

Fine Old Residential

Early in this century Mansfield was a compact community with its business district on or near North Main St. and the principal residential areas not far away.

Then the automobile came along and changed the entire picture.

Before the auto era, business and professional people wanted their homes near their stores and offices. Factory workers lived as close to their jobs as possible to save time and transportation costs.

After the streetcars came to Mansfield in the 1880s homes were built close to the carlines. It was a matter of necessity to save long walks or hitching up the horse to get to work.

Since the trolley lines operated on Main St., Fourth St. and Park Avenue West, it was natural that most of the homes were erected on or near these streets.

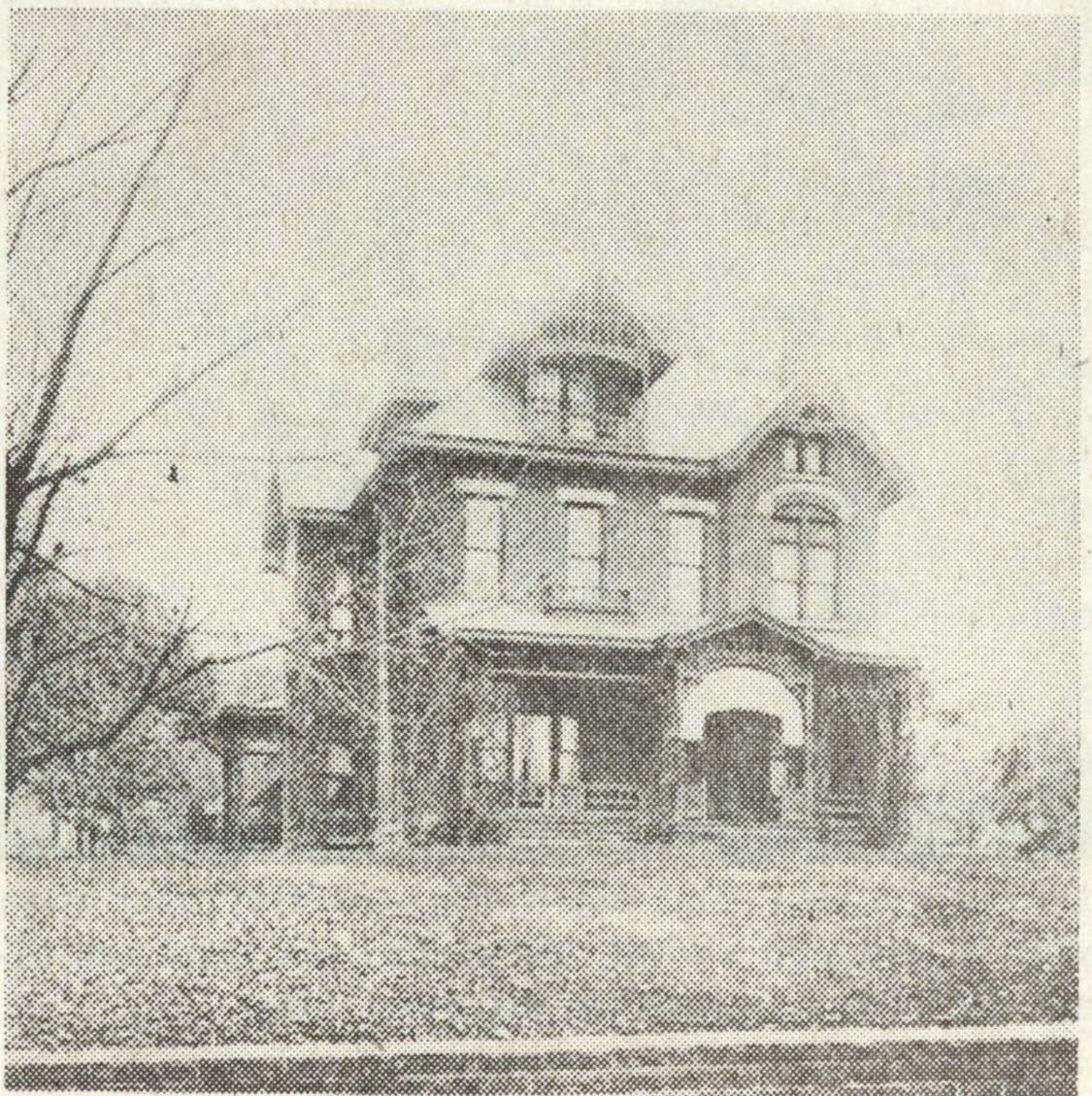
Besides the street cars, the only means of transportation in town was by horse-drawn vehicles. Most of the better homes in the city had stables at the rear of the property for the family's carriages and horses. Usually there were hitching posts in front of the houses. These posts often were metal with ornamental tops. They were sunk in cement.

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On Park Avenue West, homes reached almost as far downtown as Walnut St. around 1900. It was the same on West Third St. while a block to the north, the residential area on West Fourth began at North Mulberry.

There were homes again east of Diamond St. on East Third and Fourth Sts. and Park Avenue East. Businesses on South Main St. extended only to West Second St.

Fifty years ago Sturges Ave. and Park Avenue West were the addresses of the city's business and professional leaders. Changes began on these streets in the late 1930s and 1940s when it no longer was fashionable to



The Henry M. Weaver home on Park Avenue West at Sturges Ave. was a landmark for years. The Downtown Motor Lodge now occupies the site. (Richland County Genealogical Society Photo.)

live downtown. The important people were moving to the new residential communities on the west and southwest sides of Mansfield. Later this trend was to take many of them beyond the city limits.

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In the period between 1900 and 1920 the addresses on Sturges Ave. read like "Who's Who in Mansfield." Men like Charles K. King, donor of Kingwood Center; Bankers Charles F. Ackerman and W. H. G. Kegg; and industrialists J. L. Baxter of Baxter Stove and J. E. Brown of the Aultman and Taylor Co. lived on the street.

Others among the town's leading citizens who had fine homes on Sturges were A. C. Hand, president of the Tracy and Avery Co.; E. J. Criqui, manager of the Criqui Furniture Co. on West Fourth St., and Jesse Isaly of the dairy family who at that time was treasurer of the Mansfield Pure Milk Co.

M. B. Bushnell, president of the Richland Savings Bank, had an imposing home at 34 Sturges Ave., now the Richland County Auto Club headquarters. Before the Auto Club moved

in, the fine old house housed the Wolford Funeral Home.

For a number of years the late Miss Justine C. Sterkel lived on Sturges Ave. near the Bushnell home.

Across Sturges Ave. at Park Avenue West was the large brick home of Henry M. Weaver who was president of the Barr Cash and Package Carrier Co. His home, which stood several feet above the street, was a city landmark for years. The site now is occupied by the Downtown Motor Lodge.

In the same block on Park Avenue West lived H. L. Reed, Hobart Scattergood, H. Harroun, W. J. Tappan, and R. B. Maxwell. Further west on the same street were the fine homes of Senator John Sherman and Congressman Winfield Scott Kerr.

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President William McKinley spent a night at the Kerr home while he was in Mansfield for the funeral of Senator Sherman in the autumn of 1900. The remodeled Kerr home now is headquarters of the Mansfield Typewriter and Office Supply Co.

Around a century ago the city's wealthy men lived in

Areas Fade Away

The Mansfield That Was

By VIRGIL A. STANFIELD

what is now the downtown area. The Elks Home at Third and Mulberry stands on the former site of the house built in 1869 by J. Harvey Cook. The home later was the property of Mrs. Abe Heineman, widow of wealthy horse dealer here.

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Across the intersection to the southwest was the home of Patrick Purdy Hull who was mayor of Mansfield about 120 years ago. He later left Mansfield for California where he married the beautiful Lola Montez.

An elaborate home at the southwest corner of Park Avenue West and Mulberry St. which later became the Blymyer Inn was built in the 1840s by Z. S. Stocking, well-to-do businessman. Across Park Avenue to the north was the Vasbinder home which later was sold to Dr. J. H. Nichols.

Two West Fourth Street landmarks for many years were built by John J. Wiler who operated the Wiler House on North Main St. One of the homes, recently vacated by the Isaly Dairy Co., is hardly distinguishable as a house following remodeling of the front in the 1930s.

The other home built by Wiler stood a little further west of Fourth St., adjacent to The News Journal building. It served as a dining room and antique and gift shop in fairly recent years. It was razed before The News Journal building was erected.

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A large and ornate home built by Robert G. Hancock, builder of the Mansfield Reformatory, stood at 164 West Fourth St. until it was razed seven years ago. Hancock was a leading builder here for many years, erecting some of Mansfield's better known downtown business structures.

Another West Fourth St. mansion was the home of William S. Cappeller, publisher of the Mansfield News. The solidly-built structure was at 93 West Fourth, near Weldon Ave., until wreckers demolished it in 1966 to make way for a parking lot. The house was familiar to generations of Mansfielders because of the

two stone lions which stood in front of it.

On East Fourth, next to the old Brunswick Hotel, was another residential landmark. That house, razed six years ago, was built by Barnard Wolff, an early architect-contractor in Mansfield. The structure was used for business purposes for 75 years.

Older Mansfielders watch with deep regret as these historic homes are demolished and wonder why some of them can't be preserved.

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The trouble is that the houses don't meet modern building requirements and it would be costly to remodel them. No one wants to buy them as relics because that can prove costly.

The Richland County Historical Society is having its problems with Oak Hill Cottage off North Mulberry St. That fine old home needs extensive repairs and there is no money to take care of them.



Sturges Ave. might have been called millionaires' row in the early 1900s. Many of the city's business and professional leaders lived there. These imposing homes were on the west side of the street near Marion Ave. At extreme left is the old Bushnell home, now the Auto Club headquarters. (Photo courtesy of Richland County Genealogical Society.)