

Sounds of Music

This century old building was filled with singing in the 1940's.

I don't know of all the uses for what is now referred to as the Opera House.

In the 1950's Paul Milam had an auto supply and tire shop. There were gas pumps in the front on Main Street. My first memories of this building are in 1947 at the age of six years old.

My parents were John and Carrie Pemberton. My older brother was John Pemberton Jr. Our home address was 2604 Second street. We lived very close to the Opera House. From the back of our property was about the distance of a stone's throw. Or I should say a mud ball throw since there aren't many rocks in this black land soil. My father would hand me two dollars to go to Bethea's market. Holding my breath, out the back gate in the ally facing Main Street with the phone Company on my right turning left at the old fire station I would be in the store before exhaling. Handing the clerk two bucks, I would receive a carton of Camel cigaretts and a dime which I got to keep.

My mother would load baskets of laundry in my Radio Flyer red wagon and we would journey io this building. She pulled the wagon as I balanced the load crossing Main Street. I would like to hurry for what if someone were to see a young Roy Rogers and a wagon called Trigger helping with these domestic chores.

The majority of memories of a six-year-old lad are forgotten or embellished over time. I am telling this event for the first time. Entering this building, I was amazed at what I saw. The building was filled with duel galvanized metal open top washing machines complete with hand wringer. Above the chug-chug sounds of these machines, was the

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humming, laughing and singing of many women. Joyous beautiful singing in the sultry steamy atmosphere.

Once the laundry washed, we returned home. After the clothes were hung on the lines, my wagon and I were freed from bondage.

Many years later I began to understand the reasons for the beautiful singing. Perhaps happy to not be using a washboard and number three tub. More likely the returning of our solders after the ending of World War II. Rationing had ended by 1946. The farmers crop of "King Cotton" was abundant with all three of the towns cotton gins roaring in the autumn nights.

The voices of these women may have been your grandmothers, great grandmothers or other relatives. The vibration of their music may still be in these red brick walls.

There is a saying: God respects you when you work and loves you when you sing. May **God bless you all!**

Phil Pemberton 2024



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