

FDR's legacy endures in local sites

UI's Illini Union among landmarks built by New Deal

By CHRIS SUNDHEIM

News-Gazette staff writer

The Washington, D.C., memorial dedicated today to Franklin Roosevelt is the first official memorial to the president, but it's not the only tribute to his 12 years in office.

Since the Great Depression, East Central Illinois has been dotted with brick-and-mortar

monuments to Roosevelt — fruits of New Deal programs that funded public construction projects in the 1930s.

In the middle of the Depression, when one-quarter of American adults were unemployed, Roosevelt's programs sought to provide government-financed jobs through initiatives to build schools, parks and municipal facilities.

"If there was ever a Ramses II in American political history, it was Franklin Delano Roosevelt," said Champaign Mayor Dan McCollum, referring to a 13th-cen-

More on memorials:

■ Clinton, others pay tribute to

FDR at dedication ceremony, A-8.

tury B.C. pharaoh credited with building some of ancient Egypt's largest temples.

Several local landmarks came about from New Deal funding, including the University of Illinois' Illini Union, Champaign Central High School, Urbana's Leal Elementary School, the Champaign City Building, and both the Champaign and Urbana National Guard armories.
Vermilion County's Kickapoo

State Park was another example.

Kickapoo had been almost inaccessible to visitors before the New Deal. Civilian Conservation Corps workers, who made the park their camp, planted trees, made trails and built camping, picnic and recreational areas on the former mining ground west of Danville.

Crews from the CCC and the Works Progress Administration worked on roads, drainage ditches, "whatever needed to be done," said Don Richter, presi-

See FDR'S LEGACY, A-8