

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**SENT TO D.C.**

7-6-00

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

**1. NAME OF PROPERTY**

**HISTORIC NAME:** William Brown Building  
**OTHER NAMES/SITE NUMBER:**

**2. LOCATION**

**STREET & NUMBER:** 226-228 South Main Street  
**CITY OR TOWN:** Rockford  
**STATE:** IL **CODE:** IL **COUNTY:** Winnebago **CODE:** 201

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION:** N/A  
**VICINITY:**  
**ZIP CODE:** 61101

**3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_ statewide  locally. (\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William L. Wheeler / SHP

7. 5. 2000

Signature of certifying official  
State Historic Preservation Officer, IL Historic Preservation Agency  
State or Federal agency and bureau

Date

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
(\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_ entered in the National Register  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_ removed from the National Register

\_\_\_ other (explain):

Property Name: William Brown Building

County and State: Winnebago County, Illinois

**5. CLASSIFICATION**

**OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY:** Private

**CATEGORY OF PROPERTY:**

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
BUILDINGS	1	0
SITES	0	0
STRUCTURES	0	0
OBJECTS	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

**NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER:** 0

**NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING:** N/A

**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

**HISTORIC FUNCTIONS:** COMMERCE/ Office

**CURRENT FUNCTIONS:** WORK IN PROGRESS  
RESIDENTIAL/Multi-family  
COMMERCE/Office

**7. DESCRIPTION**

**ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:** Romanesque Revival

**MATERIALS:**

- FOUNDATION:** Concrete
- ROOF:** Asphalt
- WALLS:** Brick
- OTHER:** Stone

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION:** See Continuation Sheets

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## 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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### APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA:

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

### CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS: N/A

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B. Removed from its original location.
- C. A birthplace or a grave.
- D. A cemetery.
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F. A commemorative property.
- G. Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: ARCHITECTURE

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1892

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1892

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER:

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: See Continuation Sheets

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## 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

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BIBLIOGRAPHY: See Continuation Sheets

### PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

### PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Federal agency
- University
- Other State agency
- Local Government: Rockford Historic Preservation Commission
- Other: Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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**ACREAGE OF PROPERTY:** 0.34 acres (14, 875 square feet)

UTM REFERENCES:	ZONE EASTING	NORTHING	ZONE EASTING	NORTHING
1	16	327190	4681620	
2				
3				
4				

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:** See Continuation Sheet

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:** See Continuation Sheet

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**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

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**NAME/TITLE:** Susan M. Baldwin

**ORGANIZATION:** Baldwin Historic Properties

**DATE:** February 1, 2000

**STREET & NUMBER:** 70 West Hubbard, #203

**TELEPHONE:** 312.321.0707

**CITY OR TOWN:** Chicago     **STATE:** IL

**ZIP CODE:** 60610

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**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION**

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**CONTINUATION SHEETS:**

**MAPS:**

A USGS MAP (7.5 OR 15 MINUTE SERIES) INDICATING THE PROPERTY'S LOCATION.

A FLOOR PLAN(S) FOR INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

A SKETCH MAP FOR HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND PROPERTIES HAVING LARGE ACREAGE OR NUMEROUS RESOURCES.

**PHOTOGRAPHS:**

REPRESENTATIVE BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE PROPERTY.

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS:**

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**PROPERTY OWNER**

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**NAME:** Brown Building Limited Partnership C/O Wm. Charles Investments

**STREET & NUMBER:** 4920 Forest Hills Road

**TELEPHONE:** 815.654.6252

**CITY OR TOWN:** Loves Park

**STATE:** IL

**ZIP CODE:** 61111

*Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.*

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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

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Name of property: William Brown Building  
County and State: Winnebago County, Illinois

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### 7. DESCRIPTION

The William Brown Building, located at 226-228 South Main Street in Rockford, Illinois, is a six-story commercial building situated on the northeast corner of South Main and Chestnut streets, with the rear of the property extending to Wyman Street on the east. The building is prominent, as the centerpiece of a four-block area that, with one exception, has been cleared of historic buildings. It is in the central part of the historic west side downtown, just two blocks west of the Rock River. The west and south facades face onto the streets, extending to the sidewalk, and are treated similarly as the primary facades. Adjacent to the building on the north is a parking lot. Across the street to the west, facing its main entrance, is the block-large recently constructed Rockford Metro Center. Directly to the east across the street is a new parking garage. Across the southwest corner from the building is a turn-of-the-century brick commercial structure of simple design. Across the street from the rear of the building to the east is additional new construction. With the exception of the Metro Center, all of these buildings are lower than the height of the William Brown Building.

Completed in 1892, the William Brown Building is of Richardsonian Romanesque design, with street elevations constructed in a monochromatic palette of smooth red brick above a first-story base of rusticated red stone. The smooth face of the six-story structure is enhanced by rounded corner bays at the southwest and southeast corners. Above the first story with its storefronts and monumental arched entrance, the windows are one-over-one light, double-hung sash in sets of three. The common brick of the north and east elevations, with odd numbers of single, punched openings, has been covered in stucco. The masonry bearing walls surround an interior structure of slender cast iron columns supporting wood floors. There is a poured concrete foundation and a masonry, finished basement. The building is nearly square in plan, extending 88 feet along South Main Street and 92 feet to the east along Chestnut Street from the southwest corner. At the rear of the building on the east the property extends for another 60 feet, where it is paved and contains a drive-up banking facility. The other three elevations extend to the property line. The flat roof, covered in built-up asphalt, is punctuated by the corner bays which extend for another eight feet above the roof and a parapet on the west facade.

The primary west facade is five bays wide, which includes the rounded bay at the southwest corner as the southernmost bay. The other four bays are identical in elevation above the first floor. The monumental arched entry is in the second bay from the north, slightly recessed in the rusticated stone facing the first story. On the cornice band separating the first and second stories, above the entrance, is carved the name of the building "William Brown Building" in large simple letters. The entrance itself is set in an ornamented carved stone Romanesque rounded arch with successive layers of carved ornamentation. The outer rim of the archivolt consists of an egg and dart molding. Slightly recessed from that is a wider band of anthemion and palmette design, and further recessed is a third molding with two narrow bands of

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design, one an egg and dart and the other a palmette. Recessed an additional two feet is the entrance, consisting of a recent metal framed system of double doors with glass panels flanked by narrow sidelights under a three-part transom with an arched top. This system, painted dark green and designed to be sympathetic to the original, replaced inappropriate doors that had been installed in the 1970's. On either side of the arch and even with its top are round plaques surrounded by carved egg and dart molding and containing plain white marble slabs, which are probably not original. The chronology of building permits indicates a remodeling of the entrance in 1924.

The rusticated stone of the first story, set above a three-foot base of smooth stone, is set in ashlar bond with monochromatic mortar joints. Except where it faces the entry, it consists of massive piers that separate the storefronts. The storefront windows are set above metal panel bulkheads, rather than punched in the stone. To the north of the entrance is one bay of storefront. Its typical metal-framed design consists of a set of plate glass windows divided by a mullion set above the paneled bulkhead and below a transom which repeats the window design. This design, installed in 1997 at the same time as the entrance doors, replaces a previous alteration of all the storefronts on both the west and south elevations in 1963, when they were covered over. The current configuration is similar to that indicated on early photographs. To the south of the entrance are three bays of storefronts, divided by metal mullions that extend to the ground. Two of these are the same as the one described above, but the one nearest the entrance is a three-part design comprised of a center set of double doors with sidelights below a three-part transom. The southwest corner stone pier of the building is massive where it supports and intersects the base of the turret. The decorative underside of the turret is covered in metal, painted green, and continues as a paneled cornice separating the first and second stories. Directly above it is a two-part molded stone string course with a scroll design above and egg and dart molding. An ornamental four-sided clock with a pyramid roof capped by a finial is attached to the southwest corner of the building. Green and red striped canvas awnings decorate each storefront.

The four bays of the west elevation are divided into two horizontal sections. The second, third and fourth story windows and spandrel panels are slightly recessed within three-story arches, while the fifth and sixth story windows are simple trabeated openings. Each bay is comprised of a set of three windows at each story, separated by brick mullions except at the fourth story where each opening is a tri-partite arched window with metal mullions. Framing each bay of windows at the second and third stories, the continuous pier is trimmed with a quoin decoration formed by molded masonry units inserted every fourth course to imitate the size of stone. Just above the sill line at the fourth story is an impost from which springs a rounded arch of voisoirs trimmed with egg and dart molding at both the inside and outside edges. The outside edge of the impost is embellished with a foliate design that rises vertically to the outside edge of the arch. Above the crowning of each arch is an anthemion medallion. The recessed spandrel panels, trimmed with a molded border, feature colored terra cotta shields and festoons. The

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narrower panels between the third and fourth stories have shields and laurels. Separating the fifth and sixth stories is a composite cornice line, consisting of a row of corbelled brick dentils, and a scrolled ornamental band beneath a projecting molded cornice. Above the sixth story is another row of corbelled brick dentils.

All of the windows in the building were replaced in 1969. They are metal, double-hung, one-over-one light, with the exception of the side windows of the tri-partite set on the fourth story, which are fixed light windows set into the curve of the arch. Early photographs indicate that the original windows were also double-hung sash, one-over-one light windows. All of the windows have monochromatic stone sills and lintels, which are continuous for each set of three windows.

The south elevation is a repeat of the west elevation, with the same arched treatment at the second, third and fourth stories, in a three-bay center section which is flanked by rounded turrets on both the southwest and southeast corners. The fifth and sixth stories are treated the same as well. The turrets are of a continuous design with the facades, cornice lines and trim following the curve of the rounded portion, but are otherwise smooth. Instead of sets of three windows, the turrets have sets of two, all trabeated, separated by brick mullions. At the ground floor of the south elevation, there are five storefronts, each of the same typical design with a set of windows above a metal bulkhead panel with a transom above. The three storefronts on the east end are separated by stone piers, but the two at the west end are inserted into one masonry opening as are the three around the corner on the west elevation, and are divided by a metal mullion. This was the original condition at this bay, as indicated in early photographs.

Around the west and south elevations the building is crowned with a wide, overhanging copper cornice, which consists of several parts. The lower band is a row of dentils, above which is a row of projecting ornate brackets, topped by a further projecting molded cornice band. Set back from the cornice but extending above it over the entrance bay on the west elevation is an ornamental pediment with classical details in copper, with bracketed sides and a corniced top, from which a decorative parapet wall extends along the west and south elevations, appearing as a cresting. Also projecting above the cornice for eight feet are the two turrets, with brick walls and sets of windows, above which is another copper cornice. Currently with flat roofs, they were originally crowned with conical roofs and finials, but these were removed sometime between 1969 and 1994.

The north and east elevations are constructed of common brick. In poor condition, the brick was covered over in 1979-80. The north elevation, which has ten tiers of single double-hung windows, has had the windows at the first, second and third stories filled in with concrete block behind the covering material. The location of these openings is clearly discernible so that they can be reopened. The east rear elevation has also suffered alterations in the window openings at the first and second stories. In 1949 a concrete

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ramp was constructed for a drive-up facility, and the permits indicate a "receiving window" construction in 1956. In 1963 a steel-framed structure was added to the east elevation, presumably for the drive-up facility. This was later removed, and a newer canopy was constructed which still exists. It is attached to a small addition at the northeast corner, and extends east to the rear of the lot. There is a receiving window in the wall of the small addition under the canopy. There are five tiers of window openings with double-hung windows on the east elevation, and one tier of doors that lead onto a metal fire escape that is attached to the south end of the east elevation. At the northeast corner where the small addition is attached is a projecting chimney which has been parged over.

### Interior

The first floor of the interior, which is a tall one-story space of 16 feet with mezzanines, suffered numerous alterations over the years, but some of these were reversed in a 1997 rehabilitation. The upper floor offices were reached from a small two-story foyer and lobby inside the main entrance at the second bay from the north on the west elevation. The lobby is 12 feet wide and 36 feet long, with two elevators on the north wall. In 1936 the elevator shafts were enclosed, and in the 1970's and 1980's, the ceiling was lowered, obscuring architectural details. Also, a wall was constructed between the east end of the lobby and the staircase, which covered over the small balcony at the stair landing which looked out into the lobby. Currently, the suspended ceiling has been removed, so that the original high coffered ceiling in two sections at the west end of the lobby has been revealed and will be restored. Also revealed were four pilasters with decorative capitals which will also be restored. Plans are to remove the wall and doors closing off the staircase, which is a wooden, closed-riser stairs ascending from the first to the sixth stories. It has a rounded, splayed bottom step and closed stringers with landings returning on itself. The very decorative balustrade is somewhat Eastlake in design, with cut-out fleur-de-lis patterns at the bottoms and tops joining the paired, turned balusters. The newel posts are square, while the bottom post, which is larger, is turned in a diamond shape. Running along the enclosure wall is a dado of wooden panels topped by a railing.

An opening in the north wall of the lobby leads into the retail space of the north storefront. Currently vacant and under construction, the space had been altered with a suspended, lowered ceiling, carpeting, and thin partition walls. The suspended ceiling has been removed revealing a two-story tall space with a partial mezzanine.

To the south of the main entrance is retail space that, since the completion of the building, has been occupied by a bank, currently Amcore Bank. The 16 foot- tall space underwent a major renovation in the 1920's, creating a terrazzo floor and re-designed columns and moldings in the classical style with Art



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Deco inspired decorations. Later, in the 1970's and 1980's, these designs were buried under suspended ceilings, carpeting, and other finishes. In 1997, the current owners removed the later alterations and restored the 1920's features, at the same time that the storefront windows were restored. The large space is roughly bisected from west to east with a row of square columns with decorative capitals that support the main beam. The beam is finished as a cornice that extends around the perimeter of the large banking room and is trimmed with low-relief stylized Art Deco designs in plaster. The terrazzo floor is designed in a tile pattern with diamond inserts in green, with green borders, all set in brass casing. Along the row of columns in the center of the room is a marble staircase which descends to the basement where the main bank vault is located, along with additional office space with new finishes. Another vault is located along the north wall of the first floor space.

Above the second floor, the floor plan, with iron columns placed at approximately 13' apart, is laid out around a light well, 12 feet wide, that extends 24 feet from the rear of the stairwell at the center of the building to the east elevation. Originally open, it was closed in on the east elevation, presumably when the covering was installed over the rear elevation masonry. The stairwell forms the core of the building, with masonry vaults on either side of it and bathrooms adjacent to the south vault. From the stair landings, doors lead into the elevator foyer on each floor. The elevator foyers, which are varying sizes, have all been altered with new finishes and trim and lowered suspended tile ceilings. Typically, other doors from the stair landings lead to the corridors which may have originally followed the plan of the building around the core but most have since been altered into different plans. There are a few segments of corridor that follow the original configuration, with the outlines of transoms above the office doors remain on a portion of one floor. Otherwise, the corridors have been altered with new finishes and wall coverings and lowered suspended tile ceilings. Each floor contains six vaults which were built into the masonry of the building for fire protection of documents or materials, in an age when fires were more prevalent. In addition to the vaults on either side of the stairwell, there are two vaults on each floor placed into the west perimeter walls on either side of the entrance bay on each floor, and two more in the south perimeter walls - one near the turret at the east end and the other farther to the west. While those built into the walls are small, each vault has a steel door, still in working order. The masonry vault walls feature rows of corbelling where the top of the vault rises to the ceiling, and three layers of soldier courses forming a segmental arch over the door.

The office spaces of the upper floors have had partition walls and finishes much altered over the years, and they are currently in poor condition. The ceilings have been lowered with suspended tile below the level of the window tops. The floor plan and conditions vary on each floor. Most of the wood trim - door and window surrounds - have been removed or replaced. The few remaining areas of trim suggest that the original wood window trim consisted of a narrow apron below a slightly extending sill, 4" wide jamb trim with a simple edge molding, and a 6" piece across the top with a slightly projecting edge

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molding. One office contains 10" wide three-part baseboards that appear to be original, but other spaces have simple 3" modern wood or vinyl bases. The interior of the third floor office spaces has been removed to reveal the structure and condition of the building materials. In an interesting note, in the original plaster walls around the elevator foyer, it was found that straw was used as a binder in the plaster. This feature will be preserved. Currently, the building is under rehabilitation as apartments on floors two through six, following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

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### 8. SIGNIFICANCE

#### Summary

The William Brown Building at 226-228 South Main Street in Rockford, Illinois is nominated under criterion C for designation to the National Register of Historic Places as a locally significant example of Romanesque Revival architecture. Designed in 1889-91 and completed in 1892 when the economy began to decline, it was one of the last major commercial buildings completed in Rockford before the severe depression of 1893 crippled the town for the remainder of the decade. The William Brown Building is representative of the Romanesque Revival style that evolved from H.H. Richardson's incorporation of the historical style into a distinctly American style. It retains the design and detailing that characterize the style, and became typical of many prominent commercial buildings of the early 1890's. The William Brown Building's significant features of the style include its rusticated red stone base surrounding a monumental arched entry, monochromatic smooth red brick facing the upper stories, grouped windows recessed within arches supported by pilasters, and rounded turrets. Occupying the prominent corner of South Main and Chestnut streets, the William Brown Building location was a result of the increased development on the west side of the river after the construction of the Chestnut Street Bridge. Designed during the brief flowering of this style before it was subverted by the 1890's depression, it is one of last remaining significant Romanesque Revival buildings in Rockford. With the recent rehabilitation of its first story storefronts, the building has excellent integrity, particularly in its exterior detailing and design.

#### Architecture

The design of the William Brown Building was probably inspired, as were many commercial buildings in the Midwest from 1888 to 1893, by the design of Burnham and Root's 1888 Rookery Building in Chicago (209 South LaSalle Street, National Register listed). Daniel Burnham (1846-1912) and John Wellborn Root (1846-1891) were, in turn, inspired by the work of H.H. Richardson. One of the great American architects, Richardson is best known for his adaptation of the most direct and powerful elements of the historical Romanesque style into a distinctly American style that, in the words of Henry Russell Hitchcock, "helped greatly in liberating America from the indiscriminate imitation of European revivals."<sup>1</sup> Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886) studied at Harvard and at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. He established a practice in Boston and won competitions for the design of two influential

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<sup>1</sup> H.R. Hitchcock. *The Architecture of H.H. Richardson and His Times* (Revised ed. Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1966), p. 417.

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churches - Brattle Square Church in 1870 and Trinity Church in 1872 - which established him as an original, though learned architect. He was attracted by utilitarian works, and incorporated massiveness, rusticated stonework, and large rounded arches with monochromatic masonry, belt courses and turrets. His Marshall Field Wholesale Building constructed in Chicago between 1885 and 1887 (demolished) was considered his greatest achievement and the basis of his decisive influence on commercial architecture. The building illustrated how a great volume could be integrated with strength, vitality, and simplicity. With its economy of detail and subtle rhythms, "it was a forerunner of the new architecture of industry and commerce, where volume and surface texture and the free expression of structure determine aesthetic effect."<sup>2</sup> Composed of rusticated stone, the sets of windows are recessed between piers which extend up to rounded arches. The facade is divided into distinct sections of fenestration, each of which divides the pattern into narrower sets of windows.

It was the firms of Adler and Sullivan, and Burnham and Root, who took Richardson's style and adapted it to the iron and steel framing of the new tall commercial structures. Adler and Sullivan's Auditorium Building, constructed from 1886 to 1890, is clearly inspired by the Marshall Field Wholesale Building. In the words of Burchard and Bush-Brown, "Here in the sight of this building, [the Marshall Field Wholesale Building], Sullivan found what others would find later, a way of form so that the technical need not be ugly and the aesthetic would be neither borrowed nor flimsy. Richardson gave to many architects a goal of quality, an index of scale, a sense of stateliness possible in architecture for an industrial civilization."<sup>3</sup> The massive Auditorium Building, rising to 10 stories with a 16-story tower, incorporates a rusticated base and smooth upper stories with the middle story windows recessed between piers rising to massive rounded arches. The upper stories are again set apart with belt courses and cornice ornament.

Carl Condit called the Rookery "a livelier and richer essay in the architecture of commerce than Richardson's store."<sup>4</sup> While Richardson's style was suited to masonry load-bearing construction, it was the adaptation of the style to metal framed buildings that allowed it to become less massive and livelier, with more expanse of glass and opportunity for ornamentation. Burnham and Root were the primary champions of the tall Romanesque-inspired commercial building of the late 1880's and early 1890's. Root's design facility, and the sheer number of buildings he designed during this time, lead to the popularity of the Romanesque Revival-inspired tall commercial building throughout the Midwest. Daniel

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<sup>2</sup> Carl Condit, *The Chicago School of Architecture: A History of Commercial and Public Building in the Chicago Area 1875-1925* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), p.61.

<sup>3</sup> John Burchard and Albert Bush-Brown, *The Architecture of America: A Social and Cultural History* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1961), p. 186

<sup>4</sup> Condit, *Op. Cit.*, p. 63

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Burnham had teamed up with John Wellborn Root, his first partner, in 1873. Burnham's strength lay in his vision and business acumen, while Root was the talented and innovative designer. Condit has said that Root "led the way in bringing the building art of the nineteenth century to its maturity... It was Root who took the ultimate step of freeing the big commercial building from any dependence on masonry adjuncts and creating the plan and structure of the urban office block as we know it today."<sup>5</sup>

The precursor for the Rookery was Burnham and Root's Insurance Exchange Building of 1884-85 (demolished). At ten stories in height, it featured a similar horizontal sections as the Rookery, separated by belt courses. The second and ninth story windows are rounded arches which terminate continuous piers rising from the base of the section. The sets of windows are recessed within the arches. This building also is capped by small corner turrets similar to those of the Rookery. On the Rookery, while incorporating many of H.H. Richardson's Romanesque features, Root constructed the masonry facades over an iron frame. The smooth red brick facade above the rusticated red granite base are embellished with intricate ornamentation. There is a monumental arched entry set in the rugged base, with storefronts set between columns on either side. The facade is comprised of several sections of windows between horizontal belt courses and vertical continuous columns that project slightly from sets of windows and spandrels. The most prominent section includes three stories of slightly recessed windows that form an arch at the top. The piers separating each tier are embellished with low relief ornamental capitals. The central bay above the arched entry has a slightly rounded wall plane, and is surmounted by a decorative parapet that extends above the cornice, accentuated with small round turrets, which also highlight the corners above the decorative cornice.

The Rookery was followed by a series of significant commercial buildings by Burnham and Root that continued to explore variations in its stylistic and structural themes. These included the Second Rand McNally Building (1889-90, demolished), the Great Northern Hotel (1892, demolished), with its smooth undulating surfaces and rounded corners; the Ashland Block (1892); and two of the most significant, the Women's Temple and the Masonic Temple, both completed in 1892 and since demolished. The 22-story Masonic Temple was considered the leading skyscraper of 1892, and was the tallest. These buildings had in common the subordination of detail to the mass and structure. With monumental arched entries, rusticated bases, and sets of recessed windows between continuous piers terminating in rounded arches, these buildings represented a significant collection of the some of the most American of early skyscrapers. Unfortunately, none of them have survived, leaving the Rookery as the sole ancestor of this legacy in Chicago's Loop.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 99

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Many of the features of the Rookery can be seen in the William Brown Building, which was designed as early as 1890. A detailed etching of the building, as it was built, was featured in a published book in early 1891.<sup>6</sup> The William Brown Building incorporates a similar light touch in its Romanesque interpretation, as adapted to a smaller building and tighter budget. The William Brown Building is square, as is the Rookery, and constructed around a light court. In the case of the William Brown Building, it is more of a light well, but it is also supported by iron framing. The overall building construction is, like the Rookery, a combination of load-bearing masonry and iron columns and beams. The facade composition of the William Brown Building is very similar to that of the Rookery. While the William Brown Building is only five bays on a side (including the turrets) and the Rookery is nine, the William Brown Building incorporates a similarly scaled monumental arched entry set in a rusticated stone first story, with storefronts between the stone piers. The three stories of slightly recessed sets of windows and spandrels set in the continuous piers topped by an arch are very similar to those on the Rookery, as is the cornice belt course below and above the sixth story, and the decorative parapet with a pediment feature that emphasizes the entrance bay. The large corner turrets with conical roofs are not a feature seen on the Rookery, but given the location of the William Brown Building next to buildings of no more than three stories in height, it enhanced its prominence so that it could easily be seen from the river and from the east side of Rockford across the river.

The design of the William Brown Building includes a number of classical revival details as well, particularly in the carved ornamentation surrounding window openings and along belt courses. Also revealing this reference are the dentils and the parapet ornament at the top of the building, and the spandrel decorations with painted terra cotta shields and festoons.

### History and Development

Rockford's early development was concurrent on both sides of the river, but up to the time of the construction of the William Brown Building and the depression of 1893, the main commercial area was on the east side of the river. The William Brown Building is one of a few commercial buildings on the west side that predates 1900. When the first settlement began near the west side of the rock ford of the Rock River in 1834, it was called Midway, because it was halfway between Galena and Chicago. A year later another settlement began on the east side of the river, which progressed faster in terms of its commercial development. In 1836 the founder of the west side hired a surveyor to lay out streets. A few months later the east side did also, but found that because of the contours and land conditions, the street would not be able to line up with those on the west side. This condition remains today, though some

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<sup>6</sup> Eugene Browne and Ford F. Rowe, compilers. *Industrial and Picturesque Rockford*. Rockford: Forest City Publishing Co., 1891.

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duplications of names and other problems were resolved when Rockford was incorporated as a city in 1852. Rockford's industrial development began with the formation of the Rockford Hydraulic and Manufacturing Company, which was succeeded in 1851 by the Rockford Water Power Company. A dam was built at the rock ford just south of downtown, with a millrace on the west side, resulting in the Water Power District which became the heart of Rockford's early industrial development. A second boost to development was the railroad, with the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad reaching Rockford in 1852. Also in that year the city obtained approval for bonds to build a new two lane covered bridge across the river at State Street. East State Street, which is now a National Register Historic District, was Rockford's first commercial strip. The first railroad bridge was built over the river in 1853. There are only three or four commercial buildings remaining in Rockford that predate the Civil War, and one of these, the Chick House (119-123 South Main Street, National Register listed), has not been drastically altered and/or covered with siding.<sup>7</sup>

Although Rockford, like most cities, suffered through the depression of the 1870's, many immigrants from the Scandinavian countries continued to arrive and settle. A new courthouse, on the same west side location as the old, was constructed and dedicated in 1878, designed by Chicago architect Henry Gay. There are also several commercial buildings on the east side from the 1870's that are extant. Adding to the transportation network, the Rockford Street Railway Company organized in 1880. Electrically powered street cars arrived in 1889, the year that the William Brown Building was planned. There was much optimism in the city in the 1880's, as evidenced by the city's growth and large building projects, both private and municipal. At the beginning of the decade, two new bridges were constructed over the river - a new bridge for State Street, and a bridge at Walnut/Chestnut. The first major Romanesque Revival building in the city was completed in 1890 at the corner of State and Madison Streets, to house the Rockford YMCA. After suffering alterations and changes in tenants over the years, it received a rehabilitation in 1985 and still stands as an important landmark. During this decade also, more commercial structures began to be built around State Street on the west side, where the William Brown Building was one of the early large and prominent buildings. Much of this was due to the construction of the bridge at Chestnut Street, which offered easy access to Main Street. At the beginning of 1893 the Nelson House, a \$250,000 hotel, was nearing completion across the street from the William Brown Building. It was noted in a publication that "the commercial anchors of the west end of the Chestnut Street Bridge... were the Nelson Hotel and the William Brown Building..."<sup>8</sup> The large and imposing Nelson Hotel, designed in a Victorian Romanesque style, has since been demolished.

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<sup>7</sup> Rockford Historic Preservation Commission, *1994 Survey of Historic Resources, Downtown Rockford, Illinois*, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Jon W. Lundin, *Rockford: An Illustrated History*. Tarzana, CA., American Historical Press, 1996.

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The depression which hit in 1893 and lasted through the decade was devastating to Rockford. In 1893 the city had two state banks and six national banks, including the People's Bank of Rockford located in the William Brown Building. Many of these did not recover, although the People's State Bank continued. As the city recovered, the west side of downtown became the growing commercial center for business and retail, while the east side showed little substantial change after 1900. It is partially for this reason that the East Side Historic District has maintained a more cohesive collection of historic buildings, while the west side has been altered by development and later urban renewal. After recovery from the depression, many commercial buildings were built in the more simple Chicago School style, while public and institutional buildings tended toward the Classical Revival style. Thus, the influence of H.H. Richardson and the Romanesque Revival style were brief in Rockford, as elsewhere.

While there are several early photographs of the William Brown Building in addition to the 1891 etching, there are few records of its construction, and the architect is not now known. The Nelson House from 1893, which bore similarities to the William Brown Building, was designed by D.S. Shureman. Possibly the similarities were a conscious attempt in flattery or to be in context. The *Rockford Morning Star* of May 7, 1892 reported briefly on the William Brown Building's completion. The directory of 1892 listed the address of the People's Bank of Rockford as "after April 1, 1892 will be in the William Brown Building at the corner of Main and Chestnut." It listed the same entry for the Rockford Insurance Company.<sup>9</sup> However, the naming of the building is not a mystery. William Brown was a highly respected personage in the city, born in 1819, who died on January 15, 1891, as construction was proceeding on the William Brown Building.<sup>10</sup> There were many things named in his honor in Rockford, among which the William Brown Building is one of the most enduring.

In addition to the People's Bank of Rockford which located on the first floor of the building, and the Rockford Insurance Company, the building was home to the Grand Army of the Republic. Rockford veterans of the Union Army during the Civil War were instrumental in the founding of the organization in the years following the war. The organization located in the William Brown Building shortly after its completion and remained there for years. The People's Bank of Rockford was an early ancestor of the Amcore Bank that is located in the same offices today. By the 1920's it was known as the People's State Bank, which was one of few banks to continue through the crash of 1929 and was recapitalized in 1931 as the Illinois National Bank. It continued under that name until 1985 when it merged with American National Bank and became Amcore.

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<sup>9</sup> Rockford City Directory, 1892.

<sup>10</sup> *Judge William Brown*, Privately published, n.d., in Rockford Public Library.



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The extant Romanesque Revival buildings in Rockford are few and easy to spot. The YMCA building, known thereafter as the Merlin Block, the East Side Inn and currently as the East Side Center (220 East State Street), as mentioned above was completed in 1890 on the east side of the river by the commercial district. While designed with all the typical facilities of a YMCA, it was only used as such until 1906, and thereafter for offices and a hotel. Vacant from about 1968 until 1987, it suffered deterioration in addition to alterations. However, while the entrance was moved from State Street and the windows have been replaced, the exterior retains a high degree of integrity. It is three and a half stories in height on a raised basement, with a complex gable and hipped roof with numerous gabled dormers. The basement and first floor are constructed of rusticated limestone, while the upper stories are clad in brick with extensive limestone trim, accentuating the contrast of materials. The main entry and first floor windows are in massive arches. There is a six-story corner turret with a seamed metal roof. While the first floor exhibits strong Romanesque Revival characteristics, the upper floors also display Queen Anne influence, with complex massing and surfaces, in addition to the contrasting colors. With its different function and inspiration, the East side Center, which was rehabbed in 1987, is a complementary structure to the William Brown Building, representing an interesting example of the Romanesque Revival.

The other Romanesque Revival building that can be compared to the William Brown Building is the Stewart Block just up the street at 105-115 South Main Street, also completed in 1890. With stores on the ground floor and offices on the second floor, it housed the Rockford Business College in the two top floors. The four-story structure is in the middle of the block on a commercial strip of older buildings known as Stewart Square. The building, like the others on the block, has storefronts on the ground floor which in this case have stone surrounds. The building could have been inspired by the design of the Rookery Building. Above the storefronts, the three-bay facade is brick with sandstone at the top of the fourth story above the arched window openings, and a limestone balustrade at the base of the second story. The bays on either side of the central bay are each further divided into three bays of windows, each separated by pilasters. Further decoration includes fluted columns on ornamental brackets at the top of the building, and decorative brick patterns between the second and third stories. Originally, the building had four "turret" finials at the top of the building through the cornice, punctuating the corners and bay separations. The Stewart Block has suffered major alterations, having had a complete new facade applied in 1958, including covering the first floor and bricking in the central arched windows, and removing the extension of the second and third story central bay windows. In the mid 1980's, however, the building was rehabbed, the facade covering was removed and the central arch was re-opened. New windows were installed in a similar pattern, though the top-story central arch window is visibly different. The ground floor, also with new storefronts, does not appear to be as original.

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The William Brown Building is currently undergoing a certified rehabilitation to convert the upper floors to residential use. The current owners purchased the building in 1996 and rehabilitated the first story, removing the coverings over the storefronts and restoring them to the extent possible. They also preserved and repaired the monumental stone entrance, and restored the 1920's features of the first floor banking space. The first floor banking space will remain as existing, with the bank in the large retail space to the south and a new retail use in the small storefront to the north. On the upper floors, the masonry will be repaired while preserving all details. The inferior metal sash windows that were installed in 1969 will be replaced with new windows in the double-hung, one-over-one configuration. The entrance foyer and decorative staircase are being restored. Partition walls on the upper floors, of which few if any are original, will be removed to accommodate seven or eight new apartments per floor. The apartments will have all new mechanicals, finishes and fixtures, but will incorporate the original vaults with steel doors, and the original wood trim pattern on window surrounds and baseboards.

### 9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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*Rockford Morning Star.* May 7, 1892.

### **10. VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Part of Lots Four (4) and Five (5) in Block Six (6) as designated upon the Plat of that part of the Town (now City) of Rockford on the West side of Rock River laid out on the West part of the Southwest Fractional Quarter (1/4) of section Twenty-three (23), Township Forty-four (44) North, Range One (1) East of the Third Principal Meridian, the Plat of which is recorded in Book D of Deeds on Pages 428 and 429 in the Recorder's Office of Winnebago County, Illinois, bounded and described as follows, to-wit: Beginning at the Southwesterly corner of said Lot 5; thence North 30 degrees 01 minutes 31 seconds East, along the Westerly lines of said Lots 5 and 4, a distance of 88.52 feet to a point which is 44.00 feet (as measured along the Westerly line of said lot 4) Southwesterly from the Northwesterly corner of said Lot

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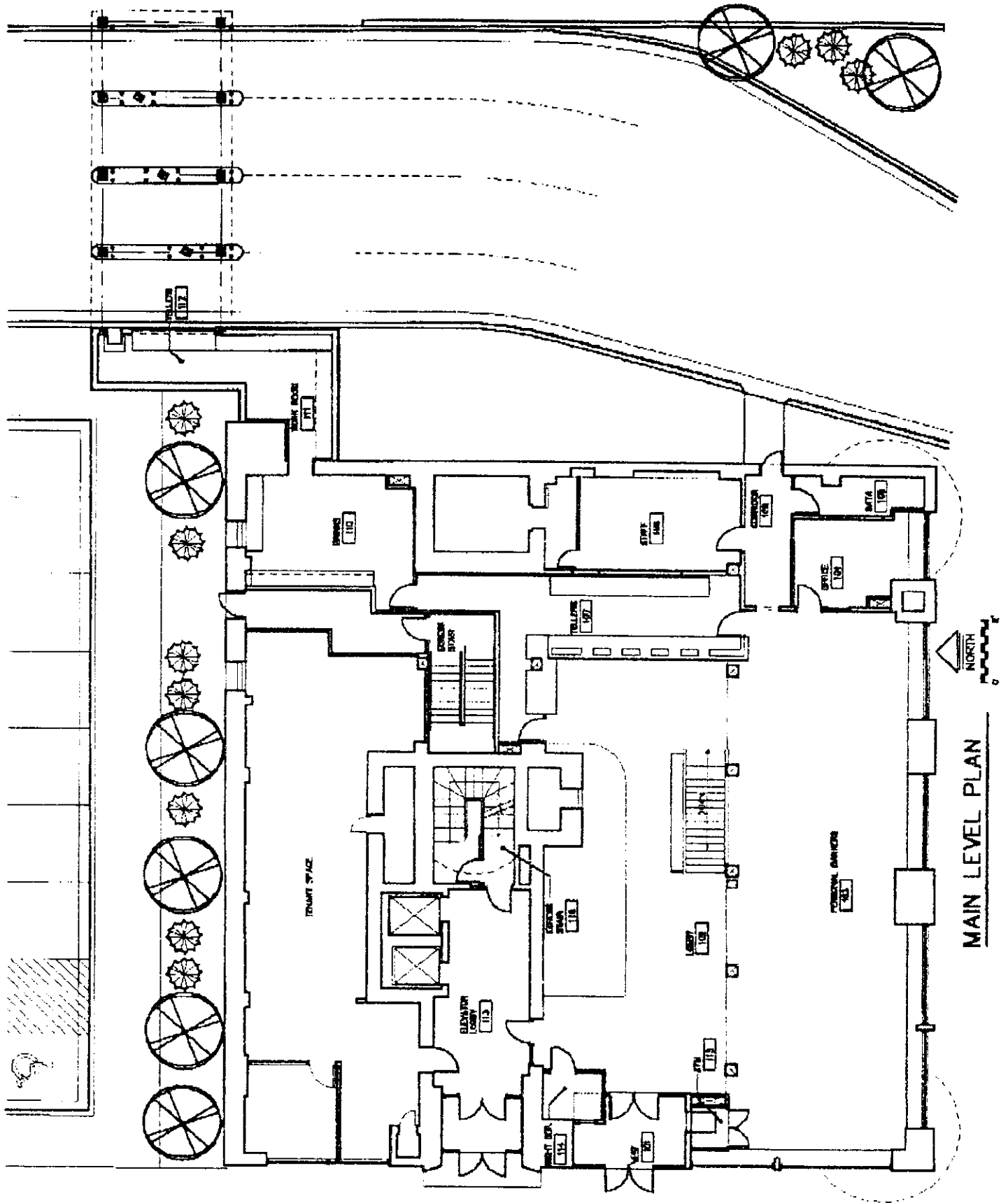
Name of property: William Brown Building  
County and State: Winnebago County, Illinois

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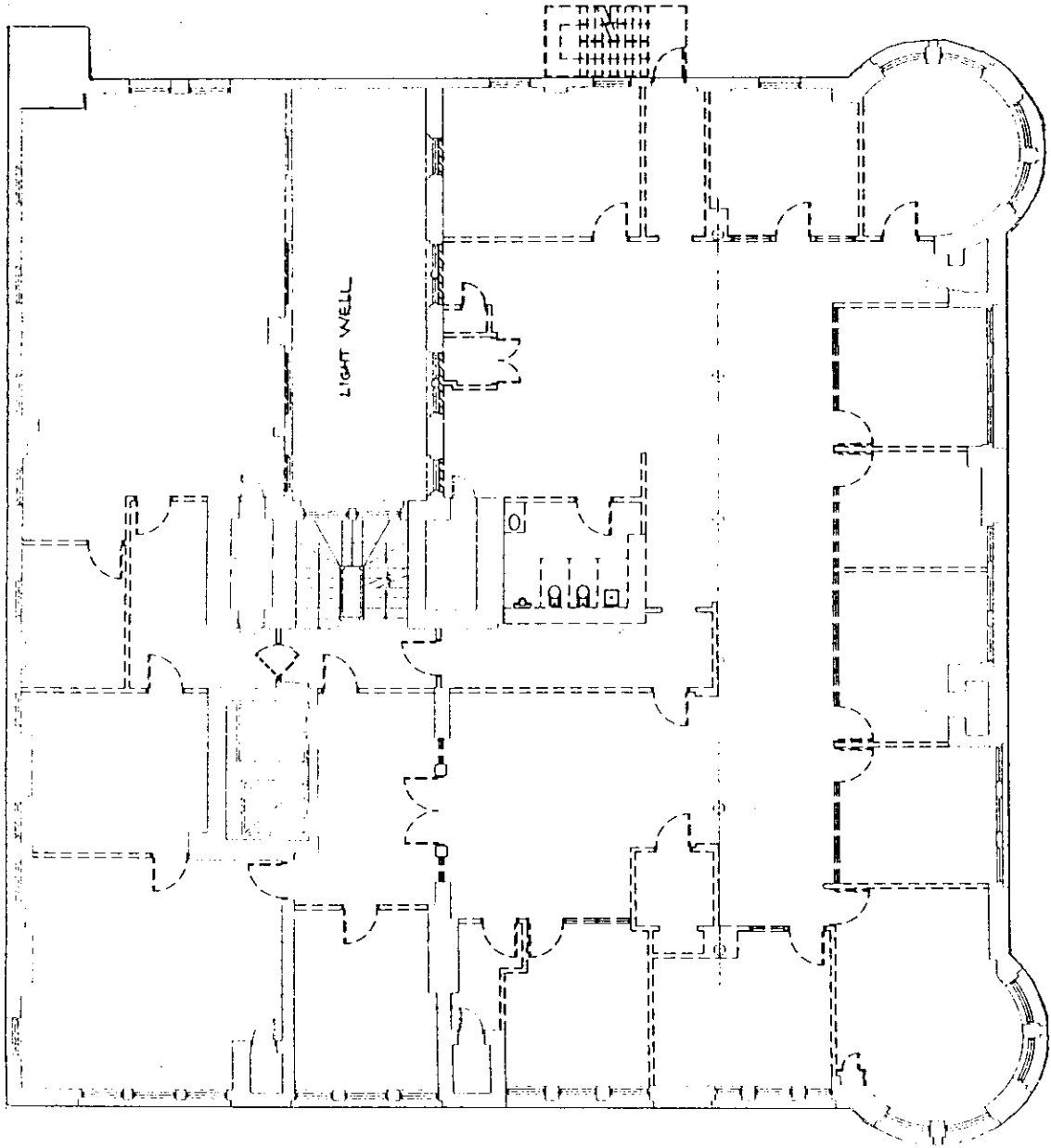
4; thence south 60 degrees 00 minutes 29 seconds East, parallel with the Southerly line of said Lot 5, a distance of 105.00 feet; thence North 30 degrees 01 minutes 31 seconds East, parallel with the Westerly lines of said Lots 5 and 4, a distance of 20.00 feet; thence South 60 degrees 00 minutes 29 seconds East, parallel with the Southerly line of said Lot 5, a distance of 51.42 feet to its intersection with the Easterly line of said Lot 4; thence South 30 degrees 01 minutes 31 seconds West, along the Easterly lines of said Lots 4 and 5, a distance of 108.52 feet to the Southeasterly corner of said Lot 5; thence North 60 degrees 00 minutes 29 seconds West, along the southerly line of said Lot 5, a distance of 156.42 feet to the point of beginning. Situated in the City of Rockford, County of Winnebago and State of Illinois.

### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The above boundaries include all property historically associated with the building.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
 WILLIAM BROWN BUILDING  
 ROCKFORD, IL.



FIFTH FLOOR  
WILLIAM BROWN BUILDING



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20240

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Preservation Services

IN REPLY REFER TO:

The Director of the National Park Service is pleased to announce actions on the following properties for the National Register of Historic Places.

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AUG 18 2000

WEEKLY LIST OF ACTIONS TAKEN ON PROPERTIES: 8/07/00 THROUGH 8/11/00

KEY: State, County, Property Name, Address/Boundary, City, Vicinity, Reference Number, NHL, Action, Date, Multiple Name

ALASKA, YUKON-KOYUKUK BOROUGH-CENSUS AREA, Taylor, James, Cabins, Right bank of the Yukon opposite Fourth of July Creek, Eagle vicinity, 87001203, REMOVED, 8/07/00 (Yukon River Lifeways TR)

CALIFORNIA, MONTEREY COUNTY, Steinbeck, John, House, 132 Central Ave., Salinas, 00000856, LISTED, 8/08/00

COLORADO, LARIMER COUNTY, First National Bank Building, 3728 Cleveland Ave., Wellington, 00000937, LISTED, 8/10/00

CONNECTICUT, LITCHFIELD COUNTY, Rye House, 122-132 Old Mount Tom Rd., Litchfield, 00000940, LISTED, 8/10/00

FLORIDA, ST. LUCIE COUNTY, St. Anastasia Catholic School, Old, 910 Orange Ave., Fort Pierce, 00000941, LISTED, 8/10/00

ILLINOIS, CHAMPAIGN COUNTY, Library--University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1408 W. Gregory Dr., Urbana, 00000413, LISTED, 8/11/00 (University of Illinois Buildings designed by Charles A. Platt MPS)

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY, Buckingham Building, 59-67 E. Van Buren St., Chicago, 00000942, LISTED, 8/10/00

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY, Noble--Seymour--Crippen House, 5622-5624 N. Newark Ave., Chicago, 00000950, LISTED, 8/10/00

ILLINOIS, LAKE COUNTY, Leonard, Clifford Milton, Farm, Hathaway Circle, Lake Forest, 00000944, LISTED, 8/10/00

ILLINOIS, LAKE COUNTY, Morse, Robert Hosmer, House, 1301 Knollwood Circle, Lake Forest, 00000947, LISTED, 8/10/00

ILLINOIS, PERRY COUNTY, Perry County Jail, 108 W. Jackson St., Pinckneyville, 00000943, LISTED, 8/10/00

ILLINOIS, SANGAMON COUNTY, Bretz, John F., House and Warehouse, 113 N. Fifth St., Springfield, 00000945, LISTED, 8/10/00

ILLINOIS, WINNEBAGO COUNTY, Brown, William, Building, 226-228 S. Main St., Rockford, 00000946, LISTED, 8/10/00

ILLINOIS, WINNEBAGO COUNTY, Illinois National Guard Armory, 605 N. Main St., Rockford, 00000948, LISTED, 8/10/00

IOWA, CEDAR COUNTY, Kreinbring Phillips 66 Gas Station, 200 Main St., Lowden, 00000933, LISTED, 8/10/00

IOWA, LINN COUNTY, Second and Third Avenue Historic District, 1400 to 1800 blks of Second Ave. SE and Third Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids, 00000926, LISTED, 8/10/00 (Cedar Rapids, Iowa MPS)

IOWA, WAPELLO COUNTY, Dahlonega School #1, Cty. Rd. H25, 2 mi. NE of Ottumwa, Ottumwa vicinity, 00000934, LISTED, 8/10/00

MASSACHUSETTS, ESSEX COUNTY, Rollins, John R., School, 451 Howard St., Lawrence, 00000956, LISTED, 8/10/00

MASSACHUSETTS, NORFOLK COUNTY, Fisher School--High Street Historic District, 748-850; 751-823 High St., Westwood, 00000687, LISTED, 6/30/00

MONTANA, MISSOULA COUNTY, Lenox Flats, 300-306 West Broadway, Missoula, 00000874, LISTED, 8/08/00 (Missoula MPS)

NEW JERSEY, SOMERSET COUNTY, Higginsville Road Bridges, Higginsville Rd. at the South Branch of the Raritan River, Hillsborough vicinity, 00000916, LISTED, 8/10/00 (Metal Truss Bridges in Somerset County MPS)

NEW YORK, RENSSELAER COUNTY, Blink Bonnie, 1368 Sunset Rd., Schodack, 00000958, LISTED, 8/10/00

OHIO, COLUMBIANA COUNTY, Teegarden--Centennial Covered Bridge, Eagleton Rd. T-761, 0.1 mi E of C-411, Salem vicinity, 00000961, LISTED, 8/10/00

OHIO, CUYAHOGA COUNTY, Olmsted Falls Depot, 25802 Garfield Rd., Olmsted Falls, 00000963, LISTED, 8/10/00

OHIO, SUMMIT COUNTY, Northfield Town Hall, 9546 Brandywine Rd., Northfield, 00000962, LISTED, 8/10/00

PENNSYLVANIA, ERIE COUNTY, Erie Trust Company Building, 1001 State St., Erie, 00000967, LISTED, 8/10/00

PENNSYLVANIA, FULTON COUNTY, Cold Spring Farm, 323 Lions Park Dr., McConnellsburg, Todd, 00000966, LISTED, 8/10/00

PENNSYLVANIA, LANCASTER COUNTY, New Holland Machine Company, 146 E. Franklin St., New Holland, 00000846, LISTED, 8/09/00

PENNSYLVANIA, MERCER COUNTY, Greenville Commercial Historic District, Centered on Main, Canal and Clinton Sts., Greenville, 00000964, LISTED, 8/10/00

PENNSYLVANIA, PHILADELPHIA COUNTY, Bell Telephone Company Building, 1827-35 Arch St., Philadelphia, 00000849, LISTED, 8/07/00

PENNSYLVANIA, YORK COUNTY, Red Lion Borough Historic District, Roughly bounded by Edgewood Ave., Windsor Twp. line, MD&PA RR., Chestnut Rd., Country Club Rd., and York Twp. line., Red Lion, 00000847, LISTED, 8/10/00

TEXAS, BURNET COUNTY, Briggs State Bank, Loop 308, approx. 0.5 mi. N of jct. with US 183, Briggs, 00000885, LISTED, 8/11/00

WASHINGTON, FERRY COUNTY, Fairweather--Trevitt House, 645 Kaufman, Republic, 00000975, LISTED, 8/10/00

WASHINGTON, KING COUNTY, Colvos Store, 123rd Ave. SW and Cove Rd., Vashon, 00000970, LISTED, 8/10/00

WASHINGTON, KING COUNTY, Skykomish Historic Commercial District, Railroad Ave., from 3rd St. to W of N 6th St., and part of Old Cascade Hwy., Skykomish, 00000974, LISTED, 8/10/00

WASHINGTON, KING COUNTY, Steen, Helmer and Selma, House, 10924 SW Cove Rd., Vashon, 00000976, LISTED, 8/10/00

WASHINGTON, KING COUNTY, Vashon Hardware Store, 17601 99th Ave. SW, Vashon, 00000971, LISTED, 8/10/00

WASHINGTON, PIERCE COUNTY, Wilkeson Arch, WA 165, Church St. and Brierhill Blvd., Wilkeson, 00000973, LISTED, 8/10/00

WASHINGTON, SPOKANE COUNTY, Bump Block--Bellevue House--Hawthorne Hotel, S 206 Post St., Spokane, 00000977, LISTED, 8/10/00 (Single Room Occupancy Hotel's in the Central Business District of Spokane MPS)

WASHINGTON, SPOKANE COUNTY, Roosevelt Apartments, 524 W. Seventh Ave., Spokane, 00000969, LISTED, 8/10/00

WISCONSIN, OZAUKEE COUNTY, Jahn, William F., Farmstead, 12112-12116 N. Wauwatosa Rd., Mequon, 00000978, LISTED, 8/10/00