



# MCHS BUILDING HISTORY

## 454 East Vandalia Street - Edwardsville, IL

By Cindy Reinhardt, 2023

### The Joseph Hotz House aka Cathcart Tourist Inn

Unlike most Edwardsville houses, the Hotz House has been home to hundreds of people during its long history. Although built as a single-family residence in 1897, its second owner turned it into a rooming house on what was soon to become the most famous road in America, Route 66, *the Mother Road*.

Just 15 years after moving to Edwardsville as a young man, Joseph Hotz began building this beautiful two-story Victorian home. A July 1897 article in the *Intelligencer* reported that the Hotz house already on the Vandalia Street property would be moved to a corner of the lot. The family would reside there until the new house was complete. It was estimated that the new home would cost \$3,500 and was to have “modern conveniences and comforts.”

Joseph Hotz moved to Edwardsville with his brother, George Hotz, who had just been elected as sheriff of Madison County in 1883. Joseph would serve as chief deputy. From this humble beginning Hotz had an active and varied career. He became a partner with his brother George in a very successful lumber business on Main Street, owned a cigar store and factory in the Trares building, was postmaster, and served as an IRS agent. Born in Grantfork, Illinois, he spoke fluent German as well as English, which served him well as an agent for several steamship lines.

Edwardsville residents would use his services to book passage to America for family members coming from Europe or to make arrangements for their own trips abroad.

He was also one of the men instrumental in the founding of the Clover Leaf Loan, being elected as the first bank president in 1889. His last employment was as County Clerk an office he held from 1924 until his death in 1933. Friendly and well-liked by the community, Hotz held appointed and elected office in the community for a half century and was a leader in the Democratic Party.

In his personal life, Mr. Hotz was a family man, active in social organizations and in the Catholic Church where he served as organist. He married Mary E. Nagel, daughter of a prominent Highland family, in 1883. She passed away in October 1903 after a long illness, and two years later, Joseph married Catherine McCarthy of Pena. He was the father of eight children.



*The Hotz House as it appeared in 2015. Just to the right is one of the tourist cabins, and to the left is a corner of the garage in back. The café was located on a lot to the left of the house (east side), but it has been gone for many years. (Reinhardt)*

In 1922, the *Intelligencer* announced that Joseph Hotz was selling his “beautiful home” to George Cathcart of Thurber, TX. Cathcart was expected to turn the house into a “first class and up-to-date boarding house.” With many of their children gone, the Hotz family decided to move to a smaller home on South Buchanan Street. The Vandalia Street house that cost \$3,500 to build in 1897, was sold to George Cathcart for \$9,000. It was noted that private hotels were becoming popular in Edwardsville and helped “solve the housing conditions.”



*This view of the house shows one of the tourist cabins. 2015 (Reinhardt)*

Less than two weeks later, an ad in the paper announced, “Will be open for business Monday, November 27 in the beautiful home formerly owned by Mr. Joseph Hotz. Modern furnished rooms with meals. Can take care of 12 people. Mrs. George Cathcart. 454 E. Vandalia Street.” Mrs. Cathcart called her business “Cathcart’s Tourist Inn.”

The Cathcarts also purchased the property at 456 Vandalia where they ran a popular café with a grocery in the back. Their timing couldn’t have been better since just 4 years later, in 1926, Route 66 was christened and traffic in front of their new boarding house increased significantly. But travelers weren’t the only people who stayed at the hotel; local residents needing temporary lodging also stayed at the house. Within a few years they increased the number of rooms available by building a number of small tourist cabins on the grounds next to the house, some of which remain today.

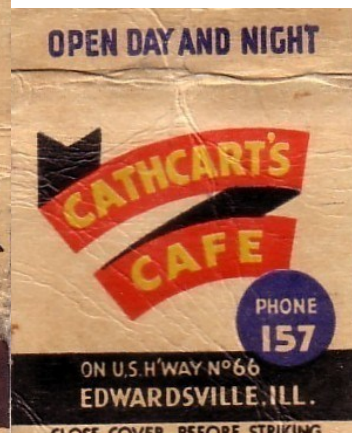
In the 1930’s the house and tourist cabins were purchased by the Goddard family who also ran a boarding house for many years. The house then returned to life as a single-family residence for twenty years before being converted to a tea room, The Honeybee, and, briefly, a sorority house.

This grand old house has been home to a variety of businesses since then. The Tom Beavers family owned it for many years and were good caretakers, preserving the rich detail of the home, both inside and out. The beautiful carved staircase, stained glass windows, and intimate nooks and crannies of the house that once provided a temporary respite for hundreds of guests in their home away from home, now offers visitors a snapshot of Edwardsville’s past.

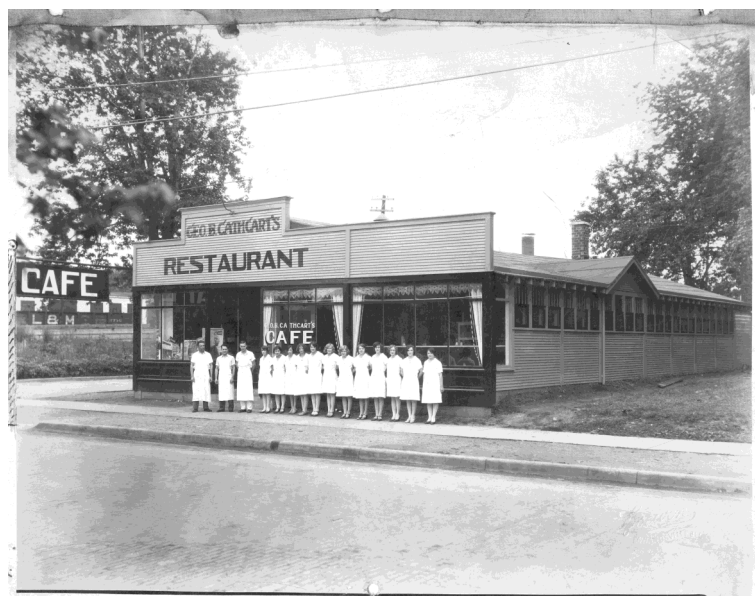
The George Cathcart Café and Cathcart Tourist Inn were inducted into the Illinois Route 66 Hall of Fame in 2013.



Matchbooks were great advertising pieces at a time when the number of smokers in America was surging. (Reinhardt)



Two years after opening the tourist inn, George Cathcart opened a small hamburger stand next door that gradually grew into the restaurant shown above and at left. The establishment also included a grocery and meat market. George advertised that his restaurant was “known from coast to coast.” The restaurant closed after George’s death in 1952. (June Nealy)



Cathcart Café staff pose in front of the restaurant, probably in the 1940s. This same image was used on a matchbook cover. (June Nealy)