PACA Receives Major Donation

The Preservation and Conservation Association is pleased to announce a major gift from the Drenckhahn and Morris families. The descendants of Francis Emory and Abbie Solon have donated the Solon House at 503 South State Street, Champaign to the Preservation and Conservation Association of Champaign County. The Italianate mansion, which was built in the 1860s, has been owned by the Solon family since 1907.

Francis Solon's grandson, James M. Morris, of suburban Washington, D.C., stated, "This is a gift from the Solon family to the people of Champaign. Our family has owned the house for approximately 100 years, and we trust that the house will grace Champaign 100 years from now. Our gift of the Solon House to PACA will result in the restoration of the house and garden." Abbie Ellen Morris, Mary Frances Morris, and James M. Morris, the children of Ellen Solon Morris donated their 50% interest in the house to PACA. Mary Ellen Fleischli, Ann Zahner, Virginia Wendland, and Frances Frost, the children of Ann Solon Drenckhahn donated the other 50% interest in the house. Speaking for the Drenckhahn sisters, Mrs. Fleischli added, "It is our intention to give this wonderful home to PACA in the memory of our grandparents, Francis and Abbie Solon. In making this donation, we hope to preserve a little of Champaign history for future generations."

Francis Emory Solon was born in Champaign County in 1868, the son of John and Ellen Solon of Colfax Township. His father, John Solon, emigrated from Ireland and bought land in central Illinois beginning in the 1860s. Francis Solon married Abbie Gunning, the daughter of Dennis Gunning of Tolono, another prominent Irish-American landowner in nineteenth century Illinois. Francis Solon significantly expanded the older generation's real estate interests, and was also active in politics. He served as chairman of the Champaign County Democratic Central Committee, as chairman of the Board of Review, and as a drainage commissioner. Francis and Abbie Solon had five children: John B. Solon, James A. Solon, Ann Solon Drenckhahn, Ellen Solon Morris, and Mary Margaret Solon. Ellen Solon Morris, was born in 1909, the first Solon to be born in the house. Francis Solon and his brothers and sister donated the main altar at St. John's Catholic Chapel at the University of Illinois in memory of their parents and brother. Quietly philanthropic, the Solon family has contributed to many local causes, including Holy Cross and St. Matthew schools. Francis Solon died in 1938, but his wife, Abbie, continued to live in the Solon House until her death in 1967. Their last surviving child, John, died in 1995. For virtually the entire period that Francis and Abbie Solon lived in the house the garden included the land behind the house as far as Prairie Street.

"This gift represents a significant event for the Preservation Association and the community at large," stated PACA President Catherine Barbercheck. "This home has been a significant architectural landmark for residents of the area for many years. We are very excited to have the opportunity to help make it again a functioning presence in the community for future generations to appreciate."

The Solon House was listed as a Champaign landmark in 1998, which allows the Champaign Preservation Commission to review exterior work. The house was built between 1865 and 1869 by William Barrett. PACA has not formulated plans for the historic house aside from an initial preservation assessment and security. The house will not be accessible to the public in the near future.
Historic Schools: Renovate or Replace
(Part two of a three-part series on preserving historic schools)

Conflict arises all too often when administration, parents, and community representatives struggle over the choices of either replacing an older, historic school or renovating the school. Understanding the more common barriers puts the dilemma into perspective and enables decision-makers to obtain critical information for developing plans.

In the previous article of this series the key barriers identified include the following (for the purpose of review):

- Out-dated structures incapable of remaining current with advancing technological requirements for education;
- Inefficient energy designs, making them prohibitively expensive to heat and cool;
- Insufficient space for the size of classrooms;
- Structurally sound schools that do not meet safety requirements and codes;
- Accessibility requirements (ADA);
- Inadequate parking for staff and other site-related restrictions;
- Insufficient space for outdoor recreation;
- State education policies for siting schools;
- Poor air circulation and ventilation; and
- Health-related problems (that contribute to asthma) caused by substandard environmental quality.

These are not insignificant barriers. Students must have healthy environments for learning and staff legally must have healthy work environments. Energy costs are prohibitively expensive for schools and newer, more energy efficient systems in schools that are better insulated are good arguments for newer facilities. Each of the above barriers comes complete with a lot of well-thought arguments for replacing older schools. The natural question, is therefore, how do we overcome these real issues and renovate an older school while achieving improved technology, economic and efficient energy (E3), improved indoor air quality, removal of mold, and equitable accessibility for all students.

Each school facility is unique due to its age and previous modifications. While many of the barriers are shared, the techniques and designs required to overcome each will differ. This article will address only a small portion of opportunities for some of the key barriers. An online resource for identifying sources for techniques and recommendations is provided at the conclusion of this article.

Wiring the building for Internet access is a common concern. Technology plays an important role in education. Many schools are using Internet resources in lieu of purchasing expensive publications for their libraries. Technology enables students to have quick access to current research materials rather than outdated publications. As we all know, this technology is rapidly changing. In the near future wireless Internet technology may make it unnecessary to rewire buildings. Outdated wiring that does not meet electrical code will need to be addressed in all retrofits—it's unavoidable.

Energy efficient design in new schools frequently gets overlooked and districts too often need to return to the blueprints to update within one or two years following construction. Energy efficiency, unfortunately, isn't always achieved with new schools. Older schools can reduce expenses by retrofitting and modifying schools without building new. Some considerations include reviews of case studies and identifying some technical opportunities for improvement.

Although retrofitting sounds expensive, building new schools becomes considerably more expensive. Out-dated radiators can be removed and modern HVAC systems can run through ductwork along stairwells and possibly following the old pipes that supported the radiators. A bit of creative engineering can be used to avoid unnecessary costs and save a community landmark.

Technical Opportunities
Examples of some energy savings strategies include occupancy sensors, bi-level or zone switching for lighting, exterior photocell installations, strict nighttime and vacation shutdowns, and replacing all remaining incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent (cfl) bulbs. The first three have moderate costs but maintenance personnel can generally complete the installation. Cleaning light bulbs and fixtures with a dry cloth can increase the input as much as 15% each year. Solar heat can be controlled with window blinds and window film to either reduce heat gain on warm days and heat loss on colder days.

Health-Related Problems
Admittedly, asthma issues have grown considerably over the years. Building new schools is not an automatic guarantee for escaping asthma and mold issues. Tightly sealed, poorly ventilated new schools continue to show growing problems and risks with asthma. Chemical releases, pesticide exposures, paint fumes, and bus emissions can all trigger asthma attacks. Some simple adjustments can eliminate many of
these risks. Management of chemicals, both in the classrooms and in the maintenance closet, can eliminate overhead costs and reduce emissions. Hazardous spills in labs and classrooms often occur from lack of familiarity with proper chemical storage and use. Excessive use of educational chemicals can be avoided by embracing the principles of green chemistry and micro-scale chemistry. Pesticide use can be avoided through the development of an integrated pest management (IPM) plan. Careful selection of low VOC (Volatile Organic Compound) emission paints additionally removes some triggers. These are substances found in the paints that evaporate into the air. The fumes irritate ears, noses, and throats and can cause headaches or nausea over time and contribute to “sick building syndromes.”

Uninviting pests into the school achieves multiple benefits. Sealing off their entryways (cracks and holes around pipes, windows and wires) prevents their entry but simultaneously improves energy efficiency. Careful monitoring for pests and removal of food and hiding places (habitat) for pests cleans the learning environment and tends to identify and eliminate many leaky pipes. An additional benefit of this is that it helps reduce and prevent mold buildups.

Improving Air Circulation and Ventilation

While air quality can be improved by opening windows and doors, in schools this tends to reduce energy efficiency and re-invite pests into the schools. Usual recommended procedures for improving air quality is to reduce emissions from the source. Maintenance staff should consider cleaning their buildings when school is not in session and selecting cleaning solvents with low emissions. School administrators should work with personnel and maintenance on scheduling times that encourages access of the buildings in evenings and possibly weekends. Placement of barrier floor mats at school entrances reduces the amount of dirt and dust in schools. High efficiency vacuum bags will retain the smaller particles of dust. Clean and monitor drain traps. Dry drain traps draw in sewer gas fumes. Use energy efficient air conditioners (and clean them regularly) to keep humidity levels below 60 percent. This will help reduce moisture-related problems. Carefully examine what emissions might be occurring close to air intakes.

Use of native plants in landscaping school grounds eliminates most needs for chemicals on the campus. Any application of herbicides and insecticides should be done away from vents and when students are not on the campus.

ADA Accessibility

The intent of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is to prevent segregating disabled students from the rest of the student body. Provisions for accessibility apply to both new construction and existing buildings. The difficulty rises from the need to introduce new architectural elements to existing buildings. While there are a lot of details to consider involving interior and exterior ramps, elevators, and accessible toilet rooms, creative engineering might minimize the costs. Many older, historic schools have non-historic additions. If a multiple story addition is attached to a historic school, the elevator might be inserted into the existing non-historic structure. The same technique can be used for installation of ramps if the goal is to maintain historical integrity.

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P.A.C.A. MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO PACA

Central High School was built in 1934 as Champaign’s Junior High School. It was Project #2918 under the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works program. Ramey, Berger, & Kelly were the architects.

Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.
Insufficient Space for Outdoor Recreation
Re-evaluating the arrangement of the school campus landscaped areas and play areas, might provide alternatives for expanding the outdoor recreation opportunities. Developing partnerships with nearby parks can add space. This has a dual purpose of enhancing two programs while introducing students and their parents to other community facilities. By sharing facilities with parks, libraries, and recreation centers through partnerships maintenance costs could be shared. Demolition of poorly planned additions can add space. Arbitrary state or district siting requirements can be modified for urban schools by lowering (Georgia) or removing the acreage requirements (Massachusetts and Vermont). This has been done in a number of states. In some states the acreage requirement only applies to new construction and not existing schools (New York).

Too often the pursuit of building a new school occurs because of trends, or it is a political goal and not based upon actual community needs. Many may look at building a new school as the easiest of two options, starting from scratch rather than retrofitting. A few committed and concerned community members and parents can often identify resources for creatively overcoming the barriers. This unfortunately takes some time. With a little research they can identify the key arguments for building new schools and locate resources for creating new perspectives and presenting alternative suggestions. Many states have funds for retrofitting and improving school energy efficiency but locating these funds might require a little sifting through some deep files. It's not intentionally buried, it just happens. In Illinois, when school funds for energy efficiency projects become available, the Greening Schools Web site places them under Funding Opportunities. Once the key arguments can be confronted and overcome that leaves the less critical, lower tier of issues. These are easier to resolve.

As with each of the above barriers, some research and creative engineering can make big differences. By opening attitudes to possibilities, older schools can be saved and neighborhoods can remain intact. In the third installment we will highlight case studies and success stories and the values of their successes to the school's economy, efficiency, and learning environment as well as the value to the community.

This article was written by Carol Knapp, PACA Board Member, educator, and education specialist/coordinator of Greening Schools (www.greeningschools.org), with the Illinois Waste Management and Research Center, and former director of a nature preserve in Texas. She spends much of her free time restoring and renovating an 1896 house in Central Illinois.

Online Resources for Identifying Techniques and Recommend ations for Overcoming Misperceptions and Barriers to Renovating Older Schools

Children and Schools, Beyond Pesticides, http://www.beyondpesticides.org/schools/index.htm
Green Your Building from Greening Schools, A Project with Illinois EPA and WMRC, http://www.greeningschools.org/resources/admin.cfm
Healthy School Environments, US EPA http://www.epa.gov/schools/
Hidden Opportunities, From American School & University http://asumag.com/mag/university_hidden_opportunities/
Improving the Air We Breathe http://www.naesp.org/ContentLoad.do?contentId=192
A Primer for the Renovation/Rehabilitation of Older and Historic Schools, from CEFPI, The School Building Association. ($40.00), http://shop.cefpi.org/product.esiml?PID=106
Sources of Indoor Air Pollution – Improving Air Quality http://www.epa.gov/iaq/fe-imprv.html:
Ventilation%20Improvements

The Board of Directors of the Preservation & Conservation Association cordially invites all members and friends to a

25th Anniversary Celebration Dinner & Presentation

Sunday, March 19, 2006
5:00 to 8:00 pm
YMCA of the University of Illinois
1001 South Wright Street, Champaign
$35, RSVP by March 6
(parking available at Phi Beta Phi, 1005 S. Wright Street)
Salvage VIP's
Rich Cahill
Bob Swisher
Mike Richards
Dan Leasure
Bette Swisher
Maria Velazquez
Darrel Foste
Kathy Reeves
Mike Miller
Brian Duffield
Neil Lasater
Jerry Schmidt

Salvage Donations
Tom Gillespie
Barr Real Estate, Inc.
Wakeland Rentals

Heritage Award Nominations
PACA is soliciting nominations for 2006 Heritage Awards. Various categories are available for noteworthy rehabilitation projects. See the nomination form enclosed in this newsletter. Nominations should be returned by mid-March. The awards ceremony will be in May this year.

Save the Date
PACA 25th Anniversary Celebration Dinner and Presentation
Sunday, March 19, 2006
5:00-8:00 pm
Latzler Hall
YMCA of the University of Illinois
1001 S. Wright Street, Champaign

New & Renewing Memberships
(received since the last newsletter)
Charter Members (1981-1983)
Anne Ehrlich
Karen & Rex Kummer
Mary Blair
Mark & Kirstin Replogle
James & Marie Payne

Over Ten Year Members
Rose & Craig Grant
Jerry O'Bryan
Chris & Melanie Hill
Jennifer Putman & Bruce Komadina
Ellen Foran
Tony & Mary Graham
Cinema Gallery (Corporate)
Chris Anderson
Alice Berksen
Colleen & Bruce Brodie
Tori Corkery
Rick Orr
City of Urbana, Community Development (Corporate)
Sheryl & Joe DeBarr

Five to Ten Year Members
Wayne, Mary & Rachel Robinson
Andrew Phillips & Brenda Koenig
Pam Todd
David & Donna Dunning
Carol & Bruce Stoddard
Smith/Burgett Architects, Inc. (Corporate)
Ray & Marilyn Harrison
Dan Rutherford
Adrienne Edwards & Chris Ivey
Darcy & Kelly Bean
Bill Rauwolf
Douglas Kistler
Chuck & Laura Jackson
Fran Turquette
Steven D. Brown
Kay McCool

One to Four Year Members
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Barbara & Larry Slanker
Linda L. Lorenz
Marcia & Neil Lasater
David Peyton
Kim McGee
Liz & Philip Meadows
Greg Stock
Art & Diann Thoma
Thomas Fehrmann
Rex & Carol Knepp
Douglas Brewer & Ann Hutfles
Ari Babakhani
The Pawn Shop, Rantoul (Corporate)
Clifford Clark
Chuck Andrews
Scott Carney
Lea Kirtland
Gordon L. Cohen
Scott J. Robinson
Brian Behrs & Linda Lehovec

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Becky Roach & Garry Walter
Milton & Elizabeth Otto
Grant Edmonds & Christina Papavasiliou
Suzanne Hovey-Hallihan
Stewart Rawle
Fox Development Corp. (Corporate)
Melissa Chambers
Clifton & Laura Bergeron
Kathleen Jones
William & Rita Trankina
Mike & Robyn Deterding
Kris Stauffer
Felice Kaufmann & Harry Buerkett
Michael Moynihan
Charles Lozar

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.