

Daleville Landmark topples

Bricks will be used in the new Bicentennial Park

Photos and story by Larry Luntsford

The last week in March was the last week of life for a venerable old Daleville building, as demolition workers toppled the old Shirey grocery store across the street from the Daleville post office.

The bricks, made locally, were taken temporarily to a vacant lot on Road 900-W. As soon as arrangements can be made, volunteer workers will clean the mortar from the bricks, which will be used in the facade of the restroom facilities at the new Bicentennial Park at Road 900-W and White River.

Hampered somewhat by power telephone lines, demolition workers gingerly peeled off the roof of the building, chewed away the second-story sides, and then toppled the back and front facades a few bricks at a time. Pausing only to clear away the rubble, they then performed similar operations on the ground floor. The job took two days--Tuesday and Wednesday, March 23 and 24.

Owner-manager John Shirey joined a score or so other curious bystanders watching as the building fell, but he declared he had no regrets--only joyous anticipation for the prospects of his new Convenient Food Mart,

located on the same spot behind the old building. With one hand, he outlined the spot upon which his new gas pumps will sit (in the area occupied by the rubble of the old store)--while with the other, he gathered his grandchildren around him for an impromptu family portrait.

The old building, which had grown much too crowded for Shirey's growing business, was probably erected around 1875.

"I'm not sure when the building was built, but I think it's at least 100 years old. We think the bricks used to build it were kilned right here in Daleville," Shirey recalls. "I do know when they built the building it was one foot over its boundary line. The man who owned the property waited until the building was completed, then took the case to court for damages. The case was heard by Judge Ball, but the damage costs paid were never recorded that I could find. It was around 1880 when the decision was handed down, though."

"My earliest recollections of the building are when it was a blacksmith shop. They used to build wagons, big ones used for hauling and such, in the top of the building and bring them down by way of an inside elevator. There



And from the dust, arises...

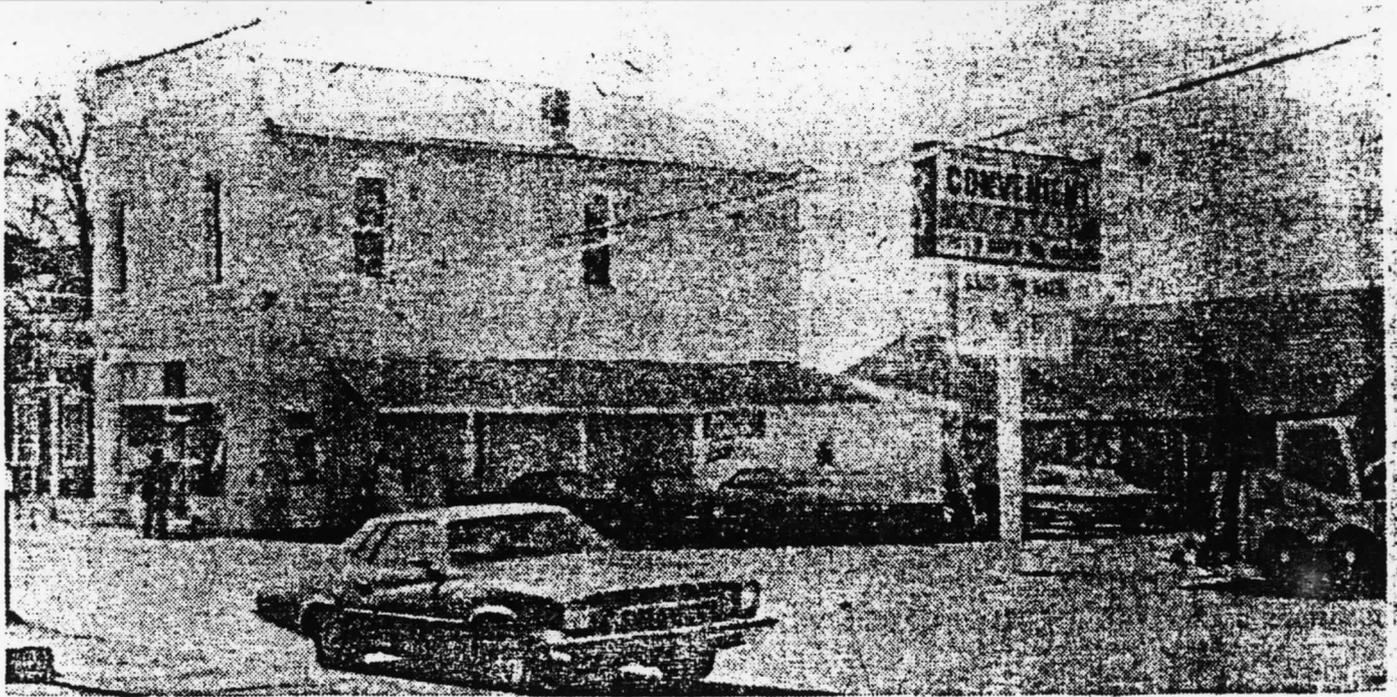
isn't anything left of that, but I can remember it was quite a sight to see those big wagons coming down from the ceiling," he adds.

He recalls other uses from the past.

"There was a restaurant here at one time called Mary's Kitchen, and at another time Bud Fenwick had an insurance agency

here. Bill Edgell had the first grocery in the building, and later he went into business with Bill Chandler.

"Later Dale Cortner had a grocery here, and I purchased it from him. If the building was used for anything else, I can't remember what it would be.



Veteran Daleville Grocer 'Goes Modern'

By MIKE STACK

Star Business Writer

DALEVILLE — Contrary to what many may think, the small town grocery is alive and well. John Shirey has so much faith in it, he recently invested more than \$100,000 to build a new one in this unincorporated community of about 2,000.

Though Shirey's new Convenient Food Mart would have to be classified as a small operation, it certainly isn't the little country store of yesterday.

Daleville's new grocery of 3,200 square feet but has a good selection of almost every type of item. Though it has all the modern grocery

equipment, including an electronic cash register, there is still the air of a country store. Posted on the front of the cash register, for example, are two notes from persons seeking babysitters.

SHIREY, a man who wears a black bowtie and white meat-cutter's cap, has been operating a grocery in Daleville for 30 years. All of those years have been spent in a small outdated building, which had its beginnings as a blacksmith shop. "No one seems to know when it was built," he said.



JOHN SHIREY... Veteran grocer...

All that changed this month when Shirey moved into his newly constructed building — three times the size of his former location and not more than 100 feet away.

"In my 30 years in the grocery business, I've seen a lot of small towns go without a store. Small groceries have declined because they didn't keep up with the times. Owners got in a rut and stayed there," Shirey said.

Shirey is a Daleville native but has not always lived there. "I was in the restaurant business during the war but it became difficult to buy supplies. I went to work at Delco for awhile and enjoyed it.

Then there was a strike and some men said I couldn't work, so I showed them by buying a grocery and working like hell ever since."

Competition from supermarkets played a large part in Shirey's decision to build a larger store. The nearest grocery is two miles away in Chesterfield. Others are more distant in Yorktown, Middletown, Anderson and Muncie.

"Don't tell me I don't have competition. People don't think anything of jumping in their car to go shopping. I face tough competition as long as a person's car will go," Shirey said.

BESIDES the standard grocery items, the store has a delicatessen area, and small ice cream bar. "Business has doubled since the new store has opened," Shirey said.

Shirey found the know-how to build his new store, which will eventually include a self-service gasoline station on the site of the old store, by joining the Convenient Food Mart franchise system.

"We were both in search of each other," Shirey said of his joining a franchise after 30 years of independent operation. "I was looking for help in building and operating a larger store and they were looking for more locations."

In return for franchise management assistance with advertising, insurance buying, and similar group benefits, Shirey gives a certain percentage of his intake to the franchise system.

The Convenient Food Mart system is headquartered in Chicago. Shirey's store is under a group operated by Al Lane, which includes seven other stores — including four in Muncie and one in Middletown.

Shirey said the Convenient system supplied

much of the know-how to build and finance his new store, though he owns the property and building. "This group knows about the intricacies of merchandising, buying and finance," he said.

An indication of Shirey's involvement in his community is that the store was built with local labor and materials. "I wanted to use a local grocery equipment company, but Cincinnati was as close as I could get."

OLD AND NEW—John Shirey's new Convenient Food Mart can be seen behind his old store which will soon be torn down for additional parking and a self-service gasoline area. (Star Photos by John Crozier)

"I think I can keep the people of Daleville here. Convenience of items is a big thing, and people don't like to shop in a crowded store. In my old place if I had six people in it at once, it was crowded," Shirey said.

Thirty years is a long time to spend in one location but Shirey has no regrets about demolition of his old store. "I really don't attach any sentiment to old things. I'm not an antique collector."

As for the future, Shirey said he's interested in starting another Convenient Food Mart store in another small town. "I'd love to. We did a survey and found about 300 small towns in Indiana that could support a grocery store. There's nothing to stop it if you're willing to put a lot of hard work into it."