

Looking Back #21

Charlevoix's Soda Fountains & Ice Cream Parlors

by

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Museum at Harsha House



Greek immigrant George Glados, right, behind the brand new soda fountain in his Sugar Bowl café, 218 (now 216) Bridge Street, 1910. Brother George stands in the middle.

Ever since Charlevoix established its reputation as a highly desirable tourist destination, soda fountains and ice cream parlors were not long in arriving on the scene. After World War I, tourism began here on a major scale, and there were plenty of places downtown that catered to the insatiable need for a vacation cone, soda, or sundae any time of day. In the Roaring Twenties, it was said that summertime Bridge Street was packed shoulder to shoulder every night of the week until well past midnight, forcing people off the sidewalks and onto the roadway. Any provider of ice cream had 'em lined up outside to wait for empty seats or tables. With no television or social media diversions to occupy their time, ice cream was the social cement of its day for our thousands of visitors (and locals too).

F. N. CHAPEL
Ph. C.

DRUGS,
Books,
Stationery,
ICE CREAM SODA,
FINE CONFECTIONERY AND CIGARS,
FISHING TACKLE,
LAMOGES CHINA, WITH VIEWS

The most attractive Drug and Book Store in northern Michigan is that conducted by Mr. F. N. Chapel. This gentleman is a graduate of the School of Pharmacy of the University of Michigan and has enjoyed a long experience in the compounding of prescriptions, of which he makes a specialty. His stock contains a full line of Pure Drugs, Medicines, Perfumery and Toilet Articles, and he also carries the latest Novels, as well as Magazines, Papers, Etc. He also deals in Stationery of all kinds; also Fine Confectionery, Cigars and Tobacco. A leading feature is his Ice Cream Soda, for which he enjoys a high reputation; it is made from pure fruit juices and only the best of ice cream is used.



One of the first establishments was at the main intersection downtown, the Chapel (pron. Tchay-pul) drugstore built in 1897. Most drugstores of the day offered a soda fountain after the turn of the century. This one, pictured above left, lasted until it was torn out in 1958 when the building came down to be replaced by the Central Drug Store we know today.



Maude and George Glados,
1940s

In 1907, Greek immigrant George Glados and his brother John came to town to open a confectionery shop in the Buttars buildings, just recently the Round Lake Bookstore. They added a café and restaurant several years later. George, with his witty quips and thick accent, became one of the most popular men in Charlevoix both with the townspeople and the summer trade for over half a century. He's barely visible above in the far center background, with wife Maude at the end of the counter. At left stands employee Warren Kibbee; behind him appears John presiding over the Glados's pride and joy, their 1910 \$2000 soda fountain, a 14-foot marvel of white marble, mahogany, brass, colored glass and metal tracery. Wouldn't we give our eye teeth to have one of those Art Nouveau beauties (see first page) still in town?

Yearning for his homeland, John returned to his roots where he lived to be over one hundred years old.

In 1920, pharmacist Floyd Fessenden came up from Central Lake to visit Charlevoix and was so impressed with what he saw he bought the local Hines pharmacy and pulled up stakes a year later. In 1922 he moved the business to the corner of Park Avenue and Bridge Street. Two years after that occurred the Crime of the Century, the notorious Loeb/Leopold case in Chicago, the brutal thrill killing of young teenager Bobby Franks by two family friends, Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb. The latter was the third son of Albert Loeb, builder of Loeb Farms south of town, now Castle Farms. Mr. Loeb, vice-president of Sears, Roebuck, hired famous lawyer Clarence Darrow to defend the two boys. A persuasive Darrow was able to circumvent the death penalty with the landmark verdict of life plus ninety-nine years. To get out of the Chicago tabloid hoopla in late summer of 1924, Albert Loeb brought Darrow to Charlevoix and the family mansion out at the Farms. It was in Mr. Fessenden's office in the back of the store, along the alleyway, that Albert Loeb presented Clarence Darrow with the check for the defense. This writer's father, Bob Miles, was working there at the time, and witnessed the two men both coming and going. He didn't know why they had been there until Mr. Fessenden informed him later. He said that Mr. Loeb had requested a strictly private venue for the transaction nowhere near his wife and family.



Fessenden's "Pills and Things" drug-store at Bridge Street and Park Avenue. Its fiery fate was described in Looking Back #15. Photo taken in 1922.



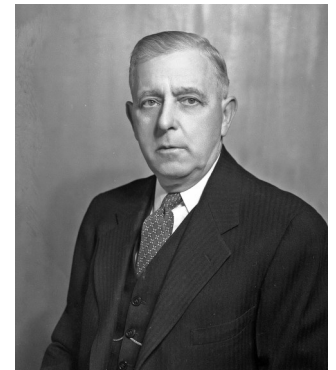
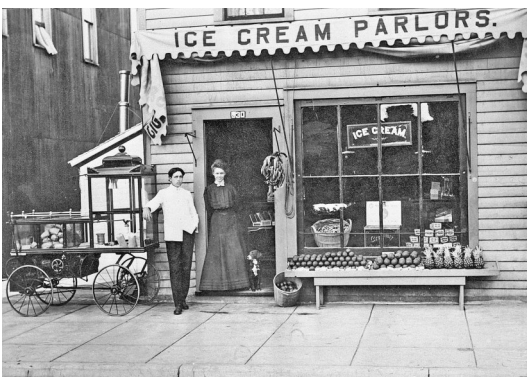
Part of Fessenden's soda fountain appears at left. The store's marble top tables are seen behind it.



Fessenden's ice cream counter. His office was at the rear of the store to the left of the mounted deer's head and upper window.



After the 1925 fire that destroyed his premises, Floyd Fessenden fortunately got a one-year lease on the vacated corner store two blocks south at Mason Street. But he was so pleased with his new place he decided not to return to the redone former site. Fessenden sold to John Schoeder and business partner George Hovey in the early 1940s, who in turn sold to Jim Williams, seen above at left behind his soda fountain, in the 1970s. The fountain was always a community nexus of daily gatherings for Cokes, coffee, ice cream, and the news, both printed and verbal, for many years. Today this is the Subway store.



Bert and Amy in front of the store with their popcorn machine

Bert and only child Lyle at the counter

Bert in later years

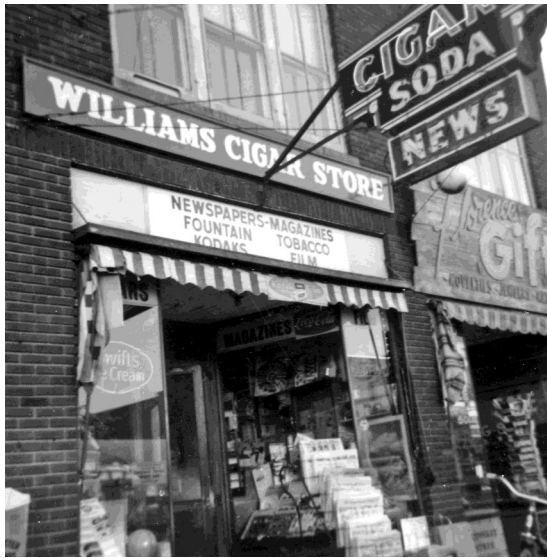
Herbert "Bert" Beaudoin (pron. Bo-dine) was born on Beaver Island in 1879 and began his working life in Charlevoix as a commercial fisherman in 1898. After not too many years, he and wife Amy opened a "candy kitchen" complete with soda fountain on Bridge Street where East Park is today. Its classic backless twisted wire stools appear in the middle photo. In the heyday of the parlor, it was said that in summer people lined up along the block to get in. Bert later became a building contractor, and in 1933 built and operated a Standard Oil gas station on south Bridge Street opposite St. Mary Catholic school. Bert stayed there until his death in 1961. Three years prior, the Standard Oil Company honored him as its oldest dealer in Michigan. Over the years, a highly respected Bert Beaudoin came to know everybody in Charlevoix, first of all by way of his ice cream parlor.



Mont's Lunch and Dining Room, or Mont's Café as the awning said, was opened by F. W. "Mont" Withers in 1920. Mont was born in Charlevoix in 1884 (his two initials were not spelled out in his obituary). The establishment became another downtown ice cream center on the site occupied today by Ga-Ga for Kids and Celeste Murdick's Fudge & Candy Kitchen next to Hoop Skirt Alley. Besides a sterling reputation for quality food, one of Mont's prime attractions was its magnificent black marble soda fountain. In the days of the Roaring Twenties, slot machines, illegal but quietly ignored, decorated the interior, as they did all over town. Mont's, open twenty-four hours a day in summer, was *the* place to go to dance the Charleston, hang out with shady characters from the big cities, in general get a whiff of what the big time could mean while the good times rolled. Prohibition in 1920 didn't stop the momentum. Illicit booze was said to be served in teacups to disguise its presence. Mont's was at its glorious peak until the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, when the excitement started to fizzle during the depths of the Great Depression.

Below is a section of an early Mont's menu. Read it and weep. "Jeff's," by the way, were a Charlevoix specialty, said to have been concocted by a local boy and quickly popular, in constant demand. But they were hated by soda jerks and other ice cream servers because they were so time-and labor-intensive: hard ice cream combined with syrups, fruits, possibly malt in various combinations all mixed by hand until it went numb.

SUNDAES			
Chocolate	15c	Bittersweet	20c
Strawberry	15c	Butterscotch	15c
Pineapple	15c	Cherry Fruit	15c
Orange	15c	Strawberry Fresh Fruit	20c
Lemon	15c	Pineapple Fruit	15c
Cherry	15c	Toasted Butter Pecan	20c
Vanilla	15c	Almonds and Pecans, 10c Extra	
Concrete	30c	McCool's Ice Cream to Take Home—	
Marshmallow	15c	Pint Package	20c
SODAS			
Chocolate	15c	Lemon	15c
Strawberry	15c	Cherry	15c
Pineapple	15c	Vanilla	15c
Orange	15c	Root Beer	15c
DRINKS			
Coca-Cola	5c	Root Beer Frost	15c
Root Beer	5c	Grape Juice	15c
Phosphates (any flavor)	5c	Milk Shake	15c
Lemonade	15c	Malted Milk	20c
Orangeade	20c	Egg Malted	25c
SPECIALS			
Mud Sundaes	20c	Black and White	20c
Frappes (any flavor)	20c	Dolly Madison	25c
Parfaits (any flavor)	25c	Banana Split	25c
Tin Roof	20c	Jeff's	25c
	Mont's Special		30c
MISCELLANEOUS			
Bromo Seltzer	10c	Pineapple Juice	15c
Tomato Juice	15c	Orange Juice	15c
<p>Our Private Banquet Room May Be Reserved for Bridge Parties and Banquets. We Will Be Glad to Plan Them With You.</p> <p>McCOOL'S ICE CREAM TO TAKE HOME IN PINT PACKAGE 20c</p>			



Joe Williams' Cigar, Soda, and News Store, 1940s to 1970s



Joe stands by his Art Deco counter and root beer dispenser under the potato chip rack



What you saw when you walked in

But if any one place in Charlevoix qualified as Charlevoix's ice cream central, it was Joe William's Cigar Store, soda fountain, and newsstand along with magazines and comic books, located where the fudge-making half of Kilwins Chocolate & Ice Cream Shop is now. The store was open every day of the year. It provided free local phone calls to anybody, coffee, soups, and personal small cubbyholes for those who wished for their newspapers to be set aside for pick-up. It was also town gossip central. Like Bert Beaudoin, everybody in town knew Joe, and Joe knew them. Probably every household in Charlevoix at one time or another resounded with the words, "Let's go down to Joe's and get some ice cream!"



Looking back from behind the counter



The all-important outside wheeled newspaper rack. Thousands of papers were purchased on the honor system. Pay inside, and very few didn't.