



LANDMARKS  
ILLINOIS

# 2025 MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES IN ILLINOIS



1.

**Chicago Vocational High School**  
Chicago



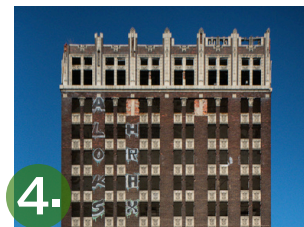
2.

**JJ Walser House**  
Chicago



3.

**Outdoor Theater at the South Shore Cultural Center**  
Chicago



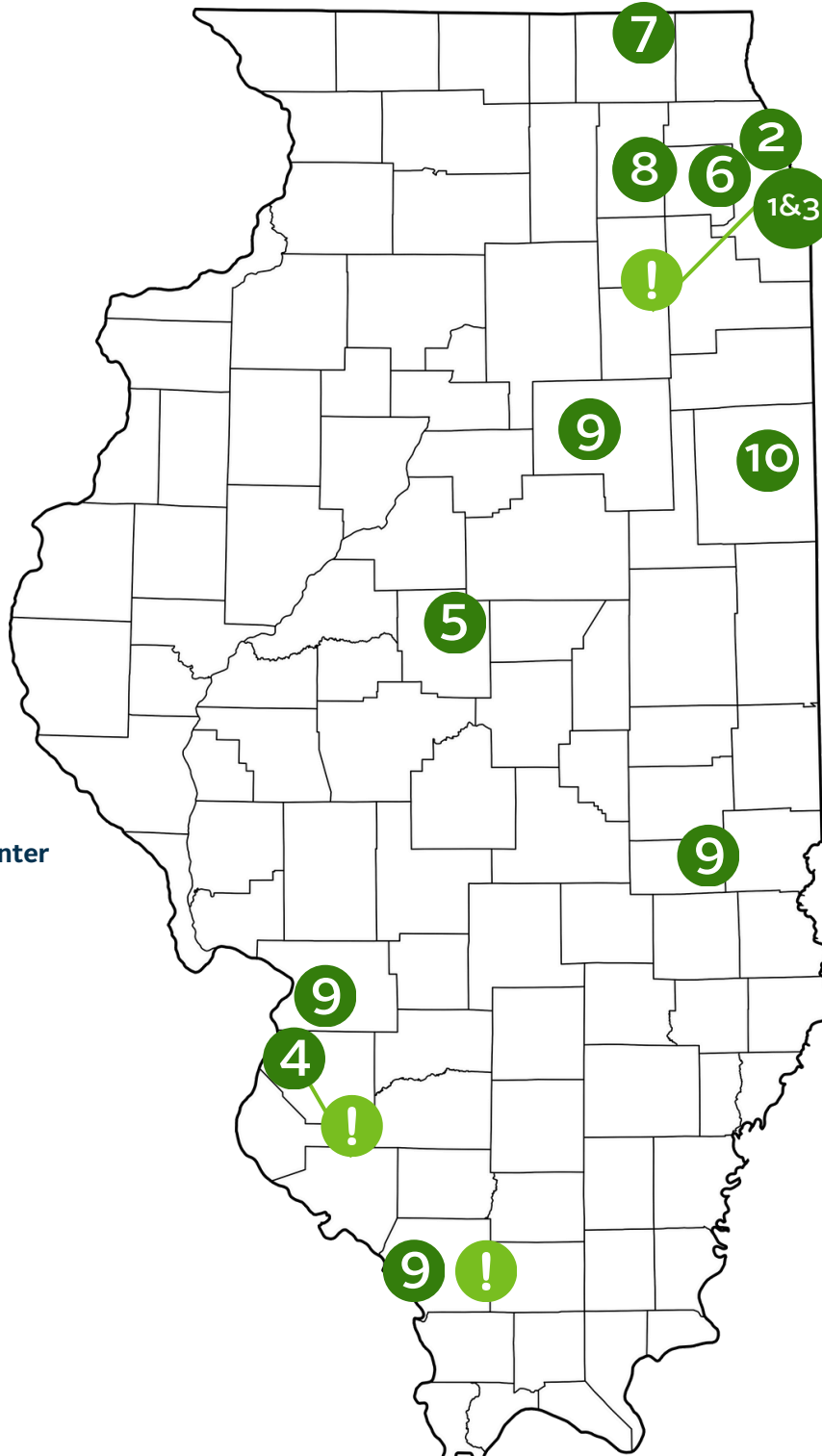
4.

**Spivey Building**  
East St. Louis



5.

**Allen Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church**  
Lincoln



**WATCH SITE: Federally owned historic buildings in Illinois**

Chicago, Carbondale & East St. Louis



6.

**Fordon House Barn**  
Oak Brook



7.

**W.A. McConnell Farmstead**  
Richmond



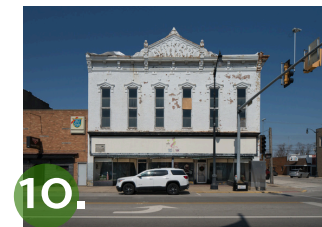
8.

**Judge William D. Barry House**  
St. Charles



9.

**Meramec Caverns Barns**  
Statewide



10.

**Stephens Brothers Opera House**  
Watseka

Learn more at [www.landmarks.org](http://www.landmarks.org)



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 1, 2025

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

## Landmarks Illinois Announces 2025 Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois

*Significant sites in Cook, Cumberland, DuPage, Iroquois, Jackson, Kane, Livingston, Logan, Madison, McHenry and St. Clair Counties require immediate attention and preservation resources*

CHICAGO – Landmarks Illinois has announced its [2025 Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois](#), calling attention to 10 culturally and architecturally significant sites across the state. The places on this year's list all face uncertain futures due to a variety of threats, including vacancy, neglect, deferred maintenance, demolition, underutilization and lack of landmark protection.

"This year's Most Endangered list is wide-ranging, not only in the kinds of troubling threats these places face, but also in their historical narratives, geographical locations and building types. Yet all celebrate cultural heritage and tell the important stories of the people who have shaped our communities," said Bonnie McDonald, President & CEO of Landmarks Illinois. "Landmarks Illinois feels a heightened responsibility this year to speak out and protect the built environment that reflects the rich diversity of our state and nation. As these irreplaceable sites face being erased, we remain steadfast in our commitment to preserve and honor our past, knowing that our history has the power to shape a more inclusive future."

### **2025 MOST ENDANGERED SITES**

The 2025 Most Endangered sites are located in the following counties: Cook, Cumberland, DuPage, Iroquois, Jackson, Kane, Livingston, Logan, Madison, McHenry 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. Photos are [available for download here](#) and at the top of the press release.

### **Chicago Vocational High School**

#### ***Chicago, Cook County***

The immense campus, built between 1938 and 1941 in Chicago's Avalon Park neighborhood, is home to the city's largest non-skyscraper example of Art Deco design. The school's "Anthony Wing," which formerly housed the heavy industry vocational programs, sits empty while the rest of the Chicago Public School-owned building is significantly underutilized in light of dwindling enrollment.

### **JJ Walser House**

#### ***Chicago, Cook County***

Built in 1903, this private residence on the busy Central Avenue in Chicago's Austin neighborhood is a significant example of Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie-period work and was the longtime home of the Teague family. Today, it sits vacant and in foreclosure, with mounting maintenance needs. A new owner is needed to bring the house back to life as a cultural anchor for Austin.

### **Outdoor Theater at the South Shore Cultural Center**

#### ***Chicago, Cook County***

Years of nonuse and deferred maintenance have taken a toll on the former outdoor theater, constructed in 1920, which is part of the current and otherwise thriving South Shore Cultural Center. Its owner, the Chicago Park District, would like to make necessary repairs to the theater to bring it back into use, but a lack of funds has consistently delayed such work, leaving the theater to continue deteriorating.

### **Spivey Building**

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

The 12-story, National Register-listed building is a testament to a period in which East St. Louis experienced prosperity and growth. The city's only skyscraper, which once housed the *East St. Louis Journal* and other thriving businesses, faces demolition due to decades of neglect, vacancy and deferred maintenance.

### **Allen Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church**

#### ***Lincoln, Logan County***

Built in 1880 by a congregation comprised of formerly enslaved people and their descendants, the church is an enduring, tangible reminder of local 19th-century African American history. It has sat vacant and deteriorating ever since it closed its doors in 2012 and requires significant repairs to ensure its survival and rebirth as a place of storytelling.

**Fordon Horse Barn*****Oak Brook, DuPage County***

The historic barn, built c. 1930, stands as a lasting reminder of an era when Oak Brook was the polo capital of the United States. The property owner, the Oak Brook Park District, is pursuing demolition despite master plans through 2030 identifying the preservation of park district cultural and historical resources as a priority.

**W.A. McConnell Farmstead*****Richmond, McHenry County***

Deferred maintenance and neglect threaten many of the outbuildings, including numerous barns, at this historic farmstead founded in 1837 by the first non-native settler of present-day Richmond. Proper funding is necessary so that the property owner, the McHenry County Conservation District, can make the essential repairs and protect the farmstead from further deterioration.

**Meramec Caverns Barns*****Statewide, including in Cumberland, Jackson, Livingston and Madison Counties***

Numerous historic barns in Illinois feature mural advertisements for “Meramec Caverns,” a cave network and tourist attraction located near Route 66 in Stanton, Missouri. An estimated 400 barn murals once existed across 14 states, and the majority that remain are in deteriorated condition. Landmarks Illinois is aware of a handful left in Illinois, including ones near Glenn and Cayuga, Illinois, that face imminent danger.

**Judge William D. Barry House*****St. Charles, Kane County***

Built in 1844 by active citizen and Illinois attorney Judge William D. Barry, the Greek Revival-style home sits prominently in St. Charles’ Downtown Central Historic District. The current owner, Baker Memorial United Methodist Church, plans to demolish the now vacant home to create a parking lot, erasing history and the opportunity to adaptively reuse the early settlement site.

**Stephens Brothers Opera House*****Watseka, Iroquois County***

The historic opera house, built in 1884, is located prominently on Watseka’s Main Street and was once a community hub for the arts and retail business. The City of Watseka purchased the vacant and deteriorating building in 2023. However, deferred maintenance has made restoration difficult and expensive. As a result, the city has discussed demolishing it for use as a parking lot or selling the building.



## 2025 WATCH SITE

In an unprecedented move, Landmarks Illinois has added a “Watch Site” to the Most Endangered list this year. The designation means we will monitor potential threats to the future of these places to ensure their preservation.

### Federally owned historic buildings in Illinois

***Statewide, including Chicago, Carbondale and East St. Louis in Cook, Jackson & St. Clair Counties***

Illinois is home to a handful of architecturally significant, federally owned buildings managed by the General Services Administration. Among these are three Modernist buildings the federal government has previously identified as wanting to sell: the U.S. Post Office and the Kluczynski Federal Building in Chicago, the Senator Paul Simon Federal Building in Carbondale, and the East St. Louis Federal Building. All three lack local landmark designation that would protect them against demolition or inappropriate redevelopment if sold to private developers.

Considering the rapid changes occurring under the Trump Administration, we feel it is imperative to monitor potential threats to these and other Illinois federally owned buildings that stand as prominent community markers and play key roles in civic and economic life.

[Read more about this listing at our website.](#)

## ABOUT THE MOST ENDANGERED PROGRAM

The annual Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois is Landmarks Illinois' longest-running advocacy program. Launched in 1995, the annual list aims to enhance advocacy efforts and build support for the eventual preservation of each property. Learn more about our Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois and view previous Most Endangered lists on our website.


The 2025 Most Endangered list was announced during a live, virtual press conference led by Bonnie McDonald, President and CEO of Landmarks Illinois. To watch a recording, please visit [Landmarks Illinois' YouTube page](#).

## 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).

###



 2100 E. 87th St., Chicago, Cook County

**BUILT:**  
1938-1943

**ARCHITECT:**  
John Charles Christensen, architect  
for the Chicago Board of Education

**CURRENT OWNER:**  
Chicago Public Schools

**CALL  
TO  
ACTION**

Express your  
support for Chicago  
Landmark  
designation !

**Contact the Chicago Board of  
Education**

Visit:  
[www.cpsboe.org/contact](http://www.cpsboe.org/contact)

**Contact Alderman Michelle  
Harris**

Email:  
[michelle.harris@cityofchicago.org](mailto:michelle.harris@cityofchicago.org)

*Photo by Paul Morgan*

## CHICAGO VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

Chicago, Cook County

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Chicago Vocational High School (CVS), now known as Chicago Vocational Career Academy, is a complex of four buildings: a main school building, a 1941 aircraft hangar and two WWII-era outbuildings. Chicago Public Schools (CPS) built it as a vocational training school to prepare people for a skilled craft. When the main building was completed in 1940, the [Chicago Sunday Tribune called it](#) “the most modern and best equipped [sic] trade school in the United States.” From 1941 to 1946, the U.S. Navy operated the school as a training facility for aircraft repair. After World War II, the school resumed civilian vocational training, at one time offering up to 30 programs. In 2022, the school was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Today, it is still in use as a vocational public high school. The main building is the largest non-skyscraper example of Art Deco design in Chicago and the entire complex is a visual landmark for Chicago’s Avalon Park neighborhood and for drivers on the Chicago Skyway.

### CURRENT THREAT

CVS was constructed to serve up to 6,000 students, but current enrollment is under 900. The 2018 CPS Educational Facilities Master Plan identifies the school as underutilized. The school’s “Anthony Wing”— located along Anthony Avenue and completed in 1943 to house the heavy industry vocational programs—is not in use. A previous proposal to demolish this unused part of the school has been delayed indefinitely due to a lack of funds. Still, the wing’s masonry reveals the impacts of vibration from its proximity to the highly traveled Chicago Skyway toll road. Although CPS invested \$56 million in upgrades to CVS in 2015, ongoing low enrollment continues to raise questions about the future of “the pride of the South Side.”

### PRESERVATION SOLUTION

Designating CVS as a Chicago Landmark would be an essential step in framing conversations about the future of the campus. Chicago Vocational High School Restoration Project is a group of CVS alumni advocating for local landmark designation, which would protect the school from future demolition and inappropriate redevelopment. CVS could be used to provide much-needed training to address the ongoing shortage of construction trade workers. According to Associated Builders and Contractors, the construction industry is expected to need [nearly one million new workers in 2025-2026](#) to meet market demands. The school already provides a carpentry curriculum.



42 N. Central Ave., Chicago,  
Cook County

**BUILT:**

1903

**ARCHITECT:**

Frank Lloyd Wright

**ORIGINAL OWNER:**

Joseph J. Walser

**CURRENT OWNER:**

Privately owned, estate of Anne Teague

**CALL  
TO  
ACTION**

Stay in the know on  
the latest advocacy  
efforts!

Follow the Frank Lloyd Wright  
Building Conservancy's Walser  
House webpage for detailed  
updates and future opportunities  
to take action.

Visit:

[savewright.org/endangered-  
walser-house-in-chicago/](https://savewright.org/endangered-walser-house-in-chicago/)

*Photo by Paul Morgan*

## JJ WALSER HOUSE

Chicago, Cook County

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright designed the Walser House for Joseph Jacob Walser and his wife, Grace. It was built in 1903, just four years after the Austin neighborhood was annexed to the City of Chicago, and is located on a stretch of Central Avenue that is dominated by commercial and multi-family buildings. It represents a significant example of Wright's Prairie-period work and served as a prototype for several of his subsequent designs. It is also Wright's only single-family house on Chicago's West Side. Hurley and Anne Teague purchased the house in 1970 and served as its stewards for nearly 50 years. Despite decades of economic disinvestment in Austin, the Teague's stewardship ensured that the home remained standing. Today, the Walser House is an irreplaceable cultural asset for Austin, a Chicago landmark and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.


### CURRENT THREAT

During his lifetime, Hurley Teague, a general contractor, kept the house in good repair. After Hurley's death in 1997, Anne Teague obtained a reverse mortgage to cover the ongoing maintenance of her home. Anne passed away in 2019, and the interest on the mortgage has become unaffordable for her heirs. The house is now vacant and faces foreclosure, placing it in a stewardship limbo that makes it vulnerable to continued deterioration. Conditions at the house are severe, including holes in the foundation and roof that have exposed the interior to deterioration and water damage. For a time, it was also unsecured from trespassers, leaving the interior littered and in disarray.

### PRESERVATION SOLUTION

The first step is to resolve ongoing questions of property control resulting from the reverse mortgage. Anne Teague's heirs would like to see the home continue to be a vital part of Austin's identity and history. Austin Coming Together (ACT), an organization dedicated to improving the quality of life in the Austin community, envisions the house as part of a revitalized Central Avenue corridor. ACT also listed the house as a community asset in its "[Austin Central Avenue Action Plan](#)" released in November 2024 in partnership with Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. As a Frank Lloyd Wright design, a restored Walser House has the potential to draw tourists and Wright enthusiasts from neighboring Oak Park.



 7059 S. South Shore Dr.,  
Chicago, Cook County

**BUILT:**  
1920

**ARCHITECT:**  
Marshall & Fox

**CURRENT OWNER:**  
Chicago Park District

## OUTDOOR THEATER AT THE SOUTH SHORE CULTURAL CENTER

Chicago, Cook County

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The South Shore Country Club was founded in 1905 and constructed the Mediterranean Revival-style club buildings that now house the South Shore Cultural Center in 1916. The outdoor theater opened in 1920 and features a small stage and a terrazzo dance floor emblazoned with the country club's logo. After facing a decline in membership, the country club closed in 1973 and was purchased by the Chicago Park District. In its years of ownership, the park district has completed various restoration projects. However, while the outdoor theater was stabilized, it was never fully restored. Today, the South Shore Cultural Center is a cultural and recreational hub for the South Shore community.

### CURRENT THREAT

The outdoor theater is facing deterioration after years of non-use and deferred maintenance. In its current state, the theater is not suitable for usage. Concrete areaways are broken, creating tripping hazards and posing potential liability risks to the Chicago Park District. Necessary lighting and sound systems are absent. The theater also does not meet current ADA accessibility standards. Although the Chicago Park District's 2018 South Lakefront Framework Plan anticipates the restoration of the theater, the lack of funds has prevented the project from moving forward.

### PRESERVATION SOLUTION

The Chicago Park District requires proper funding to address necessary repairs to the outdoor theater so it can once again be used. Following restoration, the South Shore Cultural Center Advisory Council envisions the theater serving as a hub for youth programming. The space could also be a venue for theater productions, concerts and other cultural events or be adapted for additional uses such as fitness classes and outdoor lectures.

#### CALL TO ACTION

Express your  
support for  
restoration!

Contact the Chicago Park District  
to voice your support for the  
restoration and reuse of the  
theater!

Email:  
[play@chicagoparkdistrict.com](mailto:play@chicagoparkdistrict.com)

*Photo by Paul Morgan*



417 Missouri Ave., East St. Louis, St. Clair County

**BUILT:**

1927

**ARCHITECT:**

Albert B. Frankel

**BUILDER:**

Wimmer Contracting Company

**ORIGINAL OWNERS:**

A.T. Spivey

**CURRENT OWNER:**

St. Clair County Trustee

## SPIVEY BUILDING

East St. Louis, St. Clair County

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Spivey Building is the only skyscraper in East St. Louis. Built during a construction boom, it stands as a 12-story testament to a period in which the city experienced prosperity and growth. The building is listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places and is also part of a National Register Historic District. It was built for Allen T. Spivey, owner of the East St. Louis Journal. The Spivey housed offices for the Journal, the Illinois Light & Power Company and other businesses. The Great Depression halted East St. Louis's building boom, but the Spivey remained occupied through 1980.

### CURRENT THREAT

After decades of neglect, the building's exterior has deteriorated to the point that falling bricks and other debris pose a risk to passing pedestrians and motorists. The building is effectively a shell, with no roof and a gutted interior. The Spivey Building faces demolition by the City of East St. Louis.

### PRESERVATION SOLUTION

Like the 2021 Landmarks Illinois Most Endangered site, the Broadview Hotel, the Spivey Building could be completely rehabilitated, using a combination of tax incentives and private investment. It could be reused for affordable housing, which is desperately needed in East St. Louis and the surrounding region.

*Photo by Paul Morgan*

**CALL  
TO  
ACTION**


Join the call for the preservation & reuse of the building!

Contact the Community Development Department at the City of East St. Louis and encourage the City to collaborate with developers to preserve and reuse this iconic structure.

Visit:

[www.cesl.us/343/Business](http://www.cesl.us/343/Business)



 910 Broadway St., Lincoln,  
Logan County

**BUILT:**

1880

**ORIGINAL OWNER:**

Congregation of Allen Chapel

**CURRENT OWNER:**Illinois Conference AME  
Church**CALL  
TO  
ACTION**

Get involved in the  
advocacy effort!

Contact Lincoln Historic  
Preservation Commissioner Ron  
Keller for more information.

Email:  
[thatonekellerdude@gmail.com](mailto:thatonekellerdude@gmail.com)

*Photo by Paul Morgan*

## ALLEN CHAPEL AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Lincoln

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Allen Chapel AME Congregation was established in 1868 by formerly enslaved people and their descendants. They erected the Allen Chapel AME Church in 1880. The church is an enduring, tangible reminder of 19th-century African American history in Lincoln, Illinois. Like other African Methodist Episcopal (AME) churches, Allen Chapel was not merely a house of worship but also served as a community space for Black residents. Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes attended the church with his mother, Carrie, while living in Lincoln as a child. Other notable congregants include Aaron Dyer, a conductor on the Underground Railroad in Springfield, and his grandson, Dr. William “Billie” Dyer, who served as a military surgeon during World War I.

### CURRENT THREAT

Allen Chapel closed its doors in 2012 and has remained vacant since then. The chapel has deteriorated over the past decade due to a lack of use and maintenance. The building's roof is in poor condition, tuckpointing and foundation work is needed, and the chapel's interior is dilapidated and requires mold remediation.

### PRESERVATION SOLUTION

The chapel's owner, the Illinois Conference AME Church, must prioritize addressing the building's deteriorated condition. The chapel could be reused as an interpretive center with a focus on the history of Lincoln's African American Community, the Underground Railroad and the city's connection to Langston Hughes.



Saddle Brook Park, Saddle Brook Dr. (S. of 35th St), Oak Brook, DuPage County

**BUILT:**

C. 1830

**ARCHITECT**

Unknown

**CURRENT OWNER:**

Oak Brook Park District


**CALL  
TO  
ACTION**

Voice your  
opposition to  
demolition!

Contact the Oak Brook Park District to express your opposition to the demolition of the barn and request that they work toward a preservation solution.

Visit: [www.obparks.org/contact](http://www.obparks.org/contact)

*Photo by Paul Morgan*

## FORDON HORSE BARN

Oak Brook, DuPage County

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Fordon barn is situated in Saddle Brook Park, within the Saddle Brook Community of Oak Brook. It is a lasting reminder of an era when Oak Brook was the polo capital of the United States. The Oak Brook Polo Club was founded in 1922 and became one of the top clubs nationwide. Jerry Fordon, a competitive polo player and club member, purchased the barn in 1941 to house his polo ponies. In 1975, the Saddle Brook Development Company deeded the barn and surrounding parkland to the Oak Brook Park District. The barn's ties to Oak Brook's equestrian history are especially meaningful in light of the polo club's closure in March 2025.

### CURRENT THREAT

The Oak Brook Park District is pursuing demolition of the historic barn. The park district formerly used the barn as storage but no longer needs it for that purpose. The park district originally planned to demolish the barn by the end of April 2025. However, pushback from residents has successfully delayed demolition. An open house at the barn was scheduled for April 26. Still, the Park District's 2025-2026 draft budget discussed during a budget workshop on February 24 identifies the removal of the barn as a capital project for the upcoming fiscal year.

### PRESERVATION SOLUTION

The Oak Brook Park District's Master Vision 2020-2030 prioritizes the preservation of the park district's cultural and historical resources. Demolition would be totally at odds with this goal. One potential solution is for the Oak Brook Park District to renovate the barn as a programmable space. Alternatively, the Saddle Brook Community Association has expressed interest in taking responsibility for the barn for community use through a long-term lease or potentially by moving it to another nearby lot. In either scenario, local support will be essential for a successful outcome.



6102 Broadway Road,  
Richmond, McHenry County

**BUILT:**

1837-1868

**ORIGINAL OWNER:**

William A. McConnell

**CURRENT OWNER:**

McHenry County  
Conservation District

**CALL  
TO  
ACTION**

Get involved!

Contact the W.A. McConnell  
Foundation  
([Foundation@WAMcConnellFoundation.org](mailto:Foundation@WAMcConnellFoundation.org)) to offer your  
support.

Encourage the McHenry County  
Conservation District  
([www.mccdistrict.org/](http://www.mccdistrict.org/)) to  
allocate the necessary funding to  
stabilize and repair the farmstead  
structures.

*Photo by Paul Morgan*

## W.A. MCCONNELL FARMSTEAD

Richmond, McHenry County

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

William A. McConnell was the first non-native settler of present-day Richmond, Illinois. McConnell was a carpenter from Pennsylvania and arrived in Richmond in 1837, building a log cabin on the current site of the farmstead. Other settler families soon followed, and by 1841, McConnell's property became the home of the area's first school. In 1852, McConnell constructed a Greek Revival-style home on the 500-acre property. He built another home in 1868. McConnell was an active community member, serving as county postmaster, commissioner and judge. Today, the McHenry County Conservation District (MCCD) owns the farmstead's remaining acreage, along with its eight structures, which include a home, granary and multiple barns.

### CURRENT THREAT

The farmstead buildings are currently at risk of neglect and deterioration. While the 1852 house is in fair condition and is privately owned and occupied, the 1868 home, barns and outbuildings on the farmstead are not. The exterior of the 1868 home has been painted but requires other repairs. The roofs of the barns, especially the oldest barn, are in dire need of repair. The original cabin and school are no longer standing. While the MCCD states its "core activities will prioritize protecting, restoring and managing natural and cultural heritage resources" ([MCCD Annual Budget, 2024 Fiscal Year](#), page 23), necessary funding has not yet been allocated to protect the farmstead structures from continued deterioration.

### PRESERVATION SOLUTION

The MCCD should allocate the funding to make the necessary repairs. The farmstead can be repurposed as a community center or educational facility promoting Richmond's history. Additionally, the repaired farmstead buildings could serve as a hub for safe and accessible nature trails and other natural recreation opportunities, as the property is located adjacent to an entrance for the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge.



Various, including Livingston, Cumberland, Madison and Jackson counties

**BUILT:**

1933-on

**ARCHITECT**

Various

**CURRENT OWNER:**

Various


**CALL  
TO  
ACTION**

Know of a  
Meramec Caverns  
Barn? Let us know!

Contact Casey Claypool,  
Executive Director of the Illinois  
Route 66 Scenic Byway, with  
information on any existing  
Meramec Cavern Barn in Illinois.

Visit:

[illinoisroute66.org/contact-us/](http://illinoisroute66.org/contact-us/)

## MERAMEC CAVERNS BARNs

Various

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Meramec Caverns is a cave network and tourist attraction located on Route 66 near Stanton, Missouri. In 1933, amateur spelunker Lester Dill purchased the caverns and began to provide tours. To market the tours, he began offering to paint nearby farmers' barns for free if the owners would allow him to advertise the Meramec Caverns on them. Barn advertisements began to crop up along Route 66, the National Road and other thoroughfares. Millions of motorists traveled these highways, making the barns ideal billboards. Dill and his employee, Jim Gauer, painted close to 400 barns in 14 states, including a number in Illinois.

### CURRENT THREAT

Many of the Meramec Cavern mural barns across the original 14 states have been lost, and the majority of those still standing are in deteriorated condition. This spring, Landmarks Illinois and the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway identified five Meramec Cavern Barns in Illinois in various states of disrepair. Two of them face imminent danger: one near Glenn, Illinois, and the other near Cayuga, Illinois. The disappearance of these structures represents an ongoing loss of Illinois's heritage tourism. The barns are not merely colorful roadside kitsch, but also pieces of the history of Route 66 and the National Road, two of the most historically significant highways in the United States.

### PRESERVATION SOLUTION

Landmarks Illinois will continue to work with the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway and the Route 66 Association of Illinois to identify the remaining Meramec Caverns barns in Illinois. Working with the owners, an action plan can be developed to address the deteriorated barns with the help of grant funding and volunteers.

*Photo by Paul Morgan*



217 Cedar Ave., St. Charles,  
Kane County

**BUILT:**

1844

**ORIGINAL OWNER:**

Judge William D. Barry

**CURRENT OWNER:**

Baker Memorial United  
Methodist Church

**CALL  
TO  
ACTION**

Voice your  
opposition to  
demolition!

Contact St. Charles Alderpersons in their role as the Planning and Development Committee of St. Charles to request that they uphold the Historic Preservation Commission's denial of the demolition permit.

Visit:

[www.stcharlesil.gov/Government/City-Council-and-Elected-Officials](http://www.stcharlesil.gov/Government/City-Council-and-Elected-Officials)

*Photo by Paul Morgan*

## JUDGE WILLIAM D. BARRY HOUSE

St. Charles, Kane County

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Judge Barry House is a Greek Revival-style home built in 1844 by Judge William D. Barry, a prominent citizen of St. Charles who was active in community affairs during the mid-19th century. Barry was an accomplished Illinois circuit court attorney before his 1851 election as a Kane County judge. He was also the first president of the Kane County Bar Association. Barry managed Union Civil War General John F. Farnsworth's seven successful campaigns for Congress. Located near other early settlement sites, this home represents an essential piece of St. Charles' heritage within its downtown Central Historic District.

### CURRENT THREAT

The current owner of the home, Baker Memorial United Methodist Church, plans to demolish the building to create a parking lot. Baker Memorial purchased the house in 1993 to provide housing for those in need. The church has ceased using it for this purpose and it has sat vacant since at least 2017. The church's most recent request for demolition, filed in October 2024, was denied by the St. Charles Historic Preservation Commission. The church subsequently filed an appeal to the city's Planning and Development Committee, which has yet to vote on the request.

### PRESERVATION SOLUTION

The Judge Barry House is in a prime location in downtown St. Charles and could be restored for active use. The City of St. Charles has said that it is considering purchasing the home. At a time when there is a housing shortage across the country, it could also be sold to a private owner for use as a residence. Alternatively, it could be reused as a retail space following the example of nearby former homes on St. Charles' Cedar and 3rd Avenues. A renovation of the Judge Barry House could take advantage of the Façade Improvement Grant offered by the City of St. Charles.



100 W. Walnut St., Watseka,  
Iroquois County

**BUILT:**

1884

**ORIGINAL OWNERS:**

Asa and Alva Stephens

**CURRENT OWNER:**

City of Watseka

**CALL  
TO  
ACTION**

Support local  
advocacy efforts!

Contact Watseka Community  
Renewal to offer your assistance  
with its ongoing advocacy.

Visit:

[www.watsekacommunityrenewal.org](http://www.watsekacommunityrenewal.org)

*Photo by Paul Morgan*

## STEPHENS BROTHERS OPERA HOUSE

Watsika, Iroquois County

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Stephens Brothers Opera House was a community hub and event space in Watseka for decades. The theater, located on the building's second floor, had a capacity of 700 people and held a diverse array of activities and performances. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, temperance activist Carrie Nation, and ragtime pianist Blind Boone made appearances at the opera house. It became a silent movie theater in the 1920s and retailer J.C. Penney began leasing the ground floor in 1929. The theater closed in 1938, and J.C. Penney closed in 1990. After a succession of retail businesses, the building deteriorated and was purchased by the City of Watseka in 2023.

### CURRENT THREAT

The Stephens Brothers Opera House is suffering from the effects of neglect by previous owners. The building needs a new roof, tuckpointing and stabilization to ensure its future. Although the City has already invested in it by purchasing it, there seems to be no agreement about the building's future. Demolition for use as a parking lot has been suggested, but this would be a tragic loss of this potential community anchor. The City has also discussed selling the property.

### PRESERVATION SOLUTION

Located on Watseka's Main Street, the Stephens Brothers Opera House represents the city's vibrant past and has the potential to bring renewed energy to its future. The local group Watseka Community Renewal is a local nonprofit that supports the preservation of historic structures in the area and has been advocating for the restoration of the opera house and has also developed a phased restoration plan for it. Collaboration between the City and Watseka Community Renewal could transform the Opera House into an anchor for cultural and economic development. Possibilities include a multi-use space on the ground floor, with the upper floor used as a concert venue.



Various, including Chicago, Carbondale and East St. Louis in Cook, Jackson & St. Clair Counties

**BUILT:**

Various

**ARCHITECT:**

Various

**CURRENT OWNER:**

U.S. General Services Administration

## FEDERALLY OWNED HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN ILLINOIS

Chicago, Cook County

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) owns more than 480 historic buildings across the United States, with a substantial number of them being significant modernist buildings constructed between the 1950s and 1970s. In Illinois, these include the U.S. Post Office and the Kluczynski Federal Building in downtown Chicago, both designed by Mies van der Rohe and built between 1974 and 1975, the East St. Louis Federal Building, built in 1966, as well as the Senator Paul Simon Federal Building in Carbondale, which was built in 1978. As federal facilities, these places play key roles in the civic and economic life of the communities where they are located—acting as service centers, sites of congregation and protest and symbols of stability.

### CURRENT THREAT

On March 4, 2025, the GSA announced that it would sell a large number of “non-core” federal real estate assets across the country. The list posted to GSA’s website included 14 properties in Illinois. Many of the included GSA-owned Illinois buildings are listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, but none of them have local landmark designation that could protect them against demolition or inappropriate redevelopment if sold to private owners.

GSA released a new, shorter list on March 21 that includes only one Illinois building that was not on the March 4 list, the William O. Lipinski Building at 844 N. Rush St. in Chicago. Still, [GSA’s website says](#) the list of properties for disposal “will continue to be updated as we execute on our strategy to rightsize the federal portfolio.”

### PRESERVATION SOLUTION

The Washington Post reported on March 11, 2025, that nearly half of the GSA’s fine arts and historic preservation staff have been dismissed as part of ongoing federal reductions in force. This action not only disrespects the service of these dedicated staff members, but it may also jeopardize GSA’s ability to meet review requirements for the disposition of federal property under the National Historic Preservation Act. If these buildings are sold out of federal ownership, review processes must be in place, as they are often the only opportunity for the public to provide feedback on potential sales. Additionally, local governments that have the power to designate these properties as local landmarks should do so proactively before they are sold to new ownership.

#### CALL TO ACTION

Help us locally landmark federally-owned buildings in Illinois!

If you reside in [Chicago](#), [Carbondale](#) or [East St. Louis](#), contact your local officials to ask them to proactively landmark historic federal buildings in your community.

The following quotes come from local representatives for each site included on the 2025 Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois. Members of the media are welcome to use them in their reporting.

## CHICAGO VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

**Michael L. Mims**

*C.V.S Restoration Project, Inc.*

"Chicago Vocational High School stands as a powerful symbol of architectural grandeur, educational innovation and community pride. Its striking Art Deco-Modernist design reflects the city's industrious spirit. At the same time, its legacy of playing a vital role during World War II in training service members and workers in support of the nation's defense efforts underscores its national significance. For generations, this landmark has equipped students with essential trade skills, shaping Chicago's workforce and strengthening its communities. Preserving this historic institution not only honors its proud past and safeguards a vital piece of the city's heritage but also ensures it continues to inspire and uplift future generations."

## JJ WALSER HOUSE

*Charisse J. Grossley & Johnny Teague*

*Heirs of Anne Teague*

"When my grandparents purchased the Walser home, it represented upwardly mobile Black people establishing legacies for their families and creating a blueprint for home ownership in the Black community. My grandfather was a builder. He made sure he maintained our home as well as our neighbors' [homes] if they needed assistance, taking pride in how he could serve this community better. This home serves as a tangible link to our past, offering insight into the lives of those who came before us and the events that shaped our community. The preservation of this landmark is essential not only for its historical value to the community but also for its potential to educate future generations."

## OUTDOOR THEATER AT THE SOUTH SHORE CULTURAL CENTER

**Ana Marija Sokovic**

*Member of the South Shore Cultural Center Advisory Council*

"[The theater's] restoration would create an inviting space for concerts, theater performances and cultural programming that would energize the South Shore neighborhood. The lack of adequate public spaces for youth cultural activities makes this project especially vital, providing opportunities for young people to engage with the arts, connect with their community and experience the unique natural beauty of the lakeside venue."

### SPIVEY BUILDING

#### **Yaphett El-Amin**

*President of Efficacy Consulting & Development, developer of the former Broadview Hotel*

"The Spivey Building stands as East St. Louis' only skyscraper and a singular testament to the city's former economic prosperity. Built in 1927 and vacant since 1980, this 12-story landmark, with its distinctive terra cotta details and architectural significance, represents an irreplaceable piece of our community's heritage. Including it on the Most Endangered list would shine a critical spotlight on this National Register property and catalyze the preservation efforts needed to transform this historic structure from a symbol of decline into an anchor for downtown revitalization."

### ALLEN CHAPEL AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

#### **Ron Keller**

*City of Lincoln Historic Preservation Commission Member*

"Historic buildings are our tangible connection to the past. The Allen Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Lincoln, whose members included the great poet Langston Hughes, stands as a significant relic of a forgotten heritage. From the post-Civil War era through the 20th century, Allen Chapel became the place where the local African American community gathered in kindred spirit, in common faith and in shared struggle amidst the outside world of segregation."

### FORDON HORSE BARN

#### **Elizabeth Arts**

*President, Oak Brook Historical Society*

"The Fordon Horse Barn puts a spotlight on often overlooked places. It represents a window to the past where we get a unique opportunity to experience Oak Brook from a time when farms and pastoral settings were the norm. It brings to light and amplifies the cultural and social aspects of a polo club created by Paul Butler for the community, which for a time made Oak Brook the cornerstone of American polo culture. It is worth saving and preserving a place where American history happened."

### W.A. MCCONNELL FARMSTEAD

#### **Adam Metz**

*President, W.A. McConnell Foundation*

"The 1868 McConnell Homestead is a prime example of how Chicago's first farmers settled on hilltop oak savannas loaded with springs for drinking water and a flowing creek to power their mills. Now that voters have approved funding for the farm's owner, the McHenry County Conservation District, there is a new opportunity to preserve this homestead. We can showcase history, architecture and 19th-century culture on a historic entry to Richmond, which is itself a preservation diamond in the rough. Better yet, the McConnell Homestead lies at the entrance to the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge—another preservation success in Richmond."

### MERAMEC CAVERNS BARN

#### Casey Claypool

*Executive Director, Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway*

"Placing the Meramec Barns on the 'Most Endangered' list through Landmarks Illinois is a crucial step in preserving these historic structures for future generations. This designation not only raises awareness of their cultural significance but also opens the door to funding and support for their restoration. By securing their place on this list, we are ensuring that these iconic landmarks continue to tell the story of advertising history in the U.S. and along its interstate system while paving the way for their revitalization and long-term preservation."

### JUDGE WILLIAM D. BARRY HOUSE

#### Steve Gibson

*Local historian & former commissioner of the St. Charles Historic Preservation Commission*

"The Judge Barry House is a rare 'story house,' reflecting nearly two centuries of Illinois and national history. Home to Judge William Barry—a frontier attorney, early Republican leader and mentor—it was central to key legal and political developments. Later residents, like Fred Rasmussen and Edith Kohlert, add layers tied to industrial innovation and local politics. Though Barry's legacy has faded, the house offers a tangible link to his contributions and those of others who shaped St. Charles. Preserving it honors forgotten figures and stories that would otherwise be lost—making it far more valuable than a few parking spaces."

### STEPHENS BROTHERS OPERA HOUSE

#### John Whitman Brito

*Member of Watseka Community Renewal and the owner of the historic Roff Home in Watseka*

"Great buildings deserve second chances. The Stephens Brothers Opera House served as the center of our community for one hundred years. If we can pull together as a community to give it a second lease on life, it can serve the community into the next century and beyond."

## CHICAGO VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

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## 2025 'WATCH SITE'

## FEDERALLY OWNED HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN ILLINOIS

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