

Troy Laundry Building

By Barbara Bedau Brow

White Lake Area Historical Society



1938 Troy Laundry Building - located at 214 E. Colby

There is no mention of the Troy Laundry in the local newspapers prior to 1884. But it is known that John Lindahl and his wife were the original owners/operators of the laundry. Before that, according to the 1880 census, John was working in the mills.

The first mention of the laundry was an item in the Whitehall Forum on January 17, 1884, which indicated that John Lindahl was occupying the Bratz building with the Troy Laundry. "And he has the most improved machinery for doing good work." At that time, the Bratz building was located three doors East of the Mears Hotel on Colby Street. On a map from December 1883, it appears that the laundry was located in the middle of the block between the alley by the Mears Hotel and Division Street.

In September 1884, John was having a new laundry building and a residence built on some property he owned further up Colby Street. The 14x32 foot laundry building was going to be built on the corner of the property and a 22x24 foot house in the middle. The house was brick with a basement reaching five

feet above the ground to contain a dining room, etc., and an upper floor for a parlor and chambers. Both of the buildings were built by John Westerlind.

In July 1886, John Lindahl moved his laundry building back and put up a store front to make more room. He also purchased a Eureka steam washer and engine. These additions gave him one of the best equipped laundries north of Muskegon. After this, ads in 1886 then indicated that the laundry was now located five doors East of the Mears Hotel.

In September 1886 there was an ad in the Forum for a residence, laundry, and machines for sale. Due to the ill health of his wife, John was intending to return to the old country of Sweden. Unfortunately, his wife died in October 1886.

A notice in the paper in December 1886 reported that John Lindahl had rented the Troy Laundry to Miss Carolina Ulen. She had been employed in the laundry for 3 years and thoroughly understood the business.

On 19 July 1888 it was announced in the local paper that John Lindahl had married Miss Hedvig Horman in Muskegon the prior day. According to census records, John and Hedwig later moved to Chicago. They would have three children during their married life together.

In September 1888, John Lindahl sold the Troy Laundry property to Charles Tornblom. Charles also married Carolina Ulen in September 1888. Tornblom was born in Sweden in 1860 and came to Whitehall in 1880. He had served as a member of the village council and the Board of Review. He was also a member of the fire department in the old days of hand-drawn equipment and water cisterns in the streets.

A news item in July 1893, stated that John Lindahl had returned to Whitehall to live. While they were here, his daughter Esther was born in 1895. But they later returned to Chicago, where their second son August was born in 1897 and where John died in 1914.

On April 1, 1931, after owning and operating the laundry for 43 years, Charles Tornblom sold the Troy Laundry to George Gasahl and retired. With the recent passing of his wife in March 1931, Tornblom moved to Greenville to live with his son. Mr. Tornblom died there in April 1941.

George Gasahl was born in Whitehall in June 1880. He received his high school education here and then moved to Chicago where he lived for 25 years. During his time in Chicago he was connected with Marshall Field & Company. He married Jeannette Mooney in June 1927 and they had a son George, Jr. Gasahl's moved to Whitehall in 1930. Mr. Gasahl died in 1936, but his wife continued to operate the laundry business.

On January 28, 1937, the old wooden laundry building caught fire and burned to the ground. The loss was estimated at \$15,000 and was only partially covered by insurance. It was quickly replaced by a new building. The existing structure was built entirely of tile, concrete and steel and is considered fireproof. Only the doors, counter, and the feed table were wood. A grand opening of the new laundry was held on May 10, 1938.

In 1945, Mrs. Jeanette Gasahal announced that she was leasing the laundry to her brother Leo "Bud" Mooney for a year and was going to take some time to "enjoy a good rest." In 1948, her son George, Jr. entered the business.

October 1950 saw another change in management when Mabel Pelon and Vera Buzzard leased the laundry. Mrs. Pelon had been employed at the laundry for thirteen years and Mrs. Buzzard for five years. There were no plans to change the current operation of the laundry and dry cleaning service.

A Whitehall Forum article on May 28, 1953, announced the sale of the Troy Laundry to a group of Muskegon men. The new owners were Chris Schrier, Lawrence DeHollander, and George P. Thompson of Hudson Cleaners. Ferrell Bower of Whitehall was training to take over the establishment as manager. This proved to be a short-lived venture as the closing of the laundry was announced in the paper on December 10, 1953. Mrs. Gasahl had sold the business but retain ownership of the building.

In October 1955, Mrs. Gasahl opened a shop called "Jeannette's" where she sold hats, gloves, handbags, and accessories. The former laundry was redecorated in a French-motif style. Mrs. Gasahl had eighteen years' experience with hats while working at Marshall Fields in Chicago, and a year and a half at Grossman's in Muskegon. Having her own hat shop was a dream come true for her.

Mrs. Gasahl continued her dream until December 1961, when she began holding a "Going Out of Business" sale at Jeannette's.

Shortly after Mrs. Gasahl closed her shop, she sold the building to James Tait, who moved his already established business known as the Fife and Drum, into the building. In 1977 he celebrated the 20th Anniversary of his business, while he was at the Colby Street located. On Sunday, September 14, 1980, the business closed.

In December 1988, Ed Roberts opened The Dunes Art Gallery in the house next to the former Troy Laundry building – which had been the former home of John Lindahl and Charles Tornblom.

On May 30, 1992, The Silver Drum was opened by Jack Seggie, a former Montague police officer. The shop consisted of Indian crafts, jewelry, Santa Fe and Southwest-style décor and clothing. The shop's name was a combination of the Native American imagery and the name of the business formerly located there – The Fife and Drum.

Later it became the "From Time to Time Gallery - Antiques, Art & Stuffed" according to a sign that hung over the door for many years. It was only open from time to time.

The building appears to be unoccupied at this time.