

Shave and a Haircut, Two Bits!



BARBER, from the Latin word *barba* meaning “beard,” is a person whose occupation is primarily to cut, dress, groom, style and shave men’s and boys’ hair.

When barbering was introduced to Rome in 296 B.C, barber shops quickly became very popular centers for daily news and gossip.

Barbers originally assisted monks, who in the 1300s, were the traditional practitioners of medicine and surgery. Papal decrees prohibited members of religious orders from spilling blood themselves. In addition to haircutting, hairdressing and shaving, barbers also performed surgery; neck manipulation, cleansing of ears and scalp; draining/lancing of boils, fistulae, and cysts with wicks; bloodletting and leeching; fire cupping and the extraction of teeth.

In 1540 an Act of British Parliament specified that no surgeon could cut hair or shave another, and that no barber could practice surgery; the only common activity was to be the extraction of teeth. The barber pole, featuring red and white spiralling stripes, indicated the two crafts (surgery in red and barbering in white), and continues to be used to signify the place or shop where the barber works. Occasionally one will see a red, white and blue spiraled barber pole. One interpretation of these barber pole colors is that red represents arterial blood, blue is symbolic of venous blood, and white depicts the bandage.

Louis Pasteur's work on the effects of bacteria in the 1870s and 1880s led to new sanitation laws throughout the U.S. It became required for each client of a barber to have his own **shaving mug**. Mugs were not to be shared. These laws were generally in effect from the 1880s to around 1920. It is interesting to note that there was no restriction in the sharing of razors, just the mugs.



Blank mugs, usually from Germany or France, would have the client's name hand painted, often in calligraphy, and a scene featuring the client's occupation. These mugs then would be displayed in the barber shop. This display became like business cards, yellow pages or the what internet is today. When someone in the neighborhood needed a trade or service they would simply stop in the barber shop and check out the mugs for the service they required.

A **scuttle** was made to hold hot water in a separate compartment. The hot water was usually for dipping a shaving brush into. Sometimes scuttles were fashioned to keep shaving soap or cream warm for a more luxurious shave.



Burma Shave was an American brand of brushless shaving cream, famous for its advertising gimmick of posting humorous rhyming poems on small sequential highway roadside signs. BurmaShave sign series first appeared on U.S. Highway 65 near Lakeville, Minnesota, in 1926, and remained a major advertising component until 1963 in most of the contiguous United States. The first series read:

Cheer up, face the war is over! BurmaShave.

And this very appropriate one:

*Shaving brushes / You'll soon see 'em /
On the shelf / In some / Museum / Burma Shave*

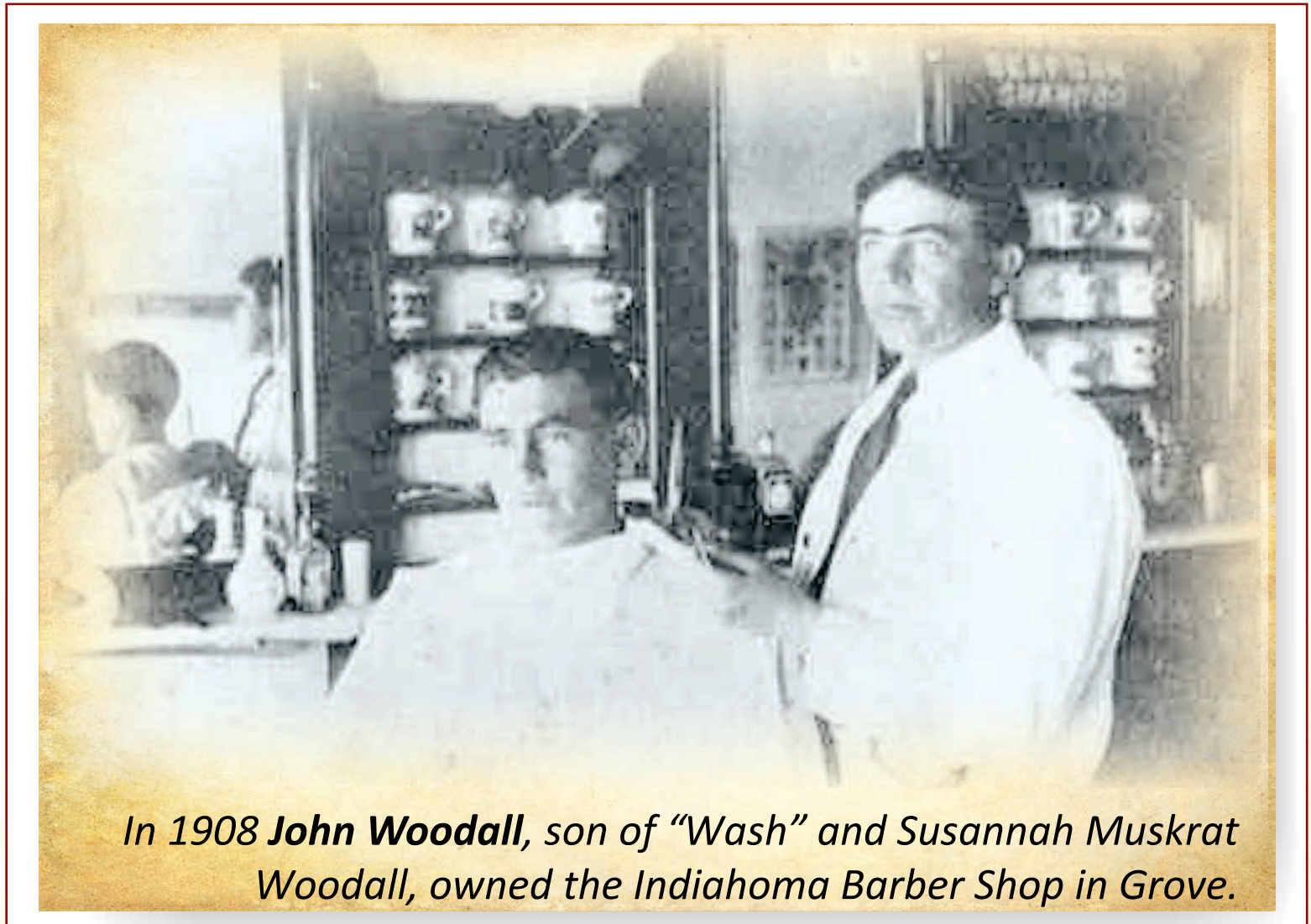


Burma Shave signs along Route 66

Bert Slocum was another long-time resident of Grove and was a first class barber. He told me once he had been an army barber. It was customary in those days that most of the patrons had their own individual shaving mug and on the mug was a representation of the business that they were in. For example, they might have the head of a steer on it for a cattle man. My father's mug had a reproduction of the grain elevator. At least the mug had the individual's name on it, and each individual had his own shaving brush.

Bert was one of the most energetic men I ever saw. He always had several operations going at once. In addition to his barber shop, he had a picture show next door. Bert might have a customer in the barber chair ... he would get him lathered up and put a hot towel on him. The hot water, by the way, came from an old lard can on a kerosene stove nearby. Bert would grab up his megaphone and rush out on the street when it was time for the show to start and yell in a loud voice, “Just starting, at the Princess Theater, etc., etc.” and the customer would just have to wait until he got back in and finished him up. Bert didn't operate the projector; he had a man employed to do that.

Memories of John Elmo Pace, Grove



In 1908 John Woodall, son of “Wash” and Susannah Muskrat Woodall, owned the Indianoma Barber Shop in Grove.

Bill Davis from east of Jay brought his two little girls with long braids into Bill Roberts’ Barbershop for haircuts for they had prevailed upon their parents to get their hair bobbed. Ethel was first and got a Buster Brown haircut with bangs and was promptly complimented by all in the shop. Then it was little Lola’s turn, who, when she got into the chair, demanded he give her a boyish bob. When her father acquiesced, Roberts proceeded to cut it as she directed. When the long braids lay on the floor and she grinned at everyone, the crowd was slow with their compliments. Then she knew she should have done as her sister had done. Lola said, “Bill Robb, I take it back Give me a longer cut like Ethel’s. I don’t like this short hair cut.” That was talked about for many days around the square.

Recalled by Mrs. Claud Maynard, Jay



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