

Dwight, Illinois Architecture

As the train travels between Joliet and Pontiac, Illinois, try to spot the little town of Dwight and some of its famous historic buildings. At first glance, it appears to be a sleepy, little town of about 4000 residents, but Dwight's architectural treasures hint at a remarkable past.

Dwight was founded in 1854 by a partnership of five men, all of whom had connections with the Chicago and Mississippi Railroad. In addition to this railroad, two more companies built rail lines through town within a few decades, enabling the little town to prosper. Town leaders saw the need for a grand railway station, and Henry Ives Cobb was hired to design the building. His splendid 1891 Richardson Romanesque station is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

While visiting Dwight, you can view the beautiful train station, as well as several other examples of diverse architectural styles. A downtown bank was designed by the innovative Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright was well-known during his lifetime, and in 1991 was recognized by the American Institute of Architects as the "greatest American architect of all time." The 1856 Pioneer Gothic Church is a rare example of a wooden Carpenter Gothic church building. There is even a Texaco Gas Station on historic Route 66 in Dwight which is also listed on the National Register.

In 1857 a local physician named Dr. Leslie Keeley publicized a cure for alcoholism based on gold chloride, and founded the Keeley Institute. Dr. Keeley's treatment gained international recognition, even though it was criticized by the mainstream medical profession. One of the institute's buildings is now open for tours. Visitors can learn about the treatment which attracted hundreds of thousands of patients to Dwight, including President Theodore Roosevelt's brother, Elliott Roosevelt. However, Mr. Roosevelt was not the most famous visitor to town.

Local residents are proud to tell of an 1860 visit by the Prince of England, Albert, son of Queen Victoria and heir to the British throne. Prince Albert came to visit one of the town's founders, Charles Spencer, for a hunting holiday. Mr. Spencer's furniture was deemed unsuitable, so it was all put into storage and some of the prince's own furniture was shipped ahead of time for his use. During the visit, the royal party killed over 200 prairie chickens and quail. The grounds where Prince Albert stayed have been donated to the town and preserved as Renfrew Park, so today visitors can picnic where royalty once hunted.

Instead of passing by the little town of Dwight, take a closer look and enjoy its architecture and history!

Source(s):

The Village of Dwight. (n.d.). Retrieved December 20, 2010 from <http://dwightillinois.org/>.

Wikipedia. (2010). Dwight, Illinois. Retrieved December 20, 2010 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dwight,_Illinois.

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