



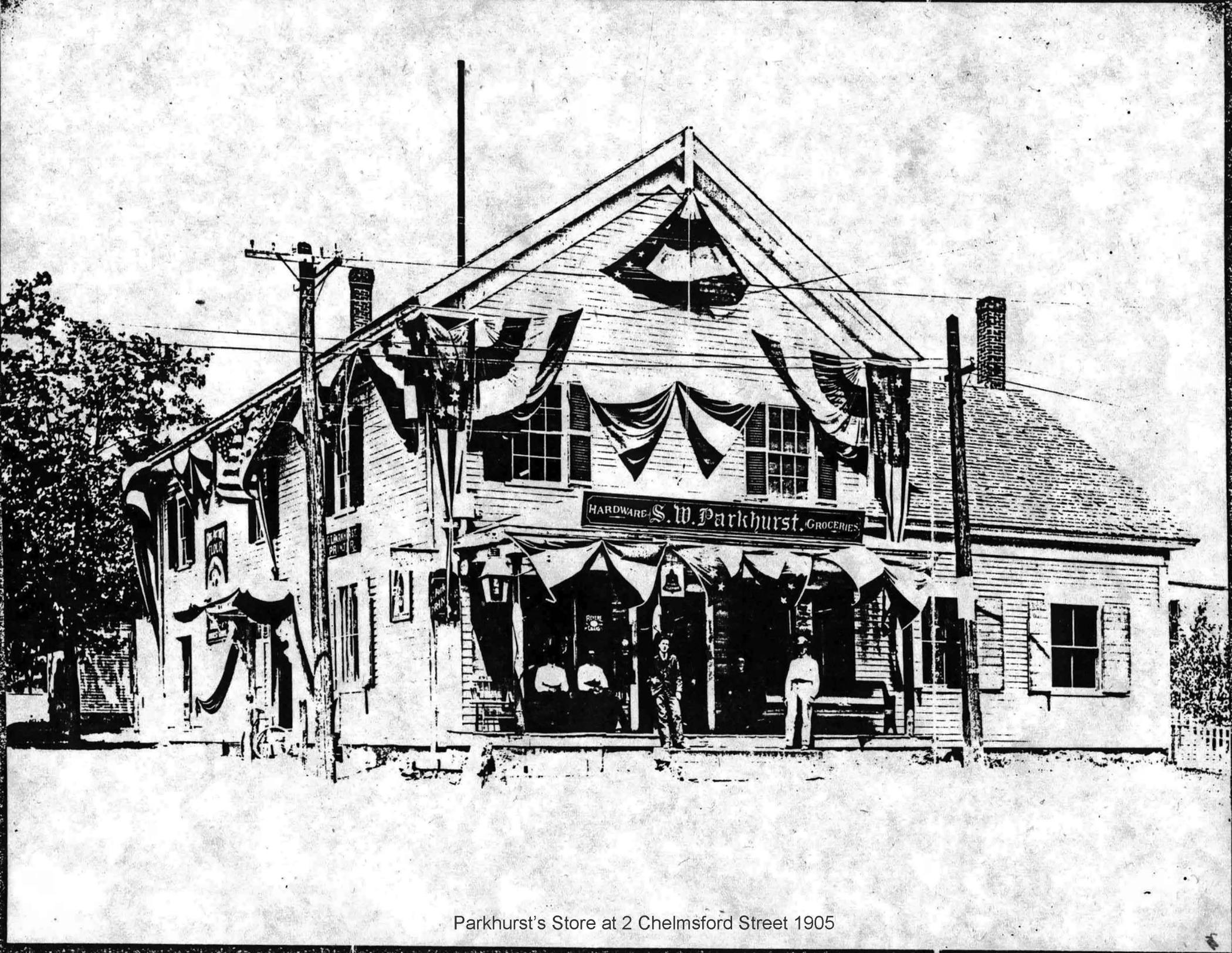
Parkhurst's Store at its original location on North Road before relocation to make room for the railroad c.1870



Parkhurst's Store at 2 Chelmsford Street location c. 1890



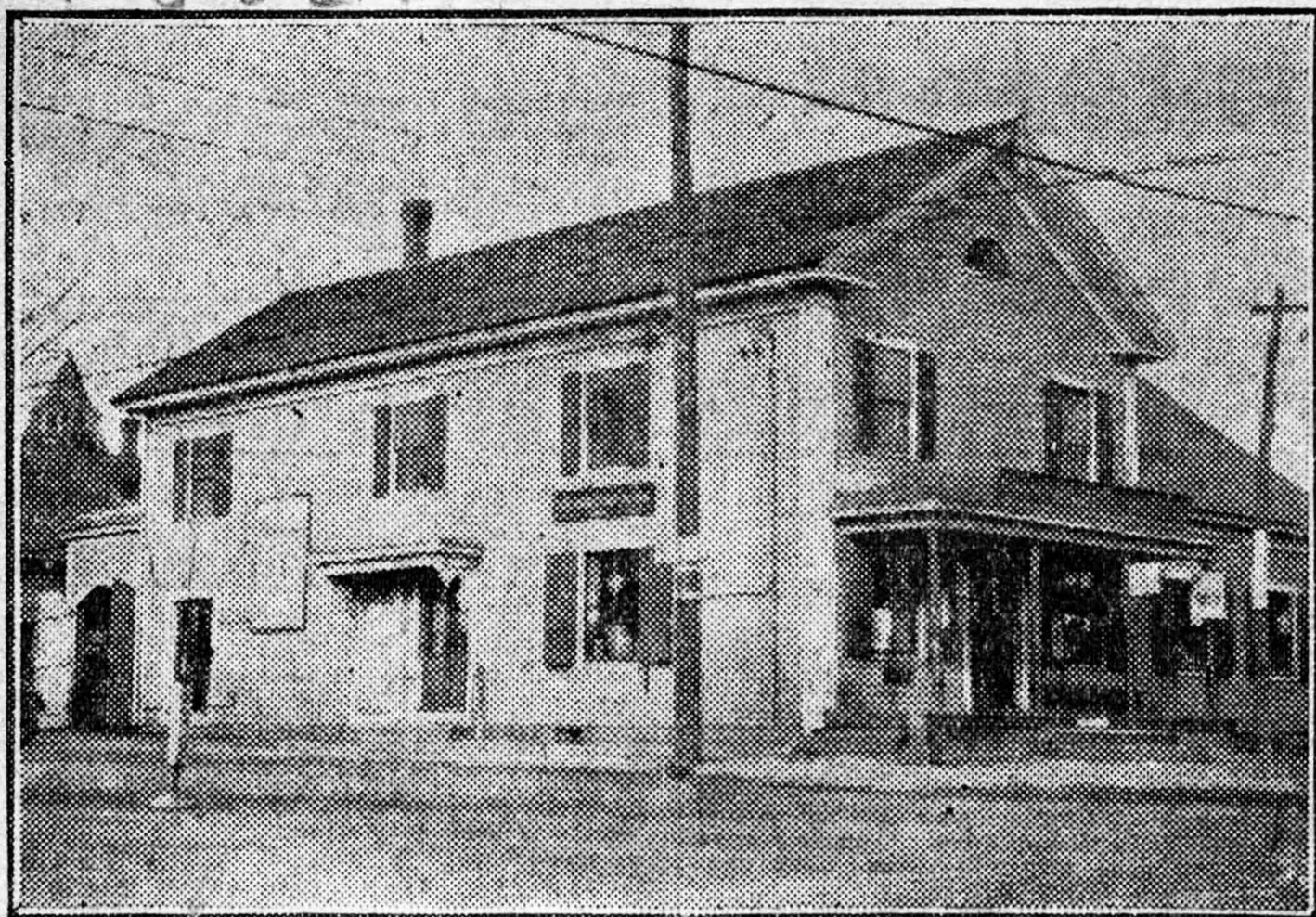
Parkhurst's Store at 2 Chelmsford Street location c.1900



Parkhurst's Store at 2 Chelmsford Street 1905

PARKHURST'S STORE IN CHELMSFORD CENTRE SOON TO PASS INTO HANDS OF BOSTON FIRM

JULY 27 1923



PARKHURST'S STORE.

About the first of August, the well known grocery business at the corner of Lowell road, in Central Square, known as "Parkhurst's store," will pass into the hands of a Boston firm and for the first time within the memory of the oldest inhabitant the business will be conducted by other than a local firm.

As far back as 1843, with a few brief intervals there has been a "Parkhurst's store" at Chelmsford Centre. At that time the store was owned by S. S. Parkhurst, a great-uncle of the present owner, S. W. Parkhurst, and was on the site of the so-called Central block. This building was burned, and the present building was erected by E. King Parkhurst about where the flagman's house is now at the railroad crossing. At the corner where the store now is was at that time a tavern, kept by Henry Proctor, and this was a popular over-night stop for those taking the long journey from New Hampshire to Boston. The tavern was destroyed by fire in 1861, and evidences of the blaze may still be found on the stately old elms about the square.

When the Framingham and Lowell Railroad opened what is now the N. Y., N. H. and H. division, in 1871, the store was moved to its present location. The upper part of the building was used as a hall called "Central hall" and was the scene of many dances and social times. It was also used by the women of the town who banded themselves together during the Civil war as "Soldiers Aid Society," as a meeting place while they worked for the soldiers.

In 1845 the business was taken over by Thomas Howe and later by E. F. Webster, but in 1851 it again came into the Parkhurst family with E. A. Parkhurst as the owner; he was succeeded by Hill and Parkhurst seven years later and they by John E. Stevens. In 1862 the business was brought by E. King Parkhurst, who sold it in 1865, S. S. Parkhurst again taking up the

business. Samuel Cummings and Libby & Evans both controlled it for a short time until in 1880 when it was brought by the present owner, S. Waldo Parkhurst. For a time he had with him his brother, the late George A. Parkhurst, who afterwards was connected with the Lowell Weekly Journal.

Many changes have come about in the business during the years since Mr. Parkhurst has had the store. At that time the store opened promptly at 5.30 in the morning and was open every evening until 9 o'clock. A little later the store closed on Monday evenings only and gradually led up to the present hours for opening and closing. Wages were less in those days. A boy who started in to work could not expect to get over \$3 or \$4 a week for some time and \$10 a week was good pay to look forward to in the future. The stock of those days was that of a miniature department store—groceries, crockery, hardware, tools, seeds, implements, dry goods, candy, fruits and vegetables. All of the cereals, rolled oats, rice, etc., came in barrels; crackers were also in barrels, raisins and currants in bulk, codfish by the whole fish only, and the variety of canned goods was decidedly limited. The store of the olden times was the men's social club of the village and it was the usual thing after the work was done to "go down to the store." Here questions political and social were thrashed out verbally, and occasionally physically, and many a story is told of the lively times around the stove at the store, on a winter's night. Gradually as in everything else, the country store has become modernized, the stock limited to groceries, the hours to conform with those of the city. During the past few years Mr. Parkhurst's health has not allowed him to take an active part in the business and his daughter, Miss Emma L. Parkhurst, has assumed the control.

The boy donned shoes and a career

By CHRISTINE MCKENNA
Sun Staff

CHELMSFORD — Not much after the turn of the century, when Henry Eriksen was still a schoolboy, he stocked shelves for \$2 a week at Ebon T. Adams' general store in Chelmsford Center.

"In the summertime I used to go barefoot like all the kids," remembers Eriksen today. "But Mrs. Adams said to me, 'young fella, if you're gonna hang around here, put some shoes on' — so I did."

Retired now, Eriksen, who will be 83 next month, worked part time at Adams' store for several years. In 1923, he moved across the center to the big yellow building on the corner of Chelmsford Street to become manager for the chains that bought out S.W. Parkhurst's store.

In 1941, he bought the store himself and proudly hoisted the "Eriksen's General Store" sign that remained on it until he retired in 1969.

If you don't believe that some people are born to a certain occupation, you've never met Eriksen.

The same boy who was willing to wear shoes all summer so he could work in Adams' store, also raced there ahead of his classmates in the "rush" when school broke for lunch.

His only pay was a couple of donuts or fig bars — and, of course, the thrill of working in the store.

If an advertising agency combed the world for a person with the right face, voice and personality to represent a supermarket chain wanting to project an "old-fashioned" image, it could do no better than Henry Eriksen.

His blue eyes twinkle, his round face breaks into frequent, broad smiles, conversation comes easily to him.

The lines that etch his face are soft, and his eyes often flash a little-boy excitement and wonder that is remarkable after surviving 83 years of life's vicissitudes.

Like any old-time grocer worth his salt, Eriksen loves to hear and tell stories.

"There used to be a porch on the front of the store, you know," he says. "It had a bench on it and my old cronies would come and sit and talk to me."

Back in the 1930s, conversation among the cronies on the bench buzzed when a stranger from Lowell came to town and fatally shot young police officer Donald Adams.

It seems the stranger came around the store acting suspiciously. When Adams hopped on the electric car that ran by the store to talk to the stranger, the man shot him.

"Harold Davis was on the same car and hit the man with an iron bar,"

Chelmsford

Eriksen recalls. Justice was served but the incident shocked the town and kept it humming for a while.

"That was a big thing to happen in such a small town," points out Helen, Eriksen's wife of 61 years.

The street car that was the scene of the murder ran from Chelmsford Center into Lowell until the 1930s.

For a nickel, many of the men in town rode it into their city jobs at Pollard's Department Store or one of the Lowell mills. On winter mornings the men would gather in the store to wait for the electric car, said Eriksen.

"Around 1918, there was a lot of snow and wet rain," he recalls. "Then it got cold, freezing up the tracks."

The riders, businessmen and residents in the area grabbed picks, shovels and axes and began hacking away at the ice. "The railroad sent some equipment, but it wasn't enough," said Eriksen.

"It happened twice, remember?" he asks, looking toward his wife. "We got a lot of snow those years."

The Chelmsford center business district reflected the needs of different times before World War II. According to Eriksen, there were two blacksmith shops, a harness shop and a Chinese laundry as well as the three general stores in business then.

In the early part of the century, the grocery store employees would go house to house every morning — by horse and cart in the summer and by horse and sleigh in the winter — to take orders.

Then they would go back to the store, fill the orders and deliver them in the afternoon.

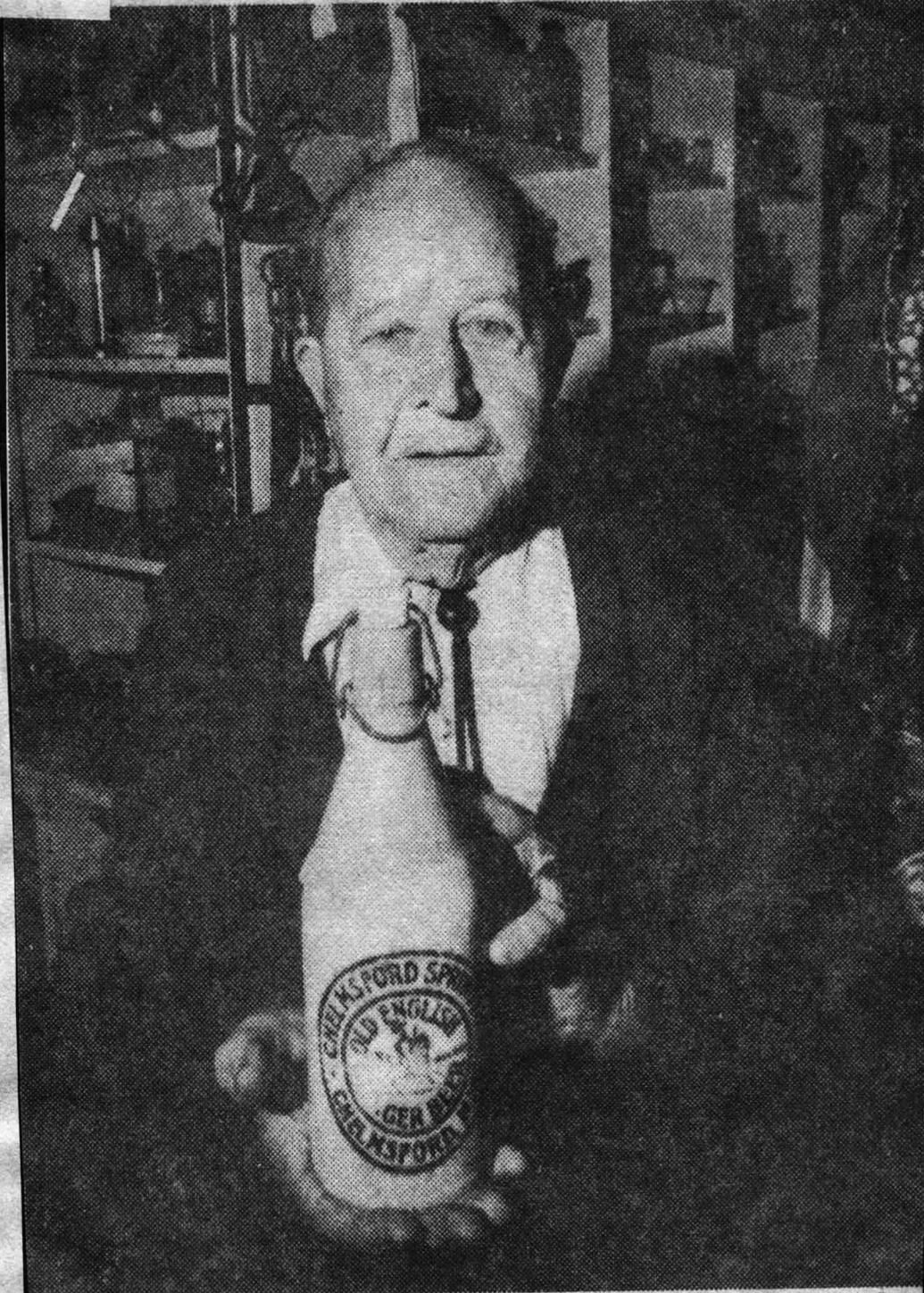
"There was a long stretch from Mill Road down Turnpike Road where there were no houses," remembers Eriksen. "In the winter it was pretty cold in the open sleigh, so I would get off, give the horse a rap on his rear end and run behind the sleigh to keep warm," he laughed.

In 1923 E.E. Gray Co. of Boston bought out Parkhurst's store and offered Eriksen \$21.50 a week plus one percent commission to manage the store. Eriksen, who had been earning \$20 a week at Adams' store, told Gray to forget the commission but held out for a \$28 weekly salary and got it.

In the 1930s, Economy Stores, the forerunner of Stop and Shop, bought the store, retaining Eriksen as manager.

Eriksen finally realized his dream when he bought the business from Economy in 1941.

The building was owned by the Parkhursts who had run a general store in it for 80 years.



HENRY ERIKSEN

Sun staff photo by Mike Pigeon

... with antique ginger beer bottle

The building was constructed across from the common in 1843 but when the railroad came through the center in 1871, the building was moved to its current location.

Eriksen may be retired, but he's still a general store operator at heart and from his big white Chelmsford Street home, diagonally across from his old store, he sells antiques out of his barn.

"Selling antiques is something to do and I love it," he says. When Purity Supermarkets, and then the other large supermarkets, came to Chelmsford in the 1950s and 60s, he lost much of his grocery business, he says, and turned to selling hardware and antiques from the store.

Eriksen's barn is crammed with a mind-boggling array of goods, much of it left over from his store and the inventory of Kidder's Hardware, which he bought out in the late 1930s.

While giving a tour of the barn, he reveals two forces that drew him all his life to the general store business — the need for people contact and a love of collecting things.

"I liked sitting around chewing the fat, it's what I miss most," he says of his retirement. "People would come in all day to buy candy or cigarettes and talk."

He even liked all the kids who hung around the store after school. "We did a big candy business," he said, but pointed out that they lost some business to kids stealing candy bars.

Winking, Eriksen says "if I caught them, I'd make them pay, but, they were just kids, you know what I mean?"

Pulling out old files, he shows hundreds of dollars worth of unpaid credit slips that go back over the years. He says the hardest part of the job for him was collecting money — he just didn't like to do it.

Shrugging, he closes the file and says "that was part of it, you gave credit but some just people couldn't pay."

Eriksen saves everything. He has a set of brass window pulls and screws left from Kidder's inventory in its original package. Asking price: five cents.

He has war ration stubs and chits, a jar of Volpe campaign buttons, Gold Dust soap powder, 20 Muleteam Borax in the old-style box and hundreds of draws filled with things like pipe fittings, wire hooks, nuts, bolts, screws, door lock parts and bits.

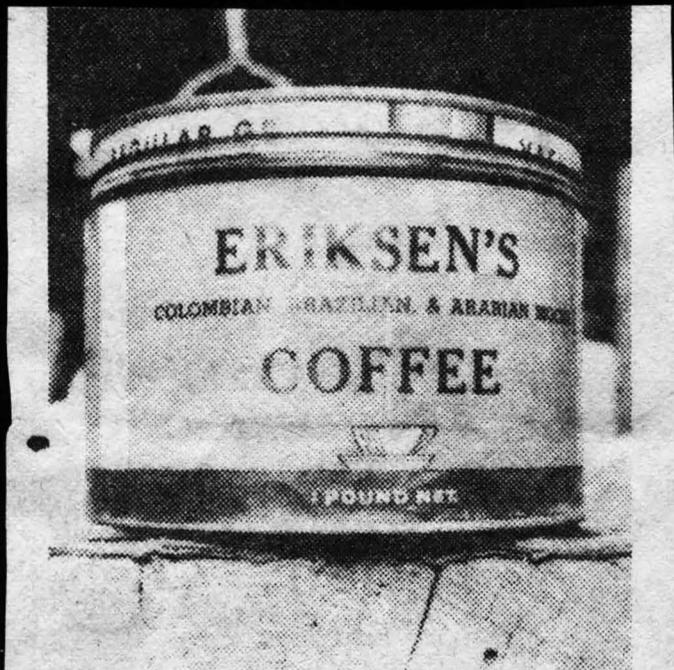
And he keeps buying. "Here's something good - wait 'til you see this that I bought the other day," he says, running into the far reaches of the barn to retrieve a new treasure.

What you just bought the other day? It's near-impossible to navigate the barn now, points out a visitor.

Eriksen stops a minute, to try to explain. "My wife says to me all the time, why do you want to buy more? I tell her, that's not the point, I may find something I don't have. I like to find old, odd things, you know what I mean?"

When the tour is over, Eriksen steps out into the warm summer afternoon and looks around. "Hmm, no business today," he says. "I expected more people by on a day like today."

"Oh well," he says, with a little smile and a shrug, "I just do this for something to do. I like to talk to people."



Sun Staff photo by Mike Pigeon

Good to the last drop

Henry Eriksen, 83 years young, used to run a general store in Chelmsford. He's still a storekeeper at heart and sells antiques from the barn near his home. The barn is crammed with a mind-boggling array of goods, much of it left over from his store - including this can of choice regular grind coffee. Page 9.



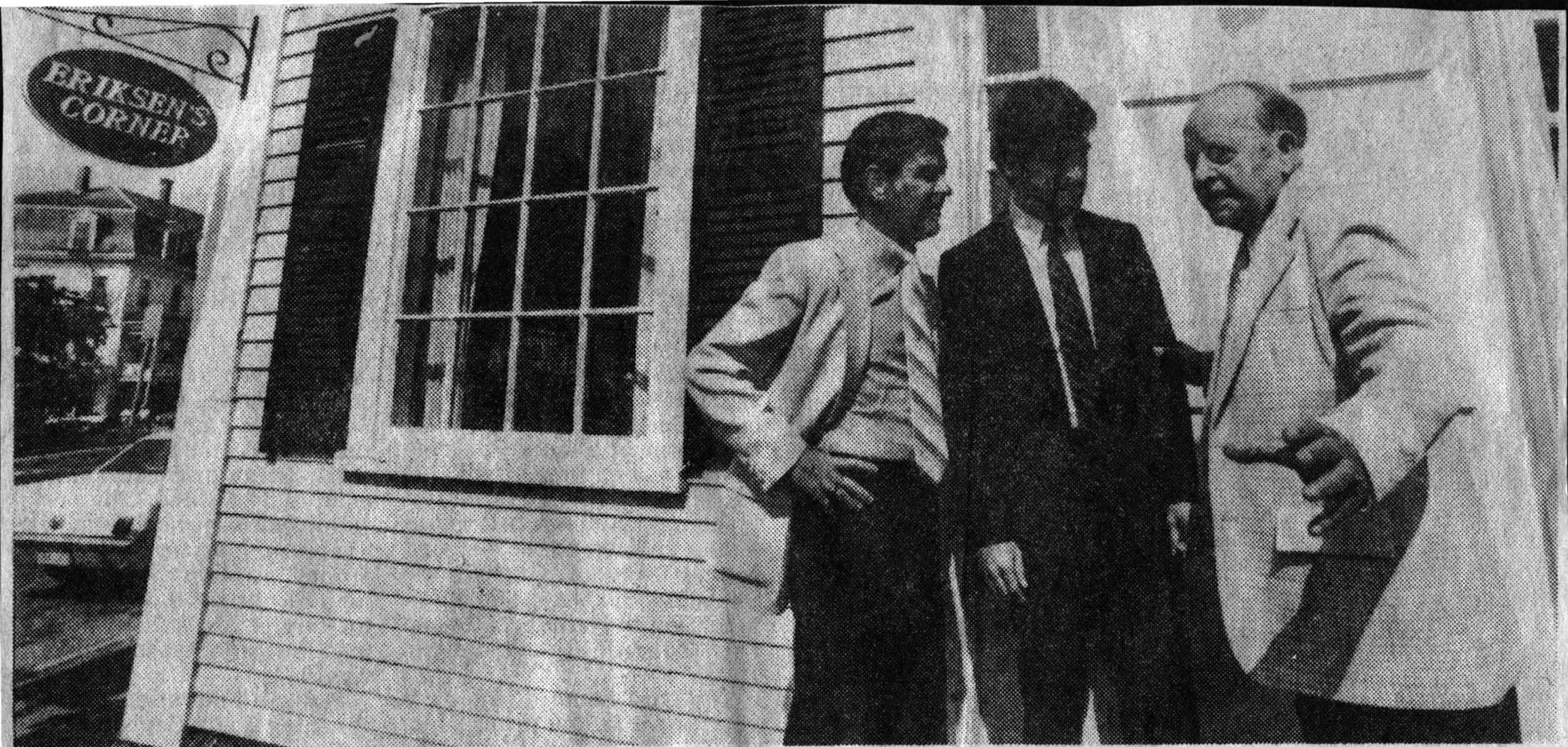
IN THE EARLY '30s

Sun Staff photo by Mike Pigeon

... Henry Eriksen, center, with Teddy Ducharme, left, and Dick Gray



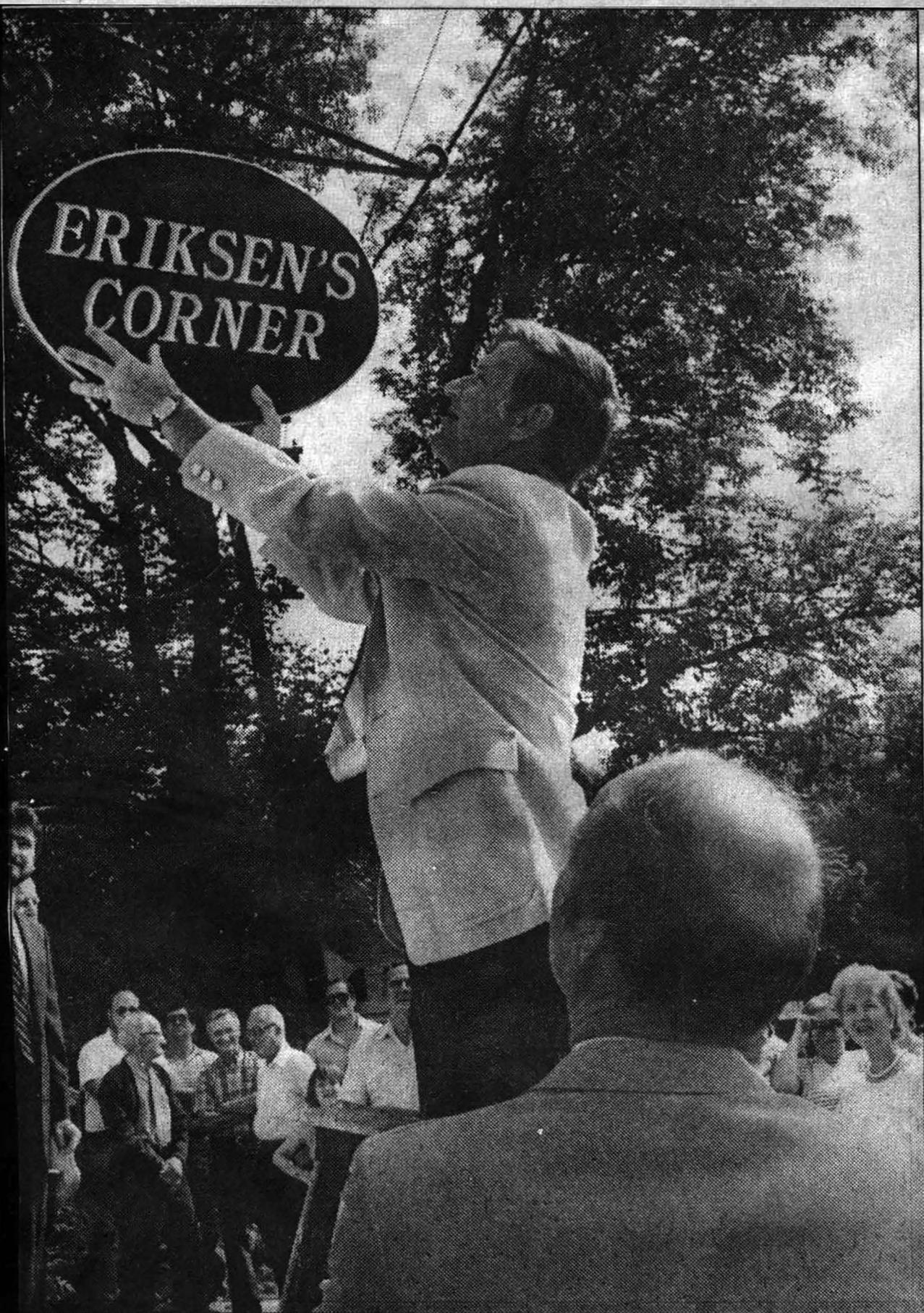
Parkhurst's Store at 2 Chelmsford Street 1985



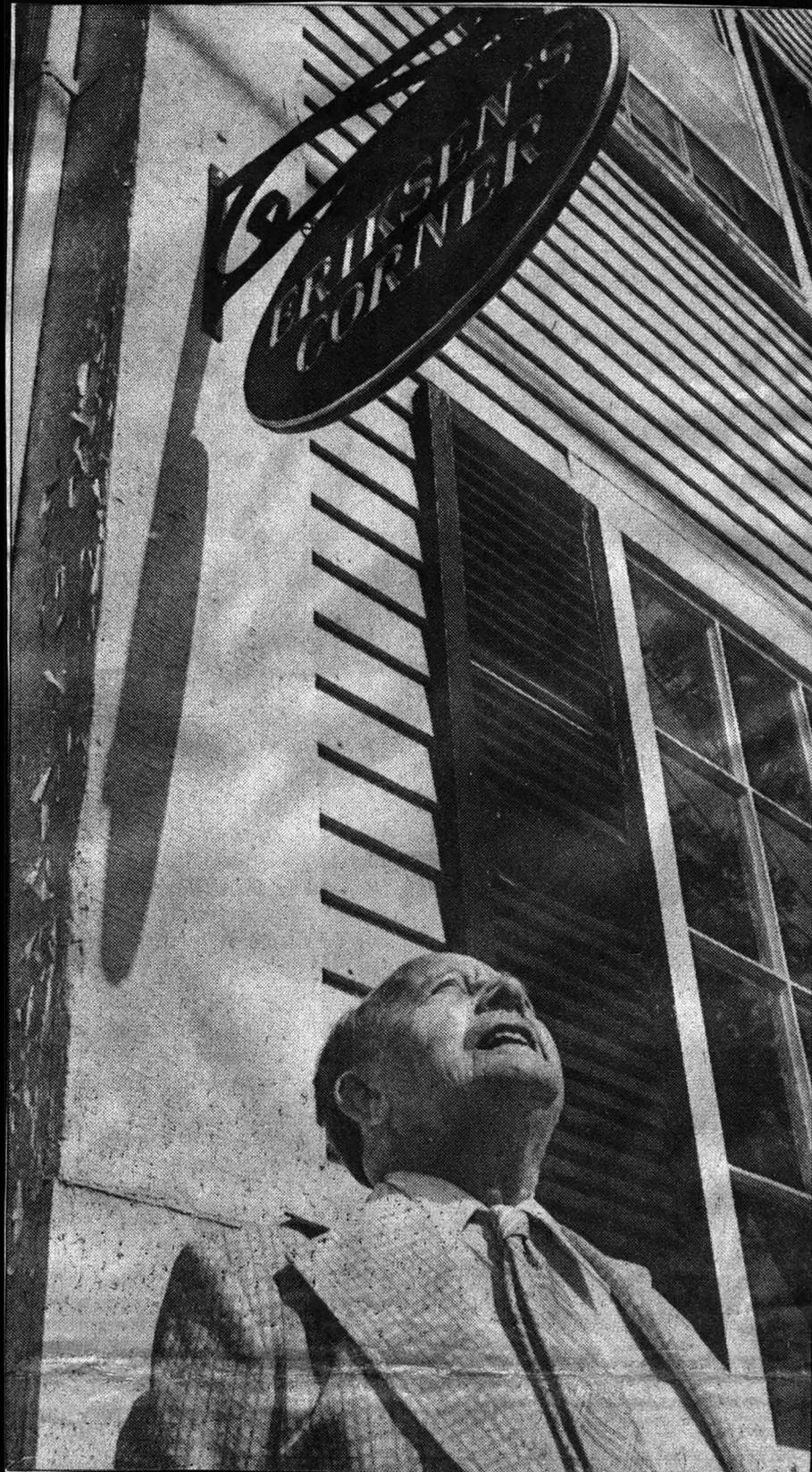
Chicken no more

What has been affectionately known to motorists passing through Chelmsford Center as "Chicken Corner" was officially dedicated and renamed yesterday after an 87-year-old Henry Eriksen, right, a longtime merchant who owned a general store at the corner from 1941 to 1969. Select-

men voted nearly a year ago to rename the corner after Eriksen, but finally put up the sign making it official on Tuesday. With Erikson are Selectman John Emerson and Dennis McHugh. (Sun photo by Michael Pigeon)



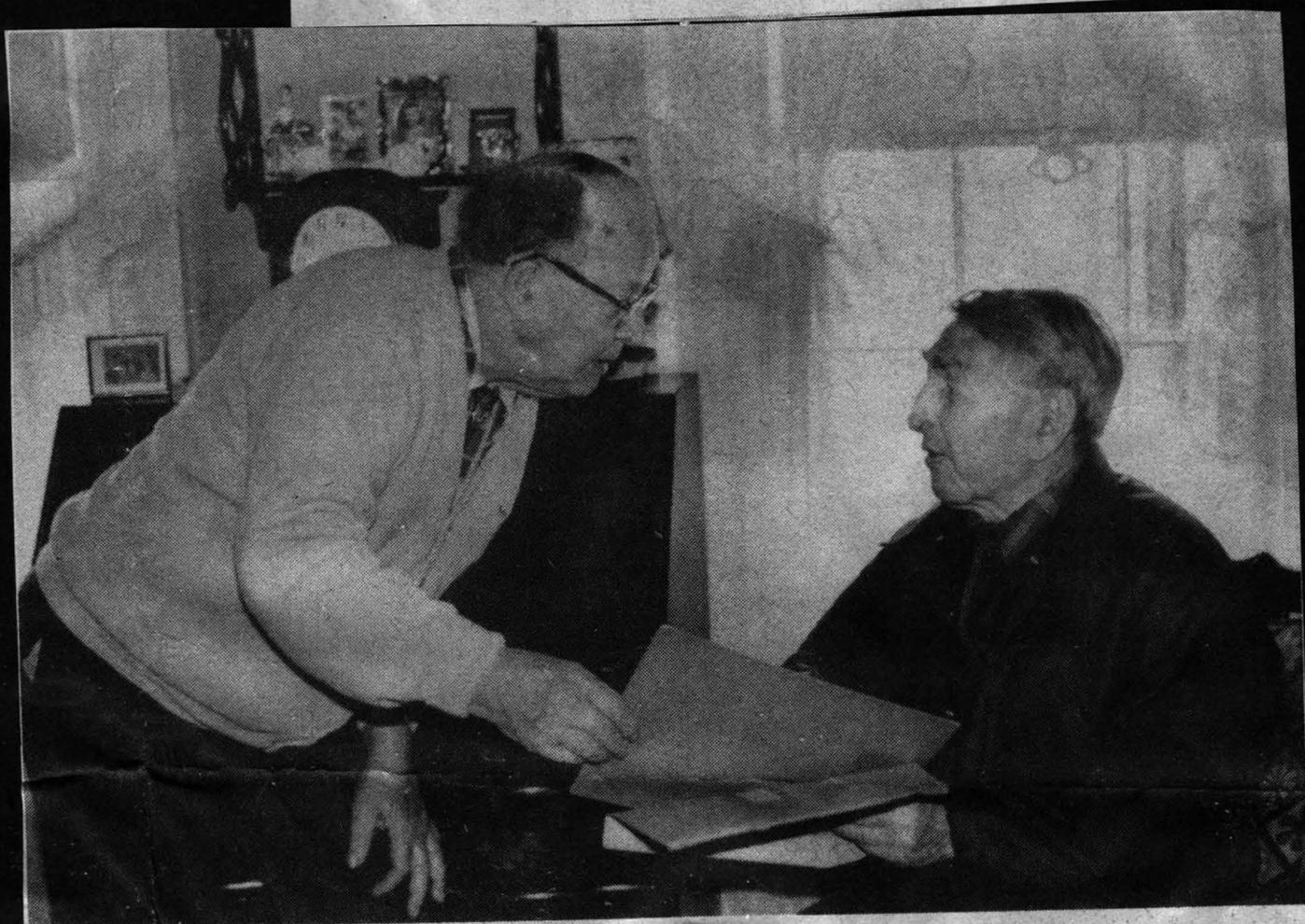
Chelmsford Selectmen John Emerson (above) adjusts the new sign placed at the corner of Billerica Road and Chelmsford Street designating that corner as Eriksen's Corner. Looking on are the many family members and friends of Henry Eriksen, for whom the corner is named, as well as attorney Dennis McHugh (left) on whose building the shingle hangs, and Executive Secretary Howard Redfern (foreground). In the photo at right, Henry Eriksen, the long-time operator of the general store at that site, admires the the sign placed in his honor. Story, page 2. (Garo Lachinian photos)



Eriksen's Corner Noted

CMFD-NO LONGER "CHICKEN CORNER" but Eriksen's Corner: The notorious corner in Central Square which has seen so many fender-benders that it became known as "Chicken Corner" has been re-named Eriksen's Corner in recognition of veteran businessman Henry Eriksen. A sign, just approved by the Historic District Commission, will be placed on the Parkhurst Building, which was the location of Eriksen's grocery store. The store had a long history beginning as S.S. and then S.W. Parkhurst's Store, then the first chain store in town, E.E. Gray Co., of which Eriksen was manager. He continued as manager of its successor, the Economy Store, and (1941) bought the business which he ran until his retirement in 1969 when the Parkhurst family, owners of the building for many years, sold it to Bradford Emerson Real Estate. (Staff Photo)

Chelmsford history



Henry Eriksen, left, discusses old times with another Chelmsford resident, Sam Fletcher.

(Photo by Micki Hilliard)

By Berna Finley

"Remember Ruby?" Henry Eriksen, a Chelmsford old-timer, asked his friend Sam Fletcher.

"Sure, I remember Ruby," answered Fletcher, a grin spreading across the lines in his face.

"Oh boy, was she a live wire. She was beautiful," said Eriksen. His friend nodded in agreement.

"But she was a nervous wreck. Adams had to send her back," Eriksen said, shaking his head and leaning forward in his chair for emphasis.

"She was just too much horse for a grocery wagon," he said, as the two men broke into laughter.

The story of Ruby and the grocery wagon was one of the memories shared by Eriksen and Fletcher as they took part in the second of a series of taping sessions planned as part of Chelmsford's Barrett Byam Museum record

counter.

He started "hanging around" Ebon T. Adams' grocery store when he was, literally, a barefoot boy. And he "loved the store" so much that he willingly consented to Mrs. Adams' demand to "get some shoes on."

From that moment, Henry Eriksen was smitten and he began his journey through the ranks of the business world as a counter boy while still in grammar school. Eriksen earned his own lunch waiting on school chums who flocked to Adams' store for lunch-hour treats.

After grammar school, Eriksen abandoned formal education to go to work full time as Adams' clerk and delivery boy. Harsh New England winters found him hooking up horse and sleigh to deliver provisions to weekly customers at the age of 13.

In 1923, Eriksen stepped across the street to the E. E. Gray store, negotiated a \$28 per week salary, was promoted to store manager, and in 1941 became owner of the corner landmark — subsequently known as Eriksen's General Store — which he ran until 1969.

From that vantage point, smack in the center of Chelmsford, Eriksen touched the lives of several succeeding generations of townspeople.

Their names and descriptions, propel his thoughts into one experience and out another.

Eriksen laughs as he reminds Fletcher about the time they put a rope across the road to trip up Wallace as he got off the Lowell

train after a night on the town. He marvels at the price list in a 1933 photo of Gray's store — "Hamburg, 18¢ a lb.; Bacon, 17¢ a lb.; Smoked Shoulder, 11¢ a lb."

And he recalls how his corner building became an antique store as well as a grocery store and center for circulating community news.

Asked about his involvement in town politics, Eriksen explains that his only brush came when a group of friends tried to put him on the ballot for town clerk against Harold Peterson.

As he tells it now, Eriksen believes declining the nomination was for the best because, "Harold Peterson turned out to be one of the best town clerks we ever had."

Occasionally the remembrance is painful, like the day his six-year-old brother died.

It was at the Parker Road strawberry fields near the Byam House, recalls Eriksen. His mother was picking berries with her sons when a blot of lightning from a sudden spring storm struck and killed his younger brother.

Pointing to his own shirt, Eriksen remembers clutching his brother's clothing to extinguish the flames. He remembers too, his own confusion — "not really understanding what it (death) was all about."

But time has softened the memories of his brother, and Ruby, and Harold Peterson, and Wallace and all people who passed through the door of Eriksen's General Store.

History buffs Richard Lahue and Charles Maderosian of the Chelmsford Historical Society are originators of the project which will record town history through the lives of Chelmsford pioneers.

Eighty-four-year-old Eriksen, the featured story-teller on this occasion, is a lifetime resident of the town. He was one of seven children born in the "poor but well-fed" family of Mina and Oliver Eriksen.

Unlike his father, an iron moulder in a Lowell foundry, Henry rejected the steel industry, preferring to spend his life on the business side of a grocery

Henry still lives no more than a stone's throw from that spot where, for 28 years, he conducted business and pleasure around the periphery of a pot belly stove.

He brought to his new home the remainder of the antique business he still runs part time, and a few thousand dollars worth of unpaid charge accounts he regards philosophically.

"If I had (collected) all that

money, I'd had to pay a big income tax. I lost a little money, but what the hell, I made a living," he said.

Helen, Eriksen's wife of 62 years, chides her husband for his choice of words as she flits in and out of the living room. She has listened carefully to the vignettes, many of which she has shared with him.

Asked the secret of their enduring marriage, both smile. He looks at his wife and remarks,

"We have our fights, but she's a hard worker, that woman."

When the subject of their three children, seven grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren comes up, she seizes the occasion to bring out her own collection of stories and photos.

And although it will not show on the transcript of the museum's historical tapes, there's a twinkle in the eyes of Henry and Helen at the mention of a new generation of Eriksens.

Man who was friend to all is remembered by many

By Lisa Nevans

Staff Writer

A storyteller who loved people. The kind, old grocer who knew everyone in town and who cared

about them. Ask any of the late Henry Eriksen's friends and relatives about him and they paint a portrait straight out of a Norman Rockwell picture.

"Henry was the kind of guy

you see in Pepperidge Farm commercials, sitting in the store telling stories," said Selectman Dennis Ready, who, like many others who grew up in Chelmsford, remembers sitting on the porch of Eriksen's General Store as a boy.

Memories of Eriksen, who died after a brief illness on Feb. 8, are inexorably linked with memories of his Central Square store. "Growing up, it was the kind of place you'd hang around in the summer," Ready remembered. "It was your typical country store with candy, a deli, canned goods, ice cream — it was THE place."

Longtime friend Leonard MacElroy of Summer Street introduced Eriksen to Helen MacFayden, who later became Eriksen's wife of 63 years. MacElroy remembered the store as "quite a meeting place. We had a store across the street and used to fraternize. You'd go into the store to discuss the topics of the day or newsworthy items in the paper."

But the most memorable part of the store was the front porch with its bench. "It was a gathering [place] for kids after school," reminisced Eriksen's daughter, Virginia Pontefract of Brentwood Road. "Everyone went there because it was in the center of town — you could see everything. People would stand there looking for accidents to happen at the corner — and many did," she said.

Orchard Lane resident Dick Lahue, Jr., who worked for Eriksen for 37 years, began with him at the age of 11, stocking shelves. Lahue remembers sitting on the porch bench as a boy of 11 or 12. "[Eriksen] would be at the screen door in his apron. He'd have rakes or shovels on the porch, and would take them in at 6 p.m. We'd take 'em back out the side door, and put 'em back on the porch. Then we hid them in the meat case... He never got mad."

After Eriksen retired in 1969, he used to walk over from his 21 Chelmsford St. home to look at the building on the corner of Chelmsford Street and Billerica Road, wishing the porch were

ERIKSEN-FROM PAGE 1

still there, friends said. "Why didn't they leave that porch on?" Pontefract remembers her father saying often.

Born in Chelmsford in 1898, Eriksen worked for Ebon Adams as a boy, delivering groceries by horse and buggy, Pontefract said. In 1923, he became manager of the general store owned by E.E. Gray, later owned by Economy Stores, the predecessor of Stop & Shop. Eriksen bought the store in 1941, operating it until he retired in 1969.

When supermarkets came to town, Eriksen began selling paint and hardware, and later antiques, but continued to sell essentials like bread and milk, Pontefract said. After he retired, he moved his antiques to his barn, always maintaining his license to sell.

"I drove him around through New Hampshire and Mass. buying and selling antiques. 'When you buy it, it's junk; when you sell it, it's antiques,' he'd say," Lahue laughed.

Most of all, Eriksen is remembered for his stories and his love of people. "He had

loads of friends, young and old," said Pontefract. "He told stories over and over. They had already heard them, but they enjoyed hearing him tell it."

"He told them 100 times over to me, but I never minded. He loved to talk," Lahue said.

Eriksen truly cared about his customers, his friends said. "He carried people during World War II," Lahue explained. "He'd let people go and pay when they could. He made sure nobody starved." Pontefract said her brother, Donald Eriksen of Miami, recently told her that their father gave baskets of food to his customers with big families at Christmas. And during the Second World War, she remembers him saving butter, which was rationed, for his customers.

Eriksen loved people so much he even enjoyed wakes, Lahue said. "Whenever anybody died, he'd go and pay his respects. Then he always wanted to wait by the back door to catch everybody going in and out to talk to them. He would've loved his own wake, because all his old pals showed up."

Popularly known as "Chicken Corner," the intersection of Chelmsford Street and Billerica Road were proclaimed "Eriksen's Corner" on Aug. 6, 1985. "He was on that corner for 45 years — that's why they named it after him," Lahue said.

"That corner," Lahue laughed. "We watched it studied I don't know how many times. They'd talk about cops and signs and all that business. 'There isn't a heck of a lot you can do,' he'd say."

"He wished [townspeople would] call it Eriksen's Corner instead of Chicken Corner. He'd always say, 'They named it Eriksen's Corner [but] call it Chicken Corner. If they wanted to call it that they should've made the plaque say that.'"

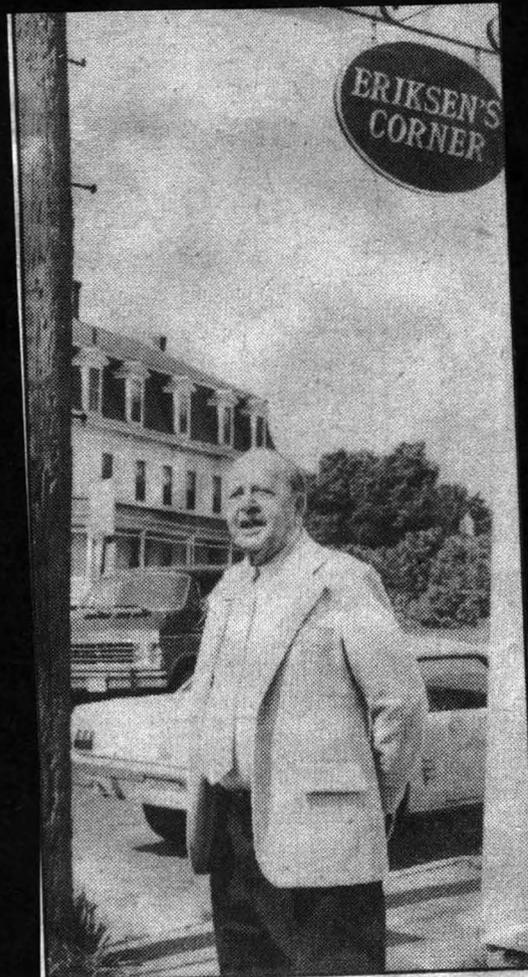
"He was a good guy. He told it like it was," Lahue said. "He was honest as could be. He kept the rest of us honest too: he'd give us a little kick in the behind if we'd need it."

Pontefract summed up her memory of her father: "He just loved people so much." Those who knew him will cherish his memory as an embodiment of a simpler time.

FEB. 23 1989
Friends remember Henry Eriksen



HENRY ERIKSEN (center) with two co-workers at the former General Store in Chelmsford Center.



HENRY ERICKSEN at the dedication of Eriksen's Corner.

Henry Eriksen - Dec 1979

There was a club called the Chelmsford Social Club in town around 1918 and Henry Eriksen, his brother Phil, Harry Parkhurst and two Mullen brothers ran dances at the Town Hall once or twice a month on Friday nights.

They hired Campbell's Orchestra from Lowell and paid \$25.00 for their music, \$15.00 for rent of hall and charged 50¢ admission to the dance.

One night a man, who had been evicted from the dance, was sitting in front of the Town Hall in a big black Buick took a shot into the upper Town Hall windows and the bullet went up into the ceiling.

at that time the town constable was George Wright, blacksmith in the Centre. He arrested the man and he was brought to trial. Nothing further was heard about the case. Henry was never called as a witness. George Wright was later in possession of a

big black Buck.

The dances were to end at 12 o'clock but they would pass the hat to raise enough money to hire the orchestra for another hour or two.

During intermission, the ~~dancers~~ ^{dancers} would go down to the lower hall to buy ice cream. The crowd was, as a rule, well behaved and orderly and a good time was had by all.

There was a Fireman's Association when the fire department was in the building later used as Auxiliary Police Headquarters. They held dances in the basement of Town Hall and usually served chicken dinners. One time they decided to have lobster & chicken (that was when lobster was 25¢ a pound). People had their choice & not many picked lobster. Each member of the committee took 2 or 3 home. Henry said that was the first time he had eaten lobster.