

The following is a transcription of a school report on Star City done by Susan Frost when she was 15 years old in 1986. She won First Place for Local/State History in the Morgantown High School Social Studies fair.

The report was shared by her mother, Alice Frost, the year of Star City's Centennial Celebration.

Companies

Keystone Industrial Company 1903

Incorporators:

D. Brewer
L. Sigwart
F. Schmidiger
R. Barrickman
A. Boehler

Star Glass Company 1904

Incorporators:

F. Carter
G. Cleveland
D. Brewer
G. McClure
A. Boehler

Officers 1906

J.W. Wiles, President
Lee Shriver, Vice President
W.W. Smith, Treasurer; Attorney

Directors:

Wiles, Shriver, Smith, Boehler, Sigwart,
Barrickman, Kauffeld

Kauffeld Company 1915

L. Kauffeld
M. Kauffeld
H. Kauffeld
R. Kauffeld
W. Cameron

Early Star City

One of the first steps taken towards the development of Star City took place on December 1, 1901. On that date, the Empire Brick Company bought land from William T. Boyers. This land was known as "Home Farm" and included the right of way for the railroad.

By 1906, the companies in Star City included Randall Glass Company, Empire Brick Company, Shriver Lumber Company, Randall Building and Improvement Company, McClure House and Stores, Randall Residences, Keystone Industrial Company, and Randall Glass and Water Company.

In 1903, Randall was described as a “village”. However, by 1906, Randall was considered a town. When incorporated in 1907, Randall became Star City.

Randall had many amenities: a railroad station, a bank, stores, a hotel, and a post office. Developers looked forward to the building of a bridge and a railroad connection between Mannington [WV] and Waynesburg [PA].

In 1906, the Keystone Industrial Company held an auction to sell lots. This was the opportunity to build houses for the laborers of Randall. One of the purchasers was Louis Kauffeld, general manager of the Star Glass Company, who bought twenty-one lots.

Restrictions were placed on the houses to be built on the lots. The houses had to be two stories, built of brick, and have a solid stone foundation. They had to have a tile or slate roof and have a square cornice. All these features are visible in the group of houses along Herman Avenue [the 400 block]. The house owners had to be Caucasian and of known good character.

Early Star City Timeline

Date		Source
12-01-01	Empire Brick buys land (Home Farm) from W. Boyers, including right of way for railroad	D.F. 62/251
05/19/03	Keystone Industrial Company incorporated	Corporation Book
07/20/03	First lots sold	
12/07/04	Star Glass Company incorporated	Corporation Book
01/17/05	Star Glass buys land from Empire Brick	D.F. 80/367
05/10/06	New Dominion Industrial Edition describes the businesses located in Randall	
09/29/06	Auction of lots by Keystone Industrial Co. Louis Kauffeld purchases 21 parcels of land.	Morgantown Daily Post
1908	A house has been built on Block 44, lots 3 & 4	Tax Records
1909-1910	As well as the plant in Star City, Star Glass has an office at 208 Main St in Morgantown	City Directory
08/09/15	Kauffeld Company incorporated All members of Kauffeld family except Walter Cameron)	Corporation Book
08/16/15	Property is transferred to the Kauffeld Co	D.F. 140/105
12/11/17	Factory destroyed by fire. Louis Kauffeld is manager.	Post Chronicle
05/31/27	The property on Herman Avenue is granted to (a) Second National Bank (b) Bank of Monongahela Valley	D.F. 216/181
07/31/37	The property is bought at auction at the courthouse door by William Evans and his wife. After this, the houses are sold to	D.F 296/116 296/120

individual owners.

The names of the occupants of the first homes are unknown. Between 1916 and 1926, people of Italian and east European descent lived in the houses. [This is born out by the information in the Star City School rolls of the time period]. It is interesting to note one man could not sign his name on the deed.

In 1907, Star Glass gave its name to Randall, which became Star City. The company specialized in lamp chimneys and globes. The factory, which was built to be fireproof, nearly burned to the ground in 1917. This disaster and the use of electricity instead of gas and oil lamps caused the decline of the Star Glass Company.

In 1915, the Kauffeld Company was incorporated. The directors of the company were Louis Kauffeld, Mary Kauffeld, Howard Kauffeld, Ralph Kauffeld, and Walter Cameron. From the 1922 Morgantown City Directory, I have learned that Ralph Kauffeld was a confectioner, garage owner, and postmaster. Walter Kauffeld was also a garage owner (possibly the same) and lived on Herman Avenue. Howard Kauffeld, Vice President of Star Glass, also lived on Herman Avenue.

In 1926, the Monongahela Development Company was offering more exclusive lots in Suncrest and East Fairfield, bordering on Star City. Some residents of Star City may have moved to East Fairfield. Then the Depression came and many people were unable to keep their property, including the Kauffeld Company. In 1927, Second National Bank and Bank of Monongahela Valley took possession of the Kauffeld property. Ten years later, the property was sold at auction at the courthouse door. As the country recovered from the Depression, it became possible for individuals to become homeowners. The houses on Herman Avenue passed into private hands. Many of the houses have been owned by the same families for more than thirty years.

Growing Up In Star City

An interview between Susan and Mrs. Perozzi and Mr. John & Mrs. Mary Vargo, residents of 412 Herman Avenue. [Their son, John James Vargo, resided in the house until his death]

S: Who owned the house before you?

Mrs. Perozzi: I don't know. All I know is his last name was Sanders. We bought it in 1940.

S: Why did you buy this house?

Mrs. Perozzi: Well, we rented first but then somebody bought the house so we had to move. Then we bought this one.

S: Did you grow up here?

Mrs. Vargo: Yes, I've lived here since I was four years old. I went to Star City Grade School.

S: Where did you go shopping?

Mrs. Vargo: Sellaro's had a little store.
Mr. Vargo: The Clover Farm Store, the Scott's Store.
Mrs. Vargo: At the bottom of the hill was Cook's Grocery Store.
S: Were there mostly families living in these houses?
Mrs. Vargo: Yes, they raised some really big families here. Eight or nine children.
S: What type of transportation did you have?
Mr. Vargo: Bus line was used a lot.
S: Mrs. Perozzi, what did your husband do for a living?
Mrs. Perozzi: He was a miner.
S: Mr. Vargo, what do you do?
Mr. Vargo: I work in the glass factory as a glass blower.
S: Where else have you worked?
Mr. Vargo: I started out at Seneca. Then I worked in Chicago at Ingle Glass. I've worked at Davis & Lynch for 33 years.
S: Has the glass factory changed much?
Mr. Vargo: No, it's all hand blown still. Except now we have a crimping machine. Everything is by hand.
S: Do you attend a neighborhood church?
Mrs. Vargo: Yes, St. Mary's Catholic Church.
S: Have you always gone there?
Mrs. Vargo: Well, years ago, we had a smaller church. It was right next to Star City Elementary. [now converted to apartments]
S: Did you grow up here?
Mr. Vargo: Yes, I've spent my whole life here. My family moved here around the first part of the 30s.
S: Where did you live?
Mr. Vargo: We lived right up the block. When the Shiders moved, we bought their place across the alley.
S: What did your father do?
Mr. Vargo: He was a miner. Most people were miners or glass workers.
S: What were the nationalities?
Mr. Vargo: Italian and Hungarian.
S: Did most people own their own homes?
Mrs. Vargo: At first, people rented. Eventually they bought them.
Mrs. Perozzi: Years ago, everyone rented.
Mr. Vargo: You had to rent them off of Kauffelds.
S: Have you lived in West Virginia most of your life, Mrs. Perozzi?
Mrs. Perozzi: Yes, I was born near Fairmont in what is called Watson.
S: What was it like when you first moved here?
Mrs. Perozzi: They did not have many houses.
S: Where were most of the buildings when you moved here?
Mrs. Perozzi: Some on Herman Avenue.
Mr. Vargo: Buildings were mostly over the hill. Then they built the brick row. It was all farmland. Around the post office and up was Brewer's Farm.

Mrs. Vargo: There was old building over the hill. They used to call it the Kauffeld Building.

Mrs. Perozzi: It was a dance hall. People went square dancing.

Mr. Vargo: The Cook's building was a grocery store, beer garden, and dance hall.

S: Are there a lot of the same families?

Mr. Vargo: A lot of people's children are here. Our neighbor's kids are still here.

S: How long was that farm there?

Mr. Vargo: I really can't recall. The farmhouse is still there. The Sellaro's bought a farm.

S: Were there many buildings near you?

Mr. Vargo: Yes, there was a little grocery store, a filling station, hardware store, and theater. The Pavone's had a store. I met Mary at a dance hall.

S: What was the house like when you first moved into it?

Mrs. Perozzi: We did a lot of work.

Mrs. Vargo: Just a wooden porch, no sides on the porch. The posts on the porch were wood.

Mr. Vargo: There was no indoor plumbing, only outhouses. You can still tell where some were.

Mrs. Vargo: This house has no partitions. It's nothing but brick and plaster. There was no water or bathroom. In our neighbor's yard, there was a pump. The outhouses were in the backs of yards. Nobody had a telephone. Most had electricity.

Mr. Vargo: Some had kerosene lights still.

Mrs. Perozzi: There was wallpaper when we moved here.

Mrs. Vargo: They put the bathroom in in the early 40s. We got running water then.

Mrs. Perozzi: We always had electric, though.

S: When did most people get their telephones?

Mr. Vargo: I'd say in the early 50s.

S: Have some of the places around here had different names?

Mrs. Vargo: Where the Boulevard goes through used to be called Brewer Hill.

S: Did most people attend high school?

Mrs. Vargo: Most people did. Some didn't make it.

S: What did most people do after they graduated?

Mrs. Vargo: A lot worked in the glass factories. People got married. A few made it through college.

S: Where was the theater?

Mr. Vargo: There's a video shop there now, across from the Dairy Mart. [gray building, most recently Colorado Mikes] It was a dance hall after that. It was called the Morgan Theater.

S: What was the neighborhood like back then?

Mr. Vargo: Everybody knew each other. Most people were related somehow or were real good friends. Neighbors visited each other. At Christmas

and Easter, everybody got together. They'd come to your house. You'd go to their place. We used to visit all night. We shared food.

S: Why did you move to Star City, Mrs. Perozzi?

Mrs. Perozzi: My sister told us to move down here. The girls, my husband, and I came down. My husband got a job.

S: How were the houses furnished?

Mrs. Perozzi: Just what you need. My kitchen didn't have cabinets. We washed our dishes in the tub. We had a coal stove.

Mr. Vargo: That was before furnaces. Then kerosene heaters came out. People loved them. You just turn it on and cook. A coal stove had to be kept on all day to cook.

Mrs. Vargo: There were big bake ovens outside in backyards. Friday, we made bread.

Mrs. Perozzi: A lot of us used to bake bread and sell it where only men lived. Miners used to buy it for about 25 cents a bag.

S: There was a ferry across the river?

Mr. Vargo: Yeah, that was the only way to get across.

S: When did the glass factory open?

Mrs. Vargo: I don't know. Years ago, it was called Perfection Glass. Then Mr. Davis took it over.

S: What did you do for entertainment?

Mrs. Perozzi: Listen to the radio. Every Saturday, the Wheeling Jamboree was on.

Mr. Vargo: The show boats used to come along the river. You had to go aboard to see them. They used to pull up at the ferry. Circuses came too.

S: Has politics been important?

Mrs. Vargo: My mother used to make people vote. There were lots of political meetings.

S: Were there lots of clubs?

Mr. Vargo: There were different groups. Hungarians and Italians had separate lodges. They kept apart. When I was young, you never heard of a Hungarian running with an Italian.

S: What did you do on weekends?

Mr. Vargo: Go to movies. On Sundays, then we went to Riverside Park. The mines and factories had baseball and football teams. A field was near where the post office is now.