Centennial Portrait and Biographical Record of the City of Dayton and of Montgomery County, Ohio
Pages 1232-1244 Thomas Gilbert to Joshua Swartzel

The children of Mr. and Mrs. Hepner married as follows: Minerva married John H. Wehrly, of Dayton, Ohio, and has one son; Sarah A. married Samuel Fasnacht, a farmer of Sumner county, Kans., and has one child; Amanda R. married Martin B. Fasnacht, a farmer of Sumner county, Kans., and has five children; Elizabeth married James L. Weaver, of Boulder county, Colo.., had three children, and is now deceased; Emma married David C. Cloppart, a farmer of Montgomery county, Ohio, and has one child; Clara married for her first husband Lucien Berk, by whom she had one child, and after the death of her first husband Mrs. Berk married William T. Ninninger, of Johnson county, Mo.; George W. married Clara Bowser, of Montgomery county, and has two children; Jacob A. married Hattie Bowser, is living on the home farm and has one child, and William A. married Bessie **Slyder**, is a farmer of Montgomery county, and has one child. The Hepner family is one of the most respected in Montgomery county, and comes from good, old pioneer stock.

**>>>

own workers whose conditions he was trying to improve. He made many improvements to the working environment and to the worker benefits (he called them welfare programs which I'll detail at a later date). The changes he made were slowly acknowledged by the business world and some years later Forbes Magazine recognized Mr. Patterson as "America's Best Employer" and NCR as one of the best places in America to work.

The Patterson property in the south of Dayton, where he built his new factory, just happened to be near one of the worst neighborhoods in the city. The homes were run down, the streets were ill kept, fences needed mending, and yards were overgrown. "**Slidertown**" was not a pleasant place to live and yet many of his employees owned or rented homes there. His business was growing and each day customers and potential customers were visiting. Business leaders, politicians, entertainers, and other well known men and women came to see his new factory. The factory itself was everything visitors had heard it was and yet the surroundings were not at all pleasing to the eye.

Mr. Patterson decided that perhaps the best thing to do was set an example for the neighborhood and the city. So what did he do? He hired a professional. Not just any landscaper but Mr. John Olmsted who had designed the landscaping for the Vanderbilt family home "The Biltmore" in North Carolina and the Roosevelt family home in New York as well as being the chief landscaping architect for the Chicago Worlds Fair. Following a landscaping plan, the lawn of the factory was seeded, shrubs were placed near the buildings, trees were planted around the grounds, the buildings were painted and decorated with flowers boxes at the doors and under windows. The factory grounds became a landscape showcase for all to see.

Now Mr. Patterson set his sights on **Slidertown**. Using the factory property as an example, he distributed pamphlets in the community offering NCR's help to the residents to improve their property. She met skepticism at first, but when he made his groundskeepers available for planting and as instructors, offered Sunday landscaping lectures on company property, offer seed, shrubs, trees and other plants to the resident at cost, slowly **Slidertown** began to improve. Over time the area became a show place community. It had its own community center, library and adult school. Property values rose to become among the best in Dayton and the neighbor became one of the most desirable places in Dayton to live. To celebrate the transformation the name was even changed from **Slidertown** to "South Park."

Remember I mentioned multiple benefits? Mr. Patterson had improved the living condition of many of his employees, he had improved the neighborhood around his factory, and his factory was now the showplace he desired in the setting he wanted. And all because he believed a commitment to the city where he chose to headquarter his business produced results which benefited the city as well as NCR. It was a win-win situation.
>>

This article appeared in the Dayton Daily News, May 7, 1933

THE MAN THEY HAD TO HANG TWICE

By Howard Burba

When a gaunt, uncurried old horse shambled along South Brown st. just eighty years ago, dragging behind him a truckster's wagon equally as dilapidated in appearance, no one gave it more than a passing glance. That is, no one except a couple of citizens who

happened to be standing on a street corner in "**Slidertown**," near the present site of the. N.C. R. They took a second look.

It may have been because there was nothing else moving around "**Slidertown**" at that early hour on the morning of August 13, 1853, or it may have been that those two citizens were above the average in the matter of curiosity. At any rate, they took a second look, and in doing so discovered that the old outfit was driverless. The horse was picking his own way along the highway still soft with the mud of recent rains.

It was the second look that started an investigation. And it led to the discovery of a double-murder, one of the most cold-blooded crimes in the history of Ohio, and one for which Francis Dick paid with his life on a scaffold in the old Montgomery co. jail. Eighty long years have passed since that execution, and it is doubtful if anyone can now be found who personally witnessed it. But for long years the mention of the Dick hanging served to recall one strange, unusual feature in connection with it. It was at the Dick hanging that the rope broke and the executioner had to go through his grim task a second time.

But let's get back to "**Slidertown**" on the morning that mangy old horse came slowly wandering down the Brown st. hill, unheeded by all save the two early risers who stood chatting on a street corner. Let's hear the news of their discovery just as Daytonians heard it in their little local newspaper of that day.

"SHOCKING EVENT—A WOMAN AND HER SON MURDERED!"

That was the heading over that important piece of news—and that was all there was in the way of a heading. But the details were there, and the gruesomeness of the recital more than supplies any deficiency to be found in the heading.

"Great excitement was occasioned this morning," reads the first published story of the affair, "by the report that the bodies of a woman and a boy terribly mangled had been found in the woods on Stoddard's farm, near the residence of J. Patterson, just beyond the corporation line. It was ascertained that the murdered persons were Mrs. Elizabeth Young, an old woman who attends market with corn meal, and her son, James, a boy of some 14 or 15 years of age. The discovery was made by a couple of citizens of **Slidertown** who saw the horse and wagon of the old woman coming along the road just after daylight.

>>>

THE REMARKABLE CAREER OF JOHN H. PATTERSON

He Makes Workers Happy and Cash Registers for the Whole World—A Simple Success Recipe

By B. C. Forbes

FACTORY WAS UNATTRACTIVE.

The acorn did not at once grow into an oak. Troubles and obstacles were met at every turn. Construction of the cash registers demanded highly skilled and scrupulously careful workmanship of a novel kind. It was difficult first to teach the workers and then to retain them as their expert services were sought by others. The factory was located in an unsavory section of Dayton called **Slidertown**—everybody and everything on the downgrade had a habit of sliding into this section. To work at "The Cash" did not bring a high social rating; in plain language, the

better class of young men and particularly young women preferred to earn a living in more respectable surroundings.
John H. Patterson was partly to blame for this unsatisfactory state of affairs. He was not then a model employer. He was neither better nor worse than other factory owners. His interest in his employees was confined to what he could get out of them. And they repaid him in kind. Poor working conditions begot a poor product.
So bad, indeed, did things become that in one year $50,000 worth of machines was thrown back on the hands of the company as faulty.

BEGINS REFORMS

The serving of the coffee had an instantaneous effect upon the output of the women. Patterson learned that kindness paid in dollars as well as in disposition. From that day on he never wavered in his determination to improve the lot of his people. One thoughtful innovation after another was introduced and a systematic effort was made to raise the quality and tone of the working force.
Better workmanship and better product brought increased business. Sales increased from a few thousands a year to several score of thousands. Larger buildings became necessary. **Slidertown** had been cleaned up somewhat under Mr. Patterson's influence, but it was still no Newport or Tuxedo. Mr. Patterson next bought up much of the property in the neighborhood and resolved to spend both money and time in revolutionizing the whole neighborhood.
Most important of all, he engaged the leading firm of architects in America to design a factory building which would be the very antithesis of the ordinary factory. He wanted it to contain every conceivable appointment conductive to the comfort and safety of the workers. He wanted, also, halls for noonday entertainment, for the holding of classes, for illustrated lessons, and lectures on the different phases of manufacturing the cash register and on salesmanship.

REFORMS BOYS.

When the glass and steel palace began to be erected Dayton shook its head. Among other things, Patterson was told that the boys of **Slidertown** would not leave one whole window overnight, that new glass would cost him more than his profit. Patterson took the boys in hand and began to transform embryonic gangsters into young gardeners and young gentlemen. The boys were given individual gardens, received instruction from a head gardener, were shown how to organize themselves into a stock company, were inspired to interest themselves in the work, received prizes and, at the end of the year, were paid dividends from products sold. The company was run entirely by the boys themselves. Also, a club was formed to send city lads to work on farms during summer vacations. This solved the window-breaking problem–and solved, also, problems of more vital importance to the boys and to society.
Patterson's "coddling" of labor was bitterly resented by other employers. They reasoned that the best type of workers would prefer to secure positions with the Cash Register Company. They also feared that labor would become discontented, not to say obstreperous. Still he went ahead, convinced he was on the right track and that one day his example would have to be followed. The more he did for the happiness of those around him the more fun he got out of it

SLIDERTOWN SPRUCES UP

Mr. Patterson's activities on behalf of his employees multiplied. **Slidertown** began to blossom. Besides the boy club gardeners, grown-ups in the neighborhood became so greatly enamored of

the beautiful that, under consistent encouragement, they began to spruce up their homes and to surround them with flowers and lawns.
Mr. Patterson also worked laboriously and against much discouragement to arouse the citizens of Dayton to make of it " The City Beautiful." He threw himself enthusiastically into reforming the administration of the city then politics-ridden, not to say corrupted. Like most reformers, he made enemies.
Nor did he wholly escape the trouble with workers which other employers had predicted. During a period of acute labor unrest throughout the country, whisperings began to be heard that a section of the Cash Register workmen were to strike. Mr. Patterson's kindness had been misinterpreted as weakness. Some of the men wanted to become masters of the establishment. They imagined they could to as they pleased, that Mr. Patterson would submit to anything. He had made one mistake in the treatment of his workers; some of the privileges, such as taking baths and attending certain of the entertainments provided, were made compulsory. This form of paternalism, naturally, was resented. Mr. Patterson, however, saw his mistake and rectified it.

>>>

Seized with an infatuation for this woman in scarlet, Adams became acquainted with the habitutes of her house. He likewise became her constant slave, accepting in return for his work about the resort a place at her table and the liquor she doled out to him when his craving for it became insistent. He lost the interest of the good men on the hill, and packing his cobbling kit, he went into â€œ**Slidertown**â€• to become one of its permanent pieces of driftwood. He had reached the depths.

To Lou Hoffman he told his life story. Born in Petersburg, Va. on April 21, 1849, of hard-working and respected parents, he had learned the trade of shoemaking. With the outbreak of the Civil War he enlisted in the Ninth Pennsylvania cavalry, and an honorable discharge revealed that he had served faithfully during the entire period of the unpleasantness. Upon being discharged he drifted to St. Louis, where he started on a life of drinking and carousing, frequent brushes of the police of that city stamping him as an undesirable citizen in any community in which he might be.

To those who frequented the saloons and red-light resorts of â€œ**Slidertown**,â€• however, Harry Adams was not rated as a dangerous man. On the other hand his weakness earned him the pity of those who saw in him all that was base and low in human form. But he did earn a reputation for sullenness and brutality, cowardice and cunning. If he ever had a standard of living above that of the slums, it had been cut from under him the moment he made the acquaintance of Lou Huffman.

On the morning of Feb. 13, 1876, Henry Mulharren, a veteran at the National Military Home applied for and received a pass entitling him to a brief vacation beyond the gates of the institution. At the same time he was handed a pension voucher for $50, and this he proceeded to cash at the Home canteen. He passed out of the Home grounds, boarded a street car for the city and a few hours later had made his way to â€œ**Slidertown**."

>>

An exact copy of Ohmer's diary, written in 1901, in which he describes Dayton as it was in 1840

A BOY'S IMPRESSION OF DAYTON 64 YEARS AGO.

The Negro Settlement was along Seeley's Ditch about that time. One night it was reported that they held a white woman there against her will. A lot of men went to take her away with the result that a white man, McLarey, was stabbed to death, the following night the Negro town was reduced to ashes, the murderer was captured and sent to the Pen for life. It was a pitiful sight the morning of the fire to see the Negroes carrying their belongings. The men and women had bundles and the children had chickens. They left the country. For a while negroes were scarce in Dayton.

The **Slidertown** boys and the Dayton boys were not friendly. I saw more than one with a black eye the result of their fights at night.

There was a little settlement South of Seeley's ditch that was called **Slidertown**. The boys living there would attack the Dayton boys when they crossed the line and vice versa when they showed in Dayton. Occasionally boys with black eyes were seen on the streets caused by their fighting.
>>>

At that time the shop was in the Callahan Power Bldg just in the rear of the present Third National bldg and they were using just 13 men its production. They increased it to 40 men and that was all the space they could get there. They decided to build their own factory building upon ground that they owned south of the City, but it was necessary to go through **Slidertown** to get to it.
It was common report that it was not safe for people to go through that part of town in daylight and was worse at night, but as they owned the ground they went ahead with their plan. The new factory was of brick, two stories high, 240 feet along Stewart street and 50 feet deep, with many large windows, and it was a fine factory building. He was ridiculed for building such a large building, and in such a bad location and all his employees would be afraid to come through **Slidertown**, so he would not be able to get the people necessary to make the factory a success. They had hardly moved in before they began to feel the effect of **Slidertown**, for windows were broken, grass dug up and shrubbery and flowers destroyed. Mr Patterson hired Miss Harvey to work with the boys, providing her with a house to teach them drawing, wood carving, and clay modeling free, and Miss Harvey changed those boys from enemies to warm friends of the NC R. In the summer, he gave each boy a plot of ground, furnishing him with tools, seeds and other things needed, and all the boys raised was his own, to use as he wished. Both of these things were published all over the U.S. more to ridicule J. H. than anything else, but it was advertising the N C. R. just the same. He was considered a crazy man by many, but he has changed that end of town from a rough place to a beautiful part of the city and is well named South Park.
>>>

ABBOTT, JOHN, farmer, **Slidertown**.

Slidertown was in reality a suburb of Dayton at the time the directory was issued in 1850. It was a settlement lying just north of the original N. C. R. building, and north of what is now Stewart st. The final name in the listing is that of John Zigler, molder, whose address is given as â€œSecond bet. Main and Seares.â€•