



## *This is the story of Alexandria,*

a town of 4,801 people, lying along the banks of narrow, slow-moving Pipe Creek in the Midwestern state of Indiana, U.S.A. So begins the narrative of the original Small Town, U.S.A. booklet, published in 1943 and distributed in 1944 as a propaganda piece by the Office of War Information overseas.

Fifty years later, in 1994, Alexandria, now with a population of 5,709, still lies on the banks of Pipe Creek. But the passage of time has brought many changes to Alexandria, as it has to all small towns in America.

Like most small towns, Alexandria has experienced a loss of big business and industry. While the residents of Alexandria, 1943-44, saw the town as the center of their lives — a place to work, live, shop, and socialize — today's residents often view their town differently. Because of advances in communication and transportation, people's lives in 1993-94 are no longer necessarily centered in the town where they choose to live. They may reside in Alex (as all long time residents refer to the town - pronounced El-ec), work in Muncie, and attend church in Anderson. People travel to Indianapolis for entertainment and shopping. As a result of people's mobility, many goods and services which were once vital to a small town are no longer available locally. Small, family-owned businesses find it difficult, if not impossible, to compete with large nationwide chain stores and restaurants.

Fifty years ago it was typical in a small town to know everyone — if not "by name" then "by face." That, too, has changed. People live in Alex for convenience or economic reasons, but center their lives in larger surrounding cities. The majority of young people graduating from Alexandria-Monroe High School will move on to other towns for employment and residency.

Yet, life in a small town still offers many of the same advantages that existed here 50 years ago. Our streets are safe; our schools are good; the pace is slower; the people are open and friendly. Serious crime is almost nonexistent, especially when compared with the daily murder, robberies, and shootings

occurring in larger cities. Many residents still leave their cars and homes unlocked.

And even with the decline of retail stores and services, Alexandria still has much to offer. Doctors, dentists, optometrists, accountants, barbers, beauticians, and a lawyer practice here. Residents can purchase prescription drugs, groceries, furniture, clothing, baked goods, animal feed, flowers, jewelry, gifts, hardware, cars, computers, gasoline, and plumbing supplies locally. They can do their banking, bury their loved ones, have blood drawn, purchase insurance, and list their property with a realtor — all in Alexandria. Residents can have their clothes dry-cleaned, their shoes repaired and shined, their home re-wired, or a new heating and cooling system installed — all without leaving town. They can have their car repaired, store excess "stuff" in a rental storage unit, have their picture taken, learn to dance, or record a song at a state-of-the-art recording studio. Alexandrians can relax in a tanning bed while their clothes wash at the laundromat located in the same building. They can golf, attend a movie, bowl, swim, shoot pool, play tennis, view a wide variety of school concerts, plays, and athletic events, rent a video, play bingo, or check out a good book at the public library.

Twenty-six churches, both Catholic and Protestant, serve the religious needs of the community. A variety of restaurants and bars, both fast food and sit-down dining style, offer residents a place for a quick lunch or dinner out. Dozens of service and social organizations are available, fulfilling a need for both entertainment and an opportunity to better one's self and the community. Residents with musical or acting talent can participate in a community band or a local theater group.

And a local weekly newspaper, The Alexandria Times-Tribune, still keeps people informed about the happenings in Alexandria and the surrounding area.

This, then, is Alexandria, Small Town, U.S.A., in 1994.



*In 1943, the heart of the business district was located on Harrison Street.*

The picture in the original publication shows a street scene jammed with cars and people. Fifty years later, the businesses of Alexandria are more scattered. Some still lie downtown on Harrison Street, while others fill Lincoln Center, a shopping area on State Road 9 on the northeast side of town. Businesses also are located along State Road 9, both north and south, and on State Road 28, which runs east and west through Alexandria.

People no longer make a weekly trip to town to do all their shopping at one time in one location. With most women now working outside the home, shopping is often done whenever and wherever there are a few minutes to spare. Many stores are open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., though most stores in the downtown still close at 5 or 6 p.m. Some stores are open on Sunday to accommodate people's

busy schedules. And a grocery store and mini mart are open 24 hours a day for shopping convenience.

Another popular feature of the '90s is the presence of drive-through service at many banks and fast food restaurants.

Although there are fewer retail merchants than in past years when people mainly shopped locally, residents of Alexandria can still buy a surprising number of items in town. There are two grocery stores, plus stores selling hardware, drugs, candy, furniture, jewelry, flowers, and gift items. Two discount stores sell everything from clothes and shoes to toiletries and housewares.

The downtown of Alexandria 1994 doesn't have the bustle that existed there 50 years ago. Large discount chains like Wal-Mart and K-Mart, and shopping malls in Anderson, Muncie, and Indianapolis have lured away many people who once bought "only in Alex." The trend is repeated in small towns throughout the nation.

But Alexandria still retains enough shops and variety that, as one local retiree stated, "The majority of things that I really need, I can find right here in town."



## *The passage of 50 years has brought many changes to the homes of Alexandria,*

both inside and out.

Geographically, the homes are spread over a wider area than in 1943. Housing additions have sprung up in Alexandria, with McCarty Addition to the north and Lincoln Heights on the east side. On the south side of town are the more recent additions of Yule Estates and Fairway Estates.

Local housing has also become more diverse over the years. Alex Manor houses a government-subsidized apartment complex for families. Lincolnwood is also subsidized, but houses primarily elderly residents. Alexandria also has two apartment complexes, two trailer courts, two nursing homes, and Elder House, where elderly women may reside, while still retaining some of their independence.

Sixty percent of the people in Alexandria own their own homes, with the median home value being \$35,000. A few homes fall in the \$20,000 range, and a few at the upper end of the scale are valued at \$200,000 to \$300,000. The average home sale in 1994 in Alexandria was \$56,000. Median rent is \$244, and 31% of Alexandria's residents are renters.

Many of the white, wood frame houses pictured in the original 1943 booklet are still standing and in use, but have been up-dated with colored vinyl siding and contrasting trim. The most popular color combination of the '90s is taupe siding with hunter green or teal trim. Many older homes with peeling paint have been made to look new again. Ironically, many of these homes originally were painted in colors, then in later years re-painted white. Many now look more like they did originally than when pictured in 1943.

Inside, homes have seen even greater changes. Whereas the 1943 booklet stated that, "nearly every house has electric lights," it would be safe to assume in '94 that nearly every house has at least one television and VCR (video cassette recorder). The majority of homes have washers, dryers, and microwave ovens, and many also have garbage disposals and dishwashers. Most homes have more than one telephone, plus an answering machine, and many have personal or home computers. The majority of homes have central air-conditioning or window units to cool individual rooms, although old-fashioned ceiling fans have returned to popularity both for aesthetics and function. Heat is either gas or electric, though in the '80's solar heat and wood-burning stoves both enjoyed brief popularity as alternative heat sources. Homes are being better insulated as people have grown more energy-conscious, and double and triple pane windows have eliminated the need for storm windows in newer homes.

The layout of an average home still includes a living room or great room, kitchen, dining area, and three bedrooms, but usually includes at least one and one-half baths and a family room or den. Many homes have screened-in "Florida rooms" built on the back or wood decks or patios, complete with a gas grill.

The people of Alexandria still spend time outdoors in nice weather. But the peaceful practice of "sitting on the front porch" has been supplanted by television watching and central air.

Ron Garner, athletic director at the high school, rakes leaves as son Rusty rides his bike in the background. The picture is in the exact location of the original 1943 picture where Monroe Duncan was shown raking leaves.





John and Karen (Beard) Prough relax on the porch while visiting Karen's mother, Mabel Beard. Former Alexandria residents, the Proughs now live in California, but return home to Alexandria as often as possible to visit family and friends and sample Hoosier cooking.



John Cox, owner of Cox Super Market, is pictured with Karen Phillips, an employee of nearly 30 years. Automatic scanning devices have increased the speed and efficiency of the check-out, and double coupons offer shoppers a chance to save money. Cox's

has been an Alex institution since 1936 and currently has 60 employees. While flour and sugar were the biggest sellers in 1943, today soft drinks, breakfast cereal, snacks, and chips top the list.



Alberta Garner watches as son Dick and grandson Craig change a car's oil at Humphries Automotive Service. Dick's father, Mac, first opened the station in 1956 on East Washington Street. Dick moved to his new station on State Road 9, July 1, 1980 and now has 8 employees. Gasoline sells for \$1.06 9/10 for self-service and \$1.28 9/10 for full service. The use of computers has radically changed the manner in which newer cars are serviced.



Pictured in Gaither Studio C, Bill and Gloria Gaither, along with engineer Chad Evans and Ron Beard, do a mix-down for an upcoming video. Bill, who began singing with brother Danny and sister Mary Ann as the Gaither Trio in 1961, now owns Gaither Recording Studio, has written 600 gospel songs, and won numerous Dove and Grammy Awards. Wife Gloria has written 12 books, and was named Songwriter of the Year in 1986. Their companies employ 60 people, with their biggest business currently being Christian music videos.



Since 1951, residents have gathered at the Alex Bakery for good food, doughnuts, pie, coffee, and the latest news of the happenings in Alexandria. Pictured here are Susan Stafford and owner Mike DiRuzza serving breakfast to Richard and Sandra McCord and Kevin Zurchin. A breakfast of eggs and bacon, toast and coffee sells for \$3.08.



Knotts Flying Service, owned by Duane and Carolyn Knotts, opened September 1, 1955, with a grass landing strip. Today the airport has a 2,590 foot paved airstrip and is a complete mechanical facility. They also offer hangar rental for private aviation; plane rental; and pilot instruction. Pictured with a Beechcraft King Air A-100 are: Gary McCord, flight instructor and co-pilot, Duane Knotts, owner and operator, Paul Frederick, aviation mechanic, Martin Koob, and Carolyn Knotts.



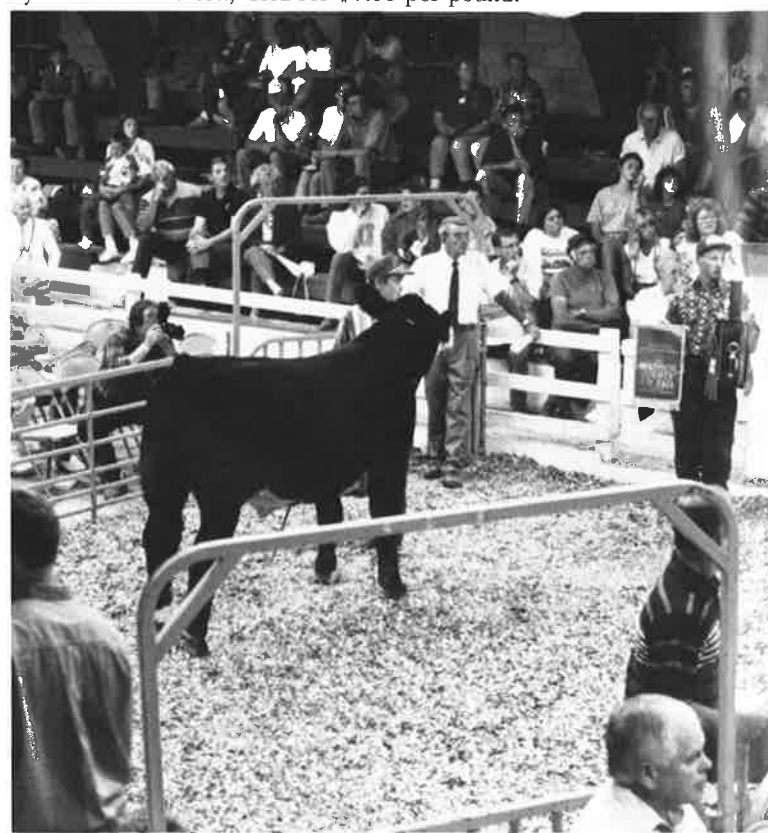
The American Legion Auxiliary conducts a service each year on memorial Day to honor deceased service people. They also sell poppies on Poppy Day, which have been made by disabled servicemen, and donate the proceeds to VA hospitals and the Knightstown Children's Home. Shown placing flowers at the Veterans Memorial are: Vella Raines, Nettie Hollies, Clarice Odom, Mildred Croy, Rosemary Cunningham, and Maxine Kelly.

Seventy-nine-year-old Murl Ray, former owner of the Clock Shop, uses his "retirement" time in a new venture. Ray now operates "Murl's Handyman Shop" on East Church where local citizens can have their most exacting wood repair needs met. Ray was store manager and advertising director for Cox Super Market from 1948 to 1971.



The Madison County 4-H Fair, sponsored by the Alexandria Kiwanis Club and held the last week of July, draws thousands of spectators and participants to Beulah Park each year. Shown here are three of the main people who make the event happen: Barbara Ingram, John Noffze, and Don Ingram.

The Livestock Auction at the 4-H Fair draws dozens of bidders and raises thousands of dollars for 4-Hers. Shown auctioning his grand champion Simmental Steer is A.J. Anderson, of the Alexandria Ag 4-H Club. The steer, purchased by St. John's Health Systems of Anderson, sold for \$7.00 per pound.



Mayor Ed Schmidt and Julianne Fletcher, Park Board President, view plans for the new downtown park to be located at the corner of Harrison and Church Streets, former site of Rhodes Jewelry Store. Standing, left to right: Schmidt and Fletcher. Seated: Mike DiRuzza, Alexandria Bakery; Tom Thomas, former Supt. of Schools; John May, National City Bank Vice President; Dr. David Steele, dentist and former city councilman; Murl Ray, Murl's Handyman Shop; John Cox, Cox Super Market; and Ethan Moore, landscape architect from the Council of Government.



Improvement of Alexandria's main artery meant changes on Harrison Street. City officials and citizens review plans for new curb placement and saving 26 trees on N. Harrison at an informal meeting at the City Hall. Left to right: Bill Gaither, nationally known singer and composer; Steve Simison, Park Supt. and Street Commissioner; Mayor Ed Schmidt; Wilfred Allen, Building Commissioner; Kent Byran, City Engineer (standing); and Tom Thomas, Board of Works member.



The first and third Monday of each month, the Monroe Township School Board meets at the central office to direct school policy. Seated, left-right, are Chip McFerran, Lisa Rinker, Ord Lemaster, Jeff Montgomery, (absent) Charles Breckenridge, Supt. John McFarren, and board secretary Barbara Allen.



Mayor Ed Schmidt presides over a meeting of the Alexandria City Council. Shown left to right are Art Watts, Dist. 4; Robert Rock, city attorney; Steve Frazee, Dist. 5; Don Lynch, Dist. 1; Mayor Schmidt; Jack Gardner, Dist. 2; Leroy "Pete" Sayre, at-large; Jan Lynch, clerk-treasurer; Jack Beigh, Dist. 3; and John Fox, at-large.

### *The city of Alexandria is run*

by its mayor, city council, clerk-treasurer, and a wide variety of boards and commissions. Also serving are both elected and appointed officials and city employees. The mayor is elected to a four-year term, as are the seven city council members. Council members, whose main function is budgetary, meet twice a month and receive a salary of \$2,165 per year. Council members also field complaints from citizens and refer them to the proper department or board.

The council passes all local legislation.

Main boards are the Board of Public Works and Safety, which controls all business except financial; the Park Board, which takes care of all the city parks, the pool, and the concession stand; the Safety Board, which deals with the Fire and Police Departments; and the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Storm Water Management Board, and the Planning Commission.

An elected City Court Judge, James Wehsollek, hears cases in city court, as compared to 1943 when the mayor tried civil offenders.



Alexandria's Fire Department, now located next to the Police Department on Harrison Street, has 10 full-time and 6 part-time firemen, 4 trucks and 3 emergency medical vehicles. Pictured left to right are: Ron Warner, Dan Ingram, Brian Etchison, and Lance Love.



Enhanced 911, the number to call for any emergency, allows the dispatcher to receive the caller's name, address, and phone number immediately. The dispatcher, June Bott pictured here, then notifies the proper response team. Although Alexandria experienced only six robberies, two rapes, and no murders or fatal fires in 1993, 911 responded to 3,240 calls for assistance.



Senior Trooper Mike Campbell, of the Indiana State Police Department, a former Alexandria resident now residing in Frankton, discusses police procedures with Alexandria's po-

lice chief Steve Staggs. Looking on are Abbi, Todd, and Maggi Campbell.