

Keywords

Lumbering
Murner School
Theisen
Postal system
Kwapis
Transportation

Harry Dreffs was born in Gaylord in 1919. He lived here until he entered the service just before WW II started. His grandfather immigrated here from Poland when his dad was about 2 years old. The Polish name is Dreds.

His grandfather was a hoop coiler, working at a local hoop mill. There was a great call for barrels as foodstuff was commonly transported in barrels.

Harry's parents lived on a farm on Parmater Road nw of Gaylord. At this time the owner of the property is Cyndi Cole. To the east lived Henry Widger and to the north on a small lake lived the Tomaski family. Harry attended Murner School. It was the first one room school that had indoor plumbing.

One of Harry's first memories, before he was old enough to go to school, is watching the sleigh drawn by horses being loaded with logs. The sleigh was then pulled across the fields, over Franks property and then into Gaylord. There the logs generally either went to DLBW or were loaded on railroad cars.

Sleighs were also used to transport people during the winter as the roads were not plowed. In better weather Harry would ride in a Model T.

A passenger train came through Gaylord twice a day, once late at night and then again, early in the morning. This train also towed a mail car. Mail could be deposited in the mailbox by the depot or would be brought from the post office. The mail was sorted on the train and then delivered to railroad stops.

Some of the stores Harry remembered was the A & P, The IGA, Sissons, Kramers and the Sugar Bowl, also called the Greek Restaurant. There was no mail delivery to homes in Gaylord. Everyone had boxes at the Post Office. There was delivery in the areas outside of town.

When Harry wanted to attend High school he roomed at his aunt's who lived in town. There was no school bus service at this time. Prior to the time Harry graduated from 8th grade the district rescinded its policy of having student's from the one room schools taking an exam to see if they had sufficient skills.

There were few jobs for teens. However during vacation times from school Harry would cut, deliver and stack firewood. On a normal day he and his friend could make \$2.00 each. That was four cords of wood.

During the Depression the WPA built a sewer system in Gaylord. Prior to this, homes had outhouses.

After high school Harry went in the service. In 1945 he was out and after a short time away he came back to Gaylord. He and his long time friend, Tom Theisen, decided to buy farms on Shaff Rd. near each other. In fact, their homes were across from each other. They shared machinery and helped each other. When Harry's wife developed severe allergies, Harry sold the farm to the Kelso family and moved to Clio.

Electricity came to their farms in 1946. Phone service was established after the war, using surplus wire from the government.

Connection to Kwapis family...

Two of Harry's sisters married brothers with last name of Kwapis. One was Stanley Kwapis, who had a store on Main Street and had a potato warehouse in the vicinity of Gaylord Feed and Grain. During the Depression Stanley gave credit to many families which forced him into bankruptcy. His daughter and her husband bought the building and put in a tavern...Mary's Tavern.

Farming

Oats was the common grain grown. Corn was used for fodder because corn varieties of the time needed a longer growing season than the county has. The first tractors did not have rubber tires and were not allowed on the roads. Prior to the war, horses were used in farming. After the war tractors became more common. The beef cattle business was encouraged by Ray McMullen, County Extension Director.