THE NATIONAL HOUSE—Where Nights Were Nights

"Just think what a trip it must have been from Pontiac to Detroit before the advent of the street car and the automobile, a thoughtful citizen of Birmingham was heard to remark recently.

The citizens would have been mistreated in each community, it had not been for the existence of the famous old National Hotel en route. No travelers of old ever went by the National on the way to Detroit. Its cool white porch beckoned to the weary, dusty traveler. The cracking of swinging hinges might have been a lure, as well. No alternatives but to tie up for a few minutes and chat with the boys.

Ironically, in a country with an area the old National Hotel was a destination for all people 50 years ago. Its pretensions were fronted by itself proudly, where the stone pillars of the First National Bank now stand. Its utility was unlimited.

In a back room of the hotel an iron pipe supported the ceiling. The lower end embedded firmly in the floor. This room became a species of rogues' gallery. Tramps,, vagrants, thieves and other varieties of undesirable were placed on exhibit in this room.

Jim Brittkey, one-time town marshal, discovered that a handcart made a good fit for nicely around the iron pipe, while other mañana whipped quickly around any given wrist. This, he had, the respectable gentrifiers would sit, while the populace in an orderly fashion passed the window to view the victors.

About the second floor the social activities of the village were. A back room was given on its smooth oak floor, which was held up and down by movement when a hundred pairs of feet were rhythmically whirling. A companion which caused much apprehension in fear that the supports might collapse a disaster which ever threatened but never culminated. On New Year's Eve, according to eye witnesses, some 1,000 couples would congregate in the room decorated for holiday array. A ragged band, which, with the former Euch Reinson, would make a modern dance orchestra sound like a funeral dirge was the popular urge for ticketed feet. The old floor would sway and dip under its burden until, well, until hours which we cannot divulge.

The floor housed the bar well designed and conveniently arranged in the original plans. It is rumored that no finer bar exist for miles around than the old "National." In later years the management and ownership of the hotel changed hands, and the old edifice underwent a superficial change. The exterior, lying the main street, then Susan, was remodeled to include a lower porch with a balcony above along the entire frontage of the building. Its magnificent balustrades were the talk of the countryside and business was brisked to the place.

With the advent of the street car, and train, however, came a rude falling off in the register. Folks found the trip from Pontiac to Detroit facilitated greatly, and the refreshing stop at the old National was forgotten.

Not many years ago its faded sign, the half-naked columns, the grinning dance floor, all went under the wrenched hand, and with them went happy memories of Birmingham's quaint capity of the '80's.

The Community House

WHERE THOUSANDS GATHER

THE CIRCUS GOT 'EM

Back in 1884 when the street car line was an innovation in Birmingham, the people's faith in the car was somewhat shaken by an unfortunate occurrence.

A circus came to Pontiac for a brief stay. On a warm Saturday afternoon practically everyone in Birmingham decided to go to the circus, and practically everyone decided to take the same car. On the way out the conductor told them all to enter the vehicle, but when the power was applied, nothing happened. The people began to clamor and complain for it was soon evident that unless the car sprouted wings, without delay they were going to miss the circus performance. But the power motors only created a hubbub. The springs sagged almost to the armrest channel and the motorists gave vent to choice expletives. But the car wouldn't move. Finally they called the passengers were transferred to a second car and the procession started for Pontiac, only to arrive at 1 p.m. too late for anything but a side show.

So crowded were Pontiac hotels on this occasion that permission to sleep in the hay in livery stables was granted at the rate of 50 cents per head.

KEY TO THE MAP ON PAGE 4

Churches:
- A Baptist
- B Methodist
- C Presbyterian
- D Advent

1. Public school
2. K. R. Depot
3. Library
4. School's Monument
5. Post Office, Express Office, Masonic Hall: General Store, J. Allen Bigelow
6. Foundry
7. Edging Mill
9. Hardware: H. T. Page & Son
10. General Store, G. Poppleton & Son
11. Druggist, Grocer & Toilet Articles, H. H. Page
12. Meat Market, Thorne & Converse
13. Harness Mfg., Edgar Lamb
15. Blacksmith & Wagon Shop, J. Baldwin
17. Tailor Shop, J. Bodine
18. Boot Shop, Samuel McRumb
19. Contractor & Builder, R. D. McManus
20. Dental Parlor, C. F. Day
21. Druggist, Grocer, Toilet Articles, & Etc.
22. Birmingham Eccentric, Whitehead & Mitchell, Editors

Remember?

Hugh Hévin
Preacher Marsch

John Bodine

Hulker's & Hansa.