PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Volume 15

PACA Salvage Warehouse: A Perspective

The 1994 January-February issue of the PACA newsletter contained excerpts from an article written by S.D. Cosper, W.H. Hallenbeck, and G.R. Brenniman for the Office of Solid Waste Research at the University of Illinois-Chicago. That article highlighted PACA's role in saving useful architectural items from landfills and was based on efforts during the 1990 Harker Hall renovation project. It also mentioned the special considerations necessary for our type of salvage operation to be successful. Among the key elements were:

- a group of people willing to devote time to salvaging,
- a good rapport with local governments,
- a secure well-staffed storeroom/showroom.

It is the purpose of this article to expand upon some of these points, and to provide an update on warehouse activities.

Although the primary mission of PACA is to preserve and protect architecturally significant buildings in the community, when demolition is unavoidable, we try to salvage as many of the architectural features as practical. PACA has a warehouse open to the public where salvaged and donated material is offered for sale. This provides low cost materials that help businesses and individuals remodeling their properties. The proceeds from these sales have funded a number of community projects over the years, most recently the Forbes House project, a replacement roof for the Orpheum Theatre, and the Heritage Grant program.

The concept of a salvage warehouse began with the founding of PACA in 1981. One of the first salvage projects involved buildings on North Neil Street that were demolished for the Bank of Illinois. For years the salvage operation ran out of members' basements and garages. In the mid-1980s the current location, at 65 East University in Champaign, was rented. The initial space was expanded in 1992 with the renting of the adjacent "heated space" at 104 North Water Street. The warehouse currently occupies about 2500 square feet and is open every Saturday morning at 9:30. It is staffed by volunteers, usually Bob Swisher, Dick Elkin or Rich Cahill and occasionally Al Friederich, Mike Miller, Pius Weibel, Steve Roemmel, and Gary Perkins.

Supply

PACA does not buy salvage material and must depend on direct donations from the public or material it has been given permission to salvage from the public or private sector. PACA has developed good working relationships with the University of Illinois, the cities of Urbana and Champaign, and some demolition contractors. Formal "ties" with the University include a "Request for Removal of Salvage Items" form that has been especially useful in providing security at the buildings on the University campus.

Since 1991, the University of Illinois has provided a very significant amount of material salvaged from its north engineering campus. Several very large buildings including the Aeronautical Engineering Laboratory B, Electrical Engineering Research Laboratory, Electrical Engineering Research Annex, and the Woodshop/Foundry were demolished to make way for the new Grainger Engineering Library and engineering quad. Even though PACA led an intense, but unsuccessful, public campaign to preserve these significant buildings, the University allowed PACA to salvage architectural components from the structures. During these operations, PACA was given approximately two weeks for each project. The University has also provided additional material from the demolition of a number of frame houses in the campus area, as well as material from remodeling projects such as Gregory Hall and the Peabody Avenue Residence Halls. It is estimated that 250 pick-up loads of useful material were saved as a result of these operations.

Construction in the immediate campus area has resulted in a number of salvage sites. Often PACA learns of these locations when a demolition permit is requested from the City of Urbana. Recently established ties with the City of Champaign will improve acquisitions from projects associated with the Boneyard drainage project. Frequently, demolition contractors will contact PACA directly to coordinate salvage operations. It is important for PACA to make sure that all of these contacts are made while the project is underway, so that PACA can be aware of the potential for salvage before the site is cleared.
when they observe architectural features they think should be saved. However, under these circumstances there is often little time available to organize a salvage crew and only a limited number of items can be saved. Our best resource has been developers who are willing to permit salvage prior to demolition. This is an advantage since we have more time to enlist volunteers and often electrical power is still available. We actively encourage developers to call PACA before they demolish and will provide an itemized list of material salvaged since these items can be considered a charitable donation. PACA carries a $1 million general liability insurance policy and our volunteers work fast—in most cases a moderate size house can be salvaged easily over a weekend.

Our third source of materials is direct donations from contractors and homeowners doing remodeling projects. Again, PACA provides a receipt listing the items received for tax purposes. We also can arrange for pick up of material (i.e. claw foot bathtubs) that may be hard for the owners to move. However, we do request that potential donors call the PACA answering machine or visit the warehouse first. Some material may not be suitable, may not be in high demand, or may create storage problems. Two examples are storm windows and radiators. Often material is left at our front door, which, besides looking bad, may get stolen.

Demand

With the ever rising cost of building materials and the interest in the restoration of old homes and businesses, demand has always been high for salvage items. Below are a few examples of how material from our warehouse is being used.

Foundry Molds: used as models for drawing classes at Parkland College, Illinois State University and the University of Wisconsin

Porch Columns: used in display area of Bittersweet Antiques, Urbana

Built-in Kitchen Cupboard: reused at Steeple Gallery, Monticello

Slate Blackboards: used at Countryside School, Champaign

Wood column from UI Beckman Institute demolitions used to conceal an iron support column at Baxley Media, Urbana.

6,000 lb. stone machine calibration platform salvaged from UI North Campus demolitions. This effort required coordination from the UI, PACA, a stone company and crane operator.

"School House" Light Fixtures: used by the Blind Pig & Old Main Book Shop, Champaign

Laboratory Benches: refurbished by ISOTECH Laboratories, Champaign

Claw Foot Tub: Urbana Kindergarten class reading nook

Some of the more unusual items currently at the warehouse include: a barber's chair, a wood-burning stove, classic sinks, claw foot tubs, photo plates from the 1950s, architectural forms, walk-in refrigerator doors, oak pocket doors, an antique gas stove as well as lots of doors, hardware, spindles, and trim.

PACA also maintains a "want list" for such items as wood floors and radiators which we either don't have room to store or are difficult and time consuming to remove. The salvage operation is PACA's main revenue source with receipts averaging about $150/week; total net receipts for 1994 were $23,392.46. Expenses for sales tax, rent, truck maintenance, insurance, and the like totalled $5,433.96. The average number of customers during the limited Saturday hours is 10 to 30 people.
Become a PACA Rat

To continue to operate efficiently and to reduce volunteer "burn-out," the warehouse needs the following:

- More volunteers to take a regular Saturday morning shift,
- "On-call" volunteers for an occasional salvage project—weekday or weekend,
- One-time volunteers for the annual warehouse organizational/clean-up day.

To volunteer, please call 328-7222 and leave your name or stop by the warehouse any Saturday morning. The work is fun, the company great, and it's a great stress-reducer.

The future of the warehouse at its current location is uncertain. Due to the recent death of our landlord, John Solon, our rental arrangement is unsure. In addition, the City of Champaign will be requiring extensive, and necessary, repairs to the building in the near future. These include repointing the exterior masonry, window and floor repair, and the possible addition of a sprinkler/alarm system.

Who will pay for these items and how the work will be done is something that PACA must negotiate with the new owners. However, relocation is always a possibility and we ask our members to be on the lookout for alternative salvage warehouse space.

This article was written by PACA Board member and Salvage Chair, Rich Cahill.

The Color Doctor is Coming

Color Anxiety. It's more common than the common cold and just about as curable. You know you've got a serious case of it because when it's time to paint the house, instead of buying that luminous shade of forest green you've been dreaming about, you're reaching for the cans of white paint instead. And it's not just white; it's got to be white white; even almond, oriental silk and dove make your palms sweat.

But not to worry because historic paint consultant John Crosby Freeman will be giving a free lecture on Wednesday, March 8 (7:00 pm, Champaign City Council Chambers, 102 N. Neil) and he will deal with just those sorts of anxieties. "More people are using color because they know that color is magic," says Freeman. "But they are afraid of making a mistake. Color anxiety is caused by uncertainty about color placement."

Freeman, a former college professor who has developed historic colors for major paint companies and who has created color schemes for hundreds of houses, says the color issue has become more important as the next century approaches, because owners of older houses have become interested in painting them in colors appropriate to the period and style of their home. Although some owners take the costly course of commissioning a paint analysis to determine original colors, most simply stick with a period color scheme that reflects their taste and emphasizes the house's architectural elements.

But unless you live in a museum, there is no reason to paint the house in its original colors unless you like them. "People worry about what's going to work on their house. Forget about that," says Freeman. He can work with anybody's colors, no matter how outrageous they are, if he can pick one more color and as long as he decides where each color goes. Normally he picks a neutral body color, covering the largest area of the exterior.

Then if someone chooses something like hot pink or purple, he places it into smaller areas which he calls intimate zones. Homeowners want their places to look festive, but not frivolous.

Why the emphasis on color? Color can draw attention to a house, a big plus in today's competitive real estate market. Pleasing colors will sell a house faster than others in the same neighborhood painted white, or beige, or gray. Freeman often quotes Mae West: "It's better to be looked over than to be overlooked."

Lately, even owners of ranches and split-level homes have been consulting him, often looking for help in reducing the impact of prominent double-door garages. In fact, smaller houses offer more color opportunities since modest-sized houses wear bright colors well, while those colors become obnoxious on large structures.

The Color Doctor will be available on the mornings of March 9 and 10 for private, 50-minute, on-site paint color consultations. There is a $40.00 fee for PACA members ($50.00 for non-members) that must be prepaid to reserve your time. Contact PACA (328-7222) for more information.

Membership Application P.A.C.A.

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

Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.
Historic Preservation Days

On March 15-16, there is a unique opportunity to learn more about current legislative issues and to talk with your legislators about the benefits of preservation and its importance to you and your community. As supporters of preservation efforts in Illinois, it is up to us to keep our government apprised of preservation concerns so that we can work together to protect our heritage.

Preservation Days is an annual event that provides Illinois preservationists an opportunity to work on statewide public policy issues with each other and with elected officials. These lobbying days are sponsored by the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois and the Illinois Association of Historic Preservation Commissions. Issues on the agenda include:

- Maintaining funding for the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency,
- Expansion of the Illinois Main Street Program, and
- Combating the Illinois Homebuilders Assoc. challenge to preservation laws.

March 15 begins with a 6:00 pm dinner that includes registration and a briefing session on 1995 preservation issues. Thursday starts with a working breakfast, followed by a press conference announcing Illinois' 10 most endangered historic properties. The remainder of the day is open for individual meetings between legislators and constituents.

For additional information, contact PACA. The $40 fee includes materials, dinner and breakfast.

Old House Journal
Subscriptions Available

PACA is once again inviting its members to save money and help PACA's treasury at the same time! By subscribing to or renewing your subscription to the Old House Journal for $24.00, you save $4.00 on the subscription price and PACA gets to keep $10.00. Last year we raised $140.00. This year we would like to do even better. Remember, subscriptions make great gifts!

To renew or subscribe anew, send your check to PACA for $24.00 by March 10. If renewing, please enclose a copy of your mailing label to ensure accurate processing.

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Richard Cahill
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Kids Building Fair
May 20
11:00 - 4:00
Orpheum Theatre Parking Lot

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