

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic G.A.R. Memorial Building

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 23 East Downer Place

not for publication

city, town Aurora

vicinity of

state Illinois

code 012

county Kane

code 089

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name City of Aurora

street & number 44 East Downer Place

city, town Aurora

vicinity of

state Illinois

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Kane County Courthouse

street & number 719 S. Batavia Ave.

city, town Geneva

state Illinois

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Illinois Historic Sites Survey (First Priority)
has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1972 federal state county local

depository for survey records Illinois Dept. of Conservation

city, town Springfield

state Illinois

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

This one and one half story limestone building dates from 1877 and is located at 23 East Downer Place on Stolp Island in downtown Aurora. It is surrounded on two sides by a municipal parking lot, by the Fox River to the east, and commercial buildings across the street.

The irregularly shaped lot includes pine and beech trees, lilac bushes and small evergreens placed around the foundation. The site is filled with commemorative items including an 1851 cannon, flagpole, a granite slab dedicated in 1931, a 1974 plaque, and a 1923 Women's Relief stone marker. There is also a small stone bench reminiscent of nineteenth century cemetery art, with side supports resembling tree branches, topped by cannon balls. The bench is dated 1938.

The Gothic Revival style structure is executed in rock-faced ashlar and is octagonally-shaped with projecting gable wings on alternating sides. Each wing is enframed by clasping buttresses and pierced by a rectangular basement window, a triangular gable window and a pointed arched sash window. The latter were originally diamond-paned and approximately one foot shorter until a 1903 remodeling. The non-gabled sides have the same fenestration, excluding the gable window.

The north gable has an additional smaller projecting gable which contains the main entrance. Six dressed stone steps lead to the paired wooden doors which are topped by a pointed arched stained glass transom. The pointed arched entrance is adorned with a dressed stone architrave, next to which is inscribed "Erected 1877." Flanking the entrance are two brass guns from the Rock Island Arsenal which were made in Mississippi for the Confederate forces. Above is a carved shield inscribed "Memorial Building," while a bulls-eye window pierces the gable above.

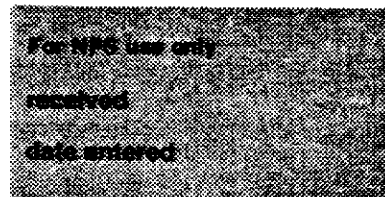
The shingled, pyramid-shaped roof has intersecting gables and an octagonal cupola which originally featured trefoil patterned panels. It now has foliate-cross panels. The original iron cresting has been removed, but the eight foot bronze statue of an infantry soldier survives atop the cupola.

In 1884, a two story stone and brick addition was attached to the south wing and southwest side. A two story, flat-roofed stair tower was built in 1903, attached to the 1884 addition and west wing. In 1964 the addition was demolished, but the tower retained. The tower's south elevation is parged where it was attached to the addition. The west elevation features a pointed arched sash window on the first floor, and five narrow pointed arched windows on the second floor. The top is crenelated with a corner oriel bay. The north facade is set back from the main building's plane, and contains another pointed arched entrance with stained glass transom and dressed stone architrave. Six stone steps lead to this entrance, with pipe metal handrails. Above are five narrow pointed arched windows, one of which is executed in stained glass.

Inside the main entrance are two glass paneled doors etched with the U.S. Coat of Arms and "Memorial Building." A central chandelier has been removed, the floor covered with vinyl tile, and portions of the wall murals and woodwork painted. Otherwise, the interior is largely intact. Eight marble tablets with gilded lettering of veterans' names are grouped around the entrance and on the wall opposite. Six of the original bookcases remain, but have been painted and altered to serve as display cabinets. Above are plaste:

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busts of generals and statesmen, original to the interior but recently painted gold. Above the oak wainscotting are frescoes of battlescenes and heroes, all of which have been painted over except for small scenes in two corners.

In the center of the room is a marble angel standing atop a cast iron base. Surviving original furniture includes four ceremonial high backed armed chairs and a wrought iron hat tree employing military motifs.

On the west wall is a door to the stair tower area. The stairs have been enclosed and lead to a small second floor room used for storage. The basement stairway is lined with photographs of early members and leads to the basement meeting room, kitchen and bathrooms. These spaces have been remodelled, but contain a three-sided platform original to the building. The painted wood piece is detailed to imitate a fortification with openings for cannons.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1877; 1903 **Builder/Architect** Joseph Mulvey

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Grand Army of the Republic Memorial Building is one of Aurora's most widely recognized historic landmarks. It is the sole survivor of a string of nineteenth century civic buildings that once included City Hall and the U.S. Post Office. Its curious compact design, prominent location and historic associations qualify it for recognition.

In 1869, a Soldier's Monument Association was formed in Aurora to raise funds for a Civil War monument. Fred O. White, the association's secretary, was an influential businessman who united the veterans, civic leaders and the community in this task. Contemporary newspapers describe the dinners, benefits, sales and private donations that swelled the fund. By 1877, enough money had been collected to erect a substantial monument, but White proposed an alternative. He circulated a stereoscopic view of a Memorial Building in Foxboro, Massachusetts which he had just visited, and proposed that Aurora erect just such a structure. Arguing that a building was more useful than a static monument, he cited the Foxboro building's use as a library and meeting place and convinced the public to support a Memorial Building for Aurora.

The Foxboro structure is still standing and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was built in 1868 and designed by J. Stevens, believed to be the John Stevens of Boston responsible for numerous civic structures in the region. The building is almost identical to Aurora's, except for its use of random coursed granite rubble, roof slate and stained glass.

Joseph Mulvey, the architect for Aurora's Memorial Building, clearly modeled his design on Foxboro's. Mulvey also designed the graceful and harmonious 1884 addition. Although Mulvey is listed as an architect in city directories from 1880 through 1900, no other Mulvey-designed structures have been identified to date except for an 1878 reference to his design for a courthouse in Saline County, Nebraska.

Indicative of the widespread support this undertaking received, land for the building was donated to the City by Joseph Stolp, developer of Stolp Island. An accounting book of the Aurora Historical Society details the numerous craftsmen and merchants who donated either work or goods. Contracts were let with L.H. Waterhouse & Son for the masonry, and with C.B. Colwell for the carpentry, prolific contractors who participated in almost all major construction projects of the day.

When the City Council authorized construction in 1877, they granted the Soldier's Monument Association permission "to erect a memorial building to be (used) for a public library and reading room." Although bookcases were supplied, a public library was not formally established in Aurora until 1881. Aurora Post No. 20 of the G.A.R., which was chartered in 1875 and operated the building, agreed to the library's location in their building. Fred O. White began yet another fundraising drive for an addition to serve as stack space, and for re-location of the G.A.R. meeting rooms. With a membership of almost 650, the post needed the additional room.

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The addition was built in 1884 and the library flourished at the site until 1903, when a new Carnegie library was built a block away. With the library's departure, a final fundraising was held to add the stair tower, raise and remodel the basement and add kitchen facilities. The former meeting rooms were made available to civic groups city-wide.

The Aurora Post No. 20 of the G.A.R. lasted until the death of its last member in 1947. As with the national organization, which was organized in 1866, it operated "for the purpose of preserving and strengthening those kind, fraternal feelings which have bound together the soldiers, sailors and marines who united to suppress the late rebellion." Membership was open to any honorably discharged soldier of the Union army, regardless of race or rank. Later, Confederate soldiers were even allowed to join the Aurora group.

A host of complementary groups operated out of the Memorial Building, including the Women's Relief Corps, Ladies of the G.A.R. Aurora Circle No. 4, Sons of Veterans Aurora Camp No. 21, and the Daughters of Veterans.

In the early 1960s, the city demolished the 1865 City Hall and the Romanesque Revival Post Office for parking. The sweep east was to include the Memorial Building, but public outcry halted these plans. A 1963 fundraising effort provided enough support to save the landmark and renovate the property. The 1884 library addition was demolished, mechanical systems upgraded and interior spruced up. A foundation was also established, including representatives of veterans groups, to see that the building was protected in the future.

While the building today is again in need of repairs and restoration, the basic integrity of the Memorial Building has survived, a mark of its status as a generally recognized landmark intimately linked to Aurora's nineteenth century history and civic pride.



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

AUG 31 1984

IN REPLY REFER TO:

The Director of the National Park Service is pleased to inform you that the following properties have been entered in the National Register of Historic Places beginning August 19, 1984 and ending August 25, 1984. For further information call (202) 343-9552.

STATE, County, Vicinity, Property, Address, (Date Listed)

ILLINOIS, Jo Daviess County, Galena vicinity, Wenner, Charles, House, Rocky Rd. (08/22/84)

ILLINOIS, Kane County, Aurora, G.A.R. Memorial Building, 23 E. Downer PL (08/23/84)

LOUISIANA, East Baton Rouge Parish, Baton Rouge, Planter's Cabin, 7815 Highland Rd. (08/23/84)

MINNESOTA, Hennepin County, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Old Campus Historic District, University Ave. and 15th Ave. (08/23/84)

MINNESOTA, McLeod County, Glencoe, American House Hotel, 12th and Ford Sts. (08/23/84)

MINNESOTA, McLeod County, Glencoe, McLeod County Courthouse, 830 11th St. E. (08/23/84)

MINNESOTA, Ramsey County, St. Paul, Schornstein Grocery and Saloon, 707 E. Wilson Ave. and 223 N. Bates Ave. (08/21/84)

MINNESOTA, Washington County, St. Croix River Access Site, (08/23/84)

MISSOURI, Marion County, Hannibal vicinity, Hendren Farm, Off U.S. 61 (08/22/84)

MISSOURI, St. Louis (Independent City), Blind Girls' Home, 5235 Page Blvd. (08/23/84)

MISSOURI, St. Louis (Independent City), Louise Apartments, 3900 Lindell Blvd. and Vandeventer Ave. (08/23/84)

MISSOURI, St. Louis (Independent City), Robert, Johnson and Rand-International Shoe Company Complex, Mississippi and Hickory Sts. (08/23/84)

MISSOURI, St. Louis County, Ferguson, Church Street Commercial District, 2--100 Church St. (08/23/84)

NEW YORK, Chemung County, Elmira, Elmira College Old Campus, Roughly bounded by College and W. Washington Aves., N. Main St., and Park PL (08/23/84)

NEW YORK, Jefferson County, Oxbow, Benton, Dr. Abner, House, Main St. (08/23/84)

NEW YORK, Onondaga County, Syracuse, Stickley, Gustav, House, 438 Columbus Ave. (08/23/84)

NEW YORK, Suffolk County, Montauk, Montauk Manor, Fairmont Ave. (08/23/84)

NEW YORK, Sullivan County, Rockland, Rockland Mill Complex, Palen PL (08/23/84)

NORTH CAROLINA, Forsyth County, Winston-Salem, Bland, Joseph Franklin, House, 1809 Virginia Rd. (08/21/84)

OHIO, Cuyahoga County, Cleveland, Doan School, 1350 E. 105th St. (08/23/84)

OHIO, Franklin County, Bexley, Duncan, Robert P., House, 333 N. Parkview Ave. (08/23/84)

OHIO, Hamilton County, Finneytown, Smith-Jessop House, 1038 W. North Bend Rd. (08/23/84)

OHIO, Hardin County, Kenton, Kenton Courthouse Square Historic District, Roughly Main, Detroit, Market, Columbus and Franklin Sts. (08/23/84)

OHIO, Jackson County, Petersburg vicinity, Johnson Road Covered Bridge, SW of Petersburg (08/23/84)

OHIO, Montgomery County, Dayton, South Park Historic District, Roughly bounded by Park, Morton, Hickory, and Wayne Ave. (08/23/84)

K-H-110

201475

ILLINOIS HISTORIC SITES SURVEY INVENTORY

1. Name of Site:

Common GAR Memorial Hall
Historic

2.. Location:

Street and Number Downey Pl. at the bridge
City or Town Aurora
County Kane
Township
Range
Section
1/4 Section

3. Classification:

Category (check one) Integrity (check one)
 District Building Altered Unaltered 1 addition made
 Site Structure Moved Original Site years ago

4. Ownership:

Private Occupied
 Public Unoccupied
 Preservation work in progress

Access to Public

Yes Restricted Unrestricted No

Present Use (check one or more)

Agricultural Industrial Religious
 Commercial Military Scientific
 Educational Museum Transportation
 Entertainment Park Other (specify)
 Government Private Residence

5. Ownership of Property:

Owner's Name Phone Number
Street and Number
City or Town
State County Zip Code

6. Description: Stone. A very odd building

Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated Ruins Unexposed

Is there a program of preservation underway? Yes No

FRATERNAL

POLITICAL

MILITARY

7. Historical Themes : (check one or more of the following)

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archeological Site | (Pre-Columbian) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archeological Site | (Post-Columbian to 1673) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> French Influence | (1673-1780) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Illinois Frontier | (1780-1818) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Illinois Early | (1818-1850) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illinois Middle | (1850-1900) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Illinois Late | (1900-present) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Famous People | (give names & dates) |

8. Specific Date: 1877

Areas of significance (check one or more of the following)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal (historic) | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal (pre-historic) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | |

Brief statement of significance: (include all names and dates) Use additional sheets if necessary. Recently saved & connected to war museum. Several in front

9. Form prepared by:

Name and Title: T.H. Date: _____
Organization: _____ Phone: _____
Street and number: _____
City or Town: _____ County: _____ Zip Code _____

During the course of the Survey we often find it necessary to search for references for a particular site. When filling out the Survey form, please list according to the following example, published references to the site for which forms are being completed. If a bibliography can be compiled, it will greatly deduct from the Survey's task.

Bibliography

Robertson, Robert, Of Whales and Men. New York, Alfred K. Knopf, Inc., 1954.

