

HISTORY & ARCHITECTURE
DOWNTOWN ROCK ISLAND



ROCK ISLAND
ILLINOIS

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1. Lewarne Law Office

121 16th Street

Constructed around 1880, this Italianate structure developed a distinctive history through the ownership of George "Crimps" Holsapple. Although Holsapple is listed as a bartender in city newspapers, his "bar" was a notorious house of prostitution in the 1920s. He was a rival of the infamous John P. Looney; the rivalry eventually culminated in a shootout in front of Market Square on Third Avenue, where Holsapple and others gunned down Connor Looney, John's son. Nationally known lawyer Clarence Darrow defended "Crimps" in 1923, but Darrow could not prove innocence. Holsapple and three others were convicted for the murder of 21 year-old Connor Looney, and were sentenced to 14 years in prison.



An elaborate cornice, with unusual shortened brackets and fancy elliptical fans cut into the wood are featured here. The windows have hooded brick arches on the second story. The double

doorway entrance is unique among other Rock Island buildings, and is decorated with corbel arches that support the porch. George and Mamie Holsapple owned the building until 1948 when it was closed by the State's Attorney's office. Since 1948 it has been used as an office, and was acquired by John Lewarne in 1981 after several years of vacancy.





2. Illinois Theatre

1600 2nd Avenue

In 1901, a committee of local people raised funds for the construction of a first class theater in Rock Island. During a contest to name the new theater, several names were proposed: Rock Island, Cosmopolitan, Grand, New Century, Occidental, Peoples, Imperial, and the winner, Illinois. After much effort, the three-story Illinois Theatre opened to audiences on December 26, 1901 with "Are You a Mason?" The newspapers panned the performance, but patrons were enthusiastic about the theater where each seat had a clear view to the stage. Audiences were also appreciative of the drop curtain, large stage, carpeted aisles, brass box railings, and clear acoustics.

When moving pictures became popular in the early 1920s, attendance at the vaudeville shows and plays in the Illinois Theatre declined. Finally,

in 1929, the building was remodeled for commercial use. Contractor Sam Weisman did that remodeling using plans drawn by architects Horn & Sandberg. Partitions on the first floor were removed and the ceiling was raised to accommodate a new mezzanine. The basement was excavated further to hold additional sales space and the storefront was remodeled to incorporate two prominent entrances with large show windows.

Montgomery Ward Company occupied this prominent corner from 1929 to 1932. Hill Furniture moved in during 1937. From the 1940s to 1968, the building was leased by a variety of small businesses until the former Illinois Theatre became part of Hyman's downtown holdings in 1972.



3. Panther Uniforms

1609 2nd Avenue

Panther Uniforms is one of the oldest buildings on the block, with an estimated construction year circa 1870. Among the previous owners are the Tri-City Shirt Factory in 1892-93 and the Taxman

Brothers, associated with wholesale liquors, in 1910. Notable architectural details include its wooden sills and window pediments on the second story. Brick pilasters frame the end windows on the second story. The frieze area contains four circular frames with crosses that exist on no other downtown structure. The original cornice and brackets are still intact.



4. **G.E. Bailey Company**

1611 2nd Avenue

George Bailey arrived in Rock Island from the South in 1865. A purveyor of dry goods and fancy food items, particularly fruit, he was disappointed when retail grocers began to lose business to peddlers. Despite this, Bailey remained a retailer for 40 years. His building on 2nd Avenue, built around 1883, has Renaissance Revival influences. Two outstanding oriel windows protrude from the second story. The elaborate designs on the oriel projections continue to the base underneath the oriel. Another notable feature is the detailed brick cornice.

5. **Bowlby's**

1623 2nd Avenue

This building is appropriately called Bowlby's after the music store that occupied it for 85 years. The Bowlby name and music are synonymous in the cultural history of Rock Island. D. Roy Bowlby visited the city on personal business in 1877, planning a stay of about two weeks. But as a representative of the Kimball Piano and Organ Company of Chicago, he recognized the good business climate in Rock Island, and opened a music store at 1726 2nd Avenue in 1912. During its first decade, Bowlby Music sold 5,000 pianos and organs from a store that also featured a full line of small instruments, the largest selection

of sheet music in the area, and expert instrument repairs.

Prior to Bowlby's existence at 1623 2nd Avenue, the building had a number of owners. One early tenant was Price Brothers and Company, followed by Newport Billiard Hall. Alloway and Millner continued the billiard business in 1910 until Bowlby moved in.

The Italianate structure lacks its original cornice, but boasts brick crowns over the windows and brick brackets under the second story windows. Look up to see the interesting brickwork above the third story windows. The angled storefront is not original, but from an Art Deco-period remodeling.





6. Ann Goldman Building

1629 2nd Avenue

The Rock Island House, a well-known hotel from Rock Island's early days – circa 1850 – is believed to be at the core of this commercial and apartment building. Remodeled by Charles W. Negus around 1894, this building grew from two to four stories. It originally had unusually long windows as well as an overhang above the storefront. Further alterations from the 1920s greatly changed the building's characteristics, including window size, stucco infill on the top story and vertical brick bands around the window frames. Its buff brick facing is similar to that of the Best Building at 1701-07 2nd Avenue.

With a few exceptions after the 1920s remodel, this building traditionally housed department or furniture stores. From 1923 to 1937, Hill Furniture Company occupied the space until moving to the old Illinois Theatre. Sears, Roebuck and Company wished to expand its Quad City service (already having stores in Davenport and Moline) and opened in this location in 1937. The two top floors were used for receiving and stock, and the rear contained a service station and farm implement store. Other previous occupants include Younker's Department Store and Hyman's Furniture. Recently the upper stories have been converted to apartments with magnificent views of the city lights or the Mississippi River.



prime construction method.”

Curtain-wall construction allows open spans on the floors, forcing structural loads and elements to the exterior walls. This building uses concrete and steel for structure with large expanses of glass between the structural elements, which is typical of the International style. In fact, structural elements are in place for this

7. **First National Bank of Rock Island**

1639 2nd Avenue

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969) must be counted among the founders of Modern architecture and design. One of the most emulated architects of the 20th century, he was a master teacher of architecture for nearly three decades. Mies, as he was known, came to Illinois Institute of Technology to head the university's Department of Architecture soon after the closing of Bauhaus, the renowned design school that flourished in Germany from 1919 until the rise of Nazism in 1933.

Mies is described as having a “skeleton and skin” approach to building, particularly in the last 30 years that he practiced in America. Mies felt structure was the workhorse of architecture. Rock Island architect William Stuhr, who designed the First National Bank Building around 1960, was clearly influenced by new Modernist buildings being produced in Chicago. “It was the design idiom of the time,” said architect William Appier, who was Stuhr's associate. “We were influenced by Mies van der Rohe, and curtain-wall was the

office building to be ten stories tall, rather than the four stories it is today. Another outstanding Modernist feature is the cantilevered construction and the way in which the upper stories seem to be floating on support piers.

Forty years later, the architectural integrity is outstanding. Little has changed from the time of its occupancy in 1963. It is the only multi-story example of Modernist architecture in Rock Island and for this reason is deserving of preservation despite its relative youth.

The present bank building was constructed on the site of the Exchange and Banking House, built in 1891. The First National Bank of Rock Island (1863–1905) existed in the original structure until 1905, when prominent citizens Philander Cable and Philemon Mitchell acquired a state charter and began the State Bank. In 1946, bank president Lewis B. Wilson applied for a national charter, renaming the bank the First National Bank of Rock Island. The old building was replaced under the direction of Wilson's son Charles, chairman of the board at that time, and has always been used for banking and offices.

8. Best Building

1701-07 2nd Avenue

Architect Frederick George Clausen designed the Best Building in 1908 for Young & McCombs Cooperative store, which moved from its previous location at 1723-27 2nd Avenue. The building replaced two buildings from the 1850's known as "Charles Buford's Brick Block" which included the Buford Building and the Gothic Building.

When the Best Building was first constructed, it was the tallest building in the immediate vicinity. Special characteristics included an elevator, fireproof materials, and an early form of air conditioning from a 10-ton ice machine located in the basement. Originally, an elegant glassed roof portico hung over the 2nd Avenue

entrance, and flagpoles lined the roof edge. Despite its great height, the building was designed to be sympathetic to the surrounding buildings. Note the gentle arches that frame pairs of windows and which echo the curved tops of many of the windows originally present on the block.

Young & McCombs Department Store existed in this location until the 1920s, and was succeeded by Brady-Waxenbergs Department Stores and Montgomery Ward in the 1930s.





|||  Sessions |||

9. Bengston Building

1704 2nd Avenue

This building is named for druggist John Bengston, who came to Rock Island in 1862 at age 19. He operated a drugstore in the corner storefront of a four-story building (now reduced to a single story) to the west that he called the Bengston Block. According to *The Argus*, when built in 1875, the Bengston Block was “considered to be the most beautiful [building] west of Chicago.”

Bengston owned this two-story building as well, although it was not called the Bengston Building until around 1900. Bengston remained in business until 1916 when he sold this building to his nephew, John A. Bengston, who was also a druggist.

John A. Bengston lived upstairs here and operated his own drugstore at the street level for many years. He also served as mayor of Rock Island in the 1930s.

Except for the difference in height, this structure was identical to Bengston’s larger building. The lovely windows, with arched ornate lintels and unusual twisted columns at the sides that are seen on the second story once were shared by the upper stories and the entire west facade of the Bengston Block.



A turn-of-the-century photo shows identical storefronts on the two buildings as well. Delicate cast iron columns framed very tall windows that were surmounted by narrow sign panels with fancy cornice molding atop. Such architectural details are typical of the era, since the support provided by the strong but slim iron permitted maximum window space to display merchandise.

By the 1920s, the cast iron had been replaced (or covered) by brick piers.

A wide protruding cornice at the very top of the building has also been removed, leaving a plain brick parapet in its place.

10. Mosenfelder Building

1706 2nd Avenue

It was reported in 1920 that Crucen, Nelson, and Martin Mercantile (a chain store) had signed a lease on a three-story structure to be built at this site. However, there is no record that such a firm ever occupied this structure. When it was built in the early 1920s, it served as the Mosenfelder & Kohn (located at 1723-27 2nd Avenue) annex. Two separate storefronts existed, with recessed entrances and an interior partition of frame construction. The upper floors are covered in a white textured terra cotta, and are characterized by smooth surfaces and ornamented panels around the windows. The panels feature classical motifs with scrolls, urns, and Acanthus leaves.

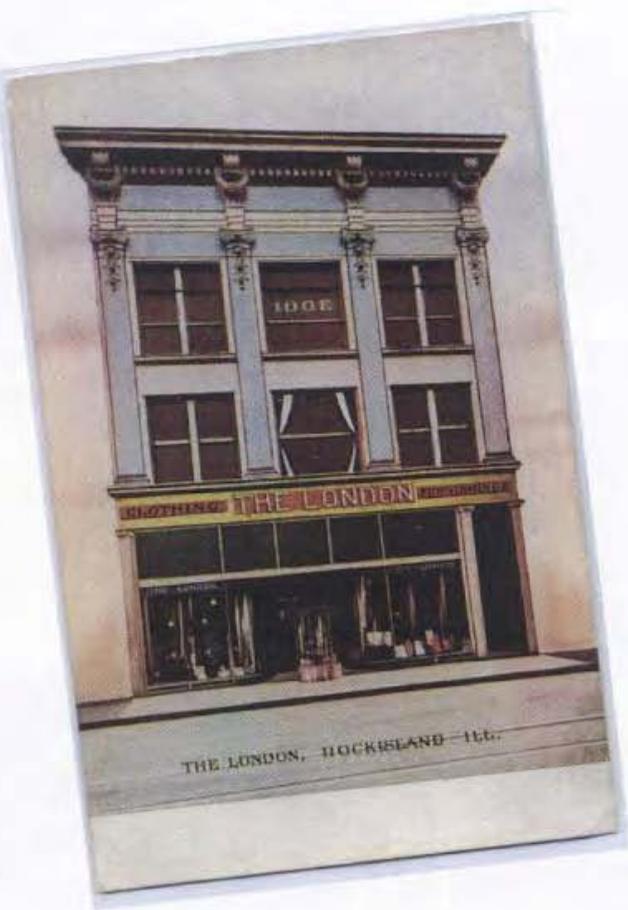
Around 1930, Julian Goldman’s People Store and Walgreen’s occupied the two locations. The Big Shoe Store moved in during the 1940s, utilizing the upper stories for office space. Later, Newberry’s expanded into this building from its first store to the east. In the 1970s, the building was converted to restaurant use, and has housed various restaurants since that time.





QUAD CITY *Arts* CENTER

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JULY 11 - AUGUST 8



11. The London Building

1715 2nd Avenue

The London Clothing House, selling "gents furnishings" under the proprietorship of Jacob B. Sax and Meyer C. Rice, opened at this location in 1889. The business was successful, and in 1902, local contractor Nick Juhl completed a new building at the same location for \$30,000. The store adopted a new advertising slogan: "Big Store, Blue Front, You Know Us."



The London Company closed in the teens, and S.S. Kresge Company moved into the street level with upper stories rented to Fidelity Loan Company and Brown's Business College. January 6, 1922 marked an evening of devastation for these businesses, as a fire swept through the building from what people believed to be crossed wires in the basement. Despite \$75,000 in damage to the structure

itself and over \$150,000 in damage to merchandise and equipment, the Sax family decided to rebuild.

Upon completion, The Argus reported, "handsome apparel store rises from ruins of most disastrous fire in Loop District." Although the interior was updated, very few differences could be spotted on the outside. The original twin double hung windows and transoms were updated to a newer style with three glazing panels with transoms at each opening, similar to what exists today. The storefront level was modified from a singlewide store entrance and right side stairway entry to three wide symmetrical display windows framing a pair of recessed doorways. The current storefront dates to the 1960s.

The first occupant of the restored building was Mosenfelders, Inc. In subsequent years, retail businesses here would include Waxenbergs, Block & Kuhl, and The Fashion. For the past decade, it has housed Quad City Arts and Gere-Dismer Architects.





12. Krell and Math Building

1716 2nd Avenue

George Stauduhar, prominent local architect, designed this structure for the Krell and Math Store in 1892. The plans are listed in his papers in the University of Illinois Archives. The beautiful metal cornice is intact with the exception of a peak in the center. One main alteration was the removal of square bays on the second floor.

Established in 1861, Krell and Math was reported to be the finest confectionery and ice cream parlor outside of Chicago. The company manufactured its own ice cream and confections for both wholesale and resale trade. By 1920, the building was used by Woolworth's. Over the years, various organizations used the third story's large hall, including the Standard Club, Knights of the Globe, Maccabees, and the Moose.

13. Center Building

1720-28 2nd Avenue

Situated on the southwest corner of 18th Street and 2nd Avenue, this 1870s structure originally housed the Rock Island National Bank on the first floor and the Masonic Hall on the third. In 1878, the bank

was described as having "plate glass windows, finely frescoed ceiling and walls, and safety vaults equal in strength and convenience to those in large cities." Ben Harper (of the Harper House) and Judge Spencer erected this building, one of the finest and most substantial in the city.

By the mid-1880s, McCabe Brothers occupied the west part of the building, remaining there until 1930 when the company was sold. Other previous occupants of the storefronts include John Ullemeyer, men's clothing; Boston Shoe Company; Ford Hopkins Company, a drugstore; Gorham's Men's Clothing, and Schiff's Shoes. The Prescription Company was located on the 18th Street side for about 30 years.

Early in the century, the facade was completely remodeled, and an additional structure to the west was incorporated into the new facade. The seam between the two buildings is still visible. Although the window sashes have been changed and the upper sashes covered, the building retains intricate trim at the cornice level. In addition to being labeled the "Center Building," the building is also referred to as the Robinson Building after the estate of J.F. Robinson.



14. Fries Building

1723-27 2nd Avenue
National Register of Historic Places

Department store owners Frank G. Young and William Sharp McCombs commissioned Rock Island investor Peter Fries to erect this structure after they had outgrown a previous building at the same location. The new store opened in 1897 to much fanfare. The new building had 22,400 square feet, frontage on 2nd Avenue of 60 feet and electrical lights around the display windows. The prosperous Young & McCombs Department Store moved west to the Best Building in 1909. Various retailers continued to occupy the Fries Building, including Mosenfelder & Kohn's shoe store, Hadley Company furniture, Bennison's Department Store and the New York Store. Upper stories were recently converted to apartments.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Fries Building possesses unique architectural details that are Classical Revival in style with



some elements of Commercial Style in the large upper story windows. A reconstructed cornice frames the underlying decorative frieze with round windows. The two upper stories

are divided into three bays by four monumental brick pilasters with elaborately carved Corinthian capitals. Between the second and third story windows exists a replicate of the original copper. A wide limestone entablature spans the three-bay wide storefront, and consists of a wide frieze with wreaths over each pilaster and a projecting cornice.





15. Peoples National Bank

1729-31 2nd Avenue
National Register of Historic Places

The Peoples National Bank building has undergone numerous alterations since its construction around 1876. A major change occurred around 1904 with the addition of the fourth story and the redesign of the 2nd Avenue facade. Similar to the Fries Building with its mixture of Commercial Style and Classical Revival details, the building boasts prominent architects for its remodeling including Drack and Kerns (1900, 1904) and George Stauduhar (1910-11). The original round-topped windows have been replaced with rectangular ones, and the 2nd Avenue windows have been enlarged. Plans for the 1911 remodeling are located in the George Stauduhar papers at the University of Illinois archives.

The Bank was organized in 1874 with officers Bailey Davenport, Joseph Rosenfield and John Peetz. The banking establishment changed names many times as companies merged or were bought out, particularly in the 1920s. The building then became an early location of McCabe's Department Store, which occupied this space during the 1930s and 1940s. Other occupants include Mosenfelder and Kohn, Odd Fellows Hall, and various retailers.





16. Rock Island National Guard Armory

1801 1st Avenue

In 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal for America began the great wave of National Guard armory building across the United States. Leaders of the WPA and PWA directed that new armories should follow "the newer tendencies toward simplification in architectural style." This simple style requirement resulted in a large number of Art Deco style armories, similar to this Rock Island structure.

The construction of the armory began with a ground breaking by Governor Henry Horner on March 8, 1936. The official designer of the armory was local architect Benj. A. Horn, although it is reported that Chris Maiwald, who had worked for Horn for several years, did much of the actual design. The plans included vertical design elements such as tall narrow, multi-paned windows, set back sections, and vertical fluting. Other Art

Deco elements include the horizontal banding along the top curve of the parapet and the curved caps to the corner towers. The smooth faced concrete finish, typical of armories built in the era, surrounds a total area of approximately 80,000 square feet.

Coath and Goss of Chicago built the armory at a cost of \$400,000. A unique feature of the structure is its connection to the massive seawall that protects Rock Island from flooding. Originally, the floodwall was composed of stone riprap that weighed between 15 and 200 pounds. Following the flood of 1965, a reinforced concrete floodwall was incorporated into the building's structure. The National Guard vacated the armory for a new facility in 1996, and the City of Rock Island submitted the only proposal for purchase of the property, at a price of \$90,000.



17. Elks Club Building

111 18th Street

Rock Island Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks Lodge No. 980 was organized on June 26, 1905 with B. F. Knox serving as exalted ruler. Initially, the lodge met at the Illinois Theatre on the southeast corner of 16th Street and Second Avenue (see page 4). By 1908 the Elks had built this new lodge.

In the late 1920s, the Elks moved again to a new home on 19th Street, and their upstairs space was taken over by the Loyal Order of Moose.



By the 1940s, the Moose were gone, too, and the Teamster's Union moved in. Other areas of the building were used for everything from a tobacco warehouse to an electronic school, to a VFW Post – and there were many intermittent vacancies. In the mid-1990s, it became the home of the Blue Cat Brew Pub.

The look of the Elks Club Building has changed significantly since its initial construction, due mainly to the complete removal of the third story. It happened around 1940, and probably resulted from a fire or other catastrophe. The loss of the original, elaborate cornice and windows is significant. Renovations

in recent years have made the building much more attractive than it had been since the loss of its top floor. Although there is now only one major entrance to the pub and restaurant, the pattern of windows on the storefronts have been reworked to be reminiscent of the historic appearance. The iron support column at the former saloon corner remains and the old stairway entrance to the Elks lodge can still be used to get upstairs. Renovations also exposed a vintage chewing tobacco sign that you can see painted directly on the interior brick wall, probably from the building's days as a tobacco warehouse.



18. Dart's Block

1800 2nd Avenue

Dart's Block is a grouping of two buildings that were built as early as 1880. The first occupant of the three-story corner building was the Stewart and Montgomery Hardware store, established at this location in 1855. The store remained there through the turn of the century, changing its name to Rock Island Hardware in the early 1900s. The hardware company then moved to the taller, two-story section to the east around 1908, taking over the space from Henry Dart's Sons, wholesale grocers. Following this move, Lavelle Clothiers gained ownership of the corner building. Rock

Island Hardware remained in the second location into the 1940s while a series of other stores operated at the corner.

In the late 1920s, the corner building was extensively remodeled, resulting in the upper stories we see today. A layer of new brick was added to the street sides to hide the changes.

The three Second Avenue windows were changed to a single larger window opening and several windows and storefronts were added along the 18th Street side. Much later – perhaps as late as 1950 – the second building was remodeled to match the corner and make the two appear as a single large building. Yet the seam between the two is still visible to the discerning eye. On the interior, the formerly two-story building was converted to three stories. Traces of the original window layout can be seen on the alley side, where the old brick was not covered.

The present facade has three wide sets of windows across the front and several more along the side. Unfortunately, although of the same overall size, the current windows have a different design than the original remodeled windows. The top of the building has a simple flat cornice banded with stone (or concrete) above diamond shaped inserts. The stone lintels atop the third story windows extend around the building, and a wide horizontal band of stonework sets off the storefronts.

19. Star Block

1821-29 2nd Avenue
Rock Island Landmark

The Star Block was built in downtown Rock Island in 1874 from plans designed by architect Isaac N. Holmes. Italianate in design, the structure features widely overhanging eaves and decorative brackets on both the 2nd Avenue and 19th Street sides of the building. Continuous pilasters rise from the base of the front facade to the cornice and serve to unite the three stories, while at the



same time dividing the facade into five distinct sections. The windows are tall and thin, of one or two pane glazing, and are arched and topped with decorative surrounds. At one time an additional wing to the west existed, and a cast iron gallery extended across the entire front of the structure. The three dimensional star and the "BLOCK" text within the peak are original.



One of the earliest occupants was the Illinois Street and Gas Company, which provided gas lighting to area homes and businesses. The building itself was owned and built by Weyerhaeuser and Denkmann. At the time of construction, the storefront on the corner of 19th Street and 2nd Avenue belonged to the tailoring and clothing firm of Walker and Dodge. From the 1880s, the corner (1827-29) was used as a jewelry and optical shop, first with Ramser and Sons through the 1920s, and later with Emerson's in the 1930s and 1940s.

The 1825 storefront was the originally the home of Schmidt and Son, barbers. By the 1930s, the Ring Ling Café established itself there, followed by the Hollywood Supper Club. Eating establishments have remained here since. Western Union Telegraph Company occupied the 1823 building. Fred Hass, whose shop was at 1821, specialized in steamboat and brewery distillery work. He used his store as a showroom for his tin ware, stoves, and sheet ironwork. The shop was later occupied by Central Union Telephone Company, Allen Myers Company, and John Gustafson's men's clothing store. The upper floors of the Star Block were primarily used as residences, with occasional office or commercial uses.



construction cost. Upon completion, the hotel was described as a monument to the civic spirit of the community. It became the center of social and business functions, hosting Christmas parties, wedding and anniversary celebrations, Chamber of Commerce banquets, and the annual May Day Dance.

Italian Renaissance in style, the exterior of the structure features a "woodland rustico" brick with ornate masonry accenting the crown area of the building as well as on the vertical corners spanning from the top to the bottom of the structure. The upper stories are trimmed in white terra cotta while cast concrete is used for ornament on the lower two stories. Although it is a nine-story building, the deep setbacks on the "T" shaped upper stories keep it from dominating the streetscape.

The public spaces of the hotel were restored in the 1980s when the hotel rooms were converted to apartments for senior citizens. Adjacent commercial structures were demolished to make way for Spencer Square Park.

20. Fort Armstrong Hotel

1900 3rd Avenue
National Register of Historic Places

Designed by Charles W. Nicol, a prominent Chicago hotel designer, the Fort Armstrong Hotel provided 160 guest rooms plus ten apartments on the top floor. Other facilities included a banquet room, three dining rooms, a bar, bowling alley, billiard room, barbershop, and seven storefronts. Over \$450,000 was raised from local residents in one week by stock sales to help ease the \$800,000



21. Rock Island Public Library

401 19th Street
Rock Island Landmark

Opened in 1903, with a 1985 addition, this is the home of the first Public Library in the state of Illinois, established on November 25, 1872.

Interestingly, it is NOT a "Carnegie Library." Reportedly when approached for funding, Andrew Carnegie stated, "Any town that has Frederick Weyerhaeuser need not ask a library from me." Though this

story cannot be validated, Weyerhaeuser and his partner F. C. A. Denkmann did indeed make generous donations. When Colonel Charles Walker of the Building Committee approached Weyerhaeuser about funding, Mr. Weyerhaeuser loaned \$50,000 to the Library Board along with other monetary gifts.

Local architects Drack & Kerns won the contest held for best plans and specifications for the new library building. The Renaissance Revival design is enhanced by four sets of double Ionic columns

rising to span the first and second levels. The entryway features a heavy pediment with scrolls and brackets. Echoing pediments are evident over the windows on either side of the entrance. Names of well-known (and lesser known) poets adorn the frieze: Shakespeare, Virgil, Dante, Longfellow, Emerson, and several others.



The first librarian of the Rock Island Public Library was Miss Ellen Gale, who served as head of the library for 64 years. When she retired in 1937, she had set a record for tenure as a librarian that was

unequaled by any other library in the country. To commemorate her and the fascinating history of our library, Dr. Roald Tweet wrote *Miss Gale's Books: The Beginnings of the Rock Island Public Library* in 1997. Check it out!

22. Sala Apartments

320-330 19th Street
National Register of Historic Places

Constructed in 1903 and designed by noted Rock Island architect Leonard Drack, the Sala apartments exemplify the Italian Renaissance





Revival style. The building is considered to be one of the earliest and finest multiple family dwellings in the city. At a cost of about \$50,000, Sala had the apartments built so the affluent could work close to their downtown offices. The apartment building consists of 25 units arranged around five interior light wells, in addition to the raised basement, which has three commercial spaces, three apartments and storage. Masonry in construction, the building has a six-course ashlar limestone foundation above a wide watertable and below a molded stone stringcourse. The building has three Classical Revival entrances featuring cut stone piers and dentils. Mansard-roof ornamentation is echoed above the southeast entrance and on the south facade. The rest of the cornice is metal and quite elaborate. The only original details thought to have been lost are eight short balconies extending from the windows on the third and fourth stories.



The interiors of the apartments are relatively unchanged, with original oak and pine woodwork, fireplaces, some original light fixtures, original radiators and porcelain bathroom fixtures. A 1913 northern addition designed by C.D. McLane features interior details that distinctly reflect the Craftsman movement. For instance, most of the dining rooms have vertical panel wainscoting strips and high plate rails and the stair rails and fireplaces reflect the simplicity of the style. This depicts how styles change in only ten years.

Dr. Sala died suddenly in 1921, and his widow Mary Elizabeth inherited the property. In 1928 she wed Judge Robert W. Olmsted, who served Rock Island County as assistant state's attorney, county judge, and circuit court judge. Mary Sala Olmsted died in 1931. Olmsted purchased the building from Mary Sala's estate in 1936.



23. Circa '21

1828 3rd Avenue
National Register of Historic Places

Another of Rock Island's National Register of Historic Places structures, the old Fort Theatre, has been restored and is now the home of Circa '21, a dinner theater enterprise. Designed by the Rock Island firm of Cervin & Horn and the Chicago firm of Brawn & Ermling in 1919 and 1920, the theater is a three-story Art Deco style building faced with Indian red brick and polychrome terra cotta. Building and furnishings cost around \$500,000, and accommodated both stage and screen entertainment.

The major focal points of the Fort Theatre exterior are the 3rd Avenue facade with its curved northeast corner, the tympanum-like areas above each window and the themed terra cotta designs. Look for the following icons in the terra cotta that relate to Rock Island's prairie heritage: arrows, buffalo,

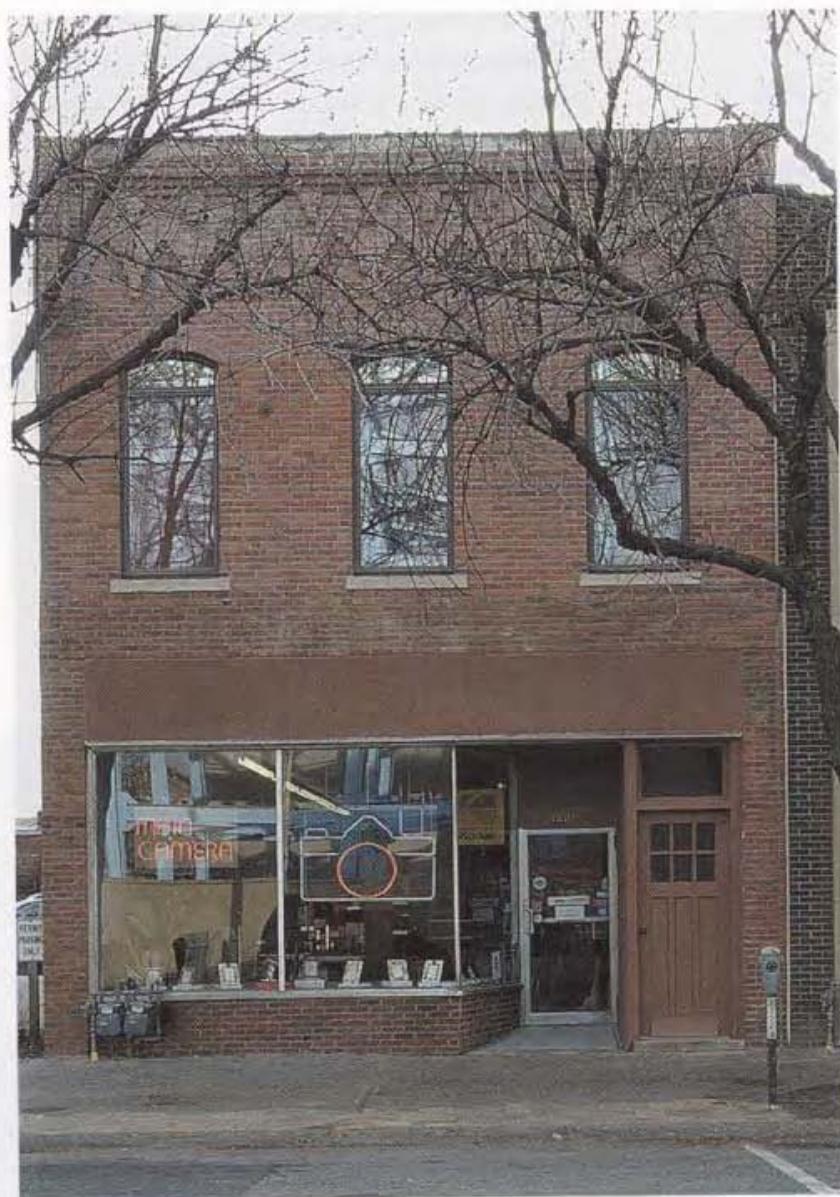
corn, eagles, fish, Indian, salamanders, snakes, and more. The Midland Terra Cotta Company of Chicago designed the terra cotta specifically for this building. Rudolph Sandberg and his young family were moved to Rock Island by Brawn & Ermling to work with the local architects and oversee the ornamental details and their construction. Sandberg remained here and became a prominent architect in his own right. The theater's original marquee was replaced in the 1930s, but a new marquee was installed in 2001 reminiscent of the original.



Fort Armstrong Theatre opened on January 19, 1921 at the height of the

silent movie era. The main auditorium originally had a seating capacity of 1,566,





24. **Main Camera Center**

1810 3rd Avenue

Valentine Dauber, who advertised himself as a “practical and expert horseshoer” plied his trade in this building from the early 1880s until the mid-1890s. Dauber was the nephew of Mrs. Peter Fries, and came from Germany as a boy to live with his wealthy Rock Island relatives. Following Dauber in the building, came Blake & Burke, then Blake & Murphy, who were plumbers and steamfitters. John Morrison then occupied the building, selling cigars for wholesale trade.

Food and drink establishments

located here after 1930, including Charles Schaub’s restaurant, the Mecca Tavern, the Duncan Liquor Company, and Orwitz’s Deli. The building now houses the Main Camera Center.

The storefront once had fluted cast iron columns, but changed to a “modern” storefront of shiny, black structural glass. That storefront was removed in 2003. Note how the corbelled brickwork suggests the form of the more ornate wood or metal cornices on some of the other buildings of this area.

with five sections of seats and four aisles. The stage area consists of a proscenium arch and a 22-foot deep stage. Ornamentation on the arch reflects the exterior of the building, incorporating spiral columns and symbols relating to Native American motifs. Opening night featured the film “Midsummer Madness” by William DeMille, a ten-piece orchestra, and other musical and comedic presentations. Lila Lee, co-star of “Midsummer Madness,” appeared in person. Much excitement was generated when congratulatory telegrams arrived from Paramount Pictures President Adolf Zukor, Cecil B. DeMille, and comedian Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle.

25. Safety Building

1800 3rd Avenue

Local architect Olof Z. Cervin, also an eventual owner, designed the Safety Building in 1908. Mr. Cervin said this was the first time reinforced concrete was used for construction in the Quad Cities. The concrete was used for floors, ceilings, roof, and supporting columns. As a result, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps noted the building as fireproof. It is 60 by 150 feet, contains six stories and cost about \$125,000 to construct.

Another financial partner in the venture was Levi S. McCabe, of McCabe's Department Store. Mr. McCabe wanted to enlarge the business district that was located primarily on 2nd Avenue. His investment in the Safety Building was intended

to promote that expansion. The third original owner was the Rock Island Safety Deposit Company, who gave the building its name. Cervin sold his interests to McCabe heirs in 1923. The building remained under their control until 1975, when it was sold to a group of local businessmen.

At the time of its construction, the building was the tallest in Rock Island. A careful look at the design reveals three distinct horizontal divisions separated by cast stone bands. Such a division of structure was becoming increasingly common in Chicago skyscrapers during this time and is known as the Commercial Style. If we imagine the entire building represents a Greek or Roman column, the divisions are immediately apparent as representing the base, the shaft, and the capital (or top).



In the Safety Building, the first story base is dark brick. The classically inspired entrance on the north is trimmed with shell-like carvings called anthemions. The middle shaft portion is four more stories high, with buff colored brick and aligned windows accentuating the vertical rise. Near the upper corners the bricks are laid so as to create an arrow-like relief. The arrows continue into the top story or capital, which is nicely finished with a bracketed cornice punctuated by recently restored electric lights. Since these cornice lights are unique downtown, it is easy to speculate a connection between their use and occupancy of the building by People's Power Company, who sold electricity.



26. TELCO Building

231 18th Street

Built around 1912, this was Rock Island's homage to a Greek temple, with two huge Doric columns facing west and five facing south. It was built at a cost of \$100,000 in 1911 for the Rock Island Savings bank, which had been founded in 1890.

Although the bank was 32 feet tall – normally two or three stories – it actually contained only a single story with a soaring ceiling. Constructed of reinforced concrete, the outer walls were surfaced in smooth Bedford limestone. The windows were deeply recessed, framed by the columns, while the carved cornice and deep frieze atop the building were most impressive. The interior was reportedly finished with the finest marble, bronze and mahogany.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the banking world changed. In 1932, the Rock Island Savings Bank merged with two other local banks – Central Trust & Savings and Manufacturer's Trust & Savings – to form Rock Island Bank and Trust Company. As banking operations were consolidated in another bank building across 18th Street, this building was vacated. It remained empty for many years, with only intermittent use by small businesses.

By 1950, the building had new owners and a new name as well: Telco Building, home of WHBF-TV. Interior remodeling added stairs and floors to create two more stories in the originally single story building. WHBF occupied the top two stories, while a drugstore was located on the street level. A 400-foot tower with an 86-foot antenna atop was also constructed in 1950. A few years later, the exterior was covered with granite, brick, and bright turquoise metal tiles. More recently, the original bank and its adjacent building were covered in a stucco material, with shadowed panels evoking the original columns, which are still hidden underneath.



27. Rock Island Bank Building

230 18th Street

This 1914 structure was built to house the Central Trust and Saving Bank, the successor of the Rock Island National Bank. Founded by T. J. Robinson, J. H. Wilson, and J. F. Robinson, the Rock Island National Bank had earlier been located in the Center Building at 1720-28 2nd Avenue.

The original building was only four bays wide on 3rd Avenue; it was expanded in 1926 to its present 6 1/2 bays. The original entrance existed on 3rd Avenue near the corner with an arched fanlight. All of the main floor windows had multi-paned fanlights, now replaced with single large sheets

of glass. The windows were shoulder high, maintaining the popular fortress look from early in the century. They have since been lowered to make the building appear more

accessible. The upper windows, now with horizontal tri-panels, were originally double-hung.

28. McCabe Building

1713 3rd Avenue

The bright aluminum decorating the upper stories of this building currently covers the original upper stories, with its oversized, Chicago-style windows. The original storefront windows, with prism glass transoms, have been replaced. At one time, a cornice existed atop the building, and a graceful wire-glass and iron portico extended from the building to shelter the main entrance.

Levi S. McCabe built this structure in 1900 as the second in a chain of stores he used for his business. The first store opened in 1870 in what was called "Palace Row" on 17th Street between 1st and 2nd Avenues. Entitled "McCabe's Plunder Store," the shop then moved to 1714-22 2nd Avenue before adding this store at a cost of \$85,000. Since most people thought shoppers would never go to 3rd Avenue, McCabe kept the 2nd Avenue store open for many years. He was an aggressive retailer who believed strongly in advertising and sales. This 3rd Avenue store not only offered household and personal items,



but also a branch post office, rest and reading rooms, long distance phones, telegraph service and a tea room. In 1902, Mr. McCabe was elected to the Illinois State Senate, but only served one term due to his business demands. He died in 1915, but the business went on. The McCabe's name was discontinued in 1930 (to be resurrected later) and the operation became known as The Arthur J. Hause Company. Hause was manager of the McCabe estate and was married to Levi's daughter, Dorothy McCabe. Hyman's Furniture is the most recent occupant.

29. **Robinson Hardware**

1706 3rd Avenue
Rock Island Landmark

Robinson Hardware was designated a Rock Island Landmark for its outstanding and intact early 20th Century Commercial architecture with Prairie-style influences. The large, glass storefront, with its walk-in display area and wooden trim and floors, is very rare.

The Robinson Hardware Store was built circa 1875 with an Italianate facade. An early 20th Century remodeling was undertaken just prior to Robinson Hardware occupying the building. The Robinson Hardware Store features patterned brick and limestone, mullioned windows and the outstanding, intact storefront.

Over the past 120 years, commercial tenants, namely flour and feed dealers, wholesale and retail grocers and hardware stores, have occupied the property. Until 2001, the building was amazingly reminiscent of an 1800s grocery or hardware store. From the tin ceiling to the stock ladders to the glass cases and

hardwood floors, this property embodied a past era. William Robinson, son of the original storeowner, hoped to preserve the interior, but was unsuccessful; subsequent owners have brought back a flavor of that bygone era. Robinson worked here with his father as a teenager, and ran the business until it closed in the 1980s.



30. Tremann Building

1700 3rd Avenue

The Henry Tremann family operated a meat market at this location for many years and, in 1894, constructed this impressive building on the site of their earlier market. Although modifications have been made, the building still stands as a fine example of Romanesque Revival. The Tremann's occupied the building until the 1930s when it was converted to a restaurant: the Dutch Inn Tavern. The second floor was used for offices, and various groups occupied the third floor hall including the Sheraton Club, the Tuscan Club, and Castle Hall.

Originally, the building featured a round, cantilevered, metal clad tower that projected from the corner above the main entrance. The round window tops have been filled with brick, and an arched storefront transom with leaded glass has been covered or removed. However, the cast name and date plaques on the third story level are still visible.

31. Royal Neighbors of America

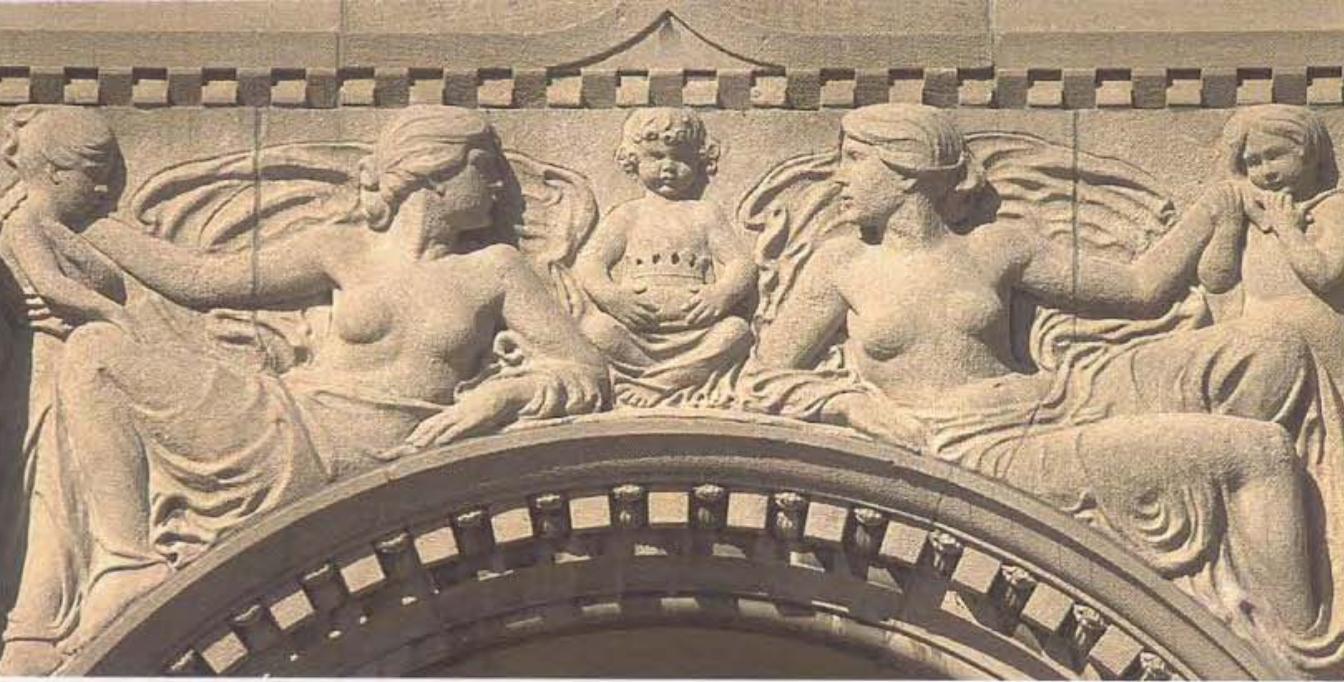
230 16th Street



One of the finest examples of Art Deco architecture in Rock Island is the 1928 Royal Neighbors of America Building, designed by Pond & Pond, Martin & Lloyd

Architects of Chicago. The large L-shaped, three-story Bedford limestone structure houses the largest fraternal benefit society dedicated to serving the insurance needs of women. The symmetrically designed main facade on 16th Street has three vertical bays: two end bays and a long center section. Each of the end bays has three small-paned, case-ment windows at each level. Shallow pilasters on each side of the panel contain the windows, with an additional flat pilaster applied at the first level. The opulent main entry is centered. The bronze doors – that glow like new, a testament to the quality of the original materials as well as loving maintenance – are cast in a filigree arabesque design. The doors are set in a circular arched open-





ing outlined with dentils, over which are carved reclining figures designed by Chicago sculptor Nellie V. Walker. The cherubs and semi-nude women are intended to portray characteristics of womanly neighborliness and the ideas of protection and sympathy. On either side of the doorway and upper window panels are applied pilasters, capped by a pediment with sculpted, low-relief figures portraying the physical and spiritual side of the Good Samaritan. The mansard roof features original blue-gray slate.

Founded as a social order on December 5, 1888 in Council Bluffs, Iowa, Royal Neighbors of America

was chartered in Illinois as a fraternal benefit society on March 21, 1895. At the time, the society had a membership of 4,124 in 100 camps, with \$576,000 of insurance in force. On May 3, 1927, construction began on the current building. A dedication ceremony took place on October 17, 1928. The total cost of the new supreme office building was \$600,000, equivalent to one dollar for each of the 600,000 members at the time of the dedication. Currently, the Royal Neighbors of America has a membership of 217,030, with an insurance in force of around 2.117 billion dollars.



32. Rock Island City Hall

1528 3rd Avenue

Designed in 1938 by Cervin & Stuhr and constructed in 1940, Rock Island's City Hall exists as another fine example of the Art Deco style. The stone-faced building includes vertical fluting on the main entry, the spandrels between the second and third story windows, the columns separating and the window bays, and the circular moldings over the front doorway. Above the doorway, incised in stone blocks with a scalloped bottom

green marble, a material also used for the baseboards in the lobby. The decorative crown moldings and lobby walls are paneled with white oak. A beautiful terrazzo floor in the center of the lobby features a large multi-colored (black, yellow, and red) star-shaped design.

The rear addition of City Hall, a two-story light brick faced building, houses the Police Department. The slightly projecting entry bay displays distinctive Art Deco features including a metal-framed door with two glass panes and a



edge, is the name CITY HALL. On each side of the main doorway are five original, aluminum framed, double-hung windows. The 16th Street side of the three-story section has three window bays with paired aluminum framed double-hung windows at each level, recessed slightly between columns flush with the wall plane.

The vestibule and lobby of City Hall are tastefully designed in a manner contemporary to the 1940s. The walls of the vestibule are covered in a deep

molded cut stone surround. Above the doorway's metal canopy is a vertical stone section containing a strip of glass blocks. The stonework above the glass blocks is fluted.

Plans were in the works for many years to construct a new City Hall. There had been an active movement to replace the 1880s Second Empire city hall, which had stucco walls, with a new, modern facility. The old city hall was razed between October and December of 1939.



Newspaper accounts of the demolition stated: "None mourn its passing: No tears were shed." Completion of this city hall was accomplished under the administration of Mayor Robert P. Galbraith at a cost of \$275,000.



33. **Rock Island County Administration Building**

1504 3rd Avenue

surround the arched main entrance. A stone balustrade caps the columned entrance.

In 1898, Modern Woodmen of America founder Joseph Cullen Root commissioned this Renaissance Revival structure. Decorated with a granite portico, hammered copper ornaments, and a terra cotta roofline, the building shows symbolic emblems of woodcraft. The architect of this masterpiece was George Stauduhar. It has two major additions, the last filling in what was a three-sided courtyard. Stauduhar designed the building to have a raised basement of rusticated stone, topped by three stories of brick and a French clay tile roof. There are terra cotta panels between the first and second stories that feature a torch. Several second story windows have arched tops, also set in terra cotta. Stone Ionic columns atop substantial bases

The interior features marble and polished granite walls. Even the doorknobs feature the MWA insignia. Today it houses Rock Island County administration, which purchased the building in the 1960s.

Root brought his young fraternal beneficial insurance company from Lyons, Iowa to Rock Island. Eventually, it became the largest fraternal life insurance company in the world. Today it stands as the nation's fifth largest fraternal organization. The concept started with Root's wish to "clear away financial burdens like the pioneer woodmen cleared away natural burdens." Modern Woodmen has had previous ties with other fraternal beneficial insurance companies including Woodmen of the World (also

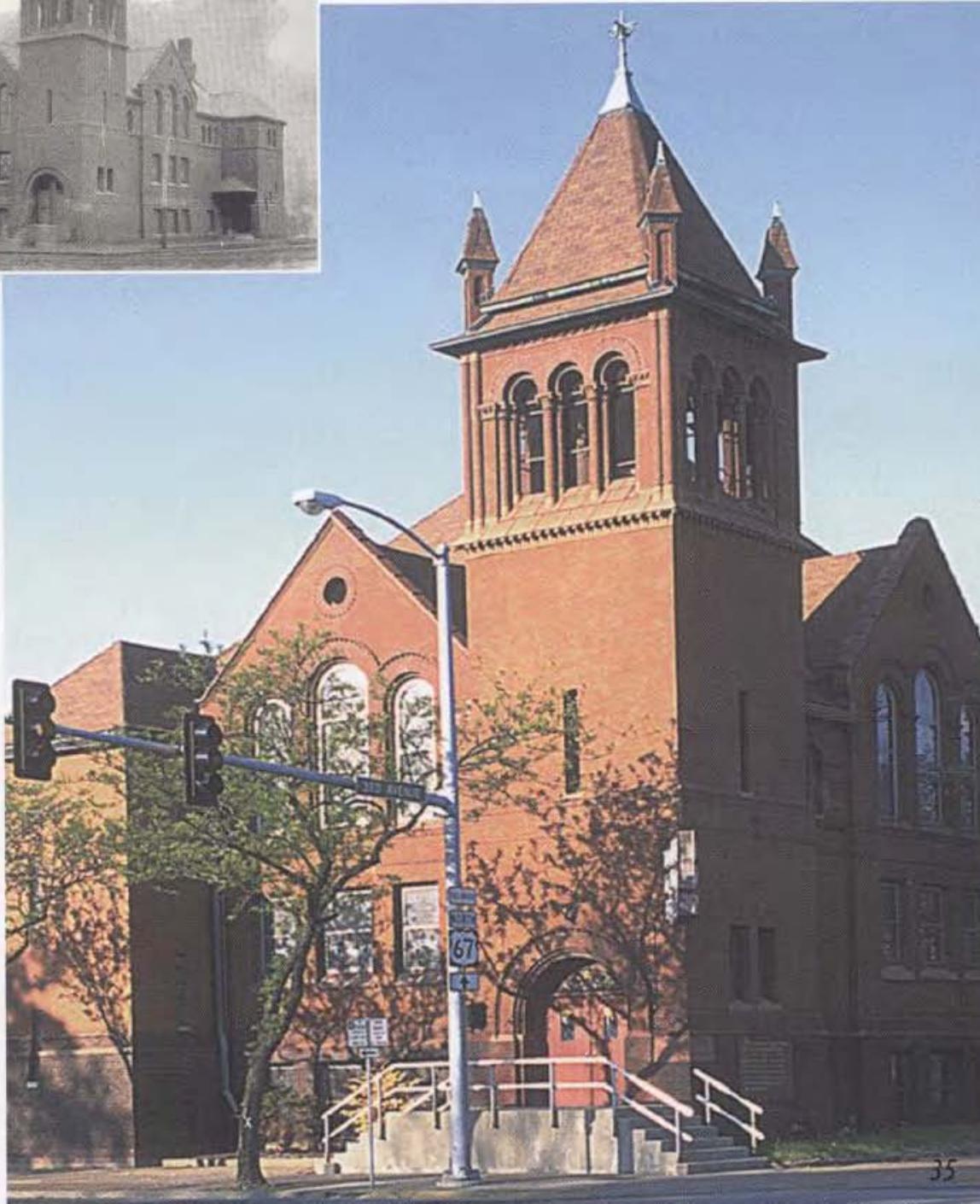
founded by Root), and Royal Neighbors of America. With a current insurance in force of over \$28.49 billion, the company continues to follow its Creed: "There is a destiny that makes us brothers, none goes his way alone; all that we send into the lives of others comes back into our own."

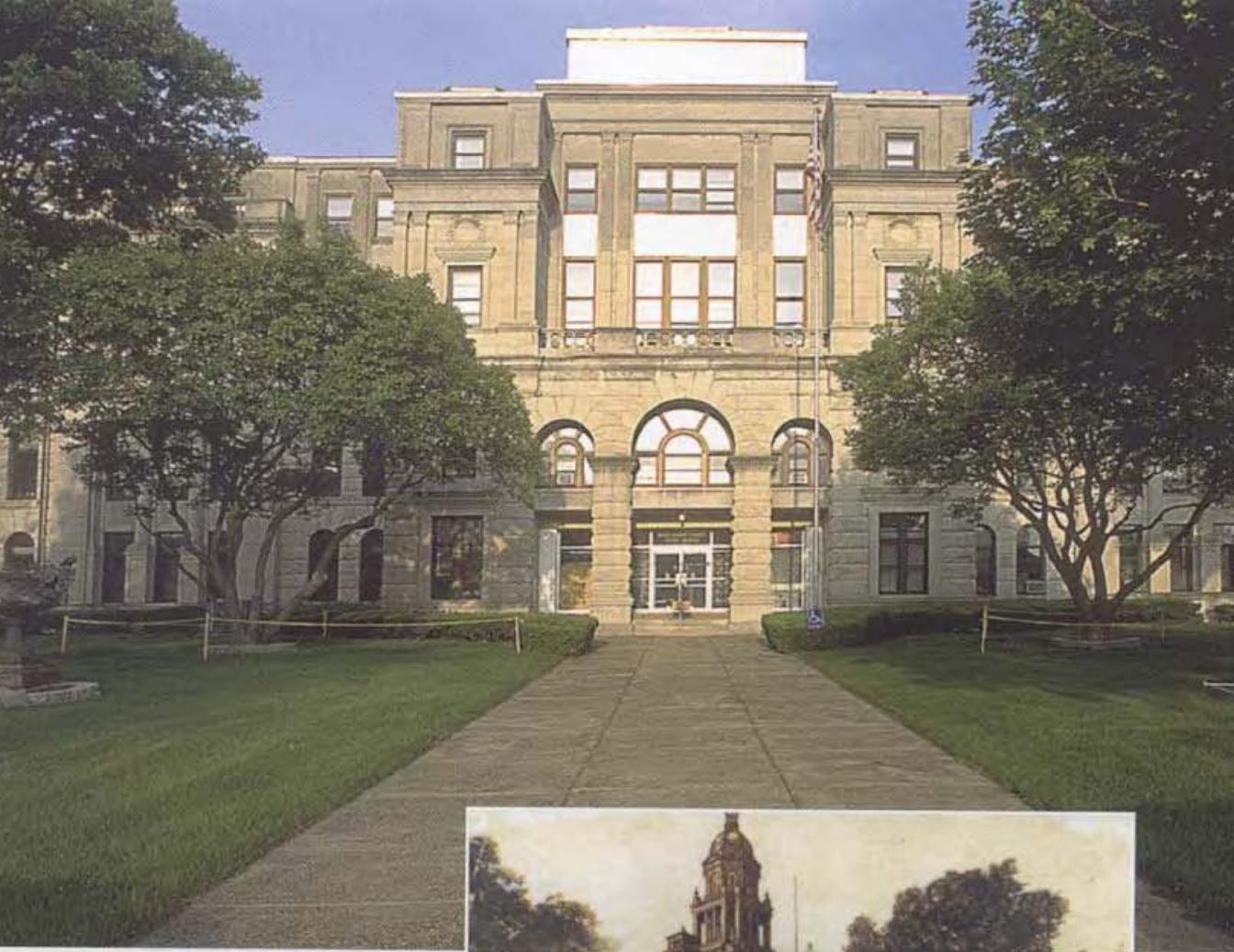


34. Memorial Christian Church

231 15th Street

Mrs. Mary H. Wadsworth, daughter of Philemon Mitchell, gifted the church congregation with enough funds to make construction of the present church possible. She intended the gift as a memorial to her father, an early community leader who helped start the church in 1868; hence the name Memorial Christian Church.





The present structure exists on the site of an old church, which had served the congregation for 26 years. It took nine months to build at a cost of \$21,000, and was completed in 1896. Congregation members had to furnish the new church with the exception of the pipe organ, which was a gift from Mrs. H. S. Fraser of Indianapolis. Currently, the church is a member of the national Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

The interior, designed by Braisard and Holsman of Chicago, holds between 400 and 600 people. The exterior style is Romanesque, which is strongly reinforced by the chipped paving brick seen at street level. The upper stories feature pressed brick and terra cotta. The neon sign for the church has also gained its own measure of significance. The interior features a cantilevered choir loft.



35. Rock Island County Courthouse

200 15th Street

Rock Island County was officially established on February 9, 1831, with county organization completed in 1833. The county quickly outgrew its early Greek Revival courthouse. Joseph Fitzpatrick, county supervisor from Blackhawk Township, started the movement for a new county courthouse. The architecture firm of Gunn and Curtis was hired to design an elaborate structure of the Renaissance Revival style, which was completed in 1896.

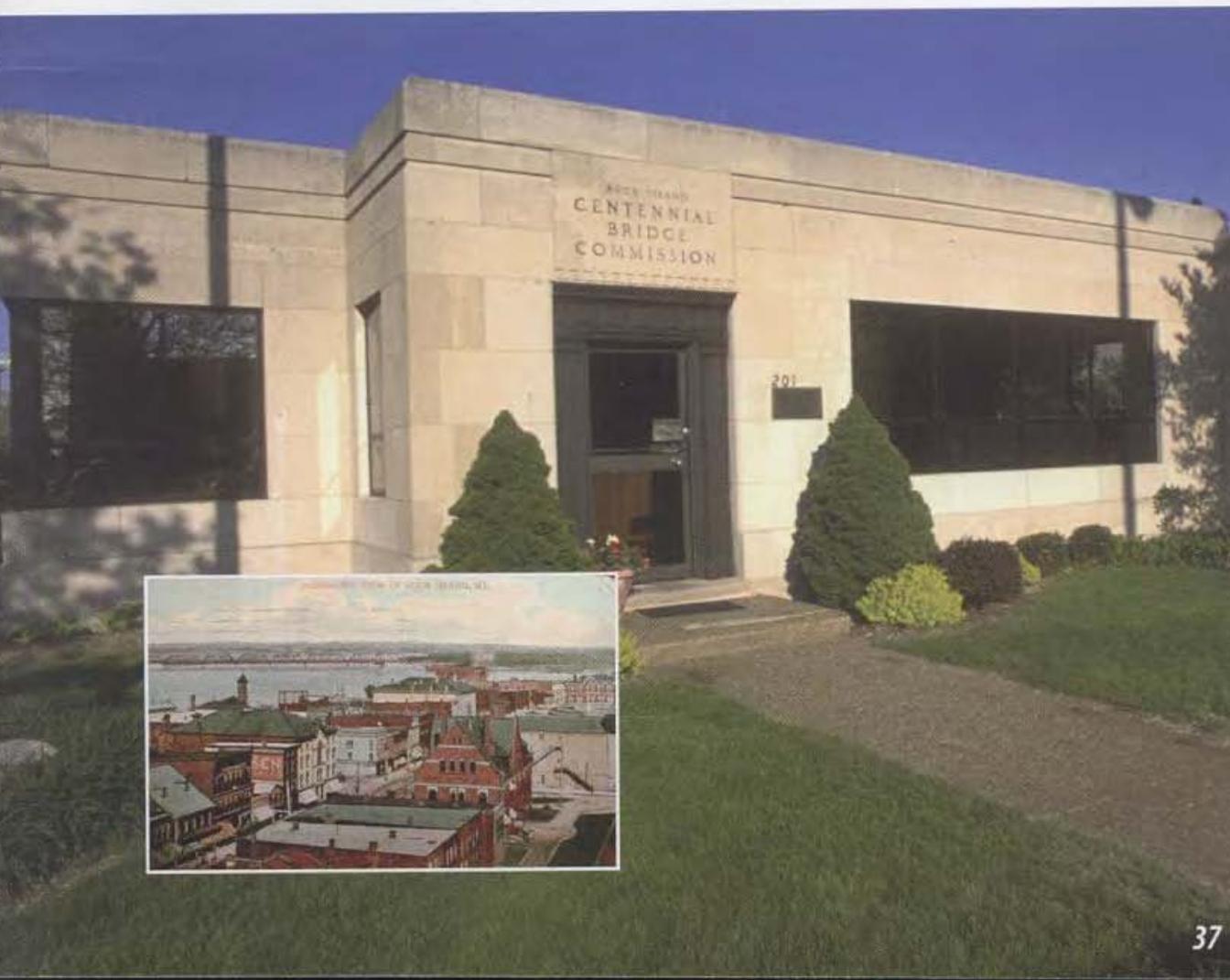
Unfortunately, the building has been greatly altered over the years. A large dome, supported by smaller domes formed a substantial attic space on the courthouse and so dominated the structure that the building was known as "The Dome" when it was built. Sadly, a 1958 front-page picture in the Argus showed the domes being removed. Only sixty years after being built, the copper roofing on the domes had "worn out." Rather than repairing or replacing the roofing, a decision was made to remove all of the domes, leaving a truncated version of this originally spectacular building. Below the roofline, much of the detail remains. There are both pediment (triangular shaped) windows and arched windows, framed by cut stone in both flat edges and arches. A balustrade borders the top floor. The interior of the building retains the classical lines of an open court with a tiled floor.

36. Centennial Bridge Commission Building

201 15th Street
Rock Island Landmark

Local contractor Sam Weisman built the Centennial Bridge Commission Building in 1941. It was built in the Art Moderne style, which is characterized by clean, angular lines, ornament that is integral to the structure, light color and light chrome/aluminum metals. The Centennial Bridge Commission Building is the smallest of the city's Art Moderne structures and retains a high degree of architectural integrity.

The Centennial Bridge Commission Building is associated with construction of the Centennial Bridge and former Rock Island Mayor Robert P. Galbraith. Galbraith pioneered the local appreciation for modernistic architecture. He built the Art



Moderne Galbraith Motor Company building at 1401 4th Avenue, and his administration sponsored the construction of City Hall and the Rock Island Sewage Treatment Plant at 1299 Mill Street.

A plaque near the door of this building identifies the City Council members during the time in which the bridge was built, and also the engineers who designed the bridge.

37. Centennial Bridge

The engineering firm of Howard, Needles, Tammen and Bergendoff designed the Centennial Bridge and its associated commission building. Today the engineering firm is known as HNTB and it is a firm that has significantly influenced the local, national, and even international, landscape. The firm specialized in bridge construction and, by 1940, had engaged in projects in more than half the states as well as several foreign countries.

Mayor Robert P. Galbraith ran for election in 1937 on the platform of building a better means of transportation between Rock Island and Davenport. The original bond for the bridge was \$2,500,000. After much research, Mayor Galbraith was able to present a complete

program of financing using the relatively new system of selling revenue bonds for bridge construction. He flew to Washington D.C., seeking Congressional approval and a permit to build the bridge from the War Department. Automobile tolls supported ongoing maintenance of the bridge from the time of its construction until 2003, when an agreement was finalized to turn the bridge over to the State of Illinois. The five cents toll for pedestrians had disappeared even earlier. The tollbooths were removed in 2003, but the steel canopy that protected paying motorists from the weather remains.

Centennial Bridge was the first four-lane span to cross the Mississippi River. Running between 15th Street in Rock Island and Gaines Street in Davenport, the bridge boasts a 90-foot maximum pier height and a 170-foot maximum arch height. The .88 mile long bridge opened on July 12, 1940 to great fanfare, with a parade and street party. A local group, which later evolved into River Action, enhanced the aesthetics of the bridge with the addition of lights in 1988.



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City of Rock Island
Planning & Redevelopment Division
1528 3rd Avenue
Rock Island, IL 61201
309/732-2900
www.rigov.org

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CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: Stephanie Allewalt and Jill Doak, City of Rock Island; Rock Island Preservation Society

EDITORS: Rock Island Preservation Commission

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*This publication is dedicated
to the memory of Suzanne Curry
(1929 – 2003), former member
and chairwoman of the Rock
Island Preservation Commission.
By authoring 15 Rock Island
Landmark nominations, Mrs.
Curry demonstrated the highest
principles of historic preservation.*

*— Memorial contributed by Ann Keefe,
Landmark Owner*



ROCK ISLAND
ILLINOIS

