

Interview with HAROLD CHAPMAN

by Irma Jolliffe

I was born in Town of Troy, Walworth County on November 18, 1897. I came to Eagle in 1916 as a bookkeeper at the Smart's Auto Company. That was located where Chapman's is now. That was Harry Smart and he was the first dealer to have automobiles in Eagle, Palmyra and Mukwonago. I went back to school in 1917. I went to Elkhorn as a bookkeeper for Holton Band Instruments. It was a temporary job and I worked there about 4 months. I then came back to Eagle. In 1918 I was drafted into the Army. I went to Milwaukee to the School of Engineering. In December of 1918 I was discharged as the war was over. I learned mostly mathematics in the Army. I was in about 4 months.

I got married in 1919. My wife was from Eagle. We got married in Eagle. When I worked for Smart's I lived right here on Highway 67. After I was married I bought this lot from Smart's and built this house. My father-in-law was Rockteacher. My wife belonged to the Eagle Girls Club and they had lots of dances. We went often. The dances were the dance of the time, schottisches, and waltzes. There were also square dances. We have three children, all girls.

In 1923 I took over the shop from Mr Smart. He was no longer a car dealer. The place burned down in 1923. I built the front part of the station, it is still there. In 1924 I started with Standard Oil. In 1969 I retired and my nephew, Russell bought it out. He is the present owner.

There was a spur from the railroad that went to Troy Center. There were two side tracks down by Sasso's in addition to the main track. They used to bring grain in from the Dakotas, polish it here in the mill, then send it on to the breweries in Milwaukee. The Ringling Brothers Circus used to come through here at night and we would get up to watch the circus train go through.

The ledger I showed you belonged to Smart and before that Steve Reed had it for his blacksmith shop. They also sold farm machinery there then. To begin with the Smart brothers bought the shop, but then one brother went north. Joe Stude bought the house over here and he found the books and brought them over to me. Smart had a car dealership but I was a gas and oil dealer. I sold cars for Smart, one day I sold two of them. One was to our neighbor on the farm, Nokes. I do not remember who I sold the other one to. A touring car cost \$349.

I have a telephone bill back then from the Eagle Telephone Company. It was a \$1.75. That was for one month. You could call Dousman, Genesse, Palmyra, East Troy, North Prairie, and Mukwonago then. Now only two cities are local. The telephone Company was above the bank. I do not know when the company was started or when it stopped. We had a phone at home on the farm. Mike Sasso has a collection of the Eagle Quill newspapers and he might be able to tell you.

In about 1910 Henry Faestl started delivering Standard Oil. We delivered Standard Oil products direct to the farm by truck. We also had a service station. Farmers could get machinery, farm clothes, everything in Eagle. Farmers would trade eggs for groceries. I remember one time when Cora Babcock came into town with eggs in the back of a buggy and the horse was scared by a car. He started to run and Cora grabbed her hat with both hands. The horse and buggy went between the garage and the

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telephone pole and headed down the Troy Center road. Some men in the saloon saw it and took off after it and got it stopped. I just remember how funny Cora looked as she held on to her hat.

I also remember the night the bank was robbed. It had been robbed before but the time I remember the robbers cut the phone lines. The phone office was above the bank. Anyway, the man from the phone company found out some how that the bank was being robbed so he came by yelling "Get Up, the bank is being robbed." I didn't know why I should get up - all I could do was watch I suppose. But then Harry Smart came by. and We heard some awful shooting and a shotgun banged. I told Ruby I'd have to get up I suppose and for her to take Eve and go to the Smarts. This neighbor Stude that I told you about, he came across with a rifle. We saw three men coming up the street. I said to Art" there goes Harry now lets catch up with him". We got in front of the school and saw that it was the bank robbers. They said "shoot 'em up". I was gone by that time. I didn't waste any time getting out of there. They had left their car in the cemetery. Anyway, the bank robbers got away.

When my wife, Ruby was young the Creamery used to empty their old milk out in back and Ruby got typhoid fever, and she was taken to Palmyra to the Sanitarium. the creamery was on Sherman Street next to the railroad. When we were on the farm we took our milk to Little Prairie. That creamery is now the saloon. There was also a creamery at Jerico.

In back of the old village hall there used to be coal sheds and also stock yards. The railroad had a water tower down there and had a well. There also used to be a pickle factory there. Someone came in to the pickle factory with a small team and the horses fell into the well. Ruby's Uncle and Aunt used to dig wells and they had a tackle and pulled the horses out.

In May I think 1923 a long freight train derailed. The Marsh boys used to ride the train and the train went by and one of the boys was sitting on top and waved to us. About two hours later someone came in and said there had been a terrible train wreck at the county line. We went down there. One of the box cars was tipped over, also the engine. The Marsh boy was pinned underneath, they could not get him out.

Ruby's grandfather was going to help one of the first minister start the church down here. We were sitting here one night and about 9 o'clock someone rapped on the door. It was John Steinhofer from Palmyra, his wife and another woman, a nun. She was from South Dakota. They thought I could tell them where the Irish settlement was. She was writing a book. Her name was Lane. They were strong Catholics, lived below lighthouse hill here. I am not Irish, I am English and Scotch. They asked me if I knew about the Irish settlement because I am the oldest one around here.

I think people are different now. Back on the farm our barn burned during a thunder storm. My mother called upstairs to the hired man John, who was 16 years old. He went out and got all the cattle and horses out except for a few calves. The next morning there were three loads of hay there. Billy Baker brought in a load. We milked about 20 cows. We also had pigs.