

The Stationers

Founded: 1893

Location: 619 1/4 South Main Street, Elkhart (1893–98); 529 South Main Street (1898–1916); 523 South Main Street (1916–ca.1932); 417 South Main Street (ca.1932–); 223 South Main Street (ca. 1940s–1997)

In 1893 Fred S. Timmins cleared out a three-foot-wide coal bin between two buildings on South Main Street in Elkhart, installed a hinged counter at the front, and opened a newsstand. He puckishly designated his location as 619 1/4 South Main Street, knowing that the curious address would stay in customers' minds. The gregarious Timmins cultivated his clientele, and his business prospered. In 1898 he purchased a stock of goods and opened a store at 529 South Main Street, which sold books, stationery, and tobacco. He named his shop the Timmins Stationery Company. In 1916 he moved his business to 523 South Main Street in the block occupied by the Bucklen Opera House; in this building he occupied three floors and the basement.

Around 1932 Timmins Stationery Company moved to 417 South Main Street. Timmins died in 1934. His widow and daughter ran the store for a while but eventually sold the stationery shop to Arthur C. Mund, who renamed it The Stationers and moved his operation to 223 South Main Street. In 1948 Mund sold The Stationers to two employees, Albert McDowell and Earl Davis. They sold the shop to Merle Stephey and Frank Taylor in 1966. Stephey left the company after a short while, but Taylor continued to run The Stationers until 1987, when he sold it to Carl Ehry. Taylor expanded the business several times, adding thirty-three hundred square feet of space in 1977 by buying the Houseworth Drugstore building next door. Taylor sold the concern to Carl Ehry in 1988. Five years later Declan McNamee purchased the company.

McNamee had lived in various cities across the country, but he and his wife decided to settle in Elkhart, which was McNamee's boyhood home. By the time McNamee purchased the company, which was renamed The Stationers of Michiana, it had fourteen employees and sold mostly office supplies, business-related gifts, and office furniture. In September 1997 McNamee sold the commercial division of The Stationers to Community Business Equipment of Nappanee. The commercial division, which provided office equipment and supplies to businesses, had accounted for as much as 85 percent of the total sales for the company before it closed. McNamee claimed that commercial competition had made the business unprofitable, and retail sales could not make up for the loss of income. The Stationers opened to the general public for the last day on 4 September 1997, ending a 104-year tradition.