

Pierce Tavern

5135 Main Street



Summary

In 1892, the **Farmers and Merchants Bank** opened as Downers Grove's first bank. It shared its space with a post office, library, barber shop, and several doctors/dentists over the bank's lifetime. However, shortly after the 1929 stock market crash, the bank closed. In 1947, the building became home to **Muriel Mundy Apparel Store** and was a mainstay of the downtown for over 60 years. **Max Logan's Home Accents** filled the space from 2012 to 2017. Then in 2018, the Vlahos Family added **Pierce Tavern** to the downtown landscape.

Building History

Farmers and Merchants Bank (1892 to about 1929)

In 1892, the Farmers and Merchants Bank opened as Downers Grove's first bank on the northeast corner of Main and Curtiss Streets. The Village's Downtown Tour booklet describes the architectural style:

"Prominent local contractor William James Herring used an amalgam of popular architectural styles. The quarry-faced base and fully round arch of local limestone suggest Richardsonian Romanesque, while the pressed metal turret on the corner has ornament and a dome profile that evoke the Renaissance Revival. Banks and other prominent buildings often chose corner locations in the last quarter of the 19th century because they afforded a prominent position in the downtown streetscape. Here, as was frequently the case, the main business entrance was at the very corner in a chamfer and topped by a projecting turret that cantilevered from the front and side facades to increase its visibility far down Main Street."

By 1895, the building also housed the U.S. Post Office, Downers Grove Reporter newspaper offices and the editorial rooms of the Chicago's Columbian magazine. The post office was housed on the east end of the building. The second floor would serve as the first public library in Downers Grove. Other uses for the building included a barber shop and the offices of several doctors, dentists, and other professionals. In 1895, officers of the bank included notable citizens such as Charles Curtiss, one the pioneers of the village and past village president, W.A. Tope, a local physician with a large practice.

The bank closed during the Great Depression as did all banks in Downers Grove. The building was initially smaller than today's building as seen in the picture to the right.

In 1944, the exterior of the building underwent a modernization effort, eliminating many original features. The turret was removed, the windows were shortened, and the face brick of the bank and that of its neighbor to the north were coated with a layer of cement that was colored and tooled to resemble squared-ashlar stone. The bank's original rough-hewn limestone base and arch are still visible.



Muriel Munday Apparel Shop (1947-2011)

Three generations of owners ran the store named after the founder Muriel Mundy. Mundy retired in 1968, and the store continued to be operated by two generations of the same family until 2011.



Max Logan's Home Accents (2012-2017)

Ruth Gurney opened Max Logan's in 2012. They had a delayed opening after a plumbing leak on the second floor flooded the building. In addition to home décor items, the store also sold purses, scarves, scented lotions, and handmade artisan jewelry.

Pierce Tavern (2018-present)

Pierce Tavern is the second restaurant opened by the owners of Fuller House in Hinsdale. Per their website, they are paying homage to the founder of Downers Grove, Pierce Downer, and bringing a neighborhood hideout to the heart of downtown Downers Grove. The menu features burgers, bourbon, beer and so much more.



The upstairs of the building has rental apartments as of 2021.

Sources

1. Building pictures are courtesy of the Downers Grove Historical Society and the Downers Grove Museum.
2. Sanborn Maps. Earlier Sanborn Maps are available at Library of Congress website. <https://www.loc.gov/maps/?q=Downers+Grove>. Later maps for 1933 and 1947 are available on microfilm at Downers Grove Public Library.
3. *Downtown Walking Tour pamphlet*, Village of Downers Grove, http://www.downers.us/public/docs/historic_preservation/Downtown%20Walking%20Tour%20Booklet%20FINAL%20Unlocked.pdf
4. Montrew Dunham, Pauline Wandschneider, *Downers Grove 1832-1982*, Published 1982.
5. "Main Street's Muriel Mundy's closing down," Patch.com, 26 Aug 2011, <https://patch.com/illinois/downersgrove/muriel-mundy-to-close>
6. "Max Logan's to Reopen 2 Months After Cracked Toilet Flooded Store," Patch.com, 23 Aug 2012, <https://patch.com/illinois/downersgrove/max-logan-s-to-reopen-2-months-after-cracked-toilet-fbd92de7d30>
7. Pierce Tavern Website, <https://piercetavern.com>, accessed 19 Nov 2021

Written and researched by Marty Acks in 2021.