

Tales of Hoffman's:

Childhood Memories

- - - written by Sally Adams

Hoffman's Inn and Boarding House (a/k/a the Willis-Boyle House and Cockey's Tavern) holds many fond and vivid memories for me, many strong connections to my early years. Growing up next door at 218 East Main from around 1945 to 1961, I welcomed the grand old house as an extension of my own home. As a child I discovered as many secret corners, crevices and hiding spaces as I could from the dirt cellar to the attic rafters. Many games of hide and seek were played between the two houses.

My mother, having been trained in nursing and a L.P.N., was called upon for her kind services on more than one occasion. Either to administer her services to an elderly boarder or "patch up" after a late night card party, she was on call because that's what neighbors did.

All three meals were served to guests and boarders, but the Sunday mid-day dinner and some evening dinners were open to the public. People came "up from the city" to experience the joy of these family-styled meals. Once in a while these diners entered through our own front door expecting to sit down at our table until my trusty cocker spaniel greeted them. Even after fifty years, my memory can still return to the specific aromas coming from the old kitchen where Thelma (Hoffman) and Mrs. Staley cooked. The corn fritters and sticky buns have never been surpassed and I remember large sheets of yellow cake that would be iced with chocolate, orange or coconut icing. Of course there was lots of fried chicken, mashed potatoes and fresh vegetables from the local farmers served along with the hot homemade rolls. The chickens were raised out back, down by the alley in the large shed. The long, narrow yards behind the two connected houses were separated by only a wire fence, so again there was a vast area to explore as a young marauder.

When you entered the front door into the main hall, the large dining room on the left catered to the Sunday guests and special dinner meetings. The first room to the right was where Thelma had her desk, cluttered with papers and money and her chair parked in front of the TV. It was her living area and



Sally Adams on her fifth birthday with Ricky, her cocker spaniel, in front of her home by Hoffman's Inn (Cockey's) - March 1, 1950

occasional waiting room during the meal hours. The family dining room came next and accommodated the two large tables that seated the regular evening diners, those that actually called Hoffman's home and those of us taken in by her welcome. This was the room I remembered best. My mother and I ate dinner there every night after my father passed away and Mom went back to work. There were local high school teachers, exchange teachers from England, traveling salesmen and an array of other colorful local characters that graced our tables. The next room right before the kitchen also had a large table where breakfast and lunch were served and where the kitchen employees ate in the evening and the local plumbers had their mid-day meal. Upstairs on the second floor were rooms belonging to boarders who had lived there for long periods and a front bay window sitting area enjoyed by just a few. Thelma had her bedroom down the long narrow hall toward the back of the house that had once been a closed in sun porch. The third floor belonged to a much beloved English teacher (Mike Eaton) and a jovial and respected music teacher (George Carrozza). There were other rooms that were rented for shorter periods to the less permanent boarders.

In the summertime in the late 40's and early 50's, there were two elderly sisters (Mrs. Cassell and Mrs. Branderford) who spent many evenings sitting outside on the chairs that lined either side of the front porch. I can still remember as a little girl being impressed by their white leather lace up boots and arms full of silver bangles. This old house was more than just a refuge for many, it was a home to those long remembered.