

The Renoda Hoffman Clock

By Elaine Massena

Many in White Plains know Renoda Hoffman as our city historian, a post which she has held for over 30 years. Perhaps not so well known is her involvement with the White Plains Beautification Foundation. In 1991, the foundation surprised her by donating a clock to the city in her honor.

Standing at the corner of Main Street and North Broadway, in Tibbits Park, the 13' 9" cast-iron clock is accompanied by a bronze plaque that pays homage to Hoffman and also recognizes the 25th anniversary of the Beautification Foundation.

The Victorian-inspired design of the clock was popular in America beginning about 1880. In fact, a very similar clock once stood on Main Street near Grove, in front of the earlier Home Savings Bank building. According to Jim Verdin, president of the Verdin Company of Cincinnati who made the "Hoffman clock," the popularity of two-faced clocks faded during the 20th century until the 1976 bicentennial, when business again was booming for the 150-year old Verdin company. They produce about 100 clocks a year. Reportedly, the cost of the clock was close to \$20,000.

Hoffman likes to tell the story of how surprised she was when she unveiled the clock and saw the plaque with her name on it. She had been asked to be on the committee to help choose the clock with other foundation members, and was in on all the planning—except that she didn't know that the clock would forever bear her name.

Barbara Vrooman, president of the Beautification Foundation at the time said: "We wanted to mark our 25th anniversary with a very special gift of



Credit: Elaine Massena



Top: Clock dedicated in 1991 to City Historian Renoda Hoffman (left).

Photo Credit Elaine Massena

Bottom: Victorian clock which once stood on Main St. near Grove. (From "Yesterday in White Plains" by Renoda Hoffman)

lasting quality—something that would be useful and decorative. It will signal good times for White Plains." And so it has. Countless passers-by enjoy the beauty of the Hoffman clock every day and in every season. It is just as lovely covered with snow as when surrounded by cherry trees in bloom. Many thanks to the Beautification Foundation for their gift to us all, and to Renoda Hoffman for just being who she is.