



NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

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When we think of an “everything” store we think of Wal Mart or Target. However, 50 years ago, people in Wynantskill could get “everything” at Frank Houser’s store.

For those who weren’t around pre-1960, a little biography is in order. Frank Houser came to Wynantskill in 1902 to work for Frank Gillette who owned a local hotel/tavern on Main Avenue. He worked for Gillette until joining the service in World War I. After his discharge, Hauser purchased the building and Houser’s Store began.

Except for meat and groceries, the store carried practically everything. There were dry goods. Need a pair of rubber boots or a raincoat? Frank carried them. How about tobacco or penny candy? You could find it at Houser’s. How about needles and threads? Just go to THE store in Wynantskill.

Children (and adults too) enjoyed ice cream at the soda fountain in the back of the store. Frank’s assistant Charlie Minassian was his “right hand man”. Charlie had a wooden leg and consequently walked with a limp. Kids used to play tricks on him. They would say “Hey Charlie, can I get a Pepsi?” He would get up and slowly walk to the soda counter. While he was over there, kids would help themselves to the candy. Mr. Hauser may have known about this, but being such a good soul, would look the other way.

Everyone who has talked to me about Frank Houser used the word “generous”. He helped a family trying to buy a home during World War Two; he would invite kids waiting for a bus in the winter to come in and keep warm. He allowed a friend to store his car during the winter in his barn. Although not a parishioner, he donated food to the First Reformed Church.

Frank was active in the community for many years. When the Wynantskill Fire Department was in its infancy, calls would come into Houser’s Store and Frank would get the word out to volunteers. He was a member of the American Legion, the Agricultural and Farm Bureau and the North Greenbush Ambulance Association. Frank was a founder, trustee (and I believe) generous benefactor of St. Jude’s.

Frank retired in 1964 and Houser’s Store closed. Years later it was damaged by fire and taken down. If you look really hard at the “Jack and Jill” pre-school on Main Ave., perhaps you can imagine the green and white building that used to be Houser’s Store.

I’m sure there are many other Houser stories; please pass them on (283-6384). Do you remember Sharpe’s Grove in Defreetsville? Please call me.