



MARKTOWN UPDATE

A publication of the Marktown Preservation Society

February 2005

A NEW MAYOR AND A NEW VISION FOR EAST CHICAGO!

January 2, 2005 marked a new beginning for this one-hundred-twelve year old municipality known as East Chicago, Indiana. While the actual oath of office was administered by Attorney Carmen Fernandez in the Council Chambers at City Hall the very morning after the December 28th Special Mayoral Election, it didn't seem proper not to do it right, not to invite the public and let all see and hear about the new vision, the new direction for this great old city.

Sunday, January 2nd 2005 the East Chicago Central High School Auditorium filled and overflowed into the main hall for the people's inauguration of yes, the people's new mayor of East Chicago: Mayor George Pabey. It was a sight that had not been seen in East Chicago in at least two decades. The doors opened at 1:30 PM and within minutes, residents of this great city began filling the auditorium. Mayor and Mrs. Pabey arrived a few moments later and for the next hour and a half, George Pabey, nay Mayor Pabey personally stood in the hall and greeted every person who came through the door.

The list of dignitaries who attended would fill a page itself. From Jacqueline, the wife of Rev. Jesse Jackson who drove in from Chicago to personally extend their congratulations, to Superior Court Judges and elected officials from across Lake County and all of Indiana, it was by all means a who's who of elected and appointed officials and dignitaries, all here to wish Mayor Pabey their best. But it was not the politicians that impressed me, it was the people of East Chicago who came out in mass to celebrate the return of city government to the people of this great city.

The program itself was impressive. It was a cultural mix of clergy and inspirational speakers. Alicia Rodriguez and Christine Vasquez served as the Mistress of Ceremonies. Musical presentations were made by Marktown's own Olivia Bustos. The high-

light of the event was the oath of office administered by attorney Carmen Fernandez. Mayor Pabey was accompanied by his lovely wife Hilda Pabey at his side with all of their children and grandchildren at hand. Following the oath of office Mayor Pabey had this to say:

"Thank you all for being here today. This is a truly remarkable day. I'd like to take a moment to introduce the members of my family, for without their strength, love and support, I would not be standing here today.

"As I said, this is really a remarkable day. Standing before you today, I am both proud and humble. I am proud to call East Chicago my home. And I am humbled that you have put your faith and trust in me. I won't let you down, because it is true. *Together*, we really did make history.

"My parents came here to find the American dream -- a good job, owning a nice home, living in a safe neighborhood. My parents were hard working, and they were deeply committed to family and friends. They taught me about values and those

things that are really important in life. They taught me about hard work, about being honest, about caring for my family and serving my community.

"They taught me that as a family we had an obligation to stick together, to help each other and that by working together we could accomplish great things. These are the values I was taught, and these are the values I try to live by every day.

"I am proud to look around this auditorium and see us coming together, and the rainbow of people that make up East Chicago. In our city we are family. Young, old, Black, White and Hispanic... this is our family and we will accomplish great things *together*. Our diversity is our strength and *together* we will make East Chicago a great place to live, work and to raise our families. We will work *together* to



make life better and safer for our senior citizens. And we will work *together* to improve education and bring good jobs to our city so that our children will have hope and opportunity for a bright and successful future.

"*Together* we will improve our schools.

"*Together* we will rid our neighborhoods of crime, drugs and gangs.

"*Together* we will bring new businesses and good paying jobs into our city.

"*Together* we will work to lower the property taxes, maintain free bus service, and bring back stores and business to our city.

"The election is over. Now it is time to govern and there is so much to do.

"As we begin to unravel the years of secrecy, back room deals, and corruption that have plagued our city, there is no telling what we will find. And there is no telling how bad our city's financial situation is. But we know it is not good. We will have to make hard decisions and tough choices to turn our city around, and we will make those decisions *together*.

"During the next 100 days I will be working hard to create a new beginning for our city, and while there are many things we will be doing, here are some of my top priorities:

"1. We will hire an independent financial auditor to review the city's revenue and expenses. We will open the books and shine the light on the casino money to see where it has been going and how it has been spent.

"2. I will appoint a Citizens' Budget Committee to work with the independent auditor so that taxpayers will have a direct view of our financial condition.

"3. I will cancel all unnecessary and over-priced contracts with consultants, lawyers and contractors. I know this will save us enormous amounts of money. In terms of the City work force I will be asking Department Heads to accept lower salaries, and I am going to immediately put an end to the '2% Club' where City workers have been pushed into contributing 2% of their salary to the Mayor's reelection fund.

"I pledge to sweep politics out of City Hall and this is a giant first step. Our work force will be judged by the quality of the work they do, not by their

political contributions and connections.

"In addition to these agenda items, I will be working to increase personal contact with each and every resident to truly open up City Hall so that it serves all of the residents of this great city.

"4. I will put all my energies into finding ways to reduce property taxes by tightening our belts, eliminating waste, and doing things right.

"5. I will personally work to reorganize our police department to make sure we have more officers on the street.

"And of course I will be working to put together a new administration that can work together to improve the quality of services, and who can understand that in the NEW East Chicago we put the residents first and not ourselves.

"One Saturday every month I will have open office hours from 9 AM to 5 PM. You won't have to make an appointment to see me, just come down to City Hall.

"We will be scheduling Town Hall Meetings in each Council District so that myself and your Council member can hear your issues and concerns and work *together* to solve problems and be responsive to your needs.

"There are many things we need to do to turn East Chicago around. We will do it because we will all work *together*.

**For our children,
for our seniors,
for our families...
we must do all we can to make
East Chicago
the
City of our Dreams.
I thank you and God bless you all!"**

There is a new Mayor in East Chicago and with him comes a new vision and a new spirit of hope among the people of this city. It is time for everyone to put their differences aside and work **together** for a better, cleaner and safer place to live, work and to raise our families. If the same changes are ever to be made in the Marktown Historic District, then this is the time. We too must put our differences aside and work **together** for the betterment of all.

Paul A. Myers, Editor

With TEAMWORK all things are possible. Let's all work TOGETHER to make Marktown and all of East Chicago a better, cleaner and safer place to live, work and to raise our families!



By Gene Mustain and Doreen Weisenhaus

Chicago Sun-Times / August 31, 1980 - reprinted with permission



MARKTOWN

This Community of Contradictions Lives and Dies A Little Each Day

Marktown was photographed by Sun-Times staffer Anthony Suau, who spent more than a year gathering the sensitive and powerful photos that accompany the story.

A few miles down the road from Chicago, along the southern shore of Lake Michigan, in the smelly, dirty great industrial empires, history lives and dies a little each day.

Welcome to Marktown, born in 1917, the child of Big Steel. It is one of the last company towns, the by-product of a bygone era, a half-finished dream town, a community of contradictions set against a tide of declining prosperity.

Marktown is in a corner

of East Chicago, Ind., which no one cares to visit unless they have to. No signs point the way. Gas station attendants have never heard of it. But it's there, in one of the most environmentally hostile settings for any community anywhere. It's surrounded by steel mills and oil refineries whose ovens and towers dispense odors, gases and particulate matter twice as high as the national air-quality standard.

Its current residents are a mixed lot of 650 people, mostly steelworkers and their families, who say they live there either because they always have, or because the price is right. Some hope to profit from their unique historical heritage and tame the harsh

forces at work within and outside their borders. Others seem oblivious and full of despair or resignation.

Marktown was conceived in 1917 by a paternalistic tycoon, Clayton Mark, and an architect, Howard Van Doren Shaw, whose credentials included Market Square in Lake Forest. Mark and Shaw wanted to create, next to Mark Manufacturing's new steel-making plant, a self-contained community for 8,000 people who would have access to everything they needed --- sturdy homes, shops, schools, parks, hotels, restaurants and community centers. Everything would have converged on a central square.

Shaw's efforts in Mark-

town were recognized by the federal government in 1974 when it listed Marktown as one of its national historic districts. Marktown's houses were spaced with great care. The windows of each home look out on the garden of the neighboring house. The houses are two stories high and finished in stucco and complementing tones. Most interior streets are only 16 feet wide. In the middle of Marktown, the effect is cozy, European-charming.

But the dream town was never finished. Only about 40 of the 190 swampy acres of marshland set aside for the project were ever used. About 210 homes and one 40-room hotel were built, along with a smattering of



Above: Every neighborhood has them. He is one of the Marktown's tough kids.

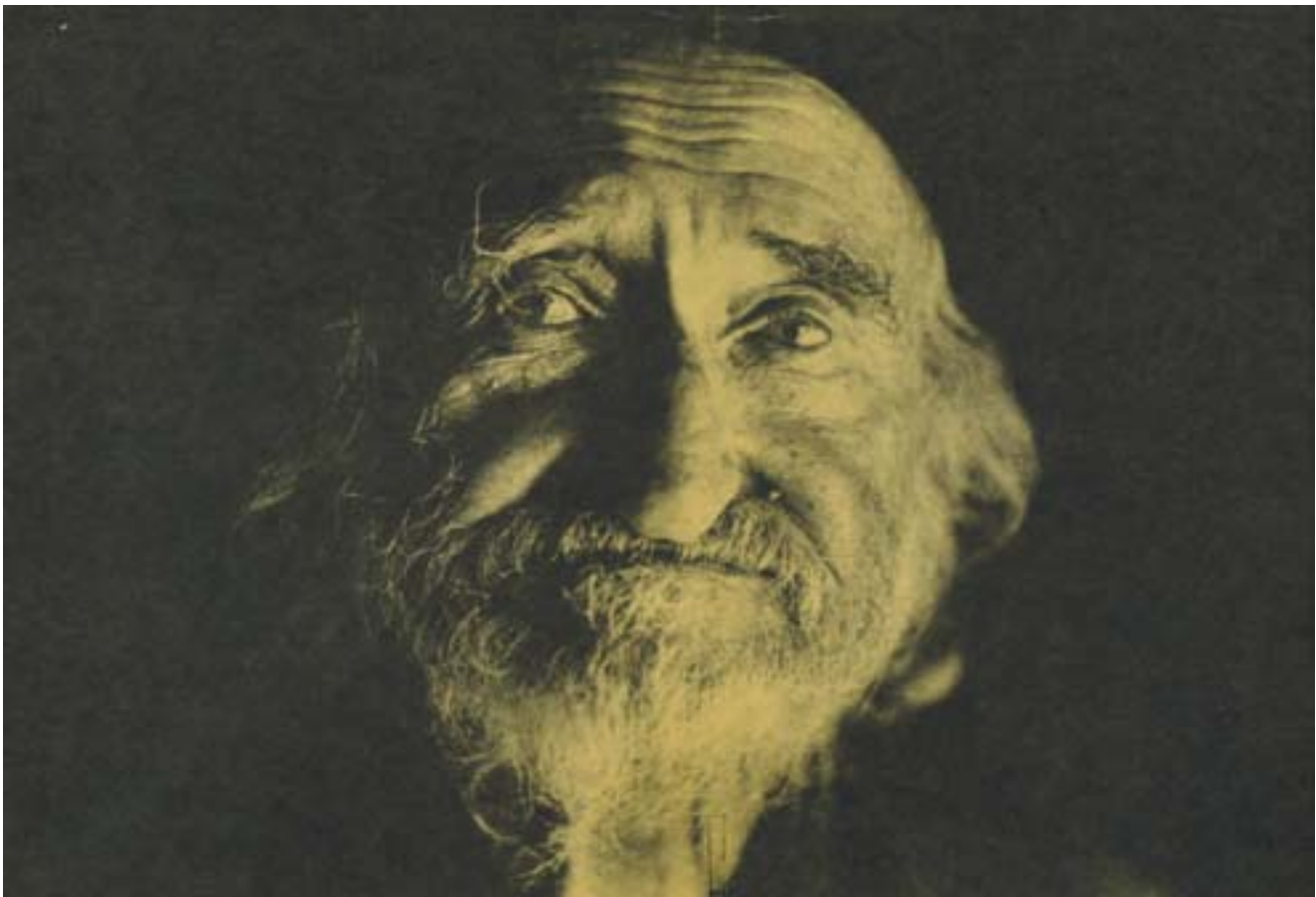
Above center: Beth Micheals lives in the Mark Hotel when she's not hospitalized.

Right: J&L plant is just a few feet away from Marktown's homes.

Bottom Center: George MacBeth, a former steelworker, just got tired of living, his friends said, and starved himself to death.



Photographer Anthony Suau went onto become a world renowned photographer. His work for the Sun-Times and in Marktown helped to develop his talents behind the camera and in the dark room.



shops and community centers - since-abandoned. Eventually, the remaining land was used by Mark Manufacturing's successors for expansion or sold to other enterprises for equally heavy industrial development. Instead of a self-contained community, Marktown became an isolated community, more an encampment than a neighborhood. On the south end, Marktown's park abuts a huge tin mill owned by Jones & Laughlin Steel. To the west, a softball diamond is the only thing separating Marktown from an Amoco oil refinery, whose giant towers flare off gasses



which at night give the field a spooky orange glow. Marktown's one bar-and-grill faces north, toward a spidery tangle of transmission lines belonging to an electric utility. Another J&L plant dominated the eastern horizon.

All day long, trains, trucks and cars carrying thousands of workers move in and out of the



Top: Part of its charm used to be the narrow streets and European-styled homes. Center: "Angel Dust" obscures Marktown. Left: A Friday night at the local tavern.

area, depositing their cargoes and adding to the noise, the pollution, the congestion, the contradictions of living in Marktown.

There was a simpler time. A time when everybody in the community got along because everybody was the same. The residents were all of supervisory rank. You had to have clout to get in. For \$16 to \$19 a month in rent, the company provided all the upkeep, fixed the faucets and cut the grass. "I begged to move to Marktown," remembers Mrs. Julia Scott, who did 46 year ago. "Nobody trespassed then. There were no fences. We didn't lock our doors when we went on vacation." Today, it doesn't take any clout. "There's always homes for sale here," says Jean Nikruto, a community leader and mother of three. "No one's breaking down doors to get in."

Youngstown Steel, the first successor to Mark Manufacturing, decided to get out of the residential property business in the late '30s, and the homes were sold for about \$2,000 or \$3,000 each. Marktown's prosperity remained intact, abetted by the second world war, which produced bigger paychecks and united workers and neighbors.

There was a new untested reality to contend with, however: The mill still provided, but not longer protected. Marktown was on its own.

Marktown's single hotel -- which provided inexpensive rooms and hearty meals -- was a lively place in that era, a symbol of the community's vitality and harmony. The mills needed temporary housing for workers imported from other parts of the country to build tanks. There was so much work that prisoners were given jobs at Youngstown and rooms at the hotel. In one month in 1943, the hotel restaurant served nearly 80,000 people. The hotel hosted dances and political meetings and, as the boys came home, boisterous victory celebrations. Today, Mark's Hotel is a condemned building,

the result of years of neglect and, three years ago, a fire which left all but one section uninhabitable. Recently, a man who had been living there, clinging to the past decided he had lived long enough and stopped eating. Within a few day, George MacBeth's wish came true.

In the good old days, there was a grocery store, a drug store and a barber shop: it wasn't Market Square, but it was something. Especially when you threw in the Garage Bar & Grill, where you could buy half-pints and work gloves, and the Mill Gate Inn across the street, a friendly chili-and-beer place with X-rated magazines behind the counter. Gradually, except for the Garage and the Mill Gate all left. Old-timers blame it on Marktown residents not patronizing local merchants. More likely, after the war, there just wasn't enough business.

After the stores left, some of the people began to leave. Some were newly prosperous and could afford places farther from the memory of the mills. Delores Wheeler, who has lived there for 18 years, who still works at the No. 2 Tin Mill of J&L, understands what happened. "There's people at work who say they wouldn't live here because they wouldn't want to look out their window and see the place where they work. I can sympathize with that: sometimes I get sick of it myself. But the gas (transportation to work) is cheap."

In the '60s when the hazards of pollution became widely publicized, the pace of change accelerated. A lot of former home owners were replaced by renters, a trend that continues now (40 percent and rising).

The old-timers complain about the newer residents' failure to involve themselves, or at least keep up their property. "It's not that it's wrong for them to live here" says Jean Nikruto. "But this change happened too quickly. These people have no commitment to the community."

But the atmosphere has changed, ac-

ording to many others. A longtime resident says, "It used to be a real family neighborhood. But now everyone has kind of built their own fortress. There used to be no fences and the children ran about the streets and we all watched over each other's kids. The homes are slowly deteriorating and the people renting are doing most of the damage."

People say the isolation is responsible for increasing vandalism and theft among the young. Several Marktown youngsters openly boasted to a Sun-Times photographer about breaking into their neighbors' homes and into cars of steelworkers. They even showed the photographer stolen property.

"We go into the parking lots and we get what we can from the cars, but it's getting hard because the security is cracking down," one delinquent says. "We do it because we're board." Aside from the park, where there is no organized activity, there isn't much for young people to do in Marktown. Parents worry about them going into the Garage Bar & Grill to buy soda and candy because there was a fatal shoot-out during a robbery there last year.

The process of change, which has made neighborhood harmony difficult, upsets residents more than the pollution. Everyone likes to cite the example of Beulah Burns, who was 103 years old when she move out. "It didn't seem to shorten her life any." Julia Scott says.

Beulah lived through days on which millions of tiny silver particles floated and blinked ominously in the afternoon light. The residents call the particles angel dust, but most consider them more a nuisance than a hazard. "My husband has worked at the mill 30 years and he says it doesn't matter," says Ruth Plesha, manager of the Mill Gate. "He breathes it all day long anyway."

Remnants of company-town loyalty still exist, despite the pollution. Nikruto

and Wheeler, for example, believe if the mills had to spend more money on antipollution programs, layoffs would result. "There're two ways of looking at it," Wheeler says. "It's pretty bad, but as long as you have pollution, there's jobs." She says the mills care about the employees and cites as an example the fact that her company allows her to use the Xerox machine to copy women's club notices.

When some of those who care decided recently to reactivate the Marktown Civic Association, they notified everyone in town of the meeting. Twenty-eight came, but the new association picked up only 11 paid members. One of them, who also is the president, is Jose Cruz, a determined 24-year-old bank worker of Puerto Rican heritage. He says he is proof that it isn't racism, but concern over property values, that causes resentment among old-timers.

Cruz invested \$30,000 two years ago in one of the brick homes subsequently added to Shaw's original design. He wasn't aware of problems then, but they became apparent soon enough. And they were not limited to community apathy and pollution. One day he found two punks in his garage, preparing to disassemble his car. Another time, clad only in socks and long johns in the dead of winter, he chased a would-be car thief off his neighbor's property.

"I'm trying to protect my investment," he said. "You have no right to complain unless you do something about the problems. These problems have made me more determined." So far, the Civic Association has persuaded the East Chicago park district to shake loose some cash for improvements to the community center and the mayor to think about rerouting a planned highway extension to cut down on truck traffic and congestion.

Recently, a Champaign, Ill., firm was given a \$12,000 grant to study ways of improving Marktown and taking advantage of its historic status. An-

other \$20,000 federal grant was then sought to implement some of the firm's ideas. But the grant appears doomed because of a stalemate in the state legislature over the extent of participation by the funding agency.

Some direct federal-grant programs are available to homeowners who wish to restore their property, but no one in Marktown has applied. Jose Cruz and others are sincerely hopeful of turning things around. But, as he himself says, "not enough people seem to care. Some of the older residents, they feel they've been let down too often in the past."

Betty Michaels clings to hope, too, despite a litany of woes that keep mounting. Her parents ran the Mark's Hotel in its heyday. Then she ran it, along with a couple of her exhusbands and several of her six children. As the hotel began to fade, so did her health. A victim of diabetes, she's had 22 operations. Both her legs have been amputated and recently she lost part of her sight. After each hospitalization, she has returned to her nearly burned-out hotel.

She was so determined to stay in her hotel that during the last few winters when there was no money to keep her room heated properly, she wrapped her stumps in newspapers to stay

warm. She remembers George MacBeth, the old-timer who stopped eating and died.

"He was a fine old man," Betty says, "Sweet as sugar. There aren't too many like him left around Marktown. He was a good neighbor, always helping out. It's not like that anymore. No one cares. Everyone lives for themselves."

After the last operation, Betty was taken to a convalescent home. She says she'll come back to Marktown, back to what they now call Heartbreak Hotel. "They're dumb if they think I'm not coming back. I'm coming home as soon as I can. Maybe I'll sell the hotel, or fix it up, I don't know. But it's a shame about that hotel. It used to be so nice.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This article is being reprinted as a reminder of what has transpired. While some of the conditions still remain, many of the problems detailed in the article have been resolved over the past 25 years. Solutions to all of the problems that face our neighborhood are available to all of us. First, we must learn to ALL work together. Secondly, we must define exactly what the problems are, and finally, we must work together to not only find the proper solutions, but to solve the problems once and for all!*



Moon over a Marktown townhouses.

SOMETHING OLD BECOMES SOMETHING NEW AGAIN



While cleaning out a Marktown attic about twenty-years ago, a Marktown resident came across an original brass light fixture complete with the original globes or shades. It didn't take a great deal of imagination to realize how this might look in a kitchen or upstairs hall. And so it was that the fixture was sent to the chandelier restoration studio of Dusty Trapp in Dyer, Indiana for a long overdue and well deserved make-over. The shades on the fixture are two of six which have been found in two different attics over the years, which leads us to believe that they were common to all Marktown homes, but relatively rare today. The restored fixture now serves as a kitchen fixture in a Marktown home. No, we don't recommend this for everyone - only those with the spirit of adventure and preservation in their heart.

A Picture Postcard From Marktown's & ISG's Past

The post mark is from East Chicago and is dated May 27, 1929. It was mailed with a 2¢ red U.S. postage stamp depicting the profile of George Washington and was addressed simply:

Miss Sarah McCombs
Venetia, Penna..



The card reads:

Dear Sarah, Arrived here safe and tired and going to work tomorrow. Give my best to all and will write tomorrow night.

Love Al



FREE PRINTER PAPER AT COMMUNITY CENTER

The Marktown Preservation Society is pleased to announce a free paper program to Marktown residents only. A case of 8 1/2" X 11" standard printer paper has been donated to the residents of Marktown.

Residents need only go to the Marktown Community Center and ask Ms. Judy Hicks for a ream of paper. No strings attached. One per family, adults only please. Available only while quantities last!

Canal Dredging Project and the Marktown Historic District

At the monthly meeting of the Waterway Management District in December 2004, Paul Myers spoke in reference to the fact that Marktown is located directly down wind of the proposed storage site on Indianapolis Blvd. He pointed out that they have already installed a monitoring station adjacent to Central High School to determine the outfall

and potential exposure for the residents in the 1st District. He asked that they install two monitoring stations in Marktown. One at Riley Road and Spruce Avenue and the other at Broad Street and Spruce Avenue. There is no reason why the residents of Marktown should not be afforded equal protection.



Marktown Update is a monthly publication of the Marktown Preservation Society which is dedicated to the restoration and preservation of the Marktown Historic District.

The printing is provided through the generosity of Dan McArdle.

The postage and photography is provided through a most generous grant provided by the East Chicago Community Development Foundation, Inc.

With TEAMWORK, Everything is Possible!

