

THE 1955 TROJAN *Alumni* PRINTS

December 2002 • Send news articles and/or photos to Frank Hunter, 106 Columbia Dr. #12B, Tampa, FL 33606 • Email fhunter@sptimes.com • Issue 14

A Further Decline of Our Beloved City?



It was very disappointing to me when I read that Portsmouth will lose one of the most imposing structures it has ever had to the wrecking ball. In other cities I have lived in, there was always a sense of pride that was awakened in the citizens that would not allow such a travesty. In my humble opinion, the former N&W passenger station ranks alongside the Cincinnati Union Terminal for its architectural splendor. It should be preserved at all costs as a symbol of the greatness that Portsmouth once was. It would make an excellent home for the Southern Ohio Museum as just one suggestion for future usage. Citizens, wake up!

Having said that, I would like to offer a brief look at the past.

Pick a year... say 1947... perhaps late winter. It is four o'clock in the morning and much to early to awake. My father is gently shaking me. "Get dressed, the cab will be here soon". My mother and younger sister are already dressed. The cab, which was called from a neighbor's phone last night will be here at 4:30. We gather our bags and walk out to the curb on Kendall Avenue. Soon we hear the rattle of the valves on the taxi coming up the street. It is foggy and the headlights soon appear. My father steps off the curb to signal the driver. We get in and dad says only one word. Depot! The driver turns around at the coal pile at the top of Wayne Avenue and we are off. I can remember the exact route. We turned right on 17th Street, proceeded to the cemetery, bore left and then turned right on Grant St. At Offner we turned right and then a left on 16th. We would

wind our way to Waller and then drive under the tracks to the station.

There are passenger train cars occupying two or three of the tracks already as we push through the front doors of the station. There is a warmth emanating from the huge lobby. On either side of the lobby are two or three long bench type seats running the length of the room. They are of a dark orangish colored wood and rounded off at all corners. In the top and back of these long seats is a vent from the heating system. Thus when you are seated, your back is comfortably warm. On the right hand wall is large photo mural of one of the trains. I don't remember if it was a passenger or freight train. Continuing straight in from the front entrance... on the right at the rear center of the lobby was the ticket window. In addition to selling tickets, one could buy a candy bar or a bag of potato chips there for a nickel. On the far left of the lobby, there was once a place to buy sandwiches, etc. During the war, that area was manned by the USO and served coffee, soft drinks, sandwiches, donuts, etc to our servicemen. The baggage claim area was at the far right corner of the lobby. Also in that corner was a long corridor running to the rear of the building. This was the men's restroom area. Here one could smoke cigars and chew tobacco or just socialize with the guys. The same amenities were provided for women on the far left corner of the lobby.

Outside at the back of the building, there was an almost constant din from switch engines moving cars around from one track to another. They were making up the consist for the train to

Columbus. It would have cars from the Westbound train and the Eastbound which was usually already in the station at that hour. Also there may be a couple of freight trains moving through during our wait. My father, who was a train crewman on other days, would usually wait around outside talking to fellow employees and observing the train action. Soon he would come in and announce that our train was approaching the station. We would gather our bags and go out the back doors before the rest of the passengers were alerted. We would use the stairs to go down to the tunnel beneath the first two tracks and then go up the stairs to the Westbound trackside. One can never forget the rumbles, hisses and smells that existed at the top of those stairs. There were baggage carts and service trucks everywhere, train maintenance men and passengers scurrying to get aboard. After a short walk to the loading car and a climb aboard, all was suddenly quiet. Only the muffled sounds of snoring passengers could be heard. I would soon fall asleep and wake up somewhere down the line. This would be a typical weekend trip for my family to visit my grandparents in Sardinia Ohio.

We cannot relive those days but for those who never had the privilege of train travel from Portsmouth, we should be very careful to preserve a bit of history for them. Such history is in that building scheduled for destruction to make way for a (I'm sorry... did I read correctly...) JAIL? WAKE UP PORTSMOUTH!

Frank L. Hunter

Classmates: if you are concerned at all, please send a note to the editor of the Portsmouth Daily Times. www.portsmouth-dailytimes.com.



Station Preservation

Thank you Frank and Kitty for remembering me re: the tearing down of the N & W Railroad passenger station to make room for a jail. Ain't it awful!

I long have advocated that we deserve, and need a transportation museum, because Portsmouth exists mainly because it had been a transportation center since its inception back in pre-historic times.

Our first settlements were made because of the Ohio River, and the Indian trails, like the Scioto Trail, which are still in use. Then with stage coach lines, the Ohio Erie Canal, the advent of Steamboats, and by the late 1800's the railroads. At one time Portsmouth was the hub for three major railroads, The B&O, The C&O, and of course the N & W. In fact the N & W Railroad terminal area, was the largest one-railroad rail classification yard in the world.

The ideal place for a transportation museum would be that fine Art Deco structure, which along with the old Greyhound bus station, should always be a part of our town.

Oh, by the way, remember the red-neon running-greyhound-dog sign that used to grace the Greyhound Bus Station? Well, a few years ago I did a story about the sign, and I got a message that the sign is now in the Greyhound Bus Company President's office in Texas.

I am with you, and don't believe the building should be demolished for a jail (ugh!)

Jim Kegley

Trains

When I was growing up in Portsmouth in the 1940s, my home town was a major railroad center for the Norfolk & Western, Baltimore & Ohio, and Chesapeake & Ohio Railroads. One of my special memories as a youngster is the constant smell of smoke and the dirty soot that enveloped our entire city. Everyone got little irritating "clinkers" in their eyes all the time. It was just another fringe benefit of living near the railroad tracks on Charles Street.

Ever so often our family would ride the railroad to Columbus or Cincinnati. The N & W Depot on Sixteenth Street was an exotic and marvelous place with long pew-like wooden benches, which were dwarfed by the huge domed waiting area. Standing on the gritty train platform, listening to the noisy engine, about to step aboard on a bright yellow stool below the steps of the passenger car, was a very exciting experience for a kid. To get to the boarding area you had to go down some stairs through a little tunnel underneath the tracks and then reemerge back up to the platform where you boarded. The train always seemed to be monstrously large--hissing and steaming in all its majesty.

Several times in my young life, my mother and I took the train to visit Aunt Nell Fisher over in Anderson, Indiana. Going to see Aunt Nell took a lot longer than going to Columbus or Cincinnati.

The world looked entirely different when viewed from the window of a train. It was not at all the same type of scenery you saw when you trav-

eled on the highway by car. You saw backyards of rural towns, farmhouses up close, and empty main streets in small country towns. The rhythmic swaying and the "clickity-clack" of the engine's wheels were unique.

On our trips to Columbus and Cincinnati, we frugally packed a lunch in a brown bag. But, when we traveled all the way to Anderson, Indiana, we got to eat in the dining car--an experience in and of itself. To get to the dining car you had to move through several of the passenger cars. This involved pushing open heavy doors and crossing shifting steel plates--a scary experience for a kid. I always marveled at the ability of the dining room waiter as he served our meal. He carried the food on a large tray and compensated, somehow, for the swaying of the train. It seemed that he combined the grace of a ballet dancer with the ability of a broken-field football runner. As I remember, the food in the dining car was good, but it always seemed to have a greasy, smoky taste.

Looking back over some fifty years, I remember our railroad excursions with fondness and nostalgia. It was truly another era.

Blaine Bierley

HELP!

As you can see, this issue is a little heavy on editors's opinions and writings. This is your paper. Therefore, we need your input to make this instrument as interesting as possible. Please consider sending me your story. It could be high school material or your current life, loves, etc.

More Norfolk & Western Station Preservation

Hi Frank, You don't know me and I don't know you but want to tell you how much I enjoyed your letter regarding the N&W depot- truly an historic landmark. I was born and raised in Portsmouth (Bill Hobbs was a cousin of mine) and my Dad, Bill Hartshorn worked in the depot in the road foremen of engines office on the second floor. He has been gone for almost 40 years but I have vivid childhood memories of the building and you described them to a tee!

I graduated from PHS in '65. I still remember sometime in the mid-50's when Eisenhower came through on a campaign swing and made a stop to make a phone call. I was able to see him - some have said that Mamie was with him but I don't recall seeing her.

I also remember the spittoons that were in the offices!- the ticket window, the long benches, etc.- and distinct smell - not offensive just a smell all it's own! Ha!

I, too think the residents of Scioto County are making a huge, foolish mistake - I sense they think the murals - which are fantastic - are all that's important to reclaim a sense of the past. Thanks for the memories --

*Judy Hartshorn Amos
Batesville, Indiana*



The Armed and Dangerous Payton Gang?

l to r: John Wood, Jerry Stewart, Don Payton, Bob Tipton. Check out those argyles.

An Act of kindness speaks volumes about Southern Ohio football

By JAMES WALKER - Thursday quarterback

In an age when arrogance and "Sharpie" pens steal the national spotlight, it is often the smallest, most unnoticed acts of kindness that remind us that football is merely a game.

The story, which is destined to become legendary in Southern Ohio circles, starts in Waverly. Northwest football coach Dave Frantz and Tigers' coach Derek DeWitt shared a conversation the week leading up to the game. But the two coaches weren't discussing strategy, instead they were talking about a mentally-handicapped Northwest player by the name of Jake Porter. Porter, a senior, has a disorder called "Chromosomal Fragile-X," which is the most common cause of inherited mental retardation.

Porter still shows up on time for practice every day and dresses in full gear during games, but he has yet to take an official snap in a football game. Frantz wanted that streak to end last Friday.

"I told them (Waverly) ahead of time that he can't take a hit or anything," Frantz said. "If the game's not at stake on the last play, I wanted him to come in and take a knee."

Yet a week after their conversation, with Waverly leading 42-0 with five seconds remaining, coach DeWitt offered Frantz one better. "During the timeout, he met me in the middle of the field and said 'We'll let him score,'" Frantz explained. "(Initially) I said 'Nah.' Then we talked about it with the referees, and they said 'Hey coach, we understand.'"

What soon followed will forever go down in Southern Ohio football lore.

At Waverly's 49-yard line, Porter entered the game at tailback, had his play, "84-iso," called in the huddle, and when the ball was snapped all 21 players parted ways.

Porter was somewhat surprised when he slowly walked through the huge hole. He initially turned back around to the original line of scrimmage, but everyone on the field - including defensive players from Waverly - pointed and guided Porter toward the Tigers' end zone.

"When we practiced it, he was supposed to do it, so I think he was a little confused at first," Northwest tailback Zach Smith said. "But once he figured it out, he took off."

The 49-yard trek to glory took about 10-12 seconds in all, and was culminated by players from both sidelines cheering and running step-for-step with Porter to the end zone. Tears flowed from the bleachers well into the night, and the life of one young man was changed forever.

"At Waverly, we didn't do anything special. We were just happy to be a part of that," a humbled DeWitt said. "That young man was just excited to get the ball. Our guys didn't care about the shutout, those stats went out the window. When you're involved in a moment like that, you want to make sure you end the game with class, decency and respect."

Those who play football on the highest levels should take notice. No pen that Terrell Owens ever pulls out of his sock could write a scene more touching than this.

I don't know if this story was picked up in the Portsmouth area, but our classmates might want to read it.

John Eby

Our Black Elementary School

The Booker T. Washington Grade School, or as it was originally called the 11th Street School, was a historical landmark and should have been made a historical site by the state of Ohio.

Before the elementary schools were integrated in Portsmouth, Washington Grade School was a source of pride for the black community in Portsmouth. The school was where we learned our alphabet and our arithmetic, played ball, held dances, held meetings, and learned to be proud of African heritage.

It is regrettable that the young people, black and white, do not know the greatness of Washington Grade School. Actually, the history of the school should be chronicled and placed somewhere in Portsmouth for all to see and be proud of.

It goes without saying that Washington Grade School produced some of the greatest athletes to ever put on a Trojan uniform and beyond, and equally important are the great minds that it produced in the fields of medicine, law, and education. In the field of athletics, annually we won the championships in football, basketball, and baseball in our division.

To this day, I am so very proud that I received my initial schooling at Washington Grade School. Our black teachers taught us well and disciplined us also when necessary. They wanted us to realize that if we missed the foundations of educations at that level we would fall behind, and perhaps never catch up.

So HAIL to Washington Grade School for producing professionals who are still out here representing her and the city of Portsmouth.

Curt Gentry

Station Preservation

I strongly agree with those who oppose the destruction of the N&W train station. Portsmouth has a great heritage and that train station got us into the record books - at one time it (the yards) was the largest single terminal station in the world. The grand architecture of the building would make a good home for a museum.

Roger C. Howard

Preview

This morning when I woke, I saw the beauty of the white blanket that God lay over us.

It's pure bright whiteness is but a flicker of the beauty that awaits us in his kingdom.

God has prepared a place for us that no one could ever imagine.

His whites are brighter than snow and the streets of gold and gates of pearl are a color we have never known.

So when he teases us with his beauty of winter and his awesome colors of fall, he is just giving us a preview of the greatest place of all.

*William R. Miller, Sr.
12/30/97*

A couple of follow-up notes on Curt's article. I do not have my yearbook handy, but I do have reference to our class pictures. I count exactly fourteen black students in our class. Eleven are boys and only three are girls. If you multiply that by four years then there were only around fifty six black students in the high school at one time.

I believe that only sophomores, juniors and seniors were eligible for varsity athletics. So there were perhaps only thirty three black male students that could tryout for the various teams. Compare that with four hundred and two white males in the top three upper classes. The fact that so many good athletes consistently came out of such a small group (approximately 8%) is truly remarkable. I salute them. And Curt, or someone, I would still like to publish the story of the 14th Street recreation center. It was somewhat of a surprise to me to realize that black students did not attend our after-game dances, but rather went to the 14th Street recreation center. Not that they were not welcome at the girl's gym, but a matter of preference. And that they had their own proms there. Someone write me please.

Don't know if you remember me or not Frank. I graduated in 1957. I grew up in Wayne Hills in the building across from where the Sunset Lanes are now. "Lived" at the Park Shoppe like so many of us.

Harry Clyburn '57

Sent anything for Web Site?

We have a fabulous web site, thanks to Tom DuPuy. However if it is to grow, everyone needs to contribute something so that we can share in what you are doing. It is really easy as Tom does all the work.

Send photos or copy to Tom Dupuy: 1311 Hillake Lane, Lebanon, Tn 37090 or email material to: tj@charter.net

Williams Manufacturing and Other Thoughts

Thanks for more Williams' memories and especially the news on your get-together with Curt Gentry & Shirley Perry. Williams, first: You are right on the mark about the "social strata" of most of the employees that I remember working with. Lots were from KY, as I remember. The women were pretty explicit in talking about sex and I was taken aback by some of the intimate stories they told. I remember seeing one of the girls cut off her finger on a machine near me when I was a last puller. She was using a nailing machine that came down with extreme pressure on the heel and she wasn't quick enough to get out of the way—I think she was trying to realign a crooked heel placement or something. She was back at work the next day. Tobacco chewing was rampant. I tried one, like you, on a dare, and couldn't take it. I do remember smoking Camel cigarettes because it was the popular brand with the guys I worked with—and rolling the pack in the arm of the white T-shirt. I can remember some of the guys going over to Lucci's place for lunch and drinking a few beers and getting fired when they came back on the line when the supervisor smelled beer on their breath. We used to go over to Jimmy's Place on Gallia Street the last summer I worked down at the old Selby Building, but we were not bold enough to have a beer for fear we would be fired. The smell I remember most was that of the adhesives that they used. And, the music that they played over the loudspeakers. I remember one song they had to ban because everyone was keeping time on their machines by banging them with their hammers and/or pliers—It might have been "Open the Door, Richard."

Black students: I never was really aware of much prejudice, but there was a lot of unspoken things and the black students understood all too well what they could do and what they could not do. I hope that after forty plus years we have all lost our biases.

This is part of a reflection that I have written for my daughters about going to PHS in the 1950. You will notice that I recognize the not too subtle class structure between those of you on the hill-top and those of us down below the railroad tracks.

Sophomore Year at PHS

"I came back to Portsmouth High School as a Sophomore in the fall of 1952. I was a little older, 15, but still young for my grade level, and, still, unfortunately, immature. However, I was a bit more comfortable and somewhat more confident in my surroundings.

Our class was beginning to bond together, although there were several distinct groups or cliques in our number of about 250. At the top were the well-off kids from up on the hill. Their parents were the doctors, lawyers, bankers, and management adults in the community. They were self-confident, active in most of the school organizations, and were expected to go on to college. The second group was the athletes. Athletics of any kind were very important at PHS. Our athletic teams usually performed well in most sports and did well in league competition. Being an athlete gave status and could lift a player up several rungs on the social scale. Most of the kids, like myself, were enrolled in either the Business Curriculum or in the Trades & Industries Curriculum. Our parents were, for the most part, the working class in Portsmouth. We were most likely to get a job of some kind upon graduation from high school. We occupied a lower rung on the social scale at PHS—we were usually the followers rather than the leaders in activities.

I need to mention, also, the race factor. We had about twenty black kids in our class. In those days we referred to them as being "colored" or "Negro." The city of Portsmouth had a "colored section"—the area was around Farley Square. The Portsmouth School System in those days ran a segregated elementary school just for black students in their section of town, Booker T.

Washington Elementary School. They had all black teachers. However, all Portsmouth students, black and white, came together at the high school. Also, I remember that we did not have any black teachers at the high school. But, I think we were without much racial prejudice at PHS. Most of the black kids were popular with the rest of their classmates and joined in most activities together.

There were mainly two ways that a student could transcend the social barriers that existed at PHS—this was probably true at most schools—athletics and scholarship. If you were good in athletics or were smart and a good student, you could work your way into the upper leadership echelons and become a club president or a class officer."

Blaine Bierley

