

GROWTH ON MIDWAY ROAD

The area near the Town Hall on the Midway Road has had a long series of owners, including a few stores and a post office, and the old deeds are full of transfers and even a few foreclosures. Since the earliest days, this corner was a focal point of the community.

Several of the early landowners were Swedish immigrants Eric and Fredericka Engren, who came to Canosia in the late 1880's. He was Canosia's postmaster from 1895 to 1907 and, possibly, had a small store on the Midway Road. He had a sawmill near Pike Lake and also operated the large Engren and Shirley mill in Fredenberg. He must have had some spare time because he was also town supervisor through the 1890's, town treasurer until 1907 and justice of the peace.

Engren sold several parcels, including a heavily timbered tract in 1931 to the Early family, who built a large two-story log home. Winnifred Early McCord recalls her early years here, especially the night when the Engren home went up in flames.

In 1937 Tom and Clara Geason began operating the first Pike Lake Tavern. Clara, who later cooked at the former two-room Pike Lake School, also served light lunches in the tavern, and these were especially popular with golfers. An old hand-lettered sign, now hanging in the Town Hall, lists the menu: Hamburger 10¢, Coffee 5¢, Ham and Eggs 20¢, Cheese 10¢, Milk 5¢ and "sardine 10¢."

A fire destroyed much of the first tavern, but it was rebuilt and, in 1940, Walter and Annabelle Janov bought the Pike Lake Tavern and added several more rooms. By 1945, Annabelle was sole owner.

The Pike Lake Tavern was a favorite stopping place for many area residents, including those who didn't have automobiles and had to walk to Four Corners to catch a Greyhound to Duluth. Several generations of neighborhood children came in to buy penny candy and soft drinks. A jukebox and pool table livened things up and, when Annabelle served beer across that old bar, many stories made the rounds with the drinks. In those days we knew quite a bit more about our few neighbors, but Annabelle knew more than any of us because she had a scrapbook full of news clippings.

In 1993 a final sale of the tavern contents attracted both the curious and the collectors. Coca Cola signs and other memorabilia were the first to go. There's little left to salvage now except the kitchen cabinets and the firemen will use those

in the fire hall. And the two old outhouses? This critical decision has yet to be made.

The old tavern will be burned and when the site is cleared, there will finally be space for parking and snowplowing and expanded recycling and more parking.

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