



THE MUELLER RECORD

WINTER 2007 NEWSLETTER

THE STALEYS AND THE MUELLERS - CENTRAL TO THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE OF DECATUR



Augustus Eugene (A. E.) Staley III at six weeks with his mother, Lenore Charlotte Mueller Staley (Mrs. A. E. Staley, Jr.), and grandmother, Ora Mueller Blair. Ora had been the wife of Henry Mueller who died in 1910. The photo is from the January 1929 Mueller Record. Two additional children joined the A. E. Staley, Jr. family Henry Mueller Staley in 1932 and William Douglas Staley in 1943.

THE MUELLER-STALEY CONNECTION

This winter marks the end of one landmark anniversary and the beginning of another. The A. E. Staley Manufacturing Company, now a part of Tate & Lyle, celebrated its 100th Anniversary in 2006 while Mueller Co. begins marking its 150th year in 2007. The two companies have been cornerstones of the Decatur economy over the years, bringing jobs and recognition to our community.

The A. E. Staley Manufacturing Company was incorporated by Augustus Eugene Staley, Sr. in 1906 and began operations in a refurbished corn milling plant in 1912. Staley's skills in marketing and product development assured the growth and success of the venture and by the 1920's the company was well established.

As the company grew, it made its mark on the community in a number of ways. Possibly the largest impact was in the promotion of soybeans in Midwest agriculture. Staley began processing soybeans in 1922 and by 1927 was operating a special railcar exhibit to educate farmers on the new crop and guaranteeing them a market at Staley for any soybeans they planted. Staley earned Decatur its nickname as the "Soy Capital of the World."

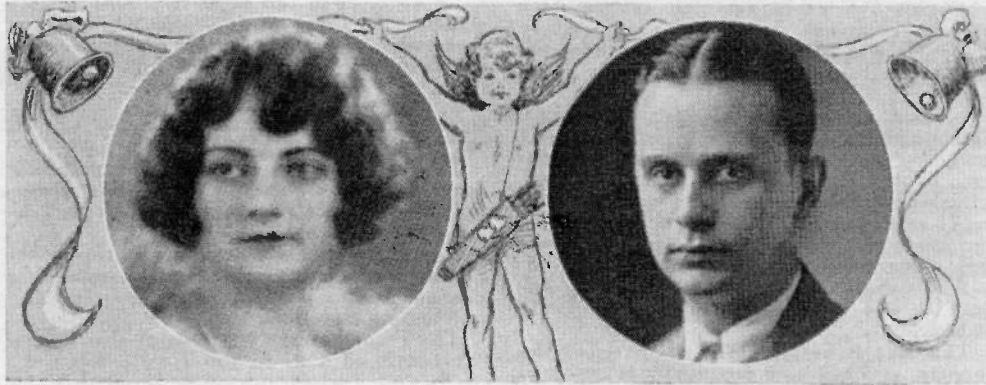
Lake Decatur was born out of a need to supply water to Staley's corn milling operation. A. E. Staley, Sr. persuaded the city to create the lake which was the largest artificial body of water in the state at the time of its dedication in 1922. The formation of this dependable water supply assured the future growth of many industries in Decatur and is a key element in the city's economy today.

The Chicago Bears owe their beginnings to A. E. Staley's love of sports. In 1918, Mr. Staley hired George S. Halas to assemble a company football team comprised primarily of former college stars who would also be given jobs at Staleys. The Decatur Staleys were a charter member of the National Professional Football Conference (NPFC) organized to give structure and uniformity to the rules of the pro game. They played their first season in 1920, finishing with a record of 10-1-2. Halas had bigger plans for professional football and with the financial assistance of Mr. Staley, moved the team to Chicago in 1921 where they played one more season as the Decatur Staleys before becoming known as the Chicago Bears. In that season, the Staleys won the first championship of the newly organized league with a 9-1-1 record. In 1922 the NPFL changed its name to the National Football League and the Decatur Staleys became the Chicago Bears with no further Staley attachments.

Staleys was responsible for two other Decatur landmarks. The firm's headquarters building in the form of an ornate 14 story office tower was completed in 1930 and stands as an instantly recognizable symbol of the company. Even the Chicago construction firm was amazed at the scope and grandeur of the "Castle in the Cornfields" edifice they were erecting. The Staley Viaduct began carrying traffic over the plant site and the busy Wabash Railroad yards in 1928 and was a key element in encouraging the growth and development of the northeast area of Decatur.

The Mueller connection is established by two marriages in the 1920's. Ebert Bernhart Mueller, son of Robert and grandson of Hieronymus, married Ruth Staley, daughter of A. E. Staley, in 1924. The two families must have found that union a success as it was followed by another in 1926 with Lenore Charlotte Mueller, daughter of Henry and granddaughter of Hieronymus, marrying A. E. Staley, Jr. Ebert and Ruth served as best man and matron-of-honor for A. E. and Lenore. At the time, Ebert was the manager of the Mueller Iron Foundry and went on to serve at various times on the Mueller Board of Directors and in the management of the Mueller facility in Sarnia, Ontario. A. E. "Gus" Staley, Jr. had taken over his father's position as President of A. E. Staley Manufacturing Company in 1925 and served in that role until 1958. Thus, the two largest and most successful family enterprises in Decatur share a common genealogical link, and many family members share a pride in the history and accomplishments of both companies.

Mueller-Staley Nuptials



Lenore Charlotte Mueller and A. E. Staley, Jr. as they appeared in the announcement of their wedding in the September, 1926 issue of the Mueller Record.

Unfortunately, no photo is available of Ebert and Ruth Staley Mueller. They were married in a ceremony in the Staley home on College Hill in Decatur on June 25, 1924 with 300 guests in attendance. Robert Eugene Mueller, born in 1925, was their only child.



MUSEUM FUND RAISING CAMPAIGN

The museum sent out an appeal for donations in December in an effort to fund some of our needs. Thank you to the many who generously responded. If any readers overlooked the request in the busy rush to the holidays, we would still be delighted to hear from you with any donation you are able to make. The museum has a wonderful new facility and now we need to turn our attention to improving the programs and collection so that we are able to communicate our story to a wider audience.



DID HIERONYMUS OVERCHARGE ?

Staff members at the Oglesby Mansion recently found a bill from H. Mueller & Co directed to Mr. Oglesby who served as Illinois governor and U.S. Senator in the years following the Civil War. The bill is dated May 22, 1877 and indicates payment of \$2.25 for 3 hours of labor. An interesting detail is that the original amount of \$3.25 has been reduced to \$2.25 ! Was it a simple error or did the governor complain that the bill was too high? After all, it was only 3 hours work... Whatever the answer, we may assume that the financial loss had no long-term impact on the success of H. Mueller & Co. A copy of the bill is now on display in the museum.



IN MEMORIUM

Robert (Bob) William Lyons died November 23, 2006 after a battle with lung cancer. Bob was 76 years old. Bob served as the Vice-President of Marketing for Mueller Co. from 1981 to 1985 when he became President of the Water and Gas Division. He retired from the company in 1988, moving to Lake Nacogdoches in Texas.

HIERONYMUS MUELLER MUSEUM

420 WEST ELDORADO STREET
DECATUR, ILLINOIS 62522

HMPH

Annual Membership Information

Student/Senior Citizen Membership: \$15

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

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

***Benefactor Membership: \$1000**

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

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HIERONYMUS MUELLER MUSEUM

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