It’s time to renew your RIPS membership.

If you receive your newsletter by mail, your mailing label shows your membership expiration date. If your label says “2/1/2020” or anything earlier, your dues are due. If you have opted to view our newsletter online, an email will be sent soon with instructions on your renewal. Our ‘year’ runs from February through January. We are a 501(c)(3) organization so dues and donations are tax deductible as allowed by law. Please use the enclosed renewal form.

On the renewal form, you can request that meeting minutes and agendas be emailed to you. You have two options for receiving the RIPS News. You can mark your choice of either a print version mailed to you or you can receive an email with a direct link to each new newsletter as it is posted on our website. Online, you’ll see photos in color and the digital posting will be available on or before the date you would have received your printed newsletter. Back issues of the quarterly newsletters remain available on the RIPS website.

If you have any questions, contact Diane Oestreich at 309-788-1845 or blueskies78900@yahoo.com

This is the last call to submit ideas for potential Preservation Awards to RIPS. Awards and Certificates of Recognition will be given for work completed in 2019 (or earlier, if we overlooked a prior year’s project). Candidates will be reviewed at the March 17th membership meeting held at Gas & Electric Credit Union, corner of 24 St. & 4 Ave., Rock Island. In May, we will host a presentation before the City Council.

Please send award suggestions (address and description of work completed) to Daryl Empen at daryl@gaselectriccu.com or Diane Oestreich at blueskies78900@yahoo.com or 788-1845.

Candidates can be an individual, group, or business that has made special efforts to preserve or restore historic structures or whose actions have served to support historic preservation in Rock Island. When awards are for structures, they are given primarily for exterior work that can be enjoyed from the public right-of-way. Generally, a building must be 50 years old or more and lie within the city limits of Rock Island.
RIPS will soon be 30 years on the job since our organization began in 1981. We like to think we have a pretty good handle on historic resources in Rock Island, but we’ve discovered that we are lacking in history for our Mid-Century neighborhoods, even though we created a walking tour for Watch Hill Road nearly a decade ago www.rockislandpreservation.org/tours

That’s why we were surprised to recently “discover” that there is a wonderful Mid-Century neighborhood tucked away in the heart of the city. Oak Hills is a collection of 20 homes, built in the late 1950s and early 1960s on a beautiful wooded site surrounded by a ravine and two creeks. The site was formerly a pasture and it was subdivided and developed by John Strieter and Dick Motz. The access via 29th Avenue is a dead end, just east of 30th Street adjacent to the TriCity Jewish Center.

The homes, from one story ranch to split level to two stories, were designed and partially built, then wall panels, complete with windows, were trucked in, assembled, and finished. The prefabricated part was called “panelized”, which means the walls were prefabricated in seven factories across the country. The designer who created the firm, called Scholz Homes in 1948 in Toledo, Ohio, was Donald Scholz. He called his homes “California Contemporary” and featured multiple models. In Oak Hills, two model names include Salem Court and Mark 57. The “Mark” name followed by a year designation was a common theme.

California Contemporary homes featured open floor plans, with cathedral ceilings and ample windows that arrived already in the wall panels. Homes included garages and rear patios or decks that were partially sheltered by wide eaves. Our Oak Hills homes are surprisingly spacious and many have basements. The original owners were often young couples, with youngsters. Oak Hills was a wonderful place to grow up, with the ravines, creeks, and even the large flat circular cul de sacs which were perfect for playing games and ball.

Scholz plans were published over the years in magazine advertising as well as in company booklets called “Famed Scholz House Plan Collection.” We are trying to find a Scholz Homes booklet from the era to identify the other homes in Oak Hills. In the company’s later years only plans, not panelized homes, were sold. Today, the Scholz name remains in use at a company, Design Basics in Omaha, who purchased later home plans about five years ago.

All photos from Google Street View
RIPS has been asked by owner, Lisa Vinar, to prepare an application for a local Landmark for the historic YMCA building that now houses the furniture company that Lisa and her late husband, Dan, moved into some years ago. D. Vinar Furniture at 20th Street & 5th Avenue is a full service home furnishings store and the historic building is a fitting setting.

The building served the Y from 1913 until 1977, 62 years, making it clearly the longest lasting Y in Rock Island. It replaced a beautiful Richardsonian Romanesque building from 1894 that was the first Y here. However shortly after the construction of the original building, it became obsolete – the gymnasium was only a single story, hence no room for such activities as basketball. And there was no swimming pool nor any place to add one.

The new Y was designed by architect Cyrus Daniel McLane (1866–1945). He had graduated from the University of Illinois in 1892, where he also became an instructor. He started his Quad City career in the 1890s working for Temple and Burrows in Davenport. He wed a Rock Island woman, Blanche Cleland, in 1896. In 1910, he started his own firm, called McLane Engineering, in Rock Island, first in the Safety Building and later in the Robinson Building. His specialty was YM and YWCAs and he garnered many commissions throughout the Midwest – such places as Dubuque IA; Galesburg IL; and Racine WI. The Racine building, announced in 1915, was reported to be his third one since the local Y, making this one of his earliest commissions.

McLane’s personal interest in YMCAs (he was president of the Rock Island Y for several years) resulted in insight into the special needs of such an organization. The four-story plus basement Rock Island Y had facilities for handball, swimming, bowling alley, meeting rooms, kitchen, dining room, and, of course, a large gymnasium with a running track around the top.

The upper two floors contained small rooms that could be rented to men, both transient and long term. By the time this ‘hotel’ function ceased in 1972, it was reported that the average use of its 100 rooms was only 38 on any night, with 18 men living there longer than a year. The rooms were phased out so that families and individuals – including women – could be provided with improved social, physical, recreational and educational programs.

This change was very successful – so much so that the membership increased from 425 in 1972 to 1200 at the end of 1974 and 1600 in 1976. This success led to the perceived need for a new larger YMCA and fundraising began in 1974. Unfortunately, a fire struck the building in early 1976, which forced it to close ahead of schedule. Now there was even more need for a new building. A contract was let for a brand new building on 24th Street near Blackhawk Park, with Parkhurst, Appier, and Marolf as architects. It was occupied in mid 1977. By the end of that year, membership was over 6000.

But success was not to last. By 1989, membership had dropped to under 2000 and continued to drop. In addition, the director was convicted of “misappropriation of funds” and there were tax issues related to the non-profit status (or lack thereof). In 1990, the City of Rock Island purchased the new Y at a cost of $850k with plans to expand. The facility is now known as RIFAC.

In the meantime, the old Y underwent periods of vacancy and for a few years was used by U-Haul as a storage facility. Significant damage resulted, damage the Vinars have worked hard to undo.
Many of us are familiar with John Looney, the attorney who controlled gambling, guns, illegal liquor and prostitution in the area during the early decades of the 20th century. But how familiar are we with Helen Van Dale and her businesses known as “resorts?” The blog team from the Richardson-Sloan Special Collections Center at the Davenport Public Library will unveil the twists and turns of her fascinating life story during this history talk. Please join us for this fun and informative program that is part of Rock Island History Series. General Admission is $5.00. There is no charge for members of Friends of Hauberg or Rock Island Preservation Society. This will be a great opportunity to join or renew your membership in either or both organizations.

Thursday, February 13, 2020
7:00 – 8:30 PM
Hauberg Civic Center, 1300 24th St., Rock Island

RIPS is looking for new people with new ideas to serve on our executive board. The open positions include treasurer, membership chair, research chair and event chair. Each of these positions would require a commitment of about 4 hours a month.

I am sure the event chair sounds daunting, but the position does not require that you chair events, but rather plan and oversee a calendar of events. If you would like to volunteer or ask questions, please call Linda at 309-786-7917. I guarantee you will have an enjoyable time!