

## NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2016



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**Metamora's Hotel Past...** A lot of us will travel at this time of the year and finding good, clean lodging is at the top of our list. Does it have a pool, refrigerator, double beds, ...? And you've probably heard that there is currently interest in bringing a nice hotel to Metamora. But did you realize that over the years we've actually had three hotels right around the Square? Many famous people spent time here. No swimming pools or cable TV and accommodations were very primitive. Doubling up – or more - was the norm. Here's a glimpse of where visitors stayed when they came to Metamora...

### The Metamora House

The Metamora House built in 1843 was located at the northwest corner of South Davenport and East Mt. Vernon near where the old Dr. H. W. Riggert building was. It faced the Courthouse across the street. Built by Samuel Parks, it was the first building erected specifically for a tavern. Mr. Parks had it open in time to accommodate the first sessions of the Circuit Court held in Hanover, later Metamora after the county seat was moved from Versailles.



It was torn down in 1915 because of its dilapidated condition. In early days the circuit court districts were very large and judges and lawyers rode horseback from one county seat to another. Abraham Lincoln was often a guest at this old hostelry. The building was owned by Basil Meek and Amos Ellis who later sold it to Thomas B. and his wife Maria Spiers. Mrs. Spiers continued to operate the hotel until around 1900. Sometime in the 1850s the Spiers family enlarged the building with additions to the sides and rear.

**It's History.** In 1915, Metamora House was razed after 72 years of service. The old place was a source of fond memory for the humble and the great over the years. R.H. Heintzmann was hired to demolish the building, the property having been purchased by Mrs. Henry Waldschmidt and Miss Rosa Heinger.

**Remembering Lincoln.** Mary Parke Evans, the daughter of an 1836 settler, Samuel S. Parke, recalled the earliest days of the old structure at the 1915 Old Settlers Picnic.

"... In 1843 business seems to have called for our removal to Metamora, the new name proposed for the abandoned Hanover, and the year the old Metamora House of fame was built. Having heard of repeated retrospect of my parents regarding incidents connected with this old landmark, I have this to tell:

The sitting of court brought many lawyers and others to town, and the accommodations being entirely inadequate, it became a question of how to accommodate these distinguished visitors. My father, always alert to emergencies, decided to establish himself as landlord-and with the aid of some willing women to assist my Mother in the culinary part of the deal, they took temporary possession of the unfinished house. Floors were laid by placing boards upon the joists of the upper story and beds laid upon these, enough to accommodate all. A ladder was the means of reaching the abode of the tired and sleepy travelers. Among these was our beloved and immortal Lincoln, always a central figure and a lodestone of attraction.

It is told little sleep fell among the assembly and roars of laughter peeled forth now and again as a result of the story-telling propensity of Mr. Lincoln, much of which reached the ears of those domiciled on the first floor. When morning dawned, the first to descend the ladder was Mr. Lincoln, who soon found his way to the kitchen where he remarked "he always liked to be near and see the women cooking," at the same time taking on his knee the wonder-eyed youngster, at that time much in evidence and who is now proud to related the incident as told by her indulgent parents



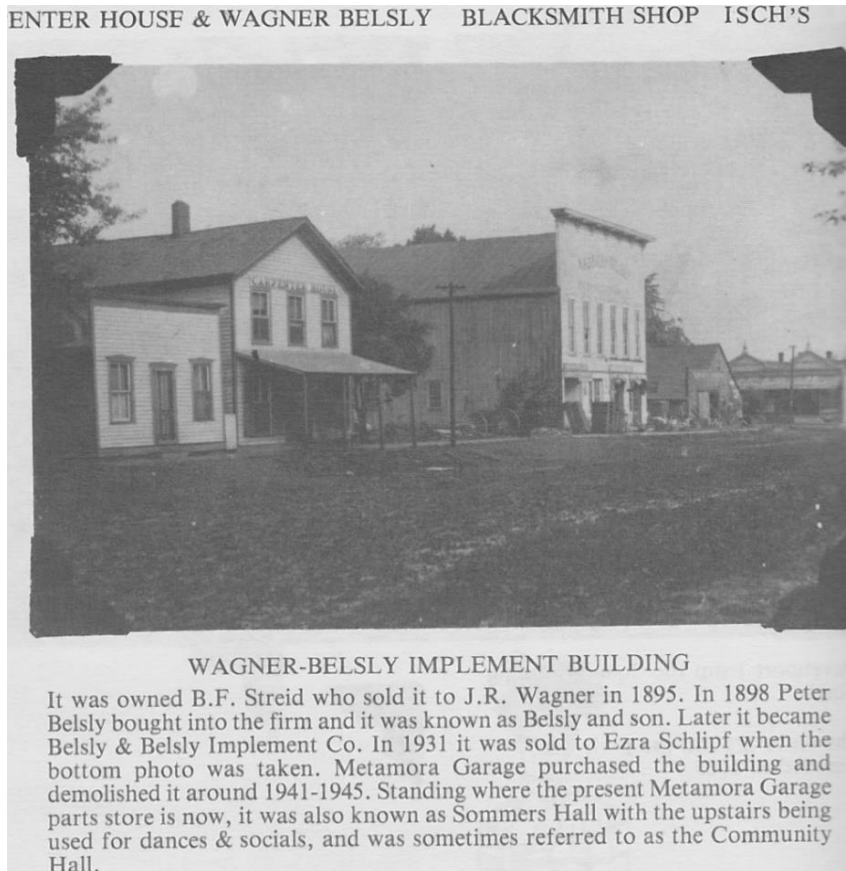
J. C. Irving recalled sitting on this bench as a child while Lincoln sat on a chair in the barroom with his feet sticking through the open window as he conversed with his friends gathered outside. The woman is Mrs. Maria Spiers, proprietress, as she appeared in her later years.

In 1913, two deaths occurred signifying the end of an era. An era was associated with the old Metamora House and its rendezvous with history. In this year, Oliver Perry Ellis, aged 81, son of Amos Ellis, proprietor of Metamora House and Maria Spiers' age at 92 years, passed into history with the men of fame whom they had served in the early days of Metamora glory. Maria Spiers and her husband, Thomas, had purchased the hostelry in 1858 from Amos Ellis. Following the death of her husband in 1867 she managed the place for twenty-five years. She had remained a resident in the crumbling old building until her death on December 20, 1913.

## The Carpenter House -

### Metamora's Last Hotel

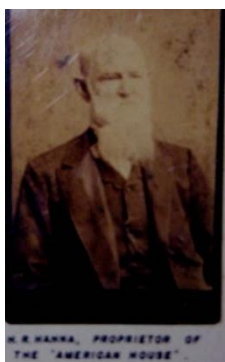
It was located in the middle of N Menard, approximately where Heartland Bank is today.



The last hotel in Metamora was the Carpenter House. Closed October 30, 1930, the hotel was operated by Linus and Sarah Carpenter, early pioneers, who came to Metamora in 1848. Their daughter married Englishman James Hall who helped the hotel earn a fine reputation for the excellence of English meals. A bell was rung at noon and 6 p.m. to announce the meal was ready. Read the full story and view pictures of the hotel and Mr. Hall on our website. Watch for article on the last hotel next month.

The Carpenter House was next to Belsly and Belsly Implement Co. which is where Dollar General is located today. The building was demolished around 1941-45. On the corner of Partridge and Menard was an old blacksmith shop which mysteriously collapsed one night. Before it collapsed, it was considered an eyesore by townspeople.

## The American House



Hanson Ross Hanna



Little is known about the American House. It was thought to have been located at the corner of S. Menard and E. Mt. Vernon Streets. The Resale Shop is at the location today. Hanson Ross Hanna (1814-1892) and his wife, Levina Ellsbury Hanna (1815-1904) were the owners and operators of this hotel. Thirteen children were born to them from 1838 to 1860. The hotel was believed to have burned to the ground.

## Contact Us

Questions, ideas - Love to hear from you

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