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401 Morgan Avenue, Harriman



Newsletter

April 2021

Custodians of the Past. Stewards for the Future



Editor's Note: We continue this month with our featured Harriman History in the **decade of the 1990s** as written by life-long resident & CHHCO Historian Tom Scandlyn. Thanks Tom!

Upcoming May Events –

Refer to Calendar in Back for Times

May 1st CHHCO Booth at Arts & Crafts Festival

May 13th Historic Zoning Commission Meeting

May 14th & 15th Community Yard Sale

May 20th CHHCO Board Meeting

May 22nd Harriman Hall Workday

Harriman 1990's

Steps Forward or False Spring?

As Harriman entered the final decade of the twentieth century, it seemed celebration was in order. The Town of Temperance was approaching its 100th birthday. But the party seemed to prove a façade in many ways. For just as March often has warm days of early flowers later covered by snow, so it was for the town of the early 1990s. It appeared to move forward while it was losing ground. Ironically in 1993 a late March blizzard dumped more than a foot of

snow literally to emphasize this point. And as the blizzard not only covered the Eastern Tennessee mountains, so the political climate of the nation with economic trade agreements such as NAFTA eroded the economic foundations of small town America. The southeast generally and Harriman particularly that depended upon textile mills such as hosiery and other light manufacturing succumbed to the destruction.

But for a 100th birthday, a party was in order so the city celebrated. Not only did the city celebrate, but its organizations and institutions also rose to the occasion. Several of the town's churches had been active since the town's beginning and were also turning 100. Trenton Street Baptist Church, First Christian Church, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church and First Presbyterian Church all fell into this category. First Presbyterian Church held its centennial homecoming in April 1991. The Rev. Robert Mitchell preached an outstanding sermon. A catered lunch followed in the newly opened Farnham Café and Bakery, a business initiative of Bruce and Diana Knobloch. The café was located in the former Farnham Hardware building at the corner of Roane and Queen. Most of the second and third Farnham generations were still living. Having roots in both the church and hardware store this was for them a great day. John Brown, local author, in his book "Harriman" stated that the early churches of the city had proven great resilience in their endurance.



The Bank of Roane County, initially the Manufacturers National Bank, at site of current Harriman City Offices.

As we looked across the landscape of downtown Harriman in the early 1990s, many signs of new life were visible. A new beautiful building of the Bank of Roane County, a new Harriman High School, and three story addition to Harriman City Hospital were under construction. It was generating false optimism. Trends on the national scene were undermining the health care and financial sectors of small towns. NAFTA and such were destroying our small town economy which made it impossible to finance our city school system.

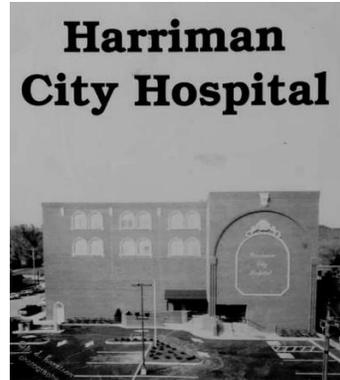


Architectural rendering of the new Bank of Roane County (BORC) building. Through a series of bank buyouts and mergers, BORC is now Regions Bank. The building was first sold to Dr. Foote and then to HUB when Regions consolidated all their Roane County branches to "Midtown."

These institutions that we had been long proud were in reality failing. The bank building today houses the Harriman Utility Board. The school system was merged with the Roane County Schools. Harriman City Hospital underwent an unpopular name change to Roane Medical Center, prefacing its later absorption by Covenant Health. The hospital building stands abandoned and slated for demolition.



The original Harriman City Hospital main entrance was constructed along Devonia St between Walden and Crescent.



The Harriman City Hospital expansion at Roane and Walden included a new emergency room, x-ray and operating rooms as well as additional patient rooms

Other signs of change would include the construction of the Riverfront Park, the legalization of alcohol sales, the completion of the Midtown interchange, and the conversion of Pine Ridge Road to a straighter and safer four lane highway.

The Riverfront Park is a continued blessing to Harriman, providing a large and beautiful place for larger events. However, in its infancy, some city officials asserted that its upkeep would have to come at the expense of Killeffer Park and other city parks. Some who had donated to Riverfront Park had "buyers regret" as it was their hope the new park would open new opportunities and not be used as a reason to neglect the green spaces we already enjoyed.

The legalization of alcohol sales in Harriman was controversial. It passed in a referendum by eight votes. It is not certain that either side has proven its case in the years passing. Alcohol sales have not brought the progress supporters promised. Neither has it brought the problems predicted by its opponents. After some initial success other municipalities followed suit taking much of the advantage Harriman sought.

Widening and straightening of Pine Ridge Road to Midtown has likewise been an asset and a curse depending on the point of view. It does provide better access but led to renewed development of Midtown at the expense of South Harriman and Emory Gap.

Also a change of infrastructure was replacement of the narrow two lane bridge connecting Sewanee Street to the Pansy Hill Road. The new bridge was wider and safer but not as

aesthetically pleasing as the older one that had served for decades.

Once again there was a new changing of the guard in Harriman. Since the 1960s the old aristocracy of Cornstalk Heights was in a slow and methodical rhythm. By 1990 only a remnant was left. Old age, infirmity and death were taking their toll. In the early 1990s the moving of the Tom Tarwater, Jr. family and the George Ed Wilson, Jr. family to Knoxville was an emotional blow to the community. The death of Mrs. L. A. Killeffer, death of Howard Lueking, Sr., and the moving of Mrs. Millard Walker to assisted living increased the anxiety that not all was healthy. One prominent long time Harriman citizen said Cornstalk Heights was becoming a "slum district." Rumors of a back door deal to sell Cumberland Park (now Killeffer Park) for HUD housing development lit a fire to this anxiety.



Mrs. Millard (Anne Geisland) Walker, who lived in English Tudor home across from Cumberland Park (now Killeffer Park)

And then it happened, a change for the better. Annette Pierce Marler and her husband, Ben, moved from Utah to Harriman and purchased the Millard Walker house on Cumberland Street. Annette had grown up in Harriman, graduating from

Harriman High School in 1950. For more than forty years she had vacationed at Harriman every year. She was an activist and outspoken. At the same time she was from here and had many connections to support her.

Joined by the d'Alessandros, Sayes, Odles, Benseys and Nancy Wimmer, the Marlers pushed the CHHCO into existence. Also the Historic Zoning Commission was established. Mrs. Marler wanted those guidelines enforced. Mrs. Marler had a vantage point view of Killeffer Park. She encouraged the city to step up enforcement of laws concerning its use. Many

illegal and obscene actions were terminated due to her vigilance.

While things were looking better in Cornstalk Heights, the economic base of Harriman continued to slide. By the end of the decade its factories and mills were mostly gone. The rest followed soon after. The town stood in the doorway to a new century still trying to find a new direction.

It would be negligent of me to fail to acknowledge those at least in part to death. All of these had been to some degree influential in past "wars" in Harriman. This list is not exhaustive but would include Tom Tarwater, Jr., Maxwell R. Johnson, Howard Lueking, Sr., R. C. Lueking, Sr., Dr. H Stratton Jones, Naoma Jones, Annie Laurie Bryson, T.C. Farnham, Jr., Albert P. Ahler, Martha B. Ahler, Leda B. Herron, Patsy Long Stowers, Walter Clinton, Florence Clinton, Virginia Johnson, Elizabeth Farnham, and Ann Walker. With such great losses, it is no wonder we felt loss trying to discern the way forward.



*All for One
and One for
All!*

Made famous in the novel *The Three Musketeers* written in 1844,

this motto reflects solidarity and support within a group. While our community consists of significantly more than three, the concept that the community supports its members and its members support the community reflects the gains made through collaboration. CHHCO's collaboratives also include the community, government and businesses. Progress in one group supports progress by the other groups.

Support Your Local Businesses! Enjoy the Entertainment! Get Involved in Your Community! It's all good! Check out the attached Community Calendar to see what options are available in May and upcoming in June.

CHHCO Community Calendar

May 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 10-6 Harriman May Day Arts & Crafts Festival
2	3	4	5 11-2 Lunchtime Food Truck @ old Hosp Parking	6	7	8
9	10	11	12 11-2 Lunchtime Food Truck @ old Hosp Parking	13 5:00 Harriman Historic Zoning Commission City Offices	14 All Day Community Yard Sale 5-8 Merchant's Friday Nights on Roane & Food / Dessert Trucks	15 All Day Community Yard Sale
16 3:00 Roane Choral Society Virtual (YouTube) Concert	17	18	19 11-2 Lunchtime Food Truck @ old Hosp Parking	20 7:00 CHHCO Board Meeting 501 Roane, 2nd Flr Visitors Welcome	21 7:00 3 Rivers Theatre Murder Mystery The Roaring Secrets at The Walden	22 9-1 Harriman Hall Workday 11-6 TN Pirate Fest, 550 Fiske Rd
23 11-6 TN Pirate Fest, 550 Fiske Rd	24	25	26 11-2 Lunchtime Food Truck @ old Hosp Parking	27	28	29 11-6 TN Pirate Fest, 550 Fiske Rd
30 11-6 TN Pirate Fest, 550 Fiske Rd	31 Memorial Day 11-6 TN Pirate Fest, 550 Fiske Rd					

ADDITIONAL CITY EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT COMING UP:

June 4-6, "Southern Fried Funeral" (@ Princess Theatre, Show Times Vary)

June 13 CHHCO Picnic @ Killeffer Park

June 11 5-8 Merchants "Friday Nights on Roane"