

Arterial Scrapbook No. 45



HOTEL GREW FROM TAVERN - The Griffin Hotel on West Main St. was built around a frame building dating from 1800 and which served as a tavern in the years when travel through the valley was by way of the "Mohawk Turnpike". George M. Voorhees lived in the original house from 1826 to 1909, a longevity recognized by identification of the building as the "Capt. Voorhees Home". Amsterdam Contractor Fred J. Conrad built the

hotel in 1910, retaining huge fireplaces and other features of the century old frame structure. Since 1950, the business location has been more widely recognized as the Wil-Ton Alleys operated by William and Anthony Griffin whose parents acquired the hotel in 1923. Most of the buildings to the west along West Main St. have already been cleared for the scheduled arterial construction. (Recorder photo - Donlon)

Griffin Hotel, City Landmark Since 1800 Turnpike Tavern Days, Eventually To Be Razed

By H. P. DONLON

The Griffin Hotel with its Wil-Ton bowling lanes will eventually make arterial disappearance from a site that has been an Amsterdam landmark from the beginning of the 19th century. Following construction of the original house, part of which has been retained as the central section of the multi-story hotel, the building served in 1800 as a tavern along what was known as the Mohawk Turnpike.

The house that was built in 1800 by Garrett Roseboom came into early use as a stage stop, one of the road houses on the rough highway that ran along the north side of the Mohawk through the lower valley.

A quarter of a century later, the house at 17 West Main St. had come into possession of the Voorhees family. Here in 1826 was born George M. Voorhees. He died in the same house in 1909, after a long and eventful career that included Civil War service as captain of Co. D., 93rd N.Y. Volunteers. Captain Voorhees organized and equipped the military unit at his own expense at the Fish House where the family had its summer home and spent much time.

In addition to military service, Captain Voorhees represented Montgomery County as a member of assembly, and he was also instrumental in construction of the first water conduit connecting Amsterdam with the Glen Wild watershed in Saratoga County.

Following his death on Sept. 14, 1909, the property of Captain Voorhees, including the home and the business block to the east along West Main St., was sold at auction on Jan. 15, 1910. Contractor Fred J. Conrad purchased the homestead with street frontage of 105 feet and depth of 203 and intimated one auction day that he might construct a large roller skating rink.

On March 8 of the same year, Conrad announced that Architect Henry Grieme was designing a two-story business building of concrete block. There would be a central court in which the ancient Voorhees home would remain. Two 18-foot stores would be built in the west wing and one store of the same width in the east wing. An upper floor would be given over for living quarters.

Well in Front Yard

Excavation for the new building uncovered a century-old well near the stone wall that had bounded the front yard and the kibitzers of the day had some history to talk about. A similar well had been found at the West Main and Market corner some years previous.

The completed structure at 17 West Main St. was neither a skating rink, nor a business block but "Hotel Conrad" that was opened for its first social function, a dinner of the Montgomery County Medical Society, on Dec. 21, 1910.

Five years later, the Conrad was sold to Mason Thayer, who later built the Thayer (now the James) hotel on Division Street. In a foreclosure action of Nov. 27, 1919, the hotel was taken over by Cornelius Dwyer in whose name the property was carried until Jan. 6, 1923, when it was purchased by Fanny Brown.

Griffin-Owned Since 1923

The Conrad became The Griffin when it came into possession of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Griffin on Dec. 13, 1923. Griffin had been operating the Central Hotel on Railroad Street the year previous.

Since that date, the hotel has been in possession of the family, represented in recent years by William and Anthony, with the latter in active management.

When bowling alleys were installed in 1950 the Wil-Ton name was derived from the names of the brothers.

Bowling brought new activity to the site where travelers had been entertained a century and a half previous, and the huge fireplaces of the old tavern around which the hotel was built will probably retain interest until the demolition crew destroys continuity with the past.