



**Media Contact:**

Kaitlyn McAvoy

*Director of Communications*

Landmarks Illinois

312-995-9679

[kmcavoy@landmarks.org](mailto:kmcavoy@landmarks.org)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 7, 2024

**[Photos available here](#)**

## Landmarks Illinois Announces 2024 Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois

*Sites in Cook, Gallatin, Henry, Johnson, Macon, Madison, Pope and St. Clair Counties threatened with deferred maintenance, insufficient funding and neglect.*

CHICAGO – Landmarks Illinois has announced its [2024 Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois](#), which calls attention to 10 culturally and architecturally significant sites across the state that are desperately in need of preservation resources.

“This year’s ‘Most Endangered’ sites are not only incredibly important places in their communities, but many are large-scale buildings that sit prominently in highly visible areas near city centers, in historic districts or on state-owned land. Their neglect is seen and felt,” said Bonnie McDonald, President & CEO of Landmarks Illinois.

“Despite their current condition, these places tell important stories from our past — stories that should not be erased due to insufficient investment or general disregard for our collective histories. Landmarks Illinois stands ready and willing to help our partners find preservation resources and solutions for these threatened places, which are opportunities for sustainable reuse, job creation and providing spaces needed in their communities.”

### **2024 Most Endangered sites**

The 2024 Most Endangered sites are located in the following counties: Cook, Gallatin, Henry, Johnson, Macon, Madison, Pope and St. Clair. [Visit our website](#) to learn more about each site. A digital press packet, which includes local contacts for each endangered property, is also available on our website.

## **BISHOP HILL COLONY CHURCH**

### **Bishop Hill, Henry County**

Built in 1848, this Colony Church is among the surviving original buildings in the Village of Bishop Hill, one of the earliest settlements of Swedish immigrants in the United States. It is also one of three Illinois State Historic Sites included on our 2024 Endangered List. It is threatened since the Illinois Department of Natural Resources has not been provided with sufficient funding to properly maintain the site.

## **BUEL HOUSE STATE HISTORIC SITE**

### **Golconda, Pope County**

The Alexander Buel House, constructed in 1840, is a state historic site with ties to the Trail of Tears. Like other Illinois State Historic Sites included on our 2024 Endangered List, the house suffers from deferred maintenance due to a lack of state resources. The state recently painted the exterior of the house, but other repairs are desperately needed, including urgent interior work.

## **SHAWNEETOWN BANK STATE HISTORIC SITE**

### **Old Shawneetown, Gallatin County**

Shawneetown Bank State Historic Site is home to the former Bank of Illinois, the oldest bank building in the state. Landmarks Illinois previously listed the landmark structure on the 2009 Most Endangered list due to insufficient maintenance. Today, it has fallen into further disrepair. As is the case with other Illinois State Historic Sites included on the 2024 Most Endangered list, budgetary concerns place this property in danger of continued neglect.

## **LIBBY, MCNEILL AND LIBBY BUILDING**

### **Blue Island, Cook County**

The former canning and bottling factory was built in 1918 for the Libby, McNeill and Libby company, the second-largest producer of canned foods in the country at the time. For decades, the factory was an economic engine for the community, employing hundreds of local residents and migrant workers, until it closed in 1968. The building is currently vacant and is beginning to decay due to a lack of reuse and proper maintenance.

## **PORTAGE THEATER**

### **Chicago, Cook County**

The prominent theater, completed in 1920 near Portage Park's popular "Six Corners" area, has been an important cultural institution for the local community. However, it has suffered from deferred maintenance since fully closing in 2018. While the current owner has demonstrated interest in revitalizing the designated Chicago Landmark, long-term plans remain unclear and securing financing has been a challenge.

## **SEARS ADMINISTRATION BUILDING**

### **Chicago, Cook County**

Constructed in two phases in 1905 and 1914, the Administration Building served as office headquarters for the former retail giant, Sears, Roebuck and Co., until the 1970s. It is part of the company's sprawling campus in the city's North Lawndale neighborhood, a complex that is a designated National Historic Landmark and is a Chicago landmark district. The building has been on the market since the spring of 2023. And, unlike other buildings on the Sears campus that have been rehabilitated and adaptively reused, this one sits vacant and underutilized despite its potential.

## **FORMER COLLINSVILLE TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL**

### **Collinsville, Madison County**

The former Collinsville Township High School welcomed generations of students between 1908 and 1982 and has had various uses since, but today sits empty and deteriorating in a prominent part of the Southern Illinois city. The current owner has plans to develop the building into affordable housing and has identified funding and tax incentives to do so. Local officials, however, oppose the project, which means that the school may continue to sit vacant indefinitely.

## **DECATUR MASONIC TEMPLE**

### **Decatur, Macon County**

The Decatur Masonic Temple has served as an important community center in Decatur's historic district since it was built in 1929. Throughout the past nearly 100 years, it has hosted cultural events and famous speakers like Eleanor Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy Jr. The building has suffered deterioration and does not generate enough income today to pay for proper maintenance, leading to expensive damages.

## **FORMER LINCOLN SCHOOL**

### **East St. Louis, St. Clair County**

Built in 1886 as a school for Black students, the historically significant building has survived the 1917 East St. Louis Race Riots and the widespread demolition seen in the Southern Illinois city during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite its local importance and proximity to the city's historic district, without a new use and proper investment, the school faces demolition.

## **JOHNSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE**

### **Vienna, Johnson County**

Built in 1871, the Johnson County Courthouse was the oldest continually operating courthouse in Illinois before it closed in 2023. While a new county complex is being constructed to house county offices, the nationally landmarked courthouse was supposed to be repurposed for local businesses and other governmental work. However, it has sat



vacant since September 2023 when a roof truss fractured. Until funding for permanent stabilization is secured, the future of the building remains uncertain.

### **About the Most Endangered Program**

The annual Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois is Landmarks Illinois' largest and longest-running advocacy program. Launched in 1995, the annual list aims to boost advocacy efforts and build support for each property's eventual preservation. Learn more about our Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois and see previous Most Endangered lists [at our website](#).

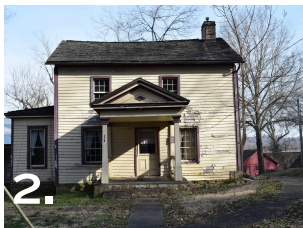
### **About Landmarks Illinois**

We are People Saving Places for People. Landmarks Illinois is a membership-based, historic preservation nonprofit organization serving the people of Illinois. We inspire and empower stakeholders to save places that matter to them by providing free guidance, practical and financial resources and access to strategic partnerships. For more information, visit [www.Landmarks.org](http://www.Landmarks.org).

###



1. **Bishop Hill Colony Church**  
Bishop Hill



2. **Buel House State Historic Site**  
Golconda



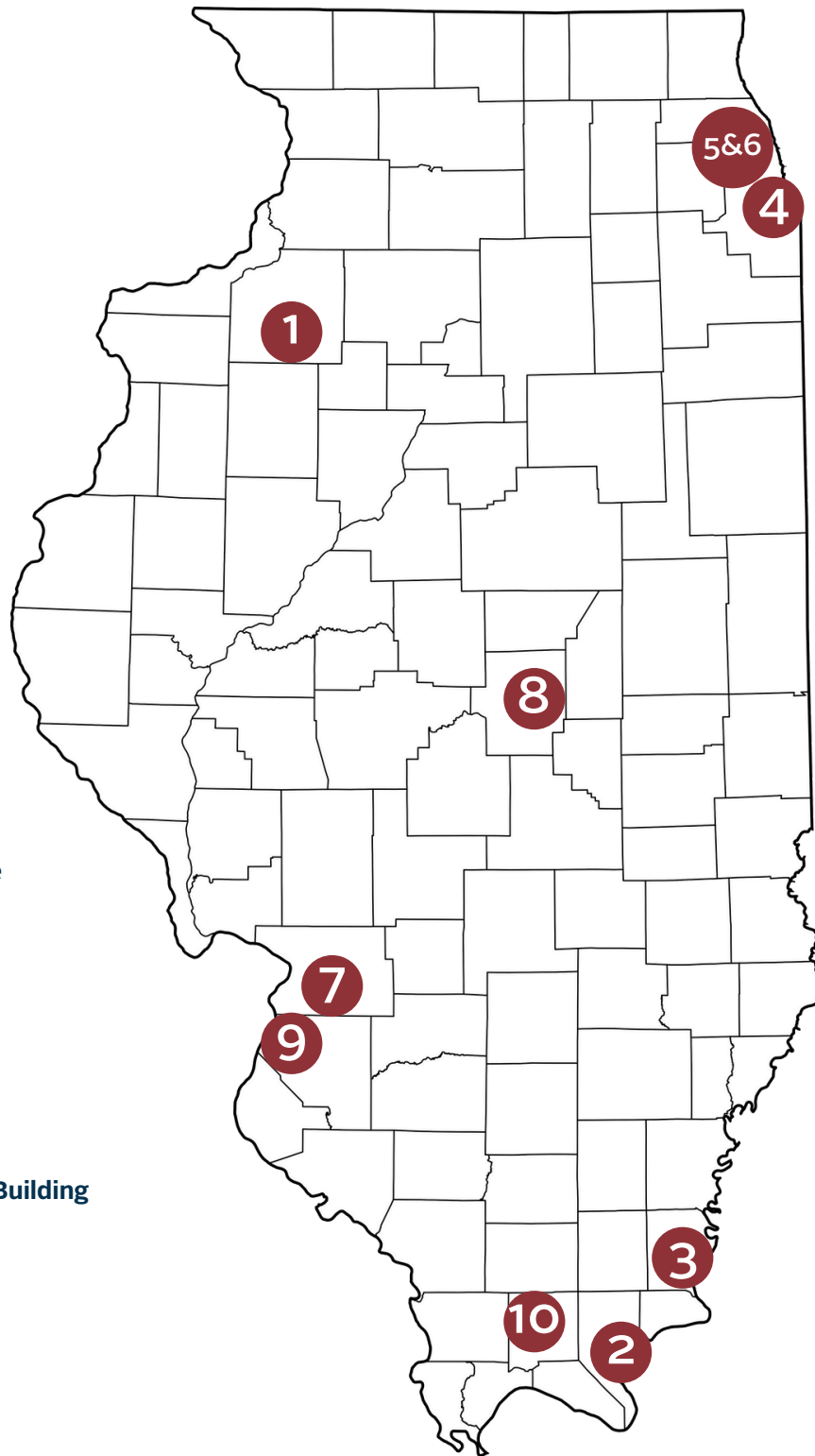
3. **Shawneetown Bank State Historic Site**  
Old Shawneetown



4. **Libby, McNeill and Libby Building**  
Blue Island



5. **Portage Theater**  
Chicago



6. **Sears Administration Building**  
Chicago



7. **Former Collinsville Township High School**  
Collinsville



8. **Decatur Masonic Temple**  
Decatur




9. **Former Lincoln School**  
East St. Louis



10. **Johnson County Courthouse**  
Vienna



 Bishop Hill, Henry County

**BUILT:**  
1848

**ARCHITECT:**  
Unknown

**CURRENT OWNER:**  
Illinois Department of Natural  
Resources

### CALL TO ACTION

Connect with the Bishop Hill Heritage Association to see how you can join the expansive network working to preserve Bishop Hill's rich history.

Email [bhha@mymctc.net](mailto:bhha@mymctc.net) or visit [bishophillheritage.org/contribute](https://bishophillheritage.org/contribute) to express your interest and offer assistance.

Contact the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to voice support for preserving state-owned historic properties at [dnr.pio@illinois.gov](mailto:dnr.pio@illinois.gov).

Contact your state representative and senator to encourage them to prioritize additional funding for State Historic Sites within IDNR. You can find your representative and senator at <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>.

## BISHOP HILL COLONY CHURCH

Bishop Hill, Henry County

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Village of Bishop Hill is one of the earliest settlements of Swedish immigrants in the United States, established as a utopian religious community by Eric Janson and his followers in 1846 during the first wave of mass Swedish immigration. Many of the village's original buildings have survived, including Colony Church (1848), Ox Boys' Dormitory (1850) and Bjorklund Hotel (late 1850s). The area of the original settlement is a National Historic Landmark and is also designated as a State Historic site, administered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). The Colony Church is central to the history and current-day economy of Bishop Hill.

### WHY IS IT ENDANGERED?

Previous State of Illinois leadership did not allocate sufficient investment in the historic buildings at Bishop Hill to address ongoing maintenance needs. Consequently, deferred maintenance on the historic structures has led to an array of needed repairs, some of which are urgent. Each of the buildings that comprise the State Historic Site needs attention, but the Colony Church is in the most dire need. There are a variety of repairs required to ensure the future of the Colony Church, including, but not limited to a new roof, siding replacement, paint stripping and new paint, foundation work, replacement of rotting wood, new gutters and plaster repair.

### POTENTIAL SOLUTION

IDNR must be provided with the financial and human resources necessary for required maintenance of the sites it is responsible for managing, like Bishop Hill. As with the Shawneetown Bank and the Buel House — also included on the 2024 Most Endangered list — IDNR could address the urgently needed repairs to the Colony Church given adequate funding and personnel. As a long-term solution, once emergency repairs are made, IDNR could partner with local organizations, such as the Bishop Hill Heritage Association, to help with ongoing maintenance of this historic structure.



 Columbus Avenue, Golconda, Pope County

**BUILT:**  
1840

**ARCHITECT:**  
Unknown

**CURRENT OWNER:**  
Illinois Department of Natural Resources

### CALL TO ACTION

Connect with the Pope County Historical Society to see how you can help the Buel House preservation effort.

Email [secretary@popecoilhs.org](mailto:secretary@popecoilhs.org) or visit [www.popecoilhs.org](http://www.popecoilhs.org) to express your interest and offer assistance.

Contact the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to voice support for preserving state-owned historic properties at [dnr.pio@illinois.gov](mailto:dnr.pio@illinois.gov).

Contact your state representative and senator to encourage them to prioritize additional funding for State Historic Sites within IDNR. You can find your representative and senator at <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>.

## BUEL HOUSE STATE HISTORIC SITE

Golconda, Pope County

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Alexander Buel House is a State Historic Site with ties to the Trail of Tears—the forced migration of tens of thousands of Native Americans from the Southeastern United States to territory west of the Mississippi River from approximately 1830 to 1850. While the house was built after the major forced migration of the Cherokee people from their homeland in Georgia that took place from 1838-39, Cherokees undoubtedly passed by the site, as it was the landing point on the Illinois side of the Ohio River. There are indications that Cherokees would later stop by the Buel House on their way to visit Georgia. The Buel House represents the beginning of the Trail of Tears in Illinois—the most fatal stretch of the Trail—and the house serves as a site of memory and education for this dark episode in our nation’s history.


### WHY IS IT ENDANGERED?

Despite being an important state-owned site located along historic State Highway 146 (the designated route of the Trail of Tears), deferred maintenance threatens the property’s future. The State of Illinois conducted a site survey in 2007 resulting in a list of repair recommendations. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) recently painted the exterior of the home, showing the transformative impact when maintenance needs are addressed. While the painting was desperately needed, several other urgent repair needs remain, including roof replacement, foundation repair and window restoration. The Pope County Historical Society has undertaken basic grounds maintenance but does not have the necessary resources to address larger issues.

### POTENTIAL SOLUTION

IDNR must be provided with the necessary financial and human resources for the maintenance of the sites it is responsible for managing, like the Buel House. As with the Shawnteetown Bank and Bishop Hill Colony Church — also included on the 2024 Most Endangered list — IDNR could address the urgently needed repairs of the Buel House with adequate funding and personnel. As a long-term solution, once emergency repairs are made, IDNR could partner with local organizations, such as the Pope County Historical Society, to help with ongoing maintenance and interpretive programming of this historic structure.



 280 Washington St., Old Shawneetown, Gallatin County

**BUILT:**  
1841

**ARCHITECT:**  
Unknown

**CURRENT OWNER:**  
Illinois Department of Natural Resources

### CALL TO ACTION

Connect with Gallatin County Historical Society to see how you join the effort to preserve the Shawneetown Bank.

Email Historical Society members Cindy Decker at [cyndecker58@gmail.com](mailto:cyndecker58@gmail.com) and Tamara Briddick at [penguin99233@aol.com](mailto:penguin99233@aol.com) to offer your assistance.

Contact the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to voice support for preserving state-owned historic properties at [dnr.pio@illinois.gov](mailto:dnr.pio@illinois.gov).

Contact your state representative and senator to encourage them to prioritize additional funding for State Historic Sites within IDNR. You can find your representative and senator at <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>.

## SHAWNEETOWN BANK STATE HISTORIC SITE

Old Shawneetown, Gallatin County

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Located on the Ohio River, Shawneetown was an important early settlement in Illinois, a key commercial area and a gateway to the Northwest Territories. The Shawneetown Bank was established in 1816 under a charter passed by the Illinois territorial legislature. This grand building, the oldest bank building in Illinois, opened in 1841 as the Bank of Illinois. It operated as a state bank for two years and then as a private bank until the devastating flood of 1937. After the flood, most townspeople relocated to New Shawneetown, three miles inland from the river. The Shawneetown Bank was deeded to the State of Illinois in 1942 and added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.

### WHY IS IT ENDANGERED?


The bank was included on Landmarks Illinois' Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois in 2009 due to insufficient maintenance by the State Department of Natural Resources. Today, the building has fallen into further disrepair. While there has been some investment in the building's exterior, the state has not been able to make any interior repairs. The building lacks mechanical systems, and roof leaks are allowing water inside the building, which is accelerating the degradation of the structure. As is the case with other State Historic Sites, budgetary concerns place this property in danger of continued neglect.

### POTENTIAL SOLUTION

IDNR must be provided with the necessary financial and human resources for maintenance of the sites it is responsible for managing, like the Shawneetown Bank. This is the same issue that endangered the Shawneetown Bank and other state-run historic sites in 2009, and it has not been resolved. As with the Buel House and Bishop Hill Colony Church — also included on the 2024 Most Endangered list — IDNR could address the urgently needed repairs of the Shawneetown Bank with adequate funding and personnel. As a long-term solution, once emergency repairs are made, IDNR could partner with a local organization, such as the Gallatin County Historical Society. The Historical Society has tried to be a steward of the building and wants to work with IDNR to maintain and operate the bank building.





 13636 S. Western Ave.,  
Blue Island, Cook County

**BUILT:**  
1917-1919

**ARCHITECT:**  
Philip Larmon, General  
Superintendent for the  
Libby Company

**CURRENT OWNER:**  
Affordable Recovery Housing

**CALL  
TO  
ACTION**

To express your support for the preservation of the Libby, McNeill and Libby Building, contact the Calumet Heritage Partnership via email at [info@calumetheritagearea.org](mailto:info@calumetheritagearea.org).

## LIBBY, MC NEILL AND LIBBY BUILDING

Blue Island, Cook County

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The former canning and bottling factory was once home to fruit and vegetable canning operations for the Libby, McNeill and Libby company. It was built in 1918 in Blue Island to be in close proximity to the farms where the produce was grown. At the time the factory was constructed, the Libby, McNeill and Libby company was the second-largest producer of canned foods in the country and became a major employer, with a workforce of about 450 that grew to 800 during the peak summer season. Many workers were local to Blue Island, though the factory also hired migrant laborers from Mexico. The factory closed in 1968 as agriculture relocated to Central and Southern Illinois. Today, the building is a reminder of Blue Island's industry, the beating heart of the community for decades.


### WHY IS IT ENDANGERED?

After Libby, McNeill and Libby left Blue Island, the building was used in the 1990s as an incubator for startup businesses. It has been largely vacant since 2018, when it was donated to the nonprofit, Affordable Recovery Housing. The organization had plans to operate the space as a "fun factory," but is currently in litigation with the City of Blue Island over code and zoning violations and a lack of a certificate of occupancy or business permit. Meanwhile, the building continues to sit vacant and is beginning to decay.

### POTENTIAL SOLUTION

Adaptive reuse of industrial buildings is increasingly popular, and there are many creative and successful examples both nearby and around the world. The Cooperage 214 in Peoria — [an award-winning preservation project](#) — is located in a former 27,000-square-foot cooperage factory that has been transformed into office space and apartments. Up the road from the Libby Building, a former Blue Island Masonic lodge on South Western Avenue has been converted into office space and now hosts doctors' offices and Cook County Health's Blue Island Health Center. The Libby Building presents similar opportunities for adaptive reuse and is located within the [Cal-Sag Enterprise Zone](#) and the City of Blue Island TIF 2, both of which could be tapped to support rehabilitation.



 4050 N. Milwaukee Ave.,  
Chicago, Cook County

**BUILT:**  
1919-1920

**ARCHITECT:**  
Lindley P. Rowe,  
in association with Fridstein & Co.

**CURRENT OWNER:**  
Manuel Gliksberg

**CALL  
TO  
ACTION**

Contact the  
[Six Corners  
Association](#) with  
offers of support.

## PORTAGE THEATER

Chicago, Cook County

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

A designated Chicago landmark, the Portage Theater (previously Portage Park Theatre) was built in 1920 by real estate speculators J.M. and Edward Browarsky. The Ascher Brothers, one of Chicago's largest movie theater owners during the 1920s, leased and operated the building. Although the Ascher Brothers exited the theater business in 1929, the Portage Theater stayed open under various operators for decades and was an important cultural institution for the surrounding Northwest Side neighborhood. It remains a visual landmark on North Milwaukee Avenue near Portage Park's "Six Corners" commercial area. Architecturally, it is noteworthy for its elaborate Art Moderne and Neoclassical interiors and its cream-colored exterior terra cotta.


### WHY IS IT ENDANGERED?

Today, the Portage Theater suffers from deferred maintenance after years of disinvestment and vacancy. After 80 years of operation, the theater closed in 2001. It was rehabilitated and reopened in 2006, operating successfully for six years. Since 2012, the theater has opened sporadically but has been officially shuttered since 2018, the same year that it was acquired by the current owner. The owner has shown an interest in improving the theater and has applied for several grants to help fund necessary work, but none have been successful. The long-term vision and plan for the local landmark remain unclear.

### POTENTIAL SOLUTION

A rehabilitated Portage Theater has the potential to be an economic and cultural anchor for the Six Corners area again. Rehabilitation is a logical next step following recent investment in the neighborhood, which has included the openings of Target and Aldi stores. The current owner would like to reopen the landmark theater but needs support to assemble the finances and vision to do so. As a City of Chicago designated landmark, the Portage Theater is eligible to apply for the Cook County Class L Property Tax Incentive and Adopt-a-Landmark funding through the City of Chicago. Pursuing a listing in the National Register of Historic Places could also make the theater eligible for other historic preservation tax incentive programs.



 3333 W. Arthington St.,  
Chicago, Cook County

**BUILT:**

1905 (first two stories) & 1914 (top three stories)

**ARCHITECT:**

Nimmons and Fellows  
(1905), George C. Nimmons  
and Co. (1914)

**CURRENT OWNER:**

Royal Pine Properties, LLC

**CALL  
TO  
ACTION**

[Contact SVN](#)

[Chicago](#)

[Commercial](#) for  
information about  
purchasing the  
property.

## SEARS ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

Chicago, Cook County

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Sears Administration Building is part of the Sears, Roebuck and Co. City of Chicago Landmark District and is a National Historic Landmark. It was constructed as the headquarters of Sears, Roebuck and Co. — one of America's leading retailers that became the largest in the world by 1960. The construction of the company's headquarters campus in Chicago's North Lawndale neighborhood was driven by its second President, Julius Rosenwald, a Jewish-American businessman and philanthropist known for his founding of the Museum of Science and Industry and for his campaign to build schools for African American students across the rural American South. Today, the Administration Building remains a vital piece of the cohesive Sears campus.

### WHY IS IT ENDANGERED?

The Sears Administration Building has been largely vacant and underutilized for many years. It has been listed for sale since the spring of 2023. The Administration Building is being left behind while other buildings on the campus have been successfully rehabilitated. The Sears Power House received a [Landmarks Illinois Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Preservation Award in 2009](#) following the conversion of the building to an educational facility. The company's former catalog building received the same award [in 2019](#) after it was converted into an affordable housing complex, the Lofts on Arthington. The Friends of Sears Sunken Garden are currently restoring the garden across the street — [an effort supported through Landmarks Illinois' Preservation Heritage Grant Fund](#).

### POTENTIAL SOLUTION

The Sears Administration Building is in an excellent position for adaptive reuse. As part of both a local and National Historic Landmark district, a variety of incentives are available to support rehabilitation. Potential tax incentives include state and federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits and the Cook County Class L Tax Incentive. The Administration Building is also within the Homan-Arthington Illinois Enterprise Zone and the Northeast Cook Illinois Opportunity Zone as well as the Homan/Arthington TIF district. A new owner is needed to take on the task of putting this five-story, 239,000-square-foot building back into active use to benefit North Lawndale.



 1203 Vandalia St., Collinsville,  
Madison County

**BUILT:**  
1908

**ARCHITECT:**  
John William Kennedy

**CURRENT OWNER:**  
Celadon-Collinsville GP, LLC

## CALL TO ACTION

Express your support for the Collinsville High School affordable housing project by

emailing developer Scott Henry at [shenry@celadonco.com](mailto:shenry@celadonco.com).

Contact Collinsville Mayor Jeff Stehman at [jstehman@collinsvilleil.org](mailto:jstehman@collinsvilleil.org) and Collinsville Community Development Director Travis Taylor at [ttaylor@collinsvilleil.org](mailto:ttaylor@collinsvilleil.org) to voice your support for finding an adaptive reuse solution for Collinsville High School.

## FORMER COLLINSVILLE TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

Collinsville, Madison County

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Former Collinsville Township High School welcomed generations of students between 1908 and 1982, creating an extensive and active alumni network. Major additions to the building were constructed in 1922 and 1957. However, once the newly built Greenwood campus opened in 1971, the existing high school was repurposed into the Collinsville Area Vocational Center, serving students until 1982. Since then, the building has been used as a private academy and for storage. Though abandoned, the building is a prime reuse candidate as it is centrally located in Collinsville and close to transportation, shopping and employment.

### WHY IS IT ENDANGERED?

The current owner has plans to develop the building into affordable housing and has identified funding and tax incentives to do so. Additionally, an independent market study suggests repurposing the school as a housing development is feasible and “redevelopment of the vacant high school building will be positive for the neighborhood.” Despite the owner’s adaptive reuse plan, local government officials are opposed to developing affordable housing in this area of Collinsville and will not approve the plan. It therefore continues to sit vacant and deteriorating in the middle of town as no other feasible reuse options have materialized.

### POTENTIAL SOLUTION

Since the owner has already acquired funding and incentives to turn the school building into affordable housing, one solution is for the Collinsville city council to approve the adaptive reuse plan. One of preservation’s greatest opportunities to be relevant to more people is to aid in increasing the supply of housing through adaptive reuse, and local leadership can both promote community history and ensure residents’ basic needs are met by approving more adaptive reuse projects. If Collinsville is truly unable to support the reuse plan as presented, then local officials should work with the owner to identify alternative uses so that the vacant school doesn’t continue to blight the surrounding residential neighborhood.



 224 W. William St., Decatur,  
Macon County

**BUILT:**  
1929

**ARCHITECT:**  
Holabird & Roche

**CURRENT OWNER:**  
TRS of Masonic Temple  
Association

**CALL  
TO  
ACTION**

Contact [History of the Heartland](#) to see how you can best support its mission to preserve Decatur's civic life.

Email  
[aynproductions@yahoo.com](mailto:aynproductions@yahoo.com)

## DECATUR MASONIC TEMPLE

Decatur, Macon County

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Decatur's Masonic Temple, designed in 1927 by renowned architects Holabird & Roche, functioned as a community center for the city and greater Central Illinois region throughout the 20th century, hosting cultural events and speakers like Eleanor Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, Jr. and Richard Nixon. Originally built with a 1,000-person ballroom, 1200-seat auditorium and state-of-the-art kitchen, the Masonic Temple is a stunning example of monumental Art Deco architecture and, at its opening, was praised as a modern work of art by the then-director of the Art Institute. Today, it stands as a symbol of civic virtue in the built environment.


### WHY IS IT ENDANGERED?

The Masonic Temple has suffered deterioration as the Masonic community and Decatur have both seen population decreases. Despite this loss, the building has successfully functioned over the years as a community center, hosting group meetings, weddings, concerts and other gatherings. However, current event frequency does not generate enough income to adequately maintain the Masonic Temple, and water leaks in 2018 and 2022 created hundreds of thousands of dollars in damages.

### POTENTIAL SOLUTION

Community members have plans to revitalize the Masonic Temple, making it a vibrant cultural center once again. Located in Decatur's historic district, preservation of the structure would enable the creation of a new business plan to house a pantheon of Decatur historic interest groups and related public events and displays. New revenue-generating activities and engagement with a range of community interest groups could provide additional funding to address deferred maintenance, ensuring the Masonic Temple once again becomes a site for community building and connection.



 240 N. 6th St., East St. Louis, St. Clair County

**BUILT:**  
1886

**ARCHITECT:**  
Unknown

**CURRENT OWNER:**  
Ministers United Against  
Suffering

### CALL TO ACTION

To learn more about  
the former Lincoln  
School, contact

Jerome King at the  
Emma L. Wilson King Foundation  
at [paulrobeson1976@aol.com](mailto:paulrobeson1976@aol.com).

For information about historic  
East St. Louis or to join the  
local preservation effort,  
contact the East St. Louis  
Historical Society at  
[esthistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:esthistoricalsociety@gmail.com).

## FORMER LINCOLN SCHOOL

East St. Louis, St. Clair County

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Lincoln School opened in 1886 as a school for Black students. In 1881, John Robinson, who was formerly enslaved and a Civil War veteran, helped lead a protest of Black mothers and students into the all-white Clay School to petition for appropriate educational opportunities and facilities. The advocacy effort, during which Robinson guarded students and conveyed their demands to the school administration, prompted the school board to build Lincoln School. Surviving the 1917 East St. Louis Race Riots, the school building later served as a junior high and as offices for East St. Louis School District 189 after multiple new schools were built.


### WHY IS IT ENDANGERED?

Despite the building's historic significance to Black residents of East St. Louis, it has been empty or underutilized for decades. East St. Louis School District 189 vacated the school in 1975. In 1999, the Ministers United Against Suffering purchased the school to use it as a shelter for the unhoused. Though East St. Louis experienced massive population decline and widespread demolition throughout the mid-20th century, this storied building has survived. Without a new use and proper investment in required maintenance, the school will eventually become another victim of the demolition by neglect that threatens much of East St. Louis.

### POTENTIAL SOLUTION

With East St. Louis' downtown historic district a block away, the former Lincoln School stands as a prime location for use as a museum and heritage site to tell stories from the past, like that of John Robinson and residents' involvement in the 1917 race riots. This would give groups that operate in the area, like the Emma L. Wilson King Foundation, a civic and educational foundation, the NAACP and alumni of the Lincoln School a site to share important local history.



 401 Court St., Vienna, Johnson County

**BUILT:**  
1871

**ARCHITECT:**  
Niles L. Wickwire

**CURRENT OWNER:**  
Johnson County Government

### CALL TO ACTION

As a historic landmark, the Johnson County Courthouse must be saved. The Johnson County Revitalization Corporation is leading local preservation efforts through the [“Save Our Courthouse” initiative](#).

Other local initiatives are also helping bring awareness to the courthouse situation and fundraising efforts are underway. You can help the fundraising efforts with a tax-deductible donation. Reach out to Johnson County Revitalization Corporation at [jocorcorp@gmail.com](mailto:jocorcorp@gmail.com).

## JOHNSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Vienna, Johnson County

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Until September 2023, the Johnson County Courthouse was the oldest continually operating courthouse in Illinois. The courthouse opened in 1871 and has been at the center of the Vienna community for generations. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, it has undergone minimal alterations, leaving most of the 19th-century Italianate architecture intact. The building's history and impressive design draw many tourists to the City of Vienna. Until the courthouse closed last year, it served as a civic centerpiece for the Vienna community.

### WHY IS IT ENDANGERED?

Johnson County began construction in 2022 on a new county complex, which is set to open in 2024. Once complete, the county plans to move operations from the historic courthouse to the new one. The historic courthouse was to be repurposed for local businesses and offices for the state government and the local historical society. However, those reuse plans have stalled since a roof truss fractured in September 2023. All county offices vacated the structure at this time due to safety concerns. County officials authorized temporary stabilization of the fractured truss, but permanent stabilization and rehabilitation have not been prioritized due to a lack of funding.

### POTENTIAL SOLUTION

Johnson County officials and citizens deserve credit for their intention to reuse the historic courthouse and honor its significance in the community. Those plans could move forward once permanent repairs are completed on the building as local advocates, such as the [Johnson County Revitalization Corporation](#), [Revive Vienna](#) and Johnson County Historical Society are requesting.

The following quotes come from local representatives for each site included on the 2024 Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois. Members of the media are welcome to use them in their reporting.

## BISHOP HILL COLONY CHURCH

**Todd DeDecker**

*Administrator, Bishop Hill Heritage Association*

"Bishop Hill was started as a communal religious colony in 1846. The Colony Church was, and still is, the heart and soul of this community. It is the most historically significant building in the village. Its continued preservation is vital to preserving the history and legacy of the Bishop Hill Colony."

## BUEL HOUSE STATE HISTORIC SITE

**Linda Parsons**

*Membership Chair/Board Member, Pope County Historical Society*

"The Buel House is history at risk of being lost without proper restoration. This historic structure, once a tourist attraction, is representative of the early history of Golconda and Southern Illinois. Designated a Historic Point of Interest on the Trail of Tears, restoration would improve tourism and allow it to be open to the public for tours and education."

## SHAWNEETOWN BANK STATE HISTORIC SITE

**Christy Short**

*Former Historian and Curator, Gallatin County Historical Society*

"The Old State Bank at Shawneetown, situated at the spurs end of the Ohio River Scenic Byway, is unique and a part of our identity. For years, opportunities for generating revenue through tourism for our county and region have been overlooked. To nourish tourism in Southern Illinois is our biggest asset. Preservation of this historic bank offers opportunities for investing in the goals we all share, seeing and touching our history firsthand and enabling us to generate public awareness of our state's history."

## LIBBY, MCNEILL AND LIBBY BUILDING

**Kevin Brown**

*Vice President, Calumet Heritage Partnership*

"The presence of unique heritage assets, such as the Libby, McNeill and Libby Building, connects communities like Blue Island to their past and presents attractive centers where community and economic development can occur if they're repurposed for the future."



## PORTAGE THEATER

**Amie Zander**

*Managing Director, Six Corners Association*

“Restoring the historic Portage Theater would be the icing on the cake amid a real estate resurgence at Six Corners. The theater served as an entertainment hub for the Northwest Side, and with proper renovations, could be reactivated to serve the community and boost the local economy.”

## SEARS ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

**Kevin Sutton**

*Executive Director, Foundation for Homan Square*

“The North Lawndale community has worked extremely hard to change perceptions and the realities in our neighborhood. Most of the buildings in the historic Sears complex, including Nichols Tower, the MD&L Building and the Power House have been rehabilitated and reused as hubs for office, education and housing. The destructive deterioration that jeopardizes the Sears Administration Building threatens the success of these projects and raises significant safety and security concerns among community stakeholders. In addition, it is feared that the deterioration will negatively impact new projects such as the restoration of the Sears Sunken Garden and the potential designation of the Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park.”

## FORMER COLLINSVILLE TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

**Scott Henry**

*Principal & CEO, Celadon Partners*

“Historic schools are ideal candidates for conversions to housing. For better or worse, demographic trends have led to many schools to be closed or vacated; but that presents an incredible opportunity for developers to leverage state and federal affordable and historic tax credits to help pay for construction while also helping to address our state's housing crisis.”

## DECATUR MASONIC TEMPLE

**Terry Howley**

*Former Decatur Mayor*

“The successful preservation and repurposing of the historic Masonic Temple is an important project for Decatur. This Art Deco icon designed by famed Chicago architects Holabird & Roche stands as a gateway between downtown and other historic district sites. The reuse of the temple as a means of commemorating and celebrating Decatur's storied past will provide a uniquely suited space for many groups. It will foster collaboration and community spirit, as originally intended by the builders, in a modern context. I look forward to its redevelopment with great anticipation.”

## JOHNSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE

### **Brenda Kreuter**

*Chair, Revive Vienna*

"Some buildings are more than buildings. They are historic, cultural monuments. This Grand Old Lady has stood with beauty, dignity and pride since its beginning. Some of our ancestors stood with her then. She needs us to stand with her now as she awaits some much-needed and deserved repairs. Our beloved courthouse is a constant reminder of where we came from, and she should not be allowed to devolve into yet another lifeless building in our county."

## FORMER LINCOLN SCHOOL

### **Reginald Petty**

*Founder, East St Louis Historical Society*

"The old Lincoln School was the first school for colored students in East St. Louis, Illinois. It stood as the cornerstone of educating our children and giving us a source of pride, knowing that our future was thriving between those walls. The sacrifices of our ancestors were being realized and true options for the advancement of our children were reality. This building stands as a symbol of our progress post-slavery and as a foundation for the great accomplishments of African Americans from East St Louis."

### **Mia King**

*President, Emma L. Wilson King Foundation*

"My twelve siblings and I are proud graduates of Lincoln High School. As members of a large African American family in East St. Louis, we share a common educational heritage rooted in the historic St. Louis Avenue structure. Despite the challenges of de facto segregated education in Illinois in the past, this school stands as a testament to the sacrifices made by our community. It boasted some of the most skilled educators and produced exceptional graduates. This building is deeply woven into the historical fabric of Illinois."

## BISHOP HILL COLONY CHURCH

### **Todd DeDecker**

*Administrator, Bishop Hill Heritage Association*

[bhha@mymctc.net](mailto:bhha@mymctc.net) / 309-927-3899

### **John Taylor**

*Owner, Bishop Hill Creative Commons*

[john.r.taylor@gmail.com](mailto:john.r.taylor@gmail.com) / 309-299-4999

### **Joella Krause**

*President, Old Settlers' Association*

[joella9528@gmail.com](mailto:joella9528@gmail.com) / 414-573-4724

### **Quinn Adamowski**

*Regional Advocacy Manager, Landmarks Illinois*

[qadamowski@landmarks.org](mailto:qadamowski@landmarks.org) / 815-603-4901

## BUEL HOUSE STATE HISTORIC SITE

### **Linda Parsons**

*Board Member, Pope County Historical Society*

[ljparsons59@yahoo.com](mailto:ljparsons59@yahoo.com) / 618-771-6537

### **Nathan Ryder**

*President, Main Street Golconda*

[Mainstreetgolconda@gmail.com](mailto:Mainstreetgolconda@gmail.com) / 618-615-0063

### **Rick Allen**

*Board Member, Pope County Historical Society*

[rick1547@gmail.com](mailto:rick1547@gmail.com) / 618-771-2655

### **Quinn Adamowski**

*Regional Advocacy Manager, Landmarks Illinois*

[qadamowski@landmarks.org](mailto:qadamowski@landmarks.org) / 815-603-4901

## SHAWNEETOWN BANK STATE HISTORIC SITE

### **Tamara Briddick**

*Treasurer, Gallatin County Historical Society*  
[penguin99233@aol.com](mailto:penguin99233@aol.com) / 618-297-0525

### **Bill Barton**

*Old Shawneetown Mayor*  
[lisabarton65@gmail.com](mailto:lisabarton65@gmail.com) / 618-313-0972

### **Janet Householder**

*Board Member, Gallatin County Historical Society*  
[janet\\_householder@yahoo.com](mailto:janet_householder@yahoo.com) / 270-836-6507

### **Quinn Adamowski**

*Regional Advocacy Manager, Landmarks Illinois*  
[qadamowski@landmarks.org](mailto:qadamowski@landmarks.org) / 815-603-4901

## LIBBY, MC NEILL AND LIBBY BUILDING

### **Kevin Brown**

*Executive Director, Blue Island Historical Society*  
[info@bihistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@bihistoricalsociety.org) / 708-603-9156

### **Gwen Stricker**

*Director, Calumet Heritage Partnership*  
[gestrick96@gmail.com](mailto:gestrick96@gmail.com) / 219-670-3084

### **Ken Jellema**

*Historian, Blue Island Historical society*  
[kjellema2@gmail.com](mailto:kjellema2@gmail.com) / 708-833-1831

### **Frank Butterfield**

*Chief Operating Officer, Landmarks Illinois*  
[fbutterfield@landmarks.org](mailto:fbutterfield@landmarks.org) / 217-836-2524

## PORTAGE THEATER

### **Amie Zander**

*Managing Director, Six Corners Association*

[amie@sixcorners.com](mailto:amie@sixcorners.com) / 773-685-9300

### **Michael Giordano**

*Executive Director & SSA 28-2014 Program Manager, Portage Park  
Chamber of Commerce*

[michael@portageparkchamber.org](mailto:michael@portageparkchamber.org) / 773-777-2020

### **Frank Butterfield**

*Chief Operating Officer, Landmarks Illinois*

[fbutterfield@landmarks.org](mailto:fbutterfield@landmarks.org) / 217-836-2524

## SEARS ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

### **Kevin Sutton**

*Executive Director, Foundation for Homan Square*

[ksutton@homansquare.org](mailto:ksutton@homansquare.org) / 773-265-5001(w), 777-265-4403

### **Caroline O'Boyle**

*Board Member, Friends of Sears Sunken Garden*

[caroline.oboyle@tpl.org](mailto:caroline.oboyle@tpl.org) / 312-656-4996

### **Frank Butterfield**

*Chief Operating Officer, Landmarks Illinois*

[fbutterfield@landmarks.org](mailto:fbutterfield@landmarks.org) / 217-836-2524

## FORMER COLLINSVILLE TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

### **Scott Henry**

*Principal & CEO, Celadon Partners*

[shenry@celadonco.com](mailto:shenry@celadonco.com) / 312-343-3285

### **Quinn Adamowski**

*Regional Advocacy Manager, Landmarks Illinois*

[qadamowski@landmarks.org](mailto:qadamowski@landmarks.org) / 815-603-4901

## DECATUR MASONIC TEMPLE

### **Bret Robertson**

*Chairman, History of the Heartland*

[bret59@rocketmail.com](mailto:bret59@rocketmail.com) / 630-518-6344

### **Quinn Adamowski**

*Regional Advocacy Manager, Landmarks Illinois*

[qadamowski@landmarks.org](mailto:qadamowski@landmarks.org) / 815-603-4901

## FORMER LINCOLN SCHOOL

### **Jerome King**

*Exec Administrator/Secretary, Emma L. Wilson King Foundation*

[paulroberson1976@aol.com](mailto:paulroberson1976@aol.com) / 202-321-8400

### **Lauren Parks**

*President, House of Miles Museum*

[HouseofMilesestl@gmail.org](mailto:HouseofMilesestl@gmail.org) / 618-365-0100

### **Reginald Petty**

*Founder, East St. Louis Historical Society*

[estlhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:estlhistoricalsociety@gmail.com) / 618-365-0100

### **Quinn Adamowski**

*Regional Advocacy Manager, Landmarks Illinois*

[qadamowski@landmarks.org](mailto:qadamowski@landmarks.org) / 815-603-4901

## JOHNSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE

### **David McKenzie**

*President, Johnson County Revitalization Corp.*

[dmckenzie618@yahoo.com](mailto:dmckenzie618@yahoo.com) / 618-771-0214

### **Ken Bain**

*Resident of Grantsburg, Illinois, Johnson County*

[ktbmin@live.com](mailto:ktbmin@live.com) / 618-771-3318

### **Ed Annable**

*Resident of Cypress, Illinois, Johnson County*

[Annable316@gmail.com](mailto:Annable316@gmail.com) / 618-771-6005

### **Quinn Adamowski**

*Regional Advocacy Manager, Landmarks Illinois*

[qadamowski@landmarks.org](mailto:qadamowski@landmarks.org) / 815-603-4901