

204 West Main Street, Belleville, Illinois  
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In 1848 Jacob Maier, a native of Wurttemberg, Germany (part of historic Swabia), bought the site of 204 West Main, and soon erected the Swabian Bakery, which was also a saloon. The family lived above the bakery and over time tenants rented apartments in the building. Maier constructed an addition to the building before 1867, which was demolished sometime after 1949. The building likely is the oldest surviving building on Downtown's Main Street. A recollection of life in early Belleville reported that the bakery was a favorite stop for farmers who bought a piece of gingerbread and a beer from the Swabian baker before returning to the farm. That story was the inspiration for the Christmas Gingerbread Walk. Maier died in 1877.

No later than the 1880s the storefront would house two separate businesses (204 and 206), until 1923. Christian Dietz, "Dietz the Tailor," rented the building for his business and residence in 1893. In 1900 he bought the building, including the cistern and smokehouse on the alley to the east. Dietz renovated the building in 1907 and replaced the front with a "modern plate-glass front" in 1911. During the Dietz period, 206 was occupied by barbers, a jeweler, and other shopkeepers. Diets moved in 1923. Subsequent long-term occupants of 204 include Reliable Loan Corporation, KBR Engineering, and Berutti Engineering.



1905