

Lynch, Michael

Intelligence

The sight of a young Michael Lynch walking down the street on his hands likely aroused the interest of Belleville citizens.

But as he aged and became a prosperous merchant and alderman, this character's antics would be accepted as commonplace.

Perhaps Lynch's strength and agility came from his days in the rough and tumble life of the log drives.

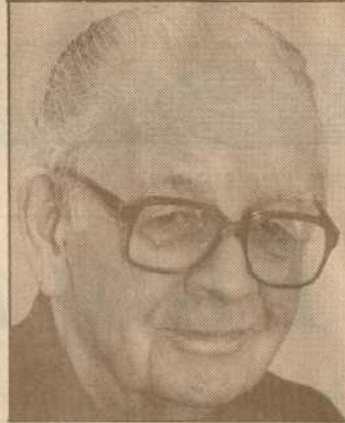
In any event, he obviously had a knack for being noticed.

In 1906, Lynch went into the grocery and feed business 8 Bridge St. E. with a man named Mr. McGinty.

Lynch was already in his late 40s when he went into business with McGinty, (later killed by a train at the CPR Church Street crossing). The store had three locations; Bridge Street, Front Street (where the ANAF is today) and 198 Dundas St. E.

Belleville resident Jack Murphy is the grandson of Lynch. Murphy delivered groceries throughout the city on horse and wagon as a teenager in the late 1920s and recalls the Front Street store.

Inside, a long counter ran up the left side. A pot belly stove sat to the right of the doorway and a barrel of pickles with a large ladle was nearby. Murphy remembers the ladle had a hole in the centre to let the juice drain away. Another barrel held huge soda crackers about 10" X 6". Both the pick-



Jack Murphy

les and crackers were popular with customers and Murphy says people often neglected to pay for them, regarding them more as free snacks. Lynch never complained — his agility was matched only by his benevolence, says Murphy.

Sometimes that was repaid. Murphy recalls the time the store was on Front Street and Charles Semark was installing sewers along Front Street. Mrs. Semark came by and told her husband they had no food in the cupboards and no money until pay day. The conversation took place outside Lynch's store, and he happened to overhear her lament.

Mrs. Semark found a package of groceries at her doorstep later that day. She determined its origin from the packaging and the Semarks became regular customers of Lynch's.

In those days that did not necessarily mean going to the

store. If a customer had a telephone they could dial 345 — Lynch's number — and place their order with him. Then young Murphy would go to the store after school on Monday and Wednesday and pick up parcels for the Hillcrest area. Depending on the season he would climb aboard his wagon or cutter and begin his rounds. There was nearly always a group of younger boys who came with him for the ride. It was a novelty for them, says Murphy. Occasionally he would crack the reins together and make the horses bolt forward, dumping one of the boys into a snow bank or onto the street. The other children howled with laughter as the boy clambered back on-board.

Murphy's congeniality was shared by his grandfather, who always kept candy in pockets for children. The leather cap that seldom left his head doubled as a wallet as he kept his money tucked inside it.

Lynch's business grew to require four horse-and-wagon teams for deliveries. Part of his patronage came because of the hay-and-feed section of his business that boomed when the fair came to town. Lynch also supplied a Mr. Smith who had race horses where the Pipeline gas station is today on Dundas Street West.

All this activity occurred before May, 1933 when Lynch died and the store closed its doors.

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