

MANSFIELD MEMORIES: Three old neighborhoods: Robinsonville, Whiteville and Sodom



The "Old Cabot Shop" where Ferdinand Cabot made jewelry and coffin trimmings in the 1870s and '80s was located in the Mansfield neighborhood of Sodom. [Courtesy/Mansfield Historical Society]

By Kevin McNatt and Andrew Todesco

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In our last column we discussed well-known neighborhoods of Mansfield. But other names have faded into history. Here we feature three neighborhoods that are no longer known by their old nicknames. They are Robinsonville, Whiteville and Sodom.

Robinsonville had its origins in the mid-19th century. Taking its name from a knife factory operated by George Robinson, Robinsonville was a village of West Mansfield in the area of Williams, Pine, Jewell and Tremont streets. The factory was located **south of Robinson's Pond (as it is still known today), on Williams Street near the Wading River**. In Robinsonville there was a one-room school house and a church. **There were mills and farms to provide employment. "Robinsonville" appears on maps as early as 1871.**

Whiteville was a village of East Mansfield, in the area of Franklin and Winter streets. Simeon White established a prosperous tack and nail factory on Franklin Street near

Whiteville Pond around 1810, which was continued by his descendants until the 1860s. Whiteville also had a one-room school house at the corner of Franklin and Winter. The Whiteville name carried on commonly until the second half of the 20th century, though it is rarely heard today.

Long gone is the nickname Sodom, which is one of the oldest parts of Mansfield. **Sodom is the area of Willow Street near Cabot's Pond. Over the years there were grist mills, cotton mills and jewelry manufacturers in the area. In her book "Every Day But Sunday," Mansfield historian Jennie Copeland explained how Sodom got its biblical name in the early 19th century: "During the cotton mill days the women of this neighborhood were so quarrelsome among themselves that the locality was nicknamed "Sodom," and the name has held to this day."** (Jennie's book was published in 1936).

Before the invention of the car folks did not live the mobile lifestyle we are accustomed to today. As a result people identified more strongly with their neighborhood. But now the names Robinsonville, Whiteville and Sodom have gone the way of the dinosaurs. Today we no longer find the small factories and sprawling farms of old, but rather a 21st century lifestyle. Now those former country roads are heavily traveled and subdivisions have replaced the farms. But the next time you are passing through, give a thought to old Robinsonville, Whiteville and Sodom.

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