

Max's X-tra Fine

Written by Becky Michael Zeissler, 2011

"Max's X-tra Fine!" she said,
"Now that's the one for me"
The patron put her order in
Max sliced the ham, but not too thin,
Then slathered dressing on the bread,
A masterpiece to see.

One Autumn day a stranger came
To Crossett's grocery store
"My time is tight, just passing through,
For lunch I've got some moments (few),
A salad please—house dressing's good!
In fact, I'll have some more!"

This man from Kraft, he struck a deal
With Crossett on that day.
"Sell us your dressing recipe,
We'll pay 300 dollars fee"
The men shook hands and Max was pleased
To get such for his pay.

The Great Depression, grim and long,
Was worse in '33
Substitutes were put in force,
For coffee, butter, (meat, of course)
Kraft dusted off Max's receipt
And said "Now we will see."

They ran a batch of X-tra Fine
Through Chapman's new machine
"Miracle Whip," the gadget's name
At World's Fair it gained great fame
And when it made its debut there
Reviews were very keen.

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Much praise was given bolts and steel,
The gears that twist and roll
"It whips the dressing, smooth and thick
Unrivaled blending, that's the trick!"
But Max, he knew, and Salem too
The spices were the soul.

In Salem, Illinois we hold
This mem'ry to be dear.
We cannot prove with legal claim
That Salem's son deserves such fame
Nor has the legend been *disproved*
The dressing started here.

Note: Local lore holds that Max Crossett, who owned a café in Salem, Illinois in the 1930s, sold his salad dressing recipe to a man from Kraft-Phenix Cheese Corporation in 1931 for \$300. Zeissler had been researching this story to determine its veracity. She wrote this poem based upon a combination of story and fact that she uncovered. Max Crossett did own a grocery store at the corner of Washington and Main Streets, at 116 North Washington Street. Crossett was partners with a Mr. Wilson, who owned a bakery. It was customary then (as now) to sell lunches from such locations. Spokespersons for Kraft won't confirm that Crossett's recipe is indeed Miracle Whip, but they do admit that during that timeframe their company bought a lot of dressing recipes from people like Max Crossett.