

# The Lancaster Legend

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## Cushing's Drug Store

BY DONALD MACDAVID

Nothing characterized the feeling people had for former downtown Lancaster more than Cushing's Drug Store. And nothing characterized the sad decline of downtown Lancaster more than its closing. It was a center of activity - a place where people dropped in for medicine, cosmetics, school supplies, magazines, something from the soda fountain, or just to see who was there.

Franklin S. Cushing founded the drug store in 1892. He was born in 1864 in the village of Wyoming, NY. He studied pharmacy part time at the University of Buffalo and earned a degree in two years. In 1888 he worked in a drug store in Silver Creek and in 1892 came to Lancaster to establish his own store at what is now 33 Central Avenue.

Franklin must have been a very busy man. In addition to his drug store business, he sold sand and ice (cut from Como Lake in winter and stored in a large barn), served as village Postmaster and Village Clerk (both located in his store), was one of the founders



and a director of Ellicott Drug Company, a wholesale distributor, sold insurance and real estate, made loans, and still found time to manage his farm.

In addition to drugs and medicines, the store sold soaps, perfumes, toilet articles, fine stationery, school books, school supplies, tobacco products, wines and liquors for medicinal purposes, and had a popular soda fountain.

*Franklin Cushing's (in dark coat) three-story building constructed after the 1896 fire.*

Catastrophic fires were commonplace in those days. Buildings were of wood. Open fires and gas lights were in use. Water mains and hydrants did not exist. In 1894 a fire broke out on the west side of Central Avenue between what is now Broadway and West Main Street. It swept down the south side (Broadway side) of West Main Street, jumped across Central Avenue where the Town Hall is now, and continued south (toward Broadway). In 1896 a fire began in an abandoned soap factory on the east side of Central Avenue, swept north (toward Pleasant Avenue) to about where Eddie Ryan's restaurant is now located, jumped Central Avenue and returned south consuming everything including Cushing's store.

Franklin replaced his store with a large three-story brick building. In addition to his drug store and his other businesses, the building housed at one time or another the Telephone Company with a line of



“Number Please” operators, a tailor shop, a law office, a barbershop, a dentist, World War I draft board, a beauty shop, a number of fraternal organizations, a chiropractor, a forging and casting company, and other businesses.

Franklin retired in 1922. His son, Robert, along with partner, Ellis Burdick took over the ownership and operation of the drug store and building. Franklin died in 1933 following a long illness.

The store was remodeled in 1925, 1950, and 1962. The 1950 remodeling included expansion into the part occupied by the Telephone Company which moved to its new large brick building a short distance north on Central Avenue. The new building contained automatic switching equipment and marked the end of the “Number Please” line of operators. At that time Cushings added a luncheonette to the fountain area. Mrs. Ellis Burdick was famous for her lemon pies which she would bring to the store not for sale at the luncheonette but for the enjoyment of the employees.

Cushings had the most popular ice cream and soda fountain in Lancaster. It is felt that some of the credit goes to its Fro-Joy (later Sealtest) ice cream and the fact that Sealtest conducted training sessions for all who worked in the fountain area. A free cup of coffee was available to people waiting for prescriptions to be filled. The fountain, although never a major profit center, competed with The Sugar Bowl on the corner across the street, Layers on Scott Street, and The Yankee Soda Bar at Broadway and Church Street, a surprisingly unpopular place owned by George Perry, a former New York City Broadway performer who was the personal friend of many New York Yankee players and management as

### Lancaster New York Historical Society

40 Clark Street  
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<http://lancasterpast.org/society>

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Little Red Schoolhouse (Bowen at William):  
Hours by Appointment

Sunday Program Series: As Posted

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#### The Lancaster Legend:

Editor/Design: Bill Harnack

well as other New York celebrities such as Jack Dempsey.

Stanley Keysa, who went on to be a village judge and Lancaster Town Supervisor, had his law office above the store. He was also a licensed pharmacist and worked in the drug store part time. His legal clients would often sit at the fountain area eating ice cream and drinking coffee while waiting for Stanley to finish filling prescriptions.

Cushings received awards from drug manufacturers and distributors for the large number of prescriptions filled. This also meant that Cushings was often among the first to receive newly developed drugs and medicines. Often there were as many as six pharmacists sharing the shifts filling prescriptions. Arthur Peters was one of the pharmacists and opened his own drug store on West Main Street which later became part of the REXALL chain.

In 1960 operation of the store was turned over to Thomas Cushing, Robert's son. In 1965 Robert died, and Tom inherited the building as well. Ellis Burdick, who had been with the store since 1913, stayed on part time until his death in the 1970s. Tom, although not a pharmacist, ran the drug store until 1980. By then it was clear that the retail market was changing. Large drug chains were moving into the suburbs. Cushing's drug store was being left behind. The store was sold to Brian Huckle and Gordon Tussing and the name changed to Lancaster Pharmacy.



*Cushing's original store on Central Ave. destroyed by fire in 1896; note wood sidewalks and steps to entrance.*

They remained in business only until 1981. The building was then purchased by Robert Schaff who renovated the store into an office building, which is now occupied by Schaff Enterprises. Throughout this period Tom Cushing remained in the U.S. Army active reserve. He retired in 1991 with the rank of Brigadier General.

Back in 1967 Cushings celebrated its 75th anniversary. Tom Cushing put together the following list of people who at one time or another were employed in the drug store. That list of 245 people along with their approximate starting year is shown following this article.



*FRANKLIN CUSHING'S THREE-STORY BRICK BUILDING WITH TOWN HALL IN BACKGROUND. THE BUILDING ON THE FAR LEFT IS THE BANK OF LANCASTER. THE SMALL BUILDING BETWEEN THE BANK AND CUSHING'S IS THE GAS COMPANY BUILDING.*

Sou  
ria  
lot

Carol J. Abenschein	1948
Laura Abenschein	1948
Simon P. Adolf	1945
Mrs. K. Allein	1948
Bruce Anderson	1941
Christian C. Anderson	1950
Ida Anderson	1953
Anthony Arcese	1952
Loretta V. Baccari	1956
Gladys Baker	1942
Celia Bauer	1910
Barbara A. Beilman	1961
Margaret Z. Bell	1960
Judith A. Bellas	1961
Ronald R. Biscaro	1961
Verna Black	1950
Hazel Blackman	1950
Anna Blair	1925
William Blessing	1948
Austin Bock	1948
Richard Bohlen	1945
Wallace Breisch	****
Florence L. Brock	1956
Calvin G. Brown	1941
Eleanor Brown	1952
Geoffrey R. Brown	1962
Joseph W. Brown	1958
Celia Bruce	1941
Lillian Buehlman	1951
Margaret M. Buehlman	1952
Peter Bunck	1940
Beatrice Burdick	1936
Josephine Burdick	1943
Phyllis Burdick	1940
Edna E. Butler	1952
Dorothy Burke	1924
Gertude Cady	****
William Cannon	****
Charles J. Cawein	1956
Anna Cervo	1962
Huntley Chapin	****
Rhoda Chase	1900
Eleanor E. Chiuppi	1955
Joyce Chiuppi	1954
Grace Church	1923
Marjorie M. Cimmerer	1951
Jeanette K. Clark	1951
Catherine Clevinger	1953
Horace Colt	1917
June Converse	1956
Louise P. Cottingham	1961
Robert H. Cox	1943
Robert Cullen	1917
Alden T. Cushing	1907
Charles Cushing	1900
Franklin Cushing	1940
Helen Cushing	1916
Janet Cushing	1925
John A. Cushing	1912
Marianne Cushing	1948
Marion Cushing	1942
Robert H. Cushing Jr.	1940
Ruth Cushing	1917
Thomas S. Cushing	1952
Gordon R. Davidson	1960
G. Craig DeFries	1943
William Delahunt	1892
John Dempsey	1928
Rose DiBartolomeo	1957
Patrick E. Dobson Jr.	1960
Nina A. Doran	1959
Anna Dykstra	1938



*Storefront after the 1960 remodeling.*

Ralph Dykstra	1940
Grace M. Eicheldinger	1954
Lucy Felli	1962
David F. Flierl	1957
Florian Flierl	1946
Duane W. Fischer	1952
Dorothy Fragale	1951
Elaine Fries	1953
Dennis J. Garry	1959
Florence Giglia	1962
Arthur Gillon	1945
Marie Girardin	1953
Virginia L. Grace	1956
Harriet C. Graham	1957
Mary M. Graham	1956
Patricia A. Graham	1957
Beatrice A. Graney	1955
Florence G. Green	1958
Mary E. Green	1960
Wilbert Green	1948
Eunice Griffith	1952
Paul Haberle	1943
E.R. Hall	1942
Robert Hambridge	1946
June Hanna	1942
Dorothy Hayes	1950
Shirley M. Hayes	1957
Ruth E. Hebut	1953
Ann T. Heidle	1957
Ethel Heim	****
William Heine	1928
Ethel May Helms	1956
Mrs. Fred Henry	1917
Grace Hessler	1948
Shirley J. Hirsch	1943
John D. Hoffman Jr.	1955
Edelgard R. Horning	1961
Ruth S. Hutchinson	1958
Andrew Jones	1954
Raymond R. Ignatz	1945
Vira May Ingalsbe	1956
Zoe Ann Ingalsbe	1957
Anne E. Jackson	1960
Carol Jurewicz	1960
Mary Keicher	1941
Elli E. Kemna	1960
Janis Kenline	
Dennis A. Kessler	1955
Helen Keysa	1926
Joseph Keysa	1929
Stanley Keysa	1925
Mary T. Killian	1954
Cora King	1959

Richard W. Kinnen	1944	Beatrice H. Smith	1950
Alice M. Klein	1956	Eleanor A. Smith	1953
Paul J.P. Klonowski	1956	Georgiana M. Smith	1955
Mary Kolodziemczar	1962	Louise Smith	1956
Margaret M. Kucio	1960	Shirley Snyder	1945
Michael P. Kraemer	1958	Inger A. Solum	1942
David Kramer	1959	Edward Spillane	1943
Jeanette Krieke	1945	David Stansberry	1947
Norma Lee Lahnen	1951	James W. Stansberry	1945
Donald Lambrix	1926	William Stansberry	1948
Ethel Marie Lambrix	1930	Onnolee Stevens	1948
Edwin Lawniczak	1947	Lena Stoetzel	1908
Clara A. Leupold	1959	Anne Lucille Stutzman	1945
Joanie Madge	1953	Catherine Stutzman	1925
Donald Mansius	1948	Raymond H. Stutzman	1944
Harriett Martzolf	1926	Janet Swatsworth	1958
Howard A. Mason Jr.	1944	Frank T. Sweeney	1945
Mildred E. Matloon	1957	William Sweet	1950
Kate McHugh	1942	David Swinton	1945
Richard G. McMillian	1960	Florence C. Symer	1956
Thomas P. McMillian	1961	Donald J. Tabone	1958
James Messinger	1941	Rose M. Tabone	1958
Rita K. Mikol	1962	Bertha Taylor	1950
Edward Mikula	1941	Loretta E. Taylor	1959
Cora Miller	1955	Sidney A. Taylor Jr.	1959
Jo Ann Miller	1955	Charles Teague	1957
Louis Monin	1943	Evelyn Thomas	1942
Joan A. Monnin	1954	Erma E. Thore	1954
William Murchison	1917	Michael D. Thore	1959
Marion Myers	1951	Mary Joan Tomczak	1952
Ruth C. Naab	1961	Doreen S. Tortorice	1952
Patricia Niespodziewany	1952	Birdsall Tremaine	1917
Katherine M. Ott	1962	Marie Anne Tucker	1962
Dar Palmer	1945	Hilda Mae Urquhart	1940
Mary Jane Paplow	1953	Janice Vesper	1947
Arthur Peters	1909	David A. Walker	1955
Katherine Peters	1950	Shirley Walls	1944
Eileen M. Pfohl	1945	Frank E. Ward	1957
June Raynor	1940	Mrs. Weinstein	1917
Eleanor Richardson	1910	Marlene A. Wendel	1957
Leslie Riebenkam	****	Joyce Winder	1953
Nancy Roberts	1960	Marilyn Wirt	1945
Cornelius O. Robinson	1951	Paul Wise	1957
Evelyn K. Robinson	1956	Nestor B. Wydysh	1960
Violet M.H. Robinson	1957	Boyd Young	1925
Earl W. Rohl	1946	Norma Young	1936
Judith A. Rohmer	1961	Gertrude Zaborowski	1956
Patricia A. Rohmer	1957	Dorothy Zasowski	1958
Sylvia M. Ross	1960	Margaret Zimpfer	1953
Frank Rozek	****		
Walter Rozek	****		
Ceola Rupprecht	1919		
Robert Schaff	1945		
Gladys Scharzenholzer	1955		
Paul Scheier	1943		
David A. Schibler	1960		
Rodney C. Schiffla	1960		
Jerilynn J. Schilling	1961		
Madeline T. Schnabel	1945		
Charles Schouten	1905		
Carol Schrader	1960		
Susan A. Shaffer	1960		
George Sheehan	1925		
George Sheehan Jr.	1947		
Mabel Sheehan	1910		
Shirley Sheehan	1949		
Rita Sheldon	1960		
Everett Simme	1940		
Ralph Simme	1939		
Donald Sizer	1948		
James Smelley	****		



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## Little Red Schoolhouse Reunion

The Little Red Schoolhouse, the name given to the long idle red brick, one-room schoolhouse on the corner of Bowen and William will hold a reunion of former students and others on Sunday, Sept. 22 at 2:00pm.

The school opened in 1868 and closed on or about 1955. It was lovingly restored in 1977. The one classroom is now filled with old-fashioned student desks, a teacher's desk on a raised platform, old blackboards on the walls, student slates and a number of textbooks from long ago.

The school is administered and cleaned by the Lancaster Historical Society. Major maintenance is provided by the Town of Lancaster Department of Parks, Buildings, and Grounds. It is open only through special arrangement with the Lancaster Historical Society.

Many elementary schools throughout Western New York make arrangements to hold one-day classes at the school, coming from as far away as Grand Island. Sometimes students and teachers come in old-fashioned clothes. There were 18 such classes during the past school year. The school originally had an outhouse, a bucket of water for drinking, and a wood stove fired up early every

winter morning. Now it has a bathroom, running water turned off in winter, electric lighting and a telephone.

The former students look back to those years with a great deal of affection and nostalgia. They can attest to the modern view of educational professionals that the old one-room school with a good teacher provided a superb education.



Lancaster, New York  
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