

WHAT WAS IT LIKE?

WHAT WAS IT LIKE? with the efforts of the townspeople to restore the old Liberty Village, the question has been raised, "what was it like in days gone by?"

There were many more people on Main Street but there were also more places to attract them.

Remember six pharmacies: Thompson's, Mance's, Shillers, Rexall, Liberty Pharmacy and Stickles. Each pharmacy had a lunch counter for snacks and ice cream and sodas. The Bowling Alley was also on Main Street where LaPolk Park is. It had a lunch counter and booths. Young people from school could gather at these places to socialize and shoppers could stop to relax with a soda.

Six or more barber shops were available and most had shoe shine stands. Whatever happened to shiny shoes? Grocery stores were large and there were several in addition to Sorocco's old fashioned market (at Town & Country location) which displayed beautiful fruits and vegetables outside under the awnings in front of the store.

The huge Keller's department store was located in the Century building on the corner of School Street. Through the front doors were shiny wood floors and wood and glass showcases with elegant, quality clothing. A wide curved staircase led to the second floor open balcony where more items were displayed. Green's Department store on the corner of North Main and Chestnut where Gozza-Hopkins Insurance is located, was a tremendous store in the old style where our parents shopped for clothing, shoes, table linens and curtains. It had the feeling of an old church, oiled wood floors, high tin ceilings with lights hanging from chains, dark oak showcases and a sedate feeling. It was behind the times but clung to it's old charm for many a

year, until it was replaced by Sears & Roebuck.

Newman's Dress Shop came along probably in the 1950's and was then considered "modern" with lots of floor space, carpeted and mirrored and with very attractive show windows.

Amber's was a similar more modern store which was large and bright and provided curtains, bed and bath items, shades and table cloths. Fabrics and sewing supplies were also available at Amber's.

There were many small specialty shops, toy stores, liquor stores, several hardware stores, cigar & cigarette stores, Hoos's Bakery and Poley's Shoe Store (where Cobbler's is). Remember the Brownie Shoppe? We always called the kind owner, Mrs. Brownie. Her store was jammed to the ceiling with toys and she knew where everything was and would find just the gift you needed. What a joy that place was! The late Lou Newman and his wife had a toy wonderland in their toy store on the corner of St. John's Street and I recall a huge building on the corner of Lake Street where the second floor was full of toys and we went there at Christmas to see Santa who sat in a sled at the top of the stairs.

In those days, Main Street was also the main 17 West Route, so naturally, the traffic generated a lot more business. (The Quickway changed all that probably in 1957). Pride in the community ran high and holiday parades would see the firemen in full dress marching behind numerous trucks. The Brownie, Cub, Girl and Boy Scouts would parade proudly with their Scout flags and the Liberty High School band in their red and white uniforms would be a beautiful sight that made every kid want to be in the band.

The "spirit" has been revived and it will continue to grow, thanks to Liberty residents who are making it happen.

Fran Kurpil

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