MONTEVALLO
# Main Street
*Memories*

## On the Corner Part 3

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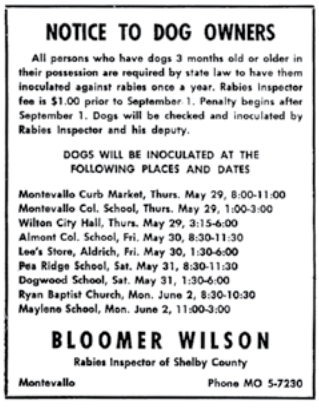
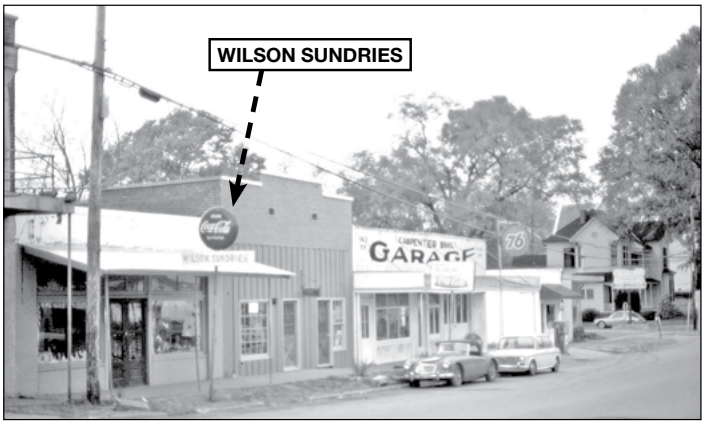
*Montevallo Historical Society*

When Dr. P . C. Wilson sold his drug store to Kyle McClure in 1954, his brother, Bloomer Wilson, his long-time assistant in running the drug store was informed by Mr. McClure that he would not be retaining him as an employee. Bloomer was the soda fountain specialist for Wilson's Drugs, so when faced with the need to find a new way of making a living, he opened Wilson Sundries in the vacant store immediately behind the McClure Drug Co. building just a few feet off Main Street on Middle Street.

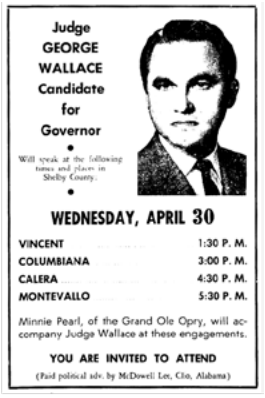
Bloomer was not a registered pharmacist, so the "sundries" he had for sale were a limited selection of "over-the-counter" medicines and toiletries. A female co-worker at Wilson's Drugs joined Bloomer in the new business and was primarily in charge of the soda fountain. Maybe it was the fact that Bloomer never turned on the lights in the store, but as long as he was in business, you almost never saw a customer come in. Apparently it didn't matter all that much to Bloomer, because he had something on the side that appeared to be enough to keep the store open and function as his professional base of operations. Bloomer somehow managed to get himself appointed as "Rabies Inspector" for Shelby County. He traveled around the county giving injections to dogs at pre-advertised locations. Owners could bring their pets to Bloomer and he would inocluate them against Rabies, according to state law.

The corner of Main and Middle Streets in downtown Montevallo has been perceived as the "center-of-town" for many years. Following World War II, the streets would be blocked off to traffic each fall so that the Montevallo High School homecoming parade could come right through town. When the parade, which always included a float carrying the Homecoming Queen and her court, got to the intersection, the Montevallo High School band would play several rousing numbers, including the school fight song, "Orange and Blue Boys." A pep rally focused on the MHS Bulldogs' football game that night would then ensue consisting of cheers led by the school's cheerleaders with participation by fellow high school students who had been let our of class early in order to attend the spirited event. The rally would conclude with inspiring remarks made from the top step of the Baptist Church by the football coach. A final musical selection by the band brought an end to the spirited festivities. The band then made a left turn, en mass, onto Middle Street and marched in step to a drum cadence all the way back to the high school three blocks away.




The sidewalk in front of Wilson's Drugs and later McClure Drug Co. was a favorite stumping spot for Alabama gubernatorial candidates in the 1950's and 1960's. When current governor "Big Jim" Folsom ran for re-election in 1954, he came to town and spoke to potential voters in front of the drug store. One of his opponents, Public Service Commission president Jack Owen from nearby Centreville, made the most memorable entrance into town during that campaign by dropping out of the sky on board a two seat "whirlybird" style helicopter.



1958

In his first run for governor in 1958, George Wallace came to Montevallo at the end of a day of campaigning from one end of Shelby County to the other. Wallace spoke from the drug store corner to a curious group of potential voters. Later in the race, Wallace's opponent and ultimate winner of the election, Attorney General John Patterson, also came to Montevallo and spoke to a good sized crowd from the same spot. Patterson presented himself throughout the campaign as a hard-core segregationist, which was key to his victory. This was a hard lesson for Wallace that prompted him to make his famous statement about future elections that he "would never be out-segged again."

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MONTEVALLO MAIN STREET MEMORIES is adapted from the series, THROWBACK THURSDAY, a **Montevallo Historical Society** and **Montevallo Main Street** partnership started in 2018. Each installment revisits commercial and residential life on Main Street and in the downtown area in the early to mid-twentieth century. The series remains available online and may be viewed at **www.historicmontevallo.org** under "Local History".