



RIPS NEWS

Advocates for Historic Architecture

www.RockIslandPreservation.org

August 21, 2007 Monday 7:00 PM

Home of Ardo and Carolyn Holmgrain, 1840 22nd Street

Business meeting to finalize plans for September Walking Tour and October Kit Home presentation.

September 18, 2007 Tuesday 6:30 PM

Walking Tour of Watch Hill followed by a meeting at the home of John & Zaiga Thorson, 37 Watch Hill Road.

Open to the public – invite your friends! See article below.

October 16, 2007 Tuesday 7:00 PM

Carriage House at Deere Wyman House, 817 11th Avenue, Moline, Illinois

Rock Island Preservation Society is pleased to sponsor a program on mail order homes by Rebecca Hunter, researcher on historical architecture from Elgin, Illinois. This program is open to the public.

Comments and suggestions for Society activities are always welcome, now and in the future!

Remember to keep the third Tuesday of each month marked on your calendar for monthly RIPS meetings and activities.

WATCH HILL TOUR

Watch Hill, one of Rock Island's most beautiful and prestigious residential areas, will be the focus of a guided walking tour sponsored by the Rock Island Preservation Society (RIPS) on **Tuesday, September 18, beginning at 6:30 pm.**

RIPS volunteers will lead small groups as they view the exterior of homes along Watch Hill Road and learn about its architecture and early residents. The public is invited and there is no charge. Please tell your friends. The tour will last about an hour, and will require about a mile of slow-paced walking. It will begin at the intersection of Watch Hill and Hawthorne Roads, where there is adequate on-street parking.

Watch Hill History:

Watch Hill, platted in 1941, was the first subdivision in Rock Island designed to take full advantage of unique geographical features with its many ravines and century-old trees. Lots could be bought with 10 percent down and no interest or taxes for the first three years. Restrictions required that each house cost at least \$5500 to \$7500. Watch Hill Road, which winds through the center, began as an extension to the older 40th Avenue on the west. The road was soon extended to 17th Street, providing a second access to this scenic area.

Although the lots sold quickly, with many buyers opting to join two or more lots, development of the 55 acre subdivision was slow. Military demands of World War II slowed the domestic construction industry. Only twelve homes were built in 1941, mostly on the Hawthorne and Woodley Road cul-de-sacs.

Watch Hill Architecture:

The late 1940s and early 1950s saw the building boom that created today's Watch Hill. It was not uncommon for these original homes to have the same owners for decades. This was one of the first subdivisions designed without alleys, thus requiring street access to garages. Garages were always attached to the home with most holding only one car, but have been expanded over the years. In contrast to today's homes, Watch Hill garages are typically recessed or use a side entrance and thus do not dominate the front façade.

The walking tour will illustrate the development of Watch Hill Road from 1941 through 1956. Many of the homes display various Colonial Revival features, updated to reflect the "modern" age. Small-paned windows and low-pitched gabled roofs, sometimes intersected by dormers, evoke the popular view of the colonial era. The Cape Cod cottage as inspiration can be seen on 37 Watch Hill Road. Across the street, a 1951 brick Georgian style at 41 Hawthorne has a two-story front portico.

Other styles are present, too. The 1955 home at 9 Watch Hill is typical of the "new" split level styles of the 1950s and later. A pair of sprawling, low slung, hipped-roof ranch style homes from the mid 1950s, face each other at 34 and 35 Woodley Road. The first has had a garage incorporated into the living space and additional garages added while the second is unchanged. Numbers 6 and 7 Watch Hill Road were both built in 1941. While the first has been greatly enlarged, the second has remained the same except for a garage expansion.

RIPS Meeting:

After the public tour, RIPS will have a short business meeting at the home of John and Zaiga Thorson, 37 Watch Hill Road.

**Do You Live in a Sears House?
Mail Order Homes in the USA 1906-1945**

Rock Island Preservation Society is pleased to sponsor a program on mail order homes by Rebecca Hunter, researcher on historical architecture from Elgin, Illinois.

The program will be presented on
Tuesday, October 16th at 7:00 PM
in the Carriage House at Deere Wyman House, 817 11th Avenue, Moline, Illinois.

Mail order catalogs, established in the late 1880s offered a wide variety of goods. House plan books appeared about the same time. In 1906, these two marketing techniques became integrated into the phenomenon of mail order homes.

The Aladdin House Company was the first to sell modest pre-cut wooden houses by mail order. Two years later Sears Roebuck offered its first Book of Modern Homes and Building Plans. Sears had a distinct marketing advantage over Aladdin: Its general merchandise catalog was already in one out of three homes in America.

Montgomery Ward offered its first kit homes in 1910 through its *Wardway* catalog. Unlike Sears, which owned three large lumber yards, Montgomery Ward never actually milled and produced its own houses. Ward's kit homes were supplied by the Gordon-Van Tine Company, located in Davenport, Iowa. Gordon-Van Tine sold close to 54,000 homes under its own name and Montgomery Ward may have sold as many as 20,000 homes. While Sears sold 75,000 homes, about 10 times that many people think they are living in Sears kit home.

Rebecca Hunter may well be the very person to help us uncover the truth. Just ask the owners of a kit house restoration in Paonia, Colorado. They had an original photo of the house and on the back of the photo, what was believed to be a delivery form for the kit house. They searched the internet, looked thru books on Sears houses, and found plans that were similar – but not exact. It was Rebecca Hunter who located the specific plan in her archives of catalogs. It was in fact a Gordon-Van Tine home.

Ms Hunter will share with us her wealth of knowledge of the kit house industry. She will show us how to locate and interpret evidence to authenticate a mail order home. And she will talk about the architectural styles represented in mail order homes.

Please mark the date for this fun and informative program. The program is open to the public and we are sending special invitations to preservation groups across the Quad Cities. Please plan to attend – and invite your friends and neighbors!

*This program is made possible in part by an award from the
Illinois Humanities Council, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Illinois General Assembly.*

CITADEL OF SIN: THE JOHN LOONEY STORY

The eagerly anticipated biography of John Looney is now available! Noted Quad City historian Rich Hamer and QC Argus editor Roger Ruthhard tell of Looney's childhood and how he became one of QC's most infamous citizens, telling of his criminal trials, imprisonment, and death. The attractive 123-page hardcover book is available at Dispatch/Argus customer service desks, at Borders Books and Music in Davenport, or online at www.QCOnline.com for \$22.95 plus tax.

Our congratulations to Rich Hamer for this outstanding achievement!

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