

2017 Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois

World War I Monuments

Statewide



*Victory Monument, Danville
Credit: Katz PaganStar Photography*

There are hundreds of World War I monuments throughout the state of Illinois, including outdoor statues, plaques, memorials in cemeteries or other tributes to fallen soldiers of the Great War. These important and historical markers in communities across the state are nearing 100 years old, and many are in need of repair. Many, too, are forgotten, ignored or even unknown to people in the community.

At the moment, Landmarks Illinois knows of about 230 outdoor WWI monuments in the state that honor those who served in the Forgotten War. There are likely many more that we do not know of or that have not been reported. While these WWI monuments in Illinois may vary in shape, size and material and may pay tribute to soldiers from different branches of the military, they all share a commonality: they require attention and maintenance. Some are in need of significant restoration work to return them to their dedication-era quality and appearance.

April 6, 2017, marks the 100th anniversary of the U.S. entry into WWI. This significant date makes it especially relevant to call attention to these important memorials throughout Illinois. To honor this anniversary and to aid in restoration efforts of the memorials, Landmarks Illinois also recently announced a new grant program, the Landmarks Illinois World War I Monument Preservation Grant Program. This new program, generously funded through the Pritzker Military Foundation, also includes a survey of WWI monuments in Illinois, so Landmarks Illinois can better understand the volume and current condition of these sometimes ignored memorials and monuments.

Victory Monument

Intersection of W. Main Street & N. Gilbert Street
Danville, Vermilion County

One such WWI monument in need of restoration is the Victory Monument in Danville, designed by famed sculptor Lorado Taft. Dedicated in 1922, the monument features a bronze statue of Victory with four figures at her base: a sailor, a soldier, a marine and a Red Cross nurse. The monument was moved in the mid-20th century to the corner of a busy intersection, making it difficult for veterans to gather around it for commemorative events. The City of Danville is now targeting a project to move the monument to a more prominent and respectful setting within the park, adding a designed landscape that will serve as a gateway to the downtown business district and riverfront. In addition, the community is fundraising to clean and conserve the bronze statue and granite base, restoring the monument to its original grandeur.



Victory Monument, Danville
Credit: University of Illinois Archives

What you can do:

- If you know of a World War I monument in your area in need of restoration, please contact Landmarks Illinois Director of Grants & Easements Suzanne Germann at sgermann@landmarks.org.

Additional links:

- “100 Cities/100 Memorials” program at the Pritzker Military Foundation, <http://www.pritzkermilitary.org/explore/wwi/100-cities-100-momuments/>
- “Grant could mean new life for hundreds of World War I memorials in Chicago, across state,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 21, 2017: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/columnists/ct-world-war-i-memorial-kamin-0131-20160129-column.html>
- “Program Launched To Save Chicago's 'Forgotten' World War I Monuments,” *DNA Info*, March 21, 2017: <https://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20170321/downtown/program-launched-save-chicagos-forgotten-world-war-i-monuments>