

 ST. CHARLES <small>SINCE 1834</small>	HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM EXECUTIVE SUMMARY			
	Agenda Item Title/Address:	Presentation of Downtown Walking Tour		
	Proposal:	Proposed walking tour, with signs to be posted		
	Petitioner:	Downtown Partnership and History Museum		
Please check appropriate box (x)				
	PUBLIC HEARING		MEETING 4/18/18	X
AGENDA ITEM CATEGORY:				
	Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)		Façade Improvement Plan	
	Preliminary Review		Landmark/District Designation	
	Discussion Item	X	Commission Business	
ATTACHMENTS:				
COA information from 11/15/17, photos showing replacement windows installed				
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:				
<p>Jenna Sawicki of the Downtown St. Charles Partnership and Alison Costanzo from the St. Charles History Museum will present information about the Downtown Walking Tour.</p> <p>Enclosed are the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed text to be used for each sign. • A sample of what the signs will look like (Hotel Baker example). • A map of the tour. 				
RECOMMENDATION / SUGGESTED ACTION:				
Provide comments and feedback. The tour will be presented to the City Council at a future meeting.				

Downtown St. Charles Walking Tour

Discover the Rich History of St. Charles

1. Public Library c.1908 (Carnegie Building)

1 S. 6th Ave.

Prior to this building, the library was located on East Main Street and operated as a subscription library. The first librarian was Miss Jenny Lewis, the daughter of Dr. James K. Lewis, first Mayor of St. Charles (1875-1877 and 1879-1881). The subscription library lasted for 17 years until the St. Charles Library Association was established in 1889.

In 1906, the township voted to build a public library. The original Classical Revival style Carnegie library building was completed in 1908. Renowned industrialist Andrew Carnegie provided financial assistance of \$12,500 of the \$15,000 in total cost. Upon completion in December 1908, the library, contained over 2,000 books, and had only one librarian, until 1929.

After serving as storage for approximately fifty years, in 1998, the upper level of the Carnegie Building reopened. Today, the Carnegie Community Room provides a delightful locale for community events. (St. Charles Public Library)

2. Rockwell House c.1841

405 E. Main St.

Originally constructed by Dr. Thomas Whipple as a residence and medical office in 1841. In 1856, Dr. Dewolf took over Dr. Whipple's medical practice and he added the second floor and Italianate features to the building.

This would later become the home of H.T. Rockwell, local postmaster, alderman and two-term Mayor of St. Charles (1885-89). Rockwell, a native of New York, came to St. Charles in 1863. During his term as mayor, a stage line was established between Geneva and St. Charles and citizens moved to create provisions for city fire protection.

In 1950, Yurs Funeral Home purchased the property. In 1985, what is now the parking lot for Yurs Funeral Home is where Col. Edward Baker's house once stood but was moved to State Avenue.

3. Illinois Cleaners c.1911

315 E. Main St.

Illinois Cleaners was founded in 1911 by George Neumark, who also served as St. Charles' Mayor (1961-1969). This business flourished until the 1960s, when the "polyester years" negatively impacted the dry cleaning industry. Eventually, William Marberry and his four sons bought Illinois Cleaners and several other Chicagoland dry cleaning businesses. The new, combined business still inhabits the building today.

Downtown St. Charles Walking Tour

Discover the Rich History of St. Charles

4. McCornack Oil Co. Building c.1928

215 E. Main St.

Charles McCornack founded the McCornack Oil Company in 1904. He started the business with ten oil tanks, three wagons, four horses and several sleighs. The company delivered kerosene to homes and businesses all around the Fox Valley area. In 1911, McCornack began supplying gasoline and the Excelene brand of motor oil to meet the demands of the automobile era.

As business grew, McCornack opened a gas station at 300 West Main Street in 1920. In 1927, he set his sights on the Minard family property on East Main Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenues for his second gas station. Contracting architect Frank B. Gray, McCornack and Gray built a premiere gas station that became corporate headquarters and was open for operation on Christmas 1928.

The building operated as gas station until 1990. The building was adapted for use by the St. Charles History Museum in 2001.

5. Minard Hall & Judge Barry's Law Office 1840's

201 E. Main St.

Constructed by early settler Ira Minard, the building served as Minard Hall and was the city's first opera house. It featured local entertainment talent, concerts, and political speeches on the second floor. William and Alonzo Barry also had a law office in the building, and it is believed that Abraham Lincoln visited the Barry brothers here. This building also functioned as the first St. Charles Public Library from the 1880s until 1906.

Later the St. Charles Office Supply occupied the building and after McNally's Irish Pub from 1998 until 2010. The building now houses The Office Dining & Spirits restaurant.

Arcada Theatre 1926 & Club Arcada 1934

105 E. Main St.

While traveling the world with his wife, Dellora Angell Norris and Lester J. Norris chose the Spanish style for his new theatre back home in St. Charles. When Dellora's uncle, Col. Edward J. Baker, saw it, he liked the design and told his architects to design his new Hotel in the Spanish style. Richly appointed, the Arcada's grandeur made it "the finest 1,000-seat theatre in the Midwest." In 1997, Craig Frank, a local businessman, completely restored the Arcada and was celebrated as "Mr. Landmark St. Charles".

Club Arcada, which originally opened on December 29, 1934, was located on the first floor of the Arcada Theatre. Later, the space was occupied first by the Scotland Yard Bar, and today by the House Pub. In 2017, Club Arcada reopened as a speakeasy and is located on the third floor, the room is a 1920s-style nightclub, encouraging guests to wear period costumes.

Downtown St. Charles Walking Tour

Discover the Rich History of St. Charles

6. Osgood Building c.1896

11-15 E. Main St.

After a fire destroyed the entire block in 1895, Frank Osgood, Bela T. Hunt, and Levi Morse began to rebuild. This location was once the station for the Chicago Aurora and Elgin Railroad, which operated interurban cars that ran on Main Street.

In 1915, a Chicago Great Western Railway train jumped the tracks that ran near where the Municipal Center stands today and struck the 12 E. Main Street building. The accident caused little damage to the building and no injuries were reported.

Many businesses and professional offices have occupied the Osgood, Hunt, and Morse Block since 1896, everything from a meat market, tailor shop, and tea shop. Today, BMO Harris Bank owns most of the buildings in this block.

7. Main Street Bridge 1836-Present

The first bridge spanning the Fox River was built in 1836. Spring thaws and fast flowing ice blocks destroyed the early bridges several times during the 19th century. In 1927, the bridge was rebuilt and widened to coincide with the opening of Hotel Baker. Route 64 came through St. Charles in the same year, which Col. Baker worked to have routed through the city. Lester J. Norris helped to design the 1927 bridge, which was adorned with four bronze foxes, that were purchased by Herbert P. Crane.

These four foxes are symbolic of the Fox River over which they stand guard and inspired the story of the "Four Sons of Charlemagne," written by St. Charles Mayor C.V. Amenoff (1969-1973). The current bridge was erected in 1997.

8. Butler-Pratt Building c.1850

103 W. Main St.

Built around 1850, by photographer, cabinet maker, and printer Dewitt Clinton Pratt, the Butler-Pratt building is one of the oldest buildings in St. Charles. Pratt first used the structure as the headquarters of his daguerreotype photography business, then as a gallery when his operations moved to Aurora. Oliver Morris Butler, a paper manufacturer, then bought the building later in the 19th century.

After Butler's death the building became Marsden Brothers Hardware. Various doctor's offices and restaurants have also occupied the site. Interestingly, in 1884, tightrope walkers strung their rope from the Butler-Pratt to what is now the Hotel Baker and walked across it. (St. Charles Public Library)

9. Bank Building c.1895

107 W. Main St.

During its early years this classical style building housed a shoemaker, a clothing store, and a jewelry shop. The St. Charles National Bank was located here in 1902 until 1926, when it moved to 200 West Main Street.

10. Gartner's Bakery c.1905

Downtown St. Charles Walking Tour

Discover the Rich History of St. Charles

203 W. Main St.

This structure was built by Joseph Gartner in 1905, to house his bakery and confectionary. Gartner was, an immigrant from Germany who arrived in Illinois at the age of 19 years old and worked in a bakery in Hampshire, Illinois. After moving to St. Charles in 1890, he set up shop in the Dearborn building at Main and 2nd Street before moving to the new location 15 years later.

Gartner's Bakery became famous for its five-cent ice cream dishes and 25-cent Sunday dinners. Joseph's son Karl ran the business until 1960, when the building was sold to Bagge Pharmacy. Various businesses have utilized the space, and it is currently occupied by Kettley Realty (St. Charles Public Library)

11. Rehm's Electric circa c.1920

LeRoy Rehm, originally of Afton, Iowa and having grown up in Chicago's Lincoln Park, moved to St. Charles in 1914. After working for several years as a teacher of electrical work at Mooseheart, he opened his own electric company in his adopted hometown. In addition to selling electrical appliances and providing the St. Charles area with electricians, Rehm Electric built the connections which originally lit up Buckingham Fountain in Chicago in 1927. After that success, they were hired the next year to install electric equipment in Hotel Baker before it opened in 1928.

12. Klink's Wagon Shop c.1866

301 W. Main St.

Louis Klink moved to St. Charles from Wurtemberg, Germany in 1854. He built the Wagon Shop in 1866 and included a ramp so finished wagons could be rolled to the street. The building also housed a blacksmith shop in its first floor. After approximately 50 years in operation, Klink's Wagon Shop was demolished to make room for the Italian Renaissance building which now takes its place. This newer construction has been home to many general and dry goods stores as well as the Blue Goose and an antiques market. After changing hands many more times, the building was transformed in 2015, into The Finery & Blacksmith Bar, Rocket Fizz Soda Pop and Candy Store. (St. Charles Public Library)

13. Old St. Patrick Church c.1851

18 N. 4th St.

Prior to the establishment of St. Patrick Parish, itinerant missionary priests offered Mass to Roman Catholics in their homes once every four months. Father William Feely supervised the construction of this gothic revival building which housed the first Roman Catholic church in St. Charles. Bishop James Van de Velde came from Chicago to dedicate the new church on July 9, 1851.

This Gothic Revival style structure served as the first Catholic church in St. Charles. The building was used as a church until 1912, then as St. Patrick School classrooms until 1950. The building remained vacant until 1974, when it was redeveloped into the Old Church Inn. The building was expanded to the north in 1996, and the steeple was removed in 2009.

14. Lambert Hospital c.1913

Downtown St. Charles Walking Tour

Discover the Rich History of St. Charles

314 W. Main St.

Dr. Edith Bell Lowery Lambert and Dr. Richard Lambert built this first St. Charles hospital. In 1924, it was converted into the Moose Hall when the city hospital relocated to the Gillette House on N. 2nd Ave. In 1940, the hospital moved into the Delnor Hospital building on N. 5th Ave., which was built by Lester and Dellora Norris and bears her name.

15. McCornack Oil Distribution c.1904

300 W. Main St.

Charles Samuel McCornack was born in Elgin on January 5, 1873. He moved to St. Charles in 1903, purchased a St. Charles Oil Distribution Company from Henry Delno in 1904. For the first years of business, the McCornack Oil's business address was his house in 1911. Shortly after, Charles bought the first truck for his business, which made his work easier, more efficient, and more profitable.

By the time 1920, rolled around, Charles McCornack had such a booming business that he was able to open his first of four service stations, the first located here on the northwest corner of West Main and Third Street. The site operated as a gas station until 1977. The station was renovated and the Filling Station Restaurant now resides here.

16. The White Front Hotel c.1851

208 W. Main St

St. Charles experienced an economic boom in the mid-1800s. As a result, the White Front Hotel was built to accommodate the increase in tourism. Built by John Billings in 1851, the hotel did not remain in his hands for long. He sold it to the Aurora Brewing Company soon after it opened. The space was then leased by Otto Frellson in 1896, and reopened as another hotel and bar; Frellson also constructed an addition to the building in 1898. The building was bought and sold many times in the following decades, but in 1928, the Kacheres family opened the St. Charles Hotel and Café, remaining opened for many years. Since then, the building has mainly contained restaurants and apartments and now houses the Main Street Pub.

17. St. Charles National Bank c.1926

200 W. Main St.

Downtown St. Charles Walking Tour

Discover the Rich History of St. Charles

The St. Charles National Bank was established in 1902, the bank originally operated at 107 W. Main Street until it moved to this location. Col. Edward J. Baker announced the construction of the new St. Charles National Bank building at the same time the Baker Community Center was being built and the Hotel Baker was being designed. Col. Baker purchased the former Gartner's Bakery building at this site, razed it, and constructed the new \$200,000 bank building using his own funds.

Col. Baker instructed the architects from Wolf, Sexton, Harper & Truax, to build the most modern and elaborately furnished bank of its size in the country. Georgia pink marble covered the exterior of the building and Italian white marble trimmed the inside. The elegant new bank building featured high ceilings, arched windows, and bronze light fixtures, vases, and furniture. The building was even completed with machine-gun emplacements for added protection.

18. Colson's Department Store c.1880

116 W. Main St.

As a toddler, John Fabian Colson immigrated with his family to St. Charles from Sweden. Growing up in St. Charles, he began as a clerk at Anderson's Dry Goods store. Upon the proprietor's death in 1880, he took over the business. As sole owner, he changed the name to Colson's Department Store. In the early 1900s, the store moved from 24 W. Main St. to 116 W. Main St.

In addition to being a department store, on the second floor of the building housed the, St. Charles Historical artifacts collection, which was the beginning collection of the St. Charles Historical Society. A fire destroyed most of these artifacts in 1933, and in 1954 a flood caused even more damage to the building. Despite these tragedies (compounded by a 1975 fire), the department store remained open until 1992.

19. Hotel Baker c.1928

100 W. Main St.

"The Perfect Hotel"

In 1918, Col. Baker and his niece Dellora Norris inherited the fortune of the founder of Texaco Oil, Col. Baker's brother-in-law John Gates. Col. Baker and his niece Dellora invested the money in St. Charles.

Col. Baker broke ground for Hotel Baker in 1926. Two years later, and costing approximately \$600,000, the Hotel opened to 301 guest on June 2, 1928. The Hotel Baker eclipsed any building project the city had ever seen. Its rainbow-colored ballroom floor is the world's first lighted dance floor. The Hotel generated its own electricity with two hydro-electric generators. Live music that once played in the Rainbow Room Restaurant was connected to loudspeakers in the Municipal Building, making it a "singing tower" that played music across the downtown.

The Hotel Baker was Col. Baker's home, and was known across the world because of Greyhound, Baker's record-setting racehorse, the World's Champion Trotter.

21. Municipal Building c.1940 and City Building c.1892

2 E. Main St.

Downtown St. Charles Walking Tour

Discover the Rich History of St. Charles

Once the site of a mill and the St. Charles Fixture Mfg. Co., Lester and Dellora Norris purchased the land after the manufacturing plant was destroyed by fire in 1928. They donated the land and, with assistance from Col. Baker, commissioned this current municipal center.

The building was designed in the Art Moderne style by architects R. Harold Zook and D. Coder Taylor, FAIA. Harold Zook's architectural designs were compared to those of Frank Lloyd Wright. Zook's most distinctive and famous trademark was using a spider-web design that is in about one-fourth of his buildings.

The old City Hall (on the eastern side of the current building) was built in the Romanesque Style in 1892, and served as the center of municipal activity until the current Municipal Building was finished in 1940. The two buildings were eventually joined together by a new entry atrium in 1995.

22. Franklin Medical College c.1836

102 E. Main St.

Built as Ira Minard's general store in 1842, this building became the location of the first medical school in Illinois. George W. Richards, an established doctor, founded the school that existed for only a brief seven-year period.

During its years in operation the school offered courses in anatomy, pharmacy, surgery, and obstetrics. Classes ranging in size from 15 to 20 students trained under well-known doctors who were considered experts in their respective fields.

However, the college closed in 1849, after a riot occurred in which one of the college's students was found to have dug up the grave of a Sycamore woman for medical research. After closing, the site was used by a variety of stores and was remodeled to its present-day appearance.

23. Wing House c.1853

105 N. 2nd Ave.

This Greek revival style house was built by Orrin Webster who operated a livery stable here in the 1850's. Clinton Wing purchased the home near the end of the Civil War. Wing was the second Mayor of St. Charles from (1877-1879). Wing was a real estate investor and president of the St. Charles Hotel and Park Company property, which became Pottawatomie Park.

In the 1960s, the home was bought and converted into small shops and in 1974, Marilou Kelly established Town House Books. Al Berg held stained glass classes in the remodeled garage and then established Al's Ice Creamery in the space in 1980.

David Hunt purchased Town House Books in 1992 and established the Town House Cafe in the space vacated by Al's Ice Creamery in 1996. Both are part of the Century Corners Shopping District in one of the oldest neighborhoods in St. Charles.

24. Pickle Packers International c.1960

108 E. Main St

Downtown St. Charles Walking Tour

Discover the Rich History of St. Charles

Pickle Packers International (PPI) was founded in 1892, to promote and educate consumers about the benefits of pickles. This non-profit agency relocated to the St. Charles area in the early 1960's thanks, in part, to William Moore who resided in St. Charles and had his Pickle Packers International office at 108 ½ East Main Street.

PPI gained national attention for the St. Charles area in the 1990's when the organization appeared as an answer to a question on the television game show Jeopardy: Answer – This Midwestern town is the Pickle Capital of the World. Question – What is St. Charles, Illinois?

PPI called St. Charles home until 2004, when the agency was handed over to an international marketing firm now based in Washington D.C.

25. St. Charles Trolley Line c.1896

In front of 307 Cedar Avenue Baker Memorial United Methodist Church

Starting in 1896, the first interurban trolley – operating under the Elgin, Aurora, and Southern Traction Company – rolled down Main Street. Trains connecting Chicago and St. Charles eventually arrived in 1910.

At the 3rd and State streets intersection in Geneva, the Chicago, Aurora and Elgin Railroad (also known as the Great Third Rail) branched off and operated on the Fox River Line. This provided an essential link between Aurora, Geneva, St. Charles and Elgin. The trolleys traveling north entered St. Charles via 3rd Street, running up and down Main Street several times a day.

The trolley and railroad lines gave people mobility and provided quicker access to neighboring towns. On October 31, 1937, the line ended operations.

26. Baker Memorial United Methodist Church c.1954

307 Cedar Ave.

St. Charles benefactor Col. Edward J. Baker had constructed five buildings in St. Charles when he undertook the construction of a church in memory of his parents, Edward and Martha Baker. Edward and Martha Baker were founding members of the First Methodist Church congregation in St. Charles in 1836.

In 1952, Edward Baker hired the architectural firm of Gray, Laz, and Mall of Geneva to design a grand new church for the First Methodist Church congregation. Constructed of Wisconsin Lannon stone with cut stone detailing, it serves as an example of modified Gothic architecture.

The cost for design and construction of the church was \$1,250,000. The Baker Memorial Methodist Church was dedicated on September 19, 1954, and the Methodist congregation celebrated the move to their magnificent new church building with a ceremonial walk from the old church.

20

HOTEL BAKER

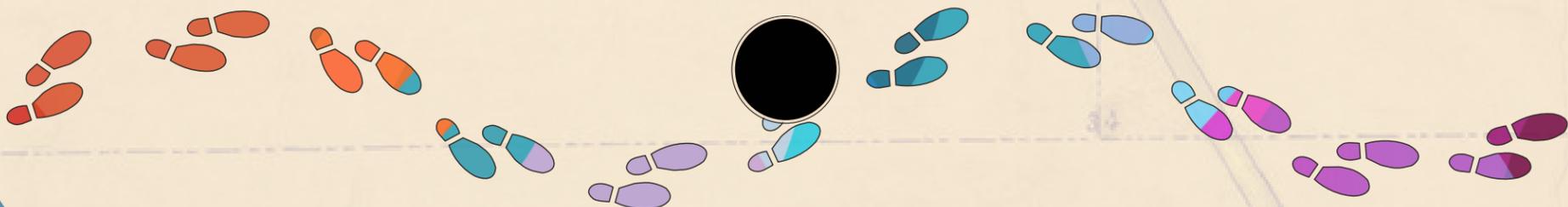
EST.
1928



"The Perfect Hotel" costing approximately \$1,250,000, the Hotel Baker eclipsed any building project the city had ever seen. Its rainbow-colored ballroom floor is the world's first lighted dance floor. The Hotel generated its own electricity with two hydro-electric generators. Live music that once played in the Rainbow Room Restaurant was connected to loudspeakers in the Municipal Building, making it a "singing tower" that played music across the downtown. The Hotel Baker was Col. Baker's home, and was known across the world because of Greyhound, Baker's record-setting racehorse, the World's Champion Trotter.



stcmuseum.org/historicwalkingtour



This self-guided walking tour is numbered for your convenience.

