2006 Salvage Report

For some time, the PACA Board of Directors urged the formation of a committee whose sole purpose is to establish formal procedures and address problems associated with the warehouse and its operation. This request was a top priority at the board retreat in 2002. In the fall of 2006, a core group of active salvage volunteers established an initial seven-member Salvage Committee. On March 31, 2007, this board will be reduced to five members, three of whom will serve three-year terms and two of whom will serve two-year terms. There are no restrictions on consecutive terms due to the shortage of active volunteers. Current members are Richard Cahill, Robert Swisher, Brian Duf- field, Dan Leasure, Darrel Foste, Suzanne Ashley-Wannemuehler, and Mike Miller.

Salvage Committee meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the month at the warehouse during regular sales hours of 4 to 7 p.m and are open to all PACA members. The committee is already active. They completed a reorganization of the warehouse and arranged a new sales desk in a more visible and warmer location. A “new” salvage truck was purchased and procedures for its use established. An Eagle Scout designed and built shelf space along the west wall. Expansion and updating of the price list is underway and the committee is exploring possibilities for additional warehouse space.

A new procedure is in place for large salvage projects wherein an experienced salvage volunteer is charged with organizing and coordinating the event. This has worked well for recent projects such as the UIUC Natural History Building (Dan Leasure), UIUC Chemistry Library (Suzanne Ashley-Wannemuehler), Danville’s Douglas School (Bob Swisher), and Nevada Street apartments (Rich Cahill). There are benefits to establishing a single point of contact for each salvage operation: streamlined coordination and communication, improved public relations, easier scheduling, and better follow up.

Historically, PACA has been fortunate to count in its ranks of volunteers retirees, self-employed people, and helpers with flexible work schedules. These numbers are dwindling, however, with only a few active volunteers who fit in these categories. Keeping a robust complement of available volunteers for hands-on salvage is a chronic problem. This is anticipated to remain a critical need of the salvage operation along with staff to work in the warehouse. In addition to the need for more volunteers, there is a need for better communication with possible salvage sources: the cities of Champaign and Urbana, the UI, surrounding towns, contractors, and building and apartment owners.

The primary mission of PACA is to preserve historic structures. When this is not possible, the salvage and sale of architectural building components supports PACA’s preservation projects and programs. These programs include annual Heritage Grants to area non-profits and their historic properties. PACA funds also contribute to focused preservation efforts, such as repairs to the Ricker House, the New Orpheum Theatre, and the Harwood-Solon House. Salvage sales contribute the majority of PACA’s income, supplemented by membership dues and contributions. Thus, the flourishing operation of the warehouse is important to the continued success of PACA. PACA is unique among local not-for-profit organizations in its contributions to the community without governmental support.

As a group, PACA salvage volunteers do not give blood, do not build houses, do not serve food to the homeless. Our services may not be as important to the daily life and well being of individuals as the services of other charitable organizations. But, PACA serves a vital purpose in identifying and preserving our unique heritage and community character and contributes to the livability of Champaign County. To volunteer on PACA salvage projects email Betty Swisher at aacana@soltec.net.
Focus On: Buena Vista Court

Buena Vista Court, a National Register and Local Historic District, was built in 1925/26 by John Carpenter and Garrett H. Baker. Originally named West Elm Court, Buena Vista Court is a set of eight Spanish Colonial Revival style bungalows built around a central court with the front entrance facing Elm Street. In the original construction, there were also eight garages along Springfield Avenue, which have since been razed. The court occupies Lots 5, 10, and 11 of Block 8 in Joseph W. Sim Jr.'s Addition to Urbana, platted on March 30, 1858. This land was originally purchased from the U.S. Government by Isaac Busey, on October 22, 1832, and was pasture land at the western edge of town.

Clapp House - 602 W. Elm
Prior to the construction of Buena Vista Court, Lot 5 was occupied by a single-family home (602 W. Elm) built by master carpenter William D. Clapp in 1858.

Clapp, from New York state and a recent arrival to Urbana, purchased the property on April 5, 1858, only five days after Sim subdivided the area. Clapp was a 25-year-old single man and erected his house immediately after he purchased the property. The house is indicated on Alexander Bowman's 1858 map. Clapp's house was one of only seven houses built on the 83 city lots of Sim's subdivision at the time. Another one of those seven houses was that of Sim, himself, who was an attorney, Urbana mayor (1864-66), and Champaign County judge. His house, which he occupied with his wife, Sarah Ann Busey, stood at 603 W. Green, on an estate occupying an entire city block. Clapp's other neighbors were Dr. Jacob F. Snyder, William H. Somers, attorney and Champaign County Clerk; and John G. Manz, co-owner of the Urbana Sash & Door Factory. All these houses were sited on estates which occupied several city lots.

On March 29, 1859 Clapp married Ann Eliza Wilson. In the 1860 U.S. Census, their real property was valued at $1,000, and they were able to afford a domestic servant. The couple, however, did not remain long in their new home. They sold back the property to Mrs. Sarah (Busey) Sim on August 11, 1862, and eleven days later William was mustered in for volunteer service in the Civil War.

The house was next owned and occupied by Dr. Samuel H. and Olive A. Birney, who had purchased Lot 5 from the Sims on Sept. 11, 1862. Later that year, they also purchased the adjacent lots 10 and 11. Birney received his medical degree in 1860 at Chicago's Rush Medical College. He served as first surgeon of the Illinois volunteer army in the Civil War, and was later elected vice president of the Illinois State Medical Society. Olive Birney was also an educated person, having received her education at Genesseo Wesleyan Seminary in Lima, New York. The Birneys had two sons, Frank and Samuel. Frank graduated from the University of Illinois in 1881 and in 1883 he received a medical degree at Rush Medical College. In 1892, he married Lucy Ella Busey, daughter of Mathew E. Busey, prosperous farmer, who resided at 804 W. Main. Mrs. Birney died on March 20, 1888. Two months later, Dr. Birney and his sons sold the property and moved to Denver, Colorado where Dr. Birney and his son Frank opened a medical office together.

In the next four years the house was owned and occupied by Drs. James Edgar and Carrie Noble White, who purchased it from the Birney family on May 9, 1888. Both Whites were medical doctors who came to Urbana in the 1880s, after receiving their medical degrees in Chicago. A native of Indiana, Carrie received her M.D. from Chicago's Women's Medical College in 1883, while James, a native of Ohio, received his M.D. at Rush Medical College also in 1883. The Whites lived and practiced medicine in Urbana until 1900 when they moved to Spring-field, Illinois. They sold their property to James and Ruth Bibler on January 13, 1892. A native of Ohio, Bibler moved to Champaign County about 1868 after serving in the Indiana Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War. He farmed in Stanton Township until 1888 when he moved to Urbana to retire at age 54. The Biblers lived on Elm Street with their three children, Anna, Adda, and Elverton. Mrs. Bibler died in April 1894, and Mr. Bibler in January 1896. After his death Elverton sold his share of the inheritance to his two sisters, who used the house as rental property until 1922/23, when it was razed.

The builders - Carpenter and Baker
On June 1, 1925, the property was purchased from Anna and Ada Bibler by Carpenter and Baker for the purpose of constructing West Elm Court. Carpenter, a mason-carpenter and general contractor, was previously in business with his father-in-law, Jacob Hyre, veteran Urbana contractor. Baker was a relation of the Busey family, and through their employ became one of Urbana's eminent bankers. His father, Frank E. Baker, was the brother of Kate Baker who had married George Busey, son of Simeon H. Busey, co-founder of Busey Bank. George and Kate Busey lived at 503 W. Elm (Campus Oaks Apartments) across from Buena Vista Court. Baker was hired at Busey Bank by George Busey, who was the bank's cashier at the time. In addition to his relationship to the Buseys, Baker had a remarkable ancestry of his own. He was the grandson and namesake of Garrett H. Baker, a founder of the Republican Party in Ripon, Wisconsin on March 20, 1854. Baker, Sr., and his wife, Elmina Clapp, were members of the Phalanx, a group of radical social reformers, who had founded Ceresco, an early communistic farming colony, at the place where the town of Ripon now stands. The commune lasted only two years, but the
Republican Party was formed by its former members, their fundamental agenda being the abolition of slavery and social equality. A few years later, the Bakers moved to Cobden, Illinois, where they were part of the underground railroad helping slaves escaping from the South. In Cobden, Baker established himself as one of the leading fruit and vegetable growers in the state and became the first president of the Illinois Horticultural Society. Their children, Frank and Kate, became teachers, and daughter Kate worked as an art teacher at Hampton College in Virginia, the first black American college, prior to coming to Urbana as George Busey's wife in 1890. Her nephew, Garrett H. Baker Jr., began working at Busey Bank in 1897, and was bank president for ten years prior to his retirement. Baker was also director of the Citizens Building Association from 1908, and its president from 1922 until his death in 1962. In 1904, he married Jennie Marriott, daughter of prominent Urbana residents Frank M. and Lydia (Yearsley) Marriott who resided at 506 W. Main.

Buena Vista residents
Baker and Carpenter had West Elm Court platted on August 14, 1925, and in 1926 the first residents began to move in. Carpenter died in January 1927, West Elm Crt. being his last project. Among the Court's early residents were Baker's daughter, Marian Baker, and her husband, Ivan B. Goble (#5, 1929), and Carpenter's widow, Eva, and their sons, Leon and Dodo. Dodo and his wife, Nelle, were the first owner-occupants of #6 between 1927-31. Nelle Carpenter, a life-long employee of the Urbana Free Library, is remembered as the founder of the Champaign County Archives, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in November 2006. Mrs. Carpenter developed the Archives from a single file drawer of historic documents in the 1950s to a three-room public facility by the 1970s. Over the years, the houses in Buena Vista Court were used both as owner-occupied residences and as rentals. The majority of the residents have been people associated with the University of Illinois: graduate students and entry-level professors and staff. The non-university related occupants were mostly owners and employees of various small and mid-size Urbana businesses. Among these were Marie Tepper (#3, 1934-37), owner of Urbana's Tepper Hardware, and one of three businessmen responsible for the development of Lincoln Square Mall, and Dr. Frank O. Sale, dentist, who was the first owner and lifelong resident of #7. Sale's daughter, Virginia Sale, an actress and comedian, and son Charles P. "Chick" Sale, comedian and writer, attained national fame in the theater and movie world.

Unit #1
Units #1 and #8 of Buena Vista Court face Elm Street, where the court's main entrance is located, and are larger than the rest of the units. #1 is a typical residence in that it has been occupied by university instructors and Urbana business people throughout its existence. (It was featured on PACA's Fall House Tour.) It has been owner occupied from the start, save for the years between 1940-45. Its first occupants were James and Mary Finch, who lived there from 1927 until 1940. Finch operated a drug and shoe store on Main Street for many years, and served as county and circuit probation officer between 1935-46. He built the Howard Apartments, 402 South Race Street, as a memorial to their son and only child, Howard Finch, who died when a high school senior. On August 1, 1940, the Finches sold the house to Mrs. Daura Woolman, widow of Albert Woolman. She resided at 401 W. Indiana St., and rented the house to Dr. Lester and Edith Ingle. At the time Dr. Ingle was an assistant professor of zoology, and his wife a UI Personnel Bureau counselor. Ingle started at the university in 1937 after graduating from Brown University, and remained its employee until his retirement in 1964. He studied the toxicology of pesticides on a NIH grant. He was an editor of Resources in Science - Biology, and the author and co-author of several publications. In November, 1944, Woolman sold the house to Walter and Ada Mae Adams. Adams was an instructor in economics at the UI, and Mrs. Adams was a bookkeeper at the First National Bank of Champaign. A graduate of the UI (1926), Adams was formerly head of the economics department at Kansas Wesleyan University in Salina (1925-30), and principal of the Delavan and Chillicothe high schools in Illinois. He was also a prominent religious leader in the University Place Christian Church. After his sudden death in 1948, Mrs. Adams continued to live in the house until her death in 1977. In November, 1979 the house was sold to Richard and Myrtle Legue. Legue was a sales manager at Sullivan Chevrolet, and in 1969 he became the first director of the Urbana Civic Center, where he served until 1978. Following Legue's death, his widow sold the house to the current owner in September, 1993, who had done extensive renovation and remodeling on the building's exterior in recent years.

This history was partly based on research done by Candace Wilmott, a former resident of Buena Vista Court. The files containing her extensive research on the court are housed in the Champaign County Archives. The article was written by Ilona Matkovszki.

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