

Milford Moments in Time

By Joyce M. Clark

The Barbara Tressler Story

With summer now in full swing, a lot of Milford residents are traveling with their families across America on one-week or two-week vacations. Many of these families turn to travel agents or internet websites to help map their routes.

But back in 1830, two of the Ruggle brothers (Elizur and Stanley) made their trip from Colesville, NY. to Chicago, Il., and finally Milford, MI. without the use of these highfalutin resources. According to mapquest.com, this trip (994 miles) should take approximately 16 hours by car, but for Elizur and Stanley it took over a year to travel this path. They walked it.

Elizur and Stanley set out to scout for new family farmland but when they arrived in Chicago, they were not impressed. So back they headed on the Grand River Trail and ended up appreciating the fine landscape of Milford. After they staked their claim in the fall of 1831, they returned to New York in the Spring of 1832 to gather various family members to begin settling in the area.

It is through this first generation of Ruggles that Barbara Arms-Tressler became a resident of Milford. Barbara is a fifth generation Ruggles and may very well get her love for walking from her ancestors. And although Barbara comes from families like the Ruggles and Arms whose descendents have made quite a mark on the local community, Barbara has enjoyed leaving an impression or two along the way herself.

Barbara Arms married Charlie Tressler back in 1942 and is probably one of very few women in the area, if any, that can claim she spent her wedding night with her mother and mother-in-law rather than her husband. Barbara and Charlie planned their wedding to take place in Texas near Charlie's air force base. The honeymoon was set for a beautiful cabin on the water.

Since it was wartime, at the last minute all leaves (including Charlie's) were cancelled. The wedding went on as scheduled, but the honeymoon did not. Hotel rooms were scarce near the base, so while Charlie returned to his barracks with local friend and Best Man Bob Smith, Barbara went to a room nearby that both her mother and mother-in-law rented so they too could attend the wedding.

Eventually Charlie and Barbara were able to start a family, but again, due to the war, Charlie did not meet his first born child (daughter Linda eventually to be Linda Dagenhardt) until she was 15 months old. After the birth of their second child Tamara, Barbara raised her children and worked in various local jobs.

After working as a drill press operator for Ford Motor Company, Barbara and her sister Margaret opened a hats, bags, and jewelry store on Main Street in the current Candy Shop. The store was called Ann Louise Shop. It soon expanded to a woman's full-line clothing store and moved across the street to gain more space.

As an active member in the local Chamber of Commerce, Barbara implemented Milford's first Sidewalk Sale. Barbara's vision was to make the sidewalk sales an event for the entire family and so amusement rides and games were included. That first sidewalk sale back in the late 1950's was very successful and some of the original traditions continue to this day.

After closing the store several years later, Barbara went to work at Skuttle Manufacturing Company until it moved out of town back in 1977. At that point, Barbara decided to follow in her father's (Chester Arms) and grandfather's (Sandford Arms) footsteps by working as the Village Clerk. Barbara had a strong sense of community living in Milford and wanted to take a more active part in its day-to-day operations.

In addition to her love of family and her passion for work, Barbara has a keen sense of adventure. After the war, husband Charlie became a builder so the family would often live in the homes he built before they were sold. All told, Barbara has enjoyed living in over 20 local homes. The shortest duration in any one location was when they moved into a home near Liberty and Bennet the beginning of December and moved out due to its sale, the end of January.

So the next time you see Barbara walking around town or shopping at a sidewalk sale, you might just ask her about the house you live in today. Chances are, she might be able to share a little history of your home with you.

2007 is the 175th Anniversary of Milford and in celebration of this major milestone, we are asking you to share some of your stories with the rest of the community. If you have a little Milford history to pass along, please contact Sue Bullard, Milford Historical Society President, 248.685.7308 or milfordhistory@yahoo.com. The Milford Historical Society is happy to document your story and share it with others.