

Middletown - Then and Now

by Irwin Richman
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Middletown ain't New York or even Philadelphia. Neither is Middletown the idyllic Nixonian vision of a beautiful small town whose tree-shaded streets are lined with big white houses. It is a polygot community upon which it is easy to dump; especially if you only allow yourself to know it fleetingly or if you let the first amazed stares at your clothes, beard, hair, and/or beads solidify your judgement.

Middletown is an old community, as a matter of fact it is one of the oldest towns in Pennsylvania. An important stopping off point in the eighteenth century, it is located midway (hence Middletown) between Carlisle and Lancaster. The community was known for its inns and taverns. In the nineteenth century the canal era brought new prosperity to the town and its neighbors, Roy-alton and Falmouth, and the remains of the old canal can still be seen along the Susquehanna outside of town. With the coming of the railroad, heavy industry developed in town: a car shop, a stove foundry, and Middletown was at its economic peak.

The twentieth century until recently has qualified the borough for a "Fickle Finger of Fate" award. The development of Olmsted Air Force base flooded, overwhelmed the town with a huge, transitory population. Thousands of people were poured into the area, but most of them didn't give a damn about it. The Pennsylvania Department of Highways also did its share in the "rape Middletown Campaign". To widen Route 230 (Main Street) as "progress" demanded, it had to destroy the flower bedecked square and to cut down the shade trees. A Main Street exposed, a Main Street trav-

eled by heavy trucks, is a Main Street which begins to grow seedy. Pride is lost, paint begins to peel and an emetic Seven Eleven Market replaces a landmark.

The Messiah has not arrived yet, but there are new trends emergent, many of them accelerated by the closing of the Air Force Base. Prophets of doom considered it to be the death knell of the town, but the area surprised itself. Commercial operations moving into the old Olmsted facilities are providing for a more stable population. The establishment of Capitol Campus added a new dimension to the community — a force whose full impact has not yet been appreciated.

The town has been taking a renewed pride in its past and its present. Planning for civic improvement has been done. Middletown even has become one of the first communities of its size to establish an Historical Commission as an official governmental agency. The changes haven't been dramatic, although some events have been surprising. Before last October twelfth, who would have believed that over 700 people would have paid money to see the inside of twelve Middletown homes? Before last year, who would have believed that Middletown would soon have a gourmet restaurant located in a restored Edwardian mansion? But it is happening on North Union Street.

A few houses are being painted and fixed up, a few more young people are staying in town, and the whole community is supporting a fund-raising effort for a burnt out Black Church. Middletown is changing.

Next time you're down town look at the community and stare back at the natives, they are not really unfriendly.

Letters to the Editor

OPEN LETTER to the STUDENTS of MEADE HEIGHTS

Welcome to a community of people.

The Board of Governors is a group of students elected to serve the needs of the community; so if you need any help, contact us at the following addresses:

Jim—845B Kirtland
Jim—845B Kirtland
Barry—849A Kirtland
Donald—849A Kirtland

Stop in for a drink sometime!

Four more members to the Board will be elected from the Junior Class during the third week. Watch for the announcements!

There is a coffee house in Meade Heights. It's next to peoples' park on Kirtland Street. Some of the planned activities are:

Discussion groups-
Students and Profs
Rock Groups
Jam Sessions

Come on over and get into it!! We're going to come around to visit your residence in Meade Heights in the near future to answer any questions you might have and to help you get involved in the community.

Jim McLean

P.S. Get involved in some committees too!

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(and always)