

Harold Wacker, Sr.

Age 88

Born on March 29, 1903. Lived in Wilton Junction, Iowa all my life. Married my school sweetheart, Etha, in 1920.

The Candy Kitchen ... I can remember this ... some Greek came and reopened the Candy Kitchen ... he was a relative of Gus ... and the "Greek", as we called him, worked at the Candy Kitchen ... and every night seemed like this was the only place downtown where we could buy ice cream ... Gus made his own.

Soon Gus owned the store and made all his own candies and ice cream.

I used to go up to the third story in the Ross building north of the Greek's and watch his hands work fast making candy.

It was a habit whenever I had pennies or a nickel in my pocket to go to Gussie's to spend it. I'd stand there and pick out the candy in front of the large candy case. Then it was put into a candy sack and weighed on a special candy scale. This candy scale is still used there today. Then the candy bars came in and each piece of candy was individually wrapped, usually costing a nickel.

My uncle, John Wacker, owned J.H. Wacker Company along with my father, Pete Wacker, who owned half interest in the business. Uncle John bought a new Velie car and brought dad home from work each night in his car. But every night they stopped at the Candy Kitchen to purchase Gussie's ice cream and take it home for supper. We had ice cream every night. I, being a kid, liked ice cream and I still remember that.

I remember when Gus built the old ice house just east of the Candy Kitchen. Gus cut his ice

out of the creek south of Wilton. He had helpers. Some were farmers with teams of horses and wagons. They would go down to Mud Creek and cut huge squares of ice, then loaded them on the wagons, and the teams of horses pulled them up to the old ice house. Then they used a rope pulley and as the horses walked away the ice squares were hoisted up into the ice house. There were big piles of sawdust which they used to pack around the hunks of ice to insulate it and it would keep until the next ice season. I liked to watch them make ice and it reminded me of the farmers putting up bales of hay in the summer. Each had their purpose.

When I began to work at J.H. Wacker Company it became my job to pick up our ice cream. Gus would have it all wrapped and ready for he knew what we wanted.

Gus always had a nice smile. I would go in there and meet other kids in the store. We talked and Gus must have been listening. Then Gus would begin talking to me, straightening me out on some of the funny ideas we had as young boys. Gus never seemed to have any trouble with the young guys. If one of us got a little rough or dirty with our language Gus straightened us out. If some of the kids got into trouble, Gus seemed to know it.

I remember when Gus went with the girl south of town ... Frankie Hudler ... he married her. Of course Gus always tended to his own business and got to be a financial power in town. He bought farm ground and invested in buildings in downtown Wilton Junction.

He never changed the place of the Candy Kitchen. It was always



the same and in the same location.

On Saturday nights a lot of people would go to the Candy Kitchen and get some ice cream before they went home to bed. Band concerts were held in the town square between Bacons Grocery Store, the Star Drug Store, The Union Bank and Lamp's Grocery and Dry Goods Store. The street was closed off for the band to play on Saturday nights throughout the summer.

I was just a kid when I began playing the alto horn in the band. Louie Hammerick played the upright bass horn and played it right on the beat. I learned to play the snare drum and the alto horn and coronet from a man from Muscatine, Mr. Matt Stark. Rolland Abbott was lead cornet and led the band. Paul Wacker was the drummer. Paul got married and moved out of town and then I was the bass drummer ... playing the beat and after beat.

The Wacker Wagon Shop turned into the Wacker Blacksmith Shop when large companies began to manufacture wagons in the cities. They shod horses at the Blacksmith Shop ... there were no cars at that time ... only horses. They had a new horse shoe called "never slip horse shoe". Round knobs were screwed into the horses hoofs. These shoes worked well. Uncle Charley would shoe the horses but finally his back gave out and he bought the farm