opera house, and he was often called on to fiddle for a dance. He also was an avid fisherman and taught many a young man the fine art of casting for bass.

George added to his merchandise anything that he felt would bring more customers. He was the first and for several years the only retailer of Hallmark cards in the area. He hung racks from the ceiling and filled them with magazines shipped from Minneapolis. Later, when the Gaultke News Agency opened in Grand Forks, he added a magazine department in the back part of the store and carried the largest stock of magazines, books and comic books in the two cities.

The store became a sort of an institution of learning as young and old spent many hours in the magazine section, in the winter warming their feet on the floor register while they read and munched a handful of popcorn which they had grabbed as they walked past the shiny popcorn machine that stood by the front door filled with fresh hot popcorn. George knew the aroma or a sample would usually bring a sale. The machine became an important part of the business and also a harbinger of spring when George pulled it out on the sidewalk and took his familiar post behind it, giving him an opportunity to see what was going on in his beloved town and a chance to greet customers and friends as they passed by.

From the day the store opened until the day it closed it was "a home away from home" for the young folks who would come in after school, week-ends and during vacations. It became their "hang-out". George knew when a lad needed advice in order to set things right at home and gladly dispensed it. He liked to help with their school work, especially arithmetic as he had good training in that as a London cash boy. But with all this he was not averse to cajoling a boy and rushing him out of the store when he was rude or got out of line. It was one thing to be loud but another to be rowdy. He knew when young couples were engaged to be married, often before their parents knew. Downham's was the place to bring a girl for a dish of ice cream after a show, often a vaudeville at the "Orpheum" in Grand Forks, and if he could afford to splurge the young man would buy Banana splits and a bag of popcorn to eat on the way home. A child, clutching a hoarded penny, would stare at the large assortment of candy and the patience of clerk and parent wore thin at the change of mind as to which was the best buy.

George was highly opinionated as to what was good or bad for the town and gave freely of those opinions to the men who ran the town or came in to the store for their tobacco, coke or a dish of ice cream. He made some enemies but none could stay angry with him for long. He was often asked to be a candidate for mayor but always refused, saying that as a business man he had no right to take sides and politics was not his cup of tea; however, he was an influential man in the affairs of the city government. When it was decided that the town must have cement sidewalks he went from door to door on Second Street, where he now owned a home, and secured the signatures of everyone except a poor widow who could not afford the higher taxes. She was stubborn but so was George and he finally convinced her the street could not have part cement sidewalks and part wooden ones so she agreed to sign and for the rest of her life every Sunday he brought her the Sunday newspaper and a pint of ice cream which he delivered personally on his way home to dinner.

George prospered where almost no one thought it possible. He eventually bought the building that housed his store and later acquired the adjoining properties at 210 and 212 DeMers Avenue. For years he rented the building at 212, once a store operated by the Parness sisters, to the city for use as a city rest room. The city furnished it with two rows of rockers, cribs, a full view mirror and a "powder room". They even installed a free telephone. A matron was in attendance all day and