

Tremont House Drew City's Finest Families

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In the 40-year period from about 1870 to 1910 passenger trains brought most of Mansfield's visitors to the city. Planes and automobiles didn't appear until early in the present century and roads were bad.

So the Mansfield hotels tended to go where the business was. That was in the north end, off North Main, Diamond, and Mulberry Sts.

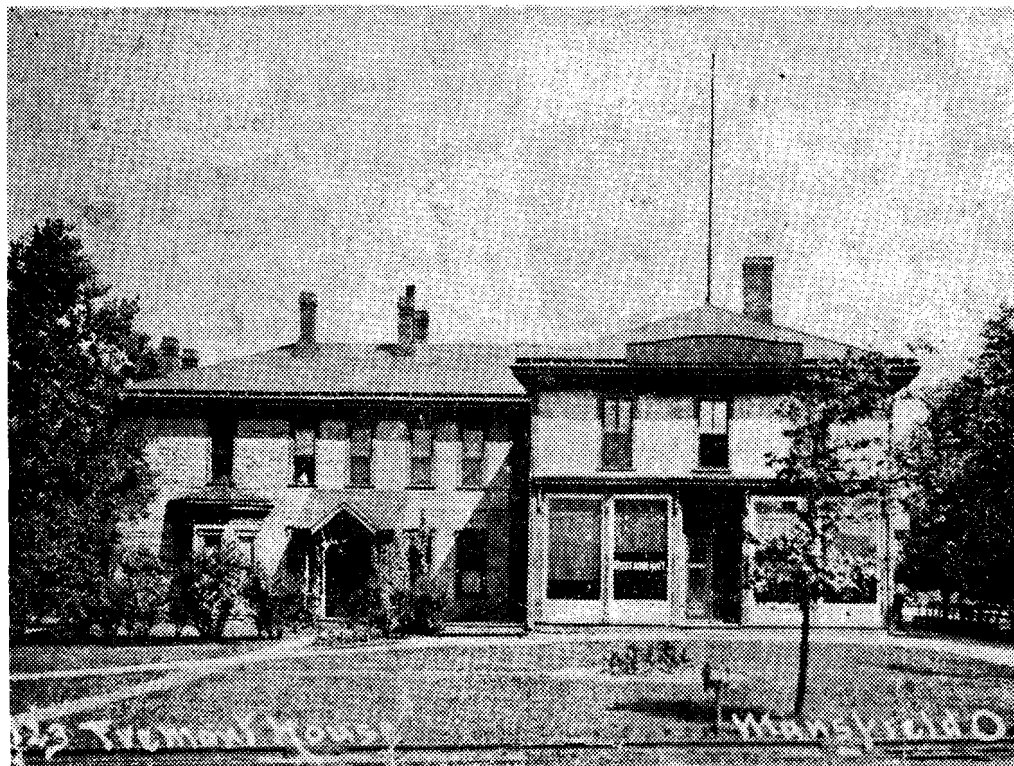
One of these hotels — and probably the most famous — was the Tremont House which was about as close to the rail traffic as it could get. The Tremont stood across the Erie tracks from the Union Station. It faced the Erie while the Pennsylvania passed it just to the east and the B and O was a short distance to the west.

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Guests at the hotel had to get used to the noise of trains at all hours of the day and night and to the cinders from the steam locomotives.

But that didn't bother anybody very much. The Tremont was a popular place for more than 50 years. It was known more for its dining room than as a place to spend the night.

The late Herman Homberger, who served Mansfield as postmaster in the 1930s, once said that transients often referred to the Tremont House coffee "as the best between New York and Chicago."

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A sign on the front of the hotel dining room lured patrons with this: "Come in and get a cup of coffee like your mother used to make."



One of Mansfield's popular hotels of yesterday was the Tremont House which stood across the Erie tracks from the Union station. Its meals and hospitality were famous for many years in the late 1800s and early part of this century. (Photo by courtesy of Miss Alfaretta Bell.)

But the Tremont had more than coffee to attract diners. It was famous for its cream pies, cakes, rolls, home-made ice cream, creamed sweetbreads, and an assortment of other delicacies.

Miss Alfaratta Bell, South Home Rd., who was born at the Tremont and is a granddaughter of the long-time hotel proprietress, Mrs. Margaret Leech, recalls that her grandmother would get up at 4 in the morning and start her baking for the day. She used an old wood stove.

While the Tremont offered few luxuries and was in the industrial area, Mansfield's first families dined there. It was a favorite spot for a fine Sunday dinner and that was in an era when most people ate at home.

On a busy Sunday as many as 300 persons might dine there. The city's wealthy families parked their fine carriages and cabs nearby and probably had trouble keeping the horses calm as the trains went by.

In the days before rail-

roads started using dining cars, trains sometimes would stop long enough for passengers to dine at the Tremont.

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One of the hotel's best customers was O. L. Enos, who was Erie railroad agent here for many years.

On the final day the hotel dining room operated Mrs. Leech baked a cream pie especially for Enos. She sent someone over to the depot to tell him she had the pie ready. Enos happened to be in Huntington, Ind., that day.

The Mansfield That Was

By VIRGIL A. STANFIELD

The boys at the station here got the word to him and he came back on the next train to claim his pie.

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Enos said railroad people got special treatment at the Tremont. They paid less for their rooms and meals. But the folks in the hotel dining room had their fun with the railroaders.

Sometimes when an order was passed on to the kitchen for meals for a railroader and two other patrons, the waiter would yell: "Orders for three breakfasts — two gentlemen and a railroad man."

The good meals at the Tremont were reasonable enough, even in those days.

Miss Bell said weekday meals were 35 cents and on Sunday a big dinner cost 50 cents.

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The Tremont, a two-story wooden structure, resembled a large residence with some rooms added to the rear. It apparently was built in the 1870s and was operated for a time by John McSherry, an Irishman.

In 1884 the hotel management passed to Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Leech. After Mr. Leech died his widow took over the business and was there for about 35 years, Miss Bell said.

Miss Bell's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Sherman Bell, assisted Mrs. Leech in the operation of the place and lived in rooms on the first

floor at the hotel. Miss Bell was born while they made the hotel their home.

. In 1917 the Tremont was sold to the Ohio Brass Co. whose plant was nearby. The dining room was used as a cafeteria by the company until the early 1930s. It was under the management of two of Mrs. Leech's cousins from Scotland, Mrs. Nellie Snodgras, now deceased, and Mrs. Margaret McAllister, 403 Chevy Chase.

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Mrs. Leech, who made the Tremont House food famous, died in 1926. Bell, who later managed the Elks club dining room, died in 1940. Mrs. Bell died in 1921 at the age of 38.

Many of Mansfield's older residents today have happy memories of the old Tremont House which stood until 1933.

The Tremont enjoyed its greatest prosperity around the beginning of the present century. At that time there were several good hotels in the city's northside, near the railroad stations. Among them were the Western House, at North Mulberry and Johns Ave.; the St. Cloud at 17 Springmill; the National House at 7 West Johns Ave. the Keller House at 226 North Main St.; the Mansfield House at 215 North Main, and the Tremont, next door to all three of the city's railroads.