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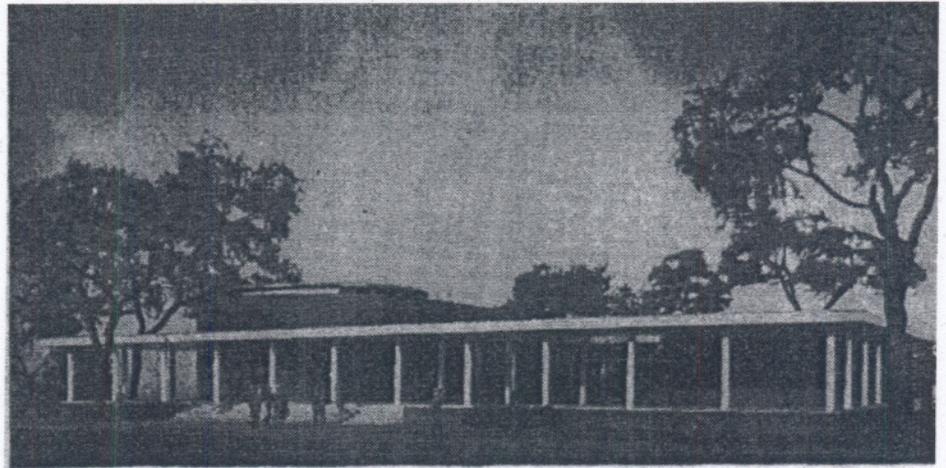
NUMBER 3

Focus On: University of Illinois Hillel Foundation

The Hillel Foundation building, 503 East John Street, Champaign, was designed by Max Abramovitz in 1947 and published in *Architectural Record* in 1948. However, it was not constructed until 1951. Although it is not specifically listed as such, the Hillel building appears to resemble the Neo-Expressionism (circa 1950-1970) architectural style. This style, which emphasizes "structure and function in abstract designs," was often used by architects to convey a message through the form of the building. Since most radical architects, Abramovitz included, saw religion as a significant message, the Neo-Expressionism style was often selected for churches and chapels.

Common elements of this architectural style are found throughout the Hillel building. These include "generally sculptured effects, daring structural techniques, the use of arches and vaults (found in the chapel's dome ceiling), and structural columns (seen in the loggia or colonnaded porch)." The building is one-story, constructed of red brick, concrete, and a steel frame that stretches 200 feet horizontally and supports a low, flat roof. The rounded chapel dome extends above the roof and is highlighted by the structure of the building. The Hillel building is not heavily adorned with windows; a few are included near the front entranceway and light the library area, but none are highly decorative. The building does feature an open court, named the "Courtyard of the Lord," in the middle of the structure, which is a grassy garden of traditional origin used for religious ceremonies.

The University of Illinois Hillel building is a duplicate to that of the Jewish center designed and built by Abramovitz for Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. While the two buildings were



Newspaper rendering of the new Hillel Foundation building, 503 East John Street, Champaign. The building was constructed in 1951 to the design of Max Abramovitz; it will be demolished this summer for a new building.

designed and created almost simultaneously, the University of Illinois Hillel was the first completed. In addition, this building closely resembles the cylindrical chapel designed for the M.I.T. campus (but not yet built in 1948) by architect Eero Saarinen.

Historical and Cultural Significance

Important to the significance of the Hillel building is the history of the foundation at the University of Illinois. While the current building for the Hillel Foundation was constructed in 1951 on East John Street, Hillel was founded at the University of Illinois in 1923. The foundation's original quarters, located on the second floor of a building at 605 East Green Street, Champaign, was the first established Hillel Foundation worldwide.

When Hillel acquired its attractive corner location at Fifth and John, the chairman of the Hillel Foundation Building Fund, Sam Shmikler, moved the foundation to a house on the site. Building at the new location commenced shortly thereafter. Isaac Kuhn, of Joseph Kuhn and Co., was a primary financial contributor. The new

building, when completed and ready for use, represented an outlay of approximately \$400,000. Kuhne-Simmons of Champaign received the construction contract with supervision of construction led by a sub-committee composed of Rabbi Samuel Berkowitz (then the director of Hillel) and Professor Granville S. Keith of the University of Illinois School of Architecture. Prof. Keith had been assigned the position of supervisor by Max Abramovitz (of Harrison and Abramovitz), the designer of the new building.

After construction, the building was named the Benjamin Frankel Memorial in honor of the late Rabbi Frankel, who was the first director of the local Hillel Foundation. Among those attending the building's dedication was the former first lady, Eleanor Roosevelt.

From the creation of Hillel Foundation at the University of Illinois in 1923, it has grown to become the largest Jewish campus organization in the world. Foundations and affiliates are on 400 campuses in forty-seven countries including the

United States, Canada, Israel, Australia, Europe, and South America.

The Hillel Foundation, in cooperation with B'nai B'rith International, has had a "historical commitment to a pluralistic community which encourages intellectual challenge and growth." In this respect, Hillel has offered programs designed to ensure the preservation of Jewry and Judaism through education, community volunteer service, and other social, cultural, and religious programs. These activities give students the opportunity to enhance their Jewish identity in the college experience, "making it comfortable and enjoyable for students of all backgrounds and diverse interests to 'do Jewish'." The Hillel Foundation is a medium for Jewish students to "come to know each other, and together create a campus Jewish community that reflects their own interests and needs."

Today, the University of Illinois Hillel Foundation is directed by Joel Schwitzer. The foundation serves the campus' Jewish population of approximately 3,500 students, which includes the large Jewish Greek system at the University of Illinois. To cater to the student's needs, the Hillel Foundation offers more than twenty courses, for both graduate and undergraduate students, concentrating in Hebrew studies and Jewish culture and society. In addition, several rabbis from Chicago routinely visit and teach. The foundation also offers study abroad programs, in cooperation with the University of Illinois, for academic credit. Likewise, Hillel works with other campus units to bring speakers to campus.

Outside of academic programming, Hillel presents social action events that work with the homeless population and local children. Cultural programming encompasses gay/lesbian issues, women's issues, and language discussion groups. Social events and cultural art, such as intramural sports, Israeli dancing, authentic cooking classes, and painting and sculpture are included in the schedule. Hillel also offers five kosher dinners weekly, observance of services every Friday night and Saturday morning, and observance of Jewish holidays. The University of Illinois Hillel Foundation building is well-equipped to provide these opportunities to the Jewish student community. "The chapel seats 100 for religious services, the auditorium accommodates 300 for lectures, dramatics,

social gatherings, and recreation. The library, seminar rooms, and social rooms are used by both students and the community. Kitchens are included, as well as the caretaker's and administrative suites."

Architectural Significance

In addition to the University of Illinois Hillel Foundation's importance as the first established student Jewish cultural center, the building also gains recognition as being the work of the notable architect, Max Abramovitz. Abramovitz was born on May 23, 1908 in Chicago, Illinois. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois in 1929. Two years later, he attained his master's degree from Columbia University after briefly teaching in their school of architecture. In 1934, Abramovitz joined the architecture firm of Corbett, Harrison, and McMurry, as a designer and later, partner. After the previous partners died, the firm became known simply as Harrison and Abramovitz (1943). Hillel Foundation hired the firm in 1948 to design their new building. Abramovitz designed buildings at other university campuses with similar stylistic features. At Brandeis University these include the Inter-Faith Chapel (1955), Springold Theatre, Schwartz Art Studios (1963), and the Rose Art Museum (1961). Abramovitz also designed the Columbia University Law School (1961), the Wahovia National Bank Building (1958), and the Radcliffe College Library Project.

Perhaps more notably, Max Abramovitz collaborated on a number of projects such as the U.N. Headquarters building, the Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (1962), and the American Telephone & Telegraph Company Exhibit for the New York World's Fair (1964). However, Abramovitz is "chiefly known for his designs of the University of Illinois buildings such as the Assembly Hall (1963) and the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts (1969). Such buildings have led Max Abramovitz to be nationally recognized for his structural, cultural, and stylistic architecture, and to become largely known as one of the University of Illinois' most distinguished graduates."

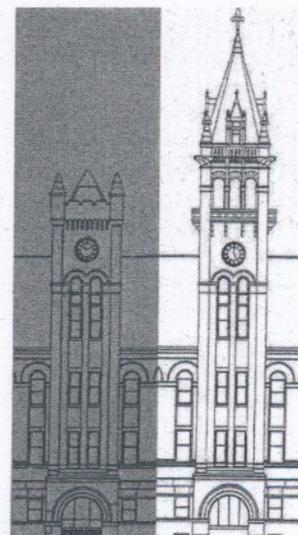
The influence and significance of architect Max Abramovitz and his buildings are summarized by Henry Dreyfuss. As written by Dreyfuss, when one enters a building designed by Abramovitz, "one feels the calm, the warmth, the understanding

of this very human being; he has the ability to leave part of himself in his work . . . the rare ability of getting inside of others, to become one with them and understand their needs and desires, and in the case of this architect, translate them into satisfying, finely proportioned, livable structures. . . Over the years, Max Abramovitz has been an urgent force in today's architecture . . . how grateful we must be for this one, who considers our needs and surrounds them with beauty."

This article was adapted from a nomination prepared by Allison Laff, a graduate student in Urban Planning, in 1998 as an application for local landmark status. Due to the objection of the owners, the building was not listed. It is scheduled for demolition this summer.

Champaign County Courthouse Clock Tower Update

After more than two years of fund raising, the Citizens' Clock and Bell Tower Committee has raised over \$700,000 toward the goal of \$1 million. The end is in sight. The county is just now beginning to contract for the restoration of the old courthouse exterior and the tower extension should be a part of that contract. The alternative is a more costly later restoration at greater cost. Now is the time for the last big push for fund raising. Donors of \$500 or more are to be memorialized on a bronze plaque in the new Courts building. Send your donation to the Clock Tower Restoration Project, 1776 East Washington, Urbana, IL 61802-4581 or check out the website at <http://www.co.champaign.il.us/CLOCKTOWER/belltowe.htm>. Donations are tax deductible.



What is Historic Integrity?

Is my house eligible for the National Register? It's over 100 years old. This is a common question that PACA receives. The National Register considers more than just age for listing. Historic Integrity and Historic Significance are two important considerations. The following discusses the issue of integrity.

The National Register of Historic Places, administered by the National Park Service, employs strict guidelines for determining the eligibility of properties to be listed in the National Register. Eligible properties must meet at least one of four criteria for entry in the National Register.

Briefly, Criterion A states that a property may be registered if it is associated with an event significant to the broad patterns of history. Criterion B specifies that a property may be registered if it is associated with the lives of significant persons. Criterion C includes architecturally significant properties, while Criterion D is usually associated with archeological sites.

In addition to meeting one or more of the National Register criteria, a property must also have "integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association." If a property has been seriously compromised by unsympathetic alterations, it may not be eligible for the Register.

But what exactly is historic integrity? Below are some guidelines to help property owners determine the historical integrity of their property based on the seven types of integrity specified by the National Park Service.

Location. Is the resource on its original location? What is the relationship between the location and the significance of the property?

Design. Does the resource retain its original design? What effect have later alterations, additions, later construction, or other changes had on the resource's historic appearance?

Setting. Does the resource retain a sense of its original siting and setting? How have later changes to its surroundings effected its historic appearance?

Materials. Are the materials of the resource authentic and original? Have later alterations or replacements effected the resource's historic authenticity?

Workmanship. Are the details of the resource still intact? Has the integrity of construction materials, methods, and finishes been considered? Is the workmanship of ornamentation and detailing still evident?

Feeling. Does the resource have sufficient historic appearance to convey the reason why it is significant? Would the builder, owner, or significant person immediately recognize the resource?

Association. Does the property have a direct and tangible connection to the event or person for which the property is significant? Does the property retain its historic appearance from the time in which the person lived or the event occurred?

Decisions concerning the significance and integrity of historic properties can be made only when the criteria are applied

within related historical contexts. But what then is historical context? It is the evaluation of a property in relation to its peers. To determine historical context, a researcher might ask the following questions.

Has the property been evaluated in comparison to others with a similar history, design, or time period? How important was this historical theme, event, or architectural/engineering work to local history? Has the factual history of this property been related to the general history of the community? Does the property have good historic integrity? What are the characteristics that a property should have to represent this historical theme, event, or design and does this property retain them?

For more information about historic integrity or the National Register, contact the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency at 217-785-4512 or visit their website at <http://www.state.il.us/hpa/>.

SAVE THE DATES Upcoming Conferences

The National Alliance of Preservation Commissions is holding their fifth biennial National Commission Forum in Baltimore, Maryland from July 27-30, 2006. *Forum 2006* will build on the success of the four preceding conferences with workshops and traditional training courses dedicated to new commissioners and commission chairs. It will also feature working roundtables and breakout sessions with tours and mobile workshops. For information contact NAPC at 706-542-4731 or check the website at 222.uga.edu/napc.

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MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY

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Building Bridges: Community, Collaboration, Celebration is the theme of the Association of Midwest Museums, the Illinois Association of Museums, and the Iowa Museum Association's 2006 conference. The event will be held in the Quad Cities (Illinois and Iowa) on September 26-29, 2006. The *Building Bridges Conference* is a unique collaboration of three museum associations and twenty local museum venues. The conference will have a resource hall with forty products and service providers that offer expert guidance, advice and ideas, as well as the most cutting-edge products and technology. Information will be available on exhibit fabrication, government grants, collections management software, web site design, historic preservation and architectural services, audio tour technology, and more. Information is available at AMM 314-746-4557 or midwestmuseums@aol.com.

Illinois' largest meeting devoted to the history of the Prairie State will be October 12-13, 2006 in Springfield. The annual *Conference on Illinois History* will feature authors Robert Bray, James Green, and Kerry Trask. A teachers' workshop is included and the conference is accredited by the ISBE for CPDU. Details are available at www.Illinois-History.gov/conference.htm.

The nation's premier preservation conference is being held this year in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. *Making Preservation Work* is the theme of the 2006 National Preservation Conference sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The dates of the event are October 31 to November 3, 2006. A pre-conference seminar, *A National Summit on Greening of Historic Preservation*, will be held October 30. Besides the Green Building session, other sessions will focus on various types

of revolving funds with break out sessions on the latest financial and real estate techniques for establishing and expanding funds in communities, cities, and states of all sizes. The conference is well-known for its tours and special events, but the focus of the conference are the very informative educational workshop sessions (50+) and the ability to network with preservationists from around the country. Information is available at 866-805-5725 or www.nthp-conference.org. As a NTHP Forum member, PACA members are eligible for a conference discount.

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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.

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(received since the last newsletter)
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