

The Charlemagne

St. Charles History Museum
Quarterly Newsletter

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SPRING 2020

Exhibit Celebrates Legacy of Local Business

by **Tim Kirsininkas**
Marketing & Public
Engagement Manager

The St. Charles History Museum's new exhibit, *Booming Business in the Beauty Spot of the Fox Valley*, explores the legacies of some of St. Charles' most outstanding businesses over the course of its history.

The exhibit features the stories of St. Charles businesses and industry which saw a major boom at the beginning of the 20th century as waves of new immigrants and settlers arrived in the Fox River Valley looking for work. Through never-before displayed artifacts and photos, the exhibit provides a snapshot of each of the companies that have had a distinct and lasting legacy and contributed to St. Charles becoming the city it is today.

Among the 14 companies featured in the exhibit are Colonial Café and Ice Cream, Blue Goose Market, and Rehm Electric, three of St. Charles' longest-running family-owned businesses. Other featured companies include the Cable Piano Company, Heinz Cut Glass, and Howell Manufacturing, each of which are notable for making significant contributions in cutting-edge technology and manufacturing procedures and employed scores of St. Charles residents over the years.

"St. Charles has enjoyed a long history of diverse business and industry," said Museum Executive Director Alison Costanzo. "We are excited to present this celebration of the legacy of local business as we enter the next chapter of our community's history."

The new exhibit is sponsored by Sterling Bank of St. Charles and will be on display until mid-August.



Workers assembling pianos at the Cable Piano Factory. The facility was a major employer of St. Charles residents for many years.



Volunteer Bryan Wirball (center) examines a map of businesses with Aldermen Art Lemke, Rita Payleitner and other visitors at our VIP and member preview night.



St. CHARLES
HISTORY MUSEUM

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Museum Hours

Tuesday - Saturday
11 am - 4 pm

Closed Sunday-Monday

About Us

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E-mail: info@stcmuseum.org
stcmuseum.org

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St. Charles, IL 60174



Letter from the Board President

Dear Members and friends of the Museum,

I am proud and honored to serve as your Board President for the next two years. Twenty-five years ago, my wife Monica and I chose St. Charles to raise our young family because of its beauty and history. We remain because of so many wonderful friends, neighbors, and fellow volunteers. This is a significant time of transition for the Museum as we say farewell to Alison Costanzo, our amazing Executive Director of the past five years. Through her leadership and vision, the Museum has sprung alive and become a vibrant community resource and partner. My short term goal is to find a quality Director to replace her and continue carrying forth her vision. Long-term, I am guided by our new strategic plan to foster a sustainable Museum, supported by diverse revenue streams that provide quality community programs that incorporate and honor St. Charles' rich and proud history. Thank you for your continued generous support and please feel free to contact us at info@stcmuseum.org with your observations, suggestions, and questions. We look forward to serving you and our great city.



Sincerely,
Mike Corbett, Board President



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Museum Approves New Strategic Plan

Over the course of the past year, the St. Charles History Museum staff and Board of Directors have been working with an outside consultant to update our Strategic Plan, which will serve as a guiding “road map” as we enter a new decade and the next chapter of the St. Charles’ History Museum’s storied legacy.

Through several months of community and member surveys, analysis of our strengths and weaknesses, and several focus groups, the Museum now has a solid course of action which will guide us during this exciting time for the Museum.



At the center of our strategic plan, we have identified the core values which will guide us in our mission to collect, preserve, and present St. Charles history:

- **Heritage:** The Museum is committed to preserving collections that contribute to the St. Charles story as well as documenting the historic architecture and character of St. Charles.
- **Community:** The Museum is committed to serving the community of St. Charles, its residents and visitors, by providing diverse historical perspectives.
- **Stewardship:** The Museum is committed to excellence in museum policies and practices that will conserve its collections for generations and its financial resources to ensure sustainability.
- **Education:** The Museum is committed to engaging residents and visitors in our collective past through exciting and interactive exhibits, programs, and events.
- **Research:** The Museum is committed to providing resources for local historical research.

Among other goals outlined in the plan are undertaking an audit to ensure best financial practices, conducting a space needs analysis, shoring up our membership engagement procedures, and developing a marketing plan. All these tasks are set to begin in the coming year. For more information and to view the full St. Charles History Museum 2019-2021 Strategic Plan, visit www.stcmuseum.org/who-we-are.

Welcome New & Returning Members

Art Lemke - Joyce Creiger - Leslie Hepler - Larry Brucher
Loretta Zuehlke - Diane Hemmingsen - Donald Regole
Steve & Cindy Martin - Al & Maurine Patten - Rudy De Weirdt
Jay Rasmussen - Daphne Manuel - Carol Bibly - Bryan Wirball
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Pollyanna Brewing Company
FONA International

Renew or become
a Member Today!

[stcmuseum.org/
membership](http://stcmuseum.org/membership)

Executive Director Alison Costanzo

It's hard to believe that five years have gone by since I started at the St. Charles History Museum, and when I look back at all that has been accomplished, it really has been an honor to bring the Museum into the forefront of the St. Charles community. I knew prior to coming on that there were going to be significant challenges, but I also knew that I could make a difference and make the Museum a place that the community could take pride in. Coming to the St. Charles, I knew the only way to make it successful was to invest myself fully in the organization and, in many ways, create a family. I have been fortunate enough to have had an incredibly talented board, staff, interns, and volunteers over the years. I couldn't have made this place what it is without their time, dedication, and support.



Along this journey, I have had the opportunity to work with and meet wonderful people who love this community and the Museum. One of my fondest memories which is a relatively recent one at our Annual Membership and Volunteer appreciation event. To see everyone here having a wonderful time and enjoying the Museum is what I wanted from the start. To see that moment is humbling and fills me with great satisfaction.

I have always felt that everything happens for a reason and that I came to the Museum at the right time. I know that this is the right time for my departure, though it is very difficult to say goodbye. There is something very special about St. Charles, there is a love and respect for history that is weaved into the culture of this community. I am proud and privileged that I had the opportunity to be a part of this unique history.

Collections & Exhibitions Manager Amanda Helfers

Hello all, I am very sad to announce that I will be leaving the Collections and Exhibitions Manager position at the St. Charles History Museum to become the Museum and Library Specialist at the Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology and am incredibly excited for this new adventure. My career began here in St. Charles in September 2016 as an intern with no prior experience and no clue what the museum field entailed. With the support of Alison, the Board, members, numerous volunteers, and the St. Charles community, I became more confident in navigating the field and quickly determined it was the career I was meant to be in.



In July of 2018, I was given the wonderful opportunity to step into the Collections and Exhibitions Manager role, which I have greatly enjoyed. Working in the collection, creating temporary exhibits, helping with programs, and connecting with the community have all taught me many valuable lessons that I will carry with me in this new journey. My time here has been filled with fabulous memories and I am extremely grateful to have started my career in such an incredible institution. Thank you all so much!

Museum to Raffle Off Prizes in East vs. West Fundraiser

stcmuseum.org/east-vs-west



It's La Mesa vs. Pollyanna... Who Will Raise the Most?

For as long as St. Charles has been around, the Fox River has served as the dividing line for the city. Before the construction of the city's first bridges, the city functioned almost as two separate cities entirely. Later, a fierce rivalry developed between the schools on either side of the community before they were combined into a single school in the late 1800s. That rivalry between the two sides of the river was reignited with the opening of St. Charles North High in 2000.

This year's community fundraiser for the St. Charles History Museum taps into the historic competitive spirit and now friendly rivalry between St. Charles' East vs. West sides.

One establishment on each side of the river, Pollyanna Brewing Co. on the East Side and La Mesa Modern Mexican on the West Side have agreed to represent both sides of St. Charles. They'll be facing off in a 12-week fundraiser to see who can raise the most money to support our mission of preserving St. Charles' history for generations to come.

Stop into either of these establishments and ask how you can buy your tickets. Support your favorite side or your favorite establishment and buy your tickets today!



**TICKETS AVAILABLE
FOR \$5 OR 5 FOR \$20**

Grand-Prize: A Week Long Getaway on Eleuthera Island in the Bahamas! Escape the brutal cold of winter with a trip to beautiful Eleuthera Island. You and a guest will fly round trip from Chicago to Nassau, and from there take a short ferry ride to your secluded island destination. ***Due to recent concerns regarding travel safety in the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak, the grand prize winner will have the option to select the trip OR the cash value equivalent of \$2,000. Trip provided by peacefulgetaways.com.***

Trip dates: January 9-16, 2021 - 7 days, 6 nights

Other prizes include prize baskets from La Mesa and Pollyanna, Dick Pond Athletics, and other fine St. Charles Establishments. Each ticket purchased helps support the St. Charles History Museum and our efforts to collect, preserve, and present St. Charles history. Don't delay, buy your tickets today! Find out more at stcmuseum.org.

Museum News

Education Committee Plans Fun Year of Events & Programs

By Vanessa Bell-La Sota, Education Committee Chair

As the new chair of the Education Committee, it is my pleasure to share some programming highlights for the coming year. Our Museum staff has been working hard to provide a variety of rich new experiences for you! Our Spring children's Storytime Series will launch a new partnership with our St Charles Public Library beginning in April. May brings a repeat of last year's opportunity for residents to honor a veteran or active duty military as they "Ring a Bell for a Veteran" employing the historic Wild Rose bell in front of the Museum on Saturday during Memorial Day weekend, and our "Living History Day" WWII re-enactors will offer insight into the national observance of the 75th Anniversary of the end of WWII.

Last year, the four Posts of our St. Charles Veterans Center partnered with the Museum for the 100th Centennial of American Legion Post 342, to initiate the program. Learn about the unique story of the Wild Rose Bell and join us to honor those who serve! Next, we will reprise our children's Victory Garden program with continued St. Charles Veterans Center sponsorship as local students create and learn about a garden in the WWII tradition in front of the Museum.

Thursday, June 4th marks the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment, giving women the right to vote. The Rockford Peaches women's baseball team comes to Pottawatomie Park June 7th for an exhibition game to give us an idea of what strides women made in the sport. Come on out- we'll have peanuts, popcorn and Cracker Jack! It will be a fun day in the Park!



The Museum plans to expand its children & family program selection this year.

May 7th through September 3rd, look for the return of our popular "History Happy Hour" series. This new series will take place on the first Thursday of each month. Local trivia will be served up with fine wine, beers, and savory charcuterie. It will be a great way to wind down after work

and experience some of our city's history, as each event will have a different educational theme and short presentation. Have you been to the Museum for an evening with our local musicians like the Ryan Carney Trio? Expect some great evenings enjoying music and rich historical perspectives ahead!

On September 19th, we will host a House Tour of the Moody Millington Historic District homes, with a commemorative program book for attendees, Interior and exterior tours will be led by Museum volunteer docents. Would you like to be a docent? Contact the Museum.

Fall continues unveiling our exciting, colorful, local history "Grave Reminders" narrative cemetery tours-(of which I have been a part for the past two years as a character re-enactor). I look forward to meeting you at one of our upcoming programs and events!



Incoming Education Chair Vanessa Bell-La Sota brings her enthusiastic teaching expertise and community involvement to the Museum.



This year's Living History Day will feature WWII re-enactors to recognize the 75th anniversary of the end of the war.

Museum Uncovers Footage of Municipal Building Construction



The St. Charles Municipal Building under construction in 1939.

In an exciting recent discovery, the St. Charles History Museum has uncovered never-before seen footage of St. Charles' prized landmark, the Municipal Building, being constructed from start to finish, as well as the opening and dedication ceremony on September 1, 1940. The reel also features shots of community philanthropists Lester and Dellora Norris and Col. Edward J. Baker admiring their work from across the river in the penthouse of Hotel Baker. The families donated the land and funds necessary to build the building. The original film reel had been buried in the depths of the Museum archive in a box of other 8mm and 35mm film reels, and was sent to be digitized. The Museum previously had no way to view these film reels, but through new technology we are able to send these reels to be preserved by Tim Frakes, a local film producer who specializes in the digitization of old films.

Through our ongoing collections organization project, we have been able to find and document many important pieces of St. Charles history, including this cherished footage. Among other recent finds were film reels documenting the opening ceremony of the original Delnor Hospital (also donated by the Norris family), as well as footage of Baker and Norris family outings, and new footage of Col. Baker's prized champion trotter horses in action.



From L to R: Community philanthropists Dellora Norris, Col. Edward J. Baker, and Lester J. Norris pictured in newly-digitized film during the opening ceremony of the new Municipal Building on Sept. 1, 1940.

The ongoing collections project is a 6-7 year undertaking to document and record each one of the over 10,000 items and 15,000 photographs in the Museum's collection to ensure that St. Charles' history remains accessible to all for generations to come.

The rediscovery of this important film is all part of our mission of collecting, preserving, and presenting St. Charles' rich history. To help support our mission and ensure that items like this can be properly preserved and maintained, consider supporting the Museum by becoming a volunteer, becoming a member, or making a financial contribution.

View the film footage in its entirety on our YouTube Channel or at www.stcmuseum.org/blog.



Museum staff examines film reels from the 1940s recently discovered in our archives through our ongoing collections organization project.

Community News

Honors Presented for Betty Butler, One of America's Oldest Living WAVES

St. Charles resident and World War II Navy veteran Betty Butler was honored in a special ceremony at the St. Charles Veterans Center on Monday, December 9th, 2019. Butler, who recently turned 98, is among the oldest living WAVES in the United States.

During World War II, the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) manned ports and shore stations around the United States along with the Coast Guard SPARS while servicemen went off to fight on the front lines and on the high seas. At one point during the war, the WAVES totaled over 86,291 members spanning across 900 shore stations, becoming an integral part of the Navy's efforts to defend the home front.

While a vast majority of the service branch cared for routine day-to-day tasks in shore stations such as clerical work, health care, or storekeeping, other women service members were involved in more involved duties like maintenance, radio and control tower operation, and aviation. Butler herself was involved in training pilots for the war effort in the Link flight simulator unit from 1941-1946.

At the ceremony at the Veterans Center on December 9th, Mayor Ray Rogina proclaimed the day "Betty Butler Day" in St. Charles and honored her with a ceremonial key to the city in celebration of her distinguished service and continued dedication to serving her community and her veteran post.

On behalf of all of us at the St. Charles History Museum, congratulations Betty! You are a true St. Charles treasure and an exemplary reminder that young or old, service to our community and our nation are key to living a long and fulfilling life.

The St. Charles Veterans Center is open to all members of the community, veterans, and their families. If you would like to learn more, visit them at www.stcharlesveteranscenter.org.



Betty Butler, WWII Navy Veteran, was recently recognized for her years of dedicated service to St. Charles.



A WAVES recruiting poster from WWII.

Get Involved with your Museum... Volunteer!



The St. Charles History Museum is currently looking for volunteers to help with our day-to-day operations as well as to help at Museum events. No matter your age or skill level, the History Museum has many opportunities available. A minimum commitment of a four hour shift either once a week or biweekly for at least 6 months is requested. Hours available 11am-4pm, Tuesday through Saturday. For more information, visit stcmuseum.org/volunteer or email info@stcmuseum.org.

Museum Snapshots



Former Bentz's Texaco owner Archie Bentz (right) secured a vintage Teaxco gas pump, now on display in our Gift Shop. The pump pays tribute to our building's legacy as a gas and service station.



Michael Verive of the Fox Valley Whiskey Society led a presentation on the history of whiskey and prohibition at the Museum on Dec. 7

Thank You 2019 Donors!

75% of our annual operating expenses are paid for through the generous support of our members and donors. These are the people who made history happen in 2019. Thank you!

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YOUR SENSE OF COMMUNITY.

Upcoming Events and Programs

stcmuseum.org/events



Stories at the History Museum

*Fridays, April 3 & May 8
10-11 a.m.*

Hear some stories and do a history-themed craft! After the story time, explore the museum and learn about our town's rich history. This program is in partnership with the St. Charles Library.



Paddlewheel Riverboats Pop-Up Ribbon Cutting

*Saturday, May 2, 11 a.m.
Pottawatomie Park*

This year, the iconic St. Charles Paddlewheel Riverboats are celebrating their 75th anniversary of sailing on the Fox River. Join us as we celebrate this famous local business!



End of WWII Living History Day at the Museum

*Saturday, May 23,
11 a.m.-4p.m.*

We're taking it back to the end of WWII in this year's Living History Day! Meet and greet with reenactors to learn about equipment and local WWII veterans to thank them for their dedicated service.



Living History Day with the Rockford Peaches

*Sunday, June 7, 1-5 p.m.
Pottawatomie Park*

Enjoy an afternoon of baseball presented by the All American Girls Baseball League's Rockford Peaches! Afterward, enjoy Q and A and photo ops with the players. This program is in partnership with the St. Charles Park District

St. Charles, IL 60174
215 E. Main St.

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