



PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Volume 22

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Number 4

**Sesquicentennial
Neighborhood House Tour
Sunday
September 29
1-5 PM**

**\$5.00 PACA Member Tickets
available at: Queen Smith Garden
and
404 West Washington, Champaign**

For the first time in a number of years, PACA is sponsoring a Fall House Tour; this year's tour features Champaign's historic Sesquicentennial Neighborhood. This neighborhood, bounded by Church, Neil, and Lynn streets and the railroad tracks, is recognized as the oldest residential area in Champaign. Also vying for this recognition is the area east of First Street between University and Washington. However, until townships were organized in Champaign County in 1861, everything east of First Street was part of the City of Urbana. Not until this reorganization took place did the city limits shift to Wright Street. Thus, the Sesquicentennial Neighborhood is technically six years older.

Champaign's origins are in the routing of the Illinois Central Railroad. By 1851, a noisy, rowdy, muddy impromptu village of sorts had sprung up in the area directly south and east of what is the present-day intersection of University Avenue and First Street. This was where those working in construction of the railroad and those who had flocked in to provide them with a variety of services settled. The railroad workers were primarily Irishmen with the I.C. bosses and engineers being Anglo-Saxon; most of the salesmen were transplanted Yankees.

The new railroad owned the land immediately surrounding the right-of-way, which is the reason why downtown streets run with the railroad, and two-thirds of this land was on the west side of the tracks. The railroad gave many lots



Unit #15 in the historic Pembroke Co-operative is one of the twelve historic residences in this year's Fall House Tour. Single-family homes, a bed-and-breakfast, two works-in-progress, an apartment, a condominium and this co-operative will be open for the tour. Photo by Leasure.

away to businessmen to lure them to the new rail station. Most of the best lots were on the west side of the tracks, thus it was natural for the young town to grow westward with the business district growing up adjacent to the railroad. As this area was low, wet, and muddy, these entrepreneurs and their clerks sought out higher ground for their residences.

The first home (one with a foundation and shingled roof) was built by Mark Carley in the 400 block of North State Street. This is literally the highest point in the area. Carley was soon joined by others. Carley and J. Baddeley, who lived on the northwest corner of Hill and Randolph, both had the same friend and attorney, Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln was a common sight on the streets of the neighborhood in the 1850s. The neighborhood was the site of Champaign's first public school, first hotel, and several churches.

Most of the original homes in the neighborhood were very small, in keeping with the frontier nature of the new railroad boomtown. The oldest ones date from the 1850s, although these are very few in number. There are a number of homes

from the 1860s and an even larger number that date from the 1870s and 1880s. A typical early house was two to four rooms. It was balloon framed with the beveled poplar exterior siding nailed directly to the studs with one-inch-thick boards nailed on the interior of the studs. Wallpaper was then applied directly to these boards (some of which are 14-inches wide). The foundation was brick and the roof was wood shingled; many roofs in the neighborhood still have their original shingle layer.

Later (by the 1880s), as the frontier moved west and as confidence in the permanence of the town grew, these original modest homes were added to, remodeled, and enlarged. Thus, all of the oldest and most historic homes in the neighborhood are a series of additions built around a typical two-room core. The oldest homes characteristically have an addition on the rear where city services were brought; this is the reason why bathrooms are often found in somewhat awkward places at the rear of the homes. At this time, wood lathe and plaster became common for interior walls.

Being the prairie, wood was rarely used for heating. Coal burnt in shallow fireplaces in parlors and stoves scattered throughout the home; it was also the cooking fuel. Both indoor and outdoor air quality was abysmal and was a major contributor to respiratory ailments.

Small grocery stores were scattered throughout the neighborhood with one being within three blocks of every home (at least two houses on the tour had stores connected with their histories). The downtown was within a six-block walk. Thus, few homes had horses or buggies. However, the neighborhood still has a few examples of small barns for a horse and the occasional cow. For transportation, most everyone walked.

In the 1880s, three east-west railroad lines were built through the neighborhood. Just north of Maple, between Neil and Randolph, was the Wabash line; the Wabash was a spur that connected to the main line running through Sidney. Its passenger station was sited on Maple. The Illinois Central Havana Line, however, connected with this spur line and continued west. Just north of the Wabash line was the Big Four Railroad which had a large brick passenger station between Neil and Randolph. The Big Four freight depot still stands on the west side of Randolph and is now used by the C-U Public Health District.

In the 1890s at the high point of train traffic on these tracks, over 60 trains, both passenger and freight, passed by each day. All were coal fired and the noise, air pollution, and strangers that the railroads attracted discouraged the wealthiest from continuing to live in the neighborhood. Thus began the move to the west and south. The residential real estate tradition in Champaign to move toward the southwest for status was first started over 120 years ago simply to move away from train traffic.

By the early part of the twentieth century, the idea of urban living in brick multi-unit multi-story buildings came to Champaign. Older homes, especially in the 300 and 400 blocks north were pulled down and many fine brick co-ops and apartments were built. Additionally, the downtown continued to grow westward. The Baddeley home, which had become the Joseph Kuhn House, was pulled down for the new Masonic Temple (now the Jefferson Building on N. Hill). The Carley Home was demolished to make room for a new supermarket (Piggly-Wiggly, now three restaurants on Church). Also the two churches in the neighborhood, the United Methodist and the First Presbyterian, continued to expand and remove residential buildings.

By the 1970s, changing housing trends caused an influx of absentee landlords looking for cheap property. These landlords were often the least experienced in the rental business. The result was a predictable downward spiral in housing conditions and quality of tenants. This trend reached its apex in the early 1990s. Since then, urban homesteaders, preservationists, and folks who wish to be near downtown have wrought exciting changes to the neighborhood. A great deal of that effort was the result of the Sesquicentennial Neighborhood Association.

This article was prepared by Michael Markstahler, a long-time neighborhood resident and neighborhood historian.

Sesquicentennial Neighborhood Association

PACA is proud to co-sponsor this year's Fall House Tour with this energetic and committed neighborhood association. In 1993, the seed for the Sesquicentennial Neighborhood Association was planted in a deteriorating section of the neighborhood. What started as a Crime Watch effort in the 300 block of West Maple was soon joined by adjacent and desperate neighbors on North State and West Vine streets. One member of the Champaign Police Department had predicted that in five years the Maple-Vine neighborhood would be lost. But instead, the two-block crime watch group became the Maple-Vine Neighborhood Association, and then grew into the Vine-Maple-Columbia Association. New sidewalks and neighborhood cleanups, cookouts, outdoor meetings with support people from the City, and the first implementation of community policing in Champaign occurred. The group initiated "citizens' patrols" to reclaim its neighborhood from the heavy 24-hour-a-day presence of street criminals. In communication with the Police Department, the citizens' patrols played an important role in the shutting down of notorious drug houses and prostitution. Local and even national media recognition resulted.

The big push for neighborhood wellness expanded into a celebration of pride in a unique heritage and historic preservation. The city's oldest residential neighborhood was established by a City Council resolution as the "City of Champaign Sesquicentennial Neighborhood," bounded by Neil Street, Church Street, Lynn Street, and by the Norfolk Southern Railroad tracks. The Maple-Vine Neighborhood Association had grown into the Sesquicentennial Neighborhood Association. Signs of revitalization include the

Queen Smith Memorial Garden at the corner of State and Maple, leased by the group from the City to turn an abused space into a community greenspace, and the designation by the Champaign Historic Preservation Commission of the Thomas Franks House at 704 N. Randolph as a historic landmark. After standing vacant in recent years, the house is undergoing renovation.

This article was written by Barbara Horne, past president of the SNA.

State Farm Classic Homes Fair

The Third Annual State Farm Classic Homes Fair offers hands-on, practical solutions to care for older buildings and to construct new buildings in traditional styles. It is scheduled for September 13-14 from 9-4 pm at the David Davis Mansion, 1000 East Monroe, Bloomington, Illinois. Interested homeowners and renovation professionals attending the Fair will learn how to restore and preserve historic buildings, neighborhoods, and landscapes. The general public will also have a chance to meet talented craftspeople and suppliers who specialize in historic restoration or new construction using traditional designs. The featured speaker is Roy Underhill, host of the *Woodwright's Shop* on PBS-TV, and former master housewright and director of interpretive development at Colonial Williamsburg. Admission is \$10 for both days; for further information go to www.oldhouse.society.org for details.

In addition, researching interiors and developing a furnishing plan for historic buildings will be the subject of a two-day workshop in Bloomington. "Researching Historic Building Interiors" will be held Thursday and Friday, September 12-13, at the David Davis Mansion State Historic Site. The workshop is intended for curators, administrators, and owners of historic homes. It will help these people research the history of their homes and develop a historic structures report and furnishing plan. The cost of the workshop is \$150.

Volunteers Needed

The Fall House Tour has 12 properties open to the public. That means that we need about 50 volunteers to help staff the houses. Its easy, just take tickets and/or watch out for accidents/theft.

As a reward for your two-hour shift (1-3 or 3-5) you will receive a free ticket to the tour! Call PACA, 359-7222, to volunteer with your shift preference.

From the President's Desk

Starting with this issue PACA President Rich Cahill will be writing periodic summaries of current PACA issues.

Introduction

In April of this year, I became president of the PACA Board of Directors. This is my second term on the board, where I have been lucky to work with a distinguished group of presidents that have included Steve Roemmel, Alice Novak, Art Zangerl, Jeff Gordon, Dan Wurl, and Dan Leasure. Each of these individuals, along with the eight-member board, have helped lead PACA through a period of outstanding successes as well as a number of major disappointments. During this period, the Orpheum Children's Science Museum has become a very successful stand-alone organization, the Ricker House was restored and sold, and we purchased our salvage warehouse.

A frequent question, that all PACA volunteers are asked, is how did they get involved with PACA? My involvement started in 1987. I had just purchased an older home in Urbana that was missing a few odds and ends. Someone mentioned that there was a place in downtown Champaign, only open on Saturday mornings, that might have the door and trim I needed. (At the time the warehouse was located at 65 E. University, Champaign and only occupied the front part of the building.) I think I found what I needed, and a few months later at a PACA sale at the old Grants building, I purchased a large display case that came from Danville which Bob Swisher and Hank Kaczmarek kindly delivered. A few

months later, I was asked to help salvage a house in Urbana on University Avenue. I was hooked. I became a regular volunteer at the warehouse, and helped with major salvage operations associated with the UI engineering campus. Initially, I served on the PACA board from 1993-1998, and was vice-president in 1995 and treasurer from 1996-1998. In 2001 I agreed to return to the board. One of the major contributions I feel best about is the recruitment of volunteers, many of whom have gone on to serve on the Board of Directors, and who have become good friends. The strength of PACA will always be a strong and active membership.

Pending Issues

The PACA board has pledged financial support, in terms of a no-interest loan, to help defray the cost of moving the Garrett House. The house, located at 201 East Washington, Urbana, is a fine example of an old farm house that was built in 1898. The Urbana School District has been very patient in trying to relocate the house after several proposed plans for saving it have fallen through. The current proposal has the house moving a very short distance to a new location on South Broadway. This plan eliminates problems with removing trees and dropping power lines. Robert Nemeth, an architect on the PACA board, is assisting the project by providing site plans required by the city.

On a Sad Note

I am sorry to announce the very untimely passing of two noted contractors from the area, both good friends of PACA. Andy Speer was the owner of Castle Painting. Andy worked with the

new owners of the Ricker House (612 West Green, Urbana) in choosing the color scheme and painting the house, and he volunteered at eleven Kids Building Fairs. His tasteful choice of color on many houses around town will be visible for people to enjoy for many years to come.

Peter Halfar was the owner of Halfar Plumbing. He was responsible for the complete replacement of plumbing at the Ricker House and was willing to work with owners of historic homes in preserving older heating and plumbing systems. PACA sends condolences to both families.

Upcoming Events

The annual Membership and Volunteer Recognition Party will again be on Columbus Day weekend, Sunday, October 13. (This is not a Bear's Game Day.) This will be the fourth party at our warehouse, and the first since it is now completely paid for!! A ceremonial burning of the mortgage will take place. Food and drinks will be provided, and perhaps some entertainment.

Editorial Comment

The auction of surplus furniture from the Champaign County Courthouse this summer resulted in very unfavorable press for both the administration and the County Board. It was implied by some that PACA received salvage from the Courthouse. To set the record straight, PACA has not salvaged any materials from the courthouse; however, we did salvage from the Sheriff's Residence the previous year. The Champaign County administration allowed PACA to tour the courthouse in February and a list of potential salvage items was submitted.

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 _____

e mail address: _____ Phone: _____

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

Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

We were given the impression that PACA would be allowed save architectural elements from the old courthouse in late June once the facility was vacated. However, repeated attempts to obtain permission and access to the courthouse met with failure. Thus, any materials that might have been recycled to area residents for historic renovation projects have probably been lost to a landfill.

Historic District Forum

Urbana's Historic Preservation Commission is sponsoring a preservation forum on historic districts, September 25 at 7:00 PM. The event is open to the general public and will be held at the Urbana Civic Center, 108 E. Water Street. The three guest speakers, from Bloomington, Normal, and Grand Rapids, Michigan, all live in historic districts and will discuss the problems and advantages of owning property in a historic district. Urbana commission members will also be available to answer questions about the local ordinance. If you have questions or reservations about historic districts and how they might effect your neighborhood, plan to attend this meeting.

Salvage Donations

Jay Salmon
George Kiningham
Donna Whitehill
Barbara & Eric Frahm
Malcolm Green
Longview Methodist Church
University of Illinois
Jeanie & Larry Craig
Tim & Barbara Kinkead

Salvage V.I.P.'s

Bob Swisher
Rich Cahill
Mike Miller
Darrel Foste
Dan Leasure
Mike Richards
Brian Duffield
Bill Odenweller

New & Renewing Memberships (received since the last newsletter)

Charter Members (1981-1983)

Mark & Kirstin Repogle
Louissette Zuidema
Dr. & Mrs. Robert Sutton

Over Ten Year Members

Sandra & George Batzli
Steve & Kathy Roemmel
Craig & Rose Grant
Glenna M. Bartell
Mr. & Mrs. George Miley
Andrew B. White
Dennis Lewis
James Fallon
Mrs. J.L. Fairchild
Virginia & Jack Waaler
Irma R. Lore
Mark Netter
Earl & Lynda Creutzburg
Lianne Anderson

Five to Ten Year Members

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Kevin Fahey & Ann Bergeron
Tim & Barbara Kinkead
Catherine Barbercheck
Valerie Woodruff & Mike Boero
Ellen Foran
Kristin Solberg & David Seyler
Cheryl Kennedy
Joe & Phyllis Williams
Jennifer Hines & Robert Krumm
Bert Barickman

One to Four Year Members

David & Donna Dunning
Dianne Dunning & Steven Marks
Sue Waller
Kay McCool
Chuck Andrews
Suzanne Ashley-Wannemuehler
Ann Lowry
Mr. & Mrs. Donald Taylor
Ann Zahner
Adrienne Edwards & Chris Ivey
Patricia Brunk
Carol & John Leasure
Sharon Thompson
Robert I. Selby
Susanne Massell
Brian & Claire Deal
Scott Carney
Sandra & Stephen Burgener

New Members

Giraldo & Melodye Rosales
Mr. & Mrs. Nathaniel B. Jones
Mitchell & Frances Harris
Michelle Walden
Peggy Whitmer
Christine Cleatou
Amy Wagoner-Johnson
George Weisiger

Save the Date!
**Sesquicentennial
Neighborhood House
Walk**

**Sunday
September 29, 2002
1-5 PM**

Volunteers Needed, Call 359-7222

PACA Newsletter

P.O. Box 2575, Station A, Champaign, IL 61825

Richard Cahill, President
Kathy Reeves, Vice-President
Robert Nemeth, Secretary
Lou Simpson, Treasurer
Karen Lang Kummer, Exec. Director



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