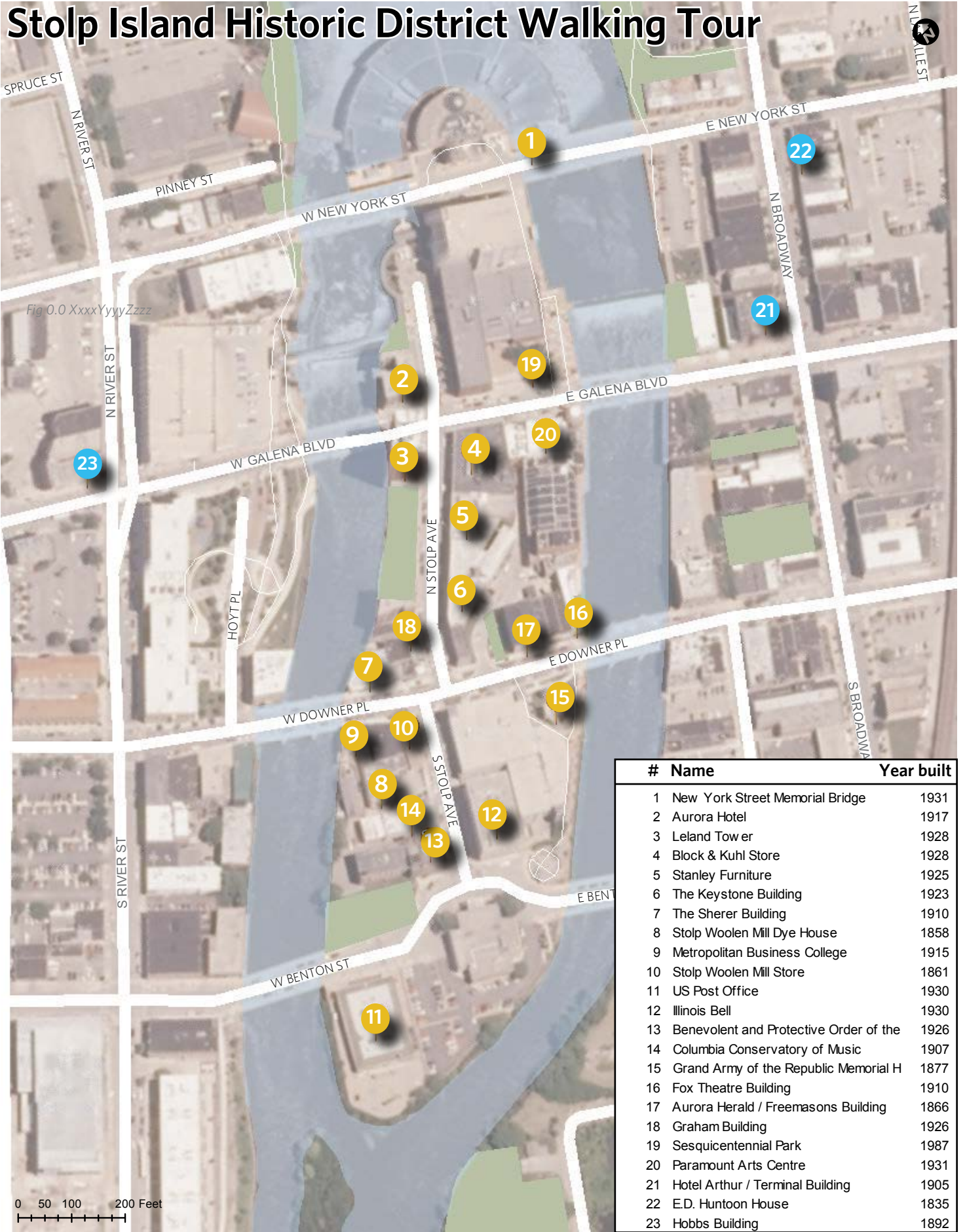


Stolp Island Historic District Walking Tour



Stolp Island National Register Historic District

National Register Historic District: 1986 Listed on the National Register of Historic Places
Historic District Self-guided Walking Tour

Stolp Island is located in the Fox River, at a site where the river drops steeply. This drop is what gave the McCarty Brothers, Joseph Stolp, and Zaphna Lake the waterpower source they desired for their milling businesses. The Fox River, although an excellent power source and motivator for industrial development, had a disruptive influence on commercial and residential development causing rivalry between the growing settlements on the east and west banks. It was because of these rivalries that Stolp Island became the neutral territory for Aurora's public buildings and other private organizations. The National Register Historic District includes good examples of the works of nationally known architects, and unique architectural styles. Due to its central location in the growing community, Stolp Island became a functional transportation link as well as an emotional link between Aurora's east and west sides. W Frederick Stolp bought this island for \$12.72 in 1848. He later deeded the island to his nephew, Joseph Stolp, who built a woolen mill.

If you think of Stolp Island as an outdoor museum of architecture, one of the finest exhibits is the terra cotta. Essentially a fired clay product, terra cotta was often used with glazes of various colors and textures. It was a versatile and inexpensive building material that was used to form elaborate details, or to simulate expensive stone such as granite and limestone. Buildings clad with architectural terra cotta were originally called "china front" buildings. In America, this building material was first used in Chicago in 1895. Terra cotta's primary appeal was its ability to adapt to the variety of elaborate revival architectural styles in vogue at the time.



1 New York Street Memorial Bridge, 1931

New York Street (between Route 25 and Route 31)

Built in the Art Moderne style, the bridge was dedicated on Armistice Day, November 11, 1931, as a memorial to World War I veterans. Unlike Stolp Island's other bridges, the New York Street bridge structure spans the entire channel of the Fox River. The genius behind the bridge's design was sculptor, Emory Seidel. He planned the entire bridge as a memorial integrating the kneeling statues of "Memory" into the concrete structure at the pylons. He also created the bronze statue of "Victory", the eagle statues, and the Armed Services bas-relief located in the statuary niches at the center of the span. His limestone relief below the "Victory" statue depicts a family in peacetime.



2 Aurora Hotel, 1917

2 N. Stolp Avenue

The eight-story hotel was the tallest building on Stolp Island when it was constructed in 1917. The first large hotel in the city, it represented an effort by the citizens who developed it to elevate Aurora's position as a center of commerce. This organization (Aurora Island Hotel Corporation) was responsible for many of the projects which made Stolp Island a commercial center. The building was in a severely deteriorated condition until it was saved by a grass roots effort in 1996. The remarkably restored building is now used as apartments for senior citizens.

3



Leland Tower, 1928

7 S. Stolp Avenue

Constructed in 1928 as a first-class hotel and entertainment center, the Leland building is twenty-two stories high. When built, it was the tallest building in Illinois outside of Chicago. It was designed by Anker Sveere Graven and Arthur Guy Mayger of Chicago. The architects called their building “a modern adaptation of the Italian Romanesque style”. It is now being used as an apartment building.

4



Block & Kuhl Store, 1928

5 E. Galena Boulevard

This building was originally the Block & Kuhl Store, constructed in 1928 by the Aurora Development Company. It became the home for the Carson Pirie & Scott store in 1961. After a major remodeling, the Waubesa College Extension Center opened in 1986. Notice the architectural terra cotta cladding, prism glass transoms above the storefronts, and Chicago style windows on the second and third floor incorporating a fixed center glass with two adjacent operable windows.

(photo by Flickr user David Wilson)

5



Stanley Furniture, 1925

14-20 S. Stolp Avenue

Built about 1925, the former Stanley Furniture store is noted for its white terra cotta facade. The building is actually two, with the terra cotta of the southern “half” being slightly creamy in color. There are four terra cotta lion heads placed between window openings at the second story level that served as canopy hooks.

6



The Keystone Building, 1923

30 S. Stolp Avenue

The Keystone Building is one of two Stolp Island works by architect George Grant Elmslie. It is a relatively rare example of the Prairie School style used for an office building, and is listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places. Notice the subtle coloring of blue and gold in the organic terra cotta detailing. This type of decorative motif was originally developed by Louis Sullivan, Elmslie’s former employer.

(photo by Flickr user David Wilson)

7



Sherer Building, 1910

9-15 W. Downer Place

The triangle shaped Sherer Building was constructed in 1910, and designed by architect Eugene Malmer. Notice the multi-colored terra cotta “S” at the parapet

8



Stolp Woolen Mill Dye House c.1858

20 W. Downer Place

Dating from 1858 to 1860, the dye house is the oldest building on Stolp Island. It is located on a lower level behind the Metropolitan Business College building. The building has a coursed limestone foundation and simple arched windows that face the river. Its lack of ornamentation identifies it as an early industrial building. It is the oldest building on Stolp Island.

(image courtesy of Google Streetview)

9

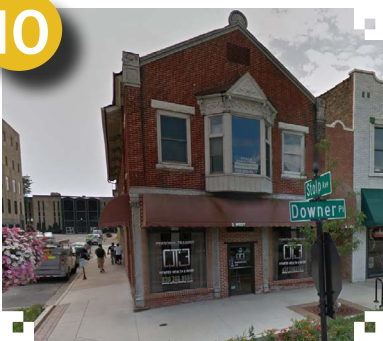


Metropolitan Business College, c.1915

8-16 W. Downer Place

This building represents the development of the island in the early portion of the twentieth century, c. 1915. The parapet detail design and the window detailing appear to be from the same architect, Eugene Malmer, who designed the earlier Sherer Building across the street. Both buildings were owned by Joseph Stolp Sherer, grandson of early pioneer Joseph Stolp. It was constructed in glazed brick.

10



Stolp Woolen Mill Store, 1860-61

2 W. Downer Place

Built by Joseph Stolp in 1860-61, 11 years after he built a woolen mill to the west of the store site. The store was constructed to sell those goods which were not shipped across the country for sale. It is listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places.

(image courtesy of Google Streetview)

11



United States Post Office, c.1930

18 W. Benton Street

The Post Office building is an arcaded block building, featuring a series of evenly spaced, round arched window openings. It is a commercial style that was popular during the early 20th century, and was derived from the great arcaded porches built in Italy during the Renaissance. The gargoyle waterspouts and decorative detailing are fashioned in terra cotta. James Wetmore was the supervising architect. The building now houses SciTech, a science and technology center with over 200 hands-on exhibits.

12

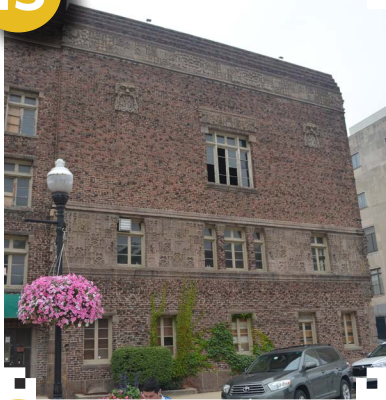


Illinois Bell, c.1930

70-82 S. Stolp Avenue

One of the major commercial buildings on the island is the telephone company's building on Stolp Avenue. Notice the keystone carved above the single window opening at the corners of the second floor and the keystone motif decorating the metal first floor window framing. The chevron motif above the windows identifies it as an Art Moderne style. The top two floors and north bays are later additions.

13



Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks, 1926

77 S. Stolp Avenue

Perhaps the most unusual building in Aurora, this 1926 Zimmerman, Saxe and Zimmerman design is one of the few examples of the use of Mayan Revival in the United States. The building was originally designed in the classical style. However, prior to the time sufficient funds were raised, the great archaeological finds in Central America were discovered and the design was changed. All of the Mayan gods and Mayan relief decorations are fashioned in terra cotta. The bulk of the building is faced with clinker brick, a brick too irregular for normal construction use.

14



Columbia Conservatory of Music, c.1907

75 S. Stolp Avenue

This former conservatory was accredited by the State and conceded to be the best equipped school in Illinois and included schools of dancing, languages, art, music, dramatic art, and kindergarten. It is constructed of another popular substitute for stone, cast concrete.

(image courtesy of Google Streetview)

15



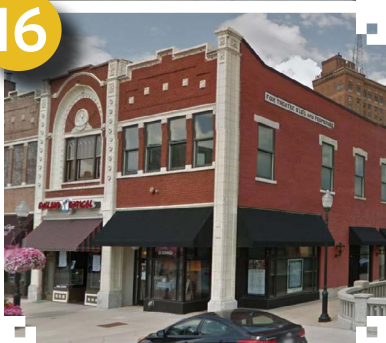
Grand Army of the Republic, (G.A.R.) Memorial Hall, 1877

23 E. Downer Place

The G.A.R. Memorial Hall was built in 1877 and is one of Aurora's most widely recognized historic landmarks. The building was built as a library and meeting place to commemorate Civil War veterans. Constructed with locally quarried limestone, it is in the Gothic Revival style. The side tower was added in 1904. This building is a copy of a brick G.A.R. building in Foxboro, Massachusetts. Restoration of the building is planned for the future. Contact (630) 264-INFO for information on when the building will be open to the public.

(image courtesy of Google Streetview)

16



Fox Theater Building , 1910

24-28 E. Downer Place

This building was remodeled in 1910 with a new brick and terra cotta facade. Notice the reclining terra cotta fox which is the centerpiece of a circular medallion on the second story. While all three bays are technically one building, later ownership has divided the building, hence the western most bay has been painted.

(image courtesy of Google Streetview)

17



Aurora Herald/Freemasons Building/Ginsberg Store, 1866

20 E. Downer Place

This Italianate commercial structure was built in 1866. It originally housed the Aurora Herald, and Freemasons. Later it was the Ginsberg clothing store. Visible on the west side, facing the alley, are the original Italianate brackets under the eaves. Note the Masonic “eye” symbol carved into the top of the limestone wall. A massive pressed metal Italianate cornice has been removed. The building now features the collection of the Aurora Historical Society, and the Aurora Public Art Commission gallery. It was renamed after former Mayor David L. Pierce who was responsible for the building’s restoration. A joint gift shop is located on the first floor. Hours are Wednesday through Sunday, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

(image courtesy of Google Streetview)

18



Graham Building, 1926

33-35 S. Stolp Avenue

This is the other of Stolp Island’s two Prairie School style buildings designed by George Grant Elmslie. Constructed in 1926, the building is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is the only building that takes advantage of its river setting by duplicating street face ornamentation on its river side.

19



Sesquicentennial Park, 1987

23 E. Galena Boulevard

Architects of the original Paramount Theatre designed a park called Paramount Park on this same site. It existed from 1930 to 1934, containing paths, a pond, garden, and miniature golf. It was a restful retreat area available only to theater patrons. Redesigned and dedicated in November 1987, the Sesquicentennial Park features a sculpture entitled “City Lights, City Life” by Chicago artist Jerry Peart.

(image courtesy of Google Streetview)

20



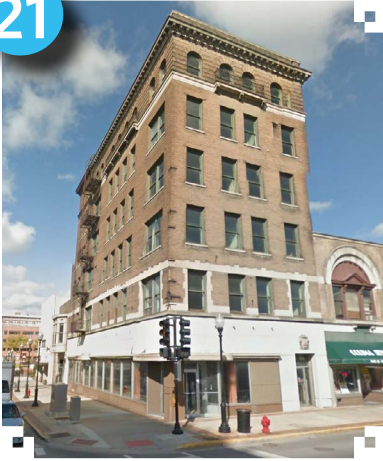
Paramount Arts Centre, 1931

23 E. Galena Boulevard

The Paramount Arts Centre was designed by George and C.W. Rapp in 1931. Rapp and Rapp are renowned for their opulent movie palaces including the Chicago Theater. The movie palace opened in 1931, a terra cotta and steel building with an exterior covering of face brick. The most significant portion of the exterior is the octagonal tower. It is elaborately detailed in brick and colored, glazed terra cotta and capped by an orange tile roof. The interior combines Venetian murals with Art Deco detailing. Reopened after renovation in 1978, the Paramount is a prestigious cultural facility that serves the entire region, and offers a full season of world-class professional entertainment. Call (630) 896-6666 for information the building and programming.

Just outside the Stolp Island Historic District

21



Hotel Arthur / Terminal Building, 1905

2 N. Broadway

Designed by architect Eugene Malmer, this six-story pressed brick and Bedford stone 2nd Renaissance Revival building was once the tallest building in Aurora and one of the tallest in Illinois outside of Chicago. Malmer studied with William Le Baron Jenney, father of the skyscraper when he was a student in Chicago. In 1915, the building was leased to the Aurora, Elgin, and Chicago Railroad Company to serve as that company's traction terminal station and main corporate offices. It is still often referred to as the "Terminal Building."

(image courtesy of Google Streetview)

22



E.D. Huntoon House, c.1835

31 N. Broadway

Built circa 1830, this former residence is believed to be the last remaining hand-hewn timber frame structure in the downtown. For decades the building was covered over with false fronts, masking its wood construction. The building was remodeled in 2001 to reflect its appearance as a Victorian commercial era building with an Italianate cornice and window hoods.

23



Hobbs Building, 1892

2 N. River Street

This Romanesque Revival building features an onion dome, intricate brick detailing in the semicircular arches over the third story windows, and decorative pressed metal on the piers. It was built in 1892 as a furniture store and loft building. A photo at the Aurora Historical Museum documents a man leaping from the top of the dome into a six-foot pool of water as a featured attraction at the 1910 Fourth of July Celebration.

*The information in this document is from Aurora's Historic Preservation Commission:
https://aurora-il.org/historicpreservation/hist_stolpisland.php*

Unless otherwise noted, photographs were taken by CMAP staff.