

## VIOLA RYAN STANTON

### WHATEVER HAPPENED TO GRANDMA'S NEW SHAWL?

This happened when Ethel O'Hern and I were about seven or eight years old.

Grandpa Ryan (John R. Ryan) raised a large flock of sheep and every spring the sheep were sheared and the wool tied and sold to Faribault Woolen Mills. Grandma always got a year's supply of yarn for knitting socks, mittens, wristlets, etc. This particular year she bought a new black wool shawl. Most older women wore shawls, especially in the winter.

My story took place one afternoon around Halloween time. Grandma and Aunt Mayme had a bonfire – burning rubbish and leaves. I was staying overnight with Ethel. After Grandma and Mayme left to do chores Ethel and I decided to play witches. Ethel went to Grandma's bedroom and got both the new and the old black shawls. Ethel took the new shawl and I had the old one. We danced and sang around the fire, adding more leaves so the fire would burn higher. As we danced and made "witch noises" we got closer and closer to the flames. Oh what fun! But as Ethel whirled the end of the shawl swung over the fire and started to burn! Panic set in - "Grandma will kill us." About a third of the shawl was burned and we were scared stiff. Then to my surprise Ethel picked up the shawl and threw it into the fire saying, "Grandma can't wear half a shawl."

We watched until the last thread was burned, swore each other to secrecy and returned the old shawl to Grandma's bedroom. We ate little supper that night and hurried to bed early. Boy, were we feeling guilty!

About a month later Grandma was at our home and mentioned that she didn't know where her new shawl went. Did she leave it at our house? After she went home I waited until Dad was alone and told him that I knew what happened to the shawl, but he was to keep our secret. I told him the story. He grinned and promised not to tell. I told Ethel that I had told him.

One afternoon Grandma and Ethel were at our house and Mom was making a dress for Ethel. Mom was looking for her scissors and made the remark about how things get lost. At that point Grandma mentioned that she had never found her new shawl. Ethel looked at me and both of us looked at Dad, who had a smile and a twinkle in his eyes. We knew our secret was still safe. Grandma never knew what happened to her shawl.

## ST. PATRICK'S STORE

St. Patrick's store played a big part in the life of the parish. It was the social gathering place, where after Mass the good and bad news was exchanged.

The store as I remember it was owned by Mrs. Cavanaugh, who was a widow with three daughters Grace, Marie and Katherine. People gathered at the store after Mass to buy their groceries, talk and visit. The groceries were displayed along the south wall. On the outside of the counter were hundred pound sacks of potatoes, onions and other produce. In the corner was the glass candy case with boxes of candy bars. Behind the counter gum, cigars, cigarettes and beer were sold. Mrs. Cavanaugh's brother-in-law, Andy took care of that side on Sundays. Standing at the end of the counter was the Cookie Case with a double row of glass front cases. Cookies and crackers were shipped in large boxes and then filled into the cookie rack. Near the front window at the end of the bar was a five-cent slot machine. The jackpot was around \$5 (if you were lucky). In the center of the store was a large pot-bellied stove. Around it several chairs were placed for the comfort of the visitors.

Behind the main part of the store were the living quarters and upstairs was the Dance Hall. Wooden stairs on the outside of the building led up to the Hall, which had many uses. In the winter card parties were held, followed by a dance. Tony Doherty and Johnnie Birch played their fiddles and Mom, Nan Ryan or Esther Nash played the piano. My Dad usually called the square dances. All ages from 3 years to 93 years joined in the dance. Tom Svobodny would grab a lady and speed around the floor (whether the lady wanted to dance or not! The stage at the west end of the hall was the scene of many parish plays, St. Patrick Day parties and medicine shows. At St. Patrick Day parties you may see the three generations of Flynns (Corny, Mike and Rollie) dance the Irish jig. About midnight the ladies would serve a lunch of sandwiches, cake and coffee. Oh, what good simple fun!

I must tell of a personal experience. One Sunday after Mass our family was at the store. I was about six years of age. My Grandpa Cummings had taught me to dance the Irish jig and to sing "Peggy O'Neil." The Cavanaugh girls took me back to their living room and put on the phonograph record "Turkey in the Straw." I danced and sang for the girls. I loved it all and especially the candy, pop and Aunt Sally cookies I enjoyed. When we went back into the store everyone was gone. Mrs. Cavanaugh called Mom and asked, "Did you forget something?" Mom looked over her groceries and said, "No, I have everything." Then Mrs. Cavanaugh said, "I have a little girl here." Mom was so embarrassed. Needless to say my entertainment career was put on hold.

About 1930 Pete and Emily Cilhar bought the store and I helped Emily in the summer and sometimes at election or township meeting times.

November 28, 1933 Ray Stanton and I were married in St. Patrick Church and had our wedding dance in St. Patrick's Hall. Now 58 years later there are no dances held there and the store is much changed. A dining room has been added. We go back once or twice a year, usually for the annual Chicken Dinner. The community has changed and we know very few people there – but the Store still stands!