

UNWELCOMED FREE RIDE

This is a non-fiction little story that was related to me by my father, Willie Santucci. This incident happened in the early 1920's. The date and the time was not noted.

In the 1920's around Verona, the roads were not all finished with brick and cement. The roads from Frankstown Road to Verona were still dirt roads with ruts. Not many cars were out and about. Some wagons pulled by horses were on these roads. On a dry day these roads were fine, but when it rained there was an adventure in the making.

My dad was working at a coal mine at the corner of Frankstown Road and Saltsburg Road located at that time in upper Verona, which is now Penn Hills. His home was on South Verona Hill where he was a boarder at the Rinaldi house. He would walk to and from work, about four and one-half miles. Going to work was all up hill, but coming home it was the complete opposite. At this mine he did not do the digging, he would lead the mules that pulled the loaded cars out of the mine opening. This mine, Peterman's, supplied coal for the Pittsburgh Hospital in East Liberty at the corner of Washington Boulevard and Frankstown Road.

One day as he was walking home past a local farm, the farmer's dog came out and was barking at him. Simultaneously a woman who was driving an open-sided car was also coming down the road. The dog started to leap up on this woman. By my dad's description, she was an elegant woman of culture, besides being rich enough to own a car at that time. She was not too pleased with the dog's behavior, leaping up on the open side of the car and on her clothes. She did not say much, but pulled out a small pistol and shot the dog dead. My dad said he did not move. The farmer came out screaming at the woman. My dad said he remained very quiet and still. The farmer took the number of the automobile and wanted the woman's name. My dad continued to remain quiet and while the two were arguing, he said he started to walk slowly away. The woman told him to wait and wanted his name. She said he was witness to this incident and she would give his name to the police if a court suit was in the works. He wanted no more part of this and started to leave. At this juncture, the woman told my dad to get in the car and she would take him home. He said she got a little angry, he feared that she would pull the gun again, so into the car he went. He tried to explain to her that his mine clothes were too dirty. She said not to worry, somebody else cleans her car. She drove him directly to the Rinaldi house and took the address. She said if the incident goes to court, he would be called as a witness for her. He tried to explain that he spoke very little English. No problem, she said, if it went to litigation, he would be told just what to say.

Basically the incident ends on that note, but that free ride caused many anxious moments. He never saw her again.

Frank W. Santucci, August 2014