

East Falls Past--Jean Rowland Interview

The Falls, May 2010, by Wendy Moody

Following are excerpts from a 2009 interview with Jean Rowland, an East Falls resident for 85 years and owner of Rowland's Market that stood on the corner of Indian Queen and Conrad. Present at the interview were Lois and Fred Childs, editors of *East Falls: 300 Years of History*. Lois is Jean's niece.

Jean, where do you live?

Indian Queen Lane. Before that I lived on Laboratory Hill. Bowman, Calumet, let's see where else...

When and where were you born?

1915, in Dunbarton, Scotland. I'm 95. My parents were from Ireland.

When did you come to East Falls?

Age 10. My father came first, to make a million dollars! That's how we talked in those days. We thought in America you made a lot of money; there was money on the ground.

When did he send for your family?

A year later. I hated the boat ride; I wasn't too fond of coming anyway. We first went to Ireland to stay with my grandmother while my father was making money to send for us.

What are your memories of St. Bridget School?

It was nice. I learned the violin there. We went home for lunch. My friends were Helen Burke, Mary Burke, Veronica McCoy. When I first went to St. Bridget's the nun would have me talk in front of the class because of my brogue. I did it a few times and then I got fed up. The kids would laugh, so I stopped. I wouldn't do it.

What did you do for fun?

We played along the river, sledded on Bowman, swam in the Bathey and ice skated and swam at Gustine Lake.

Did you swim in the river?

Yes, up by the Canoe Club. We swam out to the rock in the middle. You thought you were real smart. (laughs). There was plenty of current. We really shouldn't have been there.

What do you remember about Prohibition?

When there was no booze? You could go to some house and pick it up. You knew who sold it. They would even give it to children who were going for their parents.

Christmas?

We had a tree - they sold them in the neighborhood for 50 cents. We never missed Mass on Christmas Eve and had a turkey dinner.

Easter?



We got our outfits in town - Wanamakers, Lit Brothers, or Strawbridge's and would parade along the river.. We had candy and hard-boiled eggs in our baskets.

Sports?

My husband Frank played football. He was a quarterback in the East Falls Wildcats.

Did you feel safe growing up?

Yes, yes.