

PENNY CANDY AND WOODEN FLOORS

Up and down the Allegheny River were the little so-called river towns. I grew up in Verona in the 40's and 50's and this community reflected the soul and makeup of all these local river towns. The communities included Oakmont, Springdale, Cheswick, Harmarville, Aspinwall, Blawnox, Sharpsburg, Etna and Millvale.

In Verona we had two major food stores, A&P and Krogers, four drug stores, two large fruit markets, two furniture stores, a Murphy's 5 & 10, two movie theaters, seven churches, a high school, a parochial school, and a large fire department that featured a fireman's marching band. Alas these places are long gone, and the ones I miss the most are the ones not previously mentioned; the mom and pop stores. In Verona we had nine of these slices of Americana. They were located throughout Verona

Most of my business was directed to the Zalvesky's store at the corner of Center and Third Street. Living on Second Street made it the most convenient place to small shop penny candy, cigarettes, lunch meat, bread and milk. This was standard fair for all of these mom and pop stores. You could also bring in used soda pop bottles for a 2-cent refund for a small bottles and 5 cents for a quart bottle, always used to buy penny candy.

The names of the other stores: Helen's at Sixth and North Avenue; Bonitta's at Second and Center Avenue; Lou Sher's at First and Union Street; Manni's at First and Parker Street; Stein's First and Center Avenue; Roth's between Herron and Brunot on South Avenue; Caroline's Second and Parker Street; and Frank's on Penn Street in the Sylvan section of Verona. These stores were neat, clean and the floors wooden. One thing that stands out about these floors was how they were cleaned. A sawdust mixture with some sort of oil base was on the floor. This kept the dust in control and by walking of this mixture cleaned and kept the wooden floors from drying out. Periodically the floors were swept clean and a new batch was put down.

Now we can say that these Verona institutions have also been swept away.

Frank W. Santucci, Summer 2014