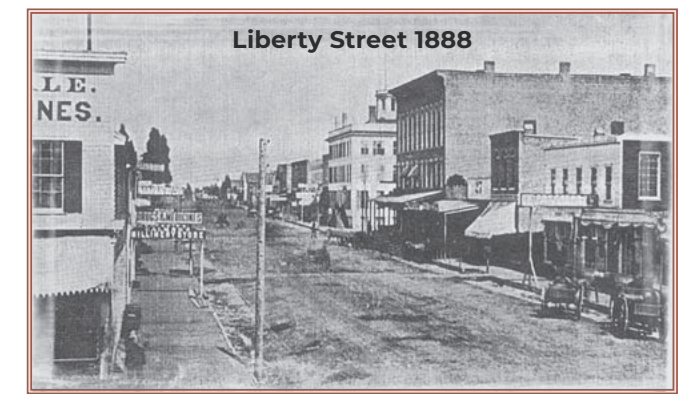


Self-Guided Walking Tour of the Morris Downtown Historic District



For more information on
Downtown Morris and local history, visit
Grundy Area Historical Museum
510 W Illinois Avenue, Morris
(815) 942-4880



www.morrisil.org/visitmorris

Welcome to Morris

Morris began as a location on the proposed Illinois and Michigan Canal which would link the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. During its construction from 1836 to 1848, this was one of several towns that grew up along its banks — supplying 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 La Salle, Grundy County 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 the local residents, they gratefully named the town after him.

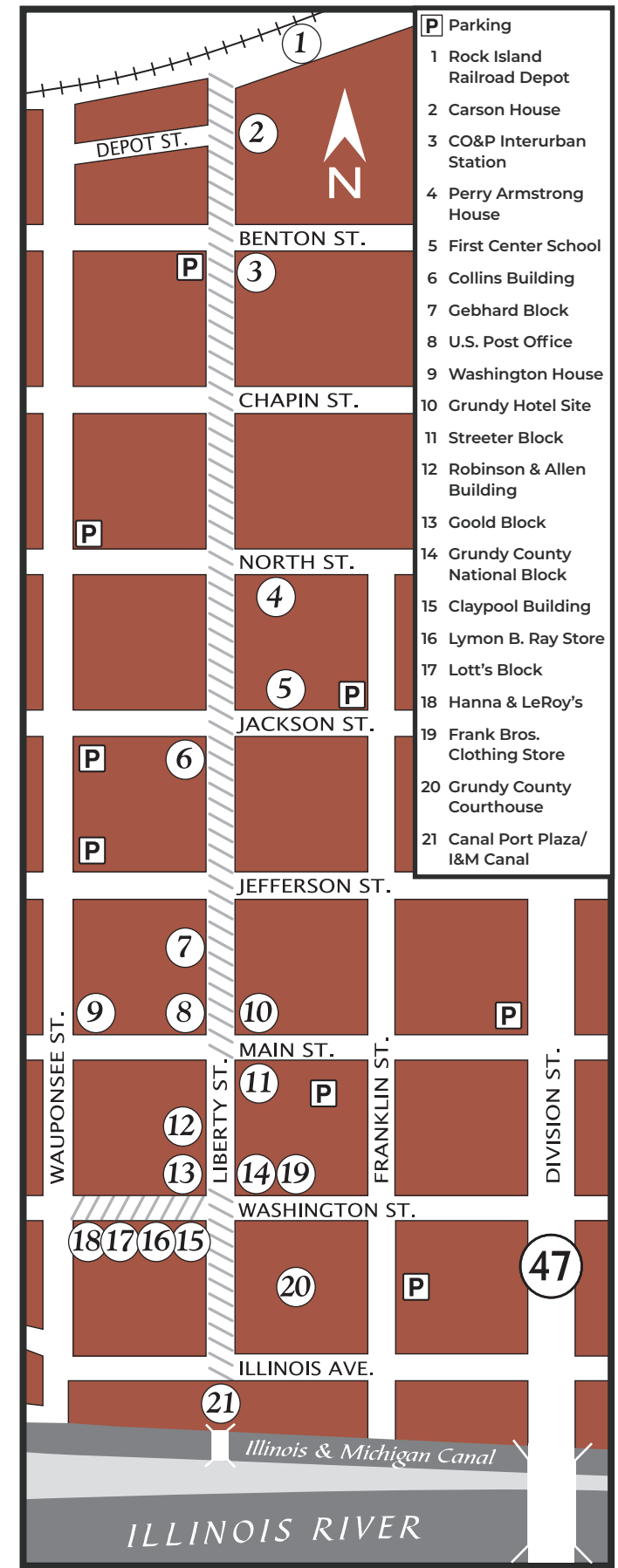
Leander Newport was appointed surveyor, and directed to lay out the town into lots, blocks, streets, and alleys, with a public square. The original town was bound to the north by Washington Street, to the east by Cedar Street, to the west by Wauponsee Street, and to the south by the canal.

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 & M Canal in 1848, the town prospered. Wooden structures went up quickly for grain elevators, workshops, hotels, and stores. Then, in 1867, there was a fire on Washington Street. 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, Gebhard Brewery in 1866, The Coleman Hardware in 1873, and Northwestern Novelty in 1909. The Morris Paper Mill was established in 1915.

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



17 Lott's Block 109 W. Washington St.



This property was originally owned by the Irish canal boat captain, John McNellis, who opened a provisions store here. In 1847 Horace Hulburd and Lewis Lott turned it into a fancy dry goods store. Ray Kindelspire moved his business here in 1933.

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



Edmund Hanna and Dr. David LeRoy built 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 Canal

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

 Start at railroad tracks on Liberty St.

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. Caboose #522 is on display and open for tours periodically. These end-cap cars served as rolling homes for train crews.



2 **Carson
House**
823 Liberty St.

Originally the Boston Saloon, built in 1858, it was renamed the Carson House in 1862. The two story addition was built in 1877. Here, traveling salesmen stayed while they called on their Morris customers before taking the Rock Island to the next town.



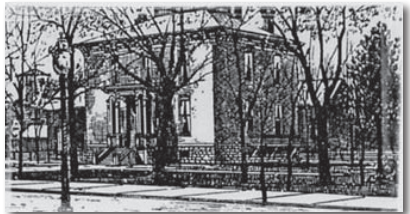
3 **Chicago,
Ottawa &
Peoria Interurban
Station**
721 Liberty St.

This was the depot and power house for the interurban street car line, completed in 1911, as 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. The second floor was apartments, and the third floor was the Masonic Hall.



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.



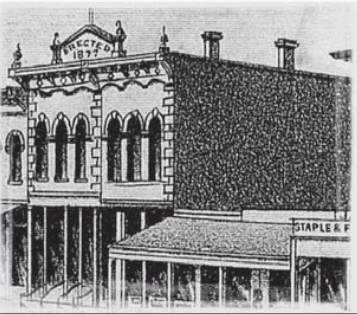
11 **Streeter
Block**
301-305 Liberty St.

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, then to the Senate, and eventually became Lieutenant Governor. He helped organize the Grundy County Republican Party.

