

Register of Old Buildings  
Macon County Historical Coordinating Council

Address: 314 W. Decatur St.  
(Northwest corner, West Decatur and South Union Streets)

Date of original construction: 1875 or 1876.

Name of original owner: John Ullrich  
Wholesale Grocer and Pork Packer.

History:

John Ullrich was born in Renish, Bavaria in 1833. He disembarked in New Orleans in 1850, age 17, with five dollars in his pocket. His first trip to Decatur was in 1855 to look it over. In 1855-56 he came back to settle, saying, "It's the best land I've ever seen."

In 1859 he married Elizabeth Litterer in Madison, Indiana. He had already secured from a Decatur bank a \$10,000 loan for a grocery store, John Ullrich & Co., Wholesale Groceries and Pork Packer, 240-248 E. Main St. By 1876 he had begun investing in land.

The headlines of an article in the January 30th, 1924 Decatur Review written by E. B. Hitchcock and E. T. Coleman, was as follows:

Thrift was His Watchword  
John Ullrich Had Capital of \$5  
When He Landed in America  
But Left a Million.

Mr. and Mrs. Ullrich had three children:

Louetta, widow of Professor Harry Bumstead of Yale.  
Lena, wife of Spencer Ewing of Bloomington, Illinois.

John H. Ullrich, Decatur.

John Ullrich's only public service was on the Board of Education. It was always said of him that you knew where he stood. He was simple and direct. When told that a school was to be named for him, for example, he said "That's nice". He died in 1919 in California.

"The old John Ullrich home at the northwest corner of Decatur and Union Streets was sold during last week by the heirs of that estate to Geo. Williams of the Williams Sealing Corporation who buys the place for a home.....

"The Ullrich residence, is a large, old brick residence, well kept up and one of the most substantial in the city.....The price is not named."

Newspaper File

May 16, 1920

(See reverse side)

Present owner's name: Norbert McNamara  
1875 or 1876 - 1920 - John Ullrich, owner.  
1920 - 1944 - Geo. Williams.  
1944 - - Norbert McNamara.

1944 - John Ullrich home sold by Elizabeth T. Williams to Norbert McNamara who plans to convert the property into an apartment house.

"This is a large and well-constructed home of the older type with a large hall and two living rooms, a library, dining room and kitchen on the first floor, six large bedrooms, hallway and full bath on the second floor, a very large attic, floored and ceiled. It is heated with gas and like many older fine homes has numerous fireplaces.

"It is on a large lot, 140 x 150, nicely landscaped and with fine large trees, in a choice and close in location..... The purchaser (Norbert McNamara) plans to convert into two large four-room apartments on the first floor and three three-room apartments on the second."

Decatur Herald

Real Estate News

Decatur Herald & Review

Files

November 26, 1944

From Decatur City Directories

- 1872 - City Directory - John Ullrich, residence 31 South Main.
- 1873 - " " " " " " " "
- 1874 - " " " " " " " "
- 1875 (Missing)
- 1876 - N. W. corner Decatur & Union. (John & Elizabeth Ullrich, also
- 1877 - N. W. corner Decatur & Union. John M. Ullrich and Miss Louetta Ullrich)

314 West Decatur



Photo, courtesy, H. Lynn Bohon, 1972

# Ullrich Prospered Here

Bavarian Immigrant Accumulated 2 Millions

Je 17-57.

Teen-age rebel against Prussian oppression in Bavaria—riverboat roustabout at New Orleans, clerk in a little Indiana grocery store—and finally a Decatur banker and landowner worth more than two million dollars.

That is a brief sketch of the life of John Ullrich, who came to Decatur before the Civil War. He continued in active management of his business interests until his death in 1919 at the age of 85.

Born in Bavaria in 1833, he took part in a brief revolution as a rebel when he was 16, doing picket duty and slipping into hostile, garrisoned town to report on enemy strength. Soon after the rebellious movement collapsed, he slipped out of the country and reached New Orleans after a 63-day voyage.

With less than \$5 on his arrival, he took the first job available as crew member of a riverboat plying between New Orleans and Cincinnati, holding that job for two years.

After brief employment as a grocery store clerk in Indiana, he came to Decatur and opened his own small grocery store, sleeping in the store and relying upon his stock of goods largely for food.

## Prospered Here

Soon he was prospering and in the early 1880's had developed a substantial wholesale grocery business. He had confidence in real estate and invested his surplus earnings in farm land and city property. In 1887, he built "the largest veterinary hospital in this part of the country", and manufactured and sold remedies for shipping fever and livestock colic.

In his early years in Decatur fist fights were common. Mr. Ullrich was peaceable by nature,



John Ullrich

He was by turns a revolutionist, roustabout, grocery clerk and millionaire.

three times before his boisterous opponent concluded he had enough. Mr. Ullrich recalled in

later years that "Jim" Millikin once whipped the same man in a fist fight.

In his later years, Mr. Ullrich retired from many business enterprises, but continued to devote time to the National Bank of Decatur of which he was an executive and large shareholder.

He also retained general supervision of his farming interests which included ownership of 7,000 acres of land in Macon and other Central Illinois counties.

Mr. Ullrich had a lifetime interest in schools and served many years as a member of the Decatur School Board.

Although he was one of the

district's largest individual taxpayers, he always supported necessary tax increases for better schools.

Once he told school officials: "Go the limit, make us pay all the law will permit for school purposes, so long as the children get the benefits." The Ullrich School was named for him in recognition of his interest in education.

# RETIREMENT LAW FOR CLERKS NEAR

## Postoffice Employees in Washington Convention Receive Encouragement.

### LOCAL MEN INTERESTED

#### Members of Congress Tell Letter Carriers Law Will be Passed Soon.

Word has been received by local postoffice clerks that the retirement law for clerks and carriers, considered for some time, may be passed in the near future. Federal employees are now in session in Washington, D. C., according to a Washington paper, members of Congress in addressing the National Association of Letter Carriers that the retirement law is not far from reality. This fact is of great interest among the clerks and carriers in the local office.

The Washington Evening Star of last Friday says in part:

#### Regrets Differences.

Telling of his great interest in civil service problems, particularly retirement, Commissioner Siddons, of the District of Columbia, expressed regret that there was any difference of opinion on the retirement proposition. He expressed the hope that in the near future all of the forces working for retirement along opposing lines would harmonize their differences.

"Your movement," he continued, "has reached the stage where sentimental grounds have passed away. It must be dealt with in a practical manner. The fundamental principles of the proposition must be carefully thought out."

#### Hopes for New System.

"I have reached that stage in life where I have come to lay aside, as far as must do, all that youthful enthusiasm of a new idea, and to realize that after all the march of progress is along the lines of least resistance. I want to see a just retirement system realized early. I think that if you will fairly debate and discuss the question, as all American citizens ought to do, approaching the problem in the right spirit, I believe the time is not far distant when the people of this country, through their representatives in Congress, are going to write into the statute books of the nation a retirement system that will be just to all. In conclusion I wish to say that I hope that the deliberation at this convention will bring the results so devoutly wished."

#### Gude Promises Support.

"That the civil service employees could depend upon the support of the business interest of Washington for a civil service retirement plan was the declaration of William F. Gude, president of the Washington Chamber of Commerce. This statement brought forth a storm of applause from the delegates.

"When Representative Hamill was introduced the delegates rose in their seats and cheered for some minutes, and it was with some difficulty that President McKee quieted them down. "Have come here simply for the purpose of seeing," said Mr. Hamill. "We are second. The piece of legislation we are contending means a great deal to us, and we are depending upon the part of the business interest in dealing with its employees. It is a new and important legislation. However,

# Schools Named For John Ullrich and Mary French

## New Sangamon Building Will Be Named for Former President of Board of Education and Wood Street Building for Former High School Teacher.

"Mary W. French," and "John Ullrich" are the names selected by the board of education for the new Wood street school and the new Sangamon school, respectively, which are to be erected this year. This decision was made during the meeting of the board, Tuesday afternoon.

"I told Mr. Engleman that I did not want my name used," said Miss French Tuesday evening, in speaking of the affair. "I believe it is always better to name such buildings for great personages, persons who have accomplished great things and are known to many."

#### Taught Many Years.

It seems to be the opinion of the board that Miss French has accomplished "great things," one member saying that her name had been selected because she had given her life, or a great many years of it to the betterment of the Decatur schools.

Miss French taught in the schools a total of 43 years, resigning two years ago. She established a \$1000 scholarship fund, at that time, the interest of which was to be given to graduates

from the High school who ranked one and two in their class, three-fifths to number one, and two-fifths to number two.

Hundreds of Decatur citizens have received a part of their schooling under the training of Miss French and will welcome the chance given for such an appropriate commemoration.

#### Former Board President.

In speaking of the name given the new Sangamon school, a member of the board said that Mr. Ullrich had been formerly a member of the board of education for about 14 years and that he had been president of the board for a part of the time.

Mr. Ullrich has always been a great friend of the schools, saying that he always paid school taxes with a better spirit than any other taxes. Mr. Ullrich was a member of the board when the Oakland school and the addition to the old high school were built.

"We feel that no more appropriate names could have been found," said a member of the board in speaking of the selection. "In fact no other names were even suggested."

# SIXTEEN APPLY FOR NEW MAIL BOXES

## Larger Style Will Replace Smaller Ones in Business District and Those Go to Other Sections

Sixteen applications have been filed for letter boxes. Recently 25 boxes, of the size desirable for residence districts were sent to Decatur. These will be located with the effort to give the best service, most convenient to the largest number of the office patrons. Decisions as to the location of the new boxes will not be known for several days until the situation has been thoroughly canvassed.

Those who want mail boxes near their homes should not appeal to Postmaster Bering. He has nothing to do with it. File applications with Deputy Postmaster Fred Stoewand or Supt. of Mail William Donovan. They have exclusive charge of the location of the boxes. The local office has nine No. 2 boxes, a large size for the business district and four No. 3 boxes and these will be placed in the business district and the small boxes they replace will be installed in the residence district. Before anything is done posts for the boxes must be had and the work will wait until the frost is out of the ground.

# FINES COLLECTED IN

VEAD TOTALLED \$5 10¢

# SMOKER WELCOME IN SILVER TUBE

## Some Member of Association of Commerce to Carry Invitation to McKinley.

In a silver tube, made for the purpose, a welcome and invitation to W. B. McKinley to attend a smoker in Decatur, signed by 300 or more Decatur men will be handed to Mr. McKinley when he lands in New York the 17th, after his trip around the world. Some members of the Association of Commerce will leave the last part of the week to carry the message. John L. Bennett is in charge of the arrangements.

The welcome here may not be as big as the one in Champaign but it is to be as hearty. The Champaign Chamber of Commerce has tendered its services to the student body of the University of Illinois who are in direct charge of the home-coming celebration planned for the former congressman in his home town.

The program here has not been fully determined upon, but it probably will be informal, though including a welcoming address. It will be non-partisan in character.

# S. A. EDWARDS TO BE ASSIGNED TERRITORY

Commenced Duties as Deputy Game Warden Tuesday—Meet in Shelbyville Next Tuesday.

# SUPERVISORS CHARGE MANY POLLING

## Justices of the Peace Share of Fees in Criminal Cases.

After many years the poll of the sixth precinct of Decatur has been changed from 218 West Wood street, to a new establishment of the same name on the north side of the street. The change was made by the board of supervisors at the Tuesday upon recommendation of supervisor T. L. Corley. Other polling places upon his reelection were made as follows: Fourth district, Baucum's North Monroe street.

Eleventh district, Lipman shop, 710 East Eldorado street. Twenty-first district, Wackerly store, 1901 North Church street. Twenty-second district, store, 409 East Decatur street. Seventh district, rear of 685 Decatur street.

#### Asks Part of Fees.

The justices of the peace at Decatur township petitioned the board to allow a certain percentage of the fees earned by these justices in criminal cases. The fees are unless there is a conviction costs can be collected from the convicted person only rarely.

It is that the justices do much nothing. On motion of Rodgers the petition was made a special order for 10 o'clock Wednesday. A resolution approved by the county supervisors that all boards should co-operate in getting a state institution for victims of tuberculosis was placed on file.

#### Want Road Near.

A communication from the County Association of Highways urged that the county take such action as was necessary to secure to Macon county a share of the fund appropriated for road building. The communication was on file.

Mary Moore, county supervisor, submitted her report concerning the number of schools visited during the last quarter and presented a claim for \$234 for clerk hire and office supplies.

#### Expends \$1,710.

O. B. Cross, overseer of the poor reported that during the last quarter he had issued orders for an amount of \$1,710. Of that amount \$1,200 was for groceries, \$200 for transportation.

Dan Moore, chairman of the relief committee, reported that he had issued orders aggregating \$1,000 during the last year.

Overseer Cross reported also that dependent children under the care of Judge Smith, \$215 had been paid during the last year.

# CONSTRUCTION FIRM APPEALS DECISION

## States That it Was Not Responsible For His Death by Falling Last Week.

# FINE TRIBUTES TO JOHN ULLRICH

## Rev. R. E. Henry Tells of Fine Character of Dead Citizen—Large Crowd at Funeral.

The body of John Ullrich arrived from California at 4:40 o'clock Thursday morning, accompanied by Mrs. Ullrich and daughter, Mrs. Spencer Ewing of Bloomington, and the son, John H. Ullrich. The body was taken to the Monson & Wilcox chapel and at 1:30 Thursday afternoon was taken to the First Christian church. The church was crowded with friends.

After the services at the church the body will be returned to the Monson & Wilcox chapel and at 1:45 Friday morning will be taken to the Graceland crematory in Chicago and cremated.

The honorary pallbearers were J. A. Meriwether, J. D. Prestley, C. A. Ewing, Theron A. Powers, Patrick Eggarty and Frank Reinhard. There were no active pall bearers.

### DOMINANT TRAIT

After a brief historical sketch of his life, Rev. R. E. Henry said that he wanted to talk about things that characterized the life of Mr. Ullrich. At the post, though he did not have him in mind, described his life splendidly when he said: "To think without confusion clearly, to love his fellowmen sincerely, to act from honest motives purely, to trust in God and heaven securely." Mr. Henry said in part:

"His dominant trait in business was his fearless honesty. Mr. Ullrich despised a cheat most heartily but trusted his fellowmen to the limit. With his business associates his relationship was very close indeed. When a man whom he had trusted proved a rascal it hurt him sorely.

"It was inevitable that Mr. Ullrich should amass a fortune. His habits of economy and frugality, his indomitable energy and his unlimited capacity for work assured that. The foundation for his fortune was laid early upon the advice of his father who had traveled the world over and said at one time to him, 'John, get hold of some of this Illinois land; there is nothing richer in the Nile valley, and I know, for I have seen it all. He saw the possibilities of central Illinois soil and began to buy as much of it as he could.

### HIS BENEFICATIONS

"His benefactions were numerous and large, but he never shouted a trumpet when doing them and it would be poor taste for me to laud him because of them now. I must

mention a few, however, bringing you my own personal experience. Upon my first coming to the city, he said to me, 'You will often find cases of need. Do not contribute to them yourself, but come to me for anything necessary.' I never came for help from him but what it was cheerfully given. So far as I know his largest benefaction was for his church and it was his splendid gift that made the building possible.

Truly it would be appropriate to say of Mr. Ullrich that which was said of St. Christopher Wren, the rector of St. Paul's, and who was buried there, 'si monumentum requiris circumspice,' which liberally translated is, 'would you see the monument look around you.' This church might well have been named the Ullrich Memorial church of Christ, though I am sure Mr. Ullrich would have been the first to protest against any such action.

### HE WAS DEMOCRATIC

"I want also to speak of his democracy and his keenness of interest in things of today. There was no one more interested or better informed of the world war and world events than Mr. Ullrich. From the ground up he was democratic. He despised Prussianism and he knew it in all its hideousness, for he himself had gone through the revolution of 1848 when Prussian soldiers were quartered in his own home and knew that Prussian oppression of Bavaria of 1866. Not only did he despise the particular kind that was regnant in the heart of William Hohenzollern, but wherever found, for his defilement of Hanau was to take what you want just because you can get it." Truly, he was a democrat in his wealth. It never made any difference in his treatment of his fellows. He despised caste and the caste spirit.

"His religious experience was of the deep abiding kind. He said to me about confirmation: 'I fear it is often a mere matter of form to secure church membership, but in my case my confirmation was my definite acceptance of Jesus Christ as my personal savior, and from that Faith I never have wavered.' It is in view of that faith by which he lived and in which he died that I come to you, his immediate circle of loved ones, with the assurance of God's word."

Rev. Mr. Henry quoted in closing parts of John 14 and 1 Thess. 4:13-15.

# J. O. ENGLEMAN SPEAKS TONIGHT

## Will Tell of Federal Educational Bill.

Superintendent J. O. Engleman will deliver an address before the university club tonight on the Federal Educational bill which is now before congress. This bill is the most important educational matter that has ever been put before congress.

It provides for an annual appropriation of one hundred million dollars annually by the federal government provided that sums in equal amounts be provided by the several states for the purpose of carrying on more successfully certain types of education which vitally concern the national welfare. Superintendent Engleman has studied this bill carefully and this will be the first public discussion of it in Decatur. This bill is altogether more important than most people think it is, said Mr. Engleman.

### SEPARATE DEPARTMENT

The Bureau of Education is now under the department of the interior. It is proposed to make it a separate department with a secretary who will be a member of the cabinet. The fact is that so clearly is the the strategic value of the schools recognized that there are eleven different bureaus in Washington in Washington that are trying to tell us how to run the schools or are asking in some way aid of the schools. You may have noticed during the war that in all mention of the cabinets of Europe the minister of education ranks with other ministers of the government.

All school men recognize the importance of raising the average level of the schools. We have right here in Illinois school districts that are conducting their schools upon an assessment of 30 cents on the hundred dollars for educational purpose and other districts that are assessing 45 on the hundred of assessed valuation. We have a wide difference of quality in schools in different districts in Illinois than there is between the schools of different states.

# BEST ATTENDANCE IN THE SCHOOLS

## Only 612 Absentees in Buildings in September.

There was the best attendance yesterday since the opening of the schools in September, the number of absentees being 612. Since the enrollment on Jan. 13 was 6,350, there was not quite one absentee for each ten pupils in the schools.

The sickness among teachers is steadily decreasing and it may now be said to be normal. There are no more teachers out of service than could be found under normal health conditions. Miss Adelta Bishop of the Mary W. French school returned to duty today after being ill a few days.

# COUNCIL DISCUSSES STREET CARS

Lack of adequate street car facilities was again the subject of discussion in the city council Thursday morning. Commissioner D. F. Mattes asked that Corporation Counsel Carey bring in a report telling the council just how far it can go without applying to the Illinois board of public utilities in regulating street car traffic.

He said that lack of equipment was to blame for all of the complaints that the street cars were in constant use during the day, so that there was no time to even sweep the dirt out of them; that in bad weather mud from the streets was carried into the cars and there was no chance to sweep it out till late at night, after the cars stopped running. He believed that if the street car people would borrow a couple of the old interurban cars to use in the morning and evening rush hours it would do away with the complaints as far as the Eldorado line is concerned.

### MAYOR'S STATEMENT

Mayor Dinneen said he believed that from the rulings of the public utilities commission in other matters the council would be wasting time trying to do anything with the street car matter directly and that the only way to get anywhere with the proposition would be by going direct to the utilities commission with it, and in any event he said that action should not be confined to the Eldorado street line. He spoke of conditions on the Riverdale line and said that they were about as bad as anywhere on the system.

Commissioner Robbins said he did not believe there was anything in the franchise that required the company to keep the cars clean or regulating the number of cars to be used on any line, and that whatever powers the council may have reserved under the franchise had been taken away by the utilities commission.

### MORE STRAPS

Commissioner Becker said that if a temporary relief for those who have to stand up, the suggestion of The Review that more straps be provided, was a good one.

Commissioner Rutshoff said that the health department could insist that the cars be kept clean as a health measure, but he didn't know if the health department could go any further.

Commissioner Mattes said that the overcrowding of the cars was a much a menace to health as the dirt and if the health department can prevent the overcrowding of the street cars he wants to know it.

Mayor Dinneen said that the street cars in the east part of the city might not be able to carry the heavy interurban cars, but that they could be used it would be that section of the city a great help.

Commissioner Rutshoff said the track for several blocks on William street was being laid.

# BIG CROWD FOR "JOLLIES OF 1919"

# SPECIAL I. T. S. CAR TO GAME

W. D. Stacey Makes Arrangements D. H. S. Students to Bloomington.

THETA ALPHA CLASS PARTY