

Merchants Made Village Bustle

By DAVE PHILPO
Staff Writer

When The Birmingham Eccentric published its first edition in May, 1878, there was a score of merchants in the peaceful but busy little village.

From the ads which appeared in the pages of the newspaper, a fairly clear picture can be painted of the Birmingham business section of that day.

Hugh Irving, who had a hardware store on the west side of N. Woodward where the Huston Hardware is now, started his business in 1849 with a tin shop.

About 1855 he expanded his enterprise and added stoves and hardware and in 1864 took his son, John, into partnership with him. In 1878 he added the celebrated Weed sewing machine to his stock of merchandise and dealt extensively in a new bone fertilizer called the Homestead.

FRANK HAGERMAN, the druggist, purchased the stock of drugs and groceries of George L. Lee in the spring of 1870. Business was transacted in the south end of the National Hotel building about the place where Hawthorne Electric is now located on N. Woodward.

In the fall of 1870, John Daines, who owned the property, built a fine and comfortable two-story brick store, one door south, and Hagerman moved into it in the spring of 1871.

Besides his stock of drugs and groceries, Hagerman also represented the Home Fire Insurance Co. and was manager of the Western Union Telegraph company's office in town.

The store of Bigelow and Whitehead, which stood on the southwest corner of W. Maple and Pierce streets, dealt in groceries, canned goods, books and stationery, flour crockery and glassware, hams and salt pork.

BIGELOW RETURNED home from the Civil War in 1865 with the rank of captain and minus an arm which was amputated during his service. He bought the old building called "The Academy" at the corner of W. Maple, then called Mill St., and Pierce.

Whitehead was taken into partnership in April, 1877, having been in Bigelow's employ for three years.

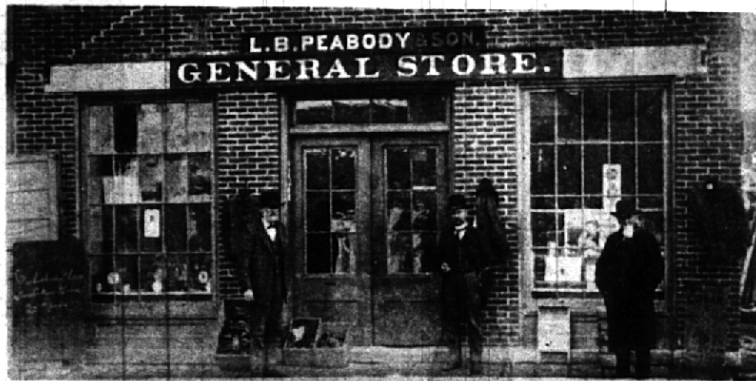
Thorne and Converse were the proprietors of a meat market and were dealers in butter, eggs, hides, pelts and other items. Their store was located in the northeast corner of Woodward and Maple, and for many years was the only meat market in Birmingham.

They held the reputation of carrying only the best of meats and the finest roast pork with all outside fat removed could be obtained at their store for 8 cents a pound.

OPDYKE AND MILLER were the proprietors of the Birmingham Flour Mill, which stood by the River Rouge just west of the present W. Maple bridge.

In 1878 they put in a new corn sheller with a capacity of 150 bushels per hour and it was said that "it can grind feed so quick that it makes you dizzy."

Mrs. L. T. (Libbie) Furman already had been in the millinery and dressmaking business for 10 years in 1878. She had the largest and most complete stock of millinery and fancy goods in the village.



LYMAN B. PEABODY (LEFT), TOM WARD AND JACK BALDWIN
General store sold everything from washboards to telescopes.

Hair switches could be purchased from Mrs. Furman for \$1.50 up and combs were made up at 50 cents per ounce. Her store was located on the west side of Woodward, the fifth establishment north of the corner of Maple and Woodward.

John Baldwin was the village blacksmith and a veteran horse-shoer. His establishment was on Troy Street (now E. Maple) on the north side of the street about four doors east of the Woodward corner.

ONE DAY BALDWIN set 50 horsehoes and according to reports, "it was not a good day for setting, either." This attests to the superior skill of blacksmith Baldwin, because setting 30 horsehoes was called a good day's work. Lyman B. Peabody's general

store stood on the southwest corner of Woodward and Maple. It faced Woodward Ave., as did all corner buildings on the main street at that time.

Just about everything was held in the Peabody store, including washboards at 30 cents each. For a long time, Peabody inserted an ad in The Eccentric of 1878: "For Sale: Large Telescope. Has been used in Light houses near Detroit. Cost \$25. Will sell for 1/2 price."

John Bodine was a tailor, but in 1878 he also was the justice of the peace. His office and tailor shop was on the west side of Woodward, first floor, one door north of the Maple corner.

ORRIN POPPLETON, one of the oldest established merchants in the

village, opened his first store in 1840. It was located on the west side of Woodward, about the middle of the block between Maple and Willis.

In 1841, he moved his store to the northwest corner of Maple and Woodward and in the fall of 1843, moved to the northeast corner of Hamilton and Woodward where he still was in business in 1878.

He specialized in dry goods but also carried groceries and crockery as well as boots, shoes, caps and hats.

Poppleton, it was said, had the advantage of a very large capital so he was able to pay cash for his goods, thereby getting a discount. These savings he passed on to his customers by offering his goods at less cost than his competitors.

National Hotel Was Popular Meeting Place for 101 Years

By DICK ZEMMIN
Staff Writer

One of Birmingham's most famous institutions, itself a landmark for 101 years, is no longer around to observe Birmingham's centennial.

The National Hotel, once located on the southeast corner of Woodward and Hamilton, served as a village institution until it was torn down in 1920. In its heyday, it was the center for the village board, public meetings and entertainment.

From 1819 when John Hamilton built his log cabin tavern along Saginaw Trail until 1920, the hotel served as a welcome refuge for weary travelers.

THE HOTEL underwent many architectural and management changes during its time and became a village institution. It had

a well-known reputation for good food and accommodations.

Hamilton, who called his hotel "The Birmingham House," was succeeded by a long line of owners. John Davis (in 1842), Leman Fuller, Peter Dox (in 1850's), Frank and David Curtis, E. R. King and E. H. Valentine, who added the southern portion of the hotel, containing the ball room.

A. C. Ellis, a Mr. Porter, Lewis Cantine, George Ferguson and Martin D. Masters then followed. John Daines became owner in 1864 and, after his death, his son, George E. Daines, took over.

At this time, oil lamps with reflectors were used to light the rooms. An iron pole in the bar room was used to handcuff law-breakers to it until they could be taken to the county jail.

IN 1892, Daines sold "The Na-

tional" to his brother-in-law, James O. Beattie for \$8,000. Beattie, the former village undertaker, fed from 50 to 100 guests a day. After Beattie's death, Daines again ran the hotel from 1894-1900 when he sold out to Edward C. Fish.

Fish, who ran "The National" until 1903 when Andrew Anderson took over, charged \$3-\$4 a week for room and board. The hotel had 24 rooms, all with wood-burning stoves, but "The National" had only one bath.

The last proprietor of Birmingham's famous hotel was James Wooster, who bought "The National" in 1908 for \$7,000. He planned to remodel the old hotel and install steam heat. But Wooster's plans were given a jolt.

THE COUNTY went dry for two years and Wooster's wet goods department failed. In 1910, the voters (all men at that time) were plenty thirsty and had the county saloons opened again.

Wooster completed his remodeling and renamed the hotel "The Birmingham Inn." In 1912 after 50 years of no change, the exterior was remodeled. A porch and 20 fluted columns were added.

The Birmingham Inn was truly the pride of the area. Walter Allen leased the hotel in 1915 while Wooster operated the bar. A man named Rogers took over in 1919.

BUT THE YEAR 1919 saw the arrival of Prohibition and with it, the end of The Birmingham Inn. The wet goods department went out of business and the hotel was sold for \$42,000 to make room for a bank and a business block.

There were no buyers for the building so it was torn down. The hotel business in Birmingham was through for good.



JOHN HANNA (CENTER), CUSTOMERS, FRIENDS
He owned half interest in market in 1888.

★ ★ ★
SERVED B'HAM 30 YEARS

First Meat Market

Sawdust on the floor . . . sauerkraut and dill pickles in barrels and the butcher standing by a big, wooden cutting block wearing straw cuffs.

Scene: a butcher shop in the pre-super market era.

On the northeast corner of Woodward and Maple stood a small white building that served the village of Birmingham as a meat market for almost 30 years.

ORIGINALLY the first Presbyterian church of this community, the building was erected in 1844, and according to one account, stood on what now is the southeast corner of Woodward and Maple, then called Saginaw and Troy streets.

When the church was outgrown and the congregation built a new church farther east on Troy, their old church was moved across the street and became a meat market.

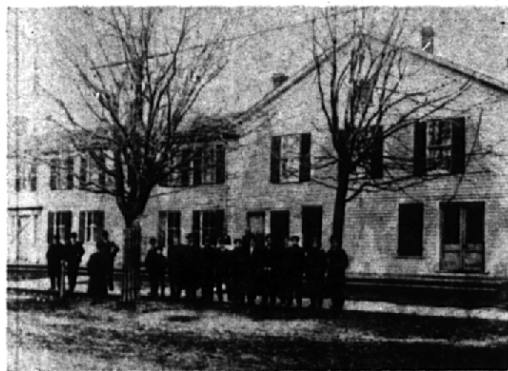
It was the only one in the village at that time for many years afterwards.

James R. McLaughlin, as far as can be determined was the town's first butcher.

LATER THE BUSINESS was taken over by Benjamin A. Thorne and a man named Woodburn (1866), then Thorne and Lewis Converse 1868, Converse and McAllister Randall (1882), Converse and Alex Parks (1884), and in 1885 by Parks and John Hanna.

In 1889 when the partnership of Parks and Hanna was dissolved, Alex Parks built the brick building that now stands on the site and the little old meat market building was moved back from the main street and behind the new business block.

It served for a while as a feed store and a carriage shop and finally was torn down.



NATIONAL HOTEL AND ITS GUESTS ABOUT 1890
Served as the village center until Prohibition.