

Early Businesses in Tuscola

- * First store built was a grocery store by **B. F. Lewis**, located on the north side of the courthouse.
- * **Dr. J. W. Wright** owned a drug store, which was located in a one-and-a-half dwelling directly east of the first courthouse.

Both of these businesses pulled up stakes and moved when the Illinois Central train depot was built off Pembroke Street instead of Houghton Street where it was originally supposed to be located. The business district naturally located near where the depot was built.

- * **Davis and Ensey Dry Goods Store.** **Jim Davis**, projector of the largest grain trades ever instituted in this region at that time, built a large storehouse on the south side of the Avenue and was in partnership with **Mr. Ensey**.

Al Woody clerked for Mr. Davis in the dry goods business. “One day Al asked Jim the name of the man whom he had just trusted to a large amount. Jim said his name was Archibull Drake. So Al goes to the books and charges the goods up to A. Bulldrake, and when the man came again Al rushes at him with a ‘How are you Mr. Bulldrake.’ That charge remains on the old books against Mr. Bulldrake and against Al to this day.” *Written in 1881 by an old Tuscola resident*

- * **Woody and Russell Grocery Store – Jacob Ephlin and A. M. Woody** bought the stock of the **Lewis** store. **William Russell** succeeded **Ephlin**. They built a permanent store at the corner of west North Central Avenue and Main Street in 1859. The partnership remained until November 1874 when it was dissolved by mutual consent and good will.

“Soon Al (Woody) found a congenial and as proved, a very reliable business partner in Bill Russell, just arrived from North Carolina ‘armed to the teeth,’ ‘clad in his mail with his visor down,’ and ‘prepared for war in time of peace.’ But peace proved to be his best hold, always, except the time when he ‘shot a man’ at long range, all the way from Sale Street, to Doc Field’s corner. This was during the war (Civil War) when if a man hurraed for Jeff Davis we just shot him ‘out of hand,’ and no questions asked. This shot was fired for effect. He dearly loved a joke and the writer has heard him tell of this shot. Russell died a few years ago. He came to Tuscola in ’59 ... He was ‘one of us’ in every way. The imprint of his business character is permanently good upon the old and new institutions of Tuscola, and his best monument is in the hearts of his survivors. We could have better spared a ‘worser’ man.

Written in 1881 by an old Tuscola resident

- * **Wyeths Dry Goods House** was located on the east side of Parke Street, south of Pembroke.
- * **J. R. Evans Grocery** store began in 1868.
- * **Dr. Wright** built a drug store on the southwest corner of Main Street and Central Avenue, where he had sole control of the drug business until 1865.
- * **Dr. J. A. Field** succeeded **Wright**, who moved to California.

* **Mr. Gruelle** ran a drug store for a few years.

* **E. L. Smith** ran a drug store until he sold out to **Benton** and then to **Foster**. After leaving the drug business, **Mr. Smith** began the practice of law. In 1878, he committed suicide by cutting his throat in his office, upstairs at the southwest corner of Parke and Sale Streets. The real cause of his suicide was never known but was supposed to be business troubles and illness.

* **Henry C. Niles** and **E. C. Siler** opened a drug store in 1865, at the southeast corner of Main Street and South Central Avenue. **Siler** sold out to **Niles**, who joined **C. A. Davis** on the north side of Sale Street in a building that was destroyed by fire in October of 1881. **Mr. Niles** returned to the southeast corner of Main Street and South Central Avenue, then moved to the J. M. Smith building, corner of South Central Avenue and Washington Street. **W. J. Dryer** joined them as a partner. They were succeeded by **James D. Higgins**.

* **S. G. Bassett**, backed by **Alonzo Lyons** began a business on the north side of Sale Street at the railroad about 1859. It was torn down a few years later.

“In an old shanty at the railroad, on the north side of Sale Street, was a store run by Simon Bassett (brother of Doc.) and Milt Maris. Simon left, but Milt still ‘paddles his own canoe’ on Sale Street. Well the building is gone at last but it was for a short time the post office and railroad depot.”

Written in 1881 by an old Tuscola resident

* **Elijah McCarty** built a large two-story warehouse on the south side of Sale Street at the railroad tracks in 1859. He opened a large dry goods store in the warehouse.

* **John M. Madison** came to Tuscola in 1860 and entered the grocery and dry goods business.

* **Henry B. Madison** came to Tuscola in 1861 and operated a hardware business.

* **A. P. Melton** kept a hardware store on the corner of South Central Avenue and Main Street (later occupied by Evans Grocery Store) for several years, and sold to **Lodge** and **Minturn**.

* The insurance business as a regular occupation was not started until 1865-66, when **William P. Cannon**, brother of **Joseph Cannon**, represented a large number of companies in connection with other business, sold out to **A. P. Helton**. **Helton's** insurance business increased rapidly and became one of the leading insurance men in Central Illinois, representing a large number of companies. **Mr. Helton** had a peculiar experience worth mentioning. In 1865, **Mr. Helton** was hunting with **Col. Taggart**. **Helton** went to remove his gun from the wagon when it discharged and wounded himself in the shoulder. His family nursed him for months afterward, and finally, under the advice from his doctor had his left arm amputated. Coincidentally, ten years later his son, **Harry**, lost his right forearm in a similar accident while hunting. Despite their handicap both **Helton's** were very successful in business.

* **Andrew G. Wallace** started the first regular real estate office after leaving the circuit clerks position. **P. C. Sloan**, also a former clerk and recorder, succeeded **Mr. Wallace** in 1883.

* The first newspaper was the *Tuscola Press* started in 1859, but it was short lived. **M. Vaul** ran it for a year or two, but it never succeeded. *The Douglas County Shield* was next, run by the **Sellers** boys between the years 1865-1867. *The Union* was in existence for a short time run by a **Mr. Gregory**. The newspaper business became a permanent institution when the *Saturday Journal* was established in March 1864, by **Siler & Lindsay**. They were succeeded in 1866 by **C. N. Walls** and then by **T. J. Williams** in 1868.

* **Samuel Bierfeldt Restaurant and Confectionery** was established in 1866. Located at 26 West Sale Street, they served warm meals at all hours, fruits in season and carried choice tobaccos, cigars and smoker's articles.

* **Cross Bros. Meat Market** was founded in 1866 by **Edmund Cross**.

* **Oscar B. Atherton** came to Tuscola in 1864. He opened a tailoring business in the Bragg and Bank Building.

* **Hudson Brothers Lumber Yard** was founded in May 1864 by **Erasmus Hudson**, who for almost thirty years devoted himself to making it the leading lumber industry of the county and one in which at all times could be found a stock of the greatest variety. Under his able and vigorous management, the business grew. **Erasmus** died May 1893. His two sons who had been raised in the business succeeded him. The business was located at the foot of west North Central Avenue and Parke Street at the railroad tracks.



Hudson Brothers Lumber Yard