Preserving Urbana's Ornamental Street Lights

Who would think that Urbana's first recorded ornamental street lighting project would still be operable after 70 years of service?

The Green Street Ornamental Lighting System Ordinance was passed July 7, 1919, for the construction of "60 Artificial Granite Standard Light Poles" with 16" glass balls using nitrogen lamps for Green Street from Matthews Ave. to Market Street (now Broadway Ave.).

The City Engineer, Alfred M. Danely, estimated that the complete project would cost $6,360.00. This project included detailed specifications to use specific sockets, film cutouts (manufactured by General Electric for Series lighting) and language that allowed the "Engineer" to have someone discharged if an employee did not follow instructions, was unfaithful, or abusive. Since this was an era for new methods and inventions, the ordinance allowed the awarded contractor all invention patents pertaining to this project as long as he paid the patent fees. Freeman & Sweet, from Chicago, Illinois, was awarded the contract by underbidding J.W. Swartz, Urbana, and O.G. Mayfield, Urbana, by a total bid of $5,850.00. This bid included the concrete poles, guaranteed to last five years, that were manufactured by Chicago Concrete Post Company.

Urbana has attempted to preserve the design and detail of these unique street lights, that are located throughout the older neighborhoods, by locating the companies that have been given the rights to manufacture the original pole design and the original capital/fixture. A new mold for the pole (now listed as the "Belmont") was recently built in Italy and transported to Stress Crete, Inc. in Canada. This new mold was created because of Urbana's concerns of needing a somewhat taller pole to help create uniform lighting with a higher maintained level. The capital/fixture which is now named the "Urbana capital" by King Luminaire, Inc. took on major internal modifications to incorporate the High Intensity Discharge lamps, ballasts, etc. but kept its ornate exterior design. In daytime, these poles/fixtures appear as they did during those vintage years, but at night the energy efficient High Intensity Discharge lamps create a higher level of uniform light. Estimated replacement cost to contractually replace the original 1919 Green Street lighting system with new poles and fixtures will average $2,500 per pole for a proposed total estimate of $150,000.00.

By creating these new poles, we can preserve the antique appearance but also replace the obsolete switchgear, controllers and lamps that are becoming harder to find. The most recent example was trying to locate 6.6 amp series lamps. Other cities throughout the Midwest that still use these original lighting systems were also contacting Urbana, trying to find spare lamps. After contacting companies in Japan and the Netherlands, Urbana was able to purchase lamps from a company located along the east coast. These lamps were only manufactured after the company supplied a minimum stocking level for their popular HID lamps.

Urbana has recently completed two retrofit street light projects using the new poles with the "Urbana capital". These lights can be seen on Green Street - Cottage Grove to Vine and Busey Ave. - Springfield to Washington.

This article was prepared by Tom Lewis, Operations Manager, Urbana Department of Public Works.
Orpheum Preservation Project

The Illinois Arts Council recently awarded PACA’s Orpheum Preservation Project (OPP) a $7330 grant for a needs/feasibility study of the historic theater. With these funds, the Orpheum Preservation Project committee can hire a consultant experienced in theater reuse to assess the need for a theater of the size and type of the Orpheum in the Champaign County area. Hopefully, alternative uses or development ideas can also be generated. As part of the grant, an arts interest survey will be conducted by OPP to appraise the physical needs of area arts organizations and individual artists.

The OPP committee plans to begin a fund raising campaign in the near future. Initially, funds are needed to cover the committee’s operating costs, advertise the availability of the theater to investors/developers, and evaluate the physical condition of the building prior to estimating renovation costs. The results of the needs/feasibility study and the structure report will set the stage for a major capital campaign to fund the restoration of the theater.

As of March 1, the City of Champaign had not finalized the purchase of the theater. Until the purchase is complete, the work of the OPP committee is hampered due to lack of access to the building. However, the Illinois Arts Council grant will enable the committee to move forward. The grant also gives the committee a morale boost since it is state-wide recognition of the project’s merit and acknowledges the contributions that the Orpheum Theater has made and still can make to the cultural environment of Illinois.

The grant is funded by the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

PRESERVATION ACTION:
THE NATIONAL CITIZENS LOBBY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

CAN YOU IMAGINE Seattle without Pioneer Square and the Arctic Building, Philadelphia without Society Hill, New York City without the Chrysler Building, Chicago without Printing House Row, Denver without Larimer Square, New Orleans without the French Quarter, or Charleston without Lodge Alley?

These historic buildings and neighborhoods — and thousands of other sites, objects, and districts — stand rehabilitated and revered in cities and towns across America because of the national historic preservation program and the rehabilitation tax credits. Everyone can point with pride to the preservation program’s effect on their own city’s revitalization.

Preservation programs, however, did not appear out of thin air. Citizens asked Congress to create, retain, and fund them. Since 1974, PRESERVATION ACTION has helped citizens tell Congress, “Preservation is important to our nation!”

What is Preservation Action?

Preservation Action (PA) is the only national grassroots lobby organized exclusively for historic preservation issues.

Through its network of board members, state lobbying coordinators, Tax Task Forces, and individual members, PA works to influence the course of federal historic preservation legislation. Coordination of this network is provided by knowledgeable, experienced Washington staff.

PA works closely with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Conference for State Historic Preservation Officers, and other national groups concerned with historic preservation. Funded and governed solely by its membership, PA is an independent advocate for historic preservation issues.

How does Preservation Action work?

Preservation Action’s staff maintains up-to-the-minute information on all aspects of federal historic preservation legislation. The Board of Directors utilizes this information to make policy and strategy decisions. The nationwide grassroots network then lobbies Congress to enact PA’s legislative initiatives.

PA’s network is not a “paper” network...it is a dedicated, effective group of activists who have a proven track-record of success with Congress. The network produces results, i.e., 3000 telephone calls to Representatives on the day prior to committee hearings on the rehabilitation tax credits. The staff’s knowledge of Congressional decision-makers and the involved, issue-oriented membership combine to form one of the most effective citizen lobbies in Washington.

What does Preservation Action do?

Preservation Action, founded in 1974, has a long record of success in lobbying for federal legislation and funding for historic preservation. PA played a major leadership role in developing successful strategies which resulted in both improved tax incentives for historic rehabilitation in 1976, 1978, and 1981, and in the 1980 amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act.

Facing repeal of the important historic rehabilitation tax credits at the hands of sweeping tax reform proposals in 1985, PA mounted the Tax Task Force project, acknowledged by many Washington insiders as one of the best grassroots lobbying efforts on the issue. The result was the retention of the credits for historic rehab at reduced, but viable, rates.

The continuing battle over the Administration’s zero dollar recommendation for the Historic Preservation Fund has been a fertile ground for PA lobbying success since 1980. Each year PA, the PA network, and the historic preservation coalition, faced with the zero dollar recommendation, have succeeded in convincing Congress to reinstate more than $25 million for the Fund.

Taxes and dollars are not the limits of Preservation Action lobbying. PA has stood, in each session of Congress, to protect and enact legislation on preservation and environmental issues which protect everything from parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted to archeological sites in Hawaii.

You can help Preservation Action!

Preservation Action raises its full budget every year through individual, organization, and corporate dues and contributions. PA’s small staff works hard to lobby and raise funds at the same time. The sentiments of one director of a major preservation group are insightful, “We want Preservation Action to spend time lobbying rather than fund raising. We have made PA a line item in our annual budget and encourage others who benefit from PA lobbying to do the same.”

All members of PA receive ALERT, the quarterly newsletter, COMMUNIQUE, a regular newsletter on tax matters published as part of the Tax Task Force project, and updates when lobbying action is needed immediately. Most importantly, these groups and individuals have Preservation Action as their voice and watchdog in Washington, assuring preservationists nationwide a fair hearing on all preservation issues.
Support your lobby in Washington!

A grassroots lobby is as strong as the number and commitment of its members. Keep Preservation Action strong and effective! Join the network! Become a member at the $35 individual, $100 organization/corporate, $1,000 Sponsor level. Contact Preservation Action at: 1350 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 401, Washington, DC 20036.

Sixth Annual Heritage Awards Presented

Presentation of the sixth annual Heritage Awards was made at the Annual Membership Meeting. The purpose of the Awards is to increase awareness of the important buildings and sites in the community, to promote the interests of preservation and conservation, and to acknowledge all of the special efforts and hard work that the owners expended in the renovation of their buildings.

This year's recipients are the following:

Landmark Heritage Award
Observatory Building, University of Illinois

Landscape Heritage Award
Green Street/Busey Avenue
Ornamental Street Light Restoration, City of Urbana
Landscape Program, Urbana Free Library, 201 S. Race St., Urbana
Brick Flower Beds at Vine, Main, & Illinois Streets, City of Urbana
Larry Birch Residence, 502 W. Washington St., Champaign

Residential Heritage Award
Kaufman-Anastasia-Rubel-Cybenko Residence, 704 W. University Ave., Champaign
Brown Residence, 406 S. Springfield Ave., Champaign
1898 Apartment Building, 308 N. State St., Champaign

Institutional/Commercial Heritage Award
Carmon's Restaurant, 415 N. Neil, Champaign
Allied Title Building, 220 W. Main, Urbana
B & W Photography, 118 N. Walnut, Champaign

Special Heritage Award
Landmark Preservation Council of Illinois
Jack Swing/Halean Swing/Donna Milner, Brown Bag Restaurant and adjacent buildings, Monticello

A new category, the UMPH Award, was begun this year. This award is “a pat on the back” or “a shot in the arm” for those projects that seem to be taking forever and which might need just a little encouragement to get over the hill. The 1990 “UMPH” projects are:

UMPH (Good Start) Award
Atkinson Building, 104 S. Neil St., Champaign
Residence, 411 W. Hill St., Champaign

Old House Source Notebook

PACA subscribes to a new source for information on preservation related products, Clem Labine's Traditional Building. This newspaper format publication discusses one or two topics per issue, such as historic wall coverings or traditional wood shutters, and investigates the various manufacturers of these products. A source list of reputable manufacturers is listed in each issue. The following is a list of past topics.

Architectural Metalwork
Traditional Roofing Materials
Historic Wall Coverings
Specialty Wood Flooring
Exterior Lighting
Wood Shutters
Ornamental Moldings
Historic Lighting

Copies of Traditional Building are available for reference at PACA's salvage warehouse, 65 E. University Ave., C; open Saturday mornings at 9:30.

Map Guide to Historic Illinois Places

Old State Capitol, Springfield 62701

Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.
PACA Annual Meeting

The Annual Membership Meeting was held February 18 at the Alpha Omicron Pi sorority house. Over forty members and guests attended and heard the preservation highlights of 1989.

The membership elected three directors to serve on the Board through 1992: Patricia Jensen (re-elected), Kennedy Hutson (re-elected), and Carolyn Badey. Currently serving are Jim Dobrovolny (90), Steve Roemmel (91), Nancy Delcomyn (91), and Joan Severns (91). Retiring from the Board is Hank Kaczmarski. Earlier, at the January Board meeting, Alice Edwards and Art Zangerl were appointed to fulfill the unexpired terms of Nina Rubel (90) and Wanda Bengoechea (90).

The Sixth Annual Heritage Awards were presented by committee chair, Steve Tyner-Wilson. Thirteen preservation projects around Champaign and Piatt counties were recognized and honored with a certificate of appreciation for all the hard work the owners had expended. A new category, the "UMPH Award," was also introduced.

Michael Svec presented a very informative and entertaining program on the UI's Observatory building. It was through Svec's research into the history and significance of the Observatory that the building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places and, just recently, was declared a National Historic Landmark, the highest honor that can be bestowed on a building. The Morrow Plots (just to the south of the Observatory) are the only other NHL in Champaign County. After the meeting, the UI's Astronomy Club hosted a tour of the Observatory dome room which included viewing sun spots through the historic 1895 telescope.

Volunteers in Preservation

Alpha Omicron Pi Sorority
Mark Replogle
Steve Tyner-Wilson
Melanie Tyner-Wilson
Stash Gorski
Michael Svec

New & Renewing Members

Mr. & Mrs. M. G. Snyder
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Espeseth
Mr. & Mrs. Reid T. Milner
Mr. & Mrs. Walter L. Myers
Mr. & Mrs. Harry Querry
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Irwin
James C. Bradbury
Ruth S. Walker
Samuel K. Gove
Debra A. Smith
Mr. & Mrs. Edwin C. Rae
Bruce C. Creamer
Dr. & Mrs. Victor Wojnar
Mrs. William M. Youngerman
Irma R. Lore
Cletara Walker
Mr. & Mrs. John Gilpin
Mr. & Mrs. Emile Talbot
Lianne Anderson
Mr. & Mrs. Allan Tuckman

Salvage Donations

DSC Thrift Store
Flora Faraci
Christine Hahn