PRESERVATION
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The Later History of the Perkins House and its Successor

There is an attractive red brick building at 611 Wisconsin Avenue, which is now known as *Toad Hall*. It has always been used as a hotel, bar and restaurant, and was constructed during 1914 by Samuel G. Augustine. Even before he built it, Augustine knew he would lease it to his commercial neighbor on Sixth Street, John C. Wagner, to create the "New Wagner Hotel", the only hotel in Racine that was run on the European model. We can track all this through the local newspapers, which carry the advertisements of Wagner and his successors, as well as many stories of John Wagner himself, because he was a noted sports enthusiast and organizer, friend of sporting and political notables, and a friendly host who was known for "eating at his own restaurant". Nonetheless, it is difficult to piece together the history of this building.

In the previous issue of *Preservation Racine News*, we looked at its predecessor on that site, a house built c.1839 by George Perkins. We tracked it through the reminiscences of his widow Melissa, then aged 82 and one of the last surviving pioneering residents of Racine. Oral history is rife with shifting stories, omissions, additions, and ambiguities. Melissa Perkins' memories suffered from all these. The next phase of the house's history relies instead on written primary source documentation and one might have hoped that the research would be less confusing. Unfortunately, the primary sources suffer instead from gaps and misprints, which leaves us little better off than before. Yet the story is just as lively.

December 31, 1942, an invitation to celebrate the New Year at the New Wagner Hotel and Bar on 611 Wisconsin Avenue. The hotel carried John C. Wagner's name until 1983, when Jim Buelow's son Ralph sold the business to Dan and Jean Traeger. It was then renamed to Gallagher and Teitelbaum's. Ralph had grown up in the hotel, sleeping in the room used by soon-to-be boxing heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey, a close friend of Wagner's who had once stayed at the hotel.

As in the first article, almost everything said here can be verified through a few major sources: (1) tax records in the Area Research Center at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, (2) the city directories on open-shelf in the Racine Public Library, (3) the Newspaper Archive, now subscription-only at $50 for six months, (4) the Sanborn fire insurance maps, which are online, (5) anything else you can find online. Ideally also (6), you should do a title search at the courthouse, but I have still not done this at the time of writing.

We followed the history of the building to 1851–2, when it was leased from Chester W. White by Senator James Doolittle, who had just arrived in Racine and was waiting for the sitting tenant on his own property to move out. We know also that the house was moved sometime afterwards to the site now occupied by Toad Hall at 611 Wisconsin Avenue, and that it was razed in January 1914. We even found a (rather blurry) photograph of the house taken by Eugene Leach just before it was razed. So, it remains to find out when and why it was moved, and what replaced it. The first gap in the record comes almost at once. As we saw, in 1903 Mrs. Perkins stated that she and her husband only lived in the house for about two

years, which takes us up to about 1841 or 1842. Eugene Leach discovered that Chester W. White had purchased the house in 1846, although he does not appear in the tax record until 1857, and earlier records suggest that others owned the building and its land before him. In 1842, Lucius Blake advertised his carpentry and joinery business in the *Racine Advocate*, his advertisement stating that he was "on the corner of Wisconsin and Sixth streets, opposite the Advocate Office" (Blake's office survives on the northwest corner). Just a year later, on August 9, 1843, the *Advocate* published an advertisement by realtor Roswell Morris, offering a large part of block 33 in three sections. These included lots 1 and 2 on Main and Sixth Streets, then a large building known as the Waverly House and suitable for a tavern or boarding house in the middle section, and finally a "large two-story dwelling now occupied as a dwelling and a printing office". This lot included the southeast corner of Sixth Street and Wisconsin [Avenue] and ran and southwards for about a quarter of a block and must, therefore, have been the Perkins house, whether it was actually on that southeast corner (as Melissa Perkins had said) or nearer the middle of the plot (as Alex Hood told Eugene Leach in 1913). Apparently, also, it was the first office of the *Racine Advocate* itself.

The earliest surviving tax record year is 1849, and at that date Isaac Gates owned the northern half of the block from Wisconsin Avenue to Main Street, so it seems possible that it was he who purchased properties offered by Roswell Morris in 1843. The next surviving tax record is for 1857, when the property was owned by Chester W. White. On May 20, 1857, realtors Sherwood and Rowe advertised a brick house and the whole northern half of lot 9. The brick house would have been the Waverly, and there is no mention of any house elsewhere on the lot. So the Perkins house may have already been moved. Apparently, there was no buyer for the lot itself because Mr. White continued to own it through 1861. However, he evidently put a new store on the corner immediately, as grocer William J. Williams is listed there in the city directory for 1858, while the same directory shows Thurston and Lucena Scribner living on "Wisconsin [Avenue] near Seventh Street", which is land that was still owned by Chester White. So, he appears to have moved the Perkins house to another part of his own property and leased it out for rent to free up the desirable corner for commercial use. When no one bought the lot, he built a new leasable store there himself. The Scribners only remained on Wisconsin [Avenue] for a year, but they bear out Melissa Perkins' statement and also pin down the relocation date. The directory for the following year has them at a different address, and the new tenant on Wisconsin [Avenue] is Orrin Barker, liquor dealer.

In 1862 Mr. and Mrs. Alvin R. Burdick were living on the southwest corner above the store of George Bull, another grocer. From 1865, Mrs. Alvin R. Burdick was running her millinery business from the Perkins house, and she paid the taxes on it from 1867 through 1870. She and her husband lived there until they sold the property to William W. Vaughan, who was by this time running the grocer's shop on the southeast corner (Jones and Vaughan) and also owned the neighboring property where the Waverly house still stood at the corner of Monument Square. The southeast corner plot and grocery shop was acquired by Hugh Hughes in 1870, who ran the shop with his brother Robert for a while. Robert then decided to focus on the liquor business and in 1875 is seen in the city directory running part of the Perkins house at 611 as a saloon while widow Catherine Bowland ran the rest of it as a boarding house. It continued for another year as a saloon under Conrad Kempel and then seems to have stood empty for a while.

William Vaughan died in 1879, and a pencil note in the tax record for that year states that his widow Elizabeth was the sister of Samuel G. Augustine. Samuel G. Augustine gained immediate ownership of William Vaughan's property on Sixth Street (now numbered 221) and rebuilt it for his furniture store in 1881 (the commemorative cartouche is still there in the gable). He then acquired the Perkins house from his sister Mrs. Elizabeth Vaughan the same year and used it as a second outlet and later as storage space.

Meanwhile, John C. Wagner had been building himself a sterling reputation as a restaurateur and hotelier. By 1900, this was well established. He had run several hotels, and from 1888 his own "European" hotel-restaurant, the Wagner House, at 416–418 Main Street, which, in due course, was very popularly and capably run by his ex-clerk and brother-in-law Fred Derrick(s), who eventually came to own it and continued to run it under the existing name. Wagner then opened a new (also European) Buffet Room and Palm Gardens hotel at 306–308 Main Street in 1899. Unfortunately, the police-chief disapproved of Sunday music (which was legal) and so felt forced to arrest Wagner for selling liquor on Sunday (which was not). Although the jury found him not guilty, John Wagner closed his Palm Gardens, gathered up his wife and children, and left town forthwith.

Perhaps they all missed Racine. At all events, they returned in 1900 and with great fanfare opened a new hostelry in "the old Engel Brothers grocery store (217 Sixth Street, next door to S. G. Augustine at 221), which was fitted up "Metropolitan style". On December 22, 1900, he launched the business by "entertaining eminent persons royally" at his new premises. Interestingly, although he remained at this location for more than ten years, the business was never named. The city directories simply show it as "saloon" or "restaurant", or both. The original "Wagner House" on Main Street continued under that name until 1902, when Peter Nelson (who had trained there under Wagner and Derricks) re-opened it to great acclaim as "418".

The relationship between Wagner and his neighbor Samuel Augustine must have been good, because fourteen years later, Augustine decided to tear down the old Perkins house and replace it with something new. Clearly the two men had been in close consultation over this because the *Racine Journal News* announced on January 10, 1914, that the $18,000 new premises would be of brick with a restaurant on the ground floor and bedrooms and parlors upstairs, the whole to be run as a "European type" hotel by John C. Wagner. On October 26 that year, the New Hotel Wagner opened at 611 Wisconsin Avenue to be run in

December 18, 1915. The Journal Times published this photo of Sixth Street with its new "clustered Corinthian streetlights". John Wagner's saloon, restaurant, café, sample-room at 217 Sixth Street is the building with arched windows on the left. Off picture to the left would have been the Waverley Lunch.

connection with Wagner's still unnamed café at 217 Sixth Street. It was fire-proof, trimmed and furnished with golden oak, had twenty rooms, bathrooms, a dining room and a ground floor office. It was, the journalist informed his readers, the only hotel in Racine conducted on the European plan. Now that the New Hotel Wagner was open, the saloon/restaurant/café at 217 Sixth Street was finally named. It was the Hotel Wagner Saloon, and it was run by John C. Wagner, Jr.

Bottle opener and bar token for the Hotel Wagner 611 Wisconsin Avenue opened December 14, 1914. From the collection of Jim Mercier.

Every Christmas season, John Wagner put on a special event and catering at 611 Wisconsin. One particularly enjoyable event appears to have accompanied the acquisition of a new grand piano from a fellow business in the Badger Building on Main Street, just off Monument Square. Wagner was proud to announce that it would be played over the season by the "well-known Ethel DeVoll" (of whom nothing more is known!).

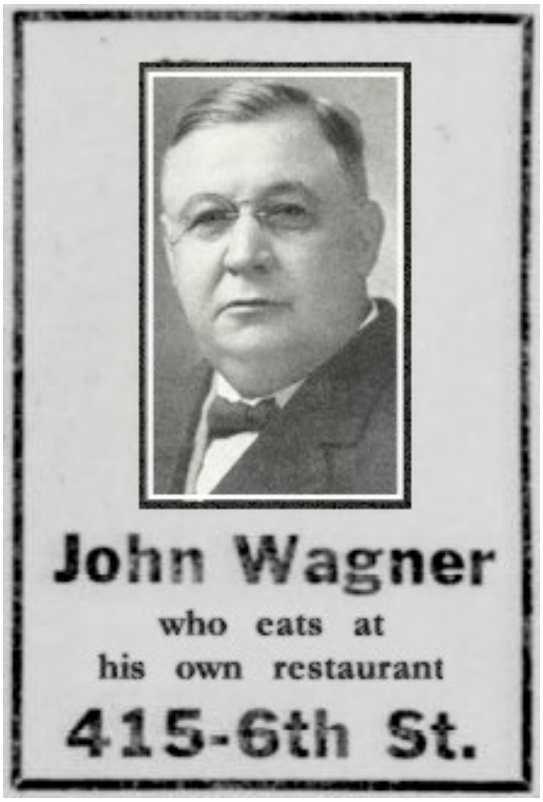
On the 12th Day of Christmas, 1923, a new grand piano was installed at the Hotel Wagner, 611 Wisconsin Avenue, for the pleasure of the guests.

These were the glory-years of the building. Not only was John C. Wagner an ardent practitioner of the European style of running a hotel, he was also a sports enthusiast and event organizer. Since it was impossible for prize fights to be held in Chicago, he organized for them to be held in Racine and Kenosha and many sporting personalities came to stay in his hotel. Future heavy-weight boxing champion Jack Dempsey, for example, is said to have considered Wagner one of his closest friends and is known to have stayed at the hotel in 1918. On top of all that, Wagner was a well-connected politician. As an erstwhile sheriff of Racine, past representative in the Wisconsin Assembly and recent alderman for Ward 1, Wagner was often consulted on political matters, and his restaurant was widely patronized for the sporting and political celebrities that might be found there – and, of course, for the excellent cuisine and service. Wagner is often reported launching sporting events or entertaining "notables" at his hotel-restaurant, and his obit in 1937 states that he was famous as *the man who ate in his own place*.

When the Hotel Wagner and its Sixth Street restaurant were acquired by Harry Chamberlin and Anton Kratochvil (former chef of Waverley Lunch at 207 Sixth Street, just next door to the east of the original Waverly house), Wagner lost no time in opening The Beef Steak Inn with Bob Angel at 1414 Owen Avenue, and when Leo Brennan opened his Sandwich Store at 415 Sixth Street, Wagner, now in his seventies, quickly joined that operation too. The Sandwich Store was in the old Rickeman grocery building (whose cartouche may still be seen in the gable), and this made the venture especially meaningful for Wagner because, as he explained to the *Racine Journal Times* on August 3, 1933, this was where he had been employed as a clerk for George Rickeman, Sr, before he went into business for himself as a restaurateur.

Meanwhile, the New Hotel Wagner at 611 Wisconsin Avenue was still in business under a series of new owners and continued to be famous for its excellent menus. Its name was changed to Gallagher and Teitelbaum's in 1983 by its new owners Dan and Jean Traeger, to Shillings English Pub in 1997 by more new owners Jim and Shannon Curtin, evolved to Shillings' Irish Pub soon afterwards, and finally became Toad Hall in 2010, when it was being run by Cory Szaryc and Jaimie Utley. It is now owned, still under that name, by Eric and Michelle Greskoviak. Its hotel rooms still exist, and although it has been much remodeled inside it retains a feeling of vintage hospitality. And its various owners, including its current ones, have all maintained its reputation as an excellent place to eat. John Wagner, who ate at his own restaurants, would have been pleased.

Pippin Michelli



John Wagner's last restaurant was at 415 Sixth Street, built in 1883 for George Rickeman, grocer, where Wagner clerked before he went into business for himself. The premises now house The Cobblestone Art and Frame store.

611 Wisconsin Avenue as it was just before it became Toad Hall in 2010.

It was clearly built to harmonize with the slightly older building next door.

The entryway to the left of the awning leads into what used to be John Wagner's office.

The street level was always a saloon and/or restaurant, and it connect with back of the sandwich shop at 217 Sixth Street.

There were 16 guest rooms with plumbing and several bathrooms.

From the President

The beginning of a new year brings with it a fresh start and new opportunities for us to promote preservation efforts through participation in Preservation Racine. I am inviting members to make a New Year's Resolution to get involved in some area of the organization and make a difference. Here are some ways you can help:

- If you are one of those organizational guru-types, consider helping in the Archives.
- If you enjoy investigating things, you could conduct research on a historic building.
- If you are a people-person, we could use additional greeters and assistants at events.
- If you enjoy writing, perhaps you would consider writing articles for the newsletter.
- If you are a leader, you could help plan and coordinate the annual Tour of Historic Places.
- If you are a strategic planner and are results-driven, consider service on the Board.
- If you like marketing and publicity, we could use a good person to take hold of social media and community outreach.
- If you are a person who enjoys seeing organizational growth, you could help with membership.

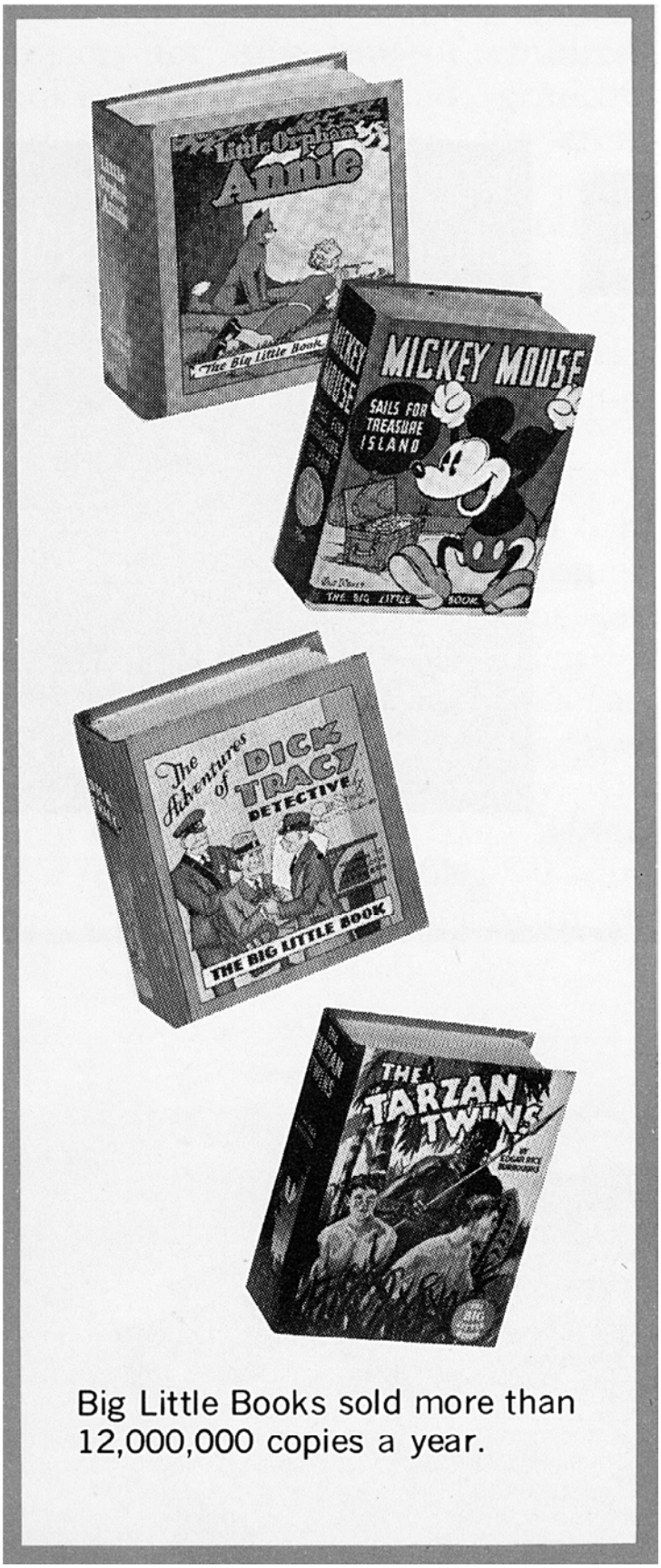
The organization's annual Tour of Historic Places has been the organization's signature event since it first appeared over 40 years ago. The event not only showcases historic properties, it also conveys to the public remarkable tales of preservation, tells stories about families who have lived inside the homes, and inspires aspiring preservationists. It cannot be overstated that the tour is the main fundraiser for the organization. We need people to lead and help coordinate the 2019 Tour.

To ensure the sustainability of Preservation Racine, I am asking for the assistance from every member of Preservation Racine; from all preservationists; from citizens who own older homes and buildings; from historians; from researchers; from persons with publicity, marketing and social media backgrounds; from grant writers; from all those non-members who may be interested in becoming members. I encourage everybody to get passionate about our county's history and promote the preservation of our heritage by supporting Preservation Racine.

Please volunteer today by emailing me at stevenrogstad@yahoo.com. I would welcome an opportunity to speak with you!

Have a great holiday season!

Steven K. Rogstad
President



Whitman Publishing

In the Fall 2018 issue of Preservation Racine News, we wrote about the establishment of Whitman Publishing Company in Racine, Wisconsin; their flourishing growth, leadership in the newest printing technology, diverse product lines, innovative sales approaches and lucrative partnerships with influential entertainment entities. The Company continued to grow and innovate after the death of its founder, E. H. Wadewitz, in 1955.

In the succeeding years the Whitman Publishing Company became the major subsidiary of Western Printing and Lithography Company. With their philosophy of in-store service and direct sales to their customers, the sales personnel expanded to 200 salesmen supported by approximately 40 people employed to sustain their needs. According to the Golden Anniversary, January 1966 edition of *The Westerner*, "In 1956, Whitman completely revised its Order and Billing Department and installed modern computer equipment to help in expediting, shipping and billing of its orders … the company also instituted a new pricing concept to include prepaid freight on all of its merchandise and made possible the price marking of all items at the same cost to retailers nationwide … which gives customers automatic re-order and stock control through Whitman computers and salesmen." By this time, sales had reached in excess of 200,000,000 books and games annually. "In 1961, an entire new Whitman shipping center was established in Racine with more than 1⅓ miles of powered conveyor equipment and a complex of delivery equipment which permits the loading of as many as 16 trailer trucks and six railroad freight cars at one time." Always looking to expand their product line, a new line of color crayons was being produced to complement coloring book sales and a new line of playing cards was being produced with "Diamond Coat" finish (to make cards easier to shuffle and deal) and "Gold-plate" edging (to reduce soil and wear on the edges). At one time Western was producing as many as 90,000 decks of cards per day to meet Whitman sales demands. Early in Whitman Publishing's history, the idea of licensing and merchandising products featuring famous names was cultivated, beginning with newspaper comics with titles of Dick Tracy and Little Orphan Annie to the 1932 first agreement with Walt Disney Productions to be their authorized manufacturer. Whitman developed many and varied relationships in the entertainment industry, which enabled them to produce books, games, puzzles, paper dolls and coloring books inspired by TV properties, live personalities and children's favorites developed in house by Whitman.

Hundreds of free-lance artists and writers, usually hired through an agency and occasionally independently, were the creative source for Whitman products. It could take as long as one year to produce a single book from start to finish. Manuscripts were received; in house editors followed a process including reviewing content, typeface and artwork to the end product. If the story was to include a licensed or authorized character, the story was presented to the licensor for approval.

In 1966 Whitman Publishing occupied over 2,000,000 square feet of facilities in buildings known as Plants No. 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 located on Water and Marquette Streets. Approximately 1,600 different items were in inventory at all times. Western was the largest manufacturer of children's books, largest producer and distributor of children's games made from paper and also comic books. In these modern, well-equipped buildings, design work, manufacturing, order processing and shipping took place. According to Wikipedia "In 1970, Western's sales reached $171.5 million but net profit fell to $3.9 million caused by the acquisition of a computerized typesetting facility and coincidentally an eleven-week strike. As a result, the Hannibal plant was closed and the number of employees was reduced by 1,500 in 1974." In 1979 Mattel, Inc. purchased Western Printing for $120.8 million in a cash stock deal. In December 1983 Mattel, Inc. sold Western to Richard A. Bernstein, a New York City real-estate investor for $75 million, plus certain liabilities. By 1997 Western was absorbed into Golden Books Publishing under the supervision of Richard E. Snyder, an ex-Simon & Schuster executive. The company closed on August 16, 2001.

Stars of the Whitman Line in 1966 included:

Alice in Wonderland*	Disneyland	Man from U.N.C.L.E.	Savage Sam*
Andy Panda	Donald Duck	Mickey Mouse	Secret Squirrel
Annette	Dr. Kildare	Midge	Skipper
Atom Ant	Patty Duke	Hayley Mills	Skooter
Babes in *Toyland**	*Dale Evans*	*Milton the Monster*	*Smokey the Bear*
Baby First Step	*The Flintstones*	*Mister Magoo*	*Snow White and the*
Lucille Ball	*Flipper*	*The Munsters*	*Seven Dwarfs**
*Bambi**	*Funny Company*	*My Favorite Martian*	*Stingray*
Bamm-Bamm	*Fury*	*Old Yeller**	*Superman*
Barbie and Ken	*G I Joe*	*Pebbles*	*Swamp Fox**
Batman	*Gilligan's* Island	Pepper	Sword in the Stone*
Beverly Hillbillies	Goofy	Peter Pan*	Tommy
Big Valley	Heidi P.C. Dolls	Peter Potamus	Tarzan
Bonanza	Hoppity Hooper	Petticoat Junction	Tennessee Tuxedo
Daniel Boone	Huckleberry Hound	Pinocchio*	Three Stooges
Bozo the Clown	I Spy	Pluto	Tiny Chatty Twins
Bugs Bunny	The Jetsons	Mary Poppins*	Tom and Jerry
Chatty Baby	Lady and the Tramp*	Porky Pig	Top Cat
Chatty Cathy	Lassie	Jonny Quest	Tweety & Sylvester
Chilly Willy	Laurel and Hardy	Quick Draw McGraw	Underdog
The Chipmunks	Lennon Sisters	Raggedy Ann & Andy	Winnie-the-Pooh*
Cinderella*	Linus the Lionhearted	Rocky and Bullwinkle	Wishniks
Combat!	Little Lulu and Tubby	Roy Rogers	Woody Woodpecker
Davey Crockett*	Magilla Gorilla	Ruff and Reddy	Yogi Bear
			Zorro*

* *Walt Disney film characters*

The parent company of Whitman Publishing, Western Printing Company, Inc., left a significant architectural heritage in Racine. Western Printing purchased the B. D. Eisendrath Tanning Company buildings and property in March of 1967 for an undisclosed amount of money. The company's principal interest was for the acquisition of the building and land to the north of the Sixth Street viaduct, adjacent to Western's newly remodeled Plant No. 6 on Marquette Street. This parcel included a three-story brick

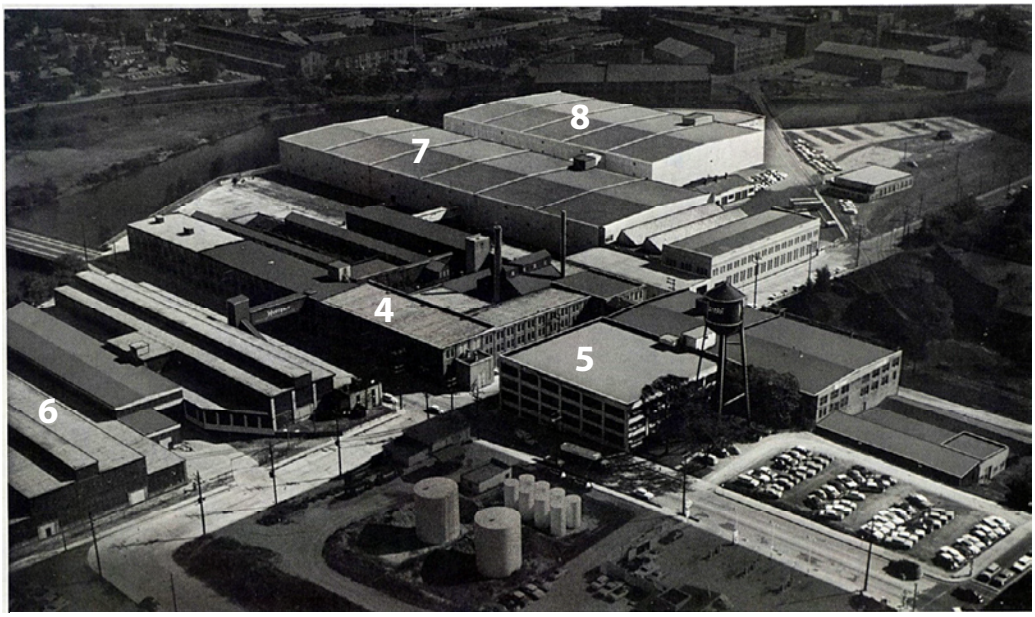
and concrete block building of 33,441 square feet formerly used by Eisendrath for warehouse and shipping purposes, as well as a considerable amount of land adjacent to that facility. The above-mentioned building eventually became the Data Center for Western. This parcel comprised almost two acres and parking for an estimated 157 automobiles. That building was last used as a church. Currently plans are developing for the reuse of the north building for housing.

The purchase included the three-story brick building of 13,200 square feet at the corner of Sixth and Racine Streets. Some buildings along the river on the south side of the bridge were razed. The remaining buildings were sold.

The buildings on the east and west sides of Marquette Street, intersecting with Water Street were originally J. I. Case Plow Works buildings. Eventually those buildings were sold to Massey-Harris Company for the production of tractors and farm implements. The Azarian Family razed some of the J. I. Case Plow Works warehouses to develop their marina. The two huge wooden warehouses to the east were originally J. I. Case Threshing Machine buildings. When Whitman Publishing occupied all of these buildings, they were extensively remodeled, new floors were installed to support the presses and other machinery, the buildings were made to look modern and state of the art. In 1978 Western sold Plants No. 7 and 8 to private investors. They then leased them back until the mid to late 1990s. All of the buildings on Marquette and Water Streets are currently being demolished for future development.

Plant No. 4 was the first Whitman Distribution Center.
Plant No. 5 was initially rented and then purchased from Massey-Harris Company. This building was used for the production of games and puzzles.
Plant No. 6 located on the west side of Marquette Street was purchased from Massey-Harris Company in 1958. Originally a warehouse, this building was later used to produce coloring books.

J. I. Case Threshing Machine Company looking north on Stannard Street in 1916.This would become the future site of Western Printing and Lithography Company, parent company of Whitman Publishing. The building on the left would become plant 7, and the building on the right plant 8.



Western Printing plants 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8, devoted mainly to the manufacture, warehousing and shipment of Whitman products. Photo published in the January 1966 issue of The Westerner celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Whitman Publishing.

Plants No. 7 and 8 were purchased from J. I. Case Company in 1961. Plant No. 7 became the second Distribution Center. Plant No. 8 was used solely for warehouse needs.

The Whitman Publishing name lives on. In 1932 the company hired a commercial artist named Richard S. Yeoman, who was interested in coins and coin collecting: in 1938 Whitman Publishing was producing coin boards. Yeoman promoted the coin collecting hobby by improving the coin cards. In 1942 the company produced its first coin price guide. Today Whitman Publishing is headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, producing coin folders, postage stamp and coin albums and books.

Thank you to Clem Krivich – former Western Printing employee, long time Preservation Racine member, contributor to our archive and passionate collector of everything Western Printing Company – for access to primary source documents and advice for this article.

Vivian Merlo

A Heritage Building

The apartment building at 504 Park Avenue has a unique architectural style and an interesting history. It was the first parsonage of First Methodist Episcopal Church and likely home of the inventor of the automobile!

The building was a side-by-side double house built in 1846 on Chippewa Street, now Park Avenue, in the Federal style. This style was popular from 1800 to the 1840s, especially on the East coast, but relatively rare in Wisconsin. It is considered to be the only surviving example of the Federal style in the city of Racine. Typically, this style is a simple square or rectangular box, two or three stories high, and two or three rooms deep. Federal style design elements are usually understated and often confined to a portico or entry, and emphasize symmetry. Other features are side-gabled or hipped roofs capped with a balustrade; multiple, tall, end-walled chimneys; and windows that are large, double-hung and dramatically arranged in strict horizontal and vertical symmetry. Often the third floor windows are smaller, and decorative moldings like dentils are used to emphasize the cornices.

Alterations to the building have resulted in lost detail, but it retains considerable architectural integrity. The building once had five chimneys, but only the central shaft remains. The four that rose from the two end-walls have been lost. Window and door symmetry is dramatic, but smaller replacement windows and glass block have been installed and the smaller top range have been boarded up. Balustrades and thin columns remain on only one of the porches; all balustrades are lost on stair railings and the porch roofs. Decorative garlands on the porch roofs are gone as well. Attractive dentil molding at cornices has been retained, as well as the top and side lights around the front doors.

Daniel Slauson, a Racine pioneer, farmer, lumberman and "father of the Methodist Church in Racine" came to Racine with William Bull in 1837. He was also known as a local preacher; Methodist ministers at that time stayed at a church for a relatively short time and were circuit riders. They were often absent and preaching duties would fall to local men of the church. Slauson purchased a farm and brought his family to Racine in 1838. In 1842 he bought Lots 1 and 2 of Block 23 of the Original Plat from Jacob Barker, who had recently purchased it from Lorenzo Janes.

504–506 Park Avenue yesterday and today

The double house was built on this land in 1846. At this time Slauson was also instrumental in building the first Methodist Episcopal church building on Pearl Street, later 520 College Avenue (Original Plat Block 24, Lot 6) one block east of the double house. He was a founding member, steward, chairman of the board of trustees, half of the building committee, and personally took a hand in hewing the oak timbers from near the Rapids for the frame, floor and roof beams. In April of 1863 he gifted the south half of his building (S. ½ Lot 1 and 3 feet of Lot 2) to First Methodist Episcopal Church. It was called the Slauson Parsonage until it was sold in 1892 when the new parsonage at 932 Lake Avenue was occupied.

Although he retained ownership of the north side of the building it is unlikely Slauson ever lived there, as his homestead was on what is now Washington Avenue, which is where his daughter Mary and her husband, Slauson's business partner, George Murray, would build the Italianate mansion we know today as Murray Mansion (Preservation Racine Tour of Historic Places 2017). In 1871 the congregation built a brick building at Main and Eighth Streets, today known as First United Methodist Church (Preservation Racine Tour of Historic Places 2011).

Reverend James W. Carhart, D.D. came to Racine and the new church building in October 1871 and stayed until October 1874. It is likely that he lived in the Slauson Parsonage, although the 1872-73 city directory lists him at 4 Superior Street. Dr. Carhart was an exceptionally good preacher, tall, with a fine appearance.

He had the pulpit removed during his tenure as he preached entirely without notes. His pastorate was very successful, but he

(*continued on page 11*)

Landmarks Preservation Commission Matters

The landmarks Commission meets once a month and functions as an advisory committee to the City of Racine when issues arise that may affect the preservation or removal of significant monuments. It is formed of citizens of Racine, including one practicing architect, one historian (preferably with architectural understanding), one alderman, one realtor, and three other citizens with a known interest in landmarks preservation. The meetings are attended by the assistant director of the Planning Department as a liaison with the City. Visitors to these public meetings may request permission to speak but may not vote.

At the most recent meeting, the commission reviewed a plan to convert the Gold Medal Furniture Company industrial building (1701 Packard Avenue) into a residential development. A conversion like this requires that the character of the existing fabric be maintained and that windows be repaired rather than replaced. Additions must be in character, and historic detail (such as the massive sliding doors and a section of rail track) left in place. As the plan was examined, we found that several of these aspects were not made specific, that the retention or replacement of the historic windows was left ambiguous, and that the proposed new material for the internal alleyway was not clear. The commission therefore determined that more information was needed before we could decide on its appropriateness as requested.

The commission also reviewed the final phase draft of the city-wide Heritage Preservation Plan, which has been researched and prepared for over a year by the Lakota Group, specialists in working with cities on projects of this kind. The plan is for incorporation into the 2035 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Racine and will provide future guidelines for historic preservation in the city. It is hoped to have the proposal adopted by the Plan Commission in December. Having surveyed the historic heritage and held public meetings on the proposed plan, the Lakota Group proposes to expand the recognized heritage by including post WW II areas and those of ethnic interest that were not previously considered. They urge that these areas be continually reviewed and updated. The plan suggests a stronger role for the commission and training for its members; it proposes proactive online education initiatives to foster a preservation ethic locally; and enhanced collaboration with neighborhood and preservation groups (notably Preservation Racine and the Racine Heritage Museum).

Pippin Michelli

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Preservation Racine Needs You!

Preservation Racine's tour of historic places is scheduled for September 29, 2019. Several house owners have already graciously agreed in principle to put their buildings on the tour. A team of enthusiastic volunteers are ready and waiting to support our new Co-Chairmen. Now all we need are those new Co-Chairmen! One of them might be you, knowing that you have so much support and experience waiting to help.

Please consider helping to lead our team this year! To volunteer or find out more, contact Steven Rogstad, President, at **(262) 412 2511**, or email him at **StevenRogstad@yahoo.com.** Why not dragoon your best friend to help you!

Signed: *The Team*

Tribute Made to Robert Hartmann

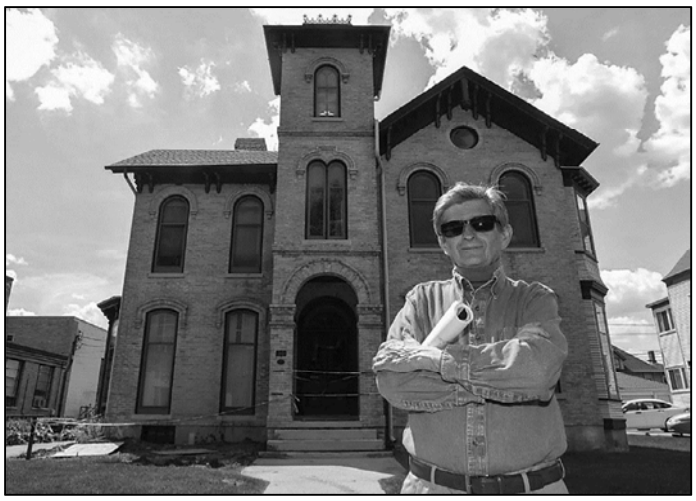
Longtime member Bob Hartmann's childhood interest in Frank Lloyd Wright was nurtured by his father and continues until today. Hartmann's academic degrees were in industrial design and environmental design and he taught landscape architecture at UW-Madison before coming to Racine where he has provided architectural, industrial and graphic design services for nearly 44 years.

In the 1960s while a graduate student at UW-Madison he frequently drove to Spring Green where he photographed in detail the progress of the Wright-designed Spring Green restaurant, currently named The Frank Lloyd Wright Visitor Center where the Riverview Terrace Café is now located. Twenty photos that Hartmann took 50 years ago of Wright's Spring Green restaurant have been on permanent display in that building since May 2017. Hartmann has currently an additional 40 "Vintage Photographs" of Wright and Wright apprentice work taken during this same time period on display at the Wyoming Valley School Cultural Arts Center.

On October 28 Hartmann was honored during an open house at the Wyoming Valley School Cultural Arts Center to which he has donated that oeuvre. The Wyoming Valley School, built as a two room country school in Wyoming Township, Wisconsin was designed free of charge by Wright who also contributed part of the property and helped to financially support its construction costs in 1956.

Hartmann may be considered somewhat of an architectural archaeologist as evidenced by his ability to analyze and interpret concept sketches and measured drawings that Wright prepared for two commissions on Delavan Lake. Those building are the unrealized Wallis scheme #1 cottage for Henry Wallis and the Fred B. Jones estate, Penwern. Consulted by Mark Hertzberg who was doing research for a soon to be published book on the Jones estate, Hartmann scrutinized Wright's archival drawings and found intertwined comparisons and contrasting details which helped to unravel the evolution of those two important Wright designs. More may be learned of this in Hertzberg's book *Frank Lloyd Wright's Penwern, A Summer Estate*, available June 2019.

Barbara S. Walter



Bob Hartmann stands in front of the Blake House, Racine, holding his reconstructed design for the front porch. Photograph Gregory Shaver for the Journal Times, July 2, 2016

Blake House Update

Preservation Racine is privileged to own the Italianate Villa style house at 936 Main Street which houses our office and archives. It was built for George and Roxilana Bull in 1868 and was purchased just a few years later in 1873 by Lucius and Caroline Blake, whose family name has remained attached to the house. Lucius Blake was involved in a wide variety of businesses and played an important role in helping to industrialize Racine. The Blake family occupied the house until 1926, when it was sold and became a boarding house and later a five-plex apartment. In 1952 the Beth Israel Sinai congregation next door bought the property, mainly for the parking lot next to it, and by 1976, they considered razing the old building.

Due to the architectural and cultural significance of the house, however, a coalition of four civic groups (Preservation Racine, the Junior League of Racine, Racine County Historical Society, and Racine Urban Aesthetics) formed a nonprofit corporation, Blake House Restoration, Inc., to lease and preserve the building. As work began on it, the Blake House was mentioned in 1977 as a key building of significance in the newly-designated Southside Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places. Over the next decades, thousands of hours of volunteer work and donations of materials and labor improved the exterior and interior, and Preservation Racine purchased the building in 2005. Restoration work has continued over the years, along with routine upkeep and emergency repairs.

The dilapidated back porch and the nonoriginal front porch were both removed in 1977. The rear porch was replaced the following year, thanks to a generous grant from the Johnson Wax Fund (photo opposite page), but the front porch remained absent until its recent re-creation in 2016. Now the back porch, which is exposed to the elements, especially the noonday and afternoon sun, needs extensive repair or replacement of the trim, columns, flooring, skirting, and even some of the floor joists. The Blake House Committee has received an estimate of $10,000 from the contractor who redid the front porch. Some other contractors have replied that they are not even interested, as the nonstandard custom work requires expertise beyond their tools and abilities.

Because of the private apartments there, the Blake House is not normally open to the public, but parts of it have sometimes been open during our Tour of Historic Places, and most recently during the August Starving Artists Fair. Upstairs there are three occupied apartments; downstairs on one side are Preservation Racine's office and archives, while the other side is an office space that is vacant and currently for rent to the right tenant. The rental income from the Blake House has made the building essentially self-supporting, except for the costs of major projects and emergencies.

Additional sources of funding are now being investigated for the back porch repair. Jen Davel, the Preservation Architect from the Wisconsin Historical Society who spoke at our program ("Past, Present, Future: Preserving Racine's Historic Buildings") at the Rondelle Theater on November 5, mentioned that although Preservation Racine, as a nonprofit organization, does not pay income taxes, the porch project might still qualify for historic tax credits. The credits could then be sold for perhaps 85 cents on the dollar (e.g. for a $1000 tax credit, we might get $850). We could also apply for grants from several sources.

The Blake House Committee and several individuals are continuing to explore the possibilities. Stay tuned for updates and hopefully a back porch restoration in the near future!

Janet Carter

had more than ministerial abilities. He was a physician and inventor with great mechanical ability. He would eventually move to San Antonio, Texas where he practiced medicine full-time. He gave up the cloth, but remained a Methodist, active in church work, teaching Sunday School, and occasionally preaching.

But in May 1873 his mechanical skills were in the forefront when he drove the horseless carriage he called "The Spark" onto the streets of Racine. He had designed the steam-powered vehicle and built it with the financial help of Daniel Slauson's son George. It was built in George's barn on Wisconsin Avenue, now a garage next to the Masonic Temple. The Spark had an upright boiler attached to two one-horsepower engines, each one powering a rear wheel. Top speed was only four miles per hour, and it was very noisy and roundly disliked by nearly everyone in the city. In fact, he was forbidden to use it on the streets after a valuable horse of J. I. Case was so frightened that it bolted and was killed in a runaway accident. Dr. Carhart did not pursue further development of the vehicle and it was eventually dismantled. But in 1908 he was invited to the Automobile Exposition in Paris, France. He attended and was hailed as "the father of the automobile."

Debbie Yale

The back porch of the Blake House is rotting at the floor and the base of the columns and needs to be replaced as soon as possible.

Century Buildings

On May 6, 2019 Preservation Racine will observe National Preservation Month when it hosts the thirty-second annual presentation of Century Building Awards. The Century Building committee is already looking for nominations for buildings that are at least 100 years old, well-maintained or restored, and located in the city or county of Racine.

If you are aware of a building that could be nominated, please call **Pippin Michelli at (262) 456- 7419**, or **Debbie Yale at (262) 639 5004**, Co-Chairmen of this event.

Mark your 2019 calendars for this unique and important event!

COMING UP

December Membership Meeting
Monday, December 3, 2018, 7:00 pm
Racine Yacht Club, 1 Barker Street, Racine
Christmas Potluck
Rochelle Pennington will present "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald"

No January Membership Meeting

February Membership Meeting
Monday, February 4, 2019, 7:00 pm
Gateway Technical College-Racine Campus
1001 Main Street (south), Racine
Pippin Michelli will present "How Research Can Be Fun"

March Membership Meeting
Monday, March 4, 2019, 7:00 pm
First Evangelical Lutheran Church
728 Villa Street, Racine
History and Tour of the Church

April Membership Meeting
April 1, 2019
To Be Announced

National Preservation Month
May 2019
Theme: This Place Matters

Century Building Certificate Awards
Monday, May 6, 2019, 6:30 pm
Great Hall at DeKoven Center
600 21st Street, Racine

Preservation Racine, Inc.
P.O. Box 383
Racine, WI 53401

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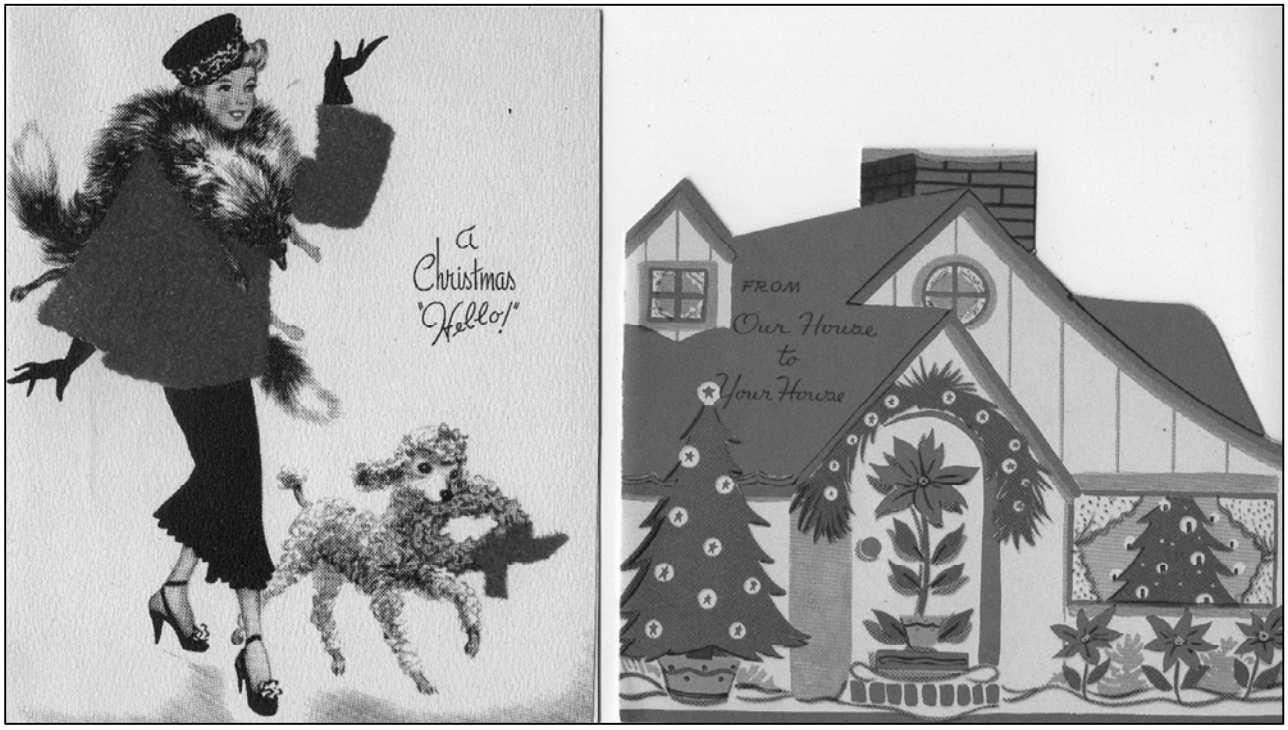

Whitman Publishing Christmas card images from the Roberta Fiene and Klem Krivich collection