

Schulenburg Billiard Mfg., Detroit MI (updated: 2/12/14)



CHAS. SCHULENBURG.



ROBERT SCHULENBURG.

1805 - Billiards being played in Detroit. One burned up in fire for \$25 loss.

1828 - Carl Schulenburg was born Hanover, Germany April 14th, 1828.

1847 - Begins working on billiard tables in Germany.

1849 - Detroit Chamber of Commerce reports qty 2 billiard tables exported from Detroit valued at \$500 (maker not mentioned).

1852 - Immigrates from Liverpool to NYC's Castle Gardens port (now Battery Park) on vessel "Franklin King", arrives June 10th (or March 10th per CS?), 1852. Listed occupation as "Farmer"? Age 25. Travelling with 1st wife Sophia (28)? Starts billiard mfg called "Siebelt and Schulenburg". Francis Siebelt was co-owner? Note: New York City 1857 directory still has him listed as billiard table mgr at 540 Pearl St, home at 36 Forsyth (based on prior years info I suspect). **Need to research NYC bus records.**

1855 - July 22nd, son Robert born in NYC

1856 - Moves to Detroit 1856, starts a saloon. A billiard parlor already pre-exists at 102 Randolph.

1857 - Mich. State Agricultural Society gives him award at 9th annual meeting (MI State Fair).

1856 - 1858 - Begins working with billiard mfr. "George Smith" at 69-71 Larned St. (attached is another George Smith ad from 1877). G. Schulenburg later set up shop himself on Shelby St.

1859 - Michael Phelan and Collender table mfg. match billed as "The Billiard Championship of the United States." This match (4/12 or 13/59) attracted much attention in the press all over the US, and all

500 spectator seats were sold at \$5 ea. They played from 7PM till 5 AM (or lasted 4 days as reported elsewhere). Reportedly, Phelan won \$15,000, \$10,000 in a bet with Seereiter and \$5,000 from the promoter. Sets the stage for Billiards craze in Detroit and nationwide?

1859 - Reports 2 billiard tables sold that year for total value of \$500 (ref. "Johnston's Detroit City Directory of 1861").

1859 - Announces intent to show sample at Michigan State Fair. Ref. 9/30/59 DFP.

1859 - Shows rosewood table at State Fair with human heads carved on the legs that local wood carver* charged him \$200 to do. Total cost to build was \$800 with estimated \$1000 retail price. (ref. 10/9/59 DFP).

1859 - Moves to 64 Randolph (ref. 12/25/59 DFP).

1860 - Schulenburg has sold total of 12 tables in Michigan in past 5 years. Total population of 150 tables in the whole state (Brunswick: 60; George Decker: 16, O'Connor & Collender: 16, NY Others: 15, and Schulenburg: 12). From totals, 1/3 in Detroit, and average cost is \$400 ea. (ref. 3/16/1860 DFP).

1860 - In 1860 builds 24 tables that year, priced \$275 to \$500 ea. (avg. blue collar worker made about \$250/year, educated person about \$500/yr). Ref. "Detroit Board of Trade Booklet" (summaries for 1859 thru 1868).

1861 - George Schmidt, Billiard maker, also list at 64 Randolph.

1861 - Enlarges to 62 - 64 Randolph St. (address listed as billiard mfr and saloon). Home is same location. Ref "Johnston's Detroit City Directory of 1861".

1862 - Schulenburg's 1st ad appeared around 1862.

1863 - Schulenburg's showroom is in "Weber's Furniture" gallery (the Art Van Furniture of the day) a few blocks up Woodward.

1863 - Adolph Zeller and C. Shulenburg both listed as billiard mfrs at 52-54 Shelby St. G. Schmidt now at 68 Larned, still listed as billiard mfr. G. Smith listed as Billiard Rooms and 63 Larned (same person?).

1865 - Son Hugo is born (listed in 1870/80 censuses), but no further info found.

1866 - Still working with Zeller. G. Schmidt at 69 Larned now (his home is 65 Larned)

1867 - Has 26 employees and \$100,000 in sales/year (@ est \$350/table => 24 tables/month). Article mentions Shelby St. location. Competitor George Smith (since 1859) has 15 employees, makes French tables (aka 3rd size caroms), and has \$25,000 in sales. Ref. Detroit Board of Trade Booklet (summaries for 1859 thru March 1869).

1867 - Buys 60' x 167' property on Randolph for future mfr. bldg. and showroom

1867 - Bush and Paterson company, Kalamazoo, MI (a construction firm) open planing mill to make billiard legs. It stays open 5 years (supplying Schulenburg?). **Need to research.**

1868 - Announces intent to build 5-6 story bldg., 70' wide, on 98, 100, and 102 Randolph St. (street renumbered in 1921 to 514-520 Randolph, now the Millender Center Parking garage). Street level to be rented out to other retail. Bldg completion expected 9/68. I think this was the beginning of Schulenburg's "boom" period. Ref 3/21/68- DTA.

1868 - Lists all persons in Wayne County that made more than \$1000/year. Schulenburg made \$3,717 (avg. wages that year: female teacher/common laborer - \$200-300/yr; male teacher/store mgr. - \$400-600; Principal/executive - \$1000-\$1,500). Ref (5/19/68 - DTA)

1868 - Zeller (and Schulenburg?) exhibits its std. tables at MI State Fair. So does George Smith. Ref (8/17/68- DTA)

1868 - Exhibits at Ohio State Fair in Toledo

1869 – A Mr. Jacob (K, maybe P) Wagner of Maumee (Toledo, OH) is making legs for Schulenburg, and plans to open Kalamazoo plant exclusive for Schulenburg production (also see 1870).

1869 – Has exclusive rights to use/sell Delaney's patent cushions (wire in nose) in Great Lakes area.

1869 – In Chicago, opens sales office next to Brunswick with partner A. Zeller, and also shows branch in St. Joseph, MO. Another employee named Thomas Bedard also worked here.

Chicago location closed 1870 for reasons unknown (need to research). Zeller takes new location (148 State) and continues to work on his own making tables (advertises as "successor to C. Schulenburg). Year after that, all Chicago burns down, but Zeller regroups and continues by himself for a while. Later he went to work for later BBC .

1869 – Builds 8 tables/week w/ 50 employees. Mentions branch factory with Zeller in Chicago and one in St. Joseph, MO also ran by Zeller. Ref. DFP 5/18/60

1869 – Builds table for Henry P. Baldwin, Gov. of Michigan 1869–1873

1870 – Exhibits at Nebraska State Fair

1870 – Kalamazoo has one billiard table leg mfg plant, JK Wagner

1871 – St. Joseph, MO Business Directory show office/shop located at 37 N. 2nd. Charles Harrer is the agent. Believed to have closed this remote location in 1872.

1871 – Beginning of "beveled" side tables by NY makers. Schulenburg begins making the "W. H. Griffith patented" style tables 1872. Becomes the standard design by late 1870s.

1872 – Schulenburg sues bankrupt J.H. Lyon of St. Paul, MN for \$1200 for 3 billiard tables for non-payment. Gets tables back. Ref. Chicago Legal News.

1872 – 60 employees (some % making toys). \$130,000 invested in business now. Makes billiard balls and bagatelle tables also. Ad in DFP claims they make 15 tables/week.

1873 – Schulenburg adds making baby carriages, wooden rocking horses, toys, and doll carriages, then has upwards of 50–80 employees. J.W. Weeks Detroit City Directory ad says they make 15 tables/week.

1873 – May 15th, Fire destroys part of the factory. \$15,000 loss.

1873 – Schulenburg's D & B credit rating is AB (top 5%), but competitor G. Smith (probably had changed name from "Schmidt"?) is CD (bottom 10%)

1873 – Files patent for table design (legs on sides vs corners)

1874 – Has sales agents with sample tables as far west as Salt Lake City at Shipman & Blonger's "Omaha Saloon". (The Blonger Bros were famous thru-out the wild west for saloons, gambling dens, scams, warehouses, and all kinds of illicit enterprises. see <http://www.blongerbrothers.com/>)

1875 – Has sold 100 tables in Pittsburgh (39 now located in one block stretch of pool halls). 60 employees.

1876 – Temp end of weekly advertising in Detroit Free Press.

1876 – Files patent for baby buggy parts

1877 – Kalamazoo has one billiard table leg mfg plant (Jacob K. Wagner?)

1877 – Files patent for a table design

1877 – Huron House Hotel, Port Huron: "the billiard room, sixty-eight feet long by twenty feet wide, in which are five first-class tables and furniture manufactured by Schulenburg of Detroit." From book History of St. Clair County, Michigan", A. T. Andreas & Co., Chicago; 1883

1880 – Census. Son Hugo now working in the business at age 15 (and attended school in last year).

1881 – Incorporates for \$25,000 capital (possibility that he needed to raise money by selling shares?).

1883 – Steam fitting/plumbers business now located in 98 Randolph St. Called the “Schulenburg Block”, between Larned and Congress.

1884 – National competitor Brunswick Balke Collender (BBC) appears at 20-22 Michigan Ave. G. Smith now at 69-71 Larned.

1884 – Wins award at MI State Fair held in Kalamazoo, MI.

1884 – Book “The History of Detroit” by S. Farmer. Mentions Schulenburg. **Need to find**

1885 – DFP ad: Mentions “our specialty – tables built to match the finish of your house”. Weekly DFP advertisements picks up again.

1887 – Has 25 employees now.

1888 – 2nd (?) wife, Mary (58), passes away

1888 – Table installed in the Light Guard Armory (originally called Firemans Halls) In Detroit.

1889 – Marries for 3rd time to wealthy heiress (Helene, 51, who claims to be related to Martin Luther in some fashion). She has \$100,000 estate. Ref. Pittsburgh newspaper. Note: Elyria, OH newspaper (12/5/89) says marriage took place in NYC.

1889 – Wins 1st Place at Detroit Intl Exposition

1890 – Begins to sell a line of bicycles (diversification idea?).

1890 – Passport Application show he (72) travels to Germany with wife (Helene).

1890 – Employee Hugo Bonninghausen files patent for a table design.

1891 – \$25,000 worth of billiard tables made in Detroit this year (all mfrs). If \$250/ea -> 2/week.

1892 – Robert is charter member and VP of East Side Club (social), in a pavilion bldgs next to Belle Isle bridge approach. It has billiard room and bowling alley. 130 members now, began in 9/92. **Look for pics.**

1893 – Exhibits at World’s Fair, Columbian Exposition, Chicago. **Looking for evidence.**

1893 – Files patent for billiard cushion

1893 – Schulenburg begins to retire, son Robert takes over. Ad for “Schulenburg Cycle” Inc. appears (incorporated 2/9/1893 w/ \$5,000 capital) shown in DFP, located at 188 Jefferson Ave. (more visibility to common person?). For Schulenburg Cycle, Charles is Pres, son is VP. Exclusive distributors for the “Derby, Triumph, Relay, New Howe” brand cycles (adds “Dark Horse” later) in Michigan. Advertises for “agents wanted” in IN, OH, and MI.

1893 – Financial Panic of 1893 begins. Runs on banks occur, 43% unemployment in MI. Detroit Mayor Pingree urges all residents to grow own food to survive the winter (Detroit later called “Pingree’s potato patch” in jest).

1894 – No more ads found in DFP till 1900

1894 – BBC now on 87-89 Monroe St. Schulenburg Bicycle business now at 24 Woodward.

1895 – Charles P. Miller, Chicago, IL, is now President. Son Robert is Sec and Treasurer (lives at 343 Field Ave., 2nd house south of St. Paul). Miller was VP of BBC (he was BBC employee 1875 thru 1915). I suspect BBC bought controlling interest in Schulenburg.

Brunswick BC showroom now at 100 Randolph. Schulenburg Mfg. now listed as being at 98 Randolph alone. Since Schulenburg owned this bldg, I suspect they were slowly winding down of

billiard mfrg business as it made more sense to resell B B & C's standard tables, while continuing to mfr just custom ones under the Schulenburg name.

1896 - C. Schulenburg files suit against Edward H. Rolfs for \$1,000 for "assumpsit" (ie., breach of contract) 4/18/94 in Wayne County Circuit Court. Probably related to bicycle business. **Look up charges.**

1896 - C. Schulenburg files suit against Don P. Mead for \$2,500 for "assumpsit" (ie., breach of contract) 11/21/96 in Wayne County Circuit Court. Mead was Sec/Treasurer for Schulenburg Cycle Company. **Look up charges.**

1896 - MI 4th Annual Inspection of Factories by Bureau of Labor: 6 employees, \$350/mo payroll. Now working 54 hours/week (60 hours at full production) . 10 hours/day is usual workday

1897 - MI 5th Annual Inspection of Factories: 10 employees, \$425/month payroll.

1899 - Ad shows company selling "Bar fixtures, furniture, and sporting goods". These items were also mfrg'd by Brunswick at this point, and Schulenburg was the reseller. Advertising in DFP picks up to monthly, then almost weekly until the very end in 1910.

1899 - State of MI Bureau of Labor & Factory inspection shows 5 full time employees, making avg of \$2.17/day.

1899 - Charles P. Miller, President, now listed as living in NYC. I assume Brunswick promoted him in some way and he moved from Chicago to NYC to manage all Brunswick's now more diverse businesses.

1900 - 17th Annual Mich Dept of Labor Factory Inspection. 5 employees working 10 hrs/day, paid an avg of \$1.50/day.

1901 - Now only at 98 Randolph per DFP ad.

1903 - DFP ad shows 2 & 3rd floor of 102 Randolph now for rent.

1903 - 4/23/03 Carl S. (75) passes away. Also reported in Los Angeles Herald newspaper.

Lived at 44 Pitcher Street, (1905-1920; Renamed 144 Stimson; 1921+: renumbered 488 Stimson, then renumbered 1960s w/ 2 names: 488 Stimson/684 Myrtle, then name change to 488 M L K Drive, bwt'n Cass and 2nd Ave). Note: The Myrtle Street names address still shows up as a 1 block section on Bing maps as the connector between M L K and Mack Ave.

1904 - D & B rates worth \$10,000 to \$20,000, and a C credit rating.

1905 - Charles P. Miller, NYC, listed as President, son Robert is Sec and Treasurer.

1905 - Listed in Thomas Register of American Mfrs with "C" credit rating (need to double check this fact)

1908 - Mich Bureau of Labor report: 8 employees (one under 16). Note: BBC in Muskegon has 551.

1909 - Begins running DFP ads for close out: used tables, show cases, and reduced repair prices. Sounds like beginning of a slow liquidation.

1910 - Mich Dept Labor report: 11 employees (10 men & 1 woman {2 men <16 yo})

Selling out of Soda Fountains to make room for refrigerators 5/11/10. I think BBC made refrigs at one time?

Last known ad in DFP was for "good, second hand tables" on 10/23/1910

1911 /1912- Out of business?

1913 - BBC has 1058 employees now.

1915 - Son Robert still owns 98-100-102 Randolph (apparently acting as a landlord)

1921 – Detroit streets re-renumbered. Schulenburg Billiard was located where Omni Hotel and Millender Center parking garages are at, between Larned and Congress.

Resources

DTA – Detroit Tribune & Advertiser newspaper (predecessor of the Detroit News)

DFP – Detroit Free Press newspaper

*Julius Melchers, also a German immigrant, was Detroit's most famous wood carver, and his shop was a few doors down from Schulenburg at 68 Randolph. Melchers did cigar store Indians, carousel figures, ships bowheads, mirrors (I almost bought one at Du Mouchelles auctions 15 years ago), etc. I'd bet that Melchers provided him with the highly carved figures and apron trim parts you see on some of his tables.

Son Robert Schulenburg's history notes

1860 – Robert (4) and mother Sophia (36) visit Jacob Rosenthal (33) in Burlington, Iowa (census). Visiting his uncle?

1878-89 – At age 22, moves to Keokuk, Iowa (visit uncle?, school?, other?)

1883- Jan 11th, Marries Carrie Schafer, in Hancock County, Illinois, across river from Keokuk.

1882-1884/5 – Robert living in Keokuk, IA working as Pharmacist. **Need to research more.**

Daughters:

1883 – Selma C. – born in Keokuk, Iowa

1886? Moves back to Michigan. Daughters Alma and twin Bertha (spelled Hertha sometimes) – born May, Detroit

9/19/1905 – Selma married to Harry Dupuis. Children Betty M. (1918-?) and Robert (1906-1965, Southfield, MI). Lived at 1761 Seyburn St. Detroit for 41 years.

3/6/1907 – Robert (51) applies for passport including Bertha and Alma

8/6/1907- Robert (52), Alma, and Bertha (both 21) departed Antwerp and arrive in NYC

10/26/1909 – Alma married Adalbert Kuhn, lives 343 Field Ave (1921+: 1505 Field), Detroit.

11/9/1909 – Was founding shareholder in Detroit based "Cartercar" auto company, bought by GM in 1909. Cartercar featured a "friction drive" transmission, only one of its type then (a forerunner of today's CVT technology).

1910 census – Lists wife Carrie and daughter Martha (another daughter later?)

6/8/1910 – Bertha married Richard Ray Daley (1885-1954-11-04), son Richard S. born (1912-1991, son Kent, daughter Karen). **Need to find Kent or Karen.**

1920 census – Alma widowed, children: John and Carl (7) Alma C. (4)

6/30/1923 – Alma remarries to Ralph Stevens. Lives at 151 Lakewood Ave (1928).

1926 – Robert (71 yo), wife Fannie (widowed and remarried now?), and Marstia (sp?) stepdaughter? (23 yo) travel to Bremen, Germany

Back in NYC from Germany 9/26/26, but w/o daughter. Manifest indicates he is widowed.

1927- Home is 551 E. Grand Blvd. New wife "Bonita"?

1931 – Last known listing for Robert.

1930 census – Alma also lists Elise N. Stevens (17) as step daughter

1932 – 12/19/32 Robert passes away

1946-1950 - Schulenburg bldg. torn down to make way for Civic Development. Turns into a parking lot and the Rocking Chair restaurant.

2005 - Alma C the 2nd daughter died

Known Extent of Existing Schulenburg Billiard Tables

- 1) Jon Heywood - 6 leg table

- 2) Derrick Tiers/Billiard Restoration - Satyr Faced Iron leg (original paint w/ pink lips)*

- 3) Derrick Tiers/Billiard restoration - Schulenburg II*

- 4) Billiard Encyclopedia - mislabeled Emmanuel Brunswick (see page X X X)*

- 5) Ant. Billiard Tables & Accessories/St. Cloud, M N - Satyr face legs (painted gray)*

- 6) Juston Markell - Square leg table*

- 7) Juston Markell - Simple table he had in truck and showed me

- 8) Ken Hash/Classic Billiards - Round legged w/ sunburst panels*

- 9) John Kern/CW WR/Nichols, N Y - Table with drops

- 10) John Kern/CW WR/Nichols, N Y - table he bought

- 11) John Kern/CW WR/Nichols, N Y - piano legged table found in MI*

- 12) House of 7 Gables/MI- Satyr face leg table and ball rack

- 13) Trashed table - Randy bought this

- 14) Flint/MI - Carved leg table w/ Bill Of Sale but w/ cut-off feet*

*- Tables I have pics of, but some are poor quality pics.