

Register of Old Buildings  
Macon County Historical Coordinating Council

Address: 133-137 E. Prairie - Williams Fashion Shop.

Legal description:

Resurvey of lots 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8 Blk. 2  
Original town of Decatur.

Date of original construction: 1854.

1876 - remodeled.

Name of original owner: Universalist Church of Decatur.

History:

1. The card on this property in the office of the Macon County Assessor contains the following data:

Structural frame -

Wood - columns, main beams, joists, girders

Foundation - masonry walls, spread footings

No basement

Wood floors and roof

Common brick exterior

Modern front for Williams Fashion Shop

Heating plant - across the alley

2. See attached article.

Present owner's name: Helen Post.

133 - 137 East Prairie



Photo - Margaret M. Meyer, 1974



# The Church Is Gone; Window Stays

By Otto R. Kyle  
For the Herald and Review

How many have walked along the 100 block East Prairie street between North Main and North Water streets and noticed a second-story round top window on the alley side of the building on the south side of Prairie just east of the alley?

Those who have noticed it may not have given it a second thought. A few may have thought that it looked something like a church window. They were correct for 93 years ago the second floor of that building was a Universalist church.

How many times there have been remodeling and repairs inside is unknown but not only that one window exists but six others. There are three more on the alley side — two long ones and one short. Go into the alley and you get a view of the back of the building with three windows in a cluster, one long narrow one in the middle and shorter ones on either side. The brick wall reveals the building's age.

Decatur's Universalist church was organized in 1854 by Rev. D. P. Bunn with nine charter members. A brick church was built on the site of the present East Prairie street building. In 1876 the church was remodeled. The walls were raised to provide an audience room on the second floor with the first floor to be used for a business room or offices. That is why there are second story church windows.

Rev. D. P. Bunn was the pastor for 14 years, resigning to become the chaplain of the 56th Illinois infantry. However, a year later he had to resign on account of illness. He had come from Ohio to Illinois in 1835 locating near Bloomington and in 1842 came to a farm near Decatur. In 1842 he began preaching and had a pastorate in Mt. Pulaski before he went to Iowa City, Iowa. He soon returned to Mt. Pulaski and then in 1854 came to Decatur to organize the Decatur church.

His son, David L. Bunn, was a prominent Decatur lawyer, a leader in the Universalist church and in Decatur music. He organized the Decatur Choral Society, the Decatur Musical Union, which gave many concerts, and was one of the organizers and the president of the Handel Society with 100



Herald and Review Photo

The clue to Bank Avenue is in this advertisement: "Robert Irwin, Attorney at Law, Decatur, Ill. Office over Frank Priest's store, opposite Railroad Bank, Central Block." The Railroad bank was in the middle of the block on the east side of what is now Merchant street but was called Bank street after the bank was established there in 1854.

ROUND TOP windows are reminders of the days when this building on Prairie Avenue was the site of the Universalist Church.

There has been no Universalist church in Decatur for many years but those second story round-top windows are reminders of earlier days.

Advertisements in Weekly Decatur Magnet, May 16, 1859:

### New Hack Line

The undersigned will run a regular Hack from DECATUR to MATTOON as follows: Leaves Mattoon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, at 5 o'clock in the morning and arrives at Decatur by seven in the evening. Returning, leaves Decatur on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, at five o'clock in the morning, arriving Mattoon by seven in the evening. For passage apply at Oglesby House.

Morgan Higgins

### Notice to Breakers

The subscriber has eight hundred acres prairie situated near Tuscola, on Chicago Central Branch Railroad, which he wishes to contract with parties

## Decatur Y

From the Files of the

### 10 Years Ago—1959

The government abandoned as futile any further effort at a quick settlement of the 96-day steel strike.

Financial support is set for the first year of the Decatur and Macon County Hospital chaplain program.

Nearly 3,000 square feet of retaining wall and bridge area in Decatur have been defaced by painted words or initials.

A device centuries old, the abacus, has been introduced to modernize arithmetic classes at St. Patrick's school.

### 25 Years Ago—1944

Decatur High School students signed war bond and stamp pledges following an assembly to stimulate a 90 per cent sale of bonds and stamps in the school.

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About Town

by L.C.T.

(Linden C. Trow)

Clipping courtesy, Florence White

Date not given

The long arched windows over Greenberg's shoe store on E. Prairie St. have an ecclesiastical look. We were intrigued to the extent of making inquiry about them and found that the building was originally used for a Universalist Church, a church which no longer holds services in this city.

The church was organized in 1854 at a time when it took a good deal of individualism to join a group of people so liberal minded. At that time the standard for church membership, for the most part was guided by a strict discipline and evangelical fervor. The Universalists didn't subscribe to the doctrine of hellfire and brimstone, neither did they feel assurance that salvation was secured only by conversion.

Decatur, in those days, was a difficult place in which to make a start or find a leader. Finally one was found in Rev. D. P. Bunn who had been a Methodist but whose views had undergone a change in the process of acquiring his theological education.

One of the most concise accounts of the man reads: "Pastor Bunn was a good preacher, a wise leader, a real human being and immensely fond of checkers." There was a cabinet and coffin maker in the northwest corner of Lincoln Square at this time named M. Y. Givler who was also considered one of the town's best checker players. A story is told that when Mr. Givler dropped his work to take Mr. Bunn on for a game that the preacher was to pay for the cabinet maker's time.

Some of the best known families in the early history of Decatur were included among the founders of the church. The Joseph Spanglers senior and junior and Jacob were among them. At that time the Spanglers were operating a mill on the Sangamon River near what is now the East William Street bridge. There are still two mill stones on the north side of the road a little west of the lake that are said to have been used in their mill.

Another family was the Reas, who like the Spanglers gave their name to a bridge. There were also Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Hanks, Mr. and Mrs. Ricketts, and Mr. and Mrs. John Capps. Twenty-eight persons in all set their names to the original register.

Ichabod Baldwin, always an independent thinker, joined the new society. It was he who built the brick church. His son, Heston I. Baldwin, who was carrying papers at the time, gave \$10 to the building fund.

D. L. Bunn, son of the pastor, D. F. Bunn, was an active member in the church and later his son and daughter Frank and Miss Edna Bunn, gave of their musical talent to the services.

In an early day the church had a quartet which furnished the Sunday morning music. One Sunday the pastor of the Presbyterian Church, Reverend R. M. Oviatt, did a daring thing. He asked the quartet to sing in his church. At the close of the service one member of the church said she never wanted to hear again "opery singing in the Lord's house."

L. C. T.



Photo, Decatur Herald and Review, date not given.



Sept 7., 1937

# FOR MARKS OLIDAY IN UIET MOOD

## ks and Beaches Lack owls as People Take to Highways

Four observed Labor day parades in a mild fashion through all of labor demonstrations or parades. Most people took to highways for the final vacation before the end of the summer.

Approximately 500 persons attended the parade held at Forest Park. The other the only public one scheduled for the day, arranged and supervised by Decatur Junior Association, of money for the benefit of the war airport and the erection of a grand lighting fund.

### Park Registrations Small

On last day of the year's fourth holiday brought small registration at all the city parks. Registration officials registered approximately 90 names for registration for the day, brought the total for the year to 1,274.

A Fairview park total picnickers showed less than 1,200. Three sections of 200 accounted for the depressed total, over Nelson. At the municipal beach the number of swimmers during the day was estimated to be according to officials. The main attraction on the beach was a clown act presented by the life guards for a fee of approximately 100. The clown consisted primarily of air diving and water maneuvers.

### 14 In Sault Race

Fourteen sailboats participated in a Labor day race from the Decatur club dock. Battling a strong breeze, Gail Olsen sailed "Chig" over the triangular course to take his honors for the day. He was followed in by Warren Johnson piloting "Petrol".

A year of the lake sponsored by E. Post & Son Jewelry store in its maintenance, drew approximately 200 to the private pier opposite the Decatur Yacht club dock, where one boat race were made during the day. In the eight-past night "Blue Diamond II".

### Many Golfers Active

At the Nelson park course, playing out to 200 in the afternoon. On Saturday morning, scattered Labor day activities in the bridge district of downtown. The golfers of the Tapscott and the Decatur clubs were accompanied by members of the city clubs. A parade in the afternoon followed by a performance at the city square. The parade was escorted by the city band.

# Frank Bunn, Well-Known Singer, Teacher, Dies at 65

Frank Elwood Bunn, 65, member of an old Decatur family, well known vocalist and former instructor of voice who was known professionally as Frank Van R. Bunn, died shortly after noon yesterday at the family home, 329 West Wood street. He had been suffering from a heart ailment for several months. Mr. Bunn, who at one time held many important church soloist positions in New York City, was born Nov. 14, 1871 in Decatur, the son of Mr. and Mrs. David L. Bunn. He was educated in Decatur schools and at Lombard college, Galesburg. Mr. Bunn had returned to Decatur about a year ago after resigning his position at Ball State Teachers college.

### Member of Bar

Although trained in his father's office as a lawyer and admitted to the bar in 1896, Mr. Bunn followed a musical career in that of a lawyer and during the greater part of his life devoted his full time to music.

### Member of Bar

Mr. Bunn first sang at the age of 10, and was the choir of the First Presbyterian church of the city. Later he sang in the First Methodist and First Presbyterian churches here. He received his first vocal training from Francis Fisher Powers, who held classes in Decatur at one time.

### Soloist in New York Churches

On the advice of Mr. Fisher, Mr. Bunn went to New York where he spent several years as soloist in prominent churches. He sang at St. Andrews P. E. church, Madison Square Presbyterian church and at St. Thomas' Episcopal church before leaving to go to Denver for a short time.

Returning to New York he sang in the Church of St. Edward's the Martyr, as the protegee of Judge Elbridge T. Gary, Indiana steel magnate. After a year there he went to



FRANK BUNN

Indianapolis where he sang as soloist for the Second Church of Christ, Scientist. Later he went to Muskegon where he became a member of the Ball Teachers College faculty, a position he held until returning to Decatur.

### Member of Opera Company

In addition to his church singing, Mr. Bunn presented many musical concerts and entertainments with grand and symphony orchestras of the East. He also sang opera in leading venues with the Savage English Grand Opera Co. in New York.

Mr. Bunn leaves his wife, a daughter, Mrs. R. G. Sawyer of Florence, Ala.; a son, E. L. Bunn of New York, and a sister, Miss Edna M. Bunn of Decatur.

Funeral arrangements are incomplete. The body is at Dawson and Wikoff funeral home.

# BANK HEADS PLAN PARLEY

## Decatur Men to Attend Soil Erosion Confer- ence in Monticello

Approximately 15 representatives of the Decatur banks are expected to attend the annual fall meeting of group seven of the Illinois Bankers association which will be held Sept. 28 in the assembly room of the National bank of Monticello.

Group seven includes Macon, Vermillion, Champaign, Piatt, Dewitt, Macon, Douglas, Edgar and Coles counties. Nearly 150 bankers are expected at the meeting which will consider pressing legislative and public relations problems. Speakers will include J. F. Schmidt, Wash-

# TWO BIKE RIDERS ESCAPE INJURIES

## Two Youths Suffer Slight Injuries In Labor Day Mishaps

Members of the city traffic bureau are scratching their heads in an effort to solve the latest outbreak of reckless riding on the part of bicyclists and especially so after two accidents which happened Labor day, in which one bicycle ran into the side of a car, and another was struck while zig-zagging from one side of the street to another.

As Mrs. Harold Gail, 1033 West Wood street was parking her car in the 400 block North Water street, Kenneth Osborn, 644 East Grand avenue, ran into the side of the auto with his bicycle. The boy was not injured, but his wheel was damaged. He was taken home.

D. H. Jordan, 272 East Condit street, reported that his daughter, Wendy, was struck by a car at the

# OPPOSITION TO PENSION PLAN GROWS

## Benefit Fund Would Cost City \$6,000 Per Year; 55 Eligible

The Illinois Municipal Public Utility Employees' Annuity and benefit fund, a form of social security for city employees, probably will not be accepted in Decatur without some opposition, reports from city hall circles indicate.

Commissioner John L. Rehfeld, head of the city's municipal waterworks, intends to ask the city council to adopt the plan for his waterworks employees sometime before Nov. 1. The reported opposition is expected to appear when Mr. Rehfeld makes his proposal to the council, but administration leaders believe the plan will be adopted regardless.

### Deadline Nov. 1

The municipal utility employees' fund was authorized in one of the closing sessions of the state legislature in July, and it provides for the establishment of a pension fund to benefit all employees of municipal utilities. To participate in the fund Illinois cities must pass ordinances authorizing the plan before Nov. 1.

Commissioner Rehfeld has said approximately 25 employees of the waterworks and other divisions of the water department are eligible for participation in the "social security" plan, and he intends to introduce an ordinance as soon as possible giving his department authority to become a part of the state-wide plan.

### Cost To City \$5,000

The plan, if adopted by Decatur, would cost employees of the water department approximately \$3,400 yearly and the city would be required to pay about \$6,000. Employees become eligible for pension benefits at the age of 65 under the plan.

The reported opposition to Decatur adoption of the plan is said to center in the cost to the city. Under the pension plan, the city's share of the cost would be taken from revenue received from the water department. The revenue that would necessarily have to be used to pay the city's part is now being used to help the city offset other governmental expenses.

### Will Ask For Vote

Mr. Rehfeld has declared he intends to ask a vote on the proposal in an open council meeting so that any opponents of the plan may publicly voice their protests. Briefly the plan required a similar to that of the police and firemen's pension fund, provides that waterworks employees pay their own contributions per cent of their salaries. The fund would be financed by the city.

# ENTRIES TENNIS

All entries in the tennis tournament on the city may be made at the city Recreation Standard Office later than 4 p.m. matches are held Sept. 18.

The tournament men's doubles and junior doubles will include a reach their 18 Jan. 1. The tournament to all tennis.

# Doyle Roos Labor

PEORIA (Special radio statement) U. S. Senator Doyle of Decatur, who attacks crowd of 10,000 who attacks light of past void of sense.

Speaker for day of Field, Mr. President has one else to be of men and of part of his a greater than through his weaknesses of examples of more.

With the of the constitutional labor a realization they are free to establish much bargaining from the Labor sold the Labor. "Yesterday, collective by theory, today land." Mr. Doyle Field, was through the district.

# GIFT SE SHOW

Need for Acute; Tru Assurance number of Girls' Welfare today as the with footie reached \$50, the fund, and Rev. Belle Wheeler. Response available has been slow.