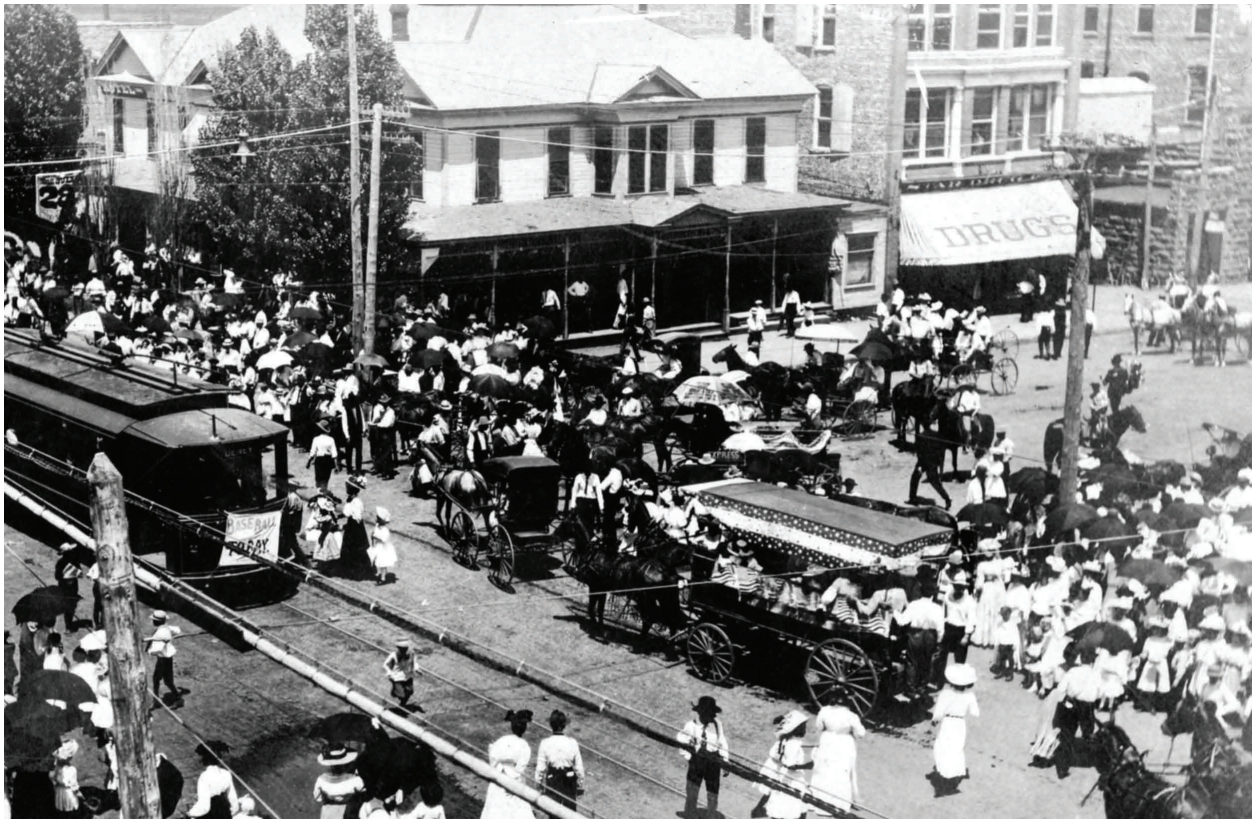


# HISTORIC DISCOVERY IN DOWNTOWN BARTLESVILLE

*As researched by Kay Little, Education Coordinator, and Debbie Neece,  
Photo Archivist at the Bartlesville Area History Museum*



Downtown Bartlesville has been a hub of activity for over a century. The entrepreneurial accomplishments of Frank Overlees and Ola Wilhite brought the National Hotel to the corner of Third and Johnstone Avenue with a gala grand opening on December 25, 1899. In December of 1900, the hotel was re-christened as the Right Way Hotel, which boasted lighting and heating by natural gas.



*Busy street scene in front of the Right Way Hotel showing the Interurban, horses, buggies and the Right Way Annex building housing the Star Drug Store on the main floor*

Albert Perkins, we are told, operated a two-table pool hall on the ground floor and Paul Newman, a barber shop. Jack Swayze was the hotel cook. Oil workers changed “towers” at midnight so one group arrived at the hotel ready to frolic, while the next shift was going to work. It is said that the Right Way never slept as it was always lively and noisy. Since oilfields were operated around the clock, often sleeping rooms were at a premium and late comers frequently paid a dollar to sleep in one of the barber chairs or on one of the pool tables.

Many oil men, like Frank Phillips, Harry Sinclair, H.V. Foster, George Getty and son, J. Paul Getty, made the hotel their headquarters and congregated to carry out much of their business activities. It was a busy, important place and accommodations were the best of its time.

City growth presented the necessity of additional guest rooms so the Right Way Hotel Annex, known as the 1904 building, was opened just



*Laying concrete walk along Right Way Hotel on north side of Third Street in 1905*

north of the hotel on July 4, 1904. This building made available seventy additional modern guest rooms for hotel patrons. On September 17, 1909, the original hotel closed, in preparation for the dismantling and relocation to just east of the YMCA. The Annex continued to serve as a hotel under the name Avameda Hotel for nearly forty years.



Shortly after the removal of the hotel, William Johnstone began construction of a three-story brick and steel reinforced structure, known as the Johnstone building. The Madansky Brothers opened The Model Clothiers on the first floor March 18, 1910. In 1921, the family Americanized their name by changing it to May and changed the name of the family business to May Brothers to coincide.



*Hyman and Hanna Madanic family  
 (Family of Mike May of May Brothers Clothing Store)  
 Standing (L-R) Harry, Max, Ben with wife Mary and Paul  
 Seated (L-R) Hyman, Sarah, Hanna holding Jake (Mike May's father)  
 At Ellis Island, the original name "Madanic" was changed to "Madansky"*



*The five May Brothers with their father, Hyman May, who immigrated from Russia  
 Front Row (L-R): Paul, Hyman M., Jacob; Back Row: Harry, Ben, Max*



*Above is The Model Clothiers and the photo below is after the name change to May Brothers Clothing—Third and Johnstone Avenue.*





Mike May closed May Brother's Clothing in 2008 to enjoy his retirement. And early on the morning of August 31, 2009 a devastating fire engulfed the historical May Brother's Building at the corner of Third Street (Frank Phillips Blvd.) and Johnstone Avenue.



As photos of the fire poured into the Bartlesville Area History Museum, employees began to make a historic discovery in the charred remains of the May Brother's building. In the early days of the Right Way Hotel,



*Historic May Brother's building after August 31, 2009 fire*

the name of the hotel was painted on the north and south sides of the Right Way Annex building also known as the 1904 Building. Since the Annex towered one floor over the hotel, this was a prime location for such an advertisement. When the three-story Johnstone/May Brother's Building was constructed, a false front adjoined the building to the Annex. After the fire, it became evident that part of the wording painted on the south side of the Right Way Hotel Annex had become visible after being covered nearly 100 years. With further research, we have discovered that the words "Right Way," although very faint, are still visible from a distance while some letters of the word "Hotel" are very visible. In a discussion with the Bartlesville Fire Department, we have discovered that there is a narrow alley between the May Brother's Building and the Annex building, behind the One Tiny Café. For nearly



*Alley way behind the false front between the 1904 Right Way Annex and the May Brother's building, which is the One Tiny Cafe*

100 years the words Right Way have been exposed to the elements and have faded to almost non existence while the word Hotel has been covered by a sandy stucco material behind the building's false front. During the fire, the stucco material crumbled, fell from the building and revealed the roots of historical days gone by.



Thank you to the Bartlesville Fire Department for their heroic efforts in saving the 100 year old landmark and to the May family for the years of history and memories. We are forever indebted!



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