

## Richmond of Yesterday--Richmond of Today

### ROMANTIC RISE OF COMMERCIAL INTERESTS OF THE CITY

Richmond's Fall Festival calls attention to the earlier history of Richmond. The pioneer days had their type of industries and mercantile pursuits which were peculiar to that time and their circumstances. Every visitor to Richmond's Fall Festival will see the great strides which have been made. The Fall Festival itself is a proof of the enterprise which has built up Richmond in its industrial and mercantile side. Look at the humble beginnings from which Richmond started and then look at the same thing in the Fall Festival displays.

The pioneer life of early Richmond was reflected in its mercantile and industrial pursuits. A backwoods settlement without roads, save pioneer trails, was not the place for great enterprises.

In the manufacturing line, tanneries were the first industries, for the wild animal pelts furnished in many cases the only currency employed. Indeed there was an extensive trade with the Indians and it is related of one of the early merchants that "Tumecumeh still owed him a coon skin in payment for a gun and ammunition."

The town was started in 1816, and the tanneries soon followed. A historian of the times says: "Two of these were established here in 1818, the first by John Smith for Joseph Wilmut, an Englishman, the other by Robert Morrison. Smith's tan yard was near his dwelling and is now owned by the Wigginses. Morrison's once boasted seventy vats, and was on Main street, north side between Main and Green streets."

Most of the later industries were of such character as arise in a new community to give the inhabitants what they must use in daily life, such as blacksmith shops and corn mills.

The early settlers were much elated at the mills, inasmuch as the nearest mill was at Germantown, O., and the journey through the wilderness was long and tedious.

The trade was mostly in clothing, and the absolute necessities which could not be made at home.

With the outside world the following is enlightening. A merchant of the day says:

"I used to take in eight barrels of country sugar a day. There was an abundance made here at that time. I recollect sending much to Kentucky and Tennessee and exchanging it profitably for cotton. I once sent three wagon loads to Lexington, Ky."

The population of the town had grown from 200 in 1818, to 824 in 1828. The opening of the Cumberland or National road, came to the town's assistance and Richmond merchants opened up a trade with the outside world. The citizens who had despair-

ed of the town ever growing into anything were silenced.

This was also the era of canal building and the struggle for outlets to the world. The town's merchants subscribed \$50,000 for a canal--but before the canal was dug, the donation was used up and nothing further came of it. This was the time of the early 40's.

**START OF MANUFACTORIES.**  
The beginning of Richmond's modern industrial and manufacturing life may be said to begin with the foundation of the "Spring Foundry" by the Huttons in 1836. This was purchased in 1839 by the Gaar's and was the foundation of the great Gaar, Scott and Co., of the present day.

The small amount of machinery was run by water power. It is significant of what went on all over Richmond that we read in the "Richmond Industrial Magazine," of 1872:

"In 1854, A. Gaar & Co. introduced steam power into their establishment, the water power being no longer sufficient."

The Gaar's were men of great courage and great mechanical genius. Their enterprise in the early times is well shown by the extract from the same "Industrial Magazine" of 1872:

"When Gaar, Scott & Co. purchased the Spring Foundry (now called the Gaar Machine Works) only one of them, J. M. Gaar had a cent of cash capital, and he had but ten dollars. After much painful deliberation as to the use to which that all important sum should be applied, it was finally concluded to spend it for coke. Accordingly a four horse team was properly rigged up, hitched to a heavy draught wagon of the old pattern and despatched through the mud to Cincinnati, a distance of seventy miles, to return in the course of about two weeks with the fuel, the proceeds of every cent of money possessed by the firm, which is worth today at least \$400,000."

The first threshing machine was a rude affair and was nick named the "ground hog" inasmuch as it was staked to the ground and did nothing but knock the grains of wheat still in the husk from the stalk, so that the chaff had to be separated by hand. The separator was introduced a few years later.

F. W. Robinson was another pioneer in the same business. He came here from Baltimore and located here in 1834. In 1836 we find his name in the membership of the Carpenter's and Joiner's association, which was one of the first labor unions in the state. With Mr. J. W. Yeo and Mr. Shoemaker he started the shops which are still known by his name. In 1860 the business amounted to

\$15,000. In 1870 it had grown 1,000 per cent or to \$150,000.

**COMING OF RAILROAD.**  
The thing which really turned Richmond into the trading center and manufacturing place it now is, was the coming of the Eaton and Richmond railroad, which was extended from Hamilton, Ohio in the year 1853. We quote again from the Richmond Industrial Magazine.

"From that time forward, the progress of the manufactures in this city was without a precedent in Indiana. Easy and quick communication being afforded with Cincinnati, it was not long until the amazing development of Richmond and the country west of it superinduced the building of other railroads including the C. C. & I. C. and the C. & G. E."

"The Richmond manufacturers, thus provided with outlets to all parts of the United States, soon pushed their wares into all the great markets and were among the most successful in contesting for premiums at agricultural and industrial expositions."

**RICHMOND IN 1877.**

There are the conditions of 1857 as set forth by Dr. Plummer in the front of the first Richmond directory published by Holloway and Davis, who were for forty years the publishers of the Richmond Palladium:

"A little upwards of fifty years ago where nettles and grass arising from a mellow vegetable mold, grew to a height sufficient to hide a horse, there now stands a busy and thriving population of more than 6,000 inhabitants, dwelling in substantial brick buildings."

"The gas works were built in 1855 and gas supplied to the city on Main and Fifth streets in the same year. Pipes are now laid on Main, Franklin, Fifth, Pearl, Sixth, Seventh and Spring streets."

"Our banks are: A branch of the State bank begun in 1834, the Citizens bank in 1852, the Wayne county bank (afterward People's bank) in 1853 and branch of the bank of the State of Indiana in 1857 all on the north side of Main street. The Citizens banking house is among the most splendid buildings in the city."

"In the vicinity of Richmond we have 22 flouring mills, 24 saw mills, 1 oil mill, 2 paper mills and a large number of woolen factories." We add, also extensive nurseries, a floricultural establishment, 2 sash, blind, door and flooring mills; a cutlery manufactory, a shoe manufactory, a soap and candle factory (besides the two in town) and six carriage factories."

"Amount of personal property in Richmond in the year 1857, \$1,152,734. Amount of real estate, \$1,528,820. Value of additional improvement, \$253,440. Amount of manufactured articles \$906,531."

Total \$3,841,025.

The war of the rebellion put a crimp in all business life, so that it is only toward 1870 that it revived and then came the panic of 1873.

Chambers encyclopedia of 1870 gives a picture of Richmond as it appeared to the outside world:

"Richmond the focus of six railroads. The river gives water power to cotton, wool, flour and several extensive implement factories. Richmond has a brick trade with a fertile and populous country, fifteen churches and five newspapers. Population 1860, 6,603 and 9,445 in 1870."

But coming to local authorities, we find that it was in reality the beginning of Richmond's tremendous activities in the implement business. The fertile land lying round about, assured the manufacturers of local trade and national trade was pushing over the "six railroads."

A local historian mentions what he considers a great industry, that of the Empire Plow shop, run by S. Horney & Co., as follows:

"The main building of this great plow shop is 130 feet long by 50 wide and a blacksmith shop 76 feet long by 30 feet wide. It employs 33 hands and manufactures 30 plows per day."

Others in the plow business at this time were Oran Perry and D. S. Horney. At any rate they turned out 10,000 plows every year.

**FIRST COMMERCIAL BODY.**

The forerunner of the Commercial Club of Richmond, was the "Richmond Board of Trade. It was organized in 1869 and died and was revived in 1874. The president was J. F. Hibberd, Andrew Scott served as vice-president and Clem Ferguson was treasurer."

In 1874-5 the Board of Trade published a report showing the attractive points of Richmond and containing an incomplete report of the state of manufactures and mercantile life. It reads:

"The whole number of manufacturing establishments in Richmond is 127, with an aggregate capital in real and personal property of \$1,807,785, consuming raw material of the value of \$795,784, of which Indiana has furnished \$303,465; employed 1,507 hands, paid wages to the amount of \$654,459, and sold goods valued at \$2,729,346."

"There are eight establishments in Richmond more or less engaged in the manufacture of agricultural implements, but no one of them is engaged in that business exclusively."

"Among the leading products are 362 threshers, 234 portable engines, 140 horsepowers, 5,600 plows, 3,000 pairs of hames, sorghum mills, evaporators, etc."

"Merchants and traders generally in Richmond, did a satisfactory business during the year 1874. The panic of 1873 made a marked impression on business in all branches, but no failures occurred, and its depressing influence had largely faded before the opening of the season following."

Richmond cut last year 27,700 of the heaviest logs in the United States and

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2268

Hagerstown cut 14,250 of the heaviest logs next to Richmond, and for these logs was paid \$852,106.

"This large sum paid in cash to farmers in the country surrounding Richmond, gave an impetus to local trade and was a fountain that sent a life giving and sustaining current through every branch of industry."

The number of mercantile and trading establishments was 190, with a total capital of \$1,445,357, employing 615 persons, and paying \$178,832 in wages, and selling goods amounting to a total of \$3,970,358.

The report of the Board of Trade mentions what is now the Starr Piano Company in terms so modest that it is hardly recognizable.

"A piano factory is in the process of erection. It will employ about 25 hands."

**RICHMOND'S MERCANTILE PROGRESS.**

Since 1870 the merchants of Richmond have also made rapid strides.

No longer are there the low frame structures on Main street which characterized the early seventies. Instead of small stores dealing mostly in "notions" and calico, the merchants have become, with the times, up-to-date.

The department store of the great city is no more an advance over the former shops than are the many departments which have grown up in Richmond stores.

Some of the merchants of Richmond like the industries, had their own small beginnings in the town years ago and have kept pace with the town. As for the many lines which they carry the reader has only to look at the advertising in this paper and compare the announcements in the advertising columns with the days of not many years ago, to see what an advance has been made.

Almost all the stores of Richmond have passed the stage of fifteen years ago, say, when the proprietor waited on his customers over the counter.

Now in many a place, the clerks in one department are more in number than the clerks with which the store started. To show the growth of Richmond's mercantile trade is but to show the growth of Richmond.

Take the block between Eighth and Ninth streets in the year 1860. On the north side of the street were frame residences. There was a house where the Little block now stands and on the other corner where the Vaughan block is now, was the old Meredith or Tremont hotel.

On the south side of the street there were buildings low and unsubstantial. The sky line was about the same height as that on Main street in Centerville but not so pleasing. Each store had a hitching rack in front of it and awnings stretched on wooden frames covered the side walk.

On the south side of the almost un-

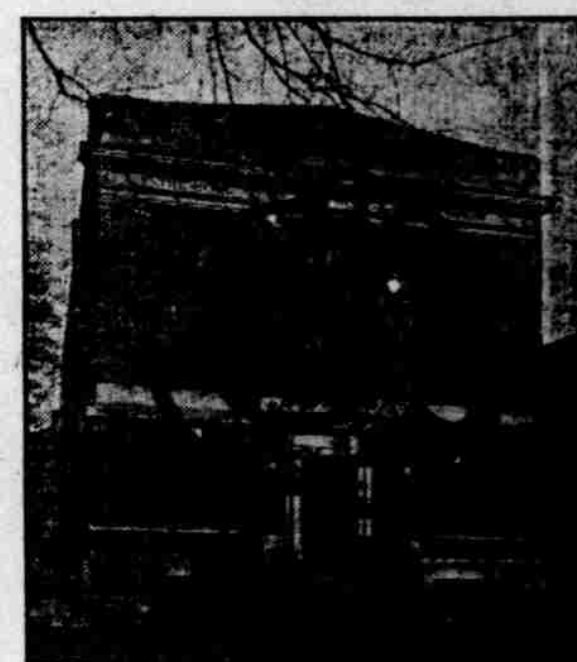
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# Richmond Home Telephone Company

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