

GAR Museum Earns Top Honors from Illinois Association of Museums

The Aurora Grand Army of the Republic Memorial Museum (GAR) has been named the 2017 Small Institution of the Year by the Illinois Association of Museums (IAM).

"The IAM Awards Committee and Executive Board were impressed with efforts and outcomes of the City of Aurora and its dedicated citizens to restore and reopen this important historic building and preserve and tell the many stories it interprets," the IAM said in its announcement of the honor.



The Aurora GAR Memorial Museum was built in 1877-78 as a tribute to the brave Aurora men who fought in the Civil War. Seven hundred men from 70 different Union Army regiments would become members of the Aurora GAR Post. Over the years, the GAR Hall fell into disrepair, and was closed because of safety concerns. After a 15-year, \$3.5 million restoration effort, the Museum was reopened to the public on Memorial Day 2016.



"The stalwart efforts to reopen the GAR have not gone unnoticed," said Mayor Richard C. Irvin. "Visitors are in awe as they tour the museum. Statewide organizations such as the Illinois Association of Museums and Landmarks Illinois have deemed it worthy of recognition.

Certainly, everyone who was involved in the restoration efforts must be applauded for their work to preserve one of Aurora's most treasured historic assets."

Today, the GAR Museum at 23 E. Downer Place in downtown Aurora presents a dozen exhibits focusing on the local soldiers who served in the Civil War and on the growing community of Aurora in the mid and late 1800s. The Museum is open - for free -- from noon to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and from 5 to 9 p.m. on the first Friday of every month. The Museum also is open for tours by community and school groups, Monday through Friday.

The 2017 Small Institution of the Year award will be presented to the City at an awards dinner sponsored by the Illinois Association of Museums in October.

This is the second state award presented to the GAR Museum in the past year. In 2016, Landmarks Illinois, a statewide historic preservation organization, presented its President's Award for Preservation to the Aurora GAR project.