



PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Volume 17

November-December, 1997

Number 6

Focus on: 201 N. Market Street, Champaign

The City of Champaign owes its existence to the charter granted by the state legislature in 1851 to the Illinois Central Railroad Company for the building of a railroad the length of the state. The route selected through Champaign County ran two miles west of the existing town of Urbana and was chosen for engineering and economic reasons, as it did not require cutting rough moraines or crossing rivers. The area west of the tracks to Neil Street was platted by the Illinois Central in 1853 and was legally regarded as the "Railroad Addition to Urbana"; the building at 201 North Market is located in this addition. The railroad reached West Urbana in 1854 and within a year there were commercial buildings in the area and the population was over four hundred; by the end of the next year the population was over twelve hundred. On April 17, 1857, West Urbana was organized as a village and in 1860 a vote was taken to incorporate the village as the city of Champaign; the population at that time was 1,727.

According to *J.S. Lothrop's Champaign County Directory, 1870-1*, several fires occurred in Champaign from 1866 through 1871. Included in these fires, was one that destroyed "the entire block covered with buildings, between Market and Walnut streets and University avenue and Main street, ...excepting two brick buildings standing upon opposite corners of the block." Lothrop continues, "The most of this territory has since been covered with fine brick blocks"; it appears that 201 North Market Street dates from after the 1868 fire and before 1878 when the Centennial Saloon is noted at that location in the *City Directory* of that date.

The earliest Sanborn Insurance Map of Champaign, 1887, labels 201 North Market Street as a saloon and shows the building as a brick two-story block with a frame one-story canopy over the east sidewalk and a one-story frame wing on the rear southwest corner. Later maps



201 and 203-205 N. Market were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in November, 1997. The building on the left, #201, is referred to as the "Solon Building" after its last owner and was built around 1870. These two buildings represent two of only three cast-iron storefronts in downtown Champaign west of the R.R. tracks. PACA file photograph.

show the same details, although the front canopy has disappeared by 1909. The 1897 map labels the second story a cigar factory, while the 1902 map shows it as a gambling hall. By 1915 the building is used as a store.

City Directories bear out the uses depicted on the Sanborn maps:

1878-1879	Centennial Saloon (Oscar Straub & Theo Siegel)
1885-1898	Siegel Saloon (Theodore Siegel)
1895-1898	Cigar Manufacturing (2nd floor/Charles J. Peterson)
1900	Saloon (E.S. Cunningham, lived above)
1902-1906	The Stag Saloon (George Baumgardner, lived above)
1912	Vacant (Charles A. Lyman lived above)
1914	Vacant
1916-1938	Champaign Tea & Coffee Co. (Joseph L. Beeson, proprietor)
1939-1944	Vacant

1944-1945	Lillard & Getman Furniture Storage
1946-1958	Joseph Lundy, Furniture Store

The Italianate style and cast iron storefronts

201 North Market Street may be discussed in terms of its Italianate architecture as well as its cast iron storefront. In both categories, the building is a gem of downtown Champaign, together with its companion building, 203-205 North Market Street. Champaign has few commercial buildings remaining from the mid-nineteenth century. Additionally, these buildings are two of only three buildings to retain cast iron storefronts, the third of which is from the later nineteenth century (122 N. Walnut St.).

The Italianate style, c. 1850 - c. 1880s, was an extremely popular nineteenth century architectural style, particularly in the expanding cities of the Midwest, as well as in many older cities of the northeastern

seaboard which were still growing. Adopted for private residences, commercial blocks, train stations, and industrial buildings, the adaptability of the Italianate style made it nearly a national style in the mid-nineteenth century. It could be as picturesque as the Gothic Revival or as restrained as the earlier Greek Revival.

The Italianate style, while inspired by the rural architecture of northern Italy, was introduced along with the Gothic Revival style in England as part of the Picturesque movement in the late 1830s. In the United States, the Italianate style developed into a truly indigenous style with only hints of its Latin origin; while the informal, rural models of the Picturesque movement were generally followed, these Old World models were variously modified, adapted, and embellished.

While the earliest examples of the Italianate style in the United States date to the 1830s, the style was substantially popularized by the pattern books by Andrew Jackson Downing, published in the 1840s and 50s. By the 1860s, the Italianate style had completely overshadowed its earlier companion—the Gothic Revival style. Surviving examples of the earliest use of the style are rare; most examples date to c. 1855-80. The financial panic of 1873 and the subsequent depression was the impetus of the decline of the style. New housing styles (the Queen Anne style, in particular) took over when prosperity was returned in the late 1870s.

Whether residential or commercial in application, identifying features of the style are similar: two or three stories (rarely one story); tall, narrow windows, commonly arched or curved above and frequently with elaborated crowns; and cornice detailing, typically brackets and frieze panels. While hip roofs are common on the style's residential applications, shed roofs, concealed behind cornices/parapets, are typical for commercial applications of the style. Occasionally, commercial examples of the style are four stories. Italianate features of 201 North Market Street include tall round arch double-hung sash with soldier course hoodmolds, keystones and impost blocks; rectangular or box-like massing; an entablature detailed with brickwork on the parapet which hides the shed roof; and a cast-iron storefront with classically influenced details.

Technological changes in the mid-nineteenth century made the Italianate style more economical for commercial buildings. By the 1840s, production methods for cast iron and pressed metal permitted the affordable mass production of stylistic features that few merchants

could have afforded in carved stone. The application of such features became so popular that cities such as New York, St. Louis, and Portland, Oregon all had districts of cast iron buildings.

Architects and builders were able to experiment with iron columns and lintels on ground floor levels. Simultaneous advances in the glass industry resulted in the manufacturing of large panes of glass at an affordable cost. The result of these two technological advances was the storefront as we know it today: large spans of glass framed by thin structural elements. Commercial buildings of the first decades of the nineteenth century more closely resembled residential buildings, with ground floors distinguished by regularly spaced, heavy piers of stone or brick, infilled with paneled doors or small pane window sash. The changes brought about by new technology meant new aspects of business marketing were being introduced. As stated by H. Ward Jandl in *Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts*:

The advertisement of the merchant and his products in the building facade and display windows quickly became critical factors in the competitive commercial atmosphere of downtowns. In the grouping of these wide-windowed facades along major commercial streets, the image of America's cities and towns radically changed.

Initial use of the new cast iron technology resulted in simple post-and-lintel construction accompanied by minimal, if any, decoration. As iron craftsmen became more adept and as styles such as the Italianate (with more ornate architectural embellishments than earlier styles) became more popular, cast iron was produced in Italianate, Venetian Gothic, and French Second Empire details. By the early 1850s, cast iron storefronts could be purchased directly from catalogs.

In the nineteenth century, the typical storefront was composed of single or double doors flanked by display windows. Entrances were typically recessed not just for the protection of customers, but also to increase the amount of space for merchandise displays. In some circumstances, an additional side door provided access to the upper floor, as is the case with 201 North Market Street. Thin structural pieces of cast iron or wood, rather than masonry piers, framed the storefronts of the mid-late nineteenth century; in the case of 201 North Market Street, cast iron formed as turned rope was used. Storefront windows were raised off the ground by wood, cast iron, or pressed metal bulkheads. Commonly, canvas awnings or canopies of wood or tin shaded storefronts; a wood awning is shown on early Sanborn maps in front of

201 North Market Street. From the 1850s through the end of the century, few major changes effected this standard storefront configuration. Display windows areas were expanded to the fullest extent possible and the use of canvas awnings was increased.

For many historic commercial buildings, the storefront is the most important architectural feature. In terms of marketing, the storefront has a significant role in a business's ability to attract customers and increase business. The continued use of historic commercial buildings over many years is usually accompanied by a history of cosmetic change to the buildings, in an effort to keep up-to-date. While these changes can apply to both stories of commercial buildings as well as the interior spaces, perhaps no one element has been as susceptible to alteration as the storefront. As Jan Jennings and Herbert Gottfried state in *American Vernacular Interior Architecture, 1870-1940*:

Storefronts have always been directly associated with myths about progress and change, especially about the need to change appearance in order to stay competitive.

Few storefronts in downtown Champaign are historic, much less original.

As the Italianate style and cast iron storefronts of the nineteenth century may be characterized, so, too, may the interior space be analyzed. Typically, these small scale commercial buildings are long narrow spaces, enclosed by masonry load-bearing walls. The interior of the first floor is created by partitions and furnishings, the design and location of which is determined by the nature of the business. Depending of the type of business, the open first floor space would be occupied by special counters, tables, cases, cabinets, shelving, platforms, racks and fixtures, unobstructed floor space, ceiling and wall coverings, and other features. While no furnishings remain in 201 North Market Street, much of the pressed metal ceiling and pressed metal interior storefront detailing remains from the building's historic embellishments.

Limestone Sidewalk

The impact of the high degree of integrity found on 201 North Market Street, with its companion 203-205 North Market Street, is enhanced by the limestone sidewalks which continue to line the front of the buildings, setting a scene which is unmatched in Champaign-Urbana. According to experts, the large stone slabs may be the only example of a nineteenth century stone sidewalk remaining in Champaign County. In the

earliest part of the century, sidewalks were wooden, but by the late nineteenth century more durable sidewalks became necessary, especially in high-traffic commercial areas. As bricks were unsatisfactory for the purpose, stone was the only remaining alternative. The earliest stone sidewalks were constructed of rough-quarried flagstones which were uneven and irregular in size and shape. Large sawed and planned stone slabs made the best sidewalks. Although expensive, their use was widespread by the 1890s.

Surprisingly, the stone in front of these two adjacent Italianate buildings is not the same. The sidewalk for 201 North Market was quarried in the Lemont-Joliet district in northeastern Illinois. Quarrying in that region began when high-quality building stone deposits were discovered sometime before the excavation of the Illinois and Michigan Canal began. Most of the stone quarried there was used in the Chicago area for building construction and it was in especially high demand following the Great Chicago Fire in 1871. However, the reputation of this superior stone became highly recognized, and its use spread to other parts of the state and throughout the Midwest. Notable examples of the statewide use of this stone include the Illinois State Capitol building in Springfield and the Rock Island Arsenal. Railroad routes such as the Illinois Central Railroad and the Chicago & Alton Railroad facilitated the more widespread use of this stone. As the use of stone as a sidewalk material was considered an upgrade from wood, so was the replacement of the stone with concrete during the twentieth century.

The stone slabs in front of 201 North Market Street are an excellent example of Lemont-Joliet stone sidewalk construction, with their large size and smooth surface reflecting the effort that was expended to produce good sidewalks in the last century. As summarized by a local geologist,

Now worn by more than one hundred years of foot traffic, the fossil trilobites, brachiopods and crinoids in these slabs testify to the four hundred million-year-old origin of this rock.

Currently, 201 N. Market is subject to the City's Historic Properties Interim Development Ordinance (IDO) which protects 23 properties considered to be at risk for the loss of historic integrity. The Ordinance provides protection, until May 1998, for these properties until the new Historic Preservation Commission has the opportunity to consider them for designation as Landmarks. In a very recent development, the building was condemned by the city under its revived commercial building inspection program due to deterioration of the roof and wall mortar and the need to fill in the building's sidewalk vault. The building's owner is currently working with the city on a solution that will preserve this, the second oldest commercial building in downtown Champaign. (The 1857 Cattle Bank is the oldest.)

This article was condensed from the National Register nomination written by Karen Kummer and Alice Edwards of ArchiSearch. The building and its neighbor at 203-205 N. Market were listed in November, 1997.

Ricker House Receives Grant

PACA is pleased to announce the receipt of a Community Foundation of Champaign County grant to the Ricker House. The award of \$900 will be used to purchase materials to finish the restoration of the wrap-around porch on the historic residence at 612 W. Green Street, Urbana. PACA volunteers have spent the summer rebuilding the porch substructure, redecking the floor and repairing the roof structure. Volunteers have also stripped the original turned wood posts, which have been primed and reinstalled, and the decorative "gingerbread" frieze has also been stripped and awaits painting and installation. Project construction chair, Art Zangerl, has also industriously replicated the railing design; the original railings were severely deteriorated and two sections were missing. The new railings have been primed and await installation.

The grant will be used to purchase roof shingles, underlayment, starter membrane, gutter materials, copper step flashing (to match the flashing on the newly rebuilt chimneys), and underporch lattice. PACA volunteers will install the above materials and finish the renovation of the porch when warm weather returns.

PACA is looking for volunteer(s) who have a warm work space and/or the time to paint the "gingerbread" and railings in the chosen historic paint colors. Indoor painting of these sections will be much easier than painting them in place and installation of finished painted pieces will make a dramatic statement. To volunteer a space or painting time, please call PACA at 328-7222.

Membership Application P.A.C.A.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY:

- Adult \$15.00
- Student (1/2 time or more) \$10.00
- Senior Citizen \$10.00
- Family \$20.00
- Corporate \$75.00

- NEW
- RENEWAL

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

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

Donations toward the renovation of the historic Nathan C. Ricker House are still needed. The main roof needs replacement in 1998 and removal of the wide aluminum siding is a job we have volunteers eager to do. However, funds are needed to accomplish both goals. The anonymous loan used to purchase the property is due in May and both the PACA Board and the Ricker Foundation are working on strategies to accomplish that important goal. Reuse ideas, fund raising suggestions and experienced volunteers (both construction and fund raising) are needed on this very important and visible project. **This is a big project for PACA and we need the help and support of all our members.**

OHJ Subscriptions Available

Once again, PACA is offering discount subscriptions to *Old House Journal*. The cost is \$20, a savings of \$7 over the regular subscription price, and PACA keeps \$10 to use on local preservation projects. Both new and renewal subscriptions count, so contact PACA for your *Old House Journal* needs!

Heritage Award Nominations Sought

The Heritage Award Committee is seeking nominations for the 1998 Awards. Categories include: Commercial, Adaptive Use, Residential, Landmark, Institutional, Landscape, Neighborhood, and Special. Nominations are due by January 20, 1998.

PACA Newsletter

Jeffrey Gordon, President
 Bruce Creamer, Vice-President
 Tony Bamert, Secretary
 Rich Cahill, Treasurer
 Karen Lang Kummer, Exec. Director



328-PACA: Telephone & Answering Service

Printed on recycled paper

Salvage V.I.P.s
 Bob Swisher
 Gary Perkins
 Rich Cahill
 Cheri Chenoweth
 Pius Weibel
 Dick Elkin
 Al Friederick
 Matt Riggs
 Jerry Hester
 John Schnider
 Gary Salmon
 Rex Kummer
 Hank Kaczmarek

Salvage Donations
 City of Champaign
 University of Illinois
 Green Street Realty
 Richard Leskosky
 Dallas Hintz
 George Kinningham
 Mr. & Mrs. Wade
 Champaign County Forest Preserve

Call for Nominations

PACA's annual meeting will be held in late February or early March. At that time, three members will be elected to serve on the nine-member Board of Directors for a term of three years. Nominations are sought for these positions. Board duties involve a monthly evening meeting, held on the second Wednesday; a willingness to help with at least one committee or specific project; and an active interest in preserving the historic buildings of Champaign County. To nominate an individual or yourself, contact PACA.

New & Renewing Members

Jeff Mellander
 Wendy E. Laraway
 Mrs. M.G. Snyder
 Mr. & Mrs. George A. Miley
 Howard Cahill
 Betsey & John Cronan
 Linda & Doug Mills
 Erik & Sarah van Rens
 Bob & Bette Leach
 Carolyn & Norman Baxley
 Mrs. Vita N. Doyle
 Tori & Dan Corkery
 Mr. George T. Clayton
 David & Jan Sholem
 Rick Orr
 Keddy Hutson & Ann Boswell
 Bill Capel & Ernie Martin
 Lachlan & Mary Blair
 Nance & John Withrow
 Jim Crotzer
 Neill Schurter
 Alice Berkson
 Mr. James C. Bradbury
 Ruth H. Fliegel
 Rick Piester
 Liz England
 Colleen & Bruce Brodie
 Tony & Mary Graham
 Dorothy Neumann
 Rose & Craig Grant
 G. Simms & J. Lines
 Dr. Sally Foote & Tom Wold

Remember to check your mailing label for your membership renewal date. The date shown indicates when you last renewed; membership runs for one year from that date.

NON-PROFIT
 ORG.
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 CHAMPAIGN, IL
 PERMIT NO. 133