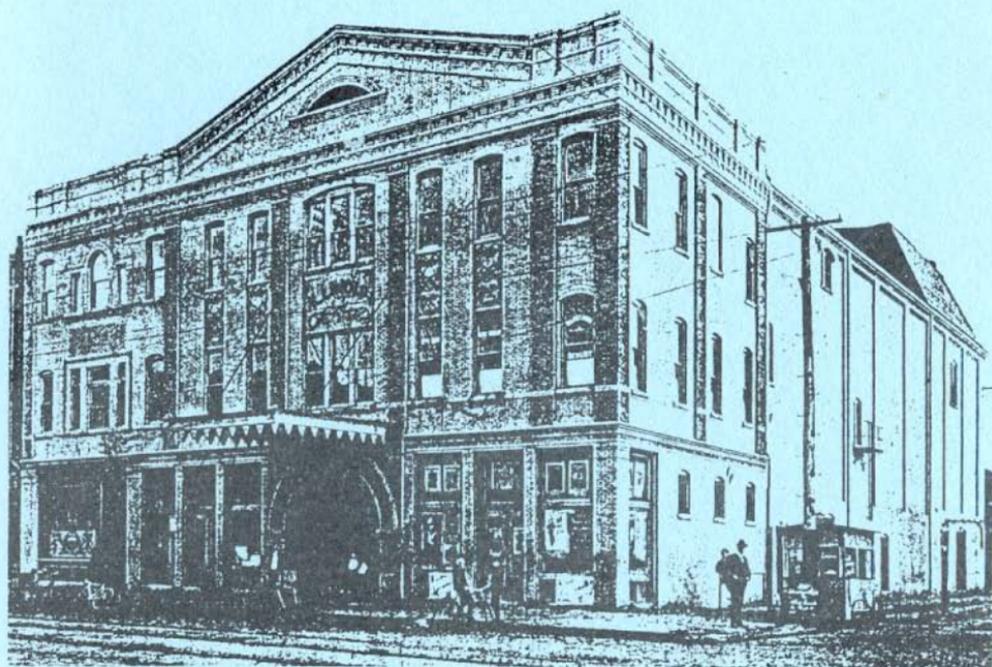


A WALKING TOUR OF
WESTERN DOWNTOWN

Rock Island, Illinois



HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE

HIGHLIGHTING COMMERCIAL
AND GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

Western Downtown Rock Island History

The old city of Stephenson, which later became Rock Island, was centered in this section of the present downtown. Though none of the buildings from Stephenson survive, it is interesting to know the physical location. Remnants of the old river city remain today in the layout of the streets and avenues, which parallel the Mississippi River. Until 1877, these old roads were known by other names. Second Avenue was known as Illinois Street and Third Avenue as Orleans Street. Fifteenth, Sixteenth and Seventeenth streets were known as Elk, Buffalo and Eagle, respectively.

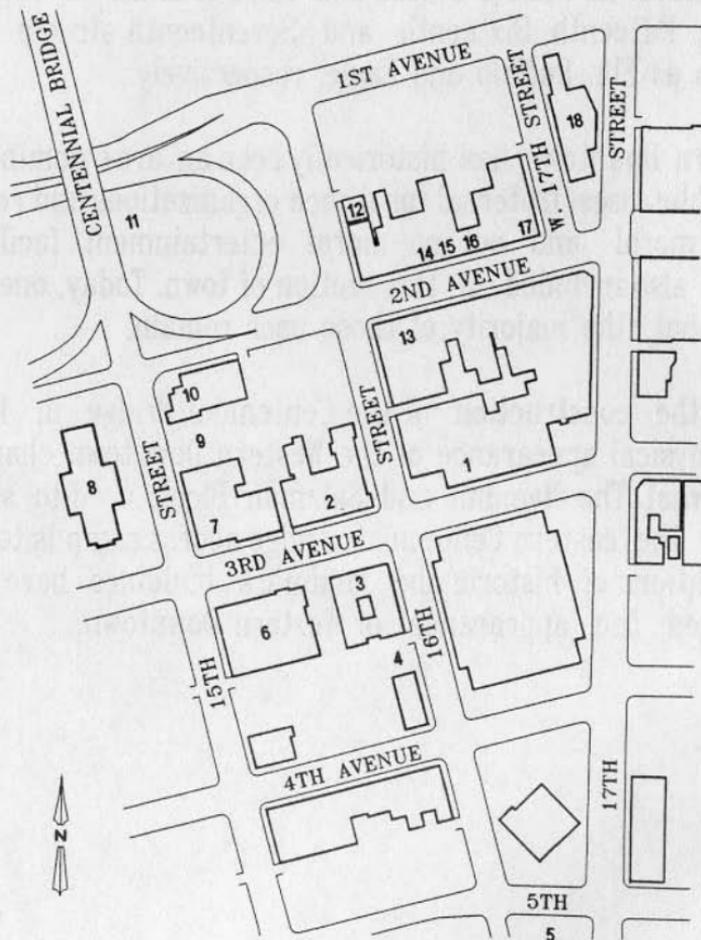
Western Downtown has historically been an area dominated by public uses, fraternal insurance organizations and retail. Some moral and not-so-moral entertainment facilities were also included in this section of town. Today, one can see that the majority of those uses remain.

With the construction of the Centennial Bridge in 1940, the physical appearance of the Western Downtown changed somewhat. The Clemann and Salzman Block used to stand where the eastern Centennial Bridge access ramp is today. Demolitions of historic and landmark buildings have also changed the appearance of Western Downtown.

Tour Route

The walk covers 2nd, 3rd and 4th Avenues between 15th and 17th Streets. The tour begins on 3rd Avenue across from the parking ramp. Start walking west on 3rd Avenue. Cross 16th Street, then go south to 4th Avenue. Proceed west on 4th Avenue to 15th Street, and then turn north to 3rd Avenue. Cross 3rd Avenue and continue walking north on 15th Street. Head east at 2nd Avenue, crossing 16th Street. Pick up Lewarne Law Office on 16th Street and then continue east along 2nd Avenue. The tour ends at 17th Street.

WESTERN DOWNTOWN ROCK ISLAND WALKING TOUR



1. Tindall Livery Stable

(ca. 1875, 1895) 1613/15 - 3rd Avenue.

In the 1800's, the livery stable combined the function of the modern parking garage, repair garage and taxicab service. Downtown Rock Island supported several livery stables and a livery has been at this location since the 1870's. The original proprietors were James and Joseph Copp. Joseph, a hostler, (one who takes care of horses), lived at the site. About 1880, the business was purchased by Winslow P. Tindall. Tindall was born in Rock Island County in 1848 and moved to Colorado in 1879. After six months as a miner, he returned to Rock Island and began his work in the livery business. He was described as a Republican and a Knight of Pythias, and reportedly dealt largely in the buying and selling of houses. Tindall, who boarded at the Rock Island House, had one of the earliest business telephones in an era when most businessmen had no mechanical communication. There were only 100 telephone subscribers in Rock Island in 1881. Early in the century, the business was taken over by John A. and Edward T. Murrin. At the same time, the building housed David Richardson, a veterinary surgeon.

By 1910, both livery stables and auto garages were present downtown. The Murrin Brothers probably intended to enter the auto garage business, as, in 1920, they commissioned George Stauduhar to draw plans for a "Murrin Motor Sales" building. The structure was apparently never built. After the livery business became obsolete in the teens, the building was used as a garage and machine shop. The garage use continued through the 1950's.

The original 1870's livery stable was an L-shaped structure covering the rear portion of the lot. The bricks and supplies were furnished by William Atkinson and John Olaff from the Energy Brickyard. About 1895, the front portion of the building was enlarged to its present appearance. This new structure also enclosed a separate entrance on the east. The original arch topped windows on the first story have been enlarged into the present show windows. The upper windows have not changed. The present painted sign even occupies the same spot where Tindall had his livery sign.

Cross 16th Street



2. Royal Neighbors Headquarters (1927). 230 – 16th Street.

This building was constructed on the site of an older Royal Neighbors Headquarters, built in 1910. Royal Neighbors originated as the women's auxiliary of Modern Woodmen of America and gradually evolved into an independent fraternal beneficial life insurance company. The present building was constructed to accommodate the increased work load that was caused when Royal Neighbors severed its final ties to Modern Woodmen in 1927.

This Art Deco building has intricate floriated designs on the brass panels over the doors and windows. It is made of cut stone with a hipped roof covered with slate. The base of the building is granite. Notice the characteristic linear lines moving your eye from the first to the third floor.



*Cross Third
Avenue*

3. Rock Island City Hall (1940). 1528 – 3rd Avenue.

Located on the same site as the earlier city hall, the present city hall was designed by well-known Rock Island architect Olof Cervin. Some of Cervin's other buildings in Rock Island include the Fort Armstrong Theater (Circa '21), the Safety Building, and many buildings on the Augustana College campus. City Hall is one of his later works in the Art Deco style.

Notice the geometric design of the building and the straight-headed windows. Enter the building and admire the wonderful multi-colored terrazzo floors and the wooden paneling.

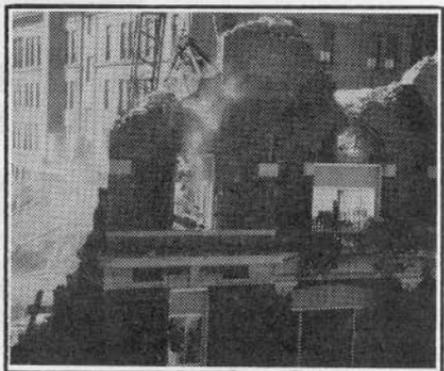
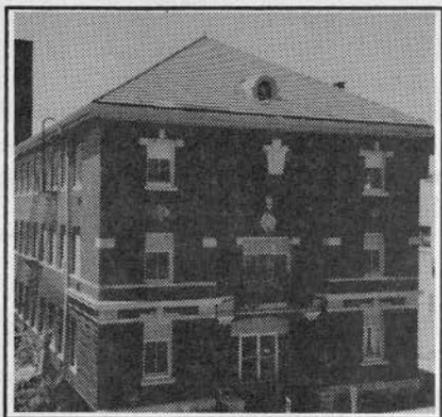


4. Modern Woodmen Publications Building (1908, 1922). 318 - 16th Street. (demolished).

The parking area between the Police Department and the American Bank is the site of the demolished Modern Woodmen of America Publications Building. Despite local landmark designation, the Italianate Renaissance printing plant was torn down by Rock Island County in 1988.

The front portion of the building was constructed in 1908 and designed by Rock Island architect George Stauduhar. The 1922 addition was more utilitarian in design, and its architect was Oscar Cartwright. The original building was brick with limestone and tile trim and a red tile hipped roof. The facade contained a magnificent three story inset arch crowned with capstone. It also had a balcony with a wrought iron railing. A Modern Woodmen of America emblem made of tile tied in the theme.

Modern Woodmen of America built this printing plant near its main office building (#6 of this tour) to comply with a post office ruling about the origination of publication material. By the 1920's, this publication plant's output was the largest of any fraternal organization. It accounted for 30 percent of the Rock Island post office's output in 1927.



5. Flat Iron Square (demolished). 16th Street and 5th Avenue.

This is now the site of The Rock Island Bank's Drive-In facility. Once, however, it was the location of the Rock Island Central Fire Station, which was torn down in 1969. At that time, the fire station moved to 1313 - 5th Avenue.

After much discussion and controversy, the City Council in 1890 appropriated \$6,000 for a new hose and hook and ladder house. The impetus behind this appropriation was a citizen push for a professional fire department to replace the volunteer force that was then currently in use. The fire station opened in 1891. The architect of the new building was D.S. Schureman and the contractor was Ritchie and DeGear. Robert Brahm served as the first paid fire chief from 1893 to 1895.

*Turn right. Go west
on 4th Avenue.
Turn right again
and head north on
15th Street.*

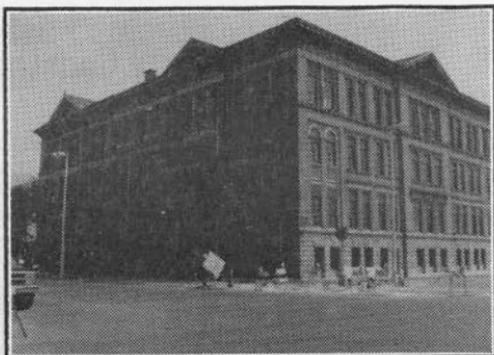


6. Modern Woodmen Building/Rock Island County Administration Building (1898). 1504 Third Avenue.

The western half of this structure was built in 1898 by Modern Woodmen of America founder Joseph Cullen Root. He brought his young fraternal beneficial insurance company from Lyons, Iowa to Rock Island, and eventually it became the largest fraternal beneficial life insurance company in the world. It all started with Root's wish to "clear away financial burdens like the pioneer woodmen cleared away natural burdens." Modern Woodmen spun off other fraternal beneficial insurance companies, including Royal Neighbors of America, which is still located in Rock Island, and the Woodmen of the World of Omaha, Nebraska. In fact, Root himself founded Woodmen of the World after leaving Modern Woodmen over a philosophical dispute in the 1910's.

After Modern Woodmen constructed its new home office building at the foot of 17th Street in the 1960's, Rock Island County purchased the building for its administration building.

The building is Renaissance Revival style, with a granite portico, hammered copper ornaments and a terra cotta roofline. The building is also decorated with symbolic emblems of woodcraft. The inside features marble and polished granite walls. At one time, the west side windows had awnings.



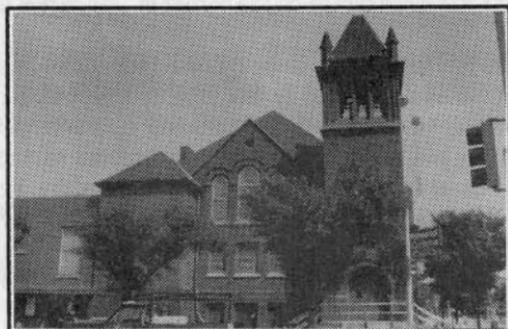
Cross Third Avenue. Head north.

7. Memorial Christian Church (1896). 231 - 15th Street.

Mrs. Mary H. Wadsworth, the daughter of Philemon Mitchell, gifted the church congregation with enough funds to make building the present church possible. She intended the gift as a memorial to her father, who was an early community leader and who helped to start the church in 1868.

The present structure was built on the site of the old church, which had served the congregation for 26 years. The structure took nine months to build and cost \$21,000. Congregation members only had to furnish and equip the new church. The pipe organ was a gift from Mrs. H.S. Fraser of Indianapolis.

The interior was designed by Braisard and Holsman of Chicago to hold 400 to 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. Also notice the neon Memorial Christian Church sign, which has now gained its own measure of significance.



8. Rock Island County Courthouse (1896). 200 - 15th Street.

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 it on a very grand scale. Unfortunately, the building has been very altered over the years. Especially sad is the loss of window detail and the tower.

The earlier county courthouse was Greek Revival style. The current courthouse is a more elaborate Renaissance Revival. The cut stone frames windows in both flat edges and arches. There are pediment windows and arched windows. Notice the balustrade on the top floor. Inside the building the open classical lines of an open court remain. The tiled floor adds to that element.



9. Site of Old County Jail (1919). 215 - 15th Street. (demolished).

Now a Royal Neighbors parking lot, the old county jail once stood in close proximity to the county courthouse. The jail was used for more than 60 years until the new one was constructed on the corner of 14th Street and 3rd Avenue.

Building the old jail turned out to be quite a task for the County Board of Supervisors back in 1919. Apparently, the exterior frame of the building stood as a shell for nearly two years before floors and cells were put in due to the difficulty of getting bond issues. An early Argus account said the jail had "the appearance of an apartment building". The three story structure had a capacity of 75 prisoners, and until about 1970, the sheriff lived in the jail.

The County received \$135,000 for the jail property. \$89,000 was used for demolition, which began in April, 1986.

10. Centennial Bridge Commission Building (ca. 1940). 201 - 15th Street.

This Art Moderne building houses the Centennial Bridge Commission. A plaque near the door identifies the City Council members when the bridge was built and the engineers who designed the bridge.



The Art Moderne style of this building is reflected in the rounded corners, flat roof and the smooth wall finish. This building has very little ornamentation. Its long, low lines are enhanced by the metal awnings, which are unusually long and low pitched. However, the awnings may not be original.

Cross 2nd Avenue and walk up to the bridge fountain.

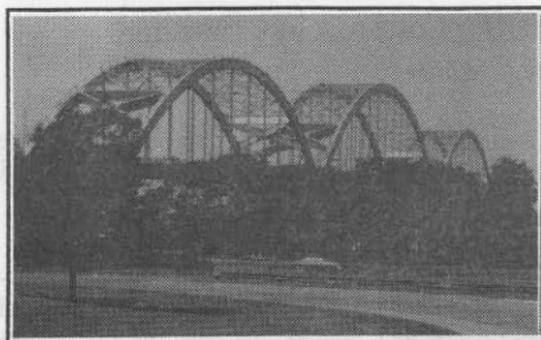
11. Centennial Bridge (1940). 15th Street.

Located in the heart of the original Stephenson, the Centennial Bridge was built in 1940 by the engineering firm of Howard, Needles, Tammen and Bergendoff. That firm is still the engineering firm for the bridge today. The length of Centennial Bridge is .88 of a mile, and it runs between 15th Street in Rock Island and Gaines Street in Davenport. The height of the tallest pier is 90 feet, and the height of the tallest arch is 170 feet above the river. Average daily traffic in 1990 was 18,000 trips per day.

Rock Island Mayor Galbraith initiated the idea for the first four lane bridge over the Mississippi River in this area. He flew to Washington, D.C. seeking Congressional approval, and even had to get a permit to build the bridge from the War Department.

The original bond for the bridge was \$2,500,000 and the original toll was five cents. The bridge opened to traffic on July 12, 1940. Extensions to the bridge were put on in the 1960's and 1970's. A nickel pedestrian fee was eliminated in 1971.

Notice the fountain and the entrance gate, which have an Art Deco/Art Moderne hint of styling. The aesthetics of the bridge were enhanced with the addition of lights in 1988.



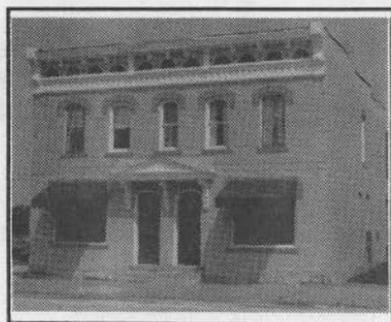
Centennial Bridge

*Turn back to 2nd Avenue.
Walk east along the south
side of the street.
Cross 16th Street.*

12. Lewarne Law Office (ca. 1880). 121 - 16th Street.

Early city directories are unclear about the origins of this building. By the 1920's, however, it had become notorious as a house of prostitution run by George "Crimps" Holsapple, whose profession is listed as "bartender" in city newspapers. 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 John Connor Looney, John P.'s son. Holsapple was defended by nationally known lawyer Clarence Darrow in 1923. However, Darrow could not prove Holsapple not guilty. "Crimps" and three others were convicted for the murder of 24 year old John Connor Looney and sentenced to 14 years in prison.

The building, owned by George and Mamie Holsapple, stayed in their hands until 1948, when it was closed by the State's Attorney's office. From 1948 to the present, the building has been used as an office. It was acquired by John Lewarne in 1981 after it had been vacant for several years. Lewarne rehabilitated the building in 1988 through the City of Rock Island's Facade Improvement Program.

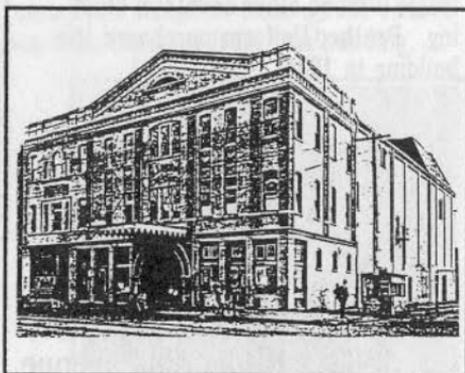


This Italianate structure has quite an elaborate cornice. The cornice has unusual shortened brackets and fancy elliptical fans cut into the wood. The windows have hooded brick arches on the second story. The corbel arches supporting the porch are typical of the Italianate style. The double doorway entrance is unusual for Rock Island.

13. Illinois Theatre (1901). 1600 - 2nd Avenue.

A committee of local people backed the raising of funds and construction for a first class theater in Rock Island. A contest had been held to name the new theater. Some of the choices were: Rock Island, Cosmopolitan, Grand, New Century, Occidental, Peoples and Imperial. After much effort, the three story Illinois Theatre opened to audiences on December 26, 1901 with "Are You a Mason?" The performance was panned by the newspapers, but everybody was enthusiastic about the theater where each seat had a clear view to the stage. Opening night was attended by Cables, McCabes and Mitchells. Audiences were appreciative of the drop curtain, carpeted aisles, brass box railings, good acoustics and the large stage and seating capacity.

For several years, the Illinois Theatre held vaudevilles and plays. It was remodeled for commercial purposes in the 1920's. Montgomery Ward Company occupied it from 1929 to 1932; Hill Furniture moved in during 1937. From the 1940's 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.



Illinois Theatre ca. 1905

The Illinois Theatre, which is made of St. Louis pressed brick, has been drastically changed. A beautiful large pediment once topped the building, but it has been removed. The concrete ornamentation has been removed and window placement is unrecognizable. Windows and doors have been filled in with brick. The arched entrance and metal canopy are gone as well. The storefront has been altered to allow for more display area.



Hyman's in 1990

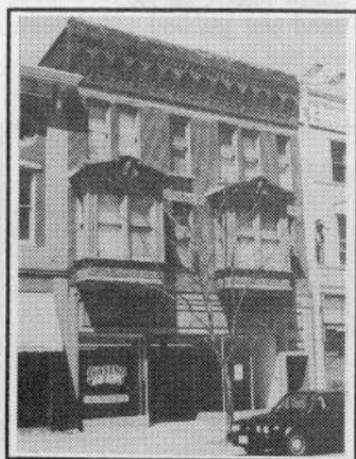
Continue east on 2nd Avenue.

14. Panther Uniform (ca. 1870). 1609 - 2nd Avenue.

The historic details on this building are limited. Apparently it was used by the Tri-City Shirt Factory in 1892/93 and by the Taxman Brothers, who were in wholesale liquors in 1910. The earliest owners and tenants cannot be traced, but this building is probably the oldest on the block. Most notable about it are its wooden sills and window pediments on the second story. At one time an awning projected over the entrance. The brickwork above each window is also unique. The cross in the circular frame is on no other downtown building. Panther Uniform purchased the building in 1984.



15. G.E. Bailey Company (ca. 1883). 1611 - 2nd Avenue.



George Bailey came to Rock Island from the South in 1865 after the Civil War. He was a grocer of fancy and dry goods, and dealt particularly in fruit. He was much disappointed when retail grocers began to lose business to peddlers, yet he remained a retailer for 40 years.

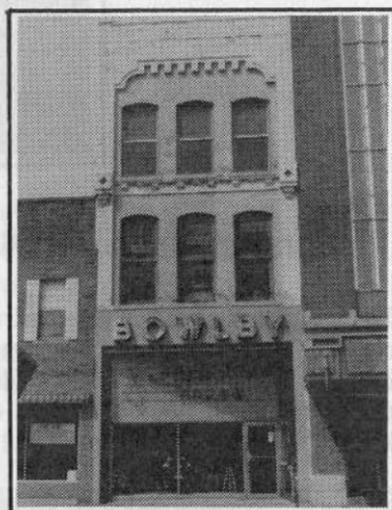
This Renaissance Revival-influenced building has two outstanding oriel windows ornamented by the masks of comedy and drama. The elaborate designs on the oriel projections continue to the base underneath the oriel. The brick cornice should also be noted.

16. Bowlby's (ca. 1885). 1623 - 2nd Avenue.

Bowlby's Music Store has been at this location since 1912. The original store, located at 1726 - 2nd Avenue, was built in 1879 by D. Roy Bowlby. The business stayed in the family for over 100 years. Gail Johnson is the current owner.

An early tenant of the building was Price Brothers and Company, who sold shoes. In 1909, it was known as the Newport Billiard Hall. Alloway and Millner then took over at 1623 - 2nd Avenue in the billiard business. Bowlby's moved in two years later.

This Italianate structure has brick crowns over the windows and stone brackets under the second story windows. The aluminum replacement windows on the third story mirror the one-over-one original wood windows on the second story. The neon Bowlby sign is a remarkable hangover from a 1957 renovation. Unfortunately, the cornice has been removed from this building.



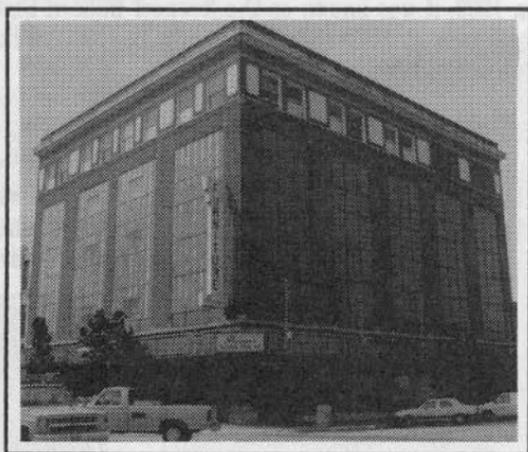
17. Hyman's/Sears (ca. 1984). 1629 - 2nd Avenue.

This building has been used almost

always as either a department or furniture store. It is possible that it had a short-lived stint as a hotel around 1914. From 1923 to 1937 this building was occupied by the Hill Furniture Company. At that time, the Hill Furniture Company moved to the old Illinois Theater. Sears, Roebuck and Company wished to expand its Quad City service (it already had stores in Davenport and Moline) and opened in this location in 1937. The first three floors were used as receiving and stock areas. Sears, Roebuck and Company also built a service station and farm implement store to the rear of the building. Younker's,

another department store, also occupied the building. The store is now part of Hyman's, which opened business at 1624 - 2nd Avenue in 1921.

The unusually large original windows of this building have been drastically altered, as has the storefront. The stucco infill in the top story, however, is still attractive. The vertical brick bands around the original window frame are also attractive. The overhang at the store front has been altered, but may have replaced an earlier version. This building is made of brown brick similar to the Best Building on the northeast corner of 2nd Avenue and 17th Street; they offset each other well in scale and color.



18. First of America (1963). 2nd Avenue and 17th Street.

The present bank building was constructed on the site of the old bank. The old bank was first known as the Exchange and Banking House, and was built in 1891. The First National Bank of Rock Island (1863 - 1905) was located in this structure. In 1905, prominent citizens Philander Cable and Philemon Mitchell acquired a state charter and began the State Bank in this building.



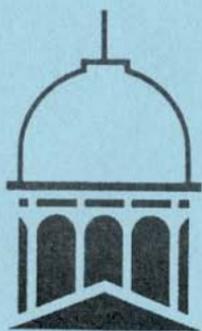
In 1946, bank president Lewis B. Wilson applied for a national charter and the bank was again called the First National Bank of Rock Island. Lewis Wilson's son, Charles, was chairman of the board when the new bank building was constructed. The bank was acquired by First of America in 1989.

HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL WALKING TOURS
of
ROCK ISLAND, ILLINOIS

1. Highland Park Historic District
 2. 20th Street Residential Area
 3. Downtown Rock Island
 4. 22nd & 23rd Streets Residential Area
 5. Spencer Place / 19th Street Area
 6. Olof Z. Cervin 1918 Government Housing
 7. Western Downtown
 8. Chicago Addition
 9. Rock Island History: A Companion to the
Architectural Walking Tours
-
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**City of
ROCK ISLAND**



Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

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For further information regarding this or other Rock Island walking tour brochures, contact the City of Rock Island Planning and Redevelopment Department.

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