

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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

other names/site number _____

Name of Multiple Property Listing N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

street & number 411 College Avenue

☐

not for publication

city or town DeKalb

☐

vicinity

state Illinois

county DeKalb

zip code 60115

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: ___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

Illinois Department of Natural Resources - SHPO

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| ☒ | private |
| ☐ | public - Local |
| ☐ | public - State |
| ☐ | public - Federal |

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| ☒ | building(s) |
| ☐ | district |
| ☐ | site |
| ☐ | structure |
| ☐ | object |

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	object
2	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/ Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC/ Secondary Structure

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/ Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC/ Secondary Structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals/

Classical Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Limestone

walls: Brick

roof: Shingle

other:

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity).

Summary Paragraph

The residence at 411 College Avenue in DeKalb IL is known as the President John Williston Cook Mansion. The property is on the northwest corner of College and Park Avenues in the Ellwood Historic Neighborhood, which is located east of the Northern Illinois University campus. There are two contributing buildings on the property. The mansion was designed by the architect Charles E. Brush for the residence of the first president of Northern Illinois State Normal School, President John Williston Cook. Entering the property from College Avenue, the front of the mansion has a portico with four two-story columns topped with Scamozzi Ionic capitals and two matching pilasters. The driveway curves up to the main residence where a porte-cochere covers the driveway at the main entrance. Continuing through the porte-cochere, the driveway curves along the carriage house before exiting onto Park Avenue. The buildings were completed in 1900 in the Late 19th Century Classical Revival Architectural style.

The buildings have sufficient integrity for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The exterior of the mansion and carriage house remain mostly unaltered since the construction in 1900. Both are built of matching red brick. In the mansion, the main floor entrance has a foyer that opens to the great room which includes a grand staircase and a fireplace with decorative mantle that extends to the ceiling. The great room leads to the library and to the parlor. The parlor is the width of the house and includes smaller columns and pilasters that mirror those on the portico. On the other side of the great room is the kitchen (latest remodel completed in the 1990s), and the dining room. The back of the house has an open porch and a screened porch with classical columns. The second floor has five bedrooms and a skylight that lets in natural light that shines through the attic's skylight. The carriage house has a garage and storage on the first floor, and a one-bedroom apartment above.

Narrative Description

Setting

The neighborhood is adjacent to the Northern Illinois University campus. It is walking distance to both the university to the west and downtown DeKalb to the east. The mansion is surrounded by residential properties. The neighborhood roads are a series of curved, horseshoe-shaped streets with grassy islands at many of the intersecting curves. Park Avenue runs north, bisecting the east-west roads. Separating the neighborhood from the campus is the Kishwaukee River. The river flows north, separating the campus to the west and the neighborhood to the east. It then curves to the east, running along the north side of the neighborhood a few blocks north of the mansion. The Ellwood mansion is another local historic property, and is in the northwest portion of the neighborhood.

The property is a double lot, with the mansion in the middle of the west lot. The carriage house is towards the back of the east lot, set back from College Avenue. The setback of the carriage house provides a large grassy front yard that gives an unobstructed view of the buildings from the south and east. Three of the four corners of the lot have large sycamore trees. The sycamore tree at the southeast corner is ringed by a brick pathway, and is separated from the street corner by a

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

stone retaining wall installed approximately 15 years ago. There are sidewalks along both College and Park Avenues. The property is on a slight elevation above the College Ave. sidewalk. Between the sidewalks and the yard is a hedge of Red Currant bushes that line the south and east sides of the property. The horseshoe-shaped driveway is mostly brick, except for a concrete portion at the Park Avenue entrance. There are two stone pillars flanking the College Avenue driveway entrance and another stone pillar at the Park Avenue entrance.

Exterior Description

The mansion is a brick, 2.5 story building on a tall stone foundation. The building has a rectangular footprint, with hipped principal roof and a widow's walk and three chimneys. The south facade of the building has a gabled portico. The east elevation has a covered concrete porch between the building and the driveway, and a port cochere over the driveway. The north side has a wood porch that is mostly screened in. All the windows have stone sills. Most of the windows are one-over-one, except for the windows on the south façade. The roof is lined with an entablature with large dentils.

The south façade of the building features a portico facing College Avenue. The portico has four two-story, white columns. Each is topped with a Scamozzi Ionic capital that supports an entablature and pediment "giving the front the look of an ancient Greek or Roman temple".¹ Behind the two outer columns, there are two matching two-story pilasters with Scamozzi Ionic capitals. The center of the pediment has an elliptical window. The doorway for the portico is topped with a transom window of a leaded glass fanlight and is flanked by two large windows. The portico door and the two windows are below a stone lintel with decorative Greek key carvings. The three portico windows on the second floor all have 12-over-one windowpanes.

The main entrance is on the east side of the house. The entrance includes a covered concrete porch with two full sets of stairs on the north and south ends, and a porte-cochere. There is a third smaller set of stairs from the porte-cochere up to the concrete porch originally designed for dismounting a carriage or horse. The entablature covering the porch and porte-cochere is supported by six columns and two half-columns. The door of the main entrance is topped with a transom window matching the portico door's transom. The main entrance is surrounded on both sides by vertical windows of leaded glass.

The house receives ample natural light due to all the windows and the skylight. The east side alone has 5 double-hung windows on the second floor. The attic has a skylight in both the roof and the floor, which allows light in the attic as well as in the living room below. The attic also has two dormers, one facing east and one facing west. Each dormer has a broken pediment, with a keystone in the center that supports a decorative urn.

The rear of the house has a wide back porch with an entablature supported by four columns and two half-columns. Two-thirds of that porch is screened in.

Northeast of the residence is the carriage house. The carriage house was built in a similar style to the residence, and in matching red brick. Some of its windows are topped by a keystone, matching a feature on the first-floor windows of the east, north, and west sides of the mansion. It also has several columns and pilasters that match the smaller columns of the residence. The gabled peak on the south side of the carriage house has an oblong window, resembling the design of the window and pediment

¹ Bigolin, S.J. (2006). *Landmarks of the Barb City*. Published by The Daily Chronicle.

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

of the residence. The first floor of the carriage house is a garage with ample storage space, and the upper floor is a one-bedroom apartment.

Interior Description

The Classical Revival architecture continues inside the residence. The two main floors each have 10-foot ceilings. Walls are plaster and lathe. Crown molding is believed to be plaster. Both first and second levels have wood floors. The main floor has the more elaborate architecture, the upper floor has the living room and five bedrooms.

Entering the great room through the foyer, one faces the central fireplace. Above the mantel are four pilasters supporting three shell motif decorations topped with egg-and-dart arches and keystones. The fireplace is flanked by two Scamozzi columns that are matched by two columns on the opposite side of the room. The molding around the great room includes dentils similar to the exterior of the house. Behind the central fireplace is the library. Three walls of the library have built-in glass-enclosed bookcases. The main staircase with decorative wood railing leads from the great room up to the second floor. Wainscoting lines the walls of the great room and the main staircase.

The south third of the main floor is the parlor, a large room the width of the house. The west half of the parlor has columns in front of pilasters, mirroring the columns & pilasters of the portico. The east side of the Parlor has a second fireplace that is flanked by curved walls with ornate wood carved built-in curved benches. There are four pilasters along the curved walls.

The north third of the main floor is the dining room and kitchen. The dining room has a built-in hutch with columns and decorative elements that match those in other rooms of the house, including the fireplace mantels. The kitchen has a center island, a breakfast nook, two doors to the porch, and access to the dining room, as well as service stairs to the second floor and to the basement.

At the top of the main staircase on the second floor is the centrally located living room with skylight. Surrounding the living room are five bedrooms and a bathroom. The door to each bedroom is topped with opening transom windows. Four of the five bedrooms have sinks in the closets, including three marble sinks. The northwest bedroom was probably intended for servants, as it is separated from the rest of the floor by a door, and it has direct access to the service stairs that lead to the attic above or the kitchen and basement below.

The service stairs lead to an expansive attic that at its peak measures 12 feet tall. The attic is a large open room with a skylight in the roof and a skylight in the floor to allow natural light through the attic to the living room below.

At the bottom of the service stairs, the basement includes several larger rooms and a few smaller rooms for storage. One of the storage rooms was a coal room, where small pieces of coal are still found wedged under walls. One of the steel beams in the basement is stamped "Carnegie", a company that like Ellwood's American Steel and Wire also became part of U.S. Steel.

Integrity

The property has excellent integrity. The exterior of the residence and carriage house both remain nearly identical to that observed in the historical photos taken shortly after the residence was built. The only loss were the railings that lined the portico, concrete porch, widow's walk, and the porte-cochere entablature. Also, four of the six columns that support the porte-cochere entablature now have block capitals where there were originally ionic capitals.

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

Much of the interior is believed to be original, but due to the lack of historical interior photos, we cannot be certain. The only room that was remodeled was the kitchen. It was first remodeled in 1950 and described in detail in the *Daily Chronicle* as a result of the vice president of the newspaper living here at that time.² That article explains that the bathroom off the kitchen used to be a pantry. The addition of cabinets in the kitchen caused one of the windows on the west wall to be bricked over. It also explains that the door between the kitchen and the screened porch used to be a built-in ice box. When the ice box was removed, the opening was too wide, so windows were added to each side of the new doorway.³ The kitchen was again remodeled in the 1990s according to neighbors' recounts.

The back porch may have been replaced. A historic photograph taken in 1900 from atop Altgeld Hall shows the Cook Mansion shortly after it was built (Figure 15). A back porch is visible in the photograph. But it may have been expanded as evidenced by two of the basement windows being blocked by the current porch. The carriage house is also visible in that early photograph. The interior of the carriage house was remodeled in 1940s to add a one-bedroom apartment above the garage, which previously was a horse stall and carriage area.⁴

² New Kitchen is Installed: Family Marvels at Difference in Half Century Old Room. *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) June 28, 1950, Pages 8 & 11. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/126578777/>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Six Local Homes Featured Saturday on House Walk. *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) September 18, 1990, Page 9 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/127500469/>

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☒ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Education

Period of Significance

1900 – Architecture

1900 – 1920 – Education

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

President John Williston Cook

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

Architect/Builder

Brush, Charles E. - Architect

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

The President John Williston Cook Mansion is locally significant and eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B, Education, for its association with Dr. John Williston Cook. The beginning of the Northern Illinois State Normal School, which would eventually become Northern Illinois University, was reliant on Cook's work both before and after he accepted the position as president of the new Normal school. To entice Dr. Cook to leave his job as president of the Illinois State Normal University in Bloomington IL, barbed wire entrepreneur Isaac Leonard Ellwood donated the land for the new Normal School and pledged to build a house for the president to live rent-free. President Cook lived in the mansion for his 20-year career as president in DeKalb. The period of significance for education is 1900 - 1920, the years Cook occupied the residence.

The mansion is also eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C, Architecture, as an important local example of the Classical Revival Style. It was designed by Charles E Brush, who associated with the Columbian Exposition in Chicago where many of the buildings displayed Neoclassical architecture. This style is displayed in the President John Williston Cook mansion built shortly after the exposition. A portico with full-height ionic columns and pilasters supporting a pediment faces College Ave. Smaller half-height ionic columns support the entablature above the entrance and porte-cochere. Inside the residence, more ionic columns and pilasters support the ceiling in the great room and in the parlor. Many decorative elements are found throughout the interior and exterior, thought to be original to the 1900 completion. The period of significance for architecture is 1900 - the year the residence was built.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Higher Education and DeKalb

The President John Williston Cook Mansion is located in the city of DeKalb, part of DeKalb County, Illinois. DeKalb is located 60 miles west of Chicago, 40 miles southeast of Rockford, and 110 miles north of Bloomington IL. The population as of the 2020 census is 40,290 residents on 16.15 square miles.

DeKalb is where modern barbed wire was invented and manufactured.⁵ One of DeKalb's citizens that built and profited from this technology was Isaac Ellwood, who would be instrumental along with Dr. John Williston Cook in starting a Normal School in DeKalb.⁶ Ellwood donated the land for the neighborhood where this mansion is located, and he also funded the building of the mansion to house the president of the Northern Illinois State Normal School.

Normal schools were founded to train elementary school teachers for public schools.⁷ In the late 1800's, Illinois only had two Normal schools, neither in the northern portion of the state. The first Normal school in the state was in central Illinois, what is now Illinois State University. John Williston Cook was president at that school at the time. A Normal school was created in DeKalb to train teachers in the northern region of the state. President Cook was enticed to lead the beginning of this new school in DeKalb in

⁵ I.L. Ellwood & Barbed Wire <https://www.ellwoodhouse.org/about-il-ellwood> Accessed on December 24, 2024.

⁶ Hayter, E.W. (1974). *Education in Transition: The History of Northern Illinois University*. Northern Illinois University Press.

⁷ Paterson, W.A. *From 1871 to 2021: A Short History of Education in the United States* <https://suny.buffalostate.edu/news/1871-2021-short-history-education-united-states> Buffalo State University. Accessed on April 18, 2025.

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

part by this mansion that was provided rent-free for his two decades of leadership in DeKalb. The Normal school grew over time and eventually developed into Northern Illinois University (NIU).

President John Williston Cook

The first Normal school in Illinois was founded in Bloomington IL in 1857, named the Illinois State Normal University.⁸ John Williston Cook's parents moved to the "wilds of Illinois in 1851" and settled near Bloomington.⁹ Growing up near the first Normal school in the state probably aided Cook in his life-long association with education in Illinois. His mother was "a schoolteacher and a lover of books" and he had access to excellent schools, "a fair library of well-selected books", and a home with enough books to "enable one who inclined to books to become fairly familiar with the leading American writers of the time".¹⁰

He enrolled at Illinois State Normal University, where he earned a degree in 1865 as part of the university's sixth graduating class.¹¹ During this time, he became close to President Richard Edwards and his associates, who inspired his career.¹² After graduation, Cook was a school principal for one year before returning to Illinois State. Back at the university, he taught history and geography, became professor of reading & elocution, then was promoted to professor and chair of mathematics & physics.¹³ He co-authored a book on the history the university for its 25th anniversary, and became editor and publisher of the *Illinois School Journal*.¹⁴

John W Cook was an advocate of Herbartianism, a type of pedagogy that focused on repetition and morality.¹⁵ Herbartianism was popular in Germany at the time, and Illinois State Normal University was seen as the center for this type of pedagogy in the U.S. Cook encouraged and funded students to study abroad to train in this type of education. He became president of Illinois State Normal University in 1890 where he remained for another nine years. During that time, he secured funding for the school's second building which would later be named after him.¹⁶ By this point, Cook was well known outside of his university as a speaker at conventions and public forums. He was called "The Crown Prince of Teacher Education" in newspapers.¹⁷ His success at Illinois State and his widespread popularity led to his next career advancement, establishing Illinois' new Normal school.

A second Normal school in the state had opened in southern Illinois in 1874.¹⁸ With Normal schools serving the central and southern regions of the state, a Normal school in the northern region would soon follow. At the inception of this new Normal school, the intent was for Dr John Williston Cook to be the president. The idea of locating the new school in DeKalb was started in 1892 by DeKalb Daily Chronicle editor, former schoolteacher, and newly appointed member of the Illinois Board of Education, Clinton

⁸ Illinois State University History <https://traditions.illinoisstate.edu/history/isnu/> Accessed on January 1, 2025.

⁹ Cook, J. W. (1912). *Educational History of Illinois; Growth and Progress in Educational Affairs of the State from the Earliest Day to the Present, with Portraits and Biographies*. The Henry O. Shepard Company, Chicago IL. Pages 540-541.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Emery, T. "This month in Illinois State University history: April" <https://news.illinoisstate.edu/2024/04/this-month-in-illinois-state-university-history-april/> Accessed April 27, 2025.

¹² Cook, J. W. (1912). *Educational History of Illinois; Growth and Progress in Educational Affairs of the State from the Earliest Day to the Present, with Portraits and Biographies*. The Henry O. Shepard Company, Chicago IL. Pages 540-541.

¹³ Emery, T. "This month in Illinois State University history: April" <https://news.illinoisstate.edu/2024/04/this-month-in-illinois-state-university-history-april/> Accessed April 27, 2025.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ NIU 125 Key Moments "John Williston Cook becomes first president (1899)" <https://125keymoments.niu.edu/john-w-cook-becomes-first-president-1899/> Accessed April 27, 2025.

¹⁸ Southern Illinois University System: About the System <https://siusystem.edu/about/> Accessed January 2, 2025.

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

Rosette.^{19 20} DeKalb residents Joseph Glidden, Jacob Haish, and Isaac Ellwood promised to donate money and land to support the new Normal school. Lastly, "Dr. John Williston Cook, then president of Illinois State Normal University indicated he would accept the presidency of the new school. That completed the necessary arrangements."²¹ With plans in place, building of the new school began October 1st, 1895, with many people present at the cornerstone laying, including Illinois Governor Altgeld and John Williston Cook.^{22 23}

Before that first stone was placed, John Williston Cook was already a favorite. He was in DeKalb in August 1895 when the local newspaper wrote "President Cook is recognized as one of the very best equipped Normal school men in the United States, and the trustees of the Northern school are going to pay very close attention to any suggestion they may obtain from him (...) It would be a great hit for the Northern Illinois Normal School if it could put John W. Cook and the faculty that he would select, at the head of the new school."²⁴ A couple months after the cornerstone was in place, President Cook gave a speech at DeKalb Ceremony Day and the entire speech was reprinted in the Daily Chronicle.^{25 26}

President Cook was in DeKalb again in 1898 to be part of the Dollar Lecture Course, when he was described as "reasonably certain to be president of the Northern Illinois Normal at DeKalb".²⁷ At the same time, he published a 4-column article in the Daily Chronicle on changes needed in education to increase participation and interest in education.²⁸ His presidency became official when the trustees voted unanimously in April 1899 to offer Cook the position, a decision that "has been generally understood among the trustees for many months".²⁹ President Cook accepted the offer shortly thereafter.³⁰ "He was assured by a unanimous resolution of the Board of Trustees that no one would be considered as an employee unless nominated by the president of the school. As a consequence, when the school opened its doors to students, there was no person connected with the institution who had been selected on any other ground than that of merit."³¹

Part of the agreement was that Col. I.L. Ellwood "guaranteed \$10,000 to be used in erecting a house for the president on the school grounds".³² The house was not ready in time for the beginning of the first school year, so starting July 1899 President Cook spent part of each week in DeKalb, and part in Bloomington.^{33 34 35} Until the house was completed in spring of 1900, President Cook spent the part of each week in DeKalb living

¹⁹ Cook, J. W. (1912). *Educational History of Illinois; Growth and Progress in Educational Affairs of the State from the Earliest Day to the Present, with Portraits and Biographies*. The Henry O. Shepard Company, Chicago IL. Pages 245-250.

²⁰ Davy, H. W. (1963). *From Oxen to Jets: A History of DeKalb County 1835-1963*. Rogers Printing Company, Dixon IL. Page 149.

²¹ Ibid.

²² *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) Oct 2, 1895, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/120374696/>

²³ Cook, J. W. (1912). *Educational History of Illinois; Growth and Progress in Educational Affairs of the State from the Earliest Day to the Present, with Portraits and Biographies*. The Henry O. Shepard Company, Chicago IL. Pages 245-250.

²⁴ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) August 14, 1895, Page 2 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/120374419/>

²⁵ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) December 9, 1895, Page 3 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/120380411/>

²⁶ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) December 11, 1895, Page 2 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/120380469/>

²⁷ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) September 22, 1898, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/120378056/>

²⁸ Cook, J. W. "School and Home Education: How Keep the Boys Longer in the High School." *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) September 26, 1898, Page 4 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/120378576/>

²⁹ "Normal President" *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) April 19, 1899, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/120382725/>

³⁰ "Normal has a President: President Cook Resigned at Normal to Accept DeKalb Offer." *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) May 2, 1899, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/120384182/>

³¹ Cook, J. W. (1912). *Educational History of Illinois; Growth and Progress in Educational Affairs of the State from the Earliest Day to the Present, with Portraits and Biographies*. The Henry O. Shepard Company, Chicago IL. Page 245.

³² "Normal has a President: President Cook Resigned at Normal to Accept DeKalb Offer." *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) May 2, 1899, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/120384182/>

³³ DeKalb's Responsibility: What the Normal Means to DeKalb as Seen by President Cook. *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) May 12, 1899, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/120385155/>

³⁴ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) February 17, 1900, Page 5 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/125935409/>

³⁵ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) May 24, 1900, Page 4 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/125937658/>

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

in the Glidden House.³⁶ From 1900 until his retirement in summer 1919, President and Mrs. Cook lived in the mansion provided by Isaac Ellwood.

The first year of the school kept President Cook busy. The Northern Illinois Teachers Association planned a program for a 2-day event in October 1899 where President Cook gave the presentation titled "What the Normal School expects from the teachers of northern Illinois".³⁷ That 2-day meeting attracted eleven hundred teachers to DeKalb; and the attendees were entertained by a 60-person chorus and vocal solo by Cook's son, John Loring Cook.³⁸

The residence at 411 College Avenue entertained many guests over the years. President and Mrs. Cook hosted the wedding for their daughter, Agnes Spofford Cook, in the residence.³⁹ Starting with the completion of the first academic year, Dr. and Mrs. Cook opened their residence for hosting faculty and students.⁴⁰ "Closing out the first Commencement would have been the popular President's Reception at Cook's spacious home on College Avenue, where graduates drank tea from dainty china cups and listened to music by the school orchestra."⁴¹ Opening the residence for parties occurred often while Dr. Cook was president.^{42 43 44 45 46 47 48} Attending these parties at the president's residence must have made quite the impression on the thousands of students who attended the Northern Illinois State Normal School under President Cook's two decades in charge. DeKalb pioneer Annie Glidden later recalled "Mrs. John W Cook and their daughter Agnes (...) arranged that each student should visit the president in his home once a year".⁴⁹ She stated "One of the greatest and most far reaching events in DeKalb history was the arrival of Dr. John W. Cook (... who) was nationally known through his presidency of the National Education Association (...) and personally widely known through his pupils who had become teachers."⁵⁰

President John Williston Cook's hard work and influence are demonstrated by the honors he received while alive and after he was gone. The new dormitory built in DeKalb was named Williston Hall in his honor.⁵¹ His presidential portrait was completed in 1917 and presented to the school by a member of the class of 1902.⁵² The Illinois State Normal University renamed a building after him in 1936, and a bust of President Cook designed by his daughter was erected in the lobby of Cook Hall.⁵³

³⁶ Hayter, E.W. (1974). *Education in Transition: The History of Northern Illinois University*. Northern Illinois University Press. Page 79.

³⁷ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) June 21, 1899, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/120388982/>

³⁸ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) October 27, 1899, Pages 1 and 4 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/121803518/>

³⁹ The Gale-Cook Wedding: Occurs at Home of Bride's Parents in DeKalb Saturday Afternoon. *The Champaign County News* (Champaign, IL). January 9, 1901, Page 2. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/667960504/>

⁴⁰ "An Annual Reception: Dr and Mrs. Cook Entertain Seniors and Faculty of the Normal." *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) June 16, 1900, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/125938187/>

⁴¹ NIU 125 Key Moments "First Commencement Honors 16 Graduates (1900)" <https://125keymoments.niu.edu/first-commencement-honors-16-graduates-1900/> Accessed April 27, 2025.

⁴² "Gave Dinner Party: Dr and Mrs. John W Cook gave a Dinner to Eighteen Friends." *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) January 30, 1903, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/126403914/>

⁴³ "At the Cook Home." *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) February 26, 1910, Page 6 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/126442747/>

⁴⁴ "Will Entertain Tomorrow." *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) October 27, 1911, Page 4

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/126869436/>

⁴⁵ "Reception at Cook Home." *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) March 6, 1915, Page 4 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/126449069/>

⁴⁶ "At Cook Home." *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) June 2, 1915, Page 4 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/126453763/>

⁴⁷ "Reception At Cooks." *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) March 18, 1916, Page 4 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/126453499/>

⁴⁸ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) January 30, 1918, Page 3 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/126982560/>

⁴⁹ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) June 8, 1956, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/126658338/>

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ "Dormitory Given a Name: Will be Williston Hall in Honor of Dr Cook." *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) June 24, 1915, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/126454267/>

⁵² "Painting of Normal School President is Presented Today." *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) June 21, 1917, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/126457116/>

⁵³ "Old Normal will Honor Famed DeKalb Educator." *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) June 9, 1936, Pages 1-2 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/126507293/>

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

President John Williston Cook was retiring from Northern in 1919, but the state recognized that his talents couldn't be lost. "In recognition of his distinguished service to the work of education in this state and the country in general, the officials (...) have decided that Illinois can ill afford to allow Dr. Cook to entirely sever his connection."⁵⁴ They recommended that John W. Cook be salaried as a non-resident lecturer in education, to lecture as desired at several Normal schools where he would help education in Illinois.⁵⁵ He fell ill and died only several years later. Dr. John Williston Cook was president at two Illinois Normal schools, as well as president of the National Education Association; he "was looked upon by the scholastic profession as one of the foremost leaders in education in the country".⁵⁶

The Cook Mansion in DeKalb should be preserved as a representation of his achievements in education. During President Cook's time at Illinois State, the only building on campus was "Old Main", which was demolished in the 1940's.⁵⁷ Cook was responsible for the gaining funding of the school's second building which was built in 1898,⁵⁸ but the building wasn't renamed for President Cook until 1936, after his death.⁵⁹ The historic residences from his time at Illinois State Normal University no longer remain. One could argue that the greatest achievement of John Williston Cook's career was leading the creation of, and the first two decades of what is now Northern Illinois University. The Cook Mansion was built specifically to bring Cook to DeKalb, and he used the residence often to entertain faculty and students during this early growth of NIU.

Neighborhood

The mansion is a 5-minute walk from Altgeld Hall, the first building built for the Normal School. The neighborhood was designed for college employees and students at the opening of the college campus, and many of the houses were built in the same time period as the Cook Mansion.⁶⁰ Some of these new residences housed members of the Ellwood family as well as early instructors at the Normal school, including some handpicked by President Cook.⁶¹ ⁶² ⁶³ Work on the neighborhood was progressing as the first school year was about to begin,⁶⁴ ⁶⁵ and President Cook was able to move into his newly completed home before the first school year was completed.⁶⁶ ⁶⁷ By the end of the first school year, twenty houses were built in the new neighborhood, and more were being built to house the increasing student population.⁶⁸ The neighborhood at the time was unique not only in its proximity to campus, but it was the first residential section of DeKalb to be paved.⁶⁹

The mansion is also a 10-minute walk from both the Egyptian Theatre and the Ellwood House Museum, two buildings currently on the National Register of Historic Places. The Ellwood

⁵⁴ "To Remain in the Work: Dr. John W. Cook will Lecture at Normal Schools of State." *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) May 19, 1919, Page 6. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/126911752/>

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ "Dr. John W. Cook, Pioneer Illinois Educator, Dead: Former Normal President Taught 57 Years." *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago IL) July 16, 1922, Page 9 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/355197866/>

⁵⁷ Illinois State University Campus Landmarks <https://about.illinoisstate.edu/campus-landmarks/artwork-collection/old-main-bell/> Accessed April 27, 2025.

⁵⁸ Town of Normal "Cook Hall, Illinois State University" <https://www.normalil.gov/680/Cook-Hall-Illinois-State-University> Accessed April 27, 2025.

⁵⁹ "Old Normal will Honor Famed DeKalb Educator." *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) June 9, 1936, Pages 1-2 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/126507293/>

⁶⁰ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) June 21, 1899, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/120388982/>

⁶¹ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) May 9, 1899, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/120384799/>

⁶² *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) May 11, 1899, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/120385050/>

⁶³ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) July 14, 1899, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/121783022/>

⁶⁴ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) August 12, 1899, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/121788538/>

⁶⁵ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) September 11, 1899, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/121794069/>

⁶⁶ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) February 17, 1900, Page 5 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/125935409/>

⁶⁷ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) May 24, 1900, Page 4 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/125937658/>

⁶⁸ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) June 18, 1900, Page 4 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/125938444/>

⁶⁹ Nigbor, B.C. (2012). *The Early Years of DeKalb' Ellwood Addition 1898-1903*. Winona Street Publishing

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

Mansion belonged to Isaac Ellwood, who donated land for this neighborhood and built the President John Williston Cook Mansion. Isaac Ellwood's success was partially due to becoming a part of American Steel and Wire,⁷⁰ which would eventually become U.S. Steel.⁷¹ The Egyptian Theatre opened in 1929 and is one of only seven Egyptian theatres remaining from that era.⁷²

Architect

The President John Williston Cook Mansion was designed by architect Charles E. Brush. Brush designed Altgeld Hall, the first building for the new Normal school.⁷³ ⁷⁴ He also designed the Ellwood-Nehring House that is located next to the Ellwood Mansion, as well as a remodeling of the Ellwood Mansion.⁷⁵ ⁷⁶ ⁷⁷ Several contemporary newspaper articles estimated the cost of the Cook residence to be \$10,000. One article states "It will be a very spacious building of wood costing \$10,000."⁷⁸ However local historian Stephen J. Bigolin writes of a 1973 conversation with Charles Hunt, an early Ellwood House board member who recalled oral tradition that claims the original cost was \$75,000.⁷⁹ Bigolin's 2006 "Landmarks of the Barb City" describes the impression that one gets when approaching the campus from east and encountering the Cook Mansion. "In a sense, then, the structure was expected to function as something of a gateway to the Northern campus."⁸⁰

Charles Eliphalet Brush was born in Carbondale IL in 1855, son of one of the founders of Carbondale.⁸¹ ⁸² According to his 1901 biography in *The Inter Ocean*, he graduated from University of Illinois in 1877 and was appointed superintendent of the U.S. Marine hospital in Cairo IL.⁸³ He was then hired by the state of Illinois as architect for additions to the Chester, IL penitentiary.⁸⁴ He left the state to work with Van Brunt & Howe in Kansas City MO until he returned to Illinois where he was associated with Daniel Burnham during construction of the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago as superintendent of construction.⁸⁵

Shortly after it was decided that DeKalb IL was to be the location of the new Normal school, there was a call for architectural submissions. Out of 16 submitted, Charles E Brush was awarded the job.⁸⁶ ⁸⁷ Brush was in DeKalb for the groundbreaking,⁸⁸ and

⁷⁰ The Wireworkers Unite *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) March 19, 1898, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/121863204/>

⁷¹ "Encyclopedia of Cleveland History: U.S. Steel Corp". Case Western Reserve University <https://case.edu/ech/articles/u/us-steel-corp> Accessed on December 28, 2024.

⁷² The Historic Egyptian Theatre – History <https://egyptiantheatre.org/history/> Accessed on December 24, 2024.

⁷³ The New Normal *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) August 27, 1895, Page 2 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/120375831/>

⁷⁴ Hayter, E.W. (1974). *Education in Transition: The History of Northern Illinois University*. Northern Illinois University Press. Page 56-57.

⁷⁵ DeKalb Public Library – DeKalb County Tours: Ellwood Family Homes <https://dkpl.org/dekalb-county-tours-ellwood-family-homes-2/> Accessed December 24, 2024.

⁷⁶ ALPHA: Friends of Antiquity announces last lecture of fall. *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) October 29, 2015, Page 14 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/182398604/>

⁷⁷ Bigolin S., Brauer J. Detailed plans appear in 1879 Chronicle. *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) December 5, 1889, Page 20 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/127531926/>

⁷⁸ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) July 14, 1899, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/121783022/>

⁷⁹ Bigolin, S.J. (2006). *Landmarks of the Barb City*. Published by The Daily Chronicle.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago IL) November 2, 1916, Page 17 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/354905889/>

⁸² Bigolin S. The Landmarks of Barb City – Part 38A: John Peter Altgeld Hall. *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) December 20, 2004, Page 13 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/120386090/>

⁸³ Charles E. Brush *The Inter Ocean* (Chicago IL) May 19, 1901, Page 68. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/34835479/>

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Hayter, E.W. (1974). *Education in Transition: The History of Northern Illinois University*. Northern Illinois University Press. Page 56-57.

⁸⁷ The New Normal *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) August 27, 1895, Page 2

⁸⁸ Ibid.

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

returned to the area often over the next four years while construction of the building continued,^{89 90 91 92} and he was present for the official opening.⁹³

With his many visits to DeKalb, his skills were utilized by Isaac Ellwood to design houses for his family^{94 95} and also remodel the Ellwood Mansion.⁹⁶ With Charles E Brush being "the Ellwood family's architect of favor", Isaac Ellwood hired Brush to design the President John Williston Cook Mansion.⁹⁷ Since the same architect worked on several other historic homes in the neighborhood, there are some common design elements shared among the Cook Mansion and these other local historical buildings. This is especially true for the remodeled front porch that gives the Ellwood Mansion its characteristic look seen in the before/after photos on the Ellwood House website.⁹⁸

After designing the Cook Mansion, Charles E Brush designed the Lee County courthouse in Dixon IL, which is also neoclassical with large ionic columns.^{99 100 101} The Lee County courthouse would then be the inspiration for the DeKalb County IL courthouse that was designed and built by William J McAlpine, who often built the buildings that were designed by Brush.¹⁰² Charles E Brush passed away October 31, 1916^{103 104} and there are no mentions found, including in his obituaries, of whether he completed any work after the Lee County courthouse.

Architectural Style

The President John Williston Cook Mansion at 411 College Avenue in DeKalb is a significant example of Classical Revival architecture from 1900. The style came from the study of Greek and Roman structures, incorporating symmetrical composition.¹⁰⁵

The identifying features of this style are "Façade dominated by full-height porch with roof supported by classical columns; columns typically have Ionic or Corinthian capitals; façade shows symmetrically balanced windows and center door."¹⁰⁶ The Cook Mansion satisfies this description, having a central door surrounded by two windows on the first floor, and three balanced windows on the second floor. The principal subtype is a front-gabled roof. This subtype is described as uncommon, with a "full-façade, colonnaded porch beneath the front-facing gable gives the house the appearance of a miniature Greek temple."¹⁰⁷ "This form was very common in Greek Revival houses, but makes up only a small

⁸⁹ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) November 13, 1895, Page 3 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/120378278/>

⁹⁰ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) July 14, 1896, Page 2 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/120376178/>

⁹¹ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) October 13, 1897, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/121777833/>

⁹² *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) April 25, 1899, Page 4 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/120383527/>

⁹³ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) September 21, 1899, Page 8 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/121796562/>

⁹⁴ Bigolin, S.J. (2006). *Landmarks of the Barb City*. Published by The Daily Chronicle. Page 83

⁹⁵ Bigolin S. Some History on the Elks House. *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) December 13, 2000, Page 3

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/129879232/>

⁹⁶ Bigolin S., Brauer J. Detailed plans appear in 1879 Chronicle. *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) December 5, 1899, Page 20

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/127531926/>

⁹⁷ Bigolin, S.J. (2006). *Landmarks of the Barb City*. Published by The Daily Chronicle. Page 137.

⁹⁸ About the Ellwood House <https://www.ellwoodhouse.org/> Accessed April 18, 2025.

⁹⁹ Charles E. Brush *The Inter Ocean* (Chicago IL) May 19, 1901, Page 68. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/34835479/>

¹⁰⁰ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) July 20, 1900, Page 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/125939201/>

¹⁰¹ Dixon's Fine Court House. *Freeport Daily Bulletin* (Freeport, IL). October 30, 1901 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/792844379/>

¹⁰² Bigolin S. Some History on the Elks House. *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) December 13, 2000, Page 5

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/129879276/>

¹⁰³ *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago IL) November 2, 1916, Page 17 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/354905889/>

¹⁰⁴ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) Nov 4, 1916, Page 5 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/126458539/>

¹⁰⁵ Walker, L. (1996). "American Homes: The Landmark Illustrated Encyclopedia of Domestic Architecture". Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, Inc. New York. Pages 176-177.

¹⁰⁶ McAlester, V. S. (2013). "A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America's Domestic Architecture." Alfred A. Knopf. New York. Pages 434-446.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

percentage of Neoclassical examples.”¹⁰⁸ Windows in Classical Revival architecture are often “rectangular with double-hung sashes (... and have) multi-pane or single-pane upper sash and a single-pane lower sash”.¹⁰⁹ Most of the windows in the Cook Mansion have two single-pane double-hung sashes. The three second-floor windows above the portico have twelve panes on the upper sash and a single pane on the lower sash.

The Classical Revival architecture movement was inspired by the attention given to the World’s Fair in Chicago in the last decade of the 19th century. “This revival of interest in classical models dates from the World’s Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893. The exposition’s planners mandated a classical theme, and many of the best-known architects of the day designed dramatic colonnaded buildings arranged around a central court. The exposition was widely photographed, reported, and attended; soon these Neoclassical models became the latest fashion throughout the country”.¹¹⁰ Charles E Brush was working with Daniel Burnham during the Columbian Exposition.¹¹¹ He would have been directly exposed to this resurgence in classical architecture.

Classical Revival architecture is preserved in the Cook Mansion, being designed by an architect who was directly involved with the World’s Fair in Chicago. The mansion shares these influences with other buildings that Charles E Brush designed or remodeled in the same period.

There is another house that is located even closer that also shows this architectural influence. Another mansion was built across Park Avenue at 335 College Avenue. This neighboring mansion also demonstrates the details described above. Interestingly this house was not designed by the same architect, but it was designed for one of Isaac Ellwood’s daughters in 1900.¹¹² Both the Cook Mansion and the house at 335 College Avenue were identified in the Illinois Historic Structures Survey (1971-1975) as individually significant.

Ownership History

President Cook’s residence was not ready for the start of the first school year that began August 1899. It was completed sometime between February and May 1900.¹¹³ ¹¹⁴ The 1900 U.S. Census lists President John Williston Cook, Lydia Cook, and their daughter Agnes living together in June 1900.¹¹⁵ Agnes soon marries Henry Gordon Gale, a physics professor at University of Chicago, at a ceremony in the Cook Mansion on January 5, 1901 and moves to Chicago.¹¹⁶ Dr. and Mrs. Cook lived at the residence until his retirement, which was planned to occur shortly before he became sick in August 1919.¹¹⁷

Isaac Ellwood had intended the mansion to be the official residence of Northern’s President, continuing the rent-free living for future presidents.¹¹⁸ ¹¹⁹. However, the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Charles E. Brush *The Inter Ocean* (Chicago IL) May 19, 1901, Page 68. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/34835479/>

¹¹² Bigolin, S.J. (2006). *Landmarks of the Barb City*. Published by The Daily Chronicle. Page 144.

¹¹³ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) February 17, 1900, Page 5 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/125935409/>

¹¹⁴ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) May 24, 1900, Page 4 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/125937658/>

¹¹⁵ United States of America Bureau of the Census. *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1900. T623, 1854 rolls.

¹¹⁶ The Gale-Cook Wedding: Occurs at Home of Bride’s Parents in DeKalb Saturday Afternoon. *The Champaign County News* (Champaign, IL). January 9, 1901, Page 2. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/667960504/>

¹¹⁷ Unable to Make Speech: Dr. John W. Cook Unable to Be at School Last Day of His Service: Confined to His Bed. *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) August 1, 1919, Page 1. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/126914410/>

¹¹⁸ Joliet Man Named to Head Normal. *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) May 12, 1919, Page 1. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/126911342/>

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

next president, J. Stanley Brown, was unable to use the residence. He instead was housed in an apartment in Williston Hall on campus beginning late June 1920.¹²⁰ ¹²¹ The 1920 census showed the Brown family living next door at 419 College Avenue in January 1920 before eventually moving to the residence attached to the dorms. A Renworth (or Rauworth) family with six children was renting 411 College in 1920.¹²²

The longest-residing family were the Raymonds, who owned the Daily Chronicle at one time. They purchased the residence around 1928.¹²³ Edward J Raymond is listed as a newspaper reporter, and is living there with his wife and two sons in 1930.¹²⁴ Edward J is widowed by the 1940 census; his two sons and a stepdaughter are living with him at the residence.¹²⁵ The older son, C Edward Raymond, is the homeowner along with his wife and two children during the 1950 census.¹²⁶ It was in 1950 that the kitchen was first remodeled by the Raymond family and documented in an article in their newspaper.¹²⁷

The residence was then purchased by Dr. Stewart Olson, a local physician, and his wife Sally in 1968¹²⁸. The house was listed for sale in 1990,¹²⁹ and was purchased by C Thomas and Brenda MacDonald who lived there for 10 years.¹³⁰ Robert A and Megan M Morrison purchased the house March 1998.¹³¹ The residence was then purchased by Jessica and James T Lehan III May 2018.¹³² The current owners, Robert J and Linda M Srygler purchased the residence in November 2022.¹³³

Conclusion

The President John Williston Cook mansion was built for the first president of NIU and should be preserved to honor the beginning of the college and the man who guided the first two decades. Cook was a major influence on education in Illinois in the late 1800s and early 1900s. When DeKalb pushed to get the state's third Normal school built here, Cook was already president at the state's first Normal school in Bloomington. Even before his first presidency, Cook was already known in the area as far back as 1877 when he was listed as part of a Teacher's Institute in neighboring Sycamore, IL.¹³⁴ The historical record indicates that he was the intended president for the new Normal school

¹¹⁹ Bigolin, S.J. (2006). *Landmarks of the Barb City*. Published by The Daily Chronicle. Page 139.

¹²⁰ President of Normal to have Rooms in Dorm. *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) June 23, 1920, Page 5

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/126511432/>

¹²¹ Six Local Homes Featured Saturday on House Walk. *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) September 18, 1990, Page 9

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/127500469/>

¹²² United States of America Bureau of the Census. *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1920. T625, 2076 rolls.

¹²³ Schrader, B. If This Old House Could Talk. *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) May 18, 2018. Accessed Dec. 31, 2024.

<https://www.shawlocal.com/2018/05/16/schrader-if-this-old-house-could-talk/a38u3pc/>

¹²⁴ United States of America Bureau of the Census. *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1930. T626, 2667 rolls.

¹²⁵ United States of America Bureau of the Census. *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1940. T627, 4643 rolls.

¹²⁶ United States of America Bureau of the Census. *Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1950.

¹²⁷ New Kitchen is Installed: Family Marvels at Difference in Half Century Old Room. *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) June 28, 1950, Pages 8 & 11. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/126578777/>

¹²⁸ Six Local Homes Featured Saturday on House Walk. *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) September 18, 1990, Page 9

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¹²⁹ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) October 5, 1990, Page 18 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/127500750/>

¹³⁰ Schrader, B. If This Old House Could Talk. *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) May 18, 2018. Accessed Dec. 31, 2024.

<https://www.shawlocal.com/2018/05/16/schrader-if-this-old-house-could-talk/a38u3pc/>

¹³¹ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) March 29, 1998, Page 10 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/128895692/>

¹³² DeKalb County Government Community Online Map Property and Search Site. Accessed Dec. 31, 2024.

http://gis.dekalbcounty.org/QTAS/COMPASS_Results.asp?ID=0822230027

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ *The Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb IL) May 14, 1887, Page 5 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/120378646/>

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

from the beginning of its planning. After being selected, Cook was directly involved in selecting those who would be operating the new school. Months after the school opened, President Cook was the lead of a teachers' association meeting in DeKalb that drew 1100 teachers to the area. In 1901, Former Illinois Governor Joseph W. Fifer said, "I feel that I am somewhat acquainted with the educational influences in Illinois, and am glad to believe that no one has done more for the cause of education in our state than our good friend Cook".¹³⁵ During his presidency in DeKalb he published his 700-page "Educational History of Illinois" book in 1912. President Cook remained in charge in DeKalb for 20 years, guiding the school through its first era. When he retired from Northern Illinois State Normal School, the state created a position for Cook to keep him active in the state's education. His years creating and leading Normal schools in Illinois were spent training teachers who would then go on to teach students of their own. He directly and indirectly influenced the education of generations in Illinois.

In addition to its association with President Cook and education in Illinois, the President John Williston Cook Mansion has sufficient integrity as an example of Classical Revival Architecture in 1900. The residence was designed by Charles E. Brush, an architect who had direct experience with designing the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago. The architecture at that World's Fair led to the Classical Revival period that immediately followed. Brush built other Classical Revival residences and a similar styled courthouse in the area around the same time. Most of the Cook Mansion has been preserved over the 125 years since it was built. The exterior closely resembles the early photos from when the residence was first erected. Being accepted on the National Register of Historic Places will help this historic property remain for future generations.

¹³⁵ Northern Illinois Vol. 2 no. 7 (April 1901) Published by Northern Illinois State Teachers College.

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

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Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

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Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

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Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

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Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

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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 # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion
Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois
County and State

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion
Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>41.933912</u> Latitude	<u>-88.757257</u> Longitude	3	_____ Latitude	_____ Longitude
2	_____ Latitude	_____ Longitude	4	_____ Latitude	_____ Longitude

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The President John Williston Cook mansion, carriage house, and property are drawn and described in a 2018 PLAT survey (attached with Additional Documents). "Lots 16 and 17 in Block "D" of I.L. Ellwood's Addition to the City of DeKalb, situated in the County of DeKalb, State of Illinois. Commonly known as: 411 College Ave, DeKalb, Illinois."

Beginning at the northwest corner of College Avenue and Park Avenue, the east border of the property extends 166.5' north. The north border of the property extends 160' to the west of Park Ave. The west border of the property extends 149' north of College Ave. The south border of the property extends 160' west of Park Ave.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

These were the buildings and property built for President John Williston Cook in 1900.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	<u>Rob & Linda Srygler</u>	date	<u>4/19/2025</u>
organization	<u>N/A</u>	telephone	<u>815-685-3737</u>
street & number	<u>411 College Ave</u>	email	<u>rjsrygler@yahoo.com</u>
city or town	<u>DeKalb</u>	state	<u>IL</u> zip code <u>60115</u>

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **GIS Location Map (Google Earth or BING)**
- **Local Location Map**
- **Site Plan**
- **Floor Plans (As Applicable)**
- **Photo Location Map** (Include for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion
Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois
County and State

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property:	<u>Cook, President John Williston, Mansion</u>		
City or Vicinity:	<u>DeKalb</u>		
County:	<u>DeKalb</u>	State:	<u>IL</u>
Photographers:	<u>Rob Srygler and realtor</u>		
Dates Photographed:	<u>Summer 2022, January 2023, April, October and December 2024, January 2025</u>		

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 of 21:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #001
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
View of mansion and carriage house taken near College & Park Avenues
Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on October 2, 2024

Photo 2 of 21:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #002
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
View of Portico taken from sidewalk along College Avenue
Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on April 5, 2024

Photo 3 of 21:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #003
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
View of portico and entrance taken from front yard
Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on October 2, 2024

Photo 4 of 21:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #004
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
View of portico taken from sidewalk to front door
Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on October 2, 2024

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

Photo 5 of 23:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #005
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
Aerial view of mansion, carriage house and driveway
Digital Photo Taken by realtor summer 2022

Photo 6 of 23:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #006
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
Aerial view of portico and east face of mansion
Digital Photo Taken by realtor summer 2022

Photo 7 of 23:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #007
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
View of main entrance from porte-cochere
Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on December 19, 2024

Photo 8 of 23:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #008
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
View of back porch
Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on January 3, 2025

Photo 9 of 23:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #009
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
View of east face of carriage house
Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on January 3, 2025

Photo 10 of 23:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #010
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
View of south face of carriage house
Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on January 3, 2025

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

Photo 11 of 23:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #011
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
View of central fireplace
Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on January 3, 2025

Photo 12 of 23:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #012
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
View of detail above central fireplace
Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on January 3, 2025

Photo 13 of 23:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #013
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
View of great room
Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on January 3, 2025

Photo 14 of 23:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #014
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
View of leaded glass above and on each side of door from foyer into great room
Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on January 3, 2025

Photo 15 of 23:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #015
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
View of parlor and portico door & windows
Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on January 3, 2025

Photo 16 of 23:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #016
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
View of east end of parlor, showing fireplace, curved walls & built-in benches, and pilasters
Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on January 3, 2025

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

Photo 17 of 23:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #017
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
View of leaded glass fanlight transom window above portico doors
Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on January 3, 2025

Photo 18 of 23:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #018
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
View of west end of parlor, showing column & pilasters that mimic the larger columns & pilasters on the portico
Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on January 3, 2025

Photo 19 of 23:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #019
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
View of capitals atop column & pilaster in the parlor
Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on January 3, 2025

Photo 20 of 23:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #020
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
View of library with built-in bookcases
Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on January 3, 2025

Photo 21 of 23:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #021
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
View of original hardware
Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on January 3, 2025

Photo 22 of 23:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #022
President John Williston Cook Mansion
411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois
View facing south of living room, skylight, and stairs
Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on January 20, 2023

Cook, President John Williston, Mansion

Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois

County and State

Photo 23 of 23:

IL – DeKalb County – 411 College Ave - #023

President John Williston Cook Mansion

411 College Ave, DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois

View of attic showing attic skylight, skylight above living room, and portico window in distance

Digital Photo Taken by Rob Srygler on January 3, 2025

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 30

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

List of Figures

(Resize, compact, and paste images of maps and historic documents in this section. Place captions, with figure numbers above each image. Orient maps so that north is at the top of the page, all documents should be inserted with the top toward the top of the page.)

Figure 1

President John Williston Cook Mansion, 411 College Ave, DeKalb IL, DeKalb County

Latitude 41.933912, Longitude -88.757257

Google Maps



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional DocumentationPage 31

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 2

President John Williston Cook Mansion, 411 College Ave, DeKalb IL, DeKalb County

Latitude 41.933912, Longitude -88.757257

Local Location Map



Figure 3

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

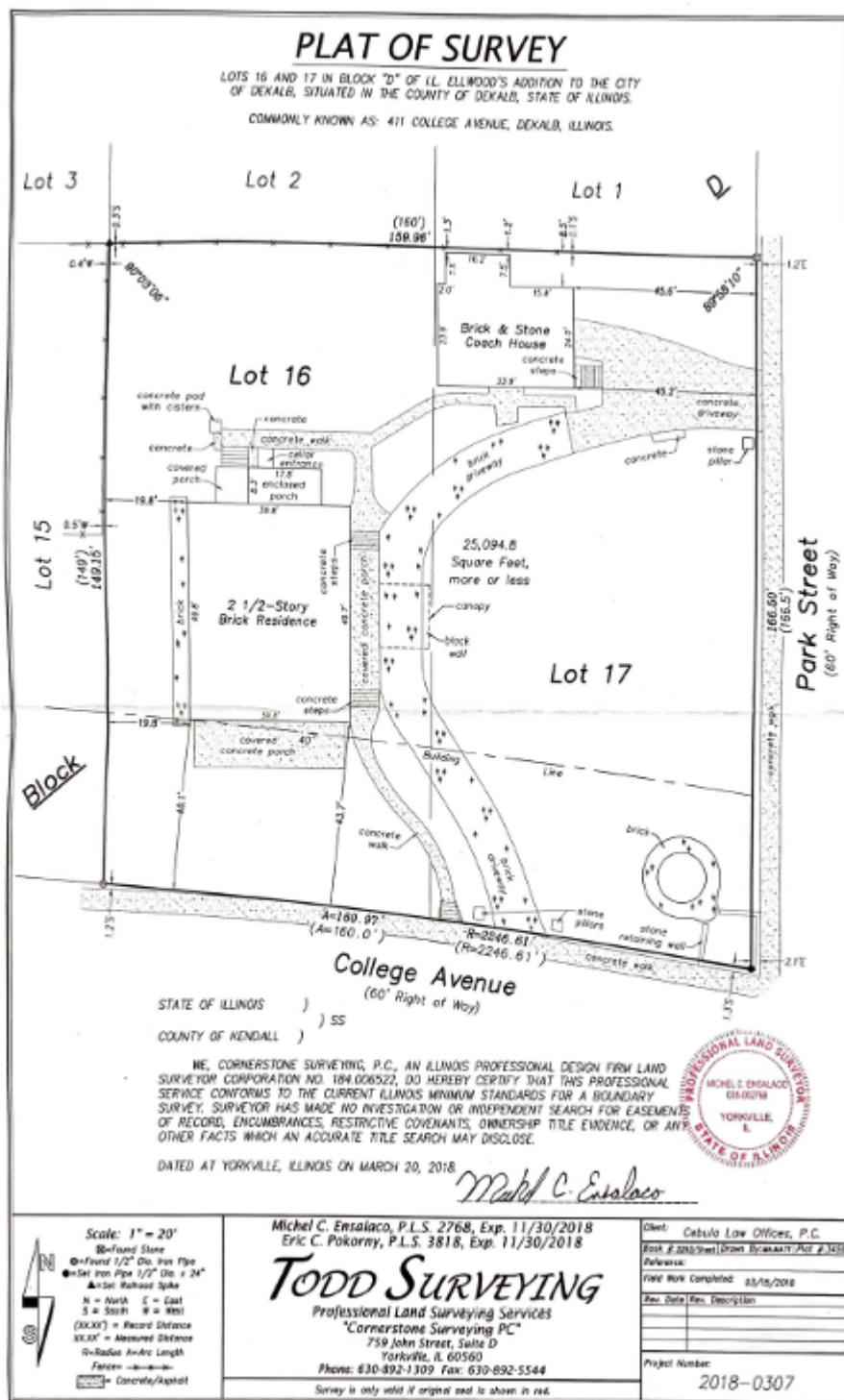
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Page 32

President John Williston Cook Mansion, 411 College Ave, DeKalb IL, DeKalb County
Plat



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional DocumentationPage 33

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

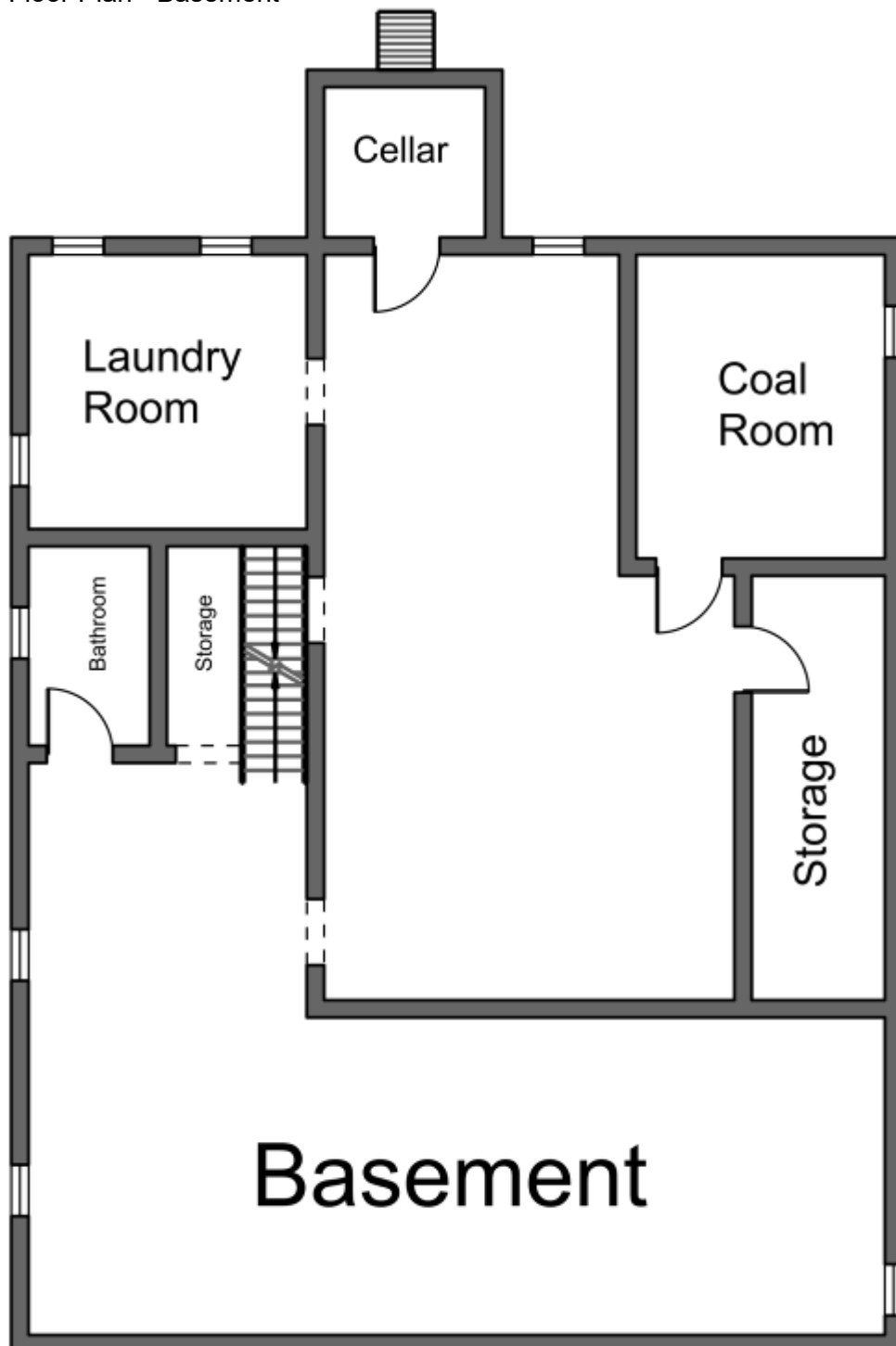
Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 4

President John Williston Cook Mansion, 411 College Ave, DeKalb IL, DeKalb County
Floor Plan - Basement



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 34

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

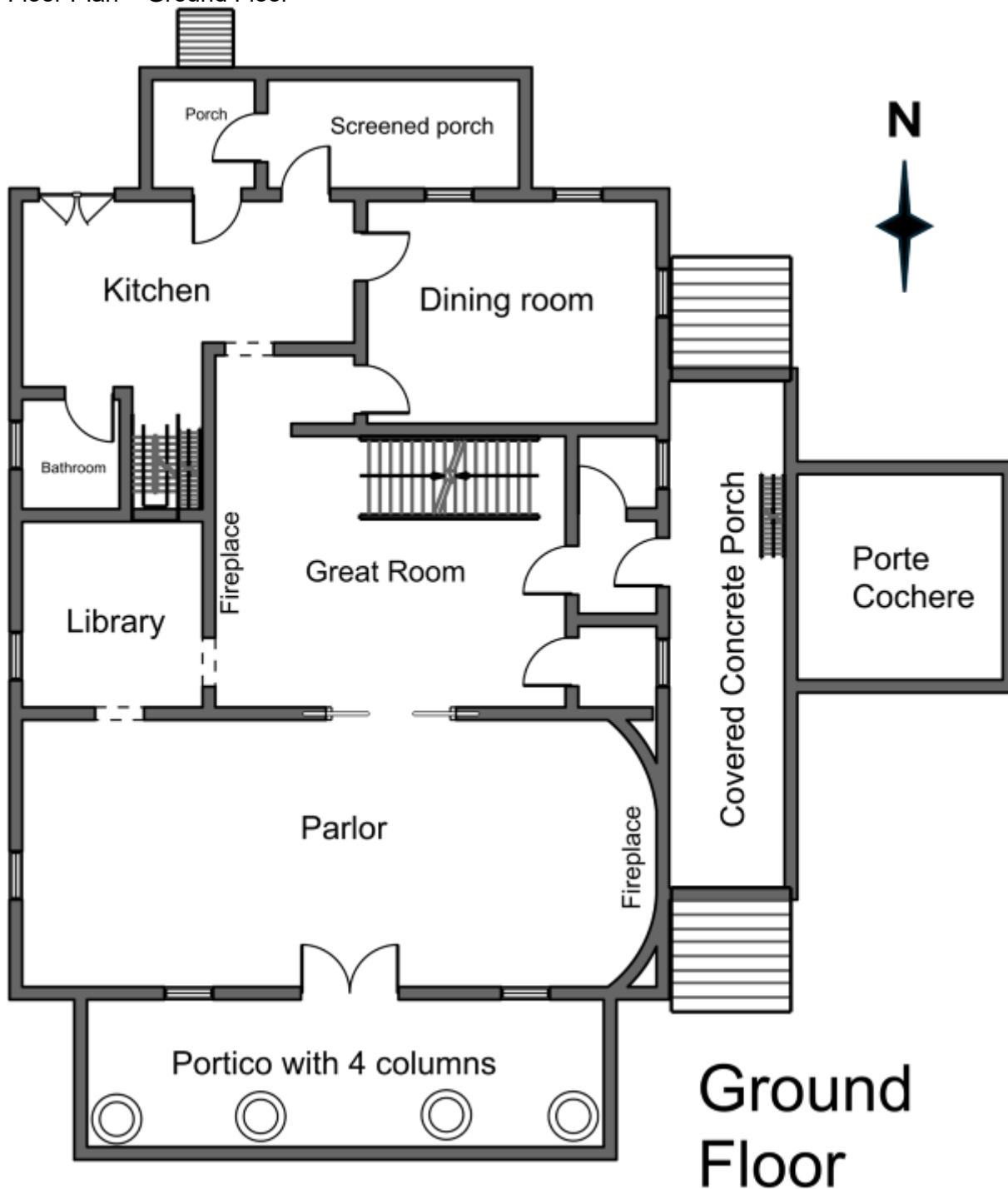
Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 5

President John Williston Cook Mansion, 411 College Ave, DeKalb IL, DeKalb County
Floor Plan – Ground Floor



Ground
Floor

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional DocumentationPage 35

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

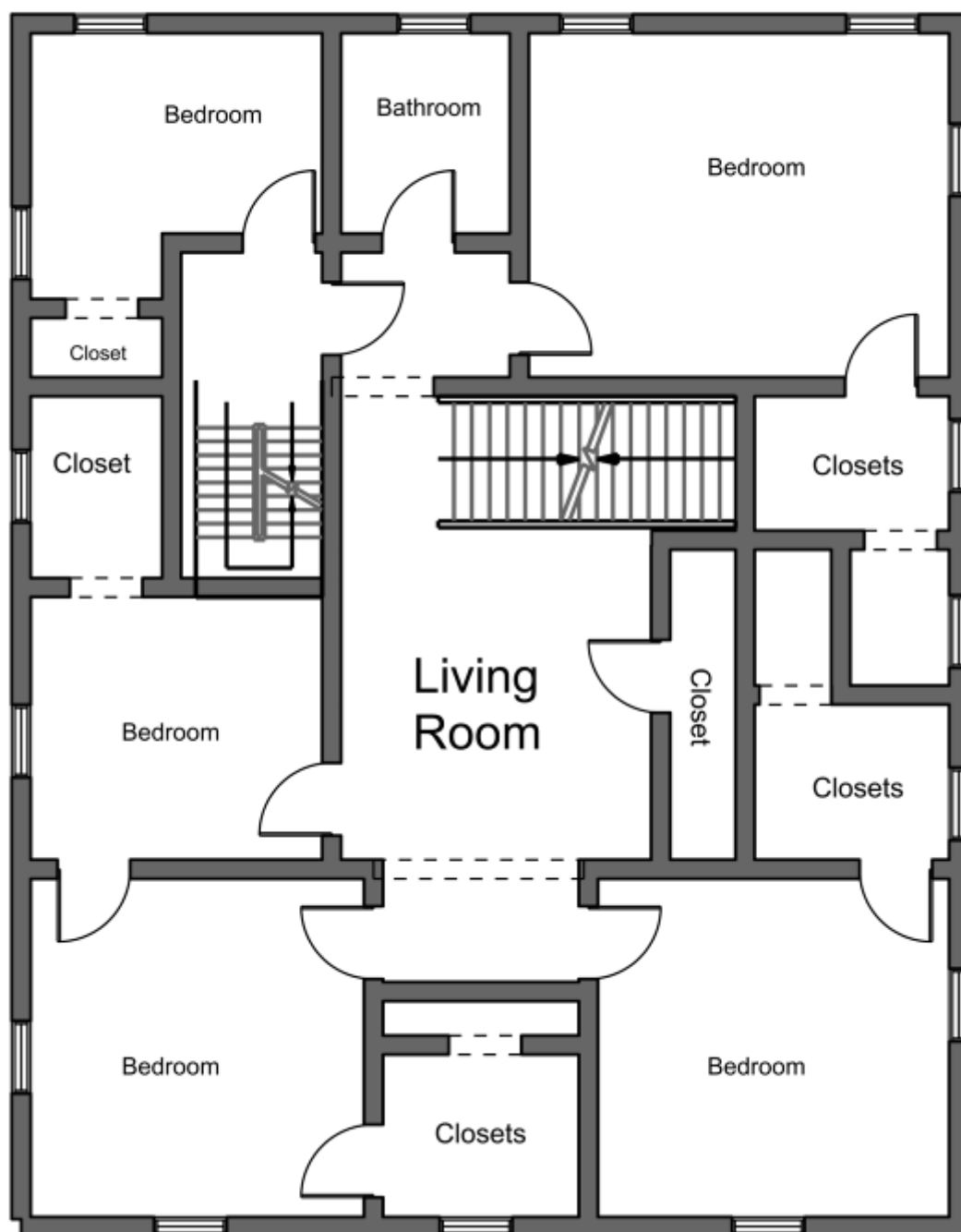
County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 6

President John Williston Cook Mansion, 411 College Ave, DeKalb IL, DeKalb County
Floor Plan – Second Floor

2nd Floor



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 36

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

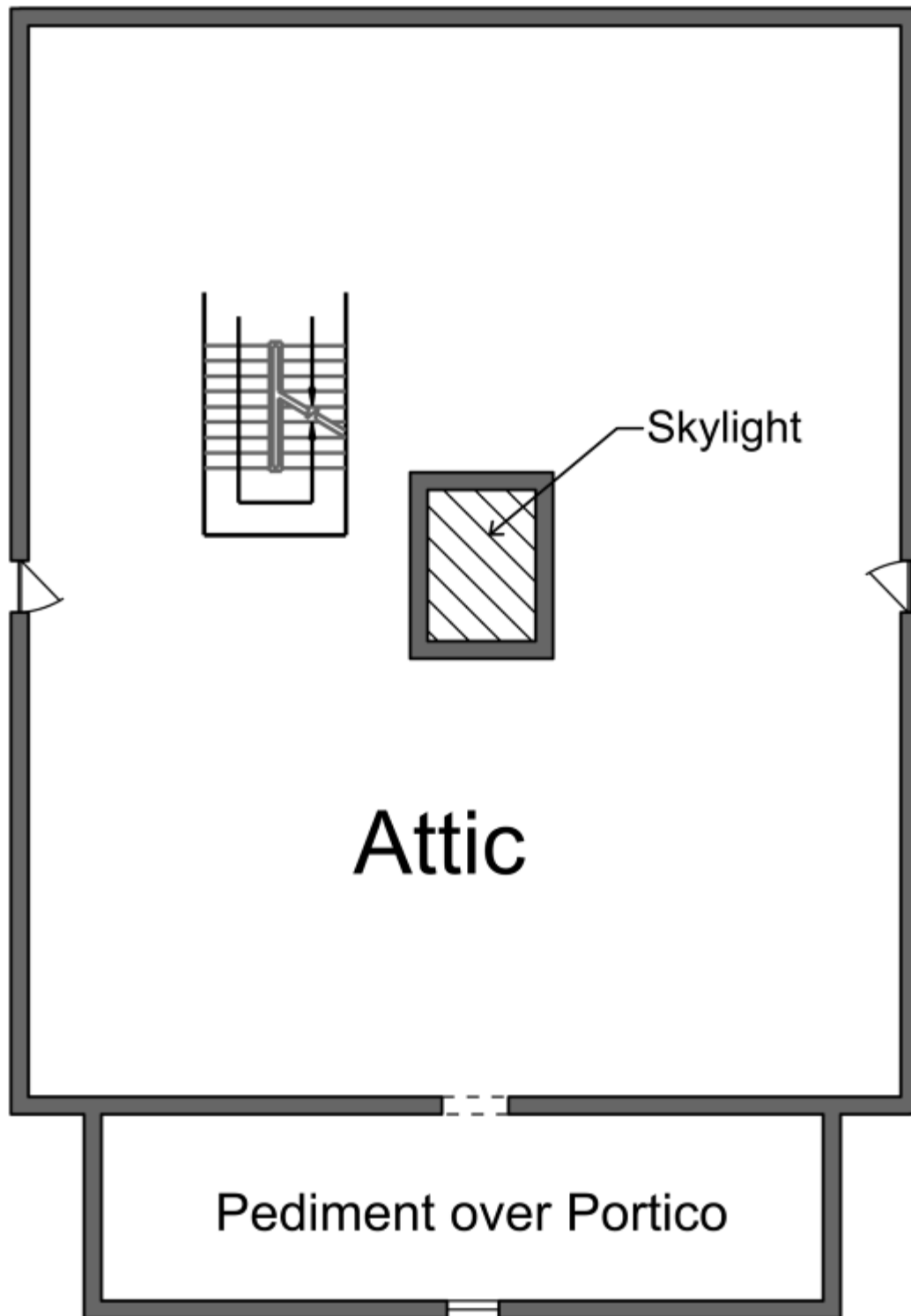
Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 7

President John Williston Cook Mansion, 411 College Ave, DeKalb IL, DeKalb County
Floor Plan – Attic



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 37

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

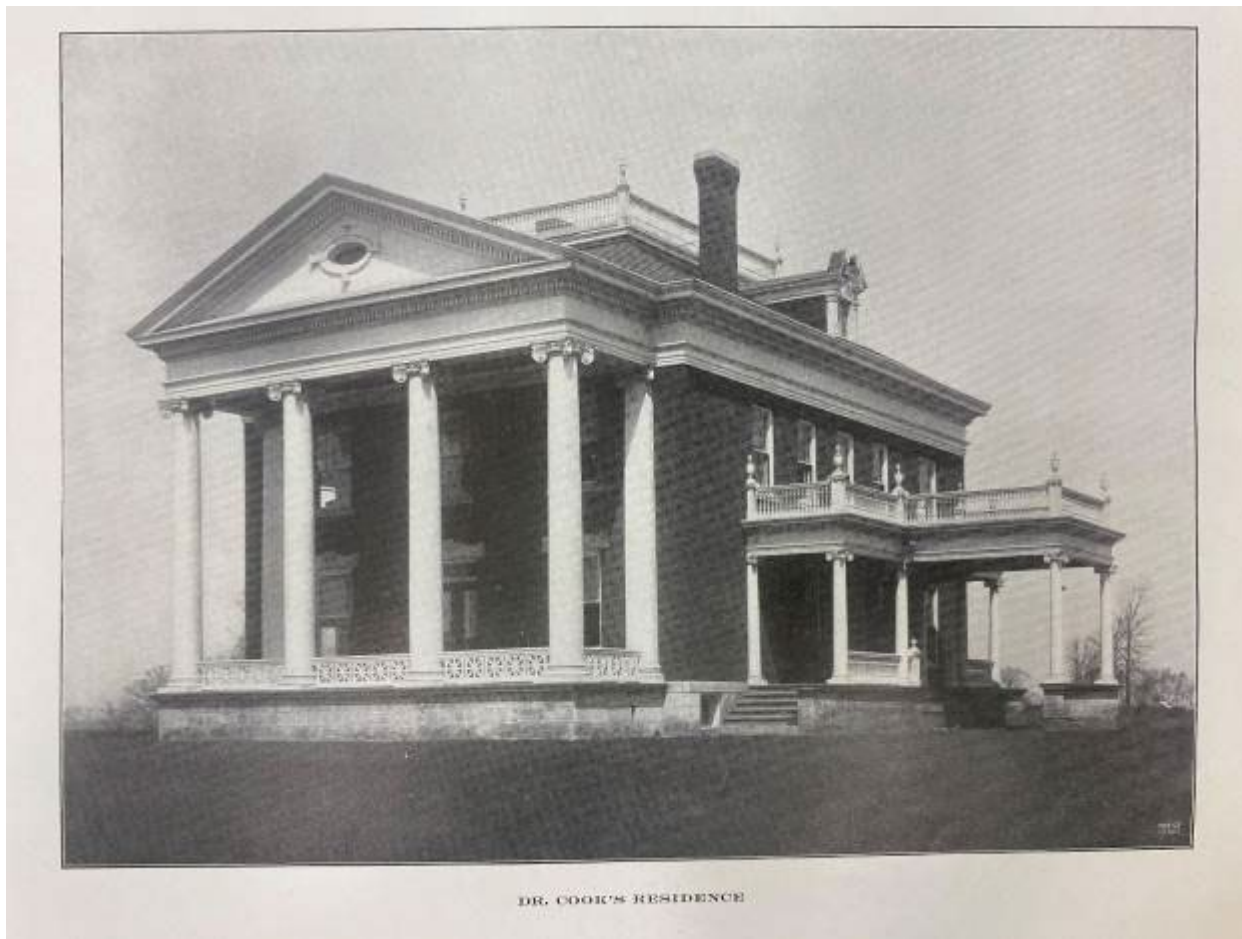
Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 8

President John Williston Cook Mansion, 411 College Ave, DeKalb IL, DeKalb County
Historical Photograph - 1900



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 38

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 9

President John Williston Cook Mansion, 411 College Ave, DeKalb IL, DeKalb County
Historical Photograph – 1904



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 39

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 10

President John Williston Cook Mansion, 411 College Ave, DeKalb IL, DeKalb County
Historical Photograph – 1911 Postcard front and back



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 40

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figures 11 & 12

President John Williston Cook Mansion, 411 College Ave, DeKalb IL, DeKalb County
Historical Photograph – Undated Photographs



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 41

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 13

President John Williston Cook Mansion, 411 College Ave, DeKalb IL, DeKalb County

Historical Photograph – President John Williston Cook on portico, SE corner of College & Park Avenues visible in the background.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 42

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

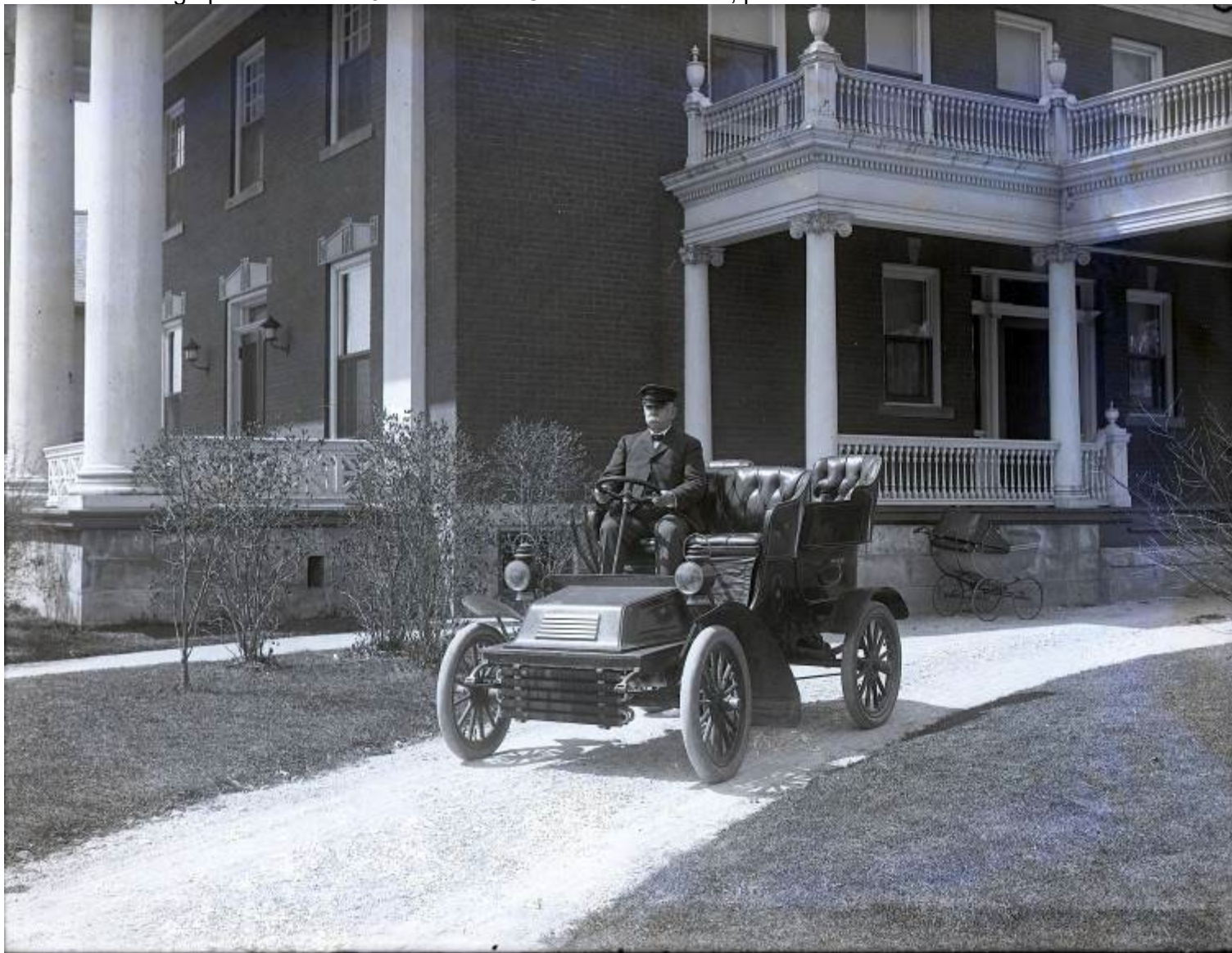
County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 14

President John Williston Cook Mansion, 411 College Ave, DeKalb IL, DeKalb County

Historical Photograph – President John Williston Cook in automobile, portico and main entrance visible.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 43

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 15

President John Williston Cook Mansion, 411 College Ave, DeKalb IL, DeKalb County

Historical Photograph – Photograph taken atop Altgeld Hall looking east circa 1900. Cook Carriage House and Mansion visible (first and second buildings right of Altgeld).



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 44

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 16

President John Williston Cook Mansion, 411 College Ave, DeKalb IL, DeKalb County

Historical Photograph – Photograph taken near College Ave & John St., 1901. Cook Mansion is visible in center of photograph.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 45

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 1 of 21: View of mansion and carriage house taken near College & Park Avenues



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 46

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 2 of 21: View of Portico taken from sidewalk along College Avenue



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 47

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 3 of 21: View of portico and entrance taken from front yard



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 48

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 4 of 21: View of portico taken from sidewalk to front door



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 49

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 5 of 23: Aerial view of mansion, carriage house and driveway



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 50

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 6 of 23: Aerial view of portico and east face of mansion



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 51

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 7 of 23: View of main entrance from porte-cochere



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 52

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 8 of 23: View of back porch



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 53

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 9 of 23: View of east face of carriage house



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 54

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 10 of 23: View of south face of carriage house



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 55

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 11 of 23: View of central fireplace



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 56

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 12 of 23: View of detail above central fireplace



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 57

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 13 of 23: View of great room



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 58

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 14 of 23: View of leaded glass above and on each side of door from foyer into great room



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 59

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 15 of 23: View of parlor and portico door & windows



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 60

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 16 of 23: View of east end of parlor, showing fireplace, curved walls & built-in benches, and pilasters



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 61

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 17 of 23: View of leaded glass fanlight transom window above portico doors



Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Page 62

A large, ornate living room decorated for Christmas. The room features a high ceiling with a large crystal chandelier, white columns, and a fireplace. A decorated Christmas tree stands near a window with blue curtains. The room is furnished with elegant chairs, a coffee table, and a sideboard. Sunlight streams in from the window, illuminating the space.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 63

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 19 of 23: View of capitals atop column & pilaster in the parlor



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 64

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 20 of 23: View of library with built-in bookcases



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 65

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 21 of 23: View of original hardware



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 66

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 22 of 23: View facing south of living room, skylight, and stairs



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 67

Cook, President John Williston,
Mansion

Name of Property
DeKalb Co. IL

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo 23 of 23: View of attic showing attic skylight, skylight above living room, and portico window in distance



Owner and Local Elected Official Notification Information

The State Historic Preservation Office is federally required to notify the property owner(s), as well as the chief elected officials of the county and municipal political jurisdiction in which the property is located. Please make sure the information is current.

Name & Address of Property Owner. If there are multiple owners, you may need to send a separate spreadsheet:

Robert J and Linda M Srygler
411 College Ave
DeKalb IL 60115

Name & Address of Chief Elected Official of Municipality (Mayor/ Village President):

Mayor Cohen Barnes
164 E Lincoln Highway
Room 203
DeKalb IL 60115

Name & Address of County Board Chairperson:

John Frieders
200 N Main St.
Sycamore IL 60178