



St. CHARLES  
HISTORY MUSEUM

# Booming Business

*in the Beauty Spot of the Fox Valley*



Sponsored by  **STERLING BANK**



# *Sterling Bank*

2004-present

Sterling Bank was founded in Poplar Bluff, Missouri in 2004 by two friends with a passion for finance and investing in the community. In 2014, the company opened a loan production office in St. Charles and in 2015, the loan production office turned into a full-service branch located at 360 S. 1st Street. Three years later, in the summer of 2018, Sterling Bank relocated to 10 W. Illinois Street as part of the First Street Development Project. With 11 locations in total, Sterling Bank believes in the importance of investing in each and every community it is a part of. In St. Charles, Sterling Bank has been a sponsor for a number of

organizations in the community, and we as the St. Charles History Museum are honored to have them as a presenting sponsor for our temporary exhibit, *Booming Business in the Beauty Spot of the Fox Valley*.

**Address:**  
10 W, Illinois Street

Sponsored by  **STERLING BANK**





## Introduction

St. Charles businesses have dramatically changed since the days of its settlement. Farms and mills sustained the city for many decades, bringing new settlers to the bustling area. At the beginning of the 20th century, when Edwin Hunt was elected mayor in 1911, St. Charles was launched into an era of modernization. By the 1920s, industry was flourishing among the factories, dairies, banks, and mom-and-pop shops. Even the Great Depression couldn't close the majority of businesses and most were able to stay afloat. When World War II broke out, St. Charles wasted no time to help the cause as factories converted to wartime production and grocery stores implemented rationing. When the war was over and consumer production began again, St. Charles continued on an upswing.

With businesses always being at the center of the community, many have left their own distinct legacy that has helped shape St. Charles. *Booming Business in the Beauty Spot of the Fox Valley* explores many of these unique legacies. From businesses that are still in operation today, like the Blue Goose Market, Rehm Electric and Colonial Cafe and Ice Cream; to those that no longer operate like Colson's Department Store, St. Charles National Bank, and Heinz Cut Glass, each of these companies have had a profound impact on the lives of St. Charles' residents and the story of our community.



1901-Present

## Colonial Cafe and Ice Cream

Dairies have a long-standing history in St. Charles, and at the turn of the 20th century, multiple dairy routes operated throughout the city. One of the most notable dairies, which still operates today as Colonial Ice Cream, is Anderson Dairy. In 1901, Simon Anderson purchased a milk route from Nicholls & Akin, Dealers in Pure Milk and Cream, and began his new career venture. The St. Charles Pure Milk Company/Anderson Dairy Co. never owned or operated a dairy farm, but Simon Anderson would purchase raw milk from local farmers, process it, and then sell various products like sweet cream, whipping cream, buttermilk, and even cottage cheese. In 1910, Simon added ice cream to his production list and in 1917 bought the Ramsey Ice Cream Company, which had been the primary ice cream producer in St. Charles.

In the early 1920s, Anderson Dairy became associated with the Colonial Ice Cream Company. Colonial Ice Cream owner Eddie Willnitz of Plainfield would pick up his ice cream from the Anderson Ice Cream “substation” in Aurora and take it back to Plainfield to sell. A few years later, Willnitz sold his route and the Colonial name to the Andersons. In 1932, Colonial opened its first retail store at 120 N. Third

Street in St. Charles and continued to expand its enterprise throughout the following decades. In 1957, Joe Anderson opened Snappy Snack at 1108 W. Main Street. Modeled after Royal Castle restaurants in Florida, Snappy Snack had a limited menu with food that could be served quickly. After four more Snappy Snacks opened, Joe Anderson was ready to take his businesses in a new direction. Opening a Colonial Ice Cream and Sandwich Shop in 1959, Colonial continued its expansion into the restaurant business. The decades to come were even more successful as more restaurants were opened and started to become full service, eventually changing the name to Colonial Cafes.

Colonial Cafe still operates today within the Anderson family.

**Address:**  
120 N. Third Street



# Moline Malleable

1893-1991

The Moline Malleable Iron Company was established in 1869 in Moline, Illinois. A fire in 1892 destroyed the foundry; however, with financial aid from Terrence Ryan, a new foundry was built in 1893 in St. Charles. As part of the agreement to move the factory, President W.B. Ullman also relocated the employees, which inspired the first large housing development project. This area on the west side of St. Charles is popularly known as “Belgian Town” for the influx of Belgian immigrants that worked for the company. The foundry was built on land along the Great Western Railroad tracks which allowed freights to be loaded directly from the factory to the cars. Products made at the foundry included: castings for agricultural implements, thousands of castings for manufacturers in various branches of iron work, power transmissions for elevating and conveying machines, and elevator buckets and chains.

In October 1915, the company suffered another devastating blow when it was destroyed by fire for the second time. The only part of the building left was the office section and a small garage. Within a year, Moline Malleable had rebuilt the foundry and was back in production. The new factory included a new sprinkler system to help extinguish any future fires.

The foundry modernized in 1946 when a metallurgical laboratory was added. With the new modernized lines thirty molders could produce 120 tons per day. Moline Malleable Iron Company continued to grow as two more plants were added, one in Belvidere and another in St. Charles. In 1972, the company changed its name from Moline Malleable Iron Company to Moline Corporation, and in 1977 started a \$1.6 million program to modernize the melting facilities.

Business for Moline peaked in the 1970s with more than 800 workers employed, but steadily began to decrease in the 1980s as foreign competition and a fall in demand hit the company. In 1991, Moline Corporation officially closed its doors, and in 1992 the facility was torn down.

**Address:**  
364 W870 Dean Street





# Cable Piano Company

1899-1937

Herman D. Cable found himself in the music business in 1879 when he entered into a reed manufacturing business with F.R. Wolfinger and John A. Comstock. Though Cable was new to the manufacturing business, he quickly grew the business from reed manufacturing to piano manufacturing. The switch was successful, and by 1890 Herman Cable acquired the Conover Brothers piano company and operated under the name Chicago Cottage Organ Co. The Chicago factory could not keep up with the amount of orders they were receiving, so in 1899 a second factory was built in St. Charles. The name of the company was also changed that year to Cable Piano Co. in honor of Herman D. Cable, who had passed in March 1899.

St. Charles was chosen as the location for Cable Pianos' second factory for many reasons: a plentiful labor force, its beautiful location along the Fox River, and most importantly the proximity of the switch line from the Northwestern Railroad which ran along First Street. Starting at around 75,000 square feet, the factory continued to receive additions which grew the space to more than 250,000 square feet. In 1902 Cable Piano Company built a foot bridge over the river to ensure its east side employees made it to and from work easily and safely. The foot bridge still exists over the river to this day, just south of the Illinois Street Bridge.

At the time of Cable Piano's peak, the St. Charles factory employed over 500 men and women and produced more than 35 pianos a day. Each piano was made by hand using only the finest products the world had to offer: ivory imported from India and Africa for the piano keys, wood from Australia for the hammers, and veneers from Mexico, South America, and Africa. The many names Cable Pianos were manufactured under include: Conover, Cable, DeKoven, Kingsbury, Midget, Puritan, Wellington, Schiller, and player pianos under the names Euphona, Carola, and Inner-Player.

When the Great Depression hit, Cable Piano Company's first major layoffs occurred during the holiday season of 1929. By the late 1930s, radios and movie theaters rose in popularity, and sales continued to steadily decrease, until Cable Piano Company closed its doors in 1937.

**Address:**  
410 1st Street



# Heinz Cut Glass

1905-1927

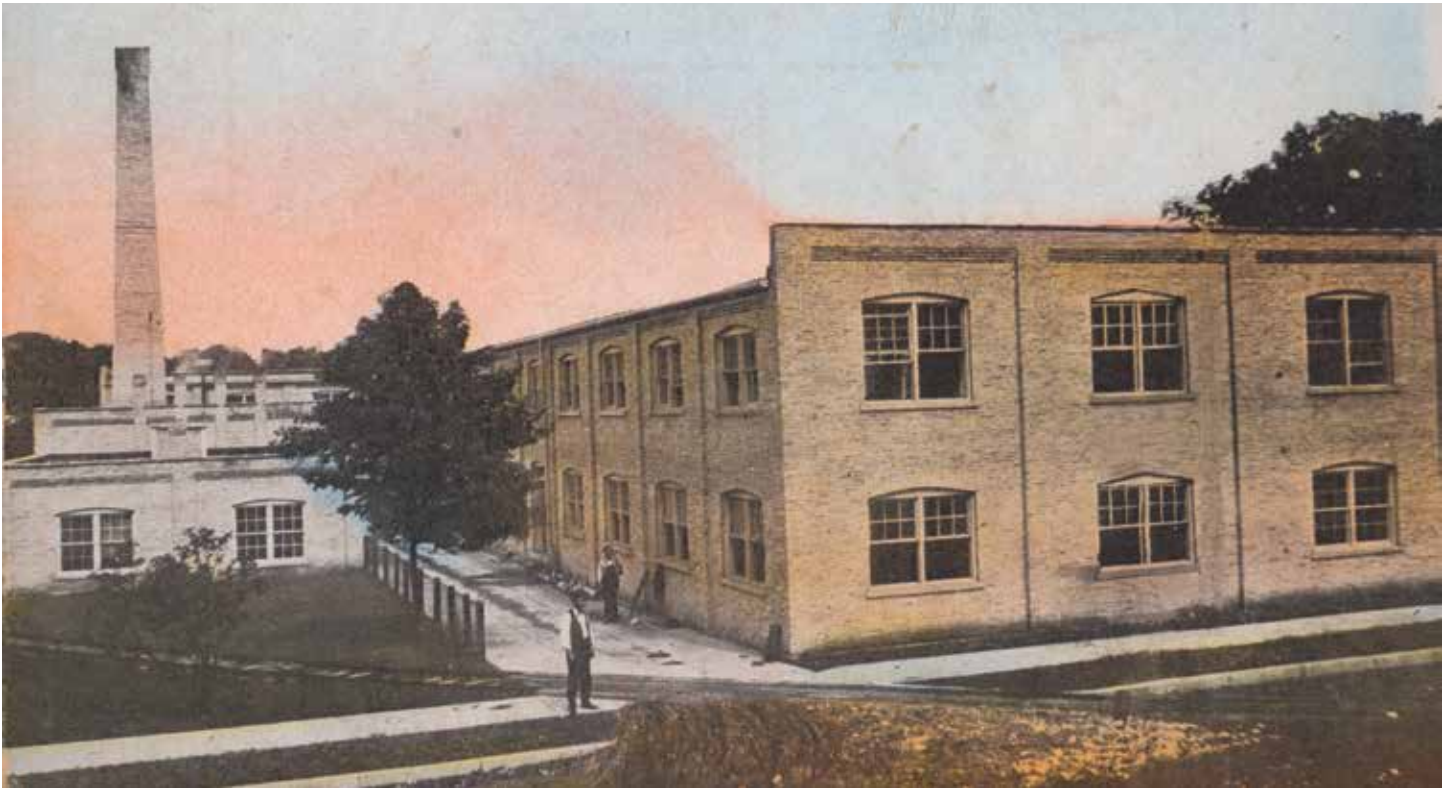
At the turn of the 20th century, American cut glass grew in popularity, and factories began to spread from the east coast to the Midwest and beyond. Chicago quickly became a bustling hub for cut glass factories and gave birth to one of the largest cut glass businesses in the Midwest: The Heinz Brothers Cut Glass Company.

Beginning their career with Pitkin and Brooks and the American Cut Glass company, Richard, Emil, and Otto Heinz decided to venture into their own business. The Monarch Cut Glass Company was a partnership formed between the Heinz brothers and Herman and Frank Kotwitz. The company organized in 1901, and the factory was located at the corner of Union Street and Carroll Avenue in Chicago. In 1902, the Heinz brothers bought out the Kotwitz brothers and began to operate the business under the name Heinz Brothers. Incorporating for \$50,000, Richard served as president, Otto was vice president, sales manager was Emil, and secretary and treasurer were Herman Schmidt and Herman Eichman (plant foreman). Quickly becoming the largest cut glass factory in the Midwest, the Heinz Brothers products extended all over the United States, Canada, and parts of Europe. In 1905, the Heinz Brothers Cut Glass Company built a factory in St. Charles and began operations in August of that year.

This new factory, located at Thirteenth and Indiana Avenues, was 200 feet long and 40 feet wide, with a 28 foot boiler room adjoining the east end and two floors. The second floor held room for 100 workers while the first floor held room for 50. This new factory employed about 80-100 men and women, some of whom were professional cutters from around the country, but most were St. Charles residents. The yearly volume of the Heinz Brothers business transactions reached between \$90,000 to \$100,000 with a payroll of \$40,000. In 1913 Mill, Gardner, & Co. took over operation of the Heinz Brothers business and increased the workforce.

When World War I broke out, cut glass factories saw a decline in sales, and by the end of the 1920s cut glass was completely out of fashion. The factory in St. Charles operated until 1927, when the real estate was sold and the corporation dissolved.

**Address:**  
214 S. 13th Avenue



# Crown Electric Factory

1892-1936

Established in 1892 by St. Charles businessmen J.B. Horne and F.J. Mosedale, the Crown Electric Manufacturing Company was first located on what is now Mosedale Street. The majority of the business engaged in bicycle chain and chandelier manufacturing. By 1897, the demand for bicycle chains was so large the Crown Electric Manufacturing Company had to lease the Stewart Mill (where the Municipal Building now stands) in order to make both chains and light fixtures. In 1898, the company had manufactured 250,000 chains, approximately 237 miles, and employed both a day and night work force.

In December of 1900, a fire broke out at the factory on Mosedale Street and the building was destroyed. Rather than rebuilding on the same site, Mosedale and Horne decided to long-term lease the Stewart Mill and remodel the building which allowed all business to be conducted in the same factory. After a few years, the company sold their interest in the bicycle-chain making industry to a Chicago company and focused on chandeliers and other brass fixtures.

With the new manufacturing focus, Crown Electric built a new factory in 1910 on First and Illinois Streets that was equipped with special machinery and very favorable working

conditions. The new location was also perfectly situated near the Chicago Northwestern railroad tracks to the west of the buildings, which allowed railcars to pull right next to the building for easy loading and shipping. The easy loading became especially necessary when Crown started to receive orders from hotels from all over the United States. Hotel Stevens, now the Hilton Chicago on Michigan Ave, was one of the largest orders they received with 5,500 lamps in one single order.

Like many other riverfront factories that once operated here in St. Charles, the Crown Electric Manufacturing Company's factory no longer operates as business trends shifted to commercial and retail space along the river. The majority of the factory was razed; however, a small portion still stands today as Fox Island Square.

**Address:**  
1 Illinois Street





# Newcombe|Hawley

1924-Present

In 1924 Jesse Hawley and Albert Newcombe formed the Newcombe-Hawley Company and located their factory at First and State Avenues in St. Charles. Making molded fibre products, the main product of the company was the radio speaker horn. A fire in 1931 gutted the factory but did not keep business down for long; Hawley even expanded into many fields within the fibrous market. In 1935, Hawley invented and patented a tropical sun helmet that originally served the general public. Taking notice of the new helmets, Major Reed Landis approached Hawley with the possibility of producing a helmet to be used by the army in hot climates. After a period of research and testing, the army approved the helmet as standard equipment and production began in 1937.

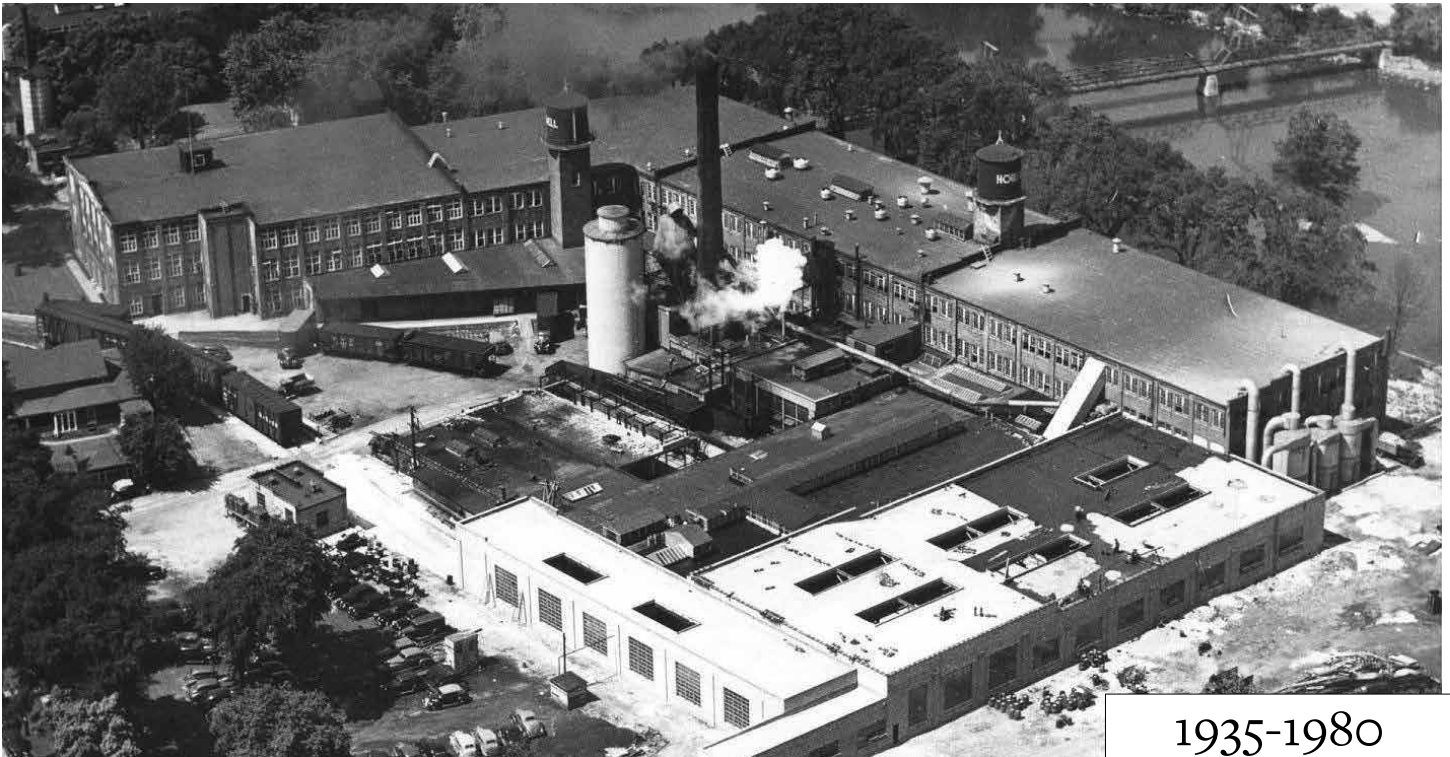
A second factory was needed for the new orders, and in the spring of 1938, Hawley's second plant was located at 333 N. Sixth Street. Manufacturing 500 helmets daily at first, the numbers quickly increased to 10,000 helmets daily. World War II brought changes to Hawley production and the First Avenue plant began to make diaphragms for army tanks, ship and signal corps communication systems, and a newly designed combat helmet. Soon the company was producing 20,000 helmets daily and two hundred new employees were added to the force. Hawley's efforts during the war years were

recognized, and the plants were awarded the Army-Navy E Award in 1943, and two stars for continued excellence in the years afterward.

When the war ended, production turned back to the domestic market and development of new products began. A typewriter case for the Royal Typewriter Co., motion picture projector cases for the Revere Co., clock cases for Telechron clocks, lunch trays for United Air Lines, and bodies for world globes produced by Denoyer-Geppert were all manufactured by the company in the mid-1950s. Hawley continued to experiment with different fiber blends like fiberglass, and in 1967 the company was purchased by HITCO Corporation. From purchasing Hawley, HITCO then had one of the leading producers of reinforced fibrous materials in the automotive, luggage, electronic, and acoustical fields. In 1984, the company moved from St. Charles to Paducah, Kentucky.

## **Addresses:**

201 1st Avenue  
333 6th Street



1935-1980

# Howell Manufacturing Company

Beginning in Geneva in 1867, the W.H. Howell Foundry produced metal door stops, fluting irons, and sad irons. In the 1920s Howell ceased producing the irons as electricity and electric irons became popular, and in 1924, under the new ownership of Edward Ekvall and William McCredie, Howell began producing metal frame furniture including patio ware. After attending the Chicago World's Fair in 1933, metal frame furniture quickly became the trend and despite the Depression, orders began to flood the Howell Company. It was also at the World's Fair where Howell Company found their new designer, Wolfgang Hoffmann. Working for the company from 1934-1942, his designs combined either tubular or flat chromium plated steel with vinyl, leather, linoleum, glass, wood, and Bakelite resulting in large number of chairs, tables, desks, and case goods for both commercial and residential use.

In order to meet the demand, Howell operated three locations within Geneva, and in 1935 moved into the first and second floors of the Cable Piano Company factory in St. Charles. In 1937, when operations completely ceased for Cable Piano, Howell Manufacturing bought the entire factory and consolidated the three Geneva plants into the 175,000 square foot factory in St. Charles, which made production more economical.

When America entered WWII, the Howell Company converted their operations to war-time production of

fragmentation bombs, incendiary bombs, and artillery shells. They were also selected to produce stainless steel mess trays for the Navy, as well as inboard and outboard sections of airplane wings. When the war ended, the factory was converted back to making metal framed furniture with the same success as before, and employed 500 men and women to fulfill orders from all around the country.

In 1954 Acme Steel Company, which later became Interlake, Inc. and was also a previous supplier to Howell, bought the company. Unfortunately, Interlake did not see the same success as in past years and in 1975 sold the company to Burd, Inc. In October of 1979, a labor strike began after a dispute over wages and fringe benefits, and Howell Company never resumed production. In early 1980, the machinery and the property were sold.

Initially sold to developers that planned to turn the building into condominiums, the building was sold again and turned into the Piano Factory Outlet Mall in 1986. After 11 years of business, the mall fell on hard times and foreclosed in 1997. The building was razed in 2000 for townhomes, condominiums, and business development.

**Address:**  
410 1st Street





# Operadio/DuKane Corp.

1928-Present

In 1922, J. McWilliam Stone Sr. established the Operadio Corporation in Chicago, which designed and manufactured portable radios. By 1925, Operadio had become the largest manufacturer of portable radios, and in 1926 Stone tried his hand at producing loudspeakers to supplement his receivers. Business was booming in both areas of manufacture until a fire destroyed the Operadio factory. Realizing the company needed more space, Stone found a factory in St. Charles to continue operations, and in 1928 Operadio took over the former Heinz Cut Glass factory.

After getting settled in to this new factory, Operadio held a display at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, and also built a robot for Sears Roebuck. The company continued production of loudspeakers, and by 1940, Operadio was one of the largest radio loudspeaker manufacturers in the world. Due to the continued growth of production, Operadio soon outgrew the old Heinz factory and leased space in the Cable Piano factory. But more space was needed, so in 1934, a deal was made between Globe Music Company and Operadio for a building trade which gave Operadio double their original floor space. Then in 1936, even more space was needed and Operadio bought the Crown Electrical building.

When WWII broke out, Operadio set aside entertainment production in order to assist in the war effort by producing paging systems for everything from defensive plants to warships. After the war, Stone sold the loudspeaker

business to a group of Operadio employees and began manufacturing electronic and audio visual systems, including communication systems for industrial, hospital, and commercial applications; audio learning laboratories for schools; film strip projectors; and tracking transmitters and other items for military use. In 1951, J. McWilliam Stone changed the name of the company from Operadio to DuKane Corporation, which was derived from the name of the two counties the company was adjacent to: Kane and DuPage. Throughout the 1950s and 60s, business boomed and the company soon realized they needed even more space. In 1968, plans were made for DuKane to build a 250,000 square foot plant as part of the new Central Manufacturing District off of Kirk Road.

Remaining in the same location today, DuKane Corporation is a global leader in plastic welding with locations all over the world.

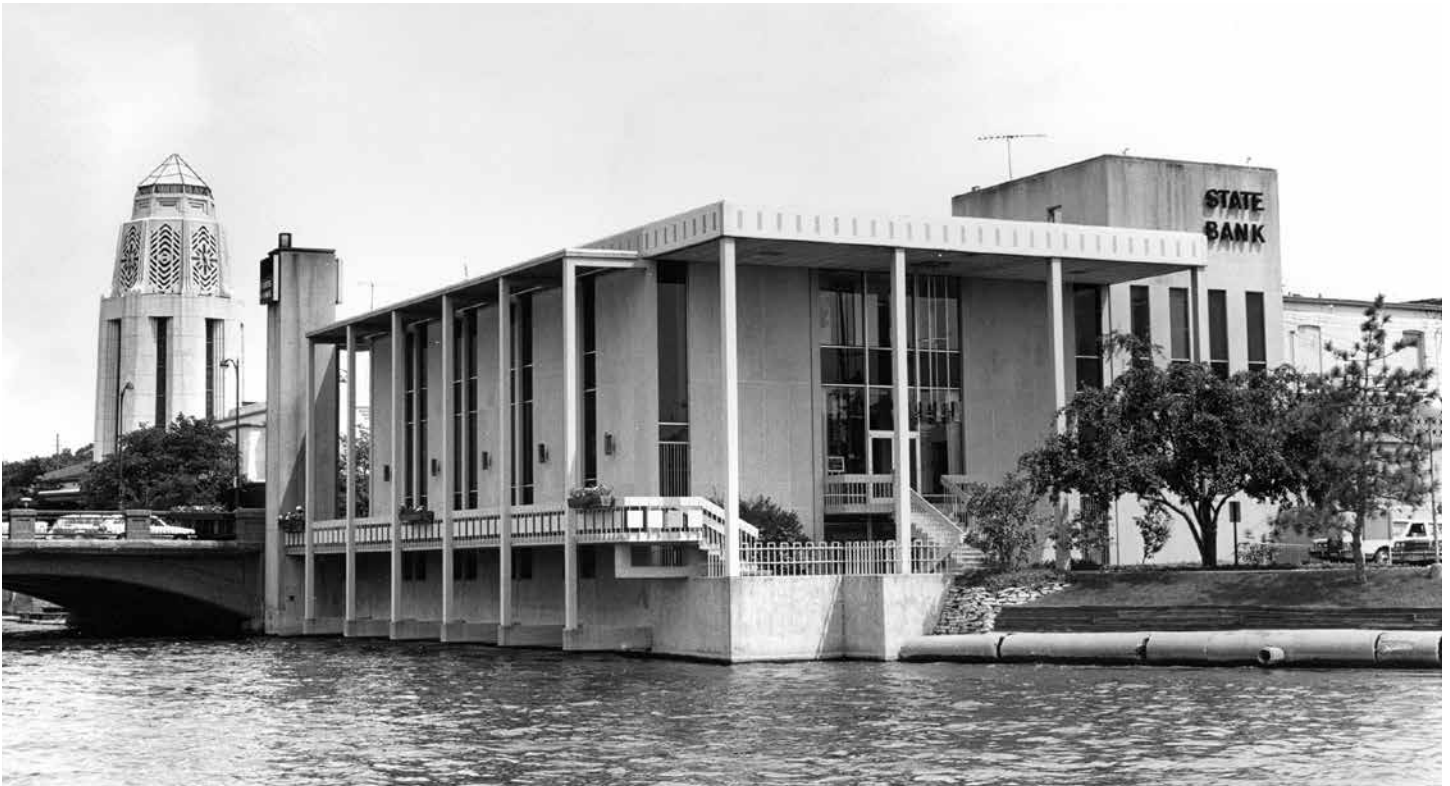
## **Addresses:**

214 S. 13th Avenue — c. 1928

530 N. Washington Street — c. 1934

1 Illinois Street — c. 1936

2900 Dukane Drive — c. 1968



# *Stewart State Bank/ State Bank/BCMO Harris*

1872-2019

The oldest bank in St. Charles was established in 1872 as the Kane County National Bank and had one of the largest capital of banking houses in the county, next to Aurora and Elgin. In April 1911 the bank became a State bank, which by Illinois law meant a State bank examiner was required to check to ensure correctness. The bank's name was also officially changed to Stewart State Bank. Finding space in 1902 in the Osgood, Hunt and Morse Block, Stewart State Bank occupied 8 E. Main Street.

In 1931, Stewart State Bank was taken over by the State Bank of St. Charles. In a memo sent out to bank patrons, the new bank was made possible by the support of the Directors-L.J. Norris, E.J. Baker, C.S. McCornack, Floyd H. Bergland, Albert M. Wolf, and C.W. Norris. The State Bank of St. Charles operated business at 8 E. Main Street until 1965 when a newer, more modern building was built at 1 E. Main Street. The new building featured a lower level which contained the safety deposit area, the loan department, and bookkeeping

offices. A walk-up window outside the front entrance allowed hours outside of normal bank hours and the upper floor contained offices.

The State Bank of St. Charles successfully ran the bank until 1988 when they, and the First National Bank of Batavia, merged with the Harris Trust and Savings Bank of Chicago. Harris continued to run the bank at the Main Street location until August 2019 when the branch was forced to close.

## **Addresses:**

*E. Main Street & 2nd Street — c. 1872*

*8 E. Main Street — c. 1902*

*1 E. Main Street — c. 1965*





1902-2007

# St. Charles National Bank

The other bank that held stature among St. Charles residents was the St. Charles National Bank. Established in 1902, the bank first operated at 107 W. Main Street until 1926 when Col. Edward J. Baker provided a new building for the bank. Baker purchased the old Gartner Bakery building at the corner of Main and Second Street, razing it to build a modern \$200,000 bank building. He hired the architectural firm of Wolf, Sexton, Harper, and Trueax to design the building in a Classical Revival style. Georgia pink marble was used for the exterior of the building and Italian white marble trimmed the inside. The building was also equipped with a machine gun lookout and a burglar-proof vault. On June 20, 1926 the bank officially opened with a celebration for townspeople to view the bank and receive a souvenir.

Colonel Baker owned the building until his death in 1959 when Dellora Norris inherited it. In 1960, National Bank stockholders bought the building from the Norris family. Remaining as the St. Charles National Bank, many changes were made through the '60s and '70s to modernize the building. In 1962, the bronze decorations and furniture were removed and walnut counters replaced the white marble. The bank added executive offices and a conference room to the

west of the original building in 1967, and in 1971 completed a \$250,000 renovation. The renovation added walk-up and drive-up windows and lowered the ceilings in order to add more space for the bookkeeping department.

In 1985, the St. Charles National Bank was sold to ELM-Marine Bancshares of Elmhurst, IL and the St. Charles location became known as Illinois Marine Bank and then Illinois Regional Bank. Old Kent Bank then bought the bank in 1990 and completed renovations of their own before selling the building in 2007 to a law firm. The Geneva law firm of Foote, Myers, Mielke & Flowers, LLC added office space to the north of the original National Bank building and moved its offices to the 3 North Second Street Addition in 2009. The law firm still owns and operates the building today.

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#### **Addresses:**

107 E. Main Street — c. 1902

200 W. Main Street — c. 1926

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## Rehm Electric

1924-Present

LeRoy Rehm began his electrical career at 21 when he attended the Lewis Institute in Chicago and began working at Commonwealth Edison. By age 25, LeRoy had saved enough money to buy a lot in St. Charles and build a home. He left work at Commonwealth and began to work at the Child City of Mooseheart in Batavia, instructing boys in electrical work. In 1924, Rehm planned to open his own electrical business and on December 6, 1924, Rehm's Electrical Shop officially opened. A few years later in 1927, Rehm was appointed Superintendent of Light and Water for the City of St. Charles and worked both jobs for the next six years.

Not only did Rehm Electric sell electrical appliances and supply electricians to the St. Charles area, but Rehm also built the connections that originally lit up the Buckingham

Fountain in Chicago in 1927. After that successful job, Rehm was hired to install electrical equipment in Hotel Baker, which included the lights under the Rainbow Room floor.

Rehm Electric survived the Great Depression and continues to thrive as a family business today. The business is still located in downtown St. Charles at 215 W. Main Street.

**Address:**  
215 W. Main Street





# Gartner's Bakery

1890-1960

Joseph Gartner immigrated to Illinois from Germany when he was nineteen years old. He first worked in a bakery in Hampshire, Illinois, but found business to be slower than he anticipated. Finding a new location, Joseph Gartner settled in St. Charles and in 1890 opened a bakery at the corner of Main and Second Streets (where the St. Charles National Bank building stands). The bakery became popular among St. Charles residents for its five cent ice cream (vanilla only) and twenty-five cent Sunday chicken dinners. In 1893, Joseph convinced his brother John to open a second Gartner's Bakery at 114 E. Main Street, which remained in business until the 1930s.

In 1905, Joseph constructed a new building for the bakery right across the street at 203 W. Main Street. When the bakery moved, it stopped serving meals and focused more on baked

goods, ice cream, candy, and fountain drinks. Joseph's son Karl worked at the bakery throughout the early 1900s and eventually took over the business for his father. Karl operated Gartner's Bakery until 1960, when he retired and sold the building to Bagge Pharmacy.

The building still stands today at the south corner of Main and Second Street, recently vacated by Kettley Realty.

## **Addresses:**

200 W. Main Street — c. 1890s

203 W. Main Street — c. 1905



# Colson's

1880-1992

John Fabian Colson was born in Sweden in 1853 and immigrated with his family to St. Charles before his second birthday. For 12 years, Colson worked as a clerk in L.C. Ward's store and then worked for Charles Anderson at Anderson's Dry Goods Store. Years later, Colson became Anderson's business partner and when Anderson died in 1880, Colson kept the business and renamed it Colson's Department Store. In the early 1900s, Colson moved the store from 24 W. Main Street to 116 W. Main Street.

The second floor of the new Colson building also served as a make-shift history museum in 1933 for the city's 100th anniversary. Harold Colson, son of John Colson, had reached out to other St. Charles citizens to showcase their curios and local memorabilia. Much of these relics were lost when a fire broke out on Christmas Day 1933. Flames poured out of the building and the first floor was heard to have fallen through to the basement. Though the exterior remained intact, the interior was almost completely destroyed. Colson's rebuilt in the same location, and a year later they were open for business again. In 1940, the historical society Harold Colson had organized in 1933 moved into the new Municipal Building.

Colson's continued to thrive after the fire and was one of the best clothing stores in the area. In 1963, youngest child

Lloyd sold the store to Marion Greene which marked the end of Colson family ownership. Greene expanded the store to include many more departments that served a variety of different customers. By 1974, there were almost 20 departments ranging from clothing to hardware. Another fire in 1975 completely destroyed the store again, but Marion Greene rebuilt. After Greene's death in 1978, his widow Doris took over the store and it became so successful two more locations were added in Dekalb and Wheaton.

The recession of the late 1980s and early 1990s, as well as large shopping mall complexes, led Colson's to struggle. In 1992, after 112 years of successful business, Colson's closed its doors. Vertical Drop, a winter sporting store, moved into the location and completely renovated the building in a Colorado ski shop style. The Vertical Drop operated in the Colson's building until the spring of 2013. Stanbridge Master Saddlers now occupies the building.

### **Addresses:**

24 W. Main Street — c. 1880s

116 W. Main Street — c. 1900s





# Blue Goose

1928-Present

Annunciata “Nancy” Lencioni began her fruit and vegetable stand in 1928 at a small store front on Main Street. The name of the business was inspired by a wooden crate with a blue goose on it, and Blue Goose Fruit and Vegetable became the official name. However, a small legal issue came about when another company claimed to have the same name. A ruling was made in favor of the Lencionis, and Blue Goose gained exclusive use of the name.

The first of four locations was located at 205 W. Main Street in the Gartner building block, where for 12 years the Lencionis enjoyed their successful business. After surviving the Great Depression, Blue Goose needed a larger space and moved to the corner of 3rd and Main Street (now Rocket Fizz). Blue Goose was the first store to use shopping carts and still primarily sold staple products like bread, fruit, and vegetables. In 1947, meats were added to the product line.

In 1963, Blue Goose began construction on their third location (at 1st and Illinois Streets) that allowed them to expand their products and become a supermarket. Nancy Lencioni’s son Vasco was owner at the time, and construction of the new store fit his philosophy of how to stay in business:

changing with the times. Blue Goose was the first self-service store in the area, the first to have scanners and checkout counters, and the first store to have refrigerated display cases.

Spending over 40 years at the 1st and Illinois location, the city of St. Charles approached Blue Goose about relocating the store to make way for the First Street Development project. Blue Goose accepted the city’s offer and moved a couple blocks south between 1st and 2nd streets. The Lencioni family continues to operate Blue Goose with the same passion and vision of Nancy Lencioni back in 1928.

### **Addresses:**

205 W. Main Street — c. 1928

301 W. Main Street — c. 1940s

1st & Illinois Streets — c. 1963

300 S. Second Street — c. 2008

# St. Charles History Museum

The Museum is located in the 1928 McCornack Oil Company building at 215 East Main Street. The building served St. Charles as a gas station from 1928 until 1990. After renovations, the Museum opened to the public in May 2001. Prior to 2001 the Museum was located in the St. Charles Municipal Building.

The St. Charles History Museum houses permanent and temporary exhibits, the Colonial Anderson Room, photo and research archives, the Curious Fox Gift Shop, administrative offices, and the storage-preservation repository for the Museum's collections.

*Come visit us today and don't forget to sign up for our email newsletter for the latest news, events, and Museum happenings!*



# *Ways to Support the* **St. Charles History Museum**

## **VOLUNTEER**

The St. Charles History Museum is always in need of dedicated volunteers to help with the Museum collection, exhibits, and at Museum events.

No matter your age or skill level, the History Museum has many available volunteer opportunities for front-end work, special events, research, and archive work.

## **DONATE**

Did you know that as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit, over 75% of our annual operating budget is paid for through membership dues and donations? Each donation, no matter how big or small, helps contribute to our mission of preserving the St. Charles story for generations to come. Each donation to the Museum is tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

## **BECOME A MEMBER**

Members are our biggest asset, and history is made possible because of them! When you become a Museum supporter, you are assisting in the Museum's mission to engage visitors and present St. Charles' rich history. It is because of our members and supporters that the Museum continues to be an important benefit to the St. Charles community. Members enjoy many privileges and benefits, while also sharing in the knowledge that you are proactively contributing to preserving and sustaining the vital history of our great city.





St. CHARLES  
HISTORY MUSEUM

COLLECT • PRESERVE • PRESENT

YOUR CITY. YOUR HISTORY. YOUR SENSE OF COMMUNITY.

The St. Charles History Museum is a 501(c)(3), non-profit organization operating the St. Charles History Museum and historic archive. The Museum holds more than 10,000 photographs in its archive and 15,000 artifacts in its collection.

215 E. Main Street, St. Charles, IL 60174 • [stcmuseum.org](http://stcmuseum.org)

ST. CHARLES  
ILLINOIS