

Reminiscences of Rachel Henrietta Gehrlein Holtz

Rachel Henrietta Gehrlein was the daughter of Frank and Ida Becker Gehrlein, and she married Arthur Holtz. On 2 May 2002 Rachel took some time to write down some reminiscences regarding her life when she was a child in the home of her parents at 1707 French Street, Erie, PA. That address perfectly matches the address of the Frank Gehrlein Family in the 1930 Federal Census, where Rachel was listed as a daughter of age 9 years old. The attached pages that she wrote in 2002 were in the possession of Arthur and Rachel Gehrlein Holtz's daughter Janice Holtz when Rachel passed away on 17 August 2019 in Erie. Janice Holtz sent copies of her mother's written account of her family and how they got by in the 1930's to me, and copies of those pages are attached.

William V. Gehrlein
Lewes, Delaware
September 2019

May 2-2002

1707 French St

House filled with children
and only the basic necessities

No furnace - Coal stoves
in downstairs rooms
downstairs

Bedrooms usually didn't have
any heat, freezing cold in winter

No washers, dryers, no modern
toasters etc., that came later

Electric light ^{bulbs} were clear
glass, you could see the filaments

Toilet paper was a luxury

No books

No radio

No magazines

No nothing

Did have an electric iron
where 18-20 shirts were ironed ^{each}
in a week.

"1707 French St" 1920^s-1930^s

The house was box size,
painted gray (probably lead
paint in those days)

There were eight rooms, five
rooms on first floor, three
bedrooms, bathroom and open
space where a bed was placed.

Very cold in winter, hot in
summer.

The kitchen was in the rear of
the house with a coal and gas
stove, kitchen sink, cup boards
and a long office sized table
that seated ^{mine} children and two
adults this room was where
^{most} many meals were prepared and
eaten, all food was served in
large portions.

There was a hard wood floor
that was so smooth you could
slide across it

The roof was made of tin and when it rained, you could hear the sound of the rain drops like musical tones.

The inside of the kitchen was wood walls and ceiling from top to bottom, because of the tin roof and leaking of water from rain and snow, in the spring time the wood became damp and because of the wood ceiling, between the cracks of the ceiling, wood worms would drop on the floor and table top, it wasn't a pleasant sight until the weather got warmer and it was over until the next spring.

The house was heated with coal stoves, coal was two dollars a ton, there was a gas tank for heating water and baths, washing clothes, the monthly gas bill was seventy five cents electric the same.

Costapation ✓

"1707" French St
Thanksgiving

A 20 or 25 lb. turkey
One peck potatoes
all the trimmings
Nine children
Mother, Father
Aunt, Uncle

Other meals

~~Baked~~ 18-20 cinnamon cakes
Vegetable soup
Chicken noodle soup (noodle)?
Roasts, pork chops
Lake Erie Perch
Baked beans with pork ham
hocks or salt pork
Liver, usually tough,
cakes liver better but costs
too much.
Milk, 10¢ quart. 1 lb. Butter 40¢
10¢ lb. sugar

conspicuous.

Usually everyone was present at meals, around supper time Father would go outside and give out a huge whistle and everyone better run home.

Mother did all the work, cooking, cleaning, ironing and mostly filling the coal buckets which had to be brought up from the dimly lit cellar.

Near as I can count she had the nine children (every two or three years) apart.

Imagine all those cloth diapers, feeding, clothing, washing. He was cheerful, loving and caring, she was the one that kept the family together.

W. W. W. W. W.

Mom
Song Mom sang

Show me the way to go home
Had a little drink about
an hour ~~ago~~ ago, and it went
right to my head

Over land or sea or foam
Show me the way to go home

No matter where I roam
you will always hear me
singing, show me the way
to go home (singing a song)

A staunch Catholic always
went to confession, in later
years ~~the~~ a priest would
come to the home to give her
communion

In her early years she attended a school that taught German and later in life if she had the urge to swear, she would swear in German, Gott in Himmel etc!

When she was a little girl she had thick auburn hair, one time her Mother made one hundred long curls, she was truly beautiful and always smiling.

When young worked for the Boston store and also a button factory

She rarely spanked the children that was left to (the old man) he must have been in his thirties which made him the bad guy because he over did it but that's another story

Friends

Otto and Georgia Gaertner

Ethel and Pete Lockbaum

Kitty Wose

Florence Bauer, Josephine
Ted, Buddy, Autumn
The Slatt family from
St Mary ^{daughters. Sons}

Grand-ma -

Francis, Amanda, Margaret

The Twins - Margaret, Amanda
Each had a little girl
about the same age but they
were cousins

At that time about six years old
they played violins together
and it was very cute

Clean

Brown Iels Napta soap (Lye) was the soap of the days wash
Clothes were washed in a tub with hot water (heated on the stove) coal heated on left side and gas grill on the right.

Clothes were scrubbed with the fels napta bar soap on a scrub board, a hand wringer) was used to roller
wring out the water in the summer the clothes were hung out doors on a clothes line
In winter a small heater was used in the bath room to heat the room to dry the clothes on lines hung across the bath room.

The bath tub hot water was turned on once a week for a hot bath the rest of the week pan washing was at the kitchen sink

In the 1900^s

People of little means

Babies were born at home
Mothers were up and about
in a few days

Doctors would come to the
home for deliveries and serious
infections, for routine visits
the fee was two to three dollars

Broken arms and legs
were treated at the emergency
room.

Hospitals smelled of ether?
and it was unpleasant to have
to^{go} there.

You would only go to the
dentist when teeth were so decayed
they had to be extracted.

The word cancer was never
spoken and if you were a
cancer victim, you died, there
were no cures~~at~~ at that time.

If you had cataracts, you
went blind, there was no
cure.

~~Remo~~

Penyolds Drug Store
18th State

Green and Red large vase,
like containers containing liquids
sparkled in the windows
This is where medicines were
purchased

Sticks of sweet wood
from a sweet wood tree
were sold for a penny or two
the size about a pencil size
and they were sweet tasting
and you would ^{chew} ~~suck~~ them
until the sweetness was gone
and what was left were
strings of sweet wood

✓ Mom's Medicine Chest ✓
Camphor - oil camphorated
Rubbed on chest for coughs
and colds

Sweet oil

Warmed on a tea spoon and
a drop or two inserted into ^{ear} for (ear)
ear aches. (dropped)

Paregoric

A drop or two in water for
babies stomach upsets

Thrush - carbolic salve - ^{also} cuts
scrapes

Fresh urine diaper was
rubbed on babies tongue for
cleansing, small portion
seemed to work (tip of diaper

gargle
Iodine - Sore throats - ^{warm} salt water

For cuts and scrapes

Castor oil (ugh)
Constipation

Chicken pox, measles -
infections

Put in a darkened room
away from other children,
kept warm, liquids, would
sleep and wait for fever to subside

Colds. Coughs

Would fry cut up onions
slightly cooked, wrapped up
into a squared piece of flannel
cloth stuck together to hold
warmed onion, put on chest
don't know if it did any good
but if it smelled good you were
on the road to recovery ha!

check spelling
Also flannel was used with
camphor oil wrapped around
the neck for a sore throat?

Sore throats

Gargle with warm salt water

To heal cuts
cut up cubes of bread were
soaked in warmed milk and
lightly squeezed and put on
cuts with bandages made with
strips made from clean old
sheets.

Broken arm
✓ Sick-emergency room
Nearly severed tongue, broken
teeth - emergency room
~~sew~~ tongue sewed back together
~~severe~~ high temperatures
~~so~~ high fevers, sore
throats, emergency room
painted throats with meiacrome
and gave enemas mecaethorne
severe cuts
stitches tetanus shots