

White Plains in 1876



Thanks to the creative talents and decades-long perseverance of two extraordinary White Plains residents, we have a vivid picture, in detailed sketches and informative prose, of Main Street (then called Railroad Avenue) and the village of White Plains in 1876 – 100 years after America declared its independence and 150 years ago.

In the 1920's, **John Rosch** meticulously drew sketches of both sides of every block of Railroad Avenue, from the Bronx River to North Broadway, as it looked in 1876 from photos he had taken then. And 50 years after that, **Renoda Hoffman's** lifelong research about the people, businesses and events in White Plains enabled her to provide a fascinating in-depth house-by-house story that complements the sketches and brings them to life.

This compilation of John Rosch's sketches and Renoda Hoffman's sketch-by-sketch written history are designed to help visitors more deeply understand and more fully appreciate the historic value of the sketches, which are on display in White Plains City Hall. It was created as part of the White Plains City Hall Centennial Celebration on February 22, 2026



One of John Rosch's 16 sketches is the North Side of Railroad Avenue between Court St. and North Broadway in 1876. Thanks to Renoda Hoffman's research we know that the two white houses to left of the Methodist Church are the site of White Plains City Hall which opened on February 22, 1926.

John Rosch came to White Plains in 1874 and worked as a photographer. He was interested in civic affairs and served as Village Police Commissioner, as well as the City's first Assessor. He enjoyed creating political cartoons and many appear in his 1939 history of the city, *Historic White Plains*.

He invited President Franklin Roosevelt to attend the 250th Anniversary of the purchase of White Plains in 1933 and is seen here talking with the President.



One of Rosch's most ambitious undertakings was the series of 16 drawings which he created to depict Main Street in 1876. Rosch donated the panels to the City in 1928 and they have been on display in City Hall since then.

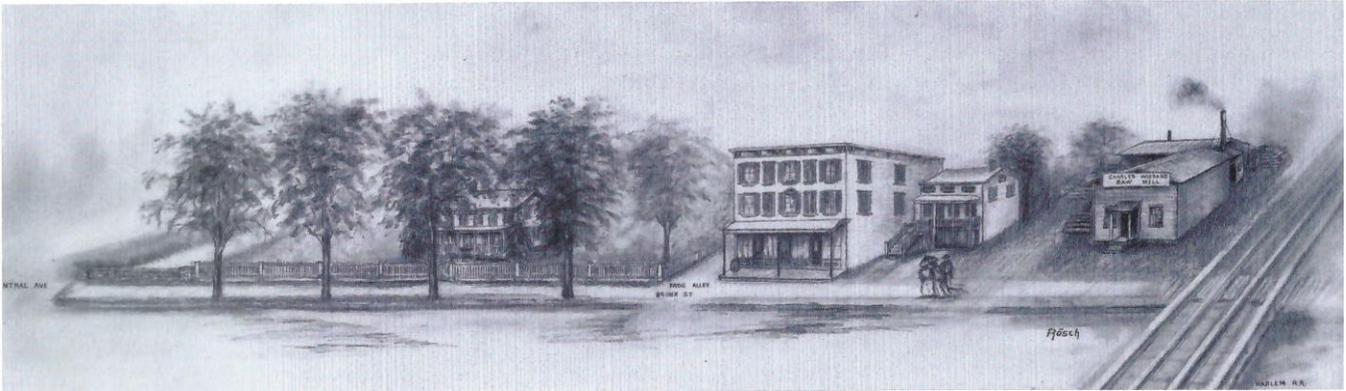
Renoda Hoffman was the City of White Plains Historian for 35 years. She wrote two books --- *Yesterday in White Plains: A Picture History of a Vanished Era* and *It Happened in Old White Plains* – as well as many booklets and articles on White Plains and Westchester History.



A founder of the White Plains Historical Society, Renoda was the first woman president of the 103-year-old Westchester County Historical Society and was Editor of the Society's magazine, the *Westchester Historian* for 20 years.

Her buoyant, friendly personality and research prowess shines through the stories she wrote to accompany John Rosch's comprehensive collection of sketches.

North Side of Railroad Avenue – Central Avenue to the RR Tracks



(Located on 2nd Floor, on Common Council Wall, on Top)

Let's take a trip back to yesterday in White Plains and discover who lived and worked in the buildings on Railroad Avenue in 1876.

Commencing at Central Avenue, left we cross the stone bridge that carries Railroad Avenue over the Bronx River. Today's bridge funnels great volumes of traffic across this river.

A white picket fence surrounds the home of White Plains attorney, Stephen S. Marshall. He was a brother-in-law of Judge John Mills, Surrogate and County Judge. Mills lived on the south side of Battle Avenue where Mill Lane, and later, Smith Street, stretched along the foot of Chatterton Hill, to dead-end at the river.

Was Mill Lane named for the judge, or for the mill that stood at the end of the lane? As business encroached, Marshall's house was moved flush with the sidewalk, and transformed into a grocery store and shoe repair shop. From here the proprietor, E. Oliva, had a grandstand view of the 1912-13 activities, when the railroad tracks were moved from Orawaupum Street to their present site, and the bridge to carry the tracks above the Avenue was constructed alongside his building.

In the 1870's, Bronx Street was also known as Frog Alley. The label was bestowed because of the great number of amphibians that receding waters of spring floodings left stranded on the street.

The three-story building on the Bronx Street corner sheltered Fred Ranscht's grocery store until he built his own three-story building across the street. Mrs. Sipps fashionable millinery shop was located here also.

William Deveson, of livery stable fame, ran a hotel in the small house where later R. Young Brothers located their office. The firm also acquired Charles Wiegand's sawmill on the west side of the tracks, an important industry of those early days. Following the turn of the century, the mill building was moved to Hamilton Avenue and Bronx Street. Boxing exhibitions were staged in the building for a short while.

An 1874 newspaper queried: "Has one of our police officers any more right to pasture his horse upon the public streets than a private citizen?"

There was only one paid police officer in our town at the time—the police chief! Sketch: City of White Plains.

North Side of Railroad Avenue – RR Tracks to North Lexington Ave.



(Located on 1st Floor, Near up stairs, on Bottom)

The four-story Union Hotel on the NE side by the railroad tracks, boasted of a large meeting hall on the second floor in which community and private functions were held. Neither the Union Hotel, however, nor the smaller Excelsior Hotel next to it, ever attained the prominence of the Orawaupum Hotel, which stood directly across the street from the Union.

F. Theodore Doll was the proprietor of the Union Hotel for many years. Its patriotic name honored our Union of States. Doll built a large house on the hill on Lake Street opposite the present Delfino Park, where his daughter, who married Charles Deutermann, lived.

By the 1920s the Orawaupum Hotel had been demolished, and the Union hotel had become Sam Ellis's department store.

William Miller lived and had his tailor shop in the small house next door. Squeezed between larger buildings, the tailor still maintained a flower garden in his front yard. The usual shed protected James H. Purdy's groceries from the elements. The Purdy family lived in comfortable quarters above the store. Both Coryell's tin shop and Dr. Peck's drug store occupied space in the next building.

Gus Kneeriams operated a shoe shop in the house just west of the brick building. Kneeriams was the Democratic leader of that day. The Republican leader maintained his headquarters in the Gibson building on the NE corner of North Lexington and Railroad Avenues (see next page), so there was usually a great deal of excitement in this area on election days.

There was only one polling place in the village—on the second floor of the three-story E.C. Sniffen building on the NW corner of North Lexington and Railroad Avenues. When you voted in those days, there was no secret ballot. Everyone knew for whom you voted. Fights erupted in the polling place, on the stairs, and in the street, whenever those of one political persuasion attempted to change the loyalties of another.

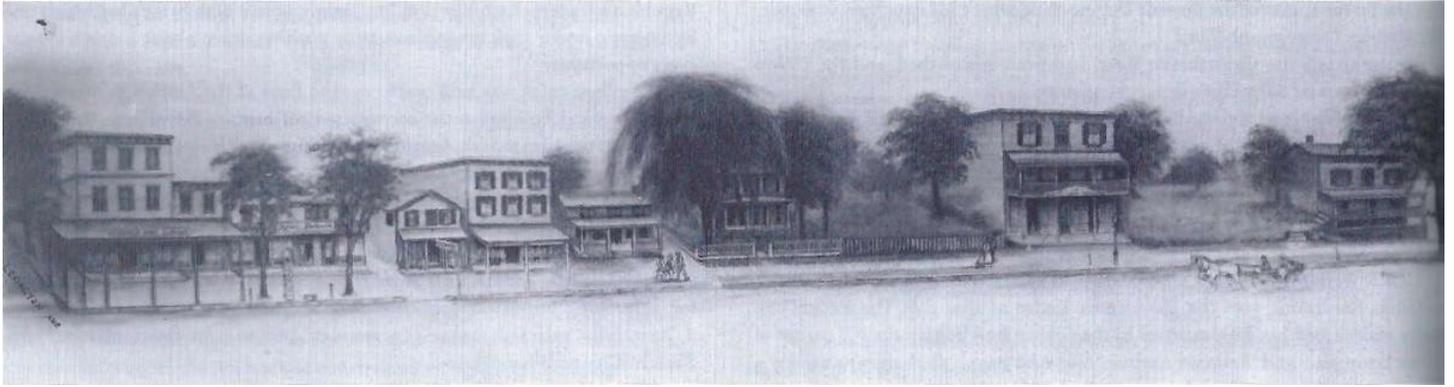
James H. Moran (better known as "Jimmy"), with his brother, John P., were Republican leaders. Each Election Day Jimmy wore a high beaver hat which one Democratic leader took great pleasure in pushing down about Jimmy's ears at every opportunity.

The village court was held on the second floor of the Sniffen Building. This was the second building to be constructed of brick in the village. The Moger Building, opposite today's Sears department store, was the first. Ox teams brought the brick here from Tarrytown.

Sniffen ran his grocery business in the corner store for many years. In later years, the business was sold to Frank Armbruster.

In 1880, John C. Schleich was conducting his "fashionable shaving and hairdressing rooms" in a store in the Sniffen Building. He also offered for sale fine "imported domestic" cigars, and he advertised these with a "tastefully selected statue" (a wooden Indian), in front of his shop.

North Side of Railroad Avenue – North Lexington Ave. to Spring Street



Marcus Badt moved into the ground floor of the Gibson Building on the NE corner of Lexington Avenue in 1874. After a fire in the building in July 1880, Badt was advertising a fire sale with great bargains, slightly damaged or soiled. Men's and boys' fine clothing, Merino underwear, dress goods, shawls, "ladies' made up fine white under-garments," "all of Dr. Warner's corsets," and all goods at half price. By November, Badt closed his White Plains store.

The Village Board of Trustees held meetings on the second floor of the Gibson Building.

The 1876 wooden Mead Building, its doorway framed between the two trees, was the forerunner of the brick building which, when hit by fire in 1907, took the lives of three young volunteer firemen.

When this sketch was made, Mead's Bakery and Burnham's Jewelry store were in this building. In the 1930's Woolworth's five and dime store occupied the entire ground floor.

The peaked roof sheltered Prouty's hardware shop. Back in the 1880's some mischievous young pranksters purchased black powder here for a Fourth of July joke. They used too much of their purchase, and the resulting explosion totaled an old cannon on North Broadway.

Later Nowill's drugstore was here. Much later it was Vogt's drug store.

Sherriff Frank Schirmer's grocery store occupied the ground floor of the three-story building with the shed in front.

An alley separates the cottage from Edward home and shoe shop beneath the dense foliage of the trees in his yard. John Rosch and his bride lived upstairs in the Campbell Cottage for the first year of their marriage, paying, as he complained, "the enormous sum" of \$6 a month for rent!

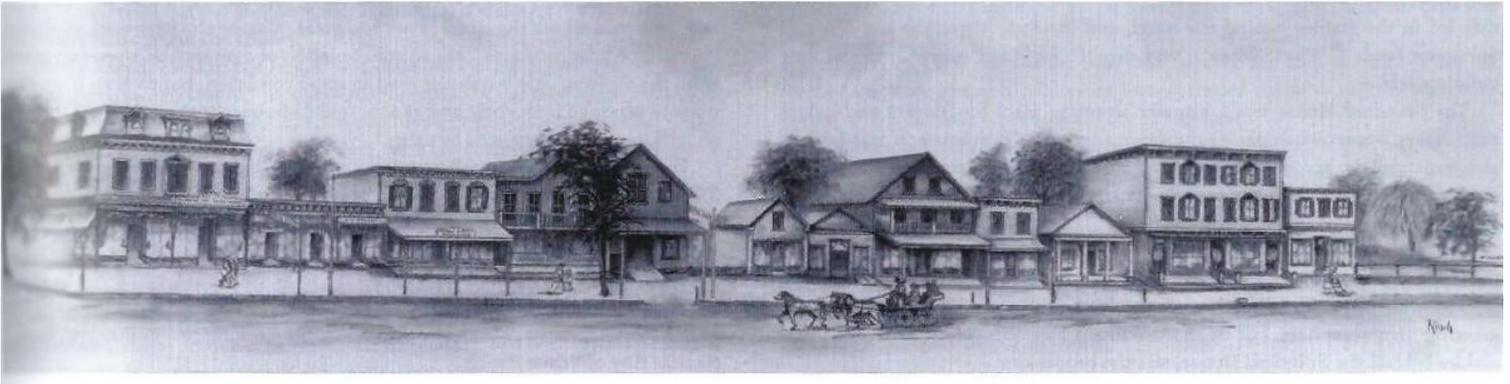
The three-story Max Schirmer Building was torn down in the 1930s, to make way for the F. W. Grand Building. Boughton's, a very early five and dime store once occupied this spot.

In 1908, there was a gala celebration when the new Briarcliff Hotel opened on the west corner of Spring Street. It had been named for the great Briarcliff Automobile Race run that year. But—not so long ago—the shell of the old hotel was demolished following a spectacular fire that evicted the Paterson Silk Store from the ground floor store.

Back in 1876, the Moran homestead stood on the Briarcliff Hotel site. Jimmy Moran was 99 years old when he died in 1943. Besides being a Republican leader, he practiced law in our town for 77 years. He served as Village Supervisor, Deputy County Clerk, Deputy County Registrar, White plains Postmaster, County Supervisor and headed the streetcar company which laid the first trolley tracks in White Plains. In yet an earlier day, much of the property between Spring Street and N Lexington Avenue was an open field where traveling circuses pitched their tent for their one-night stands.

In June 1897, Frank McGuire, foreman in Sherwood's plumbing shop, saved a child from death on Railroad Avenue. While hitching a ride on the back of delivery wagon, the boy slipped and caught his leg in the wagon wheel. McGuire stopped the wagon and removed the lad from his desperate situation. The child's condition was not reported.

North Side of Railroad Avenue – Spring Street to William Street



(Located on 2nd Floor, Near up stairs, on Bottom)

In 1876, the three-story Moran Building on the NE corner of Spring Street contained Moran's Hall on the second floor, and a drug store below. In the 1880's it was Stafford's drug store. By 1900, it was McCulloch's drug store, and in the 1920's it was the popular Xanthos Ice Cream Parlor.

Campbells Tobacco Shop, a barber shop and a harness shop occupied the long one-story building. Merwin Sniffin's grocery store sported the sheltering shed, while the Cottage Hotel hides behind the tree which also shelters the Central Livery Stable. A ramp leads into that building from the sidewalk.

During the month of May 1874, an exciting event took place at the livery stable. On a specially built track, Edward P. Weston, nationally celebrated walker, did a 100-mile "turn" for enthusiastic crowds. Until recently, Busch's Jewelry store occupied the stable site. The Davis Brook passed underneath on its way to meet the Bronx River.

The small building above the double hitched horses housed Mrs. Coir's dressmaking establishment, and the smaller building next to her was our Post Office.

The three-story gabled roof building housed both Smith's Market and Prior's Candy Store. Seek restaurant was next door. He was Chief of Police in the 1880's. The little, columned law office belonged to Elisha Ferris, who also served as Village president. Later years found the White Plains Produce Company engaged in business here.

The two-story building alongside was the Eagle Hotel. Hotel guests must have enjoyed the aromas wafting from the bakery on our westerly winds.

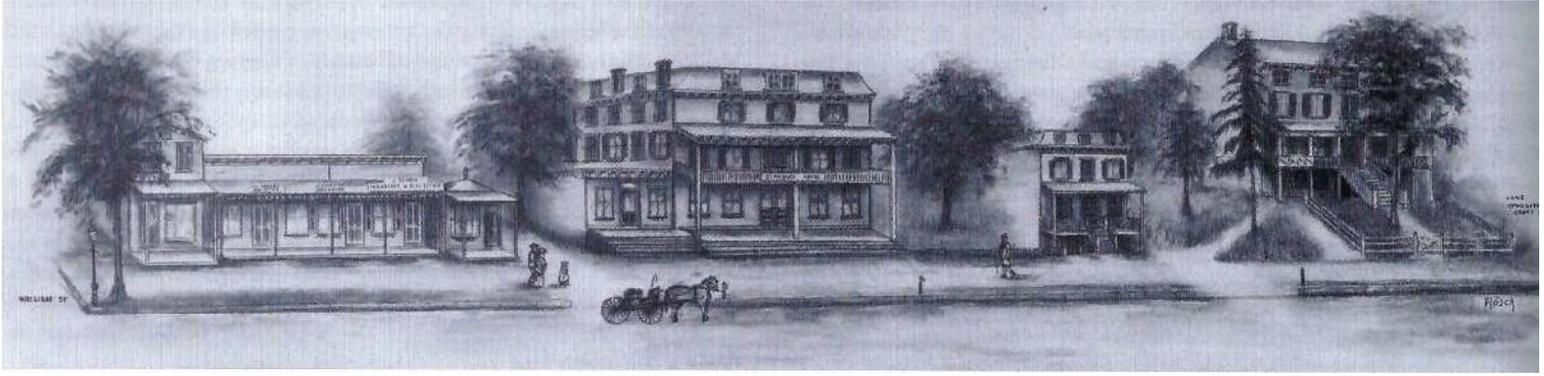
In 1876, there was an empty lot on the NW corner of William Street. About the turn of the century, a four-story building was erected on that corner by Daniel Maloney. (His home, top floor altered because of a recent fire, stands on North Street opposite the Baptist Church,) The 1914 advertisement of the Rathskeller that once occupied the lower floor is reproduced on another page.

The building was demolished to make Way for a new Woolworth five and dime store. This, in turn, was lost during urban renewal. Today this corner is witness to the huge sixteen-story Centroplex building rising above Main Street, Grove Street and Hamilton Avenue (1981).

Nearby, back in 1896, John C. Schleich was riding along William Street. Suddenly a portion of the road above a sewer pipe gave way beneath his horse, causing the animal's leg to be broken. The horse had to be destroyed, and the Board of Trustees settled the claim against the village for \$150.

On December 18th, 1880, the following want ad appeared: "Twenty good ditchers to make ditches across Railroad Avenue in order that persons may cross and recross when it rains without wading ankle deep in mud. Good wages paid to persons who are accustomed to working in mud and have good health constitutions. No others need apply as the Board of Village Trustees will not pay doctors' bills," There was no Blue Cross yesterday in White Plains!

North Side of Railroad Avenue – William St. to Lane Opposite Court St.



(Located in Lobby of 3rd Floor)

The offices of attorney William Romer, and civil engineer J. Henry Carpenter, were in the long wooden building on the NE corner of William Street. A saloon occupied the corner store. The Westchester Title and Trust Company building, completed on that site in 1910, dispossessed the saloon, and still stands.

In the 1930's, and until the 60's, the building was owned by Joseph P. Kennedy, who stopped by frequently to collect rents, accompanied by two of his sons, Bobby and John F. In the 1930s the Kennedys lived in Bronxville. John F. became the 35th President of the United States.

The small building in front of which a family is passing originally topped the roof of the Standard House next door. Removed, it was placed next to the lane that led to the stables behind the hotel, and in 1876, it was the law office of Surrogate Lewis C. Platt. When it was demolished, Platt moved into the long building, left.

The Standard House was a popular stopping place for lawyers and judges since it was conveniently across the street from the Courthouse. It was famous also for excellent accommodations and good food. Another convenience as Deveson's livery stable in the rear. Today the site is filled with the Northcourt Building.

The house next door was the home and office of Dr. DeHart. At some period, the house also served as the Standard Cottage, an annex to the Standard House.

The Old Homestead Hotel was in the far right. In 1876, Patrick Farrell was greeting his guests here, but by 1878, William Deveson, who owned the livery stables behind the Standard House, was the proprietor.

In April 1884, the Westchester News complained that "Railroad Avenue has for years been a source of great trouble for our Trustees. Everything placed upon it so far has proved a failure."

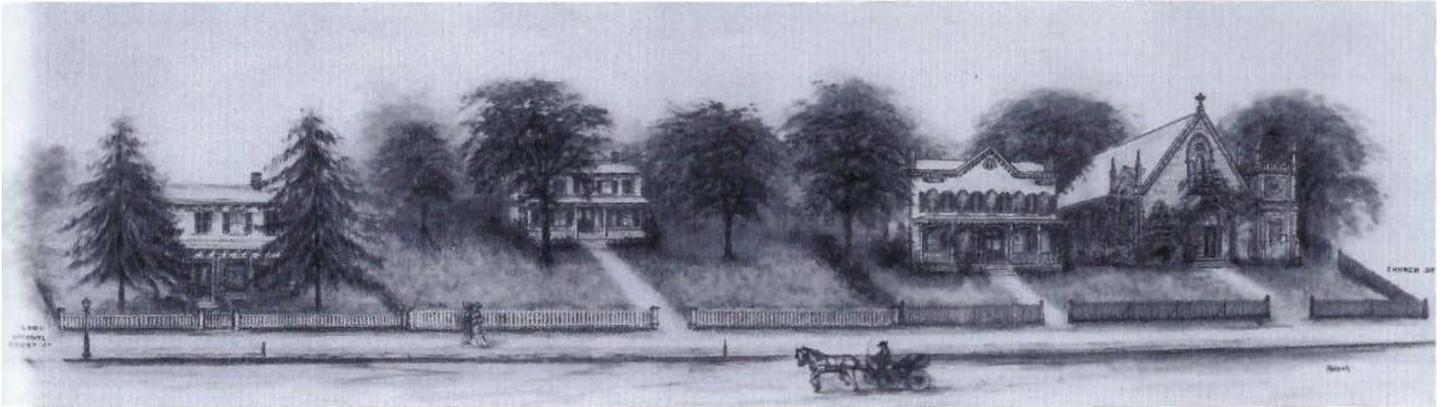
Gravel from Roa Hook (near Peekskill), was to be used on the Avenue. Claim was that this material would cement together to make a good hard surface, The newspaper was not convinced. "We are skeptical, as we fear the travel on avenue will be such as to grind it to powder but...are willing to give it a fair trial:'

A month later the paper reported that the gravel was "packing nicely, but evidence of wearing out very quickly."

In October, the News was "satisfied the gravel has merit and will make excellent road where the travel is not too great ...during the past week workmen have scraped the mud and filth, an accumulation of manure and worn-out gravel from the Surface. This leaves the road in good condition, but to keep it so, this must be repeated frequently, and as a natural consequence the gravel will soon be all removed, unless replaced by other."

Two months later, Tony Richards had a contract with the Village to keep pavement clean. This meant that men were to be constantly employed to fulfill the contract of \$350 for the season, or \$29 a month. This was most even in those days, as revealed by the paper's final comment, " Rather low, Tony."

North Side of Railroad Avenue – Lane Opposite Court St. to Church St.



(Located on 2nd Floor, Near up stairs, at Top)

Edmund Ward lived in the house on Railroad Avenue by the lane opposite Court Street. It was his son, Edmund F. Ward, who painted the mural in the Old Post Office, and created the design for the 1926 White Plains Battle Stamp.

In 1907, Stanley Newell erected his Newell's Theatre on this site. When movies made inroads on live productions with their low admissions, the theatre fell upon dark days. Many of today's residents still fondly remember Dr. Leon Dickerson, our White Plains dentist, who directed the "Paradas," featuring local talent in the old Newell/palace Theatre for the benefit of the White Plains Lions Club.

In 1926, when the Bar Building was built upon the site of the theatre, it was the tallest structure in the county.

Hiram Rowell lived in the house next door. He refused to donate any of his land to the village so that Mamaroneck Avenue could be cut through to Hamilton Avenue. Eugene Preudhomme, who donated property for the erection of the Grace Episcopal Church and its parsonage, then cut a street through his own property to reach Hamilton Avenue. The street was called, naturally, Church Street.

Lawyer Jackson Hyatt lived in the Rowell house in the 1880s. There were other owners between then and 1926, when the RKO Theatre was erected on his property.

The Grace Episcopal Church was constructed here at a cost of \$45,000, twelve years before Rosch created this sketch. Isaac Buckout, architect for the first Grand Central Terminal in NYC, designed the church. The parish house was built alongside the church at the same time.

Buckout designed and erected his home on the South Broadway site of the first Westchester County Courthouse in White Plains, presently the site of the Armory.

Yesterday in White Plains, Railroad Avenue could boast of a sprinkler system. In the 1880s, this consisted of a wooden wagon with steel tires, which was drawn by a single horse. On top of a wooden tank was the high seat of the driver, from which he could open the valve that controlled the spray of water across parched streets to lay the dust on hot summer days. Using a rope and pulley, Baldwin Sutton drew his water from the Bronx River, bucket by bucket, until his tank was filled.

Railroad Avenue merchants paid 25 cents weekly for this service. When he reached the store of a non-subscriber, Sutton turned the valve to "off," then back to "on" when he came to a client's place of business.

In December 1896, several Railroad Avenue merchants got together and issued the following notice: "We, the undersigned merchants on Railroad Avenue, White Plains, propose to close our places of business after the first day of January 1897, for the remaining winter months, viz: January, February and March, at 8 O'clock every evening, with the exception of Saturdays. Samuel Scott & Company, Edward Schirmer, New York Dry Goods Company, F. H. Nowwill, Thomas J. Hamlett, C. J. Ackerman. J. B. Cox, J. E. Bolt, A. B. Russe and Paul Pincus.

North Side of Railroad Avenue – Church St. to North Broadway



(Located on 2nd Floor, at down up stairs, in Middle)

In 1876, the home of Dr. H. Ernst Schmid stood on the NE corner of Church Street and Railroad Avenue. Dr. Schmid, a man of tremendous talents and unusual background, was instrumental in the founding of the White Plains Hospital. In 1926, he died at the age of 93.

Dr. Schmid's home is partially hidden behind the foliage of the trees, as is that of Dr. Newton Curtis, brother-in-law of Dr. Schmid, next door. In later years the Thrift Shop set itself up for business in Dr. Curtis's homesite. It is, however, destined for an office building

Before it was demolished, Dr. Schmid's home for many years served as Lyon Hartnett's Funeral Home.

The next two houses were occupied by Malcolm Smith, County Clerk, and Gilbert Lyon, president of the village. The White Plains Municipal Building now occupies these two properties.

The Methodist Church had been completed only three years before Rosch made this sketch. In 1903, the church was replaced by a red sandstone building, remembered for its lovely stained-glass windows. Now the Sears department store occupies the site.

The large building next is Lafayette Hall, THE entertainment center of the village. The hall contained a stage, balconies, and had a seating capacity of over 400. In 1872, it was listed among the assets of the Methodist Church. The congregation met here while the Railroad Avenue church was under construction. When the Salvation Army came to our town in 1883, first services were held here.

The Abbey's Uncle Toms Cabin Company presented the Harriet Beecher Stowe drama in White Plains for the first time in Lafayette Hall in January 1881. In 1883, the Republican County Convention met here to nominate candidates for county offices.

In 1884, "East Lynne," "the highly emotional play in five acts headed Iny Lizzie Seymour, a young and talented artiste," was performed in the hall Admissions were and 50 cents..

In 1885, the hall became a roller-skating rink.

The commencement exercises of the Plains Grammar School were held here on June 30, 1892, and Clara Hopper, our first librarian, was listed on the program as one Of the thirteen graduates.

The White Plains Gas Company had its office in one of the two stores.

In 1896, after the Auditorium had been built on Mamaroneck Avenue, the Hall was sold. Dr. Charles E. Birch demolished the west portion and moved the rest to the rear of his property, where it became a barn.

Only yesterday the Westchester Lighting Company erected an office building on the NW corner of Main Street and South Broadway. McCutcheon's handsome building became the Lighting Company's neighbor to the west. But, back in 1876, when Main Street was still Railroad Avenue, and White Plains was a country village, Mrs. Annie Clark lived in the comfortable family cottage on that corner.

South Side of Railroad Avenue – South Broadway to Mamaroneck Ave.



(Located on 2nd Floor, at down up stairs, on Bottom)

Before the railroad came to our town there were only two east-west roads, the old Post Road and the Dobbs Ferry Road. Over the years, the latter was straightened, given street names, and became (commencing by the Presbyterian Church on Broadway) Rockledge Avenue, Spring Street, Railroad Avenue, and Battle Avenue.

On March 14, 1836, the village highway commissioners met at Purdy and Fisher's general store near the SW corner of Broadway and decided to call the new street, then known as "the Public Highway Leading from the Village of White Plains to Bronx Bridge at the foot of Chatterton Hill"—Railroad Avenue. Glamorous—no, but descriptive—of course!

The first train to arrive from New York puffed into White Plains on December 1, 1844.

Rosch did not include the Civil War Statue in his sketches, even though it had been erected four years prior to the drawings. And there was no Main Street extension in 1876!

The Westchester News of November 28, 1896, reported that William R. Brown of Broadway, had a gang of laborers digging on his property at the head of Railroad Avenue preparatory to continuing the Avenue through to the streets in the Hall property.

Mrs. Susan Horton lived in the house next to the empty lot and, in the next house, a dressmaker created latest fashions for the stylish women of White Plains.

Caleb Huestis, the village blacksmith, living next door, carried on his trade in the Moger building before he sold it to the Mogers. After that he worked in a barn behind his home.

In 1867, Nathaniel Moger, along with Daniel Moger, founded the Moger Brothers grocery store, located in the gable-roofed building above the horsemen. This was the first building to be constructed of bricks in White Plains.

In 1859, the Masonic Lodge shared facilities in the hall upstairs with the organization of Odd Fellows.

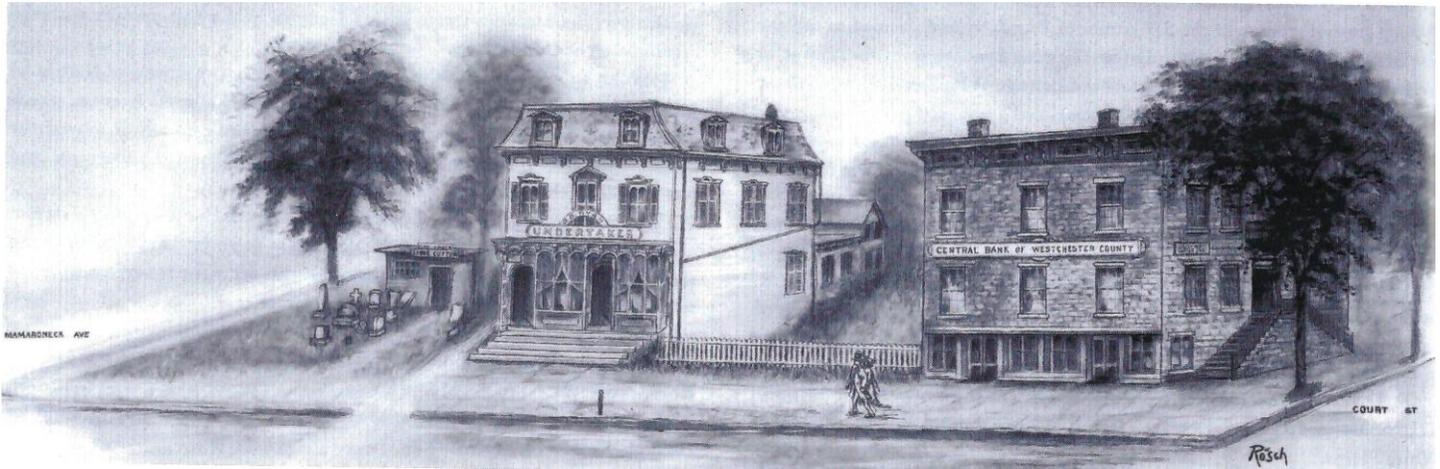
John Mead, who lived in the house between Moger's store and Nathaniel Moger's home was proprietor of a shoe shop on Railroad Avenue, which remained in the same store until 1927, when Mead's daughter moved the business to another building. Mead served as a Westchester Supervisor and was Justice of the Peace for the County in 1860-63.

The last house on the right was home to William H. Huestis, Village Assessor and Town Clerk from 1854 to 1866. He dabbled in real estate and insurance and was Tax Collector for 1867. For his services in this office, he received a fee equal to 1% of all taxes he collected. Caleb was his father.

Later the Henry Moore mansion, famed for its beautiful ballroom, stood on the site of his home. In 1909, the White Plains High School was erected on the empty property next to the Moore house.

Back in 1876, the corner lot at Mamaroneck Avenue, was a playground for children.

South Side of Railroad Avenue – Mamaroneck Ave. to Court Street



For a long time after Railroad Avenue came into existence, winter and spring thaws, or even a very heavy downpour, changed the street into a stream of oozy mud that even horses found difficult to traverse. Any article unluckily dropped into this quagmire was lost forever. Boots were known to have been sucked from the feet of any unwary enough to step into the mess.

In 1876, there were only three businesses in the Mamaroneck Avenue-Court Street block.

The George Trace Stone Monument Works, on the Mamaroneck corner, was conveniently close to Robert B. Ryan's undertaking establishment. Trace created articles other than memorial stones. The two stone watering troughs which stood for many years—one at the intersection of Railroad Avenue and Broadway, and the other at Central Avenue and Tarrytown Road, were his works.

When the Auditorium Building was constructed in 1895, the dispossessed Monument Works moved across the street to the east corner of Mamaroneck, now the site of the Home Savings Bank.

R. B. Ryan, a carpenter from Troy, commenced his undertaking business in 1872. In 1880, Ryan was advertising (pushing a sideline) "furniture of every variety, polish, picture frames, looking glasses, etc. Terms cash."

The home he built on Grand Street was one of three houses that the U.S. government took over when it constructed the Grand Street Post Office in 1932.

At the turn of the century, Ryan sold his undertaking establishment Stephen Lyon and George B. Weed. By 1911, when Henry Hartnett became a member of the firm instead of Weed, the name was changed to Lyon & Hartnett

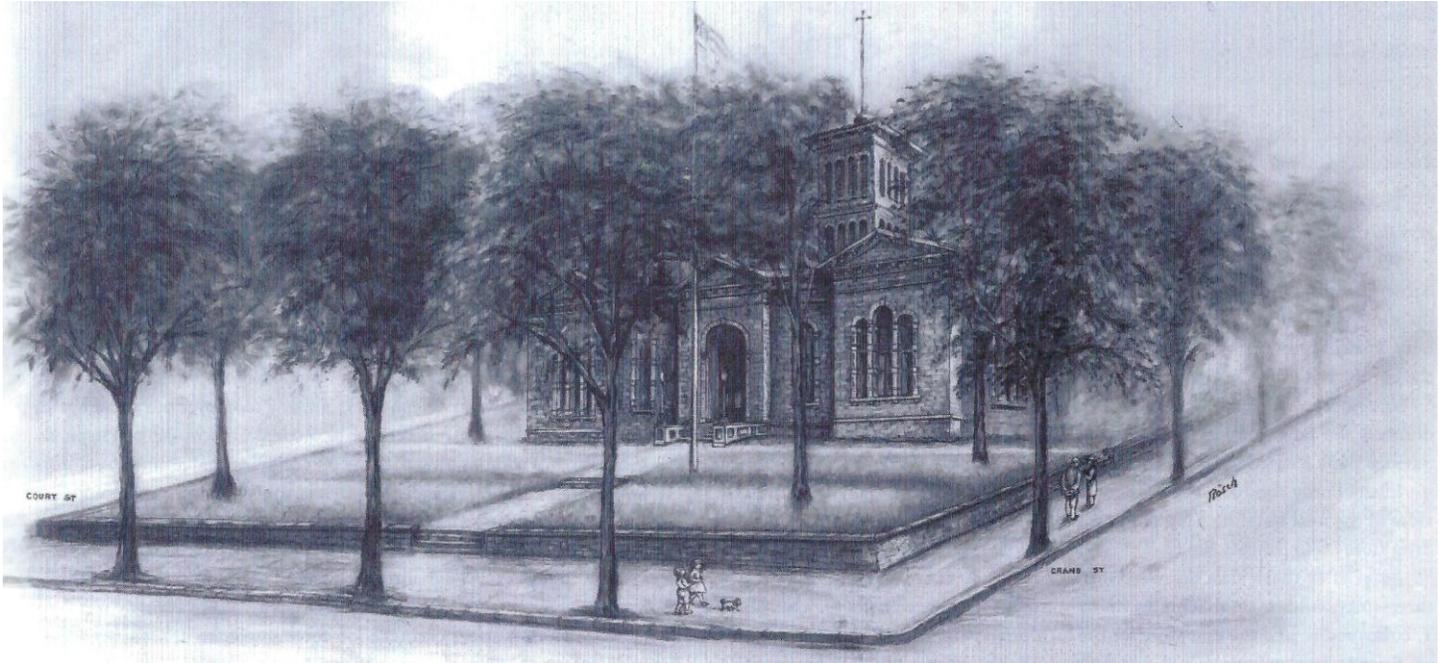
In time, John Rosch built his two-story building on that empty lot between the Ryan building and the bank. For decades, his photographic shop carried on business from the second floor.

The Central Bank of Westchester was established in the stone building on the SE corner of Court Street in 1868. The building was erected in 1857, constructed of the same Davis Avenue Quarry stone used in the Courthouse construction that year. The building was first in use as a hotel. William H. Albro, the bank's first president served in that capacity for six years.

In 1922, the Central Bank merged with the Westchester and Bronx Title & Mortgage Guaranty Company, and became the Westchester Title & Trust Company.

Prior to 1876, there was a substantial grade along Railroad Avenue from Mamaroneck Avenue to the low ground by Grove Street and the Lowes Theatre site where the Davis Brook, traveling north, crossed the road. When the grade was cut away, the basement of the bank was almost at street level. Windows, doors and a partition created two stores. But to enter either, one still had to descend two or three steps.

South Side of Railroad Avenue – Court Street to Grand Street



(Located on the steps up to 3rd floor, Second Position)

The most important block on the Avenue was that of the Courthouse, bounded by Court Street, Martine Avenue and Grand Street. The property was donated by Charles A. Purdy in 1855. The building was completed in 1857.

The trees in front were elms. They grew tall and luxuriant, their branches spread protectingly above the trees.

In spite of the shade—or because the trees were young at the time—Sheriff Horton in the 1880's planted beds of flowers on the lawn of the Courthouse, which each spring drew admiring throngs. It was reported that in 1884, the beds were in the shape of crescents. The next year the Sheriff switched to stars!

Generations of males utilized the wall in front of the Courthouse. Perched here, they admired the daily parade of young ladies passing by. One of the many famous trials held in the Courthouse was that of Harry K. Thaw, tried for the murder of the famous architect Stanford White. White had supplanted Thaw in the affections of a show girl, Evelyn Nesbitt, with unfortunate results.

In 1915, the third Courthouse was demolished to make way for the fourth Courthouse. But the Davis Avenue Quarry Stone with which it had been built was so tough that dynamite had to be employed to complete the job!

The bell, embossed with the date 1855, served the second Courthouse on Broadway for two years before being installed in the tower of the 1857 Courthouse.

When the building was demolished after sixty years of service, the bell was placed in storage to later be installed "in the room set aside for it at the Westchester County Historical Society," according to the Westchester News of June 15, 1915. The bell was never received by the Society.

In his "Historic White Plains," John Rosch reports that in 1937, the bell was in the chapel of the Old Ladies Retreat in the County Alms House. The chapel burned. The whereabouts of the bell is still unknown.

South Side of Railroad Avenue – Grand Street to Grove Street



(Located on the steps up to 3rd floor, 4th Position, on Top)

The first census, taken in 1790, listed 500 people in our town. The 1875 count reveals that 2,749 people were calling White Plains home.

White columns grace Close & Robertson's little stone law office on the SW corner of Grand Street. When the Courthouse on Broadway was abandoned, the building, constructed by Minott Mitchell next to the Courthouse was moved here. The columns were rescued when the building was demolished, and used at the entrances to the County Trust Company Building erected on the site.

The house with the sheltered entrance was owned by Charles A. Purdy, who donated the land on Railroad Avenue for the Courthouse. Later the Home Savings Bank located here.

Elisha Purdy conducted a dress goods and notions shop in the ground floor store of the next building. He lived upstairs with his family. In 1911, the Schwarz drug store occupied this site.

Soon after these sketches were made, Charles P. Sherwood constructed a three-story building on that empty lot to house his hardware business. Jeremiah T. Lockwood rented the east store for his furniture business.

Price & Brother were dispensing drugs in the three-story building on the SE corner of Railroad Avenue at Grove Street in 1876. The Telephone Company opened its first exchange in White Plains on an upper floor of the building in 1884.

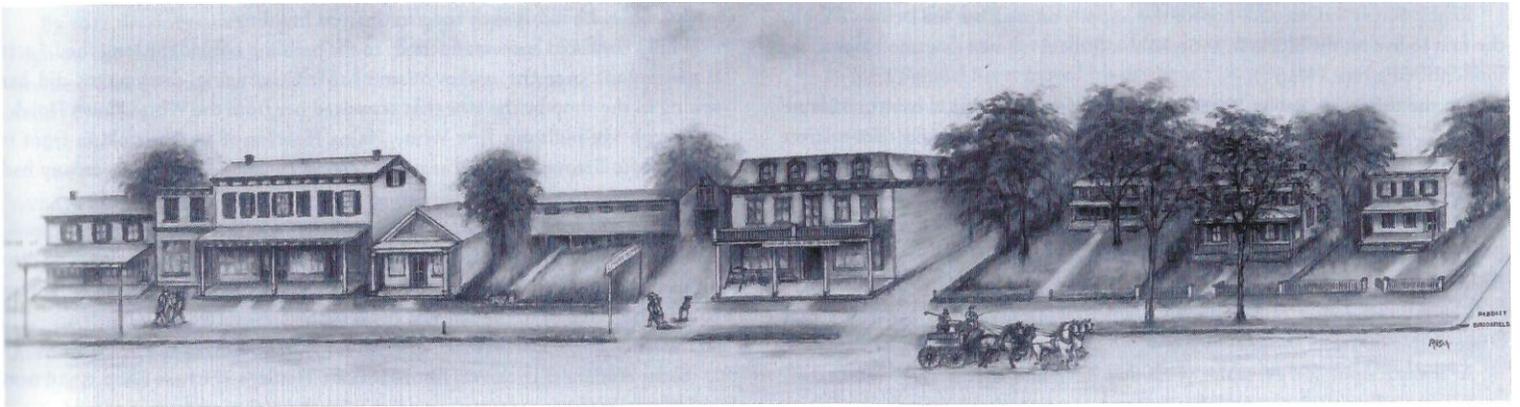
The first telephone operators were men. Frank Benson worked the day shift and William Lown, Sr., watched over the switchboard at night. There were times when the operator couldn't be reached. Then he was tramping along Railroad Avenue, armed with a long pole, uncrossing telephone wires!

When the Westchester Telephone Company took over our exchange in 1897, service improved. By 1903, there were 746 telephones in White Plains. In 1919, the company was complaining that the cost of living had jumped 73% from 1914.

Two years before the sketch was made, the Westchester County Historical Society held its first annual meeting here. In 1892, William Popham Platt purchased the building. He added a tower and moved his law offices to the upper floors. The building survived until it fell victim to urban renewal.

Loads of hay on the main street yesterday in White Plains were a common sight. How about a street cleaner's job for the woman approaching the Grove Street intersection?

South Side of Railroad Avenue – Grove Street to Brookfield Street



(Located on 2nd Floor, at down up stairs, on Top)

D. Morgan Underhill operated a meat market in the Grove Street corner store until 1890. Village President in 1879-80, and Collector of Taxes, he lost his son, Caleb, in the Mead Building fire. For many years this was Schulte's Cigar store corner.

Nathaniel Voris ran his fish store in the small building. Frederik Hagner's family lived next door. The Davis Brook overflowed frequently to become a swimming hole for children near Railroad Avenue. Hagner's cow often wandered into waters a foot deep in marshes behind the building or found itself stranded on a hummock in the swamp. When the building burned in 1908, there was no loss of life, but water froze so quickly in the below-zero night that the firemen literally were turned into icemen!

Elisha Horton conducted his law practice in the little office for many years. In 1902, a narrow brick building took the place of Horton's building. Anton & Wille's delicatessen occupied the store until the 1920's.

About 1897, James Young purchased the Daniel Dusenbury livery stable and remained in business for more than 20 years. The stilts on which the stable was built straddle Davis Brook. The brook is shown in the sketch as it flows beneath the building and disappears into a pipe that carried it under the road.

When John Lynch erected a theater on the stable site, the building was placed on piles because of the water problem. On September 20, 1921, the theatre opened. In December, B.F. Keith leased and ran the theatre until it was purchased by the Loew's Theatre chain about a year later.

The Citizens Bank, erected on the western portion of the livery site, later became a branch of the County Trust Company, and was the last building in his block to be demolished in anticipation of the Galleria.

Some of those who at one time or another owned the three-story building were Henry T. Dykman, Stephen V. Albro and Herman Bowman.

Wall Street, in the 1920's led to the Strand Theatre behind the building where Samuel A. Dreyer dispensed drugs. In its later days, the theatre was known to youth patrons as the Ranch House because of the western movies it featured.

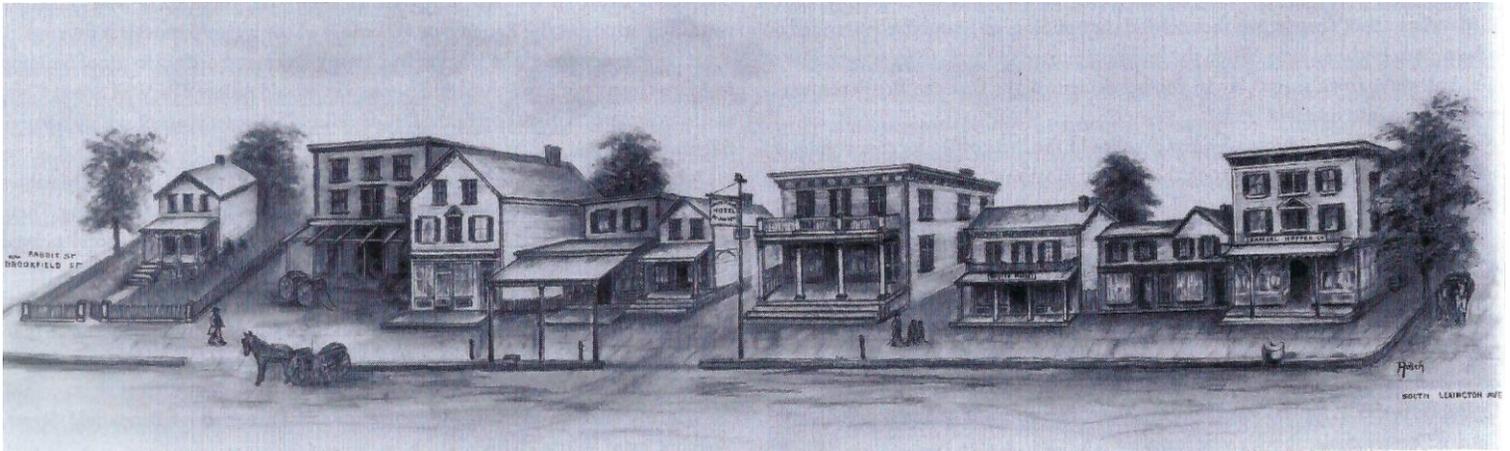
Having experienced the Hagner fire, Henry Dykman built a fire-proof building in Albro's front yard, and the Albro home was moved to face The Wall Street Club, as did Bowman's florist shop in the Dykman Building, after years of selling nature's fragrant creations.

John R. Tompkins lived in the next house in 1876. When Adolph Matthies opened his hotel in this house in March, 1888, the great blizzard was raging. There might have been very little business on opening night, but the hotel proved profitable for many years.

White Plains suffered a tragic fire on July 31, 1954, when two firemen, Bernard J. Callahan, Jr. and Salvatore N. Glassco were killed. While seeking a man erroneously reported to have been trapped in a three-story building on the old hotel site, the flaming roof fell upon them.

William Baldwin lived the house on the SE corner of Brookfield Street.

South Side of Railroad Avenue –Brookfield Street to South Lexington Ave.



(Located on 1st Floor, at up stairs, on Top)

Rabbit Street was named, not for the hoppity animal, but for Dennis Rabbit, the first to live on the block. In 1867, Rabbit Street is shown as a one-block long, unidentified street.

On the 1881 map, Rabbit Street is so named from Railroad Avenue to Martine Avenue. During the period between the last map and this, a street extending from Post Road to Martine Avenue had been put through and identified as Brookfield Street. It wasn't long before Rabbit Street was also called by that name.

In 1872, John Birch, father of Dr. Charles E., Dr. Francis, Robert and David Birch, lived in the small house on the SW corner of Brookfield Street and Railroad Avenue.

The following year, our perennial dentist Dr. G. G. Platt, opened his first Office in this house.

A favorite spot for everyone yesterday in Plains was this corner. Standing at the railing erected for that purpose, one could watch the White Plains Argus rolling off the thundering presses behind plate glass windows. About 1900, John T. Rehill purchased the property for \$24,000, and built the newspaper plant. He continued in operation here until 1919, when the paper was taken over by the Daily Reporter.

In 1874, Sutton & Coles Carriage Factory was busy turning out carriages and wagons in the three-story, flat-roofed building next door. By 1907, Martin Spreitzer had converted the building into the Electric Theatre. In the teens, the building became Genungs department store.

John Mead had his shoe shop in the next building. Philip Hoff sold homemade candy in the building behind the long shed. Later Hopkins took over the sweets business. Mrs. Germaine, dressmaker, did her sewing in the shop by the lane that separated her from the Plains Hotel.

Joseph Lye built our first White Plains Hotel in 1859. The pole in front is topped by a fireman's hat because the second Independent Fire Company had been organized in the Hotel.

During the Civil War, Lye issued currency of his own. His small pieces, stamped in various denominations, were legal tender in White Plains. The dining room accommodated 100 persons. Here a full course dinner could be had for 50 cents. In the first part of the century, Fowler & Sellars erected their hardware store on this site.

Shute sold meat in the market next door. Hanleys Harness Shop stood next to Samuel Hopper's grocery store on the South Lexington Avenue corner.

Yesterday a horse out of control was as dangerous as today's automobile.

Back in 1881, as Robert Monty turned into Railroad Avenue from Lexington, a shaft broke, the horse bolted and threw the driver out. The animal, at full speed, freed itself from the wagon and raced along the sidewalk. Encountering a pile of lumber, the horse sailed over it and landed on David's carriage.

Considerable damage was done to the vehicle, but no one on the sidewalk was injured! What might have been the result had that sidewalk been as crowded as are today's Main Street walks!

South Side of Railroad Avenue – South Lexington Ave. to Orawaupum St.



(Located on the steps up to 3rd floor, 4th Position, on Bottom)

By 1912, businessmen began to seek a name change for Railroad Avenue. High on the list of suggested names was Graham Avenue, to honor Dr. Robert Graham, who donated the land for our first Westchester County Courthouse on South Broadway.

But the name Main Street won out.

The Board of Trustees of the Village of White Plains also voted to change the name to Main Street of that section of the Avenue from Orawaupum Street west to the Bronx River. This had officially been the continuation of Central Avenue. The change took place on April 15, 1914.

The Village Engineer, George R. Byrne, was instructed to renumber the buildings on the street for postal service from the Bronx River Bridge to Kensico Avenue. There was to be a number for every twenty-five feet.

Frank Carpenter's grocery store stood on the SW corner of Railroad Avenue at South Lexington Avenue in 1876. His store is gone, but the home he built on Purdy Hill still stands, though it is hardly the show place it once was.

A delivery wagon belonging to James H. Purdy had a mishap in July, 1874. The horse ran away. Rounding the corner below, the wagon collided with a post and threw the driver to the ground.

The horse ran back to his stable, suffering no injuries, but the wagon was seriously damaged, and the feelings of the driver badly bruised.

In 1883, Samuel Scott moved his dry good business into the Carpenter store, and continued his business there for many years.

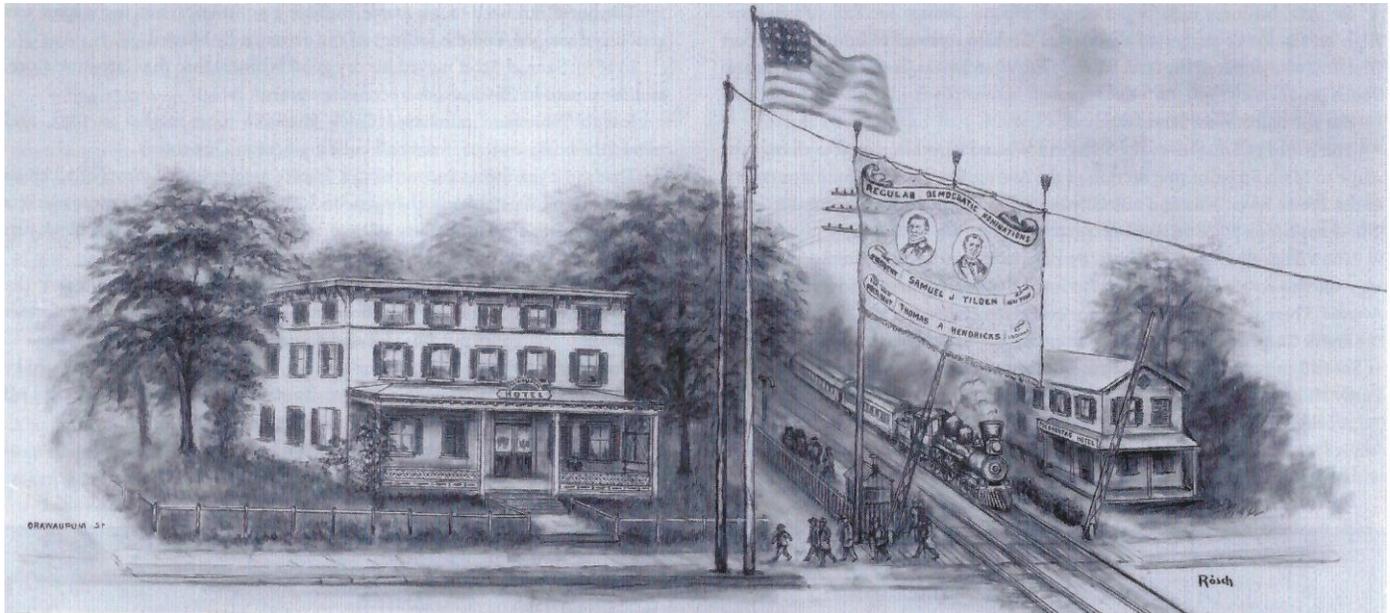
Joseph Whiteman purchased Caleb Huestis's meat market in 1874, and moved the business into that small building next to Carpenter's.

That same year he was advertising a "choice assortment of meats of all kinds with game and vegetables in their season." There were only three meat markets in the village at that time. James Shute ran his meat market in the block just covered, and Underhill's was at the Grove Street corner.

The little house is unidentified, but the three-story building on the Orawaupum Street corner was the Riordan Building until Leopold Kahn, former P.T. Barnum attraction, purchased it and named it the Admiral Dot Hotel.

Orawaupum Street was a private street for many years. Originally opened by the Harlem Railway to provide access to its station, the street was blocked off periodically so the company might retain ownership. Martine Avenue dead-ended at the railroad property.

South Side of Railroad Avenue – Orawaupum St. to Depot Plaza



(Located on the steps up to 3rd floor, 3rd Position)

The commuters heading for the Orawaupum Hotel are passing beneath the 1876 presidential banner for candidates Tilden and Hendricks. (they lost). The train is headed north on the left-hand track.

The first steam engine and passenger cars on the Harlem Railroad reached White Plains in 1844. By June 1st, 1874, the road was completed to Croton Falls. The tracks reached Chatham in 1852. The cost for constructing the road amounted to \$7,948,118. The single track did not become double until 1903.

In 1876, White Plains was being served by ten trains a day. The Harlem commenced operating by electricity as far as White Plains on March 14, 1910.

After the first Orawaupum Hotel burned in 1854, a new and larger hotel took its place. The Orawaupum was one of the better-known hotels in suburbia. In 1870, Ziba Carpenter, later Chief of Police, operated the hotel.

In 1896, the property was sold for \$45,000. Members Of the Rotary Club, organized in 1919, held their first meetings in the hotel.

In 1897, Frank Winn resigned his position as assistant undertaker for J. T. Lockwood and took a job at the Orawaupum livery stables on Orawaupum Street. What a switch! From corpse man to horse man!

The first business property purchased by the Urban Renewal Agency was the four-story brick building on the NW corner of Orawaupum Street and Depot Plaza in 1966.

The considerable grade on Railroad Avenue from Orawaupum Street west to the Bronx River was reduced over the years. To this day there remains a suggestion of that grade.

Before the first Kensico Dam was erected in 1885, spring waters flooded the Bronx River valley from Bronx Street to Central Avenue and north beyond today's County Center. They almost reached the keystone of the Railroad Avenue Bridge.

The Pocahontas Hotel on the SW side of the tracks was one of the oldest hotels in the village. For many years the photographer, H. H. Nightingale, still in business in 1928, had his photo shop in the old Pocahontas Building.

South Side of Railroad Avenue – Depot Plaza to The Bronx River



(Located on 2nd Floor, on Common Council wall, on Bottom)

In the days of unscreened windows our town endured a yearly invasion that affected everybody.

The *Westchester News* of July 5, 1874, explained: "The flies have begun to make it exciting for people. A very small fly, judiciously alighting on the right spot, can send a man's political, religious or philosophical reflections scooting quicker than nothing short of a dog fight or an organ grinder."

There is a lane, barely discernable between the first tree and the three-story building, which led to Thomas Griffith's cider mill in the rear of this block. The apple orchard, in the midst of which the mill stood, supplied fruit for the pressing.

The three-story boarding house was run by Patrick Fahey. Fahey was the village lamp-lighter, whose job it was to have the gas lights on Railroad Avenue lit and shining each day by dusk. In 1880, Fahey was advertising for boarders, assuring them that "respectable workmen can be accommodated with good board and the comforts of home." In 1894, Frederick Ranscht moved his grocery business into a new building on this site.

The *Westchester News* for July 4, 1874, reported that the new houses built west of the railroad tracks on the south side of Railroad Avenue, had been completed and were ready for use.

The Fanning and Leary families lived in the next two cottages. John B. McCarthy, a Westchester County Supervisor, was born in the third cottage.

The last two unidentified cottages, and the empty lot behind the tree is where today's trains rumble through. It was reported that these two cottages were moved away from the track site to Fulton Street. Perhaps they are still there. The tracks were shifted westerly from Orawaupum Street, some 300 feet to this site in 1912—13.

How about that two-horse jitney! Trolleys did not come to White Plains until nearly twenty years after the period these sketches depict. Horse stages connected the county seat with places the railroad did not service.

The drawing indicates there was a curve in Railroad Avenue just before the crossing at the Bronx River.

In 1876, the Avenue from the river east to Orawaupum, was Central Avenue, part of the projected Central Park Avenue that began in New York City. It was to have continued through White Plains to link up with the Boston Post Road in Port Chester. The road never got beyond Orawaupum Street.

In 1876, all west of the Bronx River, including Chatterton Hill, was in the Town of Greenburgh. Not until White Plains became a city in 1916 did the area become part of our town.

One cold day in the last century, a group of racing enthusiasts decided to race their horse-drawn sleighs. The race was held on Central Avenue. The prize of fifty bushels of oats was won by Ziba Carpenter. Carpenter was Chief of Police, duty bound to discourage racing on village streets! But that came later. He served from 1901 to 1904.