

# The First National Bank of Saint Charles, Missouri

A brief history of the town, the bank,  
and the men who made it possible.

By Craig J. Dickherber

**S**AINT CHARLES, MISSOURI IS LOCATED TWENTY MILES northwest of Saint Louis on the Missouri River in Saint Charles County. It was founded in 1769 by Louis Blanchette, a French Canadian fur trader. Blanchette named the town Les Petit Cotes (The Little Hills). This was the first settlement along the Missouri River, and only the second settlement west of the Mississippi River. In 1791, while under Spanish control, the town's name was changed to San Carlos.

Then in 1804, after title was transferred to the United States government as part of the Louisiana Purchase, the name of the town was anglicized to its present name, Saint Charles. Missouri entered the union under the terms of the Missouri Compromise on August 10, 1821, and Saint Charles was designated as the temporary capital of the new state. Saint Charles served as the state capital until October 1, 1826, when the capital was moved to its permanent location in Jefferson City.

Saint Charles County was well adapted to agricultural purposes with the ground being rich and fertile. The timber in the area was in great abundance. In addition, limestone for building could be found everywhere. Apple, peach, and pear trees were scattered across the countryside; wild game and fish were in plentiful supply. Coal was found in the 1830s, and a mine for local trade was operated on the land of Edward C. Cunningham.

By 1860 the population of the county had reached 14,313 people with a third of those residing within the City of Saint Charles. The assessed value of the

improved property within the city was \$794,720 which generated \$6,429 in taxes. Public schools enrolled 130 pupils and two teachers were employed. The City of Saint Charles was advancing much more rapidly than ever before. The need for a banking establishment to be organized under the new National Banking laws became essential.

The First National Bank of Saint Charles was organized with a capital of \$50,000. It was the only bank organized in the City of Saint Charles and Saint Charles County under the National Banking laws during the currency issuing period. On December 16, 1863, the Articles





of Association and adopted by-laws for Charter #260 were signed in the town hall by the stockholders.

These 106 prominent citizens, listed in **Table One**, included many government officials: Edward C. Cunningham; Sheriff Benjamin Emmons; Circuit Court Clerk Fred W. Gatzweiler; County Court Judge Theodore Bruere; the Saint Charles City Attorney, Saint Charles Public School Board Secretary, and a future State Senator. Valentine Koch, Fred Heye, John H. Senden, George H. Senden, and Charles Hug were all councilmen for the City of Saint Charles. At this stockholders meeting, the Board of Directors was elected, and bank officers were appointed.



FNB of Saint Charles in 1863

From the time of its organization the bank was located on the northeast corner of Main and Jefferson Streets. The original building was built as the home of Ezra Overall in 1852. Overall moved his living quarters to the upstairs of the building and the banking business was conducted on the ground floor. The first year's rent of the building was \$200, and it was furnished with used furniture and fixtures purchased from the Southern Bank of Saint Louis at the cost of \$800.

This building served as the home of the bank for 48 years, with major alterations from time to time -- including repairs from a tornado that partially destroyed the building on February 27, 1866, and a new

TABLE ONE			
Original Board of Directors			
Eugene Gauss	Valentine Becker	F. W. Gatzweiler	
Charles Hug	Ezra Overall	Theo. Bruere	
	R.A. Walton		
Original Stockholders			
Alderson, Benj.	Gatzweiler, F.W.	Klune, John H.	Pfortner, Henry
Alexander, Jos. H.	Gibbs, Wm. P.	Kempf, Quinia	Platz, John
Angert, Adam	Hess, Chas. E.	Kuhlhoff, John	Reed, Nathaniel
Angert, Henry	Heuser, Christian	Klare, Henry	Redmon, John W.
Becker, Valentine	Hollrah, Jno. D.	Klaustermeier, Chas. H.	Ross, R.G.
Berckman, Henry	Hunning, August	Klinghammer, Geo.	Ruenzi, Abraham
Berlekamp, Jno. F.	Hess, Frank	Lewis, Edw. A.	Runge, Theo.
Blase, Aug. F.	Hug, Chas.	Lutholf, Jos.	Sachse, Edw.
Borgmann, Henry	Hilger, Edw.	Linnemann, C.D.	Sandfort, Henry J.
Boyce, Clement	Hodapp, Clement	Mallinckrodt, Herman	Schaber, Jacob
Breker, Phillip	Hodapp, Wendelin	Mollinhardt, Francis	Schaeffer, Ernestine
Britton, Jas. H.	Heye, Fred	Mittelberger, Jno. C.	Senden, Geo. H.
Bruere, Gustave	Hammes, Stephen	Meyer, John H.	Senden, John H.
Bruere, Theo.	Huncker, Charles H.	Nolle, Ernest	Stonebraker, Jno. E.
Bruns, Henry H.	Hilbert, John	Mittendorf, Jno. H.	Thro, Emile
Cunningham, E.C.	Hund, Henry	Nolle, Ernst H.	Thro, Jno. B.
Dennigmann, Herman	Haake, Anton	Maertens, Wm. H.	Vogel, William
Dolan, John	Hausam, John	Metz, Fred H.	Walton, Robt. A.
Edward, W.E.	Johanpeter, Herm.	Oehri, Geo.	Watson, Sam S.
Emmons, Benj.	Kemper, Adolph	Overall, Ezra	Weber, Jno.
Fetsch, Peter M.	Kemper, Henry	Overall, Asa N.	Weeke, Chris
Flohr, Frank F.	Krekel, Arnold	Orrick, John	Wiedy, Henry
Garvin, Alexander	Klinger, Geo. A.	Oberkoetter, Frank	Wilke, Herman
Gauss, Eugene	Koch, Valentine	Orrick, Jno. C.	Williams, Martin
Grant, Richard	Kremer, F. X.	Oser, Jos.	Windmeuller, Henry
Gronefeld, Henry	Kohlenhofer, Henry	Pieper, Henry F.	
Grupe, Edw.	Kuhlmann, Herman	Parks, Robert H.	



stone front in 1881, which considerably modernized the bank's image.

In June, 1911, the original building was razed and the present two story bank and office building was erected. This building was designed by architect Albert B. Groves and constructed by the Sutherland Building Co., both of St. Louis. This banking house included burglar proof vaults and safe deposit boxes. The interior was lined with Italian marble wainscoting and Tennessee marble floors.

Eugene Gauss was appointed President of the First National Bank of Saint Charles on December 16, 1863. He was the son of Carl Gauss, a man known for making great breakthroughs in both math and physics. Eugene was born in Gottingen, Germany, on July 29, 1811. He came to the United States in 1830 after studying law at the University of Gottingen. Gauss arrived in Philadelphia with no money or prospects and enlisted in the army. He was sent to Fort Snelling, the farthest outpost of the time, located in what now is Minnesota. Eugene Gauss fluently spoke French, and the army used him as a translator.

After his discharge he worked for the American Fur Company where he learned to speak the language of the Sioux Indians. Like his father, Eugene had a remarkable facility for numerical equations. He was said to be able to remember long strings of numbers for days at a time, and able to compute complicated mathematical equations in his head. Gauss served on the original board of directors and held the position of President from 1863 until 1870.

John E. Stonebraker served as the original Cashier of the FNB of Saint Charles. Stonebraker was born in Maryland on June 1, 1826. Stonebraker attended not only ordinary schools, but took courses at the Franklin Institute of Pennsylvania and studied bookkeeping. He was, therefore, more than well qualified for those times. At the age of 21, he took a job at Collier Flouring Mills in Saint Charles as a bookkeeper and maintained that position until 1851. At that time he became an equal partner with a Mr. Gibbs in the St. Charles Woolen Mills. In 1856 he sold out at a substantial profit. He then ran a mill for the manufacturing of walnut lumber and other hardwoods.

Stonebraker was a stockholder of the Saint Charles Branch of the Southern Bank of Saint Louis, and served as Cashier at that location for four years. The Southern Bank of Saint Louis was the original of the Third National Bank of Saint Louis, Charter #170. Stonebraker was instrumental in the organization of the First National Bank of Saint Charles and served as Cashier from December of 1863 until the



Eugene Gauss, 1863-1870

**THE FOLLOWING IS A COPY OF THE FIRST  
STATEMENT PUBLISHED BY THE BANK, MADE AT  
THE CALL OF THE COMPTROLLER OF CURRENCY  
AT THE CLOSE OF BUSINESS MARCH 24, 1870**

<b>Resources</b>	
Loans and Discounts	\$ 82,081.52
U.S. Bonds to secure circulation	50,000.00
Furniture and Fixtures	1,050.00
Current Expenses	575.50
Due from National Banks	9,298.44
Cash Items, viz.: Rev. Stamps	325.00
Coin	570.00
Treasury Notes	10,467.00
National Bank Notes	950.00
Fractional Currency	334.78
	<hr/>
	\$ 155,652.24
<b>Liabilities</b>	
Capital Stock	\$ 50,000.00
Surplus Fund	6,500.00
Interest and Exchange	1,475.73
Profit and Loss	5,520.00
Individual Deposits	49,411.51
Circulation	42,745.00
	<hr/>
	\$ 155,652.24

I, **Jno. E. Stonebraker**, Cashier of the First National Bank of St. Charles, Mo., do solemnly swear that the above statement is true, to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Jno. E. Stonebraker, Cashier.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 9th day of April, 1870.

Chas. E. Hess, Notary Public.

Correct, Attest:

C. Hug,  
Theo. Bruere,  
Ezra Overall





Valentine Becker, 1870-1884



William W. Kirkpatrick, 1884-1889

end of March 1864, and again from 1869 until 1888.

In a letter dated March 31, 1864, Eugene Gauss wrote to his son of Stonebraker giving his resignation as cashier, stating Joseph H. Alexander was hired as Stonebraker's successor. Gauss states that Alexander is so little aquatinted with the business that he will have to stay in the bank for a week or two before Alexander will be able to get along by himself.

Joseph H. Alexander remained Cashier of the First National Bank until the organization of the Union Savings Bank in which he became a stockholder and elected Cashier in 1869. He was born in Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana, on February 29, 1828. At the age of 10, Alexander had still not learned the alphabet -- not enrolling in school until later in age. He came to Missouri in 1843. He became qualified to teach school and attended college in Saint Charles.

He studied law after leaving college and was admitted to the bar in 1850. Immediately following his admission to the bar, he entered a partnership with the Honorable Robert Parks. In 1853 Parks retired and Alexander formed a partnership with the Honorable Edward A. Lewis, a leading lawyer at that time, who later became the Chief Justice of the Saint Louis Court of Appeals. Alexander withdrew from the legal profession altogether when he accepted the position of cashier in 1864.

Valentine Becker, the second President of the First National Bank, was born in Darmstadt, Germany, on June 16, 1816. He was the son of John Becker, a successful merchant and distiller. In 1832 Valentine Becker went to Paris, France, where he obtained employment in a brewery. Becker came to the United States in 1841 and for two years worked in a brewery in Saint Louis.

Becker made his permanent home in Saint Charles in 1844. He was in a merchandising partnership with F. W. Gatzweiler for about five years and then engaged in business by himself. Becker built and owned several residences in the city and owned several successful farms in the county. He was one of the leading organizers of the First National Bank and held the position of President for 15 years (1870 to 1884). Becker was also an organizer of the Saint Charles Mutual Fire Insurance Company, the Saint Charles Car Works, and was president and a leading stock holder in the gas company.

William W. Kirkpatrick, born in Saint Charles June 11, 1837, was a longtime stockholder in the First National Bank. He was elected Vice President in 1880 and held that position until January of 1884 when he became President. He remained President until 1889. Kirkpatrick was successful at establishing a grocery store, and dealt in stocks and real estate. Kirkpatrick had a history in county government being elected County Assessor in 1872 and at the end of that term appointed to Deputy County Collector.

He was also Vice President of the Novelty Manufacturing Company and a director of the Saint Charles Tobacco Company, both of which he was a substantial stockholder. Kirkpatrick and Stonebraker were among the leading land owners in Saint Charles County, owning 2,600 acres jointly. Kirkpatrick and

#### Statement of Condition May 1886

Resources	
Discounts	\$ 104,850.17
Bonds to secure circulation	50,000.00
Bank Furnishings & Fixtures	11,350.00
Due from Banks	33,241.03
Cash on Hand	22,656.03
	<u>\$ 222,097.23</u>
Liabilities	
Capital	\$ 50,000.00
Surplus	15,000.00
Undivided Profits	4,929.49
Deposits	107,177.74
Circulation	44,990.00
	<u>\$ 222,097.23</u>





Benjamin F. Becker, 1889-1900



Edward Gut, 1900-1908



Henry Angert, 1908-1922

Stonebraker are believed to be the first men in the state of Missouri to use traction steam engine gang plows for the breaking up of their land.

Benjamin F. Becker, the son of Valentine Becker, born in Saint Charles on December 29, 1851, was educated at the college in Saint Charles and Christian Brothers College in Saint Louis. Becker was a partner in the firm of Rechtern and Becker, dealers in groceries, dry goods, boots and shoes. The firm occupied a large building with a sales floor of over 4,000 square feet on which one of the best and most complete stocks of goods was displayed. Annual sales on average were in excess of \$40,000. He served as President of the First National Bank from 1889 to 1900.

Edward Gut served as FNB's President from 1900 to 1908. He had previously been Vice President of the bank from 1891 to 1900.

Henry Angert, born in Saint Charles, November 7, 1845, received his business training when he entered the grocery store of Henry B. Denker as a clerk at the age of 14. He later started the business of Angert and Brooker, dealers in groceries and glassware. After the death of Brooker, Angert maintained the business by himself where he did trade in the amount of \$30,000 per year. He also served as Vice President and a director of the Saint Charles Tobacco Company. Angert was a longtime stockholder of the First National Bank. He served as Vice President from 1884 to 1890, Cashier from 1890 until 1908, and as President from 1908 to 1922.

John A. Schreiber had a history of 54 years with the First National Bank. Schreiber, a lifelong citizen of Saint Charles and the nephew of Henry Angert, began his career with the bank at the age of 17. On May 8, 1886, he was elected Messenger by the Board of Directors. As Messenger his duties, among others, included; sweeping the lobby, cleaning the ink wells and cuspidors, and winding the eight-day clock above the vault door. This position also required him to spend his nights in the bank sleeping with a gun at his side to protect the deposits.

After only a few months in the bank Schreiber began to fill in as cashier between the hours of noon and one o'clock each day so Stonebraker, the Cashier at the time, could eat lunch. The position of Messenger paid \$25 per month. Schreiber soon became Assistant Cashier and continued on up the corporate ladder. He was elected Cashier of the First National Bank in 1908 and served in that position until the time he became President in 1922. He remained at that capacity through the great depression.



FNB of Saint Charles in 1877



1881



1912



TABLE TWO					
Bank Officers ~ Years of Service					
PRESIDENT		CASHIER		VICE PRESIDENT	
Eugene Gauss	1863-1870	John E. Stonebraker	1863-1864	W.W. Kirkpatrick	1880-1884
Valentine Becker	1870-1884	Joseph H. Alexander	1864-1869	Henry Angert	1884-1890
W.W. Kirkpatrick	1884-1889	John E. Stonebraker	1869-1888		
B.F. Becker	1889-1900	W.W. Kirkpatrick	1889		
Edward Gut	1901-1908	Henry Angert	1890-1908	Edward Gut	1891-1900
Henry Angert	1908-1922	J.A. Schreiber	1908-1922	Carl Daudt	1901-1920
J.A. Schreiber	1922-1935+	Charles B. Mudd	1922-1935+	Geo. H. Kuhlmann	1924-1935+



John A. Schreiber, 1922-1940

Twice while Schreiber was president the bank was held up by armed bandits. The first robbery occurred in 1932, at which time the robbers acquired \$18,000. In the second, a year later, they took \$6500. During both robberies Schreiber's hands were bound with picture wire. Schreiber was very proud of the fact that this was the only bank in Saint Charles permitted to open "100% unrestricted" after the bank moratorium in 1933. This meant the bank was authorized to honor withdrawals of funds by its customers without any restrictions.

The signature of J. A. Schreiber can be found on the majority of the surviving banknotes from the First National Bank. Schreiber signed the series 1902 notes both as Cashier and as President. He signed as the President on all of the series 1929 notes. He remained President of the bank until the time of his death in 1940. A list of the above and other known officers of the bank during the currency issuing period and the years of their service are shown in **Table Two**.

The First National Bank had a total circulating issue of \$1,787,010. This included notes from the First Charter period, both Original Series and Series of 1875, Second Charter brown backs, all three series Third Charter notes, along with Type 1 and Type 2 small size notes. The total amount outstanding in 1935 was \$99,450; of that amount the large size outstanding was \$6,260.

Known surviving notes include: 14 large size notes (two Brown Back \$10s, a Brown Back \$20, a Red Seal \$10, a 3rd Charter Date Back \$10, six Plain Back \$10s, and three Plain Back \$20s) all in circulated condition. There were also 43 small size notes (16 Type 1 \$10s, including an uncut sheet of six, 10 Type 1 \$20s, 8 Type 2 \$10s including an uncut sheet of six, and 9 Type 2 \$20s including an uncut sheet of six).





**TABLE THREE**

Notes Issued ~ Sheet Combinations ~ Engraved Plate Dates ~ Serial Numbers

<b>First Charter, Original Issue</b>		<b>Den.</b>	<b>FR#</b>	<b>Serials</b>	<b># Issued</b>
5-5-5-5	February 20, 1864	\$5	394	1-5050	20,200
<b>First Charter, Series of 1875</b>		<b>Den.</b>	<b>FR#</b>	<b>Serials</b>	<b># Issued</b>
5-5-5-5	February 20, 1864	\$5	403	1-2090	8,360
<b>Second Charter, Brown Back</b>		<b>Den.</b>	<b>FR#</b>	<b>Serials</b>	<b># Issued</b>
5-5-5-5	February 25, 1883	\$5	466	1-4764	19,056
10-10-10-20	February 25, 1883	\$10	479	1-509	1,527
	February 25, 1883	\$20	493	1-509	509
<b>Third Charter, Red Seal</b>		<b>Den.</b>	<b>FR#</b>	<b>Serials</b>	<b># Issued</b>
10-10-10-20	February 25, 1903	\$10	613	1-3000	9,000
	February 25, 1903	\$20	639	1-3000	3,000
<b>Third Charter, Date Back, Blue Seal</b>		<b>Den.</b>	<b>FR#</b>	<b>Serials</b>	<b># Issued</b>
10-10-10-20	February 25, 1903	\$10	616	1-7100	21,300
	February 25, 1903	\$20	642	1-7100	7,100
<b>Third Charter, Plain Back, Blue Seal</b>		<b>Den.</b>	<b>FR#</b>	<b>Serials</b>	<b># Issued</b>
10-10-10-20	February 25, 1903	\$10	624	7101-21828	44,184
	February 25, 1903	\$20	650	7101-21828	14,728
<b>Small Size, Type One, 1929</b>		<b>Den.</b>	<b>FR#</b>	<b>Serials</b>	<b># Issued</b>
10-10-10-10-10-10		\$10	1801-1	1-2494	14,964
20-20-20-20-20-20		\$20	1802-1	1-672	4,032
<b>Small Size, Type Two, 1929</b>		<b>Den.</b>	<b>FR#</b>	<b>Serials</b>	<b># Issued</b>
10-10-10-10-10-10		\$10	1801-2	1-3322	3,322
20-20-20-20-20-20		\$20	1802-2	1-929	929

Table Three shows the number of notes printed for each type, the sheet combinations, as well as serial numbers and dates on the notes.

The First National Bank of Saint Charles continued to grow along with the community surrounding the bank. Even after the currency issuing period had ended, the bank continued to prosper. By 1952 the bank had outgrown the building. Additional room was needed to increase the bank's floor space. Several of the rented offices were taken over for use by the bank. Substantial alterations took a year to complete. The bank opened a trust department in 1956, a service that was long needed in the community. Then in 1961, the bank opened an additional facility at 423 Clay Street, which was known as the First National Motor Bank. It included three drive-up windows and an air-conditioned lobby. The bank celebrated its centennial in 1963. The interior was renovated and commemorative signs decorated the exterior. By 1979, the bank boasted three convenient locations.

The bank had survived the Civil War, robberies, tornados, panics, and the Great Depression, but could not survive the corporate merger. In 1984 the FNB was merged into Landmark Bank. In 1991 Landmark merged with Magna Bank. Not long after this merger, the building was closed. Magna Bank merged with Union Planters Bank which merged with Regions Financial Corp.



FNB of Saint Charles in 1952





The building and its memories remain; although, the First National Bank of Saint Charles is gone forever.

### Acknowledgments

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