

# REMINISCENCES SUBMITTED FOR **KINGSFORD** **DIAMOND JUBILEE BOOK**

*[Transcribed by William J. Cummings]*

## **BREITUNG AREA OF THE VILLAGE OF KINGSFORD**

**By Kate (Rice) Chiesa  
1998**

### **Orchestras originating in Breitung:**

**Hanson Brothers:** Played in **Boy Scouts Hall** and other places.

**Lauzon Brothers:** **Homer** had at least two brothers; one played a mean saxophone.

**Johnson Brothers:** Mrs. Johnson, who lives in the 300 block of Roseland, is the wife of one. **Mrs. Ernest Vigo**, who lives in the 300 block of Roseland, is a sister. **Wilhelmina Johnson** is the wife of one of the brothers, but I don't know where she lives.

**Bobby O'Keefe and his fiddle:** He also called square dances.

There were many barbers and shoe repairmen.

As you came up **Breen Avenue** going west to **Quincy Street** (200 block), there was the **first Kingsford school** with only two rooms (1922). **Rita (Burby) Whiting**, of **229 Roseland Street**, went through the woods from her then home close by the Ford gate, wearing her little red coat, looking just like Little Red Riding Hood. Her teacher was **Miss Baril**. I believe she taught in the **Garden Village School** later.

Then atop **Breen Hill** was **Berro's Brothers Garage** on the left hand side. Someplace on the left was a **shoe repairman**. Next a **tent**. **Mr. Erickson** had the **first gas station** with a tent for shelter and a can to pour gasoline from. Gasoline was not needed in quantities by cars. Even so it took Mr. Erickson a while to have a pump.

Then we come to the 400 block of **Hooper Street and Riley Road** where the **Cillini Store** was located.

The "Great White Way" of Kingsford was **Brassington's theatre** [**the Capitol**

**Theatre**]. The **Frisco Follies** played there on stage. They also had "home talent": **Mr. Tortelli**, who had a magnificent voice; the **Robichaudes**. **Mrs. Robichaud** was the pianist and her son, **Edward**, sang. **Peggy** also sang and I believe another member of the family sang. **Billiards and pool were played in the basement, and there was a barbershop there as well.**

Across the road was a **pool hall** run at one time by **Ben McIvar**.

Now is the time for the next "show," as it was called, a huge tent [**the Wigwam Theatre**], where movies were shown for a short period. The man who ran it was arrayed in cowboy gear, and he spent a lot of time trying to catch the many boys trying to get in free by rolling under the tent and scampering to the top row of seats without paying.

I don't know when the **Kotlar building** came into being. Then it was **Horace Mitchell's Hardware Store**. Horace had a speech difficulty and a quick temper, resulting in a lot of priceless stories. Someplace in the space between **Cook's Drug Store** and the **Kotlar building** there was a **garage, Seigelstrom's**, I believe.

Then came a very small building – **Cook's Drug Store**. One of their clerks was **Agnes (Lundquist) Staples**. The building stood until it was razed a few years ago for a parking lot for **Machus' store**.

The **Fair Store** was next – a large **grocery store**. One clerk was **Miss Andrus**. There was a butcher who worked for the **A. & P.**, but I can't think of his name. Then it became an **A. & P.**, and the **Munn's Hardware Store**.

Kitty-corner was **Abe Cohodes & Son's store**, serving Kingsford residents with **food, clothing and furniture** until recent years.

Then was the residence and business place of the **welldriller**, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, and across the road was **Larmay's tailor shop**.

# REMINISCENCES SUBMITTED FOR **KINGSFORD** **DIAMOND JUBILEE BOOK**

*[Transcribed by William J. Cummings]*

**Marcellini's Gas Station** and around the corner was **Derrick's Grocery Store**.

Going down to the east was **Sagola Avenue**. I know there was a big **grocery store**, but I don't remember the name – **Remondini's** – in the 100 block. Then we come to the **Jacobs' store** and across the street was **Cormier's store** – **groceries, post office, dry goods and at one time a dance hall**. Mr. Cormier served as a councilman.

Down the street to the right was the **Hemlock Hotel**. Down a bit further was a tiny **grocery store** owned by **Pliny L. Burr** and his wife, **Kate**, in the 100 block of **Dorland Street**. Also in the 100 block of **Hooper Street** was **Burcart's [Burckhardt's] store**.

And we must not forget **Mr. Hencheck**. At first he gave drinking water free and he finally had to charge a nominal fee before his well ran dry! There was a small **store** run at one time by **Pick Petrovich**.

So now we'll go to the bottom of the hill, turn north one block, and west onto **Breitung Avenue**. There was a **boarding house, Cjucky's**, on the 100 block close to the gate. **Tortelli's** had a **boarding house and ice cream parlor at the corner of Breitung Avenue and Hooper Street**.

There was a **large brick building, a furniture store** at one time. The last owner was **Mr. Frivault**, who had furniture and he ran a storage business from there.

Way up the street at the **corner of Dorland Street and Breitung Avenue** was a little **ice cream store run by Mr. Blanchard**. Up from there was **LeBreque's Bakery**. It served food to the **Ford Plant workers** only. They had their own private gate to the Ford Plant.

There were **two bakeries on Breitung Avenue**. One was \_\_\_\_\_, and I'm not sure of the other's name. Then there was a **store, King's** [See **Betty and Dave McDowell.**], where **Rice's Juice Company**

is now located. I don't recall any other business because I didn't go there.

Yes, Breitung was quite a place. There was excitement in the air. It crackled like electricity. The hammers rang all day and all night to finish your abode. Many a wife attempted to hurry the job. There were many mashed fingers and bent nails before they gave up and let the males do it. Grandpas, brothers and uncles helped to hurry the job before winter set in.

**Charlie Lauersdorf** built many houses just like the pioneers. He cut all the timbers, and his crew put the timbers in place, but long before they finished their job Charlie was cutting more timbers for another house.

Roads? Even in 1924 there were none existent. Trails, yes! They were rutted but all verging to one trail across the fields to a small bridge arching over the only creek Kingsford has ever known – the ill-smelling **Sewer Creek!**

The owners of **Cellini's store** had two children – **Fausto**, who went to Italy and became a doctor and practiced in Chicago, and his sister, who married during the war time to a major and they imported goods from the Middle East.

I remember Fausto's first day in the **West Breitung School**. He came in with the last ones and marched up to the teacher's desk and deposited the biggest red apple you ever saw. We all slumped in our desks. We hadn't brought the teacher an apple or anything else, let alone a gleaming beauty like that one.

A word about the schools. In the fall of 1924 I started school at **West Breitung**. Our classroom was in the basement. Scarce a day passed but one, two or more came to start school. Soon there was no more room, so we went on shifts. What an experience to meet your brother or sister on their way to or from school! In the back were the **portable school buildings**. They

# REMINISCENCES SUBMITTED FOR **KINGSFORD** **DIAMOND JUBILEE BOOK**

*[Transcribed by William J. Cummings]*

were buildings used by men who worked on the building of the Ford Plant. How well they were are [*sic – is*] recalled by anyone who went to them! Some of the teachers were **Mrs. Nord**, fifth grade home room, **Miss Hydar**, the storekeeper **Jacob's** niece, **Mr. Godin**, **Miss Peterson** and my favorite teacher. She was beautiful! Russet curly hair, beautiful skin and eyes. My favorite looker of all time! After all how many people have you met with pansy-colored eyes? She was as nice as she looked.

The next year we started at **Kingsford Junior High School** – in the basement again! But we were the first ones out! And that counted! *[There was no basement in Kingsford High School/Kingsford Junior High School. There were three floors, and the junior high must have been located on the first floor.]*

## **GROWING UP IN BREITUNG** By **Douglas F. Marcelini** 1998

Growing up in Breitung during the 1930's and early 1940's was very exciting. No one had very much, but it didn't seem to matter. It was the end of the Depression, but things were still not very good.

My grandma, **Maude Marcelini**. and I would go to the Ford Plant area or along the old roads and **pick blueberries**. My grandma would always let me keep a few pails so I could sell them.

My dad, **Joe Marcelini**, had a business making basement "**cement blocks**". Each day after school or Saturday a friend and I would make blocks. We would receive 5 cents for each block. It was good pay at that time.

Also, during that time, when a relative passed away, the body would be viewed in the parlor. I can still remember seeing my great-grandmother and grandfather.

When the circus came to town, we all wanted to go, but we didn't have any money, so we knew we had to sneak in. When we were crossing the field, I fell into a "tar pit". **The tar pits were near the Kingsford City Hall and road commission warehouses.** When the workers heard, they pulled me out and cleaned me up and took me home. All of my clothing and shoes had to be thrown away.

My uncle, **Ted Marcelini**, who operated the **Mobil gas station**, always loved the children of the area and always did something during the holidays. During Christmas he would dress up like Santa and visit the homes. Each home he visited would give him a drink. By the time he would reach our home, he was feeling pretty good. Other times on the Fourth of July he would have a large display of fireworks at the town park, known as **Marcelini's Park**, located across the street from the gas station.

My mother, **Myrtle (Ohlson) Marcelini**, had a cousin who worked for the circus and was a "dare devil" driver, and his wife was a "tight rope" walker. The first time they stopped by, his wife set up a rope and walked it. My mother's cousin in the meanwhile would talk about his life and show us all his scars and tell us about his broken bones. At seven years old it was great.

There were other times when I used to cut and stack wood for the women in the area. Their husbands were away at work or in the U.S. service. I would receive 25 cents a week, or when I used to baby sit a day or night and received 25 or 35 cents, and that included doing the supper dishes.

But probably the best times were playing "kick the can", "hide and seek", playing "marbles" or just hanging around.

# REMINISCENCES SUBMITTED FOR **KINGSFORD** **DIAMOND JUBILEE BOOK**

*[Transcribed by William J. Cummings]*

## **ABE COHODES & SONS...SINCE 1923, THE BEST KEPT SECRET IN THE AREA**

**By Don Cohodes**  
**April 17, 1998**

A significant piece of the history of retailing in Kingsford was the **Abe Cohodes & Son Department Store**, located at **1300 West Breen Avenue**.

Situated a few blocks south of the main gate of the **Ford Motor Company**, "the store" was a source of supply for the Ford workers. Among the provisions available were gloves, caps, shoes, lunch pails as well as "Lee" work clothes.

The Cohodes Store was also able to cash checks of workers. In the beginning the store also sold grocery items.

As a grandson of the founder, **Abe Cohodes**, and son of **Morris Cohodes**, who operated "the store" for nearly 60 years, I felt it incumbent on me to give my impressions of the business as Kingsford celebrates its Diamond Jubilee.

The Cohodes Store was a product of the times. It was a provision store...dealing in merchandise which daily met its customers' needs. The boom years enabled "the store" to grow throughout the early 1920's.

The Depression of the late 1920's and early 1930's led to hardship for many of the Cohodes customers. My grandfather and father extended credit to many during these difficult times. **Lu (Kleiman) Edwards** and **Kathy (Kleiman) Clemo** have both related to me how "the Cohodes Store" helped their family during this period. Grandpa Abe told me, in his later years, that the store never lost a dime on the credit afforded.

It may sound brogadoccia, but I have the best memories of the store as how kind my family was to its customers. My dad was accustomed to saying with regard to refunds: "You smiled when you took the customer's money...and you should smile when you offer a refund."

The Daily News dropped off newspapers for the delivery boys in the area, and through the years these lads became loyal advocates of the store. To this day, **Mark Edens** speaks of those good times.

**Larry Monosso** credits the Cohodes Store for his love of the opera. Each Saturday afternoon during the opera season, the Cohodes radio was tuned to the **Texaco Metropolitan Opera** broadcast from New York City.

Before the mass merchandisers became so prominent, a store like Abe Cohodes & Son profiled retailing at its best.

Fond memories of "the store" and my grandfather, dad, and Uncle Ben remain with many area residents and customers.