

JACKSONVILLE AREA GENEALOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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* For those who have not paid their dues please send in your 2023 dues *

Jacksonville Area Genealogical & Historical Society
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Annual Membership \$25.00 per year (January – December)

We survive by your membership and donations. Amount enclosed \$_____

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JAGHS

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Hours of Operation:

Wednesday 1 - 3 P.M.
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Thank You to Greg Olson & the Jacksonville Journal Courier.

LOCAL CITY BOOKS FOR SALE

We have many duplicate books and want to get these books in the hands of those interested

Local History Collection of Arenzville	\$10
Franklin IL 1832-2007	\$8
Murrayville IL 1858-1983	\$5
A Window on the Past by Philip H Decker Residences of Jacksonville IL 1833-1925	\$25
The People of Jacksonville By Vernon R.Q. Fernandes	\$25
Morgan Co Historical & Architectural Review & Business guide Pen & ink drawings of Morgan Co Architecture by David Badger	\$10

We survive thanks to your donations and memberships.

We would like to
thank the following
for their donations
during the last quarter:

Wanda Dame
Anne Jackson
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Greg Abel
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Tracy Amdel
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Bob Dalton

Tidbits

- Only a genealogist regards a step backwards as progress.
- Genealogy is fun. The answer to one question leads to two more questions.

Greetings!

Volunteering at the Jacksonville Area Genealogical and Historical Society is a joy! There isn't a day I'm in the society that I don't learn something new or meet some interesting person. We are currently open four hours a week, and additionally are happy to open the society doors for those who make appointments. If you might be interested in becoming a volunteer, please contact us! One of our goals is to increase our hours. Want to learn more? Give me a call! 217-248-5416.

CIGAR KING

The Way We Were Volume One by Greg Olson



Smoke-free businesses were the stuff of pipe dreams a few generations ago. And that was especially true in Jacksonville, where the tobacco industry once flourished.

In fact, for many years, the aristocrats of the working class in Morgan County were the cigar makers, who were present in Jacksonville at least as far back as 1843.

Benjamin Pyatt is credited with being the city's first cigar maker, and a nephew and one-time employee of Pyatt – Robert T Cassell – became one of Jacksonville's best know cigar manufacturers.

Seventy-five years ago this month, Cassell celebrated his 50th anniversary of opening a cigar factory.

"The Cassell cigar store has been headquarters for the man in the city and the man from the farm," wrote a Journal reporter in 1932.

"Here can always be found a clientele who are ready to welcome the candidate for office, discuss the pros and cons of matters political, the latest doings in the world of sport and affairs of general moment."

Cassell learned the cigar-making business while working for W.H. Romerman and then B. Pyatt & Son in the 1870s and the early 1880s. On April 1, 1882, Cassell and his brother, Lyman, bought Romerman's old business from Buker Martin.

At first, the Cassell brothers made cigars in a back room on the second floor of a building at 214 S. Main St., where a city parking lot is now located.

The business moved a couple of times before establishing its headquarters at 6 W. Side Square, next door to Ayers National Bank, in 1896. The Cassell cigar store remained in that location until 1927, when the J.C. Penney Co. remodeled the Cassell building and an adjacent structure for a department store.

The Cassell firm made many brands of cigars, most notably the "Short Horn" and the "Big Run" brands. When the Cassell brothers began their business, they made the "Cheerup," a 5-cent cigar.

Later, the "Leading Lady," another 5-cent cigar, replaced the "Cheerup," and in 1884, the Cassells began making "Big Run" cigars.

The "Big Run" box label illustrated different modes of transportation, including the sailing ship, steamboat, express train, bicycle and the automobile.

The Cassell cigar store moved back to South Main Street when the Cassell building on the square was remodeled in 1927.

In January 1936, Cassell went to his cigar store, became ill, returned home to 401 W. Beecher Ave., and died. He was 74.

Cassell displayed two mottoes in his cigar store that expressed his feelings about tobacco and the life of a businessman.

The inscription about tobacco read: "When all things were made, none were made better than tobacco; a lone man's companion; a bachelor's friend; a hungry man's food; a sad man's cordial; a wakeful man's sleep; and a chilly man's fire. There is not herb like unto it under the canopy of heaven."

Titled "What Next," Cassell's other mottoe read: "I have been here in business a long time. I have been cussed and discussed, boycotted, talked about, lied about, lied to, hung up, held up and robbed, and the only reason I am staying in business now is to see what the hell is going to happen next."

Have a cigar: More than a dozen cigar factories once packed Jacksonville

Tom Emery, Contributor Journal-Courier
Aug. 7, 2022



Americans have always loved their vices and a hundred years ago, a favorite bad habit was smoking cigars.

There was plenty of demand in Jacksonville. In 1905, the city was home to 13 cigar factories, which cranked out 200,000 cigars a week.

At the turn of the 20th century, tobacco use in the United States was largely from cigars and chewing tobacco. Unlike today, few worried about the health risks, and cigars were a status symbol to some.

Among the most famous celebrity smokers was Ulysses S. Grant, who reportedly went through 20 cigars a day. His vice may have proved fatal, as Grant died of throat cancer in 1885.

Grant was hardly alone in his addiction.

Nationwide in 1860, there were 2,000 cigar factories, which employed 25,000 workers. Those numbers would increase six-fold in the next 30 years.

Illinoisans loved to light up as well. In 1860, Chicago was home to 224 cigar factories, which served the city's population of 109,260. Bloomington was home to 15 cigar producers in the mid-1870s. In 1880, Illinois factories produced 132.5 million cigars, compared to only 2 million cigarettes.

In Jacksonville, the first cigar factory was established in 1843 by Benjamin Pyatt, a Pennsylvania native who was 58 years old, far past the life expectancy of the time. Pyatt's operation became known for its Lady Clare brand, a fixture among smokers in the region. Other top cigar producers in Jacksonville included the L.S. Kent-McCarthy factory, Knollenberg Cigars and the Cassell Brothers operation. Most small towns had at least one cigar store or manufacturer. In 1904, Virden and Carlinville were both home to two cigar stores. There were five in Carrollton that year alone.

One of the most popular cigar outlets in Springfield was the Allen Cigar Store, which was founded in 1908 "to wholesale and retail cigars, tobacco, and smokers' articles, and to conduct billiard and pool rooms." A soda fountain was also a feature of the store, which was badly damaged in an explosion in 1929.

Cigars kept rolling into the new century, as over 20,000 factories dotted the nation in 1900. In succeeding years, however, cigars and chewing tobacco were replaced in popularity by cigarettes, which were cheaper.

As more Americans reached for cigarettes, the number of smokers rose dramatically in the twentieth century. Cigarettes composed 51% of all taxes from tobacco in 1920, up from just 2% 40 years earlier. In 1970, cigarettes made up 97% of all tobacco taxes.

One study showed that American adults, on a per-capita basis, consumed an average of 747 cigarettes each year in 1920. That number continued to jump until 1963, when adults used an eye-popping average of 4,345 cigarettes per capita each year.

In that era, around 40% of American adults were smokers. By 2005, that number had dropped to 20.9%, and continued sliding to 12.5% in 2020.

L. S. KENT-McCARTHY CO.'S CIGAR FACTORY

FROM Jacksonville & ITS ENVIRONS



The fame of Jacksonville does not depend entirely on the great educational institutions, for it is the home of the famous Kentera Clear Havana 10c, Mac's Best and Kent's Extra 5c cigars, favorably known in constant demand wherever introduced. These celebrated and unsurpassed cigars are the products of the L. S. Kent-McCarthy Co.'s cigar factory, located at 233-235 W. North St. A variety of brands are manufactured but the ones mentioned are their specialties. Their clear Havana 10c cigar has Havana filler and Havana

wrapper. The factory occupies the entire building of three stories and basement 80x60 feet in dimensions, and gives employment to 140 skilled hands. It is the largest concern of its kind in the state outside of Chicago and five salesmen are kept on the road constantly. The goods are established in Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Colorado, and other western states. A complete line of smoker's articles, pipes and loose tobacco is also handled. The output of this concern is 6,000,000 cigars annually. On the second floor may be found 100 cigar makers at work under the union plan of 8 hours. The tobacco leaves here are dried on screens, and not on the floor, as is usually the case. The system of drying is of the most a strictly sanitary condition of the tobacco be-modern and up-to-date method, thus assuring for being made into cigars. The tobacco used is raised in the U.S., Cuba and the island of Sumatra. Mr. W. H. McCarthy was born at Glens Falls, N. Y., in 1870 and there educated in the public schools. After leaving school he learned the cigar makers' trade which he has followed ever since. He is a member of the Eagles, K. of C., T. P. A., and U. C. T., and Red Men. Mr. Lyman Sumner Kent was born at Rock Island, Ill., in 1866 and was educated in the public schools and is a graduate of the Jacksonville High School. Previous to his present business he was a traveling salesman for a notion house and also a large clothing concern. He is a member of the Elks, K. of C., T. P. A., and U. C. T. Mr. L. F. Sanders is a native of Beardstown, Ill, born in 1851 and educated in the public schools. He learned his trade in 1869 and continued in cigar business ever since. He is manager of the factory department and is a member of the C. of H. This concern was established in 1892 and in 1903 was incorporated under the laws of Illinois. All three members of the firm are gentlemen of progressive ideas, and conduct their establishment on broad and liberal lines, catering to the demands of the lovers of that fragrant weed that has done so much to soothe the cares of mankind.

JACKSONVILLE CIGAR BOX COMPANY

The various cigar factories of Jacksonville are greatly assisted in their operations by the manufacture of cigar boxes as carried on by the Jacksonville Cigar Box Co., with specious and well equipped plant, at 228-232 West Court St. The business was established in 1890 and came under the present proprietorship February 1, 1905. Improved machinery is operated and all modern methods employed, so that the products have an unrivaled reputation in the market. The factory occupies 2600 square feet of floor space. A complete line of cigar manufacturer's supplies is also handled, but a specialty is made of cigar boxes. An extensive outside business is also done in Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri. The business was purchased from Thos. H. Wright and at that time the help numbered seven; today the help number twenty-two. The weekly output of the factory is 8000 boxes and is steadily on the increase, so much so that a new two story building will be erected for them 38x65 feet, which they will occupy by the first or middle of August. Mr. R.D. Hamblin, the progressive proprietor, was born at Lewiston, Ill., in 1877 and educated in public schools of Canton, Ill. He started in business thirteen years ago at one dollar per week for the Canton Cigar Box Co., and six years ago he was made manager of the mechanical department, which he occupied until he severed his connection with the company last January. During the time he was manager he was a stockholder in the company and held the position of vice-president. Mr. Hamblin is known as a practical business man as well as a manufacturer and is popular for his integrity as well as ability. Mr. C.F. McDonough, the business manager, is a man 55 years of age. He has been a traveling salesman for twenty-two years and, thinking it about time to lay aside his "grip," he has taken up the office and road work with his son-in-law, Mr. Hamblin. He is a gentleman with wide experience with business men and has long been a popular favorite on the road where he is known and his jovial personality will add many orders to the company's list.

He looks after the books, collections, correspondence and the road work and is the general entertainer of the company. Any one, be the traveling salesman or a person merely sightseeing will find a warm welcome by Mr. McDonough when they enter the office.

From Jacksonville: Past and Present

JACKSONVILLE CIGAR CO.

Jacksonville has various things known to fame, but nothing of more importance to the smoking public than the Old Smoker 5-cent cigar. This famous brand is the best long filled cigar made for the money, and is the product of the Jacksonville Cigar Co., who are manufacturers of several brands of high grade cigars which are sold extensively through this section of the state. Seven men are employed and the floor space occupied is 1600 square feet.

W.G. & C.J. Wolfe were born at Canton, Ill., in 1867 and 1871, and there educated in the public schools. Since entering the business world they have followed the cigar line. They are both members of the Elks and Red Men. H.C. Clement was born in Jacksonville in 1874 and educated in the public schools and Brown's Business College. He is a member of the K. of P. and Elks. All three members of the firm are gentlemen of progressive ideas and conduct their establishment on broad and liberal lines, and on or about July 1st they placed on the market their new "Country Club" cigar, the title and design of which is taken from the Jacksonville country club and in itself is a most beautiful piece of art. No pains or expense have been spared in the selection of the choicest tobaccos for the manufacture of the "Country Club" cigar. They feel confident that this cigar will at once become a popular favorite with all smokers of high grade cigars.

From Jacksonville: Past and Present

**Cigar Manufacturers
(1890-91 City Directory)**

Cassell Bros. 223 S Main
Holle & Schulz, 225 N Main
Knollenberg Henry H. 74 Pub Square
Kuehne Joseph F, 615 E College
Newman W & Co, 231-1/2 E State
Pyatt B & Son, 14-1/2 Public Square
Riley Timothy, 227-1/2 E State

**Cigar Manufacturers
(1927 City Directory)**

Blesse Charles 221-1/2 E State
Cassell R T 6 w s Square, Tel 173
Clancy & Weitzel 229-1/2 E State
Cox Edward L 32-1/2 n s Square
Harry Geo A 216-1/2 W Morgan
McCarthy-Gebert Co 113-117 E Douglas av Tel 524
McGrew James 271 Hardin av
Ogar Cigar Co 222 E Main Tel 1420
Salby Geo F 216-1/2 S Main
Schreiner Henry 523 E Morton av

**Cigar Manufacturers
(1936-37 City Directory)**

Harry Geo A 216-1/2 W Morgan
McGrew Jas A 271 Hardin av
Salby Geo F 216-1/2 S Main
Schreiner Henry 523 E Morton Av
Steer Fredk E 221-1/2 E State

**Cigar Manufacturers
(1952-53 City Directory)**

Ehrgott Adam 214-1/2 N Main
Ervin Louis T 809 E College av
Salby Geo F 231-1/2 W State
Short Horn Cigar 1603 Hardin av
Steer Fred 221 E State
Winters Frank H 1603 Hardin av

**Cigar Makers listed in the 1878
Morgan County History Book**

Arbogast W E North St (Now Douglas) new
Yates

Barberhausen, Henry corner of College & Clay

Butemuth, Wm. Southern Hotel
Cassell, Benjamin P. Diamond near
Lafayette
Cohen, Michael N Main near North (now Douglas)
Ellrich, Frank College Ave near East Street
Gotthelp, Hank Southern Hotel
Gotthelp, Herman Southern Hotel
Hoffman, Daniel West Near North St (now Douglas)
Hollce, H College Ave near Clay
Knollenberg, H H corner of Main & Bissell
Martin B E West Street
Myers J H North (now Douglas) & Fulton
Orellis, Moses Diamond St
Pryatt B & Son West Side of Public Square
Reuter, Daniel Brown near Lafayette
Reuter, Fred Brown near Lafayette
Rodinghammer, J Diamond near College
Rodgersheimer, Jacob Main near North Street
Sanders, Fenton North Main near North St
Vasconcellas, Frank corner of Diamond & Lafayette
Walber, George East College new
Mauvaisterre

1910s cigar box opener and hammer advertising "Smoke "Kenteria" Havana Cigar / Smoke "Mac's Best" Cigar (Jacksonville IL)



SMOKE SIGNALS

Cigar manufacturers were once a common sight in Jacksonville

A thick haze of smoke enveloped businessmen, loafers and gossips outside Bob Cassell's cigar store in Jacksonville, as the group discussed the burning topics of the day. Also present in the crowd of cronies was a quiet woman, a young maiden dressed in a red and brown outfit. Minnehaha was her name, and she silently watched the gathering.

When the smoke cleared, it was easy to see why Minnehaha was so silent. She wasn't real. She was a cigar store Indian.

Cigar stores and wooden Indians, often clutching a bunch of cigars in one hand, were once familiar sights in Jacksonville.

Mr. Cassell, for example, ran both a cigar factory and a retail tobacco store in Jacksonville for nearly 54 years. But he was just one of dozens of people who successfully conducted local cigar shops over the years.

Jacksonville cigar makers were so successful, in fact, that they were among the wealthiest of the working classes in Morgan County, according to local labor historian Bob Dalton, of Jacksonville.

The cigar makers "were financially in a class by themselves, among laboring people," wrote Mr. Dalton in "Morgan County: The Twentieth Century," a book published in 1968. "In the days when common laborer was paid 50 cents per day, cigar makers earned \$40 to \$60 per week. This was around 1900, when more than 100 men rolled cigars in Jacksonville. The industry continued to grow in the early 20th century, and, shortly after World War I, about 300 people were working in the tobacco trade in the city, according to Mr. Dalton.

Two of the largest cigar-making shops in Jacksonville were the L.S. Kent-McCarthy Co., which had a factory on the corner of North West Street and West North Street (now Douglas Avenue), and the McCarthy-Gebert Co. on the corner of North Mauvaisterre and East North streets.

The McCarthy-Gebert shop employed 250 cigar rollers at one time, said Mr. Dalton. And the Kent-McCarthy factory made around 6 million cigars in 1905, records show.

The cigar-making industry also created a demand for a companion business – cigar box factories. One of these Jacksonville factories, managed by the Hamblin family, produced 7,000 wooden cigar boxes a week in 1905, according to a Morgan County history.

The popularity of cigarettes and the invention of cigar-making machines helped kill the local industry. And by 1951, only 6 cigar makers remained in Jacksonville. The last active cigar maker, Frank Winters, is believed to have rolled his last tobacco leaf in the mid-1960s.

By Greg Olson – Journal-Courier July 31, 2000

