

Rock Island
Preservation Society

RIPS

NEWS

Advocates for Historic Architecture

Membership Meetings

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| <p>November 18, 2014
 Tuesday
 7:00 PM</p> | <p>The Fort Armstrong</p> | <p>1900 3rd Avenue Rock Island
 We will meet in the main level dining room in the historic Fort Armstrong hotel, now adapted to an assisted living facility. Entry is on 19th Street with parking in the rear parking lot or on the street. We will have a brief tour of the recently restored lobby area. Outside doors will be locked at 8 PM, so if arriving late, please let us know by responding to the emailed agenda. <i>See related article.</i></p> |
| <p>December 16, 2014
 Tuesday
 6:30 PM
 <i>Note the early start!</i></p> | <p>Hauberg Civic Center</p> | <p>1300 24th Street, Rock Island
 Social Meeting and appetizer/desert potluck at Hauberg Civic Center, RIPS will host our holiday party in the Hauberg dining room and will feature a presentation by Gayle Rein about Frederick Weyerhauser. Members are encouraged to bring an appetizer or holiday treat to share. <i>See related article</i></p> |
| <p>January 20, 2015
 Tuesday
 7:00 PM</p> | <p>Home of Diane Oestreich</p> | <p>816 22nd Street, Rock Island
 Regular business meeting</p> |

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

During the worst winter months, it is always possible that weather will cause a last minute meeting cancellation. If there are driving advisories due to snow or ice, we will try to send you an email by mid-afternoon to inform you of a cancellation. You may also call Diane, 309-788-1845, or Linda, 563-349-1312, if you are unsure of the meeting plans.

RIPS was saddened to lose two longtime members during the past months. Don Wolgast died on September 4. Many of us have strong memories of him working on the historic S. S. Davis house at 541 23rd Street. The home, which was in serious disrepair, had been abused for years by tenants and was in danger of demolition. Don led his family as they undertook cleaning and repairing. Most amazingly, he and his children reroofed the home themselves. We offer our condolences to his wife, Deborah, and his family.

John Sherwin, who, with his wife Joan, raised a large family in a historic Rock Island home, remained a RIPS member and supporter even after moving to LeClaire, Iowa. He died on Oc. 5th. Our condolences to his wife and family.

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

Guided by consultants Houseal Lavigne Associates, LLC, the City of Rock Island has embarked on a new Downtown Revitalization Plan. Rock Island has utilized revitalization plans in the past, including the planning for Schweibert Park, the adaptive reuse of downtown buildings for new urban housing, and to address problems with bars and nightclubs. Two kickoff workshops were held on October 14 to define a new vision. More will be announced.

If you'd like to see the scope of work that will be undertaken, you can read the report made to the City Council recommending Houseal Lavigne at www.rigov.org/documentcenter/view/7259 You can still participate in an interests and ideas survey. Go to www.hlplanning.com/portals/rockisland/project/questionnaires/ and click on the Resident or Business Questionnaire link. Note that this is for ALL Rock Island residents, not just those who live downtown.

DECEMBER MEETING FEATURED PRESENTATION

Our December Social Meeting will also feature a guest speaker. After snacks, Gayle Rein will speak to us about Frederick Weyerhaeuser; covering his life and rise to becoming the most important man in the lumber industry. Weyerhaeuser's "House on the Hill" is a well known landmark here in Rock Island. This National Register listed house on the Augustana campus is the most elaborate example of French Second Empire style architecture in Rock Island.



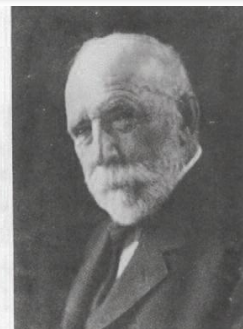
Photo from Augustana College
Special Collections

Gayle has an MA in English / Expository Writing from the University of Iowa and retired from teaching composition and literature at Geneseo High School, Black Hawk College and the U. of Iowa Writing Lab. After retirement, Gayle began doing research about local history and in 2004 wrote a chapter about the 19th century logging and Mississippi River log rafting industry for the book "Grand Excursions on the Upper Mississippi River" edited by Curtis and Elizabeth Roseman.

Gayle was a founding member of the Quad Cities Henry Farnam Dinner Committee. In 2007, she gave her presentation 'River of Logs' to 90 members of the Frederick Weyerhaeuser family. For the past four summers, she has given talks about the Quad City sawmills for River Action's summer education programs on the Channel Cat Taxi.

FREDERICK
WEYERHAEUSER

1834 - 1914



MAIN STREET NEWS

The original nationwide Main Street program was developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation beginning in 1977 in order to develop a revitalization strategy to save historic commercial buildings and downtowns. A three-year pilot program was established in three cities across the nation, one of which was Galesburg, IL. The success of such a comprehensive approach to addressing issues of historic downtowns soon led to a nationwide interest in the program.

In Illinois, the Main Street program was initially administered by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA). In more recent years, it has been transferred to the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, although the IHPA provides design services. Rock Island has been a Main Street community for many years – and a leader in downtown development – but there has not been a full-time coordinator.

Main Street programs have four distinct goals: Organization, Promotion, Design, and Economic Restructuring.

Organization brings the community together by building consensus and cooperation among multiple district stakeholders.

Promotion sells both the image and promise of the Main Street district to shoppers, investors, new businesses, and visitors.

Design addresses the physical environment by emphasizing assets such as historic buildings and traditional streetscape. Other design-related activities, such as merchandising, wayfinding, sidewalks, and landscaping, help convey a visual message about what Main Street has to offer.

Economic restructuring improves the commercial district economy by helping existing businesses expand and recruiting new business that respond to today's market.

In 2005, the "Upstairs Downtown" initiative was kicked off in Rock Island, with training created by the IHPA and Rock Island. Read more about it at www.upstairsdowntown.guru/what-we-do/ or just Google "Upstairs Downtown" "Rock Island."

NEW MAIN STREET COORDINATOR

Avalon Roebel-Thomas was recently hired as the Main Street Coordinator for downtown Rock Island. She is originally from the Quad Cities and is a 2013 graduate of Bradley University, with a major in Public Relations. She has worked as a summer intern for the District and, in her coordinator position, works from the Renaissance Rock Island offices in the McKesson Lofts building. One of her innovations is developing a new Facebook page for downtown. Check out "*Whats Up Downtown RI*" on Facebook.

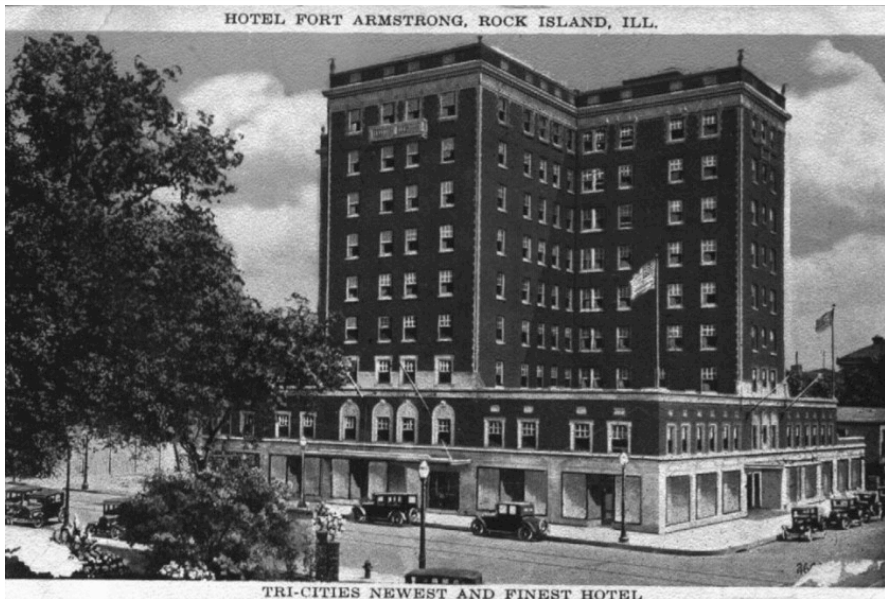
STATE CONFERENCE IN 2015

It has just been announced that there will be a joint Statewide Preservation/Illinois Main Street Conference next June 23-25 in Carbondale, IL. This is cosponsored by Landmarks Illinois and the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and will offer an unusual opportunity for both Main Street coordinators and participants as well as preservationists throughout the state to learn and share. The conference is open to anyone who is interested. RIPS will keep you up to date as details develop.

FORT ARMSTRONG HOTEL

The building of the new Fort Armstrong Hotel at the corner of 19th Street and 3rd Avenue received major coverage in the Seventy-fifth Anniversary edition of the Rock Island Argus, on December 31, 1925. "No other factor in recent years has served more to exercise the spirit of community cooperation in Rock Island than the building of the Fort Armstrong hotel."

The nine-story hotel designed by Chicago architect Charles W. Nichol is Italian Renaissance Revival in style and was completed in 1926, when the Argus noted that "A crowd estimated at 10,000 looked through the beautiful new Fort Armstrong hotel from basement to 9th floor at a public inspection." The first and second stories form a large square covering the entire building site. The seven upper stories form a cross with four wings extending from the center, giving every room an outside exposure and keeping the building from dominating the street. The building is constructed of red pressed brick. Terra cotta detailing embellishes the upper floors while cast concrete is used to ornament the lower two stories.



Postcard reprint from "Postcards from Home"
RockIslandPreservation.org

The interior of the hotel featured a grand two-story lobby with terrazzo floors and marble trimmings. Sharing the first floor were a coffee shop, dining room, private meeting rooms, offices and seven retail shops. The mezzanine featured three additional dining rooms, a banquet hall and an impressive ballroom. Tucked into the basement, along with the heating plant and coal room, were a barbershop, billiard room and bowling alley. The upper floors contained 160 guest rooms and the building was topped with ten apartments.

But it was the way funds were raised to build the new grand hotel that exemplifies "the spirit of community cooperation in Rock Island". Local residents were invited to buy shares in the proposed hotel and in less than two weeks 690 purchasers had invested over \$450,000. With an additional \$300,000 in mortgage money, the project was underway. The general building contract was awarded to the Fleischer Engineering & Construction Company of Minneapolis, but local companies got a lion's share of the sub-contracts. The brick was furnished by the Rock Island Sand & Gravel company; the tile and terrazzo work by the Cassini Mosaic & Tile Company of Rock Island; the sand and gravel by the Rock Island Sand & Gravel company; the steel by the Rock Island Bridge & Iron Works; the millwork by the Rock Island Sash & Door Works and the Rock Island Woodworks; and the cement by the Rock Island Lumber company. Three elevators, two passenger and one freight, were furnished by the Montgomery Elevator Company of Moline. The ultimate cost of the hotel was nearly \$800,000.

In 1984 the Fort Armstrong hotel was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the last remaining "grand" hotel in Rock Island. The public spaces in the hotel were restored in the 1980s and the hotel rooms were converted to apartments for seniors. Just this year, Fort Armstrong Senior Living Center has seen additional renovation both inside and out according to a recent article in the Argus that can be accessed here: www.qconline.com/business/fort-armstrong-renovations-addcomfort-beauty/article_dae720eb-9346-5dbe-b8f2-5a9755a8fe0c.html What was once a small private dining room is available for public meetings. And visitors are always welcome to stroll through the grand main lobby and experience the elegance of a 1920's hotel.

Holiday Open House

Join Us Saturday, December 6th
4:30 - 8:00 PM

Come see 5 of Broadway's beautiful homes all
dressed up for the Holidays!

702 20th Street
709 20th Street
842 20th Street
541 23rd Street
830 22nd Street

Tickets are just \$15 and may be purchased at an
home the day of the Tour.

Sten Back in Time this Holiday Season!

WHY I LIKE OLD BUILDINGS

Jack Neely reflected on the value of old buildings. “Over the years, I’ve heard begrudging regrets expressed about tearing a building down. “We just didn’t know” they claim, that a neighborhood was on the cusp of revival, that an old building might have profitable new uses—or that what resulted turned out to be less valuable than what was lost. He asks, what I think is a very important question, “Do people ever say, “Damn, we should have torn that building down when we had the chance”? His answer to that question is, “I don’t know. I’ve never heard it.” Neither have I. The truth is, old buildings give us something special; something of importance. The relationship that exists between people and historic preservation...and what it gives to us, is vividly described in Andrew Elders’ contribution this month.

My passion for old buildings began at an early age, growing up in an 1897 Shingle-style house my parents were restoring and attending an 1897 Richardsonian Romanesque church; both are local landmarks in historic districts. My parents were always willing to let me watch and learn as they worked on the house, stripping woodwork, wallpapering, and tackling the never-ending list of things that needed to be fixed. I learned to “read” a building, seeing layer on layer of history hidden from plain sight by discovering old wall coverings, flooring materials, and “ghosts” left on raw plaster where molding had been and was no longer. This gave me a real appreciation for the history of what we as humans build, and our ability to affect future generations with our structures. It’s this sense of the past that speaks to me.

Old buildings were built to last in ways that new ones often are not. The amount of manual labor expended in constructing what are now old buildings leaves a legacy of quality and craftsmanship that can’t be found in many of today’s hastily and mechanically constructed structures. The feel of them is different, more substantial and even friendlier. Old buildings were connected to the larger world; designed to work with and yet combat the elements, and to facilitate human interaction and use. Constructed in a time when climate control was largely regulated through natural light and ventilation, and for families and workers who were not connected to an electronic device all day, I am struck by the connection I feel to the elements and to other people around me when in an old building. The energy of old buildings is more outward facing than inward. Therefore, they remind me of the more enduring things in the world. They remind me where we’ve been and keep me rooted, and I think they do for other people whether they realize it or not.

Winston Churchill coined a favorite quotation of mine, “We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us.” For me, truer words have never been spoken.
by Andrew Elders

“Why I Like Old Buildings” is an ongoing series, offering our members and readers a chance to express their relationship with historic buildings. The responses have been thoughtful, memory-infused, and often poignant.

Why do you like old buildings? Let us know! Go to our website and send us your story.



Rock Island Preservation Society

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