

John Criswell House c.1881

The magnificent building at 255 West Main Street, the former Doctor John C. Criswell residence, stands on a piece of ground once called Libertyhall.

It consisted of two Commonwealth of Pennsylvania grants: one to Nathaniel Wilson on August 21, 1810, and another to Michael Whitmore and Jacob Roemer on November 4, 1812. Criswell's lot and the next lot east (245 West Main Street) once were adorned by an old-time iron fence, the black paint shining the full frontage on Main and North Franklin Streets. Gates provided access to the walks that served each home.

Numerous large Norway maples shaded the houses from the late afternoon sun. They are probably the reason the tract was known as "The Maples."

The home shown in today's "Reminiscing" photo, modeled after the antebellum (pre-Civil War) style of architecture, was built by William H. Snyder just outside the borough limits, in Washington Township, in 1881. He used it as his residence until 1902.

Snyder purchased the lot on the corner of North Franklin and Main on October 28, 1880 for \$1,050 from the Josiah Besore heirs. It represented a small portion of the David Besore farm. David, the father of Josiah Besore, bought it in the early 1830's when he moved closer to town from the Marsh District.

Snyder bought an additional 0.63 acre from Sarah, Josiah's widow, and Charles E. Besore on November 27, 1886. That land adjoined the eastern side of his 1880 purchase.

William H. Snyder was born on a farm in the Dutch settlement, one mile from New Franklin, on April 10, 1843. He spent most of his early life on the farm, attending school in the winter months. He came to Waynesboro in 1862, learning the machinist trade under George Frick.

In 1865, he moved to Altoona, worked at his trade for nine years, and then returned to Waynesboro. He became a master mechanic for Frick Company, a position he held until his retirement in 1899. He was a Frick Company director from the time of its incorporation and was elected vice president of Frick in January 1904. He also held directorships on the boards of Landis Tool Company, the Bank of Waynesboro, the National Bank of Waynesboro and Burns Hill Cemetery Company.

In 1867, he married Sarah Bell Mayhew, the daughter of James and Martha (Gordon) Mayhew. Three children were born to the couple: Ruth Gordon, who died at age 5; Anna Belle, who married Doctor John C. Criswell, a Waynesboro dentist; and Hazel D., who was first married to William W. Weagly and later to Paul J. Criswell. Sarah Bell's grandfather was Hans Gordon, builder of the first house in Waynesboro.

Entering the Criswell home from the front porch, visitors found themselves in a wide hallway from which, to the left, they could first enter the large music room or, to the right, the equally large living room. In back of the music room was the dining room and in back of the living room was the kitchen. A stairway with banisters led from the hallway to the second-floor bedrooms and baths.

Kenneth D. Weagly, to whom we owe a special thanks for furnishing portions of this article's data, is a grandson of William H. Snyder. Ken recalls his grandfather had a

Historic Home Team

large statue on a pedestal in the hall at the foot of the stairs and that the home was heavily damaged by an oil burner fire sometime between 1932 and 1936.

Doctor John C. Criswell, one of seven children born to J. H. and Susan (Immell) Criswell, was born March 24, 1864, in Scotland, Pa. His grandfather came from Ireland, settling first in Maryland. John spent his youth in Scotland, where he learned the machinist trade. At the age of 19 he moved to Waynesboro, becoming an erection engineer in the engineering department of Geiser Manufacturing Company.

In 1894, he was sent to Egypt on a construction job. When that assignment was finished, he returned here, remaining with Geiser until he entered dental school.

Dentistry was a profession he leaned toward from early childhood. He first studied dentistry in Philadelphia and then at the University of Maryland at Baltimore, from which he received his degrees. He began his practice here in 1895, meeting with much success.

Doctor Criswell was a candidate for the State Legislature in 1897, losing by half a vote. He served three terms as chief burgess of Waynesboro from March 5, 1897, to March 5, 1900. He nearly lost his life trying to recover a set of false teeth from his second-floor dental lab the night of the Wolff Block fire. He had to be rescued by ladder.

Doctor Criswell and Annie Bell Snyder, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William H. Snyder, were united in marriage on August 7, 1902, in Baltimore. The ring ceremony was performed at high noon by the Reverend Joel T. Rossiter, 882 North Calvert Street, pastor of the First Reformed Church. The wedding was private and witnessed only by members of the Rossiter family. Doctor and Mrs. Criswell spent the night at the Hotel Rennert, leaving in the morning for a honeymoon spent at several New Jersey coastal resorts.

Mrs. Criswell was gifted in music. She attended Wilson College in Chambersburg, earning a degree in piano music. She then attended Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore. Upon her graduation, she came back to Wilson where she taught vocal music for a year prior to her marriage.

Upon the young couple's return to Waynesboro, they took up residence in the home of the bride's parents at 255 West Main Street. Doctor and Mrs. Criswell had one son, Canner. He attended Haverford Preparatory School, Princeton University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, from which he graduated in June 1928. He received his master's degree from MIT a year later. He was employed in the research department of General Motors for many years.

Doctor Criswell died July 6, 1929; his wife died February 25, 1930; and their son passed away on January 31, 1967.

Presumably, William Snyder sensed the pending marriage of his daughter. He decided to build another home on the east portion of his large lot. The Snyders moved from 255 West Main Street to 245 West Main Street in late 1902, and their former home became that of Doctor Criswell and his wife.

Following Mr. Snyder's death on December 15, 1910, the property at 245 West Main Street was willed to his wife Sarah. She died January 3, 1927, with the property willed to her daughter, Hazel Snyder Criswell. Then, on July 5, 1927, Hazel and her husband, Paul J. Criswell, sold the real estate to Mrs. Belle Snyder Criswell for \$17,000.

Historic Home Team

After her death on May 28, 1930, both properties were inherited by her son Carmer.

In addition to serving the community as burgess, Doctor Criswell was a member of the A.T.H.&L. Fire Company, played in the Wayne Band, served as a director on the boards of at Frick Company, Landis Tool and First National Bank, was president of the Burns Hill Cemetery Association, the Waynesboro Gas Company and was elected master of Acacia Lodge No. 586 four times.

Although Carmer retained ownership after the death of his parents, he spent all his time in the Detroit, Michigan area.