

# Ogle County Community Guide



# ROCHELLE

**ROCHELLE** — Rochelle could be known as the unofficial entertainment capital of Ogle County. Located at the intersection of Illinois Route 251 and Illinois Route 38, the “Hub City” is the largest town in Ogle County with approxi-

mately 9,000 people. Among its alumni, actress Joan Allen grew up in the “Hub City.” Among other credits, Allen has won a Tony Award, has three Oscar nominations, and once hosted Saturday Night Live. Comedian

Tim Clue also grew up in Rochelle. He is just one of several published authors who lived in town at one time or another.

Two major motion pictures have been filmed in Rochelle, including “A Thousand Acres,” and

“At Any Price.” The first, based on Jane Smiley’s Pulitzer Prize winning novel, featured an all-star cast of Michelle Pfeifer, Jessica Lange, Jason Robards Jr., Colin Firth, Michelle Williams, Elizabeth Moss, Keith Carradine and Pat Hingle. The second featured Dennis Quad and Zac Efron, and included a

memorable scene of the old Hub Theater in the downtown business district. In 2017, the Hub Theater was purchased by a local farming family that transformed the venue into Kennay Farms Distillery. The Vince Carney Community Theater group is in full swing, offering a variety of innovative

plays and musicals each year. They perform in their newly renovated home — the former Lincoln School — located at South Main Street and First Avenue. Once a month a free movie is shown at the Hub City Senior Center, 401 Cherry Ave.

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**From page 2**

The center also offers bingo on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, as well as lunches, card games, billiards, knitting and other activities. The center has free computer service and holds a special birthday party once a month.

Train enthusiasts can find plenty of entertainment at the Ken Wise Rochelle Railroad Park, located between the train tracks on Eighth Street. The park is reported to be the second of its kind in the entire world and the first in the United States. There is a shelter, benches and grills for picnics. A stationary train greets visitors at the entrance, which all ages

are invited to sit on, right across from the park office. Train buffs literally come from all over the world to watch trains whizzing by, coming from and heading toward Chicago.

The Flagg-Rochelle Park District maintains 16 parks, including a very popular walking and bike path. Golfers can hit the links at Fairways Golf Course, a public 18-hole course on Illinois 251 South and the park district also operates a driving range at Skare Park about 6 miles west of Rochelle on Flagg Road. A popular Disc Golf Course is also located at Skare Park, in addition to a playground, park shelter and hiking trails.

For more information

on any park district program, call 815-562-7813.

Those interested in learning about the history of Rochelle, the Flagg-Township Museum offers a variety of displays inside its location at 518 4th Ave. For more information, contact the history museum at 815-562-3040.

The annual Turkey Trot is held on Thanksgiving morning to get families outside walking and running, and Rochelle's annual Old-Fashioned Christmas Walk is the first weekend of December.

The Christmas Walk features lighted floats parading through the downtown area after dark, along with the arrival of Santa Claus.



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# HILLCREST

**HILLCREST**—Hillcrest was established as a village in 1958 and over the years has come into its own through housing and subdivision development (Windover Park) as well as a number of thriving businesses that include two car dealers, two automotive service facilities, Casey's General Store, a lawn improvement company, a contractors-only building supply store, general storage facilities, warehousing for a Rochelle manufacturing facility, a retail furniture center and opportunities

for new businesses to locate there.

The newest and most thriving addition is Fat Cat Slots located at the north end of Powers Road.

There are four churches in the area including a Spanish-speaking congregation that like others in the community of approximately 1,000 people, have been a part of Hillcrest for many years.

Residents looking for a park down the street will discover Ruth Flanagan Park along the south edge of the village. Powers Park is in the center of the Hill-

crest and features a small shelter canopy, picnic tables, and a walking path circling the property.

Four Sisters Bike Path winds along the Kyte Creek on the southwest side, continuing into the Rochelle community. In the past several years, several vacated properties have undergone renovation and extensive uplift, bringing a fresh, well maintained appearance to the village.

Street repairs have also been made in many heavily trafficked areas in the village.



# CRESTON

**CRESTON** — Established in 1856, the Village of Creston (pop. 626 per latest Census) is located approximately 80 miles west of Chicago and 30 miles south of Rockford, Illinois along historic Lincoln Highway.

With a thriving agricultural base, the village is home to a notable public school for kindergartners through eighth-graders, an outstanding library, park district and active community organizations. The annual Creston Booster Days is known throughout the region as one of the top, small-town festivals.

Walk across the wooden floor at Headon's Fine Meats and you are instantly surrounded. First, by an intoxicating aroma, and secondly by an old-world charm. Headon's is located at 103 N. Main

St. in Creston, and a big draw to town. In fact, customers come from miles around, not just when they're celebrating a special occasion but for their everyday needs. Headon's is famous for its wide variety of fresh meats, including roast beef, pork, steaks, poultry, sausage and ground meat, as well as its deli and catering services.

Creston's proximity to both I-88 and I-39 interstate highways provide easy access between our idyllic rural community and a host of dynamic urban amenities. Creston is just minutes away from Kishwaukee Community College and Northern Illinois University.

Creston is a great place for families and businesses. The village motto is "Come grow with us!"

# BYRON

**BYRON** — The City of Byron offers a lineup of attractions for young and old alike, truly a community with something for everyone. And it is a community that is rich in history and at times, mystery.

Although the Byron Nuclear Generating Station has been in operation since the mid-1970s, lesser known is the fact that it is one of the last nuclear plants commissioned in the United States. Byron is also more recognizable as the city that is the Gateway to the Rock River Valley.

Several notable individuals have called Byron their home, among them Troy Drake, offensive tackle with the Washington Redskins and Philadelphia Eagles; Wilson Irvine, painter; and more recently, Sean Considine, safety with the Baltimore Ravens, Philadelphia Eagles, Arizona Cardinals and Jacksonville Jaguars.

Byron boasts three schools (Mary Morgan Elementary School, Byron Middle School and Byron High School) with

an enrollment of approximately 1,500 students. Byron High School brought home a 2023 IHSA State Championship in football.

The Jarrett Prairie Center Museum opened in the fall of 2016 that features exhibits and hands-on experiences for visitors. Requiring two and a half years to complete, the museum is free to the public seven days a week. Private venues may be scheduled at the facility. More information is available by calling 815-234-8535, Ext. 200.

The nearby and readily accessible Rock River provides boating and skiing opportunities, fishing, and other water activities and for those who are exercise minded, a beautifully maintained bike path that makes its way along the river as well as other scenic areas.

The annual Byron-Fest celebration is held each summer in July and features music and food along with rides the whole family can enjoy. For more information visit [www.byronfest.org](http://www.byronfest.org).

Byron Civic Theatre is an additional local gem, with the organization presenting several productions a year using local and area talent in the cast and crew. For more information about the Civic Theatre calendar of shows or participation details, visit [www.byron-civictheatre.com](http://www.byron-civictheatre.com).

Racing enthusiasts will find lots to cheer on at Byron Dragway dubbed the “Playground of Power.” The quarter mile strip was constructed in the 1960s as a four-lane track, however, that was discontinued after a number of years. The roar of engines can be heard throughout the area on race day and the site hosts the Power Wheel Standing Championships.

Downtown Byron hosts a number of business establishments and food is available at every turn from fast food to sit-down and stay awhile restaurants with menus featuring a host of choices.

Byron is a city of diversity, friendly folks, and entertainment choices.



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# MT. MORRIS

**MT. MORRIS**—Mention the Fourth of July and most local residents immediately think of Mt. Morris. And with good reason.

Besides hosting the largest Fourth of July celebration in Ogle County, this little village of 3,000 is home to the Illinois State Freedom Bell, which was officially dedicated in 1963.

Mt. Morris is also a musical haven. No summer in Mt. Morris would be complete without the weekly Kable News band concerts, which have been held every Wednesday night during the summer for over 110 years. A pie and ice cream social is always held an hour before.

Although not nearly as old, another equally

popular feature is the Friday Night Concerts, also held in the downtown band shell on the campus lawn, at Front and Wesley, just two blocks south of Illinois Route 64. In case of rain, concerts are moved indoors to the Mt. Morris Moose Lodge, 101 Moose Drive.

Friday night concerts provide local talent the opportunity to come to the stage and present a fun evening for the community. Each Friday evening, local organizations provide food, groups and organizations also provide concessions of their own offering sandwiches and more. Concerts run from 7 to 9 p.m.

Friday nights also feature the Community Farmer's Market with locally grown produce and

homemade items. Visit the Union Savings parking lot at the corner of Wesley Avenue and Illinois Route 64 through the last Friday in October.

Another big attraction is the annual U.S. National Straw Sculpting competition in August on the historic Mt. Morris campus. Based on a similar competition in a small town in Germany, local artist Fran Volz said the competition is open to everyone. For more information, go to [strawusa.com](http://strawusa.com).

And music is in the air the second Saturday of June for PorchFest. PorchFest features a variety of musical performances on – you guessed it – local porches! Music runs through the town.



# OREGON

**OREGON**—Oregon is the center of the art world in Ogle County.

Besides the art gallery at the Oregon Public Library, there are 15 outdoor sculptures comprising the “Oregon Sculpture Trail.” The trail includes many of sculptor Laredo Taft’s works, including Blackhawk Statue, which overlooks the Rock River at Lowden State Park south of town, and The Soldiers’ Monument on the courthouse lawn.

Local sculptor Jeff Adams also has a number of works on the trail. A list of the sculptures can be found at the Oregon Chamber of Commerce, 122 N. 4th St., or at Conover Square.

Prominent though it is, art isn’t the only thing you can find in Oregon. As the

seat of Ogle County, Oregon probably has as many activities and programs as it does people.

One of the town’s more interesting clubs is the Blackhawk Model Railroad Club, located on the second floor of Conover Square, featuring an interesting array of model trains and people who collect them. Conover Square, an old converted piano factory, has a number of restaurants, stores, antiques and even a city museum. It is located at 201 N. 3rd St., by the Rock River. History buffs will find plenty of local history at the Ruby Nash Museum, 111 N. 6th St.

While maintaining a number of parks, the Oregon Park District also offers a variety of other activities,

ranging from a kayak club to a farmers’ market. For the older crowd, the Rock River Senior Center, 810 10th St., offers a wide variety of activities.

Other activities in town include golfing, boating, fishing and antiques. Burgers and Cruise Night; Lions’ Day Car Show; Mix Street Mixer; Autumn on Parade, featuring the Harvest Time Parade, the largest parade in northern Illinois; and the Candlelight Walk. Another big draw is the annual women’s club antique show in March.

Autumn on Parade the first weekend in October is one of the largest festivities in the area, offering a weekend of activities, including arts and crafts, music, food and other events.

# FORRESTON

**FORRESTON**—The Village of Forreston is located in the northeast corner of Ogle County, about 12 miles south of Freeport and 20 miles north of Dixon. It is located in a rich agricultural

area and boasts old storefront businesses, schools and housing.

One of the village's focal points is Casey's, formerly The Depot, a convenience store which awaits any and all who

come in each day to meet, greet, and talk about everything from national politics to the local farmer who just managed to get his crops in after a lengthy and unpredictable spring season. The building was

originally a Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy train depot but was re-purposed and redesigned for commercial use in 2006.

Stop downtown and shop for what you need. Stores are filled with everyday merchandise including tools, gardening equipment, electrical and plumbing supplies, and

much more, including a gift section.

A farmer's market begins in late June and is held each Friday through October – weather permitting. The Forreston Public Library also offers programs for children and adults as well as a recycling bin for soft plastic –including food wrappers

(clean), shopping bags and wrapping from boxes.

Five churches are also located within the village – Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church, First United Methodist Church of Forreston, Forreston Grove Church, Forreston Reformed Church and North Grove Evangelical Church.



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- \*AMUSEMENTS  
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## SATURDAY AUGUST 17

- \*PANCAKE BREAKFAST - 7:30AM TO 11AM
- \*CAR SHOW - 8AM TO 3PM
- \*CRAFT & VENDOR SHOW - 10AM TO 5PM
- \*RISE UP DANCE - 10AM TO 11AM
- \*FOOD COURT - 11AM TO 10PM
- \*AMUSEMENTS - 11AM TO 10PM
- \*MAGIC MATTS FAMILY FUN SHOW - 11AM TO 8PM
- \*KID ZONE - 11AM TO 3PM
- \*BLUE STEAM - NOON TO 1PM
- \*BALLET FOLKLORIO XOCHIQUETZAL - 1PM TO 1:45PM
- \*BUZZED BY SUNSET - 2PM TO 4PM
- \*BEER GARDEN - 12PM TO 10PM  
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- \*MISSING LINKS - 5PM TO 7PM
- \*STUDIO C DANCE - 4PM TO 4:45PM
- \*HAUNTED MAZE @ MOOSE LODGE - 4PM TO 9PM
- \*HEARTACHE TONIGHT - 8PM TO 10PM

## SUNDAY AUGUST 18

- \*PANCAKE BREAKFAST - 7:30AM TO 11AM
- \*CRAFT & VENDOR SHOW - 10:30AM TO 4PM
- \*FOOD COURT - 11AM TO 6PM
- \*AMUSEMENTS - 11AM TO 6PM
- \*MAGIC MATTS FAMILY FUN SHOW - 11AM TO 6PM
- \*PARADE - 1PM
- \*THE BEAUX BAND - 1PM TO 3PM
- \*BEER GARDEN - 12PM TO 6PM  
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# STILLMAN VALLEY

**STILLMAN VALLEY** — In northern Illinois, mention of the village of Stillman Valley first recalls a winning and competitive football team, but there is a lot more to this community to talk about. There are annual clean up days and local festivals that include vintage auto shows.

One of the most popular is the Stillman Valley Fall

Festival. A complete listing of events is available at [www.stillmanvalleyfallfestival.com](http://www.stillmanvalleyfallfestival.com). Stillman Valley is served by a rail link and local grain elevators, as well as several businesses and eating establishments.

If garage sales are to your liking, Stillman Valley is your destination with annual village-wide offerings. Plan now to attend

next year's sales events that are published ahead of time with flyers and posters throughout the community.

Stillman Valley is located south of Rockford, just nine miles west of Illinois Route 251 on Illinois Route 72. Local festivals and parades that include carnival rides and a parade on Sunday afternoon, food choices, music venues,

dramatic and musical performances offered at the high school, as well as a rich sense of history, all combine to make Stillman Valley a fun place to visit and live.

Stillman Valley was founded in North Central Illinois in 1875. It is named after the creek that runs

through it. The creek itself was named after Major Stillman of the US Army who fought in the first battle of the Blackhawk War on May 13, 1832. A large memorial to this battle is located in Stillman Valley. It reads: "Here, on May 14, 1832, the first engagement

of the Black Hawk War took place.

When 275 Illinois militiamen under Maj. Isaiah Stillman were put to flight by Black Hawk and his warriors." The Monument is located South of Route 72 on the east side of the village.

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# POLO

**POLO** — During the summer, the Polo Swimming Pool is arguably the most popular place in town. The pool, located at 303 E. Webster St., is open every day from Memorial Day to Labor Day. The pool also offers swimming lessons and is available for private parties.

Besides the pool, Polo is known for its quality parks, including Millar Death Park, 70 W. North St.; Polo Community Park, 303 E. Webster St.; and Louise D. Quick Park, 102 W. Mason St.

Birdland Skate Park is located at 112 E. Mason St., the park offers skaters a variety of jumps and challenges. It is open from

dawn until dusk.

The Polo Public Library, 302 W. Mason St., offers a summer reading program, free computer classes and a number of other activities for all ages living up to its motto of "More than books."

For the older crowd, the Polo Senior Center, 101 E. Mason St., has classes and other activities and programs.

For history buffs, the Polo Historical Society Museum, 113 N. Franklin Ave., has a plethora of material, including the town's involvement in the Underground Railroad.

There's also the 1878 Henry School, south of Polo on Illinois Route 26, the 1870 Buffalo Lime

Kin, Galena Trail Road, and the Aplington House, 123 N. Franklin Ave.

Something that will delight all ages is the Polo Community Theatre, which offers a variety of plays throughout the year, including a local talent show. Located at 117 N. Franklin Ave., check out their schedule of events at (815) 441-0778 or polotheatre.org.

A few miles north of town in a big red barn is the Barnacopia Farm Museum, located at 2570 N. West Branch Road. Among the things you will see are a 1950s view of Mason Street, a full collection of the New Generation series John Deere tractors, a bright red 1963 Impala, a reproduction drive-in theater, a game room and much more.

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# LEAF RIVER

**LEAF RIVER**—Leaf River is located approximately 10 miles west of Byron in western Ogle County and represents small town America well.

It is surrounded by corn fields on each side, and most of its residents drive some distance to work each day, but this doesn't mean that the town is isolated. There are a couple gathering places downtown, a post office, a grain elevator, a village hall and even an American flag drop off receptacle just off Main Street for the proper disposal and recycling of deteriorated American flags.

The first weekend of June typically finds area

residents celebrating Leaf River Daze Festival. There is plenty of food, a vintage tractor and classic auto show, activities for kids as well as a craft fair at the Historical Museum on Illinois Route 72.

A multi-cultural Camp Kupugani also serves the community and is located at White Eagle Camp. The United Methodist Church is a worship center along Illinois Route 72 and welcomes one and all to their services.

Leaf River is a great part of the north central Illinois area, and will continue to be there for residents and visitors for decades to come.



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## DAVIS JUNCTION

**DAVIS JUNCTION** — Approximately 2,500 people call Davis Junction their home and are delighted to be part of this historic community that goes back more than a century, founded by Jeremiah Davis in 1865. He was also a pioneer in

railroading, came to the area from central Wisconsin and helped develop the Pacific Railroad that was progressing through the area.

Mainline tracks coming and going to Rockford intersected with east- and westbound traffic at a lit-

eral crossroads, hence the name Davis Junction.

These days, one train a day heads south toward Holcomb, and into the Rochelle community near Flagg Center, however, east and westbound traffic toward Chicago is still brisk.

There are several eating establishments in the area, some within the city limits, other choices may be found at the intersection of Illinois Route 251 and 72, 2 miles to the east. There is a small strip mall at this intersection as well, providing health care through Swedish American Medical Group, and other amenities. At the

west edge of the village is a recently added Dollar General store, bringing local shopping convenience to the community.

One of the most impressive areas of Davis Junction is found at the Veterans Memorial located on Moody Avenue one block north of Illinois Route 72. Installed in 2014, it was designed by Richard Cody

Janes who also created the sculptures of servicemen. The memorial was later updated to list the names of those who were lost during the Vietnam War.

The housing industry has blossomed in Davis Junction with the development of Ogle Crossings subdivision, site of dozens of new homes and the local community park.



## GRAND DETOUR

**GRAND DETOUR** — Walking through the white wooden gates at the John Deere Historical Site in Grand Detour is like stepping into another world, one that doesn't exist anymore. In fact, the

late, great Orson Welles probably put it best when he said: "Grand Detour is like a lost world, one of those Eden's you get thrown out of."

Welles spent boyhood summers at a hotel his

father once ran in Grand Detour, which is located between Oregon and Dixon on Illinois Route 251 on the southern edge of Ogle County.

"It was kind of a forgotten place," he said.

Although it is no longer there, Welles reportedly snuck into a local dance hall where he practiced the latest dance moves by the light of the moon.

A quaint, rustic little village of stately homes and lingering trees, Grand Detour sits right next to

the Rock River. Besides a scenic view, there are places to fish, boat, camp or just enjoy a leisurely picnic.

By far, the biggest attraction in town is the John Deere Historical Site, 8334 Clinton St., where the noted blacksmith invented the first

self-scouring steel plow, which revolutionized the farming industry.

Stroll the site's lush, green lawn, you can explore Deere's blacksmith shop, which features regular demonstrations, his family home, a lush garden, a gift shop and much more.



# CHANA

**CHANA** — The small village of Chana possesses heart, passion and community spirit. Located approximately 3 miles south of Illinois Route 64, Chana and its residents don't minimize

their presence in the central Midwest.

Cornett's Chana Tap is a local meet and greet. Stay awhile and have a world class burger and the brew of your choice to go with it. Live music

is provided from time to time at the venue located in the center of Chana.

Down the street is the Chana United Methodist Church, pastored by Josh Brown This thriving congregation has a slate of an-

nual events to keep everyone busy and ministered to as well. This year's chicken and noodle supper drew hundreds to the area, and a glance at the church's calendar shows something going on for all ages and interests. You're always welcome at Chana United Methodist.

The Chana Education Center, located just north of the city park, is a specialized education facility. According to its website, "The OCEC and Chana Education Center firmly believe that effective counseling is a critical component in an overall program for at risk

students."

The Chana Education Center implements a program to address the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of our students. We have named the program "Empowerment Skills" to keep in line with the Chana Education Center mission statement.



# STEWARD

**STEWARD**—Steward is a small town community, located in northern Illinois, with approximately 250 residents.

Step back in time to a place where kids play in the village park while watching the trains go by, residents stop at the local post office to collect their mail and to keep up with the locals news, tractors cruise down main street on their way to the local elevator, everyone know who's who in town, people stop at the local tavern to pick up chicken dinners, and families attend special events at the local grade school, or gather at the church on Sundays for fellowship, or to enjoy a potluck lunch.

It's a quieter, peaceful place to live, yet within easy access to some bigger towns and even bigger cities. Downtown Chicago is just a little over an hour away to the east; the town of Rochelle (population 20,000) is just 5 minutes north; Dekalb (home of Northern Illinois University) is 15 minutes to the east, and the city of Rockford (population 300,000) is only 30 minutes north.

Steward, the recipient of The 1999 Governor's Hometown Award, recognizing volunteer efforts in renovating the elementary school, is located right off I-39 which runs north and south through the state, and is just a few minutes south of I-88, which runs east and west.

Lakes, rivers, camping, sporting events, golf courses, fine arts, music, theatre, museums, festivals, farmer's markets...

anything you might wish to experience...is just a short drive away. Or stay in town and enjoy the charming, small town living that Steward has to offer.

Steward, Illinois, was named for Wesley Steward, who in 1855 came to this area in Alto Township to settle the land owned by his father, Marcus Steward. John Grimes built the first house in Alto Township in Plum Thicket in 1847, located east on the outskirts of the village as it is today. In 1861, Mr. Steward married and built the first farm house in the location of Steward, which is still standing.

The town is located in the west central part of Alto Township and the northeast part of Lee County. Mr. Steward was influential in getting the Chicago and Iowa Railroad, now known as the Burlington Northern, through the township extending from Hinckley, Illinois to Rochelle, Illinois completed in 1870.

The Village Hall on Main Street is one of the oldest buildings in existence and the jail cells bought in 1903 and housed in the building are still one of the few reminders of the early days (not used). In 1872 Mr. Steward built the first elevator at the east end of Main Street run by steam. The history of the elevators in Steward over the years is a story in itself. The first house in Steward after the town's formation is on John Street, also standing today, built in 1872.

The railroad offices and warehouse were in Wesley Steward's barn until 1871,

when the first depot was then built. It is said to have burned down in 1894. The present depot, no longer in use by the Burlington Northern and in the process of being salvaged by a group of interested citizens of the village as a historical landmark, a museum, library, and social meeting place for anyone in the community, was built in 1896.

This project "The Steward Illinois Depot Project, Inc." was being projected as a Bicentennial venture during the 1976 year. In 1902 Steward was selected as the junctional point for the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad Company as they recognized the need for a railroad to run south out of Rockford, Illinois. The Milwaukee depot and switch tower for both railroads were on the northwest edge of town.

The first businesses were a restaurant and general merchandise store built in 1871. By the early 1900s, business houses were located on both sides of Main Street with a steady growth and expansion until the depression days when the town could then gradually see a decline in the businesses. The charter for the First National Bank of Steward was signed and issued on December 18, 1902.

A new building was erected and business started January 2, 1903 and continued till 1933. The first Post Office was established at Heaton Aug. 31, 1871 and located in the Steward depot. It was relocated in Steward April 12, 1876.

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# MONROE CENTER

**MONROE CENTER** — Monroe Center is a village in Ogle County, Illinois, United States, south-east of Rockford in Monroe Township. It is located on the Canadian Pacific Railway and on Illinois Route

72, about 0.6 miles east of Exit 111 from Interstate 39. The village had a population of 471 at the 2010 census. Monroe Center is on a hill and has many fields surrounding it. The Kil-

buck Creek along with the retention ponds and lakes alongside I-39 are the only bodies of water in the area. According to the 2010 census, Monroe Center has a total area of 1.21 square miles (3.13 km<sup>2</sup>), all land.

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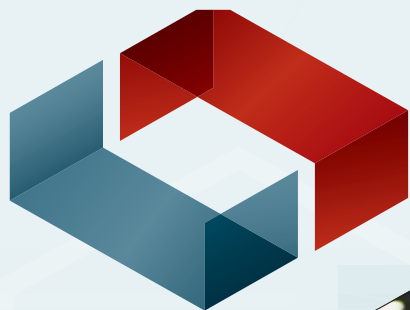
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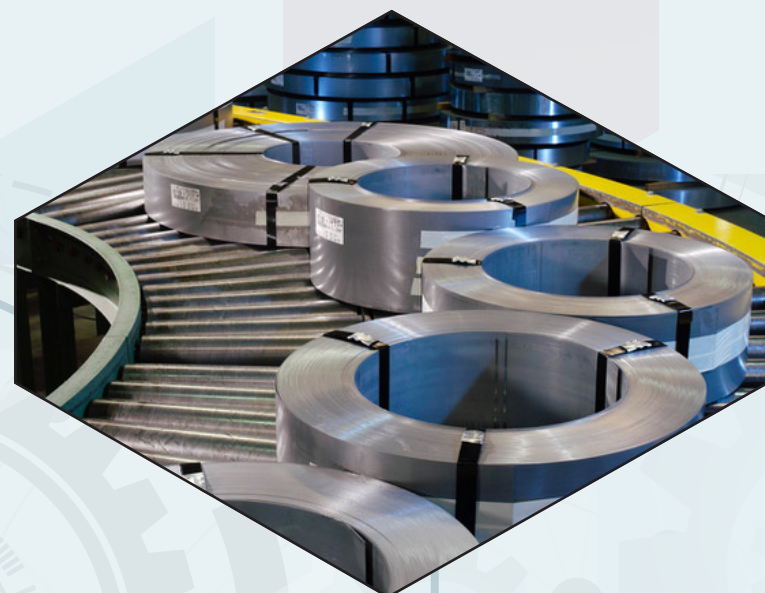
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