

THOMAS EARL HOUSE

1840

415 North Main

This three-bay red brick "gable-fronter" type Greek Revival house has been exceptionally well preserved. Solidly proportioned and white painted crown moldings, cornices and returns give visual emphasis to the roof edges. Door surrounds include sidelights and transom. On each floor the window treatments are different. The first floor windows are capped by entablature moldings, while those on the second floor are crowned with shaped lintels, and the attic window resides under a flat stone lintel. Eighteen inch thick walls filled with crushed brick and the stone "Michigan basement" are notable construction features, while the bold, strong planes of the interior wood moldings of the doors and windows emphasize the nineteenth-century feeling of the rooms. The only significant modification to the facade is the Colonial Revival style porch with rounded and tapered columns set high on square piers between which run a picketed balustrade.

Thomas Earl, born in Ireland in 1810, immigrated to the Ann Arbor area in 1833. He immediately purchased 200 acres of land in Northfield Township, and in a few months he married Mary Duncan. An ambitious man, he rapidly accumulated a fortune and took an active part in the political life of the township. In 1840, saddened by the death of their young daughter, the Earls moved into the city.

Earl, who became a merchant, planned to conduct his business in his newly built home on Main Street at Kingsley, supposing that the business district would develop northward to connect the original settlement at Huron and Main with the newer area developing across the river on Broadway. But "Lower Town" failed to prosper as a commercial center, and growth shifted eastward toward the new University of Michigan campus. The home remained Earl's private dwelling and he located his general store several blocks to the south. Mary Earl survived her husband by many years, living to be a very old woman and providing her own subsistence by raising fowl and keeping a good garden. It is said that she sometimes sheltered her geese in the third floor of the house. At her death in 1899 she bequeathed the house to St. Thomas Catholic Church.

Fred Schaible bought the house at auction the following year for \$1,300. In 1910 he borrowed \$500 to renovate the badly run down structure. With a family of four children and a wife, and at a wage of \$6 a week, this was considered a major loan, but with it he was able to install a bathroom, a new furnace, hardwood floors, gas pipes, electric wiring, and new chandeliers which could be used with either gas or electricity.

The present owner, Lucille Schaible Schmid, came to live in the house with her parents shortly after her birth in 1900. When Lucille married Harry Schmid they continued to live in the family home. Mrs. Schmid still has the pewter number "57", which identified the house until the street numbering system was changed in 1897.

References:

Ann Arbor City Directories

Interview with Lucille Schaible Schmidt, 1976.



## GLAZIER BUILDING 1906

100 S. Main Street

In the 1890's the development of the steel frame building coupled with the perfecting of the passenger elevator by Elisha Otis caused a change in the skyline of many American cities. Impressive office buildings of ten or fifteen floors were erected, and even medium sized cities strove for the metropolitan image which resulted from their construction.

Ann Arbor, however, was not a burgeoning commercial center, but a quiet university town whose business interests were dominated by unpretentious Germans who seldom affected the grand style. Not until 1906 was the city's first tall office building erected, and only then because of a very ambitious businessman from out of town.

Frank P. Glazier had developed his father's small iron foundry in Chelsea, Michigan into a prosperous stove factory. But one local historian noted that Glazier had a "lust for power"<sup>1</sup> -- a lust which eventually corrupted him and caused his downfall. Glazier established a political power base in Chelsea by becoming State Treasurer in 1906, and his dream was to be Governor. In order to influence and control area Republicans he started his own newspaper, the Ann Arbor News, in nearby Ann Arbor. In the same year he began construction of a new building in Ann Arbor, to be known as the Glazier Building. It was a grand 7-story structure with red brick exterior, fluted columns, rosettes, garlands over the windows and an elaborate cornice (recently removed). In the election of 1906, however, the Democrats noted that Glazier as State Treasurer had deposited state funds in his own bank in Chelsea and had used them to construct his Glazier Building in Ann Arbor. By 1907 Glazier was convicted of embezzling state funds and lost everything.

After Glazier was jailed the First National Bank moved into the building and stayed there until 1929, when it built the city's second skyscraper (see 201 S. Main). Since 1929 the Glazier Building has been occupied by another venerable local institution, the Ann Arbor Trust (now known as Citizen's Trust). The upper floors have housed a variety of law and medical offices, while the ground floor has remained in use as a bank for almost all of the building's existence.

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<sup>1</sup> Doll, Louis, *History of the Newspapers of Ann Arbor*, Wayne State University, 1959.

### References:

Much of this information is from an article in the *Ann Arbor Observer*, March 1977.



BANK BUILDING (GOODYEAR'S) 1867

118-124 S. Main Street

Shortly after "The Bank Building" opened in 1867 it was described as having "... a freestone front, in which are large and elegant stores, and the First National Bank."<sup>1</sup> At the time it was seen as one of the new buildings which showed "... the magnitude and growing importance of this inland city."<sup>2</sup> An 1867 photograph visually illustrates this importance. On it can be seen the building's elaborate Gothic facade in its central portion, which was intended to draw attention to the primary tenant, the bank. The pointed-arch windows and arched doorways are also in marked contrast to the buildings flanking it, which have facades in the more common Italianate style of the period. A very elaborate pinnacled cornice topped the bank's portion of the building, adding again to its visual domination on Main Street. This was appropriate, since the First National Bank had the distinction of being the first federally chartered bank in Michigan and only the 22nd in the United States.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the bank, the other known tenants included the Wines and Worden Dry Goods Store, The Phoenix Insurance Company, G.A. Gilbert, a merchant tailor, Philip Bach's Dry Goods Shop and a Business College (see also the history for 126 S. Main St.)

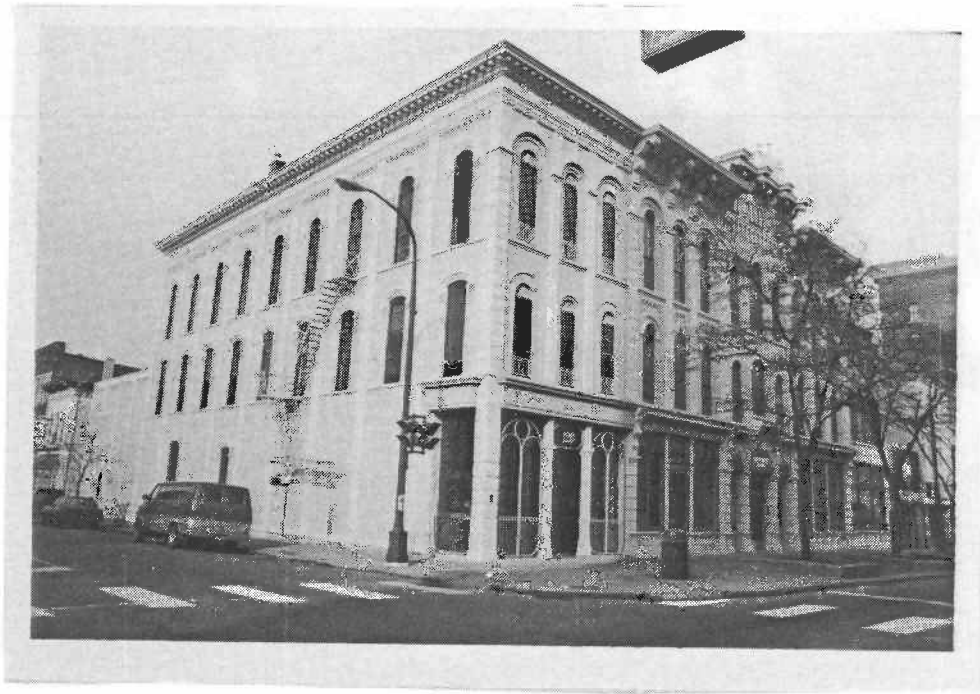
The building was known throughout most of its history, however, as the Goodyear's Building. In 1888 William Goodyear and Bruno St. James founded their retail business that was to stay and expand in this location until 1983, only five years short of the business's centennial. Initially Goodyear's (known then as Goodyear and St. James) occupied only one of the four storefronts, but after World War II it expanded into all but the most southern portion of the building. As such, Goodyear's was a primary retail anchor for the central business district. Its closure in 1983 by the State for non-payment of taxes was a blow to downtown retail trade in general. Yet in 1984, spurred by tax credits and the goodwill of the community, developers undertook an authentic restoration of the building, with the restoration design based on the original 1867 photograph as a guide. The only portion not restored to the original design was 118 S. Main, which had been changed to a Tapestry Brick facade style in 1920.

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1 *Ann Arbor City Directory*, 1872: p. 11.

2 *Ibid*: p. 12.

3 *Ann Arbor News*, June 28, 1963.



126 South Main Street

A photograph taken in 1867 pictures this impressive Italianate block, built earlier in that year for Philip Bach's dry goods business at an expense of \$20,000. "Prices were quite high at the time and a single staircase cost \$500" a later historian recalled. The photo shows the original wide flat cornice supported by ornate Italianate brackets. The name, Philip Bach, is over the awning, and a large "Business College" sign above the cornice indicates the use of the third floor.

Bach formed a partnership with Peter H. Abel in 1867. Some years later the firm became Bach and Roath. Around the turn of the century Bruno St. James Jr. left the firm of Goodyear and St. James to purchase the store, and hired Miss Bertha E. Muehlig as the bookkeeper for the new firm. She took over management of the business in 1911, and in 1924 she became the owner of the building as well as the business, continuing to do the bookkeeping as before. It was known as B.E. Muehlig, Inc from 1911 until 1981.

Bertha's paternal grandparents emigrated from Germany in 1840. A devoutly religious family, they were part of the early Lutheran congregation led by the Reverend Frederick Schmid. Bertha was certainly a successful business woman but she was even better known for her readiness to provide food and clothing for those struck by misfortune. She became a special patron of the Patrick Donovan School on Wall Street, where the pupils did not have the normal advantages. When the Donovan School was replaced by the new Northside School, she donated dining room furniture, a silver tea service, and an aquarium. Each year she sent the children candy at Christmas time and pencils on Valentine's Day. A friend also of the ladies at the Anna Botsford Bach Home of Liberty Street, she remembered the residents' birthdays and provided many necessities.

Bertha Muehlig received many honors in recognition of her services to the people of Ann Arbor. After her death several local businessmen invested in the store, continuing the business as before and perpetuating the name of this kind and generous woman.

In 1975 it received a historical marker from the Historic District Commission and the owners received a Bicentennial Award in 1976 as an example of preservation through private initiative. In 1981 the law firm of Hooper, Hathaway, Price, Beuche and Wallace purchased the building for its legal offices. The building was renovated inside and out, with many windows being unblocked and an iron entry created to mimic the original 1867 storefront.

References:

*Ann Arbor Architecture*, 1974, p. 94.

*Ann Arbor News*, January 26, 1963.

*History of Washtenaw County*, 1881.

