



No. 2

Fred Rotunno
Owner of the Grove House
and friend, Edmond Uschold

Interviewed by
George Caswell; Edwin Spelman
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Historical Society of Greece, N.Y.

History in Interview

Caswell: "We have before us a picture of the old Streb Hotel, called the Arlington at that time, and Eddie is going to give us information on it.

Eddie: "When he left East Manitou, Mr. Streb bought that place on Ridge Road. That's a long time ago."

Caswell: "Where was Mr. Streb before he went into business at the old Arlington?"

Eddie: "He was down at East Manitou right this side of the trestle; the big trestle at Braddock's Bay."

Caswell: "What was its name?"

Eddie: "Streb's Hotel. At that time Elmer Haight ran a place at the corner of Manitou Road; and afterwards, oh there were two or three places on the Manitou Road, but Tom Streb stuck it out in his place."

Caswell: "The picture we are looking at shows the Arlington Hotel with Fred Streb as proprietor, another the old Manchester Hotel. The Manchester was on the Ridge just east of Manitou on the north side; and it had an explosion and was pretty well demolished, and torn down. Mr. Rotunno has told us that those were the days when acetylene gas was used for both lighting and cooking, and was excessively dangerous. If the lines plugged up and they got them unplugged, if there was any flame anywhere, the whole thing went up "pouf". Mr. Rotunno tells us that at that time, fortunately, they were able to get electricity in, so they got rid of this acetylene and were saved from that same disaster."

Eddie: "I don't know too much about the system, but I know they put it in this place (Grove House.) I remember this place when they had oil lamps... everybody had oil lamps. The cottages were built for summer...no people lived down here in winters. There was no electricity even along the lake shore, where the Manitou Trolley ran until a few years later. I remember when John Fusco put the acetylene lights in here."

Fred: "We had our own generator out in front-- manufactured gas for lighting and cooking and quite a few of the hotels were having trouble with the carbide residue filling up the gas lines and evidently if they left different burners on and didn't have enough gas to supply them, when the gas came back on again they blew up and caused fires, so that's when Mrs. Fusco decided to run her own line down from Edgemere Drive to the Grove House."

Caswell: "This is your Aunt Nellie, right?"

Fred: "Yeah."

Caswell: "What year did you get the electricity?"

Fred: "Around 1922... '21 or '22."

Caswell: "Did any of the hotels continue with acetylene after that?"

Fred: "The hotels that blew up were never replaced."

Caswell: "You were telling me, Fred, about the old days of the Manitou Trolley, how you were almost a mile from the Trolley and had to make certain arrangements."

Fred: "When the Trolley would pull up to Long Pond Road they had a certain blast on their whistle which they would hear down

at the Grove House and they would send a car or a horse and wagon down to pick passengers up and bring them here."

Caswell: "How did you know in advance when the trolley was coming by when those people wanted to go back to Rochester?"

Fred: "Well, they had a schedule so they knew what time the trolley went by."

Caswell: "Did they hold to it pretty well?"

Fred: "Oh yes. They didn't know about anybody coming in but going out there was no problem--they would wait maybe five minutes or so and get their trolley and go to Charlotte."

Caswell: "Tell me, do you remember what caused the trestle to be torn apart. Was it a storm? Eddie apparently knows that story very well."

Eddie: "I remember when they put the new trestle in. The old trestle had to be repaired every year, and they finally tore it down and built a new one."

Caswell: "We have a picture showing the trestle pulled apart from a severe storm, and they probably didn't have service for some time."

Fred: "That's right. They had a boat from Odenbach's hotel in them days this side of the trestle...they'd take them over by boat."

Caswell: "You mean to join up beyond the break?"

Fred: "That's right. Plunk them over to Georgie's (Wiedman's Elmheart), and Cap Odenbach had a hotel there at the time (The Manitou) and he would come over with his boat to this

side of the trestle."

Caswell: "What was the reason that the trestle broke. Was it a big storm from the lake?"

Fred: "Not necessarily; I guess it was so damn old that it just rotted away--spring, the ice and all had something to do with it. It was so old I guess they really had to do something about it because it got dangerous and they couldn't use it no more. When the ice went out that spring it took half of the trestle with it."

Spelman: "When I followed the route of the abandoned Manitou Trolley line making slides, a woman came out of the house across the street and asked me why I was taking a picture of her house. When I explained, she said she remembered going across Brad-docks Bay in the early open trolleys. When the lake was rough they had to put their feet up on the seat in front because the waves washed right across between the seats. The new trestle was built about 3 ft. higher. There was a 6 ft. difference between high and low lake level."

Caswell: "I would like to ask you, Fred, to restate the story of the Grove House, when it started as a private lodge and so forth."

Fred: "The land belonged to Senator Slater. He sold it to Hogan. Hogan built the Grove House for a clubhouse for his son and their friends, and they operated a club for many years. Then it went to a restaurant and tavern, and my Aunt bought it from Hogan in 1910. That was Nellie Fusco."

Caswell: "Is she still alive and active?"

Fred: "Oh, yeah. Bought it in 1910, and she's been here ever since."

Caswell: "And you and Fred and Luke, your sons, run it?"

Fred: "We ran the business for 23 years. It was built in 1889. The part we are sitting in back here now is an addition to the front, where the bar is was the original building. Mrs. Fusco and her husband put this addition on and they had 8 or 10 rooms upstairs which they used to rent when it ran as a hotel in the summer time."

Caswell: "Tell me, in those days where did you get business from except from the trolley line? Were there people in cottages along here who came down?"

Fred: "Yeah, there were quite a few cottages around here but only in summer, you know, seasonal."

Caswell: "Did you closeup in winter?"

Fred: "No, we were open all winter."

Caswell: "Was there duck hunting, fishing, and did they cut ice out here?"

Fred: "Best in the country...they cut ice here every year. As a matter of fact, the old ice house here we had torn down. We filled it up every year."

Caswell: "Where did that ice go? To Rochester, or even farther away?"

Fred: "No, it was for our own use here, and for the residents around here. My aunt and her husband, Nellie and John, ran the old Wolfe Hotel on State Street opposite Kodak Office before they came here. They sold that and came here."

Caswell: "Is that building still there?"

Fred: "It's still there."

Caswell: "And that was in what year?"

Fred: "1910."

Caswell: "We are talking to Eddie now, and he has mentioned Streb before he went up on the Ridge. I wish you would repeat that, and then talk about George Wiedman."

Eddie: "Well, Tom Streb worked at the clothing business before he came up to East Manitou Hotel. When he sold out there he went to Ridge Road and Stehler Brothers took over. Frank and Walley...after a year or two."

Caswell: "And that place isn't still there is it?"

Eddie: "Not now; not since they put them cottages at East Manitou. Frank Stehler ran the place at Charlotte which today is Abbott's Ice Cream stand. Stehler Brothers had two hotels, one at East Manitou and one at Charlotte, at that time. And Jerry Flynn was next door to them; Johnny Kane was next door to Jerry Flynn. Then the Coughlin boys had a place there."

Caswell: "What kind of places did they run?"

Eddie: "Hotels."

Caswell: "That was Coughlin Hotels?"

Eddie: "They had two."

Caswell: "Now where are you talking about."

Eddie: "Charlotte."

Caswell: "Right along the main drag?"

Eddie: "In them days it was Charlotte, That was before they took it into the city."

Spelman: "Do you think that Coughlin was any relation to Nick Coughlin that trick bicycle rider?"

Eddie: "Well, I don't know. I remember the Coughlin bicycle riders, but I don't think these Coughlins were any relation. Years ago their father and mother ran a place, I think it was at the end of Platt Street bridge near St. Paul; the Coughlin's Hotel. That's a long time ago. I was a young guy myself, 17 or 18, and Fred Coughlin run his at the trolley turn going towards the lake, and his brother Nick run right next to it. Stehler was in where Abbott's today; next door to him was Nich Coughlin; next door to him was Jerry Flynn; next to Jerry Flynn was Johnny Kane."

Spelman: "Yeah, I remember those names down there."

Caswell: "By the way, do you mind telling us your age and where you were born, a little about yourself, Eddie?"

Eddie: "I was born in 1889 the day this building was built."

Spelman: "That was the year that the electric trolley operated from Ridge Road down to Charlotte."

Eddie: "That I don't remember; I was just born then."

Spelman: "I read that. That was the first electric trolley any place in this part of the country. You took the horse car down to Ridge Road and then you got on the electric trolley and rode down to Charlotte."

Eddie: "Well, when they first took Charlotte into the city of Rochester (1916) you used to pay one fare all the way from uptown (a nickel) right to Charlotte; but when the city took over at Ridge Road you had to pay another nickel (they gave

out coupons) they had thousands of them--they weren't sure if they had to refund that money or not. And everybody that came to the hotels down there used to throw them in a box. They had thousands of them in case the railroad company had to pay that nickel back."

Caswell: "Was there a suit or something pending on that?"

Eddie: "Yeah."

Caswell: "How did it end?"

Eddie: "The railroad company won. Naturally. About Georgie Wiedman, I think it was in 1913, his Uncle, Silk O'Loughlin, the umpire in the big leagues (this is one of Silk's grandsons that runs a place on St. Paul Blvd. now.)"

Fred: "He still runs the place out in Charlotte."

Spelman: "Yes, down in Summerville, under the tower, ..well the tower's gone now. Down by the river. Silk O'Loughlin. Next to the Coast Guard."

Eddie: "That was Georgie's uncle, and he had another uncle that he went to work with over here (at the Elmheart) named Michael O'Loughlin. And then he had another uncle, Paddy, he worked for the City of Rochester. He had a pretty big job at the water works. I think it was 1913 that George got a job playing baseball in the Canadian League. He only played one season. He came back and he's been over at that hotel over since about 1914. I was working at Tom Streb's old place this side of the trestle, when Georgie played in the Canadian League."

Caswell: "This is a little off the subject, because you knew the Ridge so well. Did you ever hear of the Falls Road?"

Eddie: "Yes, it used to be the electric trolley that ran up there to Buffalo. It didn't last too long."

Caswell: "What trolley was that? Where did it come from, downtown Rochester?"

Eddie: "Yeah, I can't think what they called it. I think the Buffalo, Rochester and Lockport Electric Line."

Caswell: "And you know that was called the Falls Road?"

Eddie: "I'm not sure now, but I remember the Buffalo, Lockport and Rochester."

Caswell: "Where did it run: where were the tracks?"

Spelman: "Along Lyell Avenue."

Eddie: "Along the old Niagara Falls New York Central...out Lyell Avenue."

Caswell: "So you're talking about a trolley line that was called the Falls Road, right?"

Eddie: "Yeah."

Caswell: "But was Ridge Road ever called the Falls Road?"

Eddie: "That I couldn't tell you."

Caswell: "It went to the falls (Niagara Falls of course) and also was called the Honeymoon Trail, right Ed?"

Spelman: "Yeah, but that's quite a little later. That didn't come until the late 1920's ... the Honeymoon Trail."

Eddie: "I knew Buckerts place for years on Ridge Road."

Caswell: "Fred was saying that you worked in all of these hotels around here. Do you want to name some of them?"

Eddie: "I worked for Stehler Brothers. And the year that Tony Kleinhans died at Grandview Beach, that was about 1916. A fellow by the name of Ward Vaughn and myself, I quit Stehler and Ward Vaughn had been working for Pete Hutchinson, a hotel at the end of Cranberry Road between East Manitou and Cranberry. There was a hotel right on the lake shore. I think they called it the Cranberry Hotel. Pete Hutchinson owned it at the time."

Caswell: "Do either of you men ever remember seeing any cranberries around Cranberry Pond? The indians used to come down there to get cranberries, and I have the feeling that there may still be cranberries around there if we could find them."

Eddie: "I know myself where there are some. Well, anyway this hotel between Streb's old hotel and Grandview Beach that burned down in the spring of 1916, Ward Vaughn had been working there so I quit Stehler. Tony Kleinhans died and Vaughn and I went to work for Kleinhans place in Grandview Beach. Later it was known as Joe Rosenbach's. I went into the army from there. Ward and I worked there, and then I was in the Army for 14 months, I came out and a man by the name of Tony McGreel was running it (Grandview Beach)...he and his brother years before had rented a place on North St., wholesale liquor store and bar. Well, I worked there and naturally when you came out of the First War they gave everybody their job back, ya know. So I worked there for him and then I came uptown and then a few years after Joe Rosenbach bought it so I worked for Joe."

Caswell: "Where was Rosenbach's Place?"

Eddie: "Grandview Beach. As far as the hotels, I knew them all years ago. There was, at one time I can remember one at Buck Pond, Beaty's at Island Cottage, Wayne Lewis, (Crescent Beach) and then we came to Grandview Beach, Pete Hutchinson's place, Stehler's place, George Wiedman across the trestle and Odenbach; nine or ten hotels along there at that time along that beach."

Caswell: "You didn't work at the Arlington or any of those places?"

Eddie: "No, I used to go up to Streb's a lot. I knew the whole family then; Tom, Raymond, Florence (mother), Tom's sister, they called her Auntie."

Caswell: "You spoke of Ward Vaughn, that is a familiar name in Rochester. Did he stay in Greece or did he go into town then?"

Eddie: "Well, Ward ran several places in the town, originally Hunter's Lodge. On East Avenue...He was robbed one night and hit over the head with a pipe or something, but he was the original of that name. During prohibition Art Coburn ran a Hunter's Lodge out in Dutchtown...corner of Jay & Child Streets. He called his place Hunter's Lodge, but the original was run by Ward Vaughn."

Caswell: "Where on East Avenue?"

Eddie: "Pretty near downtown. But Ward ran a half dozen different places, was pretty well known. He and Marty Ripholtz, they had been hunting in Canada and Ward Vaughn, and two or three others were just sitting around; Ripholtz was talking

and Ward had a heart attach and that was it.. Everybody knew Ward. Years ago he and Freddie Meyer had run the Elm Bowling Hall up on Elm Street. Ward used to work there, then went in business for himself..he used to manage the bowling hall for Freddie Meyer."

Spelman: "Yeah, I remember the Elm Bowling Hall when I was a kid."

Eddie: "Well, I wasn't too old myself. Ward was maybe 5 or 6 years older than I am."

Caswell: "I suppose those were the days of Rattlesnake Pete, right?"

Eddie: "Yes sir."

Caswell: I bet both of you fellows have a lot of recollections of him."

Eddie: "Rattlesnake Pete was on Mill Street. George Volk ran a place around the corner; Ottman Brothers were on Front Street, the hot dogs. The Corinthian was opposite the old Arcade. Burlesque shows."

Spelman: "I remember going into Rattlesnake Pete's and seeing a huge stuffed horse in there." X

Caswell: "I understand that horse is still around in one of the stores in Rochester. But most of Rattlesnake Pete's stuff was lost..put in a garage and a bulldozer came along and buried it."

Spelman: "I remember over on the left side as you went in was a coal mine...you put a nickel in it and a little train of cars would come out of a tunnel and circle around back in there..... make a half dozen turns right around and give you entertainment for about five minutes."

Fred: "He also had those coins on the bar..stranger comes in and and when he'd go to pick them up, he put the juice on them. I remember the horn on his automobile was a big long snake that would go down and come out in front of the car."

Spelman: "Snake would come out on the end of the fender...colored eyes on the snake lit up at night."

Caswell: "I remember he had Cleopatra and the asp too...you would put in a nickel or something and the snake bit Cleopatra; and do you remember the electric chair?"

Fred: "If you wanted to sit on it you'd flop right on the floor... you'd slide right off of it. You couldn't sit in it. The moment you sat in it, it tilted...right down on the floor you went."

Caswell: "And now that's all the Crossroads Park in 1977. Let's get back to this area and see if we can think of some questions about the Manitou Trolley or about the old hotels. Ed how about you, any questions?"

Spelman: "No, I don't seem to have any questions about the trolley."

Caswell: "Do you remember the names of some of the motormen or the conductors on those things?"

Fred: "Oh yes, Jack Kelley..he worked the first car in the spring, all summer, to the last car; and his stepson Marty... remember the high water a couple years ago when it took out all the wires and everything..Electric company ran a special wire to his cottage. Marty's family came by boat and lived in that grove in Braddock's Bay..so they'd row a boat from the cottage over and tie it to the trestle...leave

the oars stand on the trestle all night. The first car going east...the old man would run that and Marty, the stepson would run the late car at night. In the spring and the fall they would only run one car. And about the first of April we used to come out. In the winter time, we'd go down to Charlotte and stay at Frank's place, and in the summer Wally and I would come up here. We would come up about the first of April. And the last car would run Sunday after Thanksgiving..and then close the line down for the winter."

Caswell: "Can you tell us any incidents that happened on that old Manitou Trolley? Except the washout of course."

Fred: "Oh, every spring they had those certain spots that would wash out. The one at Cranberry, every spring was a sad story."

Caswell: "The cottages around here depended upon that trolley, didn't they?"

Fred: "That's sure. There wasn't any automobiles then."

Caswell: "I know there was harvesting of cattails or sometimes called rushes and reeds as well as ice cutting around here. What was the use of them."

Fred: "The biggest use of them was the breweries bought them. Men cut them and dried them out and delivered them to the breweries. In those days the breweries had 8 or 10 coopers, who would take the barrels apart and put the rushes between the staves to tighten them up."

Caswell: "So these reeds or cattail leaves would seal up the spots between the wood."

Fred: "That's correct."

Caswell: "I understand they were used also for caning chairs."

Fred: "I guess so."

Caswell: "Probably for baskets..I know the Indians came down here for reeds for baskets. Tell us some of the kinds of fish they would catch then, Eddie."

Eddie: "Well, all kinds of pan fish, pickerel, bass, quite a few game fish. Lake Ontario used to have white fish at one time and also occasionally you could catch a sturgeon. Its a few years since they did that. Duck hunting used to be something. I saw four or five fellows get 125-130 ducks over there on a Sunday morning. When they put the electric line in and lights along the trolley, it seemed that when the ducks came in, they would either raise or go right by - the lights kind of did something to the duck hunting."

Caswell: "I understand from some of the things I read that in the early days this whole area was very, very marshy. In fact, it was pretty difficult to stay around here because of the mosquitoes particularly. Do you remember when they started to get rid of the swamps?"

Fred: "Well, I think they started that a little ahead of my time."

Caswell: "It could be, I guess this goes back to the canal days. Much of this area was uninhabitable then because of malaria fever, but they drained a lot of the swamps and made it habitable land. When you were a boy, I suppose there were relatively few people living around here."

Fred: "Right. Very, very few."

Caswell: "Just the cottages and farm land. What were they raising on the farm?"

Fred: "Most ordinary things."

Caswell: "Was there a lot of vegetables and fruit down there?"

Fred: "Same as they do now. In them days joining all the ponds all the way up were farm land. Very few cottages just along the trolley lines."

Caswell: "Thank you very much Fred and Eddie."

THE END