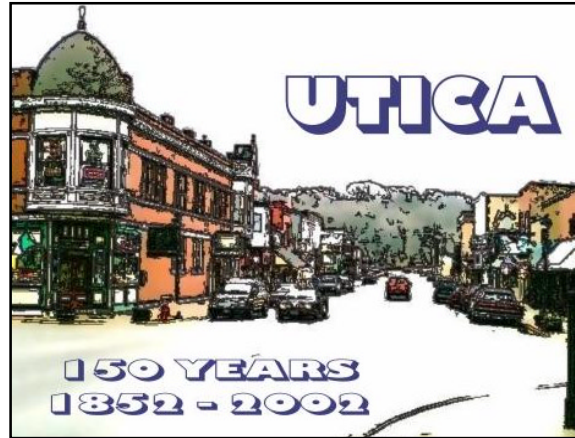


NORTH UTICA HISTORICAL PROFILE

The town of North Utica is located in LaSalle County, just north of the Illinois River. The business district is on Mill Street; Illinois Route 178 runs through its commercial core. The Illinois-Michigan (I & M) Canal divides the north side from the south side of the village. Utica's settlement origins are tied to assets that include waterpower and the natural resources of clay, hydraulic lime, and sandstone.



The Village of North Utica is the proper name of what is more commonly referred to as Utica. The original settlement was named Science, located along the bottomlands of the Illinois River. Plans for the development of the I & M Canal between 1822 and 1836 made the area attractive for settlement. In the 1827 canal survey, Utica had been designated the terminus for the canal. The canal survey nine years later moved the canal terminus from Utica to Peru and then later to LaSalle. The relocation of the canal terminus away from Utica not only limited water and rail transportation but also the general growth of the community.

Simon Crosiar, a native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, moved to the Utica Township, establishing a sawmill and carding machine. In 1834, he opened a warehouse, a store, and built a dock for transporting commodities along the banks of the Illinois River. A small number of pioneer farmers and merchants from the eastern seaboard, Kentucky, and Ohio also settled in the community. Two years later, in November of 1836, the Deputy County Surveyor filed a plat map for Utica at the recorder's office in LaSalle County.

The start of construction of the I & M Canal began in 1836. Laborers, mostly of Irish decent, arrived and set up lodging one mile north of the original settlement. The construction of the I & M Canal and the regular flooding of the Illinois River were the likely explanations for the slight move north. Construction of the I & M Canal was completed twelve years later, in 1848. Discovery of hydraulic lime and the production of cement were the impetus for further development of Utica. The village was organized in 1850. County Surveyor J.H. Wagner laid out the village in 1852. It was officially incorporated in 1867.

Simon Crosiar's sawmill, carding machine, warehouse, store, and dock were among the first business establishments in Utica. Other business establishments in the 1830's included

Thomas Brown's store (1836); George Armstrong's tavern (1836); four frame buildings containing two stores, a warehouse, and tavern; and Norton and Steele's cement plant (1838). The cement plant primarily manufactured cement used in the construction of the I & M Canal. Construction of the canal was temporarily suspended in 1841, and as a result, the cement company closed.

The cement plant was reopened in 1845 under the ownership of James Clark. The James Clark Cement Company was later changed to Utica Hydraulic Cement Company. In 1848, James Clark constructed a stone warehouse to store grain. Clark's stone warehouse also served as a post office, general store, livery, and car wash. In 1967, the old warehouse opened as a museum by the LaSalle County Historical Society. The Historical Society was officially founded in 1907.

Utica had its first grain elevator, feed mill complex, Rock Island Pacific Railroad, lumber store, and grain store in the 1850s. In the 1860s, simple frame structures were built to house necessity-oriented stores on Clark and Canal Streets. The commercial core on Mill Street began in 1870 and was oriented towards industry and services. The Utica Fire-Brick Company was established in 1882 (operating until 1928) to manufacture bricks. Further development on Mill Street took place between 1880-1900 with construction of most of the brick and stone structures.

At the turn of the century, Utica had reached its commercial and residential peak. It had a population of 1,000 people that consisted of the aforementioned settlers as well as Swedes. There were three-cement companies, three-grain elevators, the Utica Electric Light Company, and the operation of the Interurban Illinois Valley Railroad. By 1914, the railroad replaced the canal.

Further development and construction came to a halt after the 1920's. Since the 1950's, physical changes have been minimal. It is said that with the popularity of the automobile and accessibility of independent travel, Utica gradually experienced less self-sufficiency. Residents were able to travel to larger communities for necessities and services.

In the 1970's, Interstate 80 was constructed over a mile north of downtown Utica. The interstate has caused the Village limits to grow that far north. Much of the future development in Utica is expected to occur near the interstate and U.S. Route 6.

Community leaders and residents have expressed a desire for planned growth and sustainability. Recent proactive initiatives are the incorporation of a planning commission and the development of the village's first comprehensive plan.

Historic Places and Buildings

Historic structures within the I & M Canal National Heritage Corridor were inventoried by the National Park Service in 1986, under the Historic American Buildings Survey and Historic American Engineering Records Division (HABS/HAER) of the U.S. Department of the Interior. A total of 30 commercial buildings and three residential buildings were surveyed in the town; 39 farms were surveyed in the township. Seven buildings were found to qualify under the following definition:

Resources of great historical, architectural or technological importance within the Heritage Corridor possessing a sufficiently high degree of positive physical qualities to warrant documentation, preservation and, in some cases, restoration. These buildings and structures should be considered for documentation by HABS/HAER standards.

Buildings that qualify under the above definition are considered for documentation to HABS/HAER standards and may be eligible for listing on the National Register. It was also recommended that all pre-1940 buildings in Utica town be inventoried, with particular attention given to religious buildings as visible symbols of ethnic communities.

The following list represents the seven buildings that were found to qualify under the aforementioned definition:

1. Amos T. Griffin Mansion
2. Cornelius Esmond Farm
3. Duffy's Tavern
4. G.A. Bennett Farm
5. Isaiah Strawn Farm
6. Utica Post Office (old building?)
7. Village Office

Although these buildings qualified at the time, none of them have applied for designation.

The IL Historic Preservation Agency's Preservation Services Division manages the National Register of Historic Places program for Illinois. It is this agency that approves historic nomination applications and forwards the applications to the United States Department of the Interior, with the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places in Washington, D.C. The Utica vicinity has eight properties listed in the National Register. Each property meets at least one of the following basic four specified criteria:

- It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- It is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; represents the work of a master; possesses high artistic value; or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
- It yields information important in prehistory or history.

There are two laws that require that possible effects on National Register properties or properties determined eligible for the Register be taken into account as part of the planning process if the demolition or alteration is linked to a federal or state government undertaking. The two laws are Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and the State Agency Historic Resources Preservation Act. State or federally funded projects that occur on National Register properties or properties determined eligible for the Register must be reviewed by the state historic preservation office. All projects not using state or federal funds do not need to consult the historic preservation office.

The eight properties in the Utica vicinity listed, through June 21, 2001, in the National Register are the following (the date the property was listed is in parentheses):

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| Corbin Farm Site | (June 1998) |
| Hotel Plaza Site | (June 1998) |
| Little Beaver Site | (June 1998) |
| Old Kaskaskia Village, National Historic Landmark | (October 1966) |
| Shaky Shelter Site | (June 1998) |
| Spring Valley House/Sulphur Springs Hotel Dee Bennett Road | (November 1987) |
| Starved Rock State Park Lodge and Cabins | (May 1985) |
| Starved Rock State Park, National Historic Landmark 6 miles west of Ottawa on IL 71 | (October 1966) |

There is a rich history in the Utica area and preserving this history and maintaining the communities aesthetics should be considered when future development occurs.