

East Falls Past--The Depression Years

The Fallser, April 2008, by Wendy Moody

Seventeen years ago, a group of senior citizens met at the Falls Library to participate in a discussion on “The Depression Years.” Led by gerontologist Cherie Snyder and co-sponsored by Interac Senior Center and the Library, the group shared their vivid recollections of life in East Falls in the 1930s:

They remembered:

- The peddlers who came door to door selling apples, horseradish, watercress, and clothes props.
 - The English muffin man, the umbrella man, the wild mushroom man, the scissors man *[photo]*, the waffle man, and the deviled crab man.
- Local grocers, such as the Clayton Brothers on Conrad and Bowman, who extended credit to the neighbors.
- Bertrand Tregau, the Abbotts milk man.
- The group of Depression-era young mothers who dubbed themselves the “silly sisters of the sick.”
- Beer for 5 cents (and the third one free) at Quinn’s Bar, Ainslie and Conrad.
- Local politicians, Carl Meyers and John Daly, who helped people out during the Depression.
- “Charley the movie man” who owned the Alden movie house (which stands where the National Penn Bank is today) and provided coal to those who needed it.
- Eleven cent movies.
- Collecting railroad ties to burn for heat.
- Picking coal on the railroad tracks in East Falls.
- Stretching food with such recipes as Poorman’s Cake.
- The WPA crew who built Mifflin School.
- Catching carp in the Schuylkill River.
- The taste of “home brew”
- Gas priced at 50 cents for five gallons.



- The sense of community pride and togetherness that characterized the Depression.