

# Oswego Historic Landmarks

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*Promoting the preservation and enhancement of  
Oswego's unique historic character*

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Village of Oswego  
Historic Preservation Commission  
Community Development Department  
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Oswego, IL 60543  
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[www.oswegoil.org](http://www.oswegoil.org)

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*For further information regarding restoration and landmarks in Illinois go to  
The Landmarks Illinois website at [www.Landmarks.org](http://www.Landmarks.org)*

# Oswego Historic Landmarks

*“The local history of Oswego dates to 1835, when the village was first platted by Lewis B. Judson and Levi F. Arnold. The waves of growth that have occurred in the village from its origin to the present have led to the development of an architecturally-diverse urban area. The historic core includes Midwestern vernacular types from the mid-19th century, late 19th and early 20th century high styles, and popular styles of the entire 20th century. With the rapid growth Oswego has experienced in the last 20 years, the preservation of its built history can serve to strengthen the overall health and vitality of the village as a whole as it continues through the 21st century.”*

– 2009 Architectural Resources Survey,  
Granacki Historic Consultants

The Oswego Historic Preservation Commission, consisting of volunteer community members appointed by the Village Board, works to preserve and enhance Oswego’s unique historic character by informing the community of the positive benefits of preservation, enlisting public support and participation in the historic preservation process, and identifying significant sites that represent preservation opportunities.

This purpose of this report is to communicate the criteria for Historic Landmark and District designation and the benefits available to owners of landmarked property, in support of the Commission’s objective to inform and educate the community about its historic character.

## **Establishment of Zoning Ordinance criteria**

The Village of Oswego Zoning Ordinance established guidelines for the designation of historic properties/districts, for the purpose of:

1. Providing a mechanism to identify and preserve the distinctive historic, architectural, and/or landscaping characteristics of the Village of Oswego which represent elements of the Village’s cultural, social, economic, political, and architectural history;
2. Promoting civic pride in the beauty and significant accomplishments of the past as represented in the Village’s landmark and historic districts;
3. Providing a positive force to help stabilize and improve the property value of the Village’s landmarks and historic districts;
4. Protecting and enhancing the attractiveness of the Village to its residents and visitors, and thereby

supporting and promoting commerce and providing economic benefit to the Village;

5. Fostering and encouraging preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation.

Pursuant to Chapter 18.04 (B) *Criteria for Landmark Designation* of the Village’s Zoning Ordinance, a property must meet at least one of the eight criteria to be eligible for landmark status:

1. The property possesses significant value as part of the historical, cultural, artistic, social, ethnic or other heritage of the Nation, State, County or Community;
2. The property is associated with an important person or event in National, State, County or Village history;
3. The property is representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craft, method of construction or use of indigenous materials;
4. The property is associated with the notable work of a master builder, designer, architect or artist whose individual genius has influenced an era;
5. The property is identifiable as an established and familiar visual feature in the community owing to its unique location or physical characteristics;
6. The property is characteristic of a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure, including but not limited to farmhouses, gas stations and other commercial structures, with a high level of integrity and architectural significance;
7. The property is one of few remaining examples of a particular architectural style or use, or is an example which clearly represents a major architectural style, and has undergone little or no alteration since its construction and/or;
8. Area that has yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

## Benefits of Landmark status

There are multiple benefits of landmark designation. Protecting the cultural and historic heritage of the community weighs heavily among owners of historic property and the community at large. There may also be financial benefits. Owners of landmarked properties may take advantage of the **Property Tax Assessment Freeze Program**:

*The Illinois Revenue Act (35 ILCS 200/Art. 10 Div. 4) provides owner-occupants with an eight-year freeze on the assessed value of their historic residences. After the eight-year assessment freeze period, there is a four-year period during which the property's assessed value steps up to its current amount. This results in 12 years of reduced assessed value. If a rehabilitation project meets all four provisions described below, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA) will issue a Certificate of Rehabilitation for the property. This Certificate allows your assessor to implement the assessment freeze for your property.*

IHPA shall approve a Certificate of Rehabilitation Application (Application) when:

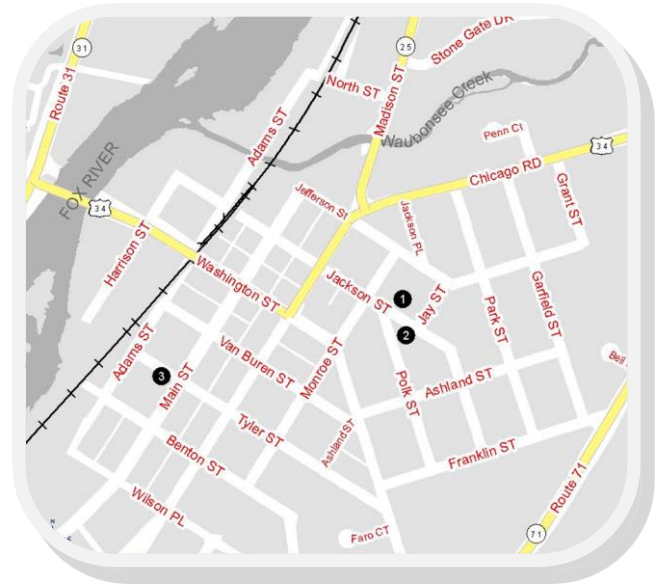
1. The building is owner-occupied housing
2. The project involves a historic building
3. The project was done in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (Standards)  
<http://www.nps.gov/hps/TPS/tax/rehabstandards.htm>.
4. The project was a substantial rehabilitation with a budget whose eligible expenses equal or exceed 25% of the property's fair cash value for the year the rehabilitation started

The attached link provides an overview and FAQ's regarding the Property Tax Assessment Freeze Program (<http://www.illinoishistory.gov/ps/taxfreeze.htm>).

For additional information, contact Carol Dyson, Chief Architect and Tax Incentives Manager, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency at [carol.dyson@illinois.gov](mailto:carol.dyson@illinois.gov) or by phone at (217) 524-0276.

## Designated Properties

Upon application by the owner(s) of these properties, and review/analysis by Village staff, the following have been granted local historic landmark status by the Village Board:



①

56 Jackson Street  
Crothers-Jolly-Jeneson-Denny House  
(Ordinance 04-114; 12/6/04)

②

72 Polk Street  
Little White School Museum  
(Ordinance 11-24; 3/15/11)

③

205 S. Main Street  
John and Margaret Young House, a.k.a. "Hardhead House"  
(Ordinance 12-34; 5/15/12)

## 56 Jackson Street

### *Crothers-Jolly-Jeneson-Denney House*

Designated as Local Historic Landmark on December 6, 2004  
(Ordinance 04-114)

Built in 1850 of high quality limestone quarried in Joliet and prepared on the property, *Greek Revival* style defined this John M. Crothers home.

It has a formal, symmetrical, and orderly appearance.

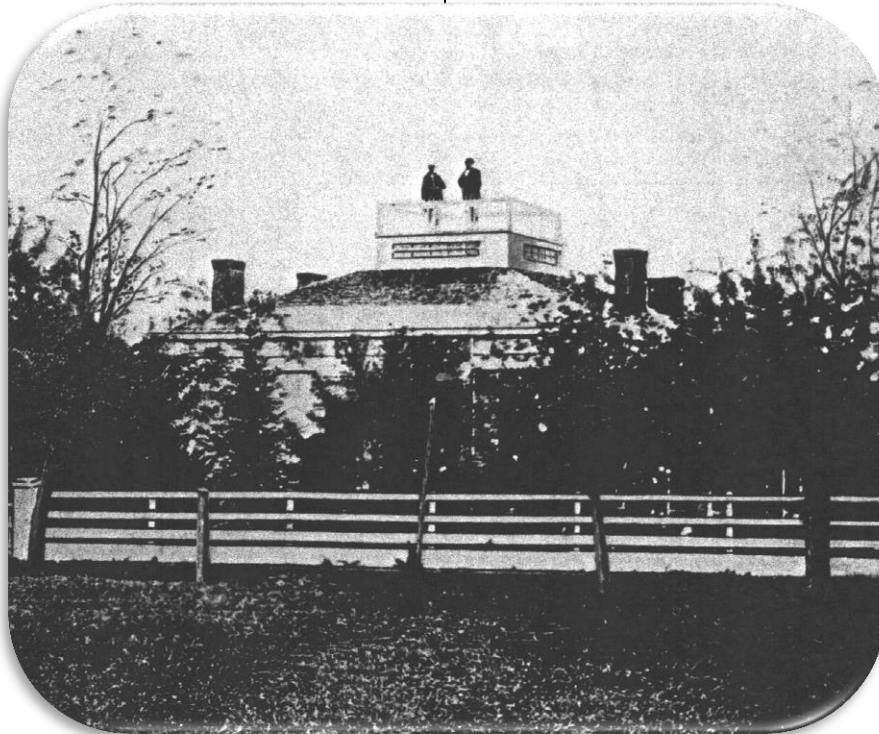
The entrance features sidelights with etchings of graceful birds, flowers and butterflies in the glass; there is a horizontal light over the door. From the Crothers name to the Denney name, the house was still in the same family until 1991, and therefore is known as the "Crothers-Jolly-Jeneson-Denney House."

The original one-story limestone house was constructed by John M. Crothers and his wife Nancy A. Foster and includes twelve foot ceilings.

A two-story addition including living/bedroom space and a new one-story two-car garage was constructed to the west of the original structure sometime between 1991 and 2000. The addition is attached to the original structure by a minimal one-story "link" and a one-story addition consisting of what is now used as the breakfast room, both rooms previously constructed as an addition to the original structure. A sunroom addition was constructed off the back of

the north side of the house during this time period following the two-story addition.

The home has been recognized both for its architecture as an excellent example of the *Greek Revival* style, as well as for its historic associations with Crothers, Oswego's first Village Board president and a local lawyer, politician and businessman. John M. Crothers was noted as being the first President of the Village of Oswego Board of Trustees following its incorporation in 1852.



The exterior limestone elevations of the original structure are visible from the breezeway "link", breakfast room, and sunroom. The original entrance to the cellar is still present in the breakfast room. The Joliet limestone exterior of the original structure has largely remained untouched and untreated while the most prominent architectural feature, the cupola, remains intact and preserved at the top of the roofline. The cupola is accessed through the kitchen's pantry via a closed wall "spiral" staircase.



## 72 Polk Street

### *Little White School Museum*

*Designated as Local Historic Landmark on March 15, 2011  
(Ordinance 11-24)*

The primary structure located at 72 Polk Street was constructed between 1848 and 1850 as the location of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The congregation continued meeting at this location until 1913, when the church dissolved, and the property was sold to the Oswego Grade School District in 1915. The building was used over the years to house first, second, and third grade students, and, before the school district halted classes in the building in 1964, was the location of the local junior high for two years.

In 1976, the school district reached an agreement with a recently formed not for profit organization, the Oswegoland Heritage Association, that allowed the school to be transformed into a museum that would archive and display local history and artifacts. Under the agreement, the school district maintained ownership of the property, the Oswegoland Heritage Association conducted the building's restoration effort, and the Oswegoland Park District accepted maintenance responsibilities for the building and property, the latter of which was given the name Heritage Park. In late 2010, the School District transferred ownership of the property to the Park District, which now owns and maintains the property and all its buildings.

Per the Village of Oswego's Architectural Resources survey, the building is rated as "historically significant" due to its continuing civic role in the community, serving both a religious and educational function during its earlier use. It has been a civic building since its completion in 1850, first serving as

a church, then a school, and currently as a museum, owned by the Oswegoland Park District, housing local historical archives and exhibits.

Per the Village of Oswego's Architectural Resources survey, the structure is also rated as "architecturally significant" as an example of classic mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Greek Revival church architecture, with a simple, triangular pedimented gable and classic entry surround. Other significant features of the style include the wide frieze and corner pilasters with simple capitals and the narrow, paired windows located on each façade.

The building has been located at its current site for approximately 160 years and has become a fixture in the community due to its distinctive architectural style and its location in one of the earliest subdivisions within the Village of Oswego. Its close proximity to the downtown area of Oswego furthers the association of the building with the Village's identity.

The building is substantially consistent with the original structure that was built between 1848 and 1850. Very few exterior alterations have occurred since the original church was constructed, as documented in historic photographs. A bell tower was a later addition (1901), and was removed around 1936. The reconstruction of the bell tower by the Oswegoland Heritage Association was appropriate and consistent with the previous bell tower.



## 205 S. Main Street

### *John Young House, aka "Hardhead House"*

Designated as Local Historic Landmark on May 15, 2012  
(Ordinance 12-34)

The single-family house located at 205 Main Street was constructed between 1895 and 1897, most likely by Lou C. Young for his parents and owners of the property, John and Margaret Young. Lou C. Young constructed numerous homes in Oswego during this time period, including other buildings that were of similar architectural style.

According to the Village of Oswego's 2009 "Architectural Resources" survey, the building is an unusual style of architecture, exhibiting styles from both Shingle Style and the Arts and Crafts style. The home exhibits many characteristics of the Shingle Style, including the eyebrow window in the attic, the tower on the southeast corner of the house, and the rustic, informal appearance of the building. Per the survey, the building received a local rating of "Significant", given to properties that are architecturally or historically significant and may be eligible for listing as a local landmark. This building's rating is due to its unusual and distinctive architectural style. There are only four examples of this type of architecture in the area that was surveyed.

The building makes use of local "hardhead" boulders, a rounded boulder that was found throughout the area during the time of construction, which were pulled from the DuPage River. The first floor and extensive porch utilized these indigenous materials. Because of its distinctive use of "hardheads", the building is recognized locally for its

unique style and design. No other local example exists of a structure that so prominently features this type of design and use of "hardheads".



Significant architectural features of the building include the front gable roof, wood windows with rounded arches over the openings, rubble stone on the first floor and porch, a three-sided bay at the southeast corner of the house with oriel windows, an eyebrow window in the attic, and a rustic, informal

appearance.

The current building is substantially consistent with the original structure. Very few exterior alterations have occurred, as documented in historic photographs. The original windows were replaced at some point in time, but similar-styled windows were installed during a recent renovation that mimic the design of the original windows. The new windows are 1/1, double hung windows, which appear consistent with the originals as seen in photos of the house taken in 1912.

A garage was added and is connected to the original house. The design of the garage matches that of the house; however, the addition is set back from the front building line of the house by over 25 feet, which visually separates the two and lends itself to the interpretation that the garage is, in fact, a later addition. In this way, the house is able to maintain its historical integrity even with the recent addition.