Genealogy can start me on one path, but I end up on ten other paths without finding what I was looking for in the first place!

One of the essential pieces of the genealogy puzzle are the stories about the people themselves. It is so important to try and document the conversations of our families, not just the facts and figures. As time marches on, we can easily lose track of what exactly made the memories of family members stick in our heads.

And so it was with little Matthieu - he wanted stories about these Irish people in his family. So I started with my father's family, the Ryans on Shelley St., in Peoria, Illinois. Life was a bit different in the 1950's and 60's compared to present times. My years with my dad and his family were brief. My grandparents had passed away before I was born, but I have had aunts, uncles, friends and my dad who gave me great memories of family. These are the memories that should be passed on to this inquisitive young boy.

My dad, **John E. Ryan**, was born in Peoria in 1906. He was the youngest of nine children. My grandfather, **Matthew L. Ryan**, was born in Loughtea, County Tipperary, Ireland in 1860 and immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 21. His parents (my great-grandparents) were **Laurance M. Ryan** (1839-1909) and **Catherine Kennedy** (1842-1906). Matthew married my grandmother, **Anna Marie (Williams) Ryan**, who was born in County Galway in 1873, and also immigrated to the U.S. Her parents were **James Williams** and **Mary Joyce**.

The Ryan family home was originally at 305 Charlotte St. in Peoria which later became Shelley St. Many street names were changed over the years so it takes a little patience and searching city directories at the library to track those occurrences. The Ryans lived in the same home for about 60 years. My grandfather passed



Seated: Helen (Nell), Anna Marie (Williams) Ryan, Frances **Standing:** Emmett, Matthew, Lucille, John, James

away at the age of 59, leaving my grandmother in 1920 with a home and family to care for.

After grandmother Anna Marie passed away in 1936, the grown children continued to live on Shelley St. Why would anyone move from their home? Who would ever consider moving away from a neighborhood where everyone knew one another and worked together? 305 Shelley Street remained home for the Ryan Clan. Dad and his brother, **Matt Ryan**, worked in the trades as carpenters. Brothers **Emmett** and **Jim Ryan** worked as firemen on the railroad. The three sisters, **Nell**, **Frances** and **Lucille Ryan**, studied business at the Academy of Our Lady and began careers at Caterpillar.

Over the years, Aunt Lucille married **William Gibbons**, a young government employee studying for a career in law. Aunt Lucille and Uncle Bill moved from Lombard, Illinois to Rockville, Maryland. Then Aunt Frances obtained a job in Washington, DC, moving too, so she might help Aunt Lucille with her young family. Dad's two brothers, Emmett and Jim passed away at ages 49 and 41 respectively. This left Aunt Nell and Uncle Matt as Dad's only family living in Peoria at the time.

Meanwhile, my parents married on January 2, 1940; Aunt Nell worked at Caterpillar as a secretary, and Uncle Matt took a job as a bridge tender. Finally, in July 1954 I was born into one of the most loving, caring families a child could ever ask for! Aunt Nell loved us dearly, but disciplined my sister, **Kathleen**, and me with a 'hard look' and wiggled her forefinger for us to come sit beside her! We knew we were in trouble for sure!

Aunt Nell never missed a birthday party or a Brophy family picnic. She liked to be helpful with any of the preparations and the cleaning up. I will never forget, however, one Thanksgiving dinner at Aunt Nell and Uncle



Matt's house. Aunt Frances had come home on the train for vacation from Washington, DC. The kitchen was buzzing with my aunts and my mom, getting the turkey out of the oven and onto a large platter. Well, the worst thing happened - the turkey slid out of the pan okay, headed for the platter but landed on the floor! Aunt Nell was aghast; my mom was stunned; and Aunt Frances picked it up, brushed it off and placed it carefully on the platter!! I think I must have been giggling, because I remember Aunt Frances and mom looking at me, and I knew my lips had better stay sealed until my last breath. The turkey and the trimmings made it to the dinner table and nobody was the wiser of the turkey's fateful tale!

Although Aunt Nell worked full-time at her secretarial job, she always made time for visits with my sister and me. Aunt Nell was practical and stylish! She enjoyed dresses with flowers, made quite sure she wore the clip-on earrings that matched her necklace and bracelet, and that her shoes matched her purse and hat! She simply enjoyed looking pleasant and comfortable. And it fit her jovial personality!

Aunt Nell seemed to get along with everyone! She had three best friends, as best I can remember - **Ann Trausch, Bea Brophy McGann, and Madeline Brophy.** They were the best of friends. They would go to the shows/movies together, dances down at Al Fresco at the north end of the Peoria River near War Memorial Drive and Galena Road, and never missed events with each others' families. I don't think any one of the girls owned a car so they all took the trolley or the bus to get around.

Aunt Nell was deeply faithful in her Catholic beliefs. She attended Mass every day before going to work and was a fixture at the Sunday 10:00 Mass at St. John's Catholic Church, where sometimes she got a special ride home with a carload of Brophy kids who had just attended the same Mass! Among the many facets of **Nell Ryan**, was her example of Irish Catholic traditions. Each meal was blessed with a prayer, and on evenings when we had stayed a little too late at their home, and she had retired for the evening, I was able to see how solemn she was as she knelt by her bedside to say her evening prayers. It was such a spiritual moment to watch my aunt in her prayerful conversation with God the Father.

Aunt Nell gave me my First Sunday Missal for my First Holy Communion. She also was my Confirmation sponsor a few years later. She really wanted to make sure my little



John, Kathleen, Nell, Mary Ann

soul was fully covered with love and spiritual love! (And I still have my Sunday Missal). I've never forgotten Aunt Nell, or her kindness to others. She always attended her friends in their times of need with a warm hand and many prayers to Heaven.

Aunt Nell's house was the greatest! She had a porch swing out front,

a sidewalk, and a dog named 'Fido' in the backyard! I wanted to explore the neighborhood, but I was limited to as far as Uncle Matt could see me, which was only a block or two. Uncle Matt would tell me stories about Fido. He also told me



Aunt Nell and my dad, John Ryan

the tale of a 'big black bear' that lived upstairs in their house. I guess the bear didn't like kids much because he would eat them if they went up there to look around! Needless to say, my sister and I were curious, but not THAT curious!

I was always excited to be told we were going to visit Aunt Nell and Uncle Matt, but I was sad to leave as the evenings ended. There was always something going on at their house, and I loved being right in the middle of it. I remember the big kitchen table with the light fixture brightly shining and the pot of coffee that continuously cooked on the stove top . . . and my Aunt Nell's big squinty smile as she shoo'd me from the kitchen with her apron! Oh I'd take one day like that again in a heartbeat. To sit on the back porch in the "spring kitchen" for a little while with the warm western sun streaming in the windows. So many sweet times with family.

There aren't "do-overs." It's important for our generation to be kind and helpful to our friends and family.... because you never know who will choose you as a special person to write about one day. We just need to try to work on re-calling the good memories of our older relatives through stories for our grandchildren, nieces and nephews. No matter how brief they may be, as long as it brings a smile to their face and a kind thought for those who came before them!



"Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family: Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one."

- Jane Howard



ORAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS

Did You Save Betty Crocker Coupons?

By Rita (Fox) Marsh

I was going to be married in April of 1966. Mom and I started an all-out campaign to collect a set of Oneida Community sterling silver flatware before I married. I spent hours deciding what pattern I wanted, “My Rose” being the winner. Thinking back, it was a perfect silverware pattern for eating our TV dinners. (I wasn’t much of a cook!)



“My Rose” Pattern

Mom and I would search through magazines looking for the Betty Crocker advertisement for their “5-piece starter set of silverware.” We collected the few ads we found and handed them out to my aunts, cousins, and friends, along with a dollar so they could mail them in the offer for me. It was always a thrill to go to the mailbox and find my new silverware pieces waiting for me. This “starter set” campaign only lasted a short time, so all my wonderful relatives started collecting box-tops and coupons, which were printed on the outside of packages. General Mills had over 200 food products, such as Cheerios, Hamburger Helper, and Gold Medal flour, also including their Betty Crocker baking mixes, featuring the coupons.

For the price of 15¢ cents and 70 coupons (or points) I received a dinner fork in the mail. For something special as a gravy ladle it cost 15¢ and 110 coupons. You can see how helpful my relatives were - we collected a lot of box-tops! I have to say it was actually fun. It was the topic of conversation for



many months... “How many silverware pieces have you collected so far?” Or, “Rita, I have 250 more points for you!”

Over time the coupons became so popular nation-wide, General Mills published a 76-page catalog - one of five annual mailings - featuring items such as dishes, cookware, gadgets, furniture, toy, along with their beloved flatware. After 75 years of snipping and saving box-top coupons, General Mills shut down their program – because people’s habit of saving for future purchases was replaced with buying on credit.

Well, this all happened over 52 years ago and I still have the silverware. Over time there’s a few pieces missing, but it’s still used on all of our camping trips.

Pearl Harbor

By Betty (Schmidt) Dickerson

It was a normal Sunday on December 7, 1941. My Dad was “tinkering” with the Model A so that we would be able to go for a Sunday drive. My Mom was preparing Sunday dinner.

All life changed suddenly. **Frank Fluegal**, my Dad’s cousin, ran up, out of breath and yelling, “The Japs bombed Pearl Harbor!!” Frank lived on Chandler Street* in Peoria; and, we lived on Middle Road* in Peoria County. That was a long run.

No one in our neighborhood had a telephone, and this was long before any kind of modern technology.

For the scary years to come, everyone gathered around the Atwater Kent radio in the living room each evening. This is how we heard where our troops were fighting and how many were injured and/or killed. Many of these were to be our relatives, friends and neighbors.

*Chandler Street is now Madison Park Terrace, and Middle Road is now Fremont Street.

December 7, 1941

“a date which will live in infamy”



ORAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS

What Goes Around, Comes Around

by Donna (Gasper) Hartwig

One of the latest trends today is to order your groceries on line and, for a charge, have them delivered. Or, the order can be picked at the drive-up area of the store, still for a fee.

Is this really a new trend?

Like today, in the 50's, many people did not have transportation to shop. My mother was a single parent who did not drive. We depended on the bus or a relative to take us where we needed to go. Many markets made home deliveries, at no charge. If a customer was "short on cash," the grocer would allow the customer to "put it on their tab" until payday, with no interest. My mother would phone her grocery list to Frasco's Bros. Grocers. One of the clerks would fill the order, and it would be delivered to our home, at no charge.

When my sister and I got a little older, my Mother, sister and I would walk to Frasco's. The store was located on Easton Ave. in Peoria, IL, about ten blocks from our home. We would take our Red Flyer wagon to cart the groceries home. We walked from our home on Kneer, over to Starr Street, and up Starr St. to Easton, to the store, and back home again. We would pass Brophy's Sundries and Logan Pool.

No, ordering groceries is not a new trend, just an old trend that has come around again, only with fees charged today.

This thermometer was a Christmas gift to regular customers at the Frasco Brothers Grocers. Era 1950.



Larkin's Grocery Store

by Marion (Doubet) Borland

As you come down Pierson Hill to Farmington Road and stop at the stop sign, you look straight ahead to a building that is now a tavern. My Mother, **Helena Williams Doubet**, told that this started as Larkin's Grocery Store and that she worked there when she was young. My guess is that it was a summer job when she was in high school. She was in the class of 1927.

She said that she rode the bus to and from work. The bus ran each morning from Peoria out Farmington Rd., and back to Peoria and returned on this same route in the evening. This was the same method that she used to go to and from high school.

There have been several additions put on this building that I remember seeing built. At the time Mom worked there, it was one large room where the public came in to shop and behind this was one room for storage. The second floor was used for living space for the grocer and his family.

The customers came in the front door, walked up to the counter, and asked for what they wanted to buy. Most of the stock of groceries were on shelves behind the counter, and the grocer would take what you asked for off the shelf and set it on the counter. Flour, sugar, rice and other staples were shipped in 100 lb. bags. The grocer would measure out on a scale the amount you wanted.

Many of the customers would charge the groceries. If you charged the groceries, he would take a book from under the counter. He would list your groceries and the amount of each item by hand into this book. When the customer came to pay the grocer, he could show the customer just what had been taken and the price of each item.

Charging groceries was necessary because the farmers planted in the spring and got no return of money until they harvested in the fall. The coal miners worked in the winter, when coal was needed to heat the houses, but they were "laid off" during the summer.

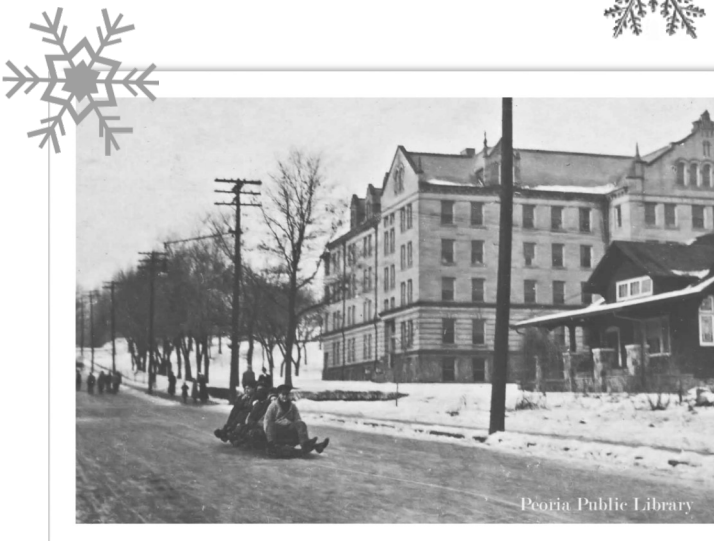
Prairie Roots

Peoria, Illinois

Fall & Winter 2018 – Volume 53

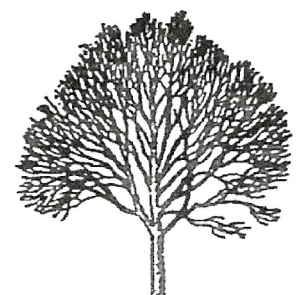


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- The Buehler Legacy
- Rural Free Delivery
- Made from Scratch
- A Memory or Two or More





Recalling Bishop Sheen's Ties Here

Submitted by Marilyn Voss Leyland

No question that the Venerable **Fulton J. Sheen**, slowed on the path to sainthood by issues of custody between New York City, had significant ties to Peoria. Though born in El Paso, approximately 35 miles from Peoria, it was here that he attended St. Mary's Grade School, became an altar boy at the Cathedral and finished high school at Spalding Institute.

Genealogists might chuckle to learn that, although he was baptized as **Peter John Sheen**, he decided early in life that he wanted to be known as Fulton, his mother's maiden name. "That's not a saint's name," a teacher once chided. "Not yet," he replied.

Following his years of seminary training and further education, Fr. Sheen returned to Peoria in 1926, summoned by his bishop to serve as assistant at St. Patrick's parish on Peoria's near southside.

St. Patrick's originally served an Irish neighborhood, while St. Joseph's, only a few blocks away, had German roots. My Aunt Clara, whose parents immigrated from Germany, spoke only German when she started school at St. Joseph's. But she told me that mother, urged by a German friend here, would go to listen to Fr. Sheen. "No matter that those ladies didn't understand English," she said. "They were drawn to the power and emotion of Sheen's voice."

The baptisms and marriages he performed remain treasured family memories. His visits to St. Patrick's marked special occasions, including St. Patrick's 100th anniversary in 1960. The book [Beyond the Mountaintop](#), a history of Peoria's Itoo Society, carries a picture of him concelebrating Mass with priests who had been students at St. Pat's: fellows like **Joe and Tom Kelly**, **Tom Henseler** and **Gene Gould**. The neighborhood had evolved to a significant Lebanese community, centered at St. Pat's.

Fr. Sheen also stayed in touch with his relatives – the Fultons, the Clearys and the Sheen families here. He had become an internationally known speaker, educator, writer and radio and television personality – won an Emmy in 1953 for Most Outstanding Personality – but when asked what he'd like for lunch here, opted for a

peanut butter and jelly sandwich, according to **Dolores Sheen**, who was married to his nephew **John**.

He had a close relationship with the pastor at St. Marks, **Fr. James M. Fitzgerald** Home parish for Fr. "Fitz" had been St. Pat's (the main altar commemorating his parents), but the friendship probably developed during their seminary years at St. Viator's. One of the St. Mark's teachers recalled a Christmas in the 1950s when Fr. "Fitz" called the convent to ask that the sisters attend the 6:30 a.m. Mass on Christmas Day. Bishop Sheen was visiting him and would be the celebrant. "Of course December is always busy and then Midnight Mass meant that we were all up late, but we were in the front pew that morning," Sister said.

She recalled listening to **Bishop Sheen** on the radio while she was in high school, earning extra credit in shorthand class for taking down and then transcribing his programs.

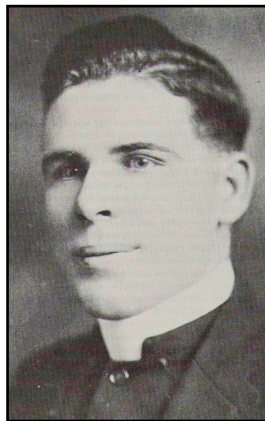
Another Sister recalls a game of catch with two other sisters in the small yard between the convent and the rectory. A missed ball broke a window in the sacristy. When the three went to the rectory to admit their transgression, Fr. Fitz noted that, if they'd been indoors watching Bishop Sheen on television, that wouldn't have happened.

My generation recalls having to be quiet while mom watched Bishop Sheen, and being fascinated by the "angels" that magically cleaned his blackboard. His eyes were especially compelling. His portrait done by Bill Hardin for Peoria Historical Society shows the strong intellect evidenced by Sheen's eyes.

In 1959, my grandmother sent Bishop Sheen one of our family Christmas cards. It showed the five of us Voss kids hauling a pine from a windbreak planted on a farm near El Paso, then owned by Aunt Clara's Uncle Joe. Sheen recalled that he had lived on that farm until he was about six. Bishop Sheen's response clearly answered Grandma's comments. Yes, he knew the house where she lived on Webster, as the original owner, **Thomas O'Connor** had defeated Sheen's Uncle **Dan Sheen** for Mayor. Sheen even extended greetings to Grandma's oldest grandchild, a freshman at the Academy: me.

In 1963, Bishop Sheen spoke at my husband's Spalding graduation on the 50th anniversary of his own graduation. The Journal Star included several photos along with their coverage of his speech. In the 1960s he had also visited the Academy of Our Lady while in Peoria, photos with students included in the yearbooks.

Bishop Sheen ultimately headed The Society for the Propagation of the Faith, and a donation to that



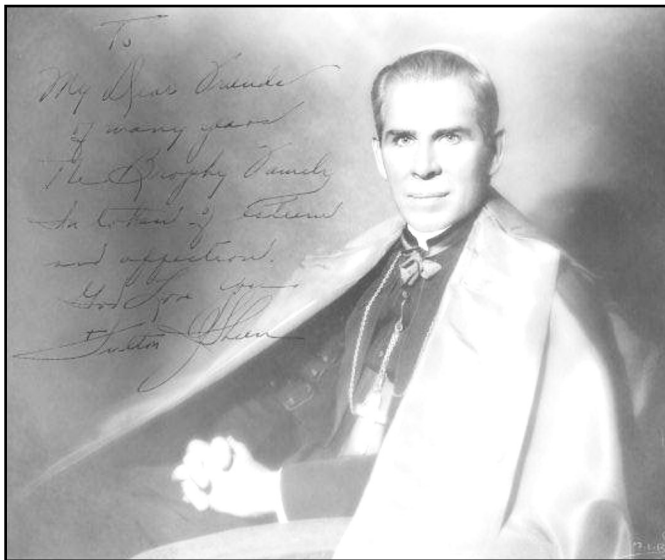
Ordination

September 20, 1919



organization brought a certificate of membership and blessing, suitable for framing. For my grade school graduation, a neighbor gave me a Sheen-inspired mission rosary, each decade a different color, a reminder to pray for the peoples of five continents. A friend has a trove of Sheen's letters from his schooling overseas, sent to a descendent of one of Peoria's prominent early Catholics. The Museum of the Diocese of Peoria houses a major Sheen exhibit.

Bishop Sheen died at age 84 in 1979. He's presently interred in the crypt under the high altar in New York City's St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue. Whether his body will be removed to St. Mary's Cathedral in Peoria remains an ongoing question.



Fulton J. Sheen



Bishop Sheen poses with the nine children of Margaret and Bill Brophy at St. Patrick's in 1949.

Bishop Sheen after a Mass at St. Patrick's in 1949. Pictured on the right: Peggy Brophy, Diane Brophy, and Madeline Brophy. St. Patrick's Convent is in the background.



The Grotto

Submitted by Barb (Cramer) Benner



A tranquil Grotto situates itself in silhouette as the sun sets in the small community of Kickapoo, Illinois, west of Peoria on Route 150. Located on the northwest corner of the St. Patrick's Cemetery, this shrine has a long history.

The cornerstone of St. Patrick's Catholic Church was laid in 1839. The population of the community was mixed, predominantly settled by Catholic worshippers, some of Irish decent and some from German heritage. The ground for the church and the cemetery surrounding was donated by **William Patrick Mulvaney** who was a native of Dublin, Ireland.

Folks established themselves in this Kickapoo area in the 1830's because of the rich farm ground and soil that beckoned a labor of love. As families grew and expanded, generations stayed in the general area. Through any and all obstacles of putting roots in the new land, internal faith ran through the veins of the residents. The area was primarily Catholic; those of the faithful were devoted, valued their houses of worship and lived their beliefs. The Irish and Germans differed in many views, but they collectively followed their strengths and belief in God.

In 1869, St. Mary's Church became the official home for those Catholics of German birthright. For dedicated and perhaps inflexible reasons, the cemetery became the final resting place for both ethnic groups.

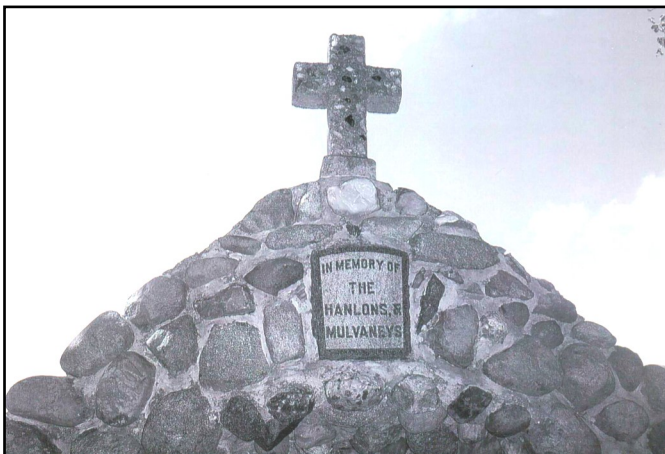
Believed to be the first cemetery burial in 1840 was that of **Nicholas Marie**, who was born in France and interred right next to the church.



John Hanlon (DOB 1803) born in County Limerick, Ireland married **Lucinda Kelley** (DOB 1815) who was from the state of Maine; and in 1840, they established a home in Rosefield Township. Two of their seven daughters (also had two sons) married two of William Mulvaney's sons. Thus, began the deep and close relationship between the pioneer Hanlons and Mulvaney's.

Over the years, they gathered on Sundays and holidays at different relatives' homes. The older generation had passed, and the next generation was fast taking their place in St. Patrick's cemetery. With large families, they decided to have a designated time each Fall to have a true large family reunion.

The annual reunions began around 1918, and there the idea was born to build a grotto in honor of the Blessed Mother. As the years passed, each year the plan was reinforced and developed. The cost of the statue, markers and original gates were paid for totally by these two families. The gates were later stolen or misplaced, but disappeared. With endless hours of hard work, construction of the Grotto was completed in 1931. Underneath the cross at the top of the Grotto is embedded in stone, "In Memory of the Hanlons and Mulvaney's."



And, in a direct quote from the original Hanlon/Mulvaney Reunion Book, it is noted, "Sunday, September 6, 1931 marked the date of the annual 'Hanlon and Mulvaney' Reunion. The recorded minutes for that reunion reflect the following: This Reunion date also marked the date of the blessing of the Grotto Shrine in honor of Our Blessed Mother erected to the memory of the pioneer Hanlon and Mulvaney families whose industry and integrity helped build and settle this well known community and country and who's faithfulness and

adherence to the Faith of their Father's was ever their outstanding characteristic."

*"In honor of this occasion, Mass was celebrated in the little stone church of St. Patrick where all the Hanlons and Mulvaney's had worshipped. After Mass was celebrated, a procession headed by **Father Kleinsorg** of Kickapoo and **Father Clancy** of Peoria formed and marched to the Grotto where the beautiful statue of Our Blessed Mother was blessed by Father Kleinsorg."*

The Grotto of Our Blessed Mother had been cared for by members of the Hanlon and Mulvaney families. **Herbert Hanlon** then assumed most of the duties regarding the care and maintenance. Upon his passing, his family took over the task and remain the caretaker at this time. In 2001, repairs were made to the grotto including a new floor and circular iron fence. The Grotto was re-dedicated and blessed in October of 2001 following "The Mass of Irish Heritage" at the little stone church of St. Patrick, and as in 1931, a group of considerable number was formed in procession to the grotto for the rededication and blessing. The photo shows the Grotto as it appears today; some deterioration has occurred and will be updated in the near future.



NOTE: Special thanks to **Mrs. Joyce (Ochs) Hanlon** for photos, family records and other documents to complete this story.



ORAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS



Wintertime Fun

by Jeanne (Marcille) Timberlake



My mother encouraged us six kids to “run outside” to entertain ourselves. Mom needed some quiet time as Dad worked second shift and she took care of us day and night. So, I spent many, many hours outside with family and friends while growing up.

My earliest memory of wintertime was riding in an old horse sleigh, pulled behind my Dad’s Ford. The sleigh belonged to **Dr. Joel Eastman**, our family’s doctor, neighbor, and friend. Mom gathered us together, and we huddled under old blankets in the back of the sleigh while Dad drove around our neighborhood. Great fun!

While growing up, our family home was in the north-end of Peoria on NE Monroe, one house away from Camblin Avenue. Camblin was a terrific street for sledding. The Story family lived on the corner of Rock Island and Camblin with an alley along their backyard, the same alley that ran behind our house. Our sled run started at their back door, through the yard (being sure to miss the telephone pole), down the alley, across the sidewalk, and onto Camblin. The sled run was a two-block-long gentle hill, starting at Rock Island and ending at NE Jefferson St. There were many snowfalls each winter, and my brothers, sisters, and neighborhood friends spent countless hours sledding down Camblin, then trudging back up the hill to race down it again.

Many snowfalls meant lots of opportunities to make snow angels and to have snowball fights. My siblings and I, along with neighborhood kids, would build snow forts in the backyard, and the girls would challenge the boys to see how long the forts would stay in one piece or who would be the first to give up.

As I grew older and no longer needed to stay close to home, ice skating became my primary wintertime activity. Glen Oak Park was within walking distance to home, and every day after school I would skate forward and backward on the park lagoon with

my best friend, Norma. The warming hut kept me toasty and warm when it was bitterly cold. Other times my Dad would drop us off at Bradley Park to skate at the wading pool which was converted into an ice rink every year. This is where I skated last. It was quite memorable. I was 65 and retired, and decided to see if I still had all the moves of my younger days. The surface was rough, and before long, I hit a snow bank, fell on my fist, and cracked my sternum. I hung up my skates after that day, but I still have them in my garage packed with many great memories.

Family time in the winter also included puzzles and regular visits to the Glen Oak Park conservatory. A puzzle was always on the dining room during the winter if you could find it under the coats, hats, and schoolbooks. If we needed the dining room table, Mom would throw a dish towel or table cloth over the puzzle, and we would sit down to eat. Luckily, we had a big square table in the kitchen that we used for most of our meals.

The family frequently visited the Glen Oak Park Conservatory during the winter to admire the garden displays, especially the poinsettias at Christmas-time. Of course, in those days, it was the original conservatory with seemingly miles of glass overhead and wandering paths through the moist jungle of trees and plants. There was even a banana tree that always seemed to have bananas on it just waiting to be picked. We kept watching the tree but always saw green bananas, and constantly wondered “Will they ever be ripe and ready to be picked?”

Family trips to Glen Oak Park and playing outside became more limited after I started working at age 14. However, when I married and had children, we continued many of the traditions of my youth, once again skating at the Glen Oak Park lagoon and spending many hours enjoying Glen Oak Park. My husband always went with us to skate, but he only skated once, preferring instead to speed with a go-cart on the river ice. I have many great memories of wintertime fun!



ORAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS



Winter Traditions



by Marianne (Timberlake) Moll

To me, winter means breathing brisk, crisp air that chaps my face, freezes my fingers and toes, and makes me feel totally alive. It also means bundling up in a coat, hat, scarf, mittens, and boots and spending long periods of time outside. Playing outside was a tradition encouraged by my parents, and we spent many hours as a family doing many of the same activities my parents enjoyed doing as they were growing up.

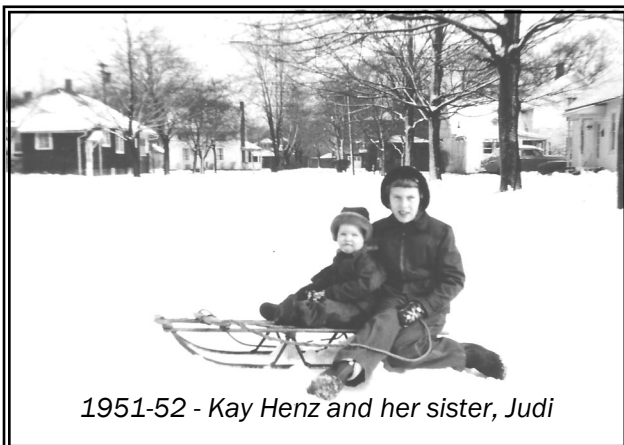
I spent a lot of time ice skating on rivers and lakes. My Dad enjoyed ice fishing so the rest of the family skated while he fished. We had a cabin in Bernadotte, IL so the Spoon River was one of the places we went. He also belonged to a fishing lake, Letsketchuwan, near Liverpool, IL. Dad would first drill a hole near the shoreline with an auger to test the thickness of the ice. If the ice was thick enough to fish, then he would use a saw to cut several more fishing holes further from the shore. The ice nearer to shore was reserved for our skating arena. My parents would sweep the snow off the ice, then pour water on the surface and spread it around with a broom so it would refreeze into a smoother surface. We had an old oil barrel, full of wood and fire, for our warming spot. Skating on the Spoon River was more exciting than skating on the lake. The ice would crack as you skated over it, even though it was several inches thick and deemed safe. The most memorable time on the river was not skating but, instead, racing up the river

with my grandfather on a go-cart. The cart had traction from the snow covering the ice so he was able to speed up river, spinning the cart in circles as we went. Great fun at the time but it certainly wasn't a tradition I continued with my children.

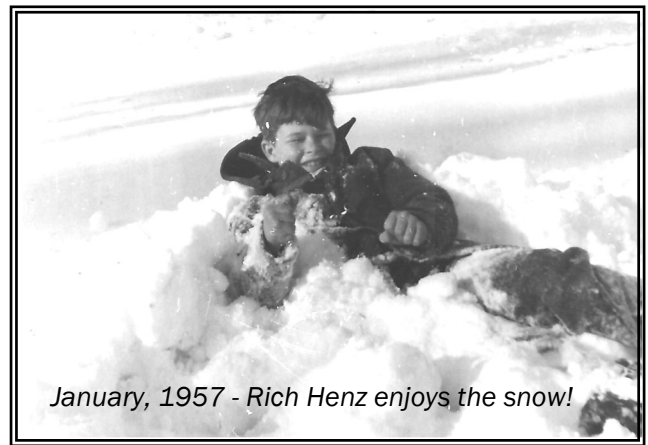
Sledding down the hills of Detweiller and Glen Oak Parks was another favorite pastime. My parents hauled the red flyer sled up the hill each time so that I could speed like the wind down the hill. All went well until the time I failed to turn the sled either right or left and ran head first into the statue of Robert Ingersoll at the bottom of a hill in Glen Oak Park. That stopped sledding for the day, but we visited my grandparents' house for some tender loving care before going home. Grandma gave me a wash cloth for my head, hot water to warm up my feet, and hot chocolate with marshmallows to make me feel better.

For those cold winter days when I didn't want to be outside, children's TV shows and cartoons were the focus. After school each day, I faithfully watched the Captain Jinks and Salty Sam show on Channel 25. Also never to be missed were the Saturday cartoons lineup with my favorites being Mighty Mouse, Tom and Jerry, Bugs Bunny, Rocky and Bullwinkle, and The Jetsons.

My husband and I continued my family's wintertime traditions of skating, sledding, and making snow angels with our children. We spent many hours laughing, speeding down hills, and sipping hot chocolate. These wintertime traditions created many happy memories for our family, memories we will continue to share throughout our lifetimes.



1951-52 - Kay Henz and her sister, Judi



January, 1957 - Rich Henz enjoys the snow!



ORAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS

Giant Turkey

by Rosemary "Pinky" (Chandler) Riffle

My grandfather was a huge man, not fat, but tall and barrel chested, big boned and, to me, a giant. He loved big things. He had worked at a piano factory and had furniture made that was so heavy no one could move it without help. We lived in a big house, everything was BIG. When it came to the Thanksgiving turkey, nothing would suit but that the turkey was the biggest he could get. Twenty-four pounds was the norm for his choice. It usually filled the oven with no room for anything else. In the early 30's when this photo was



taken, the turkey was bigger than my 4-year-old cousin, Mary, and/or her brother Ned, about 2 years old. It was the custom to hang the turkey to pull the tendons which would make the drumstick easier to eat. We also would pluck the pin feathers and stuff

the bird. No one in our family was ever sick from salmonella or any other illness associated with preparation and storage of the turkey. Although I do wonder why not. We had nowhere to store the leftover turkey except to cover it with a towel and put it on the enclosed back porch with the rest of the stuffing still in the cavity. I'm sure we tempted fate, but remember feasts and all the family fun that went with the meals. Although I am an only child, we lived with my grandmother and with cousins and aunts and uncles. Altogether there were 13 of us. We celebrated every Thanksgiving and many holidays and birthdays, all sitting around a huge old oval table that filled the dining room, another big thing my grandfather had made for us. So many great memories.

Oh Well

by Jeannette (Herghelegiu) Hughes

Are we so spoiled that we take too much for granted? Tomorrow when you go to the faucet to get a glass of water, I hope you take a moment of appreciation. I spent my early years growing up in Romania. Our daily supply of water for our home was achieved by someone going to the well. Now, years later, I can reflect on the work involved in what seemed to be an ordinary or mundane task. That well was hand dug. I don't know how deep it was, but it had to have reached the water table. It was lined with stone blocks.

The idea of an excavation in the ground to hold water is over 8,000 years old. We were lucky enough to have our own well, but in some small village areas, there was a community well. Since the manual labor of constructing such was intense, more hands were obviously available to dig that "gathering hole." Now I realize this was a valuable skill to achieve the result.



There was an above ground circular rock foundation with a pole and posts to manage a rope in the center. This allowed a bucket to descend, hand cranked to pull it up, and there was a fresh container of cold water.

This was a simple practice with no electricity used and yet supplied a necessity of life.

The moments we share are the moments we keep forever.

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