

Remember When, in the 1950's

Do you remember the Crystal Bottling Company? Located at 115 South Main in Fairmont, it was established in 1894 as the Fairmont Bottling Works by C. H. Meyer. The first plant employed three full time employees. The orders were distributed by train, team and wagon, and eventually delivery was replaced by the automobile.

According to the July 28, 1956, *Sentinel*, L. C. Meyer was quoted as saying, "In 1917, the bottling of strawberry, lemon, cream and sarsaparilla 'soda pop' was largely a hand operation." Meyer further said, "We had a good run when we bottled 150 cases a day." At full capacity in 1956 the article stated that they could bottle in excess of 2,000 cases a day.

In addition to its own Crystal brand products, Crystal Bottling Company carried name brand products, the first being Orange Crush which became popular in the late 1920's. It received a contract with Dr. Pepper in 1939, Squirt in 1942, Nesbitt's Orange Drink in 1943, and Nu-Grape in 1955. In addition, Crystal Bottling's own carbonated beverages included strawberry, grape, root beer, and several other flavors.

Nelson's Ice Cream of Fairmont was at one time one of Minnesota's largest manufacturers of ice cream. According to an article in the June 9, 1956, edition of the *Sentinel*, the Nelson Ice Cream Company, located at 423 North North Ave., was established in 1923 by Einer Nelson. He had been associated with the creamery business in Mankato and came to Fairmont to manage the Fairmont branch of the Model Creamery. Shortly thereafter, he purchased the Mankato firm's Fairmont interests and established his own business. It originally employed four persons, and by 1955 had seventy-six employees. The company also processed and bottled milk as well as churning butter.

Nelson cited major changes in the ice cream business over the past 36 years up to 1956, emphasizing two in the article. He stated that first, and perhaps most importantly, was the pattern of consumption and demand. Early years of ice cream sales varied directly with the weather, good sales during hot weather and poor sales during cold weather. He went on to say that during the current period of time in the 1950's, the only time sales dropped was when their trucks couldn't get out on the winter roads. The second factor cited by Nelson was that in the past people considered ice cream as a luxury product. By 1956, that attitude had changed in that consumers were now purchasing ice cream in half gallons compared to the practice of purchasing pints and quarts of just a few years prior to 1956.

The Sweet Shop, located at 110 North North Avenue in Fairmont, is likely remembered by many. The Sweet Shop was founded in about 1915 when the Howard Waite bakery was purchased on North North Avenue. That purchase eventually developed into The Sweet Shop and its reputation for excellent food and service in the 1950's and beyond.

According to a June 6, 1956, article in the *Sentinel*, Gus Boosalis returned to Fairmont in February of 1956 and began to once again create his well known real home-made candy. Boosalis originally came to America as a youthful immigrant from Greece and learned the art of candy making in Mankato. He moved to Fairmont in 1911 and established his own candy kitchen. This eventually led to the organization known as The Sweet Shop, Inc.

The Sweet Shop, known for its excellent food, could accommodate more than one hundred people. Lunch and dinner hours would find every available seat filled. Also available was an enclosed dining room suitable for business groups or other group gatherings. The Sweet Shop was eventually lost to this area as a result of a fire.

The 1950's brings back a bit of nostalgia for those of us that remember and lived the time. It was a good period in the history of Fairmont and our country, a period of expansion, change, and calm preceding the turbulence of the '60's and '70's. Perhaps it might best be remembered as the era of "Father Knows Best."