

The Arcade Days
by Edna Blomdahl

The foghorn had moaned all thru the night. A heavy fog was covering Lake Michigan. It was early Saturday morning and one could hear the cry, "Here she comes." And there she was the beautiful S.S. Carolina cruising into and thru the channel in that days enveloping fog. She must land at the Wabaningo pier safely and it was Leonard's responsibility to guide her into the dock. He had no lights, no bells, no whistles but he did have two garbage can covers that made a great noise when banged together and created a focal point for the steam ship Carolina to head towards very cautiously, very slowly for a safe landing at Wabaningo dock. The arrival of the Carolina each weekend was big excitement during the summer season. Many summer residents of White Lake came from businesses in Chicago and elsewhere to have a relaxed time at their summer cottage. Only in a fog was there a serious problem, on a clear day you could see Milwaukee and the Carolina slid into dock very easily. If the morning was cool – Leonard's good friend Nan Chitenden would supply a thermos of hot coffee or even a warm sweater. The docks were part of the favorite gathering spot called The Arcade. It was the center of activity, a two story building with a one-story archway that led from the road to the piers on White Lake. The north side of the street floor had a small grocery and convenience store. The south side contained a drug store with films, candies, slot machines and a soda fountain. A small office space was used by the Goodrich ticket office. The post office was entered by the street side.

On the second floor were living quarters, 3 bedrooms, bath and kitchen. The large room overlooking White Lake was used as a beauty parlor. A small porch extended over the walkway on the dock. A small storage building on the dock was the Gift Shop Walhalla. Several years after my dad opened the White Lake Grocery in Whitehall, he rented the grocery side of the Arcade Complex. Several years later Dad rented the drug side from Pitkins. Those were the days in Whitehall that Pitkins had a fine ice cream factory and the Sunken Garden was the place to go. Mom and Helen kept busy at the Arcade and on weekends. Leonard and I would spell them off. A screened in porch extended over the water just adjacent to the soda fountain. That porch was the hang out for some of the younger generation. An on going game of Hearts was always in progress with a season's score always in conversation. The Arcade is recalled with many fond memories by many of the older residents of Sylvan Beach and Michillinda.

It is important that one mention several people who were part and parcel of that interesting Arcade Complex. The postmistress was the ever-loved Rosie Spicklemire and her grandson Todd.

There was a period when the Beach Association felt the need of a guard in front of the Arcade. There were more cars and many new children on the beach. The Archway of the Arcade was the natural path for the children to head for the children's beach – or to the diving area on the docks. Charles Allen was hired for the duty. He was a retired? policeman from Chicago and proved to be a very interesting person. He had jet-black hair that was created with the application of black shoe polish. Some of the devilish young boys found out that Allen loved chocolate and treated him one day with samples of ex lax that had come into the drug store. The Arcade had wooded areas very close by. Allen had a great feeling of being a very important part of the Chicago

Police Department. He was always relating how on his trips to Chicago about his prowess of settling many problems.