

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name St. Charles Municipal Building
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Two East Main Street not for publication
city, town St. Charles vicinity
state Illinois code IL county Kane code 089 zip code 60174

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

William C. Chel 1-2-91
Signature of certifying official Date
Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government - city hall

Recreation and Culture - museum

Current Function: (enter categories from instructions)

Government - city hall

Recreation and Culture - museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement - Moderne

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Stone - Marble

Brick

roof Asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The St. Charles Municipal Building is a remarkably unique structure designed by R. Harold Zook with D. Coder Taylor in the Moderne style. Built in 1940, this structure sits at a prominent location overlooking the Fox River on its east bank at Illinois State Route 64 (Main Street) in St. Charles, Illinois. White Georgian marble is used for the main elevations of the building. These large blocks of marble with their crystalline composition glisten in the sunlight as no other material could present itself. The form of the building with its deeply recessed windows gives solidity and vigor to the structure, making it monumental in character. Above the large, slotted, abstract designed colored glass windows of the rotunda's tower is a section of pierced grille work with clocks on four sides of an octagonal form. The tower is capped by a seventy foot high diamond shaped form glazed with white structural glass and at night by a glowing and changing light from the inside making it jewel-like in character.

According to Carole Rifkind's book, A Field Guide to American Architecture (New American Library, New York, 1980), Art Deco and Moderne buildings such as the St. Charles Municipal Building were designed with "simple cubic forms and flat surfaces" which were emphasized for their modernity. Art Deco (1925-1933) ornament has a pronounced verticality and is mechanistic and linear in quality. Favored motifs are faceted surfaces, zigzags, chevrons patterns, and octagon shapes." The Municipal Building has all these elements. The distinction of being classified as Moderne instead of Art Deco lies in the fact that the Municipal Building is an example of the phase of design after 1930 in which buildings were drastically stripped of surface ornaments and windows were grouped in bands.

The Municipal Building has an interesting floor plan which uses the 84 foot tower as a pivot point to follow the edge of the Fox River as it takes a slight angle at its east bank. Actually, this east bank sea wall was constructed as part of the Municipal Building project providing a formal setting for a terrace at the first floor level which extended to the river. The wall is a combination of cut Indiana limestone at the stairs down to the river, two fountains, a four foot high railing and rubble stone facing on the wall from the river level to the terrace level, a distance of eleven feet.

Low and chunky in proportions, the horizontal elements of the building are balanced as two wings off the tower, which acts as an entry area and rotunda. From the rotunda to the north is a one-story museum which still exists today as it was planned and initiated in 1940 by the building's donors, Col. Edward J. Baker and Mr. & Mrs. Lester J. Norris. The museum ceiling is sixteen feet high. The part of the building to the south and east of the rotunda is two stories with a ten foot ceiling height on the first floor and a ceiling height which varies on the second floor from ten feet to twelve feet where it

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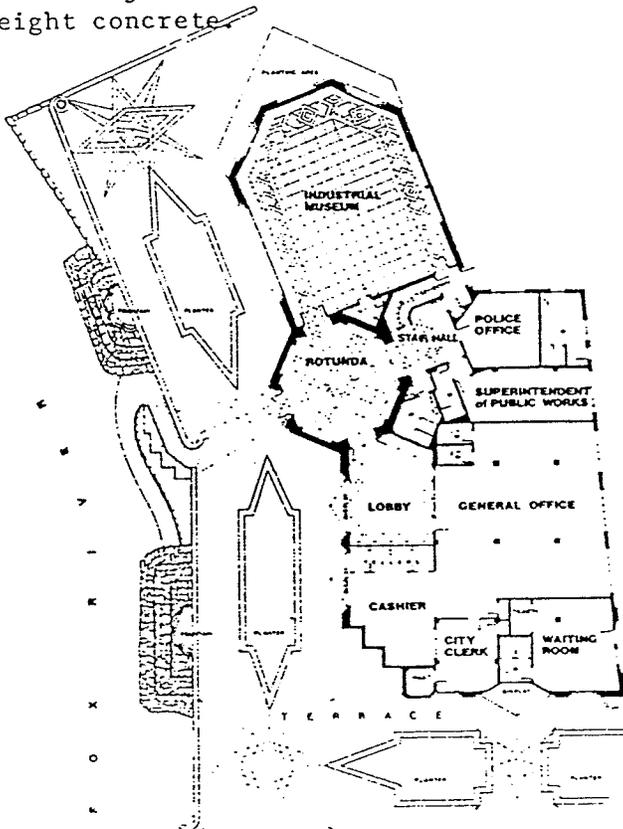
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steps up in the council chamber. These variations in height provide an interesting geometry on the west or river side of the building with the tower as a centerpiece. The museum is 44 feet by 58 feet in overall dimension while the two-story south wing is 66 feet by 96 feet in overall dimension. The first floor area is 8,410 square feet and the second floor area is 5,650 square feet for a total building area of 14,060 square feet, not including the full basement of 8,410 square feet.

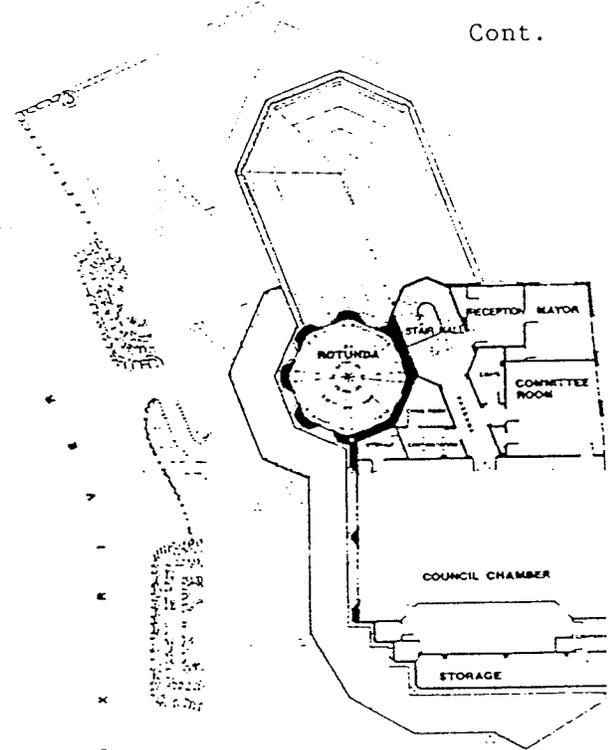
A three foot high base of polished black granite ties the north and south wings to the tower. This base wraps completely around all sides of the building except for ninety-seven feet on the east and north sides of the building which are entirely built of cream color face brick. These sides were not originally exposed to complete view because of a neighboring building to the east. Today a parking lot lies to the east, completely exposing this elevation.

Above the black granite base at all walls of the north and south wings, except the brick area on the east and north, and at the tower is a facing of 3" thick white "Cherokee" Georgian marble. This marble is supported by framing of steel and concrete. The first floor is built of poured concrete, pan construction and the second floor is built of precast concrete joists and slabs on a steel beam support system. The roof is constructed of lightweight concrete

Cont.



FIRST FLOOR / ORIGINAL PLAN



SECOND FLOOR / ORIGINAL PLAN

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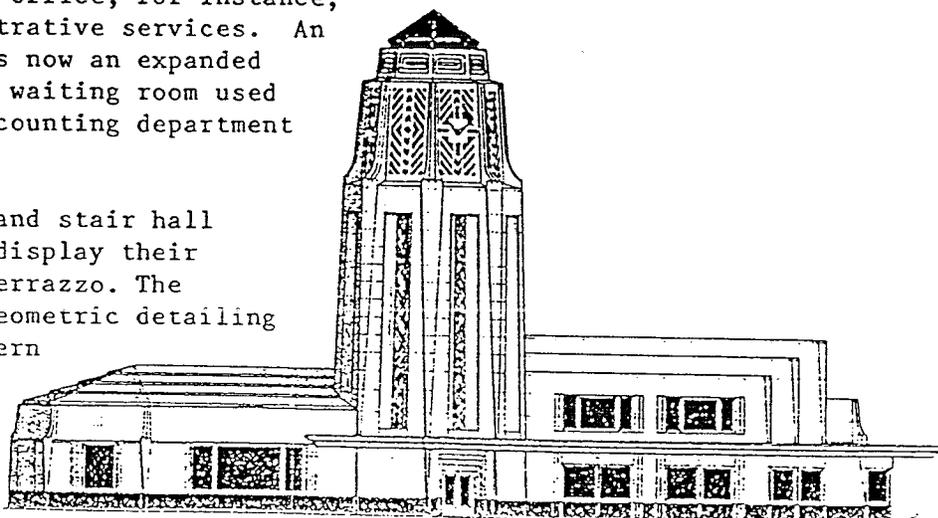
The rotunda is a true octagon in shape with an overall dimension of 31 feet. The walls being 2'-10" thick at the base, leave an interior dimension of 25'-4" clear. Colorful stained glass in the tall, narrow windows on all sides of the rotunda offers an exciting display of color at night when the interior is lighted and an exciting kaleidoscope effect on the black glass ceiling of the rotunda during the day. It is obvious from the original Zook drawings and early photographs that the stained glass has been changed at some point. This pattern probably had structural difficulties by not having horizontal support. The replacement stained glass, while still displaying diagonal elements, is more segmented with horizontal support bars at close intervals. It is not known exactly when the stained glass was replaced.

At the terrace, the west (river) and south (Main Street) sides of the building each had two poured concrete benches which encompassed planting areas. The terrace allowed for viewers to walk directly up to three display windows. Inlaid terrazzo designs were set into the concrete sidewalk areas and carried the chevron patterned floor of the rotunda to the outside and extended to the stair which lead down to a flagstone walk at the river level. The concrete benches have been removed and the terrazzo patterns on the exterior have been covered with a concrete topping. A landscape area has been added on the west side of the building to set the viewer back from the display windows approximately ten feet.

A nine foot exterior canopy which extends around the tower at the west side of the building around to the south side of the building is constructed of aluminum at its outer edge and Lustron porcelain enamel panels at the soffit. The canopy has continuous fluorescent tube lighting which gives the first floor a glow at night which is balanced by uplights on the tower and a changing color lighted dome at the tower cap. The canopy relates to the terrace areas to the west and south.

The interior has been maintained with little effect on the original floor plan. While some areas have changed function and a few partitions have been added, the geometric detailing of doors, wainscots and bases has been retained. The former police office and superintendent of public works office, for instance, are now the offices of administrative services. An area formerly called a lobby is now an expanded general office area. A former waiting room used as a bus station is now the accounting department office.

Floors in the rotunda, museum and stair hall have been well maintained and display their original chevron patterns in terrazzo. The door to the museum still has geometric detailing in its door and octagonal pattern door knob. Doors in other areas of the building have their original stainless steel round style knobs.



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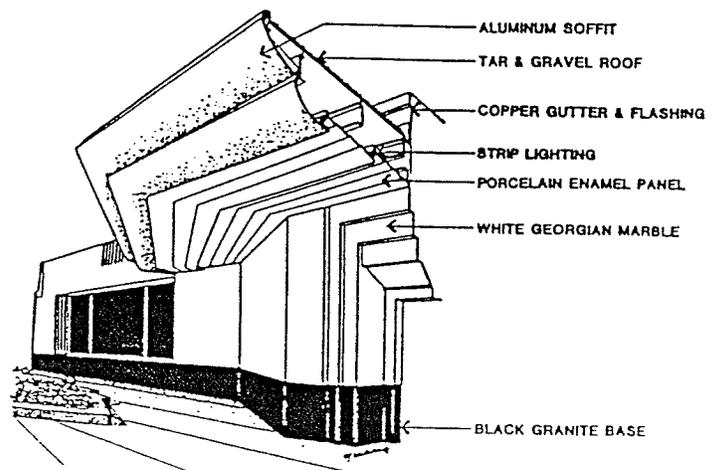
St. Charles Municipal Building

Wainscots throughout are geometric in layout with inset wood pieces at a center band, 12 inches wide.

Interior lighting is of particular interest at the St. Charles Municipal Building because, as it was stated in the electrical industry trade journal, The Delta Star, November-December, 1941 issue, "it is believed that this building is the first one of any size to be lighted throughout by tube lighting, except for such locations as cloak closets, toilets and basement heating room."

The museum ceiling has three levels of indirect lighting providing a soft illumination of the open space. The stair hall has one strip of indirect lighting plus a large five foot by ten foot skylight which provides a dramatic effect for the approach to the council chamber at the second floor.

Today the St. Charles Municipal Building is a source of pride and identity for the citizens of St. Charles and has retained a high degree of integrity of location, design, materials and association of use to display the setting for the important growth of the community.



SECTION AT MARQUEE

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
 Architecture

Period of Significance
 1940

Significant Dates
 1940

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Zook, Harold R., Architect

Taylor, D. Coder, Associate Architect

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The St. Charles Municipal Building meets Criterion C for listing in the National Register of Historic Places due to its architectural merit as a fine example of Art Moderne design by R. Harold Zook. Zook was also the architect of the Pickwick Theater in Park Ridge, a 1929 Art Deco style building which was designated to the National Register in 1975. Designed in 1940, the St. Charles Municipal Building retains some of the geometric qualities of the Art Deco style, but the overall streamline design and two-dimensional ornamentation of the building clearly expresses a striking Art Moderne style. Although St. Charles does retain other modernistic buildings, the Municipal Building best exemplifies the futuristic qualities of the pre-World War II era. In addition to its fine architectural qualities, the Municipal Building project was an innovative design regarding indirect lighting and special lighting effects. The "interior lighting is of particular interest to electrical men because it is believed that this building is the first one of any size to be lighted throughout by tube lighting ..." (The Delta-Star Magazine, November-December, 1941, Chicago, Illinois).

Design influences emanating from Europe had a significant effect on American Architecture in the late 1920's. Art Deco was a widely popular style which would break with the revivalist tradition represented by the Beaux Arts and period houses. The name Art Deco comes from the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs and Industriels Modernes, held in Paris in 1925. This "Expo Deco" was a showcase for works of new inspiration and originality. Art Deco was a style that avoided reference to the past. Characteristic in the appearance of an Art Deco design was a dramatically modern presentation with bold vertical ribs, crystalline ornament and an impressive opulence. The Depression and attitudes of the early 1930's seemed to tone down the imagination of architects with the resulting effect on Art Deco evolving in the Moderne style emphasizing heavy cubic masses, horizontality, smooth surfaces and an overall streamlining of buildings.

At the St. Charles Municipal Building simple geometric forms and flat surfaces are emphasized for their modernity. An eighty-four foot high tower adds a lingering influence of Art Deco pronounced vertically and Art Deco motifs of faceted surfaces, zigzags, chevron patterns and octagonal shapes abound. Obvious Moderne features of the Municipal Building include windows grouped in bands and continuous horizontal lines. The typical

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Moderne public building is low and chunky in proportions with a tall element carefully balanced by lower sections. Ornament is spare and abstract. The St. Charles Municipal Building is truly a Moderne building which promotes this striking style through its maintained high degree of architectural integrity.

White Georgia marble with a black granite base provides an exterior appearance for the St. Charles Municipal Building which, in its geometric forms, shows a conscious modernity and artistic expression to complement the machine age. Industrialization is emphasized in the building's program to provide an "Industrial Museum" in the north wing. This museum has been in continuous use at this location and is maintained by the St. Charles Historical Society.

In Planning the Municipal Building, its donors, Col. Edward J. Baker and Mr. & Mrs. Lester J. Norris, included the provision for the museum at the one-story north wing with a sixteen foot high ceiling. The museum occupies 1,800 square feet. Col. Baker, in particular, was very interested in local tradition, culture and industrial development and wanted this space to be a depository for local artifacts and records. Special fixtures, such as full vision exhibit cases, were specially designed for the museum and match the architectural detailing of the building's interior. These cases are still in use today.

The lighting of the Municipal Building is unique in that it was believed to be "the first permanent building of any size to use tube lighting entirely," according to the Delta Star Magazine, November-December, 1941, an electrical industry national trade journal. R. A. Warren of St. Charles, head of the St. Charles Technical Laboratories, was a pioneer in the use of tube, or fluorescent, lighting and was responsible for lighting design for the building.

The tube lighting is employed at the exterior marquee and provides a soft glow to the soffit areas and makes the building glow at its base at night. In the museum space, the ceiling has three steps up to the sixteen foot highest level with continuous tube lighting providing a soft indirect illumination. The stair hall has one level of indirect, continuous tube lighting at the ceiling. Another exciting lighting feature of the building is the glass dome of the tower which is illuminated at night with changing colored lights from within. Clocks are placed on each of four sides of the tower and chimes toll every quarter hour. The amplifying sound system was designed and installed by Operadio Manufacturing Company (now Dukane Corporation). A special remote line was connected to the Trophy Room of the Hotel Baker (a 1928 building listed on the National Register of Historic Places) so that the community could enjoy live organ music and concerts.

Mention must be made of the donors for the St. Charles Municipal Building, Col. Edward J. Baker and Mr. & Mrs. Lester J. Norris. Col. Baker and Mrs. Dellora Angell Norris were the heirs of John W. Gates. John Gates, originally from the town of Turner Junction, now West Chicago, became involved with Joseph Glidden in DeKalb, Illinois, in the promotion and sales of barbed wire, a Glidden invention. Gates invested in wire

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companies and organized American Steel and Wire Company, which was to become United States Steel. Gates also invested in oil and helped develop the Texas Company as a major stockholder and director. Texas Company was to become Texaco, a multi-billion dollar corporation.

Gates maintained a home in St. Charles and showed his special interest and love for his adopted city by helping to establish a boy's home and school just west of the city. It was at his insistence that the state selected St. Charles for the site around 1904. Gates donated \$20,000 to help erect a comfortable cottage complex in a rural setting for underprivileged boys. The state school is now the Illinois Youth Center, a correctional institution for juvenile offenders.

Col. Baker and the Norris' were to provide the City of St. Charles with many gifts in full or in part in addition to the St. Charles Municipal Building, including:

- Henry Rockwell Baker Memorial Community Center, 1926
- Arcada Theater, 1926
- St. Charles National Bank, 1926
- The St. Charles Country Club, 1926
- The Hotel Baker, 1928
- Pottawatomie Park, 1935
- Delnor Hospital, 1939
- St. Charles Episcopal Church property, 1951
- Baker Memorial United Methodist Church, 1954
- Illinois Street Bridge, 1957
- Bethlehem Lutheran Church property, 1959
- Brud Norris Memorial Two Rivers Council Boy Scout Service Center, 1972
- Dunham Junior High School property, 1973
- John Baker Norris Recreation Center, 1975
- Dellora Norris Cultural Arts Center, 1976

The St. Charles Municipal Building, through its unique interpretation of the Moderne style, is a symbol of the City of St. Charles having become more than a purely functional administrative building. When the Municipal Building was dedicated on Labor Day, September 2, 1940, it was intended that the development and growth of St. Charles be promoted by having an industrial museum and show windows. The building was to symbolize certain facets of the city. Perhaps above all else, the St. Charles Municipal Building symbolizes continuity, a value especially important and appreciated in times of change.

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Pearson, Ruth Seen. Reflections of St. Charles. Elgin, Illinois: Brethern Press, 1976.

Rifkind, Carole. A Field Guide to American Architecture. New York, New York: New American Library, 1980.

St. Charles Chronicle, article in a special edition, August 29, 1940.

"St. Charles, Illinois Goes Modern." The Delta-Star Magazine, November-December, 1941, pp. 2-4.

Taylor, D. Coder, FAIA. Letter to David Bowie, AIA, November 1, 1985.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Chicago Sunday Tribune, "Gables Heirs Give St. Charles New City Hall." January 9, 1938.

Chicago Tribune, "The Houses that Zook Built." September 22, 1985.

"Civic Offices, Museum and Carillon Promote a City." Architectural Record, March, 1941, pp. 108-109.

Fox Valley Review, "Municipal Building New Gift to St. Charles." January 12, 1938.

Lebovich, William L. America's City Halls. Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1984.

"Many-Use Civic Building Has Fluorescent Lighting and Sound Amplifier." The American City, December, 1941.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other

Specify repository:

St. Charles Historical Museum

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one acre.

UTM References

A [1,6] [3,9,1,1,2,0] [4,6,4,0,8,5,0]
Zone Easting Northing
C [] [] []

B [] [] []
Zone Easting Northing
D [] [] []

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property occupies an area at the northeast side of the juncture of the Fox River and State Route 64 (Main Street) in St. Charles, Illinois. The property is approximately 100 feet in width at the south boundary and follows the exterior building line at the east side with the overall north-south dimension being 200 feet. The west edge of the property is the Fox River.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the area of city owned land which has historically been associated with the building. The building is in the southwest corner of an area of city owned property encompassing a total of approximately 3.7 acres bordering the east bank of the Fox River north of Main Street (State Route 64).

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael A. Dixon, AIA/Architect
organization Dixon Associates, AIA/Architects date October 5, 1990
street & number 202 West Main Street telephone (708) 377-9399
city or town St. Charles state Illinois zip code 60174