

Commerce

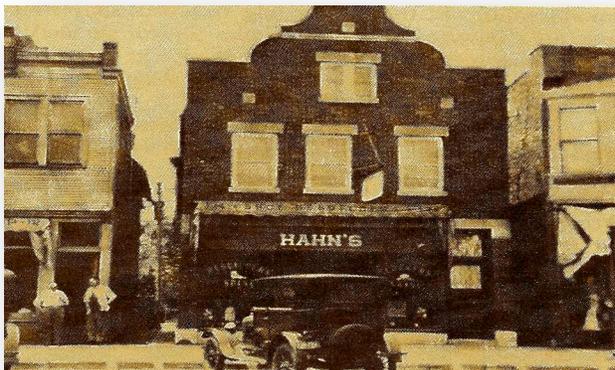
The first stop along the Northwestern Railroad in Proviso Township was Maywood. The next station was built in 1874 in the center of Nineteenth Avenue and was called Melrose.

Although the first store in Melrose was at 110 Fifteenth Avenue and was operated by the Allen Brothers, Samuel and David, more retail establishments found locations around the depot to serve the growing town. An early retail meat and slaughterhouse was operated by Gus Klug at 103 Broadway and continued prospering there for many years thereafter.

When more retail businesses arrived along Main and Broadway, the merchants felt that having a post office would enhance their area and save the people from traveling to Maywood for mail. In those days postmasters were appointed according to their political party preference. Democratic President Cleveland appointed the first postmaster - Gus Klug, the butcher.



From the 1890's until the early 1960's, Broadway was a magnet for area shoppers



Peter Bohlander, who had led the drive to get a post office, had an agreement with Gus Klug. He said that if he bought the necessary fixtures for a post office, and didn't get the next appointment, he would buy them from him. Shortly after that, Cleveland was out of office and Republican President Harrison appointed Peter Bohlander Postmaster. Klug sold the fixtures to Bohlander and the post office was moved to his general store.

By 1890, Melrose Park, with a population of 650, had three general stores, three grocery markets, a shoe store, a clothing emporium, two druggists, a hardware store, a hotel, and a cigar and stationery store. As was necessary back then, there was a blacksmith and a wagon maker. Since this was still a rural community, there were five farm stores dealing in hay, grain and harness and Samuel White operated a flourmill.

By 1892, the community was served by a weekly newspaper, the Melrose Tribune, with Wallace Leary as managing editor. And at Twelfth and Lake there was a beer and wine distributorship.

Two banks, The Citizens State Bank at Nineteenth Avenue and 1st Street (Broadway and Main) and Melrose State Bank at 114 Nineteenth Avenue, served the community by 1908. (The Bellwood State Bank, which was founded in 1914, was moved to our Village and renamed Melrose Park National Bank in 1941.)

In the same year, 1908, the 1,000 seat Melrose Park Theater was operating with "high class vaudeville and silent motion pictures." More thriving retail establishments and recreational facilities that fit themselves into the Broadway shopping area between Main and Lake Streets not only served the people of Melrose Park but people from all the surrounding communities.

The progressive spirit of the merchants further expressed itself when a new lighting system was brought to the Broadway shopping area in 1940. A huge parade on September 24, 1940, dedicated 'The Great White Way' as the greatest shopping center in the entire west suburban area. In 1956, Weiss Arcade was built, leading to a new parking lot west of Broadway.

With more automobiles and changing shopping habits, a national development firm, the N. K. Winston-Muss Company, broke ground in 1958 for a new concept, the shopping center. It was built on 38 acres of land on North Avenue between Ninth and Fourteenth Avenues. The shopping center was named Winston Plaza after Norman K. Winston, one of the developers.

The nine million dollar Winston Plaza Shopping Center had 35 stores with over half a million square feet of selling space. It advertised parking for 3,000 cars when it opened on March 3, 1960. It was the largest shopping center in all the western suburbs and the third largest in the Chicago area.

Winston Plaza recently underwent a major renovation that attracted or retained retail giants like Best Buy, Meijer's Superstore, Foot Locker, Famous Footwear, Office Max, LA Fitness and Marshalls; and restaurants like Five Guys, IHop, Pizza Hut, Chuck E. Cheese, Dunkin Donuts and Baskin Robbins.

Few villages can boast the retail options Melrose Park residents enjoy. Besides the aforementioned stores at Winston Plaza, Melrose Park also has a Costco, Target, Toys "R" Us, Food 4 Less, Walgreens, Jewel, Tony' Finer Foods, Aldis, TJ Maxx, Sears Outlet, Burlington Coat Factory, and a Menards, just to name a few.