



one street in a new town was singled out by a name carrying the same meaning as the English High street. It is safe to say, probably that nine-tenths of all towns founded east of the Mississippi during that period had their Main street. As in Lansing, so in all other towns, the first fine houses were built on that street.

There are still quite a number of residents of Lansing who remember when Main street was main street indeed; when it continued across the Cedar river over a bridge and when the first stores and the homes of the first keepers of them were clustered about the south end of Cedar street and the river banks on the ground now used by the Lake Shore railway tracks. The bridge in question had a melancholy history, for it was rather a frail structure and was again and again carried down the river by the ice and high water each spring. During the intervals when the bridge was waiting down the river for somewhere to be picked up and replaced, a ferry was used to convey people across the river, and some of the first victims in the long list of those whose lives the Cedar river has claimed from this town, met their fate during the high waters of those early springs.

The first dry goods store in Lansing was built and owned by John Thomas, father of Mrs. E.R. Merrifield, who came to Lansing from Farmington October 18, 1848. His store was on what would now be called Main street east, across the river at the corner of Cedar street. One window in that store was used by the United States government as a post office, and the first postmaster was George W Peck, whose name is a shining one in early local politics and Masonic circles.

Besides the Thomas store there were, on the west side of the river, a shoe store, kept by a man named Wait, a bakery, whose proprietor was one Smith; a bowling alley, and later another dry goods store. Across the river again was a hardware and tin-shop.

On the west side of the Cedar river was the National hotel, also on the corner of main street. Dotted about in the woods in this vicinity were that homes of the remainder of the early habitats, and at the corner of Washington avenue and Main street, where now stands the residence of R.E. Olds, was built somewhat later the Benton House, with which was

connected most of the important social and political history of those early days. It was owned by John Thomas, Daniel S. Lee and Charles P. Bush. The latter was the first landlord.

Until the capitol of the state was located on the wooden knoll where the statehouse now stands and the impetus was given for building in that vicinity Lansing residents bought and sold and made plans for a city that should have for its principle thoroughfare the street called Main street.