



# An Architectural History of Carbondale, Illinois

*Susan E. Maycock*

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Maycock has traced the architectural history of Carbondale from its founding in 1852 to just prior to World War II. Like numerous other midwestern towns established along recently constructed railroads, Carbondale emerged essentially because of the newly chartered Illinois Central Railroad. The railroad provided economic stimulus, but the personal involvement and commitment of Carbondale's citizens also proved major factors in the town's architectural development.

Architecturally, Carbondale followed the fashions of the times, with some local variations, although like many small towns it was from 10 to 20 years behind major metropolitan areas. With the exception of the university buildings, structures in Carbondale were designed and erected not by trained architects but by "local carpenters and owners who had seen buildings elsewhere or read about them in periodicals and architectural pattern books of the period." These buildings "serve as direct reflections of the community's progress at various points in its history."

The present study covers 130 years and digs into the roots of a typical 19th-century railroad town in Illinois. The book concentrates on the older section of town, that which existed before the "skyrocketing enrollments at Southern Illinois University put unforeseen pressures on the town, causing widespread demolition and alteration of older buildings to accommodate the sudden increase in population."

Although Carbondale today is totally different from the settlement laid out by Daniel Brush, the city did spring from the roots Maycock describes. Maycock gives the reader ample opportunity to compare Carbondale then and now. About half of her 138 photographs show historic Carbondale, half the contemporary city. She includes a map of early Carbondale to enable the reader to match the city as it was against the Carbondale of today. Included also is a map of rail lines, showing cities and towns along the Illinois Central that came into being for the same reason Carbondale did.

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