

Grant's Drug Store In Hannibal, Missouri



VIRTUAL TOUR BY CULLEN BURLING, AGE 13

Grant's Drug Store, also known as the Pilaster House, is currently located next to John Marshall Clemens' Justice of the Peace Office in Hannibal, Missouri. It was built in 1836 in its present location, but the Justice of the Peace Office was not originally next to it; it was moved there in 1955. This little store is where people in Samuel Clemens's time went for the cure to most of their ills. It sold many different kinds of medicine, the most well-known being Perry Davis's Pain-Killer, which makes an appearance in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* when Tom gave the pain-killer to Peter the cat and which Mark Twain calls in his autobiography "...a most detestable medicine."

This building was built out of materials with an interesting history. The timber used for the store was cut in Cincinnati and shipped to Hannibal by steamboat, which was an unusual thing to do at the time. These timbers were used to make the pilasters, flat columns on the outside

of a structure, of the store, which is why this shop is sometimes called the Pilaster House. Also, like many old buildings in Hannibal, the foundation was built of stone from the quarry on Cardiff Hill.

However, this pharmacy is far different and more important than many others of these buildings. In 1846 the Clemens family was once again down on their luck, and had to move out of their house on Hill Street. Many people think of the Hill Street house as being Mark Twain's only childhood home, but when the Clemenses left Hill Street they moved in with the Grant family above their drug store. Samuel Clemens didn't mind the move much, for Dr. Grant was a very peculiar man. When Dr. Grant's colleague, Dr. Peake, came to talk to him, Sam would hide in the room and eavesdrop on their interesting conversations. Life with the Grants was never dull. Dr. Grant even came home once with dozens of cuts and scrapes; he had gotten the worst of a sword



Pilaster is an architectural term for a supporting pier that is treated as a column. Grant's Drug Store is also known as the Pilaster House because of this unique feature.

fight earlier that day. Unfortunately, the good times couldn't last. In 1847, barely a year after they moved in with the Grants, Samuel's father died of pneumonia. Mr. Clemens was out during a terrible storm and quickly fell ill. A few days later, he died in an upstairs room of Grant's Drug Store. Soon after, Sam and his family moved back to the house on Hill Street because, ironically, they now had enough money.

~C.B.



Perry Davis' Painkiller was a common tonic in Sam Clemens' time. Aunt Polly administered some to Tom Sawyer, and Tom administered some to Peter the cat.

