

SAVING HISTORIC LANSDALE

OLD STORE HOSTED MANY TENANTS

By **DICK SHEARER**

Logic suggests that Lansdale should have developed in a circular pattern with the original railroad depot at its center. But that didn't happen. Early maps clearly show that the town grew much faster to the south and west.

Exactly why this occurred isn't clear, but part of the reason may be that a number of land speculators, including Dr. John N. Jacobs, bought up much of the land to the east of the station and held onto it until property values increased.

This doesn't mean that no one lived on "the other side of the tracks" and some folks who owned land there put it to good commercial use. For example, all of the Heebner family holdings were on the east side as were several general stores and the *Lansdale Reporter* Building.

The most impressive of those general stores was best known as Slifer's, at the corner of Main and Broad Sts., currently home to McQuillan's Photography Studio, a gun shop and a restaurant.

Built in 1871, it was originally T.D. Koffel's General Store until Koffel saw the opportunity to move closer to the railroad when the Moyer Building was erected in about 1878. That's when Slifer took over at Main and Broad. Then before the end of the century,

the Moyer Brothers operated out of Slifer's until they followed Koffel at Main St. and Railroad Ave.

Don't worry, there's no quiz at the end of this story.

Slifer's store was expanded to the west encompassing what is now 1, 3, and 5 W. Main St. Over the



years it housed dry goods stores, men's and women's clothing shops, dressmakers, tailors, at least four millinery shops, a bakery, a real estate office or two and a few barber shops for good measure.

In more recent years, the A&P/Unity Frankford market was there, followed by Doc's Market. Lest we forget, Kriebel and Lapp had a market there in the 1950s and it was home to the Lansdale Hobby Shop in the '60s. Daub's Hardware called it home for more than half a century and Sallie Ann's was a great place to grab a sandwich at lunchtime. And for good measure a number of auto service stations also operated out of the back of the building.

One of the earlier tenants of the Slifer Building was Dr. R.H. Andrews, a physician with

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REPORTER ONCE HAD HOME ON MAIN STREET

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an upstairs office.

Andrews' stay was brief. A man with other ambitions, he bought the land to the west of Slifer's and erected the *Lansdale Reporter* Building, to house the town's weekly newspaper.

Andrews, it seems, had an itch for publishing, so he purchased the paper from A.K. Thomas in 1885. Thomas went on to a distinguished career at the *Doylestown Intelligencer* and *Ambler Gazette*.

Andrews hedged his bets on this new venture. The newspaper was headquartered on the first floor but he continued to practice medicine upstairs. Apparently he also lacked patience; Andrews sold his newspaper interests to H.M. Woodmansee, who relocated the paper to North Broad Street.

In subsequent years, a store front was added to the old printing plant but for many decades the word "Reporter" could still be seen in the marquee above the second floor.

More recently, the building housed Stevenson's Gift Shop, Duffy's Aquamarina, and now Nostalgic Collectibles.

