

Pekadill's Building History

By Barbara Bedau Brow
White Lake Area Historical Society



C1884 - Early picture of what would eventually become Pekadill's, on the corner of Mears Avenue and Elliot Street (located on Lot 1, Block 37)

On December 1, 1856, Giles B. Slocum bought 67 acres in the southwest fractional part of section 28 in Ottawa County, Michigan from John Leminx for \$400. Section 28 is bordered on the north by lots that are north of River and Hanson Streets, on the east by Elizabeth Street, on the south by Alice Street, and on the west by the shore of White Lake.

In 1856, Whitehall was part of Ottawa County. On June 1, 1859, Muskegon County was formed, and Whitehall became part of Muskegon County. That year, Giles B. Slocum and Charles Mears laid out (platted) the present village of Whitehall into lot and block numbers.

Albert J. Foster bought Lot 1, Block 37 from Giles B. Slocum and his wife Sophia on June 11, 1869 for \$125. Albert Foster had come to the area in 1864 and was joined by his father David J. Foster in 1867. Together they established a large mercantile business elsewhere in town. David Foster died in 1881 and Albert Foster died in 1933.

Sometime after 1877 the number of lots running along Mears Avenue on Block 37 was reduced from 6 lots to 5 lots. On the Bird's Eye View of Whitehall 1880 on the southeast corner there is a vacant lot and a house south of it. The house was built between 1877 and 1879 on Lot 2, Block 37.

Jessie Covell, wife of Charles E. Covell, bought Lot 1, Block 37 from Nellie Foster, wife of Albert J. Foster on May 18, 1882 for \$450.

On October 4, 1883, Nels P. Myrmel bought Lot 1, Block 37 from Jessie Covell for \$450. According to an item in the Whitehall Forum for April 10, 1884, a store was being built on the vacant lot on the corner of Mears Avenue and Elliot Street. Myrmel Brothers (Nels and Andrew) opened for business around June 7, 1884. It does not appear that there were any other buildings on Lot 1, Block 37 between 1856 and March 1884.

Nels Myrmel was previously partnered in business with Andrew Krogstad (Kragetaedt) from 1879 until 1883. Their grocery store was located on the southeast corner of Mears Avenue and Muskegon.

Nels Myrmel married Anna M. Christensen in Whitehall in December 1882. In 1910 he was listed as working in a local sawmill. In April 1901 Nels Myrmel retired from the business and sold his stock and premises to his brother Andrew before moving West to Cloquet, Minnesota. Anna Myrmel passed away in Cloquet in September 1928. Nels Myrmel died there in January 1935.

In January 1900, Andrew P. Myrmel married Hilda Rydell at the Trading Post. They had 4 children during their marriage: Blanche E. (1901-1983); Wilfred (1903-1988); Ruth J. (1908-2005) and Helen D. (1912-1994).

In May 1921, Andrew Myrmel and his wife Hilda left Whitehall for Cloquet, Minnesota where his brother Nels and family had settled. Andrew Myrmel died in Cloquet in February 1923. His wife Hilda returned to Michigan and lived with family in Mt. Clemens where she died in February 1951. They are both buried in Oakhurst Cemetery in Whitehall.

On April 1, 1926, the Whitehall Forum announced that W. D. Springer, veteran feed store retailer purchased the store building of Mrs. A. P. Myrmel where he moved his present line of groceries and feed. He remained in business there from April 1926 until about July 1927.

August Stoffer and his wife Elizabeth bought Lot 1, Block 37 from William D. Springer and his wife Ada M, on July 15, 1927, for \$1 and other valuable consideration dollars. At that time, William Springer owned his feed store on Mears Avenue for just over one year before selling it. William Springer died in 1933.

Arnold Panzl married Helen Stoffer, the daughter of August Stoffer on October 10, 1922. In 1933, Arnold Panzel and his wife Helen took over the store from her father August Stoffer and it became known as Panzl's Grocery Store. August Stoffer died at the home of his son-in-law and daughter in February 1941. Helen continued to operate the store until 1952.

In 1952, George Morris bought Panzl's Grocery and renamed it George's Market. The purchase included the building and the store. Mr. & Mrs. Morris moved from Division Street to the home adjoining the store. In 1955 an ad for George's Market advertised meats, groceries and frozen foods.

In January 1972 it was announced that George's Market had been sold to Mr. & Mrs. Donald Kanouff and they had taken over the business on December 1, 1971. At the time, Mr. Kanouff was employed at the Hooker plant and Mrs. Kanouff was working at the Whitehall post office. Their son, Dale, who was married with a family, was going to be in charge of the grocery and meat market. The new owners were living in the residence quarters connected to the store building and helped with the business during the evening hours.

The Kanouffs plan to continue the grocery and meat market service as it has been. They will remain open the usual hours, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday. The store is closed on Sundays. It's unclear just how long they were actually in business there.

On October 23, 1982, it was announced that the White Lake Actors Guild and the Montague Business Association teamed up to create a two-story haunted house using the former market on the corner of Mears and Elliot. Open since October 15, the old store front was attracting crowds from around the area. Hours were 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Mondays through Thursday, and 9 a.m. to midnight Friday and Saturday. Admission was \$1 on Mondays and Tuesdays. Other days, admission was \$1.25 for those 15 and younger, and \$2.50 for adults. Families were admitted for \$5. Funds raised went to the two sponsoring organizations.

Visitors were taken through 11 terrifying rooms depicting "unbelievable realistic" horror scenes, including a devils' room, a funeral parlor, a witches' room and spider room with human spider. The ghost room sported a dazzling special effect of a ghost rising out of a tombstone. The torture chamber had a guillotine and a machete-armed executioner who attacked the crowd. E.T. and Darth Vader were also rumored to be signed up for several guest appearances. The first week of operation, the White Lake haunted house attracted more than 300 persons.

In August 1983, Pete and Kathy Wessel purchased the building and after extensive remodeling converted it into an old-fashioned soda fountain and ice cream parlor. They came up with the name by using the first 2 letters of Pete's and Kathy's names and the family dog Dillon. Pekadill's is pronounced PEEK-a-dills.

In 1989 Peka-dill's was purchased by the John Dillivan family who continue to operate it today. For one summer in 1993 Peka-dill's expanded into North Muskegon. John's wife Sue managed the original Peka-dill's in Whitehall while he ran the new restaurant.

The first stages of the gardens began in the mid 1980's with 5 tables. The gardens have continued to evolve over the years with the addition of decks and a fishpond being built in 1997.

In the summer of 2007, Peka-dill's began offering their delicious barbeque ribs and chicken dinner special. This much-anticipated offering runs from 5PM until 9PM on Fridays and Saturdays from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Peka-dill's has the distinction of being the business with the longest history in the building at 36 years and counting. Here's to many more years to come.