

# BELLEVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

“Everything we do is for the betterment of the City of Belleville.”

www.bellevillehistoricalsociety.org | facebook: Belleville Historical Society | instagram: @bellevilleilhistoricalsociety

THE MISSION OF THE BELLEVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS TO PROMOTE AWARENESS AND APPRECIATION OF THE HISTORY, CUSTOMS, ARTIFACTS, ARCHITECTURE, AND PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF BELLEVILLE, ILLINOIS. IT STRIVES TO ACQUIRE, MANAGE, AND PRESERVE ARTIFACTS, DOCUMENTS AND REAL PROPERTY SIGNIFICANT TO BELLEVILLE AND TO ENCOURAGE PRESERVATION OF THE CITY'S CULTURE, HISTORY, AND ARCHITECTURE.

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

As our country celebrates its 250th anniversary this year, the organizations that deal with preserving Belleville's history, culture, and significant architecture will be joining forces this summer to honor that event. We work to develop a greater sense of appreciation and pride in our city. Follow our Facebook page and website for more information as it develops.

## GUIDED TOURS



Museum of Mid-Century Modern Architecture/Blazier House

The BHS offers guided tours by appointment for the Historic Garfield Street Saloon and the Museum of Mid-Century Modern Architecture (Blazier House).

For the saloon, call Bob at 618-236-7481 and leave a message.

For the MOMMA, call Margaret at 618-929-3261.

A minimum donation of \$10 per person is recommended!



Historic Garfield Street Saloon Museum



Circa 1960

2025

The Ebeling-Maurer House, at 1106 West Main Street, is located on the original Public Square of the Town of West Belleville. The town, which runs roughly from Richland Creek to 20th Street, was established in 1852 and merged with the City of Belleville in 1882. The house, built in the early 1870s, was purchased by the Belleville Historical Society in 2011 and completely refurbished on the exterior. The future plans are to use it as a repository of the history of the Town of West Belleville.

## 2026 MEMBERSHIP DUES AND CALL FOR DONATIONS

2026 membership dues are now receivable. They represent a major source of revenue for us to continue our mission in Belleville. We greatly appreciate your continued support of the BHS. **Please use the enclosed form to remit your dues.**

The BHS holds a mortgage on our Blazier House. Our 5 year balloon mortgage expired in November, and we had to renew it. The interest rate has increased, and our monthly payment went up by approximately \$150. We are reaching out to anyone who would be willing to make a tax deductible donation in that amount to help cover the increase by sending a check to:

**Belleville Historical Society  
633 East Garfield Street  
Belleville, IL 62220**

Thank you for your support!

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## 1950'S RETRO HOLIDAY PARTY



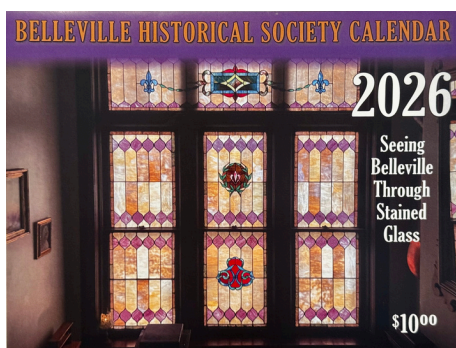
Our 2025 1950s Retro Holiday Party was an immense success. Thank you to Board Member Julia Skrabacz for taking the lead on the fun new additions to the party, such as the costume contest, specialty mocktails, and custom ornaments! We look forward to planning an even bigger and better party next year. Thanks to all of you who attended and supported this event.

## 2026 CALENDARS FOR SALE:

SEEING BELLEVILLE THROUGH STAINED GLASS

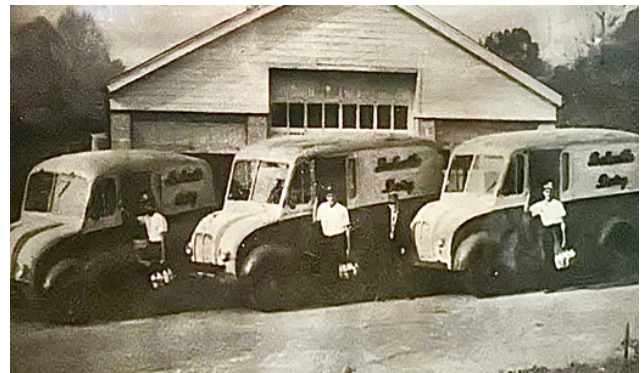
Our 2026 calendar featuring art glass windows in our city are still available for \$10 each! Don't miss an opportunity to see the stunning photos featured in the calendar, thanks to the work Hunter Robinson, Bob Brunkow, and Sarah Abbott. Purchase a calendar at these businesses:

- Artisans off Main
- Belleville Books
- Blanquart's Rusty Gem Vintage Market
- Circa Boutique
- Eckert's Country Store & Farms
- Eckert Florist
- Local Lucy's
- Peace By Piece



## HISTORY LESSON: BELLEVILLE DAIRY

Belleville Dairy (Circa 1940s) was located at 409 Union Avenue and owned by August Agne. Pictured below, you will see Agne's sons Harold, Marvin, and Tillo, and their fleet of milk trucks ready to head out on delivery routes.



## HISTORY LESSON: HENRY RAAB SCHOOL

The original Henry Raab School, built in 1906 and located at 11th Street and Union Avenue, was destroyed by fire in 1960 and replaced by a new building. Henry Raab (1827-1901), a German immigrant, was a prominent educator who served as the first superintendent of the Belleville Public Schools and later served as the Illinois State Superintendent of Public Instruction from 1882-1886. Raab was also a key organizer of the Belleville Turverein (Turners) and was active in several civic organizations.



Original Henry Raab School before and after the fire.

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## HISTORIC PLAQUE PROJECT: GEORGE BLAIR HOUSE

The City of Belleville joined our Historic Plaque project with one honoring the location of the home of city founder George Blair, which was located approximately where the City Hall annex is today. Pictured at the site is Mayor Jenny Gain Meyer and BHS Historian Bob Brunkow.



### A SALOONIST, BELLEVILLE’S FOUNDRY INDUSTRY, AND 123 WEST MAIN STREET. BY BOB BRUNKOW

When Heinrich Schmitt (1830-1886), a saloonkeeper and entrepreneur, decided to build an investment property near his saloon on West Main Street, he wanted a cast-iron front for the building. A local foundry satisfied his requirement. Founded in 1882, City Foundry and Machine Works fabricated the front. It was one of three cast-iron fronts known to have been erected in Belleville. (The others are at 312 East Main, also manufactured by City Foundry, and 26 East Main.) Documents show that Schmitt’s 123 West Main Street property was standing in 1884. The cast-iron front indicates that the building could have been constructed only as early as 1882. The building is Italianate in style, with overhanging eaves having decorative brackets beneath. Schmitt followed the same style of the building that he had constructed in 1878 at 119 West Main for his saloon and residence. The two buildings are almost twins, except that 123 has a cast-iron front, while 119 has dormers. The fronts of both buildings have had substantial alterations.

Heinrich Schmitt’s new building expanded his economic presence in Belleville. Schmitt was a native of Bavaria, who settled in Belleville in the 1850s. By 1860 he operated a saloon on the same block where he would later construct 119 and 123 West Main. He rented apartments in his saloon building. He invested in Belleville businesses, and he was a director of People’s Bank. 119 gave Schmitt the opportunity to rent apartments on the second floor and to rent the first floor to businesses.

The first known business in 119 was Eckhardt Brothers Dry Goods and Groceries, which had moved into the building by 1884. By 1887 the brothers were succeeded by Michael Kastel, a confectioner, baker, and restaurateur, who operated M. Kastel’s Restaurant and Oyster House here in the 1890s. After Heinrich died, Clara, his wife, and other family members moved into 119 from the saloon building. They left 119 about 1901. A cavalcade of businesspeople have occupied the building since the Schmitts left, including furniture dealers, butchers, clothiers, and attorneys.

An architectural detail of note may date to the late 1920s, when Gately’s clothiers offered the “finest clothing and jewelry on payments.” The window above the west-end front door of 123 is a single piece of plate glass that has a grid pattern to make it look like it was made of separate panes. A ribbed roller was rolled over the back of the glass to texturize it. The resulting window was inspired by high-end businesses that used prism glass windows that actually consisted of individual panes of glass set into frames. To judge the effectiveness of this effort to find a more economical way to mimic an expensive architectural feature, compare the window in 123 with the prism glass windows over the display windows at 201 West Main.

Though fewer in number than the buildings along Downtown Belleville’s East Main Street, West Main Street’s buildings also merit attention for their architecture and history.



**Membership:**

Membership forms for the BHS can be downloaded from our website, [www.bellevillehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.bellevillehistoricalsociety.org), by contacting us at [bellevillehistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:bellevillehistoricalsociety@gmail.com), or at 633 East Garfield Street, Belleville, IL 62220.

**Recent donations to the BHS have been received from:**

Gary Karasek	Peggy Rasp	George Gasparich	Neil Midderndorf	Ruth Heinemann Hertko
Azizat Danmole	Tom Dailey	Robert Brunkow	Anne Koleson	10th Street Baking Company
Anne Fischer Weygandt	Lana Shepek	David Deatherage	Vernon & Gloria Broderick	David & Marcia Braswell
Greg Downey	Ellen Becker-Law	Pamela Bauer	Sue Henderson	Mardy Eisloeffel
Georgia-Ann Edwards & Dennis Means		Galen Gondolfi	Gus Werner	Larry Betz

Committee to Reelect Judge Gleeson

**Supporting the Belleville Historical Society:**

As a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization, the BHS is authorized to receive gifts and donations that can bring tax benefits to the donor. Gifts to the BHS demonstrate support for the preservation of Belleville history. If you would like more information, please contact us at [bellevillehistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:bellevillehistoricalsociety@gmail.com), or by mail: President, Belleville Historical Society at 633 East Garfield Street, Belleville, IL 62220. We welcome the opportunity to serve you.

**Belleville Historical Society Trustees:**

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