



RESTAURANT NAMESAKE

THE REAL “CAROLINE” OF CAROLINE’S RESTAURANT

Caroline (Rhombert) Fischer was the great-great-grandmother to the three cousins who today manage the Fischer Companies and the Hotel Julien Dubuque. She was a driving force and businesswoman much ahead of her time and the inspiration for the name of the hotel's restaurant.

Caroline's husband, Louis, was a partner in the Fischer ice business. When Louis died in 1875 from pneumonia contracted after a fall into the Mississippi River while cutting ice, Caroline took over his ice business, becoming one of Iowa's first businesswomen. A young widow at 31 with five young children to care for, Caroline was a hard worker. She eventually bought out her partners, invested in downtown and riverfront property, and brought her family into the business that still exists today.

Caroline is said to have followed her ice delivery men around town in her own horse and buggy to be sure her men were “doing their work properly.” The many taverns to which they delivered would offer drinks to the drivers, in an effort to persuade them to leave a little extra ice. On occasion, upon finding the drivers passed out in the ice wagon, Caroline would drive the team of horses and wagon back to the ice storage warehouse herself with her own horse and buggy in tow.

In 1878, long before the Fischer Company owned the Hotel Julien Dubuque, the Fischer Wheeler & Co. ice business had a contract with the Julien to supply ice to the guesthouse, then under management of W.W. Woodworth. The three-year contract was for “all the ice necessary” for \$25 a month or \$300 for the entire year.

Caroline's daughter played a large part in running the business. Even while in high school Julia helped Caroline with the company books. Dubuque High School had two courses when Julia attended, a two-year business course and a four-year Latin/scientific course. Julia completed both courses concurrently while earning a teaching certificate, graduating in 1886 as valedictorian at the head of her class. Julia taught at Dubuque's Prescott School, working nights and weekends for her mother Caroline.

Located in view of the Ice Harbor, where the Fischer family business started, Caroline's Restaurant is a tribute to the Fischer/Pfohl family matriarch.

