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IRVINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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IRVINGTON

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The following article is reprinted from the December 29, 1949 issue of *The Irvington Gazette*. The original spelling has been retained.

What Has Happened to Our Main Street in Half a Century

Buildings Remain Much the Same: Occupants Are New

What has happened on Irvington's Main Street in the last fifty years? An old-timer confesses the physical changes have been few and that anyone who had been away from the village since 1900 was ushered in would have no difficulty in recognizing old landmarks. Names have changed and so have the businesses conducted along the street, but by and large the street has still much to take it back to the turn of the century.

The one outstanding difference is the paving on Depot Square, as it was then known, and on Main Street. Fifty years ago the streets were macadam surfaced, their tops faced each year with a new dressing of crushed stone. Black-top succeeded macadam about the time of World War I and in 1929 concrete displaced black-top.

As to the buildings along the street, most those in existence on New Year's Day 1900 are still standing. Most notable among the absentees are the "Peekaboo Flats" at the northeast corner of Main and Astor streets, the Sam Kilpatrick store on the site now occupied by the bank, the Abercrombie and Dearman grocery on the opposite corner, the old Athenaeum where the Town Hall now stands, and the Dinkel block, housing the Buckley and Raban

store on the property now occupied by Joe's Service Station.

Although the Town Hall was not completed until 1901, it was planned and the work of building it was begun in 1900. This and the Behrens Block of stores from Grinnell Street and the Croton Aqueduct were the outstanding building developments of the early years of the new century. The site of the Behrens block in 1900 was known as the Tretbar estate and the old Tretbar residence, since moved to the east side of South Ferris Street, is now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Smith. The High School building, constructed

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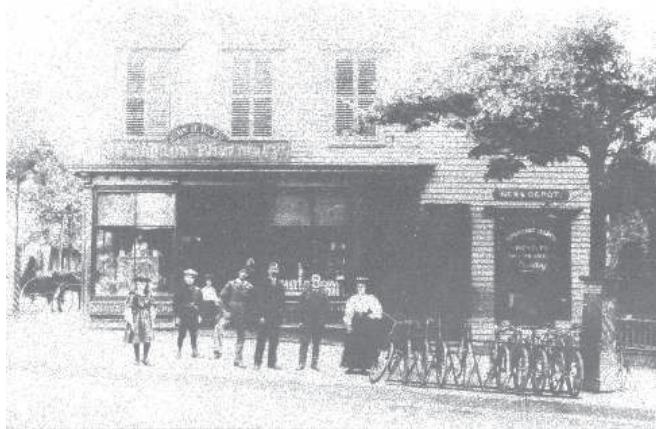
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in 1913, was built on the James Orton estate, and took the place of the North F Street school building.

The Abercrombie building at Main and North Dutcher Streets was erected in 1904 and was the last major building construction on Main Street until the Irvington National Bank building was constructed in 1929.



The Irvington Pharmacy as it appeared in the late 19th century when it was owned by John H. Barr.

Except for some face-lifting here and there, the other buildings on Main Street are pretty much as they were half a century ago. The Miller buildings at North Buckhout Street were remodeled in the early 1900s and all the buildings on the block fronting on the south side of Main Street between Eckar and Ferris streets were remodeled about the same time. With the exception of the Norcia building at the corner of South Eckar Street and the Wistrand tailor shop midway in the block, all have disappeared, some by fire and some by demolition.

But while buildings remain much the same as they were, their occupants have changed completely, and today not a single store on Depot Plaza or on Main Street from the railroad to Broadway is occupied by its tenants of 1900 or, for that matter, by the descendants or successors of those tenants, with the exception of Irvington Pharmacy at South Dutcher Street and Tom's Restaurant and Bar at North Buckhout Street and Thiele's Bakery at 75 Main Street. In 1900 the pharmacy was owned by the late John H. Barr, and after Mr. Barr's death it continued to be a drugstore, finally passing into the hands of George L. Wagner, the present owner. At the same time, Tom's Bar was operated by the late Jacob Winter, whose place was known as perhaps the best managed "saloon" in the village.

Across from the railroad station on Depot Plaza, the building now occupied by the Marb-O-Lite Products Company was the home of the highly successful grain and feed business of Henry H. Cannon, village president, whose home, The Magnolias, on South Broadway was one of the show places of the village. In the present office of the taxi company and the adjacent lunchroom was the hardware store of James Anderson. Adjoining this on the south was Judge Taylor's saddlery and harness shop. Then came Bing Brothers' plumbing store, Carl Fassell's "saloon", Bing Brothers hardware store and on the corner of Main Street the American Express Company office.



Irvington Pharmacy closed its doors at the end of the 20th century. Recently, it became the new home of TraLaLa.



The ground floor of the apartment building at 12 Main Street housed the John McCormack grocery store, while in the building at No.16 on the corner of South Buckhout was James Sweetman's plumbing shop. On the uphill corner was Albert Ackerman's tinsmith shop and across the street Charlie Dorsey had a similar business.

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From there to Dutcher Street the buildings were about the same as they are now. On the north side the store adjoining the present post office was occupied by Cyrus A. Bishop as a law office. A private residence was about where the post office is now, but on the site of the bank building were two stores, one occupied by Sam Kilpatrick, former postmaster, and itself formerly the post office, and the other directly on the corner as a market. Across Main Street there was the drug store and in the small store adjoining the late Frank H. Morrell had a stationery and newspaper store.

At the southeast corner of Main and Dutcher streets, Herman Petri's market occupied the present Barney Reilly store, and the post office was in the present Semely wine and liquor shop, with the late John Dinkel as postmaster. The Michael Touhey residence at nos. 52 and 54 had not been raised to provide space for the stores now housing Muraco's barber shop and the Sunnyside Savings and Loan office. The present Gazette building was the home of Harry Bronnes' fish market,

The old Abercrombie and Dearman grocery was in the building that preceded the one now housing Gristede on the north side of the street, adjoining was a Chinese laundry and a candy store owned by Patsy Margotta, a dwarf, who later moved to Tarrytown. Wallthew's saloon occupied the present Becker stationery store, while Laffan's paint shop was in the store occupied until his death last spring by William E. Sweetman. Michael's barber shop was in the present Grand Union

store site, while Frank Morrell, the only man in town with two places of business, had a bicycle repair shop in what is now Joseph DiChiara's Spaghetti Diner. Adam Busch's high class "saloon" occupied both stores in the building on the corner of North Eckar Street.

The original St. Paul's Church, which burned to the ground in 1908, was on the site occupied by the present church edifice and a two and one half story house next door was the parsonage. Karl Thiele's Quality Bakery was then operated by Ernest Theofel, whose son became a power in Democratic politics in Queens. Ferreiro's fruit store occupied the present Kraus' Market store, with Friberg's shoe store next door and Mrs. Jacob Knodel sold dry goods at No. 81 where the Irvington Hardware Company has its store.

Going up the south side of Main Street from Eckar Street, Fariel's Market, an old fashioned one with meat racks on a wide front porch, was on the corner where the Children's Museum holds forth. This building underwent a severe face lifting in the early 1900s. Next to Fariel's, in a building destroyed by fire half a dozen years ago, was the Tynan dry goods and notions store, and

adjoining that was Vincenzo Maffucci's barber shop. In another old building, later remodeled to be the present Wistrand tailor shop, was Oscar Logan's shoe store. Then came a private house, and on the corner Hughes' "saloon", a spot that really lived up to its name.

The vacant lot on the uphill corner opposite was occupied at about that time by an old fashioned lunch wagon operated by the late Oliver Little. The present Palermo grocery store was the cobbler's shop of Pete Maffucci. The structure itself was the old Athenaeum

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The photo above shows the turn of the century construction of the three-story brick structure that is now home to Buttermilk Blue. In 1904, the building was expanded to include the two-story structure next door, leading to its present day appearance.



Caring For Vintage Photographs

By Barbara Sciulli

This issue of *The Roost* celebrates Irvington's Main Street area through newspaper articles, recollections and photographs. Vintage photographs document the village's heritage, just as a family's vintage photographs document a family's history. However, photographs are often fragile and need special care and attention.

There are many types of vintage photographs: daguerreotype; tintype; ambrotype; albumin print; and gelatin print, to name a few. Collections often have prints from several photographic processes. Even modern photographs have limited lifetime, which can depend greatly on processing and storage. A collection needs to be protected from the effects of heat, humidity, light, dirt, and insects.

The following simple precautions can make the difference:

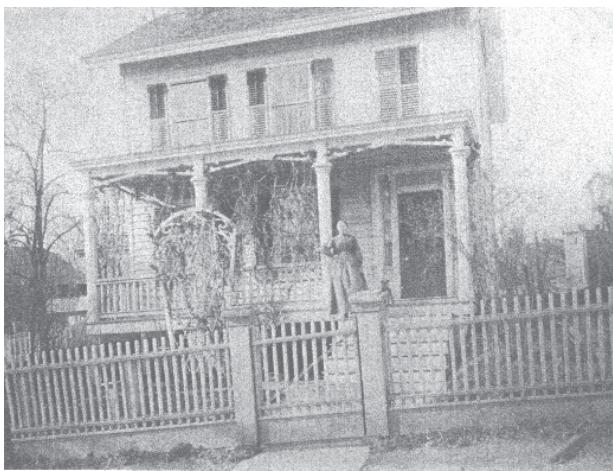
- ★ Store appropriately. Use an area where a human is comfortable, not a hot dusty attic or a damp basement.
- ★ Store originals in the dark. Light often fades prints. If you want to display the image, use a copy.
- ★ Beware of bugs. Insects enjoy munching on paper and some photographic chemicals. Check collection regularly for infestation.
- ★ Keep it clean. Dirt from handling, fungus and fumes from the air, storage containers, or album material can deteriorate photos.
- ★ Proper storage. Boxes and albums should be made of good-quality, acid free board, or archival-quality corrugated cardboard. Enclosure envelopes, folders,

or photo sleeves should be made of acid-free paper or chemically stable plastic: polyester, polypropylene, or polyethylene. Never use PVC (polyvinyl chloride), which is chemically unstable. The plastic smell is hydrochloric acid emitted as the plastic deteriorates. Archival-quality materials can be ordered by catalog.

- ★ Negatives should be stored like photographs and in individual acid-free envelopes.

Slides, movie films, videotapes and computer discs are similarly sensitive to the ambient conditions. Archival quality containers are also available for their storage. Be aware of the rule that the more recent the medium, the shorter the lifetime. To help in preserving more recent information, it is useful to copy it every five to ten years. Besides the risk from the elements, this will help guard against the risks from changes in technology. Preserved collections are much more informative, as well as more valuable, if a description of the location, occasion, name and date are included. The written identification completes the picture.

Restoration of valued photographs is often possible. Consult a reputable professional conservator. They can answer questions about the type of photographs, how they should be preserved or how they can be returned to their original appearance. You can preserve your collection with a bit of care, a small expense, and some detective work. Your family's heritage is an important part of our local history. ☗



117 Main Street (the Lawrence House), in the 1890s
and as it appears today.



Irvington Public Library

By Agnes Sinko

In 1950, when you entered the Town Hall, there was a grand lobby with wide stairs going up to an area we called a rotunda (even though it was oval shaped). From that level, there were two sets of stairs that went up to the theater.

On the east side of the lobby were the village offices and on the same side of the rotunda was the firemen's room. In the middle of this room, there was a pole going through the floor so the firemen could get downstairs to the firehouse quickly.

On the west side of the lobby and rotunda was the library. The reading room was at the front of the building. Here there were lovely tiles around the windows, which were designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany. He also designed the "slave clock" (a clock that is coordinated with a master clock) in this room. This clock was connected to the clock in the tower. Tradition has it that the library tables, as well as the original bookcases, were built by Gustave Stickley. These furnishings were paid for by Helen Gould Shepherd.

A short staircase led from the adult section of the library to the children's room. This room was lined with bookcases and had a very long narrow desk, which was raised in the middle, so that you could sit on either side and your book would be at the proper angle for reading.

I remember Miss Woodruff, who used to visit my mother and regale us with tales of old time Irvington and, of course, Mrs. Robertson, the children's librarian.

Miss Woodruff was tall and thin and rather stern-looking. Mrs. Robertson was short and plump and warm, so they made a good pair.

I don't remember how old you had to be to take out a book, but I do remember the first book I took out on my own card. It was a book my mother had read to us, but now I could read it myself – The Secret Garden. I can still remember exactly where it was located in the library. I also remember how grown up I felt now that I could take books out without my mother being with me.

In 1960, Knight Sturges designed the expansion of the library into the lobby and the rotunda. A few years later, the children's room was moved into the old firemen's room. In the 1980s when Marie Perillo was the director, the library added a small room next to the clerk's office for our local history collection, and in 1989 -90, when the theater put in its elevator, the library gained a small office and some storage space.

By then it had been obvious for a long time that the library suffered from a lack of space. The Library Board of the 1990s took this on as their major responsibility and with the help of many generous citizens, as well as the Mayor and the Village Board of Trustees, was able to oversee our move to the Burnham Building. So we're still on Main Street, just a few blocks from the old library. ☙



What Has Happened To Our Main Street, continued

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building that had been moved across Main Street to provide the site for the Town Hall. The barber shop of Leonard Genzano was in those days the Phelps upholstering shop. That ended the stores on the south side of Main Street, which from there to Broadway was nothing but private residences with the Katte house on the Broadway corner now the site of the No. 136 Main Street apartment.

Daniel Gilligan's paint shop and store occupied the present store of the Belwyn shop, while Doremus' carriage works were in the building now housing the Irvington Garage at North Dearman Street which was then North G Street.

On the Broadway corner there was the Buckley and Raban's grocery, with Emil Wistrand's tailor shop in an adjoining building on Broadway. ☙

Shopping on Main Street in the 30s and 40s

By Robert L. Bronnes

During the period from 1930 through much of the 1940s, shopping on Main Street was quite diversified – much more so than today.

Food stores were plentiful, especially on the north side of Main Street. Butler's occupied the site now occupied by Prudential Realtors, next to Irvington Hardware; Cavagnero's sold fruits and vegetables, and Alfred and Otto Kraus had a meat market where Zarilli's Deli is located.

For many years, Grand Union occupied the store where Geordane's is located. What is now the Irvington Cleaners was the Peter Reeves grocery store. Gristede's occupied the north east corner of Main and North Dutcher. On the south side of Main,

Palermo's was an Italian Deli about where the firehouse is located, and where Sunnyside Bank is now, the Orlando family had a similar delicatessen. Barney Reilly originally had an A&P store next to Cudney's on North Broadway, but, when that building had to be demolished due to fire, Barney opened a deli where Herman Petri had his butcher shop. It is now the Main Deli. And, of course, Thiele's Bakery was located where Le Moulin is now situated. In late afternoon, the delicious aroma of freshly baked bread spread all over Main Street.

For those with a thirst for a cold one, there was a saloon on the north east corner of Main and North Astor Streets, where the village parking lot is now. On the corner of North Buckhout and Main, there was the D & M (Dugan & Morgan) Saloon that later became The Alibi Inn, then The Windjammer, and now Il Sorriso. DiChiara's, now The Hudson Café, was the next stop. And on the corner of Main and South Ferris, where the new building is under construction, there was Horban's Saloon.

Sodas and other soft drinks could be purchased in Wagner's Drug Store at Main and South Dutcher, DiChiara's (during prohibition), Copeland's Drug Store where Prudential Realtors is, Joe Reilly's Ice Cream Parlor where This & That is now, or the old Corner Store

on the south east corner of Main and Broadway. There was an ice cream shop on Bridge Street, on the property then owned by my grandfather, Harold Bronnes, for those going to or coming from Mattheissen Park.

There were two hardware stores – Cudney Brothers on the corner of Main and Broadway where the Texaco station is and August Bing's on the site of the present Irvington Hardware. At one time there were three barber shops: first Holwieller's, then Lenny's, where Sal's is today; the barber shop of my grandfather, August Seus at 72 Main Street; and Maffucci's, where Sunny-

side Bank now stands.

Gottfried Wistrand had a tailor shop at 70 Main Street, and Ben Lewis had a clothing store next to Gristede's. Bob Stuart had a flower shop next to where Paul Ambra and Ed Cushman opened Main Radio, now the Irvington Pizzeria. For many years, Karl von Schenk was our upholsterer at 50 Main Street. At one time, there was even an art store where This & That is located. And, as always, there was Becker's, where candy, tobacco products and newspapers were dispensed in a most cordial manner. There were other stores, of course, but those must be for another time. ☕



Harold Bronnes' Fruit & Vegetable wagon parked on Main Street in front of what is now Geordanes.



Sunday Mornings

By Joan Morgenstern Lobdell

The smell of freshly baked bread or the fragrance of spicy cookies can transport me back to Sunday mornings on Main Street in the 30s.

Our family attended St. Paul's Methodist Church – now the Isabel K. Benjamin Recreation Center – and the enticing scents came from Thiele's Bakery next door, often wafting through open sanctuary windows on a hot day.

After the service, my brother John and I took turns accompanying Mother to Thiele's or Dad to Becker's. I usually chose Thiele's where I would help Mother buy fresh rolls for Sunday dinner and got to pick out the cookies for our school lunch bags - big molasses cookies, fat sugar ones with nuts on top or scrumptious

brownies. It was hard to decide, and I was glad when there were other customers ahead of us on line for it gave me more time to make up my mind. Mrs. Thiele, in her snowy white apron and with a cheerful smile, was always patient. But, Mother didn't like to keep Dad waiting and there was Sunday dinner to go home and finish cooking.

John preferred Becker's, for that meant the first peek at the *Herald Tribune* funnies and the possibility of a pack of gum or Life Savers. Little things, perhaps, but these are some of my fondest memories of Main Street. ☺



In the late 19th and early 20th century, Peter Laffan's paint business occupied what is now All That Glitters.



Growing Up In the 30s

By Agnes Foley O'Neill

I remember going, on Sunday mornings, for my mother, to Cavagnero's Vegetable and Fruit Store, located where Zarilli's Deli is now, to buy whatever fresh vegetables we would be having for dinner. We also shopped at Lewis's Dry Goods Store, located a few stores down the hill from Becker's. I think the only things we bought there were socks and hair ribbons.

I remember roller-skating on Main Street. We would also go to the beach at Matthiessen Park. On the

way up the hill, we would stop at Wagner's Drug Store and Soda Fountain, located on the corner of Main and South Dutcher, for a lemon coke. It cost 5 cents. On Saturday afternoons we would go to the Embassy Movie Theater in Dobbs Ferry. It cost 15 cents to get into the movie and 5 cents each way on the bus. By walking down the Aqueduct, we saved 5 cents for candy. ☺

The Roost

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Upcoming Programs

Be sure to watch for the Historical Society's upcoming spring programs:

Dolls & Trains: Sunday afternoon, March 3rd, at the Irvington Recreation Center

A Very Special Program: Nuits House Tour & Author's Night

A Community Event: Irvington Town Hall's 100th Birthday Party in May

A Perennial Favorite: The Hermit's Grave Walk, led by Village Historian, Peter Oley, in June

Village-Wide Tag Sale

The Irvington Historical Society will participate in the Annual Village-Wide Tag Sale to be held on Saturday, May 4th. We will be seeking donations of knick-knacks, collectibles, books, household items, etc. for this event. Also, any Society members who might be able to assist us in this effort would be greatly appreciated. Those willing to donate either time or items, please contact Veronica Gedrich at 591-9595. ☕

Wish List

The Irvington Historical Society is always looking for items to enhance our archives. This issue of The Roost and the recent exhibit for the Society's Annual Meeting, both dedicated to the Main Street area, have made us even more aware of the valuable resource our downtown area is. If you have any items – photos, receipts, maps, postcards, old telephone books or other memorabilia of the Main Street area, that you would be willing to donate to the Society, we would be very grateful. ☕