



Produce, candy, meat offered at Duke's Store

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Fresh meat cut in the store, produce and much more were offered at Duke's Grocery Store on East Commercial Street in Oberlin.

The grocery store, owned and operated by Duke Marietta, will be closed to visitor's during the 50th anniversary celebration of the museum because of damage to the roof, but will be opened back up as soon the roof is fixed.

Clifford C. "Duke" Marietta bought the 12 by 24 foot store in August 1933. Eck Hitchcock was the original owner of the store. When Mr. Marietta purchased the building he moved it from the original location during that night to 311 E. Commercial and opened it the next day.

The store first was named Marietta's Grocery but according to an article in the March 20, 1969, edition of *The Oberlin Herald*, "It didn't make any money with that name so I tried Duke's Grocery," Mr. Marietta said.

The store received fruits and vegetables from Denver twice a week. Mr. Marietta also bought

items from grocery houses in McCook and Grand Island, Neb. He got meat off a truck and cut it himself.

Herschel Betts worked at Duke's Grocery starting in October 1946, after returning from the service, and before he left for Fort Hays State University.

Mr. Betts wrote some of his memories of the store and Mr. Marietta after working at the store. The information is kept at the museum now.

"Duke Marietta was a great guy," wrote Mr. Betts, "and ran a good store. He never tried to take advantage of anyone and was very kind hearted. He never smiled much at kids, because his demeanor with them made their stay in his store short as they chose their candy orders, but had they known, he rarely didn't smile after them as they departed."

In December 1973 the store was purchased by the Decatur County Mental Health Association for \$2,100 and the building was used as the Bargain Box.

In November 1994, the building was moved

to the museum grounds, sitting just outside the main office.

"It is most appropriate to preserve his neighborhood grocery at the museum because very few students over the years, at DCHS, failed to stop in, sometime, going to or from school and some at noon until the school went to a closed noon hour not long before Duke closed his door for the last time," wrote Mr. Betts.

In the information Mr. Betts gave to the museum he included a picture of himself in front of a vehicle.

"The auto, pictured, was a 6-cylinder Ford and I think about a 1938. Unlike most Fords, it had no power or acceleration speed. One day Duke tried to catch up to a customer who owed a bill that had grown too big and the guy had a 'souped up' 1932 Chevy and he got out on a county road and left Marietta in the dust. Duke turned over his bill collection to the county attorney the next day."

HERSCHEL BETTS, a former employee at Duke's Grocery, stands beside the 1936 6-cylinder Ford, which Duke Marietta drove to try to catch up with a customer who owed a big bill.

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