



PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

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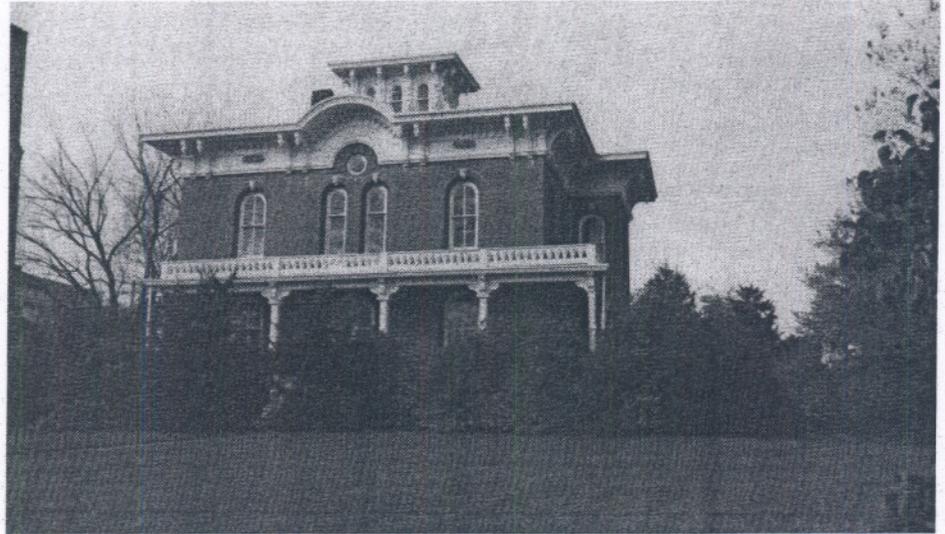
Number 3

Harwood-Solon House

The earliest of memories must be recalled in order to fit the Harwood-Solon House into the context of Champaign history. The railroad, for example, was a central factor in the forming of Champaign. Some of the earliest residences and businesses built in the mid-to-late 1850s are given a location based on which side of the railroad tracks they were on, east or west. Growing rapidly after the establishment of a few businesses, Champaign expanded outward. A "building mania" began in 1865, with 127 residences being built on the east side of the tracks and almost that same amount built on the west. Many of the houses have been described as "fine business houses" and "costly residences." Natalia Belting estimated that every day between May 25 and July 28, 1865, construction of a new house was begun. The Harwood-Solon house, having been built during this transitional period, may have been one of these fine residences.

A series of fires broke out around the small city in the late 1860s. In 1866, the whole block of Neil Street, between Church and Hill streets, burnt only to be rebuilt and burn again in 1870. Estimated damages from each fire were \$40,000. Yet another fire consumed three or four wood-frame buildings in 1867, damaging about \$16,000 worth of property. The largest of the fires was in July 1868; it consumed the two blocks between Main, Walnut, and Market streets and University Avenue. Some twenty-six buildings were destroyed with a loss of about \$75,000. It is interesting to note that "the entire block...was destroyed, excepting two brick buildings standing upon opposite corners of the block." Many of the structures that replaced the buildings lost in these fires were of brick or some other type of masonry construction.

William C. Barrett was a prominent businessman and real estate developer in Champaign. He built Barrett's Block which was a large commercial building



The Harwood-Solon House, 503 S. State St., Champaign, is probably the most recognized historic property in Champaign. It is under consideration to be a Champaign Landmark. PACA file photo.

on the corner of Neil and Main streets. He is attributed with having built two houses located at 503 and 507 S. State Street for investment purposes and probably lived in one of them for a short period of time. The houses were constructed during the time when fire was engulfing parts of Champaign. Being the businessman that he was, Barrett possibly pursued building the first two brick residences in Champaign because of the fire protection brick offered over wood construction. It was said of W.C. Barrett, "it also pleases us to speak in terms complimentary of the men who have faith in the future of Champaign, and who are willing to demonstrate that faith by works."

In 1865, W.C. Barrett purchased the property located at the corner of State Street and Thomas Street (now Healey Street) for \$1500. Barrett, then sold the property to Abel Harwood on October 29, 1869 for \$12,000. Because of the difference between the property's selling and purchase price, it is assumed that the house was constructed prior to the sale. Abel Harwood died in 1891, leaving his wife, Isabella, to reside in the home alone. Mrs.

Harwood passed away in 1903; however, the property was not sold until 1907. During this interim period, the house was occupied by Alexander Caldwell and his family. There are no records that indicate that ownership changed at this time, so the Caldwell family is likely to have rented the property. On September 9, 1907, the property was sold by the heirs of Abel Harwood to Francis E. Solon for \$12,000. The property has remained in the hands of this family ever since.

The second owner of the house, Abel Harwood, moved to Champaign after a long career in the mercantile and land speculation businesses. While in Newcomb township, he was elected to serve on the Board of Supervisors of Champaign County. He also became a Republican Party delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1870 whereby he assisted in the revision and alteration of the state constitution. Harwood Township is named in his honor. Having retired, he moved to his newly acquired Champaign home with his family in March, 1870.

The Solon family was the last to acquire the property at 503 S. State Street. Francis Solon was also a prominent

businessman and land owner. He was a strong Democrat who traveled the state with Roger Sullivan on behalf of the party. When he passed away, his children took over his estate. Sons, John and James, graduated from the University of Illinois and went on to practice law. James died in 1972, leaving John to care for the law practice and he and his sisters, Mary and Ellen, to care for the property. At the time of his death in 1995, as the sole surviving sibling, John Solon had accumulated assets of over \$2 million and acquired many different properties in and around Champaign.

The Harwood-Solon house is a distinct Italianate style building. Built c. 1865-69, the house falls into the height of the Italianate period ranging from 1840-1880. The Italianate style stems from a series of revival styles occurring during the mid-to-late 1800s including the Greek, Gothic and Renaissance Revivals. The Italianate grew out of the Renaissance Revival style, taking on many of its attributes including elegant proportions, round-arched windows, and a large overhanging cornice with brackets.

Setback from the street, the Harwood-Solon House stands a full two stories in height. The main front facade (east) is symmetrical. However, studying the other sides of the house and by viewing the plan, asymmetrical qualities can be seen. Located on the south facade is a one-story, semi-hexagonal bay window, and on the north, the exterior juts out from the main portion of the building but continues the same roof line height. A lower, two-story wing projects outward on the west elevation. The main porch extends the full length of the east elevation and wraps around half of the north side of the building. The main porch has carved wood posts and a flat roof with brackets below and a low open balustrade above. A smaller porch is located on the west side. The house has a stone foundation with American bond brick exterior walls. One existing outbuilding is located to the west of the main house. It is a one-story wood structure with a hip roof. According to the *Sanborn Insurance Map of 1915*, a series of smaller outbuildings were once farther to the west of the current outbuilding. This series consisted of a two-story structure with a one-story structure adjacent, along with three, much smaller one-story buildings, none of which remain. It is not until the 1924 *Sanborn Map* that the existing outbuilding appears and the others disappear. There are no maps between these two dates to clarify exactly when the change occurred. The footprint of the current outbuilding has not changed since the 1924 map.

Many features of the building are distinctly Italianate. At the top is a square wood cupola which rises to give prominence to the house. The house has a low-pitched hip roof with wide overhanging eaves. Under these eaves are large, paired wood brackets. Slender horizontal frieze windows are located between the brackets along the cornice. Four-over-four double-hung windows with round arches can be found on all elevations. The proportions of the windows on both stories are tall and slender. Over the windows are double rowlock brick arches with a central keystone made of limestone. A special feature of the house is a round window located at the top, by the cornice, in the center of the east (main) facade. The cornice and roof line follow the curve of the window which breaks the straight horizontal line of the cornice. The wood entrance doors, located on the east elevation, are also curved at the top. The only alteration to the property that can be discerned is the loss of the original outbuildings. The footprint of the building has remained the same, indicating that the house has had no additions.

The architect of the Harwood-Solon House is unknown. Seely Brown, one of the only architects in Champaign during this period, is certainly a possibility, but no evidence points directly to him. Before the present Edison School was built, a similar house to the Harwood-Solon residence, but more elaborate, was located at 507 S. State Street. W.C. Barrett also owned and commissioned that building. An 1871 newspaper article describes a wonderful house commissioned by Barrett, going into detail about the size and layout of the house. At the end of the article it states the architect as Seely Brown. However, it also adds that there are "rich moldings" made of terra cotta which are located above all the windows and doors. 503 S. State Street does not have this terra cotta work, but photographs of the 507 S. State Street house confirm that this house did indeed have these features. The exact address of the house is not given in the article, merely South State Street, but the evidence would suggest that it is the 507 residence. In that case, Seely Brown was the architect of 507 S. State, but it is not known if he also designed the house at 503. However, being that it was built around the same time and by the same owner, it is possible that Brown was the architect for 503 as well. Seely Brown's association with Barrett is confirmed in an advertisement found in the *City Directory of 1870-71*. In the advertisement, Seely Brown announces his architectural services and lists as one of his references, W.C. Barrett.

Some conflict exists, however, concerning the building date of the house at 507 S. State. One source claims that 507 was built prior to 503, and was the first brick house to be built in Champaign. It also claims W.C. Barrett sold the house and property at 507 to the F.R. Scott family in 1867. Records for the sale of this property are much harder to trace and this information cannot be confirmed or contradicted. However, there is no listing for the Scott family in the 1870-71 *City Directory*. Additionally, a photograph found in the Champaign County Historical Archives has a construction date of 1875 handwritten on the back. This contradicts the earlier assumption that the house in the newspaper article was the house at 507, as the article was written in 1871, four years before the house in the photograph was supposedly built. The *Bird's-eye-view Map of 1869* shows only one house standing in the 500 block of S. State Street. Being that the two houses were very similar in nature, it is hard to distinguish which house is being shown on the map. In any case, the house at 507 was demolished in 1913 when the new public high school was built on the site. However, the fact does remain that the house at 503 S. State was built before October, 1869 when Barrett sold the house to Harwood. Newspaper articles confirm that when A. Harwood moved to Champaign, he moved into one of the finest residences in the city.

This article is taken from the Champaign Landmark Application written by Kim Riesterer for the Harwood-Solon House.

PACA Members & Friends

PICNIC

Saturday, July 18
3-6 pm

Come meet your fellow PACA members and friends and see the historic Hazen Bridge. PACA is seeking input on how the bridge should be used and the future of the 5-acre site.

PACA will provide all the food (Longhorn BBQ), utensils and drink! You just need to bring your family and blankets or chairs. Please RSVP (328-7222) with the number in your party and your name by July 15 so we can order enough food.

The Hazen Bridge is located 3.7 miles north of I-74 off Highway 47N; turn east (right) at 2600N to the river.

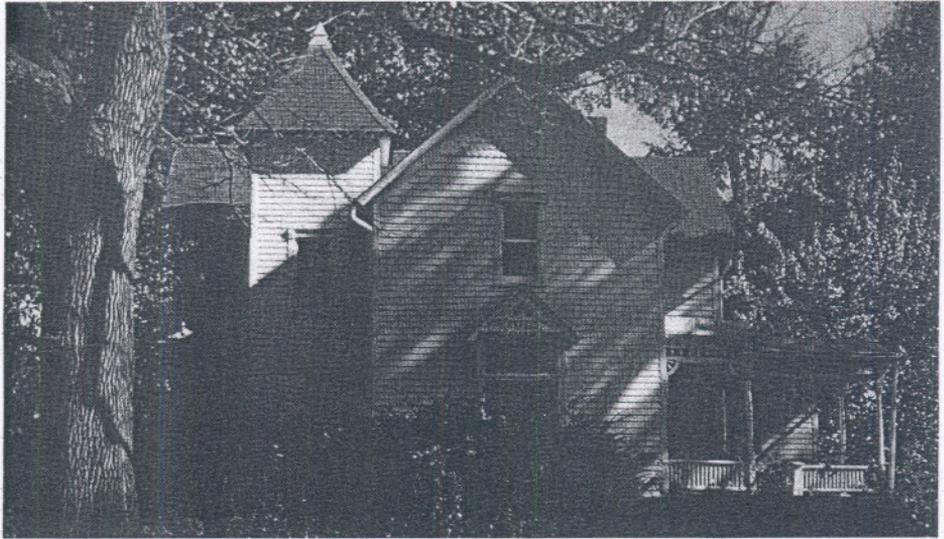
Historic House Available

The Carrie Busey House at 601 East Park Street, Champaign, is available for relocation. The property was recently purchased by Provena Covenant Hospital which plans to clear the site this fall. The house is being offered for relocation.

Built around 1885-1890, the residence was purchased by Joseph V. and Anna Irlie Busey in 1891. Mr. Busey had been a farmer near Leverett when his daughter, Carrie, was born in 1889. They moved to Champaign in 1891 where Busey spent two years as a carpenter before going to work at the Big Four Car Shops in Champaign. He continued to work for the railroad until his death in 1912. Carrie Busey inherited the house from her parents and continued to live there until her death at age 91.

The school at 1605 W. Kirby, Champaign, is named in honor Miss Busey, who worked for the Champaign school district for forty years (1911-1951). She was secretary to four superintendents of schools and held the position of clerk of the board of education during that time. She kept the books without a technological accounting system and wrote all the checks by hand. At a special meeting in 1957, the Champaign school board voted to name one of two planned elementary schools after Miss Busey.

The house at 601 East Park is an excellent example of the Queen Anne style of architecture with both clapboards and three different decorative shingle styles in the gables; decorative incised window surrounds; a front corner porch with an ornate spindle frieze and turned posts; a



Carrie Busey's Queen-Anne house at 601 E. Park, Champaign is available for relocation. PACA file photo.

similar, but larger L-plan porch on the rear with added half-round "wheel-spoke" accents; two slightly projecting oriels with decorative open-work in their gables; and a small corner tower with finial cap.

Champaign Preservation Commission

As related in the last PACA newsletter, the Champaign Historic Preservation Commission has been very busy of late reviewing applications for landmark status. To date, ten nominations have been forwarded with positive recommendations to the Plan Commission, which

will hold public hearings on the nominations and also make a recommendation concerning the nominations to the Champaign City Council. The Council, however, makes the final determination as to whether a building or district will become an official city landmark. The ten buildings/districts currently under consideration are: Harwood-Solon House (503 S. State), Wojnar House (212 E. University), 1-8 Villard Court Historic District, Park Theatre (126-128 W. Church), Sagamore Building (804 N. Neil), Illinois Central Railroad Historic District, Women's Town Club Building (112 W. Hill), Salem Baptist Church (500 E. Park), Coca-Cola Bottling Plant (1201 S. Neil), Phi Delta Theta (309 E. Chalmers).

Membership Application P.A.C.A.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY:

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Meanwhile, the City Council has requested that certain language in the ordinance concerning how the Plan Commission arrives at its recommendation and how the City Council takes action on the nominations be reviewed and perhaps changed. Because this possible change to the ordinance can affect how the ten buildings/districts are reviewed by the Plan Commission and the Council, all action on these nominations has been delayed until this language question has been resolved and the ordinance amended.

The Plan Commission public hearings on all of the above ten nominations have been continued until Wednesday, July 29 at 4:00 PM. PACA urges all of its members who support any of the nominations to come and briefly speak in support of the nomination(s); **the public's support of these landmarks is very important** and can influence the Plan Commission to forward a positive recommendation to the City Council. The City Council should act on the nominations in August.

1998 ArchiTreasure Winners

PACA and *The News-Gazette* are pleased to honor this year's Preservation Week ArchiTreasure Contest winners. They have received books from *The News-Gazette* and a one year membership in PACA.

- First Place: Marci Uihlien & Joe Morris, C
- Second Place: Joe & Phyllis Williams, U
- Third Place: Ann Tate, C

PACA Newsletter

P.O. Box 2555, Station A, Champaign, IL 61825

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