



A Stitch in Time

Antioch retains quintessential small town atmosphere

By Jessica Halston

Antioch will always be a small town at heart. Corporations may come and go, but nothing in the future can change the quaint town's history. The downtown area, as well as several surrounding Antioch neighborhoods still speak of people and events past, and that can't be taken away.

"Antioch, Illinois: A Pictorial History 1892-1992," compiled by the Lakes Region Historical Society, details Antioch's rich past. The village was incorporated on February 29, 1892, though the earliest settlers had been inhabiting the area since 1842. Nine log homes graced the land, which was shared with the Native Americans situated by Channel Lake. Only two stores could be found in Antioch at the time, and the first industry was a saw mill and grist mill located on Sequoit Creek.

Many of the structures from Antioch's youth still stand, though a succession of fires depleted many original buildings. The Lakes Region Historical Society, located at the northeast corner of Main and Depot, was built in 1892 as the Antioch School. The Vault Restaurant occupies the former State Bank of Antioch, which housed Antioch's first burglar-proof safe. Antioch Community High School, then Antioch Township High School (ATHS), was dedicated on March 24, 1916; the first day of classes occurred on Sept. 4 with four teachers.

Prominent names from the past have also lingered, including ACHS teachers John Olisar and Paul Petty. Olisar's father George taught music at the Antioch Grade School, as Olisar now leads the band at ACHS. George Olisar always wanted to be a professional musician, and was once offered the second trumpet position in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. George passed the opportunity with the CSO to teach at the grade school. He also served as the conductor at the Antioch Opera House in the 1960's. John Olisar specializes in brass instruments, particularly the trumpet. "I

hadn't planned on staying [in Antioch]," said Olisar. "I hadn't meant to go into music, but I joined the band in the army and got reinterested."

Paul Petty also carried down his family's legacy by continuing in education. Petty's grandfather, William C. Petty, served as the 8th grade teacher of Antioch Grade School during the 1920's. He was later elected Lake County Superintendent of Schools in April of 1930. Wm. C. Petty Elementary School currently stands at the corner of Grand Ave. and Rte. 83.

Paul's mother taught at several area schools, spending the years prior to her retirement at Emmons Grade School, where she instated the first kindergarten. Paul has been teaching at ACHS for 10 years. "I just thought [teaching] was a neat lifestyle," said Paul Petty.

Former ACHS teacher Ann Kakacek named the *Antioch Tom Tom* as part of a contest held at the high school in 1951. "I thought it worked because we were the Sequoits and the tom-tom was how they communicated. I won

McMillen family line went through ACHS, including Kakacek, her mother, children, and grandchildren. Her daughter Kit also went into teaching and is currently a 5th grade teacher at Pleviak School in Lake Villa, IL. When asked why she chose to remain in Antioch, Kakacek became reminiscent: "It's just always been my home. My earliest memory is probably ice skating on the channels to Lake Catherine."

Antioch used to feature several weekend attractions long since gone. The Antioch Palace was an amusement park that featured a dance floor, billiards, 4 bowling lanes, lunch counter, and soda fountains. The Palace also featured amateur boxing on Friday nights. The Crystal Theater featured live performances as well as "moving pictures" on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The Palette, Masque, & Lyre Theater now occupies that structure.

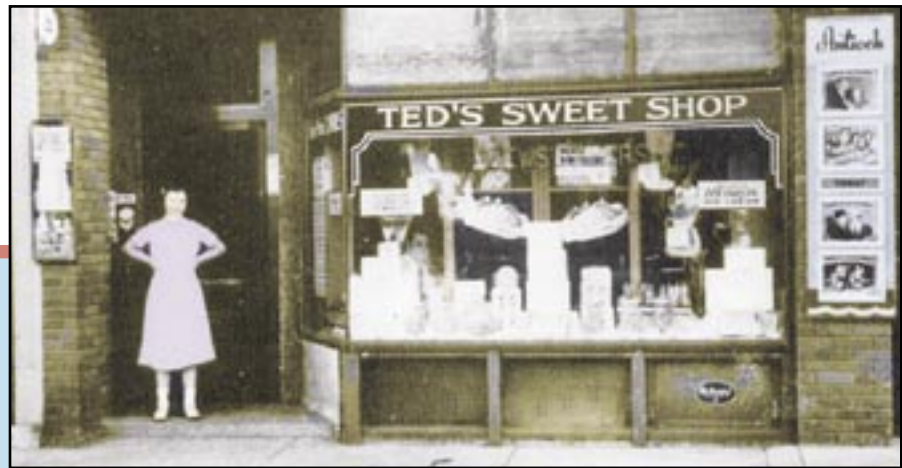
A lot of the charm from former days remains in the look and feel of downtown Antioch, especially at night when Main Street is lit up and the sky seems to sparkle. It's no mystery why many individuals who were raised here chose to stay: Antioch will always feel like home.

“ [Antioch]'s just always been my home.

-Ann Kakacek
Former ACHS teacher

a free year's issues, which cost a nickel at the time," said Kakacek. Formerly Ann McMillen, Kakacek was the daughter of past Antioch mayor and Chicago Bear James McMillen, namesake of the road running parallel to the football field at ACHS. Four generations of the

Ted's Sweet Shop now houses The Humidor, but the Antioch Theater remains next door. The Vault Restaurant, across Lake Street from the theater, was once the State Bank of Antioch.



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