

= Sycamore Historic District =

The Sycamore Historic District is a meandering area encompassing 99 acres (400 @, @ 000 m2) of the land in and around the downtown of the DeKalb County , Illinois , county seat , Sycamore . The area includes historic buildings and a number of historical and Victorian homes . Some significant structures are among those located within the Historic District including the DeKalb County Courthouse and the Sycamore Public Library . The district has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since May 2 , 1978 .

There are over 200 properties within the irregular boundaries of the Sycamore Historic District . Of those , 187 are considered contributing properties to the historic district , and 22 are non @-@ contributing . Of all of the district 's homes and buildings 75 % fit within the historic district concept . Some of the major structures include several prominent Queen Anne style mansions , the Sycamore library , the DeKalb County Courthouse , and dozens of mid- to late 19th @-@ century houses .

= History =

The 1966 National Historic Preservation Act , which created the National Register of Historic Places , empowered individual states to create review boards to function with the state historical preservation officer . Illinois did not create its historic preservation program until the early 1970s , under the direction of the Illinois Department of Conservation . The Department of Conservation dispatched field surveyors to all Illinois counties to find anything that might qualify for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places .

The field surveyor who traveled to Sycamore in 1973 found a large number of late 19th and 20th century examples of architecture that he recommended the establishment of a historic district . The mayor of Sycamore then appointed a citizens ' committee to assist the state with the work involved in listing the district .

The residential areas within the district achieved their maturity before 1900 , though Sycamore has grown considerably from the 3 @, @ 330 or so that lived there from about 1900 until the 1970s most of the historic district remains intact as it was organized in 1978 .

= Boundaries =

The Historic District is bounded by Somonauk Street on the west and Main Street on the east , a stretch of two blocks . On the north end the district is bounded by Page Street and extends to the end of South Main street . Main and Somonauk are both north / south roads while Page is an east / west street . The district also extends along State Street (Illinois Route 64) to the west until the 300 block . Somonauk Street is included through its 900 block . In addition section of Locust , Maple and California Streets are within the Sycamore Historic District . Other east / west streets also have portions included in the district , these are : Elm , High , Ottawa , Waterman and Lincoln .

The boundaries were drawn up by Robert Wagner , a Chicagoan who worked as a National Register assistant with the Illinois Department of Conservation . Wagner drew up the boundaries on the basis of " visual integrity . " . This led to an irregular pattern of inclusion for the Sycamore Historic District . Often one side of the street will be in the district while the other side will not . In other cases , such as with the library or the U.S. Post Office an arbitrary line was drawn with the sole purpose of including a specific structure .

= Architecture =

The hodge podge of architectural styles that mingle in the Sycamore Historic District begins with Greek Revival structures which date from Sycamore 's foundation in the mid to late 1830s , also the heyday for that particular style . These structures are the oldest surviving within the district . After the Civil War other styles began to dot the landscape in and around downtown Sycamore , Illinois . Styles such as Italianate , Gothic Revival and Queen Anne can be found throughout the

neighborhood . Government buildings and commercial buildings offer prime examples of Classical Revival architecture , a style showcased by the ornate DeKalb County Courthouse , Sycamore Public Library , U.S. Post Office and The National Bank & Trust Co. building . The current Sycamore Center , in the 300 block of State Street and once known as the Daniel Pierce Block , also exhibits . Classical Revival architecture .

Of the 226 properties within the Sycamore Historic District 40 are identified as " strongly contributing " to the overall character of the district . Twenty @-@ one of those are ranked as the most significant structures in the district . The majority of the rest of the buildings date from 1860 @-@ 1900 .

= = Properties = =

Sycamore Historic District includes a combination of residential , commercial , government and religious buildings . A number of Victorian homes along Main Street are enclosed in the historic district as well as a number of buildings in downtown Sycamore . South of the courthouse are other homes included in the district , each important structure is marked with a plaque near the sidewalk .

226 properties are located within the Sycamore Historic District 's 99 acres (400 @,@ 000 m2) . Of those properties , 187 are listed as contributing structures in the district while an additional 22 are non @-@ contributing . Of all the homes and other buildings within the district a full 75 % fit within the historic district concept .

= = = Churches = = =

As of 2007 there are five church buildings in the Sycamore Historic District . When it was nominated to join the National Register there were seven church buildings within the district . One of those included is a residential structure that was utilized as a church when it was first constructed ; the Arthur Stark House was once home to the Sycamore Universalist Church congregation . In the time since its listing , two churches have been destroyed or demolished . The Evangelical Church of St. John was destroyed by fire in 2004 and the United Methodist Church in Sycamore is no longer extant , replaced by a modern office building . The extant churches are the Old Congregational Church , First Baptist Church , St. Peter 's Church , the Universalist Church / Stark House and St. Mary 's Roman Catholic Church .

= = = Commercial buildings = = =

The commercial buildings in the Sycamore Historic District , located in Sycamore , Illinois , United States are mostly located in and around the city 's downtown . The largest concentration of commercial contributing properties to the historic district are found along Illinois Route 64 as it passes through Sycamore . They include several buildings known as " blocks " which can consist of more than one adjacent and attached structure , as is the case with the Waterman Block , one of the Sycamore commercial buildings .

= = = DeKalb County Courthouse = = =

Possibly the gem of the Sycamore Historic District is the DeKalb County Courthouse . The Courthouse sits in the center of a square facing Illinois Route 64 , directly across the north / south street , Main , from the Sycamore Public Library . It is a stunning example of Classical Revival architecture . The current structure was erected in 1905 being the third in a line of courthouses to serve DeKalb County .

= = = Frederick Townsend Garage = = =

This building on Main Street was originally a garage owned by Sycamore resident Frederick B.

Townsend . Townsend 's Queen Anne style home overlooks the lot from a small incline . The distinctive stone structure was constructed in 1906 for use as a garage for the estate of Frederick B. Townsend , his former home is the Queen Anne mansion that overlooks the garage property . Today it is home to a restaurant . After the building left private ownership the property was exploited for commercial use and became a gas station . Despite the years and the changes in function the building 's historical character remains intact .

== George 's Block ==

Though quite altered from its original state in the mid 19th century George 's Block remains one of the more eye catching structures in the Historic District . The George 's Block was constructed in 1857 and was then known as the James Block , after the owner Daniel P. James . James , a prominent citizen , lived in the nearby Jerkin @-@ roofed D. B. James House , another contributing property . By the 1860s the James name was gone but the building was still known as a block . Many buildings of the period were known as blocks , usually multi @-@ story and multi @-@ business , the buildings contained retail and professional space or , in the case of George 's Block , lecture halls or auditoriums . In the first year the building existed such famous men as Horace Greeley , Charles Sumner and Bayard Taylor spoke there .

== Houses ==

The houses in the Sycamore Historic District cross a variety of architectural styles and span from the 1830s to the early 20th century . There are 187 contributing properties within the historic district , 75 % of the districts buildings . Many of the homes are associated with early Sycamore residents , usually prominent business leaders or politicians . Houses within the district are known by , either their street address or by a name associated with a prominent owner or builder . For most of the houses , the latter is true . Some of the more prominent homes include the Charles O. Boynton House , the Frederick B. Townsend House , David Syme House and the Carlos Lattin House .

== U.S. Post Office ==

The U.S. Post Office Building in Sycamore is located along Illinois 64 (State Street) , directly across the street from the Sycamore Public Library .

== Sycamore Public Library ==

Sycamore Public Library , the only structure on the east side of Main Street , between State and Page Streets , that is included in the Sycamore Historic District . The library , still operational today , was constructed in 1905 with a combination of philanthropical gifts from different sources including Andrew Carnegie . The building was designed , in part , by architect Paul O. Moratz .

== Significance ==

The district includes 226 properties over its 99 acres (400 @,@ 000 m2) , of those , 187 are considered contributing members of the historic district . The buildings consist of a mix of residential , religious , commercial and governmental buildings . Many of the residential buildings are 2 or 2 ½ stories in height and feature generous setbacks from the street . These factors , along with the growth of mature shade trees , combine to give the streetscape a well @-@ balanced and integrated look and feel . While the usage of the properties in Sycamore Historic District is similar to that in other small , Illinois county seats the district 's properties are separated by their survival through the 20th century . The buildings themselves are most significant for their architecture which contributes to what the National Register of Historic Places nomination form in 1978 said conveyed " a gracious calm very close to the popular American image of an ideal small town . "

