

# ROCKFORD'S LANDMARKS & HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Since first adopting a preservation ordinance in 1978, the City of Rockford has designated 27 landmarks and six (6) historic districts. Landmarks range from the Herrick-Logli Cobblestone House on Broadway built in 1847 to the gatehouse to Beyer Stadium, best known as the home of the Rockford Peaches. Three movie theaters, five schools and Rockford's City Hall are also among the designations. As for the districts, these range in size from the 2 parcels in the Peacock Brewery Historic District to the roughly 220 parcels included in the Brown's Hills/Knightsville Historic District.

## LANDMARKS

### **Graham-Ginestra House** – 1115 South Main Street.

Built in 1857 near what was then the heart of Rockford's industrial base, the Water Power District. Graham-Ginestra illustrates the transition between Greek Revival and Italianate architectural styles. Only two families owned and lived in it from the time it was built by the Grahams until it was turned into a house museum by a descendant of the Ginestras in 1979. It is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



### **Herrick-Logli Cobblestone House** – 2127 Broadway.

Built in 1847 in the Greek Revival style, it is one of the oldest surviving buildings in Rockford and one of only a few surviving cobblestone houses left in Illinois. This type of construction originated in New York when large numbers of British masons came to the area to build the Erie Canal. Using abundant stones left by glaciers, these craftsmen developed a remarkable folk art during a 30-year period. This house is also listed on the Illinois and National Registers of Historic Places.

**Lake-Peterson House** – 1313 East State Street. Built in 1873, the Lake Peterson House is considered one of the finest intact structures in Illinois built in the Victorian Gothic style. It is equally significant as the residence of two of Rockford's leading industrialists, John Lake and Pehr A. Peterson. Lake who built the original structure, was one of Rockford's wealthiest and most prominent citizens by the 1870's. Peterson established himself as the dean of Rockford's furniture manufacturers. He was president of over a dozen industrial firms when he died in 1927. It is now owned by the UW Swedish American Health System and houses their administrative offices. It is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



**Coronado Theatre** – 314 North Main Street. Built in 1927, the Coronado is considered one of the best preserved atmospheric “movie places” of the 1920’s. The interior contains a mixture of exotic motifs – Spanish, Italian and French architecture; Italian sculpture; and Chinese, Egyptian and Persian art. The theater was virtually untouched until a major renovation carried out in 1999-2000 at a cost of \$18.5 million. The renovation resulted in combining the original Coronado structure with the Liebling Building next door (see below) to provide sufficient backstage and rehearsal space, something the original theater never had. The original structure is also listed on the Illinois and National Registers of Historic Places.



**Freeman School** – 910 Second Avenue. This was the second school erected on this site when it was built in 1893. The first school, Adams School, was razed in 1893 to make room for this structure. It was named for Henry Freeman, principal of the Adams School from the mid-1860’s to 1880. During the 1930’s and 40’s, Freeman School became synonymous with special education in Rockford, housing numerous programs for children with physical and mental disabilities. The school was renamed “Freeman Square” in the early 1980’s when it was converted to office use.

**Midway Theatre** – 721 East State Street. One of the largest movie houses built when it opened in 1918, the Midway seats 2,000. Constructed in the Spanish Renaissance style, it originally contained not only a movie theater but also four storefronts, twenty apartments on the upper floors, and a basement that contained a bowling alley and recreation area for Camp Grant soldiers during World War I. It functioned as a movie theater until August 1980 when it was almost destroyed by fire. It was restored shortly afterwards for use as a live entertainment venue, most notably as home to the Rockford Symphony Orchestra until it moved to the Coronado after its restoration. The Midway is a significant part of the East Rockford (National Register) Historic District.





**Anderson Building** – 803 North Church Street. Originally built as the home of Peter and Almira Campbell, the Anderson Building is an elaborate example of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Italianate Villa style. It was restored as close to its original design and character as possible in the late 1970's when it served for a time as part of the then nationally famous Rockford enterprise, Connie's Flowers and Dress Shop. It served as offices of Anderson Consolidated Industries for about 20 years and is now home to Homestart, a housing counseling and homebuyer education company.



**Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum** – 411 Kent Street. Built in 1869 as the home of Robert Tinker, a leading Rockford business man of the time, the Cottage is an exceptional example of vernacular, picturesque cottage style. The 26-room frame cottage sits high on a bluff overlooking Kent Creek near the site of Rockford's first industry, Germanicus Kent's sawmill. It was designed by architect George Bradley founder of the locally known firm of Bradley & Bradley. Most of the Cottage's original furnishings remain. It is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Burpee Museum of Natural History** – 737 & 813 North Main Street. These two buildings actually housed separate museums when they were designated as landmarks in 1983. The building at 737 was home to the Burpee Art Museum which has since moved into the Riverfront Museum Park and has been renamed the Rockford Art Museum. The 737 building then joined the 813 building as home of the Burpee Museum of Natural History. 737 was built in 1854 by local craftsmen as the home of John S. Coleman, a local banker and member of City Council. Subsequent owners were John P. Manny and William Nelson, both Rockford Industrialists. The Burpee family bought it in 1935 with plans to develop it into an art center for Rockford. A new wing designed by A. Reyner Eastman was added in 1939 to provide an auditorium, meeting room and additional gallery space. This was removed in 1998 and a much larger addition designed by Gary Anderson & Associated was constructed. The house at 813 North Main Street was built in 1893 by William Fletcher Barnes, one of the founders of the W.F. & Barnes Company. Mr. Barnes and his family were the only people to actually live the house until it was sold to the Rockford Park District in 1937. It provided office space for the Park District as well as museum space until 1971 when the entire building was turned over to museum use.



**John Erlander Home** – 404 South Third Street. The home was built in 1871 as the residence of John Erlander, one of Rockford's earliest settlers, and a business and civic leader. It is an excellent example of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Italianate architecture style popular at that time. Since 1952 it has served as home to Rockford's Swedish Historical Society and a museum for Swedish artifacts, early Rockford-made furniture and historical records. It is located in the Haight Village Historic District which is both a local and National Register district.



**Times Theatre** – 222-230 North Main Street. One of two remaining examples of Art Moderne movie theaters in Rockford, the Times, which includes storefronts on Main Street, was built in 1938. At its opening that year, the Times boasted of "up to the minute" acoustical treatments and temperature control, as well as 1,000 seats in the theater that were mothproof and fireproof. It ceased operation as a movie theater around 1980 and operated as a nightclub and restaurant on and off for a few years. It is currently vacant.

**7<sup>th</sup> Street Train Depot** – 701-703 7<sup>th</sup> Street. The significance of this passenger depot built in 1911 lies in the fact that it was one of two older remaining train depots in Rockford at the time it was designated, and the only passenger depot. It was the last restorable Chicago & Northwestern Depot in the Kenosha District (northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin). Designed by renowned railroad architect Charles Frost and constructed by local builder Emil Schmeling, it recently was the home to the Midtown District's office prior to their relocation to the Lantow Lofts Building.



**Four Squires Building** – 203 West State Street. This is actually two buildings combined into one in the 1920's by W.T. Grant when they replaced the original Italianate design with the existing Art Deco façade. Its significance lies partly in the quality of the Art Deco design, through which it represents a period in our history when retailers tried to make a positive corporate statement through architecture. It is also important as the centerpiece of the last block of West State Street in downtown Rockford that is still intact. This site is currently home to "The District" bar and grill.



**West Middle School** – 1900 North Rockton Avenue. This was originally built as West High School in 1939 as part of the WPA project which also resulted in the construction of East High School. Before then, there had only been one high school in the Rockford School District, Central High School on South Madison. While the basic design was by Gilbert Johnson, the exterior façade was designed by Jesse Barloga in the Art Moderne style. Its local significance also lies in the fact that it was fully integrated from the time it first opened its doors. West was changed to a middle school in 1989.



**East High School** – 2929 Charles Street. East High School was built at the same time as West High, also a WPA project. The same basic interior design by Gilbert Johnson was used, but this time the exterior façade was designed by Willis Hubbard. East was also considered an excellent example of Art Moderne architecture, and a focal point from the community from its beginning. The school recently expanded and updated all the windows as a part of a renovation project.

**Garrison School** – 1105 North Court Street. The original part of Garrison was built in 1887 with a Romanesque façade and Queen Anne details. Although the school has had additions made to it that are not compatible with the original design, the fact that the original part of the school is an excellent example of a late Victorian elementary school coupled with the fact that the original portion of the school is intact provided sufficient grounds for landmark designation. The school was redeveloped into residential units in 2007 and new townhomes were also constructed on the rest of the site.





**Liebling Building** – 330 North Main Street. Better known locally as the Jackson Piano Building, this is an excellent example of the Art Deco style with a stunning tribute to the artistry of terra cotta masons at the time it was built in 1930. Art Deco elements present in the building include its overall vertical design, stylized decorations and extensive use of terra cotta. The building's interior was incorporated into the Coronado Theatre during its 1999-2000 renovation.

**Shumway Market Building** – 713 East State Street. A unique Rockford structure, the Shumway Market was built in the 1920's. Its uniqueness stems partly from the purpose for which it was built – to serve as a public “comfort station” - and partly from its simple but elegant design. Its importance also lies in its connection to the Shumway Farmers Market that operated in the area behind since Robert Shumway donated the land to the City of Rockford for that purpose in 1904. Completely restored in 1987 by the Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, it currently houses the Rockford Area Arts Council.



**Illinois National Guard Armory** – 605 North Main Street. Built in 1937, the Armory was designated as a local landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places because of its role as a focal point within the community for a long period of time, its status as the long-time home of the local contingent of the Illinois National Guard, and its outstanding architecture. It was designed by a local firm (Bradley & Bradley) and built by a

local contractor, Sjostrom & Sons, which is still in business today. In addition to being an excellent example of the 1930's style of Neo-Gothic Art Deco architecture, it has incorporated into the first use of what is known as rigid frame construction. This vaulted the fieldhouse portion of the building with a single unified steel frame which was also connected under the floor from one side of the building to the other. At the time, it was the first attempt to use this type of construction. Bradley & Bradley received national recognition for the design which was the precursor to pre-engineered steel buildings that are erected today.





**Rockford City Hall** – 425 East State Street. What is now Rockford's City Hall was originally built as the Manufacturer's National Bank in 1926. At the time of construction, the eight-story building reached highest peak in the City, towering over the surrounding one- and two-story buildings. Designed by the firm of Peterson & Johnson, the building had an exterior façade of limestone and a base of polished granite with Corinthian pilasters rising from the street. Other architectural features included an elaborate cornice as well as dentils, shields and other terra cotta ornamentation. Spotlighted by floodlights at night, it was referred to as the "monarch of the boulevard" during its use as a bank. Like many other local banks, however, Manufacturer's was unable to weather the Great Depression and closed in 1931. Although many offices remained rented out to various types of professionals after the bank closed, the space itself remained vacant for several years. Upon passage of a referendum, the City purchased the building in 1937 for \$125,000. However, it was several years before the building was limited to

strictly City business; it wasn't until 1968 that all departments except for Police and Fire were located in the building. By the 1970's, the building was overcrowded and in need of major repair. It wasn't until 1988 that the decision was made to renovate the building, restoring the first floor lobby and adding a two-story annex to the west. Architect for the project was Ware Associates with construction being done by Sjostrom & Sons. The \$6.6 million project was completed in early 1994. City Hall is also a significant part of the East Rockford (National Register) Historic District.

**Winnebago County Courthouse Annex –**

403 Elm Street. This Classical Revival building was constructed in 1916-1917 as an annex to the Winnebago County Courthouse built in 1876. Although it is relatively small, it has a monumental appearance to it, especially in comparison with surrounding buildings. The three primary facades are symmetrical, marked with clear divisions made by either engaged columns or pilasters. In addition, windows repeat the same pattern on all three primary facades, increasing the symmetrical nature of the design. Overall, the building represents the Classical style of the era in which it was built. It is, unfortunately, the last remaining example of the type of design on what was Courthouse Square.





**Chick House** – 119-123 South Main Street. Known best in recent years as the home of Rockford Office Supply, the Chick House was built in 1857 and is one of only three remaining pre-Civil War commercial buildings remaining in downtown Rockford. It gained the name “Chick House” after purchase by Thomas Chick in 1888. While its upper floors were used as hotel rooms, the first floor had a variety of uses including a saloon, a hardware store, and the office supply store that still occupies the northern third of the building. It served as a hotel until 1951. The Chick House is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Elks Club Building** – 210 West Jefferson Street. Constructed in 1912 as the home of BPOE #64, the Elks Club building shows several critical elements of the Prairie Style in its horizontal lines and detailing. More classical elements include the arched windows and porche cochere. It was designed by Lawrence Buck, one of four architects who worked with Frank Lloyd Wright at Steinway Hall. He is not as well-known as the others due largely to a lack of surviving family members to carry on his name and history. Buck was primarily known for designing residences, making this structure a departure from his normal line of work. The building is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



**Abraham Lincoln Junior High School** – 1500 Charles Street. Lincoln is an exceptional example of the Classical Revival style of architecture. The main structure consists of a three-story building with basement, plus a rectangular one-story building which connects to the main building by a basement corridor. The school was designed by Gilbert Johnson, one of Rockford’s leading architects of the time. Construction began on the school in September 1925 and finished two years later in September 1927. It is still in active use as a middle school and recently installed all new windows as a part of a renovation project.



**Beyer Stadium Ticket Gatehouse** – 311 15<sup>th</sup>

Avenue. The historical importance of the Gatehouse stems from two factors. First, the Gatehouse and steps are all that remain of Beyer Stadium, home of the Rockford Peaches. The Peaches were a charter member of the All-American Girls Professional Softball League, the first professional sports organization for women in the United States. In addition to serving as home to the Peaches, Beyer Stadium was also where East and West High Schools played their football games until the late 1960's. The stadium hosted other events as well, such as the Rockford Rams semi-pro football team, until 1992 when the stadium was demolished. Over the years, Beyer brought thousands of Rockford residents together to watch both professional and amateur sports events.



**Booker Washington Center** – 524 Kent Street and

1005 South Court Street. This site earned local landmark status in December of 2015. The historic importance of the Booker Washington Center stems from two factors. First, this was the site of Kent School which was the third established public school in Rockford in 1858. The school was designed by George Bradley, the founder of Bradley & Bradley. The school was 3 stories tall and constructed of limestone from the Rockford Quarry. The school then became the site of the Booker Washington Center in 1936. The second factor is the social significance of this site as a center for Black culture which started in 1916 with the founding of the Colored Servicemen's Club

which was formed at Camp Grant. The name of the club was changed to the Booker T. Washington Center in 1919 to aid black servicemen coming home from World War I. BWC eventually purchased the site from the Rockford School District in 1942. The center was again used to provide food and recreation to black soldiers from Camp Grant during World War II. The center had two additions made to it that were not compatible with the original design. Both of those additions were destroyed by fire in 1980 and the upper floors of the former school were destroyed as well. However, the first floor of the original school remains intact. The center was rebuilt in 1983 and still serves the community today.



**Witwer (Bell) House** - 504 North First Street. This site earned local landmark status in January of 2019. This Victorian gothic style home was built in 1876 by O.H. Wheat for Mr. & Mrs. Benjamin Witwer. Mr. Witwer owned a dry goods store (Hough & Witwer) on East State Street and later became an alderman for the City. This home was later the residence of Myron Barnes. Mr. Barnes was a well-known tenor that taught at Rockford College and Beloit College. The carriage house was built in 1879 and one of a few constructed of brick. The original stone retaining wall was preserved along Prairie Street. A smaller version of the Lake-Peterson and Spafford homes, this house is a thoughtfully preserved and restored example of an upper middle class home of the 1870's.

## HISTORIC DISTRICTS



**Haight Village.** Rockford's first local historic district, Haight Village includes the area bounded by South Madison, Walnut and Kishwaukee Streets and the railroad to the south. This area formed the southeast corner of the newly incorporated Rockford in 1839 and is the only section of the original square mile settlement to remain intact as a residential area. It was Rockford's most fashionable neighborhood during the late

19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Taken as a whole, the architecture of its homes provides a visible record of Rockford's growth from a small settlement to a late 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial city. The style and scale of the homes here range from modest Gothic and Greek Revival homes that are Haight Village's oldest structures, to the



flamboyant Queen Anne homes of the 1890's that were built as visible expressions of their owners' economic success. Together, these show Rockford's evolution from a struggling village to a wealthy center of manufacturing. It is also listed on

the National Register of Historic Places.







**Garfield Avenue Historic District.** The 600 through 900 blocks of Garfield Avenue on Rockford's northwest side make up the City's second historic district. Homes in the District represent a variety of architectural styles, some dating back to the turn of the last century.

Many of the home represent examples of craftsmanship

unique to the early 1900's. Prominent individuals who have lived on this part of Garfield Avenue include G. R. Smith, son of the founder of Smith Oil Corporation; Arthur Ziock, owner of Ziock Sock Mills; William H. Barnes, developer of the Garfield Avenue area; and G.

David Sundstrand, one of the founders of the Sundstrand Corporation and the inventor of the Sundstrand adding machine.



**Indian Terrace Historic District.** The Indian Terrace Historic District occupies roughly six acres on Rockford's riverfront, starting with Beattie Park and extending northward to the southern edge of the Armory property. It exists today as an intact, early 20<sup>th</sup> century urban neighborhood. It derives its character not from a large number of structures of landmark quality, but from a homogeneous blend of architectural styles with similar massing, scale and proportion. The District also contains visual evidence of another culture in the effigy mounds constructed by Native Americans in what is now Beattie Park. The mounds in this group represent the southern extent and one of the last intact



sites of the late prehistoric Effigy Mound Culture in Illinois. The group consists of conical mounds, a linear mound and a turtle effigy mound.



The Rockford Park District has created an informational area about the mounds in the middle of the park. Because of these mounds, Beattie Park is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



**Brown's Hills/Knightsville Historic District.** The Brown's Hills/Knightsville Historic District lies to the north of Rockford's downtown on the south side of Sinnissippi Park. It was settled in the 1850's and 1860's by Horace Brown, for whom Brown's Hills is named, and Major Elias Cosper who subdivided his land with the aid of B.A. Knight, establishing Knightsville in 1889. The latter was a Swedish community established for the sole purpose of providing housing adjacent to the Skandia Furniture Company (located on the other side of North Second Street south of where the Park District's Nichols Conservatory now sits) for the Swedish workers. The population consisted of five families, four of them interrelated, and the relatives they brought over from Sweden. In 1922, Brown's Woods, south of Knightsville, was subdivided and became the address of several prominent Rockfordians. The District includes a variety of architectural styles, ranging from Victorian-era farmhouses to bungalows to several homes designed by Jesse Barloga, including one of built for himself. Despite the variety of homes, the District has become a closely knit neighborhood, still isolated from the rest of the City by natural boundaries.



**Northeast State & Main Historic District.** This unique historic district differs from the other four in that it is comprised solely of commercial buildings as opposed to predominantly residential ones. Its primary significance lies in the fact that it contains the last block on downtown West State Street that is still intact with pre-Urban Renewal buildings. Collectively, the buildings represent a period of history when individual buildings with their own individual architectural integrity stood side by side. Individually, they possess a variety of historical and architectural qualities with one – the Four Squires Building – being designated as an individual landmark as well.





**Peacock Brewery Historic District.** Rockford's most recently created historic district is a testament to the historic brewing industry in Rockford. It consists of only two buildings, the Peacock Brewery and the Brew Master's house. The original Brew House building, also known as the Ice House, was constructed in 1857 and consists of masonry bearing stone and brick material on the exterior. Additions were added to the original structure including the Malt House, the Brew House and the Bottling House. The brewery buildings are largely intact with original architectural details and materials. The Brew Master's house is a Greek Revival Design and is constructed of indigenous local limestone. It was built from 1845-1846. An addition for the office of the brewery was built in 1902 and consists of brick masonry. The Brew Master's house has managed to maintain its architectural integrity for over 150 years. This historic district is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

