



# RIPS NEWS

Advocates for Historic Architecture

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

## Membership Meetings

- February 18, 2014**  
**Tuesday**  
**7:00 PM**  
**Tour of Haines-Donaldson House**  
**1217 21<sup>st</sup> St, Rock Island** Home of Janice Welch  
 Tour of home followed by business meeting. *See related article*
- March 18, 2014**  
**Tuesday**  
**7:00 PM**  
**Gas & Electric Credit Union, 2300 4th Ave., Rock Island**  
**Hosted by Daryl Empen**  
 Presentation of nominations and voting for the 2013 Historic Preservation Awards.
- April 15, 2014**  
**Tuesday**  
**7:00 PM**  
**Home of Martin Bush** 1225 37th Ave, Rock Island  
 Tour Watch Hill home of Martin Bush and then adjourn to the City Limits Saloon (4514 9th St.) for business meeting.  
 Research is ongoing on the Watch Hill home of Martin Bush. It was built on a large wooded site by Louis & Regina Kohn in the 1920s. Their daughter, artist Irma Rene Koen, lived with them there for a time before leaving the area permanently. Ms. Koen was the subject of a program given to RIPS last summer by Cynthia Empen.  
*This is a private tour for RIPS members only.*

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

### AWARDS

The February meeting is the last opportunity to suggest candidates for our annual awards, which will be reviewed at the March meeting and presented this May.

#### Nominations Sought!

If you do not make the meeting, you can still make suggestions by contacting Diane Oestreich, 788-1845 or [bluesskies78900@yahoo.com](mailto:bluesskies78900@yahoo.com)

Plan on attending the March 18<sup>th</sup> meeting to view and discuss the nominees.

### MEMBERSHIP

Annual RIPS membership ends in February. To continue your support of the Rock Island Preservation Society please renew your membership today. A renewal form is enclosed or you may go to the membership link at [www.RockIslandPreservation.org](http://www.RockIslandPreservation.org).

Our dues of \$10 per person have remained the same for many years and are fully tax deductible, as are other financial donations. Your newsletter label tells you the current expiration date of your membership.

If you have any questions, please contact Diane Oestreich at 788-1845 or email [bluesskies78900@yahoo.com](mailto:bluesskies78900@yahoo.com)

### OFFICERS

March marks the beginning of the new business year for RIPS. The election of new officers and assignment of committee chairs for the upcoming year occurs at the February 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Please consider serving as an officer or on a committee.

For more information about the duties and scope of the positions, contact

Linda Anderson at  
[lwickerrph@aol.com](mailto:lwickerrph@aol.com)  
 or 786-7917.

## EVERY BUILDING TELLS A STORY ~ MAPS

Maps are flat out fascinating. Whether looking at a place you know well or some exotic spot, poring over maps can be an entertaining way to spend a few hours. And certain maps can tell us a lot about our houses.

The junction of the Rock and Mississippi Rivers was a landmark for the explorers who drew the earliest maps of what was then a vast unexplored wilderness. But our houses weren't there. Early US Government plat maps, showing the first parcels that came into government and private ownership may be accessed online through [http://landplats.ilsos.net/FTP\\_Illinois.html](http://landplats.ilsos.net/FTP_Illinois.html)

**PLAT MAPS:** County plat maps show how land was subdivided into farms and with the ownership of each parcel of acreage noted. Such plat maps generally do not have much information for towns and villages, where the subdivisions were lot-sized rather than farm-sized. However since Rock Island didn't always cover the amount of land it does today, if you live south of approximately 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, you may be able to see when your home site was still farmland. The Rock Island County Historical Society Library (RICHS) has many Rock Island County Plat Maps dating from different eras. At least one, huge, framed, and mounted on the wall, near the area of the library where the City Directories are stored, is from 1868, when this part of Illinois was relatively sparsely populated. Other plat maps are bound in large books, located near the map room at RICHS.

**1857 CITY MAP:** Another RICHS treasure is a huge 1857 map of Rock Island, showing much of the flat land below the bluffs and extending east to 30<sup>th</sup> Street. Buildings, where present, are shown as black outlines. Although hard to read, names of the owners are often listed. While these buildings are very tiny, it is still quite obvious which blocks were built up and which were open. Some businesses are also noted.

**SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAPS:** One of the best resources for house research is Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Rock Island Sanborns were published in 1886, 1892, 1898, and 1906 and there was a 1957 update. These are available in a digital form from both the Augustana College library and the Western Illinois University library in Moline. Unfortunately, unless you're a student or faculty member, you have to go to the library to access the maps. At Augustana, go to the second floor and ask to sign in as a guest. Then, check their ALiCat database to find the Sanborns. At Western Illinois, the library is still at the old building on Blackhawk Road (near Blackhawk College), although it should be moving to their riverfront campus this summer. The process is the same - go to the library, log in as a guest (ask for instructions if you've never done this before) and then go to the database section on their website. Maps from all of Illinois are available using the digital resources at these libraries.

A large book of the 1957 Sanborn maps was manually updated to 1969 by pasting new information over the older pages. This version is available at the RICHS library. Rock Island Township Assessor Brenda Carmen discovered it and donated it to the archives.

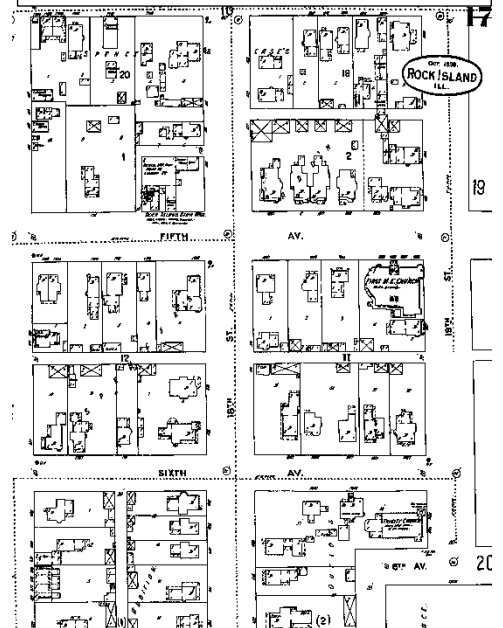
Since the Sanborn maps were intended for use by insurance companies, some of the information they provide is very detailed, especially for commercial buildings. For residential structures, the footprint is shown, with open porches indicated. Roof material - usually wood shingles originally - is noted, as is anything that might be of interest to fire insurance companies. Original Sanborns are color coded for construction, but this shows up as grays on the digital versions. The 1969 Sanborn book gives a better idea of the original colors. There is key to the images on the first pages of a map series. If you must see original Sanborn maps, they are available at the University of Illinois library, but you'll have to travel to Champaign-Urbana.

*A list of other digital maps at WIU, some available to the general public without a login required, can be found at <http://wiu.libguides.com/content.php?pid=365002&sid=2992105>*



*Above, 1857 City Map detail. Eagle Street is today's 17<sup>th</sup> St., Rock River is now 5<sup>th</sup> Ave.*

*Below, 1898 Sanborn Map detail. 17<sup>th</sup> St. is far left*



## THE HAINES-DONALSON HOUSE

The Rock Island house at 1217 21st Street that the Welch family has called home for 40 years is known historically as the Haines-Donaldson House.

It was built in 1899 for Ira and Cora Haines, who paid local contractor Guthrie & Sievers \$3800 to build it. Both Ira, then employed by the Rock Island Arsenal, and Cora were only 22 years old and were awaiting the birth of their first child.

In 1906, the home was purchased by Ellen Titterington Donaldson for \$5500, a price increase due partially to street paving, which had cost \$220. Mrs. Donaldson was 61 years old, the widow of prominent Rural Township farmer, Andrew Donaldson. She was the mother of seven living children with three adult daughters, Clara, Susan and Katherine still living with her when she purchased the home. Susan became a teacher while her sister Katherine worked in a downtown bank. When Ellen died in 1926, these two daughters still lived with her. Her will allowed them to remain here indefinitely. If both eventually married, then the house must be sold and the proceeds divided among her seven children. Susan or Katherine retained ownership of the home until the mid-1960s.

This house is rare because it has a near twin next door. Both homes are highly detailed with the main façade dominated by a prominent tower-like structure. Within the tower are huge bays on the first two floors and a shorter bay in the attic area. The roofline is made even more intricate by double gables on either side. The complex footprint and massing of the house are typical of the Queen Anne style. The front porch has simple classical columns, and exquisite beveled glass windows. A special feature of the interior décor is striking ceiling treatments. This home was featured during Broadway's 2012 Tour of Homes.



*Tour this home at the February RIPS meeting*

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Many years ago, when I was first starting to use computers, I was trying to delete something (don't even remember what software it was), and that option simply didn't exist. In frustration, I called my son, who told me that, for that application, the key word wasn't "delete," it was "erase." Even today, with the far reaching searches on Google and similar internet sites, if we don't know the correct word, we'll never find what we're looking for, unless by fortuitous accident.

We have this issue in preservation. After a recent RIPS discussion about potential landmark applications, a new member, interested in learning more about the process, went to the Landmarks Illinois website (<http://landmarks.org/>) that we'd discussed at the same meeting. He found nothing about designating landmarks there. So is that a misleading name? Certainly it's not to those who have become familiar with that statewide organization for years, but for newcomers to preservation, it certainly can be.

Another example: In Illinois, the state government office dealing with preservation issues is the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. In Iowa, it's the Iowa Historical Society and there's a similar name in Wisconsin. To us in Rock Island, a historical society is a non-profit private organization, not a state office.

It's arguable that "historic preservation" can be an ambiguous term. Some advocate using the word "heritage" instead of "historic." "Conservation" is another term used, especially for historic districts – like Rock Island's Broadway and Highland Park – which are sometimes called conservation districts. Even the word "preservation" is somewhat stodgy – are we making jams and jellies?

When RIPS was organized in 1981, there was much agonizing over our name. But it wasn't the "Preservation" part of it that was bothersome (We decided not to use the full term "Historic Preservation" in the interest of keeping it short.), it was "Society." Many thought that conveyed a "little old lady in tennis shoes" image, not the vibrant, active organization we set out to become. Yet, there didn't seem to be another word that would work. Terms such as "club," "association," "organization," and "alliance" were considered and rejected. More recently, we tried to better explain our mission by adding the words "Advocates for Historic Architecture" to our logo.

Today, we like to think that our name is widely recognized and branded. But perhaps it isn't. Should we consider changing it to something more descriptive and jazzy?..... perhaps "Heritage Rock Island." Let us know what you think are the problems with the names encountered in historic preservation (see, I said it again) and what you'd see as solutions.

*Submitted by Diane Oestreich*

## RIPS HISTORIC HOMES NOTECARDS

In the 1990s, RIPS created and sold notecards that featured pen and ink drawings of historic Rock Island homes. Most of the drawings were done by Clayton Peterson, but at least two were made by others. Recently, at the request of a Streckfus descendant, Clayton recreated five dozen copies of a notecard featuring the historic Streckfus House at 908 Fourth Avenue.

We could make more notecards, if we have enough orders to make it worthwhile. They are very high quality, printed on special notecard paper, and come with envelopes. The notecards are blank inside and have the drawing on the front with a brief history of the home on the back. They sell for \$10 a dozen.



If you would be interested in purchasing some of these, please let us know. You can reply via our website [www.RockIslandPreservation.org](http://www.RockIslandPreservation.org), or to any officers. Please let us know if you would like a single house or a variety package. We'll make the decision whether to reprint based on the response. Drawings available include the following:

Dimick House - 1250 21st Avenue  
Hansgen House - 848 20th Street  
Philemon Mitchell House - 1131 2nd Avenue  
Ralston-Schoede House - 1717 21st Street  
Stauduhar House - 1608 21st Street  
Bowlby House - 1620 21st Street  
Fickenscher House - 727 15th Street  
Pearson-Hainline - 1720 21st Street  
Long View Condominiums 18th Ave & 17th Street

Drack House - 836 22nd Street  
Kelly House - 1702 20th Street  
Ostrom House - 1037 21st Street  
Streckfus House - 908 4th Avenue  
Young House - 830 22nd Street  
Cook-Pearce House - 727 19th Street  
Phil Mitchell House - 720 20th Street  
Wagner (Robert) House - 904 23rd Street



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