

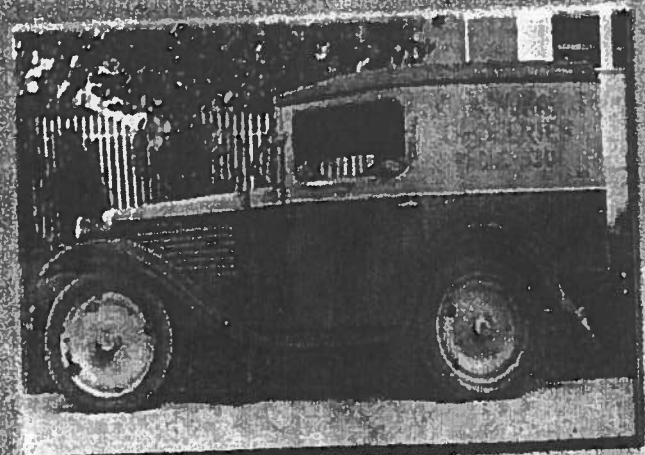


# “DELIVERING THE GOODS”

JOE A. WUKASCH  
GROCERY STORE

*A Photographic Album*

*by Kenneth C. Wukasch*



# ***"DELIVERING THE GOODS" - JOE A. WUKASCH GROCERY STORE - A PHOTOGRAPHIC ALBUM***

## **INTRODUCTION**

The history of any community is really the story of its families and Austin is no exception. It is fortunate that so many photographs have survived to tell the story of pioneer families in Austin. C.G. (Charlie) Wukasch moved to Austin following the Spanish-American War in 1898 and subsequently encouraged his sisters and brothers to follow. Looking for opportunity and profit, each in their own way became successful merchants and entrepreneurs, contributing to the progress of Austin and The University of Texas. Most of the photographs that follow were taken of everyday activities and not by professional photographers. Individually, each captures just a moment in time but taken collectively, document the special relationships and history of the Wukasch family.

Kenneth C. Wukasch  
May 2003

## **CHAPTER ONE - GROWING UP IN SERBIN**

Serbin, Texas in the 1890s was a dying town. Although the community had prospered during the Civil War, the 1870s and 1880s witnessed a decline as the railroads bypassed the settlement. Businesses and stores gradually closed their doors so that by the 1890s, Serbin had once again become a community of houses and the church. An excerpt from the Texas State Historical Marker in Serbin reads:

A thriving town 1865 - 1890; had grocery, dry goods, jewelry, drug and music stores, shops of wagon maker, blacksmith, saddler, post office, 3 doctors, 2 dentists.

Serbin was a farming community made up of Wendish Texans. Migrating from Germany in the 1850s, they settled in the area just southwest of Giddings. Unfortunately, this area was heavily wooded and the soil was low in fertility. A severe drought occurred in the 1890s resulting in disastrous crop failures. In 1893, farm prices plummeted as an economic panic and depression gripped Texas and the rest of the country. Into this world Joseph Alfred Oscar Wukasch was born on March 7, 1892. Born to George W. Wukasch and Johanna Maria Wukasch (nee Pilack), Joe was raised on a typical Wendish farm. Figure 1



Figure 1.

George W. Wukasch family,  
1894. Left to right: Joe (2  
years old) on lap of Mary  
(Mutter) Wukasch, Martha  
(standing), Frieda (front,  
Louise (back), C.G.  
"Charlie", George, Gerhard.

The family raised chickens, ducks, geese, pigs, and a "milch cow" to provide food, down, and dairy products. The sale of butter also provided additional income. Joe's grandfather, Matthias, had purchased an 85 1/4-acre farm, see Figure 2, in the 1860s for \$1.00 per acre.

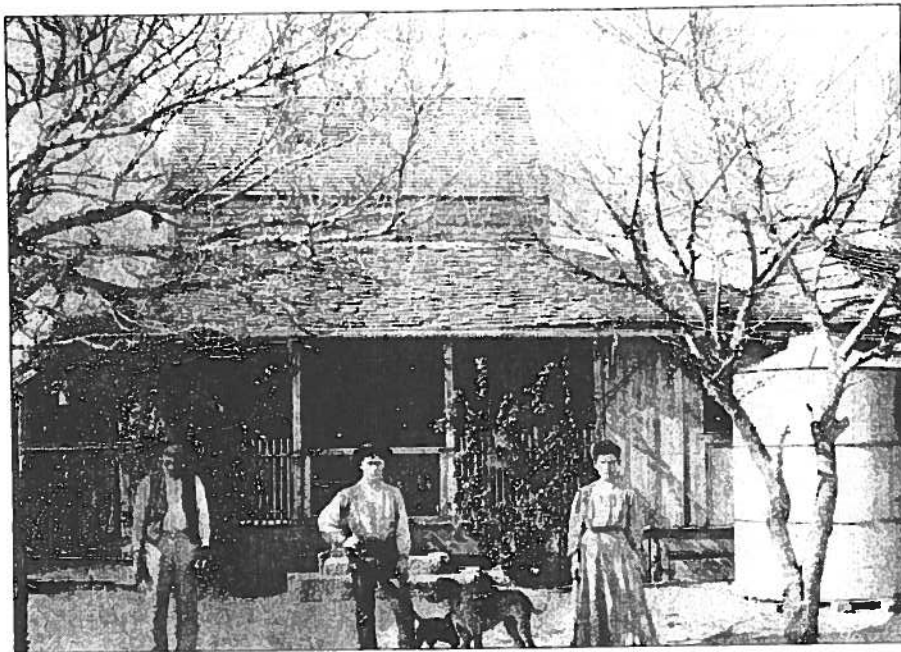


Figure 2 .Pilack homestead in Serbin. Grandfather Pilack, Joe and Louise Wukasch, circa 1907

Even though crop production was never as high as other Texas farms, the Wends successfully grew corn, cotton, wheat, rye, and sorghum that was used as an inexpensive sweetener. Oxen were generally used as work animals while horses provided the family with transportation to town and church. Life in the Wendish community of Serbin centered on St. Paul Lutheran Church. Figure 3

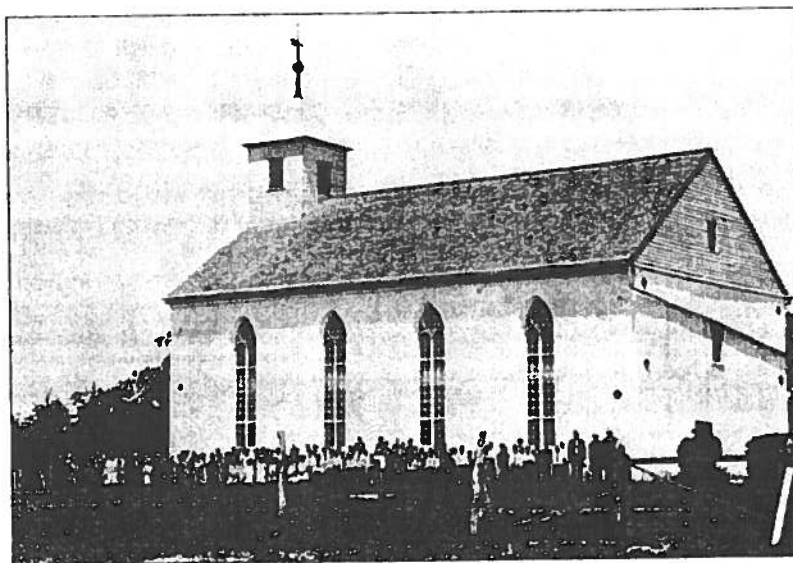


Figure 3. St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Serbin, home church to the Wukasch family.



Although formal education was limited for the Wukasch children, they were raised by their parents to work hard, be thrifty and honest, and love the Lord. These traits would be invaluable one day in successfully operating their own businesses. Figure 4



Figure 4 Joe (on the far right) prepares to go rabbit hunting near Serbin.

## CHAPTER TWO – A NEW START IN THE CITY

With encouragement from his brother Charlie, Joe moved to Austin in 1910. At age 18, Joe faced an exciting but unknown future in the city. Life in the big city was unlike anything Joe had known before on the farm in Serbin. Austin in 1910 was a city growing in population and geographic area. Figure 5

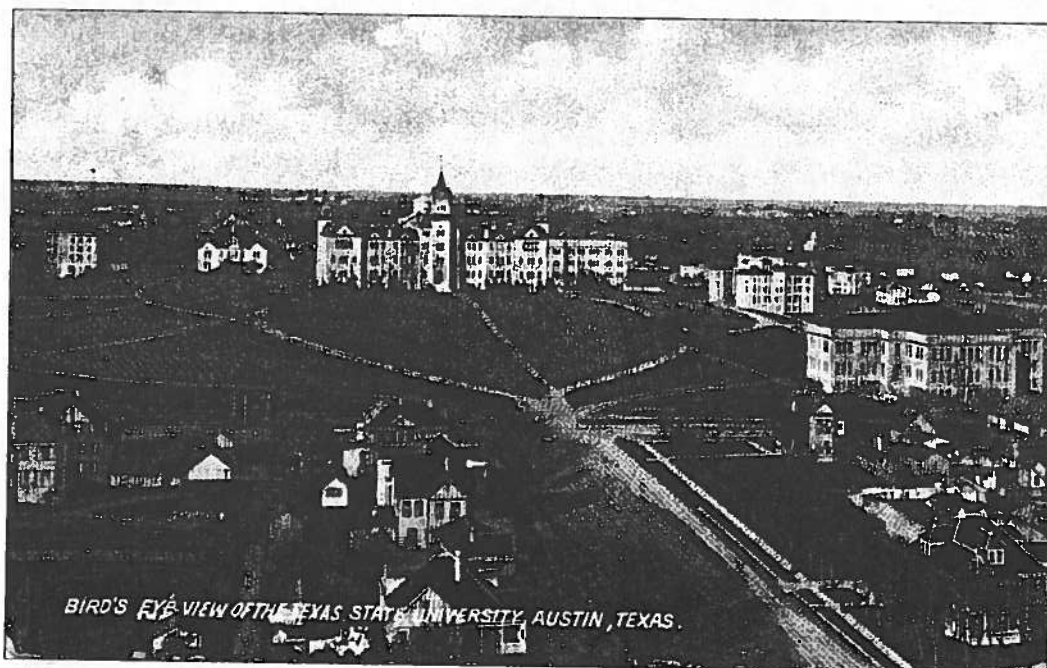


Figure 5. The University of Texas main campus when Joe arrived in Austin in 1910.

In 1912, the population had grown to 33,566 and sparked another real estate "boom." By 1913, more than 1,000 automobiles were licensed, necessitating the building of a new and more structurally sound Congress Avenue Bridge. Figure 6

Electricity was now available to most Austin homes and the radio, phonograph, and motion picture projectors were beginning to make an impact in people's everyday lives. Even though many streets were still unpaved, the skyline of Austin was changing. In 1910, construction began on the city's first "skyscraper," the Littlefield Building on the northeast corner of Congress Avenue and Sixth Street. Figure 7.



Figure 6. New and improved Congress Avenue Bridge, 1910.

Although most newcomers would have been frightened by these changes, Joe Wukasch sensed opportunity in this new and bustling urbanization. Figure 8.



Figure 7. Austin's first "skyscraper," the Littlefield Building 1911



Figure 8. Joe and August try out a new bicycle in the big city, 1912.

Upon his arrival in Austin, Joe was invited to live in the home, Figure 9, of his brother and sisters Gerhard (Jerry), Martha, and Louise, and mother Mary (the family affectionately called her "Mutter") at 302 East 17<sup>th</sup> Street.



Figure 9. The Wukasch's often gathered at the home of "Mutter" at 302 E. 17<sup>th</sup> Street. Standing left to right: Charlie, Emma, Walter, Edna, Mutter, Otto, Martha. Sitting left to right: Esther, Louise, Frieda, August (in uniform), and Martin (in front), 1918.

Almost immediately, Joe found employment with the William A. Achilles Company as a grocery deliverer. Figure 10. The Achilles Company, established in 1885, was one of Austin's oldest and most reputable groceries, advertising "GROCERIES-VEGETABLES-FRUITS-COUNTRY PRODUCE."

Figure 10. Ad for the W.A. Achilles Company. From *The Cactus*, 1911.

## W. A. Achilles & Co.

DEALERS IN

**Groceries, Wood, Feed**

AND

**Country Produce**

Headquarters for everything that  
is good to eat

"If it's good to eat, we have it"  
and "If we have it, it's good to eat"

16th & Guadalupe Sts.

Phone 394

Special Attention given to Fraternities  
and Sororities

**AUSTIN, TEXAS**

The William A. Achilles Company guaranteed delivery to all parts of the city and "morning orders leave promptly at 10 A.M. and evening orders leave promptly at 4 P.M." Joe worked hard during this time learning everything he could about the grocery business. One person that Joe could always turn to for business advice was his cousin Henry Wukasch, who in 1904 had invested \$150 in a general merchandise store at 100-102 Congress Avenue. In 1912, Joe leased space from his brother Charlie and opened the University Grocery Store at the corner of 23<sup>rd</sup> and Guadalupe Street. His first lease payment to Charlie, in March 1912, was \$25 with payments for the entire year totaling \$124. Figure 11.

May 1 <sup>st</sup> 1913	10.00	Aug 7 <sup>th</sup>	12.50
June " "	10.00	Sept 4 <sup>th</sup>	10.00
July 1 <sup>st</sup> " "	10.00	Nov 5 <sup>th</sup> 1913	5.00
Aug 1 <sup>st</sup> " "	5.00	Dec 2 <sup>nd</sup> " "	2.00
Sept 1 <sup>st</sup> " "	10.00	Jan 12 <sup>th</sup> 1915	1.00
Oct 1 <sup>st</sup> " "	5.00	Feb 5 <sup>th</sup> " "	5.00
Nov 1 <sup>st</sup> " "	10.00	Mar 5 <sup>th</sup> " "	30.00
Dec 1 <sup>st</sup> " "	5.00	Apr 12 <sup>th</sup> " "	5.00
Jan 1 <sup>st</sup> 1914	10.00	May " "	5.00
Feb 1 <sup>st</sup> " "	10.00	June 14 <sup>th</sup> " "	4.00
Mar 1 <sup>st</sup> 1914	10.00	July 14 <sup>th</sup> " "	5.00
Apr 1 <sup>st</sup> " "	10.00	Aug 18 <sup>th</sup> " "	5.00
May 1 <sup>st</sup> " "	10.00	Sept 22 <sup>nd</sup> " "	3.50
June 1 <sup>st</sup> 1914	10.00	Oct 9 <sup>th</sup> " "	3.50
July 1 <sup>st</sup> " "	10.00	Nov 13 <sup>th</sup> 1914	30.00
Aug 1 <sup>st</sup> " "	10.00	Dec 5 <sup>th</sup> 1914	3.50
Sept 1 <sup>st</sup> " "	10.00	Jan 13 <sup>th</sup> 1915	30.00
Oct 1 <sup>st</sup> " "	10.00	Feb 18 <sup>th</sup> 1915	30.00
Nov 1 <sup>st</sup> " "	10.00	Mar 18 <sup>th</sup> 1915	30.00
Dec 1 <sup>st</sup> " "	10.00	Apr 13 <sup>th</sup> 1915	30.00
Jan 1 <sup>st</sup> 1915	10.00	May 19 <sup>th</sup> 1915	30.00
Feb 1 <sup>st</sup> " "	10.00	June 17 <sup>th</sup> 1915	2.50
Mar 1 <sup>st</sup> " "	10.00	July 17 <sup>th</sup> 1915	30.00
Apr 1 <sup>st</sup> " "	10.00	Aug 25 <sup>th</sup> 1915	30.00
May 1 <sup>st</sup> " "	10.00		



Joe's nephew, Walter Wukasch, remembered that there was a door connecting the two businesses. While Joe's sisters Martha and Frieda and brother August lived in the bedrooms above Joe's store, Charlie's family lived above the Confectionery. The building had a common porch that overlooked Guadalupe Street. The porch was partitioned for privacy, with each side having its own clothesline. By 1918, Joe's store was listed in the Austin Business Directory as "JOE A. WUKASCH, GROCERIES, CONFECTIONS, CIGARS, TOBACCO," with "old phone 1071."

Even though the grocery business left Joe with little time for personal matters, he did meet a young, attractive woman named Alma Kissmann while attending St. Paul Lutheran Church in Austin, and before long they began dating. Figure 13



Figure 13. Alma Kissmann

In those days, riding bicycles, taking walks, and occasionally attending dances called "germans" were popular dating activities for Austin couples. Figure 14 & 15



Figure 14. Joe standing proudly beside his new car, circa 1917.



Figure 15. "How will I ever be able to shift gears!", circa 1917.



## CHAPTER THREE – UNCLE SAM CALLS

With the outbreak of World War I, Joe Wukasch was called into the service of his country. Ordered to report in May 1918 for active duty to Camp Travis, Texas, Joe prepared to close up his grocery store. See Figure 16.

On March 28, 1918, he made his last store lease payment to Charlie for \$50. Unfortunately, Joe would have to put his personal plans on hold. Joe and Alma promised to exchange letters while he was overseas and marry when he returned. The waiting would be difficult for Mutter and the Wukasch family. With another son, August, called into military service, the family wanted to demonstrate their pride and patriotism. The family car was decorated with "U S A" on the back window and a small star within a large star painted on the windshield. Figure 17.



Figure 16 Joe as he prepares to leave for basic training, 1918

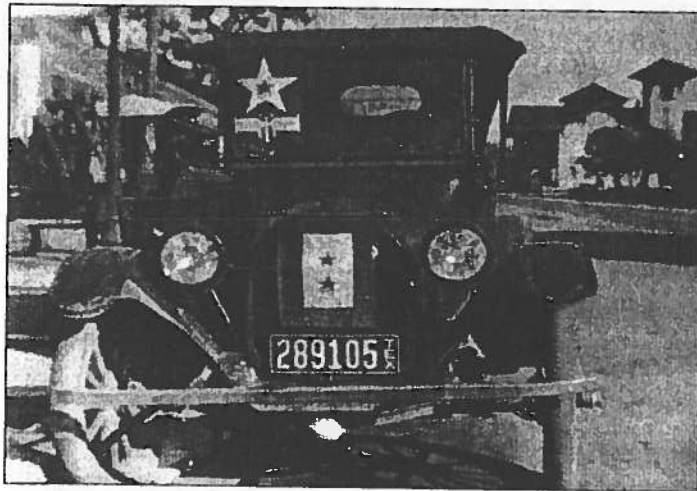


Figure 17 Wukasch family "patriotic car" in front of grocery on Guadalupe Street, 1918

Below the star were the words "OVER THERE." On the radiator hung a flag with two stars giving public testimony to Mutter having two sons in the service of their country. Figure 18.

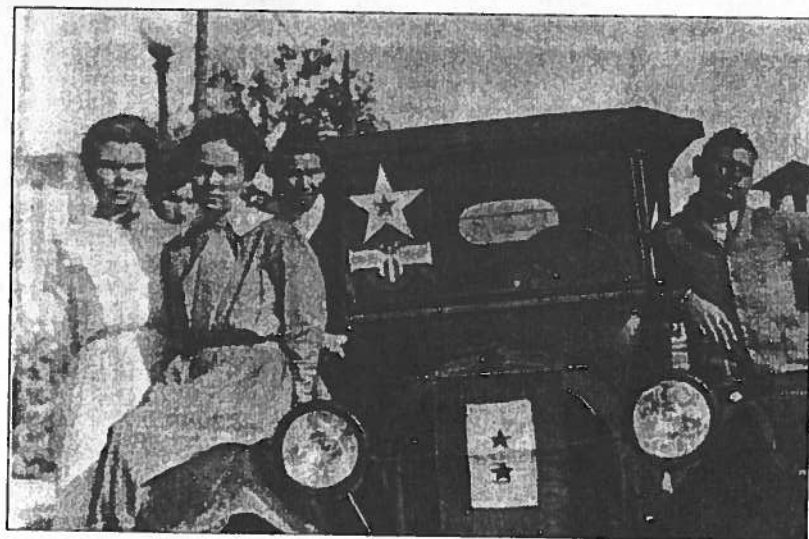


Figure 18. Wukasch's proudly pose on family car in support of Joe and August, 1918

On May 15, 1918, Charlie received the following message in a postcard from his brother at Camp Travis: Figure 19.

Dear Brother,

Been trying to write you all a letter ever since I got here but we don't get much time. We were transferred yesterday and know we will have to do some drilling sure nuf. I am in the Inf. I like all right so fore, little hard on us as we are not use to it.

360 Inf.  
Camp Travis, Tex

Best regard to you all,  
Joe

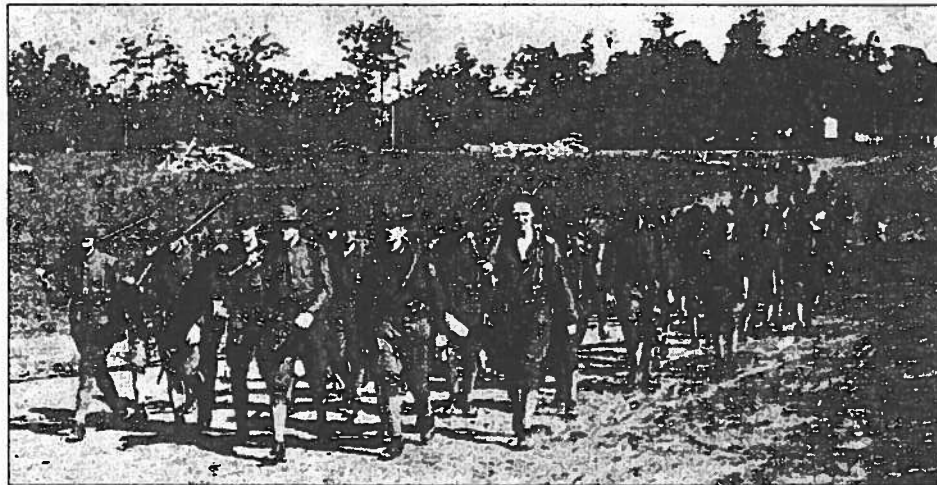


Figure 19. Postcard sent by Joe to brother Charlie from Camp Travis, Texas, 1918.

After nearly six weeks of basic training at Camp Travis, Joe's unit, Company 1, 360<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 90<sup>th</sup> Division (Texas-Oklahoma) of the American Expeditionary Force sailed for France. Arriving on June 23, 1918, the division immediately began intensive trench warfare training at Aignay-le-Duc that would last for 1 1/2 months. On August 24, Joe and his company got its first real taste of combat by helping the French army attack and reduce the St. Mihiel Salient from the Germans. Figure 20.



Figure 20. American "doughboys" prepare to "go over the top" at St. Mihiel, 1918.

This would be the first test of how this new inexperienced American army would fight. By September, the salient was gone and so were the Germans; the Americans proved that they could fight and win. Figure 21. The cost of this victory was high, however, with 7,277 American casualties.

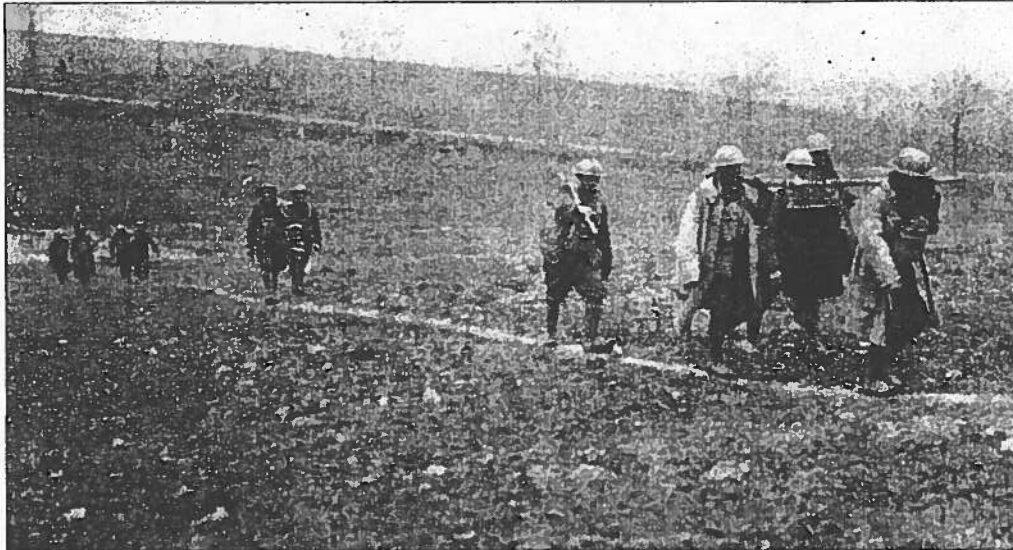


Figure 21. Taking bread and hot food to men of the 90<sup>th</sup> Division at the front line, 1918.

In October, Joe's division was ordered to join with the 5<sup>th</sup> Division in a supporting role in the last great battle of the war, the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. Even though its original mission was only supportive, the 90<sup>th</sup> found itself involved in fierce combat against the Germans in late October, serving as replacements for the large numbers of American soldiers wounded and killed. Fortunately for Joe, his top Sergeant, Earl Kennerly, asked him if he could cook after one of the regular cooks was killed. Joe replied, "Yah, I know something about food!" Figure 22 & 23. Joe was immediately assigned to be a company cook for the duration of the war.



Figure 22. Cook Joe Wukasch and top Sergeant Earl Kennerly, 1918.



Figure 23. Pvt. Joe and his buddies preparing a hot meal for Company 1, 1918.

This reassignment came at a time when many combat units were experiencing a casualty rate of over 60 percent. On November 11, 1918, Joe celebrated, along with millions of others worldwide, the end of the war. Even though the fighting was now over, the 90<sup>th</sup> Division would be one of five remaining in Germany to serve in the army of occupation. From November, 1918 to May, 1919, Joe would be stationed in Zeltingen, Germany. Figure 24.



Figure 24. City of Zeltingen, Germany, where Joe served in the Army of Occupation, 1919.

Many soldiers later wrote about how bored and homesick they were as they watched other units sail for home.

On March 16, 1919, Joe wrote the following to Alma: Figure 25.

Dear Alma,  
Many happy Easter  
Greetings  
From the little boy  
I am your Joe.

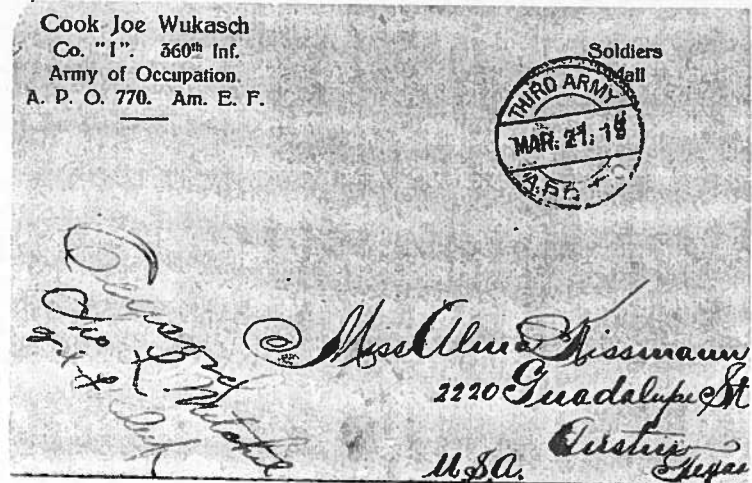


Figure 25. Letter from "Cook Joe Wukasch" to his fiancée Alma Kismann, 1919.

Finally, on May 28, 1919, the 90<sup>th</sup> Division received their orders to board the troopship *U.S.S. Mongolia*; Joe was going home at last. Joe apparently could not get home fast enough. On a postcard, Figure 26, written aboard the troopship, Joe wrote the following to Alma:

Somewhere on the Ocean: We are a little better than half ways across. It is 8:05 now by our time June 3, 1919. Will go to see the picture show soon. I am your Joe.

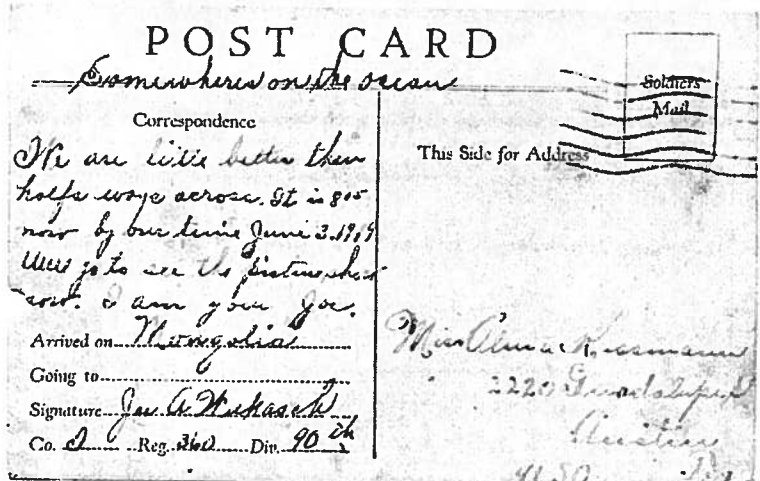
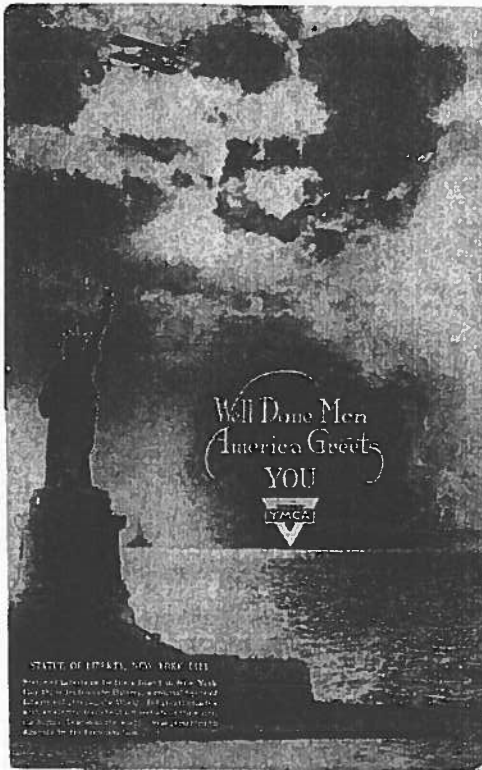


Figure 26. Postcard to Alma written aboard the troopship *Mongolia*, 1919.



On June 7, 1919, Joe sent another postcard to Alma announcing "we arrived today *Transport Mongolia*" and then another on June 7<sup>th</sup>:



American Y.M.C.A. AMERICAN  
EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

"June 7<sup>th</sup> 1919

Arrived today in the good old U.S.A. It certainly looks good to me. Feeling fine and dandy. Sure anxious to see you. Will write a good letter soon. Remember me to all. You know I send lots of love and then some. As ever. Your Joe. Figure 27.

On June 13<sup>th</sup>, Joe wrote the following to Alma from aboard a troop train:

Dear Alma,

I am feeling fine. We just came through Cincinnati, Ohio. Had a nice trip so far. We left Camp Derens(?) June 11. We are a few miles from Tex. yet. Hope to see you soon. Lots of love, Joe.

Figure 27. Postcard congratulating the returning troops, "Well Done Men, America Greets You, YMCA."

On June 15, 1919, Alma and the whole Wukasch family were at the train station to give Joe a tremendous welcome home to Austin. Figure 28 & 29.



Figure 28. Austinites turn out to welcome troops home, 1919.



Figure 29. Homecoming photo of Joe and August in uniform with a proud younger brother Otto.

## CHAPTER FOUR – STARTING OVER



Upon his return to Austin, Joe was determined to resume his grocery business and restart the interrupted romance with his fiancée, Alma Kissmann. Figure 30.

Alma Wilhelmina Kissmann was born October 11, 1894, and was baptized October 28<sup>th</sup> in Lincoln, Texas. Pastor R. Osthoff confirmed her into the Lutheran faith on April 12, 1908 at St. Johannes Lutheran Church. In 1912, she moved to Austin and took a job as domestic help waiting tables for Judge George Matthews at the Millet Mansion on West 11<sup>th</sup> Street. In 1916, Alma went to work earning \$5.00 per month plus room and board for the Herzog family who lived on First Street. By 1918, she had moved into the Mary Wukasch home on East 17<sup>th</sup> Street while Joe was away in the service. During this period, she also spent part of her time at home in Lincoln with her family. Figure 31.

Figure 30. Joe and Alma together again, 1919.

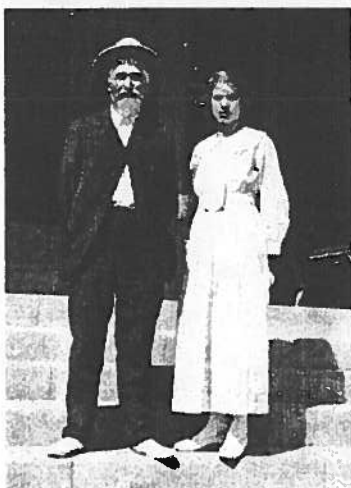


Figure 31 .Alma with her "Papa" Otto Kissmann, circa 1920.

On December 28, 1919, Joe and Alma were married by Pastor K. Manz at St. Paul Lutheran Church at 16<sup>th</sup> and Red River Street in Austin. Figure 32.

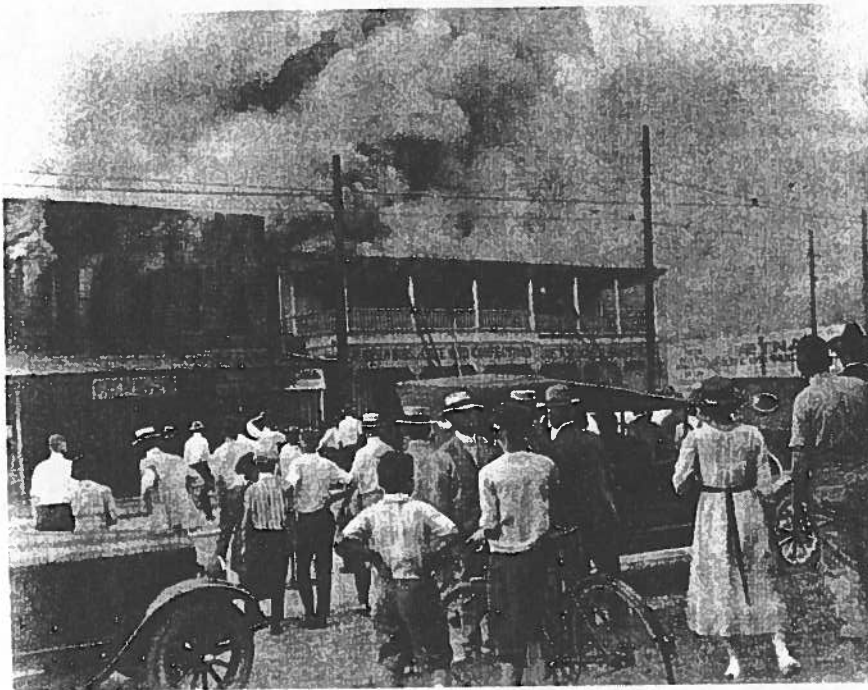


Figure 32. St. Paul Lutheran Church in Austin, circa 1920. Postcard published by Henry Wukasch.

Although the young couple at first moved into the apartment above the grocery, they soon were able to purchase their first home, Figure 33, at 4212 Duval Street. Here they would live for the next nine years.



Figure 33. Joe and Alma's first home at 4212 Duval Street, circa 1920.



At 3:00 P.M. on June 4, 1920, tragedy struck the Wukasch businesses. A fire broke out in the University Cleaners and Dryers Shop at 2214 Guadalupe Street when a gas stove exploded. Figure 34.

Figure 34. Curious spectators look on as Wukasch Brothers' Café and Joe's Grocery burn, June 1920.

According to the *Austin Statesman* newspaper:

The fire swept up the block....burning away the roof and demolishing the second story of the Wukasch Bros. Café and the Joe Wukasch Grocery Store, subjecting the stock and goods of both stores to a severe damage by water. "Charley's Place"....an old landmark and rendezvous of students, presented closed doors Friday night the first time in years. Figure 35.

Joe's son, Earl, remembers that his father never had the physical strength to pick up and move the store's cash register. But on the day of the fire, with a rush of adrenalin no doubt due to panic, Joe grabbed the cash register and quickly ran out onto Guadalupe Street. Unfortunately, the businesses suffered almost a total loss. Faced now with the decision to rebuild, Joe decided instead to relocate.

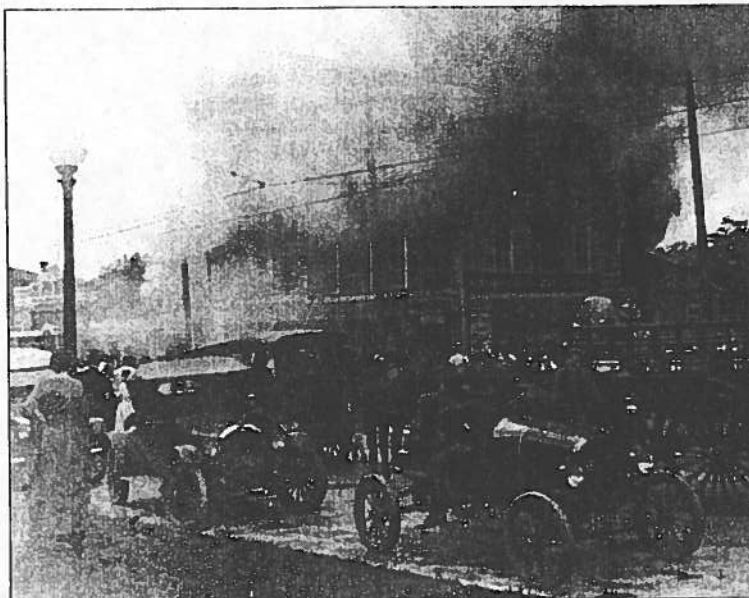


Figure 35. Cars and onlookers block Guadalupe Street preventing horse-drawn fire wagon from fighting the fire, June 1920.

In 1920, Joe and his two brothers, Otto and August, bought a store and 50 feet of property with frontage at 2000 – 2002 Guadalupe Street just south of Joe's original store. Figure 36. While Joe operated his grocery, Otto and August operated the Wukasch Brothers' Café next door. Figure 37.



Figure 36. Looking northwest up Guadalupe Street at second store, 1920. Left to right: Joe, August and Otto.



Figure 37. Joe, August, and Otto jointly purchased their new store at 2000-2002 Guadalupe Street, 1920s.

Joe's new telephone number was advertised as "Call 7071" but "If busy dial 3301". On July 12, 1921, Joe and Alma were blessed with the birth of a son, Eugene, at Seton Hospital in Austin. Figure 38.

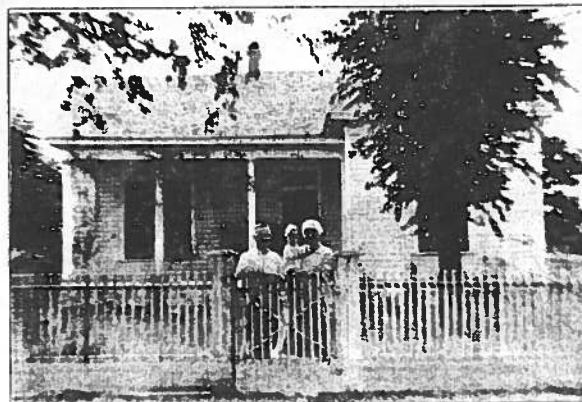


Figure 38. Joe, Alma, and baby Eugene in front yard of new home at 4212 Duval Street.



On September 23, 1922, a second son, Earl, was born at Seton Hospital, making the family complete Figure 39.



Figure 39. Eugene and Earl enjoy a special moment in their backyard at 4212

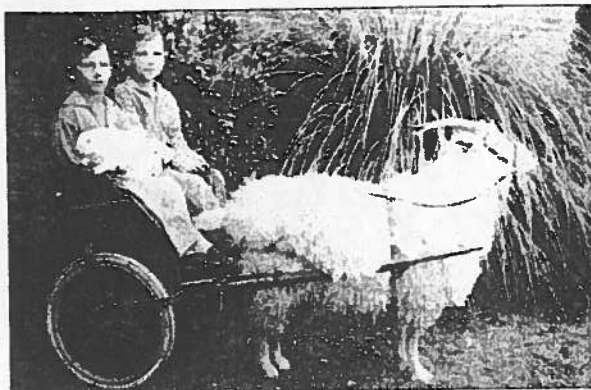


Figure 40. Eugene and Earl with rabbit posing in a photographer's goat cart, 1927.

With a growing family, Figure 40, Alma and Joe now realized they needed more space. In May, 1928, the family moved into a new home at 1001 West 22 1/2 Street. (This address was later changed by the city to 1101.) Figure 41.



Figure 42. Joe and Alma with Eugene and Earl on a special occasion, 1925.



Figure 41. The Joe Wukasch's new brick home at 1001 West 22 1/2 Street, 1928.

## CHAPTER FIVE – RUNNING THE GROCERY STORE

As Eugene and Earl grew to adulthood, they became indispensable to the success of the Wukasch grocery business. Figure 42.

Figure 43. Joe unloading a crate of barrels from his truck, circa 1930.



While Joe managed the store, Eugene and Earl helped to clerk and deliver groceries all over Austin. Pancho, a Mexican employee, also worked as a deliveryman and general clerk. Joe's sisters, Martha and Louise, began their careers by operating a bakery in the rear of the Wukasch Brothers' Café. By 1933, the store was listed in the Austin Business Directory as "Joe A. Wukasch Fancy Groceries and Fruits." Figure 43.



Figure 44. Interior of second store with Joe at left and Jerry at right background behind counter, wearing aprons,



Figure 45. Interior of Joe's Grocery with customer and hanging bananas, circa 1920.

On a typical workday, Joe was always at the store by 6:00 A.M., except for Sundays, when the store was closed. Closing time was normally 7:00 P.M. except for Saturday, which could be as late as 11:00 P.M. Joe prided himself on the fact that customers could call in an early order and the order would be delivered in time for breakfast that morning. Figure 44.

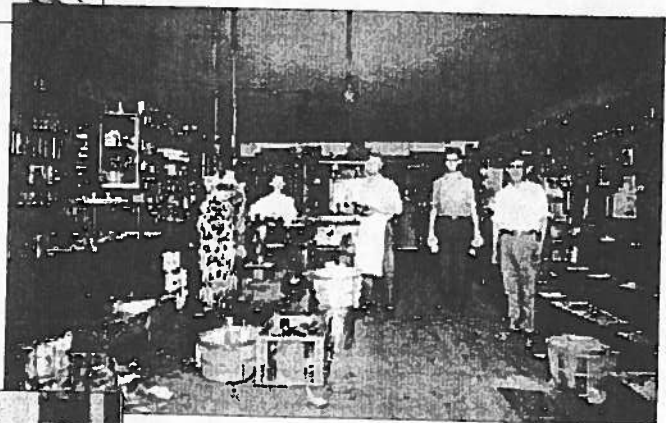


Figure 46. Interior of Joe's Grocery with proud employees, circa 1920.

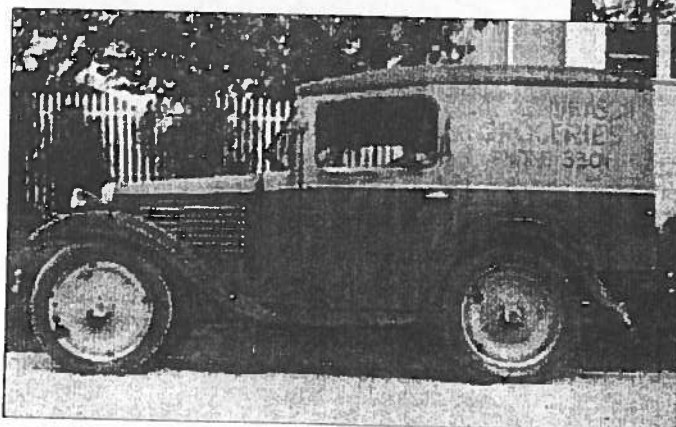


Figure 47. One of Joe's fleet of new delivery trucks, circa 1920.

Normally, Joe spent most of his time on the telephone taking grocery orders. Many of his customers lived in the areas of Hyde Park, Enfield, Tarrytown, and other outlying areas. There was no set delivery time, but instead whenever an order was ready. The general policy was that if the order was not ready for breakfast, then it would be delivered by late morning or early afternoon. Figure 45.

Orders were personally delivered since there were no self-service grocery stores in Austin until after 1920. At various times Joe employed as many as seven people to work in the grocery. Two employees were delivery boys, James C. Hunley and Pancho, who rode his motorcycle to work. When Joe had to be away from the store, Sylvie Holden was left in charge. Figure 46.

Alma often worked in the store on Saturdays. Joe had three modern delivery trucks that replaced the old horse and wagon used at the original store at 2220 Guadalupe Street. Figure 47.



Figure 48. Employees take a break behind the Wukasch Brothers' Café. Left to right standing: Bertha Jenke, Olga Jenke, Martha and Louise Wukasch. Front left sitting: "Old Tom," whose job it was to prepare the chickens. Right: UT student who washed dishes.

One day in 1933, the Governor of Texas, Miriam "Ma" Ferguson, paid a surprise visit to Joe's Grocery. Eugene was working that day and recalls:

"...I was putting country eggs into square gray cardboard boxes when someone yelled, "the Governor's here." Joe took off the white apron he was wearing and donned a fresh one. Governor Ferguson arrived in a shiny black Pierce-Arrow with an open-air chauffeur cab. A uniformed driver wearing a visored cap handed Mrs. Ferguson down from the car as Joe Wukasch went out to meet her. "Good morning Governor," said Joe. "Good morning" she replied. "How are your fryers today, Mr. Joe?" She approached a chicken coop located between the curb and sidewalk in front of the store. "Pick one out for me." Joe reached into the coop, caught a chicken, lifted it out and spread its legs for Mrs. Ferguson to check the texture and firmness of the fryer's breast. She pressed here and there, then said, "That'll do." Joe called for Pancho, his helper, who took the chicken to an area near an outhouse behind the store to kill and clean it. Inside the store, Mrs. Ferguson shopped some more and chatted with Joe. When Pancho brought in the dressed chicken, Joe wrapped it in butcher paper and placed it in a cardboard box with other groceries. Then he carried the box to the Pierce-Arrow. After the car left, he priced the groceries and added them to Mrs. Ferguson's bill, which was submitted once a month (as were other bills). Sometimes, my brother Earl and I would deliver groceries to the kitchen at the Governor's Mansion." Figure 48.

Joe was always concerned about issues that would affect the future of the area around The University of Texas campus. He was an active supporter of the Austin Retail Merchants Association and often contributed to support the many building projects at The University. Figure 49. Joe and Alma also continued as active members of St. Paul Lutheran Church.

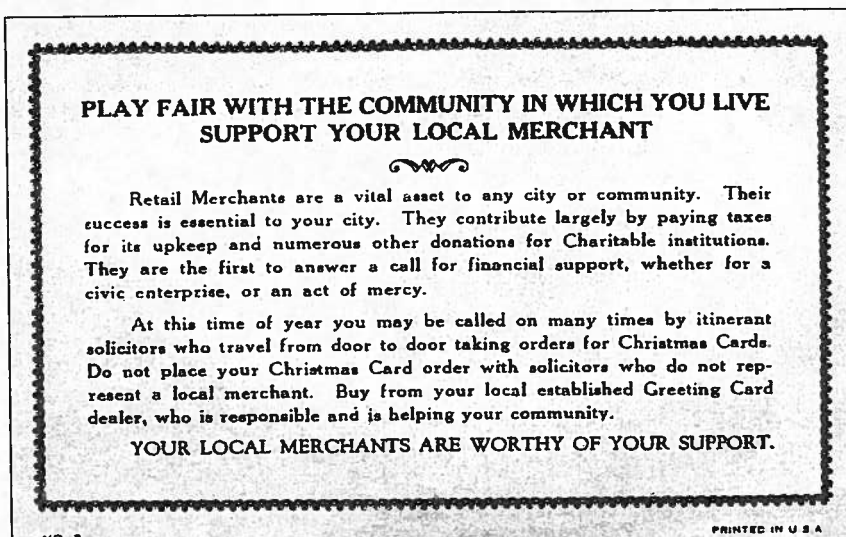


Figure 49. Circular soliciting support for the Austin Retail Merchant's Association, circa 1920.

## CHAPTER SIX – BUILDING A NEW STORE

In spite of the Great Depression, by 1935, Joe's Grocery was one of the most thriving businesses on the UT "drag." Figure 50.

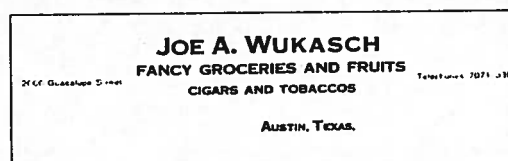


Figure 50. Joe A. Wukasch stationary used to correspond and take orders,



Figure 51. The new store—building the basement. 1935

Fortunately, the Austin economy was somewhat immune from the depression's devastating effects due to the existence of UT and State governmental agencies in the city. Of the ten grocery stores on Guadalupe Street in 1935, Joe's was perhaps in the best location, being directly across from the University mall. Due to their success, Joe, Otto, and August decided to expand. They completely tore down the old structure and contracted with Sam Busby of Austin to construct a new building at the same site. The new building was to be a more modern and spacious store with a large basement. Figure 51 & 52.

Most successful grocery stores at this time included basements that served an important function:

Crocks of butter, stocks of rope, wood encased cheeses, and a jumble of boxes, crates, and other merchandise were stored in the basement. In the earlier days, most merchandise arrived in bulk, which created a need to store kegs, barrels, and wooden boxes of every sort.





Figure 53. Construction sign announces the "New home of the Joe A. Wukasch Grocery and Wukasch Brother's Café," 1935.

In the rear of the store was a warehouse and garage that could park two trucks. While construction was underway on their new building, Figure 53, Joe temporarily opened and operated out of a new location in the 2900 block of Guadalupe Street. Figure 54.

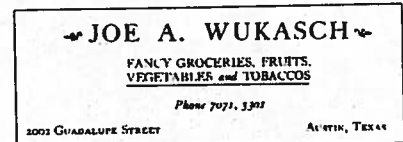


Figure 52 Joe A Wukasch Grocery ad—from *The Cactus* 1927



Figure 54. Joe's temporary store. The sign is Joe's half of the sign that hung over the original grocery and café, 1935.

Within one year, the new Wukasch Grocery and Wukasch Brothers' Café were opened to the public. Figure 55 & 56.

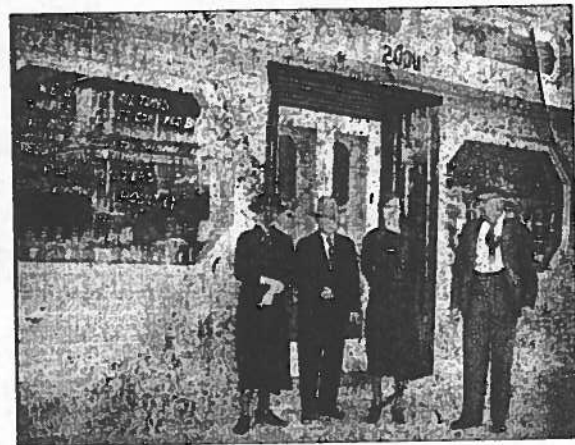


Figure 55. Joe and Alma stand proudly in front

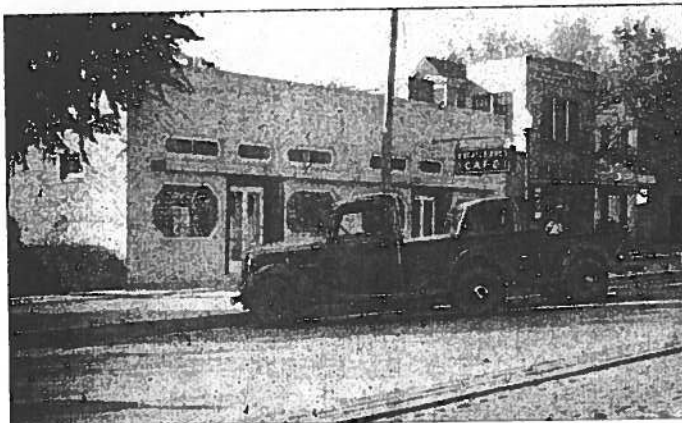


Figure 56. Joe Wukasch's new store at 2000 Guadalupe Street. Note the trolley tracks in foreground, 1935.

The new store had modern lighting and flooring with additional shelving for Joe's ever-growing stock of canned goods, jars and other merchandise. Figure 57.



Figure 57. Joe behind the counter proud of his bright and modern new store with goods neatly stacked, 1935.



Figure 58. Spraying the vegetables and fruits, 1935.

Vegetables and fruit were prominently displayed. Periodically, an employee would spray the produce to keep it fresh. Figure 58.



Figure 59. Weighing the meat, 1935.

But perhaps Joe's greatest pride was his meat market. Customers could custom order their meat and watch it being cut, weighed, and wrapped as they waited. Figure 59 & 60.

By the 1940s, the locally owned, sole proprietor grocer was beginning to disappear. With the popularity of the automobile, many customers could now travel further to shop, demanding more services and a wider selection of goods. Many merchants, looking for greater purchasing and advertising power, found it more profitable to join a franchise. In the 1940s, Joe Wukasch joined the Nelson Davis Store Group known as IGA/Red & White Stores and continued to operate his business until his health began to fail in the early 1950s. Figure 61.



Figure 60. Another satisfied customer, 1935.

## CHAPTER SEVEN – LEISURE TIME

Even though Joe and Alma found themselves working long hours at the store while raising a family, they did enjoy some leisure time. Figure 62.



Figure 62.  
Joe, Alma,  
Eugene and  
Earl enjoying  
the fireplace,  
circa 1940s.

Earl remembers that in 1935, the whole family took a vacation trip to California to visit Alma's sister Clara. They traveled in a new 1935 Ford pickup truck with the four of them crowded into the truck's one seat. On the way, they visited Boulder Dam (formerly Hoover Dam), which was under construction at the time. While on vacation, Sylvie Holden and Vernon (Vernie) Whimple managed the store.

Joe enjoyed hunting and fishing when he could find the time. He had always liked guns, having owned an Army Colt revolver, 22-caliber rifle, 12-gauge shotgun, and a single barrel 410 shotgun. The 12-gauge shotgun was purchased from Henry Wukasch as a Christmas gift from Alma in the 1930s. But perhaps one of his favorite guns was the 410-gauge shotgun that he had received as a premium for purchasing groceries.

Since Sunday was the only day of the week he did not work, Joe often took the family in the afternoon to Charlie Walker's farm near Jollyville to hunt rabbits. Charlie provided butter and eggs for Joe's store in exchange for groceries. After Eugene and Earl were grown, Joe gave up hunting and started fishing. In the late 1940s, following his doctor's advice, Joe would close the store at 5:00 P.M. and take Alma fishing below Tom Miller Dam. This became their favorite fishing spot. Although Alma would help out in the store on occasion, she was quite content to stay home and raise her family and work on her embroidery. Figure 63.



Figure 63. Joe and Alma enjoying grand-daughter Linda, circa 1950.

65610 Dentrup, G. L.	42473 Daily Texan
3766 Bertman, Marie	4391 American Statesman
7634 Berth, R. W.	22022 Associated Press
23887 Klausmann, Otto	9755 J.V.C.
87925 Tans, K. G.	27581 United Press
9295 Pittsford, R. H.	
7234 Shipp, Dr. R. W.	
6332 residence	
63967 Trinklein, Robert	4440 Boonea
	7472 Illinora
	22423 Studer
6205 Wukasch Bros. Cafe	66217 Station F.T.C.W.
28698 " Sisters	64661 Station I.T.R.C.
29002 " August	
21802 " Charlie	25411 Interstate Theatres
3061 " Otto	66661 Railway Express Agency
20959 " Rudolph	27207 U. S. Postoffice
21656 " Walter	65511 City Hall
	9101 State Highway Dept.
	68921 Lutheran Service Center
6377 Slaughter No. 1	
25316 Checker Front No. 16	35548 Concordia College
86625 Schuhmacher Co.	6835 Texas School of Fine Arts
3304 Nelson Davis Co.	9171 University of Texas
	9174 Texas Union
64634 Austin Good-Year	
8774 Campbell	
24875 Jacobson	25497 Hirsch Drug No. 3
2475 Walls	6796 Hansen's Prescription Dept.
21171 Coverts	3514 Univ. Drug
6966 Riegers	
26066 Jansens	
4333 PIRN	29201 City Street Information
3341 POLICE	115 Information
65511 Power Trouble Call	110 Long Distance
4351 AMBULANCE	
6178 Cook's	
6178 Wilke-Yamor	

Figure 61. Telephone list that hung on the wall at Joe's Grocery, circa 1930.

Joe and Alma always took an interest in the activities of the Wukasch family. Anniversaries, birthdays, reunions, and weddings were considered special times. Figure 64.



Figure 64. C.G. and Emma Wukasch's 25<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary party in the front yard at 611 West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, 1928.

Joe was very close to his mother, Mary, who died in Austin in 1946. Figure 65.



Figure 65. Joe and Alma celebrate "Mutter" Wukasch's 78<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1936.

He was especially proud of his brothers and sisters who had themselves become successful in the Austin business community. Charlie Wukasch operated a favorite student hangout called Charlie's Confectionery until 1937, Otto and August served food to thousands of hungry Austinites and students from their Wukasch Brothers' Café until the 1950s, and sisters Martha and Louise baked delicious cakes and cookies from their home business, the Wukasch Sisters' Bakery, at 1907 Wichita Street.

Figure 66. Their business continued until 1967 when their property was confiscated by The University of Texas.



Figure 66. One of the Wukasch Sisters' famous cakes, 1930s.

Little did the Wukasch siblings realize when they left the farm in Serbin that their lives would become so much a part of the history of Austin and The University of Texas.



## CHAPTER EIGHT – THE LEGACY

### Joe A. Wukasch Dies Thursday

Joe A. Wukasch, 60, 1101 West 22½ Street, longtime resident of Austin, died in a local hospital Thursday morning. Since 1913 he had been engaged in the grocery business located at 2000 Guadalupe. He was a member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

Besides his wife, he is survived by two sons, Earl Wukasch of Wichita, Kan. and Eugene Wukasch of Austin; three sisters, Miss Martha Wukasch and Miss Louise Wukasch, and Mrs. Frank Glauning-er, all of Austin; four brothers, Charles G. Wukasch, G. A. Wukasch, A. H. Wukasch, and O. B. Wukasch, all of Austin.

The body is at the Weed-Corley Funeral Home pending definite funeral arrangement. Arrangements are pending arrival of out-of-town relatives.

Figure 67. Joe Wukasch's obituary, *Austin Statesman*, June 13, 1952.

display shop, and later as his son Eugene's architectural office.

Following Joe's death, Alma continued to live in her residence at 1101 West 22 1/2 Street. She led an active life and especially enjoyed her friends and family. With her health in decline due to cancer, Alma moved in and lived for a few weeks with her son Earl and his wife Elaine. Unfortunately, further complications forced her to be transferred to Brackenridge Hospital where she died on April 23, 1974. Figure 68.

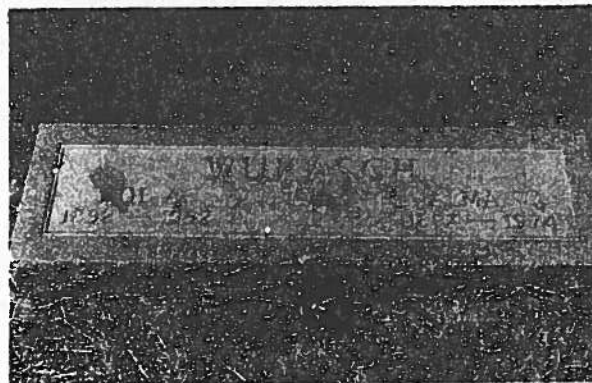


Figure 69. Joe and Alma's headstone at Oakwood Cemetery.

On June 12, 1952, at age 60, Joe A. Wukasch's heart gave out and he died at St. David's Hospital in Austin, Texas. Figure 67.

The funeral was held at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Austin with the Rev. Albert F. Jesse officiating. Internment was in Oakwood Cemetery in Austin, near the final resting place of his mother Mary. The family mourned the loss but celebrated his life. Joe was a committed Christian who never forgot his Lutheran teachings. He always remembered the Bible verse given him by Pastor Hermann Kilian of St. Paul Lutheran Church on the day of his confirmation in Serbin:

Whoever acknowledges Me before men, I will also acknowledge him before My Father in heaven. But whoever disowns Me before men, I will disown him before My Father in heaven.

Matthew 10: 32,33

Today, in 2003, the only remaining part of Joe Wukasch's original business at 2000 Guadalupe Street is the basement. After 1952, the store was leased to a variety of tenants who used it as a poolroom, dancing school, parochial classroom, typewriter repair and

**WUKASCH, Mrs. Joe A., 79,** of 1101 W. 22½ St., died Wednesday. Services 11 a.m. Saturday at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, burial in Oakwood Cemetery. (Weed-Corley)

Survivors, two sons, Eugene Wukasch and Earl Wukasch, both of Austin; seven sisters, Clara Kissman, Los Angeles, Calif., Mrs. I.W. Eaves, Three Rivers, Mrs. O.F. Mattiza, Port Arthur, Mrs. Jack Theiss, Mrs. Fred Schultz and Mrs. Bob Muschke, all of Houston and Mrs. Alvin Tonn, Giddings; two brothers, Ben Kissman, Montgomery and Louis Kissman, Lincoln; nine grandchildren.

Figure 68. Alma Wukasch's obituary, *Austin Statesman*, April 24, 1974.

Alma was buried next to Joe in Oakwood Cemetery. Figure 69.

At age 80, Alma Kissmann Wukasch had lived a long, rich and rewarding life. She too had remembered her 1908 Lutheran confirmation verse:

Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.

Psalm 37:4

Although Joe and Alma's business activities no doubt made a remarkable contribution to the progress of Austin and The University of Texas, the most lasting legacy has to be their family. Their oldest son, Eugene, became an outstanding and creative Austin architect. He and his wife Doris were blessed with four children: Linda, Susan, Jean and Jonathan. Figure 70.



Figure 70. The Eugene Wukasch family.



Earl became an engineer, teacher, and later established his own business in Austin known as The Sundae Palace. He and Elaine had five children: David, Marsha, Paul, Karen, and Gail. Figure 71.

Figure 71. The Earl Wukasch family.

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2. The Austin *Statesman*, Alma Wukasch Obituary, April 24, 1974.

### Interviews:

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