17 Lott's Block
109 W. Washington St.

This property was originally owned by Irish canal boat captain, John McNellis who opened a provisions store here. Later, Lewis P. Lott and Horace Hulburd relocated their dry goods store to this location. Ray Kindlespire moved his business here in 1933.

18 Hanna & LeRoy's
113 W. Washington St.

Edmund Hanna and Dr. David LeRoy opened this three story brick store. Hanna ran the dry goods department and Dr. LeRoy sold medicines. This brick building survived the fire of 1867 which burned the entire block to the west.

19 Frank Bros. Clothing Store
112 E. Washington St.

Built by Max Frank in 1882, this is a prime example of Italianate commercial architecture. In 1905 it was purchased by the Hynds Brothers and rented as the Post Office.
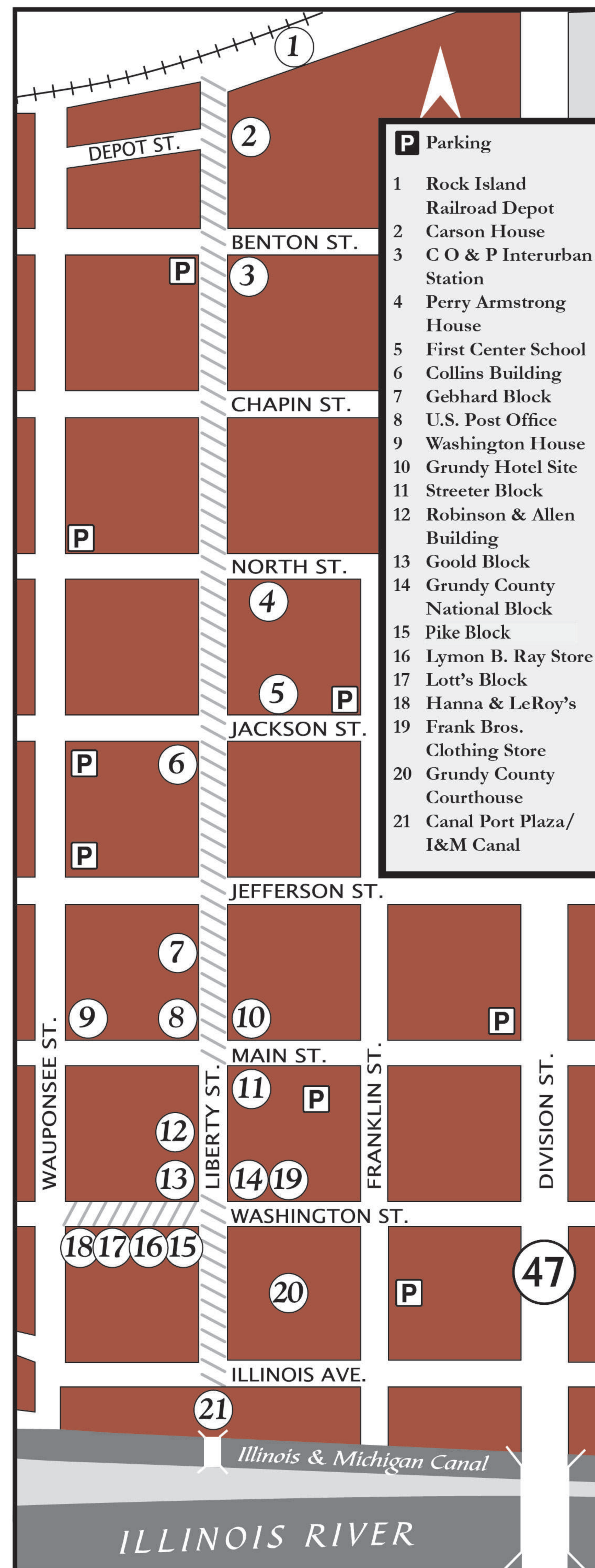
20 Grundy County Courthouse
111 E. Washington St.

This is the third courthouse, completed in 1913. The original courtroom on the second floor was restored in 2000. Memorials on the square include the "Indian Pole" of Illini Chief Nuquette, the Civil War "Soldier's Monument" erected in 1889, two World War I cannons, and the Korean/Vietnam Veteran's Memorial dedicated in 1991.

21 Canal Port Plaza / I&M Cana

End your tour at Canal Port Plaza and the historic I & M Canal.

Map

DEPOT ST. · BENTON ST. · CHAPIN ST. · NORTH ST. · JACKSON ST. · JEFFERSON ST. · MAIN ST. · WASHINGTON ST. · ILLINOIS AVE.

WAUPONSEE ST. · LIBERTY ST. · FRANKLIN ST. · DIVISION ST.

47

Illinois & Michigan Canal

ILLINOIS RIVER

P Parking

1. Rock Island Railroad Depot
2. Carson House
3. C O & P Interurban Station
4. Perry Armstrong House
5. First Center School
6. Collins Building
7. Gebhard Block
8. U.S. Post Office
9. Washington House
10. Grundy Hotel Site
11. Streeter Block
12. Robinson & Allen Building
13. Goold Block
14. Grundy County National Block
15. Pike Block
16. Lymon B. Ray Store
17. Lott's Block
18. Hanna & LeRoy's
19. Frank Bros. Clothing Store
20. Grundy County Courthouse
21. Canal Port Plaza/ I&M Canal

Morris History

The history of Morris is based on transportation. From stagecoach to canal, from railroad to trucking, its buildings stand as an architectural record of its connections and growth from the past.

Morris began as a location on the proposed Illinois and Michigan Canal which would connect the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. During its construction from 1836 to 1848, Morris was one of several towns that grew up along its banks – suppling contractors, housing workers and enticing newcomers.

In 1841, after William Armstrong successfully petitioned the Illinois Legislature to create two new counties out of the vast county of LaSalle, Grundy needed a county seat. There were two possible locations, but the canal commissioners could not reach an agreement. When Isaac Morris of Quincy cast his vote for the location favored by local residents, they gratefully named the town after him.

As the town was developed, Leaner Newport was appointed surveyor and laid out the town into lots, blocks, streets and alleys with a public square. The original town was bounded to the north by Washington Street, to the east by Cedar Street, to the west by Wauponsee street, and to the south by the canal.
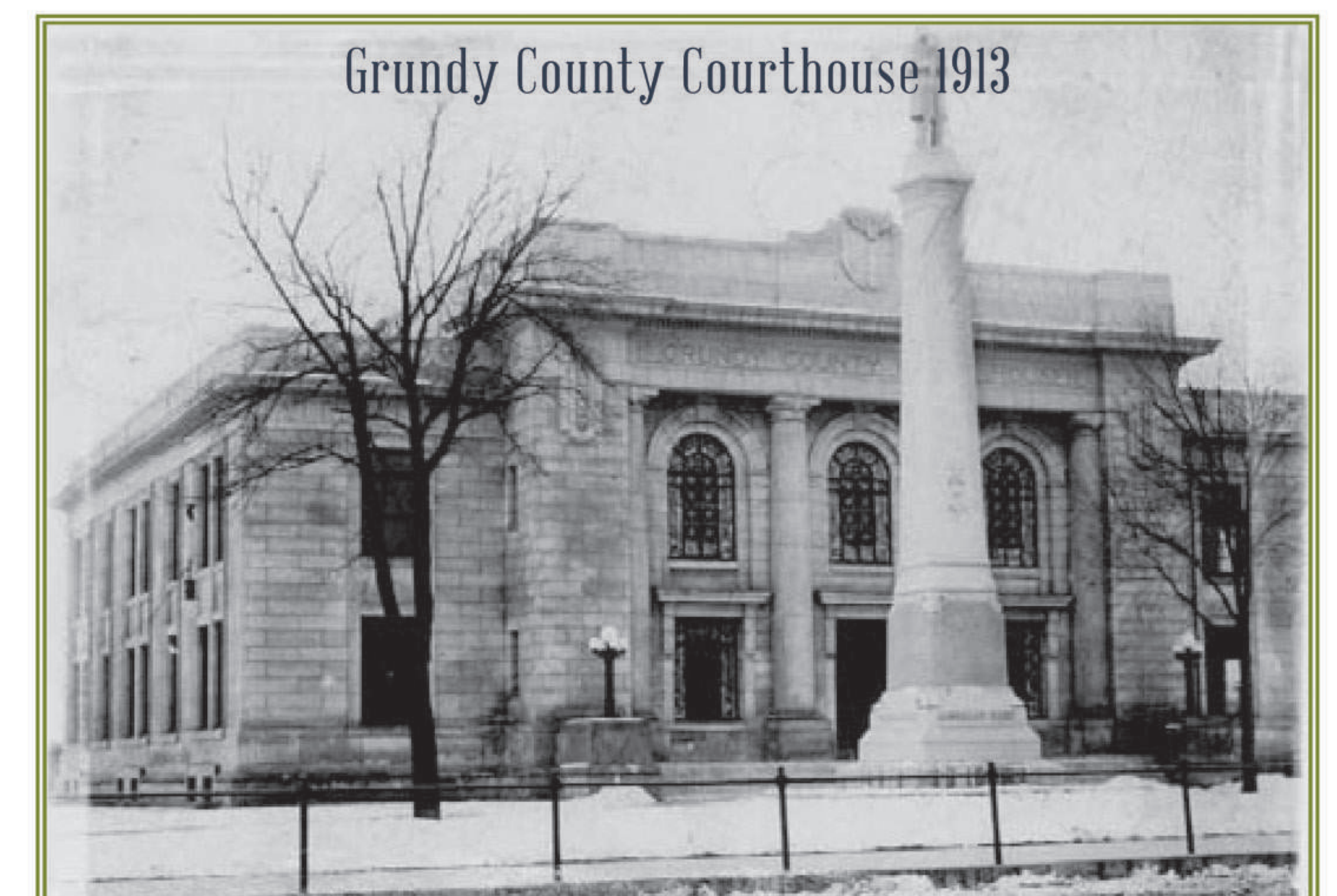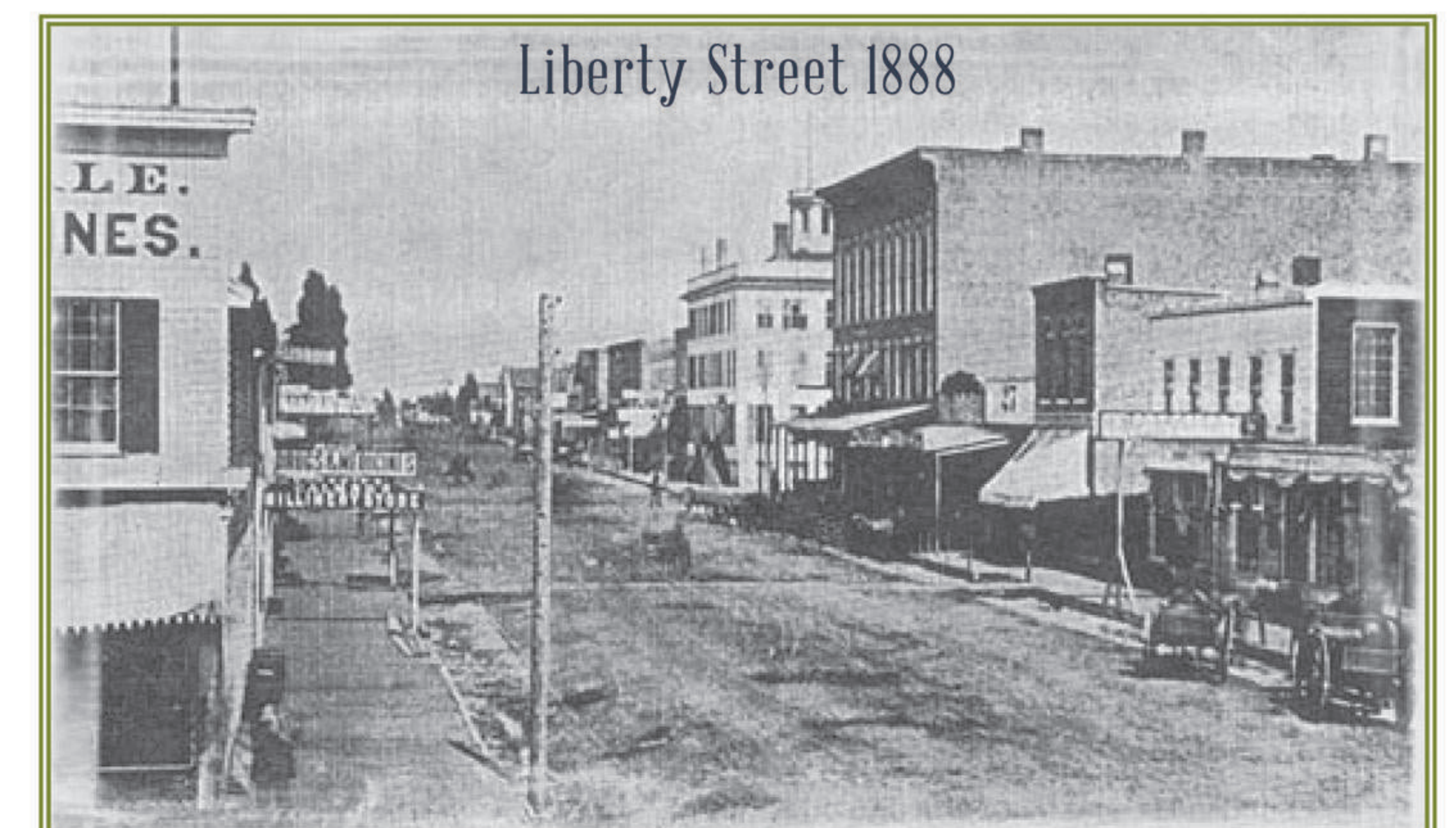
Mail to the new town was carried by stage coach before the canal opened. In 1839, the residents built Shakey Bridge over Nettle Creek to induce the Frink and Walker Stage Line to change their route from Chicago to Galena and come through Morris. In 1845, it finally did, after the United States Postal Department mandated daily delivery for the new county seat.

With the opening of the I and M Canal in 1848, the town prospered. Wooden structures went up quickly for grain elevators, workshops, hotels and stores. Following a fire on Washington Street in 1867, a fire district was implemented, enforcing more substantial building materials like brick and stone. A building boom followed and the wooden buildings were replaced. After the arrival of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad in 1852, Morris grew to the north.

Factories mingled close to town, beginning with the Plow Factory, built west of Liberty Street on Illinois Avenue. The Woelfel Tannery followed around 1858, at the Boston Saloon, Gebhard Brewery in 1866, The Coleman Hardware in 1873 and Northwestern Novelty in 1909. The Morris Papermill was established in 1915.

This walking tour brings you through the heart of Morris, one of the last enduring, authentic and vibrant downtowns in Illinois. The eight blocks from Canalport Plaza to the Visitors Center/ Chamber of Commerce at the old Rock Island Railroad Depot give you a flavor of a century of change.

Morris, Illinois
Self-Guided Walking Tour
of the Morris Downtown Commercial Historic District

Liberty Street 1888

Grundy County Courthouse 1913

Illinois & Michigan Canal 1848

(815) 942-0103

morrisil.org

MORRIS
ILLINOIS

1 Rock Island Railroad Depot

909 Liberty St.

This is the second depot, built in 1900. The restoration was completed in 2000 by the Community Foundation of Grundy County. The building is owned and occupied by the Grundy County Chamber of Commerce.

2 Carson House

823 Liberty St.

Built in 1858, as the Boston Saloon. This building was renamed the Carson House in 1862. Here, the traveling salesmen stayed while they called on their Morris customers before taking the Rock Island to the next town.

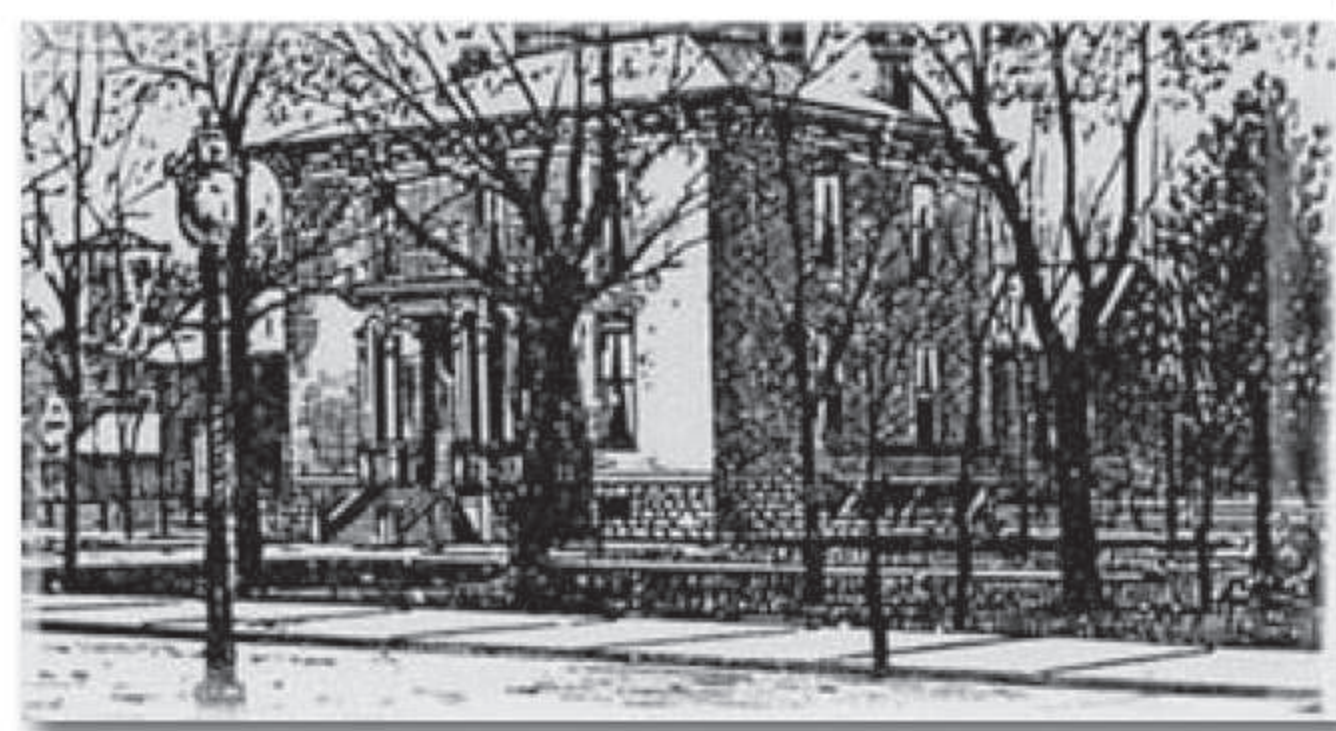### 3 Chicago, Ottawa & Peoria Interurban Station

721 Liberty St.

This station and power house for the interurban street car line was completed in 1911. As a part of the Illinois Traction system, the line ran between Joliet, Morris, Ottawa, and Princeton and closed in 1934.

4 Perry Armstrong House
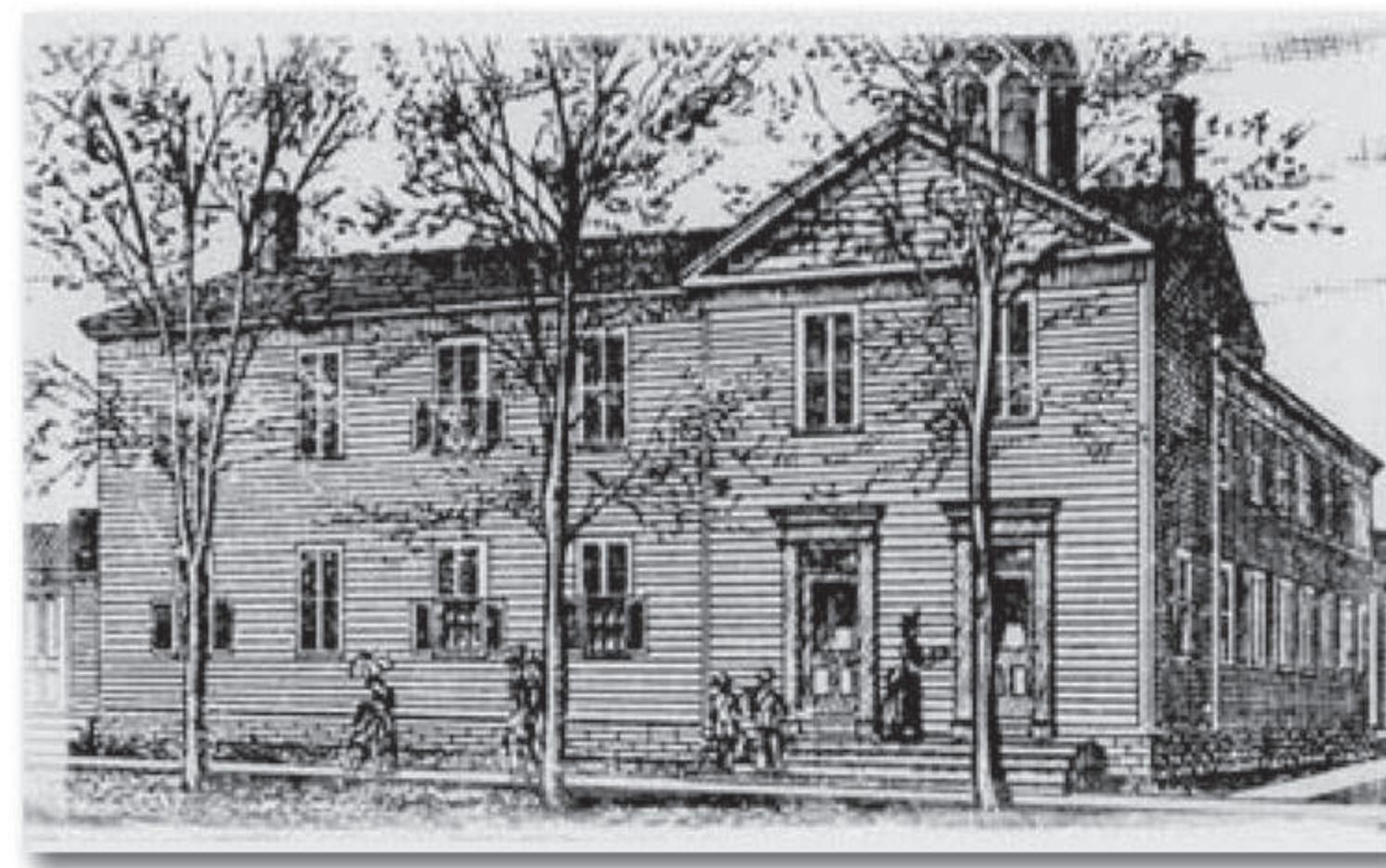
109 E. North St.

This building was originally red brick with wrought iron trim. Armstrong's law office was upstairs. Lymon B. Ray (elected to the Illinois House in 1873) used the balcony built on the west window to deliver his political speeches to Liberty Street.

5 First Center School

110 E. Jackson St.

Public grade school classes opened in this building during the fall of 1853. In 1876 it was replaced by the stone "Old Center School" on Division Street. In 1930 Dr. Fred Graham purchased this building for his dentist office. Its west wing had already been torn down in 1924.

6 Collins Building

420-424 Liberty St.

J. R. Collins built this three story building in 1905 for his Farmers & Merchants National Bank and as a hardware store for a nephew, Price Matteson. Founded in 1906, the Morris Hospital occupied two flats on the northeast corner of the third floor.

7 Gebhard Block

314-318 Liberty St.

Louis Gebhard built this commercial building in 1885. It housed Peterson's Grocery, Cronin Hardware, and the Sachse Saloon on the ground floor. Apartments were on the second floor and the Masonic Hall was on the third floor.

8 Morris Post Office

302-304 Liberty St.

In 1875 Louis Gebhard built this building to house the Post Office and the Eli Johnson Clothing Store. In 1907 Charles Sachse added a two story brick addition on the west end to house the Henry Kutz Saloon. The First Trust & Savings Bank began here in 1916.

9 Washington Hotel

114-124 W. Main St.

In 1867, Phil Lehr built a wood frame hotel here. In ca. 1869 Conrad Wagner bought it and renamed it the "Washington House." The main building was completed in 1875.

10 Grundy Hotel Site

301-305 Liberty St.

At this location William Armstrong built the first hotel in Morris in 1841. It burned ten years later and was replaced by the Hopkins House, which burned in 1888. The current structure was built in 1891.

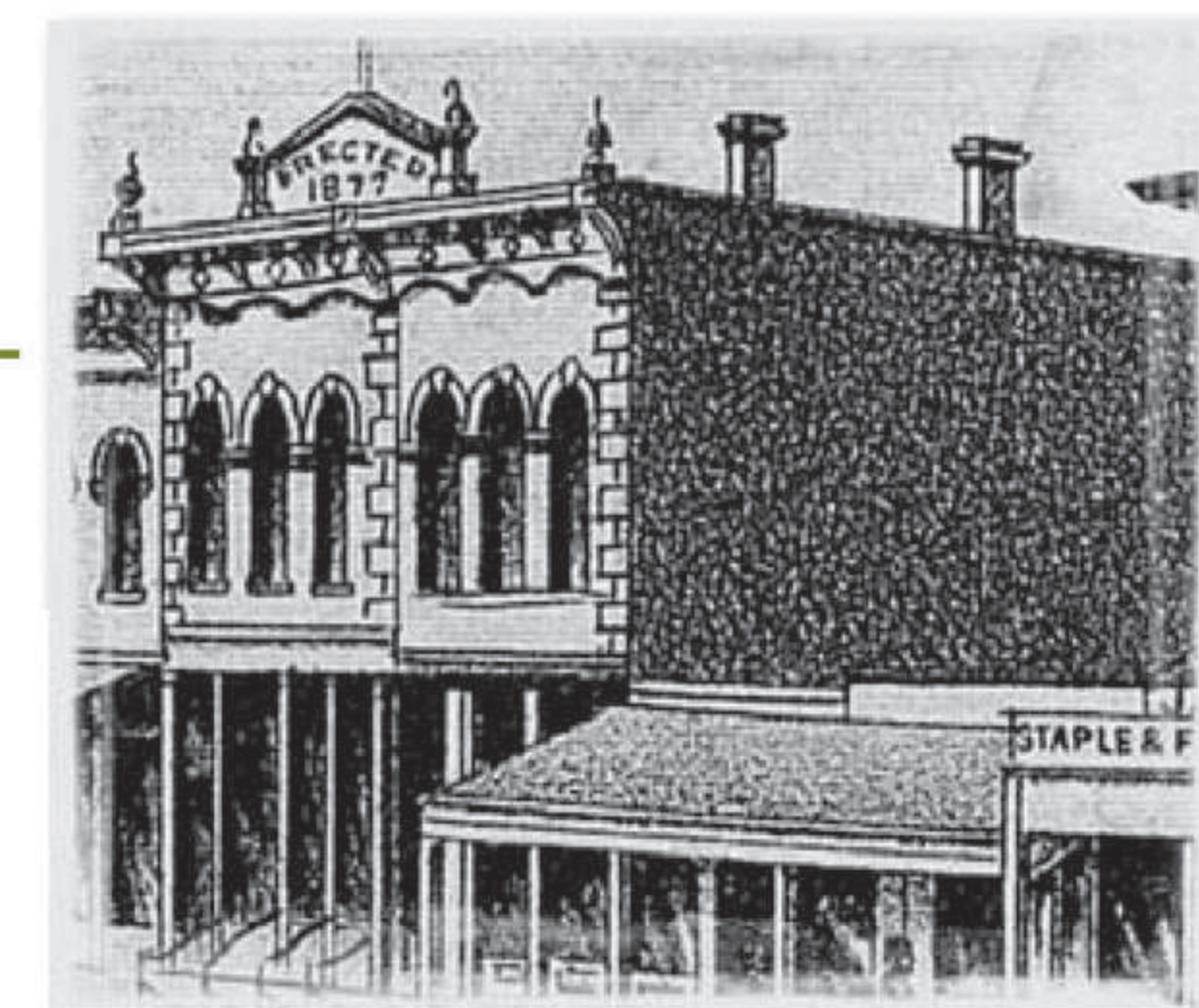### 11 Streeter Block

301-305 Liberty St.

This imposing structure, the first brick building on Liberty Street, was commissioned by B. F. Streeter in 1860. Henry Baum moved his clothing store here in 1888. Baum's Hall upstairs was one of the first motion picture theaters in Morris. The store closed in 2007 after 132 years.

12 Robinson & Allen Building

216-218 Liberty St.

Nobel Robinson built this impressive building of Aux Sable limestone, and opened a saloon here in 1877. The store to the north was rented as the "Holtzman News Stand."

13 Pike Block

202-212 Liberty St.

A portion of this building was built by Henry C. Goold in 1867 on land owned by John Porter. Marshall Pike later consolidated the four buildings at this site. They were bricked over in 1873.

14 Grundy County National Bank

201-205 Liberty St.

Property owners Abigail Atwater and N. C. Petty built this brick building in 1867 to house the Grundy County Bank. The northern section was built by Samuel Hull, a canal boat captain, who built a grocery store downstairs with his living quarters above.

15 Claypool Building

101 W. Washington St.

Lawrence Claypool built this building of Aux Sable stone in 1877. In 1889, Sam Underwood bought it for a grocery, which grew into the Revolution department store. The Fraternal Order of Eagles #1024 purchased the building in 1947.

16 Lymon B. Ray Store

105 W. Washington St.

Built in 1864, this was Ray's Dry Goods Store. The owner was elected to the Illinois House in 1873, later to the Senate, and eventually became Lieutenant Governor. He helped organize the Grundy County Republican Party.