

# The Newberry Building

**T**he Newberry building, situated in the heart of downtown Batavia, is similar in style to ones found on main streets in small towns all across the country. Built in 1881, the three-story, Italianate-style structure was designed by George J. King, a local architect who had designed several other commercial and residential buildings in Batavia.

The structure originally served C.H. Turner for his furniture store and his work as an undertaker. Six years later, the building was sold to two other undertakers from Palmyra – George Williamson and George Weeks. Williamson soon bought out Weeks and ran the undertaking business for over 20 years. When he passed away, his business and the building were bought by H.E. Turner, who was unrelated to the original Turner who owned the building.

Nearly 20 years passed before the building changed hands again. In 1929, it became home to one of the fastest-growing five and dime stores in the country: the J.J. Newberry Company. Following the success of other businesses that were offering low-cost goods to small markets, J.J. Newberry thrived in Batavia, becoming a popular shopping destination in the center of the city's commercial district. It was the opposite of elite department stores of its day, like Carr's Department Store, which was right next door to J.J. Newberry.

In 1948, a large rear addition provided more commercial space for the successful store. The two upper floors were converted to office space and rented by many different tenants, including doctors and lawyers. The 1948 modernization of the building also changed the layout of the storefronts and shifted

the staircase leading to the upper floors from the center of the building to the corner. By the 1960s and 70s, the Newberry building became one of the few structures to survive the urban renewal movement that demolished much of city's core.

Although spared from demolition, the J.J. Newberry Company closed its doors in Batavia in 1996 after nearly 70 years in business. The large first-floor retail space was later divided and rented by several other small businesses in the years that followed, but when the building returned to local ownership, it sat vacant.

In 2017, work began on a complete remodel of the 19th century building, fueled by the passion of three local businessmen who wanted to bring the revitalization happening in Buffalo to Batavia. The Eli Fish Brewing Company opened in March 2018 in the first floor of the Newberry building, giving Genesee County its first commercial brewery in nearly 100 years. Named after a Batavia brewer from the 1800s, the brewery also houses FreshLAB, an incubator space for start-up restaurants, as well as new apartments on the upper floors.

From a furniture store to a national retail chain to a local brewery, the Newberry building has served many purposes while maintaining its place in the center of the community. Like Buffalo, Batavia is beginning to capitalize on its historically-significant buildings and with more revitalization projects in the pipeline, the Newberry building is only the beginning. 🏠



J.J. Newberry closed in 1996 after almost 70 years in Batavia. Today, the Newberry building houses Genesee County's first brewery in nearly a hundred years. GENESEE COUNTY HISTORY DEPARTMENT

