

# Anna Jester's personal sketch of Collinsville as it was 100 years ago

In the papers of his aunt, Mrs. Jeanette Surber, now in Dirksen House Convalescent Home in Springfield, Ill., pharmacist James Ostle found an intensely personal history of Collinsville written long-hand by the late Mrs. Anna Jester, dated November 11, 1942.

In it, she tried to stretch her memory back to her childhood and youth and tell what Collinsville was like then:

**THIS IS** what I can recall of the city of Collinsville 65 years or more ago.

I sat down here and studied and planned and figured until I could write this past history for you of this city we all love.

First we will start at the east end of Main. Of course we never at that time had a street named or numbered.

Johnnie Marshall's parents. These are stores. Singletary's Store, John

Kuhlenbeck, Moritz Roedgers, Charlie Wilkins, Fred Metz, Kalbfleisch, John Chilton, Blum's Hardware, Gardner's, John Wilbert, Fisher's where Abe Mann is now, Gus Rodgers, Emmig's Dry Goods, John Winkler, Cy Roberts, Mike Weisenberg.

**NOW THE** drug stores.

Atwood Drugs, John Schoettle Drugs, Herman Groze Drugs, Oxner's Drugs.

Now come the baker

shops.

Berlein's Bakery, Bill McKeog Bakery he sold out to Chami Long and left for California 1880, Tom Kennedy Bakery.

Now comes the barber shops.

Barber Miller. Henry DaWalt. Old man Louis Banning across from the Catholic Church. The building is intact yet. Gus Gang by the side of Wilkins store, called Wilkins I remember.

**NOW COMES** the butcher shops.

Peter Switzer. Young Bieser worked for Pete there. Jim Mathews drove a wagon and peddled meat around the countryside. Jonathan Turner; he had his shop in the basement of his home on

Morrison Avenue.

Now comes the newspapers, although I have forgotten the names of the papers. Max Zucker; he handled books. Page and Angers had a printing press in the east side of where

## *Now comes the story of our calaboose*

Herman Groze had his drugs. Jim Peers had a news stand also, he handled school books and a small store.

Now comes the blacksmith shops. Tim Kane, I can see him yet with that old leather apron he wore. His shop here on the corner of Clay and Seminary.

John Wendler was here where Jack Francis lives now. Kalena's shop on Vandalia.

Now comes the doctors. Dr. J.L.R. Wadsworth, Dr. Powell, Dr. Merrell, Dr. H.L. Strong, Dr. Chas. Oatman, Dr. Brandemeal.

**NOW COMES** the hotels. The Berry House, Dan Steel, The Terry House, Beidler's Hotel, and Farmer's Home.

Now do you remember who was the first funeral that was held in the Presbyterian Church when it was new? Away back in the '80's; August Summer. August Summer was a farmer who had farms and land to let; in

the western part of this country, his castle was up here in the western part of the city. There is a boulevard named for him in this end of the city on the highest hill here.

Did you hear the name of the first doctor we had, not I; but in the early days his name was Doctor Gun when this place was a village so to speak.

**NOW COMES** the story of our calaboose. This building was a two room gray brick house, on the street behind Watcher's Saloon on what is now called Vandalia and a bell on the top. I am still for all these years asking, Why? the bell.

Now comes the harness shops.

Bent Willoughby, Oliver Lock, Korinek, Sr.

Have you forgotten the Look home that was moved from here where the Rodgers (Will Rogers) Theater now stands, it is down by the dress factory. Those big posts were on his house.

Now comes the cigar

stores.

Lawrence Klein, Billner's Cigars, his place was by the side of Kalbfleisch place. Then Meyer's Cigars where the Miner's Temple stands now, his wife made yeast cakes, I used to go for them for my mother.

Now we will name the saloons. This number I write here were all we had (there hain't no more) but don't

start counting now please, this stuff is very popular now days.

Dan Steel, Jim Cromwell, Sarah Hadfield (that was his name), Tom Walker, Tom Thomas, Joe Birka, Phil Wilbert, Vject or Watcher we called him, Tom Hicks, this one at the Depot, Henry Huffendick, and one on this same corner in the early days called Schlassar.