

# BELLVILLE HISTORY ISN'T ALL SQUARE



A mere three quarters of a city block (192 feet to be exact) off the square on East Main Street you'll find the site of Bellville's first business house.

Today you'll find the area's finest stock of antique wares in a remodeled 1920's car dealership on the site, alongside one of the town's earliest two-story brick buildings, constructed in 1882.

ANTIQUE & ODDITIES

# HISTORY *of two buildings, and then some.*

**J**ames & Caroline Thompson Ervin, from Georgia, were married in San Felipe, Texas in 1840, were later living near the area known today as Peters on the road leading through Bellville. They would soon be among the heaviest investors in Bellville town lots, including Lots 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, & 11 in Block A; Lot 10 in Block B, and Outlots 1, 2 & 4. Shortly thereafter, in 1849, Ervin built Bellville's first business house, including a hotel or tavern, grocery store, livery stable & residence. The 150 foot long rambling structure named Ervin House had an old-fashioned southern gallery running it's entire length. It was initial home to many of Bellville's very first residents & businessmen, including lawyers Nehemiah Holland & John P. Osterhout, & Dr. William Irby Cocke, and county officials, "drummers" (traveling salesmen), and even prisoners & their guards awaiting trial.

In 1852, just three years after opening the hotel, Caroline Ervin died, leaving her husband with three young sons. John Osterhout, an early attorney living there, in a letter in 1854 wrote, she "was an excellent cook and housekeeper and we all felt that her loss was a public calamity here. He has since married another woman about 16 or 17 years old. She is a good woman enough perhaps, she lacks the management experience and energy of the first one." It's estimated, at the time, that Ervin was around forty. Of note, still in 1854, Ervin was the contractor on the second jail.

On the night of April 20, 1857, on the steamship Louisiana somewhere between the mouth of the Mississippi and New Orleans, with five or six slaves he presumably was planning to sell, Ervin fell overboard and drowned.

The hotel was sold at public auction in 1858

to John Kray, who managed it until selling in 1860 to John G. Bell, adopted son of Bellville founder Thomas Bell, who then sold it to Dr. Arthur Applewhite who resided & saw patients there. It was sold again to Jerusha A. Montgomery and then to J.S. & Henriette Brookshire and became known as Brookshire's Hotel.

In 1867 John G. & Penelope Bell repurchased the building & lots, and once again it became a flourishing inn, known as Bell's Hotel and later Planters Hotel until 1875.

In 1879 August Haak, a successful dry goods store owner on the square, purchased the Ervin hotel and lots 8, 9, & 10 and in 1881 sold it to his son Julius. In 1882, Julius Haak built the 2-story brick building you see here today, and in 1883 rented the bottom floor to Mrs. K. Morris to house a millinery shop, advertised as having "most elegant stock of notions, fancy goods, corsets, gloves, mitts, etc." and "drummers hotel, bathhouse and sample rooms attached. Table not excelled".

In 1884-1885 Mary Haak, Julius' wife, operated a millinery shop downstairs, evidently living upstairs. Advertised "hats, bonnets, tips, plumes, pompons, ribbons, flowers, gloves, neckwear, etc."



In 1888 Julius Haak died, and it's later noted that Mary was still living in the two-story in 1891. Mary died in 1895, and the building stood vacant until 1903, when it was rented to Oscar Zeiske for a tailor shop downstairs, living quarters for his family upstairs. In 1905, A. Wolf rented it as a family dwelling. This same year, the old Ervin hotel stucture, in disrepair, was demolished.

Sometime after this, F. G. Steck established the Steck Hotel next door and evidently used this 2-story brick building, with a white wooden porch, as an annex to the Steck Hotel.

Later, William C. Westermann & wife Virginia, a local tinsmith who owned & operated his



*Nothing Ordinary  
is on Main Street,  
1/2 block from  
Bellville's historic  
town square,  
so finding us  
couldn't  
be easier.*



business on the square, purchased the building. He was one of the organizers of the Austin County State Bank, member of the Bellville Turnverein, and reorganized and lead the town band.

In 1927, it was sold to E. Laas Sr. & wife Debora who presumably built part of the current single-story building where the Ervin hotel once stood, and used as a Buick dealership & garage. They lived in the two-story building.

In 1932 John & Frieda Arning purchased the property & operated City Chevrolet.

In 1939-1940, M.C. Albert, who owned and operated Bellville Motor Company, a Chrysler & International dealership on the square, purchased the buildings and moved his business here. In a letter to Chrysler in 1949, Albert was adding on to the building & making other improvements. After Albert died in 1952, the business still continued to operate under the hands of daughter Gloria & her husband W.R. Schmid III. In the early 1980's the business was closed and sold to C. Martin Card, Jr. in 1985, who started repairs & renovations to house an ice cream





parlor and offices. His plans failed and Gloria Schmid resumed ownership.

In 1989, current owner Nancy Lawrence (Olson) rented the buildings & opened Nothing Ordinary Antiques, purchasing them in 1997.

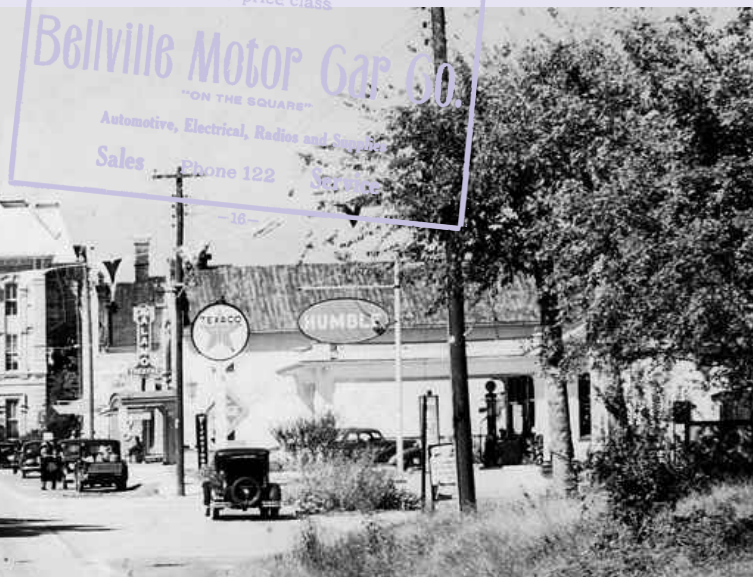
For many years, the first new automobile sold from M.C. Albert's first garage was displayed in the back. The 1930 Chrysler Coupe had been traded in only three years after its initial purchase & remained in the Albert/Schmid family.

Of interesting fact, this automobile was originally sold to local businessman Max Bader, who married the daughter of Joseph Ervin, son of the original Ervin House's founders.

Today, Nothing Ordinary continues as a flourishing antique shop, the merchandise reminiscent of the history that came before it in the 1800's.

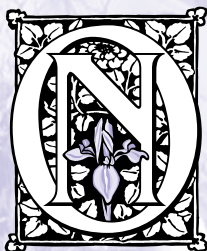
We hope you like what we've done with the place.

NOTHING  
ORDINARY  
ANTIQUES & ODDITIES



# NOTHING ORDINARY

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