

*TAKE A WALK....*

# Historic Bluff Street

BILLIE LIMACHER BICENTENNIAL PARK

*JOLIET'S FIRST STREET  
1832 - 33*

*Then...*

*& Now...*



*BILLIE LIMACHER BICENTENNIAL PARK  
201 WEST JEFFERSON STREET, JOLIET IL  
815/724-3760 [www.bicentennialpark.org](http://www.bicentennialpark.org)*



*Discover a world of yesterday as you travel  
Joliet's first street within  
Billie Limacher Bicentennial Park.*

*The Billie Limacher Bicentennial Park is a ten acre park  
along the waterway of downtown Joliet. In 1976, the Will-  
Joliet Bicentennial Park Corporation obtained this land,  
raised funds, planned and built in in commemoration of  
our great nation's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday. Then gave the park to the  
City of Joliet!*

*In commemoration of Juliet/Joliet's 150th birthday in  
1987, the Historic Bluff Street Walk was constructed.  
Bronze plaques and large boulders along Bluff Street mark  
the historic sites of Joliet's history.*

Billie Limacher Bicentennial Park Staff  
Richard Liebich, Manager  
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Eric Moniger, Grounds Keeper

Will Joliet Bicentennial Park, Inc. Board  
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Kenneth P. Stromsland, Treasurer  
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George L. Comerford  
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*In the 1960s, the historic buildings of Bluff Street were demolished through a city and HUD agreement. Many structures were unsafe and in need of demolition. Unfortunately, those buildings that could have been saved were also lost in their wake. Today, Historic Bluff Street is preserved through great photographs, memories and milestones within Billie Limacher Bicentennial Park. Here are a few of the inscriptions that can be found on the plaques throughout the park.*

**Illinois State Historical Society Marker (5)** Joliet, as "Juliet," had its beginnings in the 1830s here on old Bluff Street. Originally an Indian trail, this plaque represents the site of Joliet's first homes, grist and saw mills, general stores, blacksmith, tinsmith and mason works, newspapers, school, theatre, hotels, church services, volunteer fire department and even the first bottling of soda pop. Meetings held in these pioneer homes and establishments led to the formation of both city and county government. Bicentennial Park commemorates the vision and vitality of our pioneers and is a living memorial to our great nation's 200th birthday in 1976. "Erected by the Illinois State Historical Society, 1988."

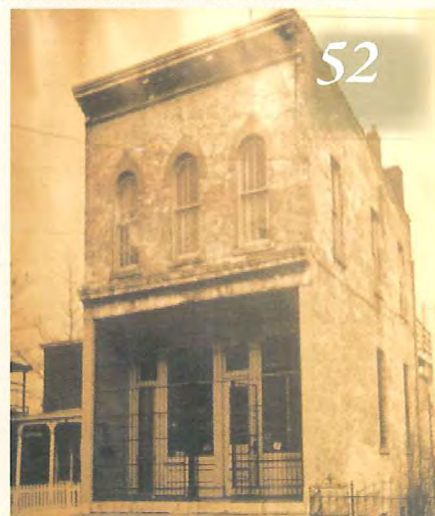
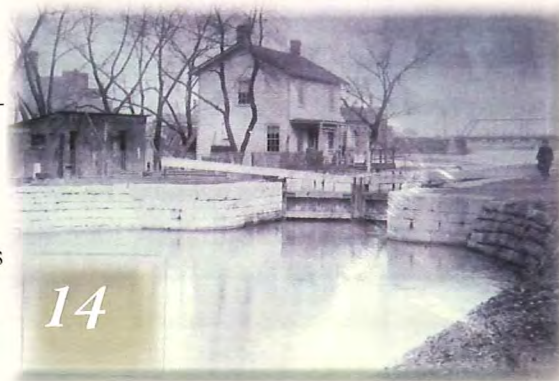
**Wagner Home & Wagon Shop (8)** Paul Wagner was a successful carriage and wagon maker in the 1850s. In 1870, he and his wife Louise started a lovely grove of catalpa trees to shade their new home. In the 1990s the Woman's Club of Joliet aided in replenishing the old grove with new catalpas.

**Bicentennial Park Hundred Year Time Capsule (9)** Six feet under the eight ton rock lies a 92" x 34" x 34" time capsule that was filled with memorabilia of the time by the Will-Joliet Bicentennial committees. By resolution of the Will County Board and the Joliet City Council, the capsule is to be opened in 100 years. Ted Grabavoy, Chairman of Will County Board; Norman Keck, Mayor of City of Joliet; and Mrs. William C. Limacher, Chairman WJBP Committees; July 4, 1976.

**McKee's Mill & Dam (14)** James McKee's mill and dam operated from 1834 until the I&M Canal was built in 1848. The locktender's house was located on an island between the canal and the river. Stores on both sides sold food and drink to passengers as boats went through the locks.



**Demmond's First House & Store (16)** In 1834 Martin and Sophia Demmond built a one and one-half story building using one room for a store before moving into Joliet's first stone building, which he constructed at Bluff and Jefferson. In 1836, Col. John Curry added to the house while living there until he died in 1872. Also in this area, R. Hunter, Lewis Reed and William Callighan manned blacksmith shops, and Deacon J. Beaumont operated a carriage shop which sold paints, oils and glass as well.



**Old Bush Block (21)** This site marks the old "American House" hotel, where pioneers boarded while they built their homes. Later, Frank Bush built a large stone brick building in this location to house the old Chicago House Saloon, Cobb's Jewelry, Dr. F.X. Woerndle, Firman Mack's Shoe Store, Schrader's harness shop and the corner drugstore, where George Woodruff wrote histories of Joliet and Will County.

**National Hotel (25)** The National Hotel, erected in 1837, was for many years Joliet's finest hotel. Both Lincoln and Van Buren were guests at the National Hotel. The corner, acting as a division point in the old Sag and Fox Trail, also became the first location of a bridge to cross the Des Plaines. Erected by Will Joliet Bicentennial Park Committee 1936.

**Joliet's First Home (26)** Joliet/Juliet's first log cabin was built by Charles and Chloe Reed 1832 -33. Other historic data of this plaque is on the one saved from the 1958 fire of National Hotel and Adler's Market, and then replaced during Joliet's (Juliet) 150th birthday.

**Porter's Brewery (28)** Edwin Porter started brewing ale and beer in 1858. By 1889 his brewery covered two blocks. Porter was also very active in stone quarrying and served as the Mayor of Joliet for several terms.

**Joliet's First Stone Building (30)** was constructed by Martin Demmond in 1834. By quarrying limestone from the on-site bluffs he constructed this impressive three-story building. It consisted of stores, offices and a large ballroom. The convention to nominate Will County's first officials was held here. After its construction, so much limestone was quarried and sent through the Midwest that Joliet became known as the "Stone City."

**Joliet's Third Stone Building (44)** "Merchant's Row" (1837), was a 120' long and three stories high. The first floor contained six stores: Allen General Merchandise, Blair Tinsmith, Herringbone Meat Market, Chatfield & Fassett Grain Dealers, Boardman's "Cheapstore" and Dr. Adam's "Golden Mortar Apothecary." The upper floors housed 20 offices, residences and halls for public use. Here Joliet's first newspaper was published (1839), first theatre was presented, churches were organized, classes were held and debates were won and lost.



**Joliet's Oldest Construction (46)** The underground storage area behind Merchant's Row store #6 (1837) still stands in part today. In the 1850s, John D. Paige became the first to bottle flavored water under pressure, thus creating "soda pop" in this location. In 1884 John Ranft bought him out, later selling to the Reimer family who continued the pop bottling business until the building was razed in 1965.

**German Loan & Savings Bank (52)** Martin Westphal and Sebastian Lager started their banking business in 1868. Constructed in 1875, the stone and brick structure was 22' x 60' with a vault sunk in solid bedrock. It was demolished in 1964, as the last building on Historic Bluff St.

