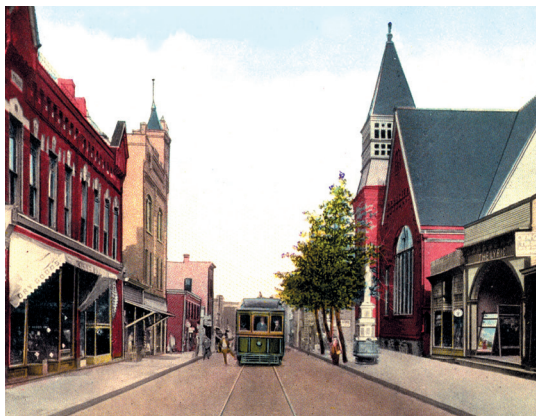


SPRING 2018



We preserve our local history, promote the history of the Norwin Community and embrace the opportunity to educate the Community about the people, places and events that comprise the history of Irwin, North Irwin, and North Huntingdon Township.

MEMORIES OF MURPHY'S

by Bob Cupp

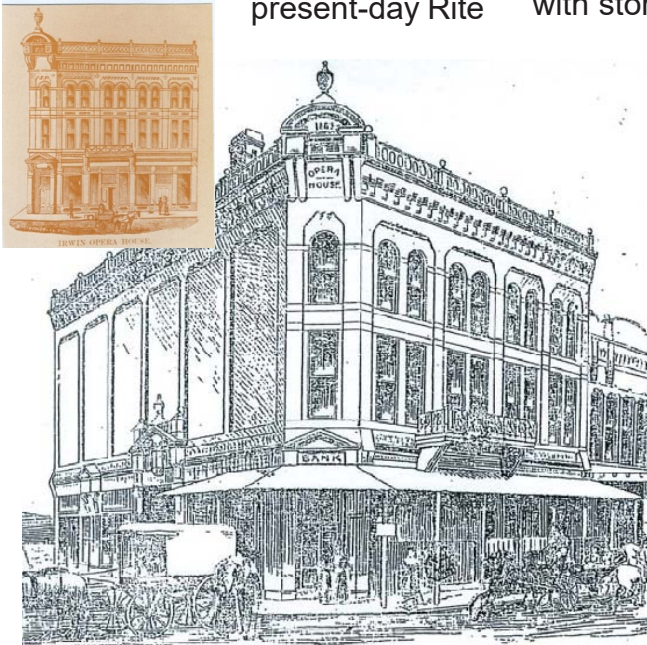
Did You Know?

G. C. Murphy Co. opened its first Irwin store in 1913. It was located across Main Street from the present-day Rite

and Fourth Streets. The opera house had occupied the second and third floors of the building, with stores on the first floor. The third floor was known as "peanut heaven." Road shows presented old-time melodramas and an occasional musical with a "can-can" chorus, and frequently packed the house.

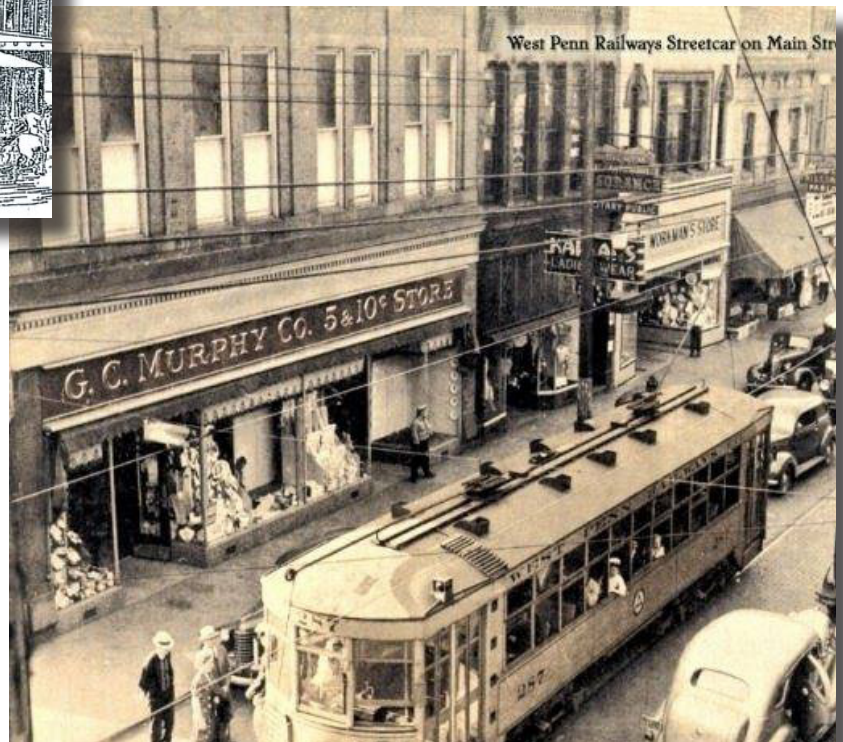
Murphy's built a new store at that location with a total retail area of 6,424 square feet on two floors. The plan was to provide a larger, more efficient store for their Irwin customers. A 1939 Murphy's ad stated, "You shop in ease and comfort at Murphy's...salespersons are courteous and helpful, and the atmosphere throughout the store is comprised of friendliness and service." By then, the

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Aid. By 1964, there were 510 Murphy stores with 118 of them in Pennsylvania. In addition to the Irwin store, there were local G. C. Murphy stores in Greensburg, Jeannette, Latrobe, Ligonier, West Newton and Monroeville.

In 1938, Murphy's took over the old landmark Irwin Opera House at the northwest corner of Main



MEMORIES OF MURPHY'S (continued)



Irwin's G. C. Murphy Co. 5 & 10 Cent Store operated at this Main Street location from 1938 until 1982. In 1953, the store was expanded and remodeled, absorbing the space previously occupied by the ladies wear shop next door. Main Street was a busy place in those days with a wide variety of retail stores and a steady supply of shoppers.

store had 37 departments, offering over 20,000 items, most of which were of the five and ten cent variety, but some departments featured items for a dollar or more.

The store was described in a November, 1953 edition of the Irwin Standard. "The newly remodeled G. C. Murphy Co. store, which marked the opening of its new addition last weekend with a three-day sale, is prepared to give the shopping public of Irwin and vicinity more efficient service as the holiday



In 1964, Murphy's participated in Irwin's Centennial Celebration. Employees dressed in period costumes, many of which were made by Murphy employee, Catherine Trice (wearing the Indian costume). Do you recognize any of these ladies? (Photo Courtesy of Eileen McCann)

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MEMORIES OF MURPHY'S (continued)

season approaches. The store interior has been revamped and many space-saver counters and displays have been installed. Other innovations include im-



The "Murphy Girls," wearing their red and white winter uniforms, posed in front of the original Irwin Murphy's location on Main Street. From Left to Right: Standing - Liz Blumentritt and Marie Myers. Kneeling - Catherine Steel, Gloria Pezze and Eileen McCann. (Photo Courtesy of Eileen McCann)

proved ventilation, all new direct fluorescent lighting and the addition of a third entrance."

G. C. Murphy Co. became an important part of the Irwin community. In 1964, when Irwin celebrated its 100th anniversary, Murphy management made the following statement: "Yes, Murphy's employees understand the pride and accomplishments with which the citizens of Irwin celebrate their 100th anniversary. The philosophy of the Murphy Company includes COMMUNITY SERVICE....springing from an overwhelming desire to make

each store a more comfortable, convenient and profitable place for you to shop. We consider it our duty to supply our patrons with the kind of merchandise they want, when they want it and at the lowest possible prices consistent with quality."

Eileen McCann spent her entire career as an Irwin Murphy's employee. She began working at the G. C. Murphy Co. store in 1937 after graduating from Norwin Union High School. "I was sent to get a job at Bell Telephone, but I ended up at Murphy's," she recalled.

"You became part of a family when you went to work at the Irwin Murphy's.

Any child who grew up in Irwin put in some time at the store."

McCann vividly remembered the beginning of her Murphy's employment. "My first job was in the warehouse; it was in an old building located behind the store; the manager was Mr. Smith. Catherine Futchter worked in the office and Miss Clugsten was the 'drug girl'. When the store moved across the street where the Rite Aid is now, the warehouse was moved to the second



Eileen McCann

**We've
MOVED TO
219 MAIN STREET
ACROSS FROM
THE LAMP THEATRE!**



For many years, the Norwin Historical Society has made its home below the clock tower on the corner of 3rd and Main Streets in downtown Irwin.

We've welcomed your visits and enjoyed your reminiscences of times past.

Once we're "open for business" in late April, please stop by and say "hello", bring historic items for us to preserve, and join with us as a member, so that we can stay in touch through our special events and quarterly newsletters!

*AND be sure to join us in December for our annual
TOUR OF HOMES!*

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MEMORIES OF MURPHY'S (continued)

floor of the new building.” The warehouse area was later converted to additional retail space. McCann had an endless supply of Murphy's memories. She recalled that, “The parakeets would get loose in the basement and we'd have to catch them. I had to have a guy arrested once; he was hiding among the ladies dresses.”

“Murphy's was committed to the community. We'd get in 100 dozen socks and sell them for \$1.00 each. All the proceeds were donated to the VA Hospital.”

buy “almost anything” at Murphy's. “We used to take the children there and buy little toys. You could get a real nice bottle of perfume for a dollar. ‘Evening in Paris’ was my favorite,” she recalled.

Lois Woleslagle recalled that, “Murphy's was a great place to shop. Everything was made in America. People were so willing to provide personal service and help you find what you wanted.”

Doris Blake worked at Murphy's from 1948 until her retirement in May, 1982, after the new Ir-

win Murphy's Mart opened on Route 30 and just four months before the downtown store closed.

Theresa Waszczak,

remembered that her good friend, Eileen McCann, had worked at Murphy's so long that she was affectionately known as “Mrs. Murphy.” “She was very kind to everyone and very honest. She patrolled the store like a policeman.”

McCann's favorite job was trimming the windows. “We decorated

for Thanksgiving, Christmas and all the holidays. During the war, I told the mothers whose boys were in the service, to bring in their pictures. I put the pictures in a window display. There were a total of 43 pictures, including twins Ronald and Reynold Peduzzi.” The Peduzzi brothers eventually became the Principals of Norwin and Penn Trafford High Schools.

In 1972, McCann received the G. C. Murphy Co.'s 35-year Service Award. She summarized her 45-year G. C. Murphy experience. “It was a good company to work for; they treated you like a human being. My days at Murphy's were the happiest days of my life. If they were to come back into the area and would be willing to hire me, I'd be happy to go back to work for them.”

Many thanks to Eileen McCann and the other Murphy's customers and employees for sharing their memories with me in 2005. For more information about Murphy's, visit the G. C. Murphy Co. Foundation web site at www.murphymemories.com.



“We were robbed twice. There were also two fires while I worked there...one was on the roof. I saw the smoke while walking to catch my bus and returned to put the fire out with a 10 gallon bucket of water. Another fire started when a man left a lit cigarette in the rugs. Smoking was allowed in those days.”

Manor resident, Doris McCracken, remembered being able to



The Rite Aid Pharmacy is located in the building previously occupied by Murphy's at the northwest corner of Fourth and Main Streets.