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# The Wells Avenue Grocery

*Debra Brasher*

Back in the 1940s and 1950s you had to pass by the Wells Avenue Grocery to travel to and from California Street and Andrew Jackson Way. The road did not go all the way through as it does now. California Street stopped at the intersection of Maple Hill Cemetery and Wells Avenue, and there stood the Wells Avenue Grocery or “Mrs. Porter’s Store.”

Imagine the days of neighborhood grocery stores—a friendly kind of place that you visited on a daily basis. Upon entering the small storefront you saw a counter about ten feet into the store, the cash register sitting on the left of it. On your right and on your left were tall shelves lining the walls, stocked with food items. Behind the counter were various soft drink crates, and perhaps a bucket or two on which to sit and rest, eat lunch, or share a story with your friends. A small stove heated the store. The meat and cheese counter was located near the back where you might purchase your lunch—a couple of slices of bologna, a slice or two of cheese, and a few soda crackers. Credit was extended to all the patrons of the store. It was always a busy place.

As you walked into the small store, Mrs. Porter, a strong, seventy-something-year-old woman who ran the place, would greet you. All the school-aged children knew Mrs. Porter, because they went there every day before and after classes. Rusty George (of Ward Avenue) was one of those children in the 1950s. He and his buddies hung out there. He suggested that Mrs. Porter was good to keep a secret, and that “she was a nice old lady.”

Today, located on the first block of Wells Avenue near the corner of Maple Hill Cemetery, a concrete street marker and the store name, spelled out in colored marbles, still exist.