

Len Knotts Store

Here is a story I heard from Carl Dahlberg.

In 1990 I talked to Carl Dahlberg, he was 88 at the time but had an exceptional memory. If not, then he told this story with such imagination and smoothness that I believed every word of it. I have tried to check as many facts as possible and it seems plausible.

I wanted further information and to record the story in his words, so I took a tape recorder back in 1991 but didn't see him. The following year I did the same but found he had been killed in an auto accident.

It seems Len Knotts had a small store, actually a shed roofed building, near the railroad stop, where he sold chewing gum, tobacco, candy, notions and probably a pint or two. Carl said it was between the location of the current Effie Service Station and the old American Legion log building. Len also used to get a gallon of ice cream from Grand Rapids Creamery by train on Thursdays, this of course had to be sold that afternoon due to the lack of any refrigeration, other than ice from the icehouse.

I wanted more information but I envisioned it as perhaps 8' x 12' with a counter across the front & shelves in the back. In the summer of 1918 he sold it for \$1,000, it seems to me like that was more than it was worth for this era, but the city had moved to that location and a storeowner may have bought it just to kill competition. On the other hand, it might have had a good bit of business since according to Ben Rajala there were over 4,000 men working in the woods north of Effie between 1910 and 1920 and many of them came through Effie by train. Since the train stopped only briefly, people could jump off the train and make a quick purchase.

They took the \$1,000 and went to Deer River and bought a new 1918 Buick 4 door convertible, price was priced at about \$800. Len was 19 and Carl 17. They wanted to try it out and the salesman wanted a down payment first. Carl said Len gave the salesman \$700 and said he would take it for a ride. When they got to Grand Rapids they decided to keep on going to Effie. Carl made no further mention of the \$100 still owing. Perhaps the salesman made a profit on the \$700.

Carl said this was the first NEW car in town. He said there were 2 other cars in town at the time but they were second hand. What is now Highway 1 was still a wagon trail. There were 2 miles of good road running from the King Road to the Old Dump Road (Kinney Trail). Carl said that for 2 weeks Len drove back & forth on this 2 mile stretch giving people rides.

A year or so later, a logger broke his leg and Len offered to take him to the Grand Rapids hospital. Carl rode along. The main road to Grand Rapids at that time was what is now the Scenic Highway, at that time this was still a wagon road and soft spots were filled with corduroy, (6 to 12 inch popple laid crossways and replaced periodically or added to as they sank). These were sometimes lower on one side of the road than the other and were slippery when wet.

The logger was lying in the back seat. Those of you who remember the old 4-door convertibles know that, not having a roof, the body was somewhat flexible and doors opened easily. As they were crossing a stretch of corduroy the right rear wheel slid sideways and dropped over the edge of the road. The door popped open and the logger slid out head first breaking his arm. So he left Effie with a broken leg and arrived in Grand Rapids with both an arm & leg broken.

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