

Industry, Invention and Transportation

Shelbina owes its existence and location to the coming of the Burlington Railroad (Hannibal & St. Joe it was first known.) In 1857 the tracks were laid as far west as the present site of the town. A station was built here because the rolling prairie seemed an ideal location, being nearly in the center of the county—east and west. As soon as the station was erected, cheap buildings were put up—the first one by the Kemper Bros. on the north side of the tracks. Martin Thomas built and Henson Thomas operated a hotel in 1857 located where the present hotel now stands. The next business house was a store built by William A. Reid in 1858. In that winter or possibly by the spring of 1858, R. A. Moffitt had a store on the south side of the tracks on the corner of Center and Chestnut streets. Perhaps there were 25 houses by the end of 1858.

Several saloons to dispense intoxicants to the railroad builders, and others, were among the first to occupy lots. The early days of this town were similar to those of most other pioneer western villages—not nearly as orderly as they should have been. There were rough characters about and much drinking. Saturday nights witnessed a number of fights. This condition continued until near the close of the Civil War. Life in a new railroad town is seldom pleasant to those disposed to quietude and sobriety, and life in Shelbina was no exception to that rule. Sober, temperate and enterprising people were slow to come—only the bravest ventured to settle here.

The infant town grew rapidly in the early years but this impetus was checked by the outbreak of the Civil War. Shelbyville and Paris were without railroad communication and Shelbina became their shipping point as well as the railroad center for the surrounding community. During the panic of 1873-78 real estate values depreciated to less than half of what they had been. The depression of the eighties further diminished trade and population growth.

Shelbina suffered two fires—one in 1866, the other in 1874. The latter blaze destroyed two whole blocks of wooden structures in the business district. However, out of the ashes of the second conflagration two new blocks were erected of stone and brick buildings. Both sides of Center street now had stone buildings. Walnut street began to develop in 1871.

One of the most important early industries was the Morgan & Sons Wagon Factory operated by Dave Morgan. Here a flourishing business manufactured many and various kinds of road vehicles, farm tools and implements. The most notable model of wagon was the "Morgan Wagon" and the "New Century." Blacksmithing was very important to pioneers and vehicle and farm tools were repaired in this factory. The plant also included a tile yard, harness shop, and lumber shed. Carriages, surreys and buggies were sold also. The Morgan building was located where Teen Town now is.

In the late 1860s Brown & McMurray established the Shelbina Woolen Mills. Mr. Brown was a grandfather of Browne Moore, now a Shelbina business man. The mill employed 11 people, occupied a 3-story frame building 26x60 feet. The spinning jack had 240 spindles. A 25 h.p. engine furnished the power. It was located at the northwest edge of town on what is now known as the Weaver farm.

Shelbina had a brick and tile plant at the north city limits. The bricks were molded by hand from native clay.

A tomato canning factory built at a cost of \$16,000 did considerable business. Shelbina also boasted a factory for the making of frames for window screens.

Another noteworthy early industry was a flour mill, located just east of the present depot. It had a capacity of 100 barrels of flour a day. The flour was known as "White Loaf." Another mill in Shelbina had been in operation several years before 1884—it used stone burrs. In 1884 Frank Crow, Thorn-



Contrast this rough scene on the street in front of the big Margreiter store with the way it looks now — Highway 36 running by the Galloway building occupied by the Bus station. This picture made about 1894, shows the old delivery wagon, Bill McCloskey and John Margreiter by the brooms, Bill Bollow with sack of flour on his shoulder, Jessie Fletcher and Sofie Shiffer, and Bill Pickett at the corner where now is the junction of Highways 36 and 15.

B. F. Dobyns recalls driving the delivery wagon shown here for a salary of \$2.00 a week.