

Register of Old Buildings
Macon County Historical Coordinating Council

Address: Union Iron Works
600-660 E. William St.
Northeast corner, Broadway and William.
Legal description: Blocks 8 and 10, Prather, Martin and
Gatlings Addition.
Lots 1, 2, 3, 4 and E10' Lot 5 and Lots
9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 block 8.

Date of original construction: 1895.

Name of original owner: C. C. Burroughs and James Millikin.

History:

1. 1865 - Central Iron Works opened - a jobbing shop.
C. C. Burroughs, founder.
2. 1875 - Engines and mill machinery were exclusive products to
this date.
3. 1877 - Name changed to Union Iron Works.
4. 1882 - Union Iron Works was incorporated, and the sign on the
present building, Serving You Since 1882 refers to this.
Milling machines and engines for elevators became chief
products.
5. August 5, 1895 - Plant burned down but was rebuilt in 24 days.
Portable shellers as well as shellers for ele-
vators, major products.

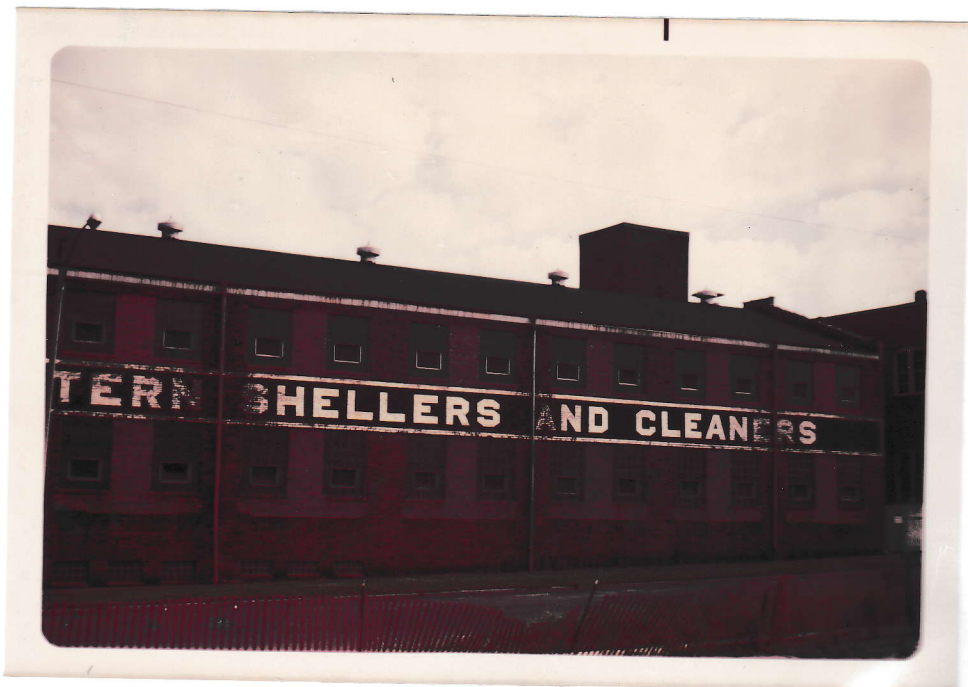
Present owner: Union Iron Works.

600-660 East William



Photos, Margaret M. Meyer, 1974

652 E. William St.
The Union Iron Works



Taken by Margaret Meyer, June 23rd, 1974

day. This makes the total capacity of the plant now 7,000 bushels of corn and 3,000 bushels of wheat a day and a total output of flour when the wheat mill runs full is about 500 barrels a day.

The entire output of the flouring mill is disposed of in Central Illinois. The company boasts that its largest customers are among its nearest neighbors. At times there has been a heavy demand for the flour for export and a good deal of it has been sold in the south. The corn mill product is marketed in Chicago, St. Louis, Milwaukee, St. Paul, New York, Philadelphia and by export.

D. S. Shellabarger is the president of the concern and W. L. Shellabarger is secretary and treasurer.

Union Iron Works

There are a number of reasons why the plant known as the Union Iron

Works is a valuable institution to the city of Decatur. Here sixty or more men find employment the year round, and the money that pays them and that buys the materials which they manufacture into the commercial products of the works comes from outside of the city. Almost every dollar is brought from outside. The products of this institution go all over the United States, Canada and Mexico.

The institution was founded in 1864 by James Millikin and C. C. Burroughs. It was mostly devoted to the building of engines up to 1880. These engines took first premiums at the state fairs of Illinois for many years. Engines and mill machinery were the exclusive products of this establishment up to 1875.

The Union Iron Works was incorporated

in 1882. It might be mentioned incidentally that A. R. Montgomery entered the service of the company in May, 1875, as bookkeeper. When the company was incorporated he became a stockholder and now, with the exception of some stock held by Mrs. Montgomery, he and James Millikin are the exclusive proprietors. The active manage-



ment of the concern fell to the lot of Mr. Montgomery, and its great success is due very largely to his energy, push and excellent business ability.

The trade naturally grew from milling machinery and engines to furnishing machinery for elevators. Then a corn sheller was perfected and it has proved a magnificent success. They have since furnished the bulk of the corn shelling machinery of the United States. More of this firm's corn shellers are now in use in warehouses than all other makes combined. Years ago they abandoned the building of engines, and since 1875 they have devoted their plant almost exclusively to the manufacture of elevator machinery and corn shellers.

Within the last ten years they have made as great a reputation on their portable sheller

→ as was enjoyed by their warehouse sheller and are now absolute leaders in that line of machinery.

The territory of the Union Iron Works is the corn growing world. While most of the business is done in the United States, they are enjoying a growing trade in Canada and Mexico. While elevator machinery and shellers constitute their specialty, a general machine shop and foundry business is carried on profitably.

Every branch of the business requires skilled labor for which high prices are paid.

The plant burned down Aug. 5, 1895, and as an evidence of the push and enterprise of the firm it may be stated that twenty-four days later the factory was rebuilt better and larger than ever and all the men were back at work. Trade that fall was one of the largest ever enjoyed by the firm.

Millikin Building

The large and beautiful business

buildings are to the stranger in our city an advertisement of the fact that Decatur is a progressive city. The Millikin building is looked upon by our citizens with a feeling of pride. Out of town visitors are convinced of the certainty of future prosperity for the city.

There may be larger office buildings, but none finer, more substantial or convenient. It is a steel frame building and is as near fire-

proof as it is possible to make a building. The walls are of beautiful stone and terra cotta, and the effect is exceedingly handsome. The magnificent appearance of the outside is equalled if not surpassed by the interior finish and the excellent arrangement of rooms. There are 108 office rooms in the building and they are all finished in hard wood, with hard polished floors. The halls could not be made finer. The beautiful tile floors, the

white marble stairways, the wainscoating of the same material, all combine to give the interior of the building a palatial effect that is seldom found in the finest buildings of other cities. Wherever the use of metal has been found necessary, as in stair railings, elevator shafts, etc., copper and bronze have been used with artistic and beautiful effect.

The elevator and janitor service, as well as the electric light plant, is the best that can be secured. When one looks upon a building of this

kind and knows that nearly every office room in it is occupied, and that most of the office rooms in all other buildings are also occupied, he cannot but conclude that there is an enormous amount of business transacted in Decatur, and that the business is growing all the time, else the offices vacated by the tenants who occupy the Millikin building would now be vacant.



Millikin Building

The Story Of Decatur

By E. T. Coleman

*Decatur
Review
May
6, 1924*

CHAPTER III.

PERSONALITY PLUS.

Caleb C. Burroughs Ran Leading Book Store, Founder of Our Oldest Industry, Was Prominent in School Affairs and Leading Citizens.

Caleb C. Burroughs successfully conducted the chief book-store in Decatur for eight years. He founded the Union Iron Works, today Decatur's oldest and one of its most successful industries. He made and lost a comfortable fortune here. He was for one term county superintendent of schools. He was elected to the first board of education and was re-elected at the expiration of his first term. He was superintendent of the Methodist Sunday school for a number of years. He built the landmark education house hereabouts, a place that attracted much attention. He was a man of culture and most delightful personality. For nearly a quarter of a century he was one of Decatur's leading citizens.

WENT UP EARLY LIFE.

It is reported that we have in a new complete record of the life of C. C. Burroughs, who was born in 1825, a year after Decatur. He was a native of the town of Decatur, and he was one of the early settlers of the town. He was a man of culture and most delightful personality. For nearly a quarter of a century he was one of Decatur's leading citizens.

MADE PERSONALITY PAY.

C. C. Burroughs came to Decatur in 1851. He had a few hundred dollars in the bank and a book-store in the building on Vermont street, now occupied by George W. Hamlin. S. E. Libstone, a jeweler, occupied the side of the town with a small stock and a repair shop. Each was prospering then.

ABLE ADVERTISER.

In three different Decatur papers in the hands of the writer, printed in 1852, the Illinois State Chronicle, the Decatur Magnet and the Illinois Central Journal, the Burroughs book-store was a liberal advertiser. Indeed, next to the Stamper & Cendell drug-store the book store was the largest advertiser with about a

month, and the more that have been a few more. The more advertising they had of goods, including wall papers, window shades, wrapping papers and many other things not at all known to book stores. In one of the same newspapers and window shades are advertised extensively. In another notice which has an advertisement for sale by C. C. Burroughs, superintendent of schools for Mass

TO LARGER FIELD.

Mr. Burroughs went out of the book business in 1854. He had supported his family during the eight years that he was in the book business in Decatur and besides this with about \$18,000 to the good, was regarded as a great deal of money. He wished to get into a larger field and in the spring of 1854 he opened the Central Iron Works, the business now operated as the Union Iron Works.

The Wisconsin directory printed in 1854 gives an extended "write-up" of this industry, doubtless paid for at advertising rates. More space is given to this than to any other business or individual. According to this, the plant was originally established as a first class jobbing shop, but at the time of this writing it had been extended to include the manufacture of a line of machinery which included the lives, balanced slide valve engine, coal shaft engines, saw mills, sorgum machinery, house castings, bridge bolts and almost anything made of iron. Burroughs & Co. were the proprietors.

MILLIKIN ENTERS BUSINESS.

From the Edmondson directory published in 1877, it is learned that the plant had then become the Union Iron Works. The proprietors listed are C. C. Burroughs, James Millikin, John M. Flood and Charles C. Grwald. The concern was then doing a business of \$100,000 a year and was employing from thirty to forty skilled mechanics. The concern had been in operation for twelve years

and its success came through loans on stock. He later acquired the entire business.

WESTERN CORNSHELLER.

The owners took up the manufacture of the Western corn sheller which has been its most successful product. The first of these corn shellers was built in this city, not as a factory product but by John Lead, the inventor, with the aid of the shop facilities.

When an authenticator told that the Burroughs was present at the first demonstration of this machine in an elevator at Quincy with the view of taking up the manufacture of it was a success. The factory did take up this corn sheller and for many years it has made only that and allied mill and elevator machinery.

POOR EXECUTIVE.

We have no positive information as to why C. C. Burroughs failed as the head of the iron works. It is said that he was a stranger to the business when he started and that the competition was very strong. It was a business in which his personality did not help him. Another man who in a year had known Mr. Burroughs and his own poor vivid recollections of him, says that he was not a good executive. He was a man of tremendous energy, was indefatigable, as he puts it, but men did not work for him well. A good deal of money was borrowed to keep the business going. There was never any crash, but the business gradually ran down.

It was Mr. Burroughs who put Alex R. Montgomery into the office as bookkeeper. We have no definite information as to when Mr. Burroughs dropped out. It is told that he left Decatur in 1880. After he left, Mr. Montgomery was made secretary and manager. During his regime of about twenty-five years the plant never had to borrow money.

IN EDUCATION.

C. C. Burroughs was elected a member of Decatur's first board of education in 1855. The special charter for the Decatur schools had just become operative. Previous to that the Decatur schools had had school directors just as the rural schools have. The three members of that first board were William L. Hammer, Rev. D. P. Bunn and Caleb C. Burroughs.

In drawing for their terms Mr. Hammer drew the full term of three years, Mr. Bunn drew two years and Mr. Burroughs one year. In 1856 Mr. Burroughs was re-elected for the full term of three years.

Mr. Burroughs and his two sons went from here to Kansas. He died there in 1893. It is remembered that his home here at the corner of East William and North Main was sold for him after he left for \$6,000. According to all the accounts of him he was a valuable man in the community and a man whom everybody wished well.

The story of C. C. Burroughs' suburban home will be told tomorrow.

to provide for the necessities.

Meat was supplied through hunting, grain was ground into flour, clothing came from the spinning wheels and looms of the log cabins and metal was hand-forged.

Flour Important

The early mills were popular because of the increasing need for more refined flour and because flour was an important staple for all the families.

Some of the early mills in Macon County were the King Mill on Stevens Creek, Allen's Mill on the Sangamon River and the Davis Mill on Big Creek.

A popular mill in DeWitt County in the early 1800s was on Salt Creek, operated by John Morrison.

Ferries across the Sangamon River were another early business enterprise. These ferry landings were also the site of the taverns where food and lodging were offered the traveler.

Blacksmith Shops

Community blacksmith shops were built and these later branched out into machine shops where metal was forged and shaped into various tools.

A Nov. 28, 1845 county census indicates the change from a strictly broad rural community to a collection of urban settlements with a hint of industry.

In 1845, according to the census, the population of Macon County was 2,229.

There were 17 industries including four grist mills, seven saw mills, two tan yards, three distilleries and one carding machine company.

Hides were treated and cured in the tan yards. Wool and flax were prepared for weaving in the carding company building.

An early pioneer in the business field of Macon County was James Renshaw, who operated a tavern and store in the mid 1800s.

Isaac C. Pugh was another pioneer storekeeper. John Ward ran a store at Indian Bluff on the Sangamon River, south of Decatur.

Ice-Making Industry

From the mid-1800s to 1907, cutting ice on the Sangamon River and ice storage was one of the major industries of Decatur. Hundreds of men were employed during the height of the cutting season.

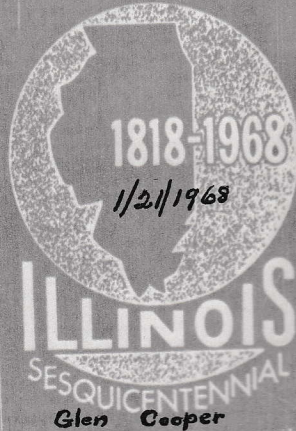
The business died in 1907 with the development of the artificial ice-making machine.

Each year the population grew. New residents with new skills were added to the county.

The city directory of 1883 describes the city of Decatur and the nearby unincorporated area as a complex business center.

Water Mills Replaced

This grist mill of the 1800s was located on Salt Creek in DeWitt County.



Bert Pherigo, Hallsville, operated blacksmith shop into 1960s.

