



WALKING TOUR



117 South Main
1878, H. C. Bode, Builder

Recognized on the National Register of Historic Places and in the WPA Guide to Historic American Buildings for its engineering, the Odd Fellows Hall is the tallest building on Main Street. This double-bracketed Italianate structure has particular importance in the history and identity of St. Charles because of its design, and because of its prominent position in the center of the block between the original Court House and the early Market Place, later City Hall. It has been referred to as the “Queen of Main Street”. Constructed in 1878 by the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, this structure reflects the pride of these prominent citizens in fraternal work and in their community. The third floor was their meeting hall and the second floor hosted the dance hall, theater space and a lounge. On the first floor was the St. Charles Savings Bank, and in the lower entry level was Emmons Title Company founded by an early Recorder of Deeds, Benjamin Emmons. Carved in stone and placed on the building above its entry are three rings. They represent the IOOF creed: Friendship, Love, Truth.

112 South Main
1863, W. Henry Maertens
Maertens Tobacco & Cigar Factory

After emigrating from Germany in 1846, W. Henry Maertens learned the tobacco trade and settled into business dealing in the ‘leaf’. Maertens built this building and conducted his business “Maerten’s Tobacco & Cigar Factory” here until 1902. When W. Henry Maertens built this building, he paid his neighbor, John Platz, half of the cost of his north wall in exchange for permission to build his building “using said wall as Maerten’s south wall”. He served as a public figure until “He was ushered out of the office by political skullduggery more successful than righteous.” Seventeen million pounds of tobacco were grown in Missouri in 1850, nearly matching production in Tennessee and Maryland. Along with cigars for smoking, manufactured (chewing) tobacco was available. Made up in two forms, chewing tobacco was formed into “plugs” or “twists” and soaked with spices, oils, sugar and rum for the discriminating palate.



108 South Main
1873, Frederick Buschman

“Tin guttering, still pipes, and stove pipes at reasonable rates”. Frederick Buschman, with his wife Sophie, had the first building on this site in 1850 where they operated their Tin, Copper and Sheet Iron Manufactory. The present brick building was constructed by him in 1873 for the shop and upstairs residence. Julius Quade was a young apprentice who married the daughter, also Sophia, in 1872. Widow Buschman sold the building to daughter Sophia Quade for \$4309 in 1875 with the provision in the deed that the property be “for her sole use and benefit without interference of her said husband”. The Manufactory became Julius Quade & Co., Dealers in Stoves & Tin Ware, and the property remained in the Quade family ownership until 1946.

101 South Main
1886, H. C. Bode, Builder

The two-story brick Market House at this location had outdoor scales, indoor stalls for selling meat and produce and a public bulletin board. City offices later occupied the second floor. The present building facade reflects changes to the structure in 1886 by builder H. C. Bode. It served as City Hall until 1976 when new facilities were built at Second and Monroe Streets and continued to house the St. Charles Police Department for several years. Still owned by the City of St. Charles, this has been home to the St. Charles County Historical Society archives center and museum since 1982.



Originally called “Les Petites Cotes”, The Little Hills, St. Charles was founded in 1769 by Louis Blanchette, a French Canadian fur trapper. The village was incorporated as a City in 1809. Missouri became a state in 1821 and its legislators met one block south of here from June 4, 1821 through October 1, 1826. St. Charles is proud to have been the First State Capitol of the State of Missouri.



Jefferson and Main Streets

Near this intersection the County Courthouse, Jail and the Concert Hall were each severely damaged or destroyed by a tornado early Sunday afternoon, February 27, 1876. Four people were killed and over 150 buildings damaged or destroyed.

A special edition of the St. Charles Cosmos Monitor newspaper described the storm and its aftermath: "At

half past one o'clock, a heavy storm cloud was observed directly south of the city, moving due north. Soon came signs of the fury which was to follow. The ragged wind blew scud in all directions. And almost instantly the lurid brown of a cyclone appeared in the southwest about three miles from the upper end of St. Charles.

"Moving eastward at first, the terrible cloud column worked its way toward the city. A deep-toned, humming roar, very similar in sound and disagreeable effect to the noise and earth-shaking properties of a steam blower of a locomotive engine, but magnified a hundred fold, was the dreadful signal of its coming. Deliberately, but erratically, it moved through our devoted city, death in its roar and destruction in its touch. (St. Charles City-County Library - www.youranswerplace.org)

101 North Main 1864, Ludwig Meyer Meyer's Jewelry, 1834-1966

Ludwig Meyer immigrated through New Orleans to St. Charles in 1834 from Brunshlo, Kingdom of Hanover, Germany. Skilled as a Watchmaker, he established Meyer Jewelry at Main and Madison Street upon his arrival. He became a naturalized citizen in 1838 and the same year bought this lot, with a frame house, from Jesse Morrison. In 1864, Meyer built this building with living quarters for his wife and two children on the upper floors.



Meyer's jewelry business passed on to his heirs and continued in business here until 1966. During all those years, a clock Meyer had made in Germany and brought with him aboard ship, hung on the shop wall and ticked off perfect time.



122 North Main Street circa 1855

A young German cabinetmaker, George Baumann, began operation of his cabinet shop in this building which he built before the Civil War. Albin Morgner became the owner in 1875, and the building remained in his family holdings until 1922. St. Charles Steam Laundry used this property from 1906 to 1910 under Messieurs Prongue & Jacobs, as "two of the businessmen of this city whose effort and attention to business has accomplished something for the cleanliness of the people, and thus themselves". During the 1930's the Steam Laundry operated from 400-402 South Main later moving to 830 South Main. For seventy years following the Laundry, a barbershop at this location provided grooming for several generations of St. Charles gentlemen.

126-130 North Main 1896, Theodore Klinger Ringe-Barklage & Company, Farm Machinery 1906-1936

St. Charles County produced over a million bushels of wheat in 1879. Three flouring mills operated on Main Street near the elevators, ferry and railroad tracks during the second half of the 19th century. St. Charles City Mill, founded by Adam Klinger in 1851, operated here until about 1890. Theodore Klinger built this 'new' building in 1896, selling it ten years later to Louis Ringe, Jr. and George Barklage for their wholesale and retail farm machinery business. Ringe-Barklage & Company also sold surreys - automobiles with a 'straight bottom and overhead canopy' like their horse-drawn predecessors. Louis Ringe, Sr. was a gunsmith who emigrated from Hanover, Germany, and who served five terms as mayor in St. Charles. On the south wall of this building you can see shadows of 1917 in the painted advertisement "Agency for Ford Cars".



132-136 North Main 1865, George Becker

Here two two-story brick buildings, joined with a center "hall between for common use", were built by George Becker in 1865. John and Anderson Wolf paid \$42 a month rent for the north side "cellar to attic" and established a saloon in 1866. The first floor of the south half, including the hall was leased to a gunsmith.



For the next one hundred years a saloon operated here. Missouri Dawson, daughter of Becker and heir to the property, rented both buildings to her brother-in-law, Charles Runge, for \$55 a month. By 1903, Billy Schulte's new Billiard Hall was open. William Schulte, Saloonkeeper, purchased the buildings in 1924.

**142 North Main
1862, August Marten**

James Chauvin sold a house and lot on this site to August Marten in 1862. He paid \$1476 for the property, built the building we see here and sold it in 1866 to Henry Hensick for \$8250. Mr. Hensick became bankrupt in the economic turmoil which followed the Civil War. Henry Linnemann was the highest bidder at the auction in 1876 and became the owner for the payment of \$5310. Here he operated his farm implement store for about twenty five years. The building later housed Weil Shoe Mart and Braufman Clothing and continued in the Linnemann family ownership until 1957.



**City Square II (100 North Block)
Ferry Crossing the
Missouri River to St. Louis**

St. Paul la Croix purchased this entire City Square in 1809 for \$100. Jean Belland paid \$110 for the privilege of operating a 'ferryage' along the riverbank to the rear of this building. Mistery Wheeler and Jacoby bought the site in 1814 and though Mr. Wheeler sold his half of the lot, in the deed he retained

"the right, title and privilege of the Bank and Shore of said River Missouri and the Ferry and right of Ferry ... right of landing & relanding, passing & repassing to and on the bank of said Missouri River as far back as the picket fence now stands." The 'Chauvin' ferry of the 1820's is thought to 'land and reland' at this site. Prices and services of 'ferryage' businesses were regulated by City Ordinance and were important matters as the village did not yet have a bridge for crossing the river.

**201-203 North Main
1867, Francis Oberkoetter**

Francis Oberkoetter, born in Hanover, Germany and a shoemaker by trade, came to St. Charles in 1842. By 1849, he had become a successful businessman here purchasing his own "business house", respected for close attention to business, fair dealing and industry. He built this building in 1867 - one of the best business houses in St. Charles, a large handsome structure.



For a short time Mackenzie Hotel owned by Oberkoetter's son in law, Mackenzie, operated on the second floor. Though Mackenzie had become the owner of the building, his rumored "dissipating gambling" and spending all the hotel profits resulted in his sale of the building to local grocer, H. B. Denker, in 1894 for \$7,500. The sale price might have been higher but Mackenzie owed Denker a considerable grocery bill for the hotel. Palace Clothing occupied the ground floor of this building until 1925 when they built a building across the street. Another German immigrant, A. R. Huning, relocated his business, Huning Dry Goods, here in 1927 and that dry goods business continued until 1994. The Masonic Temple Association purchased the building in 1926 and used the upper levels for the next nearly seventy years.



**208 North Main
1904, Albert Runge**

A small one story Revival style building built in 1904 to replace an earlier 1853 structure, this unique property has a pressed metal ornamental cornice, glazed brick piers, a color fired tile entry and full glass front. Its occupants contributed significantly to the modernization of St. Charles around the turn of the century. Mr. Runge and Mr. Link were plumbers and John Schulze was in his early thirties when he took over the plumbing business. New bath tubs, toilets and showers could be purchased here. In addition to facilities for homes, Mr. Schulze was responsible for plumbing and 'sewering' St. Charles' new manufacturing buildings, schools, banks and St. Joseph Hospital. St. Charles Light and Power manufactured gas just across the alley to the rear of this property.

**220-226 North Main
1906, William B.
Rechtern
The Central Building**

The Central Building was constructed in 1906 by William B. Rechtern to house the Bruns Machine Co., a hardware and farm implement firm, and his own Wm. B. Rechtern Clothing Co. Professional offices and local organizations utilized the second floor.



Earlier erected on this site was the Central Mill, built in 1866, and the Constitutional Presbyterian Church, built in 1845 was on the northeast portion of the site. The Central Mill continued to produce flour until 1898 when it was mostly destroyed by fire. Both the Central Mill and the Constitutional Presbyterian Church were demolished during the construction of the Central Building, one of the largest commercial buildings in St. Charles at the time. Traditional cast iron columns and wood framed windows identify the street level and the second story is uniquely decorated above the windows and at the cornice with pressed metal Italianate ornamentation. The Central Building remained in the Rechtern family ownership until 1983.



**311 North Main
1881 J. N. and J. C. Mittelberger
J. N. Mittelberger Dry Goods/
St. Charles Opera House**

John N. Mittelberger's original two story brick building housed an Opera House in the 1860's and 1870's until it was destroyed by fire in the early morning hours of January 1, 1881. The same year he rebuilt a new second floor Opera House with his dry goods store on the ground floor. Dry goods and clothing continued to be sold here by various merchants until 1993.

The popular new St. Charles Opera House had its entrance from 12' high double doors on Main Street, up the open staircase to a ticket booth on the landing. Its auditorium had three hundred and fifty seats with a horseshoe shaped balcony, a twenty five foot stage with a dressing room on each side, decorative plaster ceiling moldings, and paneled balcony railings. Exquisitely dressed patrons attended performances including vaudeville acts, dramas, silent movies, and guests appearances by 'famous' people.

Remodeling in the early 1900's changed the ground floor mercantile to recessed windows to better display merchandise and age claimed the original balcony, portal dormers and roof castings which have not been replaced. Major restoration in 1995 reconstructed the original window openings and revealed the original Victorian decorative cast iron columns and floral bracketing. The upper level is now two floors of office space, in spite of the collapse of much of the roof structure which threatened the entire building before the remodeling was completed.

**319 North Main
circa 1875, Gustave Johannpeter**

Gustave Johannpeter built this brick two story brick with the roundel (round window) in the cornice in 1875. He sold it to Frederick Gut in 1883 for \$1100. By 1895 Henry Broeker, artist and painter, had moved his painting company here where he sold paint, wallpaper, glass and oils. He decorated many turn of the century homes with wall paper, wood graining and special whitewashes for plastered ceilings perfecting skills he first learned in his native Prussia. Ground color pigments were mixed by hand for special colors, but wallpaper was chosen for parlours and important rooms in most homes. Many Main Street commercial buildings had large ornate business signs designed and painted by Henry Broeker.



**324 North Main
1892, John Atkinson
Atkinson's Dry Goods
and Kuhlmann's**

"When the first ladies pantaloons skirt was put on exhibition in the Kuhlmann show window it drew a crowd of spectators" on Main Street. The Rational Dress Society supported healthy exercise and the use of the bicycle as a 'vehicle of liberation' for women and protested "against the introduction of any fashion in dress that either deforms the figure, impedes the movement of the body or in any way tends to injure the health".

Built in 1892 by John Atkinson, this building was home to his Atkinson Dry Goods store. Kuhlmann's continued the dry goods business for many years when George Kuhlmann bought the building in 1907. Extensive remodeling, along with a small addition to the north, have altered this storefront. Excellent photographs remain to remind us of the original elaborately decorated arch and balustrade facade top embellishments - an example of Victorian exuberance in mercantile design.

**340 North Main Street
Galt House Hotel
1863 by Henry Angert, Sr.**

Hotels were extremely popular businesses in St. Charles largely because of the railroad. Cars and coaches were transferred by ferry at the foot of Morgan Street from 1856 to 1871. Henry Angert, Sr. built the Galt House Hotel and Angert Grocery in 1863. The proprietor of the Hotel in 1885 was Thomas J. Robbins about whom these lines were written: "He has educated himself up to the point of keeping his physiognomy in the presentment", as the French would say, of a perpetual perennial smile, the like of which it is a very joy to see. The traveling man, especially, delights to revel in the luxuries of his bounteous epicurean table and to stentorate circumtonically snugly tucked away within the folds of his immaculate sheets." This property remained in the Angert family until 1923.



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Enjoy more photos and information about Main Street St. Charles at
www.PreservationJournal.org

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