

Register of Old Buildings
Macon County Historical Coordinating Council

Address: 135 E. Main St. (Mutual Home & Savings Association)
(Powers Hall was on the 3rd floor)
Legal description - Resurvey of Block 1 - Original Town of
Decatur. All lots 9 and 10.

Date of original construction: 1856.

Name of original owner: William Powers.

History:

1. In 1856 a row of three story buildings was built by William Powers, in the 100 block E. Main, from Water St. to the alley.
The building at 135 E. Main St. had, on its third floor, Powers Hall with the first stage in Decatur.

In 1913 Henry Bachrach sold the property to the Mutual Home & Savings Association for \$50,000.
2. See quote on Oglesby's travel lectures in Powers Hall- (attached).
3. See James M. Johns' quote on Powers Hall's use for recruiting Civil War volunteers. (attached).
4. The record in the Macon County Assessor's Office (1974) describes the building as having masonry walls with spread footings, exterior walls of concrete block and common brick, main beams and joists of wood, and wood floors with asphalt tile.

(See attached for details of
Items 2 & 3 above)

Present owner's name: Mutual Home & Savings Association.

History Cont'd.: 2.

"But his (Richard Oglesby's) wandering disposition and his thirst for adventure soon drew him away from his chosen profession (law), and the lure of the El Dorado of the west led him to join a party of eight Decatur men who crossed the plains to California in 1849. Oglesby drove a team of six mules..... Though financially successful, Mr. Oglesby always said that the gold acquired (\$4500) was of less value than the stimulating desire for a broader education and a more comprehensive knowledge of the world and of men.....Mr. Oglesby....determined to devote the proceeds of the California venture to acquiring a larger knowledge of the world....and in April, 1850, he left Illinois for a tour of Great Britain and Europe, which was finally extended to Egypt, Arabia, Palestine and Asia Minor.....arriving home in December, 1857.....His story had to be told in his own quaint fashion so often that friends finally asked him to deliver a series of lectures on his travels.

"The first of these was advertised as "A Lecture on the Holy Land", to be delivered at Powers Hall. Mr. Oglesby had one great advantage over modern lecturers on travel in having a story to tell that was new to his audience, not one of whom had crossed the ocean..... (The series was extended to five lectures).

"It was these - talks of travel, that first developed the wonderful magnetic power of Oglesby's eloquence. His audiences never tired..... An admirer once said, in speaking of his eloquence, 'He melts off his collars and cuffs'.

"Probably as a 'stump speaker' he had no superior on the continent. He seemed at once to get himself in sympathy with his auditors. He was electric, moving, full of penetrating enthusiasm which communicated itself to his listeners....."

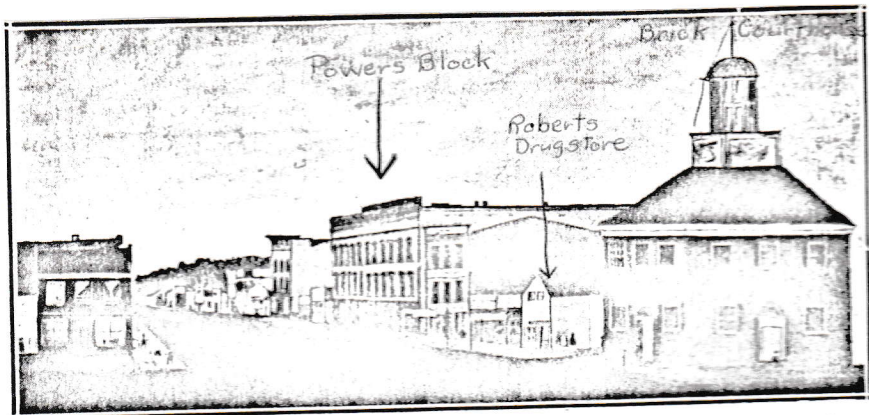
From Personal Recollections, 1849-1865
by Jane Martin Johns
From Pages 102-105

3. "In less than an hour after President Lincoln had issued his proclamation of war Governor Yates had supplemented it with a call for six regiments of volunteers (the quota assigned Illinois by the Secretary of War), and Decatur rushed to the front in an endeavor to tender the governor the first organized company enlisted in the state. Captain John Post opened a recruiting office in Powers Hall, and was soon swearing in his men, almost as fast as they could write their names.....The two companies were hurried to Springfield, where they constituted Companies A. & B. of the Eighth Illinois Militia."

From Personal Recollections, 1849-1865
by Jane Martin Johns, published by the
Decatur Chapter Daughters of the
American Revolution, 1912.
Pages 142 and 143.

135 E. Main





EAST MAIN STREET IN 1856
Looking east from Lincoln Square. Made from painting by Robert Whitfield of New York state, apprentice under R. F. Jones, painter. p. 188

¹The first brick sidewalk, according to N. L. Krone, was laid in 1856. It was around what is now the Bachrach corner on Lincoln Square.

² Frank L. Hays, who first came to Decatur in 1855, said that when the stage drew up in front of the Harrell house with a great flourish, nearly all the male inhabitants of the town were out to meet it. Most of the men in the crowd were barefoot. It was a new sight to Mr. Hays to see a crowd of grown-up men in their bare feet.

The Stamper and Condell store, which was started in Decatur in 1843, was then at the north-east corner of Lincoln square, in a two story brick building twenty feet wide. That building can be seen in the illustration, "East Main Street in 1856". It was one of two brick buildings here at the time, and was known as the Brick store. The firm later secured twenty feet more of ground

to the north and erected a new building. For many years this was the leading store in Decatur. The firm dissolved about 1870.

The picture on Page 188 also shows other stores of the '50s. Immediately east of the court house (the building at the extreme right of the picture) was the Roberts drug store in the little frame building which stood on the present site of the West drug store building. In the first three-story building beyond was the Gazette office. This building (still standing) is believed to be the oldest three-story building in Decatur. Immediately beyond that building is the Powers block. In one of the small buildings east of that block was the Barnes drug store. The brick building at the corner (still standing) housed the Griswold hardware store. Across the street, east, was Tom Albert's restaurant.

³ William Martin had a packing house in Decatur and introduced sugar cured hams and bacon. Martin's sugar cured hams gained a reputation all over the country.

⁴ The fire of Dec. 30, 1859, started in Lowenstein & Bros. Young America clothing store on East Main street, then spread to Wingate's New York store, John Holsworth's bakery on East Main, and to James Faust's hat and cap store on Water street. On the west it reached William Scanlan's clothing store, Fuller and Benton's Auction store and George Goodman's grocery. The total loss was around \$30,000. Four of the buildings belonged to J. F. Montgomery, and he had no insurance on them. C. H. Fuller and Goodman & Baker were other losers.

After the fire the Weekly Gazette said: "Let us wake up. Let the city council appoint fire wardens, prepare ladders, and buckets and build cisterns, and be ready to protect our people against another such calamity."

⁵ When the second Methodist church was built, a furnace was installed. It was the first furnace in Decatur.

Richmond, Mabel

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Centennial

HISTORY OF MACON COUNTY - 1930

The Review Publishing Co., Decatur

"Lincoln closed that famous campaign of 1858 with a speech in Powers Hall on East Main Street in Decatur on Monday night, November 1, the day before the election, although in Springfield on the previous Saturday, October 30, he had said in his address, 'My friends, today closes the discussions of this canvass.'

"The weather was unpleasant, a heavy rain falling, but the crowd was there,' said Dewitt C. Shockley in 1909, speaking of the Powers Hall address. "After the meeting had adjourned, a number of his friends went with him to the Revere House on Franklin Street and were with him until after midnight. I don't remember who was in the group at the hotel that night. I was there but I can't recall who besides Lincoln was in the party.

"That particular night all the men who went to the hotel after the meeting were Republicans, but the Democrats were among his warmest personal friends. There were Sherry Wait, Jasper J. Peddecord, Henry and William Prather, Steve Whitehouse, all Democrats'."

From

Otto R. Kyle's Abraham Lincoln in Decatur,
pages 08-99, Vantage Press - New York, 1957.

CHAPTER XLIII

THEATERS—CLUBS

POWERS Hall, Decatur's first theater, filled a long felt want in the city when it was provided in the year 1856 by William L. Powers. Up to that time Decatur citizens had to make use of hotels or other buildings for public programs or entertainments.

Mr. Powers built a block of store buildings in the 100 block East Main street, south side, and arranged the third floor for use as a theater, providing it with stage and seats. It was the first stage built in Decatur.

In that hall appeared some of the good theatrical companies of the day.

There the Decatur Musical Union, an important organization in Decatur for many years, presented concerts of various types. The hall was used for public gatherings and other events for which a large room was necessary.¹ It was told that one time when Abraham Lincoln was defending a case in court here the trial was moved from the court house to Powers hall as there was not room for the crowd in the court room. It was a murder case. Oglesby and Wait were the prosecuting attorneys and Mr. Lincoln represented the defendant.

MACON HALL

Macon hall was Decatur's next big public hall. It occupied the third floor of two buildings erected by Franklin Priest and Ben Dodson on Merchant street, at the corner of Lincoln Square. This hall boasted a sloping floor, and an unusually fine stage. It was the popular amusement house during the '60s.

FIRST OPERA HOUSE

The first opera house in Decatur was built by E. O. Smith in the 200 block on North Water street, west side, (the entrance is now No. 225) and for years it provided Decatur's entertainment. It was built in 1870, and was in operation until the Powers Grand Opera house was erected in 1889. A modern stage, private boxes, a balcony, were features of the new theater.

Nationally famous stars of the theatrical world appeared at Smith's Opera house, among them, Joseph Jefferson, Minnie Madern Blake, Edwin Booth, Madame Modjeska, Thomas Keene, and Lillian Russell.

SOME OF THE CHARTER MEMBERS OF THE WOMAN'S CLUB
 This picture was taken in 1907, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the organization of the Woman's Club. In the picture are:
 Standing, left to right—Mrs. Hiram Buck, Mrs. M. E. Metz, Mrs. Emma Stoner, Mrs. Jane M. Johns, Mrs. Laura W. Pahneyer, Miss Chloe Murphy, Mrs. W. R. James F. Holliday, Mrs. Anna McClelland, Miss Maria Buckingham, Miss Josephine Anderson, Mrs. Mary E. Haworth, Mrs. J. N. Randall, Mrs. T. L. Evans, Mrs. D. C. Corley, Mrs. Eugenie M. Bacon, Mrs. W. W. Mason, Mrs. J. W. Haworth.
 Seated—Mrs. K. K. Harwood (Darling), Mrs. Mary E. Haworth, Mrs. S. J. Bunstead, Mrs. K. H. Roby, Mrs. S. J. Bunstead, Mrs. K. H. Roby, Mrs. Anna McClelland, Miss Maria Buckingham, Miss Josephine Anderson, Mrs. Mary E. Haworth, Mrs. J. N. Randall, Mrs. T. L. Evans, Mrs. D. C. Corley, Mrs. Eugenie M. Bacon, Mrs. W. W. Mason, Mrs. J. W. Haworth.



Richmond, Mabel C., Centennial History of Decatur and Macon County, The Decatur Review, 1930

field (Mrs. G. M. Bruce of San Jose, Cal.) were geniuses in costuming.

Mr. D. L. Bunn, who for more than fifty years sung his way into the hearts of Decatur people, had a tenor voice that I never heard surpassed. His tones were soft, sweet and clear as a flute and he enunciated every word effectively. Had he gone on the stage I have no doubt he would have won world wide fame. For years he sang in choirs and for funerals as well as for social and charitable entertainments without money and without price, but the demand for his services became so burdensome that, in self defense, he was compelled to join a professional choir.

The name of D. L. Bunn is endeared to thousands of Decatur citizens by the memory of his sweet tones in "The Last Sad Requiem for Their Dead."

I once met him in Greenwood cemetery, wandering among the graves, and, in answer to a question, he said, "I believe I must have sung at the funerals of two thirds of the people who are sleeping here. Some of them were buried fifty years ago and some yesterday."

Mr. Bunn inherited his splendid voice from his father, who was a singer and teacher of music. Mr. Bunn on July 21, 1864, married Miss Amanda Suits, who, with her sisters, was one of the original members of the Musical Union. His children, Miss Edna Bunn and Frank Bunn, inherit from their father well known musical ability.

There are only a few programs of the entertainments of the Musical Union extant. In addition to the more pretentious oratorios, given in costume, they gave a great many popular concerts. A quartet of their number could always be secured to sing patriotic, war songs and negro melodies at every social held by the Hospital Aid society. "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," "Trump, Trump, the Boys are Marching," "The Red, White and Blue," "Marching Through Georgia," were supplemented by "Massa's in the Cold, Cold Ground," "Down in the Cornfield," "Old Slady" and other popular negro melodies of the day, and the audience invariably joined in the chorus.

Many old citizens will unite with The Review in affirming

that "the performances of the Decatur Musical Union were not tiresome and amateurish affairs. People went to hear the singing and then they went the second night. The week the first State Fair was held in Decatur the Musical Union gave four performances, all to crowded houses. After paying all expenses (and donating ten per cent to the Relief Society) they had money enough to buy a Chickering piano without exhausting the treasury."

It is a singular fact that the story of the Jews in Babylon, as told in music, has been given in Decatur in different forms and by different composers at least ten times within my recollection. The sacred cantata, "Esther, the Beautiful Queen," by W. B. Bradbury, was first produced by a "choral society" in 1856, not long after the opening of Powers hall. Miss Mary E. Bunn sang the role of the queen and almost all the other performers were afterwards members of the Musical Union. This cantata was reproduced in 1861.

An "Oratorio of Esther," another version of the same story, was given twice, once in 1864 and once as late as 1871. "Daniel, a Sacred Cantata," was given Jan. 20, 1863, "for the benefit of the poor," and a few nights later repeated for the hospital fund. On Thursday evening, March 3, 1864, there was given in Powers hall the grand dramatic cantata of "Belshazzar's Feast," in ten scenes in appropriate costume under the direction of G. F. Westsels, assisted by a new orchestra with new and splendid scenery, painted especially for the occasion. The hall was so crowded the first night that the cantata was repeated on Friday.

"Esther" was once given for the benefit of St. John's Episcopal church at Smith's opera house and on April 23, 24 and 25, 1874. "The Court of Babylon" was rendered by about seventy-five of the best singers in the city under the direction of the Baker family, "travelling promoters." Mrs. W. C. Armstrong was cast as queen while Mrs. Burgess, Fugh Gorin, Benton Blackstone and C. C. McComas had prominent parts and the chorus was composed entirely of Decatur citizens. Rev. W. N. McElroy preached on the subject of "Belshazzar's Feast" and the downfall of Babylon on Sunday evening, April 19. The dramatic interest

CHAPTER XXXII

DECATUR SCHOOLS

WHAT was the town of Decatur doing about schools a hundred years ago? In 1829, when the town was laid out, there probably were not enough people around the site of the town to make a school necessary, but by the following year the situation had changed.

The earliest school inside the new town, of which mention has ever been made, was in 1830. Mrs. Marietta Packard King used to tell that when she came in that year school was being held in a small room on South Main street. After the log court house was put into use school was held there in 1831 and 1832, with Daniel McCall as teacher. Probably that continued to be the location for school sessions for several years for we have no mention of other schools until 1839, when the Christian church was rented as a school room.

Nathan L. Krone often mentioned a school held in a house on East William between Franklin and Jackson streets, near the Town branch, which he attended in 1843. He thought the teacher was Thomas H. Rogers. Others have mentioned Lemuel Allen and Miss Fordyce as having taught in that building. When that school house burned down a house on Jackson street was secured.¹

In 1842 citizens were discussing the matter of a school building and a plan was made whereby the Masons would join them in the undertaking. As a result a two story building was erected at the corner of Water and North Park streets, the lower room being used for a school and the upper room for a lodge room. This was really Decatur's first school building. In 1856 the school trustees sold their share in the property to the Masons.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS

For twenty-five years Decatur had only subscription and private schools. One of the best known and most influential private schools was conducted by Mrs. Almira Avery Powers. She began teaching in 1849, Mrs. Powers had been a teacher before her marriage. Her sister, Miss Maria Giles, had been teaching a class of young women in a room on Franklin street. Mrs. Powers taught for seven years, first in her home, later in the Masonic temple and in a brick building on West North street. Many have been the tributes paid to the influence of Mrs. Powers as a teacher in those days.

After Mrs. Powers gave up her school, Miss Tempy Short of Quincy became principal of a school here.

Another school which stands out prominently in early history was the school conducted by Rev. John W. Coleman, in the basement of the First Methodist church, which stood at Prairie and Water streets. The school was started in 1855 and continued until just before Christmas, 1857.

Subjects of high school grade were offered in the Coleman school. It became a flourishing institution, and Mr. Coleman had a number of assistant teachers. They were his wife, Mrs. Nancy Ella Coleman, her sister, Miss Maria Ella; Miss Lydia Powell and W. Bramwell Powell. The latter became the father of the famous violinist, Maud Powell.

Mr. Coleman was considered one of the most remarkable teachers Decatur has ever had, though his school lasted for a comparatively short time. He was obliged to discontinue it because of ill health. When he closed his school he held a school exhibition in the Powers hall, that was such a successful event that it was talked about for years afterwards.

In later years, after Mr. Coleman's health had improved, he was employed as a bookkeeper for Stamper & Condeell, merchants, and also served as township collector. He died the day after signing his final report, Feb. 17, 1869.

In the '60s a private school for boys was conducted by Mrs. Ichabod Baldwin on West Main street. This probably was the first exclusive boys' school.

Decatur was one of the first school districts in Illinois to take advantage of the Act of 1849, which gave a district authority to vote a local tax for school support. In 1851 a tax of ten cents on the \$100 assessed valuation was voted for the repair of the "brick school house." This is supposed to have been the building occupied jointly with the Masons. The vote was 30 to 12.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Public school history of Decatur begins with the passage of the school law Feb. 15, 1855, which provides for the taxing of all the people of the state for the education of all children in the state, and requiring that all the districts maintain schools free to the children for at least six months of each year. That year tax was levied in Decatur district for the purpose of building a school house. As a result, Decatur had its first building erected exclusively as a public school. It was located at the northwest corner of Church and North

Oglesby arrived home

9 in December, 1852. In those days such a trip was almost unprecedented.

1858. That journey was of incalculable value to Oglesby in developing his mind and completing for him an education which had been far too much neglected in the schools. He was one of those rare men who travel studiously and intelligently. His acute observations of the strange and wondrous sights of the old world were told in his own quaint fashion, much to the delight of those whose privilege it was to hear him. The story had to be told so often that his friends finally asked him to deliver a series of lectures on his travels.

The first of these was advertised as "A Lecture on the Holy Land," to be delivered in Powers Hall. Mr. Oglesby had one great advantage over modern lecturers on travel in having a story to tell that was new to his audience, not one of whom had crossed the ocean.

When he stepped upon the platform and laid his notes on the table before him, he was received with warm applause, and commenced a little "preliminary talk" about his reasons for becoming a traveler; about his emotions on leaving his native land; about his trip to New York; about the sea and sea-sickness. He was intensely interested in his own story and his audience was enthralled with his eloquence, oblivious to time or space on the subject of the proposed lecture.

After about an hour of this "little preliminary," he looked at his watch and with a look of profound astonishment exclaimed, "It's after 10 o'clock and I have not got started to the Holy Land!"

"Go on!" "Let's have the Holy Land some other time," and similar exclamations came from every part of the hall.

"Well, then, I will let the Holy Land go for tonight," said Mr. Oglesby. "and I will tell you a little about what I saw in Russia and Poland, which will be quite as interesting and will not take so long."

When he got to Poland he again looked at his watch and declared that it was 11 o'clock. "Go on!" "Go on!" fairly shrieked the audience. Dr. Trowbridge, who had presided at the meeting,

called for quiet and offered a resolution, "That Mr. Oglesby be requested to continue his 'preliminary talk' tomorrow evening, and to give his lecture on the Holy Land at some future date."

The resolution was enthusiastically carried and resulted in a series of these talks that, I think, took five evenings to complete, and then we had not enough.

The fame of these lectures went abroad and Mr. Oglesby was in great demand as a lecturer for charitable and church purposes.

It was these "talks of travel" that first developed the wonderful magnetic power of Oglesby's eloquence. His audiences never tired. If he himself was enthused, he generally became as excited as his audience. Great rivers of perspiration would pour off his brow and down his cheeks. An admirer once said, in speaking of his eloquence, "He melts off his collars and his cuffs."

Probably as a "stump speaker" he had no superior on the continent. He seemed to at once get himself in sympathy with his auditors. He was electric, moving, full of a penetrating enthusiasm which communicated itself to his listeners, and they thenceforth were swayed under his impetuous eloquence like the waves of the sea by a tempest.

"Some one relates that in 1878 he spoke at a political meeting in Tuscola. Two old men came into the hall, so old, so decrepit, so rheumatic in their ancient bodies that they could but just crawl. They were rheumy, stiff, deaf and querulous. One came in on crutches and the other hobbled along painfully, supported by a couple of canes. They secured seats and sat down as if they intended to stay there the remainder of their days. Oglesby was at his best. He warmed up gradually until his listeners began to writhe and gasp under the influence of his inspired words. The two old men shared the contagion of his eloquence; they straightened up, their dim eyes began to enkindle and their slow pulse to keep time with the outrushing torrent. A few moments more and the two octogenarians were on their feet with the remainder of the audience, dancing wildly about, swinging their canes and crutches, and yelling in their enthusiasm with a

Johns, James Martin, General Recollections,

1849-1865, publisher - Decatur Chapter, DAR

Charleston, Illinois, on September 18, 1858. Richard J. Oglesby of Decatur, a candidate for Congress that year, was present. Oglesby's Democratic opponent was James C. Robinson, with whom he was having a series of joint debates. Oglesby had been touring the southern counties of his district making many speeches and came into Charleston for the Lincoln-Douglas debate and a Republican rally that night.

Three days after the Charleston debate, in a letter to his law partner, Sheridan Wait, Oglesby wrote:

"The meeting in Charleston on Saturday between Douglas and Lincoln was the most full and complete triumph of the latter in the speeches, the crowds, the turnout and the sympathy, I have ever seen. Lincoln's last speech was absolutely terrible and Douglas so felt it that he writhed and winced and at last left the stand in bad humor.

"The turnout was grand. A large car drawn by four yellow steeds and containing thirty-two splendidly dressed young ladies, had on one side the motto, 'Westward the star of empire takes its way: We link-on to Lincoln, mothers were for Clay; on the other side: 'Lincoln-Oglesby-Marshall-Cradock.' This was the feature of the day and all eyes were upon it. The friends of Douglas had one but it was a poor affair. . . .

"At night Linder, Merrick, Robinson and Lawrence with a large crowd took the courthouse at 7. Alone I began a speech in the yard to 200 of the faithful. In thirty minutes I had 500 and in one hour, 1,000. The crowd all left the courthouse and I felt that four out of five were for me. It was intensely exciting and I spoke for two hours and ten minutes."⁴

Oglesby had entered the campaign for Congress as an independent but soon was on strong Republican ground. The seventh congressional district usually was Democratic by 4,000 to 5,000 votes but Oglesby was defeated by only 1,800 votes, Robinson receiving 13,588, and Oglesby, 11,760.

Lincoln closed that famous campaign of 1858 with a speech in Powers Hall on East Main Street in Decatur on

Monday night, November 1, the day before the election, although in Springfield on the previous Saturday, October 30, he had said in his address, "My friends, today closes the discussions of this canvass."⁵

"The weather was unpleasant, a heavy rain falling, but the crowd was there," said Dewitt C. Shockley in 1909, speaking of the Powers Hall address. "After the meeting had adjourned, a number of his friends went with him to the Revere House on Franklin Street and were with him until after midnight. I don't remember who was in the group at the hotel that night. I was there but I can't recall who besides Lincoln was in the party.

"That particular night all the men who went to the hotel after the meeting were Republicans, but the Democrats were among his warmest personal friends. There were Sherry Wait, Jasper J. Peddecord, Henry and William Prather, Steve Whitehouse, all Democrats."⁶

In the legislative election, Daniel Stuckel, Republican of DeWitt County, was elected to the House from the thirty-sixth district (Macon, DeWitt, Piatt, Champaign) and cast his vote for Lincoln for United States Senator. Joel S. Post, Democrat of Decatur, in the state senate from the sixteenth district (Macon, DeWitt, Piatt, Champaign, Moultrie, Christian, Shelby, McLean) cast his vote for Stephen A. Douglas being elected 51 to 46.

Throughout 1859 the Decatur *State Chronicle* reported Lincoln's activities. In April Lincoln's letter to the Republicans of Massachusetts celebrating Jefferson's birthday was published in full. In June the *Chicago Journal* editorial, suggesting that A. Lincoln's name be added to those being considered for the next Republican governor of Illinois, was published. In September there were dispatches about Lincoln in Ohio and the *Chicago Journal's* dispatch on Lincoln's reception in Cincinnati.

Decatur was being kept informed about Lincoln although Editor Usrey was still not saying anything about Lincoln being presidential timber.

Hofle, Otto R., *Abraham Lincoln in Decatur, Vantage Press, N. Y., 1957*

Advertisers will therefore perceive that the Gazette is the paper in which to make their wants known to the public.

Our New Card Press.

We have just added to our establishment a new press, designed expressly for printing cards. We have also received a large variety of new card type of the latest styles; also a large variety of card board, both white and colored.

We are prepared to compete with Chicago and St. Louis, both in price and workmanship. We invite our friends to call up and see our new card press in operation.

Jan. 12, 1859 *The Decatur Gazette*

Gaities Theatre.

We attended, last evening, the theatre at Power's Hall. We have so often been humbugged by amateur travelers that we had but little hope of becoming interested in the play when we entered the hall. We soon found ourself too much interested in the fate of the *Stranger* to notice much else. Every actor performed his part with the ease and grace that seemed appropriate to the character he represented. Among the whole company we could not discern a single dolt. Mrs. Slocum and Miss Greener appeared quite at ease and performed with success every part they acted in the play. On the whole, we think this the best theatrical company that has ever visited Decatur.

The orchestra was entirely too slow. We think they should manage to keep their instruments ready without five or ten minutes delay after the curtain falls.

ON OUR TABLE.—The "Broadway Omnibus" is a new sheet, full of wit and humor. Published No. 80, Beckman St., New York, price 50 cents per year.

"The Philadelphia Trade Circular" for January 1st has come to hand, postage paid.

"The Printer," full of valuable suggestions has arrived. Every apprentice to the trade ought to subscribe to this sheet. Published monthly by Henry & Huntington, New York. Terms 50 cents per year.

per bushel.
HAY—Sales 25 bales common at 65c per 100 lbs.
HOGS—Flint is steady at 15 1/2 (A 9) 1-2c.

MESS PORK—A lot of 1,500 lbs lying at Chicago, sold at \$16—delivery this week—a decline. For lots here Howard, builders want \$17, though buyers wanted to have a smaller figure in view.

LARD—Strictly prime in tins and this is in demand at 11c per lb, but is being hoarded and looking transpired. For a choice lot of 500 barrels 11 1/2c. March delivery, was refused.

New York Markets.

FLOUR—Sales 100,000 bushels, with a fair demand for extra quality, and for the best at \$5 75 for white, \$5 50 for red, and \$5 25 for yellow. The latter is now sold at 81c.

WHEAT, August, with a moderate demand for the best quality, sales 100,000 bushels at \$1 20 for red, \$1 25 for white Michigan, \$1 25 and \$1 40 for white Kentucky, and \$1 20 for white Kentucky.

CORN, former; sales 10,000 bushels, very yellow Southern, and 10,000 bushels white Western at 85c. The latter is now sold at 81c.

WHISKY, firm; sales 200 bbls at \$12.
PORK, uncured; sales three thousand six hundred bbls at \$15 25 for old, \$17 25 and \$17 37 for new do, and \$15 25 for prime.

BANK NOTE LIST AND Exchange Table.
Corrected weekly by THOMAS LEVIN, President of the National Bank.

The following are the terms in which the Bank receives Gold, Silver, and Notes of various Banks based on currency:

Gold.....	1 From	Massachusetts.....	per
Silver.....	Per	Mich per.....	per
Alabama.....	4 1/2	Illinois.....	per
Canada.....	per	New Jersey.....	per
Connecticut.....	"	New Brunswick.....	12 1/2
Delaware.....	"	New Hampshire.....	per
Dist. Columbia.....	"	New York.....	per
Georgia (except).....	5 1/2	North Carolina.....	5 1/2
Atlanta bk. Ala.....	per	Nova Scotia.....	11
Interior bk. Ge. in	"	Ohio.....	per
Lagrange & Lagr	"	Pennsylvania.....	per
Mr'ches bk. Mass.....	"	Rhode Island.....	per
Illinois.....	"	South Carolina.....	1 1/2
Indiana.....	"	Tennessee.....	per
Kentucky.....	"	Vermont.....	per
Louisiana.....	"	Virginia.....	per
Maine.....	"	Wisconsin.....	per
Maryland.....	"	Kansas & Nebraska.....	5

Falling rates of Exchange in Currency; England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, &c., &c.:
\$5 to the £ Sterling, from £1 to £20
Five per cent. above that sum

Advertisements
The Decatur Gazette
Published weekly
Subscription prices
Single copies
Advertisements
The Decatur Gazette
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Subscription prices
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Advertisements

eral towns in Illinois, and hearing that Decatur was to have two railroads—more than any other town could boast—he thought it would be a good place to locate. On his way here he had come over the old Northern Cross railroad from Naples to Jacksonville.

Mr. Mills' first building job was the Humphrey house on East Eldorado street, later St. Teresa's academy. During his business career here, he had at different times as partners D. C. Shockley and W. B. Harry.

Mr. Mills sold his lumber business in 1911 to the Lyon Lumber company. He died in 1913.

Theodore Hildebrandt came to Decatur in 1853 and began work for Dr. W. A. Barnes in his drug store. For fifty-six years afterwards he was identified with the drug business here, having a store of his own for many years.

The Henkle and Condell mill, known as the Illinois Central mill, was built in 1855 at Main and Broadway. In 1859 it burned, but was rebuilt by Henkle, Shellabarger and Priest, who had purchased it. Priest and Company afterwards ran this mill.

Gus A. Smith was conducting a buggy factory, and employed fifty men, probably more than any other factory here then. He shipped buggies to the far west and south.

Among stores which were established were I. W. Ehrman's clothing and tailor shop, W. F. Busher's shoe store, Peake's jewelry store, the Imboden market, and City Book store.

J. G. Starr, in 1856, started a harness shop which in later years sold goods all over the United States. Mr. Starr died in 1878, the business being carried on by his three sons, W. H., J. S. and Harry Starr. They were succeeded by C. A. and W. C. Starr, grandsons of J. G. Starr. Now it is an automobile business, the automobile having crowded out the harness and buggy.

T. Richard and A. Keck started the manufacture of beer in 1856, selling out in 1862 to Edward Harpstrite and Henry Shlaudemian. The plant was located at Broadway and Cantrell, and became known as the Decatur Steam brewery.

The Morehouse & Wells store was opened in 1859, by S. P. Morehouse and W. T. Wells. Later Mr. Morehouse was succeeded by his son, George F. Morehouse. In 1882 C. M. Hurst and H. H. Bishop entered the firm.

Hieronymus Mueller opened a gunsmith and repair shop in 1858. The Decatur Wooden Mills, which became one of Decatur's leading industries, were started in 1859, by Boyd, Haskell and Company.

Richmond, Mabel Co., Centennial History of Decatur and Macon County, The Decatur Review, 1930

The members of the firm were William H. Boyd of Maryland, L. C. Haskell of New York, and W. J. Myers of Pennsylvania. The firm made blankets, jeans, yarns, flannels and other articles of wool, and did carding and spinning. For a time the annual output was \$75,000. In 1868 the mills were destroyed by fire, but were rebuilt. The building is now part of the Walrus Manufacturing company plant.

In 1856 Swingley and Amos started a lumber business which was sold later to C. P. Thatcher, who in turn sold to Gaddis and Huff.

The Messrs. Swingley, Kaufman and Amos erected a mill in 1857 at the corner of Water street and the Great Western railroad. It was known as the Great Western mill. Later it became the nucleus of the Shellabarger mill.

What is now the Curtis jewelry store was started in 1858 by S. D. Lilliston, who continued business until 1869. Otto E. Curtis was the next owner. In 1885 the firm became Otto E. Curtis and Brother, and in 1899 it became the Frank Curtis company. Now it is owned by Walter Flora.

John R. Race, whose name was connected with the clothing business for fifty years, came in 1855. He started a store in 1857. Later his brother, James W. Race, and Casper Elwood became partners and the firm name was J. R. Race & Co. In 1889 the Race Clothing Manufacturing company was organized, and it continued in business until 1904.

David Martin started a lime and brick yard in Decatur in 1858, later selling cement also, and the business has continued until the present, now being owned by Macknet and Waggoner. As far back as 1842 Mr. Martin had a lime kiln in Christian county, about 28 miles from Decatur, and sold a great deal of lime in Macon county. In 1853 he moved to Alton, and then in 1858 came to Decatur. He put down a block of cement street paving in Morgan street, north from Cerro Gordo, the first concrete street paving in Decatur. That was about 1885 or 1886.

Mr. Martin also erected the first house made of concrete blocks. It was in the 500 block East Cerro Gordo street, south side.

John McGinnis, Decatur's first stenographer and one of eight in the country at that time, came to Decatur in the early '50s to become bookkeeper for Stamper & Condell, and for years afterwards was identified with the business life of Decatur as bank cashier and merchant. He said he once made a shorthand report of a speech by Abraham Lincoln in a famous murder case tried in Powers hall. Mr. McGinnis built an elevator at what is now Edwin, called the place

At the time this case was heard, in May, 1838, Macon county was building its new brick court house.



LOG COURT HOUSE TODAY

The new building was not finished until in June, and was accepted by the county June 20, so there is no doubt but that the old log court house was still in use when the Lowry case came up. This statement is made because some writers have tried to prove that Lincoln never had any law practice here in the old log court house, the building now standing in Fairview park.

COURT WEEK

While traveling the eighth judicial circuit, Lincoln was often in Decatur, it being customary for lawyers to follow the court from county to county.

The Macon house, at the corner of Prairie and Franklin streets, was his stopping place. Because the Macon house was a better class of hostelry than they found in many of the towns they visited, the attorneys always enjoyed their stay in Decatur. In fact, it is said that they prolonged the business of the court in order to remain here longer.

Court week was always a big week. The town was filled to overflowing with visitors. Lawyers, their clients and witnesses naturally would be here, but there was also the usual following of peddlers, show men, gamblers and mere curiosity seekers. Gay social events were arranged for that week. There was always something doing when court week came.

It was while traveling the circuit that Lincoln heard and told so many of the stories which made him so entertaining and so popular. His kindness, honesty and courtesy to everyone did as much, however, to win him friends.

Among many incidents about Lincoln told by Mrs. Jane Martin Johns is the one about his helping with her piano. She was living at the Macon hotel when her piano came, the first in Decatur. She asked the landlord whom she could get to help carry it in. He said:

"Court will be out soon and the lawyers will come to dinner. We can get them to help."

Soon they came, one a tall, slim, muscular man wearing a heavy gray shawl as men wore then. That was Lincoln.

With others he took hold and helped carry in and set up the piano. "Now," he said, "perhaps this lady will play for us." She did so.

Lincoln was honored by the Illinois newspaper editors when they met in Decatur, Feb. 22, 1856, and took the first steps toward the organization of the Republican party in Illinois. This meeting had been called for the purpose of organizing the Anti-Nebraska bill forces. It was held at the Cassell house (on the site of the St. Nicholas), and after the meeting a banquet was held at which Lincoln made the principal speech.

CAMPAIGN SPEECHES

Though none of the memorable series of Lincoln-Douglas debates took place in Decatur, both Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas has made speeches in Decatur during the tense political campaigns which preceded the Civil war.

In 1860 both appeared in Powers hall. That was after the famous series of debates, and only a short time before the election. Douglas was here first and Lincoln a few days afterwards. Lincoln appeared to be utterly worn out by his hard work during the campaign, and his voice was so weak that he could hardly be heard across the hall.

Previous to this, probably in the year 1858, Lincoln spoke in Powers hall, and Douglas spoke at the furniture factory. On one occasion that year the two men had a debate in Imboden's grove, according to some of the old-time residents.

THE GREATEST OVATION

Lincoln received his greatest ovation in Macon county on May 10, 1860, when the state Republican convention was in session in the Wigwam, on State street, and his name was put forth for the first time as a candidate for the presidency. His nomination came at the national convention held a short time afterwards in Chicago.

Richmond, Mabel C., Centennial History of Decatur and Macon County, The Decatur Review, 1930

Soon after organization the club leased about 65 acres of land at the south end of Jasper street, fronting on the river, from D. A. Maffit and a club house was erected, which was dedicated July 4, 1900. In 1911 the club purchased the land. Years later, after the land had been taken into the city and taxes and other costs became heavy, the club decided to move. A new site across the lake was purchased in 1928, and a beautiful new club house, costing \$50,000, was erected. It was formally opened July 4, 1929. The former club grounds were sold to a syndicate and developed for residence property.

OTHER CLUBS

For some years the Calumet club flourished in Decatur. It was organized in the '80s, and handsome quarters were fitted up for it in the Powers Opera house building, erected in 1889. The club did not long survive the destruction of its headquarters by the fire of 1895, when the opera house burned.

In the days when bicycling was popular the Decatur Wheelmen's club was a well known body. It was organized Aug. 15, 1895. J. H. Krebs was the first president. When the bicycling fad waned, the club (in 1901) was turned into a social organization, known as the Froquois club with headquarters on the third floor of the Stine building in Central Block. The World war took away so many of its members that it finally disbanded.

The Decatur Fishing club was organized Aug. 24, 1904, and developed attractive club grounds southwest of Decatur. It is now called the South Side Country club.

A more recent addition to the clubs of the city is the Sunnyside Golf club, incorporated Oct. 28, 1921. Its beautiful golf course and club house are located west of Decatur on Route 10

¹From Christmas, 1863, to Jan. 1, 1864, Tom Thumb, Lavina and Minnie, and Commodore Nutt played an engagement in Powers hall. They had been billed for a one night stand, but they were snowed out here. At the conclusion of one performance a collection was taken up, carried to the stage and spread on the table. With the exception of one silver quarter the entire collection was silver plasters. Commodore Nutt held the silver coin aloft, and yelled "a silver quarter! and I would like to know who the donor is!"

Following a lecture March 25, 1869, by Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll on "Progress, Religion, Social and Political", newspapers of the city were busy printing protests from different preachers.

²Once, when Joseph Jefferson appeared at the Powers opera house, he came before the curtain and told a little story concerning Decatur:

Years before, when he was a boy, he had been traveling with his father, who was with a show company. The company was in Springfield, and expected to appear in Decatur next. Spring field had just adopted a law taxing traveling actors. The company had no money to pay a license, being very much financially embarrassed, and was unable to engage a lawyer.

"A slender young man came up to my father and said he was a lawyer, and would take my father's part," said Mr. Jefferson. "Father said he had no money to pay a lawyer. 'That doesn't matter,' the young man said, 'you are a stranger and are being persecuted. I'll not stand to see anyone persecuted.' He took the case and won it, thereby making it possible for them to appear in Springfield. They made enough money there to pay their bills and come on to Decatur. The young lawyer, we learned afterwards, was Abraham Lincoln."

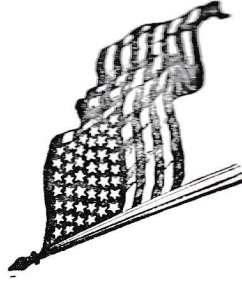
CHAPTER XLIV

CIVIL WAR

DECATUR was stunned Sunday morning, April 14, 1861, when the news came that Fort Sumpter had fallen. It was almost unbelievable. Though war had been threatening, few believed that an open break between the north and the south would come.

The news was read from the pulpits of the churches, and it was received in awe and silence. Though people recognized its significance, they had not the faintest idea that it was the beginning of a long four year bloody struggle.

But the American flag had been fired upon. The fort had surrendered. That was enough. That day patriotism burst forth as it had never been seen before.



Every family in Decatur hunted up its flag. Within a short time the banner was waving in the breeze from public buildings and from homes.

When the news was confirmed the following day and the president's proclamation asking for 75,000 volunteers came, Decatur was aroused. The spirit of war had entered. Patriotic zeal spread as the hours passed by. Printing presses were put into service to make flags. Every man and woman was supplied with an individual flag to wear. It was almost impossible to be without one. Every bit of red, white and blue material to be found was brought forth. Patriotic speeches filled the air!

Within an hour after Governor Richard Yates had issued his call for Illinois volunteers John P. Post had opened a recruiting office in Powers hall. Enthusiasm poured in as fast as the names could be written. The next day J. N. Martin opened a recruiting office in the court house.

By Tuesday night two full companies of 100 men each had been sworn into service. They hurried to Springfield and became Companies A and B of the Eighth Regiment, of which Richard J. Oglesby was made colonel!

Isaac C. Pugh was captain of Company A.

Richmond, Mabel G., Centennial History of Decatur and Macon County, The Decatur Review, 1930.

George get up a concert." She was received with cheers and preparations for Thanksgiving almost lost their interest in planning for Christmas.

The newspapers of the city entered heartily into the project and advertised it freely. A call for "a meeting of musicians to organize a musical society," was responded to by about one hundred amateurs and the Decatur Musical Union was organized. Two concerts were advertised for the second week in December, one for the "benefit of the poor and one for the Musical Union."

Both entertainments were successes and then the question arose, "who is to disburse this fund for the benefit of the poor." The treasurer of the union placed the money in the bank to the credit of the Hospital Aid society and that society solved the problem by organizing within its own ranks, "the Decatur Relief society," and electing Mrs. Lowber Burrows president, Mrs. H. C. Johns secretary, and Mayor E. O. Smith treasurer.

The primary object of those who had originated the concert had been "to give a good Christmas to our soldiers' children." Education through play and pleasure had not at that early date assumed the importance it has since attained, and serious objections were raised to "wasting money for nonsense." It would all be needed for "wood and shoes and something to eat before the winter was over." This difficulty was overcome by enlisting a bevy of young girls to work for the "Children's Christmas Festival." The Misses Isabelle Peddecord, Josephine Stamper, Jane McClellan, Marcella Greer, Anna Hargis, Myra Powers and others canvassed the town for second hand clothing, shoes and toys, while their mothers agreed to provide the dinner. The township societies were enlisted and turkeys, chickens, eggs and butter came from the country. All the soldiers' children in the county were invited, and Powers hall, free of charge, was turned over to the children for Christmas day. To prevent charges of partiality the toys were all placed in a fish pond behind a curtain and fished for by the children.

The very liberal donations of old clothes were stored in a small room over Stratton and Hubbard's store where they were

* Christmas, 1862

given out for the asking by a committee appointed for that purpose.

For more than thirty years the Decatur Relief society under the same president and secretary continued to receive donations of old clothes on Thanksgiving day and to give an annual charity ball. Guided by that charity that thinketh no evil and utterly unacquainted with the principles of scientific charity, they, with the best intentions in the world, continued in the manufacture of paupers until they discovered that they had five generations of degenerates to their credit. They then made an attempt to undo some of the evils they were responsible for by organizing an "Associated Charities," which included in its membership every church and lodge in the city and which failed because it fell into the hands of officers who neither understood its object nor sympathized with its ends.

The One Hundred Fifteenth was in the most exposed position among the other regiments in that bloody battle and held its place against great odds. It received special recognition for its gallantry.

This regiment remained in Tennessee, when Sherman's army marched to the sea. It was mustered out at Nashville, Tenn., June 11, 1865.

THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH

Macon county furnished nearly the entire personnel of the One Hundred Sixteenth Regiment. Of the 980 men and officers, 730 were from this county. The rest came from Piatt, Moultrie, Shelby, Christian, Sangamon and Dewitt counties. Nineteen men from Macon county served as captains. Two were killed and three died of wounds.

The One Hundred Sixteenth mobilized at the Macon county fair grounds, known as Camp Macon, (now Fairview park) and was mustered into service Sept. 30, 1862. The regiment became a part of General W. T. Sherman's army and saw its first fighting at Chickasaw Bayou. Other engagements in which it made a brilliant record, were Vicksburg, Chickamauga, Mission Ridge, Chattanooga, Lookout Mountain, Kennesaw Mountain and Stone Mountain. The regiment took part in the grand review before the president in Washington in May, 1865.

When General Giles A. Smith was wounded in the fighting at Mission Ridge, the command of the brigade fell to Colonel N. W. Tupper. The ability he showed in that command would no doubt have led to his promotion to brigadier-general, but he became ill and was obliged to return home to die.

The last fighting done by the regiment was at Bentonville. It was mustered out June 7, 1865.

¹As an illustration of the excitement that prevailed at the beginning of the war, the story is told that one day V. H. Parke was conducting an auction sale of a consignment of bankrupt goods from Indianapolis. A big crowd had collected for the sale, and everything was going merrily when suddenly the sound of a file and drum coming down the street was heard. The crowd rushed out to see, leaving the auctioneer with a piece of goods half sold. That was the last he saw of his crowd. It was following the file and drum and never came back. The auction sale had to be abandoned.

²The Eighth regiment was really the first regiment offered Governor Yates, but it did not receive that rank owing to the delay caused by the formalities of the resignation of Richard J. Oglesby as state senator in order to accept the colonelship of the regiment.

³One day early in the war, before General Grant had become known, according to a story told, he tried to purchase a uniform in Decatur at the J. R. Rice clothing store, and was refused credit for it, not being a promising looking candidate for credit. He had been brought into the store by George W. Baker, but he was a stranger here. Mr. Rice afterward said that the reason Grant didn't get a uniform was that the store did not have one to fit him. Mr. Rice got acquainted with Grant later, one time walking from Camp Yates to Springfield with him. Grant was in Decatur another time early in the war, when he spent some time here between trading on his way to Springfield. During the war here he took the opportunity to drill his company of men

recruited in Galena, using a plot of ground north of the Walshs. Slaves borrowed from a cooper shop took the place of guns during the drill. Grant purchased his first war horse in Decatur, buying the animal from John Slaughter.

The original flag carried by the One Hundred Sixteenth was destroyed by a shell at Vicksburg. Remnants of it, stained with the blood of Samuel Bate, are now in the state museum at Springfield. Bate was carrying the flag and was killed when the shell exploded. When the women of Decatur learned of the fate of the flag, they immediately made a new one for the regiment meeting in Powers hall for the work. Many women put stitches in that flag. The emblem went through the rest of the war with the regiment, and the remains of it, torn with bullet holes, has been ever since a cherished possession of survivors of the regiment.

AT GETTYSBURG DEDICATION

Like a voice from the past is an account of that memorable day, Nov. 19, 1863, when Abraham Lincoln delivered the dedication address at Gettysburg cemetery, the address now familiar to every school child. The account was written by a Decatur woman, Mrs. Charissa Stierrett, who was there to see and to hear for herself. At that time she was Miss Charissa Child, and her home was at Petersberry, York county, Pa., about thirty-five miles from Gettysburg.

The trip to Gettysburg was a big one for that day. It took three days to make the journey there and back. The party traveled in a rockaway (buggy), and the roads were poor. The young woman was so impressed with the events at Gettysburg that she wrote down her impressions at once.

It was not only the speech, but the setting for it that one could not forget. The blood-covered ground plowed up by cannon balls, the broken tombstones, the graves with loose dirt still upon them, trees and buildings bullet-marked, no wonder it was impressive when Lincoln said: "We cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground."

The account written of the trip was as follows:

"Three miles from Gettysburg, Wednesday, Nov. 18, 1863.

"Have taken lodging at a farm house for the night. Several persons stopped since we did and inquired for lodging but could not be accommodated. The sky is over-hawed with clouds and it is pretty cold. Our host's name is Brinkerhoff.

"Thurs. day evening, 5:20. Left our train at Mt. Brinkerhoff's this morning and walked to Gettysburg and beyond to the battlefield. Took a look at the old cemetery hill and then passed on half a mile to where some of the heaviest fighting was done. There on the top of a hill in the woods fortifications were thrown up and the trees were completely shelled with bullets. We spent some time on this hill and while there the artillery on Cemetery hill fired a salute of twenty-five guns, giving the different military companies a command around the town, the signal to march into town. After some time we crossed over to the cemetery and examined that ground, and thinking the procession would soon arrive we entered the ring which was guarded and got a position near the stand. The crowd was immense and by the time the procession came it had become difficult to stand. After the president, governors, heads of departments, reporters, etc., had been seated a space of a few feet which had been kept clear for the procession to pass around was allowed to be filled up and a rush was immediately made for the platform. Fortunately we were near it when the rush was made and gained a position on the platform. We then had a fine opportunity not only of seeing the people and position but also of hearing the oration.

"The band played an air after which a prayer was offered, followed by 'Old Hundred' by the band. The oration was then delivered by Hon. Edward Everett, after which a short composed piece by Professor Longfellow for the occasion, was chanted by the choir. Mr. Lincoln was then introduced to the assembled thousands when three deafening cheers rent the air, and as he came danced speaking the crowd again burst into loud huzzas.

"The president made a few very impressive dedicatory remarks and on taking his seat was again enthusiastically cheered. The choir then chanted another short air, after which three cheers were given for each of the different governors present, when the benediction was pronounced and the company was dismissed.

"The procession again formed headed by a band of music, followed by the distinguished men present. The military came into town by another road and marched through the town. A representative was present from each state. Each branch of the military service was represented, infantry, cavalry and artillery. The marine band of Washington was present. Gettysburg was completely jammed up.

"A delegation from the army of the Potomac was present with a flag bearing the inscription, 'Army of the Potomac, July 1st and 2d', on the one side and on the other, 'In Memory of Our Fallen Comrades.'

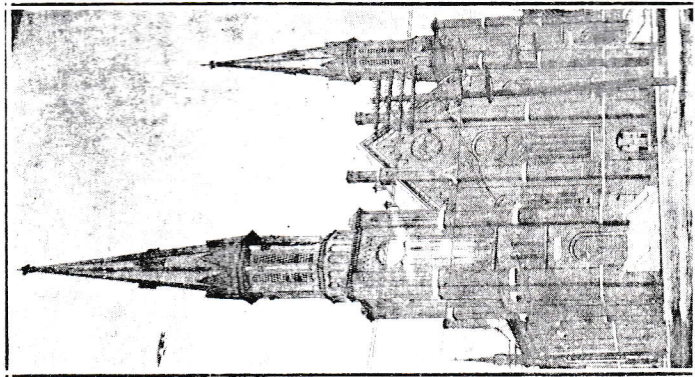
"The cemetery is considerably damaged, tombstones broken, large holes in the iron fence broken by cannon balls and the ground ploughed up in places. This is a beautiful place. It overlooks the town and the battlefield; Roundtop off in the distance with a large flag floating from its summit, Culps hill, which we had been on before, in full view. At the foot of Culps' hill a farm horse stands, which is entirely deserted. Every horse has been torn off the barn and a dead horse is still lying in the stable. Everything torn up about the house, window panes all gone and all the fences.

"Almost every house in Gettysburg had a flag flying to the breeze. In the center of the diamond a long pole was erected with a large flag, 20 by 30 feet on the top."

"C. C."

GAS SERVICE

A public improvement which came in this decade was the installation of gas service. The Gas, Light and Coke company erected a plant at Jackson and Wood streets. Henry Frather became president and J. K. Warren secretary-treasurer of the company. The installation of gas brought forth the following report in a newspaper in 1868: "At last the era of gas has burst upon Decatur with more or less brilliancy. Last night (Nov. 18) stores were lit up by this essential, and light thus diffused held by all as a most important improvement." In a year or two gas lamps and posts were installed in all districts of the city and Decatur was then in reality "lit up".



THIRD METHODIST CHURCH BUILDING

Churches were making progress. The Methodists held a revival meeting which so greatly increased their numbers that it was necessary to build a new church. The revival was held during the winter of 1866-67 by Rev. Levi Pinner, pastor, and in 1868 the church began the erection of a new building at the northwest corner of Water and William streets, which cost \$65,000. The building was dedicated Jan. 14, 1872. In December, 1866, the Franklin street church (now Grace Methodist) was organized. Its house of worship, at Eldorado and Franklin, was afterwards called Stapp's chapel.

A second Presbyterian church of the "New School General Assembly" was organized in 1868. It met in Powers hall. Rev. A. L. Brooks became pastor. In 1870, when the old and new branches of the Presbyterian church united, the First and Second churches here combined forces.

St. Patrick's Catholic church erected a building in 1863-64 at the northeast corner of East North and Jackson streets. It was used until the present building was erected in 1910.

The German Lutherans organized a church in 1866, and bought property at Wood and Edward streets, where they soon erected a frame building. Later, in 1880, they built a brick house of worship.

Four new school buildings came during the '60s, the Wood, Sangamon, and Jackson street buildings, and the Decatur high school.

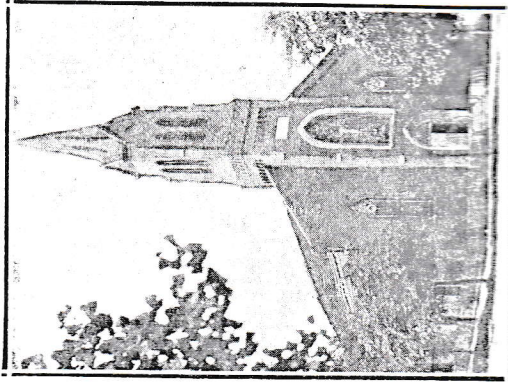
BUSINESS AND INDUSTRIES

James Millikin opened his new bank on Merchant street in 1860.

The Stare Brothers planing mill at Franklin and Cerro Gordo streets was erected in 1860.

An industry which came in 1861 was the Haworth factory, which developed later into one of Decatur's leading establishments.

In 1863 Barnes and Lintner began the manufacture of wood pumps. In 1866 the firm became William Lintner & Co., and began making furniture. Mr. Lintner sold his interest in 1875 to the other partners, Peddecord and Burrows. Four years the furniture factory was a prosperous plant, as many as 150 or more persons being employed. The plant suffered a disastrous fire Nov. 19, 1891, and though the factory was rebuilt, the furniture business was continued only a few years afterwards. Later the building was occupied by the Decatur Chair factory, which also suffered a fire (in 1905) and soon went into bankruptcy.



ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH Erected in 1864

In 1863 Barber and Hawley erected a plant to manufacture gang plows, riding cultivators, headers and other agricultural implements. Many men were employed. It failed, but was reorganized under the name of Decatur Agricultural works, with J. R. Race as president and H. B. Durfee, plant superintendent.

The Union Iron works, at first known as the Central Iron works, had its beginning in 1864, started by Burroughs & Co. James Millikin was a member of the firm from its beginning. It started as a repair shop for machinery and then for manufacturing steam engines and mill machinery. Then John Beall, millwright, invented a machine, the manufacture of which by the Union Iron works has been a leading

Decatur, Illinois
January 14, 1869

Mark Twain
First Lecture - The American Vandal Abroad

Powers Hall, on Tuesday evening, was well filled with a large and respectable audience. Broadcloths and silks were in the ascendant, and the rowdy or "fast" element - congenial to negro minstrel exhibitions - was but slimly represented. The intelligence of our city was out in full force, to be entertained as well as instructed, and decency and decorum were the marked characteristics of those assembled to hear Mark Twain's discourse on the loiterings, ponderings, and peregrinations of the impudent American vagabond, designated by him as the "Vandal", who is to be found from Sierra Leone to Siberia. Mr. Clemons (Mark Twain) was introduced by Dr. S. T. Trowbridge.

Mark is a well built, trim-looking little gentleman, with pleasant, sparkling intelligent features, and well-defined mustache. ... His pronunciation cannot be better described than as a pleasing drawl - in fact, a very agreeable drawl - every single word he articulated can be distinctly heard in any part of the house or hall, and language flows from him easily and gracefully..... He apostrophized the incapacity and general cussedness of European guides in a most emphatic manner - he denounced them as a pack of unscrupulous humbugs and cheats, and he convulsed the audience by the Yankee tricks employed to get ahead of the guides. We wish our limited time and space would permit us to give a full review of this excellent lecture - the "hero" of which appears to be the semi-educated American, full of good nature, impudence and curiosity, who stands unabashed in the shadow of the Egyptian pyramids; finds fault with Reubens and Titian 's paintings; swaggers up the Parisian boulevards; criticized the architecture of the church Saint Angela in the imperial city of Rome; tells the British officers on the Rock of Gibraltar that they may consider their fortress impregnable, but that he guesses a couple of our monitors would knock it all to flinders in 48 hours.....; enters the mosques of Constantinople, and grumbles all the while about the meanness of the foreigners who compel a man to pull off his boots before he can walk into their churches; scours across the great Arabian Desert and declares it ain't a patchin to the overland route to California; weeps over the grave of Napoleon, weeps over the grave of Louis XVI, weeps over the graves of Abelard and Eloise, the unfortunate lovers, and, in fact, weeps over the grave of everybody over whose grave he is expected to weep, and thus he goes all over the world displaying the curious characteristics and quaint originalities of the "American Vandal" who never allows any one with whom he comes in contact to forget that he is a citizen of the Great Republic of the New World.....

He (Twain) held the attention of the audience to the last moment, and no one who listened to him was in the least tired or wearied.....Mr. Clemens is a fascinating, as well as eloquent lecturer.

The success of this lecture, the first of the course for this season, has abundantly demonstrated the usefulness of the library association. Pre-

vicious to the formation of this society, scarcely a corporal's guard of our citizens could be induced to turn out to hear the most distinguished and gifted lecturer. Happily, under the well organized efforts and judicious enterprise employed by the ladies composing the same, all is changed for the better. The literary and intellectual faculties of the people have been developed until the polished and beautiful utterances of accomplished and eloquent orators are relished in preference to the coarse and stale jests of the "end man" in the burnt cork concert, or the smutty buffoonery of the clown tumbling in the sawdust ring of the circus. For this refining influence and most gratifying result, we are solely indebted to the ladies of Decatur, and we are truly proud to thus acknowledge their services in the cause of literature, christianity and refinement. Had it not been for their well-timed philanthropy, our city might for years have neglected to foster or encourage a taste for mental recreation. All honor then, say we once more, to the ladies of the library association.

The preceding is a typed copy of most of the legible portions of microfilm print-out of an article in the January 14, 1869 Decatur Republican. The microfilm print-out is included with this material.



Nov 2, 1969

Staff photo by Bob Strangman

Powers Block Has Long History

By Otto R. Kyle
For the Herald and Review

It was a beautiful day in the last full week of September this year when a number of persons on the north side of the 100 block East Main street were watching a machine remove the remains of a building on the south side of the street just west of the alley. Many others must have taken a look at the work as they walked along but how many later could describe the three-story building on the east side of the alley?

Those who took a close look at the fronts of those six buildings must have noticed the rounded construction atop all the windows in the second and third floors. It is a type of construction used more than 100 years ago when William L. Powers of Bloomington had the entire row built in 1856.

The first railroads had been built into Decatur just two years before and Mr. Powers

was investing in Decatur and in farm land in Macon and McLean counties. He saw a great future for Decatur. He was born in New York City, Dec. 9, 1804 and as a young man went to Mobile, Ala., before coming north to Bloomington where he established a home. He never lived in Decatur but was financially interested in the city and in the Macon County area.

He died Aug. 28, 1858, two years after the East Main street row of buildings was finished but the buildings were not the only Decatur reminder of William Powers. Twenty acres of the original 40 acres of what is now Fairview park were owned by William Powers. The Macon County Agricultural Society in 1857 laid out 40 acres for a fair grounds with an agreement to buy from two owners. The executors of the William Powers estate in 1863 deeded the property to the

Agricultural Society. In the East Main street buildings above the ground floor stores were offices and on the third floor was the first theater stage ever built in Decatur. It was a large hall and in it were held many public gatherings and entertainments such as given by the Decatur Musical Union. Court was held there when the court room in the court house in the square was not large enough to accommodate the attendance. It was the main place for gatherings until another hall with a stage was opened on Merchant street.

At least one of the stores in this Powers block got into the Abraham Lincoln Decatur story. James Peake had a jewelry store in one of the small buildings near the east end of the block about 1863. After the new block of buildings was completed in 1866 Mr. Peake was back in business in about the same location at the time of the state Republican convention in Decatur in May, 1860.

Lincoln had been in attendance off and on in the wigwam on North State street facing Central Park but was not there when the convention endorsed him as the Illinois Republican choice for president. Peake, the jeweler, and Lincoln were friends and Lincoln was found asleep or resting on a couch in the rear of the Peake store by a committee sent out to escort him to the convention. Lowber Burrows, an early Decatur banker, told of the episode in later years.

Boyd & Smith, attorneys at law, were advertising in 1850, that they had rooms on the second floor, northeast corner of the Powers Block while Tupper & Nelson's small notice in the Weekly Magnet said they were attorneys with an office in "Powers' new brick building." E. M. Thorne "attorney and

THE ROUNDED window tops show the type of construction used more than 100 years ago.

Carpets, Ready-made clothing, Hats, Caps and Bonnets, Boots and Shoes, Books and Stationery, Wall and Window papers, Yarns, Notions and general Merchandise, Store No. 15 Powers Block, Decatur, Ill."

RM

Mutual Home and Savings Association
135 East Main
1856

In 1856 William Powers built a row of three story buildings in the 100 block of East Main Street from Water Street west to the alley. The structure at 135 East Main, now occupied by the Mutual Home and Savings Association, had on its third floor, Powers Hall, the first stage to exist in Decatur. The hall was a large room, with chairs on a flat floor, and with a small stage or platform. (Powers Hall should not be confused with the Powers Opera House built some years later on a part of the site of the present Hotel Orlando.)

Of the several buildings still in existence in Block 1 of the Original Town of Decatur, this one has the most history related to it.

First, Richard J. Oglesby, usually referred to as our most distinguished citizen, is said to have developed much of his oratorical ability in Powers Hall. Following a successful trip west during the gold rush of 1849, he spent part of the \$4500 he returned with, on a twenty month trip to Europe, Egypt, Arabia and Palestine. (April, 1856 to December, 1857). In Powers Hall he gave a series of five travel talks holding his audience spellbound, sometimes for as much as three hours. Later, Oglesby was to be described as one of the best stump speakers in the country.

Second, also in 1858, a murder trial was adjourned from the brick courthouse to Powers Hall to accomodate the crowd. Lincoln was said to be the attorney who defended the accused murderer.

Third, on Monday, April 15, 1861 within an hour after Governor Yates called for Civil War volunteers, a recruiting office was set up in Powers Hall. It is recorded that the enlistees were signed up as fast as names could be written, with Macon County signing up two full companies of one hundred men each in two days' time. These became Companies A. and B. of the Eighth Regiment of which Richard B. Oglesby became colonel.

At the present time the windows of the former Powers Hall are bricked in, there is no stage, only storage, and the building is to be demolished as soon as a new Mutual Home and Savings Association can be built just west of the present alley.

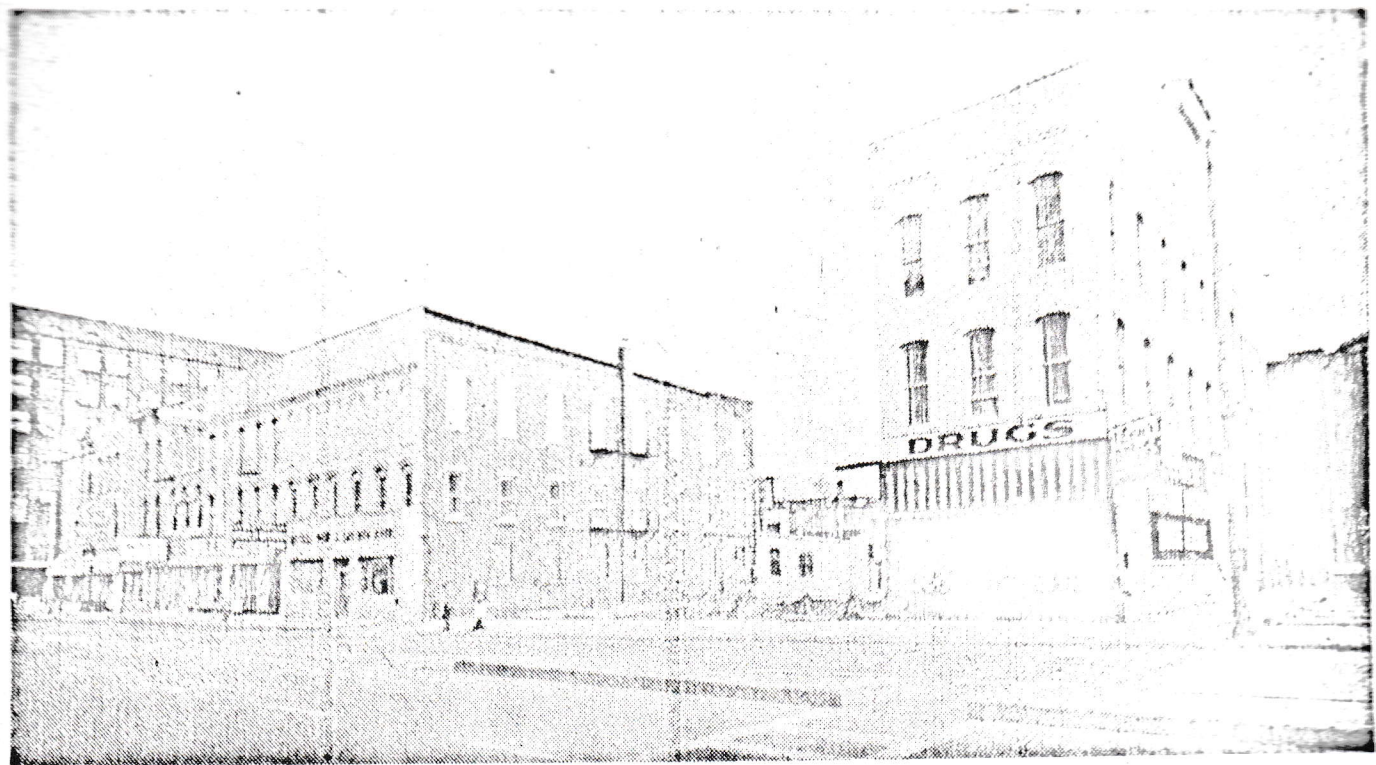


Photo by Karen Eishout

IF PLANS outlined Thursday to the City Council become fact, the building which houses the Mutual Home & Savings Association will be demolished along with that which formerly housed the R.L. Bean Furniture Co. Mutual has released plans to build a new building on ground it now uses for a parking lot which is just north of the alley running on the east side of the current structure. Included in the plans is demolition of Big Daddy's Tavern, 139 S. Water Street and a building adjacent to the north to allow access to drive-up teller windows the firm plans to construct. Council members gave informal approval of the plan.

Decatur, Illinois, Friday, September 27, 1974

New Building Plans Revealed at Session

By Glen R Cooper

Plans for a new building to house the Mutual Home & Savings Association in the 100 Block E. Main St. were revealed Thursday in a City Council staff study session.

Representatives of the association appeared during the session to learn City Council members' feelings on vacating the north end of an alley between East Wood and East Main streets as a part of the proposed improvement.

The alley, west of the present savings company building, would be converted to service drive-up windows included in plans for the new building.

Proposed plans call for the new building to be on a tract now used as a parking lot on the west side of the present alley.

The present structure would be razed, along with the building formerly housing Bean's Furniture store, and the two sites used as a parking lot.

Also proposed was the razing of two buildings on South Water Street to provide access to the firm's parking lot and drive-up windows.

The property housing Big Daddy's Tavern, 139 S. Water St., and the adjoining building on the north would be removed to create an access drive into the savings facility.

The south end of the alley would remain open for public use.

Leslie T. Allen, city manager, said the city's engineering division and department of community development helped develop a traffic flow pattern for the project.

Allen said the staff recommends the proposal as a major improvement for downtown Decatur.

Members of the council gave tentative approval to the plan and indicated they would favor vacating the alley when the proposal is offered for council action in the future.

Ronald Batterham, executive vice president and managing officer of the Mutual Home & Savings Association, said construction could start within the next six months.

He told council and staff members plans for the construction of the new facility haven't been finalized.

Decatur Was Small Village When 'Hello Dolly' Ancestor Appeared

By Otto R. Kyle

Of the Herald and Review

Decatur in 1835 was just a struggling, 6-year-old village with a small log courthouse providing the only public assembly room when the first ancestor of the present day stage and movie "Hello Dolly" appeared in England.

The log courthouse was 18 by 24 feet in size and probably was ready for use sometime in 1831. It had been ordered in June, 1830 but it was not finished until 1832. The courtroom, roughly furnished, was used for meetings of the court, church, school and other public gatherings. Decatur would have to wait 25 more years for the first show stage to be provided and it would be in a bare third floor room.

The "Hello Dolly" ancestor was a one-act play, "A Day Well Spent," by John Oxenford. It was presented in Theater Royal, an English opera house in London. The play was about two young store clerks, left to take care of a shop, who decided to lock the shop door and go to London for a good time.

Decatur got a larger and better room for public meetings than the log courthouse provided when it was decided in 1836 that Macon County needed a better courthouse. A contract was let Jan. 16, 1837 for a two-story brick building in the southeast corner of the public square which later was named Lincoln Square. The building was to cost \$10,625 and be finished in 18 months.

The new courthouse was completed and ready for occupancy on June 30, 1838. The courtroom on the second floor became a new assembly hall for public gatherings. The building was 40 feet square, which made the courtroom large.

There was no need for a theater or stage for professional performers, as theatrical troupes traveling overland were few and far between. There is no record of any such group stopping in Decatur. However, there were some lecturers and preachers who traveled from city to city over the country roads.

That courthouse room would be for public use for many years until the "courthouse in the square" was abandoned after the county moved the courthouse business to the Powers Building on the east side of the 100 Block Water Street in 1870.

In the meantime, in 1842, a second "Hello Dolly" ancestor showed up in Vienna, Austria, when Johann Nestroy's comedy, "Einen Jux Will Sich Machen" was presented with full credit to the earliest ancestor. However, Nestroy expanded the story into a stage play. It would be 56 years before another "Hello Dolly" ancestor appeared.

Decatur would not have to wait 96 years for a theater. In 1854 the first railroad car entered Decatur. Two years later, William Powers built a row of three-story buildings on the south side of East Main Street from Water Street west to the alley.

On the third floor of one the buildings he provided Powers Hall. In that hall was the first theatrical stage ever built for Decatur. The floor of the big room was flat, but provided a theater. The building is still there.

Traveling theater groups came to Decatur and Powers Hall. The city soon had the reputation of being a good theater town and many of the most prominent actors of the day appeared in Decatur. In addition, the Decatur Musical Union gave oratorios and concerts in the hall. Other groups gave entertainments. A trial is reported to have been held there to accommodate the crowd.

When the Macon Hall was opened on Merchant Street it had a sloping floor and a well-designed theater stage. It was 12 feet wide, occupying two floors on the third floor and was 20 feet wide, occupying two floors on the second floor. It was used by the Odd Fellows and various entertainments. The best traveling

theater groups used Macon Hall until Decatur's first real theater — Smith Opera House — was opened in 1870.

The Smith Opera House on the west side of the 200 Block North Water Street had a modern stage, boxes and balcony. The main floor was on the ground and the theater's only bad feature was a long narrow hallway from the street to the main floor entrance.

This theater had such stars as Joseph Jefferson, Thomas Keene, Minnie Madern Fisk, Edwin Booth and Sol Smith Russell.

Then came the Powers Grand Opera House on South Water Street, and the Smith Opera House closed its doors in 1888. The room was turned to business uses, and when partially destroyed by fire in 1892, was never rebuilt. The Powers Opera House went into a heavy listing of theatrical attractions. It seated 1,500, having a first floor, balcony and gallery.

The Powers opened in July, 1839 and housed all the notable actors and actresses playing. The theater burned twice. After the first fire in 1835 it was rebuilt, but after the second fire in 1914 the ground space was occupied by the Hotel Orlando. Then came the Lincoln Theater, erected by Clarence Wax in 1915-1916. It showed many stage productions and then turned to movies.

All this time the "Hello Dolly" theme was sleeping. In 1838 Thornton Wilder researched the 1835 and 1842 plays as the basis for his "The Merchant of Yorkers." In 1954 the play was slightly revised and opened in Newcastle, England, under the title of "The Matchmaker." It reached New York and Broadway the same year and started a long run.

Ten years later, a musical version based on the play that had a start in London in 1835 came to life as "Hello Dolly." Some day Decatur may get a showing of the movie version, but the movie version does not get a Chicago opening until August or September of this year.