



# RIPS NEWS

Advocates for Historic Architecture

[www.RockIslandPreservation.org](http://www.RockIslandPreservation.org)

## Membership Meetings

- November 19, 2013**      **Tour of the Stern Building**      **713 3rd Avenue, Rock Island**  
Tuesday  
6:30 PM  
*Note the early start!*  
Tour of Stern Building (former McCabe's and Hyman's) and the Center Building (Southwest corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. and 18<sup>th</sup> St.) followed by a meeting at Blue Cat. Tour will begin at the Stern Building promptly at 6:30 pm. *See related article*
- December 17, 2013**      **Hauberg Civic Center**      **1300 24<sup>th</sup> Street, Rock Island**  
Tuesday  
6:30 PM  
*Another early start!*  
Social Meeting and appetizer/desert potluck at Hauberg Civic Center, RIPS will host our holiday party in the Hauberg dining room. Members are encouraged to bring an appetizer or holiday treat to share.
- January 21, 2014**      **Home of Diane Oestreich**      **816 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, Rock Island**  
Tuesday  
7:00 PM  
Regular business meeting

*Remember to keep the third Tuesday of each month marked on your calendar for monthly RIPS meetings and activities*

## EVERY BUILDING TELLS A STORY! RESEARCH WORKSHOP

A great group of researchers, novice and experienced alike, attended the RIPS workshop on October 15, 2013, at the Rock Island County Historical Society Library.

Uncovering the story of a building can be described as a treasure hunt with false starts, dead ends, small nuggets and great discoveries. Becoming familiar with the tools you can use in your treasure hunt is an important first step, and was the goal of the workshop.

After an overview of the various resources available at the library, attendees began work on their own research projects with guidance from RIPS members. Resources that were highlighted include city directories, vertical files, maps, newspapers, digital resources and a book collection on topics ranging from architectural styles to Picturesque Quad Cities.

*Thanks to attendees, RIPS members  
and Orin Rockhold, Director of the  
Rock Island County Historical Society Library  
for their contributions to a very successful workshop.*

In this issue, and in newsletters to come, RIPS will share some of the tips and strategies from the workshop.

Our first article will focus on city directories, one of the best places to begin your research treasure hunt.

See the back page of this newsletter for "Using City Directories"

## NOVEMBER MEETING

### Tours of the Stern Center and the Central Building

We have a rare treat in store for our November meeting – a tour of TWO historic downtown buildings beginning at 6:30 pm (rather than our usual 7 pm) followed by a business meeting.

We will first tour the Stern Building at 1713 Third Avenue. Be there promptly, as the doors will be locked behind us. If you are late, please call Pam Saunders at 738-8976 and someone will let you in.

After touring the Stern Center, we'll go outside and around the corner to the Center Building, on the southwest corner of Second Avenue and 18<sup>th</sup> Street. This was formerly known as the Robinson Building and, much earlier, as the home of Rock Island National Bank.

You may park in the Stern lot just west of the building, if there is space available, or anywhere on the street, perhaps closer to Blue Cat, where we will end the evening at a business meeting beginning around 7:30 pm. Please enjoy a menu item if the group is delayed by the tours.

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

For the past several years, RIPS has decorated the Christmas tree in the entry hall of Hauberg Civic Center in preparation for their Holiday Market and Winter in Bloom Open House. The tree will be already set up with lights attached.

The decorations are available (but if you wish to add your own touch that would be ok). The date for decoration is November 19<sup>th</sup>. Take down will be after the first of the year. We can only accept the invitation this year if we have volunteers for both dates. If you are willing to donate two or three hours to decorate and/or take down the tree, please contact Linda Anderson at [LWickerRPh@aol.com](mailto:LWickerRPh@aol.com) or 309-786-7917



## STERN CENTER

The Third Avenue building started life as the L. S. McCabe's & Co. department store and later was well known as Hyman's Furniture. It was built in 1900 at a reported cost of \$75,000 or \$85,000, designed by architectural firm of Drack & Kerns. It was called the most expensive structure for mercantile purposes ever built in Rock Island. Collins Bros received the general contract for the building which was described as "of the Renaissance order" with a first story largely of plate glass and featuring large windows in upper stories for maximum natural lighting.

L. S. McCabe's original building presented a dignified appearance as shown in the early postcard. Five column-like two-story "pilasters" divided the front facade into four areas, each of which was further divided by smaller, one-story pilasters. The large "Chicago style" three-part windows would have flooded the interior with sunlight. The south light may have been too bright at times -- notice that there are window shades hanging at varying levels.

At street level, wide display windows provided plenty of space to display the latest wares. Their transoms contained tiny square panes of embossed "prism" glass. McCabe's was built before the bank building which is adjacent to it today, thus its elevator shaft can be seen near the far right of the postcard.

It is likely that much of the masonry detailing on the front is simply hidden by the 1960s aluminum panels, installed when the building was still a McCabe's store. Even the McCabe's name may have been preserved underneath rather than being chipped away when the panels were installed. If and when this 1960s façade is removed, the old McCabe's building will be able to have the last word.

After McCabe's closed, the building was purchased by Stanley Goldman, who was committed to keeping the lights on downtown. He later opened a large Hyman's Furniture store here, but kept the historic interior signs and other features of the historic store. After Mr. Goldman retired a few years ago, brothers Michael and Matt Stern purchased the building, which they transformed into an elegant party and reception center, complete with a ballroom. They, too, have made a special effort to retain the historic interior features. <http://www.sterncenter.biz/>



*Detail of a  
late-1920s  
postcard  
showing the  
front of the  
L. S. McCabe's  
& Co.  
department  
store*

## CENTER BUILDING

### Center Building

This is at least the third name for this historic structure. It dates from the 1870s, when Rock Island National Bank occupied the first floor and the Masonic Temple was upstairs. The bank was described in 1878 as having “plate glass windows, finely frescoed ceiling and walls, and safety vaults equal in strength and convenience to those in large cities”.

After the bank left, it was known as the Robinson Building and, more recently as the Center Building. In 1909, the original bank underwent an extensive remodeling, including the addition of a new and elegant façade that survives today. Not only did the new brick façade with intricate concrete geometric designs at the top edge cover the former bank, it also covered its neighbor to the west. That project reportedly cost \$60,000 and was featured in the July 2, 1909, edition of the Argus, which provided many details including a drawing of the remodeling. The drawing is signed by Temple, Burrows, & McLane Architects, and Mr. Burrows was quoted for the story. Henry Horst was the contractor and C. J. Larkin was the masonry subcontractor. Pictures of the building before and during construction appear in the Argus on July 10 and July 17 of that year.

During the Robinson remodeling, wide “Chicago Style” windows, distinguished by a large fixed center pane flanked by movable sashes, were added. The name derives from their common use in the “new” Chicago skyscrapers, where steel framing permitted wider openings than did previous all-masonry construction. These Chicago windows are no longer in place, but have been replaced with various asymmetric window combinations. More recently, windows at the far right have been restored to a design closer to the original.



Detail of “Second Avenue, Rock Island” postcard, c.1930. Center Building is on the left

## AUDUBON SCHOOL TIMELINE

**1923** The new Audubon School, designed by Rock Island architect Benjamin Horn, welcomes its first students. It replaces a wood frame Audubon School that was relocated to a lot across 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

**2009** The Rock Island school district announces plans to close Audubon and build a new Center for Math and Science.

**2010** Students and teachers leave the classrooms of Audubon for the last time.

**2010** Audubon School is quietly listed for sale with a commercial real estate company.

**November 2012** Fareway Stores, Inc. offers \$475,000 to buy the school and replace it with a grocery store pending a zoning change and site plan approval.

**March 2013** A local landmark nomination is filed with the Rock Island Preservation Commission. Audubon neighbors and preservation advocates organize. They try to learn more about the Fareway project and promote adaptive reuse projects that would preserve the building and the grounds.

**April 2013** Audubon is granted local landmark status by a unanimous vote of the Rock Island Preservation Commission.

**May 2013** The Rock Island – Milan School Board appeals the local landmark designation to the Rock Island City Council and the designation is overturned.

**June 2013** Fareway presents its site plan and zoning change request to the Rock Island Planning Commission and, after a long and contentious meeting, the plan was denied by a vote of 6 – 3, based on not meeting the city’s requirements for a Planned Unit Development as well as the additional request for eight variances from the zoning requirements.

**July 2013** Fareway terminates its agreement with the school district after a lawsuit is filed by Rock Island residents and before the Rock Island City Council votes on the proposed zoning change.

**August 2013** Audubon School remains for sale. The district offers assurances that it will review all offers. Residents and preservationists work to promote adaptive reuse.

**October 2013** The Rock Island-Milan School Board is presented with three Audubon options: Repairing a broken boiler, leaving the building unheated and winterizing it, and demolishing the school. Citing concerns that an unheated building would deteriorate rapidly and assurances from realtors that an empty lot would be easier to sell and generate more revenue, the vote to raze the building was unanimous. Valley Construction’s bid of \$224,300 was accepted.

**November 2013** Audubon School and grounds are surrounded by chain link fencing. Asbestos removal is underway. Habitat ReStore is allowed access to salvage reusable items such as chalkboards, oak paneled doors, coat hooks and original tile murals from the building. A last minute offer by local businessman Joe Lemon is extended but it is uncertain that the offer will be accepted. If not, it is expected that Audubon School will be razed before the end of the year.

## EVERY BUILDING TELLS A STORY! – USING CITY DIRECTORIES

If you are just beginning a search for the story of your home, City Directories (CDs) provide a quick and easy start. In Illinois, the Rock Island County Historical Society has the most complete set of these books, although some are in fragile condition. The downtown Rock Island Public Library, 410 19<sup>th</sup> Street, has these same volumes on microfilm. The public library also has more recent years in book format. The earliest CDs usually included only Rock Island and Moline. In later years, other nearby towns were added.

**HOW TO START:** After 1892, CDs contained a street index, so that you can search for your street and then the number of your house. That would tell you who lived there. In some cases, ownership would also be indicated – an “r” indicated a renter, while an “o” or “h” showed it was owner occupied.

Once you find a name for your address, you can search the front part of the CD, which is arranged in alphabetical order by name. Always look up the name listed for your address. This section gives more details, including the principal resident’s occupation. Look for others with the same last name – you may find spouses or adult children who are employed and who live at the same address. Employed adult children are often listed as “boarders.”

**CDs before 1891:** Although addresses are listed, only surnames were organized alphabetically. This means to find your house, you have to know the occupant’s name. If the person who lived there in 1893 didn’t live there in 1890, you simply will not be able to find the address, even if the house was there. In these early years, CDs only were issued every few years, with the gap between editions increasing in older years.

**CDs before 1876:** In 1876, the City of Rock Island adopted our current street and avenue numbering system. Before that our streets had names like Beaver and Oak, Madison and Jefferson, Broadway and Moline. Some buildings had street numbers, but they bear no relationship to today’s numbers. House numbers may have been numbered sequentially as they were constructed. Addresses were typically listed as “Dock, es 2n Cable.” Translated to today’s location, it would mean the house was located on the east side of 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, two houses north of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

**Organizing your search:** If you have no idea of when your house was built – or if the address may have changed – it’s a good idea to begin your search in a year when you know the house was there. A good starting point might be around 1950. Make a note of who lived there as well as any more personal information you can glean from the alphabetical listings. TIP: Note the names (no details needed) of the people who lived nearby, especially on the same side of the street. This can be very helpful when you search other documents or when information on your address suddenly disappears from the CD. Once you’ve found your first data, go BACKWARDS in intervals of five or so years and check the CDs, always noting a few of the neighbors as well. If you find a different person living there, make a note to research those interval years later, but don’t worry about at this point. Always check the alphabetical listings for your occupant’s name, too.

**When Your Address Disappears:** You will reach a point when neither your house address nor those of the neighbors is listed. This could be 1895 or 1945. That is the point at which you will need to look at the CDs you skipped, to fill in the gap years. In the best case scenario, this means your house was built right after that time. However it may be that the address simply changed. This was not uncommon as subdivisions were filled in (and, yes, there were subdivisions even in Victorian times) or street designations changed. It was very common for a house number, such as 932, to become 944 as more homes were built on that block. One major change that affected Rock Island west of 24<sup>th</sup> Street was the change of 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue around 1915. For example, a house that had been numbered 1102 21<sup>st</sup> Street became 1202 21<sup>st</sup> Street overnight. Only the 1100 blocks were affected. Another change that has occurred at least once when a large corner lot was subdivided is that the original address on 12<sup>th</sup> Street became a 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue address. These addresses appear in different parts of the CDs. If you can track these changes by the name of the resident, the change becomes clear. However if the resident moved at that time, you may not be able to find it easily. This is when the names of the people who lived nearby (you did write those down on your initial search, right?) become important to your research. If you check their current address, you may find your house listed with a different address and name.

### WARNINGS:

1. CDs rely on what people tell them. There can be mistakes in the information.
2. Misspelled surnames and a variety of nicknames are not uncommon.
3. Occasionally an address simply isn’t listed due to reporting error. That’s why it’s important to check years before and after an address disappears.
4. Women are typically not listed in early CDs unless they are a widow or employed. In many cases, a wife’s name appears in parentheses after her husband’s.

*This is Part 1 of how to find your building’s story. Watch for more articles in future newsletters.*