

Decatur County Historical Society



WEST MAIN STREET, circa 1939-40

A picture looking east up West Main Street shows the home of Carl and Mary Partin on the corner of Florida Avenue. The date is about 1939 or 1940. The car is a 1938 or 39 Chevrolet. The white building up the street is Townsend Chevrolet. The sidewalk is in front of the Dr. L. F. Hufstedler house. The small portion of a house on the left would be the G. C. Pollard home.

At the far end of the picture is the Sinclair Service Station but today the home of Tennessee Valley Ford.

MAIN STREET IN THE 1930's

By R. C. Stegall

HOMES ON WEST MAIN STREET, circa 1930's

The coming of the automobile age brought a new road to Parsons. In 1930-31 the road from Lexington was straightened and graveled across Decatur County and into middle Tennessee. In 1933-34 this road, state highway 20,¹ was concrete paved and crossed the Tennessee River on the new bridge at Perryville. This would be the only paved road in Decatur County until after WWII. Highway 20 and the Alvin C. York Bridge at Perryville helped end the almost fifty year history of the "Pea Vine" Railroad from Lexington to Perryville which ceased operations in October 1936. Inside the city the highway is Main Street.

Coming into Parsons from the west the new road crossed Bear Creek about 50 yards below the old Lexington to Perryville dirt road crossing. About the same distance down stream from the new bridge was the juncture of the Buckner Branch which flowed under the new road through a concrete culvert.

Entering Parsons On Highway 20 in the 1930's the first house on the left was Lee Stone's. It was an old log or partly log house on the north bank of Buckner Branch. His children attended school at Bear Creek. Mr. Stone operated a grist mill and blacksmith shop in Parsons. The Brook's family lived there after the Stone's family. The only names I remember were a boy we called "Stony" and a girl named Gracie Lee. This old house was gone after WWII. A new house built by George Jordan about 1950 stands near there now.

Next house, on the left, at top of the hill was Ezra and Georgia Jennings. Mr. Jennings was a rural mail carrier in the horse and buggy road days. He died in 1936. The house still stands there today (remodeled and rebuilt). A duplex built about the time WWII started stood on Mrs. Jennings property on the corner of what is today Jennings Avenue.

The next house on the left was Dr. L F. Hufstedler's. He was the only dentist in Decatur County and surrounding area for many years. That house, which stood on the east side of the Bible Hill road, was replaced several years ago by the Parsons Dairy Bar.

At the corner of Florida Avenue and West Main Street was a house occupied by G. C. Pollard. Mr. Pollard was a long time merchant in Parsons and at one time he and Hobart Goff sold Durant and Star Cars. The house later served as the Parsons office of Dr. Hubert Conger. This house has been replaced by Parsons Motor Parts.

Across Florida Avenue was the Arthur R. Evans house. Mr. Evans operated a steam powered saw mill on Buckner Branch on the Bible Hill Road north of Parsons. That house later became the home of Jess Ready. Today that house is gone and replaced by a parking lot for Lackey's Supermarket.

¹ Now U.S. Hwy 412

Starting back at the city limits, the first house on the right was Lucian Sykes. This house is today part of another house built later and the two are now joined as one building. Mr. Sykes was known in his day as a master carpenter.

Next was the Malcom Pratt house which is still standing today. Mr. Pratt was the first, or one of the first, toll-keepers for the Alvin C. York Memorial Bridge at Perryville.

A house that once stood opposite the Bible Hill road exit from West Main Street was the McIllwain house. John W. & Julia Bruce McIllwain came to Parsons after teaching in the Normal School at Holladay.² He was the first principal at Parsons University (Parsons High School).³ He also served as Trustee of Decatur County for three terms. (1910-1916). In later years the house was owned by Mrs. Ora Mays and grandson Tommy before it was torn down and replaced by a car lot and today is an empty lot. Two large trees remain there today.

The house on the west corner of Florida Avenue and West Main Street was that of Freeman Wilson. Back in the days when cotton was king Mr. Wilson operated one of the town's two cotton gins. That house has been replaced by a parking lot and business building.

On the east corner of Florida Avenue and West Main Street was the home of Mr. Carl Partin. Today it is part of the car lot of Townsend Chevrolet.

The last house on West Main was in the angle formed by the juncture of First Street and West Main. Virginia Avenue South would have been part of that juncture but was never completed between West Second and Main Street. This house faced east and was located on lots 10 & 11 of block 2 on the original city plat. That house was occupied by Moss & Ina Arnold. Moss was a sign painter and served as Decatur County's first historian. It was later the home of Ulys and Jewel Chumney. Shortly after WWII the house was removed and the property became part of Townsend Chevrolet.

Two other houses will be mentioned because of their proximity to West Main Street but were on a part of First Street that no longer exists. Directly behind the Carl Partin house on the northeast corner of First Street and Florida Avenue and facing First Street was the Walter Partin house. This was a Sears Roebuck mail order house. It was shipped to Parsons on the "Pea Vine" Railway in numbered pieces and assembled on the lot. Next door to Walter Partin was the Walter Medearis house. It also faced First Street. After the Medearis family moved to Lexington it became a rent house until both houses were removed and are now part of Townsend Chevrolet car lot and property. First Street east of Florida Avenue has been closed and is now part of the Townsend Chevrolet property.

These were the houses on West Main Street prior to the beginning of WWII.

² Johnny Conder, grandson of John W. & Julia Bruce McIllwain.

³ History of Decatur County Tennessee, Lillye Younger, page 367.

HOMES ON EAST MAIN STREET, circa 1930's

Beginning at Tennessee Avenue the first house was the home of Mrs. Olive Arnold. Her husband, N. J. "Newt" Arnold, who died in 1928, was an old time business man in Parsons. The two story building that was destroyed in a fire and explosion in 1956, was known as the "Newt" Arnold Stand. Following Mrs. Arnold's death in 1952 the house was replaced by an ESSO station and is now the location of Farmers Bank.

The second house was the home of Mr. Frank and Maud Arnold. Mr. Arnold was an old time rural mail carrier. Third house was that of James Connie and Annie Austin Long. Mr. Long was a long time bank employee. Both houses were replaced by non residential uses, i.e. Minnie Pearls Fried Chicken, Subway; neither in operation today.

A fourth house was located partially below street level at the corner of Georgia Avenue. Illey Spence and others lived there followed by The Van Cleave family during TVA days. This house is also gone.

The fifth house out East Main was the Elvington home located at the intersection of old 69 Highway, now Camden Road. In early automobile days the Elvington's sold gasoline using old manual gas pumps from a small building in front of their house. The house is gone and property later used as a service station and other uses.

Across 69 Highway was the home of Mr. Jack Odle. Mr. Odle operated the Parsons Telephone Company from a switchboard set up in his house. His son, Dave Odle and wife Sue, lived in the next house. Both houses have been replaced by a NAPA store. Today the telephone company is owned by TDS Telecom.

Others who lived on the north side of East Main past the Odle's were, Tom and Mae Warden, Raymond and Sophie Townsend, W. D. Malin, Connie and Lela Black.

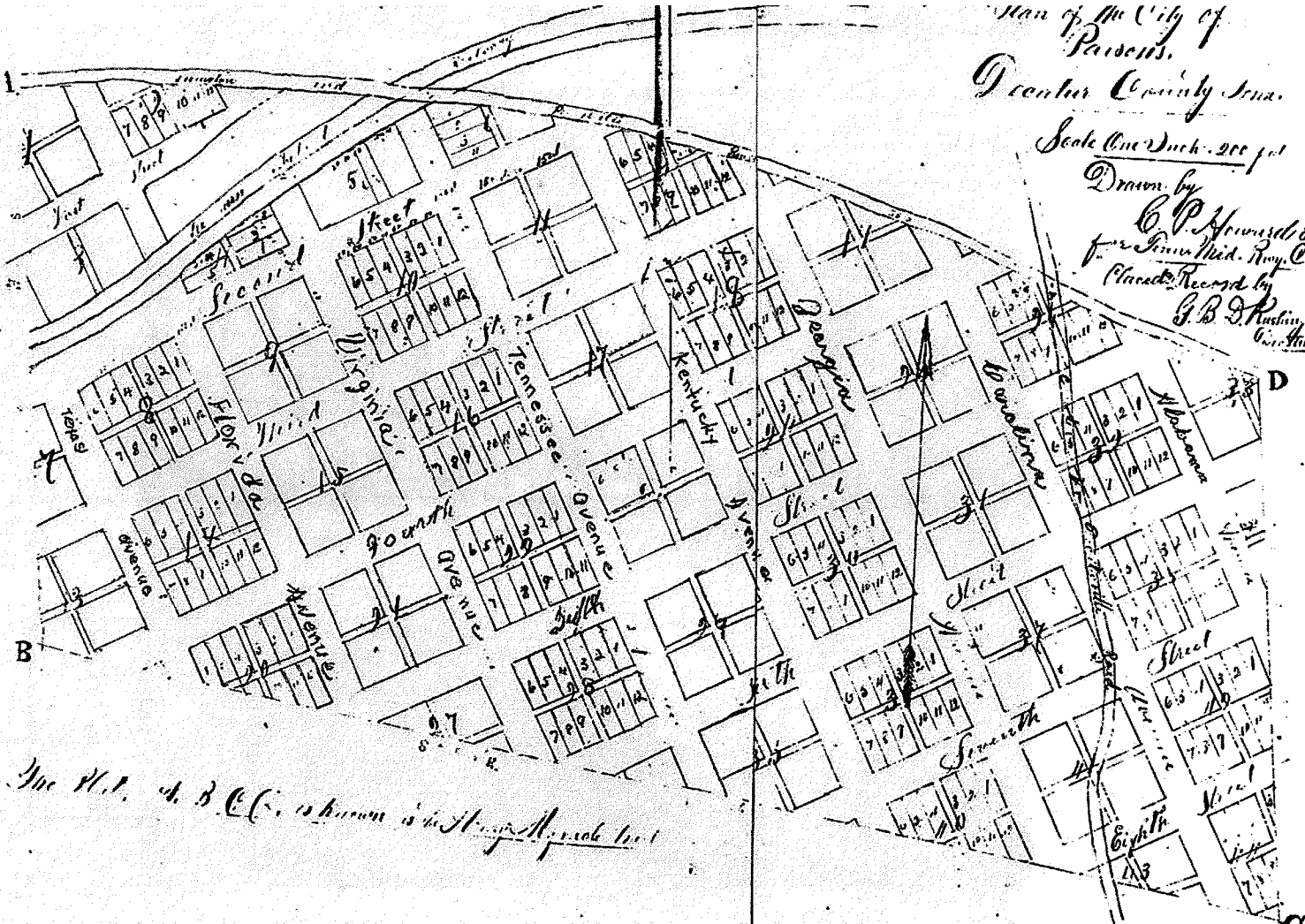
The first house on the south side of East Main was that of Gene and Eugenia Hawkins. This house backed up to the railroad cut. Mr. Hawkins was in charge of the Gulf Oil warehouse that was on a rail siding just east of his house. The old warehouse, though long ago abandoned by Gulf Oil, is still there today and has seen many uses through the past 75 years. The Hawkins house is still there but not used for several years.

The next house was the home of Fred and Grace Baker. Mr. Baker lived to be 101 years old and saw and lived much of the history of the "Pea Vine" railroad and Parsons. His story about how Salant and Salant came to build a factory in Parsons is a treasure. The Baker house is still there.

Plan of the City of
Pawson,
Deer Creek County Iowa.

Scale One Inch = 200 feet

Drawn by
C. P. Howard, Engr.
for Deer Creek County, Iowa.
Placed on Record by
G. B. D. K. [unclear]



The N.E. of B.C. is known as the [unclear] lot

The third house in this row was the home of Ray and Lucretta Jordan. The Jordan's operated the Tulane Hotel from 1926 to 1930 after it was purchased by Dr. L. F. Hufstedler. That house is still there

The last house was one where a Mrs. Buckner lived. I don't remember her name but she was living there in the early 1950's. The house, on top of the hill, is still there.

These are the houses on Main Street as I remember them in the 1930's. A run down of the businesses along Main Street in the 1930's will be the subject of a later newsletter.

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Decatur County Historical Society

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