

**“Between the  
Churches”  
A Stroll Down  
West Broadway  
Walking Tour**

with pictures, commentary  
& removable map

Provided by the  
Plainview Area History Center

# **Between the Churches- A Stroll Down West Broadway Walking Tour**

Few streets have seen more changes than Broadway. In its 140 plus years of history it has gone from a modest roadway to busy Minnesota Highway 247 with truck, car, and bus travel from nearly everywhere! Wouldn't the early settlers be surprised?

But don't let all the traffic keep you from taking an interesting stroll along its pathway. You'll find this walking tour full of interesting and unusual stories about places long vanished and those that have held fast throughout the many changes.

So tighten your laces, wiggle your toes, and get strollin' between the churches down West Broadway!

## **1. Community Presbyterian Church- 505** (Originally the Congregational Church)

Starting beside the street originally named "Church Street" by the founding fathers is this 1871 Gothic styled structure. Covered in board and batten siding, its round arch windows and delightful circular brackets speak of times long past.

The original tower stood over 90 feet tall but was set afire by burning embers from the school blaze in 1924. Only through the valiant efforts of three firemen who climbed inside the steeple to extinguish the flames (city water pressure was too weak to reach the fire) was the



church saved!

The building remained spire less until 1937-38 when the tower was lowered, steeple replaced, and the side wing added. Over the years, the original applied stain glass was replaced with leaded stain glass.

The original cost of \$7,000 included nine horse barns at the rear of the property for the accommodation of country members who traveled to worship by horse and needed shelter for their animals while they attended services. The front entrance has been added.

## 2. Church of Christ- Vanished-

One of Broadway's buildings that disappeared is the former Church of Christ building that once sat "kitty corner" across Church Street. The brick veneer structure was built in 1895 by its members, taking several years to

complete. The corner steeple dominated the building along with the large front gable roof line, accented with a beautiful center stained glass window.

To the right was Plainview's first school built in 1860 and later sold to the church as a house of worship. Eventually it was outfitted as a home with a second story added.

The church was torn down by volunteer labor in 1963 and a new one constructed by the membership in East Plainview. The original school building was destroyed by fire in 1996.



### 3. Plainview Community School- 500

Many buildings have come and gone on this site, but the location for Plainview's school has remained the same. That's because of the generous gift of this land to

the city by early settler James J. Butts.

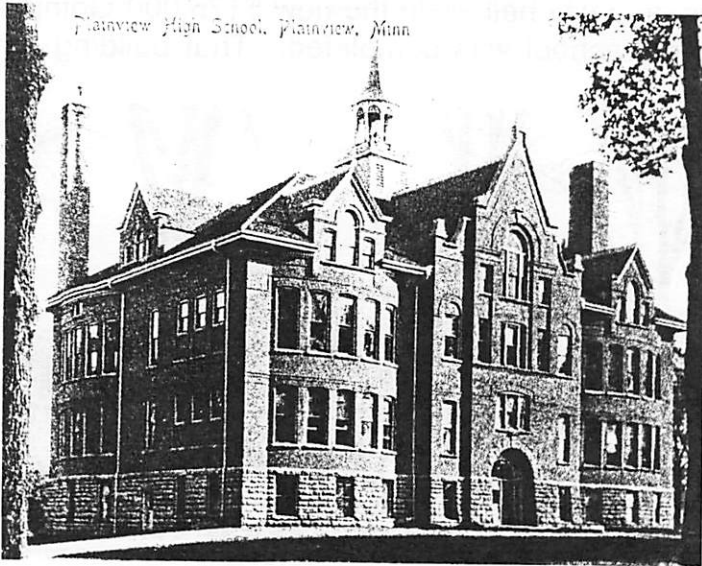
A small building built in 1860 was the first schoolhouse to occupy the site and was later sold to the Church of Christ. A center of many heated Civil War meetings determining soldier quotas, it quickly became too small for the number of students.



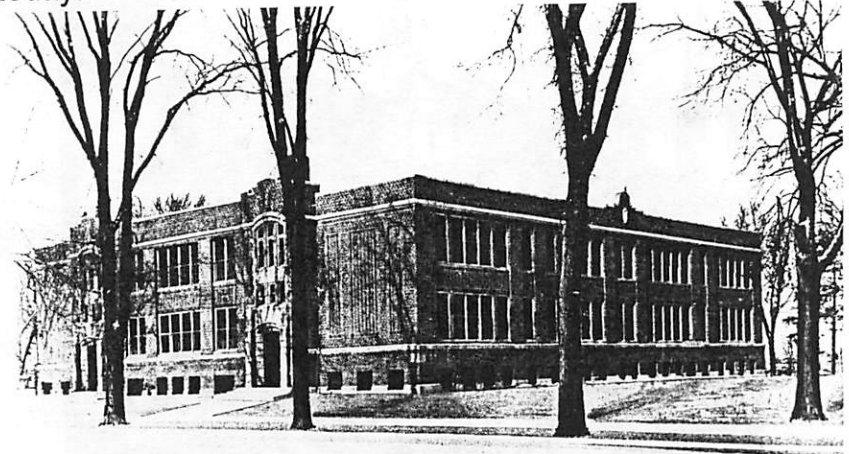
A large Italian style two story school was constructed in 1867 at a cost of \$16,000 . It provided the city with a large meeting hall on the second floor and when finished, it could be seen for miles sitting in the middle of the treeless prairie, a monument to the thriving community. But soon it was outgrown and constant repair forced the community to seek a better facility.

Construction started in 1903 directly behind the existing school of a large \$36,000 brick building. When completed everything was simply transferred into the new building and the old one torn down. Even the original

school bell, secured by city founder Ozias Wilcox from a Mississippi River boat, made its short journey. During the entire construction and razing process, every student had a front row seat!



On February 12, 1924 tragedy struck when a fire of unknown origin completely destroyed the school building. Only a single hand bell survived the fire. For nearly a year classes were held in churches, rooms above several stores, and city hall while the new \$175,000 Gothic styled fire proof school was completed. That building remains today.



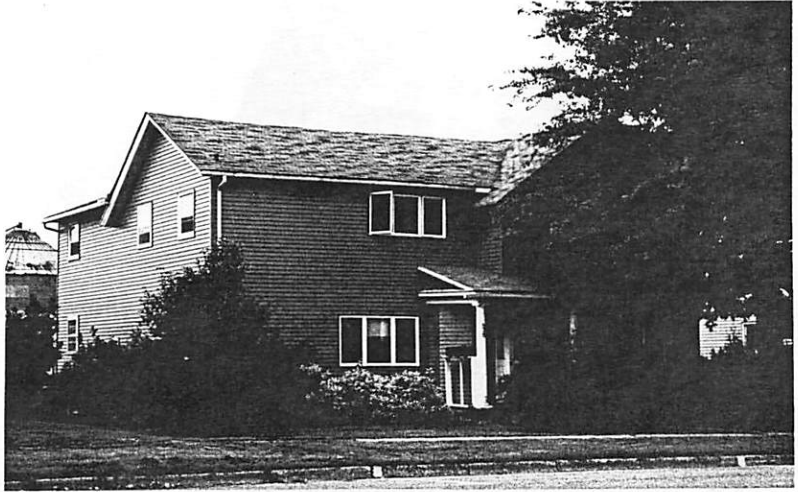
Additions followed in 1957, 1971, and 1994 until today the school stretches over three blocks. Wouldn't James. J. Butts be surprised to see what he started back in 1860!

#### **4. E. R. Cornwell House-535**

Take a quick glance at this building despite the fact it has lost most of its original character. A hint of earlier times is still evident with its partial porch.

Home of civil war veteran E. R. Cornwell, this man also built a large brick hardware store on Broadway in 1901 (Now the Greenwood Agency) and spent many

hours sitting around the store swapping war stories with his comrades!



It was a large home in its prime, situated across from the school in the center of community activities. Today it has been enlarged and made into several apartments, but if it could talk, it could tell us stories of everything that went on in the community! It had a front row seat!

As we cross 6th street (originally named Liberty Street) look to your right and notice the large gymnasium. It sits right on top of Liberty Street! In 1955-56 when the school addition was built, the street was closed and several homes moved or demolished to make way. So not only did buildings disappear along West Broadway over the years, but so did a street! Now that's something!



## 5. Dr. John P. Waste House- Moved-



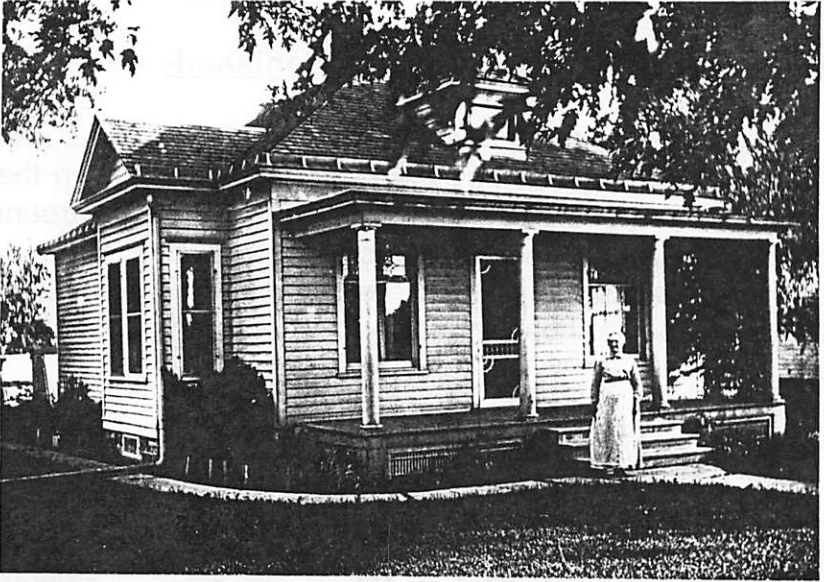
Dr. Waste came to Plainview after serving in the Civil War as assistant surgeon to the 193rd Ohio Infantry. He wrote back East to his girlfriend fearing she wouldn't like Plainview because there were no trees, but she came West and married him anyway!

An active man, Waste served as a state senator in 1871, on the board of education for many years, and in 1898 was appointed postmaster, a position he filled for eight years prior to his death.

His home, built in 1892, was a modest Queen Anne style house with corner porch and spindled railing featuring wrap around ornamentation along the posts. The front sports a square bay window and the gable ends are modestly covered with fish scale shingles.

The house was moved and today stands next to Eastwood Park almost unrecognizable from its original days on Broadway.

## 6. Mrs. J. P. Waste Cottage- 605



This 1908 colonial styled cottage was built by Mrs. Waste after her husband's death. Located across the street from her old home, its size was more appropriate for her needs. The square side bay window and small porch with round column posts and the single front dormer speaks of compactness and easy to care for living. Notice the screen door and the original wood eaves on the picture!

Today the porch is enclosed, but the unique size remains. And I think Mrs. Waste would be pleased at the tree in her front yard!

As we cross 7th street (originally named Lincoln) we leave the original city limits of the town. To the right is Thompson's Addition, named after one of the city's founders. To your left, behind the school and row of

houses, is the Butts' addition, named after James J. Butts, the man who donated the land for the school.

## 7. George Sylvester House- Vanished-

Built in 1900, this large impressive Queen Anne/Colonial styled house was the only one in town that could boast a two story circular turret! The wrap around porch with round column posts lead to a side entrance and a single dormer with triple lattice windows dominating the front. Several bay windows rounded out the beauty of the home.



A very musical family, the Sylvester's entertained with many programs in their large parlor filling the entire front half of the house. A banker and leader in many community affairs, Sylvester built this house for \$4,000, complete with steam heat!

The home was later a convent where many youth received religious and piano instruction. Later it was

# George Sylvester House- Vanished

Thompson's Addition

7th Street (Lincoln)

Butts' Addition

Original City Limits

Mrs. J.P. Waste Cottage- 605

6th Street (Liberty)

Dr. John P. Waste House- Moved

E.R. Cornwell House-535

Community Presbyterian Church-505  
(Originally the Congregational Church)

5th Street (Church)

Plainview Community School-500

Church of Christ- Vanished

**"Between the Churches"  
Walking Tour Map**

9th Street (Thompson)

**Carl Stephan House- 845**

**William Reifkogel House- 825**

**Thomas A. Thompson House-745**

**St. Joachim's Catholic  
Church/Rectory-900**

**A.Y. Felton/**

**George Dickman House- Vanished**

**Greenwood Creamery- Vanished**

made into apartments and was eventually torn down in the early 1990's.

One feature still remaining as it did when the Sylvesters dwelled here is the unusual "twisted" evergreen tree dominating the front yard. Enjoy the setting as you imagine what it must have been like long ago.

### **8. Thomas A. Thompson House- 745**



This home, built in 1877 on the site of an earlier house, was home to one of Plainview's original founders and who this addition was named after. Coming to this area in 1856, this farmer turned educator later became county superintendent of schools and a national lecturer for the Grange movement.

"Park Home", as he named it, original covered the

entire large block and was filled with a pleasing grove of trees planted by Thompson that also served as an unofficial city park for many early celebrations.

In 1889, Edwin Sylvester, Plainview banker, bought the property, remodeling the house several times. It was in this front lawn in 1918 that one of Plainview's largest funerals was held for their son, Byrl Sylvester, World War I hero. Several thousand mourners gathered in this yard to pay respect to their beloved hero.

Also a center of musical programs and entertainments, daughter Nettie was a noted soprano soloist in many St. Paul churches after graduating from Hamline.

The house today consists of two living quarters. Enjoy the large white pines that still dot the lot planted by Thompson over 100 years ago.



**Byrl Sylvester**

## **9. Greenwood Creamery- Vanished-**

It 's hard to imagine directly across the street on the ground occupied by the cluster of homes, there once sat a creamery turning out a thousand pounds of butter a day, winning blue ribbons at the State fair, and being shipped out to several eastern cities on refrigerated railroad cars once a week!

From 1882-1894 A.Y.Felton ran this progressive creamery next to his residence (vanished). The creamery, 24 X 60, contained an office, packing room, cream and churn room, engine room, refrigerator room and ice house. A water tank, situated in the upper rafters, supplied water by gravity flow to every part of the building!

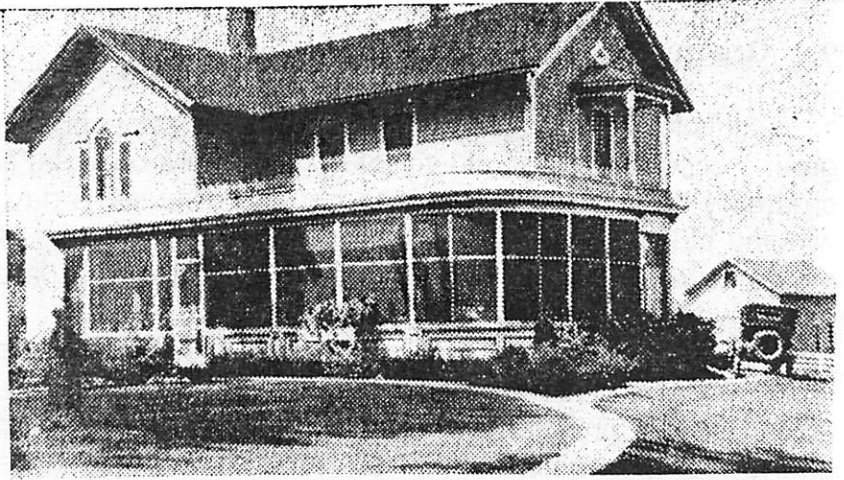
In 1896 the entire structure was destroyed by fire despite the efforts of Plainview's two fire companies. It was believed that an explosion from a stove cause by coal gas was the reason. The creamery was never rebuilt.

Take a moment to picture the one story building stretching back from the highway with its large steel wind mill tower beside it, blades rotating in the wind as it pumps water for the creamery. Can you almost see the teams of horse drawn wagons unloading their cans of cream by the side door? It must have been a busy place in its day.

## **10. A.Y. Felton House/ George Dickman House- Vanished-**

In this beautiful tree covered lot there once stood a lovely home built in the favorite L shaped Victorian style. With a side bay and ornate porch, it was home to Mr. Felton, successful business man and community leader.





George Dickman, Felton's successor, operated a mens clothing store from 1901-1940 (Rebekah's) and had the distinct honor of being robbed by a Chicago gang headquartered in St. Paul (Dapper Dan, Dago Louie & Goldie no less!) with over 500 suits stolen valued at \$20,000! An interesting court trial ensued and the gang apprehended.

Later years, Dickman sold insurance and real estate. He and his Wife celebrated their 74th wedding anniversary. The house was bought by the church and torn down sometime after 1964.

### **11. William Reifkogel House-825**

When Plainview harness maker built this home in 1902, he spent his \$3,500 wisely. The large impressive house has elements of the colonial style with the oval cameo window framed in the front gable end while the side gable sports a crescent window. The two bays reaching two stories in height are separated by the wrap

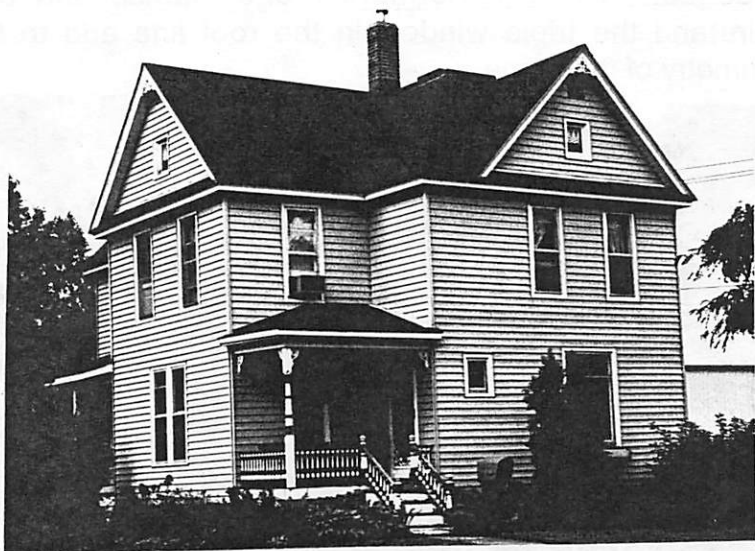
around porch with railing and columns. Today it is screened. The two dormers ( one lattice and one plain!)and the triple window in the roof line add to the symmetry of the home.



The automobile still a few years into the future, Reifkogel had plenty of business for his harness shop. It would be many years before he felt the effect of the newfangled "horseless carriage" on his business.

The Reifkogel family employed a rather unusual method of advertising their business. For nearly 75 years a life sized "dappled gray" wooden horse was positioned in the front window of their business on Broadway displaying the newest and latest "horse wares". Referred to as the "famous" Reifkogel horse, after the business closed, it was sold to the Oaks Supper Club of Minnesota City where it was later destroyed in fire.

## 12. Carl Stephan House-845



Built in 1902 by German immigrant Carl Stephan, the retired farmer was much esteemed by his neighbors. Afflicted with deafness at an early age, Stephan was always a patriotic man. Coming to the US at age 14, years later when the Civil War broke out, he tried enlisting but was denied because of his deafness! Depending on his wife for hearing, he was denied the joys of social life but loved to entertain neighbors and friends in his home.

The house is a pleasing, well proportioned home with open front and side porches and gable ends, each decorated with a simple square window. The front has a large window on the first floor with stain glass transom above. Although some of the detailing is not original to the house, the flavor of an earlier time is recaptured in this setting.

### 13. St. Joachim's Catholic Church/Rectory-900



The first Catholic Church was built in 1887 under the leadership of Father Murray. A wooden framed structure built in a Gothic style, it served the Parrish until 1911 when the need for a larger sanctuary was realized.

The new church was constructed beside the existing one and after completion, the old church was moved across the street where it served as a parochial school for 2 1/2 years. Purchased by the Greenwood Prairie Farmers Club, it was moved four miles east of town by cutting the building into three sections and hauling it by horses. There it was reassembled and became a community center for meetings, entertainments, and dances. When the club disbanded in the early 1950's, the building was sold and torn down.

The beautiful brick church standing today was designed by architect W.F. Keefe of St. Paul and built by

Martin Heffron of Rochester for under \$25,000. Father Lavery was priest during its construction. The piers, arches and buttresses along the side walls reflect the Gothic style in which it was built. Twin towers rising 80 and 110 feet in height add to the grand and imposing structure. The two immense rose windows dominating the side gables, as well as the rest of the stain glass, were made in Minneapolis. White stone detailing contrasts the red brick adding the final touch of a pleasing mixture of details.



Over the years, several additions have been built and most recently the narthex was added. Take time to walk around and admire this fine church building.

The rectory, built in 1918, is a massive home built in a modified American four square with a distinct Mission influence. The enclosed porch, extending across the front, wraps around one side and the three dormer windows in

the attic, hugging closely to the roof line, are the main details on this no-nonsense stuccoed building. A two store three windowed bay modestly breaks up the squareness on one side. It is an interesting contrast in style to the Gothic church next door.

With these two structures, the walking tour ends. We hope you have been filled with some new and enjoyable sights and stories along the way. As you return down West Broadway and remember each story- the creamery that is no more, the funerals, musical families, the tale of a deaf man, and even a street that vanished! - we believe this stroll between the churches has revealed a taste of Plainview's history that is truly unique and worth remembering.

Thank you for taking the "Between the Churches" walking tour. There were many homes along the way omitted from narration we hope you enjoyed as well. West Broadway truly played a unique roll in the history of our community.

We welcome your visit to the Plainview Area History Center and ask you to consider becoming a member of the organization to support projects such as these.

Ask us about other activities and places of interest in the area. We want to make your time in our community rewarding and interesting.

The Plainview area History Center

## **Mission Statement**

**The Plainview Area History Center**, an affiliate of the Rural America Arts Partnership, is committed to telling the stories and preserving the history of people and events of the Plainview area, believing an understanding of the past will enrich our present and future.

## **Membership**

Individual- \$12/year

Family- \$24/year

