

Walking with Wright Morris

NOTE: As in many "railroad" towns the streets and avenues are sometimes confusing. The old part of town was set out "straight with the railroad" and the newer part "straight with the world." You will find in the old part the streets and avenues are alphabetically named, and in the new part of town they are numerically named. Please be mindful of the "street" or "avenue" designation as well as the odd corners when walking from "old town" to "new town."

1. Leave the Library and turn Left (north) on 15th Avenue to 16th Street. (Cross Highway 30 with Care)

2. At 16th Street, turn left (west).

* The house on the right just after turning left is the Heber Hord house. T.B. Hord's house stood across the street east. "At the turn of the century Hord was the world's largest livestock feeder with feedlots of cattle, sheep and hogs. The Hord name (sometimes Horde in Morris' writings) was found on many businesses including the largest grain company in the state, lumberyards, banks, and various other enterprises."

The clock in front of the house is dedicated to Monte Hord, a grandson to Heber, who died in the North Tower of the World Trade Center on 9-11.

3. At the west end of the block is the Lincoln Manor (renamed when the Lincoln Highway came through town.)

* Wright Morris in CEREMONY IN LONE TREE--"The door at the front, set in slantwise on the corner, with a floral design in the frosted glass, opens on the prospect of the town."

* Wright Morris in WILL'S BOY--"Once it had entered town from the east, the Lincoln Highway made a dog-leg turn at the "square," an open space where five streets converged, in order that the main street would exit parallel to the Union Pacific Railroad as it followed the curve of the Platte Valley."

4. Continue on 16th Street, (which becomes G Street) and follow Highway 30 for five blocks through downtown.

Note: At this point the streets and avenues become alphabetical and are no longer N-S-E-W and turns will be noted as "left" or "right" only.

5. Turn right at F Avenue and cross the Union Pacific tracks. Continue on F Avenue to B Street.

6. Turn right at B Street to the sidewalk through the park, and turn left to the bandshell.

* Morris writes in THE WORLD IN THE ATTIC--"This is Hibbard Park...and looked through the trees, the idle chains on the swings, to where a Civil War cannon, with a seat-polished breech, sparked in the sun." (The cannon was sacrificed to the WWII effort.)

Across A Street from the bandshell is the site of the North Ward school. Wright Morris attended North Ward which was razed after a number of years of disuse.

*From THE WORLD IN THE ATTIC--"Is that the school?... That worn building of unfaced red brick, with the paper-flower cutouts in the tall, dark windows...."

7. Turn right at A Street for one block, and then right again on D Avenue for three blocks.

8. Turn left on D Street for two blocks. The Wright Morris Boyhood Home is on the right at B Avenue. If the "OPEN" sign is out, feel free to stop in for a visit.

*From WILL'S BOY--"...the panels of colored Glass in the window make a bright pattern on the bedclothes. This window is on the B Avenue side of the house.

*From WILL'S BOY--"In this same house, in my sleepers with the 'feet,' I hurry to stand on the hot-air floor radiator while I am dressed. In the kitchen my eyes are below the level of the table where raw sugar cookies are being rolled for baking. I reach and clutch some of the dough: I love its sweet, raw taste."

9. Turn right on B Avenue for one block. At the end of the block, on your right, is the Riddlemosher House and on your left is the house with the "run-around porch."

*From WILL'S BOY--"Mr. And Mrs. Riddlemosher live in the house on the corner, facing the railroad tracks. It sits flat on the ground. In the barrel under the rain spout bugs skitter on the water and polliwogs cast shadows on the slimy bottom."

* From GOD'S COUNTRY AND MY PEOPLE--What made the house a home was the run-around porch, a screen that stuck or slammed, a wire basket of dead ferns, a swing that scuffed the paint off the clapboards, a rail to lean on when you threw up, a stoop to sit on when you watered the grass."

10. Turn left on E Street to the Merrick County Museum. (Inside is a display of the barbershop fixtures which figure prominently in many of Morris' writings. Stop for a few minutes and look at the "inspirations." If the museum is open, you are welcome to enter. Otherwise, the museum is generally open from 2 to 4 on Sunday afternoons.

* From THE HOME PLACE--"Nearly fifty years ago Cahow's shop was a bank, with a lobby at the front where he put his barber chairs, and in the back, behind the grillwork, there was a safety vault."

11. Continue on E Street to 17th Avenue (Highway 14). CROSS HIGHWAY 14 HERE. The Union Pacific depot stood a block to the right on the south side of the tracks. Morris' father was a depot agent here.

* The Hord elevator stood just south of the tracks. From CEREMONY IN LONE TREE--"Beyond the grain elevator is the railroad station, the iron wheels of the baggage truck sunk in the gravel, an OUT OF ORDER sign pasted on the face of the penny scales in the lobby.

12. Cross Highway 30 with care and continue along 17th Avenue to 18th Street.

13. Turn left (east) on 18th Street for one block.

* At the courthouse is a Veterans' Memorial.

* The courthouse is also where Dr. H.E. Glatfelter's work resulted in "the first meeting held in the United States to ratify the proclamation of the Lincoln Highway...on October 13, 1913."

* The Patterson Law Office on the north side of the street is on the National Register of Historic Places and is the archives of the Lone Tree Literary Society--the Wright Morris preservationists. (Open)

14. Continue on 18th Street to 15th Avenue. Turn left on 15th Avenue and return to the Library.

The Lone Tree Literary Society thanks you for your interest in Central City's native son, Wright Morris.