



## PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Box 2555, Station A, Champaign, Illinois 61825

"The Past Has A Future"

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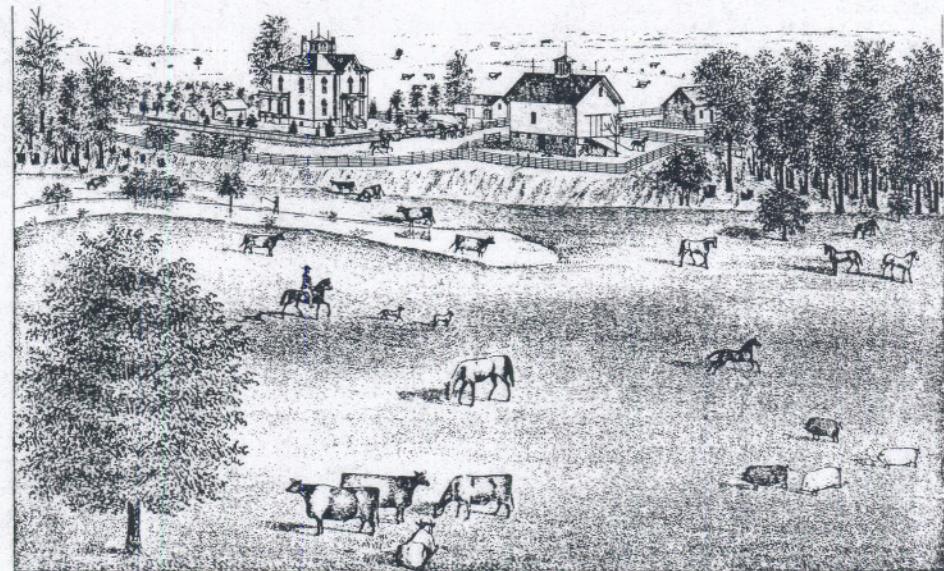


### Focus On: The Levi Wood House

The Levi Wood House was constructed between 1870 and 1873 by Mr. Wood, a prominent farmer of Champaign County, as his farm residence. It is a two story brick Italianate house, with a full basement and attic, which retains many interior features of fine quality including much of its interior woodwork. Original plasterwork ceiling moldings grace both of the first floor parlors, and even a finished basement room! The elegant curved stairway appears to have run from the basement up to the second floor at one time, but now only connects the first and second floors. The northeast parlor room contains a small marble fireplace. The house was altered slightly when the bathrooms and modern kitchen were added.

Unfortunately, the exterior of the house has lost some of its unique ornamental features such as its cupola, cornice frieze, and brackets. Ornate window hoods crown the top of each of the windows in the original square structure. There was a "summer kitchen" wing, added to the rear and southeast corner at a later date, which does not have the same detailing around its windows. But old photographs show that the summer kitchen addition was also ornamented; its porch, which faced to the north, was decorated with column, spindle, and fan millwork.

Mortgage and trust deed records appear to show that approximately \$6,000 was raised during the period from February of 1870 to February of 1873, probably to finance the original construction. An additional \$3,000 was raised in June of 1882, again through mortgages on the land, for the construction of the addition. It is interesting to note that there is a significant change in the quality of construction between the main house and the summer kitchen addition. The addition has not survived the ravages of time as well as has the original struc-



THE STOCK FARM (1000 ACRES) AND RESIDENCE OF LEVI WOOD, ON SEC<sup>2</sup> 5, 6, 7 & 8, T. 22, R. 14 (KERR Twp) CHAMPAIGN CO. ILL.

ture. Though significant deterioration of the summer kitchen has occurred, the original house is still quite sound.

The Levi Wood House is located in the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve of the Champaign County Forest Preserve District. The preserve is in the northeast corner of the county (Kerr Township) and is about six miles north of Penfield. While this preserve is the largest of the district's facilities, it is probably one of their best kept secrets. An annual event that generates considerable activity at the old farmstead is the I & I Tractor Club's Historic Farm Days. The club utilizes their own antique farm equipment to demonstrate bygone farming techniques on the land of the Forest Preserve District.

The District acquired much of the land in the 1970s and the parcel with the house in 1973. Since the acquisition, a limited amount of research has been done and initial inquiries made to determine any historical and architectural significance of the structure. The house is currently vacant and not open to the public.

Through the Citizens Advisory Committee, the Champaign County Forest Preserve District Board is seeking input regarding the future of the house. A subcommittee is being created especially to consider options for the building. The District is very open to suggestions and any help from persons having knowledge and experience relating to the research, evaluation, recording, financing, and potential use of historic structures.

An option that currently exists does include the possibility that demolition might occur if there is not shown to be serious interest and financial support in the community for the significant expense a restoration or adaptive use project would entail.

All interested persons are highly encouraged to become members of this subcommittee. Volunteers having any information (especially old photographs) they might have regarding the property are asked to contact Rose Geier-Wilson, Chair, Levi Wood House Subcommittee, CCFPD Citizens Advisory Committee, 217/359-0986 or 384-2430.

## Keeping America's Heritage Alive in Champaign County

Preservation Week, recently celebrated throughout the United States under the theme "Keeping America's Heritage Alive," gives us a good chance to see how we are doing locally in keeping our local heritage alive. Twenty-four years have gone by since Congress passed the National Historic Preservation Act which set up the National Register of Historic Places, the Historic Preservation Fund, and a program of grants to the states. Twelve years have elapsed since the federal government launched investment tax credits as an incentive to private commercial preservation efforts. We have had an Illinois State Historic Preservation Office in operation since 1969, and locally a very active and effective Preservation and Conservation Association (PACA) at work since 1980. What has been accomplished? What is yet to be done?

There are many preservation successes in Champaign County: Champaign's Art Deco City Hall, the classical Burnham Athenaeum, the humble Lorado Taft home, Urbana's High School, the Inman Hotel, Foellinger Auditorium (crowning gem of the campus Quadrangle), and many private homes and commercial buildings. Almost every one of these was seriously considered for demolition before decisions were reached to keep these elements of our heritage alive. In the weeks and years ahead, many other properties will become the focus for the question, "to keep or not to keep."

Wouldn't it be great if we could have a definitive list of what is worth keeping? The National Register is the start of such a list, but it will never be complete. Our community judgment on what to keep changes as new things get built and as we learn more about our past. Our values, our perceptions, our knowledge change.

Many efforts have been made to identify what is worth keeping, but they are spotty. In the early 1970s the state Preservation Office blanketed Illinois with a set of three county-by-county surveys, finding for example in Champaign County 123 structures of architectural merit, 32 historical landmarks, and a host of potential archeological dig sites. From time to time, various student and class studies have been done in and around the county. PACA has conducted systematic building-by-building surveys with state and federal funding assistance in twelve blocks of Downtown Champaign, the older sections of northwest Urbana, and 276 buildings on the University campus. These inventories



Griggs House, 505 W. Main, Urbana

list properties which merit careful judgment as to their future. But so do many other properties not yet on anyone's list.

The evaluation of individual properties is not easily done. I do not advocate keeping things just because they are old. But I do advocate keeping them if they add value to our community by being distinctive, handsome, economic, or sometimes just unusual. We should try to keep whatever is good, but it takes judgment to decide what that means. Nothing is likely to get saved unless it has an economic use, supported by private or public means. The best use for most properties is the original use, but adaptive use is often better than no use. I firmly believe that decision-makers (public officials and private venturers alike) should not be forced to act in ignorance. The heritage values in a property must be weighed against other values or potential ones. We need to know what they are, and to realize that they may not be measurable in dollars or in jobs.

So far, the best mechanism for preservation decisions is a review board or landmarks commission made up of informed specialists and laypersons to advise on actions. This has worked well at the federal level, in each of the states, and in 1000 local historic districts. Illinois already has 119 such districts, including ones in Decatur, Peoria, Quincy, Galesburg, Kankakee, Bloomington, and many smaller places. Champaign County has none yet, although there is interest in the subject in both Champaign and Urbana.

National Register listing brings not only the status of recognition, but also a slight degree of protection related to federal actions, and eligibility for financial and tax incentives. Only 27 properties in Champaign County have been so listed. We can easily see that this small number does not give an adequate representation of all that should be recognized within our local heritage. The National Register is only a step in the process, but it is often a prerequisite to

other preservation measures. Of the 26 Illinois counties with 1980 populations larger than 50,000, 21 had one or more historic districts listed through 1988 on the National Register of Historic Places. Only four counties in that group had fewer listed sites than Champaign, and these were all smaller in population than Champaign. We have no less heritage fabric than the other counties; we have just recognized less of it.

Preservation measures range widely from maintenance and painting to rehabilitation and moving buildings. The full range going on in our county. The Inman Hotel in downtown Champaign, by being listed on the National Register, is a "certified historic structure" eligible for investment tax credits which require federal rehabilitation standards to be observed. These credits have made it financially feasible to keep this element of our heritage alive. At present, there is only a handful of sites in our county where this incentive can be used; other places with commercial historic districts have dozens of such opportunities.

Much more is needed in Champaign County. Continuing surveys are needed to sort out what is worth keeping. Public protection through national registration and local designation of sites and districts will encourage investment and stabilization of neighborhoods. We need to apply these and the whole range of other preservation efforts in the near future if we are to succeed here in keeping our share of America's heritage alive.

**Lachlan F. Blair** is Professor Emeritus of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and is a past President of PACA. He has served eleven years as a member of the Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council. The above editorial was published in the *News Gazette* on June 24, 1990.

## National Register of Historic Places Champaign County, Illinois

Itgeld Hall, University of Illinois, Urbana  
burnham Athenaeum, 306 West Church  
Street, Champaign  
Cattle Bank, 102 East University Avenue,  
Champaign  
Chemical Laboratory, U of I, 1305 West  
Green Street, Urbana  
Greek Revival Cottage, 303 West  
University, Urbana  
Clark R. Griggs House, 505 West Main  
Street, Urbana  
Mahomet Graded School, Main Street,  
Mahomet (demolished)  
Metal Shop, U of I, 102 South Burrill  
Avenue, Urbana

Military Drill Hall and Men's Gymnasium,  
U of I, Urbana  
Morrow Plots, U of I, Urbana  
Natural History Building, U of I, Urbana  
Stone Arch Bridge, Springfield & 2nd,  
Champaign  
U.S. Post Office, Randolph and Church,  
Champaign  
U of I Astronomical Observatory, 901  
S. Matthews, Urbana  
Vriner's Confectionery, 55 Main Street,  
Champaign  
Alpha Xi Delta Sorority, 715 W. Michigan,  
Urbana  
Beta Theta Pi Fraternity, 202 E. Daniel,  
Champaign  
Kappa Sigma Fraternity, 212 East Daniel,  
Champaign

Chi Psi Fraternity, 912 S. Second,  
Champaign  
Delta Kappa Epsilon Fraternity  
(now Chi Phi), 313 E. John, Champaign  
Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity, 211 E.  
Daniel, Champaign  
Inman Hotel, 17 E. University,  
Champaign  
Mumford Farm House, U of I, Urbana  
Alpha Delta Phi Fraternity, 310 E. John,  
Champaign  
Phi Mu Sorority (now Beta Sigma Psi  
Fraternity), 706 W. Ohio, Urbana  
Delta Upsilon Fraternity, 312 E. Armory,  
Champaign  
Kappa Delta Rho Fraternity, 1110  
S. Second, Champaign

## Orpheum Preservation Project

July will be a busy month for the Orpheum Theater. The Committee has chosen ArtSoft Management as the needs assessment consultant for the Orpheum Project. Michael Hardy, former director of the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, will be the principal in charge of the project. He is tentatively scheduled to be in Champaign July 19 and 20 during which time he will meet with various artistic, civic, political, and development leaders. The Committee is also planning an open meeting so that the general public can share their ideas for the theater. Details concerning Mr. Hardy's visit and the public meeting will be sent to PACA members at a later date.

Early July should also be the time of the great unveiling of the original Orpheum facade! Negotiations with the City are proceeding with the hope that the Committee will be able to "peel away" the aluminum "skin" in the near future. Preliminary investigations suggest that most of the Classical facade is intact including the windows and half-columns. The cornice and parapet, however, were removed when the aluminum was attached. The unveiling will be a tremendous boost for the building's "morale" and will visually demonstrate to the general public the building's architectural importance. It will also be a great boon to the entire downtown scene!

In addition, the Committee has prepared blueprints of the existing structure and has received preliminary cost estimates for the theater's basic rehabilitation. The cost to bring the building up to code, replace the electrical and air-conditioning systems, recondition the heating system, repair the roof, do plaster repair and painting, etc. is estimated at \$350,000. This figure is much lower than previously projected and should make the building more attractive to developers.

Ideas and proposals for the building's future use are always welcome. Please call PACA with your thoughts or development tips.

## Membership Application P.A.C.A.

### MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY:

#### INDIVIDUAL

<input type="checkbox"/> Adult .....	\$10.00	<input type="checkbox"/> RENEWAL
<input type="checkbox"/> Student (½ time or more) .....	\$ 5.00	
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Citizen .....	\$ 5.00	
<input type="checkbox"/> Family (includes all members of a household with no more than two members being over age 21) .....	\$15.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Additional Contribution _____

#### CIVIC

<input type="checkbox"/> Over 100 members .....	\$100.00
<input type="checkbox"/> 50-100 members .....	\$ 75.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Up to 50 members .....	\$ 50.00

#### CORPORATE

<input type="checkbox"/> .....	\$ 50.00
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#### NEW MEMBERSHIP

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

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City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to: PACA, Box 2555, Station A, Champaign, Illinois 61825

Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

## New & Renewing Members

Anne A. Ehrlich  
Mr. & Mrs. Donald Miller  
Mike & Bonnie Specchio  
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Dr. William D. Youngerman  
Debbie Nelson & Paul Joffe  
Caroline Hibbard  
Nina Rubel  
Mark Netter  
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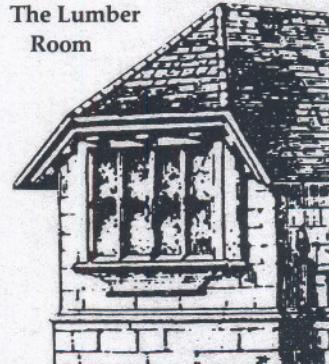
## Volunteers in Preservation

Mark Reogle	Alice Edwards
Bob Swisher	Karen Kummer
Rex Kummer	Regina Galer-Unti
Hank Kaczmarski	Peggy Shaw
David Spears	Al Frederick
Denny Lewis	Steve Baker
Steve Roemmel	Ron Baker
Carolyn Baxley	
Champaign County Public Service	
R. L. Brownfield	
Max Overmeyer/Meadow Gold	
Tom Check/Plasti-Pak	

## Salvage Donations

University of Illinois  
English Brothers Construction Company  
Allan Eckel  
John Cheesman  
Kyle Robeson  
Sandra Braman  
Tom Ennis Excavation Service  
City of Urbana  
Nancy Endress

The Lumber Room



Have you ever been called a jerkinhead? If so, you probably deserve it. A jerkinhead is not an aluminum or vinyl siding salesman, it's an architectural term used to describe a clipped or hipped gable, sometimes seen on dormers. As for dormers, the word originally is derived from Latin and subsequently the French word *dormire*, to sleep, hence, a dormer is a window on a roof where sleeping facilities are provided. If you like words as much as we do and you have a word or term related to architecture or the building trades you'd like to share with our readers, drop us a line.

PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION  
ASSOCIATION  
Box 2555, Station A, Champaign, Illinois 61825

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Kennedy Hutson, President  
Steven Roemmel, Vice-President  
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