



# Former Alton Gabs and Electric Powerhouse in Alton, Now Abbott Machine Co., Named to National Register of Historic Places

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ALTON - After an abundance of historic preservation advocate work, the former Alton Gas and Electric Powerhouse in Alton has been formally listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Among the sites, and the only one in Downstate, is the former Alton Gas and Electric Powerhouse in Alton, which was formally listed on Aug. 28. The building has been known in more modern times as the Abbott Machine Co. building on the Great River Road.

The Powerhouse, constructed in 1913-1914, was initially a substation for Keokuk, Iowa's hydroelectric system. By 1915, Alton's substation was able to receive and produce power, providing electricity for the city and the surrounding area for the next 13 years.

The power plant incorporated the most up-to-date equipment and was considered cutting edge in terms of its capacity to produce hydroelectricity for residential, commercial and industrial customers.

Following a merger of the Union Electric Co. and the Mississippi River Power Co., which was owned by the Keokuk's dam/hydroelectric system, the recently upgraded Alton Gas and Electric Powerhouse became reassigned as an emergency station in 1928. Union Electric permanently closed the powerhouse in 1937.

Historic places are added to the National Register by the National Park Service based on recommendations from the State Historic Preservation Office, a division of the IDNR.

"Each of these places tells a unique story that is a part of the rich fabric of Illinois history," said IDNR Director Colleen Callahan. "We are proud to work with local preservationists to obtain national recognition for these historic buildings and neighborhoods."

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of properties that merit special attention and preservation. Every Illinois county has at least one property or historic district listed in the National Register. Together, they represent a cross-section of the Prairie State's history from its early settlement to the mid-20th century. In general, properties must be more than 50 years old to be eligible for the National Register. A listing places no obligations on private property owners but does make properties eligible for some financial incentives.