

LESSON IN LITERATURE . . .

SETTING

- The setting of a story has three parts: place, time, and mood.
- The place is where the story unfolds.
- The time includes the period of history, the season, and the time of day in which the events take place.
- The mood is the feeling the author creates as a background to the story. The mood may be joyful, gloomy, or frightening. There are so many moods a writer can create.
- The setting may be described in detail or hardly at all. When you try to remember a story, you will find that you have stored away a picture of the setting along with the plot and characters.

THINK ABOUT IT!

1. In what time period would you place “Morning Search”? Reread the story and find three clues to the time period in which it is set.
2. What details of Nicole’s house are given in the story? What time of day is it? What time of year is it?
3. The mood of the story is especially important to conceal the surprise ending. How would you describe the story’s mood—and how does it help hide the surprise?

Morning Search

“Nicole, you’d better hurry up!” Mom called from downstairs.

Nicole was angry with herself. She couldn’t find her textbook anywhere. She left her book in exactly the same place—on her bedside table—every night, so that she wouldn’t have this problem in the morning. Last night, though, she’d been enjoying *Little House on the Prairie* so much, that she had read it instead of her textbook, and now she had no idea where her school book was.

Nicole reached around the back of the bedside table and under the bed. She ran her hands over the clean surfaces of her dresser and her bookshelf. With her feet, she gently felt the floor around her dresser and in front of her closet. Nothing.

“Nicole! Joey’s already finished his breakfast.” At the sound of the word “breakfast” she was suddenly aware of the smell of buttered rye toast. She grabbed her backpack and placing her left hand on her door frame, turned a sharp left out into the hallway. As she zipped toward the stairs, she almost stepped on a small object on the carpet. Her foot automatically pulled back before she stepped down onto what she was certain was one of Joey’s matchbox cars. She gently kicked the toy in the direction of Joey’s room.

As she reached the top step, she felt for the railing. About seven steps down, the sound of the stairwell opening to her right told Nicole she was at the landing, and she turned and headed down the remaining stairs to the kitchen.

Nicole walked straight to her seat and pounced on her toast.

Halfway through her breakfast, she turned suddenly toward the sound of Mom unzipping her book bag.

“My textbook?” she asked.

“You left it by the fireplace last night,” Mom said. “I’m putting it in your book bag now.”

“By the front door, please?”

“With your cane.”

Nicole was relieved. “Thanks, Mom,” she said.

Taking a final bite, she headed for the door.

Blueprint for Reading

INTO . . . *New Providence*

This is the story of a city. It is written as though it were true. But the city of New Providence is imaginary. A group of historians and city designers created it from old designs and plans of actual cities.

This is a story of how a city changes over time. The story has no characters. There are many settings, but no action. We see the city change over time, because we are given snapshots: from 1910, 1935, 1955, 1970, 1980, and 1992.

The theme of the story can be expressed in a word: change. The detailed pictures show the changes and the text explains them. No opinion is offered as to whether the changes are good or bad. The story just presents the facts. It is left to the reader to form an opinion.



. . . *Setting*

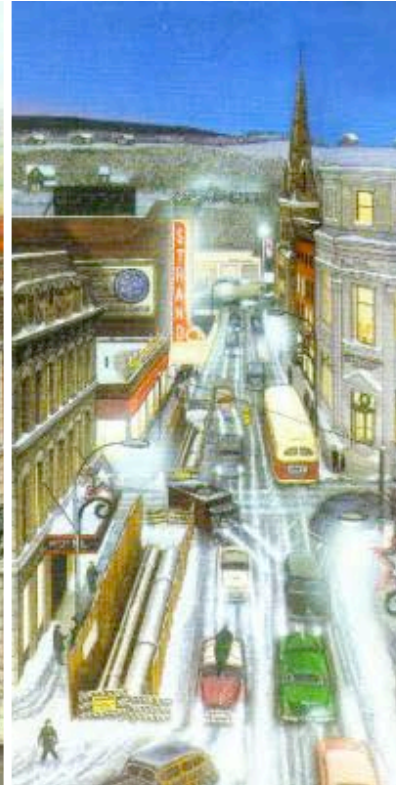
The **setting** is the physical background of a story. The setting tells the reader *when* the story takes place and *where* it takes place. Setting can also include the weather, the clothing people wear, the furniture and design of a house, the region—whether city or country, and other details that help the reader enter into the story. All the things we need when we are planning a play—props, costume, scenery, and makeup—are the setting.

New Providence: A Changing Cityscape is nearly all setting and theme. Notice that the descriptions are very clear and exact. None of the poetic language that we see in *Kate Shelley* is used to describe *New Providence*.

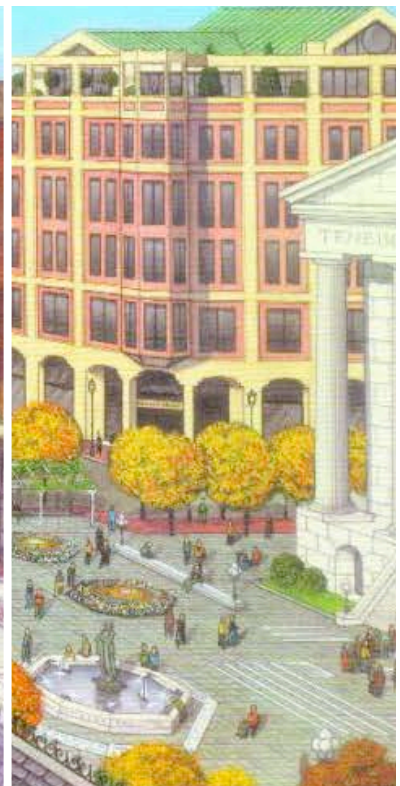
See if you can keep track of the changes to the cityscape as you read the selection.

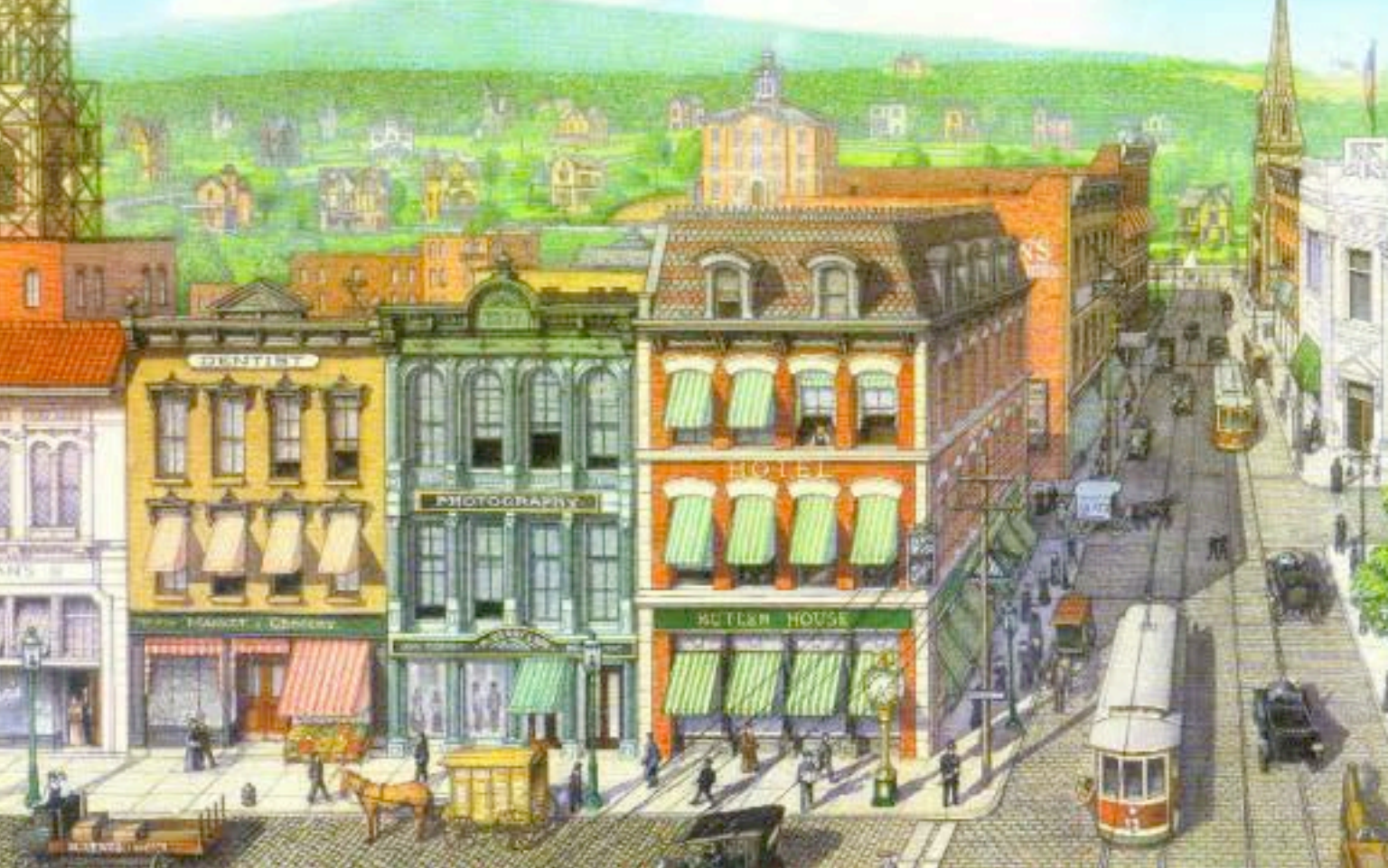
NEW PROVIDENCE

A CHANGING CITYSCAPE



CONCEIVED BY RENATA VON TSCHARNER AND RONALD LEE FLEMING • THE TOWNSCAPE INSTITUTE • ILLUSTRATIONS BY DENIS ORLOFF





Put the city up; tear the city down; put it up again; let us find a city.... —CARL SANDBURG

1910

New Providence is thriving. Cobblestone¹ streets bustle with activity—Model T Fords, streetcars, and horse-drawn carts carrying meat, milk, and ice. There is no concert in the bandstand today, but a crowd has gathered in the square in front of the Town Hall and the Tenebo County Courthouse. A fountain has been built in commemoration of Chief Tenebo, a Native American from a local tribe. The statue is about to be unveiled. Around the base of the fountain is an inscription: GOOD CITIZENS ARE THE RICHES OF A CITY.

1. *Cobblestones* are naturally rounded stones that were used to pave streets before asphalt came into use.

WORD BANK

thriving (THRY ving) *adj.*: doing very well; prospering

commemoration (kuh MEM uh RAY shun) *n.*: in memory of some person or event

inscription (in SKRIP shun) *n.*: a word or words carved on stone or other hard surface; a brief dedication or note written by hand in a book, on a photograph, or on a similar item



New Providence's good citizens—women in long skirts and men in hats—buy fruit at the sidewalk stand in front of the grocery and most of their clothing and household items at Getz & McClure's, the largest store in town. They shop for shoes and jewelry and office supplies and have supper at Gilman's or at the Butler House Café.

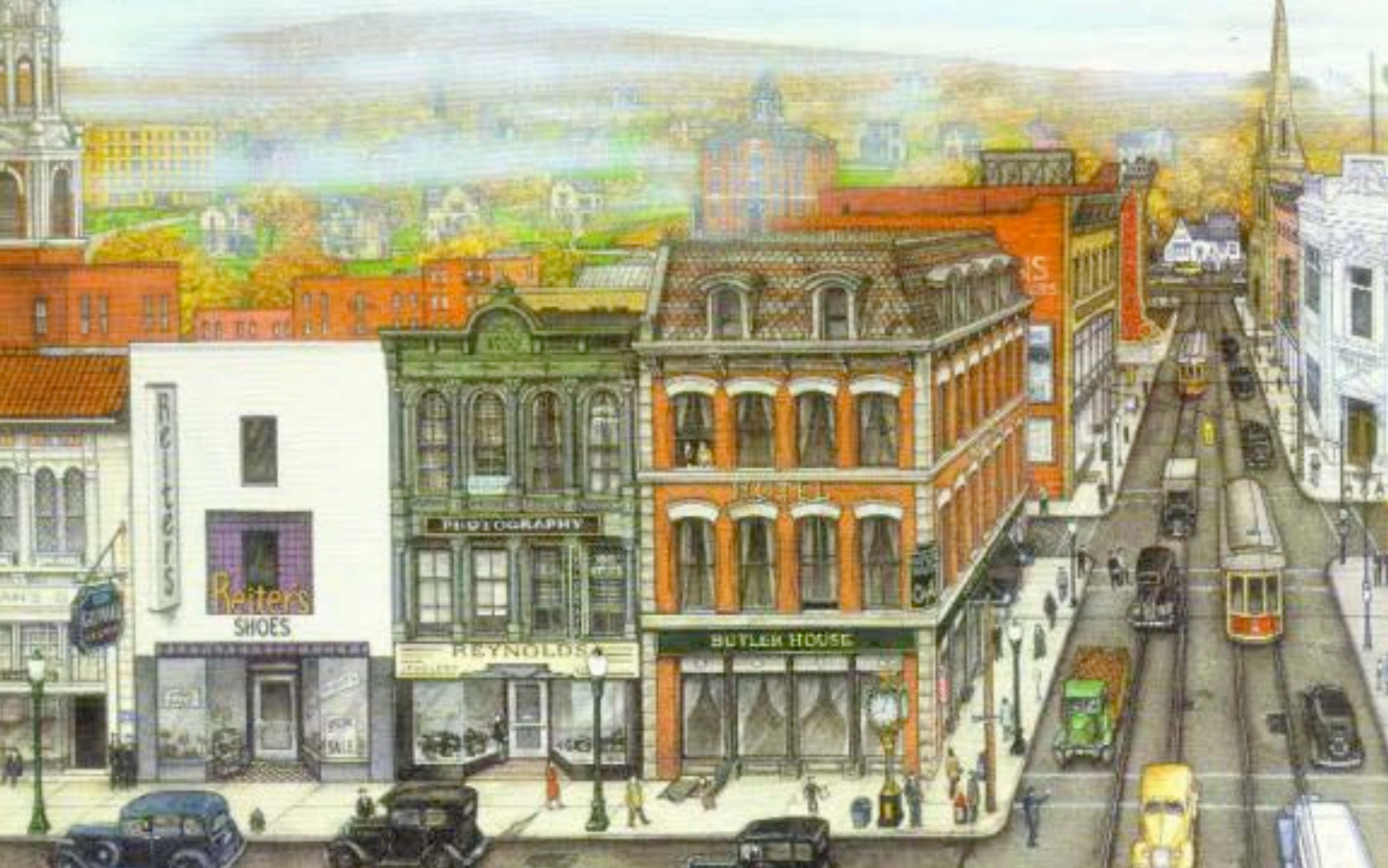
The rural hillsides surrounding the city are lush, with comfortable Victorian homes dotting the landscape and the Bloom mill and worker housing in the distance. The large red brick schoolhouse is attended by all school-age children in the region. A flock of birds flies peacefully overhead.



New Providence is filled with a typical jumble of late-nineteenth-century architectural styles: Gothic, Classical, and Romanesque revivals, Queen Anne and Italianate Victorians. Pictured here is the Colonel Fleming House, which was built in the late eighteenth century and is the last single-family home left on the square.

**WORD
BANK**

rural (RUH rul) *adj.*: characteristic of or having to do with the country (compare to *urban*: characteristic of or having to do with the city)



1935

As a mist rolls into New Providence, effects of the Great Depression are visible; the city has fallen on hard times. Gone is the bandstand from the courthouse square, where homeless men now huddle over trash can fires for warmth. A WPA sign publicizes the Works Progress Administration, a jobs program funded by the government. A line of jobless men waits for free bread outside the post office, and hoboes² are taking a free ride out of the city on trains. Many buildings are in need of repair.

But even in times such as these, life goes on. There is a concert playing at the Strand Theater. A huge Coca-Cola advertisement goes up on the side of a building. A streetlight now controls automobile traffic. The Bloom mill—expanded before the stock market crash—is still in operation, the grocery has become a shoe store, and the dry goods store, a jeweler's. The Colonel Fleming House now accommodates

2. *Hobo* is an old-fashioned word for a tramp or a jobless person who wanders from place to place.



three small businesses. Art Deco chrome and glass streamline some of the storefronts, contrasting with the older styles of the upper stories. A modern yellow apartment building squats on the hillside, while a biplane and a blimp cruise the skies.

A neoclassical granite post office has been constructed, revealing the train station in the distance.



The house at the end of Main Street has been replaced by a cottage-style gas station.





1955

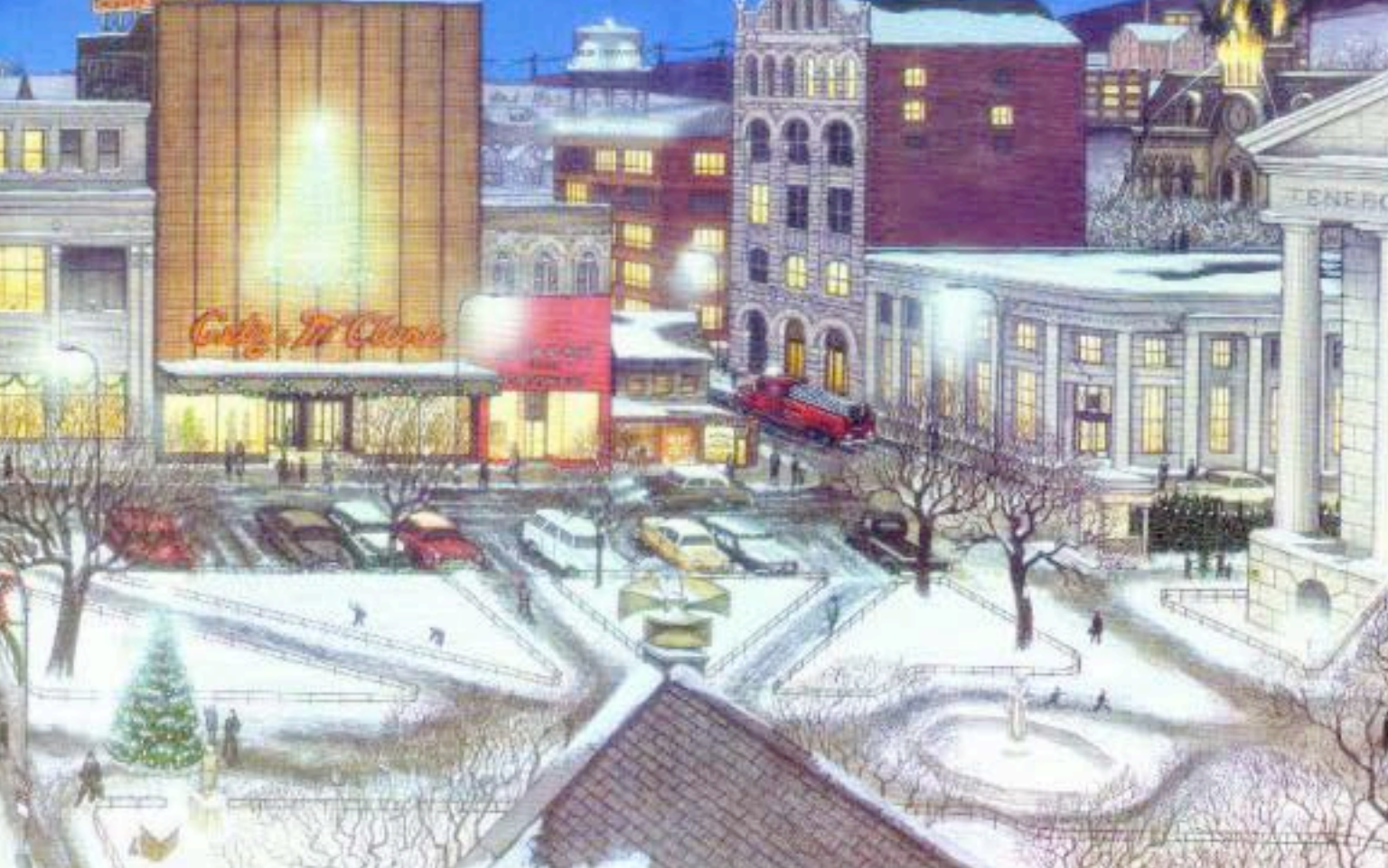
A postwar prosperity settles over New Providence, although there are signs that downtown is deteriorating.

The night sky glows with neon, holiday lights, and lighted billboards advertising bread and used cars. Part of the courthouse square is now paved with asphalt to make room for more and larger cars. Buses have replaced streetcars. Franchises³ like Rexall's and Woolworth's have moved into town, and the Alpine Motel attracts traveling businessmen. The New Providence Symphony Orchestra is performing at the Strand.

3. Sometimes companies, instead of doing their own marketing, sell the right to market their products or services to private individuals or groups. This right is called a *franchise* (FRAN chyz). The people who have bought the franchise use the name, advertisements, and products of the company, but privately own and run their own stores.

WORD BANK

deteriorating (dee TEER ee uh RAYT ing) *v.*: becoming worse in some or many ways



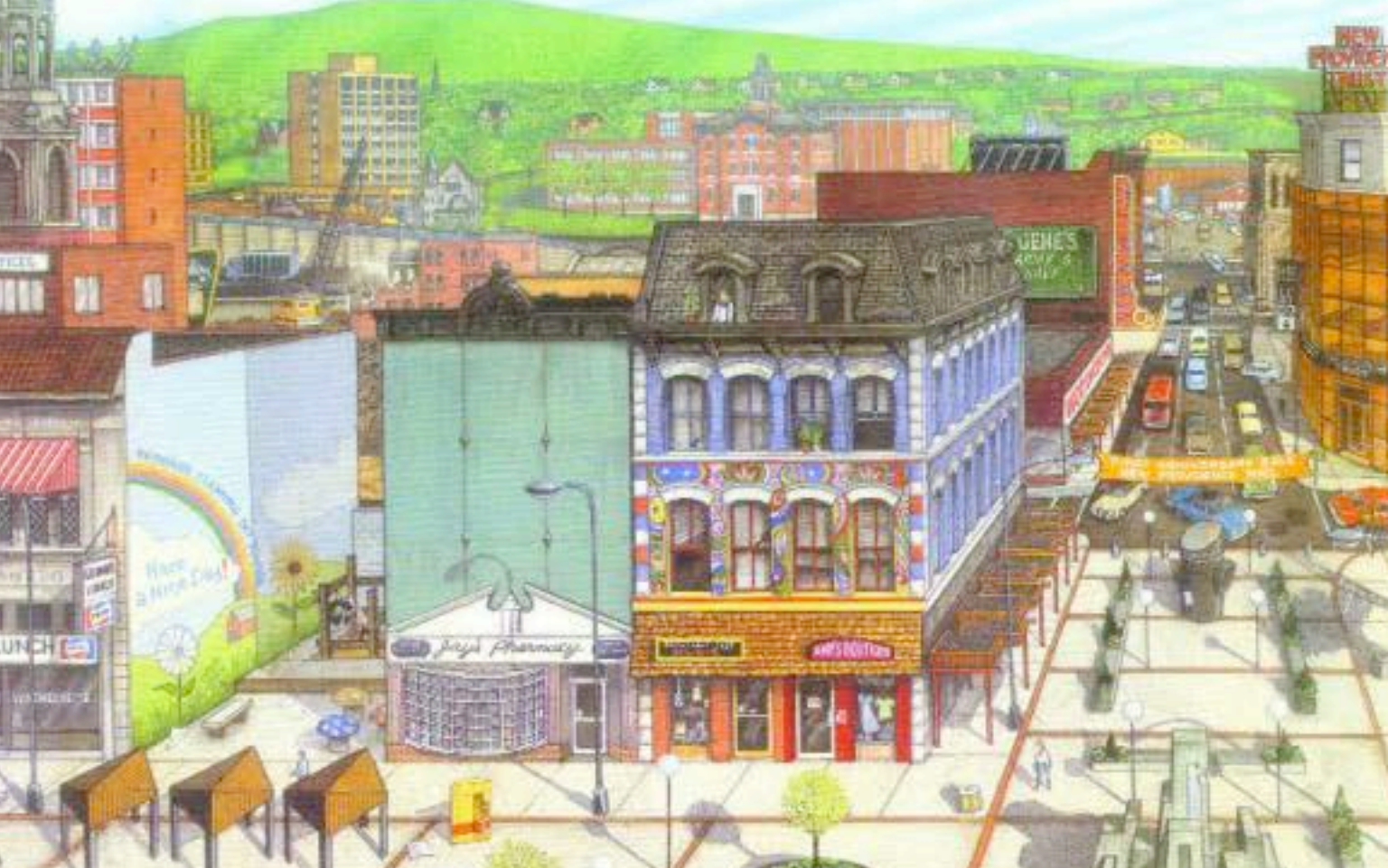
The elegant Butler House is now a liquor store and a boarding house for transients.⁴ Next to it, a Victorian cast-iron building is being covered with prefabricated siding. Getz & McClure's has already been sheathed with stark metal grillwork and a currently popular style of lettering. Two of the small businesses in the Colonel Fleming House are boarded up. Behind it, a bland new building has been erected to house Monarch Insurance. The old slate roof of the Town Hall has been replaced by asphalt shingles. A fire is raging at the train station, while the citizens of New Providence go about their holiday shopping.

4. *Transients* (tran ZEE ints) are people, usually workers or salesmen, who stay in a city for a short time.

The nuclear age arrives: An air-raid siren has replaced the decorative ornament atop Town Hall, and the courthouse bears a fallout shelter sign.



The baby boom following World War II explains the new addition to the schoolhouse. The surrounding hills are gradually filling up with the ranch-style and split-level houses of suburbia.



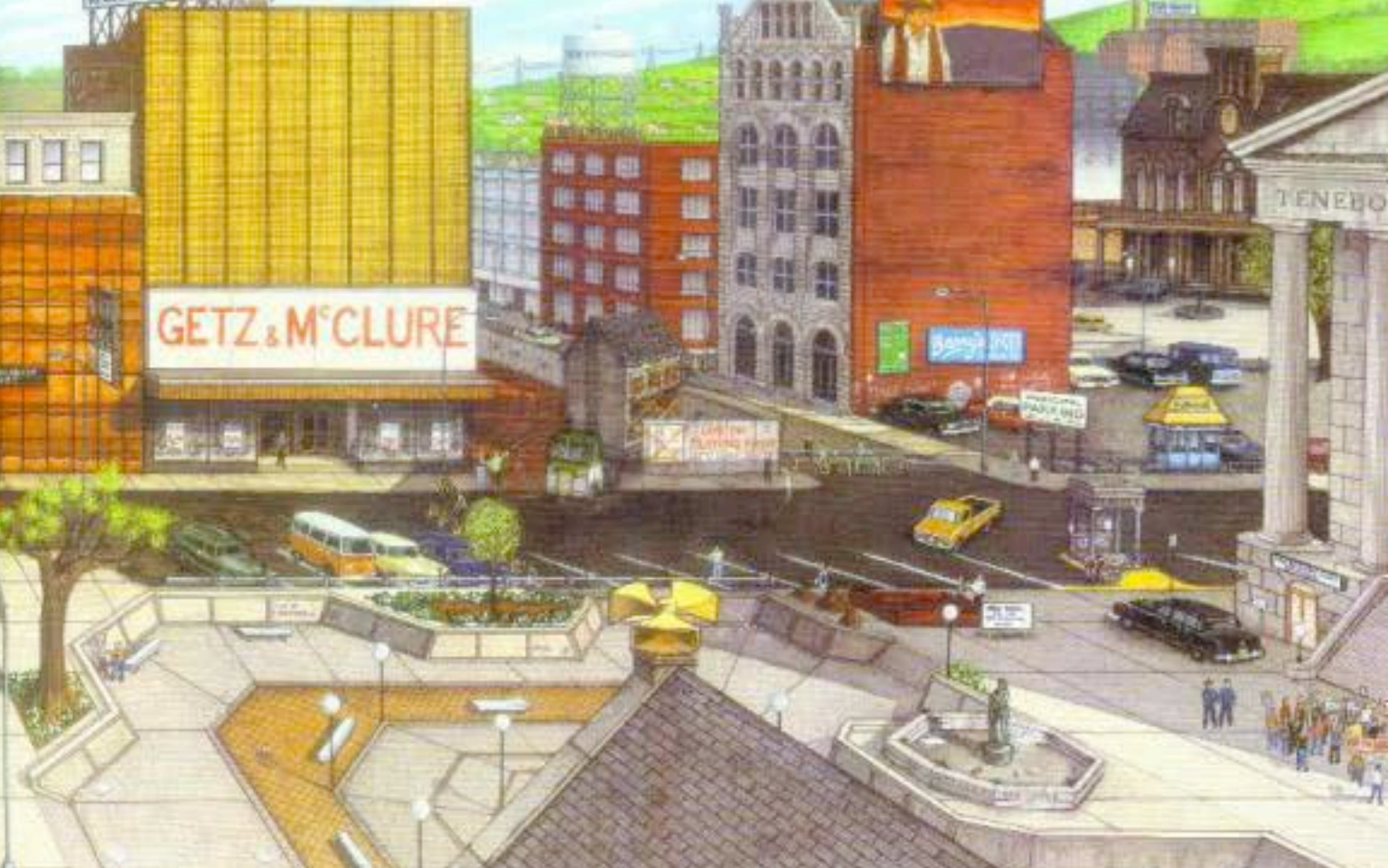
1970

By 1970, downtown New Providence is an uninspired jumble of old and new. To attract people from thriving suburbia, part of Main Street has been converted into a pedestrian⁵ mall, dominated by a harsh concrete fountain. But there is less traffic than ever in the city center, and fewer people actually live there.

A number of people in town today are gathered outside the courthouse, taking part in a protest march against the Vietnam War. Across the newly sunken and cemented square, a mugging is in progress. Graffiti mars the area, as do more and more billboards, and an Army/Navy surplus⁶ store. The post office and several other buildings have been demolished and turned into parking lots, the Bloom mill is for rent, and the train station tower remains burnt out.

5. A *pedestrian* (puh DESS tree un) *mall* is a large area closed to traffic, used by people walking on foot.
6. *Surplus* is something extra or left over. *Army/navy surplus stores* sell leftover army and navy supplies.

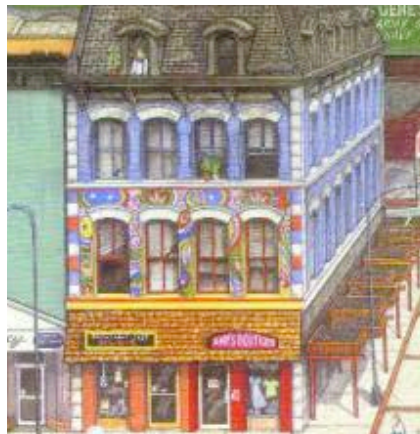
WORD BANK **graffiti** (gruh FEE tee) *n.*: words or pictures painted illegally on public property



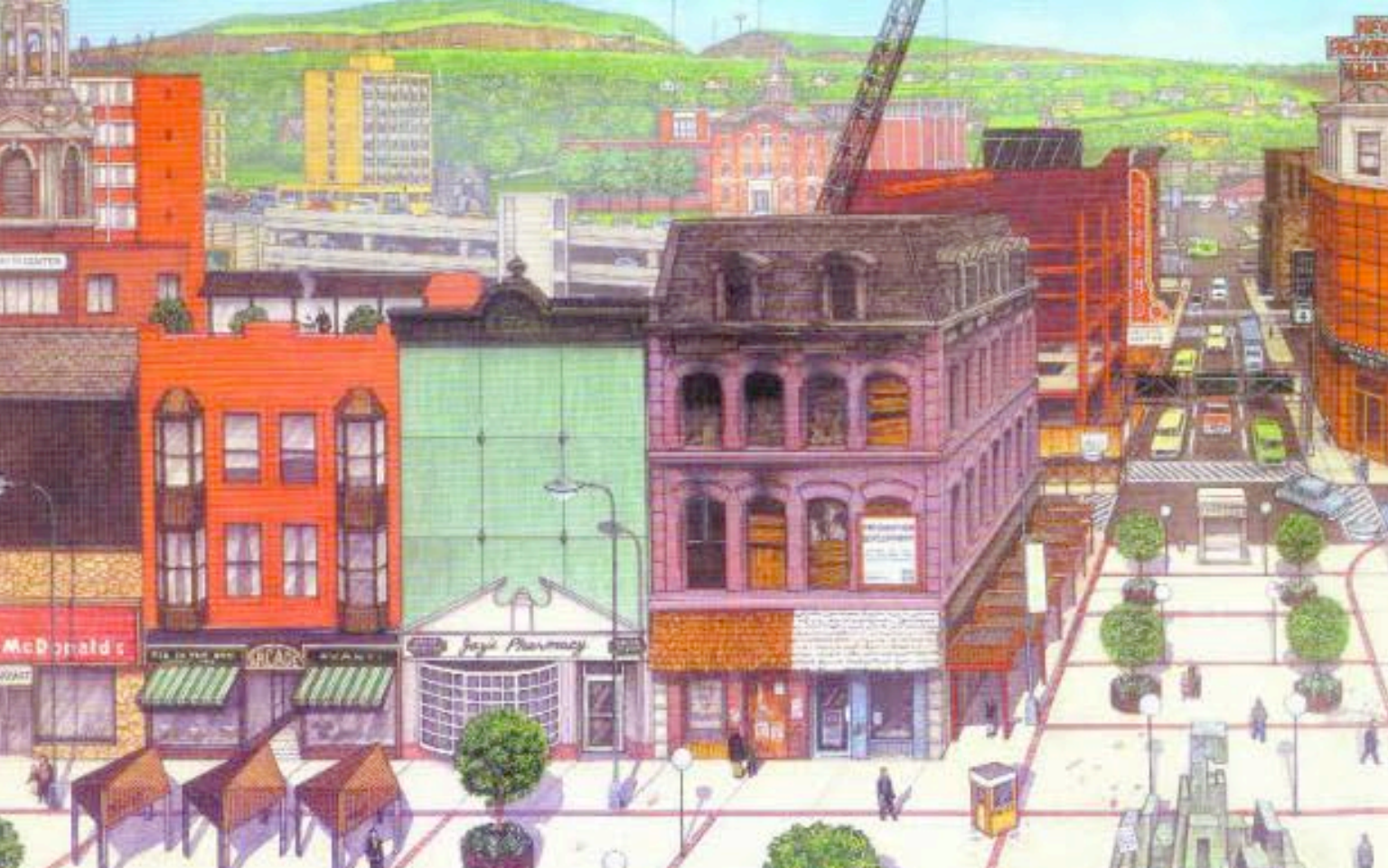
The Alpine Motel is now a Holiday Inn, a Fotomat has opened, and a famous musician is playing at the Strand. A day school has opened, complete with colorful murals and giant toadstools. The Colonel Fleming House seems about to be rescued by a preservation group.⁷ Victorian homes in the hills are disappearing to make room for highways, look-alike suburban housing, and another addition to the school. In the afternoon sky, a jet flies over the increasing number of powerlines strung across the horizon.

7. A *preservation group* is an organization that has been formed to save old buildings or sculptures that have historical value from being destroyed or changed.

An ordinary digital clock now hangs where there was once a quaint shoe sign, and the bank's classical architecture has recently been covered with mirrored glass.



The Butler House features trendy boutiques, a Day-Glo mural, and resident hippies. Space-age pavilions line the sidewalk.



1980

Ten years later, there are signs that downtown New Providence is sadly in need of recovery—and also signs that help is on the way.

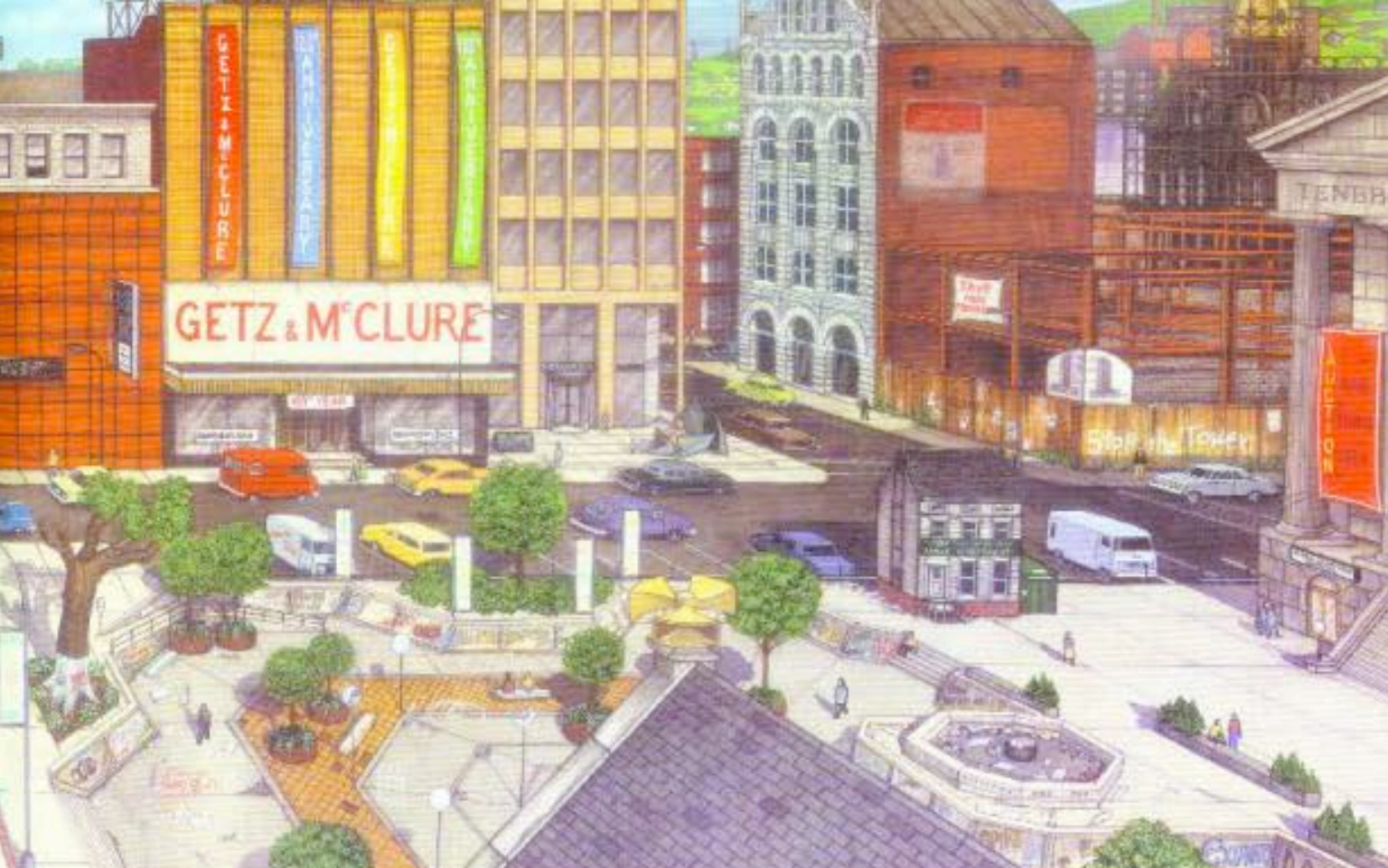
Chief Tenebo's statue has been vandalized; debris blows around its dry base and across the square. Graffiti is everywhere, street lamps are smashed, and a police box has appeared. The Colonel Fleming House has been moved across the street, but its placement does not look permanent. In its old location are a Cor-Ten steel sculpture and Monarch Insurance's new highrise, which bears no architectural relationship to the buildings around it.

But the streets seem more populated, and people are again living—even barbecuing—downtown in the new red brick infill structure⁸ next to McDonald's.

WORD BANK

vandalized (VAN duh LYZD) *v.*: deliberately destroyed or damaged

debris (duh BREE) *n.*: the remains of anything destroyed; bits of old waste matter lying about



The only billboard in town advertises health food and a cultural event. The old Strand Theater is being expanded into a Cultural Center. And although the Butler House has been all but abandoned, a sign shows that rehabilitation is being planned. A superhighway now cuts through the hillside, making downtown more accessible to summer holiday travelers. A large parking structure has been built, and well-tended plantings soften the mall.

8. An *infill structure* is a building placed so as to fill up the gap between two other buildings.

Graffiti and rusted steel girders indicate that citizens' groups have so far been able to prevent further construction of a highrise office tower on the old post office site.



A Health Center has replaced the Medical Offices, and New Providence has its first McDonald's.



It is wisdom to think the people are the city.... —CARL SANDBURG

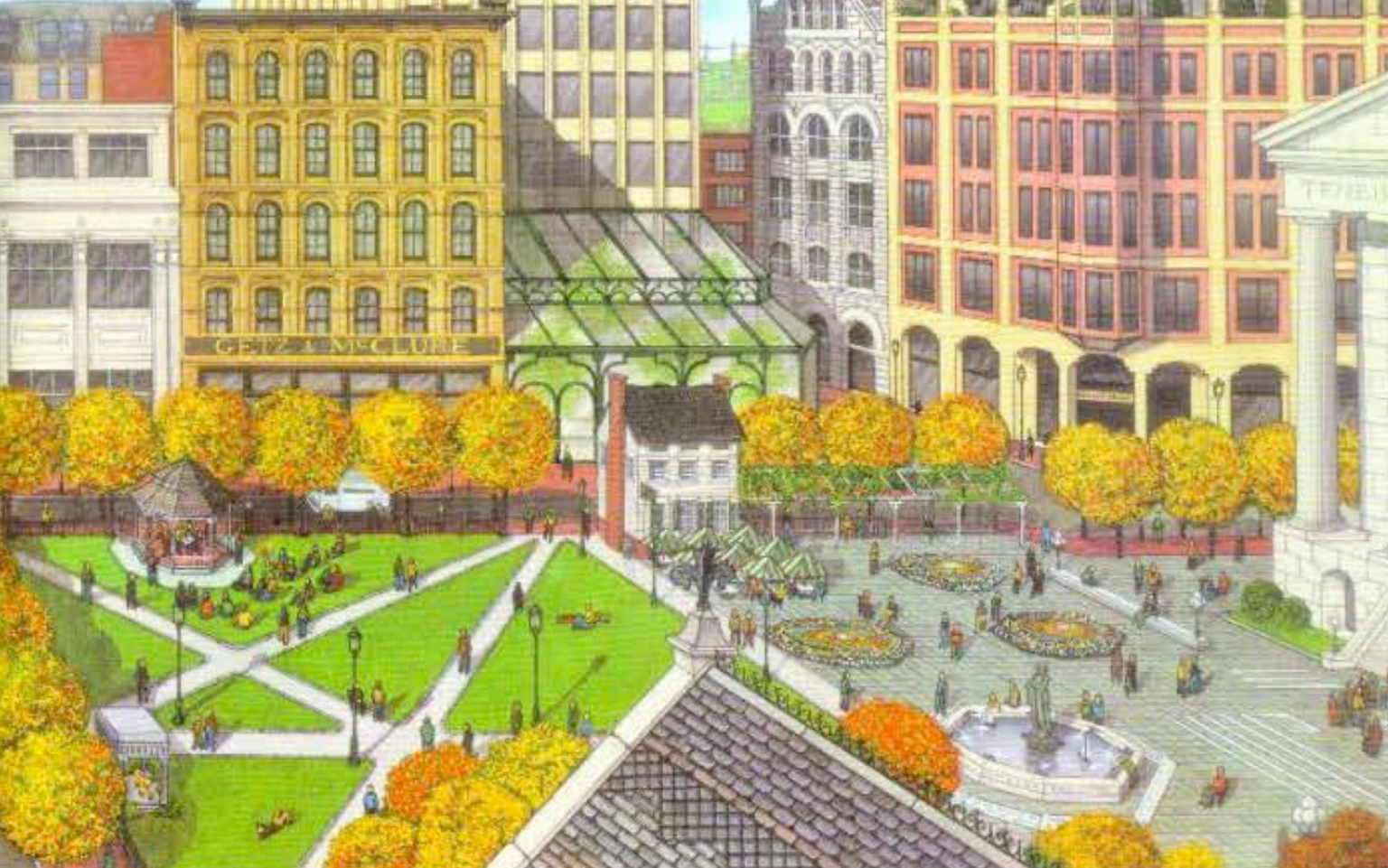
In the sunny afternoon sky a flock of birds heads back to its winter home. Below, people have returned to the city—living, shopping, working, playing. New Providence has never looked better. Sidewalk vendors sell their produce once more, and traffic again flows through handsomely paved streets. Buses are made to look like old-fashioned trolleys. Chief Tenebo has been restored, and the bandstand is back, a concert in full swing. Gone are graffiti, billboards, and harsh sculptures. Plants and fall flowers are everywhere—even the parking structure has been elegantly camouflaged.

All of the old building facades have been renovated, and the condition of most buildings is strikingly similar to what it was in 1910. The Town Hall's slate roof has been restored, and the air-raid siren is gone. Street furniture is comfortable and

**WORD
BANK**

facade (fuh SOD) *n.*: the front of a building, especially a decorative one

renovated (REN uh VAY tuh) *v.*: restored to good condition as by repairing or remodeling



compatible with⁹ the architecture. The circular clock is back in front of the Butler House, now beautifully refurbished. An arcaded building where people live and work occupies the site of the controversial tower, serving as an entry into the restored train station, and an atrium full of plants softens the Monarch Insurance skyscraper. A Fitness Center has replaced the Health Center, and an arts festival is in progress at the Strand Cultural Center.

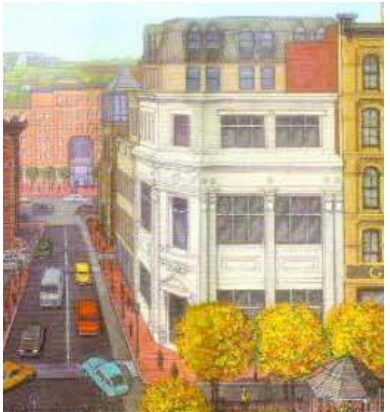
The good citizens of New Providence have worked hard to make the city livable again—and true to its heritage.

9. *Compatible with* means that something fits in with the people, objects, or ideas around it.

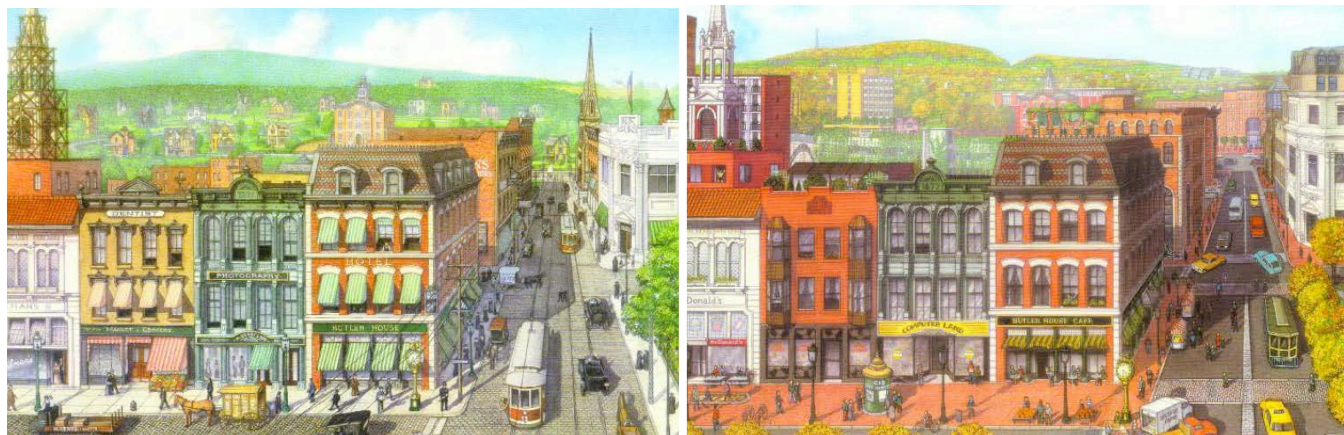


The Colonel Fleming House has been carefully restored—not as a historical museum but as an outdoor restaurant.

New buildings and additions to existing structures have been designed to complement the medley of architectural styles in downtown New Providence.



New Providence, a small American city, will not be found on any map. It is the creation of a team of architectural historians and designers, and yet its fictional cityscape is truly authentic. The buildings, the signs, even the street furniture can be found somewhere in urban America. Almost every detail was discovered in old photographs and assembled by the design team at The Townscape Institute.



Baltimore, Maryland (McDonald's building and H₂O fountain); Binghamton, New York (courthouse lights); Boston, Massachusetts (church in center and 1970 concrete plaza); Brookline, Massachusetts (church); Cambridge, Massachusetts (signs); Chelsea, Massachusetts (storefront); Chicago, Illinois (metal awning on the Butler House); Cincinnati, Ohio (1987 City Identity System booth); Denver, Colorado (building across the street from courthouse in 1910); Eugene, Oregon (1970 modern concrete fountain); Flint, Michigan (1910 shoe sign and street awnings); Fresno, California (1970-1980 sculptural clock tower); Garland, Utah (Bloom mill); Grand Rapids, Michigan (City Hall); Heber City, Utah (water tower); Junction City, Kansas (corner bank); Knoxville, Tennessee (billboard); Los Angeles, California (Getz & McClure building); Milwaukee, Wisconsin (suburban villas); Montclair, New Jersey (Colonel Fleming House); Montgomery, Alabama (Victorian cast-iron building); New York, New York (Butler House and train station); Portland, Oregon (fountain base); Richmond, Virginia (signs on Reiter's shoe store); Salem, Ohio (cornice on Main Street); San Diego, California (circular clock); Scottsdale, Arizona (parking structure with plantings); Staunton, Virginia (stained glass in McDonald's building); Syracuse, New York (layout of courthouse square); Topeka, Kansas (Alpine Motel sign); Townsend, Massachusetts (bandstand); Traverse City, Michigan (mansard roof on Butler House); Upper Sandusky, Ohio (horse fountain and pavilion); Waltham, Massachusetts (bench); Washington, D.C. (Masonic building); Westerville, Ohio (gas station); Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania (park outline); Wilmington, Delaware (1970 metal Main Street shelters); Winooski, Vermont (Main Street building).

Studying the Selection

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

In which year do you think the city was most attractive?

QUICK REVIEW

1. What is the name of the city?
2. Which years of the city's existence are described?
3. What is the Butler House?
4. Whom does the fountain commemorate?

FOCUS

5. Select one change that stands out for you. Do you think it is a change for the better or for the worse? Why?
6. Choose a year and describe how New Providence looked that year. You may even choose a year in the future.

CREATING & WRITING

7. Choose one of the cityscapes described in the story, and write about what New Providence was like that year and why.
8. Choose a subject from 1910: cobblestone streets, Model T Fords, streetcars, horse-drawn carts, bandstand concerts, food shopping before there were supermarkets, or Victorian homes. Do you wish we had some of those things today, or are you thankful that we don't? Perhaps you have mixed feelings—you like the idea of, say, horse-drawn carts, but you know they would be slower and bumpier than a car. Write a paragraph about what life would be like if we still had the item you chose.
9. Draw a picture of one or several of the buildings in New Providence. In the caption, name the buildings and the year.