



PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

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PACA Becomes A Landowner

Due to the generosity of PACA member, Jack Richmond, the Preservation Association has become the owner of a strategic piece of property—five acres of Sangamon River bottom land. The importance of this land is due to its location next to the historic Hazen Bridge, one of the few remaining iron truss bridges in Champaign County.

Minutes of the Commissioners of Highways meetings record that the bridge was built in 1893 by the Severs Manufacturing Company of Oscaloosa, Iowa for a cost of \$4,985. It is a Pratt truss design bridge, a common metal truss form in the late nineteenth century. According to *Bridge Truss Types: A Guide to Dating and Identifying*, "most metal trusses in America are of two basic forms, the Pratt and the Warren. Both forms date back to the 1840s, but many of the bridges employing these trusses that still survive were built since the turn of the century. During the last half of the nineteenth century, many different trusses were developed, but, in the ensuing competition, the Pratt and Warren forms gradually demonstrated their versatility, durability, and economic desirability to such an extent that by the early twentieth century, almost all bridge trusses were constructed using variations of one of these forms.

The basic Pratt truss was patented in 1844 by Thomas and Caleb Pratt and is distinguished by vertical members acting in compression and diagonals acting in tension. This design feature reduced the length of the compression members to help prevent them from bending or buck-



The Hazen Bridge, an 1893 Pratt iron-truss bridge, spans the Sangamon River north of Mahomet.

ling. Visually, the compression and tension members are clearly different: the thin diagonal eyebars are in tension and the posts (two heavy channel beams joined by riveted bracing) take the compressive loads."

PACA has entered into an agreement with the Newcomb Township Road Commissioner to take possession of the historic bridge once a new bridge is built to the immediate south. The bridge and the five acres surrounding the bridge will be preserved in memory of the Richmond family, early area landowners. Jack Richmond's grandfather purchased a large tract of land in the 1880s and they have farmed in the area ever since. PACA is working with the CCDC Foundation, which owns land adjacent to PACA's tract, to begin the development of a nature preserve in

the area.

A very special thank you goes to Mr. Jack Richmond for his very generous donation and for his desire to see the bridge preserved. Special thanks is also due to the hard-working volunteer* (who wishes to remain anonymous), who has seen this project through since its inception in 1988. PACA extends a heartfelt thanks to both of these individuals.

Save the Date: Sunday, October 6

PACA is sponsoring a house tour on West Main Street, Urbana. The tour will feature eight houses and two churches. Volunteers are needed to staff the houses, please call PACA (328-7222) to sign up for your time slot.



The Channing-Murray Foundation is located at 1209 West Oregon, Urbana.

Focus On: Channing-Murray Foundation

The Channing-Murray Foundation (Unitarian Church of Urbana) is an extant example of an architectural type promoted and distributed by the American Unitarian Association (AUA), especially in the Midwest, to develop new congregations.

The architecture of the Unitarian Church of Urbana was consistent with a set of missionary ideals being promoted by the AUA at the time. The design for the building was derived from a 1903 pamphlet entitled *Plans for Churches*. The pamphlet was distributed free of charge by the AUA in 1902-03 to encourage the establishment of new churches, particularly in the West, and to set aesthetic standards for Unitarian missions.

The designs promoted by the AUA were architectural expressions of the unity of secular ethics (the home) with religion (the church). This expression was visible already in the design of the Hinsdale, Illinois, Unitarian Church of the 1880s. The minister in Hinsdale, William Channing Gannett, helped design his church with a domestic scale and

details to reflect the continuity of home and religious life.

Gannett, who was prominent in the Western Unitarian Conference, was a correspondent and visitor to the Urbana congregation. He wrote essays on the development of architectural forms that unify the spiritual and domestic. Similar ideals also appear in the American Unitarian Association plan book and the Urbana Unitarian Church.

The first example of the particular plan used to build the Unitarian Church of Urbana was the All Souls' Unitarian Church, built in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1905-06. The Urbana church was the next version built from these plans in 1907-08. The designer was Walter C. Root, the younger brother of the well-known John Wellborn Root of Burnham and Root in Chicago. Walter Root had worked for the Chicago firm from 1879-1887. Walter Root then managed the Burnham and Root projects in Kansas City, and established his own firm, Root and Siemens, in Kansas City by 1889.

Photographs of the Kansas City church show that although the exterior look of the church, the scale, and the plan were derived from sug-

gestions in *Plans for Churches* and were identical to the Urbana version, the interior was more opulent in its design than the Urbana church. The scale was domestic: a 1923 article states the church was designed to fit in with the residential neighborhood in which it was built. Root's All Souls' Unitarian Church burned in 1957; therefore, the Unitarian Church in Urbana is the oldest extant example of this design.

The booklet distributed by the AUA presents eight model churches with ground plans, perspectives, and practical advice on fund raising, building, and decorating. Five of these model churches resemble the Urbana church in plan or in details. Details which are intact in the Urbana church include the vertical sliding partition to divide the chapel from the parlor, the use of native stone, and the diamond leaded glass. Other aspects of the building that reflect the AUA influence are the corner location, the low walls, the combination of wood, stone and stucco, tinted watercolor on the interior plaster, a domestic scale, and such details as the side parlor with a fireplace.

The Building Committee of the Unitarian Church of Urbana included prominent professors of art and architecture at the University of Illinois, who were also founding members of the church: Nathan C. Ricker, Dean of Architecture and Fine Arts and Dean of Engineering; Rexford Newcomb, Professor of the history and practice of painting; and Newton A. Wells, Professor and later Dean of Architecture and Fine Arts. Ricker was the director of the entire Unitarian Church construction project and, with Newton A. Wells, he collaborated on the decoration of the Church.

The Channing-Murray Chapel's Tudor Revival style is well-coordinated with its materials and workmanship. The use of natural materials and the informal plan suit the needs of a congregation wanting to welcome newcomers and provide a comfortable setting for philosophic discussions. The church layout does

not resemble the plans of many Tudor Revival houses, though. Its massing and intimate spaces recall bungalows and small craftsman houses.

The main west facade is distinguished by a corner stone tower with an octagonal bellcast roof on the north that anchors the building and directs one to the entrance. Projecting piers of stone at the four corners of the tower add to its mass and frame the three windows on the west and north that illuminate what was once a library on the second floor. The porch is covered with a gable that is braced by timbers that cross to form an "X". The large open space of the sanctuary is obvious in the treatment of the single bay just to the south of the tower. A rough limestone wall, punctuated by three modest windows, is topped by a wide stuccoed front-facing gable roof decorated with a band of half-timbering in a cross pattern and a small tripartite window.

The south facade faces a parking lot away from the street and has three tripartite windows and several square windows near the side door that is reached by a ramp, added in 1987. Half-height brick buttresses brace the south wall.

To the east and rear, a simply framed wood and stucco section rises two stories above a common bond brick base and houses what is now a kitchen and a bedroom (formerly offices). The rear entrance, under a

sloped, bracketed overhang, leads to a stairway that routes one up to the sanctuary and down to the basement. There is also a separate entrance for the basement. This rear section is delineated by vertical and horizontal slats that break up the white stucco facade. Windows fit in between these slats: four evenly spaced on the top floor and one group of three and a small rear window on the ground floor. A horizontal course of wood runs just below the eaves. An alcove designed by Rexford Newcomb in 1911 to house the organ is visible on the east side. A 15 x 30-foot meeting room, one story in height, abuts the sanctuary to the north and is identifiable from the outside by the fireplace chimney and two sets of three windows each that run between the stone walls and the eaves. On this north side, the roof slants down from its apex over the sanctuary, changing its incline at the tower to extend over the band of windows.

The interior decoration is modest. Windows with green and amber cat's paw pattern glass (from Kokomo, Indiana) remain in the sanctuary, but clear glass was substituted for the green windows in the Fireplace Room. Green glazed Roman brick surrounds the fireplace itself, picking up on the green tints of the sanctuary windows. At one time, stencil designs by Newton A. Wells were applied on the walls of the sanctuary. When the

chancel was redesigned to accommodate the organ, the stencil decorations in the sanctuary may have been covered over. The pews were removed about 15 years ago to increase the flexibility of the space, but the chapel still has the original chancel furniture and several pews. A mission style bench and several chairs in the Fireplace Room are also part of the original furnishings. Otherwise, the warmth of the wood floors and ceiling, and wooden folding doors between the sanctuary and the Fireplace Room now provide the interest on the main floor. The wooden trusses in the sanctuary are a simplification of a hammerbeam form: the triangular braces carry pointed arches along the rafters up to the ridge.

Most alterations were undertaken to complete a building built on a slim budget. Tie bars had to be installed a year after construction to prevent the peaked roof trusses from thrusting outward. In 1938, the antiquated heating arrangement was replaced with an innovative high-volume forced air system designed by church member Seichi Konzo. The basement was added in the late 1940s, according to original plans.

(Adapted from the National Register nomination prepared by Sharon Irish. The Channing-Murray Foundation was listed this past May)

Membership Application P.A.C.A.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY:

INDIVIDUAL

- Adult.....\$10.00
 Student (1/2 time or more)\$ 5.00
 Senior Citizen.....\$ 5.00
 Family (includes all members of a household with no more than two members being over age 21).....\$15.00

Additional Contribution _____

CIVIC

- Over 100 members.....\$100.00
 50-100 members\$ 75.00
 Up to 50 members\$ 50.00

CORPORATE

.....\$ 50.00

NAME _____

RENEWAL

NEW MEMBERSHIP

ADDRESS _____
Street 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.

Dana House Bus Trip Seats Still Available

There are still seats available for the September 21 bus trip to the Dana-Thomas House in Springfield. The bus will leave Champaign at 10 a.m. and return about 6 p.m. Springfield stops include the Old State Capitol and a special guided tour of the Dana House. Lunch is on your own, but refreshments will be provided on the bus. The cost is \$10.00 for PACA members and \$15.00 for non-members. Make your reservation by calling PACA (328-7222); prior payment must be received to guarantee a seat.

The Discovery Place

The Orpheum Preservation Project has taken a giant step forward with the incorporation of The Discovery Place—a children's museum set in the historic theatre. Not-for-profit status for the new corporation is currently underway and Board of Directors is being formed.

During the month of September, work on cleaning and repairing the facade will begin. A contractor has been hired to remove the remaining support structure from the 1965 aluminum sheathing, repoint the masonry as needed, replace deteriorating plywood in the transoms, and water clean the facade. Painting of the wood elements will follow. The storefront shop areas will also be cleaned out and general site clean-up will be done. By October, the historic theatre will begin to look like the "grand old dame" that it is.

Preservation & Conservation Association
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PACA Newsletter

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