

GEORGE AND CECELIA LOOK

Little Chute Historical Society 2011 Cemetery Walk

My name is George F. Look and I was born on April 19, 1890 in Little Chute at the home of my parents Jacob and Agatha (Van Ooyen) Look. Both of my parents traveled to America from Germany. My father was a shoe repair man (as was his father in Germany) and worked in the mill. After finishing 8th grade, I went to work at the mill with my father. Shortly thereafter, I was offered a job to be the grocery store delivery boy for John Wynboom.

After working for the Wynboom Grocery Store for four years, I left and worked as a delivery boy for the P. A. Gloudemans Department Store.

After four years with the Gloudemans Department Store, John Wynboom offered me more money to return to his Grocery Store.

On July 22, 1915, my future brother-in-law, George Hermsen, and I bought the grocery store from John Jansen (better known as Buttermilk John) and named it the Cash Grocery Store. This is the same building that that my future wife, Celia Gloudemans' Grandfather, Adrian Gloudemans, bought for his son, Arnold (Celia's father) in 1889 from John Van Roy. Arnold ran it as a tavern for 1½ years. When the Lamers' Hotel was to be erected, the tavern building was moved west on Main Street and the building became a grocery store.

My wife, Cecelia Marie Gloudemans, was born on March 24, 1894, to Arnold and Mary (Hurkman) Gloudemans. Both of her parents were born in the Little Chute area. Celia grew up on a Grand Chute farm. She attended the country school in the winter and the Little Chute Catholic School in spring and fall. During her First Communion year, Celia stayed at a relative's house in Little Chute to prepare. When Celia was 17 years old, her father purchased the square house on Canal Street from her grandfather, Adrian Gloudemans, and the family moved to Little Chute.

Her father, Arnold, had many prosperous occupations including: farming, lumberjack, tavern owner, coachman, store clerk, lumber and coal yard owner. Arnold and his brother, Henry, owned the Little Chute Land Company where they platted out the Fairview Heights area of Little Chute. On the lots, they built houses which they rented or sold. They donated the park land to the Village of Little Chute that we now know as Doyle Park. It was later named after the admired village physician, Dr. Doyle. "The village suggested calling it Gloudeman Park but the Gloudeman brothers did not approve of that idea."

On October 30, 1917, Celia Gloudemans and I married. We lived above the Cash Grocery Store until I was drafted into the army on August 2, 1918. Before I left, I sold my share of the store to my partner, George Hermsen. My wife, Celia, was pregnant and due to custom was not able to stay at her parent's home because it was not considered proper for pregnant women to be seen. She stayed with my parents who spoke very little English.

Raymond was born on August 30, 1918 at my parent's home and I did not see him until my discharge on December 18, 1918.

While I was in the army I helped with cutting the meat and decided to own my own meat market. On January 27, 1919, I purchased the Henry Van Susteren Meat Market which was located in the Van Susteren/Verstegen Building. I had little money and experience. Celia and I lived in the living quarters at

the rear of the Meat Market. Our first night, Celia was overcome by gas from a coal stove. At midnight, we returned to my parent's home for protection. When repaired, we returned to our rear apartment. As times were not safe, I slept with a "loaded pistol under my pillow."

The summer was hot and the owner of the ice house sold out. Ceil wrote, "We had no ice for the meat market. We thought we would have to give up because we couldn't make it. But, Henry Williams from Kimberly came to our rescue. He drove with a team of horses twice a week to Neenah to get loads of ice".

Times were challenging. Across Main street, was Pete Weyenberg's Grocery Store. Price competition was intense. An example was ground beef. I had two pounds for a quarter, and Pete lowered his price to ten cents. Forced to match his prices, I nearly shut down. Finally, Pete stopped the price war and both of our businesses continued.

Having my customers charge their purchases was the standard way of doing business. At least 50% of my customers charged on my internal charge account system that was me personally. I did all of the bookkeeping and accounts by myself.

Finding dependable employees proved to be impossible and I happily hired my brothers, Hubert and John.

Soon Celia and I moved to the apartment above Look's Meat Market just before Dorothy was born on August 23, 1920. Robert was also born there on February 8, 1923.

In 1925, Celia's father, Arnold Gloudemans, built us a new home at 528 Wilson Street. Lucille was born there on December 26, 1926.

We worked very late in the butcher shop on Saturdays and then cleaned up. Any unsold meat that wouldn't make it to Monday became our Sunday dinner. Common family meals were liver and tongue—which everyone really did enjoy. The dry heart and slimy oysters, however, were not enjoyed by all!

Fond memories are held by our children concerning our family. They remember the ice rink that I made in the backyard. Dorothy recalls sledding down the Doyle Park hill on my back when I broke a few ribs! I was carefully taped up for some time. My children recall stopping by the meat market and walking home with me for lunch. Dorothy stopped at the Post Office to pick up the mail and then would stop by the meat market to join me on the walk home. Bob also recalls lunch walks. He said that he remembers stopping by George Weyenberg's Grocery Store to purchase Van Thull's doughnuts. One time, we interrupted the clerk "fixing" something on his bare foot. He didn't wash his hands and just picked the doughnuts up and put them in the bag. Once home, I took the bag and put it into the garbage as my disappointed family watched!

The children recalled when I would bring Father DeWilde to lunch—without any way of warning Ceil. Somehow, she had to make the lunch multiply and feed everyone! Afterward, Father DeWilde and I would both take our naps on the "davenport" as quiet prevailed.

Catching frogs at Doyle Park was a common past-time for Ray and Bob. They would use their sling-shots and brooms to "catch" the frogs for supper. Dorothy and Lucille would then help fry the frog legs for dinner and "watch them hop around in the pan". Bob remembers when Ray brought a pail home and deposited them in the basement until he had time to "prepare them for dinner." Many came back to life

and escaped into the basement. Not all were found until much later. His mother was not too happy with him.

Bob, Dorothy, and Lucille recall “Pitt’s Bakery” located directly across Pine Street from St. John Church. Mr. Pitt would pull down all the shades and mix the dough with his bare feet! Lucille remembered fondly, “The cookies were very good cookies”.

Eventually, the stress of the business caused me to become ill. In 1939, I went to a Dr. Huetner in Seymour and discovered that I had ulcers. He told me that if I didn’t get out of the Meat Market business, it would eventually kill me. Following this prediction, my brother John took over the Meat Market.

For over two years, I didn’t work or own a business. However, I had done well when I had invested in Swift and Armour stocks that had been recommended by the Meat Market salesmen. Since I still owned the Look’s Meat Market building, I was planning to put a “four lane bowling alley” in the basement--under the Meat Market. However, when a huge storm flooded the basement, I dropped the idea.

Next, I considered purchasing a Kimberly grocery store. Bob, Ceil, and I toured the store and weighed the pros and cons. The decision was made to buy it and Ceil left for home. Bob and I remained for a long time. There were eight steps and it bothered me immensely. I reversed the decision as I felt that the steps would prevent many people from being able to enter.

Next, I hired an architect for a variety store which would be located in the alley next to the Meat Market. I bartered and paid the man with a washing machine. Just as the surveyor was finishing, Willard Versteegen walked over and offered me the opportunity to buy the Versteegen Hardware Store instead. I grabbed the offer and on June 7, 1941 I purchased the hardware store and renamed it Look’s Hardware. I had very little knowledge and experience in hardware and the subsequent months were extremely difficult. Eventually, business started to run smoothly. Bob joined me full time after the war in 1946.

In January, 1951, Ceil and I moved into our new home at 520 Jackson Street. Our daughter Dorothy and husband, Tom Lamers, with their family moved into the original house on Wilson Street.

Ceil loved to sew. She created most of our clothes and did mending for our children and grandchildren. Winter coats are fondly remembered and many had “wonderful fur collars.” She had a huge garden and canned everything possible. Lucille recollects Ceil’s views on apple pie: “Takes all day to make it—in five minutes it’s gone!”

When Ceil was in her 70’s, she took an art class and began oil painting. She was an exceptional artist and most of our children and grandchildren have at least one “Ceil Look” original. I made most of the frames for her paintings myself.

My real passion was health. I was at the forefront of health when it came to eating, living healthy, exercise, and vitamins. Our children remember taking spoonfuls of “Sunshine” which was really cod liver oil. I read every health book available and was the best customer at Stoeger’s Health Store in Appleton. Perhaps that is why Ceil and I were so healthy and lived such a happy and long life.

Ceil began working in the hardware sometime in the 1950’s. She checked and priced merchandise, manually totaled the endless inventories, and updated the pages of the 10 foot ordering catalog. Never enjoying the limelight, Ceil remained totally behind the scenes. She retired in the early 1980’s.

Formally, I retired from the hardware at the age of 67 when my son, Bob, took over on January 1, 1957. However, I continued the book work until 1975 when I trained my granddaughter, Peg Look. Nonetheless, I still walked downtown every day until I was 90 years old.

Around 1955, Ceil and I purchased a wonderful cottage on Winneconne off Poygan. The sun-porch overlooked the lake which allowed us to fish as we dined. Upon finding a crack in the basement wall, we decided to sell.

Our next cottage, fondly called the "Red Roof", was also on Poygan. The grandchildren would sleep upstairs in the open and unfinished area which was loaded with beds. Grandma Ceil or I served as the chaperone to try to control the giggling grandchildren. Wonderful memories are held by all.

After 10 years, we sold it and built another on a canal off Lake Poygan. We owned it for a few years and sold it.

I started the "Golden Agers Club" on January 29, 1962 and was made their first President. While president, I organized sight-seeing trips and church tours.

Ceil and I took many car trips with friends and family. We would take trips to Canada, Florida, California, and many others. Our traveling companions were Ceil's sisters and husbands; Ann and George Hermsen, Tres and George Gilsdorf, Ann and Charlie Meulemans, and our friends Mr. and Mrs. Winius. When traveling, the motels all had little kitchens with cook stoves which the women would use.

After I retired, I began to hand out cards entitled, "Two Golden Days". My granddaughter, Louise Reynebeau and her husband Todd Van Harpen owned a printing company and printed them for me. I handed out thousands to everyone I met because this verse modeled the way I tried to live my life.

Ceil and I hosted Christmas Eve celebrations in our basement. I decorated it and was very proud of my cardboard fireplace with the flickering logs. The Christmas presents were handed out by Ceil and the grandchildren laughed and played.

On Christmas day, the families would return. Potluck was shared and then I led the Christmas songs. Soon, the group became too large. Peg Look had married Dick Salm whose brother, Junior, owned the Darboy Club. We celebrated at the Darboy Club for many years until Ceil and I couldn't quite manage any longer.

I became ill in 1983 and eventually lived at the Parkside Care Center in Little Chute. Ceil visited every day until she also became ill and passed away on July 30, 1983. I followed on January 6, 1986.





