



# PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION OF CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

Box 2555, Station A, Champaign, Illinois 61820

"The Past Has A Future"

Volume 1

October 1981

Number 1

## *PACA Insuring The Future Of Historic Champaign County*

The Preservation and Conservation Association of Champaign County was incorporated in April of 1981 as a non-profit organization to "foster and encourage the preservation and conservation of the natural and the built environment of Champaign County and East Central Illinois." We will carry out these basic purposes in a variety of ways.

The primary activities of PACA will be educating the public to the need for and desirability of preservation and conservation, and facilitating preservation and conservation through legislative appeal, funding, and technical assistance. Our walking tours are one example of public education and fund raising. Carefully researched information about historically or architecturally interesting sites is shared in an attempt to heighten participants' awareness and appreciation of their environment. The admission fee helps to support the general activities of PACA as well as specific projects, such as the Cattle Bank restoration. Other activities, such as films, speakers, and workshops, and this newsletter will help to inform others of the needs of preservation and conservation and how to meet them.

PACA has already been involved in several projects to facilitate preservation and conservation in our area. PACA members spent several weeks salvaging useful and architecturally interesting

materials from the buildings being demolished at Neil and University. We drafted a letter strongly encouraging the University of Illinois to preserve the Taft House. We suggested careful consideration of the impact on farmland in the R. R. Donnelley zoning request and have expressed our support of efforts to maintain Champaign-Urbana air quality in the Abbott Power Plant gas-to-coal conversion.

PACA submitted a proposal requesting Community Development funds to establish a program that would have helped people in Census Tract 55 (Webber School area of Urbana) to do architecturally and historically accurate renovations of their homes under the CD program. Most recently the Board of Directors has been drafting a proposal that would transfer the Cattle Bank renovation from the City of Champaign to PACA or another nonprofit organization.

The PACA Board has been busy pursuing preservation and conservation issues as they arise, but for PACA to become a truly effective and influential organization we need a strong and active *membership*. The past has a future in Champaign County, and you can participate in insuring that future by donating your time, talent, and money to the projects of the Preservation and Conservation Association.

# Cattle Bank Plan Submitted To City

PACA is awaiting a decision by the City of Champaign on proposals submitted for the Cattle Bank restoration project. On August 21, 1981 the City requested proposals from private investors and organizations who were interested in taking over the restoration of the building at the corner of First and University. PACA was among those submitting proposals.

It was learned in early August that the City of Champaign wanted to divest itself of the Cattle Bank, which it has owned since 1976. The Board of Directors of PACA began immediately to study the feasibility and advisability of submitting a proposal to take over the project. During a series of Board and subcommittee meetings it was decided that we would propose to undertake the restoration of the building. Our proposal was submitted September 20, 1981.

We feel that PACA is the best qualified to take over this particular project. Due to the small size of the building (approximately 1400 square feet) and expenses involved in meeting the guidelines of the National Register, it would not be a particularly lucrative commercial investment. PACA's primary objective would be to faithfully restore



the building to its original appearance. As a non-profit organization we can raise the necessary funds through contributions and put the finished building to a use that serves the community.

If our proposal is accepted, we will need strong and active commitment from PACA members in all aspects of the Cattle Bank restoration project. We will need to dedicate ourselves to developing funding campaigns, implementing historical and architectural research, and beginning repairs on the exterior of the building within the first months after acceptance. Throughout the project there will be many opportunities for members to make their unique and lasting contribution to the preservation of this historic Champaign landmark.

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## From The Editor . . .

*Volume 1, number 1 of the PACA newsletter is finally completed. My first attempt at writing and producing a periodical has been a learning experience. I see my struggle to produce these four pages as a parallel to the task of making a new organization like PACA into a productive and effective voice in the affairs of our community.*

*After researching the process, I began the newsletter by deciding what topics to cover, gathering information and beginning to write the articles. Then came revisions, selection of articles, editing and typesetting. The task of designing the layout included writing headlines and having them typeset, picking graphics, and arranging everything for the best appearance. After the finished copies were back from the printer, folding, addressing, bundling, and mailing were still necessary to get them into your hands. I did most of this myself, missing deadlines consistently because my schedule was not well enough defined to involve others in the process.*

*PACA was established as a result of the recognition of needs that were not being adequately met. The basic goals and methods of operation were determined by the original Board and written into our constitution. It appears to me that we are currently revising the "rough copy"—clarifying our goals so that we can set more definite priorities and establish a schedule for projects. This will allow the Board to call on the membership for specific contributions to the work—putting the pieces together to make PACA an influential organization in the fight for preservation and conservation.*

*With time, practice, and your input this newsletter will become a more effective tool for the work of PACA, and with time, practice, and your input PACA will become a powerful advocate of the environments which preserve our heritage and provide continuity to our life here in East Central Illinois. Let us hear from you.*

Editor

# Proposal Rejected

The Urbana Community Development Commission has rejected PACA's request for funds to establish a neighborhood preservation program in the Webber School area. While rejecting the specific proposal which was submitted in August, the Commission recognized the need for preservation and restoration in all areas covered by Community Development programs. They have asked PACA to assist them by training City personnel in historic preservation basics.

The grant application, which was submitted July 31 and presented to UCDC at an August 26 meeting, requested \$20,000. The funds would have been used for education of and assistance to the residents of Census Tract 55 in East Urbana. The first phase called for training in methods of researching the history of properties and an inventory of the 1200 properties in the area. Data from this resident-conducted survey would have been used to develop plans for the renovations of many of the area's "vernacular" and "worker" houses.

The second phase would have provided design and technical services to residents wishing to do accurate renovations. Low interest loans would have been made available for these improvements through the establishment of a revolving fund.

The proposal, presented to the Commission by PACA Board member Neil Strack, was generally well received. The only unfavorable response to the proposal was a feeling that the \$20,000 figure was not well enough substantiated. However, the ten minute presentation and question period took nearly an hour—instead of the allotted 20 minutes—due to Commission interest.

Discussion has begun concerning the possibility of PACA-led workshops for Urbana Community Development personnel and others in the Building



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Code Enforcement Department. Such training could significantly increase staff awareness of the needs, methods, and feasibility of historic preservation within the programs administered by the Community Development Commission, thereby benefiting all of Urbana.

# University Moving Lorado Taft House

PACA has been assured by Vice Chancellor Donald F. Wendel and President Ikenberry's office that the Taft house will be relocated by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The move is necessitated by plans to build a new campus administration building at the corner of Sixth and John Streets, the present site of the house.

In late July it was reported that the University was considering the demolition of this historic and architecturally interesting building, which it had earlier planned to save. On July 29, PACA sent a letter to Chancellor Cribbet and President Ikenberry strongly encouraging the salvage of the building. Editorials expressing the same sentiment were published in the *Daily Illini*.

The house, at 601 E. John Street in Champaign, was the boyhood home of internationally distinguished sculptor Lorado Taft. It was built in 1873 for Lorado's father, Don Carlos Taft, when he accepted an appointment at what was then the Illinois Industrial University.

Lorado Taft occupied the house with his family from the time he was 13 until he was 19, and again for a year after he returned from studies at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris. While he lived in the house he earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University and served for one year as a clay modeling instructor.

Taft became internationally known as a result of his architectural sculpture at the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition. Local examples of his work include the *Alma Mater* on the campus and *Young Lincoln* at Carle Park in Urbana. He was a non-resident professor of art at the University for 27 years, and has been called "the most important artist to come out of the University, and probably all of Illinois" by Professor Allen S. Weller.

The house is one of only three campus structures of its era which remain intact, and is a striking example of the "bracketed" style of residential  
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architecture which is rapidly disappearing in the Midwest. It combines Italianate and Swiss cottage styles, seen in the bracketing under the eaves. There are some pre-Civil War elements, such as the double entry doors on the west facade. Some Victorian influences are evidenced in the general plan of the house and in the original extensive gardens.

The house, which was owned by the Taft family until 1882, passed through several owners and in 1887 was purchased by Professor Charles Rolfe, who founded the Ceramics Department and the Department of Mining Engineering and established the Urbana branch of the Illinois State Geological Survey. His descendants owned it until 1949, when the University purchased it for use as the

Speech and Hearing Clinic (1950-1974) and then the Office of Campus Parking (1974-1981).

Vice Chancellor Donald F. Wendel said in his letter to PACA "[that the staff] . . . review directed toward the Taft House decision resulted in affirmation of our early thinking that the Taft House should be saved in view of its importance as an example of 19th Century residential architecture and an early home of Lorado Taft. We . . . hope that its presence will serve the community as one reminder of our common heritage."

The house has been vacated and workmen are preparing to split it into two parts for its move to Illini Grove, just south of McKinley Health Center. The move is expected some time in October.



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ASSOCIATION OF CHAMPAIGN COUNTY  
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Please send material for the newsletter by the 15th of the month prior to publication.

**MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY:**

**INDIVIDUAL**

- Adult . . . . . \$10.00
- Student (½ time or more) . . . . . \$ 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

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