

Happy Holidays!

The Lancaster Legend

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Newsletter of the Lancaster Historical Society

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Lake Street to Church Street: The Heart of "Main Street"

by William Harnack

On November 19, 1997, the Public Comment Meeting was held at Depew High School on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Broadway reconstruction project--the final stretch of the Environmental Impact Statement process leading up to choosing an alternative and proceeding with the project. The Friends of Broadway divided up the route and each member discussed his or her segment. These are the remarks I delivered that night, covering Lake Street to Church Street through Lancaster. The opinions expressed are those of the author.

What do you think of when you think of this stretch of Broadway from Lake Street to Church Street?

I think of my neighborhood (I live a couple hundred feet off Broadway on Church Street). I think of warm summer evenings, crossing Broadway with my wife and little girl to get an ice-cream cone at the ice-cream shop at the corner of Holland and Broadway. This incredible little Tudor-style building was built as a gas station during the Depression. It is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. There are three other structures also eligible for the National Register on this short block of Broadway: the Potter House, the Row House (the only example of this unique architectural style outside of Buffalo), and the Masonic Temple. This is one of the richest concentrations of National Register-eligible buildings in Western New York.



So this is one thing you think of--important historic buildings. What will be the impact of the alternatives proposed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on these buildings? The DEIS says there won't be any. I disagree. Let's look at one element of this--trucks. There's going to be more of them. You can argue the chicken-and-egg thing, but it is a fact that four lanes will bring more trucks going faster than ever. Dr. Batt, who lives on Broadway near the east village line has observed that, today, the trucks do not begin applying their brakes until about Court

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Street. And according to the DEIS, these trucks will be 5 to 6 feet closer to the National Register-eligible buildings. The foundations are already shaking, and the decibel rating will only go up. I'd like to quote from page VI-40 of the DEIS: "The most current ruling from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on the effects caused by the Build Alternatives on historic sites is detailed in the SHPO letter dated October 21, 1996 (included in Attached Appendix 1). In this letter the SHPO found that Alternatives 2 and 3 [four lanes] would have an Adverse Effect on the Section 4(f) structures, while Alternative 4 [three lanes] would have No Adverse Effect on historic resources." The DEIS does not adequately address this important ruling of SHPO, with which I would have to agree.

What else do you think of when you think of this block? Trees--a mature canopy of trees. When this community was very young, a man named Joseph Car-

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Museum Hours: Sundays, 2:00-5:00 pm
Town Historian: Sundays, 3:00-5:00 pm
Little Red Schoolhouse (Bowen at William):
Hours by Appointment

Sunday Program Series: Last Sunday of Each Month
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penter planted these trees up and down East Main Street (now Broadway) and all over the village. Much has already been said about the importance of these trees to this historic district and this community. I would just ask you to look carefully at the altered photos in the DEIS against the maps that show just which trees will be removed. One of the reasons these aerial shots don't look so bad is that they are not accurate; by the same document's maps, many of the supposedly remaining trees will not be there. And let's not kid ourselves, most of the mature trees that remain will suffer so much damage to their root systems that they will not survive. If you think any mature trees will remain if any of these widening options go through, think again.

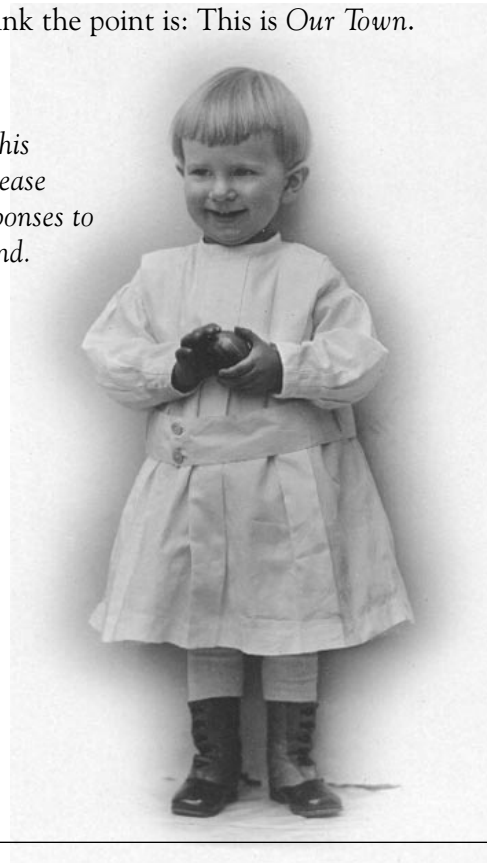
Finally, when you think of this part of Broadway, you think of residences--houses as historic as the National Register structures discussed earlier, but more important. Why? Because people live in them. At least *now* they do. If you think these beautiful houses will remain residential 5 to 10 years following the building of a four-lane urban arterial highway and the resultant changes in land use, think again.

I moved into this community 10 years ago this Christmas Eve. One of the reasons I moved here was the small-town atmosphere, an atmosphere reminiscent of the play *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder, which happens to be playing down at the Opera House tonight.

This document, this DEIS, says that Broadway, our Main Street, is *their* road.

I think the point is: This is *Our Town*.

Who is this cutie? Please send responses to the Legend.



A PAPERBOY'S VIEW OF HIS VILLAGE

by Floyd Kruschke

A paperboy comes to know his neighborhood like few people do. The Lancaster business district of Floyd's paper route in the 1930s was a prosperous area indeed. The business district was located not only on Central Avenue, but extended down the length of West Main Street and some of the surrounding streets. Trolley cars came east from Buffalo into Depew and Lancaster before heading back into the city. Those were golden days--after the Great War and before the Great Depression took its toll. Thousands of people worked in the factories along the railroad tracks in Lancaster and Depew. Small homes were being built to house the workers and large elegant homes were being built to house their supervisors. Automobiles, first introduced just thirty years before, were becoming a common sight on the streets, giving rise to whole new kind of business: car dealers, gas stations, and garages. More than 300 farms were located in Lancaster and many hundreds more in the surrounding towns.

Floyd Kruschke was born on School Street and was six years old when his father hired Mr. Adolf, a local contractor, to build a home for him on Brookfield Place. Just a year later, his mother died from complications after surgery and his father hired Anna Hahn to look after Floyd. Anna worked for Fanny Potter Eaton and lived in Mrs. Eaton's big white house on East Main Street. In time they heard of a young widow who was looking for employment so that she could support her family. Floyd remembers going with his father to meet her. An agreement was reached, and Mrs. Pfenner and her children moved into the house on Brookfield Place. Two years later Mrs. Pfenner and Mr. Kruschke decided to marry and Floyd acquired a stepmother, a stepbrother and a stepsister. He attended the School Street School through the sixth grade and graduated from the High School on Aurora Street. He delivered milk for Layer's Dairy for a time, then following in his father's footsteps, went to work for the Lancaster Machine Knife Works, where he stayed until retirement. Floyd and his wife Annette were married in 1943 and they still live in the house that her Grandfather Adolf built for his father.

In 1930 Pleasant Avenue didn't cross Central Avenue. It ended there and Mr. Jensen's house stood on the west side of Central Avenue opposite Pleasant. He was the newspaper distributor and also ran a delivery service.

There was a room in the back of his house that had benches around the walls on three sides where he would stack the papers. We had to learn which was our stack, and every day the paper boys would go there to pick up their papers.

Moving south on Central Avenue we passed the Adolf home, then the Geyer's home and garage. Joe and Frank Geyer were Pontiac dealers. Next came Mr. Scherer's tailor shop. His son was a dentist. Mr. Sandel's store stood next door. He made cigars and sold tobacco. The Albert Theater showed silent movies. They changed the bill three times a week. Behind these buildings was Protective Park. It had a dance pavilion and one year they held a dance marathon down there.

Next to the movie stood the Greis Furniture Store and New York State Gas and Electric, then the Reo car agency. Neil Rohl had his garage in the back. The Jerge Ford Agency also had a repair garage in the back, run by Gordon Walters.

The Deja Photo Studio building was once an indoor miniature golf range. Miniature golf was popular then and there were two indoor ranges in downtown Lancaster. The meat market next door belonged first to Mr. Meininghaus, then Mr. Schneider, then Mr. Nuwer. Fitzgerald and Knauber's clothing store shared a building with Rose Marie's Dress Shop. A storage building for Maute's Feed Store stood next to John and Ralph May's barber shop.

The Sugar Bowl stood on the corner of Central and West Main Street. Across West Main Street was Braun's Department Store. It was a full size department store with a system of tubes to send the money from the sales floor to the office. At Christmas you could ride the elevator to the toyland on the third floor. There was a small building next to Braun's where Dettling's Jewelers stood. Later it was a Department of Health clinic. The Oriole's Club had the next building. Mr. Stutzman opened a grocery store next door to that. Happy's Barber shop stood on the corner of East Main Street and Central. It was run by Happy Bugenhagen and George Kiel.

Opposite the end of Central Avenue on East Main Street, now Broadway, was the fire house, and the Village Inn, owned by Mr. J.O. Garretsee. My stepbrother was friends with the Garretsees and they would hire him to work for them. During Old Home Week in 1928 I got to help him park cars behind the Village Inn. The whole village was decorated with flags and bunting and there were lots of people in town for the firemen's parade. When we finished parking cars, that lot was full.

On the east side of Central Avenue, the Liberty

Diner stood on the corner of Central and Pleasant. Dr. Bentz had moved his house and dental office over to Pleasant Avenue to make room for the diner. Bernard Uebelhoer's home stood on Central Avenue where the Telephone Building is now. Linus Enser's IGA Grocery Store stood next to the creek. Mrs. Enser was a well-known china painter. For many years she signed her fine porcelain pieces with her maiden name, Florence Beaser. Across the creek was Maute's Hardware Store. Norm Barrows worked there for many years.

Teddy Suess ran a Nash Agency in what is now the Credit Union Building, next was the Iroquois Gas office. The Moose Building and the New York Telephone office was next to Cushing's. Frank Cushing ran a drug-store in partnership with Ellis Burdick. Mr. Cushing was in the insurance business. The Keebler Shoe Store, Post Office, Thill's Confectionery, and the Bank of Lancaster took up the rest of the block up to Clark Street. After the bank failed, Parker's Gift Shop moved into the building on the corner. They sold gifts and small pieces of furniture. Behind these buildings was the Spencer sign painting shop, Brass's Blacksmith Shop, and a shoe repair shop.

Across Clark Street was the Town Hall and in those days, the Public Library was located in the big meeting

room on the first floor, just to the left of the lobby. Dr. DeFries had his dental office on the second floor. Right at the corner of Central and East Main Street stood the estate of Senator Davis. It was a big brick mansion with a brick wall all around the property. The garage had a turntable in it so you could turn the car around without backing it up.

On my street, Brookfield Place, stood the Bailey, Marquart, Enser, Albert Kruschke, and Reynders homes. Our house was the last one on our side. Across the street at one time the Varney family owned a small farm with an orchard. They had the first telephone on the street and for a time, they would take phone calls for everybody on the street. Mr. Reynders eventually came to own their property and he turned it into a private park. He put in lawns, flower beds, and a lily pond. There was a vegetable storage shed, a garage, two fireplaces for cooking, and 13 post lanterns. After he died, his wife couldn't keep it up and had to let it go wild.

ANNUAL MEETING AND HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

You are cordially invited to attend the Annual Meeting and Holiday Open House at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 14.



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When making up your Christmas shopping list remember the special gifts available at the Museum: A gift of membership in the Lancaster New York Historical Society, Landmark Collectible Buildings, Mary Jo Monin's fine book, *Once a Redskin*, Lancaster note paper, tote bags, and framed paintings of Lancaster scenes by area artists. Another Man's Treasure has a whole new supply of collectibles.

And consider giving a gift of help to our Historical Society:

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