

3 4103 00034 5571  
**Wipani County Historical  
Association**

TABLE OF CONTENTS Mrs. Anna (Hoffman) Kuspa

SUBJECTS

Parents and Grandparents (Sledzinski)  
and Mother's brother (Chester) from Germany ←  
→ Father's occupation: cabinet maker, carpenter

Schooling in Albion, N.Y.

→ Employment:

- \* muckland, near Elba  
the Orleans House, Albion
- \* owned and operated Shelby Basin Tavern, General  
Store, and Boarding House
- \* catering service  
Packard's Bean House  
packed dry apples  
employed at the Community Hospital, Medina
- \* owned and operated Kuspa's Restaurant  
housework for Doctor Maynard  
housework for William Gallagher

Husband: Joseph Hoffman (bar tender, etc.)  
Daughter: Cecilia (Ciel) H. White

Husband: James Kuspa (employed at Monitor Clock Works)

Shelby Basin Tavern, Boarding House & General Store  
water supply, electricity, etc.  
customers, workers, neighbors, etc.  
trolley stop at Shelby Basin

the Mary Louise Hospital... employed at..

Medina Community Hospital... employed at..

Recreation and social life

Churches

St. Mary's Assumption R.C. Church, Albion  
St. Mary's Church, Medina  
Sacred Heart Church, Medina  
pew rent, clothing worn by members, etc.

1893-1989



# Orleans County Historical Association

## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW

Mrs. Anna Kuspa  
573 East Avenue  
Medina, New York

Mrs. Kuspa was born July 2, 1892.

The interview is conducted by Marjorie C. Radzinski.  
Also present during the interview is Mrs. Ciel White,  
daughter of Mrs. Kuspa.



Mrs. Anna Kuspa (seated)

Mrs. Ciel White (standing)



# Orleans County Historical Association

## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The purpose of this project is to collect information about the historical development of Orleans County by means of tape-recorded conversations with people whose experiences reflect the county's growth.

These tapes and transcriptions will be preserved as educational resources and possible publication (all or in part).

I hereby release this tape and transcription to the Orleans County Historical Association.

Imma M. Huspa  
Signed

3-9-81  
Date

Understood and agreed to:

Marjorie C. Radzinski  
INTERVIEWER

3-9-81  
Date

For the Orleans County Historical Association. March 9, 1981.  
 Mrs. Marjorie C. Radzinski of Albion, New York is interviewing her Aunt, Mrs. Anna Martha Radzinski Hoffman Kuspa at the Kuspa home at 573 East Avenue, Medina, New York. Also present during the interview is Mrs. Cecilia (Ciel) Ann Hoffman White, daughter of Mrs. Kuspa.

- R Aunt Anna, how did your parents decide to come from Germany to Albion, New York?
- K They came to Buffalo first. The whole family: Ma and Pa, and Grandma and Grandpa, Ma's brother (Chester Sledzinski) and his wife. They got to Buffalo and they brought their three daughters: Frances, Martha and Mary from the old country. The rest of us were born here, in Albion.... It was a big family. (Note: Mrs. Kuspa was born July 2, 1892).  
 R (Note: See page 14 for names of sisters and brothers) How did your parents happen to come across?
- K They came on the boat to New York, and from New York they came on the train to Buffalo. That's the way they got there. They stayed there for a few weeks. This man from Albion, Goodrich, he had these houses built. (Note added by C. White: Goodrich went to Buffalo to pick them up. Goodrich built the houses one story - poorly constructed. The quarry was in back of Goodrich Street and stretched almost to opposite Mount Albion Cemetery). He's the one who used to go up to the depot and bring them to these houses that he built near the quarry for these people like my cousins, my mother and other people who came there too. So that's how Ma landed in Albion. But I was born here, and Stella and John and Tony and all were born in Albion. But not all were born in this house because they were born near the quarry, in those houses.
- R Ciel, could you tell me a bit of what type of oppression there was in Europe that caused your grandparents to emigrate?
- White I used to talk with my grandmother, and somewhere I have this book of my Grandfather's history in the military service which was run by the Germans at the time my grandparents lived there. Although they are of Polish decent They were what <sup>would be</sup> considered today the peasants of the royalty, or one of the lorded gentry of the Germans. (Note added (by C. White)): They lived in houses provided by royalty... Germans). After Grandpa had served his stint in the (German) Army, Grandma made up her mind that the rest of the kids were not going to be

White brought up fighting because they were always fighting with some neighboring country. It was Poland, then it was Germany, then it was Hungary, and then it was Austria, and everybody was getting in there some time or other. And so they said they just couldn't make a living that way, so they just packed up their belongings and came to this country. Of course the reputation for settling in the United States was strong in those countries in those days; it was a great migration. They were just one of the bunch that came across. I remember her saying it took fourteen days to come by boat. That was probably motored, but it had sails also. The conditions on the ship were not very good, but they made it alright.

R Was it very expensive? Have you heard your Grandmother say if it was a hardship for them to come across; or did they have enough to provide?

White They had saved up enough money and they sold all their belongings, other than what they would need.

K They had enough money because Ma went to the bank to put some money in because she didn't want to keep it with her. She was pretty well fixed when she came to this country.

White By the standards of those days.

R How did your parents happen to build their home on Goodrich Street, Aunt Anna? What was your father's occupation?

K He was a cabinet maker but he was a carpenter too. So, he decided while they were working in the quarry, he bought these lots, my father and Sledzinski. Well, Pa built their house too; those two houses he built.

White May I interrupt? My Grandmother's maiden name was Sledzinski, and there were only two children in that family. So the two children, Grandma -- of course she was grown and married -- but she and her brother Sledzinski came together. So the Sledzinski family that is in Albion, are related... because that was my Grandmother's brother. And there is another branch in Albion out of that same family. See, the grandparents' name was Sledzinski - her maiden name. That is what she (Mrs. Kuspa) is referring to.

- K That's right! He built that house and he built a lot of shacks for the immigrant people to live in. (Note from C. White: Grandpa built several houses in the area of Goodrich Street.)
- R Who built those houses?
- White Goodrich.
- K Goodrich owned all land, and the quarries, and he was the head man of everything! So he was the one who looked after these people. ... He went to the depot and got them and brought them down here.
- R Aunt Anna, what do you recall of your school days in Albion?
- K I went to the Polish School on Brown Street. ... Right at the foot of the hill, next to the\* church. Right across the bridge and on the same side of the street where the church is. That's where I went to school. I must have been six, seven or eight years old when I went over there. When I got to sixth grade or so, I had to go on Caroline Street to school. That's where I was 'till I grew up and got out of school.(\* St. Mary's Assumption R.C. Church).
- R At what age did you go to work, Aunt Anna?
- K At fourteen or fifteen.
- R On one of your jobs you worked on the muck (land). You were quite young?
- K Yes. I must have been eight or nine years old when I worked on the muck. I went with the folks. ... They worked there and took us. (Elba, New York).
- R Did you get to keep the money you earned?
- K We turned it over to Mother. She took care of it, but what we wanted she gave to us.
- R To buy your school clothes?
- K She saw that we had good clothes, and everything. (Note by C. White: Muckland near Elba. Wagon picked up the people on Goodrich Street. Started at 75¢, then \$1. after two months. Onions, carrots, beets. Many family members went as duties and school permitted.)

- R Where else did you work as a young girl, before you were married? Did you work at the Orleans Hotel?
- K Oh yes! I worked there two or three years, and all my sisters worked over there. (Orleans House, East Bank Street, Albion). Mary, Martha and Frances and Stella; they all used to be waitresses. My sister Frances Vahoviak was cook over there: chef at Orleans House. She was a beautiful cook. She was from the Old Country. That's where I worked -- in the Orleans House. (Note from C. White: later made beds, etc.)
- R What was your employer's name, at the Orleans House?
- K Dunphee. He owned the Orleans House.
- R Was he good to his help?
- K He was wonderful! He was the best man that you would ever want to work for. I started over there washing dishes and I landed up making beds way up on the third floor. I had twenty-two beds to make up. Then from there I went to wait on table. You had to do just so much work and then you'd go wait on table in the dining room. That's how it was.
- R Did you feel that you received just wages for the work that you did?
- K Yes. They didn't pay like they do today. They paid about a dollar and a half (\$1.50) for eight hours. After you were hired and did better work, they paid the waitresses three dollars (\$3.00) a day. That was big money at that time.
- R And then you met your husband. How old were you when you got married?
- K I was seventeen when I got married.
- R Do you remember how you happened to meet your husband?
- K I met him over here on Main Street, over to the Steve Hurish Saloon. He used to come and tend bar over there. I used to go over there to stay with the kids, and I met him. (Note: The two Hurish children: Stephen and Victoria) So, I was married to Joe Hoffman.
- R Did your mother think you were too young to be married at that time?

K No. At that time they were married at 15, 16, 17; the girls in Albion.

White May I add here that Steve Hurish Saloon -- his wife (Mary) was my Mother's sister. That's how she came here. Mother's sister married Steve Hurish, and they ran the saloon here, in Medina.

R How do you spell that name, Ciel?)

White At that time it was spelled Huryz. Then they changed it to Hurish. The Saloon is where the Lockport Optical has its offices now on Main Street in Medina. That's why Mother came here.. to Medina. It was relation, not just a job.

R So you met your husband, Joseph Hoffman, and you moved to Medina. When you were first married where did you live?

K When we were first married we stayed on Gulf Street, with my sister, Stella, for about a year. Pa was tending bar in Middleport (O'Shaughnessy's) and I used to stay with Johnnie; and Stella went to work. Stella was a widow then; she wasn't married to Kulpa yet.

White Let me interrupt again. Speaking of Stella: her first husband's name was Kozloski and he died right after the son, John, was born. They were living on Gulf Street and that's when Mother went down there to stay with her. Mother was "expecting" me. I was born in that house on Gulf Street, and so she stayed there. Then Stella married Kulpa in 1939.

R How long after you were married did you move to Shelby Basin, and how did you happen to go there?

K We lived on Commercial Street where they had <sup>had</sup> a Polish Church; first Polish Church. Joe and I went and lived there quite awhile and Mr. Stein came over. Joe was tending bar over there in Middleport and he knew Stein. He knew Joe was such a good bartender, so he was bound that Joe come and work for him. So we moved to that place in Shelby Basin. Ciel, how did that happen?

White Stein offered to put Mother and Dad in business.

R Who was Stein?



White You know the Stein Brewery in Buffalo? Well, that was the original Stein Brewery man.

K We didn't have enough money to go into business, so he went and ordered everything; they fixed it all up. A bar room there, because there was a living room on this side of the bar room; and then there was a grocery store on one side there, too, where <sup>we</sup> had the saloon. So we started a saloon over there; Joe and I were there until Prohibition. Then the license was gone, there and everywhere.

R ... I understand that it was a combination of Boarding House, Tavern, and General Store. Was it like that when you moved there, or was it reconstructed?

K Well, Fieritz used to run a grocery store. He used to live there (Shelby Basin) and they had a grocery store. That's all. There was no saloon there. That's how it happened that we got it and lived there. We had bedrooms upstairs and we had the kitchen to fix up, and a big dining room was there. I used to serve in the dining room. I had a bunch of seventeen electricians that came every day for dinner, from the Middleport Hotel. They were rooming there, and that's how it was. We had a nice bar business.

R Who operated the bar?

K Joe. He was a good bar tender, believe me.

R What about the Boarding House part of it? Was that in the tavern itself?

K (Note added by C. White: <sup>Mom's</sup> Sister Stella came to help weekends but <sup>Her</sup> sister Nellie lived with us and helped).

My sister used to come from Medina and try to help me with the cooking and kitchen, and wait on the men who came in there. We had three boarders that slept there when they were living out of town. Then they started working on the canal; they were getting it ready. So then they went on the boat and they stayed over there. There was quite a gang of them; they were there all summer...

White They were widening and deepening the canal.

K We had a nice business.

R That was about what year?

White About 1912 or 1913. That's when they were doing their last job on the canal. It was coming along through there about that time.

R So, some of your best customers, at your tavern and at your general store, were the people that worked on the canal?

K Yes, they were there but all the neighbors -- they used to come there too.

R People from Medina?

K I had a lot of people that come from Medina. The trolley used to stop at Shelby Basin Road. There is a gang that used to come to our place. All the neighbors, the farmers from Fruit Avenue -- there were quite a few farmers there. And we had quite a good business in the grocery store, and in the saloon too. So we were busy. My sister Nellie was working with me all the time.

R What type of groceries did you sell in your general store?

K All kinds of groceries that we could have: bread and doughnuts (a bakery truck used to stop there). But meat, we didn't have. We didn't have refrigeration.

R How about brooms and household articles that people needed; such as mops and pails?

K Fieritz had those when he was there, so we kept them up. But people didn't buy them much. They would go to town, you know. But they (the articles) were there with the store so of course we sold them. It was just an ordinary grocery store. Nellie was right there, but Stella used to come on the trolley and help me clean, and help me in the kitchen and everything.

R Did you have electricity at that time, in Shelby Basin?

K There was electricity in the grocery store, but there was none in the bar room. We had to have it all put in. There were five or six bedrooms.

R Did you have running water?

K ~~We had running water~~. We had a pump in the front for water to drink. I had to go and get it in a pail. But we had rain water connected to wash the dishes and things like that. They had to have clean water in the bar room to rinse

the glasses and everything. It was a nice well and we had plenty of water so we were all set.

R Aunt Anna, you mentioned that you did some catering too. Could you tell me a bit about your catering? You used to do quite a bit of that .. with Matie Cook?

K When they had a banquet or party, or dinners (they had them at the Elks or Odd Fellows, and all those places), I used to go with her to help serve, for a good many years. (Matie Cook was a cateress). I used to go out to people, like that, around here who had a party or a dinner or a one - o'clock-luncheon. I used to go out to Maynard's and Robbins, Childs, and Bowens, and those rich people (in their homes). (Note: the names listed are families in this area, mostly Medina).

R When could you see a change, when they no longer needed your catering services? What changed things do you think?

K I changed when we went to that Shelby Basin Saloon.

White It was after you came back to Medina, Mother, that you did the catering. You came back to Medina from living in Shelby Basin... (Mrs. Kuspa seems confused on this point).

R Aunt Anna, you bought this house at 573 East Avenue when Ciel was a little girl of about three years old, in 1914 or 1915?

You mentioned something to me about Packard's Bean Shop. (Note: from C. White: Packard's at railroad on East Avenue; where Punch's is now).

K I lived here in this house when I worked over to Packard's.

R Was it hard work over there?

K No, that was easy for me. We used to pack dry apples in boxes. You had to pack fifty boxes in a case. They used to ship it out from here -- then the beans, when they didn't have no orders for apples. We used to go pick beans on the belt over there.

R Do you know who operated this Bean Shop? Was he a local man, or did he come out of the city?

K Ever since I know, he was in this Bean Shop. I don't know where he came from. William Packard, his name was.

R You mentioned the Mary Louise Hospital. That was located where, Aunt Anna?

K On Park Avenue in Medina, on the corner of Prospect Avenue. When I went to work in that hospital there was a milkman. What was his name? (Note: Mrs. Kuspa attempts to remember the names of several people here and both Mrs. Radzinski and Ciel White try to help her recall).

But, there was this doctor; he came from Buffalo; and that nurse too, and they opened up that. That was the first hospital in Medina. Then afterward, they got that place where...

White The Swett house.

K Yes! They moved and that became a Community Hospital. He was a milkman and used to peddle milk in Medina.

R You did quite a bit of work in that hospital Aunt Anna?

K Oh yes!! They fixed it all up you know.

R It was quite modern for those days. It was newly equipped?

K It wasn't really like it is today, but they had an operating room up in back where Ward.. His name was Mr. Ward!! Now it comes to me!!... He owned that house when they bought it. The doctor and the nurse came and bought it and they made it into a hospital.

I worked there, and there was a Doctor Swartz, and the nurse's name was Coon. Doctor Munson's son died in that hospital. (Note: See the Myra Colton transcript for additional information on this hospital, -- H. McA -- *editor*)

R You also worked over at the other hospital, on Eagle and Prospect?

K Yes. I used to go over there and clean the operating room, and to help serve the patients. I worked there quite a while too.

R Then, Aunt Anna, after your first husband died in 1937, you married James F. Kuspa, in 1939. He was your second husband.

K Yes. ... I went to Auburn and I was there for a long time.

R You lived in Auburn, Aunt Anna?

K No, I went just to visit my sisters. I was there one year. So, I got married to Jim. (James Kuspa).

R What was his occupation?

K He worked in the Monitor Clock Works, over there by Swett's (Iron Works). He worked there for years. He was really a head man over there. He had a good job! (Note from C. White: ~~Monitor~~ <sup>Monitor</sup> - on Glenwood Avenue).

R That was right here in Medina, near the Swett Iron Works?

K Yes, that big building when you're going down the hill; upstairs.

White The building is gone now.

K That was where Jim worked. He was a boss over there.

R What else did you do, Aunt Anna? You opened a restaurant. Do you have any idea what year you opened up your restaurant? (Note from C. White: Telegraph Road between Medina and Middleport, at the end of Hoffman Road).

K 1939. We went up on the hill, and Jim fixed that too. He fixed the whole thing into a restaurant.

R How did you happen to open your restaurant at that particular location?

K That was my first husband's homestead, Joe Hoffman. I bought that from my brother-in-law. Steve Hurish took a mortgage on that place. ...

White He bought it to settle the Hoffman estate.

K Then, after that, he sold it to me. Jim was a good carpenter and he is the one who remodeled the whole thing and made that place for a restaurant. (Kuspa's Restaurant).

R Thinking back, Aunt Anna, what comparison can you see between running a restaurant back in 1912 and opening one in 1939? Was it harder to get started?

K No it wasn't harder for me to get started in a restaurant because I was used to helping my sister in the saloon, waiting on table and helping in the kitchen, getting dinner. It was easy for me.

R Did you do most of the cooking, Aunt Anna?

K No, I did the baking. She helped. When I had big dinners, banquets or parties I would get two or three girls to wait on table over there.

(end of side one of taped interview)

White ... (conversation is in progress)... Well, you worked on the muck farms during the war years; during the first World War.

K I worked for Doctor Maynard for a long time, taking care of his office and all that. I've always worked hard, everywhere.

White .... doing housework.

K And I worked seventeen years for William Gallagher, if you want to know. (Note from C. White: Gallagher built the house on West Center Street (where Shierlings live now)).

R Where did Gallagher live (when you first worked for him?)

K He lived on East Center Street. (where the V.F.W. is presently located). They built that house <sup>on West Center Street</sup> and I went over there. I cleaned the house, and did washing and the ironing.

R Aunt Anna, I would like to know what you did for recreation. Did you go to dances?

K Oh yes! I went to dances. Ciel used to go to dances with me.

R Did you like to sing? Did you belong to a choir, or anything like that?

K I used to sing in the choir, but that was in the Albion Church (Saint Mary's), but otherwise I haven't been anywhere to sing... unless I had "one too many". Then I would do the jig and sing a song!! (laughter).

- R Would you like to tell me about your church life, and your church? Where did you go to church when you were a young girl?
- K When I was a young girl, I went to Saint Mary's church in Albion, 'till I got married and came to Medina and went to Saint Mary's Church here because there was no Polish Church here yet. Then they started the church in that house for a while. (Note from C. White: Sacred Heart Church on Commercial Street, in a home). You know where the grocery store is? The house next to it. That's where they started the Polish Church. They used to go to masses there until they built that church. So then I went there; but mostly I went to St. Mary's Church.
- R What changes have you seen in the church from the time when you were a girl and up to the present time? For instance: where they sat, and what they wore, and what they weren't supposed to wear ..
- K You always liked to dress up when you went to church. It was terrible to see a woman bare-headed in church. And now they're all bare-headed, with low necked dresses and sleeveless. You never saw it in those years. You always had to have a hat on your head. But now they don't wear a hat, and in with bare arms they come!! You would think they would wear a sweater or something. They are half naked to come to church like that. You wouldn't like that either, would you?!!
- R No. How about your pew rent. You used to have your name plate on your pew, didn't you?
- K They don't anymore. I don't know why. I said to Ciel, "Here is my book. I want to pay my pew rent". Ciel said, "Mother, there is no such thing as pew rent. They're not paying any. Everybody goes in any pew they want to go".
- White Let me interrupt again. In the early days, this was a form of getting enough money to pay for the expenses of running the church. In other words, you were registering yourself in the church as a parishoner, and you were assigned a pew. Each had his own pew and there was a "rent" that you paid each year, which helped to pay for the church and the expenses of the church; but also showed that you were a member. This was very common among the early churches. Today they don't need this income this way, and they have their monthly

envelopes for property improvements, and things of this nature. So this pew rent idea went out the door. But that was primarily to build the churches.

R Did they used to use church envelopes, way back?

White No, they just put the money in the collection baskets.

R I see. So, <sup>NO</sup> ~~or~~ one knew who put in what, and by paying your pew rent it identified you with the church.

White They still call it "pew rent" in many of the churches but it's sort of a form of like you pay dues to your society once a year .. membership dues, or something like this.

R Aunt Anna, I understand that your mother contributed some of the furnishings in the church in Albion?

K My father and mother bought the bell for the church over there (Saint Mary's Church). And it's still there. And they bought the "everlasting lamp" that used to hang down in the front.

White "Sanctuary Lamp" they used to call it.

K There used to be candles on it, but now they fixed it so there is electricity on it.

You probably know that when anyone in the church of our family died, that bell is supposed to be rung, to just let them know from the family. And the bell would ring. My father said this, but I don't know if, they did it or not. They did before, I know. "Oh", they'd say, "Someone from the Radzinski family died, because the bell is ringing". It would ring for other people too.

R Oh yes! I do believe the bell rings when any of the members of the church die.

K ... My father said he asked them to do that. He was donating that bell so that when anyone in the (church) family in Albion died, to let the bell ring. So it did. That was very nice of Ma and Pa to do that.

There were awful poor people in Albion. They weren't working and they didn't have much money or nothing. He did a lot of work around the church, and everyone thought it was very nice of him to do that.

(NOTE: THE TAPE BECOMES CLOGGED AT THIS POINT: CAN'T VERIFY). H.Mc.



R Going back to your father, Aunt Anna, he was a cabinet-maker. Do you remember any of the fine furniture that he made?

K The only one I know that he made - that was beautiful cabinet home in the dining room. Then he made another one and he gave that to Mary. ...He made a cabinet where there were shelves, and glass in the door for your dishes.

White I remember that one. The top part had glass in the door and the bottom part was storage. Then he also made a three-cornered closet in the bedroom for clothing. It had a drawer in the bottom where you put the hats and things like that. It was actually the early clothes closet.

K That's what he did when he came from the old country.

R He loved fine wood?

K Yes. This is a nice reddish wood, isn't it Ciel?


white Cherry, I guess. ...

K It's a beautiful wood. Look how old it is and it still looks beautiful.

(End of taped interview)

This interview was conducted by Mrs. Marjorie C. Radzinski of Albion, N.Y.

The 90 minute tape was transcribed by Mrs. Radzinski.

After examination, with several changes, additions and deletions by Mrs. Ciel White (daughter of Mrs. Kuspa) 

Final editing and typing of this transcript and compilation was done by Helen M. McAllister of Medina, N.Y.

.....

Names of sisters and brothers of Anna S. H. Kuspa:

Frances, Martha, Mary, Helen, Stella, Nellie,

John, Anthony, Joe

( from Ciel H. White)



Anna Hoffman & Mrs. Kujawina  
Packing apples  
early 1920



Anna Hoffman  
Apples ready to ship  
early 1920



1924

Pauline Cichocki and  
Ciel (White)  
Hauling packed lettuce crates.  
Fred Boots Muck, Shelby  
1924 - '25



Anna Hoffman  
"working hard"  
Cutting lettuce  
1925



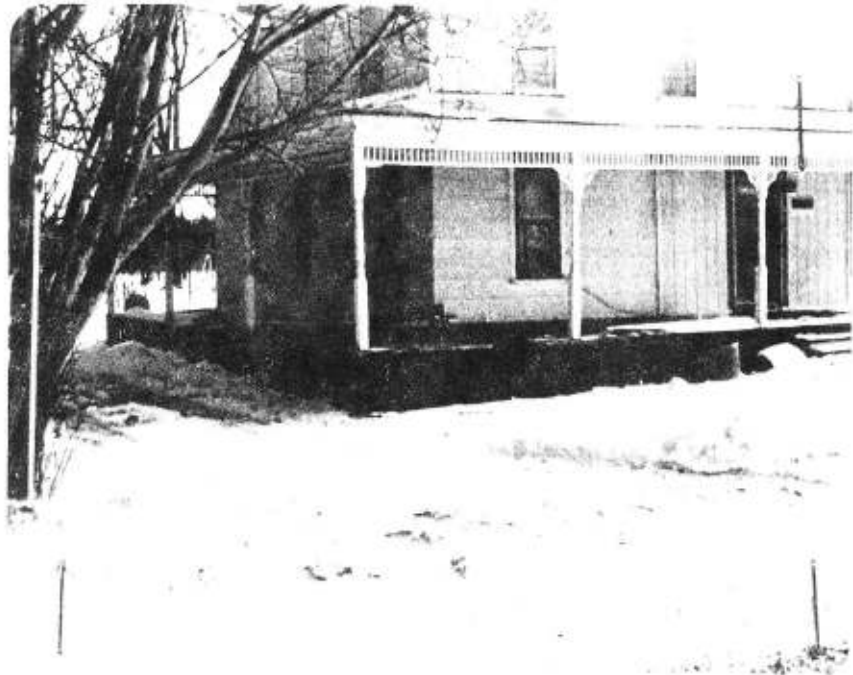
Anna Hoffman ( circa 1909 )



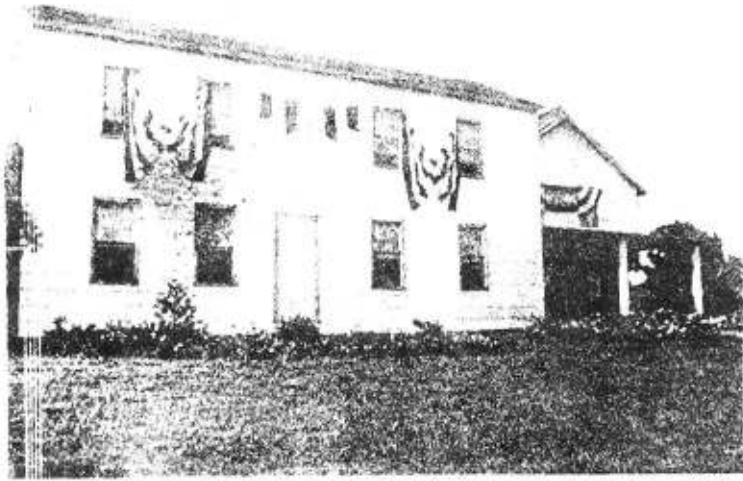
Mrs. Anna Hoffman Kuspa (1981)



boarding House-Tavern-General Store

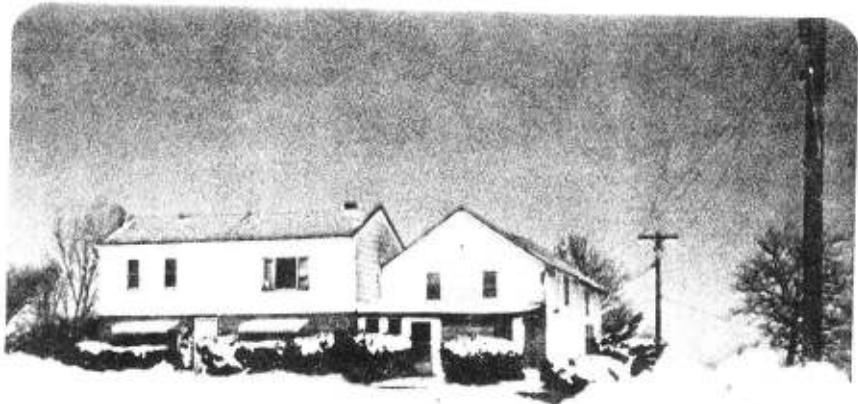


Pictures taken March 1981



Kuspa's Restaurant

Formal opening August 1940



Same building March 1981