

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian

Vol. XI

12-22-89

No. 51

NEWBERRY'S

The J.J. Newberry Store in Albion is one of our unspoiled treasures in Orleans County. You ask, "What do I mean?" Newberry's is a tradition in the traditional five and dime retail store. It is American in all its character based upon the American philosophy which had its germ in the minds of Jefferson and Franklin and founded on the science of economics. You can always find something there you want such as candy, thread, cosmetics, Xmas decorations, costume jewelry, toys, artificial flowers, spices, household gadgets, party goods, clothing, gift items and craft supplies all affordably priced. You say, "Well I know that!" Indeed many people do. But let's stop just for a moment and think about what we take for granted at the Albion store. Mrs. Oberlander, the manager who has been an employee of Newberry's stores since 1956 noted, "Many people have become used to malls." Certainly over the past twenty-five years this has come about. While malls have their advantages, it's still fun and even nostalgic to shop at Newberry's. It's a vestage of the past. It has its own charm, character and visage complete with familiar classic red sign and gold letters spelling out J.J. Newberry Co. The dark red doors and yes, when you get inside, that wonderful smell of oiled wood floors and pressed metal ceilings bring back memories of childhood. The first time I ever bought anything on my own with my own money was at Newberry's. Newberry's was every kid's favorite store when I first remember it forty years ago, and you know, it hasn't changed either. It still has that small town atmosphere with friendly cashiers who know you. There are so few things like this anymore, that always stay the same. What's more, it's a chain and obviously Newberry's recognizes its own quality and hasn't tampered with success.

The Albion Newberry store began its lease on East Bank Street April 1, 1938 and has remained in the same location ever since. During the early 1950's the store was practically doubled in size so that it occupies the entire first floor of the Masonic Building. In former years before Newberry's arrived, part of this space was once used as a movie house for silent films and was known as the Family Theatre. A raised floor in the rear where here is now a storeroom, was once the stage.

You ask, "Who was J.J. Newberry?" John Josiah Newberry was born in Sunbury, Pa. in 1877 where he was educated in the public schools. His first job was working as a messenger for the Pennsylvania Railroad in Wilkes-Barre, Pa. In 1894 he took employment in the department store of Fowler, Dick and Walker. In 1899 he joined S.H. Kress and Co. where after twelve years, he occupied a buyer's desk. However, he resigned due to illness and in December 1911 opened his first J.J. Newberry store in Stroudsburg, Pa. Here he served as buyer, manager, floor walker, salesclerk and stockman. His single-minded dedication to duty produced enough profits to open a second store after only a year and a half of operation. By 1918



he was operating seven stores in a chain. By the end of 1919 there were seventeen stores in the operation with annual sales of \$500,000. Because of this rapid growth his two brothers also had joined forces with him. The company was incorporated in 1923 and continued to open stores across the United States. J.J. Newberry, President of the Board of Directors, died in 1954. By 1961 it was reported that the company was operating 565 stores with annual sales of \$291,000,000.

In January 1972 it was announced that Meshulam Riklis, Chairman and President of Rapid-American Corporation, would seek to acquire the J.J. Newberry Company and merge it with McCrory Corporation which occurred later that year. This brought together 650 M-M-G stores with 439 Newberry units including a number of William Tally House Cafeterias. The new chain was known as G. McNew but in 1975 it was changed to McCrory Stores. Presently this corporation operates stores under a variety of names including McCrory, T.G. & Y., McLellan, H.L. Green, S.H. Kress, Silver, Elmore, Britts, Kittinger and J.J. Newberry. There are now approximately 1300 stores in thirty-nine states with employees exceeding 30,000 and an annual sales of around 1.5 billion.

The Albion store continues to thrive with its special "5 & 10" charm well in to its fifty-first year of existence here. However, McCrory Corporation has its beginning dating back to 1882 when John Graham McCrory opened his first "five and dime" in Scottsdale, Pa. Indeed, the "5 & 10" is an American tradition and a way of life. Just experience it at Newberry's!

Information in this article was obtained from Doris Douglas, Administrative Assistant, McCrory Stores York, Pennsylvania.