

Reo Memories

Mrs. Ena Malin

Ena Malin worked Gladys Olds Andersen as a house maid, cook, purchaser of supplies and groceries, and she was responsible for the day to day expenses. Her husband worked As a chauffer during the day for Mrs. Andersen and at night he worked for the Oloffson Tool and Die.

Ena and her husband migrated from Essen Germany in the early 1960's coming to Michigan. She wanted to get a job but since she didn't speak English and didn't know her way around a strange new city she was out of luck until she heard that Mrs. Olds Anderson needed help. She interviewed and got the job. She was in charge of just about everything needed to run the household. Mrs. Andersen gave her \$200.00 a month and she was to take care of the bills such as the paper boy, the grocery store, the laundry woman, paying the yard man who was from China. He worked for Mrs. Anderson for 14 years finally going to San Francisco where there were relatives. Mrs. Anderson entertained a lot and Ena was to hire the extra help to serve and clean up, but she did all the cooking.

Mrs. Malin remembered a young bachelor who was from Spain who lived in the mansion. He had been there several years when Mrs. Malin came there. He was difficult to please and was rather aloof and demanding. He apparently was from a family who were friends of Mrs. Andersen met during her travels abroad. He had many parties and Ena was expected to cook and serve and clean up after.

Ena recalled the shops and markets up and down Washington Street where she would do the shopping. The bank was nearby and she would do some of the banking there. She

especially remembered the meat market where she usually bought lamb, it being the favorite of the house. The police once warned her for jay walking.

The mansion was a lovely place, the ballroom was on the third floor and she and her husband had their own suite of rooms. This was very important because they didn't have the money to rent or buy their home at that time. She saved just about every penny from their combined incomes hoping to one day be able to afford their own place. One day when Mrs. Andersen was displeased about something she told Ena "Well, you can just get out". So that let Ena know that she could be out of a job easily without even knowing why. So they began to look for a little house to buy so that there would be a form of security. They found such a house on Leslie Street. And for awhile it stood empty until they could manage to get some furniture. But they continued to live and work at the Mansion. Ena would start her day at 6:00 sharp and sometimes not finish until late at night. This was especially if there had been entertainment or a dinner party.

Ena doesn't recall many picture or portraits on the walls or tables and she mentioned the fountain in the front yard. It was painted blue so that when the water fell into it, it looked blue. She also talked about the big beautiful houses nearby, mentioning a Dr. Badgley in particular.

As Mrs. Andersen was divorced she attended many civic functions and traveled abroad a lot. Martha Dixon, was a special friend who accompanied her.

The property called Woldumar was something that Ena talked about. She was in that house many times to help with events and was so shocked when it burned down. She begged her husband to take her out there to see it. She said it was maybe December and icy. But she wanted to go and could not understand how a stone building could burn and

who started it? She mentioned the gatehouse and the man who lived there. It was his job to let visitors in if they were expected. That house was also of stone. She was particularly fond of the beauty of the Woldumar house it being full of marble fireplaces and mantels and beautiful paneling. She said that Italian craftsmen did the work. The Mansion on Washington Street was bought by the state to make way for the 496 freeway and so were the other lovely homes along Main Street. She recalled how sad it was to pack up and move from there for Mrs. Andersen. It was her childhood home and the memories were there of the family. She bought a small house in East Lansing and remodeled it. Mrs. Malin said it was flat, probably one story, whereas the Mansion had been 3 stories. But sister Beatrice, called Bunny, live in East Lansing too and they wanted to be close. Martha Dixon was with Gladys when she had her stroke that eventually proved fatal. Mrs. Malin was working for her only when there was a need, a dinner party or something. She was there the day of the stroke and the ambulance was called to take Gladys to the hospital. Afterward she could not talk and she would try to talk with Ena but Ena could not understand her.

Looking back Ena Malin thinks that it was a good place to work because she had the opportunity to learn to speak English and to save for a house and she was privileged to meet and know many prominent people in Lansing.

I interviewed Mrs. Malin June 27²⁰⁰⁴ at home on Rippling Blvd. #208. She was very much concerned that the taped interview not be put in the State Journal. I of course told her it would be kept at the Museum and was for historical purposes only.
Shirley Bradley