

This Is The Mansfield That Was

By PAUL L. WHITE

Although leaning slightly askew the old grocery building at the hilltop on South Main St. at Stoodt Ct., flanked by the batten sided house with the "ginger bread" trim, is a landmark of Mansfield.

The exact date when the old grocery building at 213 South Main St. was erected has not as yet been ascertained by records but early accounts of grocery stores there date back into the 1880's.

Records show that in 1888 through 1890 Michael H. Kline operated a grocery in the storeroom and lived in the house.

Sometime during the year of 1891 Charles R. Smith, of Cardington, and Albert J. Smith, of Johnsville took over the store and operated under the name of Smith Brothers, The Grocers. The top photo taken in the early 1890's shows how the grocery store looked like in that period.

Charles Smith is in the foreground of the photo and brother Albert is in the doorway. The other persons are not identified. Commodities were placed on the sidewalk in front of the store and poultry can be seen in the cage near the street curb.

Dewitt T. Smith, 93 West Fifth St., is the son of Charles and he recalls vividly, although a small boy at the time, how his father would drive home to Cardington on the weekends with the delivery wagon shown in the picture. Charles apprenticed in the grocery business in Cardington and later managed store before operating the Mansfield business at 213 South Main St.

For some reason the old store building did not remain occupied by the same store proprietors for any length of time.

By 1894, Mrs. E. D. Charles had taken over the store. J. A. Grubaugh was the proprietor from 1895 through 1898. John T. Cahall followed Grubaugh and operated the store from 1899 to 1901. R. D. Wells took over and sold groceries there until the end of 1903. The store stood vacant in 1904 and 1905.

L. P. Rorick and Ed Vieno operated the store in 1906 and Ed Vien lived in the home adjacent to the storeroom. Their tenure lasted until 1910 when G. R. Bonner Rinehart occupied the store.

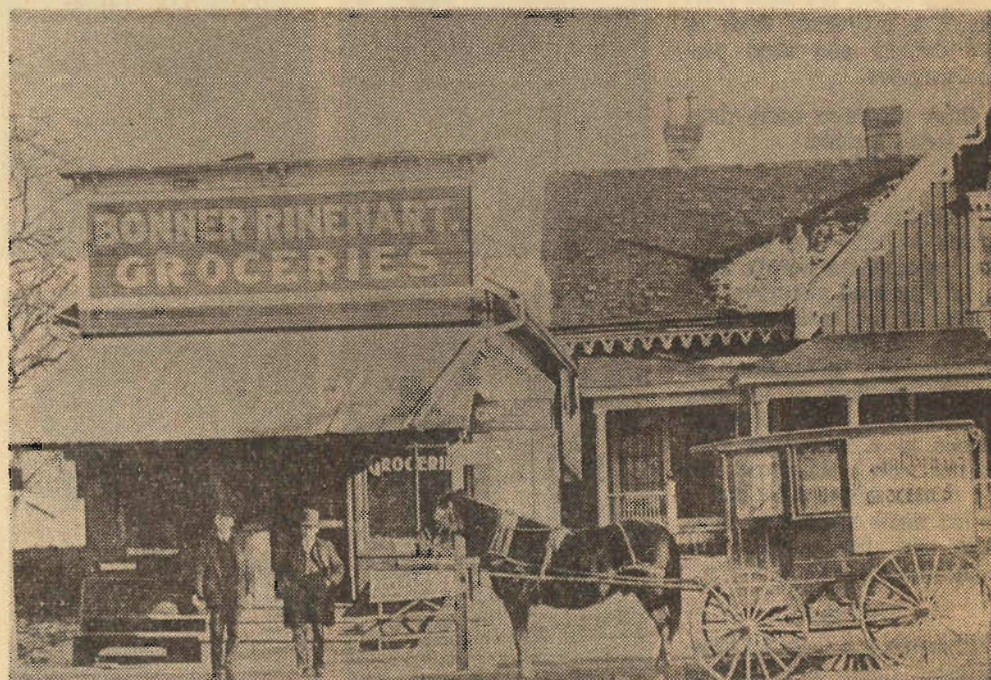
The second photo today shows the store as it appeared in 1910 with Bonner Rinehart's sign on the front and his delivery wagon which was a closed model and more modern than the one shown in the Smith photo.

The two men in front of the store are unidentified.

Bonner Rinehart had a number of years of experience in the grocery business. He had clerked in various



1891



1910

grocery stores in Mansfield and had operated a store at his home, 63 South Diamond, for about six years.

Apparently there was a certain jinx about the store at the hilltop because Rinehart gave up after only two years and opened a Notions store at 26 South Main St.

C. E. Shopbell in 1912 changed the name to Hilltop Grocery but he soon gave up on the location and turned the store over to W. B. Chapman in 1915. Chapman had operated a grocery at 293 Marion Ave. in 1894 and clerked for a period of time at Swisher and Charles Grocery at 18 Park Avenue West and Eggerts on East Fourth St.

By 1917 Chapman sold out to J. Fred Condrin who also owned the Mohican Grocery at 16 West Third St. Condrin retained the name Hilltop In 1920 W. Hoyt Mitchell took over and the jinx got to him although he held on until 1924.

The Kroger Grocery & Bak-

ing Co. was placing stores to service the various geographic areas of Mansfield and they moved into the old Hilltop in 1924. This time, it looked as though the jinx had been broken because business picked up and the store patronage zoomed upward. Ironically the great increase in business forced Krogers to move into a new building just south of the "ginger bread" house and again the old grocery store was vacant.

Walter L. Mapes opened his barber shop in the building around 1930 and in 1934 Oscar V. Erdenberger started the first of the neighborhood medicine shops to occupy the storeroom.

Herman F. Rausch operated a drug store in the building from 1936 until 1941 when Herman F. Hamilton opened a confectionery.

In 1947 the old store building was turned into a radio repair and sales room by Leisy & Bishop and ten years later B. D. Welker was still

operating a radio and TV shop there.

A Hi Fi shop (C. F. Henderson) and a vacuum cleaner sales and service shop (J. A. Wareham) preceded the present paint store that now occupies the building.

The old store building has stood through many decades of change in Mansfield since Kline, Smith and Rinehart dispensed staple and fancy groceries and produce there. None of these men would recognize the grocery business of today with the self-serve supermarkets and the check-out girls. In those days everything came in bulk and had to be counted or weighed out to the customer. Pre-cooked foods were unheard of and today's prepackaged meats are a far cry from the live poultry sold by Smith from those pens at the curb.

Photo of Smith Grocery supplied by Charles Smith's granddaughter, Mrs. Ruth Hoffman, courtesy Richland County Historical Society.)