

The Town of Shelbina, MO, as I knew it in 1907 and 1908

By Robert Cecil Threlkeld

We moved to Shelbina in the Fall of 1905. The first house we lived in was located just two blocks north of the flouring Mill. As I remember the town a little better in 1907 and 1908 will start from that date. The flour mill was in full operation. It made both hard and soft wheat flour and of course, handled grains of all kind and a building by it handled hard and soft coal. The mill was a four or five story building and was beside the CB & Q Railroad tracks. Taking the north side of the tracks first - across the street on the north side as you go west, a feed store was on the corner. It consisted of an office, grainery and a large barn full of baled hay. They handled coal also. It was run by Tom O'Donnell and Jim Graymon. Next in line was Daniell's second hand store, Cottage Hotel, space of ground and then the Adams Hotel, a large frame building. The Cottage hotel was run by Lon Blackburn and was considered a very rough place as drinkers and gamblers assembled there often.

The Adams Hotel had a good business as they picked up several drummers or salesmen and passengers stopping off. At that time, every passenger train stopped and there were 10 or 12 of them. On the corner across from the Adams Hotel (west) was Bryan Grocery Store, followed by R L Brown Grocery (later Adams Grocery), Gregory Meat Market, Chinese laundry, Lemay Feed Store (also sold coal) John O'Daniel Junk Yard and Roebuck bakery. A blacksmith shop a block west on left side of street and two blocks further west on same side of street, the Canning factory, a block north from the Adams hotel was the Cotton Lumber Company and of course the Shelbina Fair grounds at the north edge of the town. The Dobyys Lumber Company was across the street south of Adams Hotel and then the RR tracks. On the south side the two parks and band stand, the Old Depot on the right as you go south. Going south from the tracks on the left side was Miles and Bates Clothing store, one side for mens the other for women followed by a millinery, newspaper office, "The Torchlight", a cleaning and pressing shop, shoe store and bakery then an alley, The Commercial Bank, Payne's Hardware store, _____, Hanly Dry Goods store, R C Dickerson Dry Goods, Sears and Bailey Dry Goods and Gose & Yost Drug Store. Across the street on west side going south from Miles and Bates the Corner building _____, Howe's Barber Shop, Restaurant, Alley, C H Lasley & Sons Clothing Store, Jewelry Store run by Tilden Doyle, Old Bank Trust Company, J H Allen Drug Store, Smith & Bowling Dry Goods, S G Parsons Grocery then across the street south, Reid Furniture Store, Old Opera House above, Grout & Henniger Hardware, Miller Furniture Store, Si Patterson Grocery alley, old frame building and Christian Church and then along block south, Shelbina Public Schools and High School. From the School house west two blocks the

College. East from Yost Drug Store, Press Shop, Barber Shop, Railroad Express office, then a lot or two and the Picture Show called the "Nickelodian", because the charge was only a nickel. The picture show was formerly a church (Methodist). Across the street from Picture show going west was a house and office of Dr Mills, Osteopath, then J M Dean Grocery and Produce, _____, Post Office, Stalcup Book Store _____, Colbourn Variety Store, _____. Then from the corner building south Millinery Shop, Barber Shop, alley, George Bedwell Granite works "Tombstones" and a livery stable. On the 1st street going south of tracks from Miles and Bates, east, my father's barber shop, (later more buildings were built). Above Miles and Bates, a cigar factory run by Sparks Bros (Pat & ?). They made hand made cigars, from Miles and Bates across the street west (1st street south of tracks) _____, Drug Store, Clark's restaurant, Harness shop, Smock's Barber shop, McCully Drug Store, Waverly Hotel, Livery Stable, Fire Department. Drs Lyell and Daniel's had a dentist office on the corner southeast of the Christian Church.

You will note there are a few buildings I don't remember what kind of stores I have drawn a line on those. Across the street south from Parsons Grocery and going west was _____, North Missouri Lumber Company, Morgan Wagon Factory.

I have described practically all the buildings. West of Parsons Grocery were alley ____, Shoe shop and Blacksmith shop, _____ Implement Company run by W C Clark.

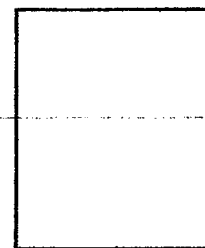
The Fire Department consisted of a two wheel cart drawn by horses, had a hose wrapped around the center. Whenever there was a fire, they would ring a large bell as an alarm. We didn't have water works until 1912) They would attach the hose to the nearest pump on the well would have to pump it by hand. Regardless of the handicap, we saved most houses. The city marshal was C A Revercomb "Cap" they called him who is now a legend) He held that position much longer than anyone else. He directed the Fire Department.

We had wooden walks everywhere but the main part of town on the south side. The main part on the north side was all wooden walks. The walks in front of the houses consisted of 2 boards about 12 or 14 feet long and each 6" wide. They were coupled together by pieces of 4 X 4's at each end. We had electricity in 1907 and 1908 but only the wealthy could afford it. Most of the poor people used kerosene lamps. Kerosene stoves didn't come into existence until a few years later. We used coal and wood ranges to do all the cooking winter and summer. We had rather cold winters in those days. Most everyone wore long heavy underwear and didn't take them off until May and then would be afraid we would take a cold. Electric fans were unheard of in those days. We used hand fans and used "elbow grease" to propel them, sometimes newspapers. Our summers were as hot as the winters were cold. Everyone had "air

conditioned” “rest houses” and the old Negro who took care and cleaned them did a profitable business. He was George Wamzy, an old Negro who had a team and spring wagon and would go down the alleys often. Flies were plentiful and was hard to keep them out of the house in summer and out of things we ate. We would each grab a tea towel and shoo them to the door and somebody would open it to let them out. We didn't have anything to kill them with at that time only fly swatters. Radios were unknown and all the news we received were out of the newspapers including the weather. Didn't even have a gramophone “phonograph” then. However we sang and played the organ and french harp. The telephone was old style with batteries inside. Think the ^{case} ??? then was 50¢ a month. We distinguished our call by the rings (like 2 shorts and a long or 2 longs and a short, etc). We could call quite a distance if we could hear the party on the other end. Peggy Durham was the telephone manager then. We would have to ring to get central then they would connect us with the party we were calling. We had dirt roads and in the summer when it was dry, a water wagon would come by sprinkling the road to keep the dust out. We knew nothing about crude oil on streets then.

For awhile we didn't have an ice box. Would let things down in the well to keep them cool. At that time in the west end of town there was a very large pond more like a lake and deep. There were two large buildings and when the ice was thick enough they would saw it and cover it with sawdust in order to supply the town in summer. There were two covered ice wagons drawn by two horses. People had to holler “Ice” as they passed or put a card in the window. The ice was in large hunks. Had to be sawed, weighed and washed off the saw dust being on them. (Later they had a ice manufacturing plant). Weavers ran the ice plant.

Example of an ice card:



House rent was cheap, so was wages. You could rent a house all the way from five to ten dollars a month. Groceries and meat were cheap. You could buy 25¢ worth of round steak and would last two meals for ordinary family. Bread was 5¢ a loaf, milk was 5¢ a quart, could get 10 lbs sugar for a quarter. All commodities were very cheap. Gas was 10¢ a gallon. A dollar then could buy a lot of things.

On the south side of the tracks and south edge of the east and west parks there was a line of posts about 7 or 8 inches square and about 3 or 4 ft high with a large hole bored in each of them close to the top and a large log chain through the holes from post to

post. This answered as the hitching racks for horses and vehicles as cars were almost extinct. There was no pavement in the town streets and they were very muddy when it was wet weather. Later in 1925 the town had its first cement street and that was from the 1st street south of the tracks on Center Street and Highway 15 to the Christian Church 3 blocks. At first the lighting system was a large bulb in the center and at the end of each street stretched across from the top of light poles. Later what was called the "white way" which you remember, consisted of large iron posts with several lights at the top.

In those days the only refrigeration they had was ice boxes and no freezers. The meat markets used huge ice boxes for keeping meat from spoiling and was filled from the back end with large cakes of ice. We had a slaughter house north of town and no meat was shipped in. Meat was really fresh and good then. Now they keep meat in refrigeration so long it doesn't taste right. There were no such things as electric refrigerators then or even coolerators. All grocery stores had a delivery wagon and people would phone orders and have them delivered to the door. The population of Shelbina hasn't increased a lot since then. The population now is a little over 2000 people. In 1907 and 1908 it was the 1890's.

The High School played their football games in Adams pasture which was a large pasture about 4 blocks north of the tracks. Before a game the players of both teams would line up and march through town to the field, the band playing. It was discontinued several years later when the land south of the school was converted into an athletic field. Before that though, when they held the annual class track meet they did their running and hurdling on the 1st 2 block north of the school. Other events as high jumping, broad jumping, pole vaulting, etc were south of the building. At that time there were a lot of negroes. The street from the mill east was called "nigger" street. It had a restaurant, a school and church (2nd Baptist) on the second block.

The livery stables did a flourishing business, could rent a horse and buggy very cheap. Don't remember how much an hour but was something like 25¢.

We had another railroad start, Shelby County Railway, in 1907. George worked on it awhile. When it was completed it hauled freight and passengers as far as Novelty, MO. The passenger train carried passengers from town to the northeast corner of the Fair Ground during the Fair. The charge was 5¢ each way. It operated until 1938 when it was abandoned. The cement pillars to the bridge still stands.

The coal mine near the river operated for a few years but was found to be of little value for the coal veins were shallow. It was soon abandoned. The brick plant was about 1/4 mile north of the fairgrounds, next to the Shelby County Railroad tracks. It operated

for a few years and was abandoned. The Fair Ground in those days was very popular. It had a lot of attractions. Far better in the former years than later. They had horse racing each day, always had a carnival. The north lot was reserved for carriages, horses and wagons. There were two barns on this lot for race horses. The main lot of the fairgrounds had a large stock tank filled with water and ice in it. We had tin drinking cups. Of course, there were a lot of stands selling hot dogs and other short orders, pop and ice cream cones. There were two amphitheaters one large for whites, the other for Negroes. Some of the attractions were balloon ascension. One year they had a large air ship or dirigible which floated over the grounds and the city. It carried 15 or 16 men. It later hit a live wire after leaving here and exploded. There was an ostrich and horse race. Who won? The ostrich, of course. It left the horse in the shade. Ha!

A circus came to town every year. It was at Adams pasture. Kids like myself, too poor to buy a ticket would deliver hand bills and anything they could to see the show. There were also side shows. A few years later they had two cement tanks, one on the north side and one on the south side for watering horses. The elephants would get in the tank and throw water like it was coming out of a hose. We always had a large parade before the show to draw customers. It was quite a sight to see. It was free. The circus paraded from the school house down Center street to Adams pasture.

We had a celebration in Shelbina every 4th of July. It was an event everyone looked forward to. Sometimes there were several accidents with fire crackers and fireworks. Remember one boy had two or three fingers blown off. He lit a large firecracker and thought it had gone out. Just as he started to pick it up, it exploded. They had dynamite cones then too. Remember your Dad had one. They were very dangerous too. Most people in those days bought 100 lbs flour at a time as they baked their own bread. The bakeries, however, had a good business. They sold bread to the more wealthy people or ones who didn't want to bake bread. There was no bread or pastries shipped into the town.

Milk and butter was cheap and we had a cow most of the time. Several people had cows in town then. I think butter sold for as low as 15¢ a pound.

The ground here was fertile and we nearly always had a good garden. Most people canned vegetables and made their own sauerkraut. In wintertime we often bought a hind quarter of beef and hung it outside. It would keep all winter as the winters were cold.

In those days children, most of them went barefoot in summer. We wore knee pants and stockings and even buttoned shoes at times. There were no long pants for boys then.

As far as the churches are concerned there were the Methodist, Christian, Catholic and Baptist. I went to the Methodist church during my boyhood days but joined the Christian Church when I was 19 years old and was baptized by a preacher by name of Ira Wood.

I remember most things in those days but there are a few things that are a little vague. We had no electric washing machines or irons. At first we had a big tub and wash board used elbow grease. Had home made lye soap, Lenox and P & G Soap. No detergents as of present time. Later I was elected to operate a hand wash machine which had a handle and a big wheel. It took a lot of elbow grease. Ha! We wrung out the clothes by hand. The iron was heated on the cook stove. We had a coffee grinder and in those days the coffee we bought was whole and had to be hand ground. If I had it now it would be a real antique. My mother had a big crockery churn with a wooden handle 2 cross pieces on the bottom. It was also hand operated. You would chug up and down and when butter came, specks of it would be on the dasher at the top. We had a wooden paddle that Uncle Tom whittled out for her and would mold the butter from that and then fix designs for decoration by making cross marks on it. We had home made ice cream often. That was also hand operated. I know you remember about that. Postage stamps then were 2¢ for letters and 1¢ for cards. I have some of the old cards written then. Will show them to you when you come home.

In those days everyone had a parlor as their best room, sitting room. Bedrooms, kitchens, clothes closet and pantry. Had the best lamp in the parlor, your Aunt Elsie and Uncle Ercil were married in May, 1908 in the 1st house we lived in in Shelbina. Would like to show you the house and also the room they were married in. At that time all of the family witnessed the marriage. She worked at the telephone office and he on a farm, at the time they were married.

Ice skating was a popular sport in wintertime. Also sleigh riding. We also played (shimmy) something like hockey now. We used an old tin can and would use part of the stave of a buggy or a crooked small limb cut from a tree. It was a lot of fun on the ice also on the ground.

Well, I have told about everything I can think of at the time. I would have sent this earlier but I wanted to get hold of a typewriter but couldn't find one. I would of bought a typewriter if I did a lot of writing but no more than I write, doesn't warrant it. I scribbled this in pencil. Hope you can make it out. Write soon or if you are interested will send you more editions later. Ha!

Good bye for now
Love to all
Unk Cecil