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# THE MUELLER RECORD

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Fall 2003

In 2004, Macon County and Decatur will  
celebrate their 175th anniversary!!!



Decatur's Transfer House with  
Mueller Company Logo sign  
ca. 1905

## For The Record

By Paula Cross, Manager

I think it's pretty exciting to be celebrating the 175th anniversary of Decatur and Macon County in 2004, but then, I love history.

Do you know how it all began? According to the *History of Macon County* (edited by O.T. Banton) the first home erected in Macon County was built in 1820 by William Downing, a fur trapper and honey gatherer. It was along the Sangamon River near the present location of the Mueller Lodge (hey, small world - we're always looking for a Mueller connection!). Downing only stayed until 1824, when he sold his cabin to the John Ward family.

The second home was built by the Stevens' family between 1821 and 1823. Their house was located about four miles northeast along Stevens Creek.

In 1828, we were part of Shelby County, with the county seat in Shelbyville and the state capitol in Vandalia. Settlement was increasing in the area and some of these early settlers decided to petition the state legislature for a new county. They were successful, and on January 19, 1829, the Legislature established the county of Macon and decreed that a new county seat, named Decatur in honor Stephen Decatur, be surveyed.

Decatur was still only a small but growing town when Hieronymus and Fredericka Mueller moved here in 1857. Hieronymus opened his gunsmith shop in the 100 block of West Main Street. Except for a short trip by Hieronymus in 1858 to participate in the Pike's Peak gold rush, there has always been a Mueller company in Decatur. In 2004, the Mueller company will celebrate its 147th anniversary.

That's a long time! I wonder if any other Decatur companies have been in business that long? I'll do some research and let you know what I find out..

There is only one *Mueller Record* today and this is it! If you know someone who would be interested in receiving this quarterly newsletter, why not give that person a membership!

### Annual Membership Information

**Student/Senior Citizen: \$15**

Free admission for member and one guest, museum newsletter subscription, 10% discount on gift items.

**Regular Membership: \$20**

Free admission for member and one guest, museum newsletter subscription, 10% discount on gift items.

**Family Membership: \$25**

Free admission for member and up to four guests, museum newsletter subscription, 10% discount on gift items.

**\*Support Membership: \$50**

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**\*Patron Membership \$500**

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**\*Benefactor Membership \$1000**

Free admission for member and guests, museum newsletter subscription, 10% discount on gift items, recognition on museum donor board.

**Please circle the type of membership preferred.**

\*A portion of these membership fees are tax deductible

Please send this form and payment to

**HIERONYMUS MUELLER MUSEUM**

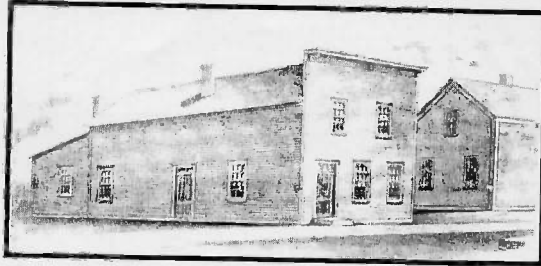
61 South Country Club Road  
Decatur, Illinois, 62521  
(217) 423-6161

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The Hieronymus Mueller Museum is a privately funded non-profit museum and depends upon donations for its operations

*In 2004, the Mueller Company will celebrate their 147th anniversary. The Mueller family is proud to be a part of the wonderful history of Decatur*

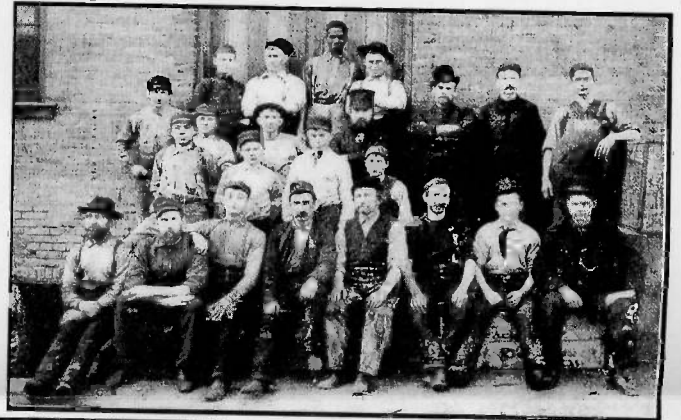


**1857**

Hieronymus and Fredericka Mueller's first shop and residence in Decatur was located in the 100 block of West Main Street. As their business expanded they moved to larger or additional buildings on East Main, North Water, Merchant, and Prairie Streets.

**1894**

This early photograph of Mueller employees was taken outside the company. At that time, Mueller Co. employed 50 to 60 men. By the turn of the century, the workforce numbered between six and seven hundred men and women.



Though Hieronymus Mueller may have hated horses, much of his early merchandise had to be shipped (at least as far as the train station) by horse and wagon. Hieronymus was a big believer in advertising, notice that even the horses have H\*M on their collars!

**1912**

The Mueller Company expanded their business with branch offices in New York, Chicago and San Francisco and a factory in Sarnia, Ontario, Canada. This photograph is of their first Pacific coast branch at 589 Mission Street, San Francisco.



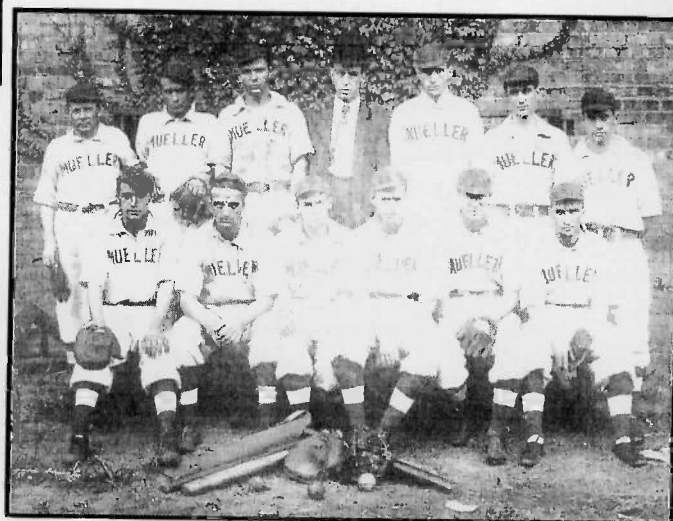


1899

Hieronimus Mueller with grandsons, William Everett and Lucien, leading parade to the Mueller Company Mutual Benefit Association Picnic.



They even had monkeys!  
Adolph Mueller at a company picnic (?).



ca. 1890

Mueller baseball team after a game (I'm assuming since some of the uniforms are pretty dirty.) Love the coach's hat!



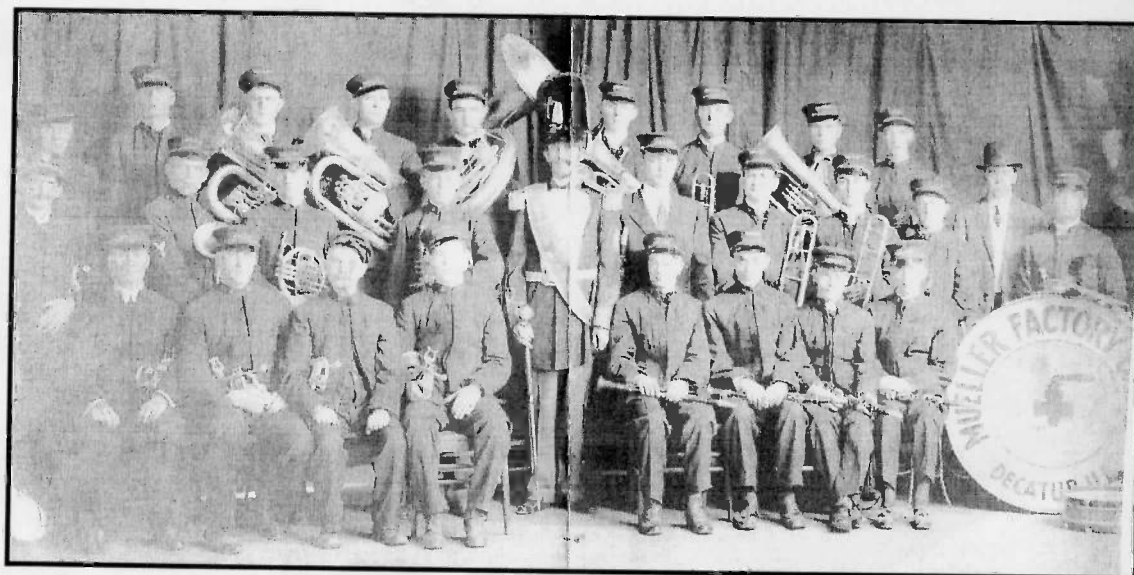
1949

The Mueller Company bowling team with trophy.

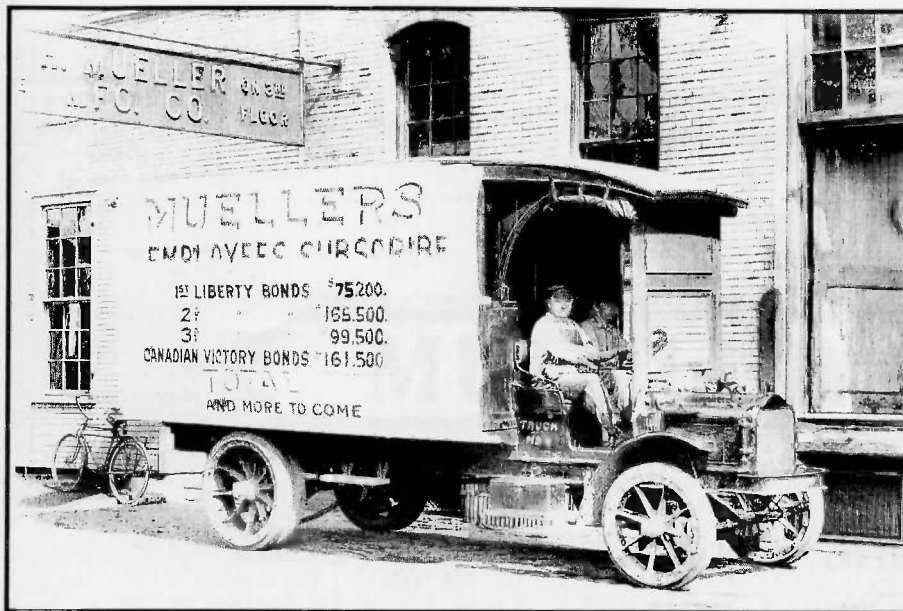
— *parades, parties, music and sports* —

1913

The Mueller Band was formed on July 4, 1910. This 1913 photograph of the band shows good-looking men in good-looking uniforms. The band director must be the one in the second row, far right, with the nifty hat! Notice the symbol on the big drum.







## World War I

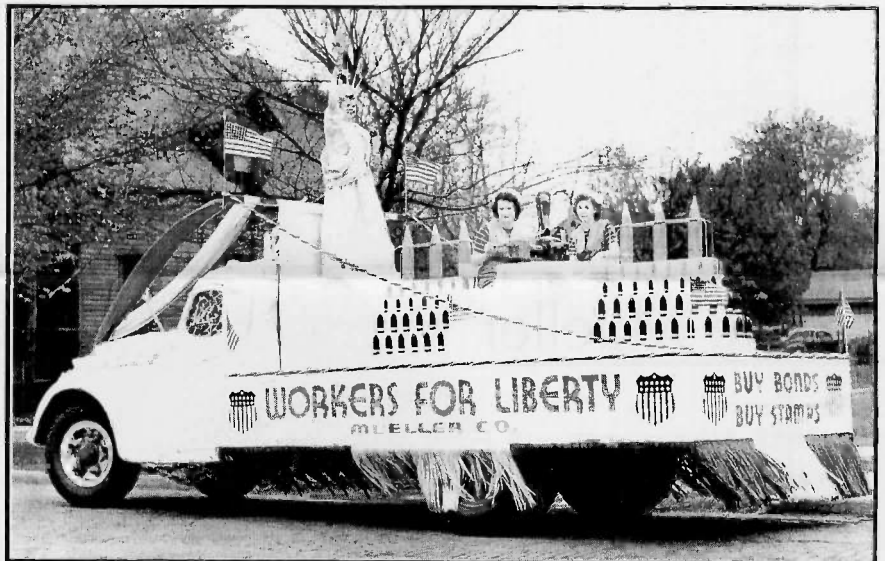
Truck in front of Mueller Company with sign promoting the purchase of World War I liberty bonds.

## World War II

Mueller Company parade float with Statue of Liberty and examples of munitions produced by the Mueller Company during World War II.

## Hieronymus Mueller, the citizen

In 1859, just two years after coming to Decatur, Hieronymus Mueller became an American citizens, never to return to his former country. Within a few short years after settling in Decatur, the country was in the midst of a civil war. Hieronymus was a staunch supporter of Abraham Lincoln and the preservation of the United States. A story about Hieronymus' dedication to his new country goes like this, "During the war (*Civil War*), Mr. Mueller was an ardent republican and union supporter. An equally intense southern sympathizer knowing his sentiments sought to belittle and disparage him before a crowd by applying a derogatory remark to his nationality. Mr. Mueller was a man of powerful physique and although the rebel sympathizer was a large man he was seized bodily, raised in the air and thrown about twenty feet, rolling down a hill unable to arise."



Mueller Company today

## HIERONYMUS MUELLER MUSEUM

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Decatur, IL 62521  
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## Some Mueller Company History!

In **1857**, Hieronymus and Fredericka came to Decatur and opened their first business, a gunsmith shop, located in the 100 block of West Main Street.

In **1871**, Hieronymus was appointed city plumber by the Decatur city council. He was in charge of making water connections at mains and of plumbing. Soon after his appointment he found himself in a water main trench, neck deep in water. Declaring this completely unsatisfactory, he invented the water tapping machine in **1872**.

Also in **1872**, Hieronymus erected a three story building at 222 East Main Street to meet the needs of his growing company. This was the fourth location of his expanding business.

By **1896**, the Mueller Co. employed between six and seven hundred people.

In **1897**, the Mutual Benefit Association of the H. Mueller Mfg. Co. was formed. The first officers were: President- Robert Mueller, Vice President- C.W. Ray, Secretary Harry Hays, Treasurer- W.H. Pease.

Group employee photographs taken around **1905** show that most employees such as brass finishers, moulders and tool makers were men, however almost all of the coremakers and the two employees in the box making department were women! Can someone tell me what a coremaker does?

*Happy 175th Anniversary  
to Macon County and Decatur*