

George Weyenberg

My name is George Weyenberg and I am the son of Henry Weyenberg and Mary Hendricks who emigrated to the United States from Holland in 1849. I was born on May 17, 1881 in Little Chute Wisconsin. My father set up businesses for myself and two of my brothers. One was Duce's Bar, another was a meat market and I was set up in a grocery store, the first one in Little Chute.

On April 30, 1907 I married Mary (Mayme) Huiting. Besides being my help mate, she was also a midwife for Dr. Doyle and helped deliver many residents of Little Chute and the surrounding area. After living above our store, we built our home on the corner of Main and Wilson Streets.

Our first store was on Main Street in Little Chute across the street from my brother Duce's bar. It was a long narrow building and besides groceries I also carried dry goods until the late 1920's. The store was the social center for many residents of the village. Many regulars came every day to sit beside my dog, Spot, around the stove and talk. When the store first opened, groceries were delivered in bulk. Pickles were in barrels, herring in big tubs and bananas were on long stalks. You had to be careful removing bananas from the stalks as tarantulas were often found among the fruit. Cookies, flour, raisins, dates and other items that today come in packages, all came in bulk and were kept in drawers. Customers took only what they needed!

We were open every day except Sunday, but if someone came to the house and needed something, I always opened the store just for them.

We had a delivery truck that was used to deliver to not only Little Chute but also Kimberly, Combined, Darboy and Freedom. A driver went around to these areas in the morning to get the orders, clerks filled the orders and deliveries of the groceries were made in late afternoon. The advent of the telephone was a great improvement, but many people could not afford a phone at that time. The delivery business was vital part of our business. Many of our customers would put their groceries "on the books" or a type of charge account. They would then pay up either weekly or monthly.

When payment was made, a bag of candy was sent home with the customer. This was especially enjoyed by the children during the Depression. During the Depression, many people came to me who were unable to pay for any of their food. They were never turned away. Their amounts were added to accounts and I told them to pay when they could. Many were never able to pay, but I never pressed them, that was not my style. During Prohibition I delivered sugar to many people who had illegal stills in the area. One of my customers was Al Capone. My sons delivered sacks of sugar to Door County, where Mr. Capone had a summer home. During World War II, after 30 years on Main Street, I lost the lease to the building on Main Street and moved the business to a warehouse next to our home. My sons, Heinie and Bud, took over the store in later years and the business continued. Because of the competition from larger "super markets", Weyenberg Grocery Store went out of business in 1968. I was on the Little Chute Public School Board for 48 years and was honored by the school board by having the new elementary school dedicated to me on April 3, 1955. A plaque honoring me is still on the building to this day. No longer a school, the building is now the Gerald H. Van Hoof Library and Civic Center.

Little Chute Historical Society Cemetery Walk 2012





FIRST STORE—The late George Weyenberg of Little Chute opened the first grocery store in that community in 1912. This picture was taken about 1935 and shows Weyenberg's two youngest children, Sonny, Jr., and Mary Ann, "Sis." Sis, now Mrs. Harry Valentyne of Kimberly, worked in the store when she was a teenager in the 1930s. She remembers Presidential candidate Wendell Wilkie visiting. She also helped her father deliver sugar to Heart of the Valley bootleggers during Prohibition. (Photo courtesy of "Sis" Valentyne.)