

The Official History of “Garden Court”



by Thomas M. Lent

edited & structured by Paul A. Bond

The Official History of “Garden Court”

Printed & packaged by Paul A. Bond

First Edition, December 2001

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Acknowledgments

Most of the facts contained herein were obtained from secondary sources found in the Erie County Historical Society, the Erie County Courthouse, The Erie County Library and certain offices in Erie City Hall. There were some occasional discrepancies in sources usually regarding dates. The selection of one date over another does not reflect a determination as to the correct date but is rather a default. Some primary sources were used which as well were found at the above sources. The major source of primary research was the real estate archives of the Erie law firm Marsh, Spaeder, Baur, Spaeder and Schaaf, which yielded the only source of information on ownership prior to 1907. The 1937 Erie Abstract Title Company title report for 633 W.6th Street contained a wealth of information about pre-1907 ownership of Block 40, as well as the Civic Art Realty Company. This document provided the names Thomas H. Sill and his heirs, which in turn allowed a look into the lives of these people who once owned or had involvement in the property we now call home. The following secondary sources were consulted, but due to the informal nature and intended personal use of this document, are simply listed but not formally cited:

Wellejus, Edward "Erie, Chronicle of a Great Lakes City" 1980;

Carney, John "Tales of Old Erie" 1958;

Reed, "History of Erie County" 1925;

Miller, "A Twentieth Century History of Erie County Pa." 1909;

Erie Weekly Dispatch Obituaries

1873-1874 Gazetteer and Business Directory of Erie County, Pa.

D. P. Robbins, "Popular History of Erie County," 1894

Sill, James, "History of the City of Erie," 1867

Walling, Emory, "Memoirs of the Erie County Pennsylvania Bench and Bar" 1928

Numerous other works were reviewed from which a snippet of information may have been obtained.

Additional thanks and credit must go to the Staff at the Erie County Historical Society Reading Room and Library for their kind assistance at retrieving documents from the archives for review and for their helpful suggestions for other sources of information. I bothered them mainly during the noon hour and delayed many a lunch I'm sure, but they were always helpful, and with a smile to boot!

My special thanks to Paul Bond for his excellent editing, structuring and layout of this document. I gave him an unedited manuscript with no chapters or divisions and a folder of copies of drawings and maps. He produced the finished product you are now holding. His efforts have made the hours of research and writing most rewarding and worthwhile. As I never thought this project would get so involved and detailed, I never thought it would result in such a professional looking work. I'm proud of what we have done. Now onto the legal stuff.

The within is not intended for commercial sale or reprint(in case I ever run for President and am accused of plagiarism) but solely for the benefit of the historical curiosity and pride of the owners of homes on The Garden Court. Remember me fondly,

Thom Lent
Erie, PA
October 1999

Introduction

This is the History Of Garden Court.

Originally designated by the Town of Erie planners as “Square 40,” the city block bounded to the east by Cherry Street, the west by Poplar and the north and south by 6th and 7th Streets, adds a rather unique chapter to the history of the Town, Borough and ultimately City of Erie. Although not officially designated as such, this block is generally known today as “Garden Court.” The block itself is the oldest traditional subdivision in Erie. A June 22, 1907 Declaration of Trust and transfer of the entire block created the subdivision and association which still conducts regular meetings to attend to the business of the association. The informal designation as Garden Court no doubt stems from the replotting of Square 40 which created a common courtyard area in the center of the block. This one-of-a-kind layout provides a unique “neighborhood” where each resident shares a common backyard community.

CHAPTER 1

Thomas Sill's \$28 Purchase

What is today the City of Erie began life as a town in the late 1700's. After Pennsylvania acquired the “triangle” of land connecting the Commonwealth to Lake Erie, a team of surveyors was dispatched to map out the new port and newly established Town. After deciding the name, a plan was laid out for development. In 1795, a team led by Chief Surveyor Andrew Ellicott completed the layout for the streets and blocks. Ellicott was famous at the time for having laid out Washington D.C. The ambitious Ellicott laid out a plan well beyond the needs of the small populace of the time, and well beyond the dedicated boundaries. Although the first formal westernmost boundary of the town was Chestnut street, Ellicott's plan contemplated expansion and Erie was formally expanded twice in accordance with the initial layout. In the second expansion, Cranberry Street was the western boundary, with West Street being Ellicott's last western boundary. One source states that at one time Liberty Street was the westernmost boundary, however the second expansion under the original plan went farther west than Liberty Street and included block 40, as well as what is now Gridley Park. Erie officially became a borough in 1805. On April 4, 1851 Erie became an official “city,” but no doubt expansion through the years was easier as the city had been so expansively laid out.

The first official transfer of Square 40 appears in the “Records of Original Sales of Squares of the Town of Erie” and shows it was sold by the Town of Erie to Ebenezer Henry by the State Commissioner of Sales on November 4, 1811. The block was sold by Henry to Nathaniel Eastman on August 12, 1814. Four days later, Eastman sold the property to Thomas H. Sill [Figure 1] for \$28.33. This transfer was not recorded until December 30, 1868, over 20 years after Sill's death. The records of Erie County were destroyed by the infamous Erie County Courthouse Fire of March 23, 1823. The delayed recording may have in fact been a re-recording to clear up the loss of the record of the transfer in the 1823 fire.

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The assessment records show the property was assessed in 1823, after the fire, to Thomas H. Sill. The deed was probably therefore recorded much closer to the actual transfer in 1814. Mr. Sill died while still owning the property on February 7, 1856.

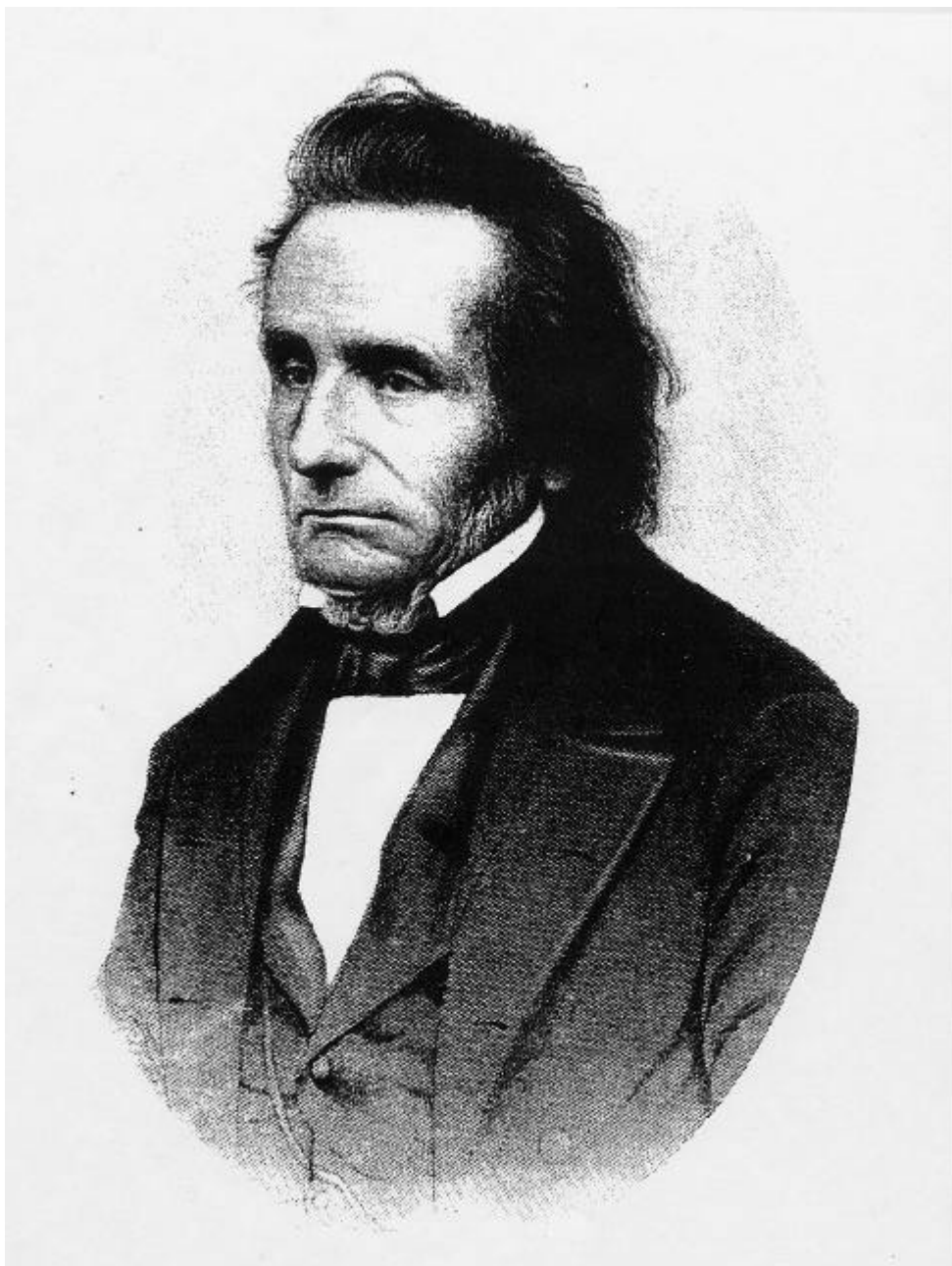


Figure 1 - Thomas H. Sill (1783-1856)

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The Honorable Thomas H. Sill appears to have been a fairly prominent citizen of early Erie. Born in Connecticut in 1783, the son of Captain Richard L. Sill (who fought in the Revolutionary War), Sill graduated from Brown University in 1804 and commenced the study of law with a Judge in Cincinnati, off and on until 1809, when he passed the bar of Ohio. There are various references to Sill having been of poor health during his legal education and later in life, but no specific reference to the nature of his ailment. At various times from 1804 through 1809, he interrupted his legal studies for health related trips to the south and is reported once to have cruised to the West Indies.

Upon completion of his studies and passing the bar, he began the practice of law in Lebanon, Warren County, Ohio. Sill's first public service came in the War of 1812, when he was a member of the Ohio “Minutemen.” Returning west from a health related trip to his native Connecticut, Sill stopped in Pittsburgh and learned that there was no resident attorney in Erie. At the time, legal services in Northwest Pennsylvania would have been provided by attorneys that traveled through the area, much like the early circuit judges. Sill believed that the naval station and geographic location showed promise and in 1813 he moved to Erie.

Sill immediately signed up with the Erie “Minutemen.” At the time this was a rather risky proposition as Oliver Hazard Perry came to Erie on March 27, 1813 for the purpose of building a fleet of warships, one of which (sort of) is still sailing. There was fear the British would learn of Perry's activity and ambush the Erie garrison. This fortunately never occurred and on September 10, 1813 Perry defeated the British fleet in the Battle of Lake Erie. Sill's other military experience came when he served on General Wallace's staff for several years although it is not reported if this was during time of war.

Sill set up his law practice on East 6th Street in the home and office once owned by William Wallace, Esq. Wallace had moved to Erie in 1795 specifically to represent the Pennsylvania Population Company. The Pennsylvania Population Company was formed by the notorious land speculator John Nicholson who, using political connections, purchased vast tracts of land from the government and sold same for a tidy profit. Much of early Erie was initially owned by the PPC, who in turn sold plots to early land developers or wealthy families, desirous of building large mansions. After removal of the first several of the PPC's corrupt land agents, Judah Colt took over this position and settled in Erie, having acquired in excess

of 400 acres of land for himself.

In 1803 Wallace bought the two-story log house on the northwest corner of 6th and Holland Streets. Wallace made noted improvements and additions to what was ultimately given the address 156 East 6th. In 1810, after the PPC sold off all of its Erie county interests, Wallace returned to Harrisburg. While Wallace was probably not well regarded in the community, Sill rose to a level of considerable prominence, holding many public offices and serving as a leader in various civic and other groups. In 1815, Sill purchased the home from the Honorable Jesse Moore, President Judge of the Sixth Judicial District. At the time, the Sixth District contained Erie, Crawford, Venango, Mercer and Warren Counties. Sill married in 1816 and raised his family in the home and sporadically continued his law practice there until his death. The house is identified in various Erie history books as the “Sill Homestead.”

The 1820 list of Erie Borough taxpayer’s puts Sill as paying tax on the 11th most valuable piece of property in the borough, then appraised at \$730. This tax included his ownership of Block 40. The property at 6th and Holland remained in the Sill family at least until 1900 as it is described as the “J. B. Sill Est.” in the 1900 City of Erie Atlas, having been inherited by Sill’s youngest son James. The house itself was razed in November 1911, to make way for the erection of “modern buildings” [Figures 2A & 2B]. At the time it was torn down, the home and buildings were described as one of the City’s oldest landmarks. The block on which the Sill homestead stood for over a century is now Erie Insurance Exchange.

In addition to his early law practice, Sill served as deputy U. S. Marshall from 1816 to 1818. In 1819 he was appointed deputy Attorney General (equivalent to the current day District Attorney). Sill at times is noted to have “relinquished” his law practice to serve in various public and elected offices. As well there are mentions that in his later years his “feeble health” incapacitated him for the practice of law. Sill was however highly regarded as a lawyer and is generally mentioned as being highly eloquent and skilled.

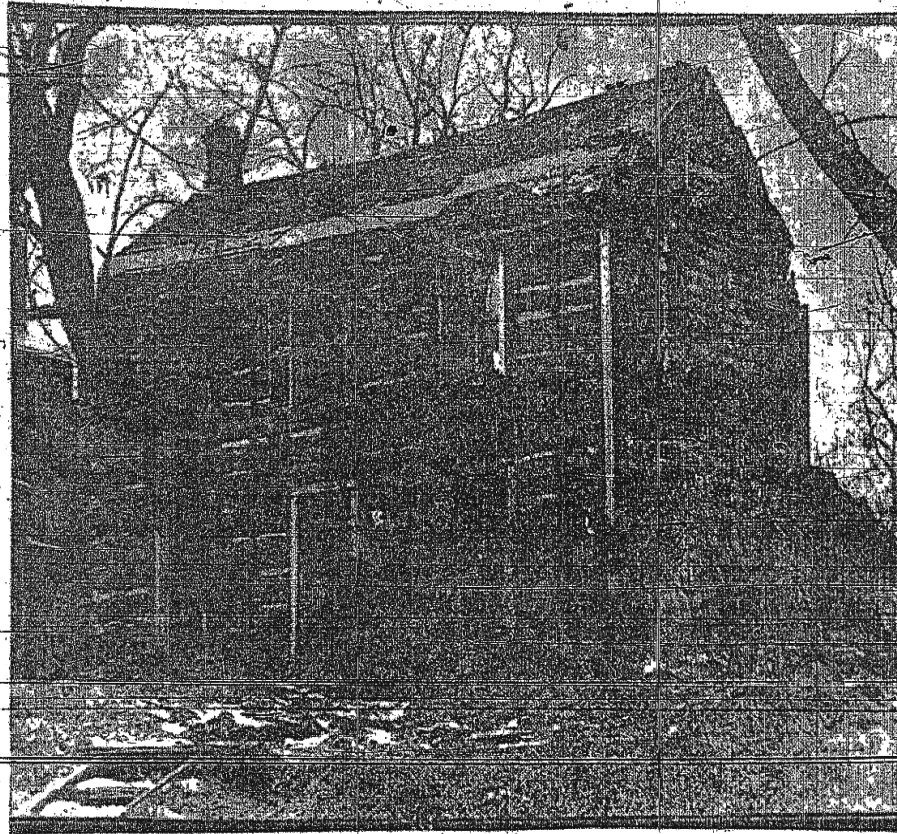
ERIE DAILY TIMES

DAILY NET PAID CIRCULATION GREATER THAN ALL OTHER ERIE PAPERS COMBINED

PAGES)

ERIE, PA., THURSDAY EVENING, NOV. 23, 1911.

OLDTIME HOUSE OF LOGS, ERIE LANDMARK, COMES DOWN



The Hon. James Sill homestead at Sixth and Holland streets is being torn down to make room for a modern building. The part of the old landmark here shown was constructed of heavy chestnut logs and afterward covered with clapboards. Men are now at work razing it.

—Photo by Kiedausch.

AUSTRIA MAY STOP THE WAR RAZING OF OLD SILL HOMESTEAD

Has Agreement With Russia to Intervene in Conflict,
According to Berlin Report—Italians Penetrating

Figure 2A - James Sill Homestead, Erie Times Photo, 1911

RAZING OF OLD SILL HOMESTEAD RECALLS EVENTS Many Historical Happen- ings and Sweet Memor- ias Cluster About An- tique Old Landmark on East Sixth Street.

In the tearing down of the old Sill homestead, 156 East Sixth street, one of the city's oldest landmarks is passing into history. There is perhaps no other structure in the city, and few if any in the state, around which cluster a greater number of historical events.

The Sill homestead embraced several buildings, erected by different years. The oldest of them in the rear was built at the dawn of the century. It was about the year 1803 that William Wallace, a young lawyer, came from Harrisburg with his wife and made his home in this building; the front part of this west building being added to increase its capacity and convenience. This addition was partly of heated logs, with

(Continued on page 2, column 1)

Razing of Old Sill Home- stead

(Continued from Page 1)

cupulous apartments. At this time, its ground position is being torn down, evidence of the care with which the materials of its construction were salvaged, the black walnut having been cut from the same square.

Mr. Wallace and his family occupied the dwelling from 1803 until 1811. He was the early president lawyer in Erie county, a first mortgage in connection with its later occupancy from 1816 to 1828 by Thomas H. Sill, who after he came to Erie from Connecticut in 1813, was for years the only resident attorney in Erie.

The Sixth street homestead, which for a while had been held by Adam Atuckle, father of William C. Atuckle, who was born there, passed into the hands of Hon. Jesse Moore, who from 1804 to 1825 was president judge of the Sixth judicial district, embracing Erie, Crawford, Mercer, Venango and Warren. In 1815 he sold the property to Thomas Sill, who started a law practice here. Mr. Sill had his law offices in the southwest corner of the house floor until he died in 1858. The house then passed to the late Hon. James Sill and to his heirs following his death.

The eastern part of the old home, consisting of a parlor and other rooms, were added about the year 1825. To realize and appreciate the conspicuous location of the Sill homestead, it might be remembered

that for about the entire first half of the late century, the Sill building stood "solitary and alone" upon the eastern half of the square north of Sixth street from French to Holland streets, with no dwelling on either side from Holland street to Mill creek. It was upon a hill still abrupt in its rise from the walk.

The old home, the place of birth of many famous men in the city's early history and the scene of many marriage festivities, possessed an abounding hospitality which never waned. The shaded yard, with its wealth of foliage, the climbing vines, succession of fragrant flowers from the morning-glories and roses, and honey-suckles to abundant lilacs, made a combination as attractive to the eye as the profusion of fruit made it agreeable to the taste.

In the early days, Sixth street from French to Parade was the highway of travel for prairie schooners proceeding to the west with their loads of humanity after the pacification of the Indians by Gen. Wayne. The white houses, green blinds, the numerous trees with their variegated foliage, flower trees and fruit made the home most beautiful in the simplicity of its adornment and many a pleasant hour was spent within its walls by people on their way to the west.

Such are some of the recollections caused by a brief review of the long period of existence of the old home, which is being lowered to the ground to make room for present-day progress. A retrospect brings more of joy than sorrow, while the recollections of the united heads of the old family with a readiness always to oblige, cannot but evoke the admiration of those who best knew their innermost thoughts, and appreciate their countless tales that all around them might be happy.

Mohawk dance, I. O. O. F. hall, tonight

Figure 2B - James Sill Homestead, Erie Times Text, 1911

RAZING OF OLD SILL HOMESTEAD RECALLS EVENTS

Many Historical Happenings and Sweet Memories Cluster About Antique Old Landmark on East Sixth Street.

In the tearing down of the old Sill homestead, 156 East Sixth street, one of the city's oldest landmarks is passing into history. There is perhaps no other structure in the city, and few of any in the state, around which cluster a greater number of historical events.

The Sill homestead embraced several building, erected in different years. The oldest of them is the rear was built at the dawn of the century. It was about the year 1803 that William Wallace, a young lawyer, came from Harrisburg with his wife and made his home in this building: the front part of the west building being added to increase its capacity and convenience. This addition was partly of hewed logs, with capacious apartments. At this time, its sound position in being torn down, evidences the care with which the materials of its construction were selected, the black walnut having perhaps been cut from the same square.

Mr. Wallace and his family occupied the dwelling from 1805 until 1811. He was the only resident lawyer in Erie county, a fact more notable in connection with its later occupancy from 1816 to 1856 by Thomas H. Sill, who after he came to Erie from Conecticut [sic] in 1812, was for years the only resident attorney in Erie.

The Sixth street homestead, which for a while had been held by Adam Arbuckle, father of William G. Arbuckle, who was born there, passed into the hands of Hon. Jesse Moore, who from 1805 to 1825 was president judge of the Sixth judicial district, embracing Erie, Crawford, Mercer, Venango and Warren.

In 1815 he sold the property to Thomas H. Sill, who started a law practice here. Mr. Sill had his law office in the southwest rooms of the lower floor until he died in 1856. The house then passed to the late Hon. James Sill and to his heirs following his death.

The eastern part of the old home, consisting of a parlor and other rooms, were added about the year 1825. To realize and appreciate the conspicuous location of the Sill homestead, it must be remembered that for about the entire first half of the late century, the Sill building stood "solitary and alone" upon the eastern half of the square north of Sixth street from French to Holland streets, with no dwelling on either side from Holland street to Millcreek. It was upon a hill, still abrupt in its rise from the walk.

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Such are some of the reflections caused by a brief review of the long period of existence of the old home, which is being lowered to the ground to make room for present-day progress. A retrospect brings more of joy than sorrow, while the good intentions of the united heads of the old family with a readiness always to oblige, cannot but evoke the admiration of those who best knew their innermost thoughts and appreciate their ceaseless toil that all around them might by happy.

Figure 2C - James Sill Homestead, Erie Times Text 1911, reproduced

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Sill also appears to have gained considerable note as a fairly successful politician. The chief elected official of a borough during Sill’s time was the “Burgess.” Sill was elected and served as the Burgess of Erie in 1816,1817,1829,1833,1834, 1843 and 1844. In 1819 and 1820, Sill was elected as County Auditor. In 1823 Sill was elected to the state House of Representatives and was instrumental in passing an act which remedied the loss of records from the courthouse fire and as well securing funding for the completion of construction of a new courthouse. Sill and seven other citizens each loaned the County \$2,000 interest free for one year to begin the rebuilding effort, and historians believe it was Sill’s organization of this effort which led to his being sought as a candidate to represent Erie’s interests in Harrisburg. The new Courthouse was completed in 1826, and was seen as an example of Sill’s commitment to Erie.

Sill’s next elected office sent him to Washington D.C. as the district’s Representative. He won a special election on March 14, 1826 to replace Patrick Farrelly, who died while returning to Washington D. C. Sill completed Farrelly’s current term and was reelected in 1828. Sill rejected the nomination for another term and returned to Erie and the local political scene with his Burgess election in 1829. In 1836 Sill was elected to the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention and in 1848 was selected as a presidential elector, casting Pennsylvania’s presidential votes for Zachary Taylor and his running mate, Millard Fillmore. As a footnote, the 1938 Federal Writer’s Project “Guide” to Erie City and County notes that for 10 days in 1849 Erie was the “Capital of the United States.” After winning the election, President Taylor came to Erie as part of a tour of the country. He fell ill in Waterford and spent 10 days recuperating at the Erie home of Dr. Woods at 8th and State Streets. Vice President Fillmore, was called to Erie to assist the President in running the country. As the piece notes, for 10 days in 1849, the United States was governed from Erie, Pennsylvania.

Thomas H. Sill’s last public office appears to be his appointment as Erie’s Postmaster from April 16, 1849 until May 13, 1853. He was initially appointed by President Taylor and reappointed by President Fillmore. His beginning of service as the Postmaster saw the official end of his law practice. At age 73, Sill retired from this position and public life.

In addition to being the early owner of Block 40, Sill is also affiliated with some other Erie landmarks. In 1837, Sill was chosen as President of the newly established Erie branch of

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the United States Bank of Philadelphia. As the President, Sill oversaw the construction of the impressive and costly bank building, which was completed in late 1839. Based on the failure of the original United States Bank, the Philadelphia bank wanted to convey a sense of strength and chose a portico and column design similar to the Greek Parthenon. The public faith in the Bank and its impressive new building was never tested because the bank never did business in the new building. The Philadelphia bank failed in 1840, and the Erie Branch was closed down and the new building sold. In 1849 the U. S. bought the building for \$29,000 and utilized it as the Customs House for the Port of Erie. The building as well served as the U. S. Post Office and local I. R. S. office over the years until the Erie County Commissioners bought it in 1937 and leased it to the Historical Society. Although Sill never acted as President of the bank in this magnificent structure, he did serve his tenure as Postmaster there. The structure is of course now the Erie Art Museum. The building next door, known as the “Cashier’s House,” was in fact built for the Bank and the resident officer known as the “Cashier.”

Sill also had extensive involvement in the development of religious and educational institutions in early Erie. He was one of the early members and elders of the First Presbyterian Church. Sill also served as School Director and Trustee for the Erie Academy for over 30 years. The Academy was the first “high school” in Erie and was the only source of public secondary education for many years. Established in 1817, the Erie Academy constructed a schoolhouse on the southeast corner of 9th and Peach, which saw its first class in 1822. The Erie Academy building also served as the temporary Erie County Courthouse after the Courthouse fire of 1823 until a new courthouse could be constructed. The Academy was closed in 1874, due to deterioration of the building but was refurbished and reopened in 1878. Classes were conducted there until 1916. The building and property were transferred to the Erie School District. The building was razed and the property sold for construction to The Second National Bank for construction of their new building. While the Bank was a casualty of the Great Depression, the proceeds from the sale (\$250,000) were used by the school district to help finance the construction of the present Academy High School at State and 26th Streets.

Thomas H. Sill was buried in the Sill family plot at the Erie Cemetery after his death on February 7, 1856. Coincidentally, Sill had been a financial contributor to the purchase of

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the land for the establishment of the Erie Cemetery. In January 1850, Sill was one of a group of Erie citizens that contributed money to finance the \$75,000 purchase of the 75 acres that are now the Erie Cemetery. Sill’s survivors included his wife Joanna Boyleston Sill and their 6 children. The Sill children, all of whom inherited a share of Block 40, were Richard, Joanna Selden (married Joseph Selden), Sarah Taylor (married Matthew Taylor), Thomas, Joseph and James.

CHAPTER 2

An Inheritance Lost

The sons of Thomas H. Sill followed in their father's footsteps to a certain degree, although only the youngest, James, appears to have gained near the reputation of Thomas H. All the sons, except Joseph, became lawyers. Joseph moved to Union City and was a cashier in a local bank. Not much can be found about their spouses. The Sill daughters married into rather affluent families. The Seldens were early industrialists in iron. Joanna's son George D. Selden was one of the founding partners of Erie City Iron Works and built a large mansion on west 6th Street. The Selden House was torn down for construction of the Harbor View Apartments. Sarah Taylor's husband Matthew was a lawyer of some success in his brief career. He was voted in 1850 as Erie's first elected District Attorney at the age of 25. He thereafter served as a City Councilman in 1852 for the newly incorporated City of Erie. Matthew Taylor died of unknown reasons on August 22, 1854 at the age of 29.

In his will, Sill appointed his wife (Joanna) and two of his sons (James and Richard) as executors, with very broad powers to sell or convey his real estate. The will set out that an amount of not less than \$2,000 nor greater than \$3000 was to be set aside for the construction of a home for Joanna "on the land," where she could live until her death. The available documents do not indicate a specific parcel and also reference that in addition to Erie property, Sill owned land in Warren and Crawford counties. The will also allowed Joanna the option of receiving \$2000 cash which would free the executors from the obligation of building the home. It does not appear the home was ever built and she appears to have continued living at the Sill Homestead at 6th and Holland until her death. In examining what happened to Block 40 over the next several decades, one can see why she never moved there.

After giving her the choice of a house or cash, the will left Joanna Sill a \$600 per year annuity. The remainder of the estate, including real estate was divided into sixths with 1/6th shares going to sons Richard, James, Thomas, and Joseph Sill. The other shares went to his daughter Sarah H. Taylor and to the heirs of his then deceased daughter, Joanna L. Selden.

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The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania issued a Patent (old term for land grant) to the Thomas H. Sill heirs in February, 1865. This presumably was to remedy the loss of the original grant in the Erie County Courthouse fire of 1823. The Patent wasn't recorded until 1906, no doubt to clear up the title chain. As of 1865 at least, each heir of Thomas H. Sill owned a 1/6th interest in Block 40. What happened for the next 20 to 30 years is somewhat confusing to say the least. The separate interest of each heir to a common owner took the following paths:

Joseph Sill. In 1870, Joseph sold his 1/6th interest to brother James for \$2000.

Sarah Taylor. In 1872, Sarah sold her 1/6th interest to brother James for \$1158.33.

James Sill. [Figure 3] In 1873, (now owning ½ of the block) James borrowed \$4400 from and mortgaged his interest to Joseph Johnson Jr. in his capacity as guardian for the minor children of Orvill Johnson. In February (or perhaps earlier) of 1883 James also borrowed \$5,000 from Humboldt Safe Deposit and Trust Company of Erie (James happened to be a Director of this bank). No doubt the loans were in some part to finance his development of the block. Due to financial problems however, in June of 1883, James assigned his interest in the property to two of his creditors (who also lived on the block as his tenants) for valuation and distribution. A court order of October 7, 1884 required the creditors to sell the property on the condition that each purchaser pay the unpaid taxes before a deed would be issued.

Judgement was entered against James on February 14, 1884 for failing to pay the Johnson debt. James' ½ interest was ultimately sold for \$100 on May 17, 1888 by M. V. B. Gifford, “High Sheriff of Erie County,” to George Selden and George D. Selden (giving each a 9/36ths interest). The deed from the sheriff specifically references transfer of “the 3/6th part” of the land of Thomas H. Sill. In describing this land the sheriff's deed also refers to numerous homes being present on the block. In November 1906 George D. Selden quit-claimed his interest in the property to James Baldwin. George Selden's estate also sold the entirety of his interest in the property (which at the time of his death was 13/36ths) in 1906 to James Baldwin for \$18,055.56.



Figure 3 - James Sill

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Despite the 1888 sheriff's sale it appears a different sheriff sold James Sill's interest to another individual for satisfaction of the Humboldt Safe Deposit and Trust Company debt on November 25, 1902. The record shows judgement was entered against James for non-payment of this loan on October 22, 1889. The judgement was assigned to S. A. Davenport on September 26, 1902. The interest of James, which may have been nothing at this time, by virtue of the earlier sheriff's sale, was deeded by S. S. Burton, Sheriff, to Davenport in 1902. Davenport sold his interest to M. H. Taylor (no relation to Sarah Taylor) in 1904 for \$1250. Matthew H. Taylor in turn sold his entire interest in the land (which included other more valid interests he had by then acquired) to James Baldwin in 1906 for over \$31,000. Taylor took back a mortgage to secure payment, which he received a year later.

Richard Sill. This brother died November 30, 1885, leaving his interest to his wife Eliza. However a judgement had been entered against Richard by the Humboldt Safe Deposit and Trust Company. This judgement was assigned to Kennedy T. Friend in 1883. Subsequent to execution on the judgement, Friend bought Richard's 1/6th interest from the "High Sheriff of Erie County" on February 4, 1886 for \$5. Friend quit-claimed his interest in 1895 to M. H. Taylor. Matthew H. Taylor and his wife included this interest when deeding the property in 1906 (which at that time may have represented 23/36ths of the block) to James Baldwin for payment of \$31,944.44.

The Heirs of Joanna Selden (Joanna S., Emma J. and George D.) The heirs, children of Joanna Selden, sold 2/3rds of their 1/6th (4/36ths) interest to George Selden (her brother-in-law and uncle to the heirs) in 1885 for \$1554.56. George died November 19, 1893 and his estate deeded his 13/36th interest (he acquired another 9/36ths, with George D. Selden from James' interest at sheriff's sale) to James Baldwin in November 1906 for \$18,055.56. The heirs quit-claimed the remainder of their interest (2/36ths) to Matthew H. Taylor on August 24, 1898.

Thomas Sill. Apparently, Thomas died in 1871 while still owning his 1/6th interest. In 1883, his heirs signed a mortgage note, using his 1/6th interest as collateral for a loan to pay off a \$9000 debt, owed to the First National Bank of Union Mills, Pa. It appears the mortgage was given to John C. Selden, "Trustee." In 1886, the 1/6th interest of Thomas was released from this mortgage. In 1891 the new executor of the estate of Thomas H. Sill, deeded a 1/6th

interest in the property to Matthew H. Taylor. Although Taylor appears to have gotten quit-claim deeds from all the heirs of Thomas H., there was never a conveyance by Thomas the son of his 1/6th interest. Since the estate of Thomas H. technically would have owned the interest at this time, it may be that the release of this interest allowed his estate to transfer same. The estate, by executor Samuel V. Holliday, did in fact transfer a 1/6th interest in the property to Matthew H. Taylor on April 10, 1891. By this point, everyone of the other heirs appears to have otherwise lost their interests.

In reviewing the saga of the children of Thomas H. Sill, several things appear to be true. The block was never subdivided during Sill's life, yet homes and other structures were built after his death. James seems to have attempted the first development of the block, as evidenced by his acquisition of ownership and financing activity. It would seem the loans, secured by the property, were used to construct the homes or improve the property for the construction of homes, which are described in Sheriff's sale documents. Not only were homes built for some of the Sill heirs but others appear to have rented or purchased (perhaps by unrecorded land contracts) homes on the block. As an example, when James assigned his interest to creditors, the named individuals were M. E. Dunlap and Samuel S. Spencer, both of whom are referenced in court documents as being tenants on the land.

It appears after the death of Thomas H., that at least 2 efforts had been made to actually split up the property so each interest would be separate. Richard Sill instituted the effort after brother James lost his acquired 3/6ths share to creditors. Richard's death appears to have slowed his effort but Kennedy Friend had himself substituted and in turn pressed forward with the petition. The partition was granted on March 11, 1886 but the records are scant of information as to the ownership of each interest at the time of the court order. An order as well appears in the records that a Partition Petition filed by Thomas the son had been granted, but again there is no demarcation of any of the separate interests other than reference to the percentages owned by each. The Partitions only resulted in the interests being separable for transfer. The block was never surveyed or subdivided to split up each interest by an established boundary or property lines. At the time the efforts of Taylor and Baldwin to acquire and consolidate the remnants of Thomas H. Sill's block 40 were sufficiently underway that there may have been no need for anything more formal.

The Official History of “Garden Court”

It would seem James was the first person with designs on developing Block 40. Although technically never owning any real interest, James did secure 50% of the interests of the block and attempted development. In the 1873-1874 Gazetteer and Business Directory of Erie County an advertisement appears for “James Sill-Attorney and Real Estate Agent.” The ad offered a “choice lot of building lots for sale on easy terms.” The ad doesn’t reference the location, but homes were built on block 40 during this time. The ad further touts, “[y]oung men just starting out in matrimonial life should avail themselves of his well known experience to secure for themselves and loved ones comfortable homes on easy payments.” If this referenced lots on block 40, it could be Sill was building homes and selling them on land-contract, hoping that when the time came to transfer ownership, he would have gotten title to the property. The efforts to secure partition of the property certainly would have been relevant at the time to determine the actual location of each heir’s interest. No doubt the 6th Street side of the block may have been more desirous and the siblings may have been concerned with the location of construction of these “comfortable homes.”

James Sill was a historical figure of some note. Following in his father’s footsteps, James trained under his father becoming a lawyer, being admitted to the Bar on October 29, 1852 at age 21. He assumed his father’s practice during periods of public service and ill health. He remained single and lived at the family homestead with his parents until their deaths, and continued there until his own death in January 1903.

Elected in 1857, James served as District Attorney for 3 years. He also was a member of City Council in 1857 and 1858. At various times, Sill served as a member of the City, County and State Republican Committees. In 1863, President Lincoln offered to appoint him as Provost Marshall (whatever that is) for the 19th District and he declined. He served as a presidential elector for President Grant in 1868. He was the City Solicitor in 1871 and 1872. James gained a fairly good reputation as a lawyer and local historian. He was the President of the Erie Law Association (Bar Association) in 1875 and he is credited with having authored the first history of the City of Erie, which appears in the preface to the 1867-1868 City Directory, which was the first directory of its kind. Unfortunately, the history doesn’t reference Block 40.

James Sill also was involved in banking to some degree. In 1870 he chartered and organized the People’s Savings Bank of North East. He also organized and held a substantial interest in a Union City Bank (First National Bank of Union Mills?), where his brother Joseph was a cashier. He as well secured the charter for and was a director of Humboldt Savings Bank of Erie.

Sill’s most prominent public service appears to have been his election to the State Senate in 1880, where he served for 4 years. An early history of Erie states of James Sill: “He was a man of wonderfully retentive memory, a ready speaker and a graceful writer, and was in almost constant request as a historian, especially by the editors of the city.” After concluding his service in the Senate, Sill restricted himself from public life, tending to his law practice and real estate interests. Sill appears to have resided at the family homestead, succeeding to same after his mother’s death.

The financial picture for James Sill did not track his public success. In addition to ultimately losing his interests in Block 40, James Sill was removed as executor of his father’s estate on September 13, 1886. The petition seeking his removal, filed by George D. Selden (Thomas H.’s grandson) on May 22, 1886 recites that Joanna B. Sill, the widow of Thomas H., at 90 years of age was “physically incapable of performing the duties” and a substitute executor should be appointed. James was replaced by Samuel V. Holliday, who completed the estate administration. How is it that a prominent, successful lawyer/politician lost his inheritance and was removed as executor of his father’s estate within a relatively short time?

In 1882, the Union City Bank failed. Bank failures of the time generally resulted in the personal financial ruin of bank officers and directors. Of Sill, a source states that the failure of the bank “crippled him financially” but he continued to manage his real estate interests. Those interests other than block 40 were certain rural parcels left to Sill by his father and most likely others gained through his position and influence as a politician. In his advertisement directed to “young men starting out in matrimonial life,” Sill references having “several fine farms for sale.” Another factor which may have contributed to Sill’s downfall may have been the cost of developing Block 40. While speculation exists the block may have been used as the circus grounds before 1866, this seems physically impossible. Although topography maps for the City are rare, an 1870 hand drawn map [Figure 4] purports to show the topography of the

The Official History of “Garden Court”

area and includes, Block 40. This map shows an enormous depression running through the middle of the block which appears to be an old river or creek bed. The depression covers probably 60% of the block. Similar depressions can be seen in blocks to the north and south. Further, the 1865 Erie Atlas shows a stream or creek running through the same area in Block 40 and the adjoining blocks [Figure 5]. Certainly full development of Block 40 would have required filling in the depression. We know today this must have been done at some point and since full scale building on the block commenced in the early 1900's, it may be the expense of filling in the land contributed to James Sill's financial hardship.



Figure 4 - Square 40, 1870

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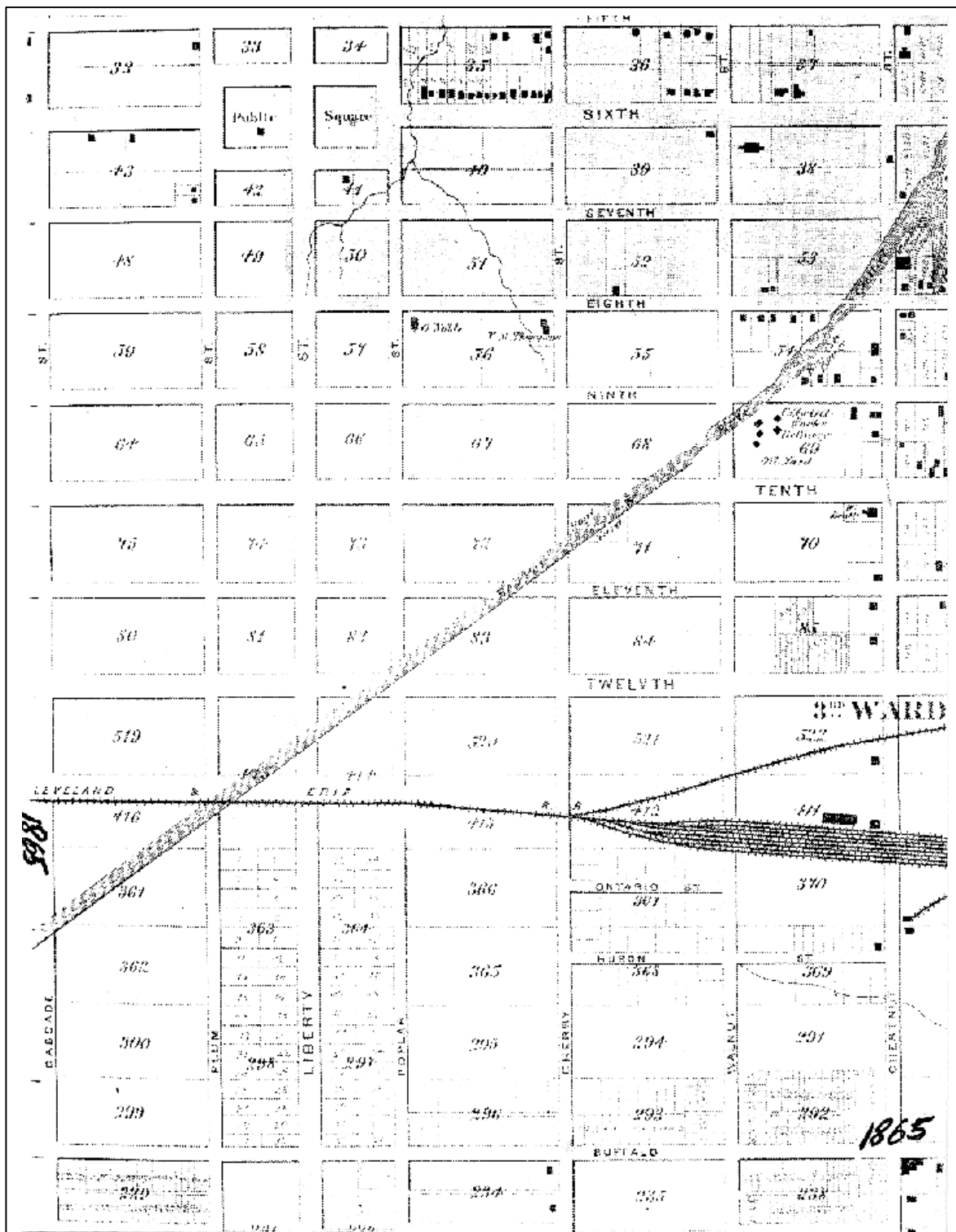


Figure 5 - Square 40, 1865

Although somewhat undeveloped at the time there certainly was some competition between James Baldwin and Matthew H. Taylor to acquire ownership of the block. Matthew H. Taylor, son of a Pennsylvania Judge was the Secretary/Treasurer of a large Pittsburgh based coal company and apparently did very well, having built or bought a rather large mansion on West 6th Street. In the early to mid-1860's coal was fast becoming the primary heating source in residential homes. The Erie to Pittsburgh Canal, which ran to the south of Block 40 was in fact constructed for the express purpose of shipping coal to northwestern Pennsylvania [see Figure 5]. The Taylor home, which is located to the immediate west of the County Courthouse, is used today as offices known as the “Courthouse Commons.” Taylor probably had the means to develop the block but may have been less dedicated to the cause than James Baldwin. Baldwin no doubt saw the potential for development and realized value of the real estate. Although Baldwin got the property, Taylor became somewhat better off, making in excess of \$30,000 at a time before Federal Income Tax. The development of Garden Court would seem to have been one of Baldwin’s first developments (based on the fact he relocated to Erie in the early 1900's) and may have “put him on the map” as a real estate developer.

The records indicate some residences on block 40 during the time of the transfers outlined above. What can we learn about the physical characteristics of block 40 during this time? The 1865 map does show the block divided into 3 distinct parcels but does not show any buildings erected. The division is not supported by any formal subdivision (which would have been necessary to effect such a division), nor were there any deed transfers of anything other than inchoate, or future interests until the early 1900's. There are homes shown however on north side of the 600 block of 6th street. The topographic illustration of 1870 shows 16 structures which appear to be homes. The map of 1876 [Figure 6] does not show any construction on any block but does show the block divided into 16 equal parcels. Again, we know from the title records that there had been no subdivision as of this time, and again no deeds transfer any ownership interest. The 1876 map is probably an assessment map, showing a standard city block division for assessment purposes. The block has never been subdivided into 16 equal parcels and any such demarcations have no significance to actual lot size, dimension or ownership.

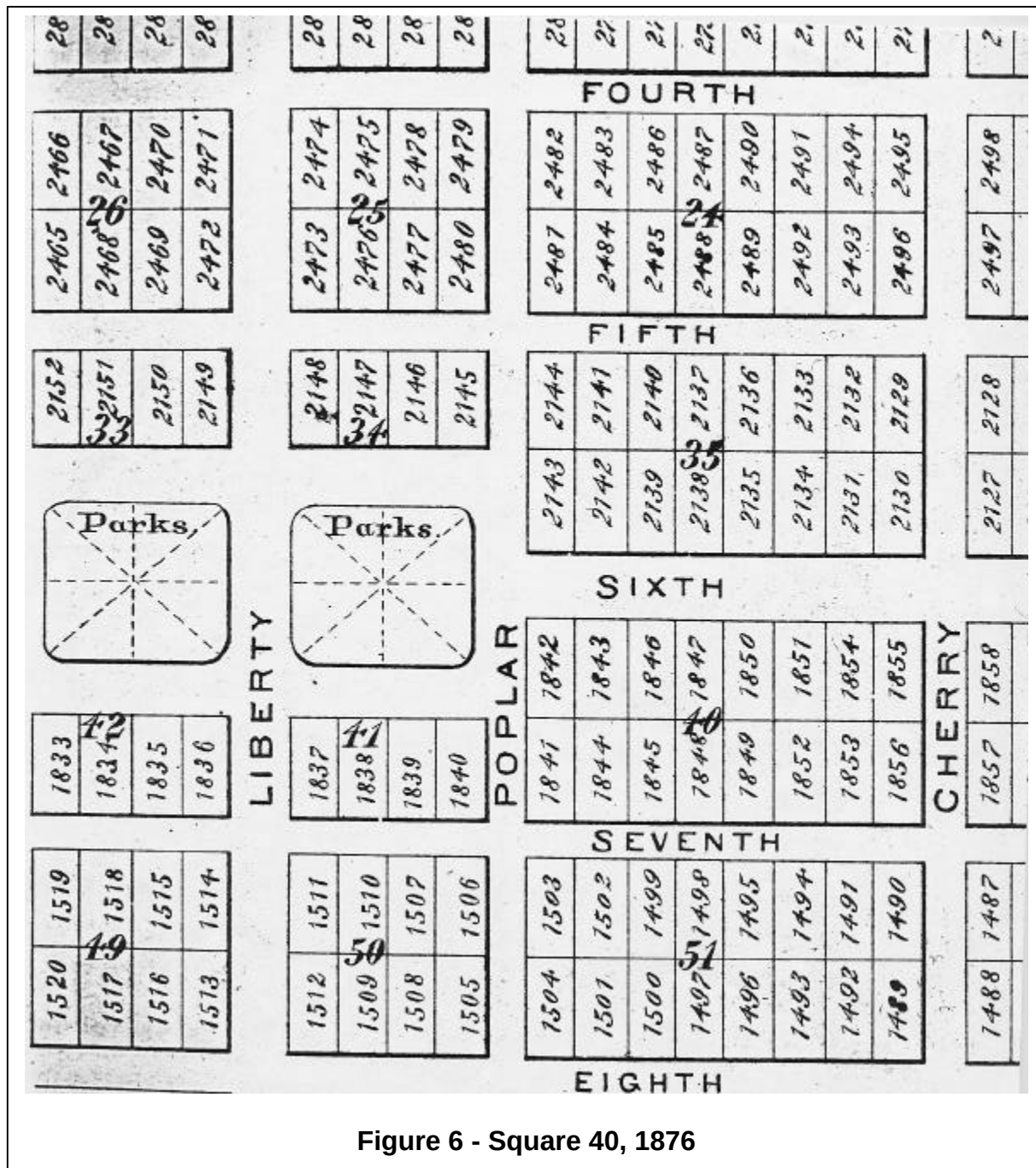


Figure 6 - Square 40, 1876

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The deed from the Sheriff to the Seldens in 1888 tells us something about the property use at that time. The deed states the property had erected thereon “19 one-story frame and board dwelling houses, 7 one and one-half story frame and board dwelling houses with sheds attached, 7 two-story frame dwelling houses with additions and sheds attached and 5 small barns.” This description appears in other deeds of the time as well. These are most likely homes and buildings constructed by James Sill in his failed development effort. In order to increase the number of homes on the land from the 16 shown on the 1870 map [Figure 4], to the 33 referenced in 1888, James Sill must have taken some steps to fill in the creek bed. Since the block was still one parcel throughout this time, we don’t know the location of the additional homes constructed after the 1870 map was drawn. We do know Thomas H. Sill kept vacant this land which he had owned for 33 years prior to his death. Certain of Sill’s heirs are referred to as “terre tenants,” meaning that they occupied the land and this appears to have occurred after Sill’s death. The documents relating to the estate also reference the estate generating income, presumably from the non-family tenants. As referenced above, the 1865 map [Figure 5], which did show buildings constructed as of the time, showed nothing on this block. Therefore any construction occurred after 1865, even though the surrounding area was somewhat built-up.

The 1900 map [Figure 7], which does show buildings, shows 2 dwellings on the block. Each is located near the southwest corner and there is no sign of the houses or barns referenced on the earlier deeds.

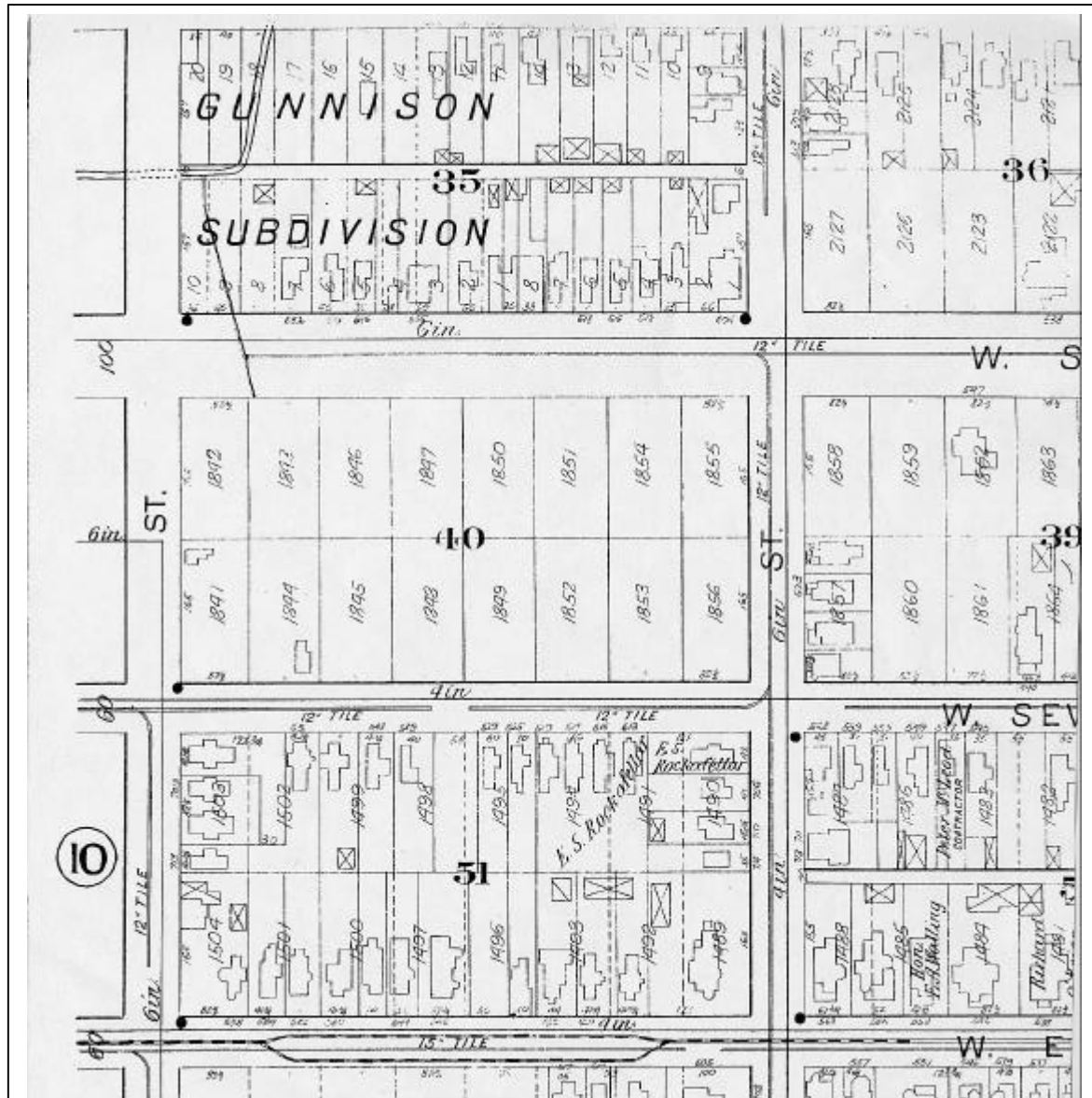


Figure 7 - Square 40, 1900

The next map [Figures 8A & 8B] is from 1917 and shows the block in its present subdivided condition as the Garden Court. There has been located no source to indicate when any of the buildings referenced in the deeds were destroyed or when the 2 buildings shown in 1900 were removed.

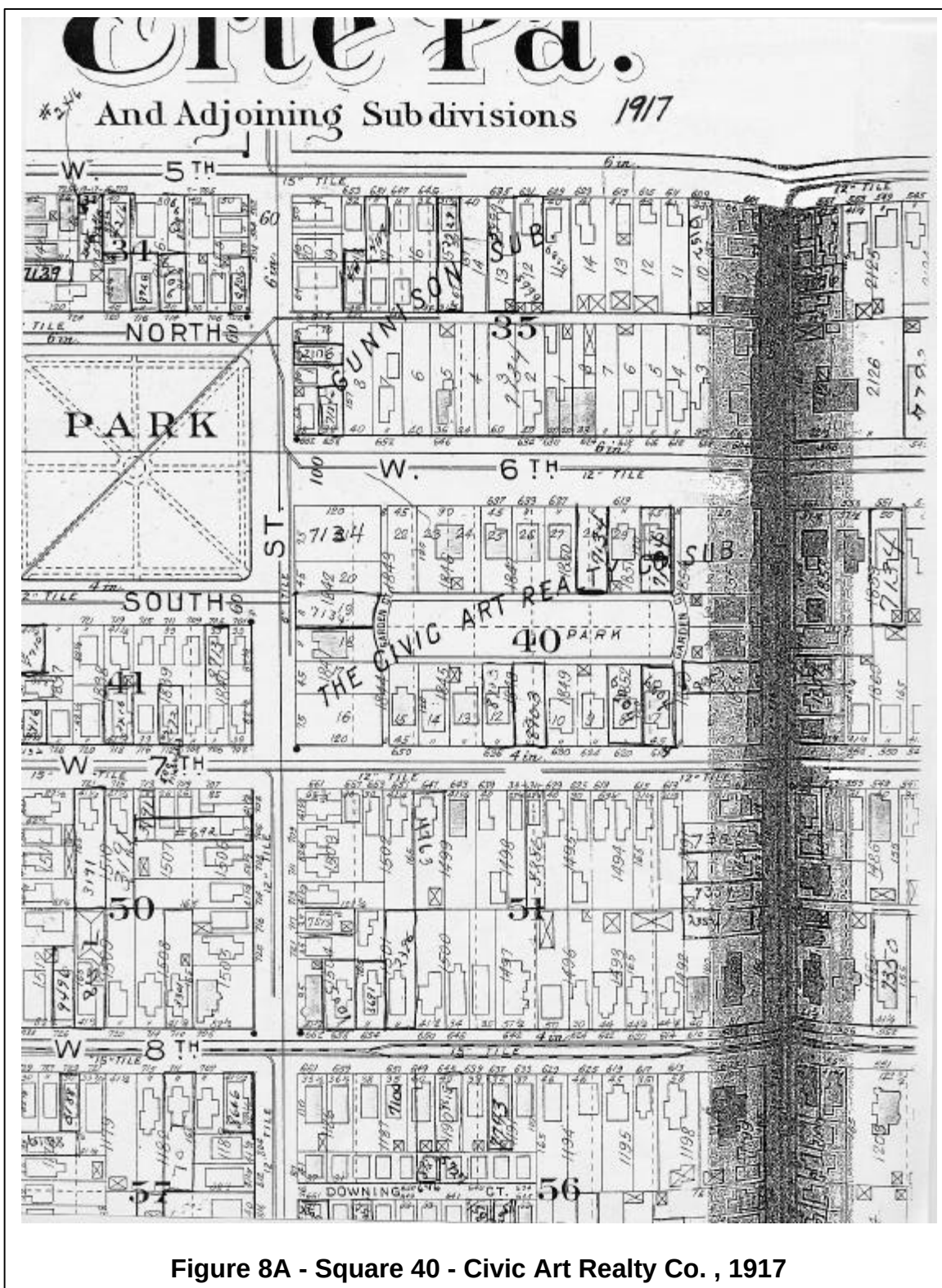


Figure 8A - Square 40 - Civic Art Realty Co. , 1917

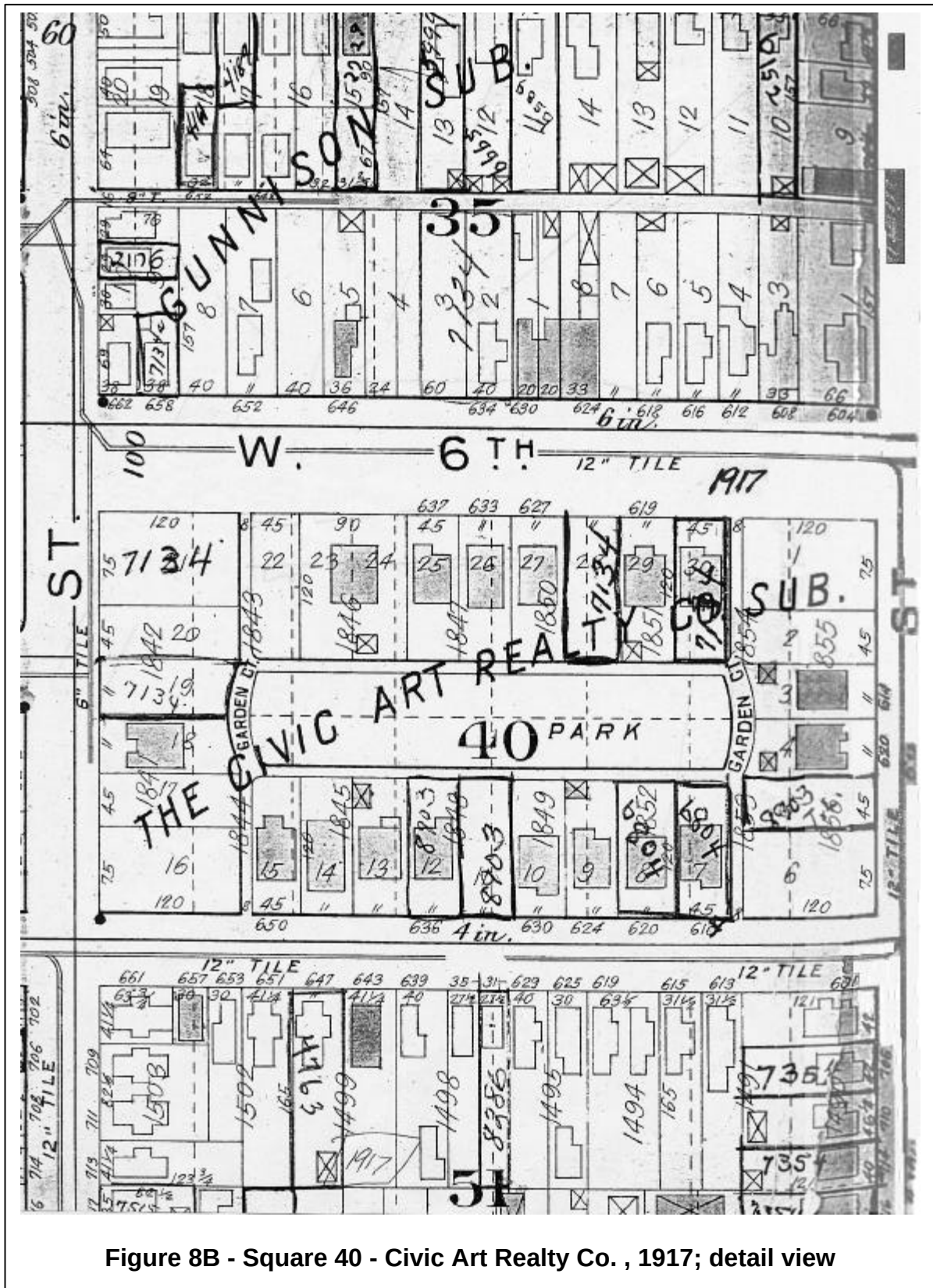


Figure 8B - Square 40 - Civic Art Realty Co. , 1917; detail view

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The following can be established from the maps and official records:

1865: Block 40 was vacant. Thomas H. Sill had been dead for 9 years.

1865-1870: 16 homes built, surrounding the creek bed running through the block

1870-1888: Total construction increases to “19 one-story frame and board dwelling houses, 7 one and one-half story frame and board dwelling houses with sheds attached, 7 two-story frame dwelling houses with additions and sheds attached and 5 small barns.”

1888-1900: Buildings referenced above are reduced to 2 dwellings on the southwest corner of the block.

1900-1906: The 2 existing buildings are removed, no buildings remain and the block is subdivided for the first time and takes on its current configuration.

As of 1900 most of the surrounding neighborhood appears well occupied by homes. Anecdotally, it is believed Block 40 was at one time owned by the city and designated or used as the circus grounds. Clearly city ownership did not occur although the sheriff had a role in selling the property to satisfy some judgements. The interests sold however did not constitute 100% ownership of the block. Additionally there were homes on the block at least from some time prior to 1888 through 1900. There does not appear, however, to have been anything on the block before 1865. This may be in some part to the topography of the land. As well, the 1865 Atlas shows a creek or stream flowing over the block, but the topographical illustration of 1870 shows a dry creek bed.

One elderly resident of the Garden Court recalls as a child finding coins in the center courtyard, felt to be remnants of circus commerce. As well, following a 1999 Erie Times article about Garden Court and speculation about the circus grounds, residents were contacted by individuals indicating the block was “without question” the old circus grounds. In fact one gentleman indicated he grew up near 4th and Cherry Streets and recalls his father telling him that as a young boy he saw The Buffalo Bill Wild West show at the circus grounds at 6th and Cherry in the late 1800's. Records confirm that the Buffalo Bill Wild West show was in Erie in July of 1898. However, the July 9, 1898 Erie Daily Times article reporting on

the show references that it was held at the Erie “Show Grounds” at 23rd and Parade Streets. Historical references are also made to a Harborcreek “Exhibition Center” of the 1890's.

Before the days of sports stadiums and “civic centers” Erie, as did many towns, maintained a circus or fairground well into the 1930's and it appeared to move westward as the city expanded. A newspaper article dated July 26, 1926 references the “West Eighth St. Circus Lot”. Another reference was found in an Erie history book which made reference to a political rally held at the “8th & Cranberry Circus Lot.” A third reference can found in Carney's Tales of Old Erie, which mentions the circus setting up at Eighth and Cranberry streets. No historical references could be found confirming anything about the circus and Block 40 however. Nonetheless, reference can be found that an elephant was in Erie in 1820, and traveling animal shows made their first appearances in 1822 and 1823. Erie became a regular stop for traveling circuses as of July 1827.

No doubt the owners of the property could have used the income generated by such exhibitions and circus trade and there are references in certain documents relating to income generated by the estate. The accounting filed by James Sill, after he was relieved as his duties as executor shows he took in \$28,850, however he did act as executor for some 25 years, and we know Thomas H. Sill did own real estate in some other counties. There is however no proof the money was generated by vacationing trained pachyderms or one of Mr. Cody's extravaganzas.

CHAPTER 3

J.W. Little's Good Deed

On June 19, 1907, James and Frances Baldwin, having acquired complete ownership, deeded the entire block to J. W. Little, Trustee. Little was the president of The People's Bank of Erie and was acting as trustee for a land trust named The Civic Art Realty Company. Civic Art was comprised of the following individuals: Edward J. Crowell, C. Paxton Cody, M. S. Peck, William Hamilton, Julius C. Knowell, Mary Louise Knowell, J. J. Bell, Arthur W. Milne, Verne L. Schluraff, Charles H. Taft, Alice B. Lewis, A. B. Osborne, Robert Spittal, Julia D. Felgemaker and G. Irving Blake. A Declaration of Trust was recorded on June 22, 1907 which stated the conditions under which Little would take and hold title to the property. Little accepted the terms of the Trust, which included and set forth the restrictions which governed construction of future homes and established the present configuration of the Garden Court. The Declaration recites that no conveyance of property was to be made unless the deed were to "contain the following restrictions, and conditions which shall be and remain covenants running with the land for and during the period of 25 years from January 29, 1907 and further until such time thereafter as they shall be modified or abrogated by the vote and consent of 3/4ths of all the property or lot owners."

The provisions of the Declaration of Trust became binding on subsequent purchasers when J. W. Little deeded the entire block to Civic Art subject to the Trust provisions on October 29, 1907. Civic Art's Charter, recorded September 30, 1907 provided the company was to incorporate and to exist perpetually. The business of the corporation was limited to the "buying, holding, leasing and selling real estate." The amount of the capital stock was \$6,000, divided into 120 shares with a par value of \$50. Shortly after the block was deeded to Civic Art, the Civic Art Realty Company of Erie, Penna., was incorporated and began selling parcels subject to the restrictions. It is not known if Civic Art had other real estate interests.

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Little acted as trustee to facilitate financing for the subdivision development. A portion of the money (\$30,000) was paid to buy out Matthew H. Taylor’s interest. No doubt sometime after Baldwin consolidated ownership of the block, the frame and board dwelling houses referenced in prior deeds were demolished. By 1907, most of the adjacent blocks were filled with homes. Additionally, the West 6th Street side of the block was a very desirable location for residences of the well-to-do of the times. Large mansion style homes were to be found on the northern side of the street and records from the time indicate West 6th Street, from Poplar to State Streets was referred to as “Millionaires Row.” Civic Art wished to add to the upper-class complexion of the community and did so through the restrictions established through the Trust documents.

Although Block 40 had originally been mapped for assessment purposes into equal rectangular pieces, Civic Art subdivided the property in a most unique manner, giving Block 40 the configuration it holds today, that being individual parcels surrounding an interior courtyard. The Civic Art subdivision was the first time Block 40 was ever less than one complete parcel. The interior courtyard has its own lot number and is owned by the Corporation. Each owner in Garden Court holds four shares of the corporation. As the restrictions read, a “purchaser, his legal representatives or assigns shall become a member or members of the Corporation, the party of the first part, owning, holding, and controlling the park, walks and driveways shown upon the plot of said tract.” Although it once did, Civic Art no longer issues stock certificates. It is not clear when this practice stopped, however when Mrs. Anne Devine purchased 633 W. 6th from Dr. and Mrs. Charles Farrow in 1951, “certificate No. 50” representing four shares of Civic Art Realty Company stock was returned to Don C. Wiley, no doubt a Board Member, with a request to reissue the stock to the new owner of 633.

The attorney representing Civic Art in its establishment was Ritchie T. Marsh, the founder of Erie’s oldest law firm, Marsh, Spaeder, Baur, Spaeder & Schaaf. Civic Art’s president at the time was Arthur W. Milne with acting secretary being Edward J. Crowell. The subdivision restrictions required a 20-foot setback with a 5-foot side lot requirement. The original subdivision restrictions were to last for a period of 25 years from January 29, 1907 or until such time as they were modified or abrogated by a vote "of three-fourths of all

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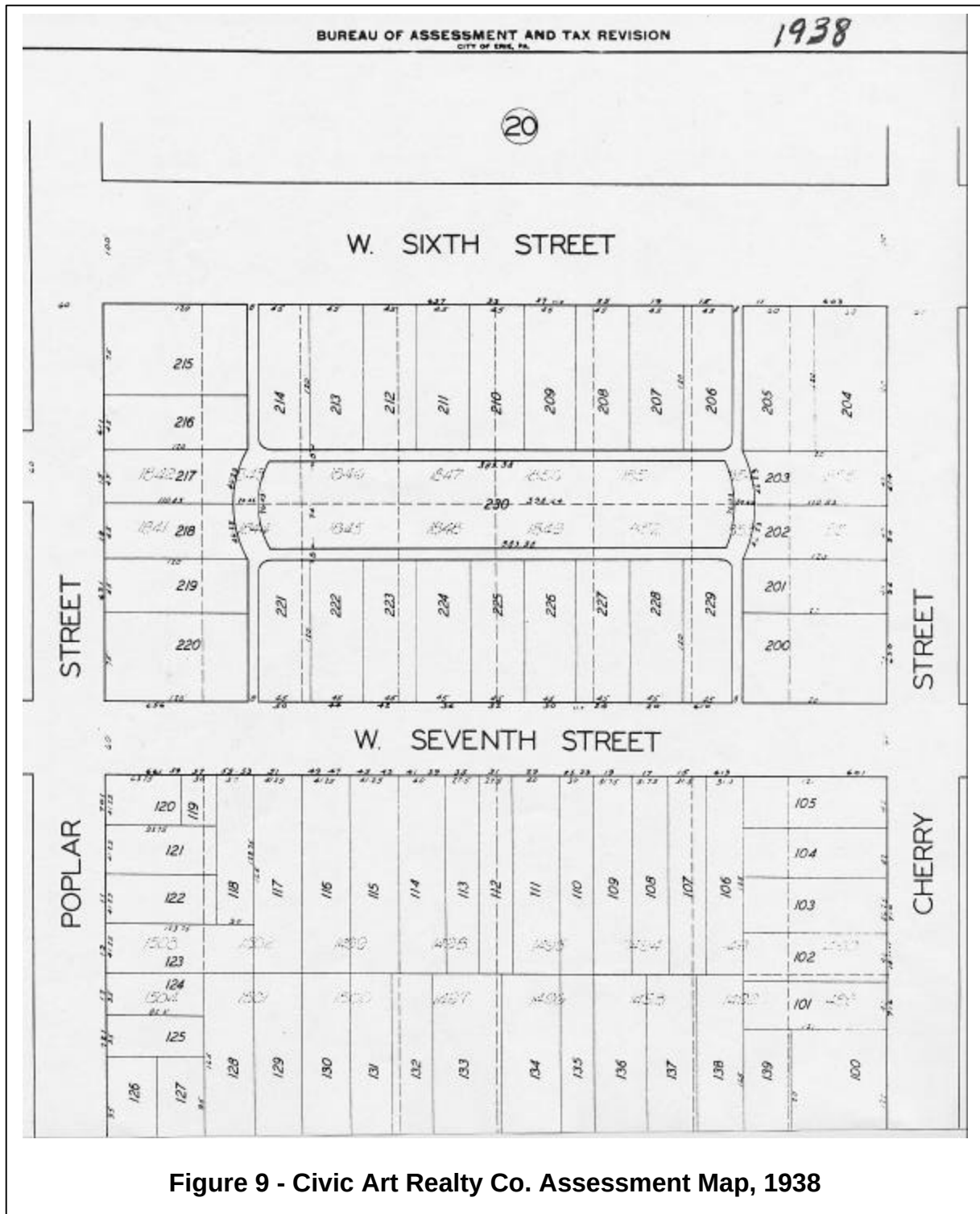
the property or lot owners of said square." Only single family homes could be erected on each lot, and early property owners were faced with the task of building homes at the cost of "not less than thirty-five hundred (\$3,500.00) dollars, judged by the ruling prices of 1907 for labor and material." One of the lots on West 7th Street sold in April of 1908 for the handsome sum of \$2700. The property owners were also charged with the duty of maintaining the "park, walks and driveways." Later votes of the board of directors of Civic Art (probably before many lots were sold) imposed an additional condition in each deed that required lot owners to pay a semi-annual assessment for such maintenance. Apparently the restrictions were not to onerous as all of the lots were sold within several years after the subdivision.

There were in fact some other early changes made to the restrictions. There are "regulations" referenced in a deed of June 2, 1909, which apparently changed or amended the original restrictions. For instance the original restrictions prohibited "automobile houses." However the deed of 636 W.7th to Asa O. Walker states that an "automobile house may be placed on said premises in accordance with regulations." The deed to Walker came from Civic Art and therefore the corporation enacted some regulations even before all of the plots were sold. The January 25, 1910 deed from Civic Art to W. Pitt Gifford for 633 W.6th references the removal of the automobile house restriction and states same was authorized by a December 27, 1909 resolution of the Civic Art Board of Directors. While the automobile house at 633 still stands, the burning question haunting Garden Court residents today is: "Where is Asa Walker's automobile house now?"

Interestingly enough, nothing in the original documents referenced the block as the "Garden Court," and at the time of this writing, the author is unaware of the origination of this title for Block 40 of the City of Erie. The 1917 atlas showing Erie subdivisions designates the interior courtyard as the "Park," and the designation "Garden Ct." is found only on the interior driveways. The name "Garden Court" however, can be seen in brass letters imbedded in the sidewalks at each of the entryways into the courtyard. The origin and date of the placement of these letters is unknown.

The Official History of "Garden Court"

The 1938 atlas [Figure 9] makes no designation whatsoever as to the name of the interior area.



The Official History of "Garden Court"

The 1951 "Sanborn" map [Figure 10] does, however, designate the interior courtyard as the "Garden Court" and also has the same references as the 1917 atlas to the driveways being designated "Garden Ct."

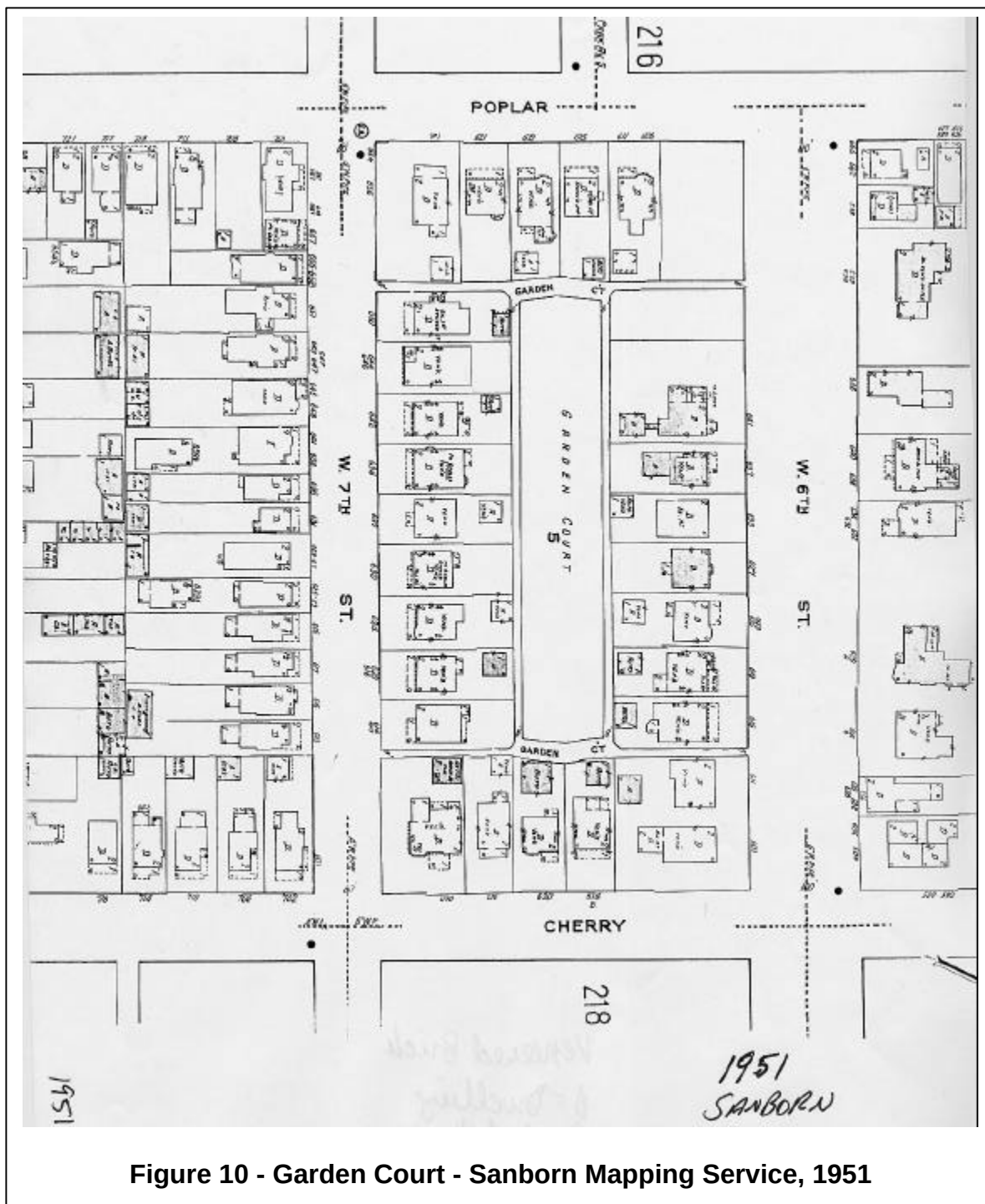


Figure 10 - Garden Court - Sanborn Mapping Service, 1951

The Official History of "Garden Court"

For general interest, the Sanborn Map Company prepared fire insurance maps that were widely used to determine the nature of the construction of particular homes. It shows the majority of homes on Garden Court are brick veneered.

An effort was made sometime in the late 60's to determine if the name Garden Court had any connection with an area known as the Garden Court District in Philadelphia. Designed by Clarence Seigel, this area in Philadelphia consists of apartments and homes with interconnecting garden areas. In some letters maintained in the Historical Society there was some speculation that Seigel may have been hired by Civic Art to try and capture the feel of the Philadelphia district in Erie for this subdivision of "mansions." The speculation however remains speculation as the documents show there was no clear connection ever established.

The Garden Court is also listed as a component of the "West Sixth Street Historic District, Erie PA.," [Figure 11] which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. The West Sixth Street Historic District extends, as you might expect, on 6th Street from Peach to Poplar and includes primarily homes located on 6th Street as well as "all structures in the block from Cherry to Poplar between Sixth and Seventh Streets." It is described in the National Register as being a "well preserved mansion district." Garden Court is specifically mentioned in contrasting the fact that most of the lot sizes within the district are described as being "highly irregular" except for Garden Court which was a specific subdivision designed to allow for the construction of what were at the time, expensive homes for the well-to-do citizenry of Erie. All of the homes on Garden Court are designated by name on the Historic Register. The homes appear to bear the name of the people for whom the homes were built. [Details are contained in Appendix A.]

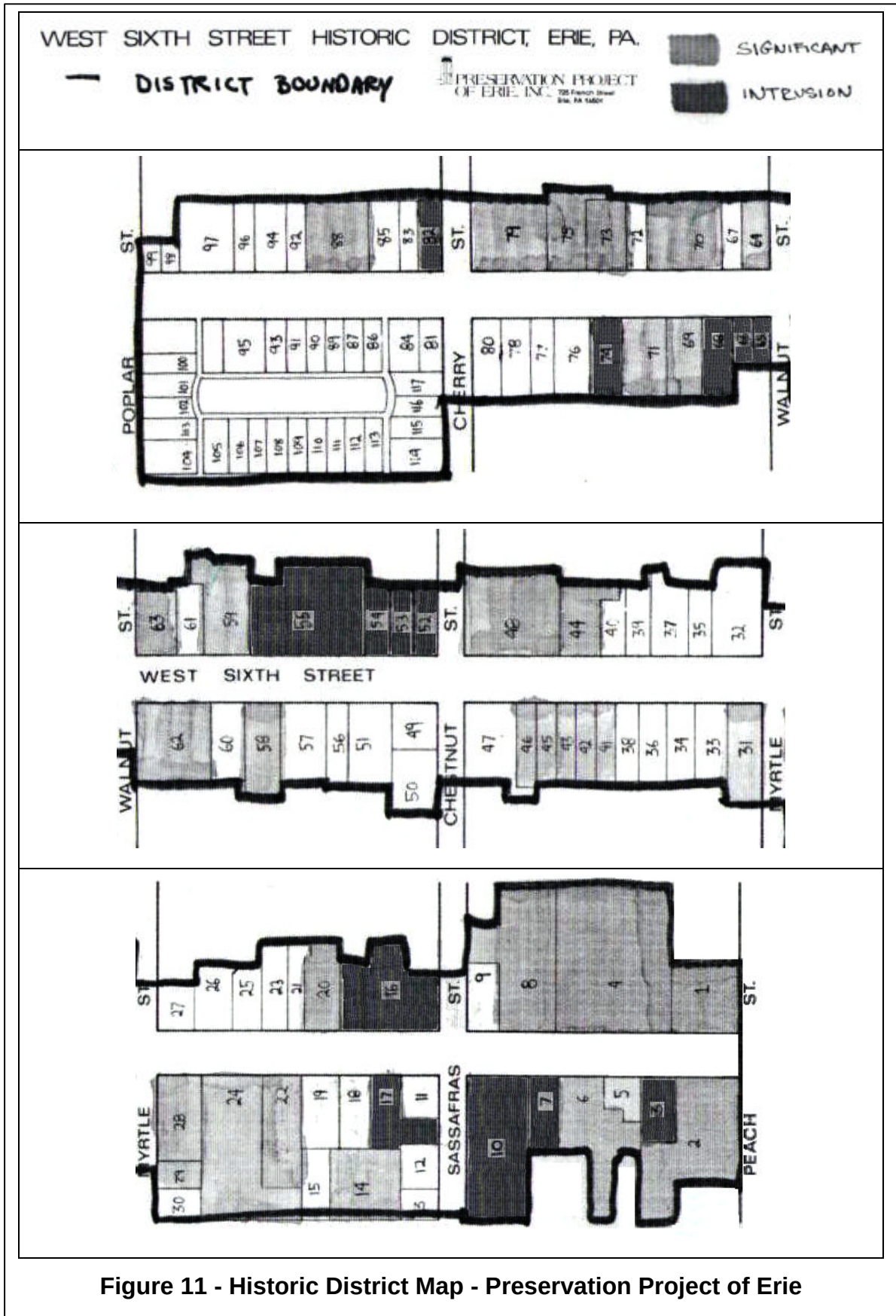


Figure 11 - Historic District Map - Preservation Project of Erie

The Official History of “Garden Court”

The corner lots were sized approximately twice the size of the interior parcels, and it appears all of the lots were plotted to border the driveways providing direct access for each owner to the interior courtyard. This appears to have been altered only once with respect to the lots near the corner of Sixth and Cherry. Although fronting Cherry street, the Carl Jarecki House bears the address 603 W.6th. As originally subdivided, the western boundary of the corner lot was to have been the Northeast driveway into the courtyard, in the same fashion that the other corner parcels border a driveway entrance. The Davis House at 611 W.6th would not have existed on 6th street, but there would have been another house fronting Cherry street, located much like the Kessler House at 626 Cherry. How did these two parcels get turned in a 90 degree fashion? Considering the following facts provides some insight:

- 1) The Jordan House at 615 W. 6th was built in 1912;
- 2) The Carl Jarecki and Davis homes were built on the two lots in question in 1930 and 1931 (making them the newest homes on Garden Court);
- 3) The Jordan House is actually built facing east, with the main entrance now directly on the northeast driveway
- 4) The garage of the Jordan House also originally faced east

The answer appears to be that Jordan originally bought all three parcels involved but built only the home which bears his name (after all, this was “Millionaires Row”). A three parcel purchase also occurred with 641 W. 6th which today remains owned as one. The Bromley House at 611 Poplar is on a double lot which includes a larger corner lot. This accounts for there being only 27 homes on 30 lots. Jordan kept his two corner parcels for his front yard. The parcels remained as such until Jordan or someone else decided to sell off the other two lots, sometime shortly after the start of the Great Depression. An early map book shows that there was a circular drive in front of the Jordan House at one point, with the entry on Cherry street, but with the Garden Court driveway access still present.

For some reason, when the two parcels were sold, the original lots were essentially shifted around in a 90 degree fashion, placing another lot fronting 6th Street and resulting in the corner lot being more suited to a house facing Cherry Street. Access for 603 W.6th to the courtyard was preserved however by allowing a small walkway access across the southern edge of the lot and along the southern edge of 611 W. 6th. During a change in ownership of

The Official History of "Garden Court"

603 sometime in the 1990's, the access was cut off by the owners of 611 W. 6th. Therefore 603 W.6th is the only parcel lacking direct access to the interior courtyard or a driveway.

Appended to this history are various documents of interest (hopefully to more than just the author) including maps referenced in text and the excerpt from the historical register as it applies to the Garden Court. Of interest should be the description of the individual houses which references the style of architecture.

Appendix A

National Register Inventory of Garden Court Homes

The information in this appendix was extracted from the Nomination Form submitted by the Preservation Project of Erie to the United States Department of the Interior/National Park Service for inclusion of the “West Sixth Street Historic District” into the National Register of Historic Places Inventory.

The Nomination Form was prepared June 1984 by Thomas J. Weber, Project Coordinator, and Shirley R. French, Director of Research, under a community development grant from the City of Erie, Mayor's Office of Community Affairs and a matching grant from the Pennsylvania Bureau for Historic Preservation.

For the purposes of inclusion on the register, a historic resource is defined as a district, site, building, structure or object **significant** in American history, architecture, archeology, and culture. Furthermore, a historic resource may be associated with the heritage of the United States as a whole or simply with the individual state or community in which it is located.

A **contributing** building, site, structure, or object adds to the historic architectural qualities, historic associations, or archeological values for which a property is significant because it was present during the period of significance, and possesses historic integrity reflecting its character at that time or is capable of yielding important information about the period.

An **intrusion** is a building, structure, site or object that *has no architectural, cultural or historical significance* as relates to the contributing buildings, structures, sites or objects within the District and does not provide visual harmony to the District.

Of the 117 buildings in the ‘West Sixth Street Historic District’, 33 are considered ‘significant’, 70 ‘contributing’, and 14 ‘intrusions’.

Look up your home address

Then go to corresponding Inventory Item Number on Figure

<u>Address</u>	<u>Home Name</u>	<u>Year Built</u>	<u>Nov. 2001 Ownership</u>	<u>Nat.Reg. Inventory No.</u>	<u>Figure #</u>
603 W.6th	Carl Jarecki House	1930	Banks	81	12
611 W.6th	Davis House	1931	Ciano	84	13
615 W.6th	Jordan House	1912	Carmen	86	13
619 W.6th	Mayo House	1913	Wingerter	87	13
625 W.6th	Potter House	1913	Penz/Beck	89	14
627 W.6th	Allen House	1908	Schleicher	90	14
633 W.6th	Gifford House	1913	Fleming	91	14
637 W.6th	Hoffstetter House	1908	Sacco/Sullivan	93	14
641 W.6th	Beyerl House	1913	Pleger	95	15
611 Poplar	Bromley House	1921	Schwabenbauer	100	15
615 Poplar	Loesel House	1920	Hranicky	101	16
619 Poplar	Horn House	1918	Conway	102	16
621 Poplar	Mayer House	1922	Bates	103	16
656 W.7th	Deckard House	1927	Squeglia	104	16
650 W.7th	Berst House	1913	LeSuer	105	16
644 W.7th	Sobel House	1910	Wilson	106	17
642 W.7th	Carter House	1910	Clerkin	107	17
636 W.7th	Walker House	1909	Bond	108	17
632 W.7th	Strauss House	1920	DeJohn	109	17
630 W.7th	Taft House	1908	Susko	110	17
624 W.7th	Lang House	1909	King	111	17
620 W.7th	Detzel House	1912	Wiesner	112	18
614 W.7th	Osborne House	1908	Urbaniak	113	18
630 Cherry	Fairgraves House	1922	Cicero	114	18
626 Cherry	Kessler House	1927	Tkach/Lechner	115	18
620 Cherry	Kirschner House	1911	Bowler	116	18
614 Cherry	H. Kennedy House	1912	Moodey	117	18

Table 0 - National Register Home Description Index

[See also Figure 15]

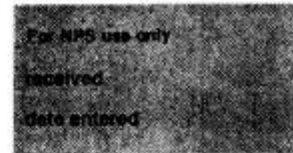
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78. 555 W. Sixth Street (Edward Walker House): A two and one-half story frame and stucco building with three front bays and a gable/shingle roof. Windows are double-hung, six-over-one. Second story is half-timbered and an imposing brick chimney is on the front facade. Building is of the Tudor Revival Style and was built circa 1910. CONTRIBUTING.
79. 558 S. Sixth Street (Robert Jarecki Mansion): A three-story brick building with seven front bays and a hip/shingle roof with three central gabled and pedimented dormers. Windows are double-hung, twelve-over-twelve with key-stones. There is a massive central two-story and balconied portico of the Corinthian Order. Entrance has decorative sidelights and an elliptical arch. Cornice has brackets and dentils. There is a balconied portico on the west end and a carport on the east end. Building is of the Georgian Revival Style. Building was completed in 1909 for Robert Jarecki (Assistant Secretary of Jarecki Manufacturing Company) and is an exact replica of his college fraternity house at Lehigh University. His classmate, Theodore Cuyler Visscher, was the architect. SIGNIFICANT.
80. 561 W. Sixth Street (Rudolph Jarecki House): A two and one-half story stucco and brick building with three front bays and a gable/shingle roof. Windows are double-hung, eight-, four- and six-over-one. Second story has half-timbering and two wall-gable dormers. Building is Tudor Revival in style and was completed circa 1910. CONTRIBUTING.
81. 603 W. Sixth Street (Carl Jarecki House): This two and one-half story brick house, built approximately 1930, is four bays wide, with irregularly spaced casement windows containing ten panes each. The first floor includes a bay window with five openings, as well as a double casement window with sidelights. The doorway molding is of stone. A gabled dormer on the top floor is sided with large stained wood shingles. Building is of the Vernacular Style with Craftsman influence. CONTRIBUTING.
82. 604-606 W. Sixth Street (Baldwin Duplex): A two-story brick building with six front bays and a flat roof. Windows are double-hung, six-over-one. Building has a rusticated ashlar foundation. INTRUSION.
83. 608-610 W. Sixth Street (Miller House): A two-story frame building with four front bays and a gable/shingle roof. Windows are double-hung, four-over-four and west side of front facade has triple double-hung, one-over-one windows on both stories. Gabled entryway has four Ionic columns. Built circa 1855, building is Vernacular with Italianate influences. CONTRIBUTING.

Figure 12 - Nat. Reg. of Historical Place Inventory, Nos. 78-83

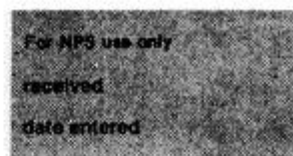
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84. 611 W. Sixth Street (Davis House): This two and one-half story brick building consists of three bays. Windows on the first and second floors are double-hung, eight-over-one. The slate roof is penetrated by three gabled dormers. The symmetrical house also features a pedimented sheltered doorway. House was built about 1930 and is of the Colonial Revival Style. CONTRIBUTING.
85. 614 W. Sixth Street (Kennedy House): A three-story, brick building of three front bays and a gable/slate roof. Windows are double-hung, eight-over-one with shutters and plain lintels with keystones. Roof frieze has dentils. Roof has three projecting gable dormers. One-story portico has dentils at cornice, balustraded roof and Doric pillars and pilasters. Doorway has sidelights. Two-car, brick garage north of building has a gable/slate roof. Built circa 1928, building is of the Colonial Revival Style. CONTRIBUTING.
86. 615 W. Sixth Street (Jordan House): This two and one-half story brick house is built with the gable end facing West Sixth Street; its main entrance fronts on the driveway entrance to Garden Court. House is three bays wide with double-hung, eight-over-one windows. An enclosed porch, facing West Sixth Street, has six fifteen-over-fifteen, double-hung windows. The gable end also contains two fanlights on the uppermost floor. An elliptical arch shelters the paneled front door. House was built about 1910 and is of the Colonial Revival Style. CONTRIBUTING.
87. 619 W. Sixth Street (Mayo House): Built about 1910, this two and one-half story brick building is two bays wide with Craftsman-Style exposed rafters and knee braces on both sides. The first floor contains a large double-hung, one-over-one window with leaded glass sidelights, as well as a paneled front door. The second floor contains two twelve-over-one, double-hung windows. A hip-roofed dormer on the top floor contains two small round-head windows similar to Palladian windows. House features an unusual cross-shaped hallway window, also of leaded glass. CONTRIBUTING.
88. 620 W. Sixth Street (Jarecki-Collins House): A three-story, brick building with three front bays and a gable/slate roof. Windows are multi-light casement. Front facade has one large and one smaller projecting gable walls which are half-timbered. Side roof gables are also half-timbered. Carriage house north of building is two-story and brick with a gable/slate roof. Building is of the Tudor Revival Style. Built circa 1925 for Alexander Jarecki as a wedding gift to his daughter and designed by Cleveland architect Frank Meade. SIGNIFICANT.

Figure 13 - Nat. Reg. of Historical Place Inventory, Nos. 84-88

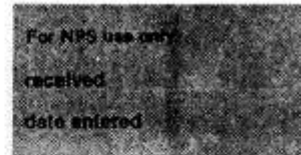
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89. 625 W. Sixth Street (Potter House): This two and one-half story brick house, built about 1921, is of the American Foursquare Style. It is two bays wide with triple double-hung bay windows extending from the brick foundation to the roofline. It features decorative roof bracketing and a small porch with brick pillars. The "slate-look" composition roof contains a single gabled dormer. CONTRIBUTING.
90. 627 W. Sixth Street (Allen House): This two-story house, built in about 1913 in the Prairie Style, is three bays wide and features a large semi-circular arch over the recessed front doorway. The first floor is of brick and the second floor is of white stucco over brick. First floor windows are 10-panel casement-type windows, with three window openings on either side of the doorway. Second floor has triple double-hung windows inset onto the corners of the building. CONTRIBUTING.
91. 663 W. Sixth Street (Gifford House): This two-story masonry building, with Flemish bond brickwork, was built about 1909 in the Dutch Colonial Style. The hipped slate roof contains a shed dormer running the full width of the facade, sheltering a balcony. House consists of two bays with eight-over-one, double-hung windows. A window on the west side of the ground floor is decorated with a carved wooden rosette. CONTRIBUTING.
92. 632-634 W. Sixth Street (Hemse House): A three-story brick building with two front bays and a gable/shingle roof. Windows are double-hung, one-over-one. There are two large gable dormers on the roof and a two-story open and enclosed porch on the east side of the front facade. Built circa 1890, building is Vernacular with Victorian influences. CONTRIBUTING.
93. 637 W. Sixth Street (Hofstetter House): This two and one-half story building is constructed of sand-colored brick with a "slate-look" composition roof. It is two bays wide with two sets of triple one-over-one windows on the first and second floors. The top floor contains one gabled dormer and one shed dormer. A shed-roofed porch is supported by two brick pillars. House is of the Vernacular Style. CONTRIBUTING.
94. 638 W. Sixth Street (Emil Becker House): A two and one-half story brick building of three front bays and a gable/slate roof. Windows are double-hung, eight-over-one with shutters. There are dentils at the roof cornice and a plain pillared, one-story portico entry. Front door has sidelights. Built circa 1920, building is of the Colonial Revival Style. CONTRIBUTING.

Figure 14 - Nat. Reg. of Historical Place Inventory, Nos. 89-94

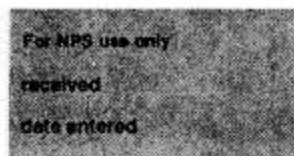
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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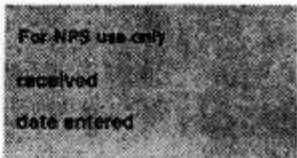
Item number 7

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95. 641 W. Sixth Street (Beyerl House): This asymmetrical three-story brick house, built about 1911, is of the Craftsman Style with elements of other twentieth century period Revival Styles. An irregularly-shaped chimney is the most prominent feature of the facade. First floor consists of four bays; second floor consists of three bays and third floor of a single bay. First floor features double-hung French doors, small one-over-one, double-hung windows, and eight-pane casement windows are irregularly spaced. CONTRIBUTING.
96. 648 W. Sixth Street (Gallagher House): A two and one-half story brick building with three front bays and a gable/shingle roof. Windows are double-hung, one-over-one with plain lug lintels and sills. Building is "L" shaped and front door has sidelights and transom. Built circa 1870, building is Vernacular in style. CONTRIBUTING.
97. 652 W. Sixth Street (Otto Becker House): A three-story, brick building of five front bays and a gable/slate roof. Windows are double-hung, six-over-six and nine-over-nine with shutters and lintels with keystones. Roof has three projecting hip dormers and dentils at the cornice. Two symmetrically placed massive chimneys line the sides. Doorway has plain pilasters, sidelights and transom. Building has an east side, brick addition which is an intrusion. Three-car brick addition has a gable/slate roof. Building is of the Georgian Revival Style. Building was built circa 1918 and designed by architect Franklin J. Kidd, a partner in the Buffalo firm of Green and Wicks. Otto Becker, the original owner, contracted his services. SIGNIFICANT.
98. 658 W. Sixth Street (McDonald House): A two and one-half story brick building of three front bays and a hip/shingle roof. Side of building faces Sixth Street and front facade faces east. Windows are double-hung, six-over-one with shutters. Built circa 1910, building is Vernacular with Colonial Revival influences. CONTRIBUTING.
99. 662 W. Sixth Street (Flynn House): A two and one-half story frame building with aluminum siding and a hip/shingle roof. Windows are double-hung, six-over-one. Building has enclosed, one-story front porch. Built circa 1908, building is an American Foursquare. CONTRIBUTING.
100. 611 Poplar Street (Bromley House): This two and one-half story building of Flemish bond brick is of Vernacular Style with numerous Craftsman features. The gabled roofline and the gabled front porch are decorated with simply carved wooden vergeboards. The enclosed porch has a tin roof, which appears to be original, while the house is roofed in asphalt shingles. House, built about 1922, consists of two bays with triple double-hung bay windows on the first and second floors. CONTRIBUTING.

Figure 15 - Nat. Reg. of Historical Place Inventory, Nos. 95-100

NPS Form 10-900-a (3-82)		OMB No. 1024-0018 Exp. 10-31-84	
United States Department of the Interior National Park Service			
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101. 615 Poplar Street (Roesel House): A Vernacular Style house with Greek Revival decoration, this two and one-half story building consists of two bays. The gabled roof is decorated with a cornice with small dentils. The first floor is of brick while the second and top floors are sided with stained split shingles, apparently over frame construction. Windows are eight-over-one, double-hung, two per floor. House has an enclosed porch running full width of facade. CONTRIBUTING.
102. 619 Poplar Street (Horn House): Built about 1910, this two and one-half story brick house consists of two bays and is of the American Foursquare Style. House has triple double-hung bay windows on both first and second floors. Bracketed roof is covered with "slate-look" composition shingles with a single gabled dormer. CONTRIBUTING.
103. 621 Poplar Street (Mayer House): This two and one-half story Flemish bond brick house was built in approximately 1921 in a Vernacular Style with Craftsman and Spanish Mission influence. The house is three bays wide with a hipped ceramic tile roof and has a tile-roofed front porch supported by simple wooden columns. The first floor features a set of triple twelve-pane bay windows on either side of the front entrance. Windows on the second floor are eight-over-one, double-hung. CONTRIBUTING.
104. 656 W. Seventh Street (Deckard House): Built about 1927, this two and one-half story brick building is three bays wide and is of the Vernacular Style with some Dutch Colonial influence. The typical Dutch Colonial roofline is extended to the front and rear of the house with large shed dormers extending from the second floor to the roof crest. Windows are double-hung with an unusual nine-over-one configuration containing one large rectangular center pane. An oval leaded glass window is located on the west side of the front doorway. CONTRIBUTING.
105. 646 W. Seventh Street (Bust House): Built circa 1913, this house is of a Vernacular Style with Prairie Style influence. The first floor is of brick while the second floor is light-colored stucco over brick. A partial third floor covers two sections of the house, extending across the facade and across the rear of the house. The house is two bays wide with two twelve-over-one, double-hung windows per floor. There is an enclosed porch extending across the Seventh Street facade. The roof is of slate, with roof bracketing both on the main roof and on the porch roof. CONTRIBUTING.

Figure 16 - Nat. Reg. of Historical Place Inventory, Nos. 101-105

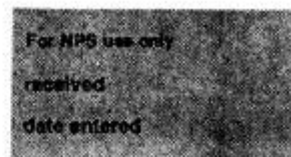
United States Department of the Interior
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West Sixth Street Historic District, Erie County
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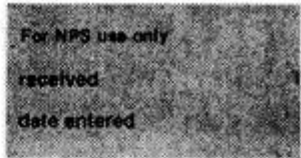
Item number 7

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106. 644 W. Seventh Street (Sobel House): Built approximately 1910, this two and one-half story Flemish bond brick house originally was the home of Erie political figure Isadore Sobel. It is an asymmetrical building of the Craftsman Style. The first floor is two bays wide with a set of four narrow six-over-one, double-hung windows enclosed under an elliptical brick arch. The second floor consists of two narrower bays with five smaller six-over-one windows with radiating brick voussoirs. The roofing material is slate. CONTRIBUTING.
107. 642 W. Seventh Street (Carter House): This two and one-half story brick building, built about 1910, is of a Vernacular Style. The first and second floors are two bays wide with eight-over-one, double-hung windows. There is a shingled projection between the first and second floors. Roof bracketing is also featured. The top floor contains two gabled dormers with double eight-pane casement windows. CONTRIBUTING.
108. 636 W. Seventh Street (Walker House): This two and one-half story dark brown brick house is three bays wide, contains one large picture window on either side of the front doorway. The second floor has three six-over-one, double-hung windows with stone lintels. House has a gabled dormer with a Palladian window. Sides of top floor are stucco over brick with dark stained half-timbering. House was built approximately 1909 in a Vernacular Style with Tudor Revival influence. CONTRIBUTING.
109. 632 W. Seventh Street (Strauss House): This two-story house of sand-colored brick was built approximately 1920 in a Colonial Revival Style. It is symmetrical in plan and is three bays wide. Windows are six-over-nine, double-hung on the first floor and six-over-six on the second floor. A narrow front porch is sheltered by an elliptical stone arch. Two attic dormers have small round-head windows. CONTRIBUTING.
110. 630 W. Seventh Street (Taft House): Built approximately 1908 in the Tudor Revival Style, this three-story house is two bays wide with two bay windows, twelve-over-one with nine-over-one sidelights, on both the first and second floors. The lower two floors are of brick while the third floor is stucco over brick with wooden half-timbering. A porch supported by brick pillars has an arched stone lintel with an inscribed scroll design. Over the porch is a castellated stone balustrade. CONTRIBUTING.
111. 624 W. Seventh Street (Lang House): This two-story house in the American Four-square Style consists of two bays with one-over-one, double-hung windows on both floors. It was built approximately 1909. There is a gabled attic dormer. The house has a stone foundation and a front porch extending the full width of the facade, supported by brick pillars. CONTRIBUTING.

Figure 17 - Nat. Reg. of Historical Place Inventory, Nos. 106-111

NPS Form 10-900-a (3-82)		OMB No. 1024-0018 Exp. 10-31-84	
United States Department of the Interior National Park Service			
National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form			
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112. 620 W. Seventh Street (Detzel House): A two and one-half story brick building, this house was constructed about 1912 in a Vernacular Style. It is two bays wide with eight-over-one, double-hung windows. There are two gabled attic dormers and a porch supported by brick pillars. <u>CONTRIBUTING.</u> 113. 614 W. Seventh Street (Osborne House): Built about 1908, this two-story house is of frame construction sided with clapboard stained a dark brown. It is of the Dutch Colonial Style and consists of three bays with one-over-one, double-hung windows. The larger living room window is one-over-one with side-lights. An attic dormer with a hipped roof faces the street. House is decorated with roof bracketing. <u>CONTRIBUTING.</u> 114. 630 Cherry Street (Fairgraves House): This two and one-half story Flemish bond brick house was built approximately 1922. It is of a Vernacular Style with Craftsman and Spanish Mission influences. The house is three bays wide with a hipped ceramic tile roof. A porch extends the width of the central bay and is also covered with a hipped tile roof. The first floor has a set of triple twelve-pane bay windows on either side of the entrance. Windows on the second floor are eight-over-one. <u>CONTRIBUTING.</u> 115. 626 Cherry Street (Kessler House): This two-story brick house is built with the gable end facing Cherry Street and is entered by a side doorway. It has a typical Dutch Colonial roofline with shed dormers on both sides. The facade is two bays wide and the house is three bays deep. Two one-over-one windows are located on each floor. House was built approximately 1927. <u>CONTRIBUTING.</u> 116. 620 Cherry Street (Kirschner House): Built about 1911, this two and one-half story brick house is of the American Foursquare Style. It consists of two bays with triple double-hung bay windows on both the first and second floors and a small sheltered porch. The bracketed roof has "slate-look" composition shingles with a single gabled dormer. <u>CONTRIBUTING.</u> 117. 614 Cherry Street (H. Kennedy House): A contemporary revival of the Federal Style, this two-story brick building is three bays wide with paired chimneys on either end. Windows are one-over-one, double-hung. House was built approximately 1912. A small centrally-located porch is supported by wooden columns. <u>CONTRIBUTING.</u>			
Figure 18 - Nat. Reg. of Historical Place Inventory, Nos. 112-117			

WEST SIXTH STREET MASTER LIST, PAGE THREE

<u>Number</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Name</u>
CHERRY STREET		
81.	603 W. 6th	+Carl Jarecki House
82.	604-606 W. 6th	Baldwin Duplex (INTRUSION)
83.	608-610 W. 6th	+Miller House
84.	611 W. 6th	+Davis House
85.	614 W. 6th	+F. Kennedy House
86.	615 W. 6th	+Jordan House
87.	619 W. 6th	+Mayo House
88.	620 W. 6th	*Jarecki-Collins House
89.	625 W. 6th	+Potter House
90.	627 W. 6th	+Allen House
91.	633 W. 6th	+Gifford House
92.	632-634 W. 6th	+Hemse House
93.	637 W. 6th	+Hoffstetter House
94.	638 W. 6th	+Becker House
95.	641 W. 6th	+Beyerl House
96.	648 W. 6th	+Hallagher House
97.	652 W. 6th	*Otto Becker House
98.	658 W. 6th	+McDonald House
99.	662 W. 6th	+Flynn House
100.	611 Poplar	+Bromley House
101.	615 Poplar	+Loesel House
102.	619 Poplar	+Horn House
103.	621 Poplar	+Mayer House
104.	656 W. 7th	+Deckard House
105.	650 W. 7th	+Berst House
106.	644 W. 7th	+Sobel House
107.	642 W. 7th	+Carter House
108.	636 W. 7th	+Walker House
109.	632 W. 7th	+Strauss House
110.	630 W. 7th	+Taft House
111.	624 W. 7th	+Lang House
112.	620 W. 7th	+Detzel House
113.	614 W. 7th	+Osborne House
114.	630 Cherry	+Fairgroves House
115.	626 Cherry	+Kessler House
116.	620 Cherry	+Kirschner House
117.	614 Cherry	+H. Kennedy House

* DENOTES "SIGNIFICANT" BUILDINGS WITHIN DISTRICT

+ DENOTES "CONTRIBUTING" BUILDINGS WITHIN DISTRICT

Figure 19 - West 6th Street Master List, Page 3

Appendix B

Discovering Your Garden Court Home History

Following the Outline below should allow you, should you desire, to become an amateur historian and chronicle the ownership of your Garden Court home. You may also be able to look into the lives of those who once called your house "home." As the owner of a home listed on The National Register of Historic Places you own a piece of Erie history. If you have any curiosity about those who went before, here's your aid to uncovering the mystery. Have fun.

- 1.) Go to the City Engineer's office at the Erie Municipal Building. The office is on the 4th floor, Room 400. The office is staffed by 2 women at desks behind a counter. They are typically very friendly and helpful.
- 2.) Ask one of the staff to see the deed transfer Book for Ward 40, Page 76. You can also tell them you'd like to see the book that would show transfers for your address. This should get you Book 40.
- 3.) Page 76 should have the layout of the block. On the layout, you will notice each parcel has a number. The book contains a handwritten record of each transfer out of Civic Art Realty to the present. Once you have gotten the number for your parcel, simply go through the chronological list of transfers (prior page), identifying the people for every transfer of your lot up through yours.
- 4.) You now have a list of all the people that have owned your property since the block was subdivided. To find out something about these folks will require some digging at the Erie Historical Society's History Center Reading Room at 417 State Street. The Reading room is on the 2nd floor and the librarians there are most helpful.

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- 5.) The initial source of information will be the Erie City Directories, which are easily accessible on the shelves. You can search year-by-year by name and/or address. The name list, if you are lucky, will list the occupations of the owners. You can always try the name listing for a period before they owned your house if nothing appears with the name at your address. You can always try several years after they sold your house. This can give you information about whether they continued to live in the City of Erie. Also if they were involved in a profession or business that advertised in the directory you may learn something about them, e.g. information about James Sill, Esq., one of the sons of an early owner of the block.
- 6.) Don't forget to add your own chapter to the history of your home!

Appendix C

A Sample Discovery: The Detzel Home

The lot now designated 620 West Seventh Street was initially purchased from Civic Art by Vern Schlueroff on March 8, 1908. Schlueroff was one of several members of Civic Art that purchased Garden Court lots. Vern held onto the property for about a month and a half before selling to F.J. Walker on April 22, 1908. Walker held onto it for almost two years, selling on March 4, 1910 to real estate developer, G. Daniel Baldwin. A little over a year later, on June 26, 1911, G. Daniel sold the property to Isaac Baldwin. Both G. Daniel and Isaac Baldwin were local developers and builders and the sons of James Baldwin who had at one time owned the entire block.

On October 3, 1912, Isaac Baldwin sold the property to Frank J. and Ida Detzel. The house at 620 West Seventh was built in 1912 and is designated on the National Register of Historic Places as the "Detzel House." Considering the Detzels purchased the property from Isaac Baldwin, it is safe to assume Baldwin probably built the home for the Detzels. Considering the nature of the homes in the area, it is unlikely Baldwin just built the house and then hoped it would appeal to someone.

It appears that prior to residing at the home, Frank J. Detzel operated a grocery store at 1228 Parade Street which was also his residence. The grocery had been started by his parents Matthias and Apalonia Detzel upon their arrival to Erie from Bavaria. They operated the grocery from 1865 to 1882. Apalonia died in 1885 and father Matthias followed on November 4, 1905. Perhaps inheriting some money and selling the grocery, Frank and Ida next moved to the home which bears his name and he as well obtained employment as a bookkeeper with the Erie Trust Company. By 1917 he had attained the position of manager of the real estate department for the Erie Trust Company.

In any event, the Detzels sold the home on June 25, 1921 to Sophia Heron and Mary Swan Brewster. Sophia Heron died on November 21, 1925, leaving her interest in the house

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to a niece and nephews, with a life estate to Mary Swan Brewster. On October 10, 1927, Mary Swan Brewster died, leaving only a surviving brother, Byron Swan. On January 25, 1928, Byron Swan and the niece and nephews of Sophia Heron (Emily Swan Wallace, Ralph and Richard Swan) sold the property to Gilbert E. Newton.

Gilbert lived in the house for almost 15 years (and married Ida). Gilbert Newton, along with two business partners owned and operated the Columbia Amusement Company which in turn owned and operated the Columbia Theatre at 17 W.8th. The Columbia appears to have been in existence at this location from 1929 until around 1949. Newton sold his interest in the company and around 1942 Warner Brothers operated their district office out of 17 W.8th and probably then owned the Columbia. Thereafter the Newtons sold 620 W.7th and appear to have left town.

On October 20, 1943, Newtons sold the property to Alfred and Vesta Miller. Alfred and Vesta appear to have moved to Erie at the time they purchased the Home. Alfred was an insurance agent and in 1946-47 represented himself as being a "Life Insurance Consultant," providing "Estate Analysis, Estate Planning" and tax consulting services. Alfred had no business address and may have been conducting his business out of the Home, clearly a subdivision restriction violation. Five years later, the Millers sold the property and appear to have left town.

Donald C. and Phyllis Willey next owned 620, purchasing same on November 15, 1948. The Wileys appear to have been newcomers to Erie. Donald Wiley was employed as a "Director of Research," quite possibly with American Meter, where he served as Vice President and Treasurer in 1954. In 1951 he served as the Vice President of the Erie Philharmonic Society. There is no employment history or mention of Wiley after 1955, indicating he may have sold 620 in conjunction with leaving the Erie area.

The property was next transferred to Armand J. and Helen Williams on October 31, 1955. Armand appears to have been a newcomer to Erie, with his first employment as General Manager of Trask's Home Furnishings store at 20 E.8th Street. Trask's got into the furniture market by purchasing the old John V. Schultz store at this location. Apparently John V. knew something Trask's didn't as the store was closed by Trask's in 1958. Before losing the store, Trask's lost Armand and he and Helen appear to have left Erie in 1957. They sold

620, living there less than 2 years before selling to George D. and Nancy Rose on March 12, 1957. Trask's left the Erie scene in 1970, when the store was purchased by Carlisle's.

George D. Rose Jr. shows up as an Erie resident in 1957, living at 511 Liberty Street with his wife Nancy. He was initially employed as an engineer with Erie Foundry. The Roses lived together at 620 until something happened in 1960 or 61. The house was sold to the Bendigs in November of 1960. It was transferred by both Roses so we know Nancy was still alive in November 1960. However George D., with no Nancy, bought 717 Oregon Avenue in 1962, and Nancy no longer is listed, at least by her married name, as an Erie resident or as George's wife. George continued to live in Erie for some time, holding the position of Chief Draftsman in 1962 and becoming a salesman and ultimately Sales Manager for Erie Foundry. In 1966, George apparently moved from the area and his employment with the Erie Foundry.

The Roses sold the house to Charles A. and Marjorie Bendig on November 11, 1960. In the 1930's Bendig was employed in the lab as a chemist for General Electric. In 1951 he became a Chemist, with G.E. and continued there until 1956 when he left G.E. and was employed by Lakes Laboratory. During these years, the Bendigs lived on the East Side of town. In 1957 Bendig obtained employment with Erie Malleable Iron at 12th and Cherry Streets and in 1960 moved to Garden Court. In 1961 he was made Department Superintendent and Foundry Superintendent in 1964. He probably retired from this position and moved from 620 in 1965.

The property next came into the hands of Joseph and Shirley Doyle (a/k/a Shirley Ramsey) on October 20, 1965. Joseph Doyle came to Erie in 1960 and was employed as an agent for the Travelers Insurance Company. He married Shirley Ramsey (for years the Channel 12 “WeatherLady”) and they purchased 620, where they lived for the next 12 years. After selling the house, the Doyles moved to 3808 Myrtle Street and Joseph appears to have entered the Real Estate field, being a principle in the now non-existent Doyle Hartman Realty Company.

The property was next purchased by Alex O. and Jeanne Clemente on December 28, 1977. Alex had been employed as the Director of The Erie Public Museum (late 60's), The Director of Learning Resources for The Erie School District (mid 70's), and as a “liaison” to the Pennsylvania Child Study Department (mid 80's). Alex obtained full ownership following a

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1980's divorce, and continued to reside in the home until 1990. Alex Clemente was very involved in the Performing Arts in Erie and was chosen as the first head of the Erie High School for The Performing Arts. Sometime in the 1990's the Clemente's daughter, Almitra Clerkin and her husband Shawn (both of whom are heavily involved in Erie Theatre) purchased a home on Garden Court and reside there today.

Thomas Lent bought the home on May 11, 1990, relocating from an upstairs flat at 1246 W. 9th Street. Lent moved from Chicago to Erie in 1976, to attend Edinboro State College (now University). Upon graduation from Ohio Northern University School of Law in 1983, he accepted a position as an Associate with Marsh, Spaeder, Baur, Spaeder & Schaaf. He was voted to full Partnership in 1989. Thomas married lifelong Erie girl Linda McGraw on March 15, 1993 and thereafter deeded the property to he and Linda. At the time of their initial meeting, Linda had resigned after ten years as the Executive Secretary to the Director of the Erie Housing Authority and was beginning Nursing School at the Saint Vincent School of Nursing. She was replaced by none other than Jeanne Clemente, the last married woman to live at 620 W. 7th. Linda graduated from nursing school and obtained employment at Hamot Medical Center, going to per diem status after the birth of her first child. Two of their children, Allison Jean and Lydia Christine were born to them during the time they lived in the house. They built a new home in the Creekside Gardens subdivision in 1999 and sold their Garden Court home in late 1999 to you, the next paragraph in the history of The Detzel House.

Thom Lent, October 1999