

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Old Main, Knox College

AND/OR COMMON Old Main, Knox College

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER campus of Knox College, facing South Street

CITY, TOWN Galesburg VICINITY OF 18th
STATE Illinois CODE 05 COUNTY Knox CODE 095

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Knox College, Office of the Vice-President (309-343-0112)

STREET & NUMBER
CITY, TOWN Galesburg VICINITY OF STATE Illinois 61401

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, Recorder of Deeds
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

STREET & NUMBER County Courthouse--Knox County

CITY, TOWN Galesburg STATE Illinois

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
DATE
--FEDERAL --STATE --COUNTY --LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

In December 1855, when Knox College was nearly 20 years old, Charles Ulricson, a graduate of the Royal Institute of Architects in Stockholm, and architect and builder from Peoria, Illinois was chosen to design a new building for the school. In 1856 he announced completion plans for Old Main, to be designed in "Tudor Gothic style," constructed of red brick and limestone and to be similar in appearance to older parts of Hampton Court Palace in England.

The building design included rose brick outer walls two feet thick, crenelated towers and mullioned windows. The building is square, three stories tall, with an open wooden belfry painted white. Each of the four sides have an entrance. The north and south facades have towers flanking the entrance which is topped by a large lancet window; the east and west facades are plainer, with five identical tall, narrow windows.

A limestone watercourse several feet high runs along the foundation line and projects up and around the corners and towers and entrances. A narrow stringcourse runs between the first and second story, another runs several feet from the top of the building and outlines the lancet windows. Limestone was also used for the cornice which accentuates the roofline and the drip-moulding around all of the windows.

Brick for Old Main was made in Galesburg, the foundation stone was from Aurora, and the wood for the woodwork, windows and doors was white pine from the "Middle States." The building was completed in July 1857 and Old Main housed most college activities for years afterward, with only two dormitory buildings, the East and West Bricks (now gone) on the entire campus. The east half of the second floor, extending into the third, was the college chapel, and recitation rooms occupied the rest of the space. Later these areas were used by the library, oratory and science departments, a museum and business offices. By the 1930's the building was badly deteriorating. Photographs show the brick and limestone crumbling in places, the little chimney-like projections along the roof were gone, as were the stairs of the south entrance, windows were broken and much of the building was covered by vines.

Restoration of the exterior began in August 1933. Disintegrating brick and stone were replaced by identical material taken from the interior walls. The entire exterior cornice is of original limestone but considerable work was done repairing the watercourse and steps. The steps to the east entrance (scene of the debate) are of stone used in the original construction, with one tread original in that set. At this time the exterior walls were treated with a paraffin spray and much of the original limestone corners and watercourse were replaced with concrete.

(Continued)

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES October 7, 1858

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Charles Ulricson, architect

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Old Main, oldest building of the Knox College campus, and the grounds adjoining it, constitute the best-preserved site associated with the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858. The seven debates between Democratic Senator Stephen A. Douglas, up for reelection, and the Republican challenger, Abraham Lincoln, keynoted the momentous issues of the sectional controversy which was carrying the nation toward disunion and civil war.

Although Lincoln lost the election, his logic, moderation, and skill in these debates brought him nationwide attention and new strength in the Republican party. In arguing that the people of a territory could accept or reject slavery, Douglas lost the support of Southern Democrats who demanded federal protection of slavery in the territories. In the debates, Douglas permanently associated himself with the doctrine over which the northern and southern wings of the Democratic party would finally split in 1860. The breakup of the old Democratic alliance would insure the election of the Republican candidate, which in turn meant secession and civil war.

Here, in Galesburg, at the fifth debate, Abraham Lincoln declared that slavery must be regarded as a moral rather than a political issue saying, "He is blowing out the moral lights around us who contends that whoever wants slaves has the right to hold them."

Knox College grew out of the Onieda experience in New York State and as the center of abolitionist activity in Galesburg and the countryside, Knox College left no doubt of its sympathies that day, as a banner behind the speakers platform read "Knox College for Lincoln." The platform for the debate was stretched across the east facade of Old Main and was raised a little higher than the steps, forcing the participants to step onto the platform through windows. An estimated 15,000 people witnessed the debate from the tree-shaded lawn surrounding the building.

Edward Beecher, a Galesburg minister and member of the prominent abolitionist family, wrote an essay commemorating the occasion, "Lincoln at the Knox Debate," which described a Lincoln transformed to heroic stature, inspiring the anti-slavery audience:

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The interior was entirely remodeled and within the old brick shell became a self-supporting building, built of concrete and steel, with an inner fire-proof ceiling under the old roof. In the renovation Old Main was made fire-proof by reinforced concrete floors and brick and tile partitions, but in most cases they saved and replaced the original windows, doors, and interior trim. The original floor plan has been rearranged to provide 26 faculty and administration offices and 14 classrooms, plus the Alumni and Common Rooms.

Original pine beams were split and used to panel the Commons Room. The Alumni Room in the west wing on the first floor was decorated with many nineteenth century pieces donated by local people, to resemble a parlor of Lincoln's era. The restoration of the exterior began in August 1933, the building was rededicated June 15, 1937, and the entire restoration was completed in January 1938, under the direction of architects Charles Hodgdon and Son of Chicago

On September 3, 1969, a tornado lifted a 3,400 square foot section of the east roof, including the belfry, from the building. Three months later the rebuilt tower was replaced on the repaired roof and the Old Main bell, resumed its signaling of classes on the 85 acre campus. Some of the large old trees that probably witnessed the Lincoln-Douglas debate still line the walks around Old Main, especially around the green to the south, but a number of old trees have died in recent years.

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There was a grandeur in his thoughts, a comprehensiveness in his arguments, a binding force in his conclusions, which were perfectly irresistible. The vast throng was silent as death; every eye was fixed upon the speaker, and all gave him serious attention. He was the tall man eloquent; his countenance glowed with animation and his eye glistened with an intelligence which made it lustrous. He was no longer awkward and ungainly, but graceful, bold, commanding.

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Old Main file from Knox College Archives.

Lincoln-Douglas Debate Centennial, 1858-1958, published for the 59th annual meeting of the Illinois Historical Society, and Civil War Round Table, at Knox College October 1958.

Nevins, Allan. The Emergence of Lincoln, Vol. I, Douglas, Buchanan, and Party Chaos, 1857-1859 (New York 1950).

Lee, Ronald F. "Report on Historical Significance of Old Main Building, Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois" Ms. Report, National Park Service, December 5, 1935.

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The Lincoln-Douglas debate participants spoke from a platform placed in front of the east entrance of Old Main, at that time the only building on campus except for two small dormitories. The audience, estimated at 15,000 spread out over the tree-shaded lawn which today ends at Cherry Street and is also occupied by George Davis Hall (1911) to the northeast and the Women's Gymnasium (1908) to the southeast (see enclosed map). The landmark boundary has been drawn to include as much as possible of the open space remaining on the east side of the building, where the audience probably sat, without including college facilities of the post-1864 period.

As indicated on the enclosed Knox College Guide, the boundary, beginning at the northwest corner on the south curb of South Street about 350 feet west of the intersection of Cherry and South Streets, follows the curb in an easterly direction for about 200 feet; thence due south within a few feet of the west wall of Davis Hall for about 100 feet; thence due east, within a few feet of the south wall of Davis Hall, to the west curb of Cherry Street; thence southerly along this curb for about 150 feet; thence due west, for about 150 feet; thence due south for about 100 feet; thence westerly approximately following the concrete walkway for about 200 feet to the walkway on the west side of the south lawn of Old Main; thence due north for about 350 feet to the beginning point.