

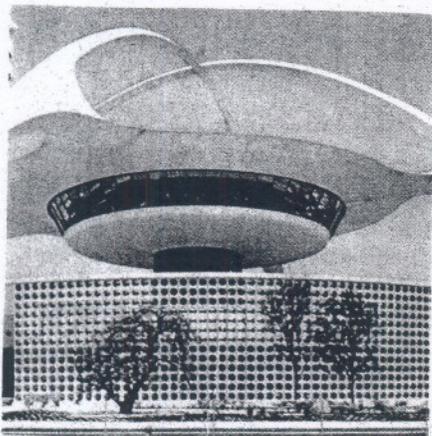


# PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

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*Theme building at Los Angeles International Airport.*

## National Preservation Conference 2000 October 31-November 5

The National Trust for Historic Preservation's annual conference will be held in Los Angeles this year. The theme of the conference is "saving America's Treasures in the 21st Century." This year the Trust will be looking ahead, exploring the issues, trends, challenges, and opportunities that preservationists can expect to face in the century just beginning.

There could be no more appropriate venue for this exploration than Los Angeles. Despite its worldwide reputation as a "city of the future," Los Angeles also has a rich and fascinating past that is embodied in a collection of historic buildings, vibrant older neighborhoods, and multicultural diversity unmatched anywhere else. And it has a dedicated, effective community of preservationists who are eager to showcase their city—and their preservation successes—for conference attendees.

The conference will offer more than 70 educational sessions on a wide variety of topics, all of them led by some of the most prominent experts in the field. In addition, more than 40 field sessions will explore preservation issues in depth, visiting projects throughout the Los Angeles

area and providing opportunities for on-site dialogue with people who are meeting the challenges of preservation in innovative ways. And lively social events, including a very special evening at the spectacular Getty Center, are planned.

In addition to the Plenary Sessions, two special sessions will look at trends affecting preservation in the years ahead, specifically in technology and demographics. Five sessions will have an international dimension in partnership with US/ICOMOS and The Getty Conservation Institute. And six interactive sessions on priority topics will feature small-group breakout sessions to maximize exchanges among attendees.

A large number of organizations and individuals have joined with the National Trust to make this an exceptional conference. Of special note are the Los Angeles Conservancy, California State Department of Parks, The J. Paul Getty Trust, National Park Service, United States Army, and U.S. General Services Administration.

For more information contact PACA or the National Trust at 202/588-6296.

## Illinois Heritage Grants

The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA) has announced the establishment of the Illinois Heritage Grants program that will provide state funding for brick-and-mortar preservation projects. The Agency's new budget includes \$500,000 for individual grants up to \$50,000 for properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places or designated as landmarks under county or municipal preservation ordinances. Administrative rules and the application process have not been finalized yet, but the additional following principles are fairly well resolved.

- Eligible activities include planning, survey, rehabilitation, reconstruction, restoration, and landscaping for structures and archaeological sites.
- Certain non-construction or pre-construction costs such as permit fees, project signs, and architectural, engineering, and archaeological services are eligible.
- All work must meet the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.
- Grants will be up to 60% of the project cost, while the local share must be for 40%, in the form of cash.
- Non-state and non-federal units of government and not-for-profit organizations are eligible to apply.
- Grant funds will be distributed on a reimbursement basis.
- It is not necessary for the applicant to own the property, as long as the actual owner gives permission.
- Only one grant to an applicant in each year.
- Properties benefiting from grants will have covenants or agreements attached to them to assure the integrity of the state's investment in the property.

IHPA anticipates that the deadline for applications will be sometime this autumn. There will be ample time to get the work out before a deadline is set, however. Although applications are not ready, IHPA is accepting requests for applications. Potential applicants may simply send their name and address with the message "please send me a Heritage Grant application when they become available" to Ms. Patricia Senor, Grants Manager, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, One Old State Capitol Plaza, Springfield, IL 62701; or a fax may be sent to 217/524-7525.

## Focus On: Villard Court

Bungalow courts were a popular development in America in the 1920s and 1930s. They began in California, combining inexpensive bungalow houses with a traditional and economical southwestern building layout. Designers then applied whimsical or eclectic surfaces to the buildings, reflecting California's dreamy nostalgia. The building form is related to traveler's courts, which evolved into motels. Villard Court is a step in this development, a uniquely American form, which expresses a stage in American urban development and the sentimental and practical ideas of an age.

Bungalow houses developed in America around the turn of the century as a means to provide unattached houses for the greatest number of families possible. The work derives from an Indian subcontinent term for country inns for English travelers, normally marked by long, low rooflines. In America, however, the term applies to small, one- or two-story homes, usually with a gabled roof, dormers, and rough materials. They were marked by a high degree of craftsmanship, with art-glass windows or carved woodwork to create an atmosphere of care and domesticity. Bungalows as a building form, however, lack a specific style. As a result, the building type frequently transformed itself into an English cottage or an Italian Villa, or any permutation or combination inbetween. The building type flourished with the development of mass transit and the growth of suburbs in the early part of the twentieth century.

Developing at the same time as the bungalow, California pursued a different dream, the urge to achieve a life of leisure. As a result of a carefully organized advertising campaign, California became the impossible Eden of sunshine and oranges. With the opening of highways, midwesterners flocked to the state, and many, especially retirees, came to settle in a land of perpetual springtime; courtyard housing developed for these people. The basic form has several precedents, beginning with Spanish colonial missions and adobes. Located in hostile territories, these missions looked inward, using a central courtyard for circulation and gathering space. In the 1900s, slum housing courts developed for the poor in Los Angeles, primarily for Mexicans recruited to work on the railroads. These housing courts lead to abuses and unsanitary conditions. Travelers' courts were most influential in the development of courtyard housing. Developed to provide sleeping quarters for those driving across America—frequently to and from Califor-



*Champaign's Villard Court Historic District was built along Randolph Street in 1927. It is one of the few courtyard complexes remaining in Champaign or Urbana. Photo by Rich Cahill.*

nia—travelers' courts began as tent courts. These projects centered tents around campfire and bathroom facilities, but soon developed into permanent cabins. Bungalow courts share the central layout and reflect the vacation-time spirit of these travelers' cabins.

Bungalow courts cluster numerous small, inexpensive units around a central garden space. A relatively high population density decreased costs, creating a viable low-cost housing type. In housing courts, outdoor space was shared with neighbors, combining the American desire for privacy and unattached housing with the practical need to cut costs. In addition, the central gardens became a gathering space for a strictly defined community. Sometimes, they became quite elaborate and lush, taking on an atmosphere of respite, even of an exotic secret garden. Bungalow courts lacked the social stigma of apartment houses. Residence in one did not connote immorality or poverty, as did apartments. They also disassociated the houses with the street, making the houses more quiet and allowing for a greater openness between the interior and exterior of the units, allowing residents to enjoy balmy California weather. Housing courts became the living standard for most Los Angelenos, regardless of class or status.

A third essential element of courtyard housing, after the bungalow form of the residences and the courtyard layout of the complex, is the fanciful atmosphere and eclectic decoration common to this building form. As bungalows moved west and multiplied, they lost some of the craftsman aesthetic of their midwestern counterparts. Instead, courtyard housing sported decoration ranging from Bavar-

ian half-timbering and picturesque massing, found in Hollywood's Bavarian Courts, to the Italian Renaissance style of the Villa D'Este, found in West Hollywood. Various Spanish revivals were by far the most popular styles for courtyard housing. Spanish Revival architecture reflected both the historic foundations of the State and the warm and open climate of the area. Courtyard housing of all economic levels sported thick, creamy white walls, red tile roofs, tropical plantings, and decorative tile floors. The inspiration for these buildings came from both Spanish national and colonial architecture. While some of the better court complexes integrated their style in plan and section, for most of these buildings the style was a superficial overlay on the standard building form. This tradition of applied stylistic ornament, of layers of historicism, began with the holiday atmosphere of California. People moved to Los Angeles to begin a permanent vacation, and fanciful buildings reinforced this feeling. With the rise of the movie industry, the idea of false fronts or stage sets, became even more apropos for the Los Angeles area. In the gulf created by the vast distances that separated California from western culture, designers of all types used facile stylistic references to suggest European foundations, easing the transition for new settlers.

As a building type emerging in 1920s California, the automobile integrated itself into the design by 1923. Early courtyard housing designed garages into the complex in unique ways. Typically, cars drove along the backsides of the buildings, and parking was provided in the rear. The American spirit and the very existence of California depended on the

private automobile. The final development of courtyard housing was the integration of the automobile into the heart of the complex. Using the central garden space for automobile passage and storage fundamentally changed the building form and led to the rise of motels. The complete integration of the automobile illustrates that bungalow courts were a uniquely American development, dependent upon European culture only for exterior ornament.

This new American building form soon passed back into the midwest and east, spread by plan books. Courtyard housing was practical and pleasant for middle class families anywhere, and the California connotations of the form brought with it a vacation atmosphere. They were called "California Bungalows," as they spread from Champaign, Illinois to Sydney, Australia. They offered people an appealing alternative to apartment living, and carried with them the promise of the good life, California-style.

Villard Court retains the eclectic style and exotic atmosphere of its California origins. When it was built, in 1927, another court existed on Third Street, between Daniel and Chalmers streets. William J. Villard and James R. Boers purchased the land, lots eleven and twelve in the Cooper and Hartman Replat, from Frank Cooper, for \$3,000 in 1926. Both men were active speculative builders in the area, developing several lots in both Champaign and Urbana. They began building in 1927; four buildings, each with two units, and eight carports cost \$28,000 to construct. The design was most probably purchased from one of the

many plan books published at the time. On January 18, 1928, they signed their interests in the property over to the Villard Real Estate Improvement Company. Villard and Boers rented out the eight units until 1945. During that time, residents were primarily small families of modest means; commercial travelers, salesmen, and clerks. In 1946, the company sold the property to Walter M. Bongart. Upon purchasing the properties, Bongart began selling the individual units. Between 1945 and 1948, all the units were purchased. William J. Bash and Nolan C. Langford both purchased both units in one building, but the other two buildings were divided between two different owners. Today this situation remains: a single owner rents the northwestern and southwestern buildings, while the other two buildings have four different owners.

The complex frames a narrow street named Villard Court, which runs perpendicular to Randolph Street. Flanking this street are two concrete piers, painted to match the creamy yellow stucco bungalows with their random red bricks poking through, providing an interesting texture. The southern pier bears the title, "VILLARD COURT," while the other pier is labeled "1927." Each duplex contains two single-story residential units, and their basic appearance is identical with slight differences among them. Two of the three carports remain, but are failing.

*This article was adapted from the Champaign Landmarks nomination prepared by Rachel Leibowitz and Elizabeth Milnarik. The complex was listed as a Historic District in August, 1998.*

## Statewide Preservation Conference

This year, the City of Lake Forest will host the 20th Annual Statewide Preservation Conference "Pro-Active Preservation for a New Century" on September 13-16, 2000. The conference is co-sponsored by the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, and the Lake Forest Preservation Foundation. The Illinois Association of Historic Preservation Commissions is sponsoring a track targeting the needs of preservation commissions. Additional tracks at the conference include the following:

- Civic Solutions** - focusing on preservation concerns at the municipal level
- Lake Forest** - highlighting the city's preservation achievements
- Working with Developers** - the nuts and bolts of maintaining standards in historic districts
- Special Interest Series** - offering insights on specific preservation issues such as preserving schools, saving cemeteries, incentives for commercial districts, controlling development through municipal initiatives, preserving vernacular housing, and preserving cultural landscapes.

Two receptions during the weekend will be held, with the first at Two Gables, the Laurance Armour estate designed by Harrie Lindeberg and David Adler. The second reception is a benefit for Elawa Farm, the A. Watson Armour Gentleman's Farm, designed by Alfred Hopkins and David Adler.

## Membership Application P.A.C.A.

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**Make checks payable to: PACA, Box 2575, Station A, Champaign, Illinois 61825**

Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

The plenary session will feature addresses by Lake Forest resident and Lt. Governor of the State of Illinois, Corrine Wood, and by Reid Williamson, Executive Director of the Historic Landmarks Foundation in Indiana. Mr. Williamson will discuss the success of statewide preservation in Indiana where the Landmarks Foundation runs six offices across the state working to save Indiana's landmarks.

Ten exciting architectural tours will be offered to areas in Lake Forest and nearby towns in Lake County. The conference will conclude on September 15, with the annual Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Preservation Award dinner and ceremony at the historic Deer Path Inn.

This is the first time the conference will be held in Lake Forest. The conference will open Wednesday evening, September 13, with a fund-raising dinner (\$150 per person) at Harrie Lindeberg's Onwentsia Club and will feature speaker Phillippe de Montebello, director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Mr. Montebello will discuss preservation and the museum today.

For more information about the conference contact PACA or LPCI at 312/922-1742.

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*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.*

**Save the Date**

**Old House Fair**

**September 9-10, 2000  
David Davis Mansion  
Historic Site  
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Bloomington**

#### PACA Newsletter

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