

2nd Draft

WASHINGTON  
For NPS use only

Final  
12/23

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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 Illinois Traction Building

and/or common Illinois Power Building

2. Location

street & number 41 East University Avenue not for publication

city, town Champaign vicinity of

state Illinois code 012 county Champaign code 019

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Illinois Power Group

street & number P. O. Box 427

city, town Champaign vicinity of state Illinois 61820

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Champaign County Courthouse - Recorder's Office

street & number Main Street

city, town Urbana state Illinois

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

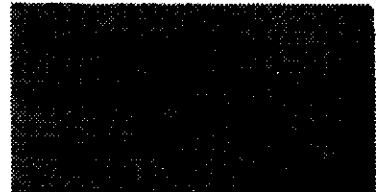
title Preservation and Conservation Association  
Historic Property Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes  no

date August 1984 federal state county  local

depository for survey records Preservation and Conservation Association

city, town Champaign state Illinois

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6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Title Illinois Historic Structures Survey

X state

Date April 1975

Depository for survey records

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency  
Springfield, 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

In 1913, the Illinois Traction Building was erected to serve as the central terminal of the Illinois Traction System which later became the Illinois Power Company. Illinois Power continued to use the building until April 1985 at which time they relocated leaving the building vacant. The Illinois Traction Building is a low-rise, brick, service/commercial structure ornamented with terra cotta details. Retaining a prominent location in downtown Champaign, the building remains largely unaltered from its original condition.

The detached, rectangular building consists of three stories on a full basement with a later, one story addition to the rear (south). The main facade, located on University Avenue, consists of three bays in a bowed configuration while the side elevations consist of seven bays. The building is faced with red brick which is laid in American Running bond on the original building and in American Common Bond on the rear addition. Decorative terra cotta with a white fire-glazed finish ornaments all facades. The roof is flat.

The storefront has not been altered significantly. Four brick piers rise from terra cotta plinths delineating three bays. The central bay, a recessed entry, has been altered. Fixed display windows with transoms and wood frames as well as terra cotta sills and lintels occupy the other two bays. Paired, double-hung windows with wood sash occupy most of the remaining bays of the first floor with a brick soldier course running below the terra cotta window sills of the main building which continues at the same level on the rear addition although the window sills of the addition are higher. Two, separate single doors open to the west alley where the boarding deck and loading deck were located originally.

The windows of the upper floors, like those of the lower floor, are slightly recessed and have continuous terra cotta sills and lintels. The windows are double-hung wood sash throughout the upper floors. On the main facade, single wide windows are flanked by narrower windows. Side elevation windows are grouped in pairs and of more typical proportions. Decorative spandrel panels of brick and terra cotta blocks are placed below each window grouping. The terra cotta-edged piers are ornamented with medallions, hooded shields and medallions with volute-like scrolls (scroll plates) all of terra cotta. Originally, lighting fixtures were mounted in the hooded shields on the main (north) and east facades. The terra cotta shields, positioned on each pier at the first floor window lintel line, remain although the lighting fixtures have been removed.

The terra cotta shields on the west facade are flattened so that, originally, a fixed metal awning could be permanently mounted over the boarding deck. Like the fixed metal awning that originally hung above the University Avenue entrance, the boarding deck awning has been removed with only the support hook anchors remaining, imbedded in the upper walls.

The interior is fairly simple with few unusual features and has been remodelled over the years. An open, interior stairway is located inside the west doors and is the only access to any of the upper floors as well as the basement. Each floor has a large walk-in vault located at the south end. On the second floor overlooking University Avenue are the former Executive Offices with panelled wainscoting and a small washroom. The third floor consists primarily of a single, large community room.

Overall the building appears to be in good condition and nearly intact. However, the exterior is more in keeping with the original appearance than is the interior. Besides the awnings and lighting fixtures, only the original overhanging cornice with its simple, clean lines has been removed to be replaced with a white, vitrified-glaze brick pediment. The terra cotta appears to be in excellent shape although the glaze has cracked.

Although the downtown Champaign area has changed since it was erected, the Illinois

(continued)

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Traction Building retains a prominent location in the downtown along a main thoroughfare and near the Illinois Central Railroad Station, which has long been associated with the traction system as a connecting link for locations beyond the Illinois Traction System's service area. Although almost all of the tracks of Champaign-Urbana street railway systems have been removed, the Illinois Traction Building remains, today, a remnant of a bygone era.

This nomination contains one contributing building and no noncontributing buildings.

Significance 8 3

After a series of mergers, the Illinois Traction System became the Illinois Terminal Railroad in 1928; a consolidation of most of the Central Illinois traction railways. However, at the heart of each of these systems was the need to generate power for operation. In 1923, therefore, the utility operation had been renamed the Illinois Power and Light Company. By 1930, the Illinois Terminal Railroad had become a subsidiary of that company, which sold the railroad in 1936 to National City Lines, a Chicago-based holding company. In one month's time, streetcar service in Champaign-Urbana was phased-out in favor of busses. The last streetcar ran on November 11, 1936. Interurbans continued to run, but the station was moved from the downtown location to one at the Wabash Railroad Station until service was ended in 1955.

In 1937, the utility became the Illinois-Iowa Power Company and continued to maintain offices in the Illinois Traction Building on University Avenue. In 1947, the utility became the Illinois Power Company which continues to operate as the generator of power for this area of Illinois today. In March 1985, Illinois Power vacated the Illinois Traction Building for new offices in Urbana.

As a remnant of an important element in the development of Central Illinois transportation and commerce as well as for its unique architectural quality in the community and amongst Joseph Royer's work, the Illinois Traction Building is deserving of fitting recognition.

## 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 type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1913 Builder/Architect Builder: Wm. McKinley/III. Traction System  
Architect: Joseph Royer

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Illinois Traction Building served as the headquarters and terminal for an important Central Illinois transportation system. The structure stands apart, architecturally, from both the downtown Champaign streetscape and the majority of the work of its architect.

Like many cities, Champaign and its sister city, Urbana, were served by an electric street railway which provided an efficient means of transportation for both passengers and goods before the use of automobiles became common. The city's system began in 1859 but was not electrified until 1890 when the line was bought by William McKinley, who then owned the electric power plant in Urbana. His merger of the railway and the utility was known as the Danville, Urbana and Champaign Railway, Gas and Electric Company. McKinley, who later served as an Illinois State Senator, envisioned a scheme to connect several local railways to form a continuous route from Danville on the east, Peoria and Bloomington on the north and St. Louis--via Springfield and Decatur--on the south. McKinley formed a syndicate to organize or acquire streetcar systems in many cities in Illinois and Indiana and, then, built power plants to service them with electricity and gas. His scheme developed into the Illinois Traction System, and the first portion of inter-city track was laid in 1902 between Champaign and St. Joseph.

Between 1902 and 1911, most of McKinley's scheme had become reality. In 1904, negotiations were made for the entrance to St. Louis, Missouri. After six years of work, the McKinley Bridge link was opened to service on November 10, 1910. As service increased, more destinations added and Central Illinois brought "closer" together, it became obvious that a new station was needed for the hometown terminal.

In 1913, the old station in Champaign was abandoned for the new Illinois Traction Building located at the heart of the city. The new building which combined a depot with offices for the System was designed by local architect Joseph Royer. Royer graduated from the University of Illinois in 1895 and located his office in Urbana. He practiced throughout the Midwest specializing in residential and service-oriented buildings such as courthouses, schools and churches. Some of the many buildings he designed in the Champaign-Urbana community include the diminutive, rustic "Dollhouse Cottage," many University fraternity and sorority houses as well as both the Urbana Lincoln Hotel (now Juner's Castle Lodge) and the Champaign Country Club which are all of the Tudor Revival style; the Gothic Revival Urbana Senior High School, and the Richardsonian Romanesque Champaign County Courthouse.

The Illinois Traction Building represents a radical shift away from the rustic or massively solid trappings of Royer's earlier buildings. With this building--the only known Royer-designed commercial building in Champaign-Urbana--he introduces the "new" ideas about commercial building design popularized after the turn-of-the-century: restrained ornament, expressed structural piers and large window openings. The result is a "lighter," stream-lined, modern building compared to Joseph Royer's typical work. Although white-glazed terra cotta was used to face two entire buildings in the community and implemented in the details of a few more, Royer used the material much more creatively in this design. The terra cotta in combination with the distinctive red brick (instead of the dark browns favored by other local architects) creates a striking addition to the Champaign streetscape. The terra cotta adds a sculptural effect not found in other buildings within the two cities.

(continued)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Champaign County Archives: Transportation-Rail-Traction vertical file  
Utilities-Power-Illinois Power vertical file  
University of Illinois Archives  
Preservation and Conservation Association Historic Property Inventory  
Illinois Power Company Records

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Urbana, Illinois

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	6	3	94	9	00	4	4	4	1	5	0
Zone	Easting		Northing								

B 

Zone	Easting		Northing								

C 

Zone	Easting		Northing								

D 

Zone	Easting		Northing								

E 

Zone	Easting		Northing								

F 

Zone	Easting		Northing								

G 

Zone	Easting		Northing								

H 

Zone	Easting		Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot Twelve(12) in Block Ten(10) in the Illinois Central Railroad Addition to the City of Urbana, now a part of the City of Champaign.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael A. Lambert, graduate student - Univ. of Ill. (Architectural Preservation)

organization Preservation and Conservation Association date June 1, 1985 (rev. 9-1-85)

street & number 212 East White Street, Apt. # 2

telephone 217/352-3870

city or town Champaign

state Illinois

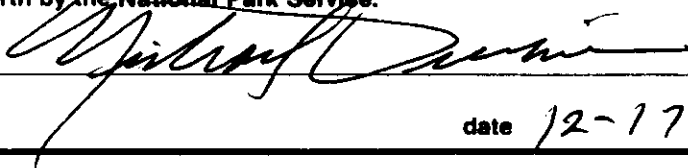
# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title

Director

date

12-17-85

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

WBF  
E.L.  
TD

DETERMINED ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE ILLINOIS

DATE DETERMINED FEB 6 1983

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Illinois Traction Building 41 East University Ave.	Champaign County Champaign

Also Notified

NPS REGIONAL OFFICE: Rocky Mountain  
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation  
The Old Post Office Building  
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. #809  
Washington, DC 20004

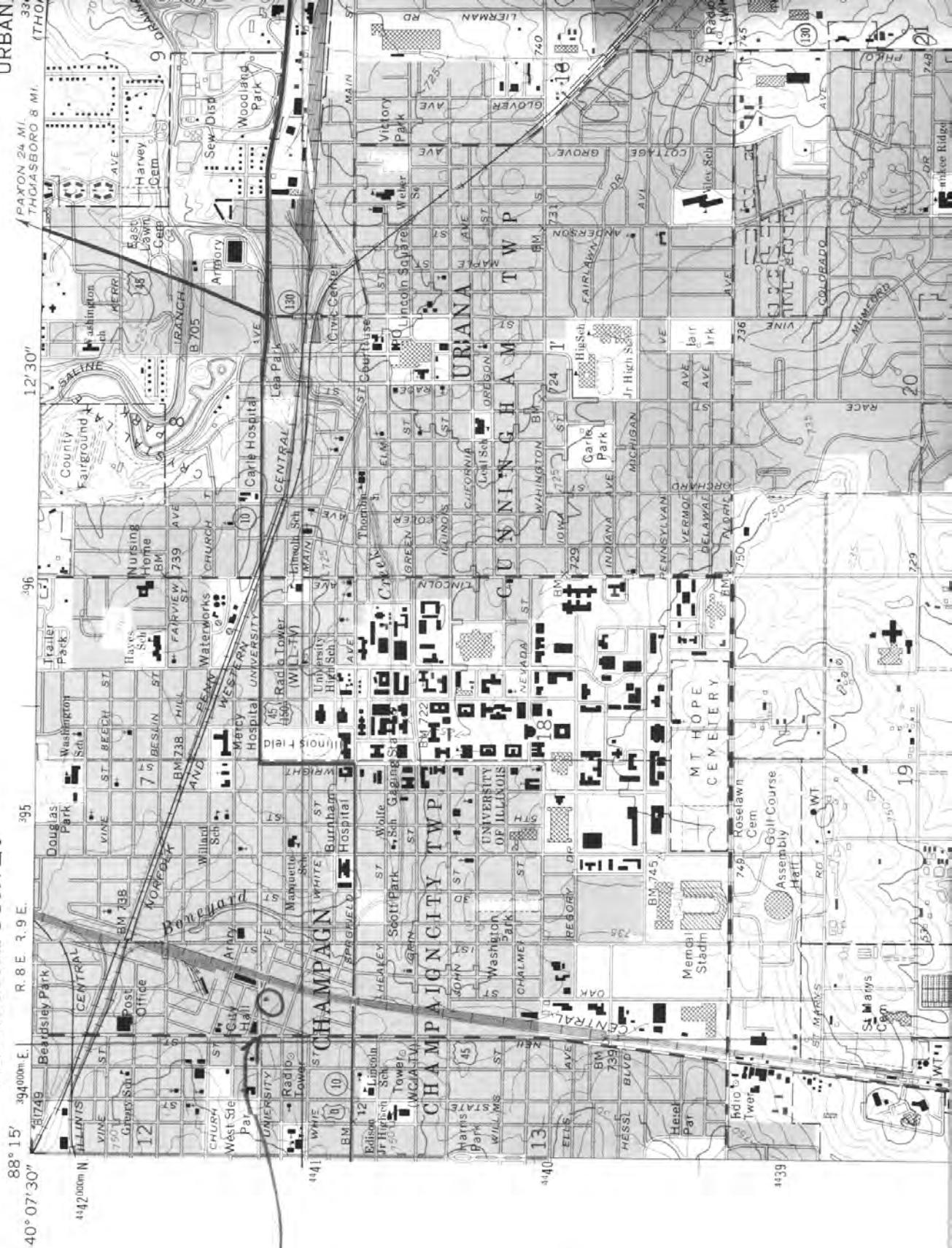
State Historic Preservation  
Officer  
Mr. Michael Devine, Director  
Illinois Historic Preservation  
Agency  
Old State Capitol  
Springfield, Illinois 62701

For further information, please call the National Register at (202)343-9536.

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

STATE OF ILLINOIS  
DEPARTMENT OF REGISTRATION  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
URBAN AND SUBURBAN AREAS  
(THOASBORO 8 MI.)

3366 III NE  
(RISING)



31400

4439