

FOREWORD

The following pages contain a series of stories which were published in The Louisville Times in May, 1955, under the title "LOUISVILLE NEIGHBORHOODS."

John C. Rogers, a Times reporter for over two decades, was assigned to write the series. Considerable information on the old neighborhoods was compiled from such sources as the Filson Club and The Louisville Free Public Library before the actual "leg work" on the neighborhoods began.

His explorations into Louisville's old neighborhoods were excellently timed. Fast industrial and population growth have almost buried these areas in the over-all character the city has acquired. However, enough remains of the individual neighborhoods to permit the lively and interesting reconstruction presented in this book.

For newcomers to the city, these stories are a shortcut to the understanding of Louisville as a whole, and for oldtimers they are a nostalgic view of the past. There are still many citizens of Louisville who were able to supply the writer with all the warmth of personal recollections and anecdotes. Mr. Rogers rediscovered and tells us about the pleasures of a simpler age—the old garden restaurants and what they served, the perils and excitements of horse and carriage travel, and the thrilling history of Louisville as a river town.

Some of these neighborhoods had their origin as separate communities and through the stories we can trace the process of growth and amalgamation that resulted in Louisville today. This is good reading for those who want to understand Louisville and know it in all its parts. Like all great American cities, Louisville is a composite of different nationalities, religions, and social characteristics. These stories unravel this blend and give us individual portraits of the city as we know it now.

Germantown

Where is Germantown?

That's a good question even among the people who live in Germantown—or think they do.

Some claim it covers a large area bounded generally by Shelby, Breckinridge, the Beargrass Creek valley south of Breckinridge, and Eastern Parkway west to Shelby.

Others admit those were early boundaries but say that Germantown has "shrunk" over the years as old families moved out and new people—many not of Germanic extraction—moved in.

The heart of Germantown is not hard to find. Just drive out Goss, Hoertz, Lydia, Mary, Charles, or Ellison and other streets in that section and by the freshly painted steps—white with a red or green strip up the middle—you will know you are there.

No one really is worried about whether he lives in Germantown or not, but there is a great satisfaction among property owners who can look about their neighborhood of neat homes and say: "Sure, this is Germantown."

This section of Louisville, where the majority of residents own their houses and their cars, is the home ground of a large number of solid, unpretentious Louisvillians.

Easy on the Police

As far as the Police Department is concerned, Germantown is not a trouble spot on its crime map.

There are bars in Germantown, but they preserve the flavor of an earlier, unhurried age. If a man, by chance, has had too much, he has friends who will see him to his door.

The conveying buddies may not know it but there is a principle of Kentucky law which states generally that an inebriated fellow is secure from arrest if he is in the custody of "sober and discreet" persons whose intentions are to see that he gets home.

There are no great mansions in Germantown. Cottages and bungalows line the streets in many parts of that area. There are some large brick houses.

Many of the yards in Germantown are small, but grass, shrubbery, and flowers are tended carefully by the householder. In some cases yards look like golf course greens.

The name "Germantown" suggests the section might provide material for a Germanic comic opera—but such is not the case. Not in the present day, at any rate.

The rotund figure, the flowing mustache, the ornamented

stein, are things of the past. So is the big, long-stemmed pipe.

The true Germantown man of today does not drink from an ornamented stein. But he does like to stroll down to the corner in the evening for a beer or two. And he feels that that is no one's business but his own.

The beer does not come to him anymore, carried by his small son in a bucket.

State law does not permit such close connection between juveniles and buckets of "suds."

But in the "old days" small boys "rushing the growler" for their fathers could step into the saloon and munch on a free "steam pretzel" while the container was being filled. Such delicious delinquency!

Real Neighbors

Not all Germantown residents hold with beer drinking. But they are a tolerant lot.

Neighbors do not force them-

selves or their views on each other, but are on hand with hot soup and kind words in case of illness or other personal disasters.

A landmark deep within Germantown is St. Michael's Roman Catholic Cemetery. You come upon its stone-pillared entrance unexpectedly at the angle formed by the "L" where Texas and Charles meet.

The oldest tombstone was erected in 1850 over the grave of Mathias Schank, born in 1785. In 1872 his wife, Barbara, was laid to rest beside him. She was 75. The words "Heir Ruhet in Frieden" are cut in the upper part of the gravestone. The English translation of the German words is "Here Rest in Peace."

Cemetery superintendent Howard Schank, who does not know whether he is related to Mathias and Barbara, said that use of German words on markers in the cemetery ended in the early 1900's.

There have been more than 25,000 burials in St. Michael's.

Weber House Is Typical

A house typical of Germantown's earlier days stands at 1477 Texas. It is thought to be nearly

100 years old. The brick house, one-story in the front and two in the rear, is owned by Mrs. Amelia Weber.

Her son, Charles Weber, 2113 Murray, said his parents moved into the house 76 years ago and that in his boyhood there the area was devoted to market gardens and dairyland. The Weber family had a market garden.

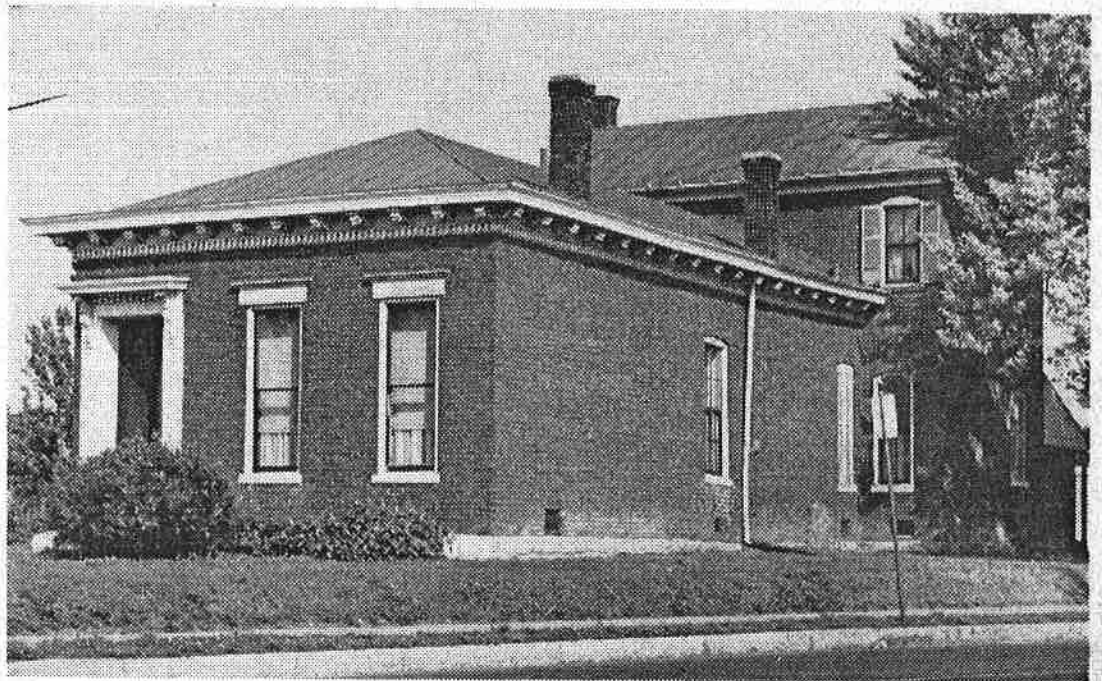
Examples of the one-story front and two-story-rear type of house are seen in all parts of Louisville but are most prevalent in Germantown.

County Tax Commissioner George Trager pointed out that in earlier days taxing authorities assessed such houses as cottages with valuations lower than for houses which were two-story at the front. Present-day assessments are on a square-footage basis, Trager said.

Area Blossomed After 1848

Germantown as a distinct section of Louisville got its start shortly after 1848, the year a large number of families came to the United States from Germany to escape political upheavals in their native land.

Some settled in Louisville, at first moving into established



By Louisville Times Staff Photographer

One-Story Front Made House A Cottage on Tax Rolls

The 90-year-old, one-time farmhouse owned at 1477 Texas by Mrs. Amelia Weber is typical in construction to many homes in Germantown. The one-story plan in front once qualified them for assessment as cottages, notwithstanding their two stories at rear.

town section.

Later, to get elbow room, they bought land and built homes in what is now Germantown but was then largely forest and field.

They settled on what had been a 1,000-acre land grant. The grant had been made in 1790 to Col. Arthur Campbell for his service to Virginia in Indian wars.

Kentucky was then a part of Virginia.

The southerly line of the grant cut diagonally across what is now the vicinity of East Oak and Mary.

Colonel Campbell died in 1811. His will set aside a good portion of the 1,000 acres for the benefit of his daughters, but provided that it must not be sold for less than \$20 an acre.

No Takers At \$20

No buyers could be found who would pay that much and the daughters got no benefit from their interest in the tract.

One daughter, Mrs. Mary Beard for whom Mary Street is named, finally went to court and got her share of the land. That section, subdivided in 1854, was where the first German families settled in Germantown.

Many kept cows and sold milk, butter, and cheese to customers in town. Oak Street was Milk Street in those days. That pleasantly rustic touch still is reflected in Germantown today where the vegetable huckster does a thriving business with housewives.

The last Germantown dairy sold its cows and went out of business in 1936. Its pastures, beside Eastern Parkway along Beargrass Creek, are in the path of progress. A large apartment development is planned there.

The dairy was started in 1880 by Fred Schurch, who came here from Switzerland in the 1860s. He died in 1927 when 79.

A son, Chester Schurch, who now farms near Newburg and Dundee Roads, said his father first had a dairy on Mary Street and later another on Ash Street before moving to the Eastern Parkway site.

As a boy the son helped out on milk routes, mostly in the Germantown section. He said that in those days, before World War I, customers put out buckets for milk on their side porches. In the buckets were coins to pay for the milk, which young Schurch ladled out from big cans on the milk wagon.

Germantown's first school, a one-room building, was built by the residents and in 1868 was turned over to the City school board. It was on Mary Street near Swan.

One of the large farms in Ger-

mantown's early days was the Snead place. It was between Oak and Goss. The house was on a hill at Swan and Ellison. A stream which wound through the farm became known as Snead's Branch.

Creek Now Is Sewer

The creek is gone now. Snead's Branch Sewer has taken its place and carries storm water to Beargrass Creek.

A part of Germantown, roughly between Goss and Shelby and out to near Eastern Parkway, is known as "Schnitzelburg" but the true reason for the distinction may be lost in the past.

Schnitzelburg includes a Louisville landmark—Fort Hill on the west side of Shelby in the 1400 block. A Civil War fort was on its crest.

Last year a part of Fort Hill was nibbled away by earth-moving equipment. The earth was used for fills and other purposes.

Germantown in the early 1900s is remembered with pleasure by many residents there and others who have moved away.

Carl A. Russman, 1215 Keswick, recalls that every grocery had its barrels of pickled pigs feet and sauerkraut.

And Fischer's Garden was at 1125 Goss. A beauty shop occupies the site now. Saturday nights were the occasion for "ice cream festivals" in Fischer's tanbark-sprinkled garden. Children ate the ice cream while their fathers sipped beer from huge mugs and sang the "Schnitzelbank" song.

Russman remembers, too, the "mud gutter bands" which played in the street—or gutter—outside of saloons. Tossed coins rewarded their musical efforts.

Fischer's closed after World War I.

Old Rivalry Recalled

A Germantown native with fond memories of that section is 62-year-old George Haendiges, who now lives in Springfield, Ohio.

In a recent letter to his son, City Police Capt. George Haendiges, Jr., he spoke of the strong sectional rivalry which existed among youthful residents of Louisville neighborhoods nearly half a century ago.

He indicated that a young swain from say, Germantown, was liable to get "clobbered" by Portland youths if he paid court to a young lady who lived in that section. And vice versa.

A neighborhood within his own neighborhood was "Paris-town," north of Kentucky and Vine and east of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad tracks.

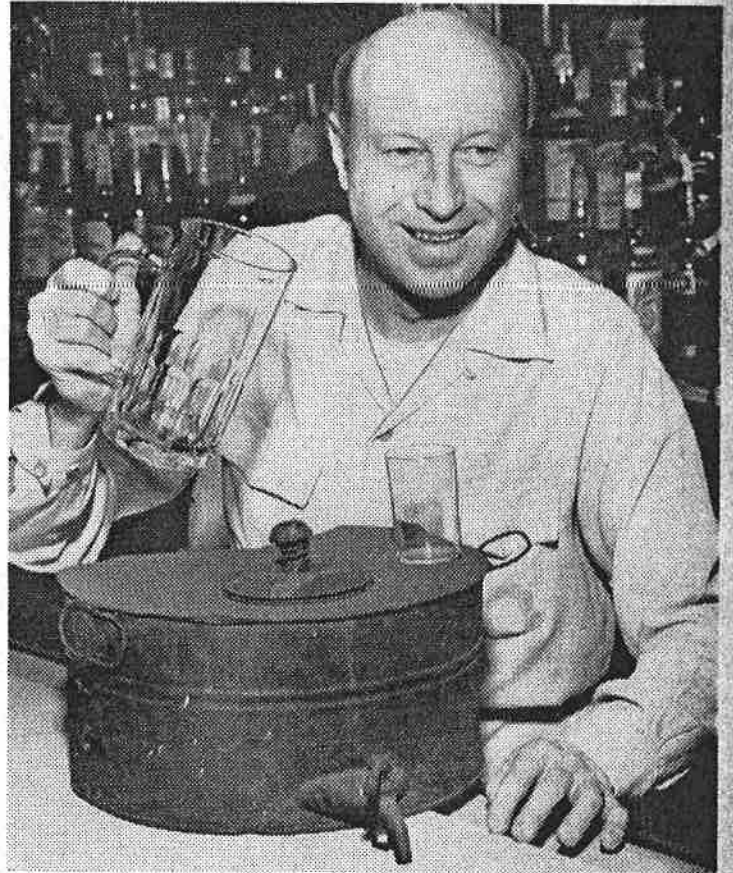
Haendiges, it appears, was a



By Louisville Times Staff Photographers

Street Scene Typical of Neatness

A typical Germantown street scene shows a row of neat cottages, many with red painted centers on their front steps, and all with crisply mowed lawns. The clean gutter shows no housewife has overlooked cleaning it, too.



A 5-CENT BEER'S SIZE in 1895 is shown by J. P. "Kelly" Thome with a 32-oz. stein in a 1953 Goss cafe. The copper container held hot water on a coal stove for Tom and Jerries.

pretty good scrapper then but he inferred that he entered the confines of Paristown with considerable trepidation. Paristowners were tough, too.

Schnitzelburg Theories

To his recollection, the Schnitzelburg section of Germantown was so named because saloons there rocked with the "Schnitzelbank" song of a Saturday night.

There are two other explanations for the "Schnitzelburg" designation. You can take your pick, lump them together, or add them as a few extra bars to the musical-origin idea.

"Schnitzel" has two meanings in German. It is a shaving—such as one planed from a piece of wood—and also is a cutlet of beef rolled in egg and breadcrumb batter and fried.

A host of Schnitzelburg men have been carpenters, wood turners, and cabinet makers. The fried meat dish also is well-known in Schnitzelburg.

Music Plus Free Lunch

Mrs. Mary Taphorn, whose family has operated a cafe at 1053 Goss for 64 years speaks nostalgically of other days when Weber's five-piece band played at her place on special occasions.

Besides the music, there was free lunch with each 10-cent glass of beer. The menu: Oyster stew, crackers, potato pancakes, fish.

Where is Schnitzelburg? Mrs. Taphorn, who after all ought to know, will point through the front window of her cafe to the west side of Goss.

"Over there," she says positively.

Neatness Is the Word

But she has a good word for the people of the area whether they live on one side of the street or the other.

"Thrifty and neat," says Mrs. Taphorn, whose family came from Switzerland.

Neatness is almost carried to an extreme by many Germantown-Schnitzelburg householders. When they sweep, they don't stop with the sidewalk. They do the gutter, too, taking up trash before their own property and the neighbors'.

Those extra licks are to keep litter from blowing into their yards from nearby.

ST. MICHAEL'S Cemetery is the last resting place of more than 25,000 persons. Many of the graves are of Germantown residents. Entrance is at Texas and Charles.



A GERMAN EPITAPH in St. Michael's Cemetery is typical of many pre-1900s ones there.

