

If Walls Could Talk – The Linderman Building

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The building located on the Southeast corner of Colby Street and Mears Avenue is the oldest commercial building in town today. The building was built by Dexter Perry Glazer in 1870 and served as his dry goods store until 1875.

In September 1875, A. T. Linderman placed an ad in the Whitehall Forum announcing the opening of his mercantile store “as successor to D. P. Glazer at the Corner of Colby and Mears”. Since that time, the building has come to be referred to as the Linderman Building. In 1878, Linderman had the letters of his last name painted over each of the windows on the upper story.

In the late 1870’s, George H. Nelson gave up his job at the Eagle Tannery to work for A. T. Linderman, as he always wanted to work in a store, being a weaver by trade.

In 1887, George Nelson bought A. T. Linderman’s business and started Nelson & Company. The first floor was occupied as salesrooms with basement and upper floor for storage of goods. In 1897 Nelson added a 6-foot-wide balcony in the store to provide more floor area. In 1899, Nelson acquired the stock of George Mason in Montague. Nelson’s son Walter and daughter Nina operated the branch of the business there. Three years later, they sold the business in Montague to William E. Sweet.

In 1909 A. J. Gladstone Dowie moved his law practice from Montague to some rooms upstairs over the Linderman block. He worked from this location for a couple of years.

In 1912, with Nelson's son Walter back working for him, Nelson had an archway cut through the wall making Nelson's a big double store with groceries and men's wear on one side and dry goods and women's shoes in the other.

In early 1916, C. J. and L. B. Gee had the two wooden buildings just east of the Linderman block razed. They had most recently housed a meat market and a pool room. Two new blocks were being constructed; one (18x78) would be occupied by the meat market of Halgen and Hall; the other block (36x78) would be rented by G. H. Nelson & Co. for expansion.

Nelson remained in the Linderman block until mid-1916, when he was forced to move because the building had been sold. Nelson relocated to the rental building which was recently built by Carl & Lynn Gee. In 1920 Nelson closed out the grocery business retaining the clothing and dry goods and eventually took over the entire building that is now the larger section of the Hokey Pokey.

William C. Cotes started out working for Gee and Carr in 1907. In 1911, he announced that he was leaving Gee and Carr to open his own store next door to C. G. Pitkin. He was going to handle hardware as well as undertaking goods. In 1916 Cotes bought the Linderman building and moved his business there. This move offered Pitkin the opportunity to buy the building next door to him and open up his Annex.

In January 1930, W. C. Cotes announced that he had sold his business to Gordon Meinert, who continued to operate the hardware store. In 1934, Cotes announced a liquidation sale of W. C. Cotes Hardware. He was not only closing the business, but the building was also available for sale or rent.

In January 1935, the Kroger Grocery & Baking Company, which had been located elsewhere in town for several years, relocated to the Linderman/Cotes building. Mr. Willard J. Frick was the manager from 1932-35. In 1936, Wallace A. Woodlock took over as the manager. They remained at this location until February 1942 when they moved to what is the Hunt's Hardware building and now Gilroy's.

Nelson Lyons came to Whitehall in 1938 and opened a grocery called "City Market" in the Fuller building (which was located on the site of the former Goody-Goody – now Chen's). He purchased the Linderman/Cotes building in 1941 and moved his grocery business there. He and his wife lived on the second floor over the store, which was not an unusual arrangement back in the day. In 1950, Nelson Lyons sold the building to August Hoffman but he kept the business.

From 1940 to 1945, Fred C. Ramthun and Harold Lundquist did business as Ramthun's Quality Service Store, in the east half of the building. Fred handled the groceries and Harold handled the meat.

In November 1945, Modern Appliance and Sport Store opened in the east half of the building replacing Ramthun's grocery. They remained there until 1964.

Pete Vanderwall of J. VanderWall & Co., New Era grocers, purchased the stock and fixtures of Nelson Lyons City Market in 1950. They sold it to Mrs. & Mrs. Charles Mersman, who in turn sold it to Kenny Connell in 1951.

In July 1951, Kenny Connell, formerly employed by Taft Nesbit Service Mart in Montague, purchased the City Market and opened Connell's Market. He operated his meat market and grocery store until he closed in January 1961.

After a complete interior and exterior refurbishing of the building in June 1963, Art Freeman and Jerry Antekeier opened Ar-Jer's Mens Wear of Whitehall, which was much like their store in Muskegon. Gary Pickle was the Manager. They remained in business until 1964 when Gary Pickle took it over and the store changed its name to Mr. Pics until 1977. Levi's Depot followed Mr. Pic's in 1978. Irving Cryderman's Face The Music store opened in 1993. Northland Insurance Services started on Elizabeth Street in 1991 before moving over to the west side of the Linderman building where it remains today.

In the east half of the building was Modern Appliance and Sports Shop from 1945 to 1964 followed by Bartlett's Hardware from December 1972 until December 1989. Phyllis Sikkenga opened The General Store in July 1996 and it is still open at that location today.