



## MEMO FROM COUNCIL OFFICE ON:

### **Ordinance 21-05 – Amend Title 8 of the Bloomington Municipal code, Entitled “Historic Preservation and Protection” to establish a Historic District – Re: The Boxman-Mitchell Building Historic District**

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#### **Synopsis**

This ordinance amends Chapter 8.20 of the Bloomington Municipal Code entitled “List of Designated Historic and Conservation Districts” in order to designate “The Boxman-Mitchell Building– 424 ½ South Walnut Street” as a historic district. The proposed district consists of two buildings. The northern building is a one story, wood frame building with red brick veneer on the northern façade (facing an alley) and on the east façade (facing S. Walnut). The southern building is a two story, wood frame building with a red brick veneer on the east façade. Both of these structures were built in 1925 by Ira Mitchell, one of the Mitchell brother responsible for a string of commercial structures that were built along South Walnut in the 1920s. The Mitchell Brothers left an indelible mark on the urban landscape of Bloomington. They built at least four brick commercial block buildings and a handful of brick homes along South Walnut, all of which survive to this day. These buildings are part of the architectural fingerprint of the city and form a recognizable pattern along its southern corridor. The building is also notable for its historical association with Henry Boxman, a local restaurant entrepreneur who operated “Boxman’s Restaurant” from 1929 to 1958. Boxman gained national recognition for his food and also boasted the first neon sign and air conditioned dining experience in Bloomington at this location.

#### **Relevant Materials**

- Ordinance 21-05
- Staff Report from Bloomington Historic Preservation Commission
- Building Assessment
- Boxman-Mitchell Building Map
- Fiscal Impact Statement Forthcoming

#### **Summary**

Ordinance 21-04 would designate the “Boxman-Mitchell Building” as a historic district as provided under Title 8 of the Bloomington Municipal Code entitled “Historic Preservation and Protection”. The provisions of BMC Title 8 are enabled by state law under Indiana Code 36-7-11 (and following provisions) and are intended to:

- Protect historic and architecturally-worthy properties that either impart a distinct aesthetic quality to the City or serve as visible reminders of our historic heritage;
- Ensure the harmonious and orderly growth and development of the City;
- Maintain established residential neighborhoods in danger of having their distinctiveness destroyed;



**City of Bloomington Indiana**

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- Enhance property values and attract new residents; and
- Ensure the viability of the traditional downtown area and to enhance tourism.

The Historic Preservation Commission is authorized to make recommendations to Council regarding the establishment of historic districts either on its own accord or by petition of the property owner. In this case, the HPC recommends that the Boxman-Mitchell Building be designated as a single-property historic district due to it meeting the historical and architectural significance that merits the protection of the property as a historic district.

A historic district designation authorizes the Commission to review and issue a certificate of appropriateness prior to the issuance of a permit for, or prior to work beginning on any of the following within all areas of an historic district<sup>1</sup>:

- The demolition of any building;
- The moving of any building;
- A conspicuous change in the exterior appearance of any historic building or any part of or appurtenance to such a building, including walls, fences, light fixtures, steps, paving, and signs by additions, reconstruction, alteration, or maintenance involving exterior color change if cited by individual ordinance, or
- Any new construction of a principal building or accessory building or structure subject to view from a public way.

According to the BMC, in order to bring forward an historic designation, the HPC must hold a public hearing<sup>2</sup> and submit a map and staff report (Report) to the Council. The map identifies the district and classifies properties, and the Report explains these actions in terms of the historic and architectural criteria set forth in the ordinance.<sup>3</sup> These criteria provide the grounds for the designation.

**Ordinance 21-05:**

- Approves the map and establishes the district, which provide the basis for the designation;
- Attaches the map and the report;
- Describes the district and classifies the properties;
- Inserts the newly-established district into the List of Historic and Conservation Districts contained within BMC 8.20.

**Contact**

Conor Herterich, Historic Preservation Program Manager, (812) 349-3507

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<sup>1</sup> See BMC 8.08.020

<sup>2</sup> A hearing on the Boxman-Mitchell Building was properly noticed and held on October 22, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> See BMC 8.08.01[e]

**ORDINANCE 21-05**

**TO AMEND TITLE 8 OF THE BLOOMINGTON MUNICIPAL CODE, ENTITLED  
“HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND PROTECTION”  
TO ESTABLISH A HISTORIC DISTRICT –  
Re: The Boxman-Mitchell Building Historic District**

- WHEREAS, the Common Council adopted Ordinance 95-20 which created a Historic Preservation Commission (“Commission”) and established procedures for designating historic districts in the City of Bloomington; and
- WHEREAS, on October 22, 2020, the Commission held a public hearing for the purpose of allowing discussion and public comment on a proposed historic designation of the Boxman-Mitchell Building, located at 424 ½ South Walnut Street; and
- WHEREAS, at the same hearing, the Commission found that the Boxman-Mitchell Building meets the historical and architectural significance that merits the protection of the property as a historic district; and
- WHEREAS, at the same hearing, the Commission approved a map and written report which accompanies the map and validates the proposed district by addressing the criteria outlined in Bloomington Municipal Code 8.08.010; and
- WHEREAS, at the same hearing, the Commission voted to submit the map and report to the Common Council which may recommend local historic designation of said property, for its consideration; and
- WHEREAS, the report considered by the Commission at this hearing notes that the structure is located at 424 ½ S. Walnut Street. It is a one and two-part commercial building built in 1925 by Ira Mitchell, a member of the Mitchell family, who built a handful of iconic brick commercial structures along South Walnut during the 1920s.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY ORDAINED BY THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLOOMINGTON, MONROE COUNTY, INDIANA, THAT:

SECTION 1. The map setting forth the proposed historic district for the site is hereby approved by the Common Council, and said historic district is hereby established. A copy of the map and report submitted by the Commission are attached to this ordinance and incorporated herein by reference and two copies of them are on file in the Office of the Clerk for public inspection.

The legal description of this property is further described as:

015-09570-00 Seminary Pt Lot 20 in the City of Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana.

SECTION 2. The property located at 424 ½ South Walnut Street shall be classified as “Contributing”.

SECTION 3. Chapter 8.20 of the Bloomington Municipal Code, entitled “List of Designated Historic and Conservation Districts,” is hereby amended to insert “Boxman-Mitchell Building” and such entry shall read as follows:

The Boxman-Mitchell Building	424 ½ South Walnut Street
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SECTION 4. If any section, sentence, or provision of this ordinance, or the application thereof to any person or circumstances shall be declared invalid, such invalidity shall not affect any of the other sections, sentences, provisions, or applications of this ordinance which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this ordinance are declared to be severable.

SECTION 5. This ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage by the Common Council of the City of Bloomington and approval of the Mayor.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Common Council of the City of Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana, upon this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2021.

\_\_\_\_\_  
JIM SIMS, President  
Bloomington Common Council

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
NICOLE BOLDEN, Clerk  
City of Bloomington

PRESENTED by me to the Mayor of the City of Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana, upon this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2021.

\_\_\_\_\_  
NICOLE BOLDEN, Clerk  
City of Bloomington

SIGNED and APPROVED by me upon this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2020.

\_\_\_\_\_  
JOHN HAMILTON, Mayor  
City of Bloomington

#### SYNOPSIS

This ordinance amends Chapter 8.20 of the Bloomington Municipal Code entitled “List of Designated Historic and Conservation Districts” in order to designate “The Boxman-Mitchell Building– 424 ½ South Walnut Street” as a historic district. The proposed district consists of two buildings. The northern building is a one story, wood frame building with red brick veneer on the northern façade (facing an alley) and on the east façade (facing S. Walnut). The southern building is a two story, wood frame building with a red brick veneer on the east façade. Both of these structures were built in 1925 by Ira Mitchell, one of the Mitchell brother responsible for a string of commercial structures that were built along South Walnut in the 1920s. The Mitchell Brothers left an indelible mark on the urban landscape of Bloomington. They built at least four brick commercial block buildings and a handful of brick homes along South Walnut, all of which survive to this day. These buildings are part of the architectural fingerprint of the city and form a recognizable pattern along its southern corridor. The building is also notable for its historical association with Henry Boxman, a local restaurant entrepreneur who operated “Boxman’s Restaurant” from 1929 to 1958. Boxman gained national recognition for his food and also boasted the first neon sign and air conditioned dining experience in Bloomington at this location.

## 424 ½ S. Walnut St

Staff Report

Bloomington Historic Preservation Commission

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### Case Background

The most recent business to operate out of the building was the “Players Pub” but they closed their doors in 2019. New ownership is proposing to demolish the building in its entirety and build a multi-story mixed use building on the lot. The lot is currently zoned (MD) Mixed-Use Downtown.

At the 8/13/2020 meeting the Bloomington Historic Preservation asked about the history of the building and Henry Boxman. This report was written to address those two questions.

### Historic surveys rating and designations:

The building is not currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It is listed in both the Indiana Historic Sites & Structures Inventory and the Bloomington Historic Sites and Structures List as “Contributing”. The property is not within a local historic district or local conservation district under the jurisdiction of the Bloomington Historic Preservation Commission.

### Map 424 ½ S. Walnut Outlined in Red



## **Building History:**

The evidence for the building's date of construction comes from two sources, Bloomington City Directories and Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. While the 1923-1924 City Directory does not list any of the 420-424 S. Walnut addresses, they can be found in the 1925-26 City Directory.<sup>1</sup> The 1913 Sanborn Fire insurance map shows an undeveloped lot where the building would be located, however on the ensuing 1927 map edition, the building can clearly be seen in its current form.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the building must have been constructed between 1913 and 1927. The 1925-26 City Directory is the earliest to list addresses at 420-424 S. Walnut which is why this is the estimated date of construction.

The 1927 Sanborn map depicts a building divided into three sections with three separate addresses; 422, 424, and 426 S. Walnut. Staff believes the Sanborn map makers incorrectly labeled the addresses, which should have been listed as 420, 422, 424 S. Walnut.<sup>3</sup> The map indicates that the building was wood frame construction with a brick veneer on the north and east facades and composition roofing. The 420 and 422 sections are on the north end of the building and are a single story. A wood frame partition wall separates these two sections both of which are labeled as "services". The southernmost section, 424, is two stories in height with "offices" on the first floor and "dwelling" on the second. There is a two story open porch on the rear.

A more accurate picture of the building's early history emerges when information found in the 1925-1929 City Directories is synthesized with the 1927 Sanborn map. The northernmost building section (420) operated as a mercantile store with windows on the north part of the building facing the alley. The middle section (422) was food services and is listed as a soda fountain/eatery known as the Dew Drop Inn. The first floor of the southern section (424) served as an office for a local stone company, and the second floor (424 ½) served as living space. The occupants of these four addresses were listed as tenants with the exception of Ira Mitchell (424 ½) who is denoted as a property owner.

Several lines of evidence point to the Mitchell Brothers of Bloomington as the original builders and owners of the structure. Looking at the physical evidence there is an "M" pattern inlaid on the upper half of the brick façade of the two story building section. This feature can be seen on a photograph of the building found on a postcard from 1951. Testimony from Charlie Boxman, who moved to 424 ½ S. Walnut after his father Henry Boxman purchased the Dew Drop Inn in 1928, also supports this conclusion. Charlie wrote in an email that the "M" stands for Mitchell and was "emblazoned on the upper part of the second story section of the original brick façade".<sup>4</sup> Finally, the 1925-26 City Directory listed Ira Mitchell as the occupant and owner of 424 S. Walnut. It should also be noted that the Mitchell Brothers were actively building commercial/mixed use buildings in Bloomington in the late 1920s'. A few lots north on the same block at 406 S. Walnut, the Mitchell Brothers built a two story mixed use building in 1927. Further south at 1504 S. Walnut they built a similar two-story brick building in 1928. Stanley P. Mitchell is one of the

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<sup>1</sup> Bloomington, Indiana, City Directory, 1925-26 (Bloomington, IN.), page 357.

<sup>2</sup> Sanborn Map Company. Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana, 1913. New York: Sanborn Map & Publishing Co, 1913. "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps". <<https://libraries.indiana.edu/union-list-sanborn-maps>> (August 17, 2020); Sanborn Map Company. Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana, 1927, Sheet 6.

<sup>3</sup> These are the address numbers that will be used for the remainder of the report.

<sup>4</sup> Boxman, Charlie. "Old Bloomington". Email, 2009. Monroe County History Center Vertical Stacks, "Boxman's Restaurant".

brothers credited with the building at 1504 S. Walnut.<sup>5</sup> Staff is unsure of the identities of the other Mitchell family members responsible for the string of buildings constructed in the late 1920s', however the Mitchell's had a homestead just two miles south of the courthouse on S. Walnut. The patriarch of the family, Cpt Issac Mitchell, was a Civil War veteran and Ira Mitchell is listed as one of the family members who attended Cpt. Mitchell's ninetieth birthday celebration at the homestead in 1931.<sup>6</sup> It is reasonable to believe that members of the Mitchell family partitioned, sold, or developed pieces of their land located along S. Walnut to capitalize on the expansion of homes and businesses along that road in the 1920s' as Bloomington's urbanized core expanded.

In 1928 the Dew Drop Inn (422 S. Walnut) was purchased by a couple that would make the building a local landmark and garner Bloomington's food scene state and national recognition. Twenty-five year old Henry Boxman and his wife Hattie kept the Dew Drop Inn moniker and continued to cater to the high school crowd that had frequented the previous business. Although they continued to serve similar menu items such as hot dogs, baked beans, ice cream, and popcorn, they geared their business toward a new form of transportation that would forever alter the American food service industry—the automobile. Under Boxman ownership, the Dew Drop Inn was the first eatery in Bloomington to offer a curbside service where menu items were delivered on specialized trays to cars parked on South Walnut Street.<sup>7</sup>

Boxman continued to innovate and adapt his business. The curbside service, which had brought initial success to the business, only lasted a few years because South Walnut Street became heavily trafficked as more automobiles hit the road and curbside service became dangerous. In response, the Boxman's shifted their business focus, rebranded the eatery "Boxman's Restaurant", and emphasized sit-down dining. Henry found a new use for his curbside trays and offered the "dessert tray" where a variety of sweet treats were brought to the customer's table making it difficult to resist buying an item. This technique was so successful it was featured in the Wall Street Journal in a front page article on the "Art of Selling".<sup>8</sup> In 1935 Henry Boxman bought the adjoining two-story section of the building (424), expanded the dining space on the first floor to offer private dinner service to groups and moved his family into the second floor apartment. The family lived there for three years until the Boxman's purchased the Free-Classic, two story home adjacent to the business at 432 S. Walnut.

The building at 424 S. Walnut would continue to be the site of many "firsts" in Bloomington as Henry Boxman continuously modernized his business. Known as a student of marketing and advertisement, it is no surprise that Henry installed Bloomington's first neon sign at his restaurant. When it was first turned on it caused quite a stir as citizens viewing it from a distance thought a fire had broken out downtown. His restaurant also boasted the first commercial gas-fired heating boiler and the second commercial air conditioner in town.<sup>9</sup>

Henry Boxman operated the restaurant at 422 & 424 S. Walnut from 1928 until 1957 when he retired and sold the business to the Moore's who operated the Fiesta Restaurant. His thirty year tenure was the longest of any of the property's owners. The last fifty years of the building's history

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<sup>5</sup> *City of Bloomington Interim Report: Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory* (Bloomington: City of Bloomington, 2004), 129.

<sup>6</sup> Shotts, Connie. "Captain Isaac Mitchell Celebrated 90th Birthday." *Bloomington Evening World*. May 5, 1931, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Courier-Tribune*, Bloomington, IN. "Boxman's Second Kentucky Fried Chicken Store Opens." January 22, 1969, pg. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Shawgo, Ron. "Boxman's Fried Chicken sold: Restaurant era has come to a close." *Herald Times*, August 27, 1983.

<sup>9</sup> Shawgo, Ron.

has seen a multitude of owners engage in a number of different businesses, mostly related to the food and beverage service. Over that time the building suffered through a series of exterior “renovations” that added layers of incompatible materials and rearranged openings. In 2013 the owner of the building received a \$10,000 historic façade grant from the BUEA and the Walnut façade was partially restored to the way it appeared in the 1950s’.

### **Henry Boxman History:**

Henry Boxman’s childhood was formidable. Born in 1903 on a farm near Columbus, Indiana, Boxman was one of ten children. His mother died when he was two and he was forced to quit school at thirteen after the last of his older sister’s left home and his father died. He supported himself by working for six years at Munt’s Restaurant in Columbus, Indiana where he learned the basics of the restaurant industry.<sup>10</sup> At age twenty Henry applied to become a sales rep with RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company in Indianapolis but was turned down because he was too young. He kept applying and was hired the next year and soon became assistant divisional manager. Henry’s early hardships likely contributed to his unwavering drive and focus towards making his business successful. He called it “sticktoitness”.<sup>11</sup>

At age twenty-five Henry and his new wife Hattie-Bell purchased the Dew Drop Inn Restaurant at 422 S. Walnut Street. The business would bring state and national recognition to Bloomington and cement Henry Boxman’s legacy as one of Bloomington’s greatest restaurateurs. The Dew Drop, often referred to as a barbeque stand, was a popular after-school gathering place for local high school students because it was only a block away from Bloomington High School. Initially, Henry did not change the menu and continued to serve short-order items such as burgers, hotdogs, and ice cream. In fact, the Dew Drop was listed as a “Soda Fountain” in the 1926-2929 City Directories.

The 1930’s brought hardship and change to Bloomington, but Henry Boxman adapted his eatery to survive through a time that brought catastrophe to many other small businesses. By 1932, Henry had changed the name of the Dew Drop to “Boxman’s Restaurant” and eliminated curbside service in order to transition to a more formal, sit-down restaurant experience. That same year, to celebrate the 4th anniversary of his tenure, Boxman offered chicken dinners for 4 cents each (dinners were usually 50 cents). The deeply discounted prices drew quite a crowd in those depression days and a local police officer was assigned to keep the peace. Boxman, who ended the day with a \$250 loss, served almost 1,000 people and said he turned away almost as many.<sup>12</sup> Although maintaining a business throughout the Great Depression was likely a monumental challenge, Boxman also found time to improve his community. He led the effort to reactivate the Bloomington Chamber of Commerce and was named its president in 1936. He was also active in the Bloomington Exchange Club, and as president of the club in 1936, came up with the slogan “Bloomington- Gateway to Scenic Southern Indiana”.<sup>13</sup>

Boxman’s community service continued in the 1940s and took on greater significance when he was appointed to serve as a food consultant to the Secretary of War, one of 96 restaurant men from all

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<sup>10</sup> Tufford, Carole. “A restaurateur to remember: henry Boxman;s food put Bloomington on the Map.” *Herald Telephone*, Bloomington, Indiana, April 19, 1989.

<sup>11</sup> Matavuli, Nick. “Boxman still has ‘fingers in the pie.’” *Herald Telephone*, Bloomington, Indiana, April 9, 1980, p 30.

<sup>12</sup> “1,032 Chicken Dinners at 4c Each Sold at \$250 Loss.” *Bloomington Evening World*, August 15, 1932.

<sup>13</sup> Goodall, Kenneth. “Men of Bloomington, Henry F. Boxman”. June 2, 1954.



over the United States who volunteered their time and expertise to increase the efficiency of military food preparation and facilities. For this work Henry received a personally signed letter from President Truman. Boxman also helped the war effort by closing on Sundays, the heaviest day of the week in volume and sales. This allowed him to save his rationed food supplies for the week days so that war workers could eat, although he still ran out of food and was forced to use meat substitutes.<sup>14</sup>

The 1950s really catapulted Henry Boxman onto the national stage. The Bloomington restaurant gained the attention of food critic pioneer Duncan Hines, who wrote the newspaper food column “Adventures in Good Eating at Home”. Hines spoke highly of Boxman’s Restaurant and regularly featured it in his column for fifteen years—he was particularly fond of the Dutch Apple Pie.<sup>15</sup> Boxman’s was also recognized in Clementine Paddleford’s “National Food” column in *This Week Magazine*. In the article, titled “Chow in a College Town”, Paddleford wrote that “...motor tourists come to Boxman’s from all corners of the nation. Dinners here are worth a half-days extra driving.”<sup>16</sup> Boxman’s was also featured in *Cooking for Profit* magazine which labeled him as one of the outstanding restaurateurs in the county.<sup>17</sup>

Boxman was both active and renowned in the state and national restaurant associations. He was a charter member of the Indiana Restaurant Association, its third president, and a lifetime member of the board of directors. In addition, Boxman was elected to serve on the board of directors of the National Restaurant Association and was the second person inducted into that organization’s Restaurant Hall of Fame.<sup>18</sup>

It was through the National Restaurant Association that Henry Boxman became good friends with Harlan Sanders, otherwise known as Colonel Sanders, the bombastic founder of Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC). Although Boxman sold his restaurant in 1957 to work as Food Services Director for Bloomington’s Metropolitan Schools, he soon came out of restaurant retirement and opened Bloomington’s first KFC in 1963. This restaurant was located next door to the old Boxman’s Restaurant. In fact, he had the building constructed in the front yard of his home at 432 S. Walnut—much to his wife’s chagrin. Boxman opened a second location in the College Mall area in 1968 and even brought Harlan Sanders to that store’s opening day to meet and greet customers. The Colonel and Boxman maintained a close friendship for the rest of their lives.

Perhaps Carolyn Tufford said it best in her 1989 Herald-Telephone article, “Henry Boxman was a restaurateur to remember...his food put Bloomington on the map”. Boxman cultivated a short order high school hangout into a dining landmark that grabbed the attention of national food critics. His business weathered a great depression and a world war. He was a founding member and honorary director of state and national restaurant associations and the second person inducted in the national restaurant hall of fame. He is a stellar example of selfless service to his community as a lifelong member of the chamber of commerce and the exchange club. Despite his illustrious career, Boxman is a relatively unknown person of interest, even locally speaking. It is to be determined if he can be considered “a person who played a significant role in local, state, or national history”.

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<sup>14</sup> Matavuli, Nick

<sup>15</sup> Hines, Duncan. “Adventures in Good Eating”. January, 1953.

<sup>16</sup> *Courier-Tribune*, Bloomington, IN. “Boxman’s Second Kentucky Fried Chicken Store Opens.”

<sup>17</sup> *Cooking for Profit*. “Boxman’s of Bloomington”. May, 1963.

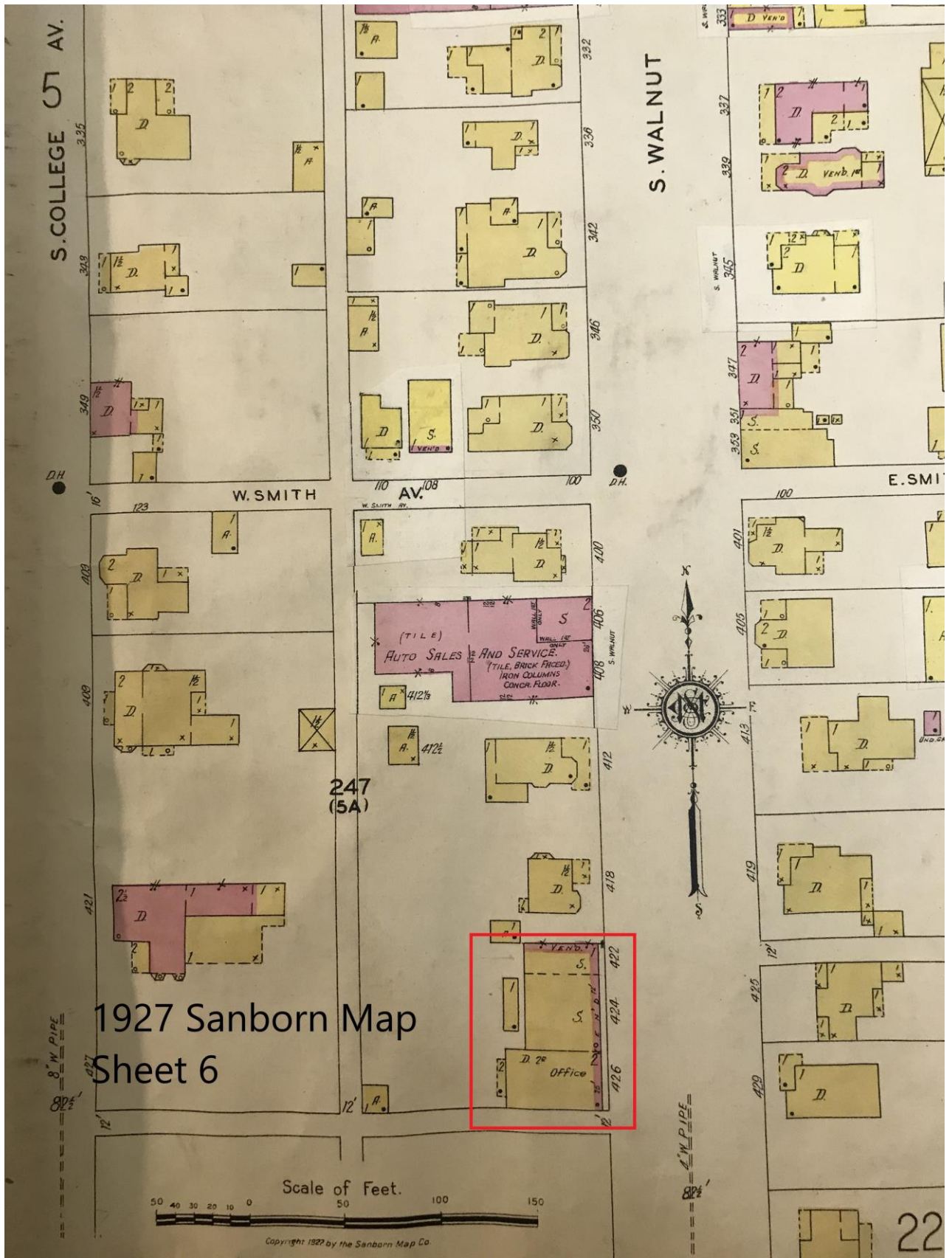
<sup>18</sup> Goodall, Kenneth.



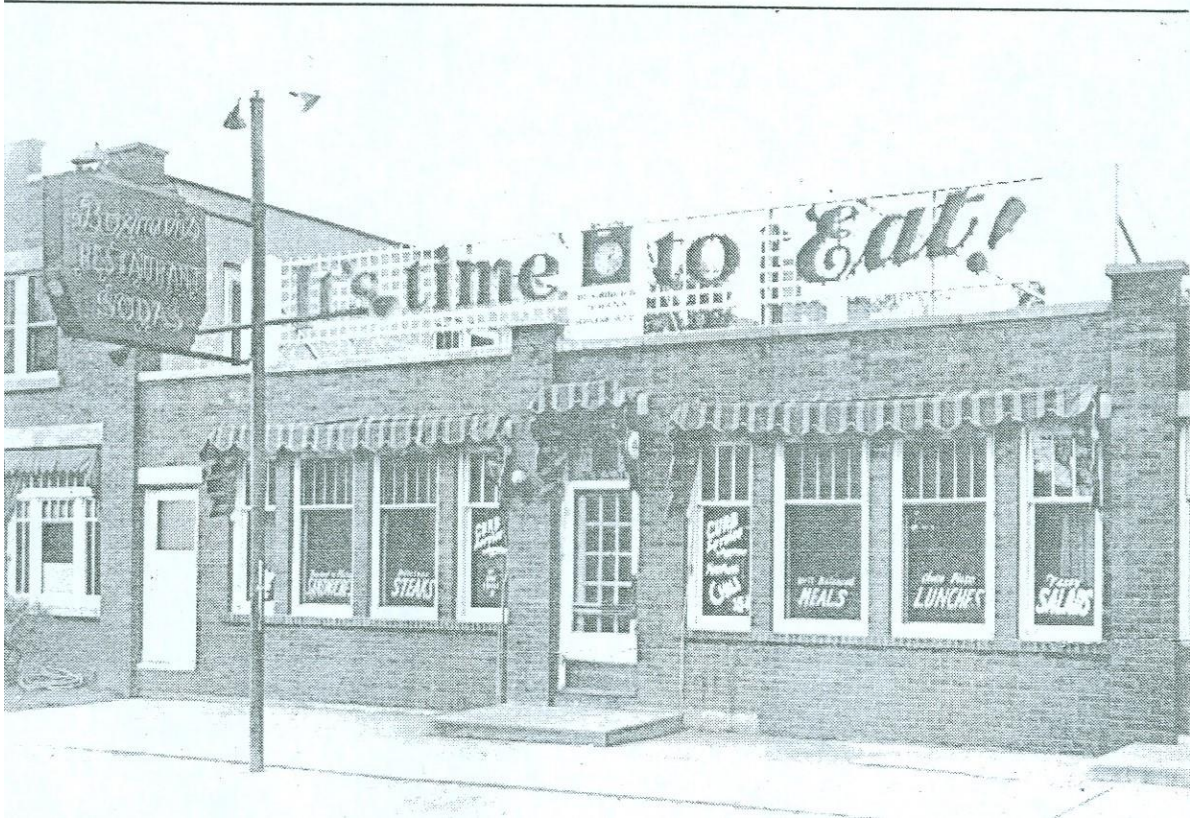
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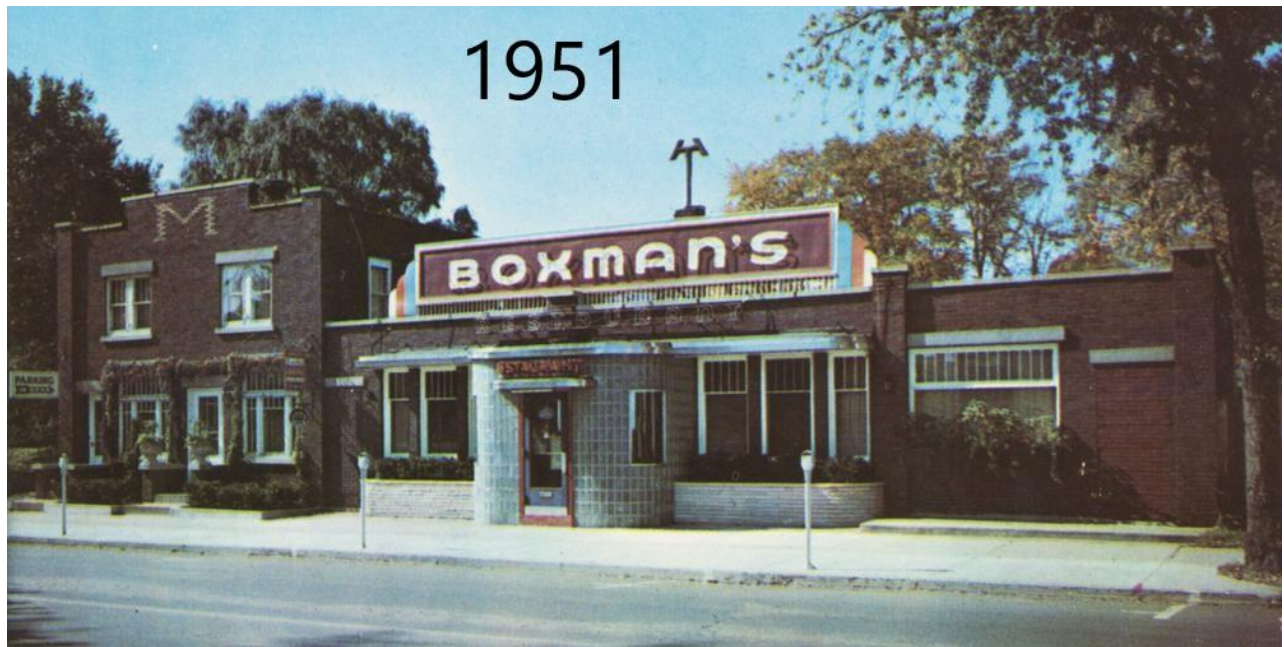
1913 Sanborn Map



1927 Sanborn Map



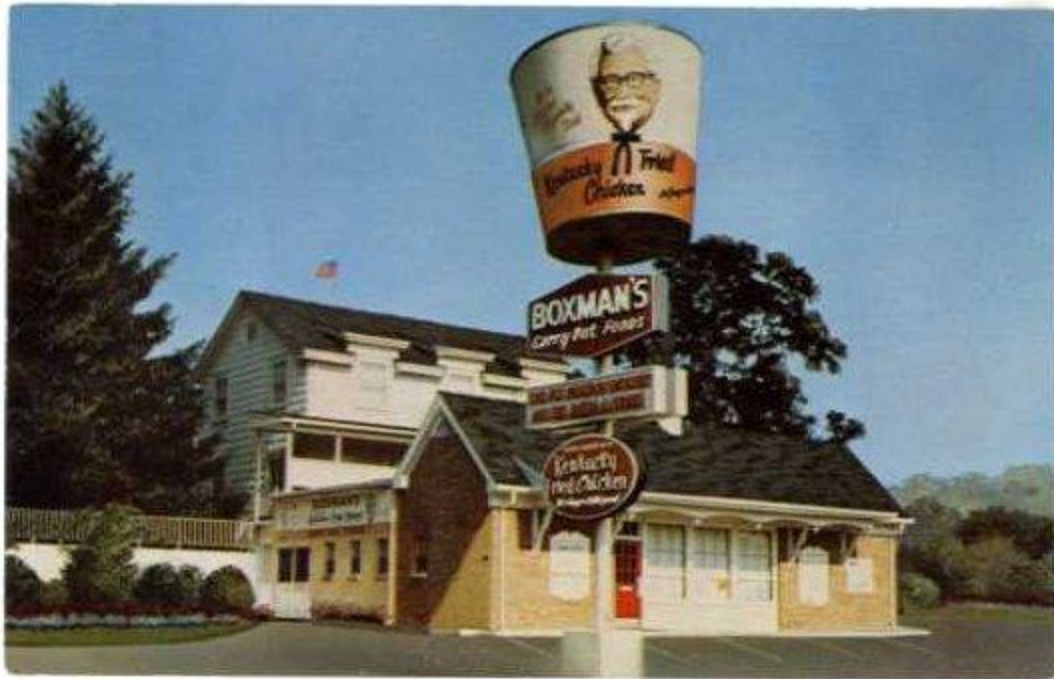
Earliest photo found of Boxman's Restaurant



A photograph of Boxman's from a postcard.



Henry Boxman with his pastry lady (likely behind the famous Dutch Apple Pie) c. 1950



Boxman opened this KFC in 1963, Blomington's first. Note that he lived in the white house in the background.



Photo taken in 2001 shows the heavily altered façade.



Photo taken in 2010 shows that the lower half of the façade has been restored and windows opened.

**Historic District Criteria.** An historic district shall include a building, groups of buildings, structure(s), site(s), monument(s), streetscape(s), or neighborhood(s) which meet at least one of the following criteria:

(1) Historic:

(A) Has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the city, state, or nation; or is associated with a person who played a significant role in local, state, or national history.

(B) Is the site of an historic event.

(C) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historic heritage of the community.

(2) Architecturally worthy:

(A) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural or engineering type

(B) Is the work of a designer whose individual work has significantly influenced the development of the community.

(C) Is the work of a designer of such prominence that such work gains its value from the designee's reputation.

(D) Contains elements of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation.

(E) Contains any architectural style, detail, or other element in danger of being lost.

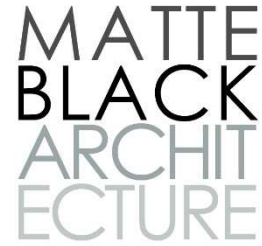
(F) Owing to its unique location or physical characteristics, represents an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood or the city.

(G) Exemplifies the built environment in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style.

# Building Assessment

424 S Walnut Street  
Bloomington, In 47404

Josh Alley  
424 Walnut LLC



The structure at 424 South Walnut, according to available GIS data, was built around 1900 and consists of a 2-story portion on the southeast side of the property along with a 1-story portion on the northeast side of the property. The 2-story portion consists of a vacant commercial space (formerly food and entertainment establishment) with a residential apartment above (condition and occupancy unknown). The 1-story portion contains an open commercial space with a commercial kitchen, bar, restrooms and accessory storage spaces in the western portion of that space. The commercial spaces are connected and open to one another even though it appears that at one point in time they were separate (as evidence by a partial masonry wall opening).

The exterior comprises of masonry and wood-framed construction with a traditional brick storefront on the east (street) side and cmu or wood-framing on the remaining facades. The rear (west) side of the structure is partially below grade due to the slope of the property up to the west. There is an upper level covered deck and lower level storage space at the rear of the 2-story portion that appears to have been added on at some point. The roof consists of a rubber membrane with visible low spots and significant disrepair and neglect. The masonry appears to be in poor condition, especially on the north and parts of the east (street) side. There is noticeable cracking, mortar loss, holes and staining that reflect years of neglect. The condition and makeup of the south exterior façade is somewhat unknown as it appears to have been covered over recently with fiber cement siding. There is exposed wood framing and water damage, particularly at the north and west facades. Also, the roof membrane has been extended down over the north façade and improperly lapped and "sealed" to the brick below. Air and light is visible through the exterior from the northwest corner of the structure. Per previous discussions with CBU a former open culvert that runs under the north portion of the existing building was filled and sealed off during major storm water renovations several years ago.

Some online searches and the GIS database indicate that the east (streetfront) façade has seen a host of materials, entries and tenants with an unknown "original" condition or appearance. There are currently 3 entries on the front of the building, 1 of which leads to the upstairs apartment, a second which is accessed via a long residential style wood ramp and stoop and the third via a vestibule which contains a step up inside to the main commercial floor. The vestibule appears to have been added on at some point and utilizes glass block and a storefront door, which isn't per the original time of construction. The large non-masonry signage area above the vestibule also appears to have been added at a later date and doesn't reflect any particular style or era of construction. Based on older photographs the building front contained larger stoops and multiple tenant entry locations that have since been removed, altered or covered up. The windows and doors appear to be of various types, styles and conditions (most not appearing original) reflecting various tenants, owners and again years of neglect and most likely limited resources.

The interior structure and condition is decidedly not safe nor up to current building code or accessibility standards. The main floor level, which is over a foot above the sidewalk level, varies by several inches in places and interior columns and beams appear to be almost randomly placed with unknown foundation and load-carrying capacities. Some columns have sunken into the floor by several inches indicating there may be no foundation at all. Many beams are sagging and have been covered, reinforced or spliced together in a very haphazard way. The ceiling indicates substantial water damage and may be hiding significant roof structure issues.



BFW Crane (structural engineer) was consulted by the previous owner to help prepare drawings for a new roof replacement as that was deemed to be the most dangerous portion of the existing structure. An initial construction estimate to replace the entire roof of the 1-story portion with a new structure and roof based on those drawings was over \$300,000.00 (see proposal by Building Associates). That did not include any other issues outlined above. The condition of the mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems are somewhat undetermined but most appear to be either outdated, out of code compliance or unsafe. It is very likely that lead and/or asbestos exists within the structure and would also need to be abated. The foundation and crawlspace below the structure wasn't inspected but most likely needs attention as well.

In summary, there are significant and costly repairs, renovations and replacements that would need to be done to the existing structure just to make it occupiable and functional (let alone valuable or desirable to a tenant). It's very likely based on initial estimates that those repairs would exceed the current value of the building and land itself. The building doesn't appear to be a notable example of the original era of construction nor does it contribute to a larger historical context in any significant way. While there are some older structures nearby that have been maintained and do provide a sense of an older context, most of the properties are either newer mixed-use, somewhat older residential or under-developed and out of place (i.e. don't relate to the historic or current architectural fabric). The recommendation would be to demolish the structure and develop the property anew with consideration to both the former (historic) and existing (modern) fabric of the neighborhood. Care should be taken to provide appropriate space that would restore a sense of place and community for years to come.

Thanks and let me know if you have any questions.



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