

Blast from the Past, Part 2

By Carol Woolridge

Each time you write a story or article, you must have a beginning, middle and ending. This time, I'll begin at the beginning with the Bloomsburg Town Hall and memories of my childhood, circa 1964.



Bloomsburg Town Hall

The Bloomsburg Town Hall is a three-and-a-half story building with a basic rectangular shape. It was built in 1890 to cover a few basic needs. First, it was the Bloomsburg Police lock-up at 307 E. Second, a Fire and Ambulance department at 305 E. Second, and Bloomsburg Town Hall at 301 E. Second.

The Bloomsburg Police Department has moved most of its operations to 119 E. Seventh Street, near the Columbia County Prison, plus it still has the Columbia County DUI Booking Center on 821 Catherine Street.

Friendship was the first fire company in Bloomsburg. It later moved to the red brick building which currently houses the Children's Museum on Seventh Street. From there, the local fire companies combined and moved to their present location on Ninth and Market, 911 Market Street.

Before building the Town Hall, town meetings were held in various rented locations around town. Even after the Fire Company moved out, the Town Hall still had at least four basic uses: as a Town Hall; Parking Enforcement office; and in front, the Bloomsburg Tax Office; and separate Bloomsburg Municipal Office.

So, to recap, on the first floor you have Police Department offices, and Tax Collection and Municipal offices. Upstairs you have the Code Enforcement office, municipal government offices and Bloomsburg Town Council.

W. Miller Zeisloft & Son was a gas station at the foot of North Hill, at the intersection which connected Lightstreet Road and East Street, with Second Street connecting to Main Street in the

middle. It was near what is currently The Bloom Diner. I remember going to Zeisloft's to get gas with my dad, but not much else about it.



W. Miller Zeisloft & Son gas station and parking lot

Beside the W. Miller Zeisloft & Son gas station, was the City Parking lot at 155 E. Main, next to what I knew as the Coles Hardware building. The parking lot seemed wider beside the gas station than it does now. The parking area itself hasn't really changed much; I mean a parking lot is a parking lot.

Located at 149 E. Main, was The Economy Stores Co., Inc., a furniture store. I don't remember going into the Economy Store, I imagine my parents preferred to shop for furniture without my help. Later it housed Coles Hardware, one of my favorite stores as a child. It had an excellent selection of little toys; some I could reach on the wall display.



Economy Furniture Store

Here is where I got my first egg of Silly Putty, my first Slinky and probably my first Play Doh. It was a wonderful place to shop at Christmas. I remember it had the squeaky wooden floors that two or three stores I visited at the time had; no sneaking up on anyone there.

On the second and third floors were apartments and offices, among them was dentist Carl T. Warhurst, a dentist I went to as a child. He was the first, and if memory serves me right, the only

dentist who put me to sleep with nitrous oxide. I was really young; maybe my mom thought I couldn't handle my necessary dental work. It was just possible that she was the one who couldn't handle it.

While researching Dr. Warhurst, I found that he had graduated from the Philadelphia Dental College that was built in 1863. He graduated in 1938 in what was the 75th Anniversary of the college. His picture and name were in the publication, *The Diamond*, which also pictured all the other graduates that year.

Right beside the Economy Store at 143 E. Main, was a two-and-one-half story brick home, rectangular in shape with a double wooden front door and a cement foundation. Built sometime in circa 1920, the style was Colonial Revival. This home was a church-owned property that H. C. Parr lived in. There are to this day apartments on the second and third floors; the first floor is currently home to the True Gents Barbershop.

Next is a two-and-a-half story t-shaped home at 125 E. Main, St. Paul's Episcopal rectory. It was built in 1892, Gothic in style, with brick and masonry construction. It was considered at the time to be, "A handsome stone structure with an auditorium, choir and guild rooms on the first floor, and a kitchen and dining hall in the basement." The kitchen was extensively remodeled and modernized in the 1950s, and the church's school rooms on the second floor were more recently turned into offices. The rectory has had few changes, but the church itself has changed much over the years.



St. Paul's Episcopal Church and Rectory

St. Paul's Episcopal Church at 101 E. Main, on the corner of Main and Iron Streets., has a long and historic past. St Paul's Church even predated our town, Bloomsburg. The church was organized as early as 1790 in Fishing Creek Township in then Northumberland County.

In 1793 Elisha Barton attended the convention of the Diocese of Pennsylvania. The convention was held in Christ Church in Philadelphia; it was then that St Paul's was admitted to the diocese. Reverend Caleb Hopkins was appointed minister of the territory within the area of the Susquehanna, also helping to set up and minister to St. Gabriel's in Sugarloaf.

It was in the same year that the first St. Paul's Episcopal Church was built on the present site of the rectory. It was a rough, simplistic log building, with no fireplace or formal heating; small holes

were dug in the earthen floor, and charcoal was placed in the holes and set afire to supply heat. The smoke often hid the rector's face. I can imagine it was hard to see and breathe under those conditions.

The next edition of the church was in 1827. This frame building was larger and used until the third edition, a brick structure built in 1837. These second and third incarnations were also built on the foundation of the present church rectory, the cornerstone being laid in July of that year. The rectory rests today on that same foundation beside the present church.

The fourth and final version of the church was built on the corner of Main and Iron, the cornerstone was laid in September 1868. The first service was held on October 28, 1870. The building is large and impressive, a limestone building with many colorful Tiffany windows, and a slate roof. It was built where the old burial ground had been. The remains of the dead were moved to the Old Rosemont Cemetery on First Street, at the top of Center Street. The bell tower in front remained unfinished until 1891.

Between 1886 and 1893, the church interior was completed, and electric lighting was introduced. Twelve Tiffany stained-glass windows were planned, but the first windows were geometric in design. These geometric designed windows were not replaced until 1958. In 1907 the vestibule of the church was tiled and wainscoted by members of St. Margaret's Guild, and in 1909 the aisles of the church were tiled in classic Italian marble, also by St. Margaret's.

The church was furnished with an altar and railings from St. John's Episcopal Church of Catawissa, which disbanded in the 1920s. In 1950 Mr. and Mrs. Roy Snyder donated a marble altar in memory of their son Lt. James G. Snyder. In 1956 the chapel was replaced with its present altar as a memorial to Sara Barbara Elwell by her husband E. Edward Elwell.

In recent years, the church has installed an elevator, a handicapped-accessible restroom and parking area. A Memorial Garden is in the area between the three parish-owned buildings. That was the last building on this block, edged by Main and Iron Streets, which now leads me to the end.