

Prophetstown's

Other

"Main" Street

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by

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Prophetstown, IL
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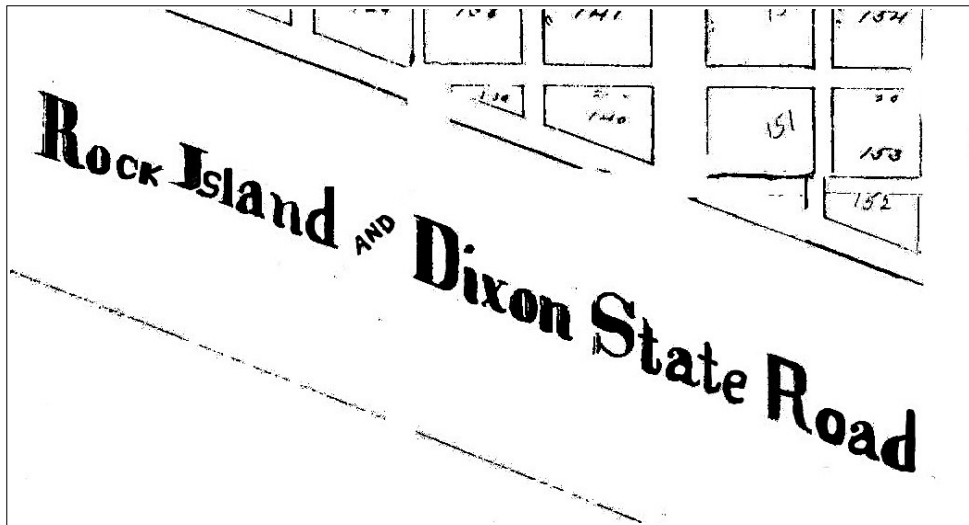
Introduction

Yes, Prophetstown did have another “main” street. If anyone here today is asked to name our main street they would say Washington Street. And that would be right, but it was not always so. Our first main street was 3rd Street. The reason for that will be explained on the next pages.

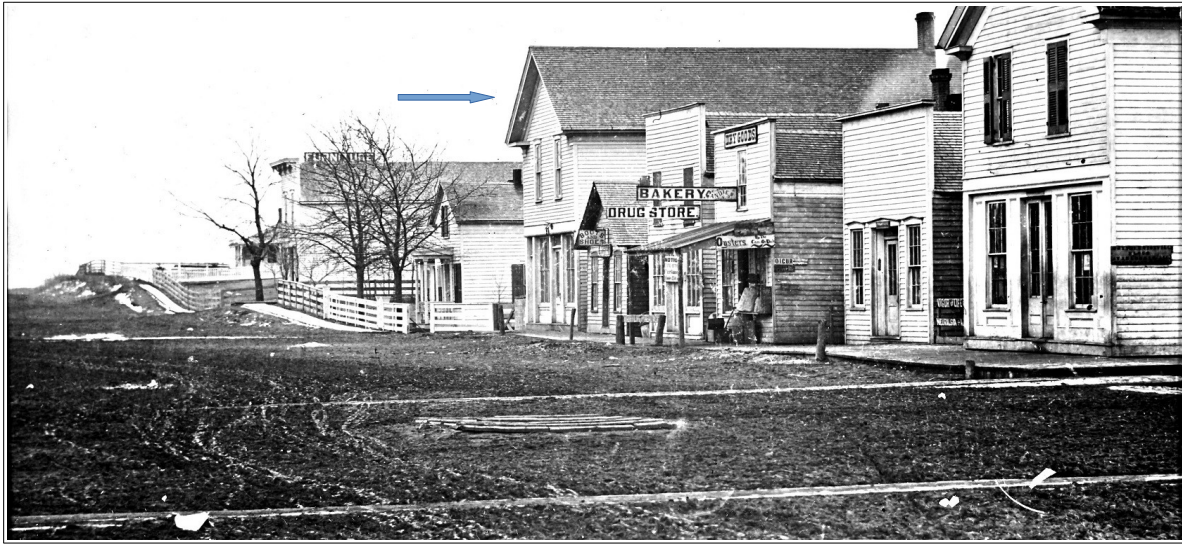
The Rock Island and Dixon State Road

The early traffic through Prophetstown flowed East-West or visa-versa. Today most of it it flows North-South or visa-versa. The latter is because of Illinois Route 78, which did not exist in our early years.

Instead our traffic flow was on 3rd Street because that street was on the route that went from Dixon to Rock Island. Notice the map below. The Rock Island and Dixon State Road flowed through our town on 3rd Street. Riverside Cemetery lay on the north side of that road.



Our first white settler, Asa Crook, built his house facing the Rock Island-Dixon Road. In those early years of travel the pace was slow. You either walked, road a horse or rode in a vehicle pulled by a horse or an ox. Since there were very, very few hotels or inns people would rent a bed in a house along the way and I am sure that was true of the Crook house.



Above is the south side of East 3rd Street looking east from Washington Street. Most businesses in those early years were located on the street that carried the most traffic, which then was 3rd Street. The building on the extreme right was later jacked up, turned to face Washington Street and became what we knew as the Sugar Bowl located at 305 Washington St. The arrow points to Rod Copeland's law office, which in the 1860s was the Masonic Hall. The large building further down was a furniture store.

Why was that building on the corner turned to face Washington Street? It was because the railroad came to town in 1871, which meant that much foot traffic was now on Washington Street.

The wooden platform in the center of Washington and 3rd covered the well which the town used to fight fires.

Below is the south side 3rd Street looking west from Washington Street. The store on the corner is now where the Prophetstown Area Historical Society building sits. The arrow points to the Annis House which was one of our first hotels.



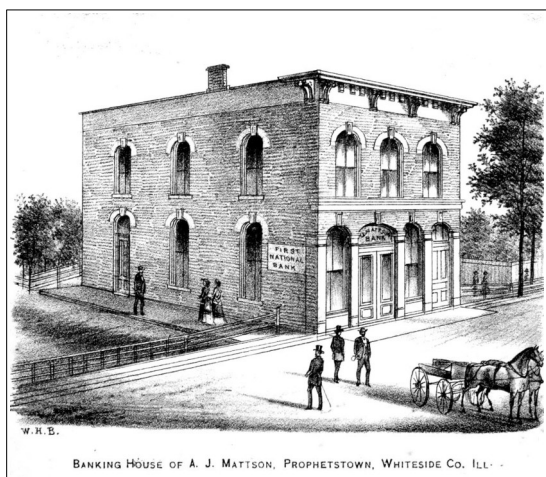
The hotel was built by Horace Annis and existed until 1908 when it was demolished. Horace, along with a couple other fellows, also built a plow factory and it sat on W. 3rd Street about where the Lutheran Church is today. Plows were an essential industry because most people then were farmers and you would want that industry to be located on the street where most of the traffic was. By 1871 it had closed and the building was in bad shape.



About 1840 this building was brought in from Portland and became the Rock River House Hotel. Back then it took a massive effort to move a building like this. There was no sheetrock then, so the interior walls of most buildings were plastered. Before a building like this was moved all of the plaster would be removed to reduce its weight, then the building would be rolled on logs and pulled by horses or oxen. The Rock River House sat about where Shaw's Market is today. It burned in 1871.



Our first brick bank building was also located on E. 3rd St. The First National Bank building was built in 1871. In its banking life it held three different banks. It began as the First National Bank, then became the Bank of Prophetstown, which later moved into a new building at 302 Washington St., which is now the home of the Prophetstown Area Historical Society. Its next bank was the Citizens Bank, owned by the Warner family. It was there until the new Citizens Bank building at 338 Washington was ready for use. The Citizens Bank closed during the Great Depression.



First National Bank of Prophetstown
112 E. 3rd St.



Citizens Bank
338 Washington St.

In 1872 this building was brought in from Portland and located on E. 3rd St. It opened for business on Christmas Day in 1872. It was needed to replace the old Rock River House, because with the arrival of the railroad in 1871 Prophetstown needed more hotel rooms. Though the railroad was bringing business to Washington Street the old Rock Island-Dixon State Road was still the main route from Dixon to what is now the Quad Cities, so placing the Seely House on E. 3rd Street made sense. We know the Seely House as the Eureka Inn. The brick building on the right is the old First National Bank building, which still stands today.

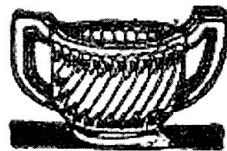
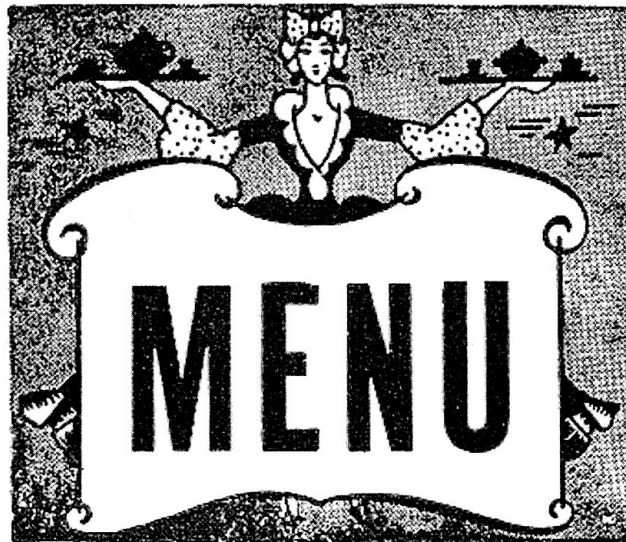


In 1938 Illinois State Route 78 opened and passed through Prophetstown on Washington Street. By this time other routes to the Quad Cities had opened, leaving 3rd Street with little of that traffic. Now the focus was on Washington Street as our “main” street. So the building on the right was jacked up, turned to face the west and now faced Washington Street. It became the Sugar Bowl and you can see the former gas station to the left of the building. In 1960 the Sugar Bowl building burned. The fire was extinguished and the building sold for scrap.

The building also held a number of other businesses including Rollie’s Chocolate Shop and a clothing store.



The old sugar Bowl building.



PETERSON'S SUGAR BOWL

MRS. BERTHA PETERSON, PROPRIETOR

PROPHETSTOWN, ILL.

BILL OF FARE

Now Serving Food Where Prices Appear

Fruits. Etc.

Orange Juice	10	Tomato Juice	10
Grapefruit Juice	5	Tomato Juice Cocktail	15

Toast and Cereals

Dry or Buttered Toast	5	Corn Flakes	10
Milk Toast	15	Bran Flakes	10
French Toast	15	Wheaties	10
Cakes and Coffee		Wheat Sparkies	10
Doughnuts	5	Shredded Wheat	10
Rolls	5	Whole Wheat Krumbles	10
Rice Krispies	10	Grape Nuts	10

Soups to Order

Chicken Noodle	20	Vegetable Beef	20
Tomato	20	Oyster Stew	
Cream of Mushroom	20	Chili Con Carne	15
Vegetable	20		

Short Orders

Steak	25 45	Ham and Eggs	40
Hamburger Steak	30	Bacon and Eggs	40
Pork Chops	40	Two Eggs, any style	25
Fried Ham	30	Fried or Boiled Wieners	30
Cold Salmon	30	Shrimp	30
Sardines	15		

(Above orders include potatoes, bread or crackers and butter, and drink)

Two Poached Eggs on Toast	15
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Salads

Potato Salad	10	Shrimp	20
Head Lettuce	10	Mixed Fruit	10
Tomato and Lettuce	10	Banana	10

Dessert

Ice Cream	5 + 10	Home Made Pies	10
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BILL OF FARE

Now Serving Food Where Prices Appear

Sandwiches

(Served on Toast 5c extra)

Boiled Ham	10	Cubed Steak	15
Fried Ham or Bacon	15	Hamburger	10
Ham or Bacon and Egg	15	Lettuce and Tomato	10
Denver	20	Bacon and Tomato	15
Egg	10	Scrambled Egg and Tomato	15
Cheese	10	Ham Salad	15
Roast Pork	15	Toasted Ham	15
Pork Chop	15	Toasted Cheese	15
Barbeque	15	Toasted Pork	15

Three Deckers on Toast

Ham, Tomato, Lettuce with Mayonnaise	25
Pork, Tomato, Lettuce with Mayonnaise	25
Bacon, Tomato, Lettuce with Mayonnaise	25

FOUNTAIN SERVICE

Sundaes

Butterscotch 15	Chocolate 15
Vanilla - 15	Marshmallow 15
Maple 15	Pineapple 15
Three Graces 15	Hot Fudge
Banana Split 20	Strawberry 15
Sugar Bowl Special 25	Cherry 15

Malted Milks - 15

Lime	Chocolate
Lemon	Marshmallow
Vanilla	Butterscotch
Maple	Root Beer
Coca Cola	Cherry
Pineapple	Strawberry

Sodas - 10

Chocolate	Maple
Pineapple	Strawberry
Root Beer	Cherry
Coca Cola	Lemon
Vanilla	Lime
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Drinks

Coca Cola	Tea, green or black - 10
Lemon	Chocolate Milk
Cherry	Hot Chocolate - - - 10
Grapefruit	Iced Tea
Lime	Pop
Orange	Lemon
Root Beer	Fresh Orangeade - - 10
Coffee	Lemonade - - - 10
Milk	-----

Bud Thompson worked in the Sugar Bowl for Bertha and Lester Peterson. Here is what he had to say about his time there: [It was] 1944-45. *Bertha Peterson owned the Sugar Bowl. Her son Lester "Baldy" helped her. They had a lunch menu and a dinner menu. The difference was lunch was smaller portions and less money. Baldy would rather be in a tavern than a restaurant. Jake Pense had a seizure and fell. He missed me, but he landed in a glass showcase. What a mess! But Jake survived. He was a good guy. We made our milk shakes with a "kinda" ice cream. It was war-time. Whenever my buddy, Dick Vandermyde came in, I would mix his shake with real ice cream. Baldy caught me one afternoon doing a real one for Dick. I nearly got fired. In later '45, I got a better job with George Brydia at his grocery store. That was an experience. He called me "General." He said when he hired me that I would learn something new every day. He was so right.*

Bud grew up in Prophetstown. Cal Schuneman did not; he moved here in the late 1940s. But he also had comments about the Sugar Bowl: *"The Sugar Bowl was the "go to" place for coffee and lunch in 1948. Mrs. Hawkinson baked delicious pies. It was located in a frame two story building about where the current post office parking lot is located. I especially remember it being operated by Bernice Gentz Oppendike Brown and her children. Her husband, John Brown worked construction out of town, but also helped out on weekends. I think it had been sold when it was later destroyed by fire. After that, Chuck's Place was the popular hang out for coffee patrons and especially teenagers."*

A ham sandwich at the Sugar Bowl in 1945 cost 10 cents. Given the inflation since 1945 that same sandwich should cost \$1.86 today. You and I both know a ham sandwich today costs a whole lot more than that.

Also on E. 3rd Street was a large creamery. It would have been about where 638 E. 3rd is today. Again, it just made sense to place a creamery on Prophetstown's "main street."



The house there now.

And there was another business on E. 3rd Street and it was the Pettit Sorghum Mill. The business was located in the area where the Asa Crook House sits today.

68 years on same farm

Memories of 'sorghum man'

By EILEEN DETRA
Dispatch Writer

PROPHETSTOWN —

Although the old cane press and cooking pans have long been gathering dust, many people still remember Will Pettit as "The sorghum man."

Pettit made and sold sorghum for 68 years before his death. His daughter, Mrs. L. A. Wagenecht, who with her husband, now lives on her father's farm on the eastern border of Prophetstown, recalls in vivid details the many steps to making the sweet delicacy which was used widely in baking and lavishly spread on homemade cornmeal bread, pancakes and biscuits.

PETTIT MADE and sold the sorghum to many local people until 1943 and also mailed gallons of sorghum to customers who lived in other states.

The going price was one dollar a gallon, with a money back quality guarantee. Each gallon weighed 11 pounds, and in the last 10 or 12 years before Pettit's death, he raised the price to \$1.25 a gallon.

Mrs. Wagenecht and her brother, Dorn Pettit, recalls the sorghum making process and how she helped her mother cook meals for the men who helped with the processing for four to eight weeks each September and October.

She remembers the fall evenings when her father would

take a pan of sorghum off the fire by the light of two kerosene lanterns and, while waiting for the sorghum to cook, would pop corn over the fire.

Mrs. Wagenecht's husband, worked for Pettit for 14 years beginning in 1933.

Mrs. Wagenecht vividly



WILLIAM PETTIT

remembers the sorghum-making process.

THE SORGHUM seed was planted each spring in a 10 to 12-acre sandy track using a horse-drawn corn planter which used small plates with especially drilled holes to accommodate the smaller seeds. The seed was gathered and saved from year to year at harvest time.

When the cane was ready in approximately 120 days, Pettit, with perhaps two extra hired hands, cut off the black seed heads and canes with corn knives and stripped the leaves from the stalk with a leaf stripper made of hickory. The seed heads were then placed in one pile and the cane in another.

THE READINESS of the cane was judged by color, and Pettit tested the dryness of the seeds by biting them with his teeth.

The cane was then gathered on a flatbed hayrack and unloaded in the yard near the sorghum mill at right angles with two six or eight foot small tree limbs spaced to allow air to circulate under the piles.

The piled cane was taken by iron wheeled carts to the mill where the cane was fed by hand, bottom first, into the three roller press that squeezed the sap out of the stalks.

SEVEN TO 12 gallons of green sap was needed to produce one gallon of sorghum.

The press was run by a 30-foot, belt-driven "Charter" gasoline engine. The pressed stalks were carried on a conveyor to a hayrack and scattered in the lot for the milk cows to eat.

The green sap ran into a short trough from the rollers onto a sieve into a tub and was siphoned through another sieve into a second tub.

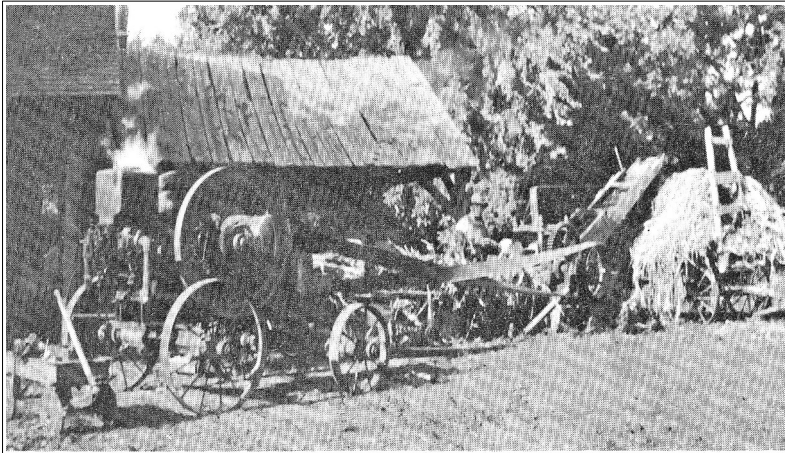
It was then dipped by pailfuls onto a finer sieve and into a 250 to 300-gallon tub. Here it was allowed to settle for a couple of hours before being drained off into the cooking pan four feet wide, 14 feet long and 10 inches high.

Three of these pans were placed on cement arches over wood fires, where the sap went through an evaporation process of four to five hours.

The sap was skimmed many times during this cooking process to remove any impurities. The skimmings were saved in large pails to be fed to the hogs. The skimmer was a large metal sieve.

THE SAP was constantly stirred with a large homemade implement made of an eight-inch cross lath on a five-foot wooden handle. This stirrer was dipped into the syrup and the "doneness" was tested by watching for it to spin a thread and looking for boiling bubbles to spread open on their tops. During the last half hour of cooking, a sheet of tin was slid over the fire in the arch to reduce the heat.

The eight to 12 gallons of the sorghum was then drained out of the cooking pans by elevating one end and pulling the plug on the other end. The sorghum was then taken by the pailful into a 25 to 30-gallon cooling tank, where it was stirred occasionally to allow the heat to escape and prevent scorching of the thickened syrup.



A "Charter" gas engine, made in Sterling, and shown in this 1927 family photo, was used to squeeze the juices from the sorghum. The battery is in the little wooden wagon to the rear of the engine. The sorghum was cooked under the roof at the end of the building.



Mr. and Mrs. L. A. Wagenecht stand in front of the building which was used in connection with the sorghum making — coolers were housed here and sales were made here. Mr. Wagenecht holds the implement used to stir the cooking sorghum and Mrs. Wagenecht holds the stripping knife used to strip the leaves from the cane. It was made of hickory wood beveled on each side like a blade. Also in the picture are two cooling pans for the finished sorghum and a tub used for green sap as it came out of the press. The taller pan is the green sap tank. Also at Mrs. Wagenecht's left is the skimmer used to take the impurities out of the boiling syrup.

Mrs. Wagenecht was the daughter of Will Pettit. She and her husband, Lawrence, lived for many years in the Asa Crook house.