

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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(L. Monacelli Photos)

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Home of A. J. Richards

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"The population multiplied and shifted. 'The West' and other unspoiled areas were occupied, 'settled', and despoiled. The aggressive energies which had been absorbed in warfare were turned now against nature. The prairie was plowed. The forests were felled. The wild animals were shot or trapped or poisoned. An incredibly abundant and useful migratory bird was exterminated completely by man's slaughter; the two most abundant and useful mammals; (the bison and the whale), nearly so, the wilderness was ravished; the country was 'developed'. This was then a good and boastful word and not, as now, one of reproach and honor, meaning squatted upon, as appropriated, exploited and polluted.

"So the nation 'grew'. We gloried, we prospered. We pre-empted; we evicted; we extended. We consolidated; we succeeded! We shut our eyes to all that was unpleasant about these words and their processes. We were too busy to discern the misery created everywhere, too smug to see the devastation we were wreaking, too greedy to recognize the waste and the inequity and ugliness and the immorality."

— Karl Menninger

It takes but few before and after pictures in our own environment for us to recognize the truths in Karl Menninger's statement. Probably no more visibly can we see the results of our devastation and ugliness than in the destruction of many prime examples of local architecture.

This 1880's Queen Anne Style home pictured here, although not extraordinary in mass, was a good example of the period. High peaked roofs, asymmetrical balance, various surface treatments and planes plus assorted window shapes and sizes typify the style.

For many years this was the residence of Adelbert J. Richards (1888-1949) on East Center Street at the head of State Street in Medina. Mr. Richards, whose career began in the late 1880's, was a well known photographer in the Medina area for close to half a century. A few years ago his former residence fell victim to an expansion project which left for the landscape more blacktop. How frequently we have devastated our neighborhoods of beautiful buildings, with parking lots, super markets, gas stations or even vacant lots. And almost invariably what we have exterminated has been replaced by ugliness.