

# Old Knightstown

By Frank Edwards

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Frank Edwards, sage of Ogden and Knightstown and 93 years young, was asked to write his reminiscences of early Knightstown and he turned in this very interesting sketch of the early days. It will be run in serial form.

During our chat a few days ago you suggested that I use your tape-recorder, and talk about the old houses and changes which have come to Knightstown through the years. As you know, I always enjoy talkin' about the Knightstown of long ago, but I have a feeling that talking to a tape recorder would seem like talking to myself, and I fear I might get the habit. Why. Tom, I've seen old codgers who sat by the hour and—let's skip it. I'll write you a letter.

Much of what I know about the very earliest days of Knightstown I learned from my parents, both of whom were born here, father in 1846, mother in 1847. Some things were told me by relatives. And I must ask your indulgence if I refer often to my family. Let me explain that in my youth about 25 families numbering perhaps 140 persons within a "whoop and holler" of the Public Square were my kith and kin. On my father's side, my great grandfather, Waitsell M. Cary had the town platted on his farm in 1827, when the National Road was built, and his was the first house, as shown by the big stone at the south east corner of the Public Square. On my mother's side came John Bell, my great grandfather, who owned the farm just south of town, now owned by Mr. Emory Cox and at the same time, about 1832, my grandfather Harvey Bell, settled on the adjoining farm south—a few years later moving to 25 South Adams Street in town. My grandfather Morris Edwards and his brother William came to town from Pennsylvania in 1835: other relatives followed them from Virginia. Old K-town sprouted and grew! But let's climb out of the Family Tree.

Now, about dear old K-town! Certainly I love the place; It's HOME. It has been "home" ever since May 13, 1876 when I started life in that brick house at the south east corner of Adams and Clay Streets (Why did the Town Dads of some years ago, have to change the name to "Main Street" and thus make us common with every other darned town in the country! Waitsell M. Cary named that "Clay Street" to honor that great Kentuckian, Senator Clay whose efforts in the Congress gave us the National Road. NOW, we call it "Main Street". N-U-T-Z!!!)

I like to light my old briar and try to picture this beautiful place as it was back in 1818 when that venturesome young man, Asa Heaton, the great-great- grandfather of Mrs. Willard Avery came to trade for pelts with the Pottawattamie Indians who had a village at the mouth of Buck Creek where it emptied into Blue River.

Imagine yourself taking a stroll on a bright summer day with Asa Heaton through the primeval forest in 1818. One would have been walking under stately, magnificent trees such as are seldom seen hereabout today: poplars, oaks, elms, beech, sugar, ironwood, sycamore, our tulip trees, and—think of it!—walnut trees, trees bearing both large and small hickory nuts, butternut trees, the delicious chinquapins and chestnuts. Among the smaller trees, of course, were the wild crab apple, redbud, and dog wood, while trumpet vines and wild grapes festooned lower branches here and there. Persimmons and paw paws would be there in season: and among the many clumps of raspberry and blackberry bushes to be found, were bushes bearing those large, plump gooseberries.

Wildflowers!

Wildflowers and various kinds of beautiful fern seeking the shady north side of trees and boulders. Of the wildflowers you may be sure the Jack in the Pulpit was there, Sweet William, Dutchmen's Breeches and the dozens of varieties cherished in the memories of childhood. And here and there among the flowers were clumps of wild strawberries with the clusters of very small berries, each cluster on a long stem, They were small, but what a treat! Each delicious little berry tasting differently!

So ends my imaginary stroll with Asa Heaton, after we have wandered some distance west from Blue River and stand on the brow of a hill overlooking a beautiful valley through which a small stream meanders. Asa points to a wisp of smoke coming from a crude "lean-to" built against a huge fallen tree-trunk at the foot of the hill on the other side of the little stream. "Trapper, named "Montgomery" said Asa, so I call it Montgomery's Creek." And NOW—in 1969--what do we have of that "dreamland", that great forest which we know was here in 1818! Well, neighbors, did you ever tarry long enough to salute that grand old oak which grows in the yard at the southwest corner of Main and McCullum Streets! Asa Heaton and I passed that tree in 1818. Want-a-bet!

I know of three fine old walnut trees, one at the Public Library steps, one in the Wiatt yard, N. W. Cor. of Washington and Brown Sts., and one on the division fence line back of the home of Mrs. John Willis and Mrs. R. L. Bell. And of the venerable trees which were, but now are not: That tough old walnut which until a few months ago stood a few rods west of the south door of the old school building, the building which lends distinction to K-town by having the ornamental globe and telescope on top. (The "ball and bat") Well, my dad told me that he gathered walnuts under that tree when he was a boy - say in the eighteen fifties and at the time the tree was in the middle of his grandfather's corn field.

And "they say" the biggest wild Cherry ever seen in these parts stood where that alley crosses Main between Washington and Jefferson Streets: while, just around the corner, a few rods south of Main on the east side of Washington, stood the grandest old tree in town. With its huge trunk and roots partly on the old brick sidewalk and partly in the street was a silver poplar at least 21 feet in circumference at its base. I do not exaggerate. I knew that wonderful old tree from my childhood. When the street was paved the contractor of course cut down the tree. OF COURSE! Fifty years or so ago, if you had walked east on Jackson Street, crossed Adams and strolled straight on down that wide alley you would have arrived at the bank of the wide old mill-race: and there, with enormous roots penetrating the west bank of the race you would have found the "BIG TREE", as everyone in town called it, an elm tree which surely began to grow many hundreds of years ago.

I salute these old giants of the forest which used to be here where Knightstown now is; but the distance is so short between these trees and a wonderful grove of sugar trees that have always been a part of my cherished memories you must visit that grove with me. I was really there. It was a bright Saturday afternoon in early spring when I was about twelve years old that I walked up that long lane with the well-trimmed hedge on either side to the tall brick farm-house within sight of Knightstown, the home of that staunch old Quaker of the Knightstown Friends' Meeting, Ithamer Stuart. (Mr. Stuart was, by the way, the grandfather of Mrs. Laura S. Berg of N. Adams Street and Miss Lou Stuart, of Warrick Street. (This home is now occupied by Gerald Keesling).

The special reason for my visit was in answer to an invitation from my school-mate, Merrill Bell (who with his mother, Mr. Stuart's daughter—made his home there,) and to watch operations at the large sugar tree grove north of the house where the trees had just been tapped for the run of sugar-water. My first thrill came with a cordial welcome to that house which, as a small boy, I had always wondered about. I had never been there. Seeing it from the north end of K-town it had reminded me of the fairy castles in my picture books. And now I was actually there, in large rooms with ceilings twelve feet high, a detail I learned in later years as well as the fact that this stately old house has twenty two rooms including four hallways as large as rooms and also a full basement with six rooms! The bricks for the house were made at the Parker brick-yard just east of the winding State Road Hill on the north side. And most of the original Slate roof is still good. The house was built in 1861.

How I digress! Merrill and I were soon off to the "sugar camp", as it was called. I shall not go of on another tangent by attempting to describe the interesting process by which the sugar water is boiled down into syrup; but, Tom, I wish you could have been there with your camera to take some pictures of that grove of sugar trees—the last grove near Knightstown. I am told not one of them is there today.

And so the ancient trees are gone. Aside from this sugar grove, the only other uncut woods near town until about the turn of the century was immediately south of town where the Rowland Morgans now live and across the road east on the farm then owned by my great uncle, Frank Bell, who would allow no trees cut from a deep wood extending some distance east from the large brick house, where he lived, to the north end of his farm at the State Road.

The trees are gone. A salute to the few old trees we still have!

So now let's talk about the folks and where and what and when. After all, they made the town. Asa Heaton, who came to trade with the Pottawattamies in 1818 stayed on, and in 1830 married Mary Cary, daughter of Waitzell M. Cary, the first bride in Knightstown.

She was my grandmother's sister and I knew her. I don't know why but to the family she was "Aunt Polly". I vividly recall a visit, when I was a teenager, with those two "young" ladies in my Grandparents' home at the northwest corner of Jefferson and Jackson Streets.

There was a cheerful fire in the old-fashioned fireplace and I listened to them chatter. From time to time Aunt Polly would tamp more tobacco into the bowl of her small clay pipe and light it with a hot ember which she raked from the fire. She was jolly, the first Knightstown bride. (This fact is engraved on her tombstone, straight west of Glen Cove Chapel, and a bit south, on the brow of the hill.) At the time I have just mentioned, Aunt Polly was the wife of Robert Woods, and lived in a large, two-story, brick house which stood where our Post Office now stands.

Asa Heaton had died, and his sister who had been the wife of Robert Woods had died. This left two elderly "in-laws". They married. Both had grown families.

Robert Woods, one of the highly respected citizens of Knightstown, was organizer and first President of the First National Bank and, my youthful impression was, owned most of the land between Knightstown and Charlottesville. At any rate, he was considered to be the wealthiest man in town. Friendly and affable, he was "Uncle Bobby" to all. Whenever I think of Uncle Bobby I see him, abundant gray hair and bushy, well-trimmed beard, always an immaculate white shirt, jogging out west Main Street on the way to his farms in a buckboard and, without fail, his rather huge frame tilting the right side of the seat up as he sat on the left side with one foot resting on the step. Always his foot rested on the step!

Among his several children, Robert Woods had a son, Emmett, whom some of his neighbors referred to as a "character". But when they did so, they smiled.

Emmett was a good citizen, and so recognized by everyone. He and his wife and three fine daughters lived in the very comfortable brick house at the northeast corner of Adams and Warrick Streets. Much like his father, Emmett drove out regularly to look after his farms.

So why did folks say he was a "character": Well, perhaps the main reason was that he was the Izaak Walton of Knightstown. There had been few propitious days since he was a small boy that he had not been fishing. Also, folks had many little chuckles over Emmett's conversation because of a little mannerism. He began every sentence with: "I say."

One afternoon my mother and I were sitting in the front yard at the old home, 25 South Adams, when Emmett came plodding up from Blue River, fishing pole over his shoulder and carrying a fine stringer of fish he had caught. (He and my parents had been schoolmates and friends since childhood.) Stopping, as for a chat, Emmett slipped a big bass from his stringer, and tossed it on the grass near mother. While mother was thanking him for the bass, he turned to me and the briar pipe I was smoking: "I say, Frankie! I say I had a dandy Meerschaum pipe that my son-in-law, Johnnie, gave me last Christmas. And, I say, one real cold morning, I say, one cold morning I started to knock the "doddle" out of my pipe on the wheel of the buck board and it broke all to H--!.

"Poor Emmett!", mother exclaimed, as the old boy pushed on toward home. Then, with eyes twinkling, she told me a story, the whole town knew, of when Emmett was a very small boy and caught a fish hook in the seat of his pants - but the hook penetrated farther than his pants!

The point to the story is that as the doctor removed the fish-hook from little Emmett's hide he let out loud and hasty yells to "Save his fish-hook"!!

But it was many years later that Emmett's "Golden Moment" came. And neither he nor anyone was aware of it at the time. I remember the day.!! Bill Herschell, the popular Hoosier Poet and Wit had come to Knightstown to be Guest Speaker at a Kiwanis Club dinner in the Christian Church on West Main Street. I sat near Herschell during the dinner.

Having arrived in Knightstown a bit early it seems that Bill Herschell had strolled down to the banks of Blue River where he found an old man fishing. During a brief chat this old fisherman - a great Nature Lover - said to Herschell: "I say, mister, I say, ain't God good to Indiana!"

And that gave Bill Herschell a line to keep turning over in his mind until he had written what is perhaps the most popular of all poems about our Hoosier State. And Emmett Woods gave Herschell that line - with his familiar little mannerism, "I say, I say Mister."

Strictly speaking, Old Knightstown, platted in 1827 was within the bounds of Carey, Jefferson and Jackson streets and the eastern part of that plat, and especially Clay Street (Main Street now) had the first buildings.

My father once told me that the two story frame house now occupied by Mrs. Charles Larmore, is the oldest house in town. This is the third house east of Adams on the south side of Main. This was definitely my old neighborhood, but I do not know who built that house.

It seems, however, that my grandfather, Harvey Bell, had part of his family about him when I was a child. He built the large brick house at 25 South Adams (half a square south of Clay St.) in 1852 when my mother was five years old. To make room for the new brick house he had moved the two story frame house in which mother was born, to a lot, or lots, on the east side of North Adams Street, making it the second house north of Carey Street. So that is one very old K-town house surely built before 1847.

In 1867 my father and mother were married and built the two story brick which stands at the south east corner of Main and Adams. There I was born. In the two story frame house next east lived my Uncle Tilghman Fish and Aunt Margaret, my mother's sister; and in the house now occupied by Mrs. Larmore. lived my mother's brother, John Bell, who at the time was Knightstown Postmaster, the Post Office then located in a small one story frame about four doors east of the Public Square on Clay Street. Could I forget Uncle John! With proper ceremony he took my letter to Santa Claus and saw to it that it was delivered, cause I got the red sled! One time he took me on his knee and told me that shortly after he came here from Virginia (1832) he saw the Indians take down their tepees and move on to the West—the last of the tribes hereabout. Years later he told me that he stood on the hill where I used to live (Now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Rowland Morgan) and saw the Indians go; and that their village was on the west side of Montgomery Creek a few rods north of the ford, where the bridge now spans the creek.

When I was about six years old my grandmother Bell died, and at grandfather's request, we moved into his home, the large square brick just south, which has always been home to me.

For about one hundred years a large two-story brick house stood at the southwest corner of Adams and Clay Streets (Main St.) In recent years it was known to many as "The Tritt House."

Before the Civil War a very plain two-story brick building was built on that lot, about five feet back from the sidewalk and forty feet from the corner. On the lower floor my grandfather, Harvey Bell and his partner, Mr. McCain had a Hardware Store. In the room above, my grandmother Susan Noble Bell taught school.

Let me digress to tell you about a meeting in my youth with one of her pupils Alonzo Hubbard, a Civil War Veteran, a very tall, well-built man who had been Flag-bearer for his Regiment during the War. Mr. Hubbard had been a neighbor on North Adams many years, and as we happened to meet one day in front of the "Tritt House," he stopped and cordially offered his hand:

"Frankie" he said. "I just want you to notice that the west side of this house was once separate from the rest of it; and upstairs in this west side I went to school to your grandmother Bell before the War. And she was the best teacher I ever had." And with a pat on my shoulder this kindly old vet walked on up the street. It was he who always carried the flag at the head of the Memorial Day Parade, while many of his marching comrades still wore their blue uniforms. carefully saved for these parades. "Lon" Hubbard who carried the flag at the head of his Regiment! (He was an uncle of Mrs. Roy Steele, N. Washington St.) A salute to our old Knightstown "Flag Bearer" His home still stands (the home of his parents) the two-story frame, west side of Adams St, and at first alley north of Main St. The Butlers were well known and popular citizens.

My old friend, the late Dr. O. H. Barrett, once told me that this "Tritt Corner" was bought by his father, Harvey Barrett in 1865 and it was he who built the large two story house, adding on to the little two-story brick building of ante bellum days. The bricks for this house were made in Harvey Barrett's own Brick Yard. Which later became the site of the Administration Building of the Indiana S. and S. C. Home south of town (Again, Mrs. Willard Avery: Harvey Barrett was her Great grandfather) The Barrett family lived in the house for not more than ten years, when it was sold to Charles Thrawley, a retired Rush County farmer, who owned a large farm just south of Mays. To this Knightstown home came Mr. Thrawley, his good wife and young daughter Annie. In time Annie married Frank Tritt, who became one of the prominent business men of Knightstown.

He and Annie had one child, Marguerite. After the death of the Tritt family, the corner was sold and the old house was torn down—presumably to make space for some business structure. Faced with the necessity of a new location for his Hardware Store, my grandfather Harvey Bell built farther west in the next block on Clay Street, Now 121-125 East Main, where the Flower Shop and Gift Shop now operate. Hardware was in the west room: and when the last of the family operating that store died, it had been Bell's Hardware Store for ninety years.

The entire second floor of this building was Bell's Hall, for many years the only place in town for large social affairs. There was a stage across the south end and here the High School graduating class came each year to give the required Commencement orations, and here were held.

Magic Lanterns showing wonderful pictures of Niagara Falls and other far-away places, no Radio, nor Television in those days, and such was our entertainment. However Bell's Hall attracted many people of the stage who would not otherwise have come to Knightstown. During Fair week each year in the nineties, we had a Stock Company from Chicago with a whole week of such thrillers as "Way Down East" and "Ten Nights in a Bar Room." Shortly after the Civil War, Phineas T. Barnum sent his famous Midget, General Tom Thumb, to Knightstown. (Tom Thumb gave my small sister one of his tiny "visiting cards".)

In addition, probably in the late seventies, came that dashing young idol of Broadway, Sol Smith Russell. I shall not forget my mother's telling of how he breezed out upon the stage, immaculate white suit and dandy cane to twirl, and sang the song that made him popular:

"On the beach at Long Branch, one fine summer day, I'd a novel reading to pass the time away."

Of course I did not hear Sol Smith Russell sing that song but it was a favorite song with my mother, and although I suppose fifty years have passed since I saw her at her old square mahogany piano in the south room at 25 South Adams, it seems but yesterday. I can hear her singing that popular song of a hundred years ago.

While I am at 25 South Adams, I am reminded that my Grandfather Bell operated a tavern here for a time in "stage-coach" days. When I was a boy, I could see the name (of the Tavern) dimly painted across the front of the house: "MANSION HOUSE".

The story is, that The Dillon House on the Public Square burned, and 25 South Adams being a large house the transients came knocking at the door. The stage coach then stopped at the corner. I believe this was but temporary as the Shipman House, north side of Clay Street, was soon built and still serves the public as the Lindsay Manor Hotel.

It was here in this old home on South Adams, as I grew up that my parents, from time to time, would mention some small matter they recalled about early days in Knightstown.

My father once mentioned a small, shallow pond located a few rods north of the present site of the Post Office, where he and other boys enjoyed ice-skating. That would have been about in the eighteen fifties. He told me that his grandfather, Waitsell M. Cary, had a small orchard on that part of his farm which we would now describe as being just north of Main Street and west of Franklin.

The first road northward out of Knightstown was out Adams Street then up that winding pike to the old Quaker Settlement at Greensboro.

And even I can remember that when I was almost a teenager, let's say in the eighties, I drove my pony hitched to a buggy down a good graveled road which started at the east end of Morgan street and led toward the northeast down to a ford in Blue River, the road being cut into the side of the hill, where in later years, the ground was covered with "the town dump".

After fording Blue River, the road led east to the site of Daniel Heaton's Grist Mill, which obtained power from Buck Creek and was located on the very old Post Road leading to the Stone Quarry five miles north. The mill stood in front of the farm home of Caleb White, later that of his son Edmund White. It was the boyhood home of Mr. Cecil White, who now lives two miles north of Knightstown, and his brother, the late Wayne White.

A short distance east of the Grist Mill, on the north side of the east-west road, (present Peaceful Valley neighborhood, I believe) was a Woolen Mill where blankets were made. My Uncle Tilghman Fish was in some way connected with the operation of this Woolen Mill, I heard him say in later years. Uncle Tilghman was also associated with my grandfather, Harvey Bell, in the hardware business and was a Director of the Citizens' National Bank of Knightstown.

And, by the way, that "Post Road" mentioned above, was the first road leading into this settlement. Mail was picked up from the Ohio River Boats at Madison and brought north. Coming along the west bank of Blue River from the south it led to West Liberty (that old village which in 1825 and thereabout stood where Harvey Hopkins now lives, southeast of K-town) and from there it turned east on what later became the State Road, forded Blue River, just north of where the present bridge to the Home is located, thence north through Raysville. The next road, the State Road, authorized by the Indiana Legislature started on the State line east of Richmond, thence west. It led to West Liberty. Not until 1827 was our National Road surveyed and Knightstown platted.

And now, back again, to Adams and Main Streets and "up on the hill" as we used to say, to that squat little very old, one story brick on the brow of the hill, south side of Main, where Mr. and Mrs. Tobias Hoover lived. Toby made and repaired harness in a small frame shop which stood a rod or so back from the side-walk about where the Post and Post Store is now. Below their house was a greenhouse operated by their nephews.

A house I shall never forget was that of my grandfather Bell's neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. John Weaver, the maternal Great-Grandparents of Mrs. H.C. Gordon of N. Washington St. This neat two-story brick house stood for many years on the north side of Main street, a half block east of the Public Square and just east, across the alley, from the Shipman House. It was built flush with the sidewalk, and served well both for both Mr. Weaver's business in the west side, and for a home, with a front door toward the east end which opened on a long hallway running entirely through the house.

In summer when that front door happened to be open one caught a glimpse of a small back yard, enclosed by a high white fence, and a bit of well-trimmed lawn. Sometimes, to the delight of the neighborhood children, Mrs. Weaver's brilliant and talkative Poll Parrot was to be seen in a huge cage swung just outside the front door.

In the west room, John Weaver had an old-time Apothecary Shop, a Jewelry store and a repair department for clocks and watches. Be assured, this gentleman was well informed and skilled in all departments.

About the turn of the century this house burned and Mr. Weaver retired from business. However, he and Mrs. Weaver immediately built a new brick house, the second house west of Front Street on Main, where these well-known and esteemed citizens spent their declining years. About 1901 the Station for the new Electric Railway line was built on the site of their old home.

Another old brick house stands out in my memory, a small, cozy place tucked away at the bottom of the hill at the northwest corner of Adams and Pine Streets. There lived two fine elderly Quakers, with their daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Kern the grandparents of the late Mrs. Emory Cox of Brown Street. Eighty five years or so ago it seemed to me that the whole upstairs of that house was filled with a large wooden loom; and I was one of the small boys of the neighborhood who was permitted to stand back in safety against the wall and watch Mrs. Kern weave rag carpets .

It was a common custom in those days for the thrifty house wife to save all rags. These were cleaned, dyed various colors, cut into inch strips, sewed end to end and wound into large balls. These balls, Mrs. Kern, with amazing dexterity, passed from one hand to the other across the loom, as she jammed some noisy pedal, and out onto a huge, spool rolled, yard-wide rag carpet . I thought it was a veritable miracle!

South Adams Street was a pleasant place for a gang of barefoot boys to be on a summer afternoon as they plodded through the dust on their way to the swimming pool with the long sand-bar at the railway bridge over Blue River. Blue River was a stream of good size in the eighties. The railway tracks ran level with the street. If a guy was "game", he could dive off of the tracks into the river.

Where the track crossed South Adams was a pumping station, and water from the nearby mill-race was pumped into an immense wooden tank elevated on heavy timbers. Here the locomotives stopped for water. Lucky lads if we happened to be loafing around and saw this operation! Perhaps the Fireman would jump down with his jug to get fresh water from the spring which flowed from the bank of the mill-pond. Of course the gang would stop at that spring too. We thought that water was the coldest in town because just back west of it stood the Ice-House, where ice cut from the mill-pond in the winter, was stored between layers of sawdust to be delivered to Knightstown customers during the summer. Be that as it may, everyone in K-town came to that spring for a drink when nearby. And, about that ice... No electric refrigeration then, of course! No electricity! Either the cellar or an ice-chest. "Fifty pounds today, please, Mr. Ice-man"!

And so the gang loitered around the huge water tank, some of the guys trying to make out the mysterious marks cut into the heavy tank supports by those traveling spalpeens, the tramps and hobos who "hung about" the place at night hoping to "ride the road", steal a ride under the freight cars.

Finally, after the fastest passenger train in the US, the Cannonball Express, had zoomed past at sixty miles per hour, we, somewhat lazily, started home from swimming, stopping only long enough for a look-in at the door of the Cooper Shop. It was a few doors south and across the street from the old Catholic Church, where John Crouch and his sons made flour-barrels for the several flour-mills between Greensboro and Knightstown. South Adams Street in those days was really a place of interest on a hot summer afternoon, if you happened to be just a boy. Now, that South Adams is not there!

I doubt if a boy could even dig up a piece of beautifully glazed brick which had been accidentally overheated, a reminder that once upon a time bricks were manufactured on the hillside south of the house at Adams and Jackson where Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Mettel now live.

That gang of lazy boys? They grew up! In later life one of that gang superintended the installation of the elevator in the Washington Monument. Going up, Sir !"

I am still trying to tell you about the old East End of town, the first part populated, as it was in the eighteen eighties and before but I do allow myself to ramble with some story that comes to mind, some incident.

Front Street? Front Street was wide and not much used, a dandy place to play tin-can-polo because little traffic except an occasional Grocery Delivery Wagon. (Every Retail grocery in town sent out a Delivery Boy whom they paid about \$1.00 per week to deliver groceries from a spring-wagon.)

The street, two blocks long, ended at the Pike, with the large frame house of W.N. Bell on the west side, and east across the street the comparatively new, square, two story frame house of Solomon Hittle, which, as did the Bell house, offered a fine view of the Blue River Valley and the hills beyond. The Hittle house also had the distinction of being built on the site of the camping place of Jonathon Knight and his crew of Surveyors as they surveyed the National Road and made the original plat of the town of Knightstown. Now, all that remains of that Camp Site is A-I-R . Below is a place to wash cars. Well OK, we do like to have clean cars. None of Solomon Hittle's family are here

On the next corner north stood the one story home of Captain Valentine Steiner, Civil War Veteran, and this house, "they say", was once upon a time used as a school building, and south of this house was a new two-story frame, next, the home of McClung Cameron, grandfather of Don Cameron, presently of Knightstown. Both McClung Cameron and his wife, of the Brosius family, were of pioneer Knightstown, parentage. Mr. Cameron was a Civil War veteran and a member of the famous old Knightstown Silver Cornet Band in which two of his brothers and my father played at the close of the War.

Down over the hill from the former Camp-site of Jonathan Knight and his crew of surveyors was the west end of the covered bridge over Blue River and here, on the north side of the pike was a small cottage with a narrow front porch flush with road Here lived the toll-gate keeper Mrs. Davis and her three children. Mrs. Davis was a widow, and highly respected in the community. She was the grandmother of the late Courtney Armstrong.

About three hundred feet below the bridge was a mill-dam across Blue River which backed the water up and gave a wide area for ice-skating. Ice was also cut from this place and stored in a large ice-house on the west bank of the river a few rods south of the bridge. And now the whole of Blue River, such as it is today, has been moved toward Raysville, and spanned by a concrete bridge. It should be remembered too, there were no toll-gates in the days of the Stage Coach.

The two blocks of Front Street ended on the north with a noisy sawmill and a noisy noon whistle, by which folks set their clocks and across the pasture north of the saw-mill was a slaughter-house, (and no Lysol). A map of K-town in the early eighties would have shown many large vegetable gardens and, of course, fewer houses than today. For instance, Joshua Welborn lived for many years in the cottage at the south west corner of Adams and Warrick; and the remainder of that lot, from his house to the alley south and to the alley west was a vegetable garden. The house you live in, Tom, was undoubtedly one of the several brick houses built at the close of the Civil War It was occupied for many years by Mr. and Mrs. James Mills who came from Wales and became substantial citizens of Knightstown.

Until 1871 the School Yard was probably still a corn field. Here let me pause to say farewell to that huge flat rock, familiar to hundreds of old KHS students, which for almost ninety years lay beside the path a few rods south of the front door to the old school building. That rock was part of "Old Knightstown"! I ate my lunch on that rock when I went to Kindergarten. Yeah, an apple and some cookies!

At that time I was too small to notice, but in later years I discovered names carved on that rock and at the top of the list was that of one of our most distinguished citizens, the late Honorable L. P. Newby, first graduate of the Knightstown High School in 1876, and, he was the only student who was graduated in that class! Names of other students were there, partly obliterated over the years by the shoes of youngsters and the weather, but enough of the original carving there to show beyond any doubt as to why the stone was placed there. (For exact date above I am indebted to the School Office).

Well, it had to go. The kids had thought up a dandy new game which they called "Try to Gently Push me off the rock, So-o-o the "All Wise Powers" in the School Office decided that either the rock would have to be carted off and buried or the kids would have to be. The dear old rock lost! Leaving the school yard, one climbed over high steps built at intervals in the whitewashed board fence, town cows, you know) and out on north Adams Street again: But North Adams ended at Morgan Street and, across Morgan in the field was a Flax Factory owned by John Casely, who, with his wife, had moved here from England.

That Flax Factory! Even today I have to shudder when I pass that spot. The boiler blew up and killed two men! This was probably the first great catastrophe in our little village and as I was a boy at the time all details seemed to impress me. I stood in the crowd which had gathered on North Adams in awed silence.

We had no ambulances hereabout in those days. A grocer's delivery wagon was pressed into service to take the dead man home. We had no Mortician's Parlors. The crowd waited with morbid curiosity! Respectfully, the crowd separates as the delivery wagon passes through. Sure, crane your necks! That's a horse-blanket which covers the man, since there was nothing else handy; and, if his legs are sticking out over the back end of the wagon, and jostling about grotesquely as the wheels bounce over the stones in the road, it can't be helped. The wagon was made to deliver your groceries to your kitchen door. A group of kind neighbors were waiting with a young widow and two little tots. As Charles Dickens might have said, it would bring tears from your eyes and a handkerchief from the pocket".

Next, the funeral! Yes, we had a hearse. It was black, with long glass panels to show the varnished black wooden coffin. Let's spell that in big letters B L A C K. To me that hearse was blacker than a black cat on a dark night. It was hauled around by two jaded black horses. The driver wore a black suit of clothes, wore a black derby, wore black gloves, wore his mouth properly and ceremoniously drawn down at each corner the Undertaker ditto, with one exception, a white collar to make the black look blacker. There you have it, so much for the hearse and let's omit the funeral; I'm gettin' skairt! But, Thomas Mayhill, I'll bet you a pewter dollar that Undertaker wore black night-shirts when he went to bed. Know somethin', I despise black!

But stay with me, I've got an antidote: Down on the east side of the Public Square, right where the Alhambra Theatre now stands, was a vacant lot with a well-kept grassy spot near the front. It was the parking place for the Band Wagon of the Knightstown Silver Cornet Band. And there that magnificent four-wheel chariot stood in all its glittering, golden glory! It is trite to say this Band Wagon was a Work of Art, yet, with the hand-carved ornaments, and the brilliant colors and the artistic use of gold-foil to embellish the whole, it would have attracted special attention in the parade of the Greatest Show on Earth. That lot on which the Alhambra now stands is also of the interest because on the east end of that lot stood the barn where the Virginia thoroughbreds were kept, relay horses for the stage coaches. There they were given lovin' care by those alert stable-boys, and led out, prancing, ready for the quick change to the on-coming stage and the lively gallop out of town at the crack of the "stager's" whip. That barn was huge and vast. Once upon a time, so old Knightstown folks used to tell, a little boy who didn't mind his ma strolled into that barn and got lost, and they never DID find him! Directly across the Public Square was another very large barn, a Livery Stable; and north of that a horse-shoe shop. On the corner stood a frame house.

When the town was platted, Waitsell M. Cary gave the west side of the Public Square for a Market Place: but hogs and cattle became unpopular there, so a hitching-rack was set up. The mounting-block for ladies who came on horseback using side-saddles, of course, was set on the sidewalk across the street at the southwest corner of Main and Washington. I wonder why! Perhaps, because Wilson had a dry-goods store over there, dresses, pins, thread, etc. That polished stone block was there until Washington Street was paved.

Suppose you could have stood on that old mounting block, Tom, and looked straight east across Washington Street at that battered old two-story brick building, you would have been looking at Hittle's Corner !

Midkiff's Corner, to the present generation, but it was Hittle's Corner for years and years and years before my good friend, the late Frank Midkiff, was born. So, with all respect to my friend, I must refer to it as Hittle's Corner, though Midkiff once owned the building. Solomon Hittle, Charles D. Morgan and Tilghman Fish were young men who shared a room in the well-known Dillon House when it burned. That was along in the fifties, I believe. They stayed; and helped build the town. And this was Hittle's Corner!

Here was Solomon Hittle's Bakery and Restaurant. Here all Knightstown helped wear splinters off of that big solid oak door-step. Here they came to buy large loaves of Vienna bread for five cents. That wonderful bread was baked daily by Sol Hittle; and he also baked large, round butter-crackers and sold a pound for a nickel.

But NOW! Now a fanfare from the band ,please, please! Here Solomon Hittle served the first oyster soup ever served to the Knightstown Public. No I wasn't there; but I can well remember the small, marble-top tables in that restaurant. I could almost make a sketch of the ornamental solid walnut legs which supported those marble tops. I can, in fancy, taste Sol Hittle's famous butter crackers which he served with that soup, because, years after that time, I ate 'em.

This corner was truly a picturesque spot with a wide red- brick sidewalk from the building to the curb on the north and on the west side, far back under the large silver poplar tree, which gave ample shade in the afternoons.

At the front door, always, a pea-nut roaster whistling merrily. With the help of one of those picture post-cards from Paris, one could almost imagine a side-walk cafe there, in the shade of the big tree.

The Hittle family, before the girls grew up, and Solomon built the new house on Front Street, lived upstairs over the restaurant. I remember Sol Hittle as a short, rotund man with a long, bushy beard which flowed out luxuriously over his, shall I say, vest and which he constantly stroked, seemingly with some show of affection as if it were a pet kitten.

The family used a corner of the large bakery as a dining room-kitchen, and, in summer enjoyed the long back yard which was tightly enclosed by a high, white-washed fence. From the back door, a brick walk ran under a long grape arbor to that small house at the south end, which George Washington would have modestly mentioned as "The Necessity".

Just over that high fence and across the alley was a long frame Livery Stable owned by George Davey, facing across Washington Street a huge brick building, the part of Bell's Hardware Store where farm implements were sold. Just north of that, across the alley, Ora Walling's meat market where a good round steak cost 30 cents, a chunk of beef liver free for kitty from that always on the block. And if some guy with a plebian appetite had a hankerin' for Liver an' Onions, he could get a big slab for a dime. At that time liver had not joined the aristocracy along with T-bone steaks and such.

The Ora Walling family lived in a two-story frame just south of Davey's Livery Stable on the corner of Washington and Jackson. George Davey with his wife and daughter lived in that trim two-story brick which still stands just east on the north side of Jackson.

Incidentally, with the Livery Stable, the Meat Market and Hittle's Bakery thus located cozily together, that was the gathering place for all the flies from miles around. They were as numerous and sassy as ants at a Sunday School picnic. Even then we had screens, not wire screens, of course, but we had beautiful green, cotton-mesh screens which looked well and quite encouraging, especially on a restaurant door, until a dashing rainstorm tore them to shreds on a hot summer day when they were most needed or until the traditional Bakery Cat wanted in or wanted out, and playfully pawed a big hole. Fly swatters had not been invented at that time either. Well, perhaps Sol Hittle spread some of that beautiful green netting over his pans of Vienna bread and Butter Crackers.

That was along in the eighties and I was busy playing with my gang up and down those nearby streets. We played on the piles of lumber while they were building a new Methodist Church at the corner of Jefferson and Jackson Streets. Naw, we didn't bother nothin', cross my heart!

I've got to tell you about George Davey. At the time I first mentioned George Davey I was just one of the barefoot neighborhood kids who played marbles on his sidewalk; and he was the Liveryman who sat most of the day tilted back in a straight chair with his heels hooked over the front round, his slouch hat down over his eyes, smoking a cigar and waiting for a customer .

Several years later, I sprouted out in long pants, a white shirt and an adam's apple and clerked in my dad's Drug Store on Main Street while I went to Knightstown High School. It was there I really became acquainted with George Davey. He came every day to buy cigars, "stogies", and always tarried for a little chat. So who was this George Davey, you're askin' me. Well now! He was a Stage Coach driver!

It was in the Nineties when I knew him, fifty years after his Stagecoach days, a touch of gray at his temples, clear blue eyes, of slight build with a firm jaw and tight lips. It was not difficult to imagine him as a young man of twenty-five, one of those intrepid "pike-boys" with plenty of muscle, plenty of "nerve", and "guts" and a large vocabulary of choice expletives who could drive a Stagecoach in all kinds of weather with dash and hurrah. The toast of the taverns!

Imagine yourself a passenger on the old National Road with several others some cold winter night, the road dark, a blizzard blowing drifts; and George Davey has jumped into the driver's seat, cracked his whip, and those Virginia thoroughbreds are off on a run while you are being jostled about for mile after mile .But young George Davey gets you through. Wouldn't you give him a friendly slap on the back and, if your stop happened to be at Cary's Tavern in Knightstown, wouldn't you all be happy to get inside before a crackling open fire and also happy to get a little gurgle from the jug which was kept under the counter for such emergencies. But, I did know George, of course, and that ride is just a "pipe-dream".

However, I recall distinctly a little story he told me one day in the drug store, as he lit his cheap cigar and began to puff, he turned toward me with a little smile and remarked: "You may wonder, my boy, why I always call these twisted, two-for-a-nickel cigars stogies". Well, that was what we called 'em back in the old "pike days". You see, they were popular with the boys who drove the big Conestoga Freight Wagons, made in Conestoga New York; and, as these boys passed through Wheeling, where these cigars were manufactured, they always laid in a supply to last them throughout their trip. These Drivers were known along the old Pike as "Stogies", so, as the cigars became popular with folks along the road, they were also called "Stogies". That's what George Davey, the old Stage-Coach Driver told me. I am writing this in 1969 about seventy-five years since he told me the story: and I believe cheap cigars are still called "stogies".

Now about that "pipe-dream" where I told how the tired, cold, stagecoach passengers hurried into the tavern of my great grand father, Waitsell M. Cary, just east of the Public Square , warmed themselves before an open fire and each enjoyed a gurgle from the little brown jug which he kept under the counter. Hark ye, Tom, that little brown jug, part of old K-town, is now kept as an heirloom in the home of the great, great grand daughter of Waitsell M., Mrs. Elsa Heaton Gubser in Oklahoma. I'm told that a jug under the counter was not frowned upon in those days. But I am not attempting to defend my venerable relative. I never knew him but I do know that he was a Methodist; and he and his brother, Sammy, whose farms joined along what is now the south side-walk on Jackson Street, donated the ground for the first Methodist Church built in Knightstown. Me, I drink milk!

So leaving George Davey to enjoy his "stogies" do you know that once upon a time there was a Knightstown-Shelbyville Railway via Carthage with wood burning locomotives and, for the rails, sheet metal nailed on heavy timber? Well, there was such a railway, with a sidetrack to the Commercial Flour Mill on Blue River two miles below town; and my dad told me that his father took him for a ride on that railway when he was a little boy, say around 1850. The Conductor was William Penn Hill, later Cashier of the First National Bank and the grandfather of William and Henry Sitler.

I knew William Penn Hill, a jovial, kindly gentleman and for many years a Ruling Elder in the Bethel Presbyterian Church. It was he who built the house at 316 North Washington Street. Now the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Luther A. Pidgeon. When this substantial old brick house was built in 1867 it was the only house thereabout north of Carey street excepting a low brick house set flush with Cary just a few rods east of Jefferson Street . The house of Mr. Hill occupied a large yard with entrance on Cary Street. Where Washington Street now is was doubtless still Cary's corn field, since Waitsell had been dead but two years.

As we go south on Washington Street, another very old brick house is that occupied now by Mrs. Phil Parker; then, at the north end of the public square the home for many years of Mr. and Mrs. Noah Wagoner. Mr. Wagoner was Teller at the First National Bank. I don't know the age of this house, but I do know that Mrs. Wagoner was my Sunday School teacher when I was in the Infant Class; and, she had two cute little girls about my age in the class. Well, so what! I'm merely trying to Guess the age of that house, say 100 years.

In looking about, I find very few old frame houses to mention, because they have disappeared . There was once a one story frame on the corner east of the Wagoner house built flush with the inner sidewalk line, and it enjoyed the distinction of having its own sidewalk of heavy oak boards from the house to the curb. Along the curb five or six silver poplars had been planted. At the corresponding corner on Adams and Brown was another small frame house. There was nothing unusual about the house, but the man who lived there had a strange occupation: did nothing but sew strips of carpet together.

In writing about Lemanowski a few weeks ago I told about the house at the northwest corner of Pine and Washington. There are two interesting brick houses just north, which have been there as far back as I can remember, which just about puts them in the "Century-old Class" but no dates are available. The second house from Pine is now own by Mr. and Mrs. John Shields and the third is the home of Mrs. Lena Faulkner, whose father, Benton Wilkinson, bought the house in 1882 from William Edwards, my grandfather's brother who came to Knightstown in 1835.

Tom Mayhill, I've written a painfully long letter to you. All you asked was that I jot down some memories of old Knightstown and the old houses, which to me meant according to the original plat, from Jefferson Street east. That, I have done with the exception of a few houses on South Jefferson where records seem unobtainable.

The same condition on North Jefferson, excepting that there is one house there upon which I always look with a feeling, akin to reverence. That is the one story brick on the east side, the second north of Warrick, where on a June evening in 1902 I was married to Era Woodard, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Horace Woodard, the elder sister of Mrs. R.L. Bell of North Washington St., and sister of the late Earl Woodard of Texas. She was a brilliant scholar at Earlham taught at Knightstown. Seven years later she died.

I have no date but am sure 100 years ago the brick house on the corner just south of the Methodist Church was built; and from my earliest memory, there lived Moses Heller, his wife Barbara and their family, Meyer, Sallie and Herbert. This Jewish family, the only Hebrews, in town, enjoyed the respect, and I may say, the affection of the entire community. In the severities, before his semi-retirement Moses and his brother-in-law, Sam Meyer operated a men's clothing store. Mose owned a farm northwest of town. Their son, Meyer became a member of a large Department Store in Newcastle; Klein, Scott Heller, and later, the owner of apartments on south 14th street. Herbert became owner of the first large Greenhouse in New Castle, if I am not mistaken, and was in a way responsible for the fact that New Castle is known as "The Rose City. His son, Herbert Heller, Jr., is on the faculty of the Baldwin-Wallace College at Berea, Ohio. So our good neighbors, Moses and Barbara, finally moved to Main St. in New Castle. Sally Heller married Mr. Klein of the New Castle Department Store and some time, later they moved to Cincinnati. Sally, by the way, became a very fine pianist. I was always made welcome by her and Mr. Klein when I lived in Cincinnati (1912-14) and was not surprised to find two side by side grand pianos for the enjoyment of Sally and her friends, for her closest friends were members of the faculty in the piano Department of the famous Cincinnati College of Music.

During one of my visits in Sally's home she told me that before she was grown, she accompanied my dad when he sang in public, and that blocks were tied to the pedals so she could reach them. Always, she asked about K-town.

The tall brick house across the street, southwest corner of Jefferson and Jackson, was built by Crickmore, a saloon keeper. There was an old K-town story about Crickmore who was threatened with Delirium Tremens on account of overdoses of his own whisky. After a summer shower, some of the "bar-flies" who loafed on his sidewalk picked up a small frog and decided to "put one over" on the old man. Accordingly, they lined up at the bar, ordered drinks all around and invited Crickmore to join them. When his back was turned for a moment, one of the jolly jesters dropped the little frog into Crickmore's glass of whisky where it began to kick about in a lively manner. One of those wags at the bar called "Bottoms up." Crickmore lifted his glass, saw the frog through bleary eyes and set the glass down. Again, as he held the glass toward the light, and there was that froggie. What's the matter, old man, ain't you gonna drink with us?" came from the end of the bar. Crickmore was speechless. He passed his glass of whisky across the bar for inspection, but of course no one saw anything in it but whisky. Again he was urged to join the crowd and drink it down. But, for once, Crickmore, set the glass down without even a sip, and waddled out. The "Bar-flies" had had their joke.

I never saw Crickmore, he died. That story was told to me over sixty years ago by an Old Timer. But I did see Crickmore's wife. Everyone in old Knightstown saw Crickmore's wife.

After he died she moved one square west to the one story frame on the corner east of the Presbyterian Church. She owned a saddle horse which she rode about town frequently.

Take it from me, Tom, Lady Godiva, in all her glory never attracted more attention than did Lady Crickmore! Now don't get me wrong. Lady Crickmore used a sidesaddle, as was proper for all ladies in early Knightstown days and she wore the conventional riding habit with long skirt which fell some inches below the stirrup, but, in a day when it was frowned upon, she wore rouge! If she had only known how, but she didn't! Her face looked as if she had spread it on with a putty knife! Land sakes! Her face was as red as the sun just peepin' over the horizon on a foggy morning! If she could, she would have blushed to hear folks titter as she rode along the street. But that wasn't all..!

Now tighten your seat-belt, she wore plumpers ! Just in case you don't know, "plumpers" were little devices sold to ladies "under the counter", so to speak, to make sunken cheeks look as if they were not sunken. In other words, to give that fresh girlish appearance to those who were approaching the elder citizenship stage of life. I am told they were made of beautiful pink celluloid, shaped somewhat like very small saucers, came in various sizes, convex on the side that fitted next to the cheek. These darned things some women pushed in their mouths and pressed 'em in place on each side of their jaws. At present I'm tellin' you the truth, Tom!

Well, our Madam Crickmore failed to try them on for size when she bought her pair, and they were too big. They were much too big. They were very much too big! But she wore the bloomin' things when she rode that old nag up and down the streets of old K-town. She looked as if she had split a golf-ball and shoved the halves in at the sides of her jaws. I hesitate to mention it but even some of the most polite people in town giggled when Lady Crickmore rode along!

Again, I'm off on a tangent. Just happened to think of a "date" I had with my mother when she was a young woman of thirty three and I was just pushing a robust four. So what, I took her to a Fourth of July Celebration held in the Knightstown Fair Grounds, July 4 th, 1880, when the Fairs were held north of town in Ithamar Stuart's Grove, west of his house. Later, in the nineties, the Fairs were held south of the Stand Pipe, west side of road. I found mother a good seat in the Grand Stand where she could see the horse-races; and when the man came round with taffy and pop-corn I saw to it that she was well supplied. What more could a guy do! In answer to one of my questions, I learned that the lady sitting, down there in the carriage by the race track was Mrs. Benton Wilkinson from Maple Valley; and those boy climbing over the wheels and getting their Sunday clothes soiled, were hers, Claude and Aubry. Aubry was Martha Wilkinson's father. The family moved here in 1882.

Among our old houses, the ancient brick house at 517 W. Main Street, the home now the home now of Mrs. L.S. Shafer, is one which is of particular importance both from an architectural point of view and for historical reasons.

To elderly Knightstown citizens, the name Lehmanowski has for many years suggested a shadowy, mythical personage identified with old Knightstown. Now, thanks to an article from the quill of my old scribbling friend, Henry Wood of New Palestine, I have the true story about this man, Col. John J. Lehmanowski. A yellowed abstract of title discloses that he who had been a prominent officer under Napoleon Bonaparte and had fought in the Battle of Waterloo, once owned a house and was a citizen of old Knightstown. (See the Indianapolis Star of 10-5-1952)

A well authenticated story has it that Lehmanowski was an aide to the celebrated Marshal Ney and served with him during campaigns in Egypt, Russia and Italy, as well as at Waterloo. After Waterloo these officers with several others were arrested and sentenced to death, but escaped and came to America. Eventually Marshal Ney is said to have secretly visited Col. Lehmanowski in Knightstown. The above story was verified by Miss Christine A. Reising of Louisville, Ky. The great, granddaughter of Col. Lehmanowski. Also, I have a memo given me by my father, born in 1846, saying that Col. Lehmanowski preached in a Lutheran Church located across from the Presbyterian Church Manse on Jackson Street, one of his boyhood memories.

And now, about that comfortable, very old brick house, located far back in one of the largest yards in town. Memories, It has perhaps been seventy years since I was in that house, a guest from time to time of the cultured and genial family of William Beeman with groups of my High School friends. How vividly I recall that long but very cozy living room, with plenty of daylight coming through tall windows on the south which opened onto an inviting porch entirely across the house! The exquisite workmanship shown on the woodwork, every inch of it then, down broad steps to an inviting basement kitchen where corn always popped with a merry pop and taffy always pulled to a proper degree of stickiness. Here again, doors opening to a porch.

The last time I passed I didn't see the old Band Stand at the very south end of that long yard! How'd THAT get there? Why Tom!, back in the "gay nineties" that Band Stand was at the south end of the Public Square: and every Saturday night in the summer I played B flat clarinet with the Knightstown Boys' Band up on the second floor of that circular building Mrs. Phil Parker's dad played another one right next to me. And where are all those boys.?

Down stairs in that "round-house" Jim Wilson cobbled shoes and boots, and discussed politics with all the loafers. Out in front, handy to the sidewalk, was one of the town pumps with an iron dipper chained to it. Dug well ? Sure, but it was covered with boards excepting where the pump went down.

There were three or four such pumps in front of the Main Street stores. The Laboratories had not yet told us about germs, sure! One such pump in front of the school house, no cafeteria in those days, no cokes, only the old dug well and the help yourself pump with the dandy big iron dipper.

Across the road from the Lehmanowski's house is an old landmark which was long ago absorbed into the newer part of Knightstown, the present home of Dr. and Mrs. George McClarnon. One can easily imagine that this was a tavern when the red stagecoaches dashed along the National Road, yet there seems to be no evidence that it was ever used as such .But let me say that there is probably no house in town where young people found a more cordial welcome and more merriment . It was, for many years, the home of the grand parents of Mrs. Maurice Holland, Mr. and Mrs. William Welborn and their family of three beautiful and sparkling daughters and two sons (one of whom died in early manhood). In the wholesome environment of this old home, the youth of the so-called "gay nineties" enjoyed many festive occasions.

A few rods north of this Grand old place, on the brow of the hill overlooking the Montgomery Creek Valley stands a house known to everyone in this vicinity on account of its beautiful location and its unusual architectural style, with a cupola on top. In the days of early Knightstown, this house, built in 1870, was known as the Probasco House, because the builder, then a Knightstown merchant was a scion of a well-known Cincinnati family . It is now the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Rula Jones. The Joneses enjoy the use of a Carriage House for a garage. Where else would one find a Carriage House?

I recall that, when I was a small boy, I spent a happy day in this house, my parents and the family then living there were friends. I think I spent most of the day up in that cupola looking over the town and the creek valley. The records indicate that it was only a few years after this house was built that it became the home of John Morrison, Treasurer of the State of Indiana. Dates seem indefinite; but one son, Robert was there in 1902, See Biography of John Morrison by the late L.E. Rogers, in the Knightstown Public Library.

For the glory of Old Knightstown let me digress to mention that one daughter Sarah Morrison was the first woman student to enter Indiana University, where she was graduated with honor; and, a rare coincidence, another woman native of old Knightstown, Mss Blanche K. Freeman is now the oldest alumnus of Indian University at age 102.

You asked me about oldhouses in Knightstown. In fact, I wish the citizens of years ago had kept more records. I would be in doubt about my own, age were it not that I have that infallible record, the Family Bible.

But some houses I know are old because I knew the families who lived in em' way back when. The Presbyterian Manse for instance and, across the street that dignified, stately old brick now occupied by Mrs. Harry Watts. Once upon a time, the whole square was enclosed by an ornamental iron fence, the beautiful yard to that property; and there grew in profusion shrubbery and flowers. Even today, I can see the "dear little old lady", who lived there eighty years ago, gatherin' flowers in the early morning while the dew was still on the grass, her skirts modestly lifted and white pantalets to cover her ankles. Old Knightstown! On the corner one block south the solid old house built by Mr. Glass who came from, England. I refuse to make a pun it is built of brick. No date, but it looks as if it might have been there when John Hancock signed his name. There the late Heber Herkless and his wife made their home for many years; and Mrs. Herkless still lives there. Miss Ida Glass, Whose father built this old place, taught me in the fourth grade in school and told me that my writin' looked as if an old hen had been scratching, but I loved her. Her sister, Margaret, taught my Sunday School Class, and had us boys in her home every Friday night for apples and home-made cookies while she read to us from "Boots and Saddles." You may be sure we didn't miss Sunday School, nor did we miss "Boots and Saddles" on Friday nights. I salute that old Glass house !

It seems that Pine Street was always a street of substantial homes and pleasant people. On the corner just south of the Glasses was a prominent attorney Mr. Lee Ferguson and his charming wife. Next west, where Mrs. Harry Johnson now lives, was the family of Henry Woods, another son of "Uncle "Robert" and on the south east corner of Pine and Harrison, lived Lieut. Luther Welborn and his talented wife. Lieut. Welborn, a west point man and retired US Army Officer was one of those Cavalrymen who fought the Sioux Indians after the Custer Massacre. In retirement, he still was a gentlemanly fighter at Bridge, (I know!). His wife, a native of Knightstown and an exceptionally beautiful woman, possessed a wonderful contralto voice, and gave generously of her talent to all charities.

Then on down the south side of Pine to Madison, set comfortably back in the yard, is that homelike huge brick where Harry and Mary Jo Jolly keep the welcome-mat out. That house, according to records, was built in 1889, by Lowry. I knew him as one of those rugged, church-going business men. One of the young men who helped build Old Knightstown. He and his brother Frank had a tannery and a slaughterhouse way down on south Madison next to the creek, and up-town they operated a retail Meat Market .Be assured, John Lowry's house was just what it is today, outside and inside, a REAL home.

Almost directly across Pine Street, where Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Cortner now live, is a house unique in the annals of Knightstown. It was selected a few years ago as the subject of an article in a book issued by the State Historical Society by reason of the fact that the architectural design is "Gothic-Italiate", for an "old K-town" house, THAT IS something to mention! The architect is unknown. For details, I suggest that you knock on the door of the State Library.

That part of town was the new (1861) Caleb White addition to the town of Knightstown. It was about the time young Dayton Heritage started a retail Furniture Store and married. It was he who had the house built in 1866. There, it was that he and his wife brought up their attractive daughter who married John Morris a native of Knightstown. This young man studied law and became our Circuit Judge at the turn of the century. His son, John Morris II, later became our Judge, he, the late Judge Morris whom many of today knew, was the grandson of Dayton Heritage As may readily be understood, the Heritage family were among the outstanding citizens of Old Knightstown.

I remember Dayton. Heritage well, a tall man, athletic build, quick in his movements and a somewhat modified Charlie Chaplin stride. He was a hustler. With a few pounds off under his vest what a basketball player he might have made.

Of course being in a very small town with no TV, things became a bit dull at times, and "Dayt " was not loath to sitting in, now and then, on a quiet little game of five - cards - round - and - who's -got 'em, vulgarly known as poker. Now a few of his buddies knew that "Dayt" was a very keen one at this game, but the lads from the outlyin' rail-fence country knew him only as that affable furniture man who always passed around the stogies, and made room for them when they wanted to edge in at the table for a few hands. So-o-o, as the story floated all over K-town, "Dayt" confided facetiously to some of his cronies at a little celebration upon the completion of the house, that if there was a brick in that house he didn't make playin' poker, he'd like to see it. Now, to get down to the George Washington truth, that poker story may have been started by some old K-town wag who had a penchant for posing as the Baron Munchausen of the "Clothes-line News Association"! We had several of such.

There are two places in Knightstown where we have dead-end streets: the east end of Jackson and the south end of Harrison. The east end of Jackson, with the old home of the Charles family, where Lloyd and Lucile Mettle now live, walled in on the south side, and the old frame Foxworthy house on the north side, Ira Foxworthy and one of those eighteen children of the Barrett clan of K-town history. Square in front, at the end of Jackson, was that old solid brick, known of yore as "Murray's". Meet two fine elderly people, Tom, the Murrays were the great grandparents, on her father's side, of Mrs. Russell Dennis.

Col. Hamilton Johnson lives there now. Has the only basement in town opening out on a pleasant view of the hills along Blue River. The other dead end street is south Harrison where Joseph Woods with about five large acres to build on, and, as they say "nothin' to worry about but taxes", set up house keeping smack in the middle of where Harrison Street might want to run some sweet day.

Gossip passes down word that he was eccentric. Well, I dunno ! BUT, if he wasn't why in the Sam Hill did lie add misery to misery by buildin' a Family Burying Vault right in the middle of North Jefferson Street! That is to say, right where North Jefferson wanted to extend. itself beyond Cary Street. And there it was, year after year. Finally, much to their embarrassment, the City Administration had to do something, they did! So that's why we have two dead end streets instead of one very proper one which was ended by Blue River. Just as Pine Street was, which I overlooked, 'scuse me! Back there by that Woods place, where they kept house in the middle of the street. Ages ago some man wanted to build away from the growing town, have a little elbow room, perhaps keep a cow and have a little garden, built a one story brick house facing the sunshine and thought lie had built the cozies little nest for himself and his wife this side of- Paradise. Now Mrs. Patricia Gelwick has bought the place, regardless of its age, her friends say she has given it a new lease on life with modern improvements.

There was another man in that part of town long years ago, Peter Welborn, who also had a large yard. He bought a small cottage which he enlarged to take care of a large family; and there he and Lady Welborn brought up seven of the finest. That big lot was chopped down by the extension of Pine street and by the building of the Big Four Railway.

That house, built of native oak and poplar and walnut, still stands: and is the home of Peter Welborn's grandson Mr. Donald Hewitt and Mrs. Hewitt. Peter Welborn was a dealer in cattle and operator of a grain elevator on South Washington. If I were writing a "Who's Who" of Old Knightstown I could write reams about the worthy activities of this Welborn family in Old Knightstown! but I'm not.

Tom, you asked for some notes about old K-town houses, but I am tempted to try to give a little of the small affairs in daily life, some of which were echoes of the old Pike Days : An occasional covered wagon traveling east with "BUSTED" painted on the cover, where a few years before as it traveled west, the slogan read: "Kansas or Bust," Or, still following the old Pike, a gaudy wagon which stopped at every town to give a "Punch and Judy" show; perhaps one of the ever popular Medicine shows with a loud salesman wearing a high silk hat plunkin' a banjo and singing ballads. Now and then an Organ-grinder with his monkey came through town: and once, I recall, a man with a trained bear. All these followed along the National Road. In the summer time about town, most any day, one could hear the cry of an itinerant. Umbrella-mender; "Umbrellas to Mend?". He would spread his bag of tools and parts on your back porch floor and make a new one out of an old one. Then there was the man with the little emery-wheel on a frame inquiring as he passed along "any scissors to grind?, any knives to sharpen?". Roving bands of gypsies frequently camped in the Blue River bottoms and often caused a flutter of excitement when women of the tribe came knockin' on doors.

Hard to believe, we had five doctors. I remember three lawyers, four saloons, and three tailor shops where the tailors could make a suit of clothes. We had three cobblers to repair boots and shoes, one store for stoves only, one store for boots and shoes only, four livery stables, three harness repair shops and four blacksmith shops. There were four toll-gates where one paid to get in and out of town and only five churches. Five or six passenger trains east and west daily on the Pennsylvania. No other way out of town but to drive--or walk.

Groceries:

Arbuckles coffee un-ground in paper bags thirteen cents per pound.

OR, buy green coffee and roast it at home in the oven.

All coffee was ground in your kitchen.

Milk-- get it from some neighbor who kept a cow.

Peanut butter---never heard of it .

Prune juice--prunes came only with wrinkles.

Grape juice--- home-made only.

Cheese -- one kind, sold in wedges cut from huge piece about as big around as a barrel and a foot thick.

Soup-- only the kind mother made at home .

Sugar-- Brown or white "Soft A"----no granulated

Oleo-- not as yet come on the market

Hospitals ! one or two in Indianapolis, but not inviting

And no worry about an appendectomy--it hadn't become popular --you just curled up and died .

Registered Nurses--unknown hereabout.

We had Midwives and good neighbors.

A "stitch in his back," --cup him-- send for Uncle Joe with his heavy tumbler and turpentine . The remedy: A swipe of turpentine inside the glass, touch a match, clamp it quickly on the victim's back thus creating a vacuum. Repeat all over his back. He's cussin' but cured !

Well Tom, that was it! That was old, old Knightstown. I have tried to give a fairly accurate picture of the way it was in the eighties, but I did go off on a tangent once in a while. I told some unpleasant as well as pleasant things but that's the way they were and if I poked some old citizen gently in his ribs, it matters not, because I first made sure that he and all his clan are no more. Therefore, if you want to file my report you may do so with no fear of echoes.

I made no effort to tell the histories of the churches because they have their own records. I avoided stories about the roads because I was trying to stay in Knightstown. After all, this not some important document, It is just a letter telling you what I remember of old Knightstown because I was born here many years ago and have spent most of the years of a long life here. I shall always cherish a keen interest in the old town and all who live here.

In writing of my boyhood days, old neighbors, old playmates, I confess to feelings of nostalgia at times . How clearly life in my old home at 25 south Adams Street comes back. A typical evening in the living room, for instance, with my father and mother reading at the center table I recall dad's pride in a new style coal-oil lamp he had bought with a large round wick to make a brighter light. And my aged grand-father Bell in his easy chair before a, blazing log fire in the fireplace, poking the log now and then with his cane to make it blaze higher. There was I, on a stool at his side listening to stories of his boyhood in old Virginia. After one of his stories, he paused and watched the burning log a moment, then turned to me as if with something very important to say: "Now Frank, here is some Blue Ridge Mountain Lore for you to remember". Then, with his eyes twinkling he recited:

"Fly high buzzard, Fly low crow,  
Never mind the weather when the wind don't blow."

I have never forgotten the lines nor have I forgotten the aroma coming from the kitchen where mother had gone. Well known to me and welcome was the hot Sally Lunn and the Brown Betty which mother was taking from the oven. I left grandfather to take his nap.

So Tom, I end this with not even a P.S. to add.  
I am yourn till the ol' cat dies.  
Frank Edwards, March 1st, 1969