

# DICKINSON COUNTY HISTORY -- SAGOLA TOWNSHIP -- A HISTORY OF CHANNING, MICHIGAN – Viola Stevens, 1977

*[Compiled and Transcribed by William John Cummings]*

*[The information contained in this long out-of-print 51-page book is invaluable to the history of Dickinson County in general and Channing in particular. Fortunately Viola (Mogan) Stevens was sufficiently concerned about preserving the village history to research and write this record over thirty years ago. Italicized words are added. The boldfaced words – mainly people – have also been added to aid in finding information contained herein. The original book does have a name index.]*

O, call back yesterday, bid time return –

William Shakespeare

## PREFACE

During a visit to Channing in 1971, I was struck by the changes which have occurred in the village since I was a child living there, and I decided to write a history of the village as I remembered it. I believed then that Channing might be approaching its centennial, which event would be a fitting occasion for publication of a history, and I made known to some of the older residents my intention to write the book.

I spent some time in the Dickinson County Courthouse in Iron Mountain searching old records in an effort to determine when the village of Channing came into being. I found no records earlier than 1895 in the village proper, though acreage which later belonged to my family, as well as some other lands in the area, was transferred by deed from the State of Michigan to one **John S. McDonald** in 1867. Since the village centennial appeared to be years away, I lost interest in

the history until I returned to Channing in 1973 and was asked by some of the early residents why I did not bring out the book before all of the “old timers” have departed this plane. I began my research and writing once more, sent questionnaires to many residents of Channing, and interviewed people who could give me information. Now that it is finished, I hope this little history will bring back memories of bygone days to those who knew them, and an awareness of what life was like in the early days to those who did not.

Another reason for my renewed interest in the history is that, since my visit in 1971, I discovered that the high school, so proudly built in 1922, has been torn down; the second school, which later became the community club house and gymnasium, has likewise been torn down. There is today no evidence that there ever was a school in Channing, the first, one-room school having also disappeared many years ago.

It is hoped too that the history will prove of value to future historians and genealogists. When I was doing my own family history several years ago, I was able to refer to area histories published in Vermont in 1870, which gave me information I could not obtain elsewhere or confirmed information received from other sources.

Some of the incidents I have recorded may not be entirely accurate since they are based on legend, and events tend to become blurred with the passing of time. The family histories, though not intended to be genealogies, are as accurate as I could obtain from others or as my own memory serves me. I am sure there are omissions of names which should have been included, which is regrettable, but any omissions and inaccuracies are unintentional. I have not tried to bring the history down to the

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present day, but have concentrated on the earliest residents and their families. When possible, families of the oldest residents have been carried down one or two generations, and some occurrences of later years, because of their general interest, have been included. Some marriages have been included – those where descendants of the first families intermarried.

I wish to thank all who filled out questionnaires, or who gave me information in any form. I particularly thank **Edith Friess Steil** for encouragement and help in obtaining information; **Rita Friess Fonferek** for permitting me to use material from her 1932 issue of CINDERS AND SAWDUST; members of the **Simon Johnson** family; **Harriette Cuculi Luecke**; **Edward and Dora Christian**; **Ted Nowack**; **Irwin Miller**; **Loretta Frizzell Van Oss**; **James and Iona Benish**, and others who gave me information regarding people and events.

**Viola Stevens**

## 1. THE RAILROAD

It's been a long time since the wail of a steam locomotive whistle, marking a railroad train's approach to station or grade crossing, broke the stillness of the night in the village of **Channing**. Those of us who are old enough to remember that hauntingly romantic call to faraway places are filled with nostalgia as we try to describe to the younger generations how it was in the "good old days." It seems that with the passing of the steam locomotive and the decline of the railroad as a means of mass transportation, a whole life-style disappeared.

A younger generation's life-style is tuned to the whine of the jet, the raucous

rumble of automobile and truck motors and the speed and dangers associated with these modes of travel. True, the automobile has given man mobility and the jet has enabled us to travel to some of the faraway places of which we dreamed, yet I wonder if those early dreams did not bring more happiness than the reality of dreams come true.

To the younger generation, the railroad is almost an unknown quantity. Most young people have never ridden on a train and they pay little heed to the few passenger and freight trains they see today. Yet at one time, the railroad was the queen of all United States passenger and freight transportation. Crack passenger trains and endless freight trains crisscrossed the country daily. Such famous trains as the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Limited, the Broadway Limited, and others spelled the last word in luxury travel.

Today, all along the weed-grown railroad tracks in small towns stand the abandoned or boarded-up and deserted depots. Some of the stations have been converted to museums, civic centers and markets. Some have been moved away to become homes. Some, as in the case of the **Chicago Union Station**, have been almost completely demolished. I remember when I was a small child, my mother took my brother and me to Chicago, arriving at the Union Station. The Union Station at the time was a red brick building having many narrow stairways and passageways, quite inadequate for the heavy traffic, though probably less than fifty years old. In time, a handsome new basilica-like station was built and thousands of passengers passed through its vaulted arcades daily, especially during World War II. One Saturday morning during that period, I arrived at the station at ten o'clock, intending to travel to

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Green Bay on a one o'clock train. The entire station was literally packed with people, everyone intent on boarding a train. The crowd was so dense that I could not get near the departure gates and the train went off on schedule leaving me behind. I remained there for hours, edging closer to the gates, and eventually I was able to get through the gates and board a five o'clock train to Green Bay *[Wisconsin]*. It is hard to realize that changing times would make that magnificent station obsolete in such a short time.

The development of the internal combustion engine was the main cause of the decline in the railroads. Automobiles became cheaper and more efficient, tires and roads were improved and then began America's ardent and enduring love affair with the automobile. Trucks began making inroads on the freight and mail carrying, adding to the woes of the once-prestigious railroad industry. And the railroads, in management and operation, seemed unable to cope with the changing times and slid farther and farther into the background. Lines were abandoned almost daily in cities and villages all over the country and many areas found themselves without rail service. People complained bitterly about the abandonment of their communities by the railroads, yet refrained from riding the trains. In fact, when hearings were held by the railroad companies in order to obtain permission to abandon a line, some residents of the area involved drove to the hearings in their automobiles to protest the abandonment, though passenger trains were still serving their communities! There can be no co-existence between unlimited use of the automobile and unlimited railroad passenger train service.

With the advent of widespread air service, still another blow was dealt the

railroads. Air travel, however, has never had the impact of automobiles on railroad passenger service in small communities, though it has been responsible for the demise of such trains as the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Limited and others. How sad that this leisurely and relatively non-polluting, non-destructive-of-natural-resources mode of travel had to go in the name of progress. It is possible, however, considering the exhaustibility of crude oil and the absence of any other practical and safe form of energy, that some day the railroad may return as a means of mass transportation, including steam power, since a railroad train can carry more tonnage, more efficiently and with less drain on the earth's dwindling crude oil supply than any other form of transportation.

**Channing** never did become a metropolis. It was strictly a railroad town – a terminal for freight, timber, ore, and passengers coming from or going to the more developed areas to the south, to connect existing communities with a more direct route to the cities and towns and the steel and lumber mills. When timber and ore were exhausted and when automobile and truck entered into competition, Channing began to lose the life and vitality it had exhibited in the early part of the century.

The railroad, as it exists today, is a development of the English tramway or wagonway, in use in England in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries for hauling coal and stone from mine and quarry to the ports. The wagons, pulled by teams of horses, traveled on wooden planks laid parallel. Later the plants and wagon wheels were covered with strips of iron to facilitate speed. Still later the wheels were fitted with flanges which meshed into grooves at the edge of the planks to keep the wagon on

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the track. The early roadbed was flush with the ground but later an iron rail raised above the roadbed came into use. A few tramways were in use in the U.S. as early as 1795, but the first railroad on raised rails, employing flanged wheels, was operated in 1826 in Massachusetts. The first passenger train, which was simply a stage coach attached to a wood-burning locomotive, was operated by the Baltimore & Ohio in 1830.

The first passenger train I remember consisted of three small wooden cars: a combination baggage and mail car and two passenger cars, one of which was a smoker. The cars had hard uncomfortable seats and open platforms on either end, and passing from one car to another while the train was in motion could be rather dangerous and was always very dirty from engine smoke. The interior of the coach would become very warm in summer; the passengers would throw open the windows admitting billows of black smoke and cinders to smudge face and clothing.

In the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the building of railroads in the U.S. was accelerated by the manufacture of steel, by the improvement of the locomotive after its first appearance in England in 1804, and by public demand. The gold rush to California, and the fear that the isolated northwest area might be annexed to Canada, moved the public to clamor for immediate construction of railroads. To encourage the building into unsettled lands, the U.S. Government made land grants to some existing railroads. The grants were of alternate sections, the Government retaining the sections between. The land was then sold by the railroad land companies to settlers at reasonable prices, the company retaining the mineral rights. Some of the railroad companies were

engaged in mining operations, but in 1906 the ICC decreed that railroad companies could not engage in mining or manufacturing operations.

The railroad known as the **Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific** was incorporated in 1872 as the **Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway**, and until 1927 was known as the "**St. Paul**" as it is now known as the "**Milwaukee Road.**" Into its incorporation went many existing railroads, such as the **Milwaukee & Northern**, the **Ontonagon & Brule River**, the **Menominee Branch**, the **Wisconsin & Michigan**, the **Republic Branch**, and others. It was said that into the CMSTP&P Railroad went more predecessor railroads than in any other railroad. The Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul acquired the Milwaukee & Northern in 1893.

According to a map furnished by the **Milwaukee Road**, rails to **Channing** and **Champion** were laid in 1888, to **Iron Mountain** in 1886, from **Ontonagon** to **McKeever** in 1883, from **McKeever** to **Sidnaw** in 1889, and from **Sidnaw** to **Channing** in 1893. The line to **Iron River** was not completed until 1914. The map indicates that the settlement which was to become Channing probably came into being in 1888.

The settlement of **Channing** was a result of land grants made by the Government for the purpose of opening up new routes to move ore from the existing mines to lake ports, to prospect for new veins, and for settlement. Ore docks were being built in **Escanaba** and soon ore from the Upper Peninsula was being moved by rail to Escanaba via the **Escanaba & Lake Superior Railroad**, nicknamed the "**Easy, Lazy & Slow**" because of its tardiness, for shipment to Gary, Cleveland and other steel centers.

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In 1848, iron ore from the Upper Peninsula was shipped in barrels via sailboat from **Marquette** east on Lake Superior via **St. Mary's River (Sault Saint Marie)** to Cleveland and Pittsburgh. The ore was hauled by teams of six horses over primitive roads and portaged around rapids before the Soo locks were built. After the docks were built in **Escanaba**, ore from the area around **Channing** was shipped by rail to Escanaba and there placed aboard ships for the steel mills. Some ore also may have been shipped by rail to Gary. By this time – late in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century – steam power was practical. In 1830 there were only 30 miles of railroad track and the first steam locomotive pulled one car. But from that time on for 100 years the railroad was a dominant influence in American life.

In addition to iron ore, soon vast shipments of timber were being moved from the virgin forests of the Upper Peninsula. During the first two decades of the century a familiar sight in the village, especially in winter, was the horse-drawn sledge with its chain-bound load of logs being driven from the logging camp to be loaded on flat cars for shipment to the lumber mills. In winter, the roads were often “iced” to make pulling the loads easier. In some instances the logs were “driven” into the rivers to **Marinette** and **Menominee**. Before long the forests were gone and only isolated stands of timber remained. Reforestation would be many years in the future.

New mines were opened up and for years daily shipments of tons of iron ore passed through Channing, loaded in small wooden cars equipped with a hopper device for dumping the ore at the docks. Train after train came into and left Channing day and night. As in the instance of lumber, however, the ore eventually ran out; the mines were worked out or other

areas where the ore could be mined more profitably were discovered. The latter condition prevailed in the case of copper. Large deposits of pure copper were, and reportedly still are, available in the “**Copper Country**” area. It is still mined there but not to the extent it once was. Copper ore was never, to my knowledge, shipped through **Channing**, though the processed product was.

In 1929 there were approximately 20,000 passenger trains in the U.S. carrying 77 percent of all passenger traffic between the cities. By the end of World War II there were 6,000 trains left. In 1970 there were 450 passenger trains carrying 7.2 percent of intercity traffic, and when Amtrack took over in 1971, there were approximately 350 trains left. **Channing** saw its last passenger train on March 8, 1968 when the **Copper Country Limited** made its last run. In over 70 years of operation, this venerable train missed only one run, and that because of a tremendous snowstorm in Chicago which prevented the crewmen from getting to the station to take the train out.

At the height of the passenger train business, there were three passenger trains north and three south into **Channing**. The southbound trains were Nos. 6 in the morning, 2 in the evening, and 10 during the nighttime. The northbound trains were Nos. 3 in the morning, 31 in the afternoon, and 9 during the nighttime hours. In addition, there were morning and evening trains to **Crystal Falls** and **Iron River**. In later years, the first streamlined trains, the “**Chippewas**,” were inaugurated; their operation ceased before the **Copper Country Limited** was discontinued. Passenger trains carried mail and express in addition to baggage. The mail car was a **Railway Post Office** with two mail clerks,

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employed by the U.S. Government, sorting and bagging mail for various destinations. Loss of the mail-carrying business to the trucking industry took away much needed revenue from the railroads.

In addition to the ore and timber shipments, a considerable amount of freight was handled in the terminal. Freight in those days was often shipped in less than carload lots, and freight destined for **Ontonagon, Iron River**, etc., was transferred to cars routed to these destinations from the **Channing** transfer.

The **freight transfer**, now gone these many years, was a long, raised platform which was level with the doors and floors of the boxcars. It had a roof over it but the sides were open so that freight from a car on one side could be shunted over to a car on the other side. Rails ran parallel to the platform on either side to permit cars to be spotted for loading or unloading. The transfer crew worked in shifts and there were as many as 16 men employed on the transfer.

There was a **roundhouse** where engines were serviced as they came in from their runs. The roundhouse had no turntable and when it was necessary to turn an engine, it was run around the wye track to the west of the yards, formed in part by the track leading to the **Ontonagon** line. This procedure had to be repeated many times during the day as there were few trains which went through **Channing** to other destinations. The roundhouse crew, consisting of machinists, boilermakers, blacksmiths, etc., numbered as many as 30 men.

To facilitate **switching** of freight cars and make up the trains, switch crews were employed around the clock in the yards during the period of greatest railroad activity. A switch crew consisted of

engineer, fireman, foreman (conductor), and two helpers (brakemen) under the supervision of a yardmaster.

On regular runs coming into **Channing** from the south, most of the crews did not live in Channing but had homes in Green Bay [*Wisconsin*] or other points where their runs originated. They would come into Channing, stop over night or until their "rest was up" in hotel or rooming house and then take their runs back to the point of origin. The cars might be loaded with freight, logs, sore, or they might be empties being returned for additional loads.

In addition to the regular freight and passenger trains in and out of **Channing**, there were numerous "extras" which originated in Channing when enough cars accumulated to make up a train. To handle these trains, a pool of enginemen and trainmen had to be available in town. These men were usually younger in seniority, since the regular runs were held by men older in their service. To handle traffic, other than the regular runs, there was a "ring" in which the men rotated in taking out the trains. I have been told that at one time there were as many as twenty-six crews in the ring. A crew consisted of an engineer, a fireman, two brakemen and a conductor. In the days of the steam locomotive, the fireman fired the boiler with coal from the tender. When the diesel replaced the steam locomotive, the fireman became a victim of automation.

The early homes in **Channing** were not equipped with telephones so a **call boy** was employed day and night to alert the crews for work. At four o'clock in the morning there might be a tap on a bedroom window and the boy would call out "five-thirty to **Amasa**," or something similar. The boy had a book which was supposed to be signed by the person called, but this

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practice was not strictly followed at night. A matter of irritation to one called for work was the short call – not being allowed enough time to get up, eat, have lunch packed, etc.

In addition to train crews, roundhouse and transfer workers, there were other groups of workers with specific jobs, such as the **carmen**, section men and section crews. The carmen repaired the cars and kept them in working order. After inspection, if found in bad order, the cars would be switched to the “rip track” and repaired. The carmen also examined the wheels of trains going through **Channing**, and a familiar sight at the depot at night would be the inspector with his lantern walking along the passenger train, peering at the wheels, looking for hot boxes.

A regular section crew was located in **Channing** to keep the immediate roadway in repair. There was also, at intervals, an “**extra gang**” which went out to keep the roadbed in the entire “section” in good order. These crews of 35 to 40 men lived in converted boxcars, some of which were bunk cars, some eating cars where meals were prepared and served to the crews by some of the crew acting as cooks and helpers. The extra gangs usually went out in the summer, employing temporary workers. My brother worked on the extra gang a couple of summers when he was fourteen or fifteen years old. These workers are called “**gandy dancers**” because of the gait used when tamping ties; however I never heard the term used in our area.

The nerve center of all this activity and all these workers was the **depot** which housed, on the south end, the **dispatchers’ office** and on the north end, the **agent’s office** and **waiting room**. The dispatchers’ office was responsible for dispatching

trains, arranging for “meets” between trains, calling the crews and generally managing the railroad in its sphere of control. There was a chief dispatcher, three trick dispatchers, operators and clerks, as well as a **trainmaster** and a **roadmaster**. The trainmaster traveled the trains and acted as a troubleshooter out on the road. The roadmaster was responsible for seeing that the roadbed was kept in repair. The dispatchers were **telegraphers** using the Morse code and the office resounded with the clickety-click of dots and dashes, perfectly intelligible to the dispatchers and operators but simply noise to the uninitiated.

The agent’s office sold tickets and handled baggage and freight shipments. Personnel consisted of the agent and one or two clerks. Because of **Channing’s** status as a terminal, the depot did not suffer the fate of so many way-station depots which were abandoned. It still functions though on a much smaller scale than in years gone by.

There were wrecks on the railroad from time to time, but surprisingly few considering the number of trains moved and tonnage carried on single-track lines. Roadbed and equipment were generally kept in good repair, the workers took pride in their jobs, all of which contributed to smoothness of operation.

There was at one time, however, a **strike of shopmen** in **Channing**. Strikebreakers were called in, there was some shooting and vandalism – generally it was a bad time for the village. No one was injured, but the home of one of the officials was burned down by the strikers.

In the early days of railroading, the “**boomer**” **brakeman** was a part of the work force. Work was plentiful and the “boomer” traveled from one part of the

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country to another, working first on one railroad and then another. Often when one found an area he liked, he would settle down there; others continued to roam.

Another type of transient which was a familiar sight in the village in the early days was the **hobo** who rode the rails from one end of the country to the other. For some reason, these “knights of the road” have almost completely disappeared – apparently even they now disdain railroad travel, though at one time there was reported to be an army of as many as one million full-time bums riding the trains in this country. In town they would knock on a back door, asking for a handout from the housewife – which they usually received. And there were hobo “jungles” in certain towns where the bums congregated, cooked a stew and slept until they boarded the next train. It was a peaceful army, however, and I never heard of any one of these transients causing any harm in the village.

**Channing** was a busy terminal for passengers, ore and freight during the first three decades of this century and the town hummed with activity. In 1932, however, the dispatchers’ office, which had been the hub of railroad activity on this end of the Superior Division for forty years, was removed to Green Bay [*Wisconsin*] and Channing began to slow down.

## 2. THE VILLAGE

Although no count has been made of railroad employees during the time of interest to this history, it will be noted from the rough estimates in the previous chapter of men engaged in the various types of work, that there were several hundred men employed in Channing at one time. During these years there were as many as seven

hotels and rooming houses in town. Most of the younger men who worked on the railroad were unmarried, or were from out of town and did not have homes in Channing. Many of the married men running into town had homes where their runs originated; there was a need for places for these men to eat and sleep, so the hotels and rooming houses flourished.

The area in the vicinity of Channing was developed by the **Milwaukee Land Company** as a result of land grants in the latter decades of the Nineteenth Century. In fact, the first transaction on every deed for lots in the original plat of the village names the Milwaukee Land Company as grantor. **The original village was laid out in five blocks north and south fronting the railroad track to the west.** This street was the main artery in and out of Channing and was called “front” street as I remember. To the east was a street running parallel to “front” street which was called “back” street, and beyond that, for a long time, was wilderness. An alley ran between the two streets for the entire five blocks. The main thoroughfare was at times called “main” street, though its official name is now “**Railroad Avenue.**” The “back” street is now “**Bell Avenue,**” and the street beyond to the east is “**Tobin Avenue.**” Names of the intersecting east-west streets are “**First Street,**” “**Second Street,**” “**Third Street,**” etc.

Other early developers and land owners, in addition to the **Milwaukee Land Company**, were **H.G. Haugen** and **Burton Hanson**. In addition to the original five blocks, soon there were additions and subdivisions identified as **Outlots A, B and C;** the **Milwaukee Land Company and Burton Hanson subdivisions,** and the **Richards addition.** Of the original five blocks, block one was the first block on the

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north, block five was the last block on the south. The lots were numbered beginning at the northeast corner, extending south to the southeast corner, then west to the southwest corner and north to the northwest corner. The lots were very narrow, there being approximately 18 lots to the block.

The business area of the village was centered on the main street (Railroad Avenue) and, beginning at the south end of block five, there was a **barbershop** and **poolroom** run first by **W.T. Stevens**, then by **F. Duchaine**, who had two daughters, and later by **O. Senglaub**. There were living quarters in the back and sleeping rooms on the second floor, and there was a back room where poker games were played regularly. It was reported that a professional gambler came to town on payday to set up the game.

To the north, next to the barbershop were **vacant lots**, then the **Richards Hotel** which had sleeping rooms and served meals. It was run at one time by **J. Brick**, who was related to the **Warrens**. The next building to the north was a **bar** or **tavern** (called a "**saloon**" in those days) run by **Keeler Calvi** and **Fred Gage**, who was related to **Mrs. Walter Weber**. Later this building, which also had sleeping rooms and a back room for poker games now and then, was occupied by the **Paul Khoury general store**. Next was the **St. Paul House** owned by **C.H. Grant** and later **Patrick Tobin**. Then came vacant lots and on the corner was the store run by **R.E. Boll and Company**. It was a **general store** and for many years the **U.S. Post Office** was at the rear, and there were living quarters above. Every day after the morning train came in, one of the Bolls would go over to the depot and pick up the mail sacks and haul them across the street

to the store. While the mail was being distributed, people would stand around, waiting to see if they had any mail – somewhat like anticipating the letter carrier today; it was one of the diversions of the small town life. After **Richard Boll** moved to Iron Mountain to live, **John Erickson** became a partner in the business, and he and **Henry Boll** ran the store for years. The store later was owned and run by the **Bloom** family.

On the corner opposite Boll's store to the north was the **Cuculi Hotel**, whose advertisement in the 1910 **Channing Gun Club** program states, "Hotel Cuculi Welcome Shooters! We were here when the town started. We are here yet, Nuff said, Good bed, Fine meal, square deal, Rates \$2.00 per day. **Mrs. B. Cuculi Prop.**" The north side of the building was occupied by the **tavern**, with **sleeping rooms** on the second floor of the entire building. My sister **Gladys** and her husband **George Bloomer** lived in **housekeeping rooms** above the tavern when they were first married. I remember visiting my sister there at times and being fascinated by the view I got of the scene below by putting my eyes to the register in the floor which was directly above the bar. My sister would put a stop to the spying and close the register to the sounds and sights below. Housing was at a premium during the boom years in Channing and every liveable [*sic*] inch of space in the whole village was occupied and spilling over into the surrounding area. Some people lived in **converted boxcars**, and others resorted to **tents which had wooden sides** extending up two or three feet which served as temporary living quarters in summer. As time went by, more and more homes were built; many railroad men moved their families to Channing, and the need for

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temporary housing, for the hotels and rooming houses vanished, until finally, only the **Couillard Hotel** remained.

On the **hotel side of the Cuculi building**, the lobby room in front was rented by **Holton Knisley**, a **druggist**, and became the **first drugstore** in town. After a time, Mr. Knisley built a drugstore south of the barbershop where he was in business until it became economically impractical.

North of the Cuculi building was the **Liberty motion picture theater** run by **Edward Vermullen**. A tinkly piano accompanied the silent films with selections appropriately scary or sentimental, according to the film. After a few years of operation, the building, which was also used as a **dance hall**, burned down. Out on the dusty roadway in front of the **Cuculi tavern** was a long-handled pump on a platform.

The next building was a **tavern** with living quarters above, which was run by **Charles Gustafson** and later by “**Happy**” **Vermullen**. The next building had a **store front**, living quarters behind and sleeping rooms above, originally owned by **Andrew Blesch**, later by **Patrick Tobin**, and then by **Charles Van Oss**. The Van Osses had a **small store** and **beauty shop** there, and at one time, **Jake Friedman**, an **itinerant dry goods merchant**, kept and sold his merchandise in the **Van Oss store**. For a long time, Friedman used to go from door to door with his large suitcase, which seemed to be twice as large as he was himself, filled with linens and other items for sale. He worked as the “candy man” on passenger trains out of Chicago to Channing and for a few days each week, he would sell his merchandise from the Van Oss store. Still later he was able to open his own store in

Wausaukee and traveled no more with his satchel.

The next building north was owned by **Andrew Blesch** and had **sleeping rooms** on the second floor which were rented out by **Lena Johnson**. This building housed **Paul Khoury’s store** for a long time, and has since been a **tavern** run by **John Cuculi** first and then by his sons, **Vincent** and **Joseph**. At one time there was a **bowling alley** in this building and a small **dance floor**.

**Anton Cuculi** and then **Andrew Blesch** owned the next building which was bought and occupied by **Simon Johnson** and family for many years. A **store building** was put up north of the home which **Jennie** and **Harry** occupied with their **general store** until they went to Miami to live. There was an apartment above the store where my brother and his wife lived for a time. The store was run by **Edward** and **Dora Christian** after the Johnsons left town. Before the store was built, there was a small building on the lot where **Jennie Johnson** ran an **ice cream parlor**.

North of Johnson’s store was the “**Eating House**,” also called the “**Link and Pin**,” which had **sleeping rooms** in addition to the **dining room**. There was also the “**Annex**,” a separate two-story building on the rear of the lot south of the main building, which had **sleeping rooms** on both floors. The buildings were owned by the railroad company, and the **hotel** was run for some time by **Mrs. White**, the mother of **Stella Hayes**, as the “**White House**.” Mrs. White had an advertisement in the tournament program referred to above which read, “Attention Shooters While attending the Shooting Tournament stop at the ‘White House.’ The President will probably not be present but you will be served as if he were. Mrs. White, Prop.

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*[Compiled and Transcribed by William John Cummings]*

Rates \$2.00.” The hotel was later bought and run by **F. Vermullen** and eventually, as did so many other buildings in Channing, it burned to the ground. **William Tobin’s lumber yard** was located across the street from the hotel for years; it, too, burned down.

Across from Bolls’ store, just north of the depot, was a **restaurant** run by **W. McClure**, who was related to **Dora Christian**. The restaurant served meals to the railroad men, and to passengers on trains going through town. Passenger trains were scheduled to allow time for passengers to eat a meal in the restaurant as some of the trains did not carry dining cars.

The **section house** was located on the railroad side of the street opposite block two. The building had a **dining room** and **sleeping rooms** on the second floor for some of the track workers. **J. Greetons** was the first section foreman to live there, and later **Ferd Lindeman** became section foreman and lived there with his family for years. In later years this building served as the **clubhouse** for the **Milwaukee Womens [sic] Club**, which was organized in 1925 with the following officers installed: **Mrs. A.B. Worthing**, President, **Mrs. W.W. Tuttle**, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, **Mrs. Stanley Johnston**, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, **Mrs. J. Johnson**, Recording Secretary, **Mrs. L. Worthing**, Corresponding Secretary, **Mrs. W.W. Pritchard**, Treasuer.

Farther north on the railroad side of the street were a number of **boxcars converted to living quarters**. They were quite comfortable and could be called the forerunner of the mobile home of later years. The **Wellendorfs** and some other families lived in these homes, and there was another one beside the transfer which was occupied by **Mr. Harrington** and his

wife during the time Mr. Harrington was chief dispatcher.

North on the **old Sawyer Lake road**, where it crossed the Escanaba and Lake Superior Railroad track, was another **section house** which belonged to that railroad and housed their track workers. The building was abandoned and vacant for a long time, and it was rumored that it was used as a trysting place in an extra-marital affair. One night the building mysteriously burned to the ground and it was whispered that the irate husband was responsible.

The business places were concentrated on the main street, now **Railroad Avenue**, in blocks four and five. On the street back of that, now **Bell Avenue**, **John Couillard** built a **hotel** where meals were served, family style. I remember eating meals in the dining room there, served on a long table laden with tempting foods. The kitchen was large and always seemed to be filled with the aroma of something good cooking. **Mrs. Couillard** was the cook, and a good one. On the first floor of the hotel were the kitchen, dining room, parlor and several bedrooms. The bedrooms opening off the parlor were usually occupied by out-of-town teachers, who boarded at the hotel. North of the hotel was the **Cuculi theater and bowling alley building** which was later converted into the “**Flats**.”

Eventually a number of business buildings were erected in the block south of the **barbershop**, in **Outlot B**. There was a **restaurant** just south of the **depot** in later years, and south of that was a **filling station** run by **William Tuttle**, and at one time by **Louis Anderson**. Across the street was the **Knisley drugstore**, and farther south the **Dal Santo tavern**, which had living quarters on the second floor. There were four sons in the Dal Santo family. The next building south was the **grocery store**

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run by **Jules Duffena** and his sister, **Mrs. Roell**. The store building was later moved from the site. Next was a **shoe-repair shop** run by **Joe Dorn**, and beyond that a **garage** run by a number of different individuals, including **Harding Johnson**.

The village was not laid out, as has been erroneously reported, by Mr. **J. Parke Channing**. No doubt it was platted by one of the **Milwaukee Land Company's** civil engineers mentioned in Mr. Channing's history, which is reproduced in the Appendix. Mr. Channing's interesting account explains his connection with the village, and how it got its name. Apparently it was informally designated "**Channing**" by some unknown person and the name persisted, though the village was never incorporated. As further noted in his history, the site was originally known as "**Ford Siding**," and this name has been erroneously linked to the **Ford Motor Company**. At the inception of Channing, Ford Motor Company was as yet unknown. The name may have been taken from the Ford River which runs south of town, where the railroad company maintained a water tank to supply steam locomotives with water. The water tank at Ford River preceded the village and it may be a logical explanation for the name "Ford Siding."

Some of the early homes were built of logs, though the majority were of lumber. No brick, stone or cement buildings were put up by the early settlers. There was no water system, no sewers, no gas or electricity for many years. Electricity was installed in about the year of 1925, and after that most of the residents installed their own water and sewage facilities to do away with the "outdoor plumbing" of earlier days. The fire department consisted mostly of volunteers wielding buckets, and they were not too effective according to the

number of buildings which burned to the ground. The home heating systems consisted of wood and coal stoves in the living areas of the homes which gave rise to many fires, and often when a fire started, the building was doomed.

The streets were unpaved and unimproved until use of the automobile led first to the use of gravel and then to cement roads. The first cement roads were very narrow and there were many curves and hills in the country, making a speed of 45 miles per hour quite hazardous. All around the original five blocks of the village were wooden plank sidewalks which finally disappeared and were replaced by cinder footpaths. All of the homes were surrounded by individual fences made of a coarse wire with cedar posts at intervals and two-by-four boards or poles framing the entire top. There were few trees in the village in the early days, though I remember my father bringing elm saplings from the woods which he planted in front of our house. The trees grew very slowly but today are tall and stately reminders of my father. There was some shrubbery in the village and always in summer a profusion of flowers in the housewives' gardens.

The present **Channing cemetery**, located on the old Iron Mountain road approximately a quarter of a mile east from the present M95, on the south side of the road, was started in 1912 when **William and Raymond Shay** and **Erwin Miller** cleared the land and prepared the site for the township cemetery. Several transients were the first to be buried there, and one of the first village residents to be buried in the new cemetery was **Lincoln Anderson** in 1914. Previous to the establishment of the new cemetery, there was an **old burial ground** further out on the road, near the Ford River.

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## 3. SCHOOLS, CHURCHES, DOCTORS, THE LAW

The **first school** in Channing was a **one-room frame building** located on the "back" street in block three which was used until 1908 or thereabouts. It later became the **first Catholic church** in town, and still later was occupied by the **Romnack family**. The building disappeared many years ago.

The **second school** was a rather pretty building located also on the "back" street in block six. At first it had only **two rooms**, but later was **enlarged to three rooms**; and the school was divided into primary, middle and upper classes, the upper classes including two years of high school. I remember this school vividly because of an occurrence when I was in the first or second grade.

One afternoon when I was about six years of age, our teacher told us to put away our books as she was going to dismiss us. The sky had taken on an ominous greenish cast and it was so dark that it was impossible to see the blackboard. There were only kerosene lamps for illumination, which were inadequate for school work, and so were seldom lighted. Before we could leave our seats, however, there was a tremendous crash; the building shook and trembled while lightning danced about the room. Plaster and debris rained down on our heads, striking terror into our childish hearts. No one was injured and we managed to get out of the building in some order, racing through the downpour to the safety and comfort of our homes and parents.

The **third school** was the fine new school built in 1922. It had all the modern

conveniences and accommodated all grades, including four years of high school. Students from **Sagola** also attended high school classes in this school, which served the area for fifty years until the craze for consolidated schools swept the country and a sprawling new school was built in the wilderness near **Randville** to serve **Felch and Sagola townships**. The Channing school was accredited and during its span of existence, many of its graduates went on to be graduated from leading colleges and universities.

At the time the school was closed in 1971, there was a final reunion for all graduating classes since the first in 1924. The following excerpts are taken from the Iron Mountain News item of June 28, 1971, regarding the school and the reunion:

"The largest graduating class was in 1934 with 28 graduates. The smallest were in 1927 and 1948, each having only four graduates.

"Channing alumni are having a grand finale reunion on July 3 and 4.

"There were 22 graduates with the surname of **Lindeman** (three in the class of 1939). There were 22 graduates with the surname of **Carey**, 14 with the surname of **Tobin** and 13 with the surname of **Roell**.

"**Joyce Olson Ashby** graduated with the first class of 1924; her nephew, **Daniel Olson**, graduated with the last class of 1971.

"**Blanche Willard Berg** graduated with the class of 1934 and subsequently had seven children who graduated from CHS. **Clarence Roell** graduated with the class of 1932 and also had seven children who graduated from CHS. His son, **James**, was a member of the last class of 1971.

"School colors for these many years have been orange and black. The school crest was a standing pine tree with an axe

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on one side and an oil can on the other, signifying the lumbering and railroading business in the Channing-Sagola area.”

The **high school** has been torn down. The **second school**, which in 1932 was converted to a **gymnasium and community clubhouse** through the generosity of Mr. **J. Parke Channing**, has also been torn down, and grass now grows where were the schools of yesteryear.

The first teacher I remember was Miss **Marie Donohue**, whom I thought the most wonderful lady in the world next to my mother. Other early teachers were **Maude Warren, Mr. Hargerink, Mr. Yeager, Miss Caine, Mr. Bell, Miss Kramer, Miss Roeker, Mr. Pearl, and Mr. Vaughan**. After the high school was built, there were many additional teachers, some of whom were residents of Channing who had graduated from the high school. The school teachers always occupied an exalted position in the village and were an integral part of its social life.

**Protestant church services** were held in the **second school building** until a church was built. The **first Protestant church** was erected south and east of block five on what is now known as Tobin Avenue. The church is no longer in use and services for the congregation are held in Sagola. Some early Protestant clergymen were **Reverend Poyser**, who used to come from Crystal Falls to hold services, and **Reverend Hamel** came from Marquette at other times to serve the congregation.

The first **Catholic services** were held in the building that had been the **first school**. Services were later held in the **second school building**, and finally a **Catholic church** was built on the corner of what is now **Bell Avenue** and **Sixth Street**. A rectory was later built beside the church for

a resident priest. The first priest I recall was **Father Dingfelder**, the next **Father Stahl**, both of whom came from Republic to say Mass. Later **Father Sanford** and **Father McCarthy** were resident priests.

The **first physician** in the area was **Dr. Dockery**, the next **Dr. Oswald**, and then **Dr. Hayes**, who was the last resident doctor in the area. Doctors Dockery and Oswald lived in Sagola, and Dr. Hayes lived there in later years. In addition to their private practice, these men served as company doctors to the **Sagola Lumber Company** and to the **Sawyer Goodman Company**. The Sagola Lumber Company was owned and operated by the **Flanagan family** and the Sawyer Goodman Company was a Marinette-based company. At one time the mill in Sagola employed a large number of men, but there was a disastrous fire and its operations were rather limited thereafter.

The **Dickinson County Sheriff's office** was, as it is today, the agency responsible for law enforcement in the Channing area. **Mitchell Dykes** and **Frank Cleveland** were early sheriffs in the county, and **Louis Kempen** was a deputy in Channing for some time. Locally-elected justices of the peace had authority in some matters. My brother **Cyril** was, at different times, a constable and a justice of the peace. I remember the flurry of excitement when a young couple appeared at our house, license in hand, looking for the justice to marry them. At that time my brother had never been married, nor had he ever performed a marriage ceremony though he had the authority, as justice of the peace, to do so, and he had only a vague idea how to proceed. A Bible was at hand, but instructions as to how to perform a marriage ceremony were not among my brother's official papers. After trying unsuccessfully to persuade the young

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couple to go elsewhere for the service, my brother took a deep breath and proceeded to officiate at his first marriage ceremony; members of the family served as witnesses. It was the bride and groom's first marriage too, they were a bit excited and didn't seem to notice that the ceremony was rather unusual.

There was a jail in the village which was seldom used. It consisted of two dank cells which might have as occupants occasional drunken lumberjacks or transients, but crime was not a problem. Residents of the village had no need for door-keys as doors were left unlocked day and night. A family could go away for a few days or a week, leaving their doors unlocked and return to find house and contents in the same condition as when they left.

## 4. THE F.F.C.

### **(First Families of Channing)**

I have made no attempt in this history to trace all of the families who have lived in Channing. The record concerns the village at its inception and the families living there from the beginning to approximately 1930. Insofar as information was available, I have mentioned the names of all the early settlers, based on the homes in which they lived during the early years. Many of the homes and other buildings are no longer in existence.

In order to have the record as accurate as possible, I searched the deed and mortgage records in the Dickinson County Courthouse to learn who first owned property in Channing. I combined the information in those recordings with my own memory and with information I received from other sources and have given the names of those who owned or rented

property in the village. The history is not as comprehensive as I would wish, but it represents the best information I could obtain.

**Beginning at the north end of block one on Railroad Avenue and going south to the end of block five, the names of the first residents of the houses along the street will be listed, followed by the names of residents of the houses on the Bell Avenue side of the five blocks. Names of residents of outlots and subdivisions and other areas of the village will follow.**

### **BLOCK ONE**

The only house in block one from First to Second streets on the Railroad Avenue side was a house occupied for a time by the **Joseph Frizzell** family. The Frizzells also lived west of the village in a house near the **Mogan** property on the Ontonagon line. The Frizzells, who came from Middle Inlet [*Wisconsin*], were one of the first families in the village, and their three youngest children were born in Channing. There were nine children in the family: **Effie, Fanny, Olive, Alvin, Ansel, George, Loretta, Gladys,** and **Eva**. Loretta married **Harold Van Oss** and had three sons and a daughter. Vacant lots in block one were owned by various residents in the village, including my father, who owned several of the lots. Most of the lots were taken over by the State of Michigan when the new road to Sawyer Lake was built. Later **Harvey Leeman** built in this area.

### **BLOCK TWO**

The first house in the next block was occupied by a family named **Huber**, including one son, **Roland**. After they left

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town, the house was occupied by **William and Irene Dionne** and their six children: **Mae, Cecile, Ursa, Evelyn, Irene, and Edward**, all of whom married, some had children. Mae married **Mr. Brabant**, Ursa married **Ray Wantz**. The next house was first owned and occupied by the **Greetons** family, who had lived in the section house before that. There were two daughters, one of them named **Leah**. The house was next bought by the **G. Bolhringers**, a childless couple from Germany, known as the "**Berringers**" in the village. Later the Bolhringers owned and lived in a house in block three.

The next house was owned by my family after we came from Green Bay *[Wisconsin]*, and we lived there from the time I was an infant until we moved to Green Bay in 1916. When we returned to Channing, my father built our home on a hill on our property to the west of town and overlooking it. After my father's death, the property was sold and the house was moved to Niagara, Wisconsin, where it still remains on Highway 141 north of the town. In my family were my parents, **George and Iola Mogan**, two brothers, **Cyril and Alban**, two sisters, **Gladyce and Marion**, and myself *[Viola]*. Cyril married **Donelda Dowd** and had one son; Alban married **Amy Schaut** and had three sons, a fourth one died in infancy; Gladyce married **George Bloomer** and had three daughters; Marion married **Lawrence Thibodeau** and had one son and two daughters; I married **Judson Stevens**, had no children. Our first home was sold to **Patrick Tobin** after we left Channing. Since the deaths of the older Tobins, the house has been occupied by **Iona Tobin Benish** and her husband **James**. There were five sons and four daughters in the Tobin Family: **Claude, Edward, William, Roger (Jack), Clyde**

**(Bob), Leota, Iona, Edna and Margaret**, all of whom married and all, excepting Clyde, Iona and Margaret, had children.

The house south of ours, on the corner, was owned and occupied by the **Aylward** family. There was a son, **Donald**, and a daughter, **Kathryn**, in the family. Mr. Aylward was the agent for the railroad; his son worked for the railroad and Kathryn became a school-teacher after they left Channing to live in Crivitz, Wisconsin. After the Aylwards left, the house was occupied by the **Albert Worthing** family, who came from Green Bay *[Wisconsin]*.

Mr. Worthing was a dispatcher and later chief dispatcher on the railroad. In the family there were two daughters and two sons: **Iona, Dorothy, Cecil and Lyle**. Iona married **Arthur Koss** and had a son and a daughter; Cecil married and had one daughter; Dorothy married **R.C. Hanna** and had a son and a daughter; Lyle married **Lucille Rouse** and had no children. Dorothy graduated from the Channing High School, went on to college and came back to teach in the high school. Later the Worthings bought a house in the southeast area of the village, and the **Louis Thiele** family bought the Aylward house.

The **Thieles** had six children: **Louis, Ben, Leona, Alice, Marian, and Utella**. All but the youngest, who was killed in an automobile accident at an early age, were married and some had children. Leona married **Edward Lindeman** and Alice married **John Krause**. The house no longer stands.

## **BLOCK THREE**

The first house on block three was owned and occupied by the **Stanley Pietzaks** and their son **Stanley**. When they moved out of town the house was sold

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to **Edward Christian** and his wife **Dora**, who have lived in it continuously since. There were two sons in the family, **Gerald** and **Royce**. The Christians also had a home at Sawyer Lake, as well as considerable other property in and around Channing.

The next house south was owned and occupied by the **Bolhringers** for a time; later it was owned and occupied by the **William Feak** family. The Feaks had two sons, **Robert** and **Richard**. The next house in that block was owned by the **Charles Gustafson** family. There was one daughter in the family, **Ardella**, and a son.

South of the Gustafson house, on the corner, was the house owned by **Mrs. White, Stella Hayes'** mother. **Dr. Hayes** and family also lived in this house and Dr. Hayes had his office there for a number of years until the family moved to Sagola. There were two daughters and a son in the family: **Dorothy** and **Elizabeth**, who became registered nurses – both were married – and **Eden**, who became a teacher in the Michigan schools, and was married to **Florence Carey**. At the back of this lot was a small house formerly owned and occupied by the **Louis Kempen** family and later used as the **U.S. Post Office**. The Kempens had two sons who were orphaned at an early age, **Karlin** and **Wallace**. **Dr. Hayes** adopted Karlin, and Wallace was reared by the **Dionne** family. Wallace served in the armed forces in WWII and was reported lost in action at Pearl Harbor, but later he was located recovering in a hospital. He later married **Janet Rouse**, daughter of **Josephine Shay Rouse**.

## **BLOCK FOUR**

Across the street to the south was the "**Eating House**," which was owned by the railroad company and run by **Mrs. White** for some time. Later the building was owned by the **John Vermullen** family. In later years, the Vermullens operated a **restaurant south of the depot**. There were four sons in the Vermullen family: **Edward, Harry, Charles, and Peter**.

South of the hotel was the **Simon Johnson home and store**. There were two daughters and three sons when the family came to Channing from Escanaba *[Michigan]*: **Esther, Jennie, Harry, Harding, and Herbert**. Esther married **Ebbe Johnson** and had two sons and two daughters; Jennie married **Harry Houser**, had no children; Harry married **Frieda Sleight**, had no children; Harding married **Dorothy Nelson**, had three sons and one daughter; Herbert married **Dorothy MacKaskill**, had one daughter. Herbert and his wife both taught in Michigan schools and Herbert became an official. Jennie and Harry moved to Miami to live and remained there.

In the next building to the south, **Paul Khoury** ran a **general store**. It has since been in the **John Cuculi** family, now a **tavern** run by John's son **Joseph**. South of that was a building originally owned by **Andrew Blesch**, who owned many pieces of property on the main street in early days. **Patrick Tobin** next owned this building and occupied it with his family and later sold it to **Charles Van Oss**. The Van Osses came to Channing from Pori, and five of their eight children lived in Channing: **Winifred**, who married **Dr. Ben Ouelette** and had children; **Anna Mae**, who was the widow of **Clifford Weber** and later married **John Kuehl**; **Lucile**, who married **Ray Berrinner** and had children; **Harold**, who married **Loretta Frizzell** and had children; and

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Arthur, who married **Agnes Nowakoski** and had children. Only Harold and family remained in Channing. The next building was a **tavern**, run first by **Charles Gustafson** and later by “**Happy**” **Vermullen**. South of this building was the original **Bartol Cuculi** property – a **hotel and tavern**, perhaps the first business house in town.

The **Cuculis** were probably the first family in town; they came from Ontonagon [*Michigan*] where they had operated a hotel. Two weeks after they left Ontonagon, the hotel burned to the ground. There were two sons and four daughters in the family: **George**, who lost an arm in World War I; **Bartol**; **Harriette**, who married **William Luecke**, no children; **Winifred**, who married **Leo Burns**, had one son; **Genevieve**, who married **Richard Boll**, had three sons; and **Therese**, who married **Roy Bartos** and had one daughter. The sons were not married.

## **BLOCK FIVE**

Across the street to the south was the **general store and post office** run by **Richard and Henry Boll** for many years. Richard Boll and his family lived above the store until they moved to Iron Mountain.

The next building south was the **St. Paul Hotel**, run by **C.H. Grant** and later by the **Patrick Tobin** family. To the south of that was a **tavern** run by **Calvi and Gage**; later the building housed **Paul Khoury's store**. Still later the **Cuculi-Baraga American Legion Post** had a building in this area. Next, still to the south, was another **hotel**, the **Richards House** run by **John Brick** in the early days. The building south of the Richards House was the **barbershop and pool-room**, owned first by **Dr. Dockery** and in later years by

**Oswald Senglaub**. This completes the account of the Railroad Avenue side of the original five blocks of the village.

## **ORIGINAL PLAT, BUT NOT RAILROAD AVENUE**

Turning to the east, there was a group of four houses built by **Patrick Flanagan**, owned later by **Mary Newkirk**. A family by the name of **Voss** lived in one house on the back of the lots. **John Dinwoodie**, who was chief dispatcher, lived on the corner. There were three children in the family, **John**, **Alice Mae** and **Florence**. In later years, this house was occupied by the **Ernie Peterson** family. There were children in the Peterson family, one of whom, **John**, lost his life in World War II.

The next house in the group was occupied by the **Stanley Johnston** family; there was one daughter, **Addie**. The next house was occupied by the **Edward Redline** family; there were two sons, **Earl** and **Lester**. The Dinwoodies and the Redlines moved to Green Bay [*Wisconsin*], and the Johnstons built a home a block north on the opposite side of the street where they lived for years.

Just north of these houses was the **Paul Khoury** home. There was one son in the family. The house on the north corner of this block was first owned by **Elizabeth Raymond**. It was later owned and occupied by **Jesse Hale** and his wife **Bert**, who had no children. At the back of this lot, to the rear of **Bolls' store**, was a small house which was occupied by **James Anderson** and his rather large family. James was a brother of **William Anderson**.

Across the street to the north was a house owned by **Oliver Raymond** and occupied for many years by **Mrs. Cowling**, who was related to the Raymonds. Mrs.

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Cowling, the Raymonds, Andersons, Frizzells, and **Mrs. Kurth** were related either by blood or marriage. On the alley side of one of these lots was the **town jail**. North of the Cowling house was the house owned by **William Dionne**, later by **George Boutott**, and after that by **Ben Berman**, who lived there with his wife and daughter.

The next house north was a large home built by **John Warren**. In the Warren family there were four sons and four daughters: **John, Frank, Raymond, Gilbert, Mayme, Maude, Mable**, and **Alice**. Mr. Warren was a car inspector on the railroad and was killed on the job. Maude was a teacher in the schools, and the sons worked on the railroad. Eventually the family moved to Seattle, and the house was purchased by **John Erickson**. The Ericksons had one daughter, **Verna Mae**. The next house on the corner north was first owned by **Michael Aylward** and was occupied by a **Vincent** family for a time. Later the house was purchased by **Bernard Trigloff**, who lived there with his wife, **Rose**, and daughter.

The house across the street, on the corner, was first owned by **Dr. Dockery**, later by **Irving Friess** and wife **Millie**, who came from Saukville *[Wisconsin]*. Mr. Friess was a dispatcher on the railroad, later chief dispatcher. There were four daughters in the family; a son, **John**, died in infancy. **Edith** married **Joseph Steil**, had a son and two daughters; **Rita** married **Bernard Fonferek**, had two sons and a daughter; **Alice** married **Ricahrd Scovell**, had four children; **Jean** married **Gordon Muster**, and had a daughter; after her husband was killed in World War II, she remarried and had three children. For many years the Friesses had a cottage at Sawyer Lake. It was sold after the death of Mrs. Friess and has, in recent times, been

purchased by a grandson, **Peter Steil**. The family moved to Green Bay *[Wisconsin]* when the dispatchers' office was moved to Green Bay. The Friess house was later occupied by the **John Tobin** family and later by the **Chester Witters** family. There were several children in the Witters family.

North of the Friess home was the building first occupied by the **one-room school**; later it was the **first Catholic church** in town. The building still later was occupied by the **Romnack** family; there were two sons in the family. The next house to the north, on the corner, was first owned by **Merton Waterhouse** and later by the **Wallace Pritchards**. The Pritchards had no children, but Mrs. Pritchard's sister, **Sadie Alexander**, lived with them. The Pritchards left Channing and spent their remaining years in Seattle. The house was later purchased by **Lyle Lindeman**.

In the next block north, the only house in the block was owned and occupied for a number of years by the **William Bartlett** family. Both Mr. and Mrs. Bartlett had family connections in Ontonagon *[Michigan]*. There were three sons in the family, **Earl, Byron** and **William**, all of whom married and all had children. The family moved to Green Bay *[Wisconsin]*. The parents and three sons are now all deceased. The house was purchased and occupied by **Howard Couillard**, and there was one son in the family, **Joseph**, more familiarly known as "**Dodie**."

In the next block north, which is the eastern half of block one of the original plat, the first house belonged to the **Charles Porter** family. Mrs. Porter had a daughter **Kathleen McIntyre** from a first marriage, who married a **Fitzgibbons** and had children. The next house was owned and occupied by the **Oliver Raymond** family; there were two daughters, **Louella** and

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**Dorothy.** The next house north of the Raymonds was the house owned and occupied by the **William Tuttle**s, who had no children. The Tuttle later built a house in the area south and east of the original plat.

The house on the corner was owned and occupied by the **William Anderson** family. There were five children in the family: **Sarah, Emily, Ethel, Lincoln** (called "**Mose**"), and **Frances**. The house later belonged to **Jennie Johnson**. Across the street and to the north lived the **John Smith** family; there were two children, **Mary** and **John**. Mary married **Nathan Fontecchio**. In this area also, the **Joseph Modlinski** and the **Michael Marynski** families lived. There were children in both families. A family by the name of **Foster** lived in this area, and the **Emil Piasini** family as well. **Holton Knisley** owned a home here too.

The **William Tobin** family had a home on the east side of the street, across from the **Tuttle** home. There were eight children in the family: **William, Eloise, Clifford, Leigh, Mary, Robert, Clayton, and Ann**. William Tobin was the railroad agent for many years and he also operated a lumber business on **Railroad Avenue** opposite the **Eating House**. Mr. Tobin was the Township Supervisor for many years. Clifford married **Eleanor Lindeman** and practiced dentistry in Iron Mountain for many years. None of the family remain in Channing.

South of Tobin's, in the next block was a house owned by **John Breitenback** and later by **Alan Gustafson**. The Gustafsons had one son. The next house was owned and occupied by the **Richard Gohr** family, who were related to the **Dionnes**. The Gohrs had a son, **Vernon**, and a daughter, **Dulcine**.

South of the Gohr home was the home of **Albert Kurth** and his wife, who was **Lydia Nowack**. There were two sons, **Robert** and **Fred**, and a daughter **Ruth**. Ruth married **Sam Khoury** and Robert became a teacher in the Channing high school. South of the Kurth home was the **Walter Weber** home. There were two sons in the family, **Clifford** and **Walter**, and two daughters, **Frances** and **Marguerite**. Another son, **Jimmy**, died young. Next to the Weber home was the **Edward Kurth** home. There were three children in the family, **Charles**, who became a dentist and practiced in Milwaukee, **Florence** and **Marian**.

Across the street on the corner to the south was the home of the **William Shay** family. The family came from Sagola, and Mr. Shay engaged in logging operations for many years. There was one son, **Raymond**, and three daughters, **Rose, Josephine, and Laura**. Rose married **Jack Tobin** and had four children; Josephine, widow of **Lawrence Rouse**, married **Bob Tobin**. Josephine had three children from her first marriage. Laura married **Grant Hinckley** and had children. Immediately behind the Shay house and facing the street to the east was the **Hinckley** home. The Hinckleys had four sons, **Clare, Bernard, Leonard, and Grant**, and a daughter, **Nina**.

**Thomas Brady**, his wife and daughter **Bernice** occupied the next house south of Shay's. The Bradys moved to Green Bay [*Wisconsin*], and the house was sold to **John Strycula**. There were four sons and a daughter in the Strycula family: **Wallace, Louis, Thomas, Edward, and Anne**. South of the Strycula home was the home of the **Herman Lindeman** family. There were three sons and two daughters in the family: **Elmer, Lyle, Marvel, Zaderine** and

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**Eleanor.** Zaderine became a registered nurse and went to Hawaii to live, married **Homer Eaton** and had two children. The two children were sent to Channing to live with their grandmother and attend school for the duration of World War II. Eleanor was graduated from Channing High School, went on to college and returned to teach in area schools.

On the corner of the block south of Lindeman's was the home **Stanley Johnston** built, later purchased by **Lyle and Lucille Worthing**. Next, to the south, was the **John Cuculi** home. John, brother of **Bartol Cuculi** and one of the earliest residents of Channing, and his wife had three sons and three daughters: **Vincent, Joseph, Leonard, Millie, Margaret and Elizabeth**. South of his home, John Cuculi built a **theater and dance hall** which later was converted into the "Flats," a multiple-dwelling building. The next building south was the **Couillard Hotel**, mentioned previously. Across the street to the south was the original Couillard home. The **Couillards** were very early settlers; Mr. Couillard engaged in logging operations. There were three daughters: **Luella**, who married **Joseph Rebman**; **Mable**, who married **George James**; **Bernice**, who married **William Hetherington**; all had children. The Couillard house was occupied at one time by the **Fords**, who had a son, **Russell**. In later years the house was owned by the **Leonard Osbornes**, who had one daughter, **Eileen**.

South of the Couillard house was property owned by **Patrick Flanagan** and **William Zimmerman**. The lots were bought by **Ebbe Johnson** who built a home there and occupied it with his family for many years. Ebbe and **Esther**, who was a daughter of **Simon Johnson**, had two sons and two daughters: **Ward, Richard, Millet**

and **Donna**, all of whom married and had children. South of Johnson's was the **second school building** referred to elsewhere in this history.

## **OUTLOTS AND SUBDIVISIONS**

South and east of the original five blocks were Outlots B and C, the Burton Hanson, Richards, and Milwaukee Land Company subdivisions, and acreage where some of the early residents lived. Starting on the main street, or **Railroad Avenue**, south of the **barbershop**, the first building was the **drugstore**, built by **Holton Knisley**. There were four children in the Knisley family; they lived on the road running east from town toward **Turner**, sometimes known as the **Miller road**. South of the drugstore was the **Dal Santo tavern, Duffena and Roell's store, Joe Dorn's shoe shop**, and the **garage**. The garage was owned at times by **Adams, Heisenfelt, Wantz, Johnson**, and in the later years, **Lindeman**. Across from the drugstore was a **filling station** run by **William Tuttle**, and at one time by **Louis Anderson**.

Next, to the south, were two houses built by **Richards**. The house in the rear was a **double dwelling** occupied by a number of families in the early years; the house on the main street side was occupied by the **Deacon** family. Mrs. Deacon was a widow and had three daughters and two sons: **Ethel, Elsie, Gladys, Raleigh, and Thomas**. This house was later owned by the **Johnson** family and was occupied at one time by **Les McMillan**.

Farther south on the east side of the street was the **Carl Christenson** home, the **McDonald**, and **Meyer** homes. The McDonalds had children, and **Leonard Meyer** and his wife had a daughter and three sons: **Leota, Wilfred (Jack),**

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**Sylvester (Buss)**, and **Orville**. Next was the **Krone** home – no children in this family – and several homes owned by the **Vermullen** family and rented out. In the early days a family by the name of **Tony Holtznecht** lived in one of these houses; there were two sons and a daughter in the family. **Edward Grade** also lived in this neighborhood and later **Harold Hessel**. Across the street were several houses, one of them belonging to **Wenzel Krummel**. The **Herbert Modrows**, who had a daughter, built a home here in this neighborhood which was later owned by **John Marynski**. The Maryniskis had one daughter. **Edward Roell** built a home in this area which the family occupied for many years. There were two sons and one daughter in the family. The two sons married two sisters, **Imogene and Agnes Perrin**, and went into **mink farming** south of the village on the road to Iron Mountain.

The old road to Iron Mountain turned east at the south end of the village, and on a hill there was a log cabin occupied for a time by an uncle of mine, **James Tuohey**, and his family. My uncle operated a **dray line** in the village while he lived there. In the early days, few people had horses, and automobiles had not come into use, but people had to have things moved and hauled, so there were two drays in the small village at one time. My uncle had a large cat which had been trained to open the outside door by pushing down the latch while standing on its hind legs.

Across the street to the east of the railroad track there were several houses. The **Wantz** and **Broniszewski** families lived here. Both families had children. There also was the house that was owned and occupied by **Mrs. Minnie Cuculi** for many years. Across the track and to the west, there were several log houses. **Louis**

**Anderson** and family lived in this area for many years, and there were several children in the family, among them, **Cora, Chester, Ralph, Clarence, Russell, and Frances**. The **Novaks**, who had a daughter, **Frances**, lived in this area. The **William Porters** lived in this group of dwellings; there were three Porter children, **Priscilla, Beulah** and **Burnell**. Mr. Porter ran a **dray**.

On the road leading west, **Albert Baenen** built a large house and lived there with his wife and daughter, **Helen**, who became a nun. In later years, my brother owned this house. Farther out on this road the **McGregors**, who had no children, lived. **John Krause** and his wife and two sons, **Robert** and **John**, lived in this area. Also on this road there were a number of other families' homes and finally, at its western end, was the **Shay farm**.

South and east of Channing on the old Iron Mountain road was the **McCole farm**. The McColes had several children, among them **Kathryn**, who taught school. Farther south on the road was the house built by the **Joseph Rebmans**.

In the area to the east and south of the original plat, on the road to **Turner**, was the **Miller farm**. There were two daughters and a son in the family: **Sarah, Olga** and **Erwin**. Sarah (Sadie) married **Henry Boll**; there were three children: **Otto, Kenneth** and **Henrietta**. Olga married **Sid Willard** and had children; **Erwin** married also. Other early residents on the Miller road were **Joe Koller** and **Viney Nolan**. Mrs. Nolan had a son, **Van Allen**. **Mr. Vaughan**, an **early school principal**, lived in that area. Later **Harold Van Oss** built his home there. There were three sons and one daughter in the Van Oss family. The **Alvin Lindeman** family lived along that

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road and the **Zager** family also lived in the area.

South of the **Dinwoodie** house in the original plat, in outlot B, was the **Lince** home; there was one daughter in the family. Next to the south was a house owned by **George Boutott** and later by **William Dionne**. **George Hirn** also had a home in this area. The **Ted Peterson** family lived here; there were two daughters and a son in the family. **Helen** married **Gus DeBaker** and **Ted** married **Helen Broniszweski**; **Elizabeth** died young. Across the street was the home built by **Al Seeman**. Mr. Seeman was a dispatcher and eventually the family moved to California. There were two boys and two girls in the family. North of Seeman's was the home owned by my sister **Gladyce** and her husband, **George Bloomer**. There were three daughters: **Mary**, **Audrey** and **Joyce**. The family moved to Green Bay [*Wisconsin*]. North of Bloomer's was the home built and occupied by **Henry Boll** and family. On the corner north of Boll's was the **Catholic church** and beside it the **rectory**.

To the east of the church, on **Tobin Avenue**, was the **Albert Worthing** home. To the south was the **Claude Clark** home; there were three children in the Clark family. **William Tuttle** and **Cliff Huetter** had homes on this street, as well as the **William McNultys**. The **Walter Lears** lived in this block and the **Elmer Lindemans**. There was one son in the Lindeman family; Mrs. Lear and Mrs. Lindeman were sisters. **John Stein** built a home here and lived in it for a short time with his wife and daughter, **Gladys**. There was a son who worked for the railroad also, as did Mr. Stein's brother, **Edward**.

The **Lloyd Brasures**, who had two sons, one of whom became a minister, lived in this area. Across the street was the **Sam**

**LaValley** home. There were children in the LaValley family. In this block was the **Presbyterian church**, and next to the church was the home **Ted Nowack** built in which he lived with his mother.

The entire area to the east of the original plat of the village was considerably built up during the period of greatest activity on the railroad. In this area was the **Fred Lindeman** home on **Tobin Avenue**. There were eleven children in the family, all married and had children: **Edward**, **Alvin**, **Roy**, **Helen**, **Iola**, **Grace**, **Cecile**, **Norbert**, **Leonard**, **John** and **Fred**. Roy married **Florence Wilkinson**, Iola married a **Witters** son, Fred married **Evelyn Kramer**.

In this area were the homes of the **John Kramers**, **Charles Careys**, the **Ewigs**, **Marshes**, **Ihrigs**, **Schwankes** and **George Rileys**. The **Albert Younkes**, whose son **Lyle** was killed in World War II, lived in this area. The **Teszlewicz** family lived here for many years. There were several children in the family. **Harriette Cuculi Luecke** had a home in this area. Farther north was the school built in 1922.

At the north end of the village was the **Mogan road** running west to our property and out to the Michigamme River. On this road was the "**Dolly**" property which was owned later by the **Haas** family, who had previously lived on the Sawyer Lake Road. There were five children in the Haas family: **Elsie**, **Lydia**, **Paul**, **Carl** and **Fred**. Farther out on the road the **Fende** and **Baraga** families lived. Both families had children. The Baragas' son **Joseph** was killed in World War II. Our home was owned later by **Ed Christian**, who owned other property close by.

North of the village, on the old **Sawyer Lake road**, was the **Nowack** home and farm. Mr. Nowack and his sons logged as well as farmed. The family came from

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Menominee, Michigan, and were *[sic]* one of the oldest families in the area. There were three sons and three daughters in the family: **George, Ernest, Fred, Lydia, Elizabeth** and **Ruth**. Ernest and Fred were unmarried; George married a widow with two children; Lydia married as previously recorded; Elizabeth married Arthur Manteufel and had two children; Ruth married Charles Carey, had three children. A mile or so north of the Nowack farm was the “**Dutchman’s place,**” at one time occupied by the **Haas** family, and later by the **Races**.

Four miles north of Channing, at **Sawyer Lake**, there were a few homes or cottages in the early years. **Fred Gage** owned a large, resort-like building on the lake, and **Richard Boll** also had a large cottage there. **Henry Boll** and **Irving Friess** built cottages on the north end of the lake, and **Simon Johnson** built on the west side. The **Roseks** had a resort on the west side for many years, and **Ed Christian** had a home in that area. In later years, my brothers owned property on the north end. There was a beautiful hardwood grove at the north end of the lake, owned by **Richard Boll** which was later acquired by the county for a park. Recreational buildings were built in the park to serve the area young people and adults. The **Edmunds** property was at the south end of the lake, near the outlet. Across the lake was a shack occupied by a hermit known as “**Ginseng Louie**” who, it was said, used to gather ginseng near the lake.

For many years there were only a few cottages on the lake, which is spring-fed and relatively pure. It remained tranquil and unspoiled during those years, and recalling the lake in early days brings me the happiest of memories. The annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July picnic was traditionally held there

and, after automobiles became more common, we were often taken to the lake to swim on hot days.

Names of other individuals not mentioned elsewhere in this history, but who lived and worked in Channing during the early years are **Ed Jubin**, who sang in a quartette; **Hart Anderson**, a bartender; **William Robbins**; **Henry Holzman**, **Mrs. Shay’s** brother; **Mike Collins**; **Courtney Duff**; **Thomas Jonas**; **Rudy and Harold Forsman**; **John and Fred Kuehl**; the **Everard** brothers; **Lawrence Thibodeau**. Names of other early residents of Channing during the period of interest to this history are: **Fred Rochow**, **Fred Harvey**, **Paul Bauman**, **Charles Quist**, **Paul and Carl Sitka**, **Ole Hanson**, **Frank Maas**, **Al Harnish**, **John Fisher**, **Frank Corr**, **Ray Heim**, **George Daniels**, **William Wentela**, **Ted Bloom**, **Harold Hessel**, **Clarence Knickerbocker**, **Clem Vincent**, **Angeline Rasmussen**, **Albert Conery**, **Victor Borga**, **Herman Steinkraus**, and the **Whitnacks**, all of whom had families. **Ralph DeGaynor**, who was a local artist, and his family were residents of the area, residing at **Silver Lake** for many years. Names of some other families who lived in the Channing area are **Federspiel**, **Sparks** and **Porterfield**.

## 5. I REMEMBER

In the first two decades of the Twentieth Century, and for that matter, until the start of World War II, life in the United States was so different from what it is in the 1970’s that it might as well be another world. That it is a different world is well known to my generation; but for those born after 1940 it would be especially hard to imagine a world without instant foods, frostless refrigeration, computers, air conditioning, transistor

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radios and appliances, jet air travel, and all the other trappings of modern times. Other features of modern life which were unknown in the earlier day I remember are polluted air and water, rampant crime, newsstand pornography, drug abuse, public nudity, X-rated motion pictures. Advances in the fields of electronics, automobiles and aircrafts, increased knowledge in chemistry, physics, and medicine, mass communications, including television. All conspired to sound the death knell of the age of innocence. Improvement in existing household appliances and the introduction of new labor-saving devices in many ways dramatically changed the role of the housewife and altered family life. I will try to describe briefly life as I remember it in Channing in those long-ago days.

The life-style here described was similar for most families in the community. There was no sharp division between "rich" and "poor" – all were railroad employees or small business people, though some may have had more material possessions, and some had larger incomes than others.

Before the automobile became common, our mobility was somewhat restricted. I remember hearing that before the first store opened in town, it was necessary to go to Iron Mountain to buy groceries, usually an all-day trip by horse and wagon. Ordinarily the villagers would take the train to go to Iron Mountain or Green Bay to shop for items not carried in the general store, but usually purchases were made at the village store, which carried most of the necessities, but no wearing apparel. It was customary to charge purchases and pay the bill at the end of the month when the monthly paycheck, often no more than \$80.00, was received. The storekeeper would present the customer with a small bag of chocolates

on payment of the bill, a treat much looked forward to by the children of the family.

Ready-made clothes for women were the exception. Yard goods were purchased and made into garments by the women in the family or by dressmakers who would come to the home and stay for a few days or a week and make up wardrobes for the family. Our fashions of that day would not be described as "high."

The dry-goods stores I remember in Iron Mountain were one-floor establishments having shelves from floor to ceiling, all piled full of merchandise. At each counter was a wire basket, about the size of a market basket, attached to wires which crisscrossed the building above the counters. Purchases and cash were placed in the basket which, when a lever was pulled, shot up and across the store, much like a ski lift, to an office above the selling floor at the rear of the building. The purchases were wrapped, change made and enclosed in a small leather container, and basket and purchase returned to the counter. Later, stores had cash registers at the counters – ornate silvered boxes having small metal flags with cents and dollars shown on them which jumped up behind a glass when the appropriate button was depressed. The registers were heavily embossed and usually had "National" in raised letters on the back.

Most of our food was made or processed at home. There was no "instant" food, and no frozen food, and very little canned food. We did have some bakery goods, brought in from Iron Mountain, but we usually resorted to them only in emergencies. We used to get flour in 50-pound sacks which were emptied into the flour bin, and the flour sacks were later hemmed and used for dish towels. Bread was baked one or twice a week, and one of

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my favorite memories is of coming home from school to find five or six large loaves of bread cooling on the table. Slicing one of the fat, golden loaves and loading a slice with butter and eating it was a treat fir for a king.

Many of the villagers had gardens to provide fresh vegetables for the table and for canning, even as in modern times. Wild raspberries, blackberries and blueberries could be picked in the area around Channing, and I remember going one time with my brother to pick blueberries in a field some distance west on the Ontonagon line, where the berries were reported to be plentiful. We left on the passenger train in the pre-dawn hours, arriving at the blueberry patch at about sunrise. We picked until approximately noon when a freight train picked us up with two bushels of berries and let us off opposite our house. Picking berries was not considered drudgery, but rather an enjoyable outing. We were given a tempting lunch including lemonade, and a day of berry-picking was like a picnic, complete with ants, mosquito bites and sometimes bee stings. There were no programs of activities for children in those days; we were generally responsible for our own amusement, and quite simple things were all that were available to us, but they made us happy.

Many of the early residents kept chickens or cows or both. We had a log barn and a chicken coop at the rear of our lots and kept chickens and cows from time to time. We sold milk for six to eight cents a quart, and eggs for fifteen to twenty cents a dozen. We had plenty of milk, cream and eggs for our own use – milk at that time was not homogenized and thick layers of cream would rise on the granite pans into which the milk was strained. We had a small barrel churn which was turned on a

frame until the cream inside turned to butter; then the buttermilk, with small particles of butter floating in it, was drained off and the butter moulded [sic] with salt. The natural buttermilk was far superior to the cultured product of today.

Refrigeration was very poor before the age of electrical refrigeration. We had an icebox which was kept filled in the summer with ice from the icehouse at Sawyer Lake. We did not use ice in the winter, but at one time we had a “root house” behind our house – a mound of sod supported by timbers on the inside and having a small door for entry. Inside we kept vegetables from the garden, such as potatoes, rutabagas, squash, etc., for winter use. We also usually had one or two barrels of apples in the root house for winter use, delicious apples which came form the Hayes orchards in Lower Michigan. At times eggs were packed in some sort of preservative in a large crock and kept in the root house for use in winter or during the period when the hens did not produce.

Besides the eggs they produced, the chickens also provided food in the form of baked or fricasseed chicken, though chicken was not available every day – it was considered more as a Sunday meal. It was more special in taste too as chickens having the run of the yard seemed to have a better flavor than those raised on wire and chemically stimulated as today’s chickens are.

With the availability of milk, cream and eggs, we had ice cream at times in summer. We had a gallon freezer which I would turn furiously, adding salt to the ice at intervals, and when it was finished, for my labors, I would be given the dasher to lick in addition to my share of the finished product. This ice cream was totally different from the commercial ice cream of today. It had no

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filler, melted quickly, and could only be described as heavenly fare. There was commercial ice cream, however, which was better than that of today, and now and then we would be treated to a five-cent cone.

For cooking, we had a wood-burning stove. On the end opposite the firebox it had a reservoir which provided warm water for washing dishes and bathing. Sometimes the reservoir would be filled with rain water from barrels which stood at the corners of the house to catch water from the eaves. The stove also had a warming over on the back where food and dishes could be kept warm for a meal. Keeping the desired temperature for oven or surface use, however, took all the skill of an engineer, and sometimes a failure in cooking would be the result of wood that would not burn.

In spite of cooking problems, however, in my opinion, the natural food, simple though it was, of my childhood was superior to the highly-processed, chemically-bolstered food of today. Meat was sometimes tough, but when it was tender, it was naturally tender, not "tenderized" with texture and flavor destroyed.

Keeping the woodbin, which stood behind the stove, filled and the ashbin emptied were some of the odious chores of the children in the family. Other chores were keeping the water pail full and the slop pail empty. The water pail appeared to be always empty and had to be taken again and again to the long-handled pump, which stood at the back door, to be filled. The slop pail, which always seemed to need emptying, was the wet version of the garbage pail or trash basket of today. That is, in addition to peelings and other food particles, dishwasher and other liquids were emptied into the pail which had to be

carried out to the alley frequently and emptied.

In my home, as in others in the village, there was no central heating, no electricity, as well as no running water or sewage systems. We had a base-burning coal stove in the dining room with a register in the ceiling which, in winter, carried some heat to the bedrooms above. The stove had isinglass in the doors through which the burning coal could be seen glowing in the dark of winter nights – a cheerful and cozy sight. The coal was fed to the grate from a cylinder which released additional coal as it was burned. Beside the stove was a coal scuttle which was supposed to be kept full, and filling the coal scuttles and emptying the ashes were two more chores the children tried to avoid.

In addition to the wood cookstove, we had a kerosene stove for cooking in the summer. It had three round burners with blue enamel cylinders on a steel framework with a tank on one end to hold the kerosene. The wicks had to be trimmed frequently to keep the heat from the burners even. For baking, there was a square steel oven with a glass door which stood on two of the burners and baked fairly well.

Kerosene lamps were used for lighting purposes. They might be hanging lamps above the dining table, bracket lamps on the walls, plain table lamps or ornate painted-globe "parlor" lamps. All, however, had one thing in common: wicks had to be trimmed, chimneys washed and bases filled with kerosene daily. Later we had a mantle lamp which had to be pumped to form a gas from the fuel. This lamp produced a very white light, far superior to the kerosene lamp, though it was cumbersome.

In the early decades of the century, there were no electric washers or dryers and washing, traditionally done on Monday,

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was a laborious task. Two galvanized tubs were set up in the kitchen on a frame having a hand-wringer in between. A copper wash boiler filled with water, into which a bar of laundry soap had been shaved, was heated to boiling on the cookstove. The white clothes were hand-rubbed on a washboard in one of the tubs, placed in the boiler and boiled for some time. They were removed from the boiler by use of a "clothes stick" and put in the "sudsing" water – clear cold water to take out the major portion of the soap – then rinsed in bluing water. In the meantime the colored clothes had been rubbed on the washboard and were waiting their turn to go through the rinsing waters, all having been put through the handwringer at each operation. The clotheslines were strung outside and the clothes pinned on the lines to dry. Rainy weather complicated things for the housewife. Sources of pride to the women were extremely white washes (bleaches were not used), and having the clothes on the line very early in the morning.

Since the railroad yards were so close to the homes in the village, the soft-coal-burning engines switching in the yards often were a source of irritation to the housewife as she might just get her wash out, only to have it covered with oily black soot. It was said there were one or two engineers who, at times, would deliberately cause their engines to eject the black smoke and soil the washings on the lines.

Winter drying of clothes was a problem too as, regardless of weather conditions, clothes had to be hung outside, and a familiar sight in winter was the frozen-stiff "long johns" hanging on the lines like headless wraiths with outstretched arms.

In later years we had a hand washing machine which supplanted the washboard.

It was a wooden tub on four legs which had a wooden agitator attached to the top. When clothes, soap and water were added to the tub, the cover was closed down and a wheel on the outside was turned by hand which operated a cam causing the agitator to twist and rub the clothes to remove the soil. This machine, which used only the energy produced by the operator and a relatively small amount of water, was very efficient, turning out clean washes.

The galvanized washtub had another important function in the early household when it was pressed into service for the Saturday night bath ritual. Taking a bath in bathroomless homes consisted of squeezing into the little tub which was set up in kitchen or bedroom and splashing water all over the place during the process of removing the weekly grime. Daily washing was accomplished by use of a bowl and pitcher of water which stood on the commode in the bedroom, or at the kitchen washstand. Lack of a bathroom, especially in zero weather, caused other hardships which added to the ruggedness of the pioneer character.

There were no "miracle" fabrics, no drip-dry or wrinkle-free garments and linens in the early days, so all clothing and linens had to be ironed after washing. The long, hot job of ironing was usually done on Tuesdays. The flatirons, heavy pieces of iron, shaped and pointed on both ends and having a slot in the top to hold the handle, were heated in groups of three or four on the cookstove. As an iron cooled, it was replaced by one of the hot ones from the stove. Later, we had a gasoline iron which had a small tank for the fuel beside the handle; a flame kept the iron at even temperature. These irons were superior to the flatirons, but I recall they usually ran out

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of fuel and had to be refilled before the ironing was completed.

For entertainment there were family gatherings, picnics and other simple forms of amusement. In the winter there were activities related to snow and ice: tobogganing, sledding, ice skating. I remember times when the snow was so deep we could walk over the fences on snowshoes. The arrivals and departures of the passenger trains were always exciting. The evening trains particularly attracted young people; the passengers often got off to eat at the restaurant; there was transfer and boarding of passengers from Crystal Falls and Iron River, and a general air of interesting activity, of life and romance.

There were card parties and dancing for the adults. I recall a bachelor named **Mike Maher** who played the “fiddle” for dances; and one time, in the section house, most of the villagers, including my father and mother, danced to his seesawing. **John Strycula** used to play the accordion for these gatherings also, and in later years, small orchestras from out of town came to play for dances – **Caviani** from Iron Mountain was a favorite. The first dances I recall were square dances with a caller directing the movement of the dancers, but when I started to go to dances, the waltz, two-step and fox-trot were popular.

Always on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, even as today, there was a picnic at Sawyer Lake. One time my father hired a horse and rig and took us all to the picnic at the lake. Along went the freezer of homemade ice cream, home-grown fried chicken, potato salad and all the other picnic staples. There were games, swimming and fireworks – we were allowed to have and shoot off fireworks.

In the fall we played such games as “run my good sheep, run,” “alley, alley over,” “hide and seek” and others, all around the

village. As I recall, nine o’clock was the time to go home and to bed for school children. Juvenile delinquency hadn’t yet become a problem, and the only real mischief I recall were the pranks played by some of the older boys on Halloween. On that night, a few gates might be removed from the fences, which enclosed every homesite, and deposited on rooftops some distance away. And one or two of the small outhouses found in every backyard were sure to be overturned. Usually these pranks were not hit-or-miss, but were directed toward certain individuals against whom some of the pranksters felt they had a grudge. But I do not recall anything to compare with the widespread, ongoing, random vandalism so common today, though there was the usual mischief associated with normal children.

Another form of amusement or mischief was the shivaree of newly-wed couples. After a marriage, when the newly-weds returned home, a crowd of villagers would appear under their bedroom window at night and serenade them with cowbells, kettles, pans and other noisemaking devices until the bridegroom came out and gave money to treat the crowd. If the amount given was considered insufficient, the serenade continued until the harried bridegroom produced money enough to satisfy the group.

As early as 1909, there was a **gun club** in Channing. Tournaments were held for the **trap shooting** to which contestants came from near and far. The range and traps were to the east of the village, near where the high school was later built. Officers of the club were **R. Boll, W. Pritchard, J. Dinwoodie, R. Held, L. Kempen** and **T. Brady**.

Speaking of the gun club area, I remember that when I was very young the

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space to the north and east of our house was mostly vacant from **Dionne's** north to the first street and from **Porter's** to **Bartlett's**. These vacant lots were grown up with small poplar saplings and trees, and we called the area the "little woods." It was fun to play in the little woods, but to the east, across the street, there were large trees: maples, elms and evergreens – a dark and scary place we called the "big woods," and we never entered there because we thought it was inhabited by wild animals or even giants.

From time to time Channing had a baseball team and on Sunday games would be played with Sagola, Republic and other nearby teams. Often a load of Channing people would be taken to the games by use of a railroad engine and caboose. Sometimes a few fans would use a railroad handcar to get to Sagola to a game. At times an engine and caboose might be used to transport a group to a dance in Sagola. There were, of course, no automobiles and no buses.

Death in the 1970's is a commonplace event, but in the early years of the century when national population was less than one-fourth its present millions, life was not cheap and death was the supreme tragedy. After a death in the family, there was a period of mourning and black was work as a sign of bereavement. There were certain conventions attached to death and funerals which were strictly observed but which now have been almost entirely discarded. In a small and predominantly young community, death was an infrequent and calamitous event.

I recall the consternation in the village when the body of a five-year-old boy was found shot to death and covered with brush at the south end of town. If death was unusual, violent death was indeed rare, and

the village was in turmoil. It was said that an older boy had somehow obtained a 22-rifle and shot the boy. Whether it was accidental or deliberate was unknown as the law enforcement and investigative methods of that time were quite primitive. No action was taken, but it was reported that the boy responsible spent time in later years in a correctional institution for another offense. Such incidents were rare, but when they did occur we were shielded from the gruesome details – at least they were not debated in my home. Today tiny children from the most tender age are permitted to see on television death in its most violent form.

An incident involving sudden death was reported to me now too many years ago by Mrs. Bartlett, who was our neighbor in Channing – I was not aware of it at the time. It so happened that a six-year-old child who lived next door died and, there being no undertaking facilities in the village, the child's parents asked **Mrs. Bartlett** and my mother to prepare the little girl for burial, which they did: washing, dressing and laying her out. She was later buried by other neighbors in the old cemetery south of town.

In the village, there was one good woman who was always on hand when anyone died in the community. The deceased were laid out at home and this woman was a fixture in the home from the time of death until after the funeral, and no death or funeral would be complete without her. But she was likewise always around to assist when sickness struck a family – a good neighbor at all times.

Another one of the good women of the village had the habit of appearing, along with her sister, at one or another of her friends' homes just at mealtime. The visitors would be asked to share the meal,

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which they would do and, a week or so later, the happening would be repeated at another friend's home, and so on for many years.

Babies were delivered at home without mishap, and I remember that my mother assisted the doctor when a number of babies were born in the village. **Mrs. Hinckley**, however, usually acted in this capacity; the service included taking care of mother and baby for the then usual nine days of confinement.

A tragic mishap was the mysterious disappearance of **Bert Gribble** and a companion. Gribble was a transfer worker and one morning after getting off work, he came to our home and asked my brother to go fishing on the Michigamme with him and his companion, a woman from Crystal Falls. My brother declined and the two went off together. When Gribble did not report for work that night, a search party was organized. When daylight came, the woman's body was found entangled in brush at the edge of the river. When was thought to be Gribble's body was found two years later. Apparently they had overturned on a raft in the treacherous water and drowned.

Another sudden death occurred on a farm midway between Channing and Sawyer Lake known as the "**Dutchman's place**." The Dutchman was a recluse who farmed and raised livestock and fowl. One day during the haying season, the Dutchman was found beside a load of hay, impaled on a pitchfork and quite dead. There were rumors of foul play – the victim was reported to have had enemies – but the case was never solved.

My brother told of an accident on the railroad when a man walking on the track was hit by a freight train coming in from the "east end." When the train stopped, the

man was under the train and my brother attempted to free him, but when he touched the victim, his head rolled off.

Another incident involved a young railroad man who had a fine singing voice. There was a dance at the Liberty Theater and the young man had sung several sad and sentimental love songs, after which he went outside, collapsed and died.

One of the aspects of life about which there was considerable reticence was the presence of the **brothel** near the village. As I remember, the place was referred to in whispers as the "**sporting house**" and I was aware of its presence when I was quite young, though I had no idea what went on there – it was just a "bad" place. As in the days of the old West, with the opening of new territory, there came the workers and the hangers-on. The madams came with their girls, and one of the first settlers in the community was a woman called "Dolly" who bought forty acres about half a mile west of town on the Ontonagon line track. She had a log cabin built and moved in with three or four girls. Lumberjacks and some railroad men used to walk the track to Dolly's day and night. Food, liquor and other necessities were drayed out to the establishment regularly as Dolly and the girls were never seen in town, except when arriving or departing by train.

When we returned to Channing and my father built on our land, that house was too close to our home for comfort and my father and some other men of the town appealed to the authorities, and one day Dolly and her girls left, never to return. The house was an embarrassment to the community, however, for many years. Long after the house was closed up and deserted, **Iona Worthing** and I, curious to see what this hush-hush place looked like, went out there one day, peeked in all the windows and

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prowled around outside. It all looked drab and uninteresting and we didn't think much of all the secrecy and mystery which had surrounded it.

The lumberjack, with his plaid Mackinaw and cap, heavy boots and leather mittens, was a colorful sight in the village for many years. These men, usually unmarried, worked and lived in the woods. Lumber camps were built close to the timber being cut and consisted of a log cookhouse and one or more log bunk-houses. When the timber in an area was exhausted, the camp was abandoned and the loggers moved on to other areas and erected new camps. The jacks would come to town on payday, have a lively time in the bars and then wander out to Dolly's place.

The Upper Peninsula of Michigan was called "Cloverland" because of the widespread fields of sweet clover which blossomed throughout the area. There was a beautiful dance-hall called the "Cloverland Gardens" [The Nightengale] located near Iron Mountain, high on a hill overlooking the Menominee River flowage, where we danced gaily to jazz tunes during what is known as the "Roaring Twenties," though in retrospect, and in comparison with recent years, that period seems to have been more "purring" than "roaring." Other beautiful dance-halls that we frequented during those years were Pine Gardens, Riverview, and Chicaugon Lake. These were large halls, crowded on Saturday nights or holidays when young people from all around the area gathered to dance to good orchestras. It was during the prohibition era and liquor was not served in these places, though some enterprising young bloods who knew where to get it might bring their own supply of sour, red wine, but there was little drinking at these affairs.

This was the age of the "flapper" so called because of our habit of fastening only the bottom buckle of our black overshoes or galoshes. The top three open buckles allowed the galosh to flap from side to side as we pranced down the street. I remember strolling down the street in Channing with my galoshes flapping scandalously, when I met my father unexpectedly. He glared at me in disapproval and ordered me to fasten my overshoes.

A tale to finish my recollections is the story of the day-long fist-fight between the principal of the school and a railroad man. It was on a Saturday morning and the two men were in Jennie Johnson's ice-cream parlor shaking dice to see who would pay for the ice cream or cigars when an argument developed and the two men went outside to settle it by physical means. They fought off and on for hours in the dusty roadway beside the railroad track, sitting down to rest from time to time and then taking up the battle again. At about five o'clock in the afternoon Dr. Hayes happened to come into town and, seeing the battered condition of the stubborn fighters, persuaded them to stop fighting and dressed their hurts and bruises.

Yes, it was a different world that I recall – better in many ways than the world of today, not as good in others but, regardless, there is no turning back to those times, except in memory.

## CINDERS AND SAWDUST

### History of Channing, Michigan

In the early nineties, the **Milwaukee Road** owned and controlled the **Milwaukee and Northern**, running from Milwaukee to Champion, Michigan. At about the same

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time, it purchased and built a line running from Ontonagon to Sidnaw. The latter points were on the **Duluth, South Shore and Atlantic Railway**. It was decided to connect these two roads, and as a preliminary step, a topographic map was made covering practically all of Iron County and Baraga County as far north as the D.S.S. & A. railroad. Those portions of Marquette and Dickinson Counties that lay west of the Milwaukee and Northern were also included.

The survey was finished in one autumn, and during the following winter, the chief engineer of the Milwaukee, **Mr. Whittemore**, laid out a line on the map running from **Ford's Siding** to Sidnaw. As soon as the snow was gone, this line was located in the field. The topographic work was so excellent, that only minor variations from the line located on the plan had to be made. It was estimated that the total cost of the Lake Superior Survey was more than covered by the saving in construction of the line.

In the spring of 1892, more detailed work was begun in the district under **W.N. Merriam** and **H.L. Smyth**. Soon after they got under way, I was engaged by a subsidiary of the Milwaukee Road to undertake exploration for iron ore at most favorable points. I had been living in Ishpeming, and was in charge of the East New York Mine, but moved to Iron Mountain.

One morning, when getting off at Ford's Siding, I was astonished to see that a box car had been set off on the side of the right of way as a railway station, and on it was the sign "**Channing**." Thus was Ford's Siding transformed over night into Channing. That particular night I spent I the box car, laying [sic] on the floor, since unfortunately I had not brought any

blankets with me. I will have to admit, contrary to the general impression, that I had nothing to do with the laying out of the townsite of Channing. My work was confined entirely to exploration work in the iron ranges lying west of that place.

I have seen Channing grow from nothing but a box car to a good sized community, and it was with the greatest pleasure that I was able during the past winter to aid it in a small way in establishing a community house.

**J.P. CHANNING**