

“But then there were the days when we just loved to come home at noon,” noted Elizabeth. “My mother made the best homemade bread. It was made with potato water and everlasting yeast, set above the stove warmer in a fruit jar. She set it the night before and always had a loaf baked when we came home (and usually a big kettle of homemade soup.) I loved crusts on homemade bread....I would cut the crust off a couple more slices, then turn it on the side, and viola! Another crust! I’d cut up the rest and get the last crust, too. My mother really didn’t appreciate that!”

The family had a team of horses, and often gave rides in the sleigh, sitting on straw covered with a pretty horse hide with a green felt backing. According to Elizabeth, “We also had chickens and a cow. All this was in the barn and chicken coop, with a fence around it, behind the big red house, just across from St. Mark’s Church! Our chicken’s produced big, brown eggs which were my mother’s pride.

She’d enter them in the County Fair each year for many years, and always got a blue ribbon.” The Poor House was on the northeast corner of the block, just kitty corner from the big red house. Joe Rice, one of the residents of the Poor House, would get the family cow every morning and stake it out to graze behind the building.

The family had a little butter churn, and Elizabeth remember churning butter. She also loved the delicious buttermilk, also. So good and so cold. Elizabeth also remembered putting milk in the crockery, and then the family would eat the cold cream off the top.



Scott County Poor House



She also remembers when she was a teenager, and the home remedy for acne. “My father decided cake yeast with a little molasses was the thing! Ugh! I had to take a spoonful every day. After some time, I guess he figured it didn’t do any good, so I didn’t have to take it anymore,” said Elizabeth.

Elizabeth, the oldest in the family, was often living in the shadow of the limelight of the famous triplets. “It seemed someone was always saying, ‘These are the triplets!’ Guess I was just jealous,” said Elizabeth, “even though it wasn’t their fault!”

And that is a bit about the triplets, the first triplets born in Shakopee (and their oldest sister!)



SHAKOPEE HERITAGE SOCIETY
2109 Boulder Pointe, Shakopee, MN 55379

952-693-3865

shakopeeheritage.org



SHAKOPEE HERITAGE SOCIETY



Triplets!

May 28, 1918

Compiled and written by David F. Schieper, Shakopee Heritage Society © 2021



Jack Abeln and Philomena Minnie Theide Abeln were living upstairs in a little house on the corner of 6th and Scott Street, when triplets arrived on May 28, 1918.

All three of the babies lived and grew up in Shakopee. The triplets were named John, Philomena, and Marie.

According to Philomena Abeln Hennen, “I guess things weren’t so complicated then. We had simple medical attention, but we all survived, although I understand we were named in hurry because they didn’t know if we would all make it.”

The triplets were born at home, with Dr. P.M. Fischer of Shakopee as the doctor. They joined their older sister, Elizabeth Abeln Schultz.

Marie Abeln was named after her grandmother, and her brother and sister were named after their father and mother.

According to Philomena Abeln Hennen, her mother was expecting twins, but not triplets. “She said she got so big when she was pregnant with us that she wouldn’t go anywhere but the back yard.” The triplets each weighed approximately five pounds at birth. They three babies were baptized promptly by Reverend Dean Mathias Savs, as they thought they might not survive. But they did!

It immediately became evident that their living quarters were too small, according to Elizabeth. And the task of caring for some many diapers, as they were not the disposable diapers of today, was an insurmountable hurdle. They had to walk up and down the stairs, with no washer and dryer.

The family moved to a house situated across the highway from Wampach’s Café. “We had just moved in—boxes around, dishes in a barrel, and a man by the name of Math Annen, who had a little shop on 2nd street, just west of the Shakopee House, was fixing our pump” noted Elizabeth. She was wheeling around one of the little doll buggies.

“I went to my mother and said there was a big bug in the buggy. Well, it was a snake curled up in the bottom end! Math Annen killed it. But after that, they put their shoes on the bed at night, and almost immediately started looking for another place, which was hard to find,” said Elizabeth Abeln Schultz in an article in 1980.



The family moved to a big red house directly across from the front of St. Mark’s Church. “One night I gave my parent’s a scare,” said Elizabeth. “I got nightmares. We kids slept in the west bedroom, and my folks in the next room, which was supposed to be the living room. They heard the window opening. They thought someone was after the babies! Well, they determined that it was I who got up, opened the window, shut it, and got back into bed!”

Though many of the neighbors were worried as they never had children in the neighborhood before, but their fears were short-lived. The triplets and their older sister were good kids, and they stayed in their own yard. Marie and Philomena were dressed alike for many years, though Johnny never had to wear anything to match. The two girls, along with their oldest sister, Elizabeth, were in the St. Mark’s girls’ choir, and Johnny was a Mass server, always on call.

The triplets and Elizabeth went to school at St. Mark’s school. They would go home to eat at lunch time. The time they didn’t like going home was when their mother made homemade soap. “We knew she’d have it ready to strain at noon. She’d put a ripped open gunny sack over a wooden tub on the floor. We each held a corner of the sack and turned our heads away.” In later years, stirred soap was made, which was much simpler.