

Burket: 100 Yea

EDITOR'S NOTE — The following was written in conjunction with the Burket Centennial, which will be celebrated with a bevy of activities this Saturday and Sunday.

By Eula Romaine Smith

Although Kosciusko County hasn't had a new town in the last 100 years, it had a high score in 1882. Like bulbs in a string of Christmas lights, new towns sprang up along the Nickel Plate Railroad.

One of these was Burket which in its early days supported three sawmills, a hotel and a drugstore. At various times through the years there have been saloons, factories and several general stores.

William Edmund Davis who managed a store there for 56 years was a man of many talents. Soon after this Ohio school teacher was married, he learned the undertaking business. One of his friends, Abraham Sarber, who had relatives in both Ohio and Kosciusko County, Indiana, suggested that Davis move to the new town of Burket and practice his profession there. After a brief stay in Warsaw he moved on to Burket, but purchased the David Petry building and began operating the Davis Store which was an important part of the Burket scene for more than 75 years.

In the early 1900's Davis also owned a grain elevator, was postmaster for several years and was president of the Burket Elgin Creamery, a company which purchased cream from the surrounding farmers.

Active in community affairs, Davis was president of a local group organized in the 1880's to hunt horse thieves, and he taught a Sunday School class for 35 years.

Complete Country Store

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Burket's Mai

Another Burket store was the Mendel Brothers General Merchandise store built in the 1880's by William, Alva and Louis (Lew) Mendel. After a few years William and Alva sold their share to Lew, so it was his life's work that went up in smoke when the store burned to the ground in the 1920's. This store was one-half block west of the Davis Store.

Mrs. King (Mildred) Howard recalled her father's store as follows: "Farmers would bring in eggs and homemade butter to sell and exchange for groceries and dry goods. Coffee came in bean form, so we had a large coffee grinder and ground it fine or medium as the customer wished. In the grocery section of the store was a row of perhaps a dozen chairs where the customers could sit and visit and solve the pro-

began there, a large bowl of chili soup and a hamburger or wiener sandwich were served each day for 15 cents. Homemade pie was 10 cents extra.

In the summer of 1919 the store was sold to Charles McSherry and Ollie Zolman. They sold it to Clancey and Carol McSherry who then sold to Jacob Smith. The Smiths ran the store until their health failed and they had to close the store.

In the meantime Joe Burket was operating a store in Syracuse. Ernest Williamson, who was station master of the Nickel Plate, persuaded him to come back to Burket and open the store which he continued from 1932 until 1946.

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Complete Country Store

William Guido Davis, son of the original proprietor, described the Davis Store as one of the most complete country stores. "It had groceries, dry goods, women and men's clothing, shelf hardware and paints, shoes and harness, which was made by Mr. Bugby, also heating and cooking stoves and a complete drug department."

After W.E. Davis died in 1940, his son and daughter and their spouses, Mr. and Mrs. W.G. Davis and Mr. and Mrs. Homer McGinley, operated the store until it was sold in 1960.

The building is no longer standing, but the Davis Store was located west of the United Methodist Church building.

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Mrs. Clifford (Eva) Eherenman shared information about the Burket Store which used the slogan: Burket Against the World. In 1912 Joseph and Mae Burket bought a restaurant and grocery store across the street from the Mendel Store in downtown Burket. They had a prosperous business, adding an ice cream soda fountain which was a meeting place for the community. Especially on Saturday evenings the store would be full of nearby farmers and teenagers would gather around the piano for a song fest.

Good Prices

When the first school lunches

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Mrs. Merlyn (Beth) Holt has a notebook containing Carol McSherry's record of trade in 1919. The total eggs for the year was \$138.37; cream, \$161.32; and chickens, \$90.38. In 1920 a shave cost 15 cents and a Ford hose connection, 35 cents.

Before the Postmaster General in 1882 approved a post office at Burket, Absalom Kistler was required to send an application which told that Palestine and Oak Ridge were the nearest post of-



First store of Joe Burket and Tucker restaurant

rs Of Rich History



n Street in 1912

downtown for awhile. He left and never returned. Years later the low ground was drained and was dry enough to plow. The plow hit something and the skeleton of a man standing up was discovered. No doubt it was the man who didn't know about the quicksand.

Through the years in Burket history there was a time when:

- Dale Kelley was principal and started the first high school basketball team.
- Mr. and Mrs. John Buryanek ran a good meat market.
- Members of the Red Men Lodge wore costumes and had a sham battle as part of the Fourth of July celebration. One year it snowed on Fourth of July.
- Farmers rode to Cleveland on the train that hauled their livestock.
- Baseball fans could ride the train to Chicago and back, attend a big league game and eat a hot dog for less than \$2.
- Two brothers from Mentone had a narrow escape when their automobile was struck by the train.
- A cracked blackboard served as a reminder of the way the principal dealt with unruly teenage boys.
- Cucumbers were stored in brine at the pickle plant.
- Merchants sponsored free movies in downtown Burket each week.
- Dwight Bechtol was honored for his Red Cross blood donations.

ices on the established route, but the proposed office would be 20 rods north of the New York, Chicago and St. Louis Railway (Nickel Plate) depot in Burket.

Early postmasters were chosen because of their politics, so there were frequent changes in both postmasters and post office locations. After Absalom Kistler there was Owen S. Gaskill, Adam Horn, Lemuel E. Hatfield, George Graff and Aaron E. Mayer. During the early 20th century the following served: James W. Howard, William E. Davis, Harry Clifford Hatfield, Huldah O. Hatfield, Clarence "Ed" Driesbach and Earl Coplen.

Eva Eherenman who started during World War II was postmistress for 25 years. She was followed by Joan Shoemaker and Jean Hatfield.

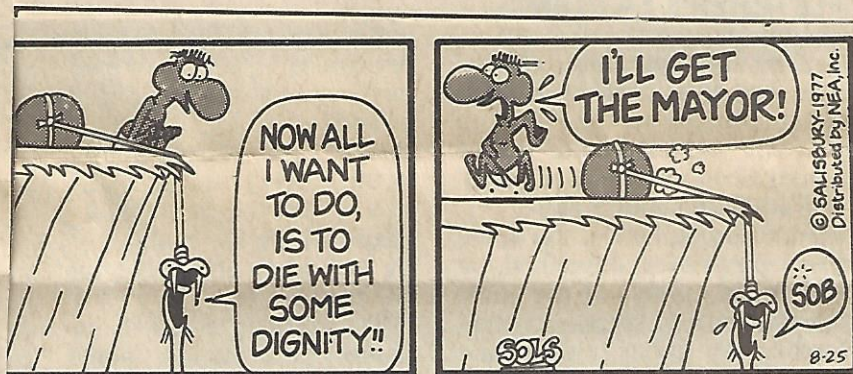
Ku Klux Klan Meets

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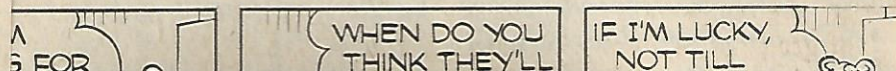
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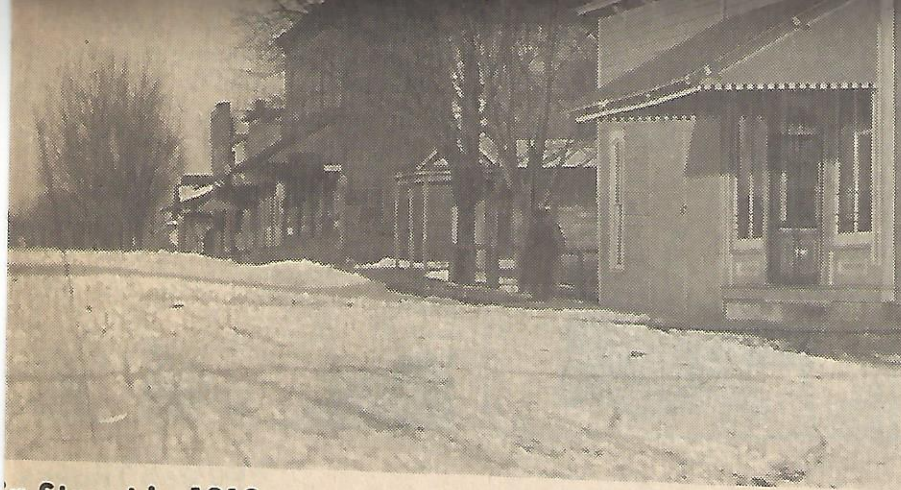
Years ago Will Linn lived north of Burket on the east side of the road. The house stood on a small hill, but south of the hill was sand, muck and quicksand.

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