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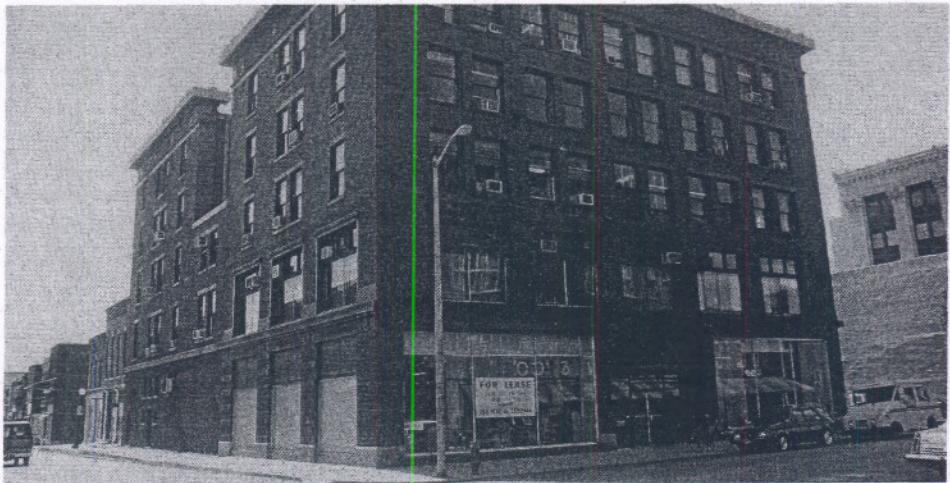
Number 6

Focus on: Lincoln Building

Located at the southwest corner of East Main and Market streets in downtown Champaign, the Lincoln Building was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places for Architecture as a locally significant example of the Commercial Style. With its tripartite division of base, shaft, and capital; fixed storefront sash and second story display sash, each with transoms; and regularly spaced double-hung upper story windows, the Lincoln Building represents a state-of-the-art store/office building for early twentieth century Champaign. Five stories tall and fireproof in construction, the mottled brown brick building with Classical Revival inspired brown terra cotta trim and a copper cornice includes fine materials and solid construction, an appropriately handsome building built by one of Champaign's most prominent families. The interior of the Lincoln Building features an extensive use of marble, terrazzo, and wood trim in its office corridors of intact suites with single light doors and three-light interior corridor transoms. Today, the building's architecture and impressive high degree of integrity contribute to this building's continued landmark presence in downtown Champaign. The period of significance is 1916, representing the building's date of completion. The building was designed by prominent local architect H.R. Temple, who had an office in the Lincoln Building upon its opening.

Commercial Style

Technical advances such as steel skeleton construction, elevators, electric lights, and telephones contributed to the innovation of the "skyscraper," which, at the turn of the century, was any building five stories or taller. With the steel skeleton supporting the building, walls were new territory for design changes, chiefly in a greatly increased percentage of wall space occupied by windows. What, exactly, to call



North and east elevations of the Lincoln Building, 44 East Main Street, Champaign. (Alice Novak, 1996)

the style of these evolving late nineteenth and turn of the century buildings may be open to debate, but typically, some variety of these buildings get lumped into the term "Commercial Style." Marcus Whiffen credits the first use of the term in print to an anonymous editor of four volumes of *Industrial Chicago*, published in 1891. Cites Whiffen,

The Commercial Style is the title suggested by the great office and mercantile buildings now found here. The requirements of commerce and the business principles of real estate owners called this style into life. Light, space, air and strength were demanded by such requirements and principles as the first objects and exterior ornamentation as the second.

The second principle of the aforementioned—exterior ornamentation—opens companion stylistic comparisons: Richardsonian Romanesque, Sullivan-esque, and even Classical Revival. The term "Chicago Style" also comes into consideration. Whiffen notes the tendency toward crediting Chicago as the birthplace of the Commercial Style, as well as the city in which the style reached its ultimate development. He credits the period of the Commercial Style from 1875 through 1915.

Characteristics of the Commercial Style include a building height of five to sixteen stories; steel skeleton construction with masonry wall surfaces; minimal, if any, projections from the facade plane; flat roofs; level parapets or cornices; 1/1 double-hung sash; prismatic transoms; and minimal applied ornament. By far, the greatest element of the style is windows, comprising much of Commercial Style buildings' main facades. The result of the total area of glass exceeding that of the brick (or other structural or facing material) is a skeletal appearance. If any ornamentation is used on the building, it is clearly ancillary to the fenestration. Windows of this style are rectangular, very large, and variously divided; the fenestration pattern, whether of single or grouped windows, is quite regular. One popular form of grouped window used in the Commercial Style became known as the Chicago window—a broad central fixed sash flanked by narrow double-hung sash. In still other examples, windows are located in semi-hexagonal bays which extend the entire height of the building (above the first or second stories). Typically, facades are terminated in cornices, varying from plain to highly decorative treatments.

Built in 1915-16, the Lincoln Building in Champaign is a relatively late example of the Commercial Style. By the 1880s, the style was already popular in New York, Chicago, and other large Eastern and Midwestern cities. Despite William Le-Baron Jenney's early examples of buildings in the style (First Leiter Building, 1879 and the Home Insurance Building, 1884-85, both in Chicago), some of the more notable Commercial Style buildings of the style's earliest period were designed by Adler and Sullivan. Included are the Troescher Building (the Chicago Joint Board Building), 1884; the Wirt Dexter Building, 1887; and, at the end of that period, the Wainwright Building in St. Louis, designed in 1890, and exhibiting the Sullivan-esque treatment.

In the 1890s, the Chicago based architectural firm of Holabird and Roche became the most successful firm specializing in commercial work in the city. Their Tacoma Building, 1887-89 represented their first attempt at the Commercial Style; demolished in 1929, that building was in the vertical bay mode of the style. Later examples of the firm's use of the style, including the Marquette Building of 1893, discontinued that mode, using instead, broad rectangular windows extending the full width of structural bays. Contemporaneously, Sullivan was employing facades with piers and spandrels in the same plane, with long horizontal lines at the sill levels being unbroken. Examples are the Meyer Building, 1893, and the Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company Store, 1899, both in Chicago.

The Lincoln Building in Champaign fits well within the defining elements of the Commercial Style. Five stories in height, the Lincoln Building is constructed of structural steel encased in fireproof material with the exterior walls clad in mottled brown brick with brown terra cotta trim. The facades are flat with the exception of a light well on the east. The full entablature is nearly flat or level, with the exception of shields which project periodically only slightly above the copper fascia of the cornice. Windows are large 1/1 double-hung sash; display windows have prismatic transoms. The building's applied Classical Revival ornament is clearly ancillary to its fenestration. The front section of the building is monopolized by large storefront sash (originally with prismatic transoms) on the first story, and large display sash with three-light transoms on the second story. The upper stories are dominated by large 1/1 double-hung sash. The facade terminates in a full entablature with Classical Revival elements.

The use of Classical Revival ornament

on the Lincoln Building is not surprising. The Classical Revival style was especially popular for public buildings from the turn of the century to the mid-twentieth century, having gained prominence through its use at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and the 1901 Pan-American Exhibition in San Francisco. The exposition planners of the Chicago fair mandated a classical theme, with many of the era's noted architects designing dramatic colonnaded buildings arranged around a central court. The widely attended exposition inspired architectural fashion around the country.

Located approximately 120 miles south of Chicago, Champaign-Urbana could hardly be considered an architectural mecca, but the architectural trends which had inspired the nation were seen here as well. The second story display windows of the Lincoln Building are not on any other buildings in Champaign-Urbana. This element is at least reminiscent of (if not directly inspired by) the Adler and Sullivan designed Guaranty (Prudential) Building in Buffalo, New York, 1895, and the Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company Store, Chicago, 1899. The idea of base, shaft, and capital tripartite vertical divisions of the building was a popular trend attributed to Sullivan. While sometimes architectural stylistic categories may be subjective, few, if any, Champaign-Urbana buildings would be classified as Commercial Style.

Champaign-Urbana's architectural preferences favored the Classical Revival style or at least classical architectural elements. The Inman Hotel, the First National Bank Building, and the Masonic Temple, all within a few blocks of each other, are Classical Revival in influence or style, although varying considerably in degree of detail. The style was also apparently favored by H.R. Temple, as, in addition to the Lincoln Building, Temple (then with Spencer and Temple) designed the Inman Hotel and the Masonic Temple in Urbana. The Spencer and Temple design for the Champaign High School also used Classical Revival elements. Opened in 1914, the school was later renamed Central School then Edison Junior High School.

Designed by prominent local architect H.R. Temple, the Lincoln Building was part of a new, modern era of building in downtown Champaign. As a result of downtown Champaign fires, including a blaze in 1915 which destroyed several businesses, fireproof construction was emphasized in advertising. Included in the "boom" with the Lincoln Building were the Inman Hotel (1915) and the Lewis Department Store (1915).

Harry Roberts Temple was a 1900 graduate of the architecture program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Nelson Strong Spencer, a native of Dixon, Illinois, was an 1882 graduate of the same program. Spencer was an instructor in the Department of Architecture from 1880-83; from 1898-1902, he was Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds at the University. (Spencer would appear to have been a good acquaintance of Professor Nathan Clifford Ricker, as Spencer's first child was named Clifford Ricker Spencer.) The Spencer and Temple partnership lasted from 1908 to 1914, according to city directories. The firm's office was first at 55 North Neil Street, then later moved to 72-1/2 North Neil Street, downtown Champaign locations. Among the numerous local designs by the Spencer and Temple firm are the First Baptist Church, 1899, Champaign; the Masonic Temple, 1912, Urbana; and the Mahomet Graded School, 1904.

Temple worked with James White, the University of Illinois's architect, on the design of the University's Agriculture Engineering Building at 1208 West Peabody. The Lincoln Building represents one of, if not the first, designs by Temple on his own. Spencer left for Chicago where he had an office on Van Buren Street. Temple resided at 909 West Church Street in Champaign, a stucco, English Revival house; whether he designed the house is not known. He eventually left Champaign for the Quad Cities. Temple died in Italy in 1923.

The building resume of the Lincoln Building's contractors—the English Brothers—reads as a "Who's Who" of significant buildings in Champaign and Urbana, and particularly at the University of Illinois campus. In addition to the Lincoln Building, among the credits of the English Brothers are the Auditorium Building, Lincoln Hall, the Ceramics Building, the Administration Building, the Wesley Foundation, the Stadium, the "New Library," McKinley Hospital, the "New Men's Gymnasium," the Women's Building, the Agronomy Building, the Floriculture Building, and the Stock Judging Building on the University's campus. As with Mr. Temple, the English Brothers became tenants in the Lincoln Building upon its opening. During their tenure in the Lincoln Building, English Brothers received the contract to construct Chanute Field in nearby Rantoul; the contract was awarded on May 22, 1917, with completion called for within sixty days.

The Kuhn Family

The Lincoln Building was built by Isaac Kuhn with his father, Joseph. Joseph Kuhn was a pioneer Champaign merchant, the city's oldest clothier and founder of the Joseph Kuhn Clothiers. His son Isaac followed well in his father's footsteps, becoming known as "the man who built Main Street."

Joseph Kuhn was born in Germany in 1835, the son of Isaac and Sarah Herz Kuhn. The elder Kuhn was a farmer and stock dealer. Apparently in an effort to escape recruitment by the German army, he emigrated to America, arriving in Mississippi at the age of nineteen; a sister of his was living there at the time. Joseph worked for his brother-in-law from 1857 until 1862 when he was drafted into the Confederate army. He served with the Confederate forces for about thirteen months before taking "French leave," allying himself with a Federal outpost and being sent to New Orleans. Joseph Kuhn ended up in Lafayette, Indiana in 1863 where he worked until moving to Champaign County in the latter part of 1864. In 1865, he opened a store on University Avenue in Champaign. Kuhn was married that year, to Lena Loeb of Cincinnati; she was also a German immigrant. Two years later, he moved his store to a building at 45 Main which he purchased. Before 1905, he bought the adjacent building to increase his store's capacity; by 1905, a third building was added.

Isaac Kuhn (born September 11, 1866) was one of Joseph's and Lena's seven children, the only one to join Joseph in business. His brother, Arthur, was in business in Alabama and Rudolph was a traveling salesman. Isaac began in the business when he was seventeen, in 1883. In 1888, Joseph took Isaac, the eldest son, into partnership; on April 14, 1904, the business was incorporated as Joseph Kuhn and Company. By 1905, Isaac was noted as relieving his father of much of the business responsibility. The building at 33-35 East Main Street was erected in 1908 as new quarters for the company's store. Joseph Kuhn died in December 27, 1915 after spending a full day at his store. The Lincoln Building would have been under construction at that time.

Isaac Kuhn's affinity for Abraham Lincoln is reflected in the naming of his new, modern office building. Later in 1946, Isaac went so far as to publish a book of selected articles on Lincoln, composing the Foreword and Conclusion himself.

Abraham Lincoln: A Vast Future was published in celebration of the 80th anniversary of the Joseph Kuhn and Company store, an understandably patriotic treatise

following the end of World War II. In his conclusion, Isaac Kuhn states:

Lincoln expressed [democracy] in his day for himself and for America—with malice toward none, with charity for all. 'Democracy meant—and still means—the rejection of bigotry, the devotion to justice, the pursuit of liberty and equality of opportunity to all, regardless of descent, denomination or income. Democracy meant—and means—the government of the nation in keeping with such principles by the people. Who are the people? You and I, and our next door neighbors.'

Kuhn's words and his obvious inspiration from Lincoln are particularly meaningful in the context of coming from a first generation American of German Jewish parents, after millions of Jews had been murdered by the Nazis in horrific contradiction to Lincoln's words. According to one newspaper article, "When Hitler's persecutions began, Mr. Kuhn dug into his pockets to aid a number of persons to come to this country, even as his father had left Germany three quarters of a century earlier. He continued this interest with refugees of World War II."

Isaac Kuhn was widely noted for his involvement in the Jewish community and his charity locally. He had a keen interest in the welfare of Jewish students at the University of Illinois, but his assistance and support to non-Jewish groups was equally as extensive. He was active with the Grand Prairie Lodge and the Cleveland Orphans' home. He served on the first B'nai B'rith Hillel commission and was credited with being one of the primary movers in the founding of the Hillel movement. He was also an ardent supporter of the Wesley Foundation on the University's campus and the McKinley YMCA. Eclectic in his interests, in 1930, Kuhn provided the handmade suit which was worn by the University's Chief Illiniwek; the suit was made by the Sioux Indian tribe in Rapid City, South Dakota. The Chief tradition, created by Ray Dvorak in 1926, and the suit, continues albeit with controversy today.

Kuhn was married to Rose Adler of York, Pennsylvania. They had four daughters.

Isaac Kuhn continued daily trips to his store beyond his 86th year. He died on January 21, 1956 at the age of eighty-nine. His importance in the community is illustrated in part by the news of his death—the top headline and full-length article on the front page of *The News-Gazette*. The *Champaign-Urbana Courier* also carried the news on its front page.

The Lincoln Building

Anticipation for the opening of Champaign's new, modern "mercantile and office building" was great, with an article on the building's opening making front page news in the local newspaper three months before the building was opened. With a photograph accompanying the article, four bold faced headings were given: "Fine Lincoln Building Now Nearing Finish," "Expected Handsome Structure Will be Ready by April 1," "Absolutely Fireproof," and "Bas Relief Tablet Will Occupy Conspicuous Place in Large Lobby on the First Floor." The article commented on the "remarkable feature" of the building having been under construction mostly during the winter months with not a single week's delay. Highlighted were the building's extensive terrazzo floors, adding an expense of \$6,000 to the building's construction costs.

Originally, the terrazzo floors were only to be in the lobby and corridors, with finished cement floors in the offices, but the new tenants were pleasantly surprised with the extensive use of terrazzo. The walls of the lobby (and the walls of the toilets) were reported as Kasota marble, "an expensive marble obtained in the northern part of Minnesota and never used in a Champaign building until this time." A bronze tablet with a carved bust of Abraham Lincoln in bas relief and a quotation from his message to Congress in 1861 ("The struggle of today is not altogether for us but is also for the vast future.") was to be placed on the wall of the lobby and opposite the building's directory. The newspaper reported that the rooms had been designed to the "wishes of those who will occupy them and as a result no two floors of the building are laid out any thing alike." Metal cabinets were to be furnished in all of the offices. A large vault on each floor was designed to receive a "strong box" for each tenant on that floor. Each suite was also provided with hot and cold water.

The Lillard & Getman furniture store was announced as the building's main tenant for the east side of the first and entire second stories, with display windows on the first and second stories. Applications had been received from several out-of-town potential tenants for the west side of the first story, but owner Isaac Kuhn was looking for a local firm. The building was equipped with a "large size" Otis passenger elevator, in addition to a freight elevator geared toward the furniture store, but available to all tenants. Most exciting was the feature "entirely new in building plans in [Champaign]." This was the "sun parlor" and

"observatory tower." The sun parlor was a glassed-in room in the lower position on top of the building; the observatory was above, from which nearly all parts of the city could be seen and "even the villages of Leverett and Savoy." Reportedly a test of the building's structure was made by placing forty-five tons of material in the west room of the third floor, with no effect being noted according to the reports of engineers. This represented "several more tons of steel than was required by the Chicago specifications."

Interestingly for this Champaign version of the Commercial Style, another comparison was made with Chicago: "Monday, May 1, which is always the occasion for a wholesale shifting of tenants in Chicago, will also be signalized by quite a bit of shifting in Champaign, particularly among office tenants." The first tenants were to move in that day, with others to follow as soon as their spaces were completed. The furniture store had partially moved into its spaces; the third and fourth floors were for offices and the fifth floor was for offices and lodge rooms. The Knights of Columbus had leased the southeast portion of the fifth floor with five "immense rooms" for lodge and club purposes.

The *Champaign Daily Gazette* featured a rendering of the Lincoln Building in its Monday, May 22, 1916 newspaper, with the heading "New Home of Lillard and Getman." Billed as a prominent furniture firm, the store opened that day, occupying half of the first floor, all of the second floor, and half of the basement, approximately 20,000 square feet in total. Commenting on the store's new Lincoln

quarters, the newspaper reported that the rooms were large, unusually well-lighted, and elegantly finished. Quite the downtown Champaign event, Lillard and Getman's opening was front page news. The opening featured an orchestra and flowers were distributed as souvenirs "to the ladies." The music and flowers were featured in the morning when the doors were opened, and again in the evening from 7 - 9 p.m. Factory representatives were also present for several of the furniture lines.

Only about a week after the lead tenant's opening, Isaac Kuhn placed an advertisement for the building, proclaiming the building's "Fire-Proof, High Grade Construction." This advertisement was part of what the newspaper had noted were Mr. Kuhn's plans to "introduce many things never before done in Champaign business operations." Included among these plans was an advertising campaign to have weekly advertisements for six months listing the announcements of every tenant in the building. The initial advertisement continued,

The Lincoln Building is Champaign's newest office and business building and rightly named because it is a building 'for the people.' The rental is such as to benefit the occupants and not to enrichen the owners.

You are cordially invited to look through the building. A few offices are yet to be rented and if you need an office, be one of the fortunate ones. There will be a slight advance in rents July 1st.

Occupancy by lawyers was not surprising, nor was the degree to which the building was apparently occupied by the time it opened. Fifty-one of the building's

sixty-three rooms were under lease before the building opened. Cleverly, the building's owners had been soliciting downtown Champaign lawyers who were in "walk-ups" (second story spaces accessed by only staircases) for rental deals in the proposed state-of-the-art Lincoln Building, complete with elevator and design as you wish office suites.

Today, lawyers and other professional offices continue to occupy the Lincoln Building, with plenty of space available for more occupants. The two storefront spaces are fairly consistently available for rent, with the Champaign County Democrats occupying the west half periodically (usually every two years, election years.) A barber shop is still located on one of the upper floors. Occasionally artists rent the observatory for studio space. The building continues to contribute substantially to downtown Champaign, serving as one of the anchor buildings in the core of the downtown. Its interior spaces are still very much intact, with interior windows providing light to office suites detailed with woodwork and terrazzo flooring. The building is owned by the grandson of Isaac Kuhn, Dr. William Youngerman, and Mrs. Ruth Youngerman, one of Isaac Kuhn's daughters.

This article was condensed from the Lincoln Building National Register nomination written by Alice Novak and Karen Kummer of ArchiSearch, a local historic preservation consulting firm. The building was listed on the Register in August, 1996.

Membership Application P.A.C.A.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY:

- NEW
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An Ordinance is Passed!

After twenty years of lobbying and prodding, in November the City of Champaign passed Champaign County's first historic preservation ordinance. Contained within the 1996 Zoning Ordinance, Article IX creates a Champaign Historic Preservation Commission. The seven member commission is charged with identifying buildings and areas within the City that are historically significant, advising the Plan Commission and the Council on designating such property or areas as either Landmarks or as Conservation or Historic Districts, and reviewing Certificates of Appropriateness for designated properties.

PACA is now eagerly awaiting the appointment of commission members and urges interested Champaign PACA members to seek appointment. In addition, owners of historically and architecturally significant properties or neighborhoods containing a concentration of such buildings should contact the Plan Department about nominating the property under the new ordinance.

Heritage Award Nominations Sought

The Heritage Award Committee is seeking nominations for the 1997 Heritage Awards. Recent restoration, rehabilitation, or adaptive use of historic buildings in Champaign County are eligible for nomination. Owners, developers, architects, or contractors are urged to nominate their own buildings or projects. Enclosed in this newsletter is a nomina-

tion form or nominations can be called to PACA at 328-7222. Deadline for submission of nominations is January 15, 1997. The following is a list of 1996 awards.

Residential Heritage Award

- 505 East Warren Street
St. Joseph
- 606 West Washington Street
Champaign
- 108 North Webber Street
Urbana
- 200 East Newkirk
Tuscola

Commercial Heritage Award

- Novak & Jones Law Offices
Urbana
- Shurts House Inn
Savoy
- Radio Maria
Champaign

Landmark Heritage Award

- Altgeld Hall, UI
- Tina Weedon Smith Memorial Hall, UI
- Experimental Dairy Farm Historic District, UI

Environmental Heritage Award

- Urbana Street Light Program

Rescue Heritage Award

- Center for Women in Transition

Oomph! Award

- 613 West Stoughton Street
Urbana
- Habitat for Humanity
210 West Maple & 707 North Elm
Champaign

New & Renewing Members

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Jeff Johnson
Mr. & Mrs. Lynn Altenbernd
Neill Schurter
Jack Waaler Family
Fred & Jody Seibold
Dan & Tori Corkery
Tony & Mary Graham
Lisa Foster
Doug & Linda Mills
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