

History of The Station Building

By the Roberts Family (Circa 1993)

The shop as we call it, was built around 1810 or thereafter. It was a three story brick until 1989. There are two buildings butted side by side against each other, but not having a door between the buildings. One side, the left side or west side is referred to as the Odd Fellows side and the other, the east side was where the Mason's met. The Odd Fellows side was built around 1810 and the Mason's side around 1890 because of the nails used in construction. The Odd Fellows side was remodeled around 1892 and a massive stone bearing the International Order of Odd Fellows lodge and lodge number dated 1894 was set in the brick on the third floor. The Mason's side remains today as it was then.

We know the building existed in 1825 because of a young man named John Ford. John Ford was a 14 year old runaway from Danville, Kentucky. He had an apprenticeship in saddlery for two years. Grief stricken by the death of his grandfather and the saddle maker's failure to keep his promise to teach him to read and write, he set out on foot from his home and taskmaster. After many days and nights on foot, he reached Louisville and then headed for the river. He was advised to cross over the Ohio River into Indiana to prevent his return to his taskmaster. He paid his way across on a ferry with a deck of playing cards. He had very little education and the only skill he had was in saddlery and the only shop in the area was in Greenville.

So there he walked and remained in the shop we now own for 20 years. Adversity did not stop Ford, he eventually bought the saddle shop. His restless urge led him into operating a small grocery and dry goods store. He then expanded the saddlery shop and operated a flour mill. He soon had more than 30 wagon teams on the road selling perforated tin cabinets, known as "kitchen pie safes", saddles and harness. At the age of 40, in 1854, John Ford sold his holdings and moved to New Albany. He later moved to Pittsburg and established the Pittsburg Plate Glass Co. and this soon became the greatest production of plate glass in the world.

The Pony Express ran from 1861 to 1867 I have been told they stopped at our shop in Greenville. I have included a picture of the Mail Stage as it stopped in front of the shop on the Odd Fellows side in 1875.

Around 1900, Mr. Hussing ran the post office for a while. Somewhere around 1915 Walter Ollis ran a grocery store and I have tried to copy a photo for you.

At one time, Frank Goss another owner sold fertilizer, farm machinery, buggies and such. They stocked the second floor, Mason's side, with buggies. Two big front doors were opened and the buggies were let down by ropes. Meanwhile, the Odd Fellows built steps in the front of their side to have an entrance from the outside to the second floor. Here churches held their socials, pie suppers, and dances. They also held plays and movies. This was from 1920 to 1923.

In 1908 there was a great fire that destroyed most of Greenville. I have included a photo and the picture was probably taken from a window in our shop. The shop was spared by a bucket brigade carrying water up ladders to men on the roof.

I do not have much information after Mr. Ollis moved his grocery store across the street in 1935. I have included a picture of the Odd Fellows side when Mr. ham ran a used furniture store and an antique business. My oldest brother, Larry Roberts, bought the building in 1974. He started an antique shop on

the Odd Fellows side on the first floor in 1975. The antique shop was open for 4 years until 1979. In 1983, Larry and my Dad sectioned off the second floor on the Odd Fellows side and made a beautiful 2 bedroom apartment with big sliding wood doors between the dining room and living room. My younger brother moved in with him. My brother, Larry, passed away in March of 1987 and left the buildings to my Dad. On December 15, 1987 a tornado took off the roof on the Odd fellows side and threw the debris behind the two buildings. We packed and moved all the furniture in one day. The shop being open suffered much damage that winter and the summer of 1988 proved to be one of the worst droughts in history and it was just too hot to work on the building. So the building sat through another winter with us trying to keep the water and ice out with tarps on third floor. After much calculation, my Dad decided to tear down the entire third floor of both buildings so the walls would bear the weight of the new roof. The building had to be squared up, floor joists had to be replaced, plumbing had to be put back in as it had frozen and busted. The wood ceiling we had stripped had to be repaired. The second floor apartment was ruined and has as yet not been repaired.

In the spring of 1990, we started painting, wallpapering, and carpeting part of the first floor where the picture shows Mr. Ollis standing in his grocery store. We were able to save some of the original floor, but had to replace some windows in the back and a door. The Odd Fellows stone was taken gently from the third floor and has a new spot in a wood frame in the back of our shop. My Dad has also built a section to house pictures and other information about the buildings over the years.

In September of 1990, we opened a craft and antique shop on the first floor and have had many visitors from all over the US. We are still not able to get the shop on the historical rolls, because we had to tear down the third floor. More work is planned for the spring of this year 1993, God willing. My Dad now 74 years young has done most of the repairs on the building and I would have to say it is a labor of love for old buildings. We are planning to build a porch across the two front doors and repair rotted windows in the front. I have 50 feet of old iron fence that will spruce up the front also. We still have not gotten the furnace in operation, so we close our shop from January until about April 15 depending on the weather.

I am happy to share with you the story of this great building of the past. I feel we have given her a new life for future generations and we owe that to my Dad, William Roberts.