

A Brief History of Streator

The influence of the Native Americans, the explorers, and the settlers has unfolded in LaSalle County since the seventeenth century. In an area near Starved Rock, approximately 20 miles from Streator, was the largest Indian village in the early United States with a population of 10,000-20,000. This was a confederation of several migrating tribes including the Illini and the Pottawatomie, the latter of which was said to have a winter campground in an area that was to become Streator.

Explorers such as Father Jaques Marquette, together with the Indians, established a mission on the north side of the Illinois River near Starved Rock in 1675. Others such as LaSalle and Tonti established Fort St. Louis at Starved Rock in 1682-83. This area and its river system was a bastion of the early French empire in North America until the English took possession after the Treaty of Paris in 1763.

The first settlers in the Streator area were farmers and merchants who came in the 1820's possibly in response to Father Marquette's seventeenth century description of the prairies around Streator. "We have seen nothing like this river for the fertility of the land, its prairie, woods, wild cattle, stag, deer, wild cats, swans, ducks, parrots, and even beaver." These

frontiersmen manufactured their own clothing and most of their farming implements.

In 1866, Colonel Ralph Plumb (sponsored by Dr. Worthy Streator) who would become the most influential person in Streator's development, arrived to purchase land and develop newly found coal deposits. He built the first railroad to link the coal fields to the main line of the Illinois Central Railroad, plotted the city and was the first Mayor. Colonel Plumb also built a high school and donated it to the city, erected an opera house, and established the Streator National Bank. In 1884, he was elected to Congress and was re-elected in 1886.

In 1880, a glass manufacturing plant was established. When this enterprise demonstrated

that glass could be produced profitably, a glass bottle company was organized in 1881. Streator's glass industry grew rapidly due to the abundant supply of coal and silica sand in the area with Streator becoming known as the "Glass Capital of the World."

The twentieth century saw the further development of manufacturing in Streator. Brick, clay tile, automobiles, numerous metal fabricators, and food service industries were next developed in Streator. Manufacturing and agriculture remain the backbone of Streator's economy.

"A Quiet Surprise on the Prairie"

FAMOUS STREATORITES



CLYDE TOMBAUGH
spent his youth searching the heavens near Streator and later discovered the planet Pluto in 1930. The only American to discover a planet.



CLARENCE MULFORD
grew up in Streator playing cowboys and Indians along the Vermilion River. He later penned the famous "Hopalong Cassidy" series of books based on his youthful experience.



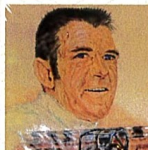
BURTON BASKIN
a Streator native and store owner, got together with his brother-in-law, Irvine Robbins, to open an ice cream shop. Today it is known as the "Baskin-Robbins" ice cream empire.



GEORGE "HONEY BOY" EVANS
blazed a musical trail with hits like "In the Good Ole Summertime" at the turn of the century.



EDWARD PLUMB
became musical director for Walt Disney for much of its glory years. He wrote music for "Fantasia" and "Bambi."



BOB TATTERSLL
King of Midget Car Racing in the United States and Australia during the 50s & 60s, was a Streator Native.

INTERESTING PAST



STREATOR MOTOR CAR COMPANY
was formed in 1904. Most of the parts were purchased and 300-400 employees of the company assembled them and did the upholstery

and painting of the cars. Early test drivers included Eddie Rickenbacker and the Fisher Brothers. In 1916, C.C. Barley purchased the company and added a new, custom-made model "Roamer" patterned after Rolls-Royce and featuring wire wheels and a German silver radiator. It was custom painted to the customer's choice. Roamers raced at Indianapolis and at Daytona Beach where they set five world speed records, clocking in at 105 mph in the measured mile.



STREATOR ZOUAVES
organized in 1897 as a social and athletic club. In 1898, the "Zouaves" turned professional, joining the vaudeville company which performed in Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia and New

York. The "Zouaves" were a great attraction, rivaling in audience appeal such stars as Will Rodgers, Houdini, and W.C. Fields. They toured England, Germany, Russia and South Africa.



THE STREATOR CANTEEN
commemorates the many men and women who helped serve our nation's military personnel during WWII. The Canteen, located at the Streator Railroad Depot, provided free meals for over two million soldiers traveling via train through Streator during WWII.



THE GOLDEN GLOVE AWARD
was created by Streatorite Elmer Blasco while working for Rawlings Corporation in 1957.



STREATOR RAILROADS
the first of seven distinct rail lines in Streator, was formed in 1870 to move coal from the Streator area. Streator had an unusual number of railroads for its size and soon became the rail center surpassed in the state only by Chicago and Peoria.