

DOHERTY GROCERY STORE

***416 Liberty Street
Petoskey, Emmet County, Michigan***

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GEORGE AND Margurite Doherty will soon be closing the doors on the Doherty Grocery Co., ending a business started 56 years ago by George's father at 416 Liberty-st. (NEWS photo by Jim Doherty.)

Doherty Grocery Closing Doors Next Month, Ending 56 Years

By JIM DOHERTY

The West Side just won't be the same—at least to me, when "Cousin' George" closes the Doherty Grocery Co. at 416 Liberty-st. next month.

There's been a grocery at that location for more than 60 years and it has been in the same family since 1914.

"Cousin' George's father, also a George, bought the store in 1914 when the present operator was a lad of eight and used to deliver groceries around the neighborhood with his hand-drawn wagon.

It was Sullivan Grocery before it was Doherty Grocery, operated by the late "Con" Sullivan, but what it was before that even George doesn't know.

My early recollections of the grocery go back as far as my memory and I think of the glass display case in which they kept candy and in the 1920's you could buy a bag of candy for a penny or two. I used to sweep out the whole store on a Saturday morning for a nickel candy bar, "peck potatoes" for something like a cent or a cent and a half a peck.

"You can't hardly find help like that today," George laughed when we chatted about those days and his pending retirement.

George really isn't my cousin, he's my second cousin, and his dad was my great uncle but you

don't call a guy great uncle, you just call him uncle.

There could have been a great deal of confusion in the family back in the 1920's because there were then so many Georges, Williams and Idas in the family. But we kids solved the mystery by giving the various kinfolk the relationship label whenever their names cropped up.

We had "Uncle George" and "Cousin George" and that was fine until George III came along. He's still "Young George." His own sons called "Uncle George" the boss."

We took care of the Williams by calling my grandfather granddad or Will; my dad Bill, Willy (which he hated) or a dispenser. The store was lit by "Cousin Bill" and my second cousin William A. we called Duke or "Cousin Duke". The two Idas were always "Aunt Ida" or "Cousin Ida" and to us, there was no confusion.

How succeeding generations have kept them separated is another matter.

The present George who is planning to retire about mid-June took over operation of the store with "Duke" back in the late 1930's when their father retired. Duke went into the Army in 1941 and went into other business ventures when he finally got home in 1946.

So for the past 29 years, George has been running the

store with considerable help from his wife, Marguerite.

Back 30 or 40 years ago, the interior of the Doherty Grocery didn't look much like it does today. There was a big pot-bellied stove just ahead of the meat case. Shelves went clear to the ceiling and one of the Dohertys would use a pair of long-handled tongs to pluck whatever it was you wanted off the higher shelves.

You never waited on yourself. Sugar was scooped out of a barrel under the counter, cotton was in tubs, cheese was sliced from big slabs, kerosine was pumped into small cans from a barrel, cookies came in bulk and were under glass with gas lights in earlier days.

The main highway used to be on Liberty-st., Jackson, Connable and Charlevoix-ave. with sharp turns at each intersection on these narrow streets. West Siders were up in arms and petitioned back in the 1930's when the Highway Department wanted to swing the "new highway" from Spring-st. to Liberty intersection at the Liberty intersection because many homes were in the tourist and hay fever business.

Doherty Grocery had a hand-operated gas pump out in front of the store and "Uncle George" used to chew out farmers, including my granddad, when they

would tie their team and wagon to the pump.

"I can't sell gas to horses," he'd say. "You're costing me money if you tie up there. Move them up the street a ways."

Doherty Grocery used to deliver groceries in a Model T Ford touring car. They had credit, and in depression days there were many people carried on the books through the long winters.

"We bought our pork by buying pigs and cutting them ourselves," George recalled. "We bought chickens alive, killed and cleaned them. We bought our eggs and butter in crocks from farmers — and we even gave away soup bones."

George's father opened the store six days a week at 6 a.m., closed at 6 p.m. on five days but on Saturday stayed open until 10 or 11 p.m. George has cut his hours down, but is still open six days a week.

For almost 20 years he met the old Petoskey Portland Cement Co. freighter J.B. John, later John L.A. Galster—now the Sea Castle, at all hours of the day or night and brought out the groceries.

The Home Dairy next door is closed. Neuman Grocery down the street is closed, Bill McDermott's blacksmith shop and the Pagel cider mill are long gone and many other neighboring West Side businesses of the days when George started in the business are also gone.

The old stove that used to be so cheerful to great debaters from the neighborhood in the 1930's was replaced many years ago when the store was remodeled to better utilize the 800 square feet of space for more self-service. But the stove is still in a back room.

George plans to rent the building, is selling out all stock and equipment and hopes to find time to catch up on some of the fishing he's missed and odd jobs he didn't have time to do.

"It'll seem strange after all these years," he admits. "But I think I'll like it."

Four Families Chased by Fire In West Side Store, Apartment

Four apartments were evacuated during a fire in the third floor of the Doherty Co. Grocery building at 416 Liberty-st. yesterday afternoon.

Assistant Fire Chief Thad Brown said cause was undetermined but damage was extensive, mostly from smoke. The store had water damage but was open for business today.

Owner George Doherty said he had insurance and planned to repair the apartments so the families who had to evacuate could

move back.

Those evacuated include Mrs. Genevive Keller, in whose apartment the fire apparently started; Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Hill; Mrs. John Cassidy and son Paul and an apartment shared by Nancy Anderson of Harbor Springs, Ann Clairmont of Harbor Springs and Diane Olsen of Petoskey. Mrs. Cassidy is currently a hospital patient.

Fire was discovered about 4:15 p.m. by Miss Olsen and firemen were summoned. At one point,

it was feared the landmark West Side building would get out of control and residents, neighbors and friends started moving out furniture and furnishings.

Adjoining the store building, about six feet away, is the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Jay Hewitt.

Thad Brown praised the work of the firemen in stopping the fire which apparently started in a corner under the sink of Mrs. Keller's apartment. Firemen had to chop two holes through the roof

and into several walls to get at the blaze. It burned a hole through the floor of the Keller apartment, spread into the sidewall.

Doherty said Mrs. Keller left her apartment about 3 p.m. and said nothing was amiss—just over an hour later the fire was discovered. Some apartments and the store got some water but firemen were as sparing as possible.

"It could have been serious," Brown said. "The firemen stopped the fire right in the corner of one room."



EVACUATION--four apartments in the Doherty Grocery building on Liberty-st. were evacuated while firemen stopped the third floor fire from spreading. There was considerable smoke and water damage. Before fire was controlled, neighbors, friends and residents carried out belongings. (NEWS photo by Fred Lovelace.)

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NEIGHBORS helped tenants move out while firemen moved in yesterday on the fire in the Doherty building on Liberty-st. This man is carrying out clothing. Others formed a chain to help remove articles. (NEWS photo by Fred Lovelace.)



FIREMAN CHARLES Laubrich (in gas mask) prepares to enter the apartment above Doherty Co. Grocery at 416 Liberty-st. yesterday to check on third floor conditions. Firemen saved the building. (NEWS photo by Fred Lovelace.)



OVERLOADED TRIUMPH. Clothing, furniture and personal belongings of three girls in one apartment in the Doherty Grocery building were dumped onto this tiny sports-car during the fire yesterday and later removed to safety by volunteers who assisted tenants in saving most of their belongings. (NEWS photo by Fred Lovelace.)

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