

Mr. and Mrs. Mike John



The long history of community commitment of the John family in Maidstone is due to the church itself. When Mr. and Mrs. Mike John were travelling to Windsor by train after their arrival in Canada, Camily John noticed that our church looked very much like the one in their home village Batroumine, north of Beirut and south-east of Tripoli in present-day Lebanon. She decided on the spot that this was where they were to live and would later bring up their family. There were five sons and five daughters: George, Philip, Josephine, Joe, Peter, Rose, Helen, Mike, Delores and Mary.

They bought the general store from Tom McCloskey in 1915 and continued to serve the village and area until Mrs. John's final retirement in 1982. After Mike's death in 1952, Camily carried on with the help, especially on weekends, of children and later of grandchildren.

Many of us remember the after-Mass "ritual" on Sunday mornings: from church to "Ma" John's to pick up a Detroit Sunday paper, maybe some other goodies, but - almost always - a slab of orange cheddar from the wheel that was always on the counter. Lovely cheddar, kept at room temperature, with the butterfat just oozing on the cut edge! Real food with real taste.

Mrs. John was a consummate business-woman long before the advent of marketing studies, MBAs and sales gimmicks. Her approach was very straightforward: always present an alternative. So in the 1950s, we kids always had the option, on a purchase of an 8¢ Coke or a 33¢ pack of cigarettes, to receive the change in pennies or bubble gum at a penny each or blackballs at three for a penny. Of course, the "lovely bubble gum" was always "fresh from National Grocers!"

The John's store, and the people who served the community constantly for so many years, remain a part of our heritage which is remembered not only by the locals but also by many farmers who, over the years, lined up with their wagon-loads of grain for Flood's mill and stopped in to get a pop or a pack of cigarettes while waiting to deliver their grain.

The store is no more but the memories live on. As well, many of us enjoy in our homes artwork created by Judy Gould, daughter of Rose and Bill, who not only served the community behind the counter but also brightened our lives with her life and art.

The John Store about 1920

