

BELVIDERE HISTORIC
PRESERVATION
COMMISSION

The History Keeper is meant to keep residents and land-owners of historic properties within the City of Belvidere informed about the assistance available to them and to keep them informed about the latest happenings.

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The History Keeper

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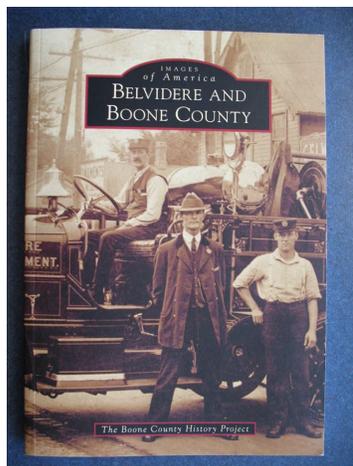
NOVEMBER 2018

Historic US Route 20

On October 16, 2018, the Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission hosted a presentation by Byran Farr, founder of the Historic US Route 20 Association. The original 1926 alignment of US Route 20 is the longest road system in the United States, stretching from Newport, Oregon to Boston, Massachusetts. One of the goals of the Association is to increase tourism along US Route 20, much like groups have done along US Route 66.

The original Route 20 includes Business Route 20, North and South State Street, Logan Avenue and US Route 20 (east of Logan Avenue). The Commission hopes to form a partnership with the Association to help promote the City's downtown along with our wonderful businesses, murals, open space and architecture.

If you would like more information about the Historic US Route 20 Association, please feel free to visit their website at: <http://www.historicus20.com>



Looking For A Special Gift?

Copies of the *Images of America Belvidere and Boone County* book are available for purchase at Belvidere City Hall for only \$20.

The books include pictures and stories that highlight the history of Belvidere and Boone County. All proceeds from the sales of the book go to fund the Local Landmark Property Maintenance Grant Program. The Program provides 50/50 grants (up to \$1,000) for exterior renovations and repairs on land-marked structures.

Please feel free to contact Gina DelRose in the Community Development Department regarding book sales. 815-547-7177 or gdelrose@ci.belvidere.il.us

The Post Office Building



If Walls Could Talk
By: Kathy Sterbenc
BDR News Editor
 (Originally appeared
 in February 9, 1990
 issue of BDR)

Address:
200 South State
Street.
Belvidere, IL 61008
Style:
Colonial Revival
Year Built:
1910

When the Belvidere Post Office opened its brand-new doors in 1911, workers who were delivering mail out of City Hall must've rejoiced at the increased space. Although the building at 200 S. State St. is now far too small to handle 1990 mail demands, it retains the details that may place it on a landmark list someday.

The building was dedicated with a ceremony that included singers, speeches, and local school children marching onto its lawn to the beat of a drum. An article which covered the entire front page of the *Daily Republican* on Oct. 11, 1911, said onlookers "crowded the open space at the south side of the Federal building, filled the terrace on Dr. Whitman's lawn, overflowed the sidewalk, and onto the street, where scores of automobiles and carriages were drawn up as near to the curb as they could get."

History Intact

The curved porch on the brick building's northwest corner leads into its Colonial Revival architecture. The main door is topped with a transom, or horizontal window which is usually hinged. The entrance originally held double doors. The door is topped with trim forming a triangle called a "segmental pediment." The pediment is broken at the top by a crest. The doorway and sides of the building are flanked with "pilasters," or rectangular pillars set in the walls from which they project. Pilasters mimic columns in Greek and Roman designs.

Round windows cap the paired windows on each side of the door. All of the windows are paired, "double-hung" windows (meaning they have two movable sashes) with transoms. Also note the thin, vertical accents, called "keystones," over the exterior and some interior windows.

The notches trimming the building's top, under the parapet wall, are called "modillions." The foundation is made of square-cut, tooled granite. A large dock was added to the building's rear in in the late 1950s, said Postmaster Jim Schwedersky. Otherwise, paint over most of the original interior oak doors and trim is the only "re-muddling" which has been done to the post office.

The main door leads to the rotunda, the round entry room which features marble wainscoting and oak trim. The doorway leading to the postmaster's office is crowned with wooden "entablature," or layers of trim. Swinging double-doors lead into the public lobby. The lobby originally had four service windows, with one each for rural carriers, general delivery stamps, registered mail, and money orders and postal savings bonds.

The original service windows, covered with bars and flanked by frosted glass panes, have since been replaced with post office boxes. The service window panels are still topped with huge pivot windows and transoms. Hand cranks rotated the pivot windows on center hinges. The only original postal boxes appear to have been built in the southeast corner of the lobby. Brass plates remain where gas light fixtures used to hang in the rotunda and lobby. The paneled ceilings are bordered with notches, or "dentils," and raised molding.

The workroom, which makes up much of the building's eastern half, has a 24-foot-high ceiling with floor-to-ceiling windows. A narrow hall, hanging from the middle of the ceiling, runs the length of the room. The hall is a "lookout gallery" where inspectors still can peer through grated windows at their employees.

One of the stranger features of the post office appears in the southing room in the southwest corner of the building. A small door, leading to a storage closet, rests about 10 feet off the floor. Schwedersky said the cubbyhole- not surprisingly- is not being used.

The basement once was part of the mail circuit, but is now used for storage. It retains its original wooden, double doors with straight sides and curved tops.

The Post Office Building Continued...

Centuries Clash

"We're forecast for a new building in 1999," a hopeful Schwedersky said. "If we can survive that long remains to be seen." Space inside *and* outside the building is precious. With the residential boom in Boone County, the structure built for 1910 won't cut it in 2010. Aside from the lack of parking and work space, the 1910 architect didn't have the foresight to make the post office accessible to the handicapped. Also, electrical outlets added to the building are scarce. Those problems make the building unsuitable for the post office, but some other lucky agency may give the historically valuable building a new lease on life.

2018 Local Landmarks!

On October 1, 2018 the Hotchkiss House located at 527 Pearl Street became a local landmark. The Hotchkiss House was built in 1840 by Adonijah Hotchkiss and has been home to notable residents such as Nijah Hotchkiss, George Ames, Frank Goodrich and the Clanin Family. Five original stained glass windows remain in the residence along with many other decorative features.



On November 5, 2018 the Dunton Home located at 401 East Lincoln Avenue became a local landmark. The Dunton Home is a great example of Italianate architecture and was built in the 1860s. Notable residents of the home include William Dunton, Harry Pierce and John Hammer. The Dunton Home is most well known for its urban tales. William Dunton's daughter Nellie drowned herself in the Kishwaukee River that flows behind the home. Her ghost is said to have remained on the property. The tunnels that lead from the river to the home have also spurred rumors of involvement with the Underground Railroad even though they are most likely from the Prohibition Era.



Prohibition Era

Did you know that Belvidere has a very rich history when it comes to the Prohibition Era? In 1933, Federal Agents raided the largest bootlegging operation outside of Chicago. The operation was in a building located across from the Apollo Theater and included 7 vats (35,000 gallons each) of alcohol. The operation could produce 700 gallons a day of 180-proof alcohol. Tunnels were dug along the Kishwaukee River for bootleggers to use when smuggling alcohol in and out of local residences and businesses.

Distillery Road was named after a distillery was found in the lost Village of Newburg that was settled in the that area.

Resource Corner!

Have you heard of the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions? The NAPC is a nonprofit located in Virginia. The NAPC has design guidelines and also a publication called the Alliance Review with helpful information. Their website is:

<https://napcommissions.org/>

The City of Belvidere recently adopted a 10 Year Preservation Plan authored by the Lakota Group. This plan will help give the community guidance on potential landmarks (individual and districts), code language, etc.

How To Best Connect

The Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission will continue to create and distribute The History Keeper newsletter in 2018, but the mailing list has now reached over 200 households. In order to most effectively and efficiently reach you, we need to know the best way to get into contact with you. That is why we would like to offer you the option of receiving a digital version of this document in the future.

If you'd like to subscribe to The History Keeper newsletter via email, please contact Gina DelRose at gdelrose@ci.belvidere.il.us.

If you'd like to keep receiving the newsletter via regular mail, no additional action is required.

Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission

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The Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission (the Commission) has been a part of the community for decades. The Commission is comprised of seven members who live in Boone County, work for or own property within the City of Belvidere as well as a staff liaison. The Commission's goal is to promote the protection, enhancement, perpetuation and use of improvements of special character or historical interest or value for the health, prosperity, safety and welfare of the people of the City. Since its inception, the Commission has landmarked 26 local properties, five national registry properties, the 2004 West Hurlbut Local Historic District, the 2012 North State Street National Historic District and the 2012 South State Street National Historic District.

For More Information Visit:

www.ci.belvidere.il.us/departments/community-development/historic-preservation

Or find us on Facebook: **Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission**

Upcoming Events

Upcoming Fundraisers

2019 Murder Mystery

The Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission will be hosting another Murder Mystery on January 25th and 26th at the Boone County Museum of History. The commission and participants had a great time last year! Based on feedback from last year's event, this one will be organized slightly differently in order to make it even better! Stay tuned to our Facebook page for ticket information and theme. We will also be placing an ad in the Boone County Shopper.

If you would like to be a sponsor for this event, please call Gina DelRose at 815-547-7177.

2019 Progressive Dinner

Do you have a historic home or building that you want to show off to the community? We are looking for properties to participate in the 2019 Progressive Dinner! The Progressive Dinner allows guests to enjoy appetizers at one property, dinner at another and desserts at a third. The Commission provides food, beverages and support to the property owners throughout the night. If you are interested in participating or have questions, please call Gina DelRose at 815-547-7177 or email at gdelrose@ci.belvidere.il.us



Hometown Christmas in Downtown Belvidere

December 7, 2018 kicks off this year's Hometown Christmas festivities! Please stop by the Boone County Historical Museum to say hi to the Belvidere Historical Preservation Commission members and ask questions or share stories. We love to hear them!

Landmark Property Maintenance Program

All properties that are locally or nationally registered historical landmarks or part of a historic district in the City of Belvidere qualify for a matching maintenance grant of up to \$1,000. The Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission has created a local incentive that will pay up to 50% of project costs or up to \$1,000 per project, but the project must first be approved by the commission. Letters to eligible property owners will be mailed in January. If you do not receive one or would like more details on the grant contact Gina DelRose at 815-547-7177.

Now Accepting 2019 Award Nominations

Since 2012 the Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission has hosted an awards ceremony for those residential and commercial property owners that have made appropriate improvements to their historical properties. Efforts such as repairing windows, repainting instead of installing vinyl siding, fixing a front porch, bringing the inside of a residence back to life while still respecting the historical features have been highlighted in the past. If you know someone that is deserving of an award please call Gina at 815-547-7177.