

## Snyder's Store

Sometimes columns come easily, and sometimes not. Initially, I thought the whole Worm moon and the Spring Equinox might be appropriate. Though it's not the most pleasing moon cycle-name, it usually suits the season. According to the lore, the full moon was named because robins, having returned from their winter vacations, tugged at the worms as the ground thawed. But most robins don't migrate, and any worm surfacing today might need a drill to get to the surface.

Now I thought I'd tell you where I hid the missing Malaysian Airlines 777, but I'm certain the NSA would track me down and water board me for the information.

As has happened most of the time, a walk around Housatonic set me straight. What, I wondered, was happening at the Snyder's Store? The first Snyder's did business at "Charlie Castrovano's house" before moving across Main Street into a large, wooden building, which, as often the case back then, burned to the ground in 1923. I remember reading stories of heroic telephone operators, who also stood their ground (the telephone office was upstairs at Charlie's) manning the phone lines throughout the conflagration. I'm inclined to believe this is the fire associated with that legend.

The Snyders rebuilt the place, in stucco this time, it's the place most of us think of when the store comes up in conversation.

Snyder's was truly a "general store" selling furniture, penny candy, hardware, and housing a television repair shop. Maybe some of you can't remember when televisions were repaired, not discarded; plug in a new tube here and tighten a loose wire there, and the thing was good as new. There was an actual short-cut – many of our other paths were simply different ways to walk home – starting in the alley next to the store and running a couple hundred feet or so from Main Street to Hart Street. A concrete wall topped by a pipe fence ran a ways up the hill where it diminished to a path winding through some old foundations, perhaps more evidence of the 1923 fire.

After being home to a couple of restaurants, the most recent of which closed several years ago, the place sat fallow, a for rent/for sale sign clinging to the window like a last, bright leaf might weather the wind in late fall. A few months ago, sheets of brown paper covered the windows, plumbing and electrical contractors worked there most everyday. **When the workers were finished, the papers were stripped from the windows, the Pleasant and Main Café and General Store emerged. The place was almost unrecognizable, but in a good way. Its newly finished floor and its comfortable-looking chairs made the place warm and welcoming. A bright sign advertised lattes and cappuccino. From all I've heard, both the food served and the attentive staff are first-class.**

I have only one quibble about the place. On the store's web page, the original cover photo changed from the handsome 1920 building to a picture of our water tower instead. By my lights, you have to earn using the water tower as advertising and identity. The expropriation of the symbol bothered me in the way a grumpy old guy who's seeing his home place change always does.

Aside from that, we should all be pleased to have a business in the building, the cold glaring windows had been discomfiting. The place will never be Snyder's Store again, but that's OK. Every thing on Earth, indeed the Earth itself, comes and goes, in its own good time.

**Bob Gray**

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