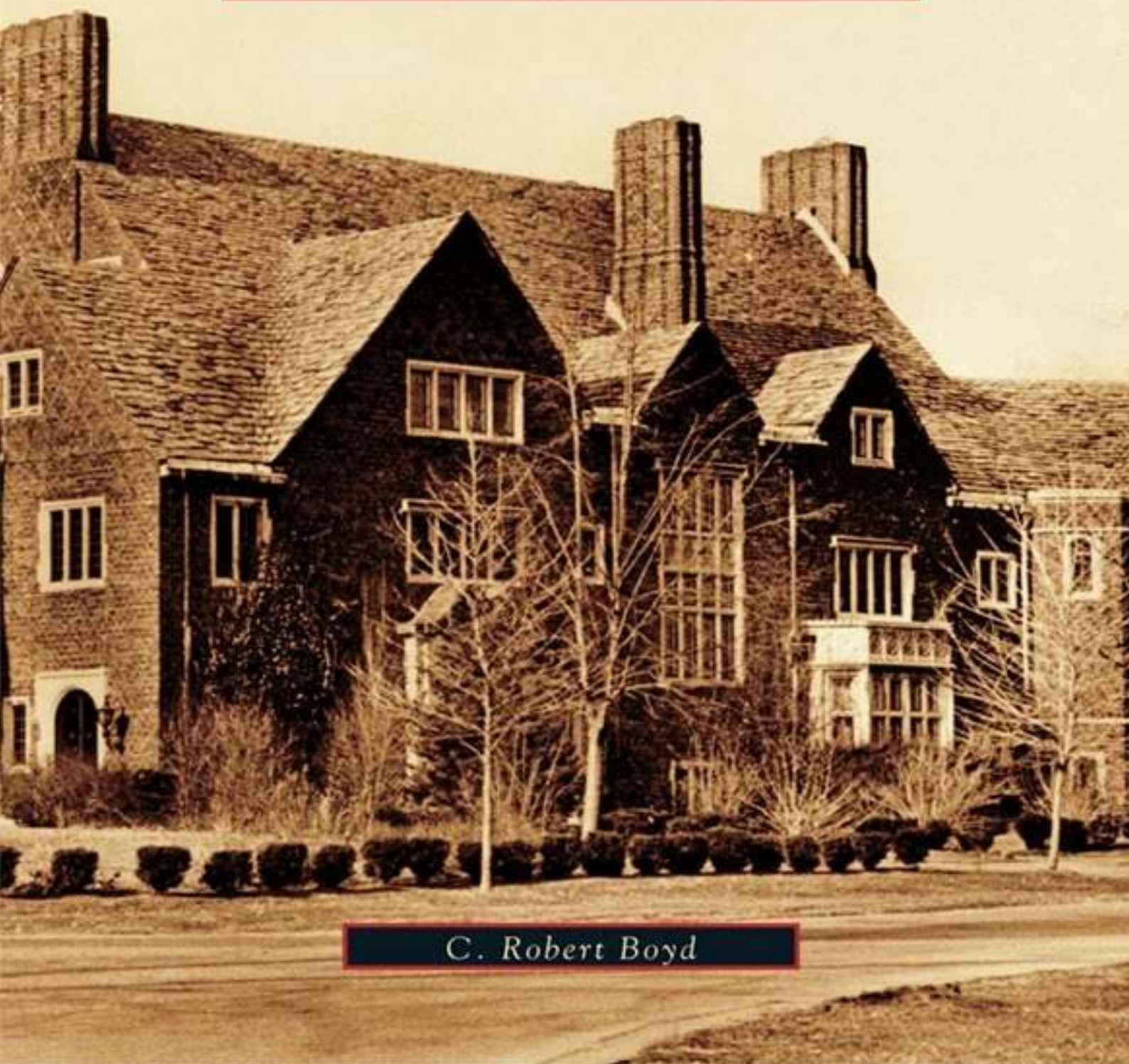


IMAGES
of America

PERRYSBURG
HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE



C. Robert Boyd

Perrysburg:

Historic Architecture

C. Robert Boyd

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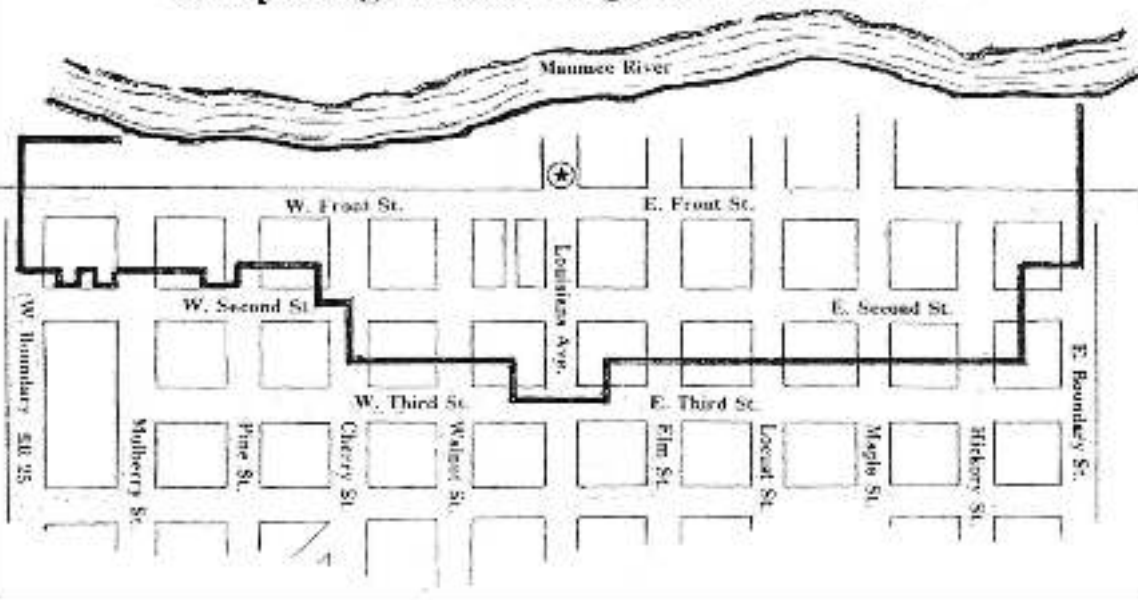


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AN ACT OF CONGRESS

“Be it enacted, etc. That so much of the tract of land twelve miles square, at the ‘British fort of the Miami of the Lake at the Foot of The Rapids’, ceded by the Wyandot, Delaware, Shawnee, Eel River, Ottawa, Chippewa, Potawatamie, Miami, Weeas, Kickapoo, Plankashaw and Kaskaskia tribes of Indians to the United States by the Treaty of Greenville, on the Third of August, 1795, under the direction of the Surveyor General, be laid off into town lots, streets and avenues, and into out-lots, in such manner and of such dimensions as he may judge proper.

“And be it further enacted, that previously to the disposal at public sale of the before mentioned tract of land, the Surveyor General shall, and he is hereby directed to resurvey, mark the exterior lines of the said tract conformably to the survey made in December, 1805, and also to cause divisional lines to be run through each section and fractional section binding on the said river, so that each subdivision may contain, as early as may be, 16 acres each. And in like manner to cause the “Great Island”, lying at the foot of the rapids, in the said river, to be surveyed, and by lines running north and south, to divide the same, as nearly as may be, into six equal parts.”

The above is the resolution by the U.S. Congress that was approved April 27, 1816, creating the City of Perrysburg, Ohio. The town was to be about one mile square and platted into town lots of one-quarter acre, with larger “outlots.” It was named by Connecticut native Amos Spafford, who in 1810 was named the collector of the port of Miami. (The word Miami was later pronounced and spelled Maumee.)

INTRODUCTION

As is typical in river towns, many of the first and best Perrysburg homes are built on high ground along the waterfront—in our case, mostly along Front and Second, two parallel streets that run the width of town and within which are many high-style architectural examples. The almost irreplaceable craftsmanship in brick and wood in these houses is hard to find elsewhere in such a concentration in a small Midwestern city. It is worth noting that most of them were built when this was a village of 2,000 people or less.

We admittedly stretch a point in assigning a style to many of the buildings shown here simply because they display one or two general characteristics of a particular style. But we do it to help draw attention to architectural elements. Speaking of which, this book is not intended as an architectural text or reference (or would it qualify as such), nor is it in any way a history of Perrysburg. More simply, it is created to give the reader a quick and better appreciation of the area's built environment and the people who created it, plus just enough local history to show what was going on during the time of its creation and development.

That environment can be said to reflect two periods of time: first, westward movement of, in our case, settlers mostly from the Middle Atlantic states (plus immigrants from southern Germany) in the 19th century, during which they left what has been called a textbook of architectural styles (mostly Victorian); and second, the immediate post-World War I period when a number of Toledo's most prominent families chose Perrysburg's side of the Maumee River to seemingly compete in building the most elegant baronial residences.

It should be said that most of the best old buildings in the city survive not only because they were well designed and built, but because their preservation and maintenance has been assured by inclusion in a National Register historic district re-enforced by a historic zoning ordinance and design-review process. The latter controls exterior alterations, demolition, and new building in the district and seems to encourage the community's general interest in and support of preserving Perrysburg's unique character.

About Perrysburg, almost without exception, towns and cities come to be because of their surroundings or some particular natural asset. That was the case with Perrysburg—interestingly enough, by government edict. Following Gen. Anthony Wayne's defeat of the American Indians at the battle of Fallen Timbers across the river in 1794, the tribes ceded a 12-mile square of land pretty well centered on the "foot of the rapids," the shallow water between what is now Perrysburg and its sister community, Maumee. This site is located some 15 miles upriver from Lake Erie and is as far as you can come by boat on open water, stretching all the way from western New York state. After a few miles of shallow rapids, cargoes and travelers of years ago could resume open water travel for a hundred miles west and on south to the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. The Maumee River's historic travel importance was underscored by the once nearly impassable Great Black Swamp that bordered all the way to Indiana and extended some 40 miles south.

On both sides of the river, the rapids here were a key spot for, most likely, Native Americans, and most definitely for French, then British, then American traders with the American Indians. It was here that the U.S. government envisioned a busy Great Lakes distribution center for goods consigned to the interior in exchange for furs, hides, and dried meats. And for many years, it served that purpose, even becoming at one time third only to Buffalo and Cleveland ports in goods shipped.

By 1810, about 70 families were living on this side of the river rapids, generally at the foot of and east of the bluff upon which Fort Meigs was to be built, but when the War of 1812 broke out, they fled when British troops and their American Indian allies came here from Detroit and burned the settlement. At the end of the war, the settlers returned and rebuilt, informally calling the place Orleans, or Orleans of the North, perhaps daring to hope that it might one day to some extent be a northern New Orleans.

In 1816, the United States, by an act of Congress, directed the creation of a town a mile down river on higher ground and sent a team of men to survey and lay it out. This is a government action Perrysburg proudly shares with the creation of Washington, D.C. During the early 1820s, and especially after several damaging floods, Orleans inhabitants moved to this higher ground, and their settlement ceased to exist.

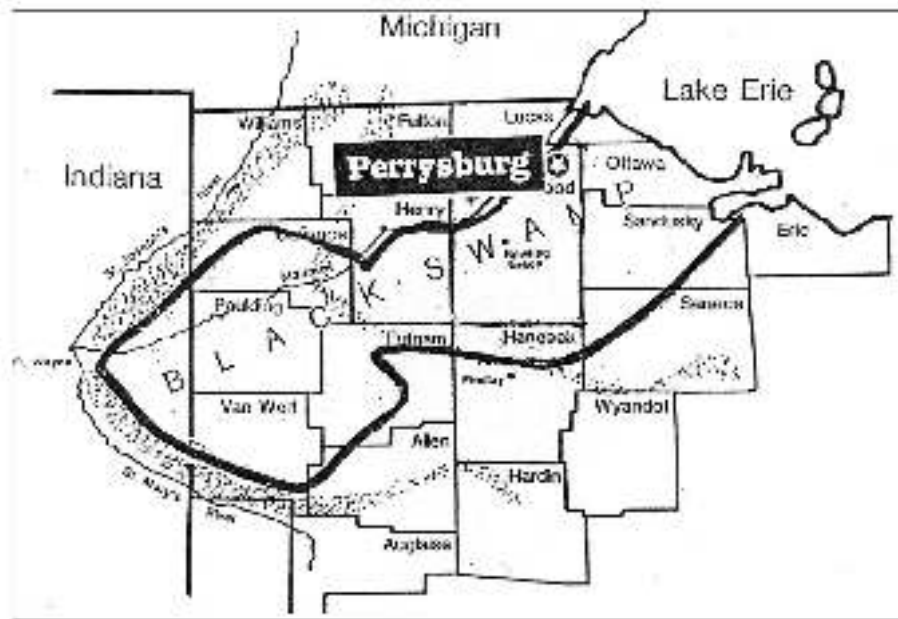
The generally agreed-upon founder of this town, certainly one of the first officially established in Northwest Ohio, was Amos Spafford, a New Englander who helped survey what became Cleveland and who came here as collector and postmaster of what was then called the Port of Miami of Lake Erie. Spafford was also the first official land owner in Wood County and the man who named Perrysburg in honor of Oliver Hazard Perry, the hero of the Battle of Lake Erie, which took place not far from here.

This book is the outgrowth of a now 15-year continuing project during which Historic Perrysburg, Inc., a volunteer preservation group, has brought to the public's attention structures in town that are of architectural or historical interest. This has been in the form of literature and monthly articles printed in the Perrysburg *Messenger-Journal and Bend of the River*, a magazine on Perrysburg and Toledo area history.

Concentration is on the exterior of the buildings described and the detailing that identifies them with a particular style. Secondary public records were used in most cases to identify original owners and the year of construction, and when best available evidence is inaccurate, we apologize and request that known facts be shared with the author.

One

1820—1830

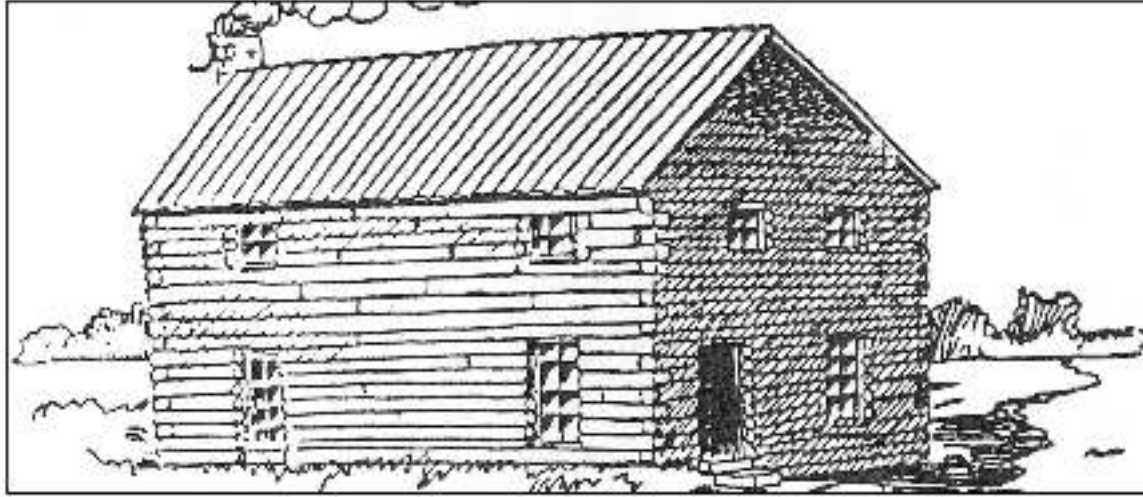


The Great Black Swamp, a dismal almost uninhabitable wilderness and the last place in Ohio to be settled, once extended right up to Perrysburg's present city limits. But it was here on both sides of the foot of the rapids of the Maumee River that white civilization, first the French, then the British, and finally the Americans, probably got a start in this part of the Northwest Territory. It was a natural trade site and an important gate to the interior of the Midwest.

The town's unusual heritage of buildings reaches back almost 185 years and reflects the architectural tastes of eastern United States culture from which many early residents came. Our very first structures range from the first log cabin to John Hollister's unusually elegant home built in 1827. The earliest Perrysburg settlers recorded in letters that the first frame house on this side of the river was built by a David W. Hawley in 1817. He had reportedly brought the finished lumber by boat. The house, no longer existing, was located on the river flats at the end of what would be the northbound extension of West Boundary Street. One traveler wrote that there was not a single house on any of the in-lots (between Mulberry and Hickory, and Front and Seventh), but there were a few log cabins on some of the out-lots extending on to the three Boundary-named streets. A few roads were cut through the forest to furnish logs for a two-story county courthouse and the framework for houses-to-be, a number of which stand today but started as log structures

Nationally, we began flexing our muscles with the Monroe Doctrine opposing European intervention in the Americas, and the canal era emerged with the opening of the Erie Canal between New York City and Lake Erie. Shortly after Perrysburg was platted by the U.S. government in 1816,

this area was a part of Logan County nearly 100 miles south of here. In 1820, Wood County was created, and by 1823, the town was about to spring to life, having been named the county seat despite numbering fewer than 200 inhabitants.



FIRST COURTHOUSE ON FIRST BLOCK OF WEST FRONT (BUILT IN 1823). Perrysburg's earliest buildings were made of abundantly available logs. This is a depiction of the first Wood County courthouse built by Daniel Hubbell and Guy Nearing and used as such for 14 years. It was located about 200 feet west of Louisiana Avenue on the south side of West Front Street next door to what was to be the site of the Exchange Hotel, built in the same year (see page 14). Logs were of hand-hewn oak 24 by 32 feet in size. Finished lumber was milled in Monclova, and bricks for the chimney were made at Hubbell's brickworks across the river. The building had offices on the first floor and the courtroom on the second, reached by an outside stairway not shown in this sketch. A log jail, in use until 1847, was moved here and located behind the courthouse. It was enlarged to include foot-square wall and floor timbers secured by pins. Windows consisted of mere slits in the logs. All of this construction cost more than the money on hand, so contractors were paid off with town lots valued at \$12 each.



WOOLFERT CABIN AT 577 EAST FRONT (BUILDING DATE UNKNOWN). Whether it is indeed some 200 years old, as once claimed by a Toledo newspaper, this restored two-story log house is typical of the earliest houses. It sat for years on an East River Road bluff less than half a mile outside of town but was moved to the 577 Foundation for educational purposes. It may have originated on a nearby farm along what is now Ford Road. A family of 11 once occupied the place.



POWELL HOUSE AT 538 WEST FRONT (BUILT IN EARLY 1820s). It is not certain who built this small house that is believed to have started as a log cabin. It is traditionally associated with Thomas W. Powell, who came from Utica, New York, as a school teacher in 1820 and who owned the property from 1825 to 1827. He was admitted to the bar and was Wood County prosecuting attorney for 10 years before leaving in 1830. The house has such Greek Revival features as a frieze board and side pilasters. A front porch was removed in recent years, and the right side of the structure could be a later addition.



SECOND POWELL HOUSE AT 300 WEST SECOND (BUILT C. 1829). This Greek Revival house is also attributed to Thomas Powell and is called a fine example of a small “two over two”-room residence, discounting the two wings probably added later. The street-facing gable features plain entablature along the sides, and the chimney extends through the center of the roof ridge. In 1976, the house was completely restored by the Frank Hirst family, with the original interior woodwork and molding retained. Many of the windows contain original panes.



JOHN HOLLISTER HOUSE AT 125 EAST FRONT (BUILT IN 1823). John Hollister, an early and prominent settler, chose the property directly east of the foot of Louisiana Avenue for his house, which for years was a showplace of the northwestern Ohio frontier. While it preceded the Second Empire style, it has its most common similarity, the distinctive mansard roof with dormer windows. A tall cupola with three windows originally topped the roof, and a wide porch in the rear offered a fine view of the river. Hollister was a forwarding and commission merchant, the owner of a line of steamboats, a judge, a postmaster, a mayor, and a member of the Ohio legislature. Presidential candidate William H. Harrison addressed a crowd in front of the residence in 1840, and over the years well into the 20th century, the place saw visitors such as Daniel Webster, William McKinley, Warren Harding, and Nicholas Longworth. The home was destroyed by fire in 1940. (below) This photograph, date unknown, shows changes made over time in the Hollister house above before it burned.



SPINK HOUSE AT 503 WEST FRONT (BUILT C. 1827). The latest research shows that this property was never owned by John C. Spink, with whom its name is associated, and that it may not be as old as thought. But we will let stand its long-time identity. It is perched on the side of Indian Hill, where warriors are said to have camped before joining in the sieges of Fort Meigs. Its Greek Revival features include a centered doorway surrounded by multi-paned sidelights and a transom topped by an entablature supported by pilasters. That it was once the old Customs House, an Underground Railroad station, and a stagecoach stop is probably apocryphal—though in the 1920s, it was known to be used for the Sunnyside Tea Room.



AURORA SPAFFORD HOUSE AT 27340 WEST RIVER ROAD (BUILT IN 1820s). Built by the son of town founder Amos Spafford, this simple Greek Revival house is called a “half house” (two and a half rooms deep with a Shaker-type interior) by the Ohio Historical Society. Now on the National Register, the house was moved a few feet from its original foundation during restoration by the current owner. Otherwise, it appears unaltered, but there are plans for change. It was the meeting place in the 1820s for the area Methodist congregation.



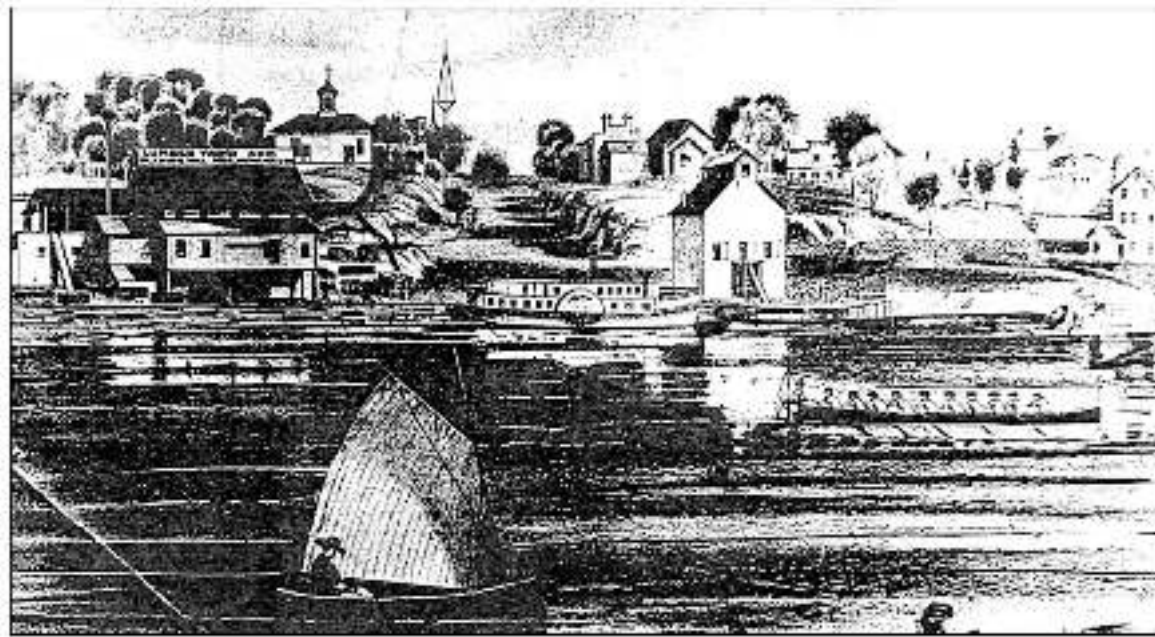
EXCHANGE HOTEL AT 140 WEST FRONT (BUILT IN 1823). (above) This famous old hostelry was built by Samuel Spafford, another son of Amos Spafford, for John Hollister. It was later bought and operated by Samuel's son, Jarvis. Built of walnut logs and later covered with clapboard, it was

the social center of the community for several generations. Among the guests and visitors over its 84 years in business were Pres. James K. Polk, Gen. Winfield Scott, Daniel Webster, Peter Navarre, and assorted national and state congressmen, governors, and judges who could enjoy a view of the busy Maumee River across the street. Political gatherings and veterans' reunions over the years used its 2 rooms that extended to the rear, and locals attended the festivals, balls, concerts, wedding reception and even lawn croquet games staged there. (below) Today the original framework still exists, but all vestiges of the former Exchange Hotel are gone. Following a fire in 1907, the structure was altered to a two-family dwelling and is now a commercial building with apartments.



Two

1830—1840



This was an exciting decade in Perrysburg. Wooden ships and boats were still the primary means of travel and commerce, and this area had the raw material to build them.

The shipbuilding industry here was centered along the flats of the river, and larger and larger vessels were being constructed—sailing schooners, steam-driven side-wheelers, and propeller steamboats, some up to nearly 700 tons. Not only that—with its natural trading center at the foot of the rapids, Perrysburg was one of the busiest ports on Lake Erie, and the Miami Canal from Cincinnati to Dayton was extended to the Maumee River, and work began on the Wabash and Erie and Miami-Erie Canal links to the lake.

Road access to Perrysburg was improving (barely) with the state putting a macadam, or stone, surface on the east-west Maumee and Western Reserve Road (now Route 20) across the swamp, though it was still an almost impassable bog during wet weather. The first short-lived log bridge was built across the river between here and Maumee.

Our town was chartered by the Ohio General Assembly and grew to over a thousand people. With that came election of John C. Spink, the first mayor. After one of many fires that defied bucket brigades and destroyed frame homes and business buildings, village council passed an ordinance creating our first volunteer fire department. But success still mostly depended on the availability of nearby water.

In 1838, work began to replace the first log county courthouse, and a Greek Revival-style structure

took shape on the site of today's municipal buildings. It was to be six years before the structure was completed. If there was any dampener to this progress, it might have been the so-called "Toledo War," when Ohio and Michigan quarreled over the state line and militia from both sides threatened one another from across the river. However, residents were said to have been thrilled over Ohio troops headquartered in town and drilling in our streets, with Governor Robert Lucas as commander.



AMOS SPAFFORD II HOUSE AT 347 EAST SECOND (BUILT IN THE 1830s). Records suggest that the grandson of the town's founder built this small, neat Greek Revival house. Hand-hewn lumber can be seen held together by square nails, along with two-inch walnut sheathing material. Spafford died in California during the gold rush, and the property was bought by Jesup W. Scott, who founded and co-edited the first newspaper here and in the Maumee Valley. He later became editor of the Toledo Blade and a founder of the University of Toledo.



PHOENIX BLOCK AT 128—130 LOUISIANA (BUILT IN 1830s). *One of the oldest downtown business buildings is this Federal-style built for Joseph Creps's Eagle Hotel, later called the Baird House, and still later the Franklin House. In 1858, it was remodeled for a general business building and in 1871, an interior wall divided the first floor down the middle. The Kazmaier grocery occupied half of it for 60 years. Because of the swamp then, cellars were not practical, and even today a ramp leads up into the building.*



A. M. THOMPSON HOUSE AT 223—225 WEST SECOND (BUILT IN 1830s). *A much altered home of Italianate style, the A. M. Thompson house features a two-story angled bay with windows topped by segmental arches of vertically angled brick over protruding brick sills. In 1928, a two-story frame addition was made in the rear. A frame entrance and the porch on the right side are also additions. Thompson was a dry goods and grocery merchant and farmer and was active in civic affairs.*



LINDSAY HOUSE AT 348 WEST FRONT (BUILT IN 1836). This is a comparatively small Greek Revival-style house with an attractive off-center entrance surrounded by sidelights and transom. The windows have stone lintels. Frame extensions were later added to the left and rear sides. Lindsay operated a sash, door, and blind factory along the river and was married to Sarah McKnight, daughter of one of the first families to make their home here.



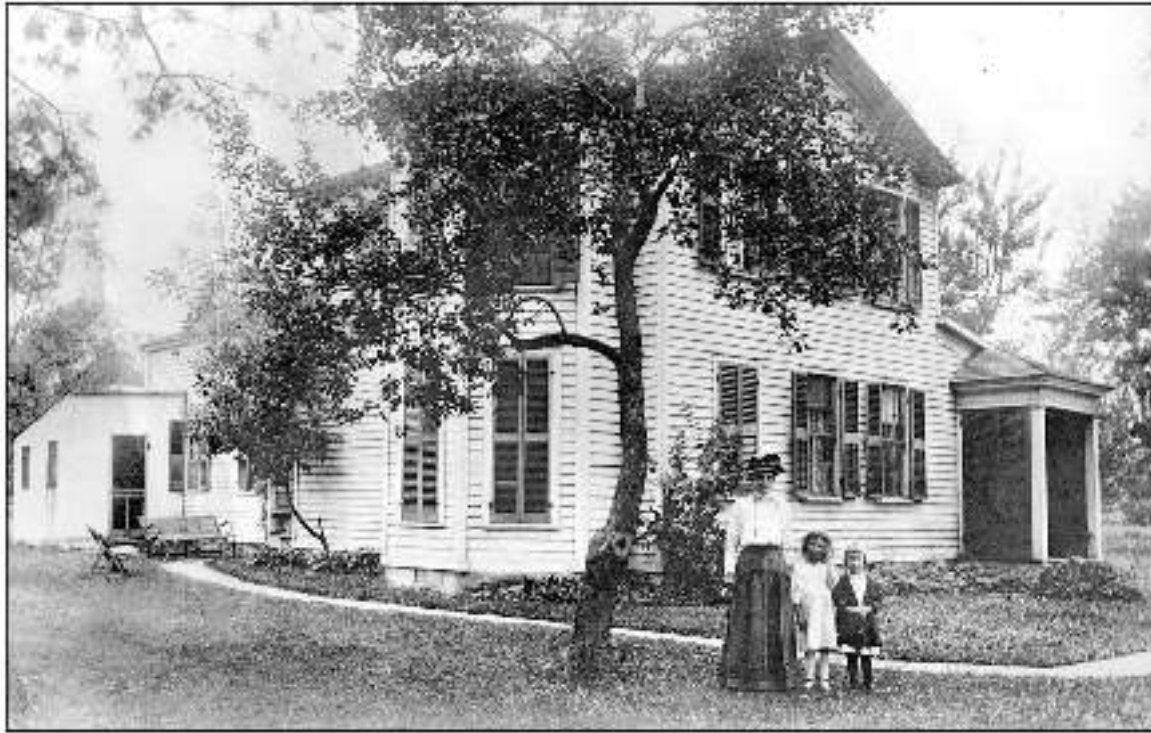
CRANKER HOUSE AT 310 WEST SECOND (BUILT IN 1830s). This Greek Revival-style home was likely built by Ruben Sawyer, though it is identified more with the Peter Cranker family. Typical Greek Revival details include the wide trim band or frieze board under the eaves, multi-glazed windows, and the front door with classical sidelights and transom. Little is known of Sawyer, but Cranker was a well-known wagon, carriage, and sleigh maker.



PETER CRANKER. Cranker was a former village councilman who began as a blacksmith and ended as a wagon and carriage maker.



WAY HOUSE AT 529 HICKORY (BUILT IN 1830s). Believed to be built by a John Chambers, this house was the Willard V. Way family house for many years, and it once stood on the corner of Indian and Walnut where the fire department is now. Way came here from New York state and was a prominent lawyer, county prosecutor, mayor, and civic leader, but was considered by some to be rather miserly by nature. Upon his death, they were surprised to learn that he left the village money to build a library and to buy books, six lots for a park, his house, and funds for a school scholarship. The house was moved in the early 1900s.



WAY HOUSE AT ORIGINAL LOCATION ON SOUTHEAST CORNER OF INDIANA AND WALNUT. *The lady in this undated photograph is believed to be Mrs. Eugenie Chapman, a schoolteacher.*



YEAGER HOUSE AT 343 WEST INDIANA (BUILT IN 1830s). *German immigrant John J. Yeager owned this house from the 1840s, and his descendants lived in it until 1990. A Greek Revival temple style farm house, it stood on the then outskirts of town. Other than the wing on the right, it has had minimal changes. Two of Yeager's descendants served as mayors of Perrysburg, and one was a long time merchant.*



EARLIER PHOTOGRAPH OF YEAGER HOUSE. *This undated photograph shows what the house looked like before the present embellishments.*



B. F. HOLLISTER HOUSE AT 407 WEST FRONT (BUILT IN 1830s). *Benjamin Hollister, from Massachusetts, built this house whose roofline and elliptical fanlight in the gable reflect the earlier Federal period. It has a framework of hand-hewn timbers secured by mortise and tenon joints and wide-plank pine floors laid directly over logs. Hollister (brother of John, see page 12) ran a general store and was in the fur trade with the American Indians. He escorted parts of the Ottawa and Miami tribes to their exile in the west.*

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