

# MAGILL HOUSE HISTORY

(timeline created by the DeWitt County Restoration Association)

March 1872—Canadian Richard Butler arrives in Clinton and purchases the *Clinton Public* newspaper.

April 1872—Prominent Clinton businessmen, the Magill Brothers, express their intention to build three two-story brick commercial buildings at the corner of North Center and the public square.

April 1872—Butler and other Clinton business owners approach the Magills about revising their plans to include a three-story hotel, with storefronts for three businesses. They argue that a first-class hotel is needed since Clinton has become a major railway hub. The Magills agree to the plan if Butler and his friends can convince the community to contribute \$10,000 of what will be a \$37,000 project.

May through July 1872—Butler, along with Fenton Bogar, who owns a furniture and undertaking business on the northwest corner of the square, and George W. Phillips, a local druggist, begin a door-to-door campaign to raise the \$10,000. Butler reports weekly in the *Clinton Public* on the progress, including names and amounts of pledges. Spurred by a \$2500 pledge from Attorney C.H. Moore and \$1000 from Banker John Warner, other pledges ranging from another one of \$1000 to many for \$50 finally reach the goal in July.

August 1872—Work on the three-story brick hotel is begun by Kirk and Bell, local bricklayers.

late winter, early spring 1873—Three businesses open up in the portion of the hotel facing the square.

April 1, 1873—A gala grand opening of the Magill House is held. Its main entrance, an elegant, balconied portico opens onto North Center. The hotel includes a sweeping staircase in the lobby, a fine restaurant, a billiards room, and a barber shop in the basement.

1883—Three of the four Magill brothers die. (The youngest of the four had already passed away in 1874.)

1884—The Magill House is sold in a Master of Chancery sale by the estate to Henry Rennick, a former traveling sales representative, who had begun purchasing several buildings on the Clinton square.

1888—Henry Rennick sells the Magill to his brother-in-law William H. Taylor. Taylor, a local businessman, had begun his commercial enterprises by opening a boot store in the summer of 1857 at the age of 21. His boot business was located at the back of his father's dry goods store, which, ironically, had stood on the same lot as the new Magill House. His father's store and young Taylor's boot business had been destroyed by a fire in December of 1857, less than six months after he had opened. Both relocated elsewhere almost immediately.

about 1890—Taylor adds a three-story west wing to the back of the Magill House, nearly doubling the number of rooms available.

mid 1900's—The Magill House name is changed to the Taylor-Magill Hotel.

late 1980's—The Taylor family sells the hotel after nearly 100 years of operation.

1990's—After changing hands twice more, the last time selling for only \$10,000 at auction, the hotel is taken over by the city due to problems with maintenance and concerns over safety of local citizens.

December 2003—The City of Clinton enters into a year-long option for purchase with Larry Barker, Clinton native and St. Louis attorney.

summer 2004—The DeWitt County Restoration Association is formed as a not-for-profit organization to help save the Magill after Barker's St. Louis developers decide against the hotel restoration project.

October 2004—The DCRA is turned down in its bid to be granted a year's option for purchase when Barker's option expires in December.

October 2004 through November 2005—The DCRA continues to negotiate with the city to save the Magill.

December 2005—The City of Clinton and the DCRA come to terms on a redevelopment agreement, and the ownership of the Magill is turned over to the association.