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TAKE A SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF ROCKFORD'S OLDEST HOUSES

Tour Guide by Carol J. Fox

		
Herrick Cobblestone House	Graham-Ginestra House	Civil War Hospital
		
Peacock Brewery Brewmaster's House	Jacob/Henry Posson House	Willard Wheeler House Daffodil Cottage

Which of these homeowners bought his land from Daniel Shaw Haight? Which home was owned by a wounded Civil War veteran? Which homeowner was arrested, tried and convicted for violating a city ordinance? Which house was once slated to be a museum? Turn the page, read on, and become your own expert on these old homes.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

This issue features the oldest houses still extant in the city of Rockford according to historical records. Four of these houses are on the National Register of Historic Places. Readers are encouraged to take a self-guided tour to see these places. For most of them, their pictures do not do them justice. They have to be experienced to be truly appreciated. If you have seen a crumbling old stone building, you will marvel at the pristine condition of the Graham-Ginestra House. If you have never seen a cobblestone house, and not many in this country live close enough to one to have seen one, you will be amazed at the artistry and workmanship in the Herrick Cobblestone House. Each of these houses has a special appeal. They are worth a couple of hours some afternoon to see them. Even bike-riders might enjoy the trip. We timed the trip from Broadway to South Main to North Main to Madison & Prairie, to North Second, to South First. That's about 35 minutes. Allowing time to get to Broadway and then time for snapshots or marveling at each house, the trip is about 1 ½ to 2 hours.

Visit the new website for the Rockford Historical Society at WWW.RHSIL.ORG. Leave a note and share your thoughts on *Nuggets* or on information on the website. We welcome your comments.

Carol J. Fox, Editor

Take a Self-Guided Tour of Rockford's Oldest Houses

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Introduction

If you have an extra hour or two on a quiet afternoon or you have out-of-town guests who might like to see historic houses, here is a guide to six of the oldest houses in Rockford. My intent is to provide you with a few new tidbits of information about the houses and/or their occupants, as well as a little more background on the architecture of the buildings and directions to get you to the houses. I have timed the tour and found that once you have reached the first house, the tour takes about an hour and a half by automobile with about ten minutes at each house. Try going from the Herrick House to the Graham-Ginstra House to the Civil War Hospital then to the Brewmaster's House, Posson House and Wheeler House. Or start at the other end and go to the Civil War Hospital, Brewmaster's House, Posson House, Wheeler House, Herrick House and end at Graham-Ginstra House.

The first railroad engine arrived in Rockford in 1852. Five of the six houses are certainly "pre-railroad" in their construction, using local materials and traditional older building methods involving heavy beams and stone, brick or rock (McAlester 2013, 119-132). The Posson house may be modern construction since modern building lumber was available in Rockford by 1852.

REMINDER

These houses are all privately owned. If you go to see them, please remember to stay on the public thoroughfares and sidewalks. Please respect the rights of the owners and residents. Of course, you can take pictures.

1. HERRICK-COBBLESTONE HOUSE -- 1847



Figure 1: Herrick Cobblestone House, Rockford, IL

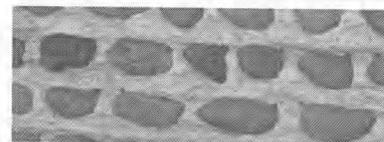


Figure 2: Close-up of cobblestones

HERRICK COBBLESTONE HOUSE

2027 Broadway

Built in 1847

Elijah L. Herrick was 51 years old with grown children when he and his family came to Rockford in 1837. He bought his land on contract from Daniel Shaw Haight. The Herrick Cobblestone House was probably built around 1847 and common knowledge is that the stones are from the Rock River.

The Herrick Cobblestone House (Fig. 1.) is one of only a handful of cobblestone houses in the United States outside of the Rochester area in New York State. In New York, readily available and free stones from the residue of Ice Age glaciers became an attractive building material to settlers. The building of the Erie Canal, from 1817-1825, brought many skilled masons to the area who saw a business opportunity once the canal was built. (*Cobblestone Architecture of New York State* 1992) Most masons had their own formula for the mortar used with the stones and, like grandma's Chess Pie recipe, it was a family secret.

The people of Rochester embraced cobblestone construction perhaps more than most. As many as seven hundred cobblestone buildings, mostly residences, were built within a 60-75 mile radius of Rochester between 1825-1860. (*Cobblestone Architecture of New York State* 1992) Many survive. Only 300 dot the rest of the United States. Illinois has two, one in Rockford and one in Elgin. However, the next most populace place for cobblestone houses is neighboring Wisconsin. Beloit, for example, has three cobblestone houses still standing and once had more than thirty.

The Herrick Cobblestone House is a combination of the Cape Cod Colonial (1750-1899) and Greek Revival (1825-1860) building styles. The traditional Cape Cod Colonial had a symmetrical pattern with a central door on the eave side of a moderately gabled roof, one or two windows on each



Figure 3: Cape Cod Colonial House

side of the door and one or one-and-a-half stories with a central chimney. (See Fig. 3.) To this basic house, details from the Greek Revival period beginning in 1820 were added: the horizontal frieze windows mimicked Greek friezes, the wide lintels above the door and windows were used to increase the feeling of horizontal space and give the impression of a Greek temple's capitals, the wood-and-glass door surrounds and porch overhangs mimicked columns and pediments, and the chimneys at each end mimicked adornments on Greek temple roofs. (See Fig. 4.)

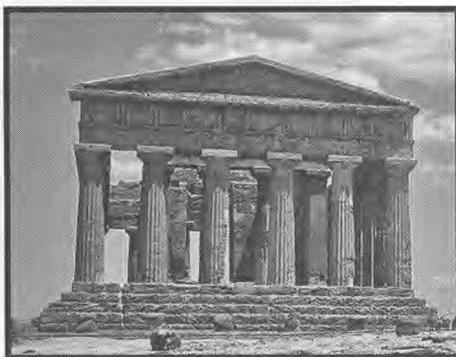


Figure 4: Temple of Concordia in Sicily. The pediment is the triangular shaped section below the gable roof. The frieze is the blocked stone area beneath the pediment followed by the architrave which sits atop the capitals on the columns. The capitals are unadorned indicating Doric style. The roof has a moderate slope. All of these elements and more were mimicked in Greek Revival architecture in America.

The Cape Cod Colonial style has a symmetrical design with one or two windows on each side of a central door on the eave side of a medium pitch gable roof. The house is typically one or one and one-half stories with a central chimney (later-- chimneys at each end). Windows are six panes over six.



Figure 5: This abandoned cobblestone farmhouse near Saratoga, NY has some influence from Federal style with its pediment porch and shows the influence of Greek Revival with its prominent lintels and horizontal frieze windows. It has not shared the fate of the Herrick House. The website *Abandoned but Not Forgotten* documents its sad condition.



Figure 6: The Herrick House clearly shows the influence of Greek Revival: prominent lintels, glass door surrounds and horizontal frieze windows. The size, shape and symmetry of the building with the six-over-six windows illustrate the Cape Cod style. There are four rows of cobbles for each quoin indicating the early period of cobblestone construction. Quoins are the stone supports at the corners of the building.

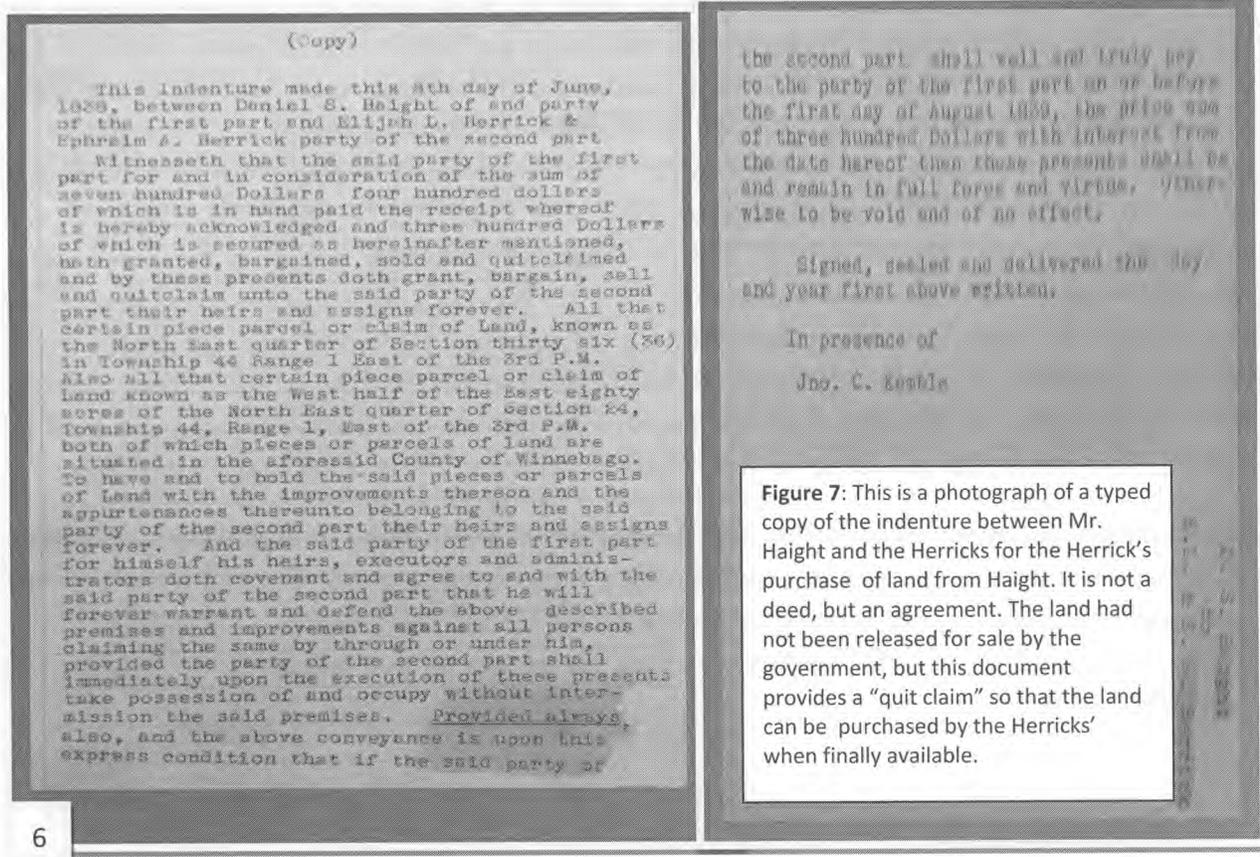
Cape Cod Colonial with Greek Revival style adaptations. Many buildings of this era, whether cobblestone or not, look similar to the ones above with horizontal frieze windows, door-surround (transom and sidelights), prominent lintels and sills, and small porches were a fashionable way to update the Cape Cod Colonial.

The Herrick Cobblestone House uses the stones from the Rock River and Galena limestone for the foundation and the quoins. Quoins are the decorative and reinforcing limestone blocks at the corners of each wall. According to criteria established by architect Carl Schmidt in his book *Cobblestone Architecture* (Schmidt 1944), the Herrick Cobblestone House is representative of the early style of cobblestone buildings (1825-1835) with three to four rows of cobbles per quoin and 1" to 1 1/2" of mortar between rows. The simplicity of style -- no extraordinary uniformity in size or color of cobbles and no noticeable pattern or design in the cobblestone placement -- also marks it as representative of the early period. Some houses in later periods had herringbone and other intricate patterns in the cobblestone placement and the stones were uniform in size, shape and color. The stones, too, became smaller and the mortar thinner between layers. This meant, often, that maintenance was more difficult. The Herrick House was built in the early style which has proved to be more resilient to time and weather than the later styles.

Mr. Herrick was paying tribute to his own Massachusetts roots with the Cape Cod style and to his new prairie home with his use of local rock and stone materials. The Greek Revival detail was a national trend paying homage to ancient Greek democracy and was very popular in the United States in the early 19th century. Most of the houses on our tour have elements of the Greek Revival period.

Family

Elijah Lawrence Herrick, Sr., born 10 November 1786, in Reading, Massachusetts, was an early settler in Rockford. A contract to buy his land is copied in a genealogical list of the Herrick family in the Rockford Public Library. (*Descent of Elijah Lawrence Herrick, 1820-1912; [and] Descent of Lucy Dunbar Jones Herrick, 1828-1926 1926?*) The contract called an indenture between Daniel Shaw Haight, the founder of Rockford's east side, and Elijah Lawrence Herrick and Ephraim Herrick (Elijah's son) is dated 1838. (See Fig. 7.) This was the time before the land had been put up for sale by the government which was in the autumn of 1839. Although Mr. Haight had claimed the land, technically he did not own it. The contract describes the location of the land, specifies the terms of the agreement and includes a "quit claim" so that it is clear that when the land comes up for sale, the Herricks will be the purchasers and the owners. In essence, the Herricks had to purchase their land twice, once from Mr. Haight and once from the government but the second time they paid only the nominal fee the government charged per acre. This was the legal procedure used at the time because the land was so long in coming to sale due to several complexities including the "Polish claim," a claim by a group of Polish immigrants that held up the sale of land in Rockford and Rockton townships until 1843. Even though the settlers had been on the lands they selected for some years, the Polish claim could have dislodged them. (Church 1900) These land transfer documents are often mentioned in Rockford historical information of the time, but I had never seen an example of a document; perhaps you had not either.



Mr. Herrick died May 15, 1852. We know he was a good stone mason and he knew of the styles of cobblestone houses in the New York area. Because of the Herrick genealogy book in Rockford Public Library we know a little about the Herrick family. Hannah Abbot Herrick (1793 - 1876), Elijah's wife, was of English, Scottish and Welsh ancestry. The Herricks and the Abbots were early immigrants to America; Henry Herrick (b. 1604) arrived in Massachusetts from England. The Abbot family members were Congregationalists and Freemen. Herrick family members fought in the American Revolution. Elijah Herrick's own family was large. He and Hannah had ten children. Three boys, Ephraim, Elijah Lawrence, Jr., and John William accompanied him on the initial trip to Rockford. The following year, four daughters and three more sons joined them. Hannah Abbot Herrick died in Rockford, March 28, 1876. Elijah and Hannah along with other family members are interred in Cedar Bluff Cemetery.

2. GRAHAM-GINESTRA HOUSE -- 1857



Figure 8: Graham-Ginestra House

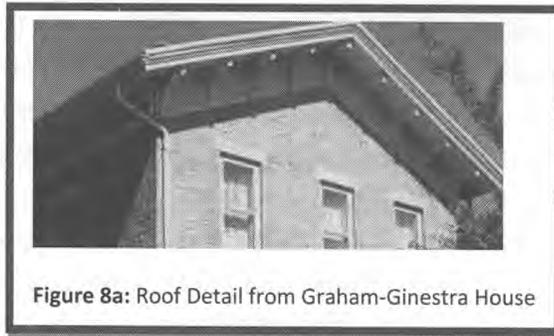


Figure 8a: Roof Detail from Graham-Ginestra House



Figure 8b: Graham-Ginestra Doorway

GRAHAM-GINESTRA HOUSE
1115 South Main Street
Built in 1857

Galena limestone was brought from Joliet in slabs and cut on site.

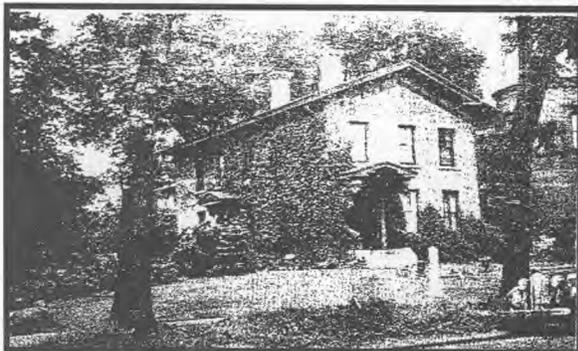


Figure 9: Photo left appeared in the *Rockford Register-Republic* on May 11, 1965. It was accompanied by an article on the house written by George S. Simonson, a neighbor. The auto headlights in the bottom right corner suggest the picture may have been taken much earlier. No credits were given for the newspaper photo.

The Graham-Ginestra House (See Fig. 8) and the Brewmaster's House (See Fig. 16.) are strikingly similar on their exteriors. They are both made of Galena limestone, both are two-stories and have the same window alignments, the same heavy lintels above the windows, the same door placement. One is considered Greek Revival (Fig. 16), the other Greek Revival-Italianate (Fig. 8). The differences are in the trim. Below the roofline on the Graham-Ginestra house are brackets on the cornice which are tell-tale signs of Italianate design. (See Fig. 8a.) (McAlester 2013) The window panes, generally six-over-six in Greek Revival homes are double hung single panes in Italianate style. The Graham-Ginestra pediment porch is Greek Revival (See Fig.8b.) while its scalloped side supports and porch roof fascia are tribute to the newly invented scroll saw (*circa* 1829-1850) which also was utilized in the cutting of intricate patterns on the rooflines of American Gothic Revival architecture.

Families

Only two families have lived in the home for most of its 149 year history. Freeman Graham built the home in 1857 and his family lived there until 1927. The Ginestra family bought the home from the daughter of Freeman Graham Sr., Julia Warner, and owned the home until 2006 when they sold it to Belvidere orthodontist, Dean Murphy. The house was a museum with a formal garden after Leo Ginestra died in 1978, but it is currently not open to the public.

Freeman Graham, Sr. (1806-1896) was already a prominent businessman when he came from Connecticut in 1855 to Beloit with his wife, four sons and a daughter. He was hired from Beloit to manage the Rockford farm implement company of Emerson, Talcott & Company. He had apprenticed in the cotton and woolen trades and had served in the Connecticut Legislature in the East. He went on to build the first sour mash distillery in the state of Illinois, open a cotton mill and paper mills and serve as Fifth Ward Alderman. He built the house on Main Street so that it would be halfway between his business concerns, the cotton mill and the distillery. His sons were equally involved in the businesses and his daughter and daughters-in-law were prominent in local civic affairs. Mrs. Freeman Graham, Jr. (Lizzie), a woman with exceptional executive ability, helped to develop the first public kindergarten in Rockford and to raise funds to pay for its operation until the program was absorbed into the public school system. When Freeman Graham, Sr. died he left the house to his daughter, Julia. She and her husband, Henry S. Warner, secretary-treasurer of the Graham Match Co., lived in the house until 1927 when they sold it to Leo Ginestra and his wife Mary.

Leo Ginestra (1892-1978) was an Italian immigrant who became a mechanic, property assessor, and businessman and owned a mobile home park outside of the city. He was actively involved in the Italian community in southwest Rockford. The house was in the heart of the commercial district by that time. [When you go, note, on the east side of Main Street, the building with several blue and white ceramic roundels across the top. The building was once the Columbia Theater, a motion picture theater opened in 1920.] The interior of this home is stunningly dissimilar from its massive-looking exterior. A "floating" staircase rises to the second floor,

parquet floors of burled walnut and contrasting woods are still displayed in many rooms, wall and ceiling murals and many original fittings and ornaments are intact. For detail on the interior of the house, see the nomination form submitted for its listing on the National Register of Historic Places Inventory. (*Graham-Ginestra House* 1979)

3. Civil War Hospital – 1842



CIVIL WAR HOSPITAL
 1260 North Main Street
 Built in 1842

Figure 10 shows an 1892 drawing of the way the hospital looked during the Civil War. Note the balcony and the stairs leading to it.

See Photo Credits for source.

Figure 10: Camp Fuller Civil War Hospital, drawing *circa* 1892.

If any house on our tour deserves to be haunted, it is the house used as a hospital during the Civil War. There are rumors and rumblings of such activities, but nothing definitive that I have heard. It sits back nearly twice the distance from the road as the houses next to it. At the time it was built and during the Civil War, it sat alone at the top of the hill. Now it abuts the alley behind it.

In 1842 when the house was built, Rockford city limits ended on the north at Park Avenue, then known as North Street, so this house was miles out of town both at the time it was built and during the Civil War. Only two houses existed in the area in 1862 when Illinois volunteer soldiers bivouacked at Camp Fuller. The other was on National Avenue, known as the Holland house. It is no longer standing. The Main Street house was used during the months of August, September and October of 1862 as a temporary hospital for the 74th, 92nd, 95th and 96th Illinois regiments stationed at Camp Fuller. The camp was named for the Adjutant General of Illinois

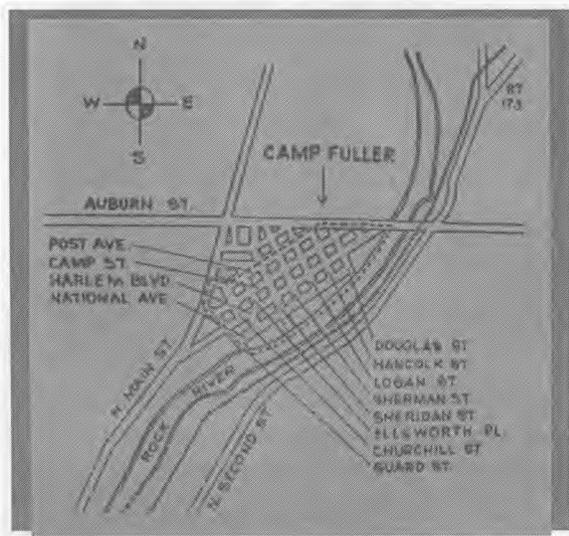


Figure 11: STREET NAMES AT CAMP FULLER

Hancock, Logan, Sherman and Sheridan Sts. are all named for Civil War generals. Douglas commemorates Stephen A. Douglas, Illinois politician. Ellsworth is named for the first known Northern casualty of the Civil War, Col. E. Elmer Ellsworth who had a strong Rockford connection. Churchill is named for M. C. Churchill who owned the property, and Guard St. marks the entrance to the camp. Post Avenue is named for Brigade Commander Philip Sidney Post, who led the 74th and others as a part of the Army of the Cumberland.

during the Civil War, Allen C. Fuller. In 1928 and 1929, the John A. Logan Camp, No. 26, Sons of Union Veterans wanted to buy the house for \$15,000 and convert it into a museum. The mayor was in favor of the idea and a bank account was set up, but nothing came of the project. It may have been that the crash of 1929 and the subsequent depression had something to do with it.

The house has continued in use over these many years serving as a farm house, a residence and an apartment house in addition to being a Civil War hospital. Only two residents have been recorded in newspapers as having lived in the house for any length of time. After the Civil War, Hiram J. Sawyer, a sheriff and constable, lived in the house until 1903. The house address was changed from 814 N. Main to 1260 N. Main in the early 1890's. George Hall, a west-end barber, also resided there for about ten years. Below are pictures of the house spanning 114 years.



Figure 12: 1892
Note balcony and stairs to second floor. This house style is known as a "centered gable", a subtype of Gothic Revival.



Figure 13: 1928
Note the balcony survives but no stairs. House appears gray. The stucco may have been added later or painted.



Figure 14: 1965 The trees obscure the extended front gable. By this time, the stucco has been added or painted white. No balcony. The horizontal line where the balcony was has been highlighted.

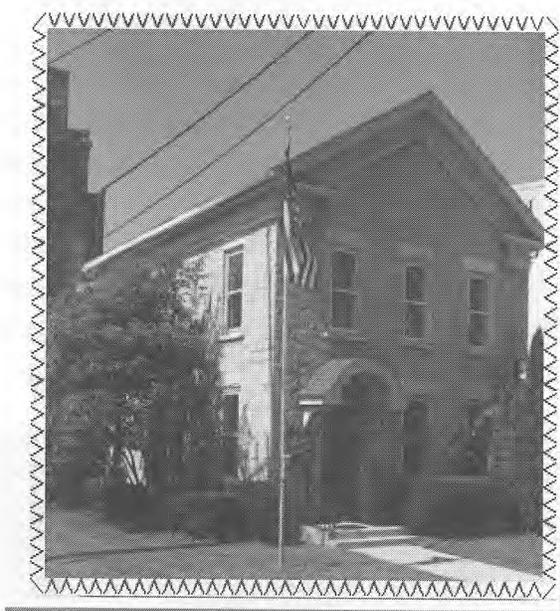


Figure 15: 2014 The horizontal line of the torn down balcony along with emphasis on the lentils above the windows lessens the Gothic feel of the house.

Gothic and Greek Revival Influence in House Style

The two-story house is of solid stone construction. Robert Borden in his article for an earlier *Nuggets of History* issue (Borden 1965) describes the walls as “two to three feet in thickness.” The 1892 newspaper article called the house an “old stone” structure. This is “pre-railroad” building, structured from thick wooden beams and/or heavy stone. After the railroads reached across the country, house building changed. Cut lumber was more available and houses began to be made of two by fours rather than thick wooden beams. Though of pre-railroad construction, the style of this house shows influence of Gothic Revival (1840-1880) design with its extended center-gable and symmetrical, steeply pitched cross-gabled roof. The 1892 picture shows a balcony with a one story main entrance and outside stairs to the second floor. The balcony appears to have extended nearly the length of the house. This, too, is a feature of Gothic Revival houses. This house is unadorned, however, with the typical bargeboard trim and elaborate arched window treatments of Gothic Revival. Horizontal lentils above the windows invoke the influence of Greek Revival style but were also important for structural purposes in the stone building. It is a folk house made with local materials in the early tradition of building but with reference to Gothic and Greek Revival architectural styles.

4. BREWMASTER’S HOUSE – PEACOCK BREWERY – *circa* 1845



BREWMASTER’S HOUSE
500 North Madison
Built circa 1845

This house, along with the brewery buildings behind it, is on the National Park Service’s National Register of Historic Places. The first owner was Jonathon Peacock, a British immigrant who came to Rockford in 1849. He began the brewery in his home, left. When he died in 1893, his brewery was highly successful and he held valuable real estate throughout the city.

Figure 16: Peacock Brewmaster’s House

This elegant old building is a beautiful example of the use of the limestone from Winnebago county. The Galena limestone so beautifully preserved shows why so many people in its day thought our county’s limestone was some of the most beautiful in the country. The creamy golden color was reminiscent of Italian Travertine in some minds, but to me it is the color of buttered corn on a summer’s day.

Brewmaster

Jonathan Peacock began his brewery in his home in about 1849. He bought the home for two hundred dollars. It turned out the sight was ideal for his purposes providing artisan well water, ice from the river, and access to railroad service.. The business at that time was outside of the city limits. As the years passed, the city grew and took the brewery into the city. In March, 1859, the city passed an ordinance prohibiting the manufacture or sale of liquor within the city limits. In April, 1859, Mr. Peacock was arrested, tried, convicted and fined \$25.00 for violating the ordinance. The case was appealed. By May of the same year, a new city council repealed the ordinance and withdrew the suit. (*Rockford Daily News* 1859) It was the first in a long line of confrontations with the temperance movement, the law, and the restrictions placed on the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages that Mr. Peacock faced in his lengthy history as a brewer in Rockford. It seems that Mr. Peacock was up to the challenge, however. He began his business with two hundred dollars, knowledge of brewing from England and Chicago, a coffee mill, a wash boiler, a wheelbarrow and plenty of determination. As his business grew, he bought more land, expanded his house adding on in the rear, then building a series of buildings for the various stages in the brewing process. By his death in 1893, he was recognized as the richest man in the county with an estate worth half a million dollars. His three sons took over but all of them, in fact all of his seven children, were dead by 1902. The brewery, still successful, was sold to Mr. John V. Petritz in 1900. Petritz was a wealthy brewer from Montana who changed the brewery's name to Rockford Brewing Company. The brewery continued success until prohibition when it was turned into a warehouse business. After several more ownership changes, some "down" time, some more repurposing and a listing on the National Park Service's *National Register of Historic Places*, it became a popular eatery and pub, The Prairie Street Brewery.

5. JACOB POSSON HOUSE – circa 1842-1852



JACOB POSSON HOUSE
201 North Second Street
Built 1842-1852

Jacob Posson was an early settler in Winnebago County. He came with his wife and 4 month old son Henry in 1836. A cooper by trade, he wanted to try farming but in 1842 began to build a cooper's shop at the Second Street address.

Figure 17: Jacob Posson House



Figure 18: Jacob Posson House, Market Street View

The Home of a Civil War Veteran

This house may not be as familiar as other houses on this list, but it is an old house. Jacob Posson began building on this property in 1842 and died in so doing in that year. His son, Henry, lived here from the age of six (1842) until his death in 1912. However, there were some changes to the property as detailed later in this section.

Mary Posson was able to live at North Second Street and raise her three children with the aid of money from the property Jacob owned. Henry became a house and carriage painter at the age of twenty and worked at his trade until he enlisted in Company G, 45th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment in 1861. The unit was organized at Galena, Illinois and is sometimes known as Washburne's Lead Mine Regiment [Elihu B. Washburne was a U. S. House of Representative's member from Illinois.] Posson fought in the battles of Fort Henry, Fort Donelson and Shiloh. He gave his right arm for his country, literally, at Shiloh. On his return home, he learned to paint with his left hand as well as he had with his right and could drive horses "with one arm better than most men could with two" (*Rockford Republic* 1912). In one of his obituaries he was said to be the first white child in Winnebago County, but that was an error. James Stearns Haight was two when his parents brought him to Rockford and Germanicus Kent's wife and children followed within two weeks. At four months of age, Henry was likely the earliest white infant immigrant.

Henry's parents, Jacob and Mary Posson were very early settlers in Rockford. They arrived from New York State in late 1836 and early 1837. Jacob Posson wanted to try farming and bought land about four miles east of Rockford. According to John Thurston (1891), he also had a cabin in Rockford in 1837. In 1842, he decided to build a cooper's shop. He bought land on Second Street and began to build the structure himself. However, as he was finishing he was hurt and a few days later, on November 1, 1842, he died. His wife, Mary, and by this time three children, moved into the place. We can be sure of this: Henry Posson lived at the Second Street

address from the time he was six. What it actually looked like all that time is a question. The paragraph below places doubt on the claim the house we see today was built in 1842.

The building was of brick and it was while engaged on the structure that Jacob Posson suffered injuries that resulted in his death. He was assisting in placing heavy timbers to support the roof when he wrenched his back, the injury proving fatal, November 1, 1842. Henry Posson was then only six years of age.

The brick shop was later remodeled into a dwelling and in the early fifties gave way to the house you see on the corner lot today and which has been the home of Rockford's oldest citizen in point of residence for nearly fifty-four years. (*Rockford Morning Star* 1909)

Henry, the oldest son, lived at this address for seventy years until his death in 1912 and his wife Hanna lived there until her death in 1918. The house was sold to Nellie Ennett Perkins. The Ennetts lived across Market Street from the Posson house and were like family to the elderly Mrs. Posson. Nellie loved the little house; after she bought it, she rented out the property for the next nineteen years and remodeled the interior after a fire. She installed the fireplace and changed the interior slightly.

Henry Posson was given to making points of fine distinction. Since James Stearns Haight was a toddler of two when he came with his parents in May of 1835, Henry was technically correct when he said he was the first white *baby* to immigrate to Winnebago County. He had, indeed, lived at the same address for seventy years, but, a 1909 article quotes him as saying that he built the house we see today. Hazel Hyde wrote a wonderful article about the Posson house and family for *Nuggets of History* (Hyde 1976), in which she named the Posson house as the oldest house in Rockford. She thought it was built in 1842, but she did not know of the 1909 article. She likely interviewed those who were still alive and the history of the dwellings on the site in its early days would have been unknown to them. Thus, the conclusion that the Posson house was built in 1842 is probably not correct. Here is the quote from Henry:

My father was a cooper. . . It was while he was trying to raise a roof to put over a new brick shop at Market and North Second streets that he strained himself, the injury later caused his death. I tore down the shop and built a frame house there and that is where we have always lived. (*Rockford Morning Star* 1909)

Henry did not immediately build the new house. He was only six when his father died, but by the time he was sixteen, it was 1852. Then he could have built the new house; this still puts the house as one of the oldest houses still standing. The house is Pre-Civil War but may be built using newer building materials. It has been well cared for over the years and deserves to be revered for both its age and condition. It is likely as old as the city itself and its first owners go back to the city's first days. If Henry did build it, it should be called the Henry Posson House.



Figure 19. Henry A. Posson (1836-1912) Civil War veteran who lost an arm in the Battle of Shiloh lived for seventy years at 201 North Second. His father, Jacob, was killed in 1842 while constructing a building on the property. **Figures 20 and 21.** The above photos of the Posson house were taken in 1976. The fireplace was added after a fire and some interior rooms were rearranged. Otherwise, it had changed little since the time it was built (circa 1852) and remains much the same today. (See photo credits for sources.)

Posson House is Front-Gabled Folk House: Greek Revival in Spirit

Folk houses are the houses of the majority. We are familiar with folk houses before 1850 and the arrival of the railroad. Log houses, stone and sod houses, Cape Cods, adobe brick houses, and tepees are all examples. After 1850, folk houses changed. They took on more of a national than a regional appearance and employed lumber readily available to construct houses using two by fours rather than heavy wooden beams. The Posson house is an example of the simple Front-Gabled National Folk House (1850-1930) even though the construction may still have heavy beams in part of the house. The Posson house is unassuming and one of the reasons is that the style is so ubiquitous in the United States. Without the fireplace and the side porch this is the house that every American child draws to represent a home. The Posson House borrows architectural design from the Greek Revival style (its front facing gable, asymmetrical entrance and small porch overhang). Windows are without lintels, shutters or pediments, and no other elaborations adorn the building. Yet, the Greek Revival influence is unmistakable; the front-facing gable was suited for small city lots and was a style extremely popular in the United States, especially in the Midwest and Northeast, after 1850 until well into the 20th century.

6. WILLARD WHEELER HOUSE – 1843

Figure 22 - Below

WILLARD WHEELER HOUSE - 1843

228 South First Street

Built 1843

This beautiful example of a Gothic Revival Style Cottage was lovingly restored in the 1980s by Dr. and Mrs. Paul Van Pervis. Gothic Revival is characterized by a deeply pitched gable roof and by the bargeboard trim that decorates the roof and porches. Dormer peaks often break into the roof line as they do here. The lintels above the windows and the glass and wood surround of the entrance door are carry-overs from the Greek Revival style also popular at the time this house was built. The cottage, reminiscent of the Cape Cod style, is characterized by the symmetry of the front with the center door and two shuttered windows on each side.



Figure 22: Wheeler House with bargeboard (gingerbread) trim.



Figure 23. Charming front entrance to the Wheeler House, also known as Daffodil Cottage, a Gothic Revival style home well preserved to this day. Finials on porch railings are characteristic of Gothic Revival period.

FOR SALE.

A SMALL BRICK DWELLING HOUSE and Lot. Said lot fronting 66 feet on first street and running back in the rear 155 feet. The above premises is eligibly situated in the grove, and on the east side of Rock River, in the village of Rockford, and formerly occupied by Wyon S. Peck. For further particulars apply to
D. S. HAIGIT.
 Rockford, April 15, 1841.

Figure 24. Left is a copy of the newspaper ad offering the property for sale in 1841. Daniel Shaw Haight acquired it in 1838.

WHEELER HOUSE: This yellow brick house has been called the Daffodil Cottage and the Wheeler-Johnson House [Dr. A. Frances Johnson, a science and mathematics professor at Rockford College, lived in the house for over forty years.] It sits on property that once belonged to eastside founder Daniel Shaw Haight and on which he had built a small brick house. (See copy of sale notice, Figure 24.) Willard Wheeler built this house. Wheeler who was the second tinner in town had a store and tin shop where he sold steel ploughs and stoves. He was an active civic leader. Rockford was a village/town from 1839-1852. The village/town of Rockford had trustees as their elected officials. Wheeler was a village trustee and, later, president of the board of trustees, as well as a trustee of the of the school lands, a member of the committee to build the first bridge, and first mayor for the newly formed city of Rockford (1852). There is sadness in Mr. Wheeler's life story for, while he was some years older than his young wife, she died in Rockford at the age of 30 in 1846. Wheeler lost the house due to debt, but the house has had good stewards that cared for it during its long history. It will enter its 172nd year in 2015. The house was placed on the *National Register of Historic Places* in 1980.

1. Going There: HERRICK COBBLESTONE HOUSE -- 2027 Broadway

From the eastside: Take a north-south major road (Mulford, Perryville, Alpine), to Newburg. Go west on Newburg to Alpine, if needed. Newburg turns into Broadway at Alpine. Continue west on Broadway to 18th St. Park on a side street. House is on the south side of Broadway, second from the 18th St. corner going west. You can get good pictures from the north side of Broadway.

From the westside: Take Main St. to Morgan St. Turn east and cross the bridge. Morgan turns into College on the east side of the river. Stay on College, navigate the roundabout and go to Kishwaukee. Turn south on Kishwaukee to Broadway. Turn east onto Broadway. Travel under the viaduct. House is on the right on Broadway. Park on 18th Street. House is the second house west from the corner of 18th and Broadway.

2. Going There: GRAHAM GINESTRA HOUSE -- 1115 South Main Street This house is on a state road through the city of Rockford on the west side, Rt.2. Cross the river at the Morgan Street Bridge or any bridge north of it. Travel west to Main Street. Turn south onto Main Street to 1115 South Main, just south of Morgan Street. Park on Loomis on either side of Main Street. Note that you are right beside the Ethnic Heritage Museum and across the street from the Barbor Coleman Building. This was a thriving, center of community in the early 20th century.

3. Going There: CIVIL WAR HOSPITAL - 1260 North Main Street Main Street is State Route 2 and runs north-south through Rockford on the Westside. From the eastside cross the Auburn Street bridge and continue to Main Street. Use the roundabout to enter onto Main Street going south. The house is in the third block (west side) south from the intersection of Main and Auburn. From Main Street, turn onto Reynolds and park on this side street. Walk back down to Main Street onto the walk in front of the houses. From there you may take pictures. It is possible to get a shot from across Main Street by parking on one of the side streets across from the 1200 block. Those pine trees in front of the house preclude a good shot of the house, but maybe you will discover a new angle. Note the changes to the neighborhood at Main and Auburn, just two and one half blocks north of the house. The structures on the entire west side of the 1000 block of Main have been razed, along with those on the northwest corner of Main and Auburn.

4. Going There: BREWMASTER'S HOUSE - 500 North Madison Street From the Main Street house, go north on Main Street to return to Auburn Street and turn right (east) onto Auburn Street. Cross the Auburn Street Bridge and take the 251 ramp entrance going south onto Second Street. At Y Boulevard (YMCA will be on the right (west)), turn right, west, and follow the road as it curves to the south and becomes Madison Street. The house is on the northwest corner of Madison and Prairie Streets. This is also the entrance to the Prairie Street Brewhouse.

5. Going There: JACOB POSSON HOUSE – 201 North First Street From the Brewmaster's House and the Prairie Street Brewhouse (The Old Peacock Brewery), continue south on Madison to Market Street. Turn east on Market. Go to Second Street. The Posson House is on the northeast corner of Market and Second Street.

Coming from the north on 251 (North Second Street) pass Y Boulevard and follow Second Street: Take Second Street to Market Street. The house is on the northeast corner of Second and Market. You can park on Market Street for pictures. Second Street is one-way going south.

Coming from the south on 251 (Third Street): Turn west on Market Street (one block north of State Street). Go two blocks to corner of Market and North Second. The house is on the northeast corner. Park on Market Street.

6. Going There: WHEELER HOUSE - 228 South First Street From the Posson House at Market and Second Streets: Go three blocks south on Second Street to Oak Street crossing State, and Walnut to Oak Street. Turn west on Oak Street, one block. The Wheeler House is on the northeast corner of Oak and First. Note the plaque on the boulder at the site. The Wheeler House is in historic Haight Village, the first neighborhood in the city to be on the National Park Service's *National Register of Historic Places*.

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- Figure 4.** "Temple of Concordia," Agrigento. Valle dei Templi. Sicily. Wikipedia. Web. Accessed 14 September 2014. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valle_dei_Templi>.
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- Figure 7.** "Copy of Herrick Land Purchase Document, 1837." *Descent of Elijah Lawrence Herrick, 1820-1912; [and] Descent of Lucy Dunbar Jones Herrick, 1828-1926*. Unpublished, 1926? Print. In Rockford (IL) Public Library Local History and Genealogy Room. Photo by the author, CJ Fox, 2014.
- Figure 8.** "Graham-Ginestra House." Rockford, IL. Photo by the author, CJ Fox, 2014.
- Figure 8a.** "Roof Detail of Graham-Ginestra House." Rockford, IL. Photo by the author, CJ Fox, 2014.
- Figure 8b.** "Porch Detail of Graham-Ginestra House." Rockford, IL. Photo by the author, CJ Fox, 2014.
- Figure 9.** "Graham-Ginestra House, circa 1927?" *Rockford Register-Republic* on May 11, 1965. Web. <<http://www.genealogybank.com>> Accessed 20 Sept. 2014.
- Figure 10.** "Camp Fuller Civil War Hospital, Drawing circa 1892." *The Rockford Morning Star*, February 14, 1892, p. 5. Web. <<http://www.genealogybank.com>> Accessed 20 Sept. 2014.
- Figure 11.** "Map of Camp Fuller Area with Street Names." *Morning Star*. Rockford, IL: 1962. Web. <<http://www.genealogybank.com>> Accessed 20 Sept. 2014.
- Figure 12.** "Camp Fuller Civil War Hospital, Drawing circa 1892." *The Rockford Morning Star*, February 14, 1892, p. 5. Web. <<http://www.genealogybank.com>> Accessed 20 Sept. 2014.
- Figure 13.** "Civil War Hospital A Museum," *Rockford Republic*, Friday, April 6, 1928, p. 1. Web. <<http://www.genealogybank.com>> Accessed 18 Sept. 2014.
- Figure 14.** Borden, Robert H. "Rockford's Civil War Hosptial." *Nuggets of History*: Rockford Historical Society: Rockford, IL: Volume 3, Number 1, pp. 1-4. 1965.
- Figure 15.** "Civil War Hospital – 1260 N. Main Street." Rockford, IL. Photo by the author, CJ Fox, 2014.
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- Figure 18.** "Jacob Posson House, Market Street View." Rockford, IL. Photo by the author, CJ Fox, 2014.
- Figure 19.** "Henry A. Posson." *Rockford Morning Star*, Sunday, Nov 3, 1912, p. 5. Web. <<http://www.genealogybank.com>> Accessed 5 August, 2014.
- Figure 20.** "Posson House, Front View, 1976." from "The Oldest House in Rockford." *Nuggets of History*: Rockford Historical Society: Rockford, IL: Volume 10, Number 4, pp. 7-10. 1976.
- Figure 21.** "Posson House, Side View, 1976." from "The Oldest House in Rockford." *Nuggets of History*: Rockford Historical Society: Rockford, IL: Volume 10, Number 4, pp. 7-10. 1976.
- Figure 22.** "Willard Wheeler House-1843" Rockford, IL. Photo by the author, CJ Fox, 2014.
- Figure 23.** "Porch Detail, Wheeler House." Rockford, IL. Photo by the author, CJ Fox, 2014.
- Figure 24.** "First Street Property Sale Ad." *Rockford Star*, June 17, 1841, p. 4. Web. <<http://www.genealogybank.com>> Accessed 29 August, 2014.

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