



a historical
guidebook
to old
columbus

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introduction

*T*HE PERSISTENT IMAGE from an old photograph keeps intruding, like the echo of a song that was playing when the car radio clicked off hours ago.

A little house stood on this spot across from the state capitol, a house planted there when the land where the Statehouse sits was an unkempt field of wild grasses and weeds. The house perched there when Third Street was a residential road in a small, isolated town, a town that was still a landlocked outpost in a mostly empty western state. The house may even have been there when tree stumps remained in the middle of High Street.

It once stood in the midst of other houses, some of which were never captured in a photograph that preserved their memory. It became a haven for retreat after a hard day's labor, a home where children were conceived and fed, laughed and cried, slept and played. It was a place to enjoy Thanksgiving dinner and entertain Christmas visitors, a spot to sit on the porch and watch this small slice of the world pass by.

One day in the 1890s, it found itself next door to a Columbus YMCA building that frowned down upon it with an imperious scowl. Then that building came down in the 1920s to make way for a new home for the *Columbus Dispatch*, another mammoth neighbor that dwarfed the little house, whose friends were all but gone.



By 1900, most of the houses on Third Street were gone. Andrews's house is just to the right of the five-story YMCA building in the center of the photo. (CML)

Its days were numbered then. The old neighborhood had passed, just like the pioneers who built it. The little two-story, Greek Revival-style brick house that lawyer John W. Andrews had long called home had become a place of business, and there were better places for businesses. It no longer suited the need or the landscape.

In 1927, almost one hundred years of memories were obliterated in a matter of days, and the eight-story University Club building took its place. No one mourned the little house's passing. Andrews had been dead for thirty-three years. The new building, which gradually became an old building, fit the landscape now; Columbus was a city, not a town, and the idea of people living on Third Street seemed quaint.

And then in 1992 that building also came down, clearing the way for a forty-two-story Capitol Tower that was never built, and a parking lot for *Dispatch* employees filled the space. Asphalt covers ground that once served as Andrews's yard, and the lot is more open now. Even when crowded with cars it looks almost



The YMCA building was demolished in 1923, and the *Columbus Dispatch* building took its place. The Andrews house to its right was razed in January 1927. (*Columbus Dispatch*)



John W. Andrews lived on Third Street from late 1840 until his death in 1893. (GHPL)

empty, but because of that photograph, it rarely feels that way to those who know its past.

Maybe some old energy still lives there, holding onto this place when all of the visible traces of past lives have vanished. Maybe something is calling, beckoning, pleading with us to look just a little closer, to take a few seconds to sense, feel, and see, hoping we will take the time to remember. Or maybe not. Maybe it's just an imaginary feeling. Maybe the spot is empty. Maybe the mind is playing tricks.

Parking lots are the curse of preservationists, but they do make it easier to imagine, to sketch a mental image of long-ago dwellings and the people who lived there, to once more see the way it was. After so many years, we can again easily envision that little house, imagine Andrews on his porch while a congressman from Illinois named Abraham Lincoln is giving a speech at the top of the east steps of the Statehouse across the street.



Commercial properties lined Third Street in 1972. The University Club building had sprouted to the south of the *Columbus Dispatch* building on the site of Andrews's house and yard. (Columbus Dispatch)



Now, anyone can stand where Andrews stood and look over there where Lincoln spoke and think about what the lawyer might have felt at that particular moment on that particular day. Or they can just hurry past that spot like the thousands of pedestrians who think Third Street has always been a row of tall buildings, churches, and parking lots, or worse still don't think about it at all, their minds mulling only which sandwich they're going to order for lunch at Subway.

This book is for those who want to think about it. This book is for those who believe that what used to be is important, even if they're not always sure why.

Not everyone can see the past, but it is a cherished gift for those who do. We hope this book will make that a little easier.

A Dispatch employees' parking lot occupies the spot south of the newspaper's building today. (Lucy S. Wolfe)

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