

#11 Helping Hands Thrift Store

6495 Main Street, Caseville, MI

As an outreach ministry of the Caseville United Methodist Church, the building housing what is currently known as the “Helping Hands Thrift Store” had an interesting and varied early life. Opened circa 1880s as the Crawford Bank (named after prominent Caseville businessman, Francis Crawford), as years went by this building was eventually occupied by wide-ranging businesses such as Crawford Bank, Caseville Mercantile and Hardware store, Kreh’s Hatchery, apartments, Thumb-Fun Restaurant, Jungle Land, Mrs. B’s Yarn Shop and Kopack’s Carpets, Kasper’s, and currently as the Helping Hands Thrift Store operated by the Caseville United Methodist Church.

Around the turn of the 20th century, if you were driving your horse and buggy north, just after crossing the Pigeon River and looking east, you would have seen a substantial two-story brick building with a columned wooden front porch featuring two large glass front windows. Peering through the “Caseville Mercantile Co.” windows, you could find items typical of any mercantile store of the time, such as penny candy, a barrel of crackers, a wheel of cheese, flour barrels, clothing, assorted household goods, sewing necessities - and often times, caskets. Originally the building had two stories, but for efficiency’s sake it was reduced to one level in the early 1940s. During the 1940s and 50s, while operating as a dining establishment owned by George and Martha Rastique, a hungry customer could have had an excellent fried herring dinner with potatoes, coleslaw and dinner roll for just 35 cents!

In more recent history the building housed “Jungle Land” where families enjoyed fun adventure-filled experiences together. During its time as Mrs. B’s yarn shop, many area knitters spent relaxed hours selecting yarns, ribbons, and notions for knitting and crocheting blankets, scarves, afghans and baby booties. When the property was purchased by the Caseville United Methodist Church in 2001 to be repurposed as a thrift store, the building provided a welcome – and needed - service to the community by making clothing and household items available at substantially reduced rates. Helping Hands also offers limited food pantry services. For special events the very popular “pasties” are sold as fund-raisers. You need to order those ahead – they go fast.

The old adage, “If these walls could talk” certainly applies to this building. One can only imagine the overheard tales about the life and times of persons whose boots and button up shoes crossed through the doorway of 6495 Main Street in Caseville.

References: History of Caseville by Mary Cobb Langley; Caseville Centennial book; Caseville United Methodist Church records