

# HISTORY MAKER

## FREDERICK EDWARD BELO

**Born:** June 27, 1811, Salem | **Died:** Oct. 2, 1883, Salem  
**Known for:** Business leadership, first department store in Salem, spearheading drive to get a railroad to Salem, and a stunning flower and specimen garden.

Heading north on Salem's Main Street, it's hard to miss the imposing three-story Belo House.

The gleaming white Greek Revival structure with its soaring Corinthian columns and striking black iron railings stand in stark contrast to the more sedate brick and wooden Colonial buildings around it.

Built by Edward Belo in 1849 into a hill, the first floor with street-level access from Main was a large general store offering wholesale and retail dry goods from clothing to hardware to specialty groceries.

He and his wife, Amanda Fries, lived on the second floor with its equally impressive street-level entries on Bank and Church streets. He added the third floor in 1860.

"Belo's Leviathan" became the area's first real department store before the Civil War.

Belo was the second of German-born John Frederick and Maria (Strupe) Boehlow's eight children. The family arrived in Salem by 1808, when John bought the lot and ran a cabinet-making business there. All the children were educated in the town's schools.

After apprenticing with masters in Pennsylvania, Belo returned to Salem and soon established a mercantile, a farm, a linseed oil factory and an iron foundry, but his progressive ideas made Salem and, later, Winston, a more appealing location for many businesses as he spearheaded construction of dams, mills, and a railroad line from Greensboro.

The Moravian leadership elected him to be an elder in the administration of the town and church, which were inextricably joined at the time.

A rift developed between him and the elders, however, over his business ideas, and he withdrew from the church.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Belo had already gathered like-minded men to get a railway line built to Salem. Completion of that project would wait until after the war, but he and his cohorts formed the North Western North Carolina

Railroad Company, which brought the first rail connection to Winston in 1873.

When the Wachovia Bank was formed in 1879, he was vice-president.

His leisure time was spent developing his extensive gardens on Church Street. Today, they are maintained by the church as the Wachovia Gardens, dedicated to genetic diversity and sustainable gardening practices.

His vision laid the groundwork for other businesses to thrive in Winston-Salem, and his passion is still feeding those in need.

—KATE RAUHAUSER-SMITH

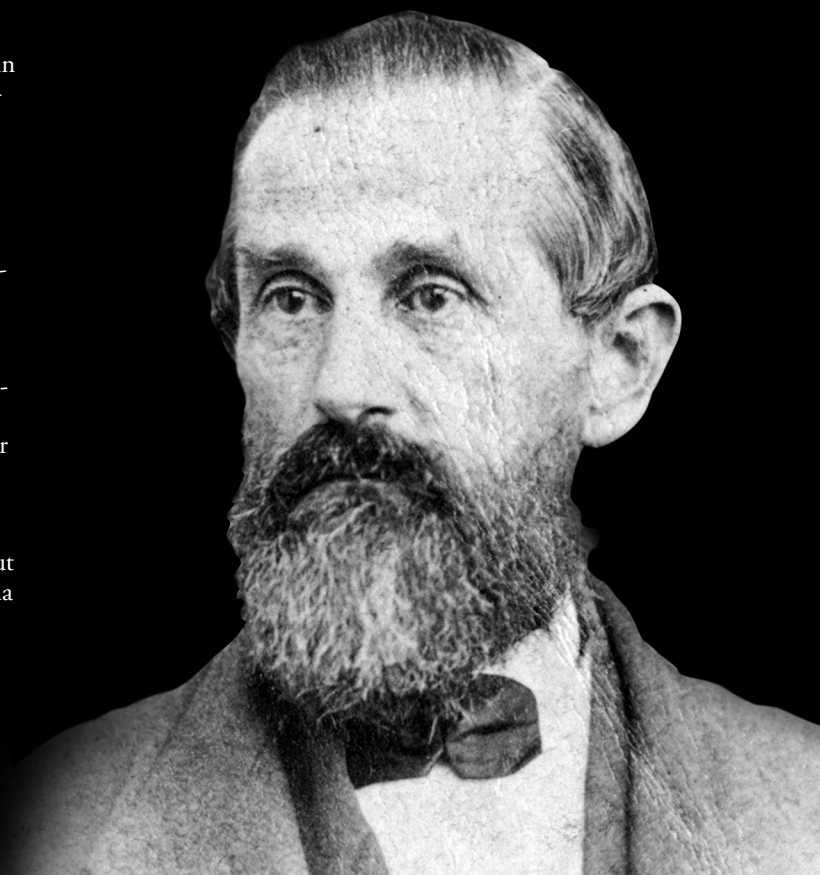


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