

Re-discovering ILLINOIS by LESTER COLBY

Come with me today and we will visit a city that believes in fairies. I started to say Santa Claus—but Santa comes only once a year. The town that surely must believe in fairies is St. Charles. It is a village of perhaps 5,000 people, about thirty miles west of Chicago.

St. Charles snuggles amid rolling hills. Its houses dip down to the Fox river, a pretty stream of moving water. Once the Fox was a highroad for Indians who sailed it in canoes. Today dams here and there hold back the water, making lakes and giving power.

But I mentioned fairies. For some reason or other, perhaps because it has been good or patient, St. Charles has been blessed. Take the Community House for example.

Ninety Years

Just about ninety years of frugal living and frugal building has brought St. Charles to its present estate. Utility has always been the chief motif. Very little was ever spent for art when it came to raising a business house. Halls and meeting places were plain. These communities that have evolved out of severe, hard working, straight and strict-thinking New England ancestry are usually so.

Now color comes. The blessed fairies are redecorating St. Charles, painting it in colors, vivifying it, teaching it to laugh and play. It comes about something like this—

A few years ago a little group of people there, interrelated, fell heir to a large fortune. Just how much is conjecture. Some say that this fortune was \$60,000,000 or thereabouts when it came to St. Charles and that it is grown now to about \$100,000,000.

The possessors of the fortune that is playing fairy to St. Charles are the Bakers, the Angells and the Norrises. The money came out of the estate of John W. Gates. He made his first few millions out of barbed wire. Other millions followed. He plunged in lands, railroads, everything. He ended his amazing career as a prince of petroleum—The Texas company.

How the millions came to St. Charles is too well known to need recounting. Suffice to say that Gates' only son died, then John W. Gates died and his widow died. So we find it in the hands of Mrs. Gates' nearest kin, the Bakers and the Angells. And the Bakers and Angells are wholesome, likeable people, the salt of the earth who continue to shake their fellow-townsmen firmly by the hand.

Dellora Angell, fairy princess of the \$50,000,000 or so, fell in love with Lester Norris, the little boy who had helped her bandage the sawdust wounds of her dolls in childhood, and they were married. Three years they have been married and there are little ones in their home.

And as these events were taking place Henry Rockwell Baker, only child of Mr. and Mrs. E. G. Baker, possessors of the remaining share of the millions, grew to manhood. Then he became ill and died. Thus we arrive at the Community House.

Give Community House

The Angells and Bakers and Norrises traveled some, got wider and newer viewpoints of larger things and came back to St. Charles to be among the people they knew. In memory of their only son the Bakers built and presented to the people of St. Charles a Community House costing \$275,000. Then Mrs. Baker added \$25,000 as a fund for upkeep and Mr. Baker presented the Community House with the income from a two-apartment building.

In equipping the house one of Chicago's greatest furnishing houses was given the blanket order—to do it completely and well. The Community House has a hall for entertainments with a dancing floor and stage, parlors, rooms for meetings, kitchens, swimming pool, bowling alleys, billiard rooms; permanent quarters for the American Legion, Women's club and the Boy Scouts.

Appointments of the Community House are as tasteful and the tapestried and friezetted chairs and couches as colorful as the most skilled decorators could make them. The finer and newer hotels and clubs in New York or Chicago may out-do it in size or vastness but for atmosphere and taste—ah, impossible!

Builds Bank

One day E. J. Baker, in from his farm and his horses and his blooded stock, remarked to the village banker that the village bank might well be in a finer home. Agreed, but how? "I'll build you a bank," said farmer Baker.

They opened the bank the other day and I, re-discovering Illinois, was there to see it. This village bank's home cost about \$200,000. It is of marble with beautiful bronze furniture and tall bronze vases and amazing equipment. It is probably the most costly and most richly furnished bank of its size in the world. It is complete even to machine-gun emplacements.

E. J. Baker, with a whimsical smile, remarked:

"You see, I never had but one child and he died. I'll never have another. I've lived here all my life. I'll live here the rest of it and die here. Why not? Why not these things for the town?"

Building Theater

Lester Norris, who as a boy preferred to draw pictures of Dellora and

her dolls rather than to mess in mud-pies, by evolution became an artist. For a time he drew that comic up-and-down strip in the Chicago Tribune that "grades" the vaudeville acts. He drew other things, too.

Today he is building a magnificent theater in St. Charles. It has a standard stage and is equipped for motion pictures. I was told that it will cost \$500,000 and will seat \$1,000 persons. I talked with an expert theater designer who came to St. Charles to look it over. He remarked with enthusiasm:

"Theater-builders will come from all over the United States to see this theater before starting projects. It is a step ahead. It is wonderful. There is no other like it. I am charmed."

The theater is a study in Mediterranean architecture, Spanish and Venetian with cathedral chimes. To enter you walk over "broken tile" floor in blues and greens and rose. The walls and ceilings are colorful, a

blazing of English vermilion, cobalt blue, coral, gold and other radiant hues. All these are being "antiqued" to make them blend harmoniously.

Finance Country Club

Talk started in St. Charles regarding plans for a country club. Shortly the Bakers, Angells and Norrises agreed to finance it. Nine holes they have, very sporty, with built-in-water hazards that mesmerize your ball, I have visited many country clubs, some of the finest, yet this I will say—

For punctilious perfection in furnishing, down to the last detail, for service and taste, I have seen none that surpasses it. It is a delight.

And now St. Charles wants a new hotel. E. J. Baker has agreed to that, too. He has bought a site on the river bank, just where the water tumbles over the dam. He has taken over a helter-skelter of rickety boat-houses and shaky landings and has kicked them out. The hotel with an acre of river-frontage for promenade, preliminary estimates say, will cost \$300,000.

What does all this mean to St. Charles? Aye, that's the thing. An example or two. The Spriet garage a few months ago was a tumbledown frame thing. The owner shook his head as the bank went up next door. Today the garage is of red face-brick. A half block down the street Harold Colson, clothier, has moved into his brand new store.

The new \$500,000 theater is going up on a spot that was a dump behind a tightboard fence that had lost its tightness. Within the last few weeks St. Mary's academy has opened its new \$200,000 school. Nor would the picture of St. Charles be quite complete without mentioning that not many years ago Charles Haines, bachelor and friend of children, left a third of his fortune of \$350,000 for the advancement of the affairs of the school children of St. Charles.

Game Farm

Out in the hinterland beyond St. Charles we find the Wallace Evans Game Farm. Here deer roam the hills, swans swim in little lakes and

wood duck and mallards and canvas-backs green in the watercourses. Peacocks spread their fans and pheasants, gaily colored, march in their enclosures.

Nearby we find the St. Charles School for Boys, state institution for delinquents; frankly, a reform school. But you'd hardly recognize it as such. Col. Frank D. Whipp, managing officer, acted as host and guide. This is the picture.

Eight hundred boys on 1,200 acres. Neither a wall nor a barred window. The boys are divided into 23 "families" scattered about in eight colonies. Sixteen school teachers teach eight grades; in all 130 employees. It is a pleasant place for boys even to lake and park and zoo. Its health department includes two nurses, a doctor and full-time dentist.

Enough for boys to eat? Ten hogs a week out of the farm's pens in the weekly kill. Beef and other meat is bought. The bread baked? Four hundred two-pound loaves and 200 one-

pound loaves a day. Cookies? Yes, innumerable for boys and boys.

Industrial Side

One moment for industrial St. Charles. Here is the great manufacturing plant of the Cable Piano company; home of the Globe Music company, stringed instruments and the Newcombe-Hawley company, radio horns. Two plants make light fixtures, another hammock, porch furniture, fishing nets, etc. The Moline Malleable Iron Works manufactures malleable castings of all kinds. That's the more prosaic business side of St. Charles.

It is to these workers and their children that the newer atmosphere, the colorful and beautiful—the Community House, the hotel, the theater, the country club, the hotel-that-is-to-be, all have come or are coming as gifts from heaven. That's why St. Charles must believe in fairies!

In proportion to population, Vermont has over twice as many telephones as Norway.



Order The Chicago Daily News delivered to your home

Now you can have *The Chicago Daily News* delivered to your home even though you don't live in Chicago or right in a town. Thousands have already welcomed this new delivery service and are receiving *The Daily News* every night. For seventy-five cents a month you can have *The Daily News* delivered to your home.

Simply telephone or write to *The Daily News*, 15 North Wells Street, Chicago, Illinois, and you will receive Chicago's home newspaper every afternoon by supper time.

Fill out the coupon below and mail it to *The Daily News* today.

No matter what kind of news or type of feature interests you most—

You will find it in

THE CHICAGO DAILY NEWS

THE CHICAGO DAILY NEWS
15 N. Wells St., Chicago, Ill.
Please deliver *The Daily News* to the following address for which I agree to pay seventy-five cents per month.
Name _____
Address _____