

A look back at

Dresden, Tennessee



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Mr. Arden Pinston and Mr. Ben Ford out for a drive around the court square. Buildings in the background are on the east and south side of the square.

Dresden flourished at the turn of the last century. It was the predominant city in the county, the seat of government, located at its geographical heart. All roads led to Dresden, including the railroad.

At that time, the Courthouse was located at the same place on court square, but the building was not the new marble edifice known for the last fifty years. It was a red brick structure, with an ornate cupola adorning the top of the second floor. The courtyard was filled with trees. The Courthouse and area were similar to the present day Henry County Courthouse and grounds.

The community of Dresden was a bustling community, with the downtown area the focus of attention. The 1894 Sanborn-Perris map now framed in the Dresden City Hall maps out that area, with some insets for others. To study that map will give insights into what the town was like at the turn of the century.

Everything centered around the Courthouse. Differences in today and yesteryear are readily apparent. On the square were three hotels; the Cashion Hotel (located on the site of the current Post Office), the Hampton Hotel (on the site of the old Weakley County Bank), and the Bowers Hotel (the Majestic Steakhouse). There were three livery stables either on the square or just off. Groceries and hardware stores abounded in that area. A couple of furniture stores were sprinkled in here and there. The post office was located in the current Coffee Cup building. The only business that was in existence at that time, that is still in operation today, was E.T. Reavis & Son, known at that time as Reavis & Loyd, then located in the Bob's Discount Pharmacy building on the east side of the Square. The unique thing, different than today, were the wells, horse hitches and horse troughs dotting the landscape of the town square.

Industry was also present nearer the Square than we have today, where those types of companies are now isolated to Industrial Parks. Near downtown was a flour company, corn and flour mill, blacksmith's shop, cotton gin, and tobacco/cigar company. Also prominently found within the business district was the Odd Fellows Fraternal Lodge (located at the site of the present day Dr. Hutcherson dental clinic).

Dresden has a shopping center today located along the new Highway 22 bypass, far from the square. At the turn of the century, things were no different. Businesses sprang up along the corridors of transportation. In those days, it was beside the railroad which was about a half mile from downtown. The depot was a hot spot of activity and business. Located near that area were several groceries and hardware stores. Also near that area was the McClean Stave Factory and the John W. Little Spoke Factory. Several sweet potato farmers both housed their produce and packaged and shipped it from that area as well.

Another long forgotten area of activity and interest was the fair grounds. It was located at the present intersection of Highways 22 and 22 bypass, behind to the north of the current Virginia Travis home. Horse races, fairs, singings, outdoor revivals, and political rallies and speeches took place at that area.

The population of Dresden at that time was around 600. We have grown some in that area. Technology and industry and transportation have caused some things to change. The people of Dresden are about the same. We love this community, love and enjoy the company of each other, are a devoutly religious people, focus on the education of our children, are politically active, and enjoy the many advantages offered by a small southern community.

It has been said that if a person moves to Dresden and lives here long enough to wear out one pair of shoes, he will never leave. That has been true in the last one hundred years, since the last turn of a century. May it be so in the future.