

METAMORA ASSOCIATION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

NEWSLETTER

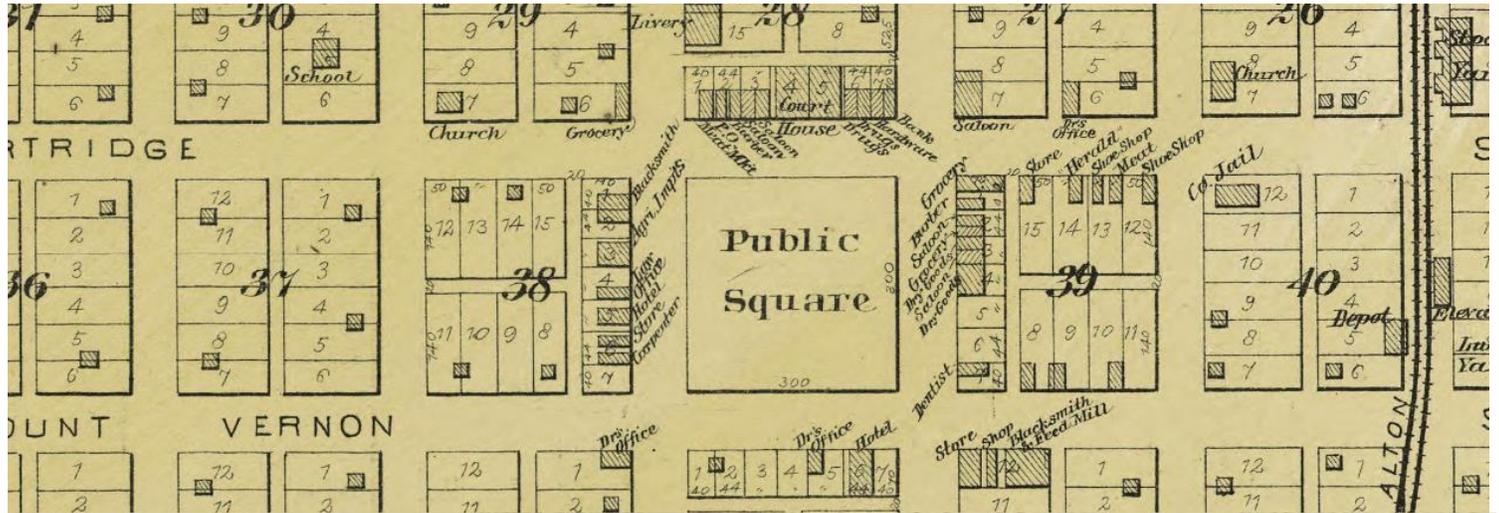
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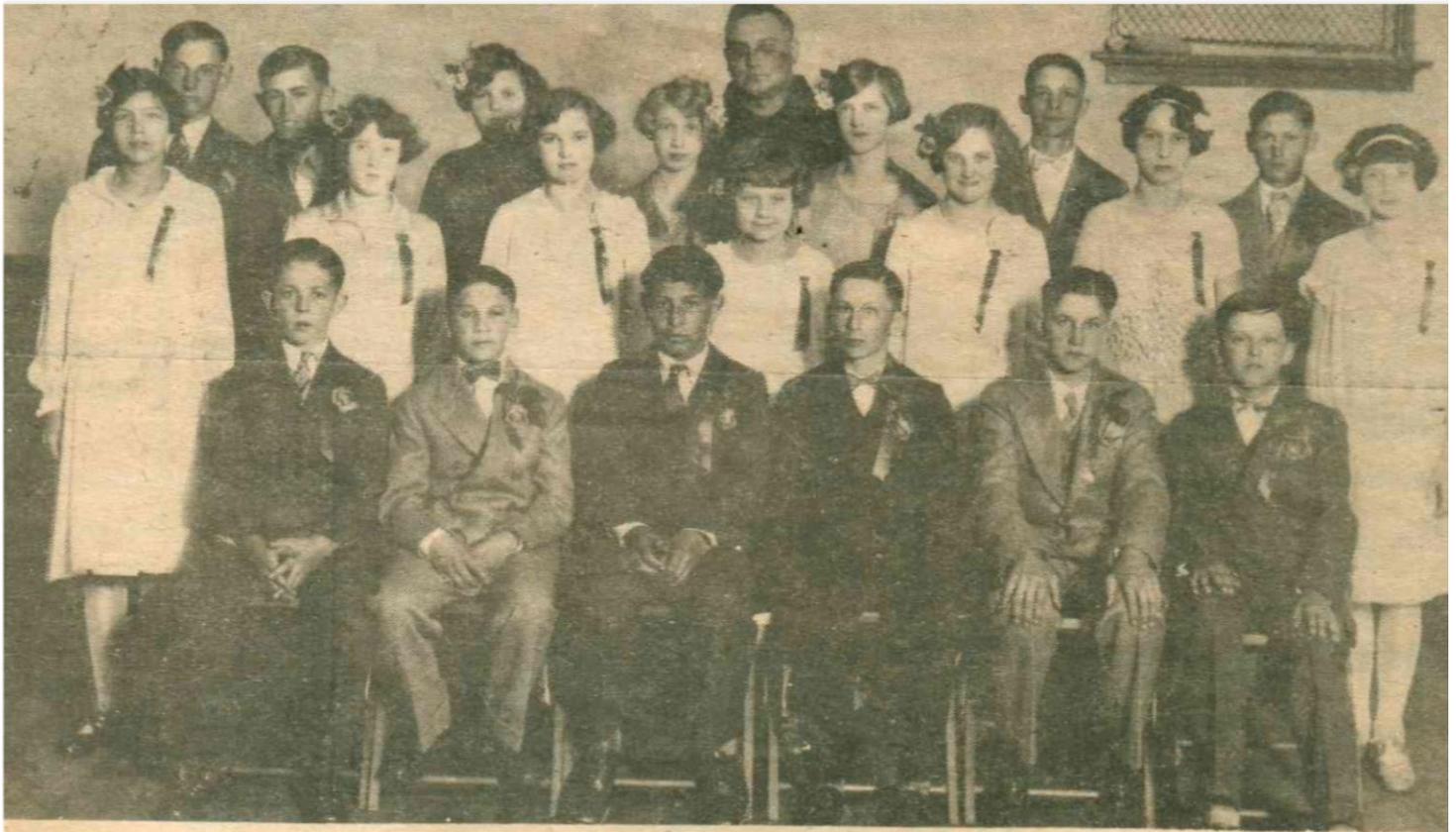
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1893 Plat... Here's what the Square looked like in 1893. Lots of doctor's offices (3), hotels – the Boswell House is just a couple of doors north of the Carpenter House (3), saloons (4), barber shops (2), grocery stores (3), butcher shops (2), blacksmith shops (2), dry goods stores (2), a stockyard, an elevator, and several "stores." The post office was roughly where the St. Mary's Credit Union is located today. Quite a bustling business district!! The second plat below is the entire original town.



1927 St. Mary's Graduating Class



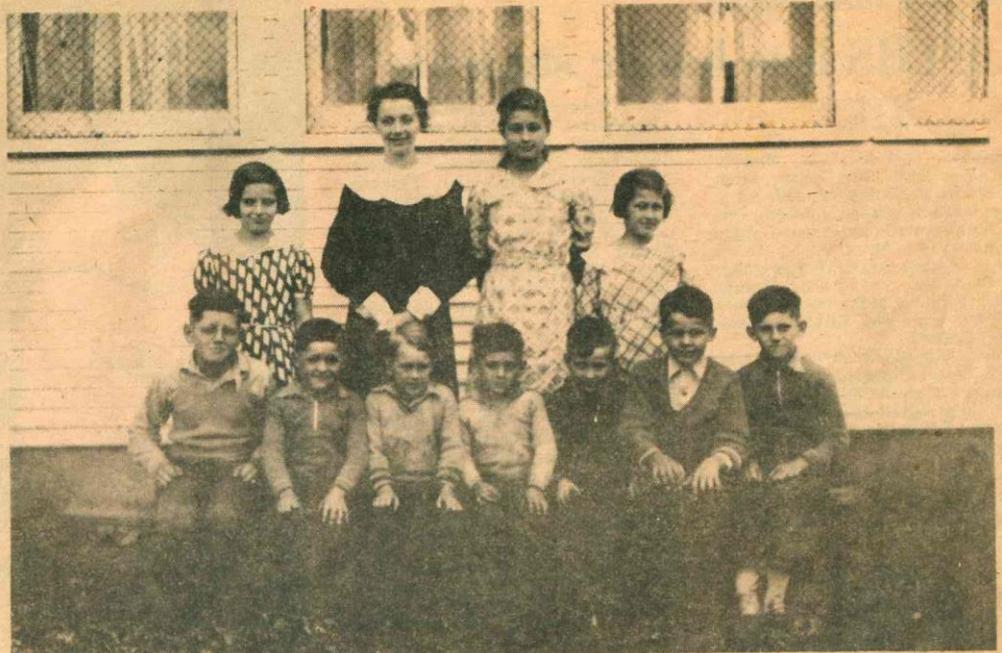
Members of the 1927 graduating class of St. Mary's Grade school pictured here are front, L-R, Deloss Wagner, Walter rapp, Raymond Schierer, Gilbert Stickelmaier, Carroll Volz and Julian Ryan; second row, Catherine DuBois, Susie Alig, lorence Nauman; Velma Eichorn; Laura Nauman, Verna

Noe, and Lela Ehringer; and third row, Lee Seckler, Julius F. Kirchgessner, Florence Studer, Dorothy Waldschmidt, Fr. Alphonse Wilbyrding O.F.M., Eunice Regele, Harland Klein and Emerson Bolle. (Names of the girls listed are their maiden names). The photo was provided by Mrs. Bob Elbert.

THE HERALD, Thursday, December 1, 1977

Pictures from the past

Mrs. Melba Stieglitz, who teaches second grade at Metamora Grade School, has been teaching for a good many years. Back in 1935, Mrs. Stieglitz and her pupils gathered at Lowell School for a class picture. Lowell was a one-room school-house located one mile east of Metamora on Route 116. Pictured are, front row, L-R, Russell Schumacher, Lloyd Schumacher, Russell Bachman, Dale Schumacher, Paul Steider, Roger Neumann and John "Bill" Schumacher; back row, L-R, Evelyn Schumacher Franz, Melba Stieglitz (teacher), Minerva Bachman Reeb and Ruth Bachman Gross. The photograph was provided by Minerva Reeb.





Pictures from the past

Josephine Eichhorn DuBois submitted the above picture of the 1905 class of Hickory Point School. Hickory Point was located on a site west of Metamora on Highway 116. Pictured are front, L-R. Albert Schneider, Elsie Greiner Zimmerman, Clara

Schneider Schaidle, Edna Gingerich Danner (deceased), Mary Ioeiger Upheil (deceased), Erna Ioeiger Schmidt and Isidor Grebner; second row, L-R, Hilarius Grebner, name unknown, Margaret Herring Sutter, Fred Herring (deceased), teacher Nannie Brown, Jerome Schneider (deceased), Josephine Eichhorn DuBois, name unknown and Pauline Grebner Theobald



Christian Union Church

The Methodist Church building, erected in 1855, became the home of the Christian Union Church in 1878 when the five churches decided to unite. This building was used until 1923 when a new church was built on the same site at 111 South Hanover.

This church was a substantial, brick building 36' x 48' and cost \$2,300 without furnishings.

(Note: this building was located roughly at 119 W Partridge on what is now Bob Fandel's property. You can find it on the 1893 plat.)

Rode in the Lincoln Cavalcade (from a 1934 Herald) Mrs. Butler's obit, who was the daughter of Marcelin and Mary Favre, was born in 1842 in Metamora. One of the pleasant memories of Mrs. Butler's life, which she related with pride, was her participation in the cavalcade which escorted Abraham Lincoln from Eureka to Metamora for a political speech here in the fall of 1858. Twenty young men and women rode on horseback, the girls wearing black skirts and white blouses and a sash of red, white and blue. They rode in pairs and Mrs. Butler related that she was paired with the man who later became her husband. *Metamora Herald August 17, 1934*

What's New (er, rather, "old") Program and script (typed, no less!) from the 1968 Metamora play *Little Town on the Praire* from Scott Curry; a 1844 letter addressed to Partridge Point from Carl Volz (the postage was paid by the recipient); and baby clothes from Wanda Neff's son Dave

Open Houses Resume in May Watch our Facebook page for details! And if your group would be interested in a tour, just let us know! There's lots of really interesting artifacts!



*Well, I was born in a small town,
And I live in a small town,
Probably die in a small town,
Oh, those small communities.*
—“Small Town” By John Mellencamp

It's no secret that I'm a small town kinda guy. When I was in high school though, I couldn't wait to graduate so I could move to the big city of Peoria. And that's what I did. I lived on both the East and West Bluffs in the early '70s and really enjoyed it. But after I got married something was calling me back to the east side of the river. I'm not sure what it was, but it might have been wanting my kids to have the same kind of childhood that I had.

I grew up in a place that almost seems mythical now. Unfortunately, I don't have any photos of that old place, so you may not believe the things I'm about to tell you. But take my word for it. It was very real.

Things were a lot different back in the '50s and '60s. For most of my younger years, WWII was still pretty fresh on people's minds. And almost everybody's dad was a veteran of it. So, we played war a lot. Or Cowboys and Indians. Every kid had an arsenal of toy guns. Different ones to fit the fight. As far as I know, none of the kids I grew up with became mass murderers.

And of course, we had pick-up games of baseball, basketball and football. Along with exploring the woods, riding our bikes, pestering local businesses and shooting frogs with BB guns. Political correctness wasn't a term yet. And life was good.



This once was the old Standard/Amoco 'service' station. It's where I finished my career as a gas jockey. Back then, there were no self-serve stations. You pulled in here and we would pump your gas, wash your windshield and check your oil. All for less than 40 cents a gallon. In addition to that, we did oil changes, tune ups and other maintenance. In the '60s women hardly ever wore pants, almost always dresses or skirts. And they were usually short. Washing windshields was my favorite part of the job. I worked here my senior year of high school and the summer after graduation.

I'm going to show the "After" photos and try to explain what was there before. It was a long time ago, so my memory might be a little fuzzy. (I left a lot of brain cells on the East and West Bluffs of Peoria). But this is my story and I can tell it any way I want.

The place I'm talking about was a sleepy little village of less than 300 people called Germantown. We know it now as Germantown Hills, a large bedroom community of over 3,000 just minutes away from Peoria. Back in the days of two-lane roads, it seemed like it was in the middle of nowhere.



Route 116 runs through town. Four nice, wide lanes. But before that, 116 ran on what is now the frontage road on the right if this photo.



This used to be Mel's Market. Now it's a funeral home. I'm sure there's a meat cooler joke in there somewhere, but I'm not touching it. Mel's was a wonderful part of the town and my childhood. The owners are like a second family to me.



This used to be the site of the Motel Peorian. I have no idea why it was called that, but it was. I think it did a pretty brisk business until the Interstate Highway System was built. The original building is long gone and has been replaced by this one that's home to an insulation company and a couple beauty parlors.



This used to be a cornfield.



This bank sits on the site of what was once a large building that was home to Marchand's Restaurant, the original Mel's Market (which became a liquor store later on) and some apartments upstairs. Marchand's didn't serve booze, so it was the place we all went to after grade school basketball games. We had a lot of good times there. And made the waitresses miserable. At one point, this building was the home of the "World Famous Zeke's Donut Shop."



This big building was originally a building supply store back in the late '70s when things were really booming. It closed during the recession of the early '80s and eventually divided up for several different businesses. But before all that it was a small lumber yard called Schrepfer and Martin. It was staffed by a bunch of comedians. It was fun to hang out there when there wasn't anything else to do.



This is the busiest intersection in town. Rt 116 & Woodland Knolls Rd. When I was a kid Woodland Knolls was called Hoffman Rd. I don't know when it changed or if it actually did. It may have been Woodland knolls all along and we just called it Hoffman Rd because the Hoffmans lived on it. Don Morgan's Shell Station sat on this corner. After Don retired it became a cut-rate place called "Gas for Less". Or as the locals called it; "Water for Less". I worked here during my junior year. The building also housed a barber shop and laundromat.



Here's White Oak Lake. A beautiful body of water surrounded by nice houses with great landscaping. Before the lake was built, it was a large meadow with the best mushroom hunting in the state. And probably the highest concentration of poison ivy. I used to miss a week of school every spring because of ivy. And it was always right after mushroom season.



Wow. I don't know if I can do this place justice. Herb's Farm Market and Nursery started out as just a produce stand in the 50's, and over the years, grew into what could best be described as Kmart in a barn. And then some. They not only had produce and everything you needed to grow anything, the place was full of crafts, nick knacks, toys, candy and sporting goods that included fishing, hunting and camping equipment. They even sold guns and ammo. No waiting period or FOID cards back then. A ten-year-old kid could buy a gun if he had the cash.

And if that wasn't enough, there was a free museum in another building. It contained items from a typical farm in the 1800's. There were horse drawn plows, scythes, presses, a lot of household things and even some old hoes.

But one of the best things about Herb's sat on that little patch of grass in front of it. Two restored horse drawn wagons. One was a two-seat buggy and the other was a covered wagon. Back in 1963, there couldn't possibly be a cooler place for ten-year-old kids to play Cowboys and Indians than on a REAL covered wagon. I feel sorry for people that never got to experience Herb's.



Across the street from Bill's, that dead end street went all the way to the highway. On that corner sat a Sinclair gas station. It was owned for years by Mr.



Oak Grove Park was the name of a small subdivision in the middle of Germantown. That's where I lived. My parents built a house there in 1950. When they



Right next to Herb's is what just might be the oldest building in town. Without a doubt, it's the oldest business building still in use. It housed Bill Schneider's repair. Bill was a really cool old German guy that could fix anything. He worked on cars, trucks, tractors, lawn mowers, just about anything with an engine. My dad used to take his 1948 3 hp Evinrude outboard motor to him for tune-ups. The place had a dirt floor and no lift. There was a pit in the floor and when Bill had to work underneath a car, he would pull it over the pit and climb down in it.



This parking lot is at the corner of 116 and Fandel Road. We lived just a couple doors down from this on Fandel. It's right across the street from the elementary school.

Mundy. He was a great old guy with the best candy counter in town. It seemed like it was 20 feet long. Not only did it have all the most popular candy bars of the time (at 5 cents each), it had a lot of "penny candy". That was great for little kids with only 3 cents in their pockets.

After Mr. Mundy retired the place went through several owners. It's where I started my gas jockey career. I had just turned 15. I didn't even have a driver's license yet and was pumping gas, doing oil changes a tune-up etc. It's also where I first found washing windshields to be very rewarding.



Kouri's is a very popular eatery in town now. Before it was Kouri's it was another popular eatery called Wernsman's. I first remember it as one room with a bar and a few tables. Every few years they would add on another big room until there was seating for probably a couple hundred. The original building was victim to arson back sometime in the 90's and this was built a few years before Kouri's bought it.

Wernsman's was famous for their fried chicken, steaks and catfish. People came from as far away as Chicago just to eat there. And then there's the onion ring story. Prior to the 1940's onion rings were always battered. Benno Wernsman didn't like them, so he developed breaded rings. The late Rick Baker told this story in a column written back in 1985 titled "Golden Laces". They are responsible for my obsession for onion rings. Wernsman's rings set the standard for which I compare every one I've eaten since. Some have come close, but none have ever been better.

changed the name of the town to Germantown Hills, it absorbed Oak Grove Park and just started calling this little park that. When I was a kid, the parking lot wasn't there and the swings were placed back under the trees. We had a small field big enough to play football and baseball. And we did. A lot.

Years ago, there was a small white building there that we called Maynard's Dairyette. I can't remember if that was the official name, but that's the only thing I ever knew it as. It was a great little ice cream stand that was very popular on summer evenings.

Maynard was also our local milkman. He lived just down the street from us and sometimes when he got done with his route, he would let me ride in the milk truck when he drove it home to put it in the garage. He was a great guy and a real force in making Germantown Hills a desirable place to raise a family.



The parking lot behind Kouri's was also very special. It was much smaller and there were no houses there, only corn. But there was a ball diamond. With lights! It was called "Elizabeth Field" after Benno's mom. There was a barn along the third base line and cornfield in deep left and center fields. It was the original "Field of Dreams". Men's fastpitch softball was popular back then and we used to go up in the evenings and watch. It was also the home field for my Little League team. I remember playing a game against the "Peoria All Stars". It was a team made up of the local TV personalities. I can't remember all that were there, but I remember Rollie playing 2nd base in a lawn chair. He had his glove in one hand and a beverage in the other.

Our team practiced two days a week in the morning and got done about noon. On days of practice, Pop would always leave me some money so I could go into Wernsman's after we got done and have a burger and fries for lunch.

Well, that's the Germantown I remember. If the kids living there now have half as much fun as I did, they'll be very fortunate. As I mentioned earlier, it was a long time ago and my memory might be a little fuzzy. But that's my story and I'm stickin' to it.

Happy trails everybody!

Contact Us

Questions, ideas - Love to hear from you

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