



## Amsterdam Broom Company

The Amsterdam Broom Company was established on lower Brookside Ave. by Julius Wasserman in 1884, with his son, David, joining as a partner in 1889. Destroyed by fire in 1909, the original mill was replaced by a larger structure, increasing annual production capacity of four million brooms. The largest independent broom concern in the world, the “ABC” remained in the Wasserman family until its 1957 sale to Edy Brush Co. of New York City. The last broom factory in the city, production of brooms at the plant ceased in 1966; Edy Brush continued the manufacture of paint brushes, rollers and trays until its closure in the early 1980’s. The building was subsequently purchased by a developer and book dealer who used it mainly for storage, and was destroyed in 2010 by a fire started by vandals.

*Jackie Murphy*



## **Bigelow Weavers**

In 1896 28 Brookside Avenue is listed as the residence of Mrs. Harriette Sacia, the daughter of John Sanford. Her husband, Henry Sacia, had been a prominent lawyer in the city and Montgomery County District Attorney. Harriette lived there until her death in 1920.

In 1922 a mill-hand by the name of Robert S. Spratt was at the address, and in 1925 it was a Mrs. Josephine Smith. The 1932 city directory shows a day nursery being operated at 28 Brookside Avenue by the Sisters of the Resurrection.

In 1934 the building became the Bigelow Weavers Association. The name derives from the Bigelow-Sanford Mills, weavers of carpets. The Association provided a place where the men of the mills could go to socialize and unwind after a hard days work.

In the 1940s Bigelow Weavers sponsored many field days at Sanford Field, now Veteran's Field on Locust Avenue. There were Drum and Bugle Corps competitions with teams from Johnstown, Fort Edward, Troy, Cohoes, and of course Amsterdam. There were also refreshments, dancing, racing, and games for the children. Many athletic teams were sponsored by Bigelow Weavers. The Association was incorporated in 1945.

Bigelow Weavers, "The Club", supports many local charities and continues to be popular gathering place. It currently has 260 members and in 2019 will celebrate its 85th birthday!

***Ray Fyfe***

## **Sisters of the Resurrection Children's Home**

On September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1926, the Amsterdam Recorder announced the opening of a nursery for pre-school children at 7 Park Street. It was operated by the Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection, an order whose mission was to assist families in need. As Amsterdam was a manufacturing city where many women found it necessary to work, the order saw an opportunity here to offer care and guidance to their children which they may not otherwise receive. The Park Street location was in a working neighborhood adjacent to the Sanford mills, making it an ideal location. Thirty children were registered on the first day. The Ladies Aid Auxiliary was formed to help support the institution financially, and the Pastors of the city's Polish congregations were enthusiastic and encouraging.

In 1927, the Park Street nursery closed and the Sisters opened a Children's Home on Brookside Avenue in a building owned by Sanford Mills. Located directly behind the "Clock Building", the former home of William B. Charles (and current location of the Bigelow Weavers Association) was renovated for the Sisters use by volunteers who also put in a chapel. The building itself remained Sanford property. The evolution of what had started as a day nursery into a children's home was a response to an increasing need in the community; a call from the Welfare Department asking if two orphaned girls from another institution could be cared for, a similar case following the abandonment of three small children, a three week old sickly baby whom its mother

did not want; and many more instances during the days of the Depression when non-working parents were unable to care for their children.

The ongoing increase in the need for their services soon overtaxed the Brookside Avenue facility and in 1932 the Home relocated to the former Gardiner Blood home at 118 Market Street on the southwest corner of Market and Prospect. Father Gorski, Pastor of St. Stanislaus Parish, assisted the children's home in financing the move, arranging for the great Polish pianist, Ignace Paderewski, to come to Amsterdam to appear. Paderewski's benefit performance raised nearly \$2000 and enabled the Sisters to pay off their bank debt.

The new Sisters of the Resurrection Children's Home was far more spacious than either of their previous locations. At times there were as many as 12 to 16 infants no more than nine days old being cared for at the home. And not only did the home care for children, but from time to time, it also helped others in need; a student from Poland who was unable to return to his home because of the world situation spent seven years under the care of the Sisters who made it possible for him to complete his medical studies, another individual was helped after he had escaped from a concentration camp in Spain.

The Children's Home was closed by the dioceses in 1960 and the Sister's ministry relocated to Massachusetts. The building was demolished in 1966 for the Route 30 South arterial. A small office building was erected on the remaining unused parcel of land.

***Jackie Murphy***





## **First Church of the Evangelical Association**

According to the deed dated September 16, 1884 John M. Schlagenhauf, John Markham, Jr., Henry Meringer, and John Bremer, as Trustees of the First Church of the Evangelical Association of North America at Amsterdam purchased lots 187 and 188 from the heirs of Thomas Bunn for the price of \$1100.

A lovely brick church was erected by the 1890's by a vibrant German community of the neighborhood. The 1929 Directory refers to it as First Church of the Evangelical Association at 14-16 Elizabeth Street and Reverend H. Rex, pastor. The building survived but the congregation did not. In 1965 the abandoned Church was taken over by the Adirondack Players theatre group who used it for several years.

*Jackie Murphy*



## **John F. Harvey**

Thomas and Emily Powell Harvey's second son, John Fraser, was born February 28, 1859. At the time of his birth, John's father and grandfather were machinists manufacturing primarily agricultural implements; they had sent their first eight-horse threshing machine to California in 1849. In 1864 Thomas Harvey formed a co-partnership with John McDonald and Perry Cline for the manufacture of knitwear. John Harvey grew up "comfortably". He attended the public school and Amsterdam Academy. As a young man he worked for druggist N. C. Becker and later entered into the East Main Street drug firm of Harvey & Buchanan. The early apothecary formulated medicinal potions and mixed paint. When John realized his calling and talent in putting brush to canvas he became associated with John A. McNaughton, a sign painter and interior decorator. In a newspaper classified advertisement of the time it read: "McNaughton & Harvey are painting some large signs for Amsterdam business houses on the fence of Riverside Park. Yesterday the artists decorated two big signboards at Fonda for Wilkie and Platt". The two were neighbors for many years at 183 and 185 Market Street. Upon Mr. McNaughton's retirement, John's sons from his second marriage joined the firm which then became John F. Harvey & Sons.

John wed Lizzie Smith, formerly of Watertown, and they had five children. But sadness entered their lives - one child died in infancy,

another at age six, and Lizzie at age 36 in 1897. Later that same year

John married Alida Kline and five children blessed their union.

Mr. Harvey was an artist of exceptional ability and his paintings covered a broad range including portraits, historic scenes, and nature studies.

His water colors are prolific in all sizes from greeting cards to an occasional mural. Harvey often used photographs or postcards to provide the subjects for his paintings.

Harvey promoted his paintings with an annual exhibit. An undated clipping from a newspaper aptly describes one such event: “John F. Harvey announces his annual exhibition of water colors in this vicinity (at William H. Kaufman’s bakery on Market Street). Those who already inspected the pictures pronounce the exhibit to be the best Mr Harvey has yet given the lovers of water colors in the vicinity. He has chosen for his subject, for the greater part, scenes of local interest. Prominent among them is a sketch of Adriutha Falls, situated at the foot of Swart Hill, just east of the city. . . Another is an attic window in the Old Fort at Akin, and the light streaming through the window with great effect. Another picture of historic interest is a basement window in Guy Park Mansion. There are many elegant floral sketches in addition to other well known scenes.” Another annual exhibition was held at the Morrison’s piano shop.

One of Mr. Harvey’s heartfelt efforts was the painting of the first enlisted Amsterdam soldier to be killed in World War I. His portrait of Matthew Coessens was donated to the American Legion Post but presently its whereabouts is unknown. In an effort to generate interest



and possibly find this missing work, Volkert Veeder put together an exhibit of six of Harvey's works which showed at the Perthshire and Amsterdam City Hall in November 2000.

John Harvey's paintings are gaining popularity. The Elwood Museum has a permanent exhibit of his work, and The Perella Gallery at the Fulton-Montgomery Community College has recently received some as a gift.

*Jackie Murphy*



## **Mac's Confectionary**

“Sunday, Monday, Happy Days!

“Tuesday, Wednesday, Happy Days!”

If you remember the television show Happy Days from the 1970s and 1980s, you remember the quintessential vision of the 1950s in America.

In that TV comedy, the main characters – Richie, Potsie, Ralph, and Fonzie – lived out most of their teenage dramas in a place called “Arnold’s.” Fortunately, growing up in Amsterdam during the 1960s and 1970s, we also had a few of those places for the teens in our city. Our place was Mac’s Confectionary on the corner of Glen and Romeyn Avenues.

The proprietor of our special place was named Alfred Raiano, but most people knew as “Mac,” and he was destined to oversee this particular hangout. Though Mac often admitted that he didn’t have much of a formal education, he had a ton of work experience in that type of environment. As a young man, according to Bob Cudmore, Mac worked for well over a decade at Community Pharmacy on East Main Street. His work there, however, was interrupted by a four-year tour of service in the Army during World War II. After the War, he came home and worked with Tom Ripepi at “Mac and Tom’s” at 121 Market Street before he finally started his own place in late 1963.

Though we lived about four blocks south of Mac’s, my family developed a strong connection when my older sister, Kathy, began working there as a soda jerk. She stood behind that eight-seat fountain

and prepared the vanilla Cokes, the cherry phosphates, the chocolate milkshakes, and the hot-fudge sundaes that fueled our growing frames. Then, when Kathy left for college, my younger sister, Marie, took over.

They both worked alongside Mac, his wife, Virginia, their daughter, Nancy, and Jim Lazarou to provide a second home for us and for all of our friends on Market Hill,

The place was essentially divided into an adult section on the right and the teenage section on the left. As we entered on the right, we traipsed through the grocery portion of the store and turned left at the cash register to enter our special realm. If my memory serves me correctly, Mac had six booths crammed into that side of the building in addition to the soda fountain, and if we wanted anything to eat or drink, we had to pay for it up front and carry it ourselves to the booth. There, we squeezed in with our contemporaries from both Bishop Scully High School and Amsterdam High School, and we talked about everything: our classes, our sports, our driving lessons, our future plans, and our upcoming social events, one of which I was totally unprepared for.

One Friday night, as I sipped my cherry Coke and ate my pretzel rods, I was stunned and practically speechless when a beautiful girl my age from Amsterdam High School pulled me aside and shyly said she had to ask me something. She gently escorted me away from the booths toward the circular rack of paperback books, and said the following: “Jim, would you take me to our sorority’s Christmas semiformal?”

As a rather reserved and immature jock, I was flabbergasted that she even considered me for this serious request, so flabbergasted, in fact,

that I mumbled and stumbled for a few seconds before I uttered, “I’ll have to ask my dad to see if it’s okay.” Fortunately, she took that as a “Yes,” and Dad later gave me the green light to go and the cash I needed to do so.

Looking back, I’m pretty sure that most of the Baby Boomers who frequented that electric den of youthful conversation, enthusiasm, laughter, tears, and heartache have a similar story or two of teenage growth and experience. While I don’t think I ever had an extended conversation with Mac during all the time I spent in his place, I can definitely say today that I am so grateful that he allowed us to grow up in such a fantastic and fun-filled environment.

*Jim LaBate*



## Sikorski's Service Station

On 4/30/36 the point of land between Locust and Brookside Avenues was purchased by Joseph J. Goller. Later that year saw it rented to Walter F. Halszen and Kenneth E. Fisher and occupied by a Tydol Service Station. Ken Fisher left the business to enlist in the Army in July of 1936 and was replaced by George Feltis, who also owned a gas station at 65 Bridge Street. Walter and George ran the station on the point until 1942 when George, a member of the Amsterdam Aviation Club, was ordered to active duty as a pilot with the aviation patrol. Discharged from the Army in December of 1944, Corporal Kenneth Fisher returned to the station to become proprietor for the next five years.

In 1949 the Tydol station passed to a new owner, Casmier Sikorski, and in 1959 found itself with a new name - Flying A Service. Francis Sikorski took over his father's business in 1983. In 2019 the station will be celebrating its 70th anniversary under the same family name.

*Ray Fyfe*

