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Man pens history of Salina's Galeville community along Onondaga Lake

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By

We all remember Galeville Grocery, on Old Liverpool Road. Fondly.

The replacement opened last summer, under the Byrne Dairy brand, and it's a complete rebuild, mimicking the original, which was there as early as 1888. Most likely, the first Galeville, was a company store, for the Galeville salt works. Thomas Gale had the last of the "salt blocks" on the spot, closing down in 1926.

That's why there was a bell on the roof peak, which the Byrne folks kept and rehung in its old spot. We're told the saltmakers rang the bell to signal rain; salt crystals drying in sheds had roofs that rolled open and shut to keep the salt dry.

The new store, which Byrne retail president Mark Byrne called a "replacement grocery store," has gas pumps. The Liverpool grocery brings the number of Byrne stores to 53.

Paul Case (no kin to me) steps forward as the unofficial historian of Galeville, a little settlement that hangs onto its identity, with the big GALEVILLE sign hung out front. I'm writing about Paul today because he's brought out a new 19-page booklet on the store he's titled "Joseph of Galeville."

Joseph is a reference to his grandparents, Joseph and Michalina Bugnacki, and to St. Joseph, who was the grocer's patron saint. The Bugnackis were Polish immigrants who settled in Galeville in 1903. Joseph worked in Thomas Gale's salt yards and eventually moved into the store and managed it.

Paul Case writes in his memoir that the Joseph Bugnacki was invited by Thomas Gale "to move his growing family into Gale's building...he also wanted him to manage the store which occupied a small portion of the first floor."

Joseph later took over the store and had it for about 30 years.

Last April, I published the recollections of Paul's cousin, Elaine Lostumbo, about Galeville grocery and crediting the Bugnackis with being the first full-time grocers in the place. Joseph and Michalina had 12 children, including four sets of twins. Joseph died in 1947, his wife two years later.

Later owners of Galeville grocery were Art Tucci, Frank Alteri and Bernie Rivers. Bernie, we recall, got to be known

as the "mayor of Galeville." The family sold to Byrne when Bernie died last year.

Paul Case's mother was Ida, one of the Bugnacki children. Her father, Joseph, "had a sincere devotion to his patron saint." A statue to the saint, which used to be in the store, now hangs in Paul's place on Ridge Avenue in Galeville.

Homer Wheaton



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Homer Wheaton was killed in France in 1918 when he saved his fellow soldiers by putting his body on a grenade that someone dropped.

Homer Wheaton, whose friends called "Wheat," is remembered as being the first man from Syracuse to die in battle in World War I. He was killed in the explosion of a grenade in Lorraine, France, in 1918. He is buried in a small cemetery in a French village a few miles behind the lines.

Homer had a park on the East Side named for him as well as a street, Wheaton Road, on the North Side. A monument to Homer was raised at Immaculate Conception Cemetery in Pompey.

There had been Wheatons in Onondaga County for several generations when Homer was born at the homestead farm near the hamlet of Pompey in 1882. Horace Wheaton was mayor of Syracuse in 1851. Homer moved to Syracuse as a youth. He went to The Manlius School and Syracuse University after that.

He left the university, and the city, to take a job writing about sports in Worcester, Mass. He joined an Army reserve unit in Worcester. When war broke out, he was in Company G of the Massachusetts 101st Infantry.

A buddy who was at the front when Homer was killed described how he died:

Corporal Wheaton, acting as a sergeant, "began to direct the distribution of hand grenades in his platoon.... There were chilled hands and nervous fingers that reached for the grenades.... One grenade slipped from the hands that sought it, dropped to the ground and dislodged in its fall the detonating pin. Without the pin, it would explode in five seconds. Nine men stood at the threshold of death...

"Corporal Wheaton saw the grenade fall...He picked it up and chugged it to his side."

It exploded, killing Homer.

His family received the Distinguished Service Cross and the French Cross.

Worcester named a public square and a VFW post for Homer Wheaton.

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