

The way we were – in 1940 – Compiled by Ed Merrick

The 1940 Census of Freeland provides a look back at a time of occupations, institutions, and values that no longer exists. The job descriptions in this story appear as they were given to the Census takers. I apologize if I have left out anyone you know.

Before the electric Frigidaire appeared on the market, we bought blocks of ice from trucks that canvassed the neighborhoods, the drivers checking the cards that we displayed in our windows to indicate whether we wanted a 25-cent piece, a 50-cent piece, or larger. The 1940 Census lists Edward Yori, 33, of 622 Ridge Street, as delivery man, ice; John Stofka, 30, 716 South Street, salesman, retail ice; Anthony Sacco, 21, 624 Ridge Street, truck driver, ice; and Joseph Johnson, 45, 512 Walnut Street, iceman, employer. One of my daily chores was to empty the pan of water that collected under the icebox on our back porch.

Who can forget the clinking sound as bottles of fresh milk were delivered to our front doors daily by the likes of Francis Boyle, 38, 554 South Street, truck driver, milk route; Joseph Butchko, 52, 457 South Street, truck driver, dairy; Joseph Evans, 27, 558 South Street, driver, milk route; Stephen Kobelka, 28, 940 North Street, salesman, dairy products; Clarence Hoffman, 37, 619 South Street, truck driver, dairy; and Andrew Uricheck, 25, 602 Ridge Street, milk deliver (sic), dairy.

Then there were the green grocers, who announced their presence by honking their horns in the street. They included Edward Gallagher, 29, 359 Centre Street, trucker, green truck.

Remember when the railroad still ran passenger service through town? Henry Funk, 51, 1000 Road 369, Foster Township, was baggage master there for the Lehigh Valley Railroad.

Another familiar sound was the roar of coal as it slid down the chutes from trucks and into our cellars. Here are some who delivered coal in Freeland: Patrick Carr, 41, 975 Walnut Street, trucking; Andrew Duda, 48, 640 Cedar Street, trucking (Who can forget the slogan on his truck? “You Duda Callin, We Duda Haulin”); Francis Gallagher, 31, 315 Washington Street, truck driver, general hauling; Patrick Gallagher, 39, 215 Alvin Street, trucking, own place; and James Lutz, 24, 922 Walnut Street, truck driver, trailer.

Horses still played a role in hauling, and that gave employment to Richard C. Roth, 78, 540 Walnut Street, blacksmith, employer; John Broskowski, 54, 239 Maple Street, blacksmith, own shop; and John Klinger, 65, 827 Walnut Street, harness maker, leather work.

Remember when police officers still walked a beat? Among those enforcing the laws were Walter Garris, 44, 1 School Street, investigator, state liquor (board?) ; Charles Koch, 31, 409 Alvin Street, patrolman, borough; Andrew Lavinka, 41, 830 Main Street, policeman, borough; John F. McGuire, 33, 625 Centre Street, private detective, employer; Howard Spade, 30, 5 Highland Street, Jeddo Borough, police, borough; Louis Stolz, 63, 730 Birkbeck Street,

policeman, township; and John Watahovich, 36, 1003 Ridge Street, police officer, Freeland Borough.

Before telephone dials, touch pads, smart phones, and area codes, we had telephone operators (“Number please.”) employed by “Ma Bell,” the Bell Telephone Company, broken up as a monopoly in 1984. In Freeland they included Anna Murin, 50, and Rebecca Murin, 23, 933 Washington Street; Doretta Zierdt, 27, 9 Main Street, Upper Lehigh, and Celestine Johnson, 27, 1131 Birkbeck Street. In that time of party lines and private lines, I remember that the Michael and Dorothy Ostroff family’s number was 8, my grandparents Michael and Anna Remak’s was 183, and the number for my family, that of Anthony J. and Helen Merrick, was 1044.

Remember the traveling salesman? That would have included Michael Pecora, 47, 1030 Birkbeck Street, salesman, Hoover Co.

The country was still in the grip of the Great Depression, and these New Deal programs provided Freeland residents with work and a paycheck:

The Works Progress Administration (WPA): Tony Maso, 58, 626 Hemlock Street, mason; Elmer Kline, 42, 630 Main Street, foreman; Harry Hill, 38, 341 Centre Street, laborer; Kathryn McBrearty, 55, 804 Ridge Street, teaching; Guy Coxe, 59, 959 Burton Street, labor; Pasquale Galluch, 25, 1120 Alvin Street, labor; Engle Biasi, 32, 977 Walnut Street, labor; Michael Prusack, 41, 620 Fern Street, labor; Peter Evancho, 35, 625 Fern Street, labor; Michael Stershic, 40, 612 Vine Street, labor; Wassel Guidos, 42, Rear 500 Ridge Street, laborer; John Timony, 26, 726 Ridge Street, timekeeper Grade 8; Andrew Yalch, 23, Rear 333 Ridge Street, labor; John Lehan, 31, 337 Ridge Street, labor; Charles McGill, 32, 911 Ridge Street, labor; Leonard Nardo, 43, 908 Carbon Street, labor; Andrew Pollack, 32, 918 South Street, labor; John Berezna, 52, 424 Fern Street, labor; and Mary Green, 38, 249 Centre Street, seamstress, WPA sewing project.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC): Richard Corazza, 18, 937 Burton Street, clerk, and Alex Mazziota, 18, 822 South Street, labor.

National Youth Administration (NYA), a division of the WPA that provided jobs to people 16 to 25: Paul Timko, 18, 60 Back Street, Eckley, restroom attendant; Mary Ferrari, 20, 1126 Walnut Street, construction; Thomas McClosky, 23, Rear 335 Ridge Street, labor; and Helen McCloskey, 17, Sandy Valley, classroom assistant.

In this heyday of the Jeddo Stars and Eckley Reds baseball teams, the Census had these listings: Dennis Brennan, 50, 440 Washington Street, business manager, ballteam; Michael Surgent, 24, 169½ Main Street, Eckley, ballplayer, baseball; and Stanley Sosnowski, 17, 334 Washington Street, manager, athletic equipment.

How many remember that we had mail delivered not once but twice a day? Making that possible were Mary Bolish, 43, House 21, Hazle Brook, postman (cq), Post Office; Julius Boraskie, 24,

321 Centre Street, mail carrier, Post Office; Neale Boyle, 50, 916 Centre Street , postmaster, Post Office; Aloysius Brogan, 25, 316 Ridge Street, delivery carrier, Post Office; George Farrar, 49, 323 Maple Street, assistant postmaster; Edward McGeehan, 34, 309 Ridge Street, deliverer, Post Office; Bernard McLaughlin, 25, 821 Centre Street, mail carrier, U.S.; John P. McNelis, 26, 632 Walnut Street, clerk, Post Office; Patrick Roarty, 40, 507 Vine Street, delivery carrier, Post Office; Emil Schmutzer, 43, Freeland-Drums Road, Butler Township, clerk, Post Office; William Shive, 41, 1144 Walnut Street, carrier, Parcel Post, postal; Peter Sweeney, 50, 822 Front Street, custodian, Post Office; Lawrence Welsh, 45, 445 Adams Street, postmaster, Post Office; and George A. Woodring, 44, 554 Walnut Street, mail carrier, U.S.

The most curious occupations had to be those of George Guido, 44, 657 Vine Street, inspector, State Potato Garden, and Henry Herbener Jr., 22, 103 Spring Street, Upper Lehigh, puller, fur factory.

Another characteristic of the time was large families. My mother, Helen Remak Merrick, had nine brothers and sisters, but Freeland's trophy for size of household in 1940 probably would have had to go to Joseph Stoffa, 48, 606 Cedar Street, and his wife Anna, 43, who had living with them children Elizabeth, 22; Thomas, 19; Dorothy, 18; Marie, 16; Pauline, 14; Anna, 13; Edward, 10; Francis, 8; Albert, 6; George, 5; Eleanor, 3; son-in-law Joseph Prokop, 26; his wife and the Stoffas' oldest daughter Margaret Prokop, 25; Joseph Prokop, their infant son, age indecipherable but less than a year; and lodger Henry Barnachi (a guess on the spelling of the last name), 23.

Also part of the fabric of life then were Christmas clubs at Citizens and First National banks, dish nights at the Refowich Theatre, canteen for teenagers at the Y.M.C.A., collectors for the numbers game canvassing neighborhoods daily for bets ("box" your number and win extra), Jolly Jack Robel and His Radio Band playing polkas on WAZL, kids playing baseball in the street, church picnics in Woodside, and on and on.

Everything else changes. Nostalgia alone survives.