

In 1833, Legislators approved the charter for Champaign County and named Urbana as its county seat. By 1850, a land grant to the Illinois Central Railroad guaranteed rail service to the area. The new route was eventually chosen to be located two miles west of the city in an area that began to informally be referred to as "West Urbana" and eventually Champaign. The construction of the railroad along with the establishment of Illinois Industrial University, later the University of Illinois, in 1867 set the tone for the growth of the Urbana-Champaign area. A boom of construction from the late 19th century is quite evident on campus, in downtown Urbana, and in the established neighborhoods adjacent to downtown.

The postwar years brought another growth spurt to the community as the University increased enrollment. In an effort to accommodate the increasing number of students, many large turn-of-the-century homes were being converted to multi-family housing. By the 1960's and 1970's, the pressures of "progress" threatened many historic properties as large scale apartment buildings were proposed to replace single-family homes and parking lots were proposed to replace historic commercial structures in the downtown area. These times brought an awareness of the historical and architectural significance of the area and sparked interest in neighborhood preservation and the restoration of historic buildings.

Located in the heart of the prairie in central Illinois, the City of Urbana enjoys a wonderful stock of historic commercial and residential buildings whose history and architecture help illustrate the evolution of the community.

For more information about historic preservation projects in Urbana, or other planning issues please contact the City of Urbana by calling 217 384-2440 or visit our website: [www.city.urbana.il.us](http://www.city.urbana.il.us)



## *Historic Downtown Urbana*

**A WALKING TOUR HIGHLIGHTING  
THE ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL  
SIGNIFICANCE OF  
URBANA'S DOWNTOWN**



**Sponsored by the  
Urbana Historic Preservation  
Commission  
June 29, 2002**



**1. / The Champaign County Courthouse**, at 101 East Main Street, was built in 1901. This Joseph Royer design, with brick and sandstone exterior is the fifth Champaign courthouse.

**15./ Post Office** - built - built 1915, at a cost of \$75,000 including \$12,000 for the site at the corner of Market and Elm Streets.

**14. / First United Methodist Church**  
The Methodist Episcopal Church was the first church organized in the City of Urbana, this is the 3rd building on that site.

**13. / Historic Lincoln Hotel** - built 1924. This was an early and mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century fine dining spot, - when an expensive meal used to be less than \$2!

**12. / Urbana Free Library** - built 1917, with a large contribution of \$35,000 from Mary T. Busey to honor her husband, General Samuel T. Busey. The addition on the west side was completed in 1974.

**11. / World War One Armory** - built - c. 1915. The Armory housed Troop B, First Illinois Calvary, during WW1. At the time of dedication in 1915, Illinois was the only state in the union with a full regiment militia Calvary.



**2. /Tiernan's Block/ Masonic Temple**, - built - 1871. Urbana native and University of Illinois graduate J. W. Royer was the architect that designed this building with a terra cotta façade.

**3. /Busey's Hall/Princess Theatre** - built - 1870. Originally built in the Italianate style to house Busey Brother's bank, this was the first "block" building constructed in Urbana and one of the few buildings that survived the 1871 fire.

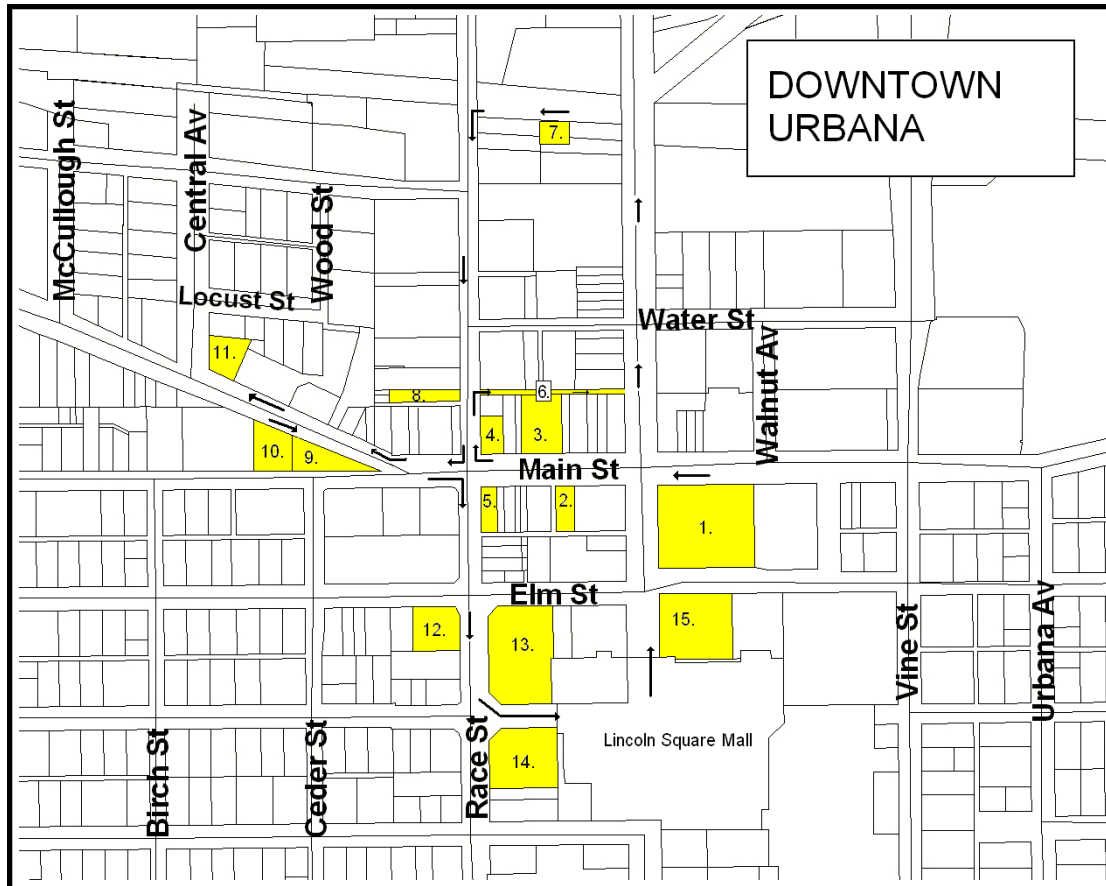


**4. / Cohen Building** - built - 1907. Joseph Royer designed this commercial building in the Classical Revival style for prominent Urbana businessman and resident, Nathan Cohen.

**5. / Knowlton & Bennett building** - built-1926. This building was built with a reinforced foundation of concrete piers. The basement extends under the north and west sidewalks, and originally had access.

**6. / Goose Alley** This alley is one of the original features of early Urbana. It was even called Goose Alley when the original charter was issued in 1883 to the "Town of Urbana". One story suggests that the farmers brought chickens and poultry to the market around present day Race Street. Instead of crating the birds, farmers would drive the geese into town by way of the alley.

**7. / Station Theatre/Railroad Depot** - built - 1889. The station was built in 1889 by the Big Four Railroad Company, later known as the Peoria and Eastern Railroad and New York Central. For several years it served as a VFW post before being converted into a theatre in 1967.



**10. / Kirby Firestone Building** - built - c. 1920/Service building c. 1927. Of particular interest is the high pitched bell-cast mansard roof covered in red Spanish tile and the dramatic extension of roof above entrance, supported by two columns.

**9. / Flat Iron Building** - Built 1904. The Flat Iron Building occupied the wedge-shaped intersection of Springfield Avenue and Main Street from 1904 until it was destroyed in a tragic fire in 1948.

**8. / The Courier Building** - built - circa 1916. Alvin T. Burrows, owner of the Courier Newspaper, purchased the land on which Courier Café is today. Competition forced the Courier Newspaper to close its doors in 1979 and it was remodeled in 1980 to become the well know Courier café.