

Register of Old Buildings
Macon County Historical Coordinating Council

Address: 413 W. Decatur St.

Date of original construction: About 1880.

Name of original owner: Peter Wikoff (Grandfather of Mrs. Forrest File), who purchased the house before E. R. Eldridge had completed it.

History:

1. Peter Wikoff, first occupant - owner - Grandfather of Mrs. Forrest File.
2. Mr. & Mrs. J. N. Baker - Parents of Mrs. File.
3. Mr. & Mrs. Forrest File.
4. John Scott.

July 16, 1950 - "John Scott, an official of Lincoln Laboratories, Inc., purchased the 10-room house at 413 W. Decatur St. from Forrest File.....The brick house is on a 150 foot square lot. Downstairs there are five rooms and a half-bath. There are five bedrooms and a full bath on the second floor. Other features include a full basement, attic and three fireplaces."

Real Estate News
Newspaper File 7/16/1950.

(Description of house on reverse side)

Present owner's name: Expression Inc. Architects
Donald R. Livergood, 428-5415.

"The old fashioned house at 413 W. Decatur has been remodeled, but not one of the things that made it distinctive was lost in remodeling.

"The long windows that almost touch the floor and the 10 ft. ceilings that are curved at the top instead of square, the old-fashioned latches and wide window sills are just as they were.

"The long stairway with the open stairwell in the center hall is the one originally built in the house.

"The floor of the long center hall...is marble. Two of the three old fashioned fireplaces remain as they were.

"Originally the dining room and kitchen were built on the back of the house. They have now been replaced by a large square sunroom with red brick walls, a red tile floor, and a large fireplace. The dining room and kitchen are on the west.

"When the family first lived in the house there were three acres of land for yard, pasture, barns, chicken yard and garden. In front of the house and all the way up town were board sidewalks that nickels so easily slipped through. Instead of houses on the opposite side of the street there was a pasture where the neighbors' cows grazed.....

"In almost every room in the house there is something that has been in the house for many years.

"In the half-century that the house has stood at 413 W. Decatur, there have been four marriages in the house, but never a birth.

"When Laura Wikoff married Fred Pahmeyer the wedding supper was served in the old Wikoff home. Mr. and Mrs. File were married in this house; Mr. File's sister, Mrs. C. E. Ewing of Atlanta, Ga., the former Bessie File; and Mrs. John Frederick Latcham, the former Margaret File, were all married in the old Wikoff home.

Newspaper Files, March 31, 1935.

J. N. Baker Victim Of Pneumonia

Was One of Oldest and
Best Known Citizens.

AN ACTIVE MASON

Helped in Organization of
James Millikin U.

J. N. Baker, one of Decatur's oldest and best loved citizens, died at 8:50 o'clock Sunday morning at his home, 413 West Decatur street. He would have been eighty-five years old next May. Mr. Baker suffered an attack of influenza a week ago, and when pneumonia developed, owing to his advanced age, he had not the vitality to successfully resist it.

SPENT LIFE IN COUNTY.

Born in Macon county, Mr. Baker had passed his entire life in this community, and for sixty-six years he had made Decatur his home and had been active all those years in every movement that helped to make things better for those who live here, and always had a prominent place in the social and business life of the community. He had a striking appearance, tall and straight as an arrow, with a military bearing that made him a prominent figure in any gathering. Even in his last days he retained that bearing, showing none of the infirmities that usually attend advanced age. His step was firm, his figure lean and straight as that of a military student, in striking contrast with his snow white hair. He was known to everybody and everybody loved him for his kindness and his extreme courtesy.

MEMBER OF GRENADIERS.

He was called "Captain Baker" by a great many of his old time friends and many of the younger generation. He gained that title from his early connection with the Decatur Grenadiers, the first National Guard unit organized in Decatur. He and O. B. Gorin were members of that company at the same time. He did not serve in the Civil war. His brother, the late Amos Baker, went to the war and another brother died and J. N. was the only one left to help his father on the farm.

Mr. Baker was born in Long Creek township May 7, 1844, the son of Newton N. Baker. He remained on his father's farm until he was twenty-two years of age. He attended the common school and the Mt. Zion seminary.

Old and Respected Citizen Dies



1844—J. N. Baker—1929

CONDUCTED SHOE STORE.

For five years Mr. Baker was a clerk in V. Barber's shoe store, later working for a time as bookkeeper for Linn & Scruggs company. In 1872 he and Mr. Barber, his former employer, formed a partnership, the firm being known as Barber and Baker. For eighteen years they conducted a shoe store in Decatur.

After his retirement from the shoe business Mr. Baker entered the Citizens National bank as bookkeeper. The bank was under the control of Casner, Dawson and company. On its incorporation, the present name was assumed and Mr. Baker became one of the stockholders. He also was made director and served in that capacity for some years. Later he became vice president. He was with the bank altogether for twenty years, retiring in 1912.

MARRIED IN 1878.

Mr. Baker was married April 25, 1878, to Ida Wikoff, daughter of P. M. Wikoff. Two children were born to them. One son died in infancy. The other child, a daughter, now Mrs. Forrest Flic, survives. Mrs. Baker died April 21, 1907.

The Baker home place on West Decatur street has always been noted for its trees and flowers, in which Mr. and Mrs. Baker always were interested.

Years ago he became a member of what was then the Cumberland Presbyterian church, later known as Second Presbyterian church and now as Westminster. He was serving as an elder in the church at the time of his death. He had been much interested in the new Westminster church building and his name appears on a plate in the new church as one of the largest contributors.

OLDEST MASON.

Mr. Baker had the distinction of being the oldest Mason in Decatur at the time of his death. Special honor in recognition of this fact was given by the four lodges, the chapter and commandery in March, 1923. Sharing in the honors then was W. C. Armstrong, who passed away recently.

Both Mr. Baker and Mr. Armstrong had ten members of Ionic lodge for over sixty years. Their applications for membership were acted upon the same night by the same lodge over sixty years ago. They pe-

tioned for membership in December, 1867, and received the third degree in March, 1868.

PROMINENT IN ORDER.

Mr. Baker was always prominent in the order. For four years, 1878 to 1879, inclusive, he served as master of Ionic lodge No. 312, A. F. and A. M. In 1882 he served as high priest of Macon chapter No. 21, Royal Arch Masons. He attended the last meeting of Ionic lodge held in the old Masonic Temple at Eldorado and Franklin streets a week ago last Wednesday. He was Thrice Illustrious Master of Decatur Council No. 16, Royal and Select Masters, from 1887 to 1889, inclusive. For two years, 1884 and 1885, he served as Eminent Commander of Beaulmoir commandery No. 9, Knights Templar, and he was a charter member of Decatur chapter No. 111, Order of the Eastern Star.

Mr. Baker was a cousin of the late Rev. N. M. Baker, who during his life time was one of the most popular ministers in central Illinois.

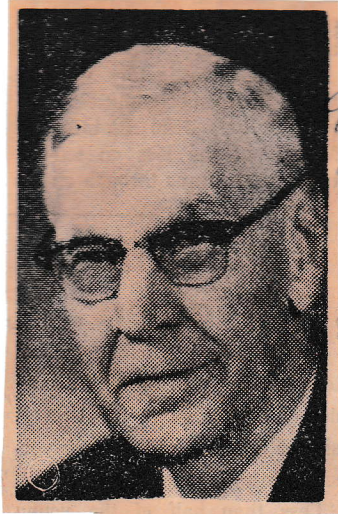
INTERESTED IN J. M. U.

Mr. Baker was actively interested in the James Millikin university from the very beginning, and for years was treasurer of the endowment fund pledged for that institution by the Presbyterian synods of Illinois, Indiana and Ohio, and he was active in the raising of that fund of \$100,000. When the raising of that fund was started it was understood that some valuable real estate in southern Illinois cities would be accepted at their appraised value. Late in the afternoon of Dec. 31, 1906, James Millikin ruled that only cash, bankable notes or securities would be accepted. By ruling out the real estate the fund lacked \$50,000 of being completed. Mr. Baker, A. R. Scott, C. M. Goltra, A. W. Hawkins, Mrs. Baker, Mrs. Dennis and others got busy and before evening on Jan. 1, 1907, they had the bankable note duly signed and accepted, thus insuring the university for Decatur.

FUNERAL TUESDAY.

The body of Mr. Baker was taken to Dawson & Wikoff, funeral directors.

The funeral will be held at 2:30 o'clock Tuesday afternoon at Westminster Presbyterian church, conducted by Rev. G. A. Papperman. The burial will be in the family lot in Greenwood cemetery. It was Mr. Baker's expressed wish that no flowers be sent.



Forrest File

Sept. 2, 1965

Civic Leader Forrest File Dead at 83

Forrest File, 83, retired contractor and civic leader, died at 12:40 p.m. yesterday in Decatur and Macon County Hospital.

Mr. File was associated with the late William H. (Bill) Collins many years in the File & Collins construction company. Their business association began in 1922 and ended in 1943.

Mr. File was a former member of the Millikin University Board of Managers, resigning in 1944.

He was a trustee of the Decatur Sanitary District until 1933. In 1941 he was elected a trustee of Westminster Presbyterian Church.

He was born June 8, 1880, in Montgomery County, a son of Daniel and Laura Gambol File.

Mr. File lived in Decatur 81 years.

He was married to Alice Baker in Decatur, June 30, 1903. She died July 26, 1958.

Mr. File leaves a daughter, Mrs. Margaret Latcham of Warren, Ohio, a brother, Kenneth of Decatur; three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Three sisters and two brothers preceded him in death.

Mr. File was a graduate of Millikin University and was a founder of Kappa Delta Chi Fraternity there.

In 1910 he worked in the county surveyor's office.

He became associated with A. B. Alexander in 1913, in the contracting business.

In 1919, Mr. File was named manager of the Macon County Coal Co. He retained his interest in File & Alexander.

He is a past president of the Kiwanis Club.

Services will be at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday in the Dawson & Winkoff Funeral Home with burial in the Fairlawn Mausoleum. Friends may call at the funeral home after 4 p.m. today.