

# Page grandson collects memorabilia from dairy

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Blade Staff Writer

About eight years ago, Thomas H. Page began digging around the remains of railroad tracks alongside a former dairy building on the near South Side.

He unearthed about 20 intact milk bottles, some of them bearing a "Kleen-Maid Milk" label, which dates to the first days of milk processing in what had been the Page Dairy Co., founded by his grandfather, Henry A. Page, 75 years ago.

The bottles were among many buried under the old railroad siding which had been used as a dumping ground for old bottles after paper cartons came into use.

The bottles were the start of Mr. Page's collection, and he now has an assortment of more than 125 bottles, bottle caps, advertising posters, wooden cases, and promotional materials relating to the former Page Dairy Co. The family-owned company once was one of the largest independent midwestern producers of ice cream and dairy products.

"I pick up things any place I can.

I go to antique shows, auctions, and house sales. I buy anything relating to Page Dairy, as long as the price is right," Mr. Page said.

Recently, Mr. Page displayed his memorabilia at a "collectibles" session at Wildwood Preserve Metropolitan park. The gathering included several former employees of the dairy. "One of my favorites is a gold-colored coin which randomly was placed in butter cartons entitling the buyer to turn it into his neighborhood store for a \$1 refund."

He also has decks of cards, a screw driver, and a folding cup, all bearing the Page trademark, which probably were premiums or special promotional gifts.

Henry Page, whose family had developed a thriving dairy operation in Illinois based on techniques they had learned in Switzerland, had been general manager of the former Ohio Dairy and opened his own plant on Wade Street on Jan. 1, 1914, confining activities initially to butter. Expansion came fast with the

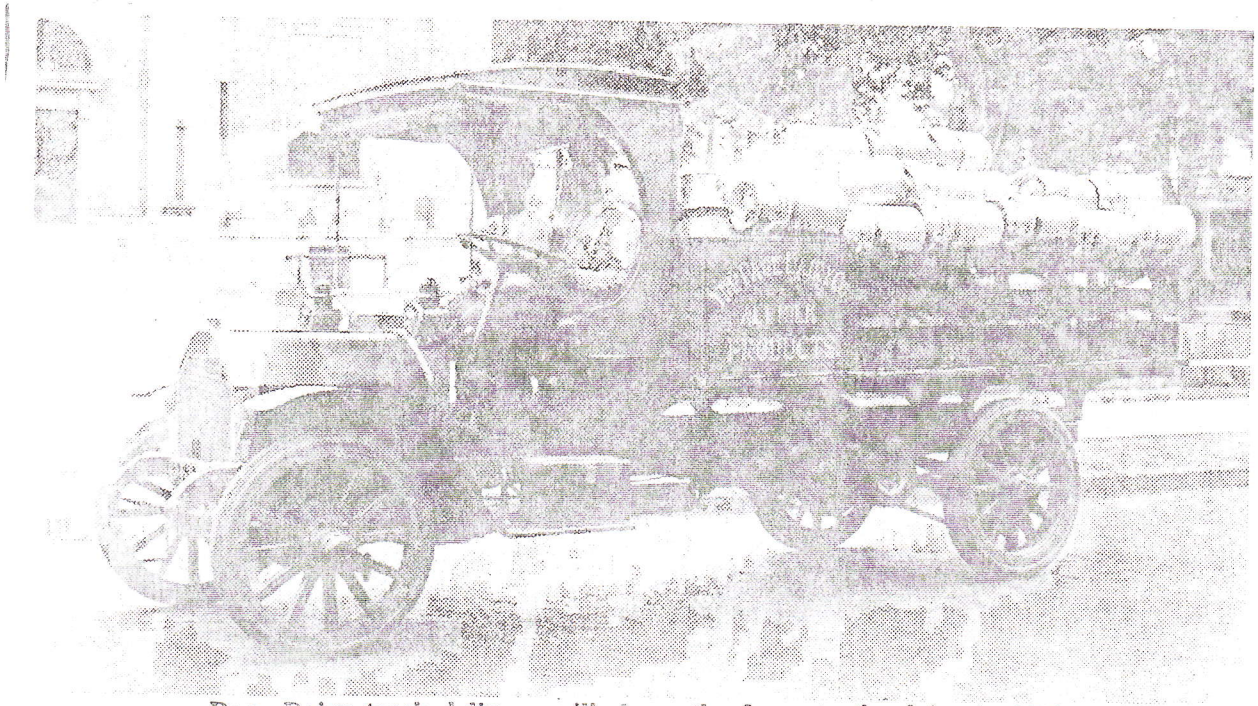
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Thomas Page displays an old milkman's hat from his collection

Blade Photo by Lloyd Ransom





Page Dairy truck delivers milk from the farm to the dairy in 1913

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## Page grandson collects dairy's history

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opening of another dairy in Whitehouse in 1917, followed in rapid succession by others in Bluffton, Mansfield, Findlay, and Bellefontaine, O.; Weston, Mich., and Angola, Ind.

The company had more than 380 employees and drew supplies from more than 2,400 farmers. It provided milk, butter, and ice cream both under its own name and private labels to hundreds of retail stores, major chains, and supermarkets. It maintained a fleet of more than 40 trucks here for regular home delivery routes.

Henry Page, who died in 1950, was an active community leader and benefactor who provided band uniforms for all Toledo high schools and the University of Toledo "because I'm sure they are appreciated

by the pupils." The DeVilbiss High School football field was named Page Stadium in his honor.

He also provided milk for nutrition programs in the schools and often donated favors to parties for handicapped or underprivileged children.

His sons, Henry, Jr., and Arnold Page, Thomas' father, carried on the business until it was closed in 1975.

"They no longer wanted to deal with the pressures," Thomas Page explained.

The shutdown came as the A&P Stores, which then accounted for about half its business, began closing many of its 72 stores in this region. Page had dropped its ice cream business seven years previously when the Kroger chain, another of its major customers, built its

own ice cream plant in Detroit.

Thomas Page, 32, said he had done some work around the plant while a student at Ottawa Hills High School.

"Had the dairy still been going when I graduated from Bowling Green State University, I probably would have gone into the business. I think I would have liked it; instead I'm a certified public accountant."

Thomas Page recalls when he did special work for the company.

"It was Christmas eve and some A&P stores were out of milk. I was only 17, but I took out a truck to replenish their supplies for the holiday."

At one showing of his collection, Mr. Page said a former dairy employee told how one of her jobs was cutting the stems and green leaves from fresh strawberries used for ice cream.