



**HISTORIC WEST
FRANKLIN STREET**

EVANSVILLE, INDIANA

*Frank F. McDonald II
Mayor, City of Evansville*



The preservation of unique architectural and historical landmarks of a city provides a positive reflection of that city's character. Evansville's historic structures provide physical evidence of our city's progress, as well as help to maintain the essential image of the place. This guidebook presents buildings found in the Historic West Franklin Street area as tangible remnants of the life and times of a community and its citizens of an earlier era.

West Side residents and property owners are to be congratulated for the conscientious efforts that have preserved so many of their significant buildings. As mayor, I am proud that city government has been able to assist in maintaining the physical appearance of this important area through allocations of federal Community Development Block Grant funds for street improvements and landscaping.

It is my hope that, as Evansville moves on into the future, city government can continue to work with neighborhood groups to insure the preservation and continuing usefulness of the distinguishing landmarks of our heritage.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank F. McDonald II". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

INTRODUCTION

The City of Evansville has produced two guidebooks in what is intended to be a series of publications calling attention to the wealth of historic structures in the community. The first, Historic Evansville, presented the significant old buildings of the Downtown Main Street area. Historic West Franklin Street, the second publication, offers both the on-site or the armchair tourist the opportunity to become acquainted with the vintage architecture and history of a smaller commercial district and its adjacent Victorian residential enclave in the western part of the city.

Franklin Street is a lengthy east-west artery, but, in the minds of many local people, "West Franklin Street" most particularly refers to a four-block-long business section west of Pigeon Creek that for nearly a century has served as "Main Street" for Evansville's West Side community. Lining the edges of the broad, recently (1979) boulevarded and landscaped thoroughfare between Wabash and St. Joseph Avenues is a mix of old and newer buildings that tangibly trace the long-term role this retail and service center has played. The focus of the tour book, however, is on the notable late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century commercial and institutional buildings, several of which have no local architectural peers.

Many people from across the city annually visit West Franklin Street during the first week of October for the West Side Nut Club's Fall Festival. At this time, the street is charged with carnival atmosphere, and, understandably, more attention is paid to the offerings of the event than to its historic backdrop. The area, though, is well worth a leisurely visit in a quieter time of the year, when it can be appreciated for the architectural and historical value that it has in its own right.

WALKING TOUR NOTE

The tour begins at the West Branch Library, 2000 West Franklin Street. The exteriors of all buildings featured in the guidebook can be easily viewed and examined from public rights of way. The interiors of private residences and businesses are not open to the public, but those of the library and stores, for example, can be visited during normal business hours.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

The majority of the buildings presented in the Historic West Franklin Street booklet are within an area placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982 as the Independence Historic District. The National Register is an important tool of Historic Preservation. A building that is located in a registered district receives a measure of protection against any adverse federally funded or assisted project. In addition, an owner of a building that is determined to contribute to the historic character of a district may be eligible to take advantage of the federal investment tax credit for the rehabilitation of a historic structure.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The West Side of Evansville has, in local terms, considerable historical and cultural significance. For many years it was physically cut off from the main part of the city by Pigeon Creek and the wide swath of factories that once made the creek an important industrial corridor. Further isolated, culturally, by a heavy settlement of German immigrants in the late 1800s, the West Side developed in its own way and at its own pace. By the turn of the century it had achieved a strong sense of community and self-sufficiency.

The West Franklin Street area became a retail and service center second only to downtown. The 100-foot-wide street itself became something of a civic plaza. Neighbors, sharing ties of family and ethnic background, gathered there to socialize as well as to conduct business. When farmers from the western townships—who shared many of the same family and ethnic bonds—came into town to do their weekly "trading," "town" to them most often meant West Franklin Street.

The West Franklin Street district extends across the center of the western half of a 480-acre (more or less) tract of land, bisected by Pigeon Creek, that was platted in 1837 as the "City of Lamasco." The proprietors were John and William Law, James B. McCall (or Macall), and Lucius H. Scott, and the novel name of their town was constructed from the first letters of their surnames. While the portion east of the creek developed into a town and was incorporated in 1847 as Lamasco City, the part to the west remained largely unsettled. By the 1860s, it had acquired the name "Independence," possibly because it had retained its independent status when Lamasco City merged in 1857 with Evansville.

In the years following the Civil War, Independence began to experience an influx of settlers, most of whom were of native German stock. The increasing population of the area and its development potential made it an attractive target for Evansville expansion, and in spring, 1870, the Evansville Common Council announced its intention to annex the area. To counter the annexation action, some residents proposed incorporating as a separate town with the name "Madduxport" after Alexander Maddux, a justice of the peace. However, these plans proved useless. By early summer, Independence was made a part of the Evansville municipality. "Independence" as a name lingered in usage for a time, but eventually it gave way to the geographic designation "West Side."

While annexation did not produce a surge of development for the area during the 1870s, it did provide benefits such as metropolitan fire protection and the construction in 1876 of the three-story brick Centennial School. An event of the 1870s that augmented the established sawmill and coal mining industry was the relocation in 1875 of the downtown-based Evansville Cotton Mill into a new, mammoth factory on St. Joseph Avenue near the Ohio River. The move infused new capital into the area, and workers living in the adjunct tenement block further increased the population. By the end of the decade, West Franklin Street was showing signs of becoming a commercial strip, although there were still only a handful of businesses, mostly quartered in frame buildings and strung out along the roadway. Housing stock was equally unpretentious, except for the Wabash Avenue "mansion" of sawmill owner Charles Schulte that was built in 1878.

The 1880s and 1890s in Evansville were a period of great growth, which spilled over into the relatively vacant lands of its west side. The river and creek banks became lined with factories and milling operations turning out boxes, brooms, edge tools, flour, and planed and dimensioned lumber. Residential blocks became filled in with new housing. Streetcar service was extended into the area in 1882 via Franklin Street and, no doubt, encouraged the area's growth and the street's development.

The same year, the twin-spired St. Boniface Church went up on Wabash Avenue. In addition to providing the West Side with a stately landmark, the church served as a centerpiece for a boulevard of large homes which were erected for some of the community's business and civic leaders. In 1884, West Franklin Street received its first impressive business building--the Laval Block. The construction of similar structures followed in the 1890s.

The growth and urbanization of the West Side continued on into the new century. The rough slopes of Coal Mine and Babytown Hills on the western edge of the low-land community were transformed into West Side residential districts, and the top of Coal Mine Hill was crowned in 1918 by the classically designed Francis Joseph Reitz High School. Industry became more diversified, notably by the establishment of the Helfrich pottery enterprises and by the Globe-Bosse-World Furniture Company, which was touted at the time as being the "world's largest" company of its kind. West Franklin Street acquired a respectable "Main Street" appearance as new, well-designed commercial and institutional structures filled in vacant lots or replaced modest buildings of earlier times. In its role as a community socializer, it helped to foster the emergence of a widespread and unequalled sense of civic pride that resulted in the formation of organizations specifically for the betterment of the area. Such organizations still exist, and the vigorous pursuits of, for example, the West Side Improvement Association and the West Side Nut Club, are evidence that the attitude the "West Side Is The Best Side" is still a potent force.

Like other traditional shopping hubs, West Franklin Street faces increased competition from commercial development on the city's outskirts. Yet the district has a charm and vitality not found in modern suburban commercial centers. Its spruced-up buildings and attractive landscaping, and its small-town atmosphere within the larger city--the feeling of a place where neighbors still greet one another and feel comfortably "at home"--make historic West Franklin Street as congenial a destination for today's generation of West Siders as it was for their forebears.



FRANKLIN STREET VIEW - CIRCA 1910



**CARNEGIE LIBRARY (West Branch Library)
2000 West Franklin Street**

1

One of Evansville's valuable cultural and architectural resources, this Beaux Arts library building, along with a twin on the city's east side, was the result of the philanthropy of Pittsburgh steel magnate Andrew Carnegie. Carnegie funded construction of both facilities, stipulating that the City was to provide the books and maintain the premises.

The endeavor to obtain Carnegie funding for the West Side facility was begun in 1909 with the West Side Business Association spearheading the movement. The building was completed in late 1912 on a block of city-owned land dedicated in the 1837 Lamasco Plat for park purposes. The architects of the \$25,000 structure were Clifford Shopbell & Company, who produced a polished interpretation of the Beaux Arts style by using a simple rectangular massing of red brick and limestone enhanced by rich, classically-inspired terra-cotta ornamentation imported from Chicago.



LAVAL BLOCK **2013-2023 West Franklin Street**

2

Comparison of a recent picture of the Laval Block with a depiction of it on a historical drawing shows that it has changed little during its century of existence. The building was erected for Dr. John Laval in 1884 and is one of two buildings on West Franklin Street which are recognizable survivors from the period when the western section of the city was still called Independence. At the time of its construction, and for some years afterwards, the Laval Block was the most handsome--and substantial--commercial building on West Franklin Street. The plan of the massive two-story brick structure consisted of six, individual, ground-floor shops with living quarters above. Laval, a physician and Main Street (Evansville) pharmacist--as well as a shrewd developer--had no trouble leasing out the spaces as soon as the building was ready for occupancy. Among the first tenants were druggist John W. Lorenz, baker and confectioner August J. Ritter, and William Scherffius, who sold boots, shoes and dry goods. All three were newcomers to the fledgling West Franklin Street commercial district and each lived in the apartment above his respective shop.



MUNDO'S SALOON/HAGEDORN'S TAVERN
2037 West Franklin Street

3

The second recognizable survivor from the Independence era is this plain, gable-fronted building which was erected in 1883 for Philip Mundo. Originally, it served a combination of purposes: as a wine and beer saloon, a boarding house and as a personal residence for the six-member Mundo family. Mundo ran his saloon business until about 1892 when he began leasing out the premises. During the early 1900s, there were a succession of proprietors selling spirits or, during Prohibition, soft drinks and ice cream. Since 1935, the building has acquired status as a West Franklin Street fixture under the name of Hagedorn's.



LORENZ BUILDING **2107 West Franklin Street**

4

The construction of this fancy brick building is noted in an 1893 building permit to have cost druggist John W. Lorenz \$3,000. Since 1885, Lorenz had kept store on West Franklin Street and, like many merchants of the day, he lived in second-floor quarters above the business. With the completion of the new building in 1893, he carried on this arrangement of living and working in the same location for over thirty years, except for a brief period when he temporarily moved his family to a new residence at 2030 West Illinois Street in 1904. (See building description 25.) In addition to continuing his pharmacy profession, Lorenz also acquired a medical degree and practice around the turn of the century. Although Dr. Lorenz is no longer a West Franklin Street personality, the use of the building as a pharmacy still continues.



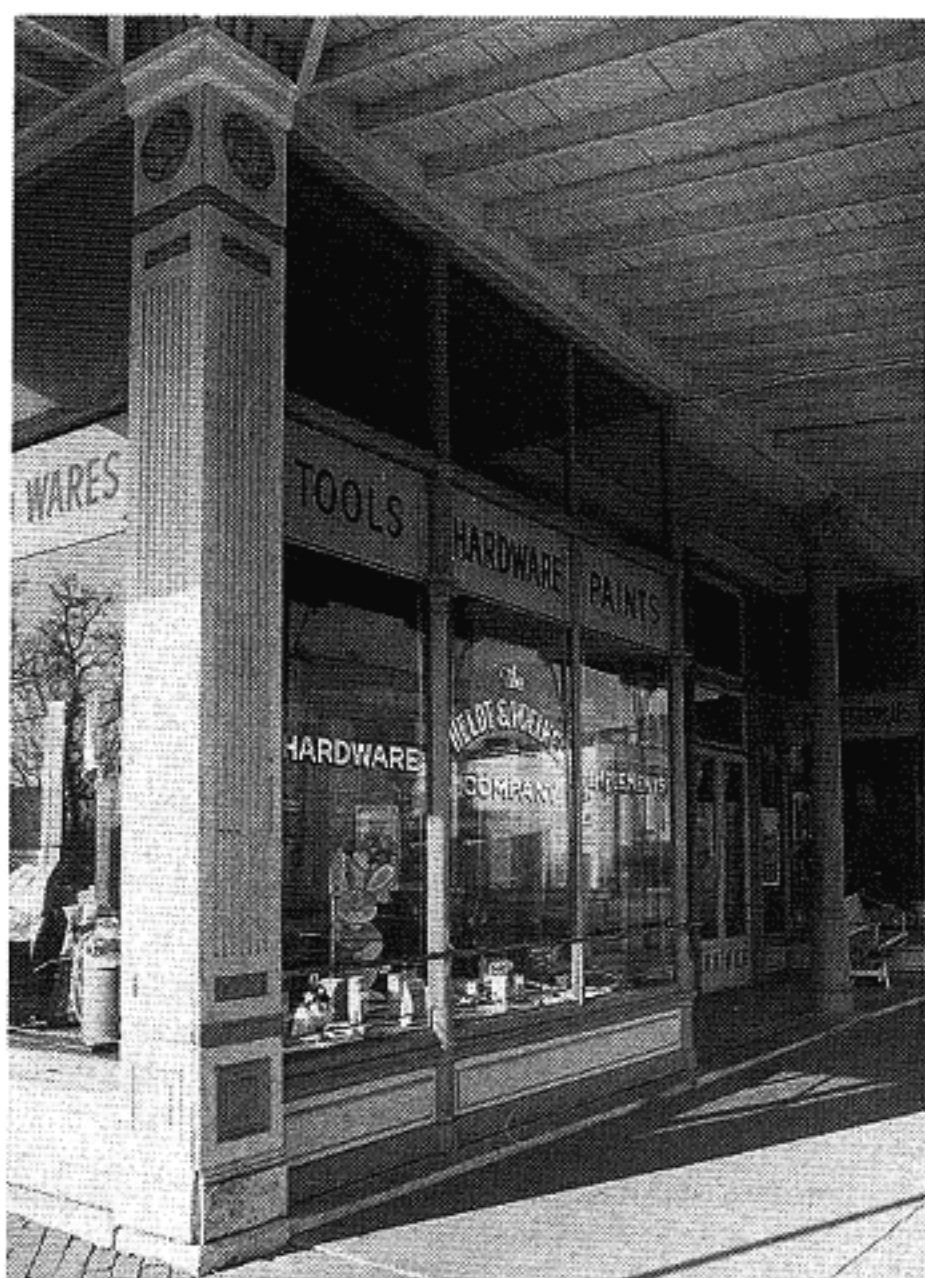
ROSENBERGER BUILDING/HELDT & VOELKER HARDWARE
2100 West Franklin Street

5

This mammoth, three-story brick block, encrusted with metal and brick decorative detailing, was built in 1890 for wholesale and retail grocer August Rosenberger. (Several years later, under the name Rosenberger, Klein & Company, agricultural implements were added.) The building is Evansville's finest example of extant, turn-of-the-century commercial architecture. The storefront is constructed of plate glass, fluted cast iron pilasters, and slender cast iron columns, while brick surfaces of the upper stories are overlaid with ornamental sheet metal. The design and fabrication of the facade and other metal work on the building may have been produced by the nationally renowned George L. Mesker Iron Works Company of Evansville. The building stood alone until 1894, when Rosenberger erected an abutting brick warehouse of the same large proportions as the store. The warehouse was razed in the 1940s, but, fortunately, the store remains in near-pristine condition on both the interior and the exterior. Credit for its preservation can be attributed to the owners of Heldt & Voelker Hardware who have appreciated its vintage qualities since they first occupied the building in 1925. The Heldt & Voelker business itself is as much a West Franklin Street institution as the building and dates back to about 1907, when John H. Heldt, William Heldt, and George Voelker sold farm machinery out of a building on the northeast corner of Franklin and Twelfth streets. (Photo reproduction courtesy of the Junior League of Evansville, Inc.)



HELDT & VOELKER SIDE VIEW



HELDT & VOELKER STOREFRONT



FRANKLIN BANK & TRUST COMPANY
2121 West Franklin Street

6

In 1927, this classically-inspired bank building took the place of two old frame store buildings. McGuire and Shook, prominent Indianapolis architects, did the design work, using classical motifs and Bedford limestone to carry out the architectural program of the building. Costing \$100,000, the structure was erected to house not only the Franklin Trust Company operations, but also those of the West Side Building, Loan & Savings Association and the West Side Real Estate Company. It might be noted that in 1927, Dr. John Lorenz was on the board of all three companies. The Franklin Bank managed to survive the Depression years. In 1951, it was merged into Old National Bank and became one of the first branch offices of ONB.



DETAILS OF THE CAPITAL



DETAILS OF A GRIFFIN IN TERRA COTTA

ROUNDEL

In keeping with the early name of the bank, at the center of the parapet is a terra-cotta roundel with a likeness of Benjamin Franklin in low relief. Flanking the roundel and incised in stone are sayings a la Franklin: "Thrift is Power" and "Save and Succeed."





SIMMONS HARDWARE STORE
2123 West Franklin Street

7

The decade of the 1890s was a significant building period for the West Franklin Street commercial district. Harry I. Simmons' \$4,500, three-story hardware store, erected in 1894, was but one of a number of substantial business structures which were built on the street during the decade. Typical of Victorian commercial architecture, it featured a facade of red brick, accented with contrasting white stone belt courses, and a corbeled parapet surmounted by a pressed metal name plate announcing Simmons' ownership. Of course, he made sure that a photo of his new building appeared in the 1895 The Book of Evansville-Illustrated. Simmons continued to vend hardware at this location until his retirement in about 1909. The store was then taken over by his son who, after only several years, left to pursue a musical career. Since then, the building has continuously housed retail furniture businesses.



CONEN COMMERCIAL BLOCK
2125-2127 West Franklin Street

8

Abutting the old Simmons building on the west is the Conen Block. It was erected for investment purposes thirteen years later than the Simmons structure by George and Christina Conen, who ran a saloon on the corner under an agreement with the Evansville Brewing Association. In spring 1907, the couple commissioned local architect Frank J. Schlotter to plan a multi-use building for the land between their saloon and the Simmons property that they had acquired several years earlier from William Eickmeier, a blacksmith and a wagon maker. Construction was carried out during the summer by master brick mason Anton Kessler. The finely crafted, three-story structure was completed in early September and its ground-floor premises were leased out to the Krescent 5 & 10. In addition to retail use, the building had available space for other uses. On the second and third floors, across the front, were offices and a small meeting room. Occupying the rear portion of the structure was a two-story-high hall designed to accommodate large social gatherings. One of the first events held in the new hall was a masquerade ball put on in November (1907) by the Independent Order of Foresters.



CONEN -- STREET VIEW CIRCA 1910



WEST SIDE BANK BUILDING **2200 West Franklin Street**

9

Founded in late 1902 to serve the financial needs of the residents and businesses west of Pigeon Creek, the West Side Bank opened its doors for business just after the New Year in leased quarters on West Franklin Street. The bank was successful from the start, and a couple of years later, its directors—men such as furniture manufacturer Benjamin Bosse (Mayor of Evansville, 1914-1922), Dr. Thomas Macer, H. Frederick Ricchmann, and businessmen August Rosenberger and Leon Currey—began planning for a more prestigious banking facility. In 1906, plans were implemented and a new building was erected on the corner of West Franklin Street and Eleventh Avenue on the former site of the Peter Hess homestead (1857), store, and sausage factory. The architects were the firm of (William J.) Harris & (Clifford) Shopbell, and the design they developed was a limestone-clad, Neo-Classical structure that projected an image of tradition and soundness for the young bank. To augment the income of the banking operation, a two-story duplex was constructed at the south end of the bank building for rental purposes. The West Side Bank continued to thrive through the teens and the 1920s. In 1932, it became a casualty of the Depression and was forced to close its doors. Since 1935, the building has been occupied by the First Federal Savings and Loan Association (rechartered and renamed First Federal Savings Bank in March 1988), a West Side institution established in 1904 as the West Side Building, Loan and Savings Association. (Photo reproduction courtesy of Willard Library.)



CURREY BUILDING
2201-2203 West Franklin Street

10

Nearly a year was spent in the construction of this West Franklin Street architectural gem. It was begun in spring 1898 and completed in May 1899 for Leon Currey, who had operated a drugstore in a narrow frame building on the same site since 1887. The new building comprised two store widths. Currey occupied Number 2201 and rented out Number 2203 to John Hast, a merchant who specialized in dry goods and "gent's furnishings." The Currey building is a fine example of precision brickwork. With its limestone trim, stone carvings, and arched Romanesque-style windows it offers one of the more unusual commercial facades in the city. Currey died in 1907, but his wife, Alice, a pharmacist in her own right, carried on the drugstore operation with the help of their son, Hiram, and C. Robert Mueller, a clerk. During World War One, while Hiram was in service, Mrs. Curry took Mueller into partnership and the name of the business was changed to Currey-Mueller Drug Company. In 1957, five years after the death of Mueller, Hiram Currey sold the seventy-year-old family business and retired.



DETAIL OF THE GROTESQUE



DETAIL OF THE COILED SNAKE



JACOB J. FOLZ JR. COMMERCIAL BLOCK
2207 West Franklin Street

11

This building was constructed in 1911 for Jacob Folz Jr. from plans by the Clifford Shopbell & Company architectural firm, the successor of the Harris & Shopbell office. The facade featured white glazed brick and Chicago-style banks of windows. On its completion, the two-store-wide building was occupied by the Schuler Implement Company under a long-term tenancy which extended into the late 1920s. One of the West Side's largest real estate owners, Jacob Folz, Jr., was a director of the West Side Bank, the proprietor of a tile factory, and the owner and operator of a West Franklin Street grocery and saloon business.

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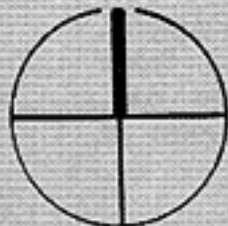
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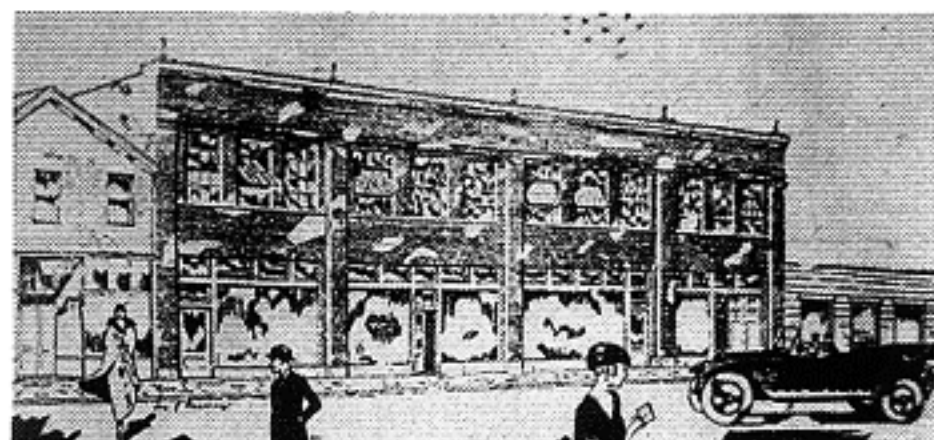
EXPRESSWAY



ECKLER GARAGE
2218 West Franklin Street

12

When the Eckler Garage opened for business at its new location on the first day of September 1923, the announcement was spread across several pages of The Evansville Courier. The company had been founded a year earlier when Robert M. Eckler severed his association with the A. L. Maxwell Company and took over an authorized Ford and Lincoln agency. He was joined in the venture by John Davis and J. Cox and the new \$48,000, Rugby brick building of two stories was put up by the Franklin Corporation with Cox and Eckler as two of its directors. The building featured a "runway" (ramp) to the second floor, an innovative concept in local automotive-related buildings at the time, and large windows throughout. Charles Troutman was the architect and engineer and Scarborough-Davies the contracting firm. In the early 1930s, the Eckler Company went out of business and the building was taken over for a short time by the Continental auto sales company.



**OCTOBER 1922 ARCHITECTURAL RENDERING OF THE
PROPOSED ECKLER BUILDING**



JACOB FOLZ JR. COMMERCIAL BLOCK
2229-2233 West Franklin Street

13

This large, brick commercial block was another Jacob Folz Jr. investment project. Research suggests that the section with the centered parapet was probably constructed in 1904 and that the first tenants were, from left to right, Heldt & Schuler implement company in the corner location, followed by druggist Theodore Gerke. The two-story, three-window brick section was added in 1905 by Folz for the Stinson Brothers dry goods business, which also leased the adjacent, one-story building from Folz. While Gerke and Heldt & Schuler (later Heldt & Voelker) were both home-town enterprises, the Evansville Stinson Brothers store, established in 1905, was but one of a regional chain operated--as the name implies--by the Stinson brothers. William E. Stinson came to Evansville to manage the new branch store and stayed, becoming over the years one of the West Side community's more prominent business figures as well as one of its prime boosters. He was an incorporator of the West Side Business Association (1909) and the West Side Investment Company (1913), and he was also instrumental in organizing the Nut Club. In fact, he is said to have given the club its name. Stinson remained at the helm of the store's operation until 1945 when, at age seventy-seven, he retired and closed the business.



GERKE BUILDING
2303 West Franklin Street

14

Looking up when walking along a commercial strip can sometimes be rewarding to the senses. As the name states, this is the Gerke Building. Construction progress on it throughout the summer of 1914 was noted almost weekly on the building page of The Sunday Evansville Journal-News. The striking design of the second story facade was the handiwork of Evansville's versatile architect, F. Manson Gilbert, who always managed to imbue his architectural designs with eye-appealing quality. For the Gerke Building, Gilbert adorned the facade with a classically-inspired frontispiece with Corinthian pilasters and a cornice underscored by modillions. The entire cost of the 40-by-110-foot, two-story building was placed at \$25,000. Theodore Gerke, for whom the building was constructed, was in the drugstore business, starting out in 1902 with John Lorenz, who was studying medicine at the time. In 1904, Gerke opened his own pharmacy on West Franklin Street, later forming an association with Lawrence Upton. The two druggists stayed in partnership even after the move to the new 1914 building. In about 1921, however, Gerke went into the paint business and Upton continued the drugstore operation in the adjacent corner building under his own name.



COMMERCIAL BUILDING
2305 West Franklin Street

15

The construction of this two-story brick structure was a project of the West Side Investment Company. Incorporated in 1913, the company was one of several associations of West Side businessmen formed in the early years of this century for the purpose of promoting the growth and development of the community west of Pigeon Creek through real estate ventures. The building, replacing an 1870s one-story frame structure that had originally served as a grocery store for Independence residents, was designed in 1917 and constructed in 1918 for lease to the Red Star Laundry. However, the project took on a new dimension when the lessees failed to get their enterprise off the ground. Instead, the first occupant of the building was the Franklin Laundry Company, a concern founded in May 1919 by six members of the investment company, who brought in a man from St. Louis, Missouri, to manage the new laundry operation. In 1923, shortly after the Franklin Laundry went out of business, the building served for several years as a branch store for Charles C. Leggett & Son, a vendor of bicycles and automotive accessories.



PARNES BUILDING
2315-2317 West Franklin Street

16

Architect Frank J. Schlotter was commissioned by Bernard Parnes to design this building in 1913 with a forty-foot-wide storeroom on the ground floor and living quarters for the Parnes family on the second floor. The building, completed early in the summer of 1914, was touted as having all of the conveniences of the uptown Main Street business houses, being equipped with gas, electric lights and running water. The cost of the building with its pale yellow brick facade, stone trimmings, and basket-weave brick design was, reportedly, \$35,000. Parnes dealt in general merchandise, and the name of his business was the Crown Department Store. It was a family-run enterprise. In about 1923, Parnes scaled back the operation and rented out the west half of the ground-floor commercial space to the A & P grocery chain. The Parnes family continued to reside in their apartment on the second floor for several more years until they moved to a large, two-story house featuring a commodious front porch on Lincoln Avenue.



PARNES BUILDING NAME PLATE AND BASKET-WEAVE BRICK



WERNER BUILDING
2319-2321 West Franklin Street

17

There are probably many West Side residents who remember when this commercial block housed "Uncle Sam's" West Side Post Office. The building was erected in 1929 for Charles F. Werner for several uses. Evansville Postal Station B shared ground floor space with Werner's attorney, realty and insurance offices and, on the second floor, there were two rental apartment suites. Architect Eli Stingle designed the building and Matt Hallenberger, a West Side contractor, did the construction work. Like the Rosenberger building, Werner's business block has managed to survive the years with its original architectural program virtually unaltered.



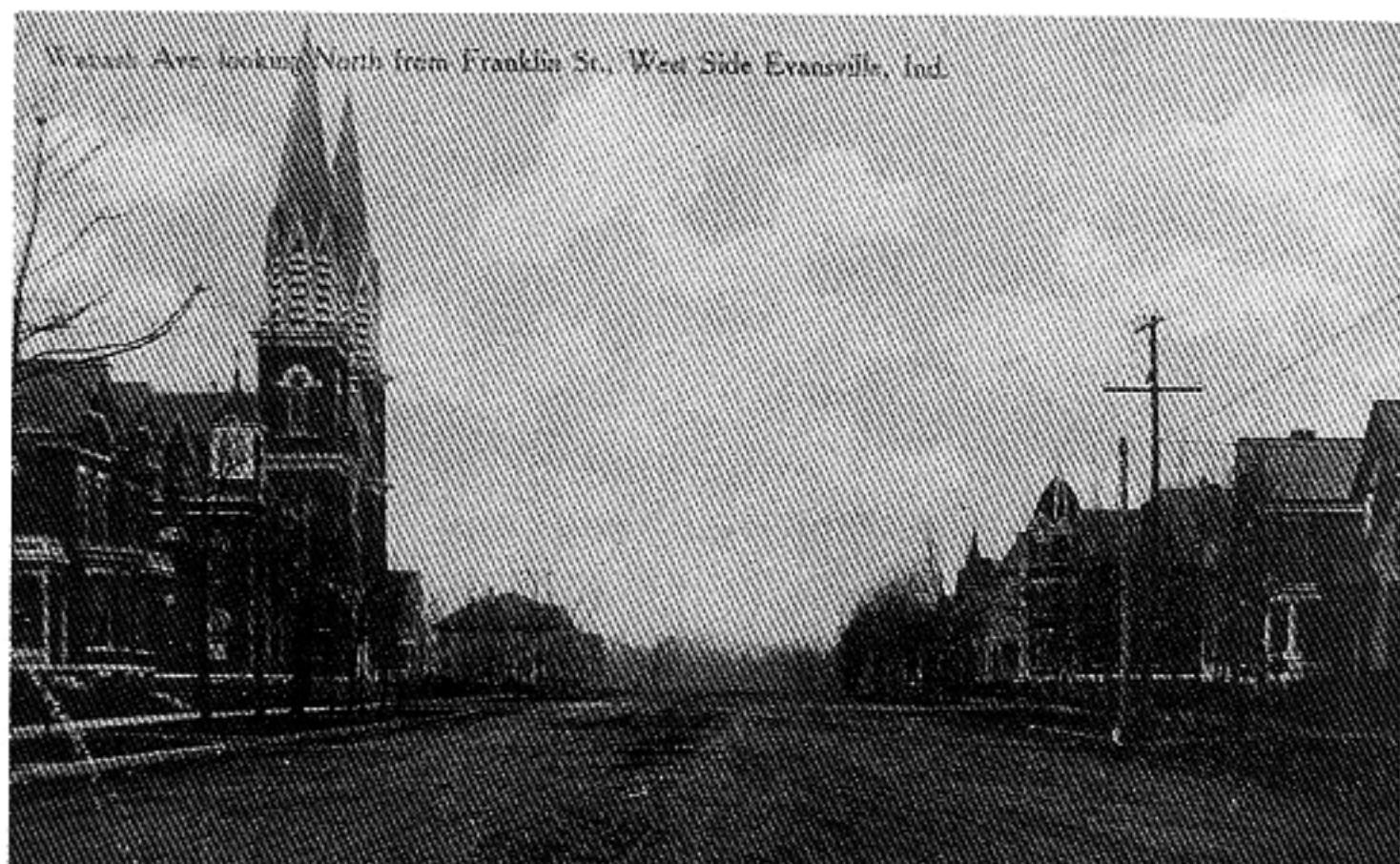
HOSE HOUSE #5
320 North St. Joseph Avenue

18

Hose House #5 has been a fixture of the West Franklin Street area for eighty-two years. Designed for the City by Frank J. Schlotter and completed in 1907, Number 5 joined with old Number 7 engine company, then several blocks away on the corner of Ninth and Illinois Streets, in providing full fire protection service for the growing West Side. Although now without its bell tower, the original plan of Number 5's two-story block remains well preserved. This vintage building had the distinction of being the City's only historic fire house still in service until April 1988, when a replacement was completed near the intersection of St. Joseph Avenue and West Maryland Street.

HOSE HOUSE #5
AT COMPLETION IN 1907





WABASH AVENUE VIEW CIRCA 1910

WABASH AVENUE

During the 1890s, the section of Wabash Avenue north of Franklin Street began to develop into a residential enclave with the construction of a handful of large Victorian residences. St. Boniface Church had been in place for over a decade and, for some of the residents, going to church on Sunday was simply a matter of crossing the street. The median that now extends down the middle of the avenue was constructed in 1936 as a WPA project. The present landscaping features of trees and flower beds were planted some ten years ago by the West Side Improvement Association and the Westwood Garden Club. Faithful maintenance is shared jointly by the Wabash Avenue of Flags Foundation and the City.

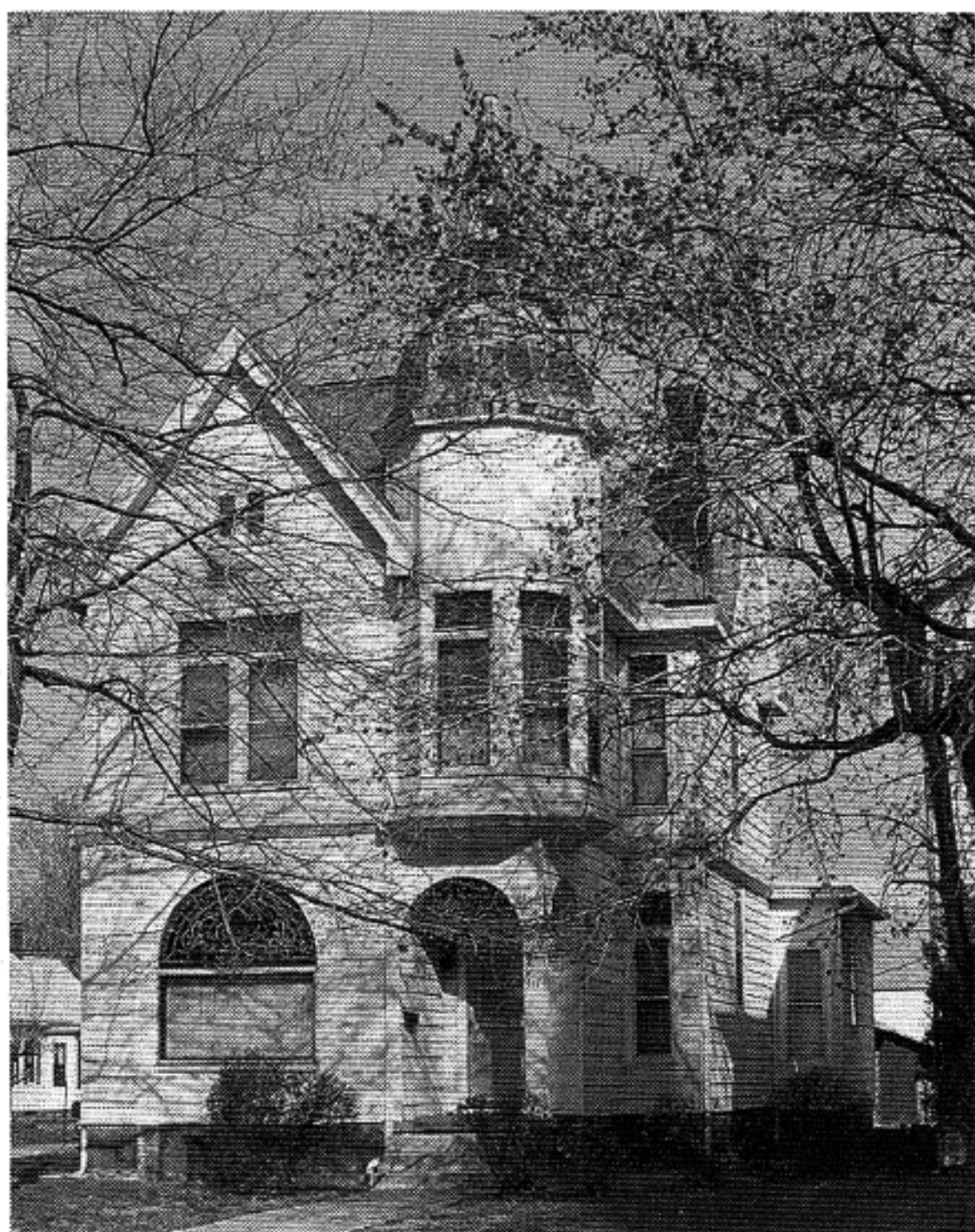


ST. BONIFACE CATHOLIC CHURCH
410 North Wabash Avenue (1901 View)

19

Founded in January 1880, in the home of Charles Schulte, St. Boniface Catholic Church was the fourth of Evansville's Catholic parishes and the third of its German-speaking Catholic congregations. The men who gathered at Schulte's to lay plans for the organization of the church also included August Rosenberger, Anthony J. Klein, Adam Helfrich and John T. Rehtin. Subsequently, funds were raised, the Wabash Avenue site was purchased, and construction on a substantial brick church was underway by late 1881. The ensuing result by April 1883, when the dedication ceremony for the new church took place, was a massive, twin-spired edifice executed in what was termed "Byzantine style with a touch of Roman." At the time, a remark was made that the church was very conspicuous in Independence; it remains so today, and its spires can be seen from many points in the area. In 1902, a fire started by lightning destroyed the church, but plans were made immediately to rebuild it. The architectural services of Harris & Shopbell were called upon and Anton Kessler was secured as the general contractor. The church was completed by June 1903. Although the plan varied somewhat from the old one (the towers supporting the spires were a bit taller and side walls had gabled dormers), the overall appearance of the new edifice corresponded to that of the first one.

Next to the church in this period view can be seen the old St. Boniface parish school. It was erected in 1885 at a reported cost of \$10,000. In 1923, a new school was constructed at the rear, paralleling Tenth Avenue. This building is still in use, but the old, nineteenth-century schoolhouse was eventually razed for a playground, which, in turn, became a parking lot. (Photo reproduction courtesy of Willard Library.)



SCHULTE-KINGSBURY HOUSE
417 North Wabash Avenue

20

Research data indicates a late-1894 or early 1895 construction date for this two-story house and that the original owner and occupant was Edward M. Schulte, son of local lumberman, Charles Schulte. Young Schulte's occupancy of the home was brief. Between 1898 and 1904, the residence was host to a succession of tenants. In 1905, Forrest W. Kingsbury moved into the house and made it his home until his death in 1920. Kingsbury was a well-known West Side businessman who rose from a saw filer to an incorporator and first vice president of the Lamasco Bank. The former Schulte-Kingsbury House has two particular details of note, a beautiful stained glass window and a corner tower capped by an unusual shaped metal dome.



HERMAN RUSCHE HOUSE
411 North Wabash Avenue

21

This house was built in 1895 for Herman Rusche on land he had purchased a year earlier from one of his employers, August Rosenberger. Rusche was an engineer with the Southwestern Broom Company that was located a block to the east on Ninth Avenue. The semicircular arch of the recessed porch is an arresting detail of the old Rusche home and is probably original, but the concrete porch railing and projecting roof may be early, twentieth-century additions.



AUGUST ROSENBERGER HOUSE
409 North Wabash Avenue (1901 View)

22

"Picturesque" is a term often applied to late-nineteenth-century residential architecture, and the former August Rosenberger House, as seen in this period view, was all of that. Rosenberger built this fanciful Queen Anne statement in 1894, four years after the construction of his Franklin Street store (See building description 5.) In addition to his mercantile pursuits, Rosenberger was a partner with Anthony J. Klein in the Southwestern Broom Company. After Klein's death in 1903, Rosenberger began devoting more time to the broom business. By 1907, the company was one of the three largest broom manufacturing concerns in the country. In about 1911, with four widely scattered plants (in Evansville, Indiana; Baltimore, Maryland; Oakland, California and Wichita, Kansas), Rosenberger moved to Kansas. However, he returned to his home town periodically to visit his friends and relatives and to check on his business interests. (Photo reproduction courtesy of Willard Library.)



HELFRICH-JENNINGS HOUSE **401 North Wabash Avenue**

23

The Victorian urge to pair white stone and rich, red brick, to fill in otherwise blank wall surfaces with ornamental brick work, and to provide a building with varying shapes and textures is clearly evident in this construction for William Helfrich and his family. The house was built in 1894, and the materials more than likely came from the sawmill and brick works of his father, Adam Helfrich. (Helfrich at the time was manager of another of his father's enterprises, the Bunker Hill Flour Mill.) The new residence was palatial in comparison to the rented half of a double house that the Helfrichs moved from. It was also conveniently situated across the street from St. Boniface Catholic Church where the family worshipped. In 1909, the daughter, Lillian, was married in the church to John K. Jennings. The young couple made their home after the marriage with her parents in the Wabash Avenue house and continued to live in it for five decades. Jennings, a bookkeeper for a coal company when he married Lillian, later established a successful hay and grain business and built (1928) a neighborhood movie house, the Rosedale Theatre, which he owned and operated for several decades. He also became involved in politics, and in 1924 ran for mayor on the Democratic ticket, but lost the election to Republican Herbert Males. In 1935, Jennings was made director of the Evansville district WPA. Based on his record while in this position, he was appointed to head the state WPA program in 1937.



ANTHONY J. KLEIN HOUSE
316 North Wabash Avenue (1901 View)

24

Anthony J. Klein (1855-1903) was one of the early residents of this section of Wabash Avenue. In June 1892, he took out a building permit to erect a \$4,000, two-story brick residence on lots thirteen to sixteen in Block Seventy of the Lamasco City plat. By 1893, he and his family were settled in their new house. A German native, Klein came to the United States in 1867 with his parents. After a number of years in the employ of tanner Anthony Reis, Klein branched out on his own. In 1887, he founded the Southwestern Broom Company and with his brother-in-law, August Rosenberger, and Charles Yeager, he began molding it into a profitable venture. He also joined Rosenberger in the wholesale and retail grocery business. In 1903, a few months short of his forty-eighth birthday, Klein suffered a heart attack and died. The family stayed on in the house and participated with Rosenberger in running the broom company. In 1943, the property was sold and the old Klein residence was used for thirty years afterwards as a rest home. Since 1975, it has been owned and occupied by the University of Southern Indiana chapter of the Tau Kappa Epsilon Fraternity which, in 1986, carried out an extensive renovation project. (Photo reproduction courtesy of Willard Library.)



DR. JOHN W. LORENZ/GEORGE C. FISCHER HOUSE
2030 West Illinois Street

25

With its corner tower, this proud old frame house stands like a sentinel in its Illinois Street context. It was erected in 1904 by builder Jack Koch for physician John W. Lorenz, who was also a West Franklin Street druggist. The house has worn its years well, and the original integrity of the structure is virtually undisturbed. Dr. Lorenz and his family moved into the new house from their old quarters above the drugstore (See building description 4), but their tenure was of short duration. An inordinate amount of late-night calls from customers and patients requesting drugs during a flu epidemic, along with repeated trips to the pharmacy for the medicines, prompted Lorenz to quickly move his family back to their former apartment above the store. The house was subsequently sold in 1905 to longtime (since 1884) West Franklin Street grocer George C. Fischer for the sum of \$6,000. The occupation of the house by the Fischer family was far longer than that of the Lorenz's, lasting over two decades.



HENRY RIETMAN HOUSE
18 North Wabash Avenue

26

Prior to the 1890s, there was little obvious display of wealth by citizens of the city's German west end. The emphasis of home construction was on utility rather than on looks. However, Charles Schulte and Henry Rietman, owners of a prosperous sawmill business, broke the mold (or, at least, put a crack in it) when they erected stylish residences on adjacent Wabash Avenue blocks just south of Franklin Street in 1878 and 1885, respectively. Near duplicates, the homes of the partners were imposing Italianates. Each featured gabled roofs and eaves brackets, ornamental window heads, a fancy veranda, and a three-story tower—all very much in keeping with the style. Together, the pair of residences imparted a touch of urban flavor to the provincial Independence community. A newspaper building note in 1885 related that Rietman's ten-room house cost \$12,000 and that the design and construction were carried out by the John S. McCorkle planing mill company. The Schulte home was razed in 1966 and replaced by the present VFW Post #1114 building, but the Rietman house has survived—albeit minus the top of its tower, which was removed after being damaged some years ago in a storm. (Photo reproduction courtesy of the Junior League of Evansville, Inc.)

West Side NUT CLUB



WEST SIDE NUT CLUB

One historic West Side institution that occupies no historic site and has no architectural description is the West Side Nut Club. The motto of this longtime West Side booster--"From Small Acorns, Large Oaks Grow"--profiles the growth of the organization and its accomplishments through the years. The club began early in this century as a noontime gathering of West Side businessmen who lunched at Carl Schultz's restaurant on West Franklin Street to discuss the topics of the day. The original name of the informal association--with members like William E. Stinson, Eli Huber, Henry Riechmann and William Muensterman--was the "West Side Epicures." In March 1914, feeling that the name "did not express anything to the layman," the men changed the name to "The Nut Club." In the same month, they proposed to the West Side Business Association that a fall festival be held in October. As a result of this proposal, the West Side's "First Annual Fall Festival" was staged on West Franklin Street. However, it wasn't until 1921, when the Nut Club was formally organized with a much larger membership, that the festival under the sponsorship of the club began its tradition as a truly annual event.

Over the years, proceeds from the festival have been used not only for the benefit of the West Side, but for that of the entire city. The West Side Swimming Pool, animals for Mesker Zoo, the Museum train, uniforms for the Civil Defense, and computers for public and parochial schools are tangible examples of the use of funds derived from Evansville's largest attended attraction. In 1988 alone, close to \$44,000 was awarded to fourteen schools and not-for-profit organizations.

The West Side Fall Festival is held during the first week of October each year on West Franklin Street west of Pigeon Creek.

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