

"Shaffer and Company Variety Store"

Carroll County Times Article for 30 September 2001

by Jay A. Graybeal

In 1961 the Times newspaper celebrated its 50th anniversary and the event provided an opportunity to look back over the half century. The business section of the November 20, 1961 issue of the paper included a story about the closing of Shaffer and Company, a Westminster neighborhood store begun in the same year as the paper:

"A Westminster and Carroll County institution that is missed during the 50th anniversary of the TIMES is the Shaffer & Co. Variety Store, which closed shortly after the first of this year after 50 years of community service.

Jesse D. Myers closed the store with regret after having been associated with the business since 1917.

Harry W. Shaffer founded the business in 1911 as a general merchandise store.

Jesse D. Myers was employed by Mr. Shaffer for two weeks in 1917 when he was called as a National Guardsman, 29th Division, for war service. As a machine gunner, Mr. Myers served for two and one-half years.

Form Partnership

In 1921, Mr. Myers returned to Shaffer & Company and a partnership was formed.

Founded as a variety store, the company sold practically everything from kitchen [utensils] to dry goods. A candy and cookies line was added in 1921.

Mr. Myers recalls that he went through the depression of the 30's with no pinch. 'Of course, I lost a lot of inventory value on goods, but pulled through without any disaster,' he says.

Mrs. Shaffer was the former Miss Arline Myers, Jesse's sister. After working in the store for five years, Arline and Harry Shaffer were married.

Carroll Product

Jesse Myers was born and reared in Carroll County, near Uniontown. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Harry G. Myers.

In 1922, Myers married the former Sarah Elizabeth Logue, daughter of Mary Beard Logue, near Warfieldsborg.

Mrs. Myers worked with her husband in the store, taking time out to have three fine children. The Myers have two sons and a daughter—Howard, accountant at Black and Decker; Jesse, Jr., laboratory technician at Frederick State Laboratory; and Madeline E. Myers, teacher at Francis Scott Key High School.

When Mr. Shaffer died in 1941, his widow and daughter continued in the business, but with Mr. Myers taking over the one-half share.

Candy Big Seller

During the fifty years of operating the Shaffer store, the big sellers were shoes, canvas footwear, tennis shoes, floor covering, work clothes, school supplies, kitchen utensils and rugs.

When candy and cookies were introduced in 1921 they immediately became the big sellers. That first year the firm sold two tons of candy. At the time the firm closed its doors in January 1961, Mr. Myers had sold 25 tons of candy.

Mr. and Mrs. Myers live at Smallwood. Mrs. Arline Shaffer lives at Cranberry Valley with her daughter, Mrs. Lindsey Shaffer.”

Shaffer and Company had numerous counterparts in the small towns in Carroll County. Growing up near Manchester, I was a frequent patron of the candy counter at Carr’s Store, conveniently located on the square directly between my home and the elementary school. No early morning walk to school was complete without an unauthorized visit, via the front door and out the side door, to Carr’s for a candy bar. The evidence, of course, had to be consumed before setting foot on school grounds.



This postcard view shows part of the East Main Street, Westminster, neighborhood served by the Shaffer and Company Variety Store from 1911 to 1961. Historical Society of Carroll County postcard collection.