

# PRESERVATION MATTERS

PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

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## Historic Building Art Contest

The City of Urbana's Historic Preservation Commission recently hosted an art show and contest about historic preservation for local high school students during Preservation Month. Original student artwork and essays were displayed May 15th through 27th at National Register-listed Lincoln Square Village. Judges with backgrounds in architecture, historic preservation, and art, reviewed all fifty submissions and selected first, second and third place winners.

This project aimed to develop an interest in historic buildings and historic preservation in Urbana through artistic expression. High school students at Urbana High School and University High School submitted an artistic representation of a historic building accompanied by a short essay describing the building's history.

This project was made possible by the following sponsors: Art Coop, Busey Bank, Cinema Gallery, International Galleries, the Preservation and Conservation Association, the Urbana Business Association, the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission, Lincoln Square Village, and the City of Urbana.

### Mumford House Lilli Pearson, first place

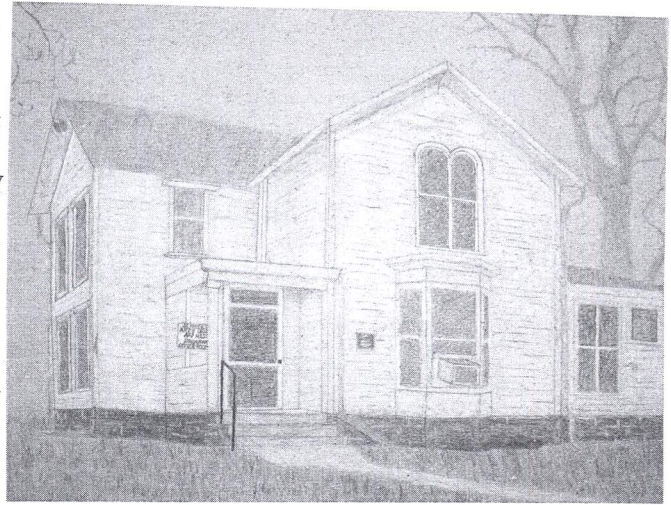
In the middle of the superbuildings of the University of Illinois campus, there is a small, white farmhouse that is distinctly out of place. Mumford House, the building in question, is located at 1403 West Laredo Taft Drive in Urbana. The house is owned by the University of Illinois, and was formerly occupied by the art history department. It is now vacant.

Mumford House, built in 1870, is the oldest existing building on the U of I campus. It was built to be a model farm house,

showing simple, domestic architecture in the Victorian Gothic style. Mumford House only cost \$2500 at the time it was built. An 1870-71 report by university trustees elaborated on the features that made Mumford House so unique. The front hall of the "Farm House," as it was originally named, allowed entry to the office, parlor, and the kitchen. The convenience of the traffic flow was novel in 1870 farmhouses and has only received attention in more recent years. Other innovative features of the house were its office and its closet space for storage.

Mumford House was used as the residence of the dean of the College of Agriculture until 1939, and housed many influential figures. The first dean to occupy the house was Thomas J. Burrill, who is today recognized as the father of plant pathology, among many other things. Professor George Morrow was another resident. The university's experimental soil plots are named after him. The Morrow Plots are the oldest of their kind in America. Herbert W. Mumford was the last dean to live in Mumford House, and the home still bears his name. Mumford House later became headquarters for the Small Homes Council/Building Research Council, until the art history department began using the building in 1971.

Lisa Lipinski, a graduate student in art history, prepared an application for Mumford House to be added to the National Register of Historic Places. The application was accepted in September of 1989. Mumford House now has a plaque declaring its status. Lipinski said that it is unknown who designed the house, but that it was built by a university carpenter.



Mumford House - First Place composition by Lilli Pearson

Mumford House is a building full of history. Built as a model of agriculture, many influential heads of the agriculture department lived in the house, including Burrill and Morrow. Mumford House is now the oldest building on campus, constructed almost 140 years ago, and has had many uses in its life. Mumford even has the honor of being named to the National Register of Historic Places. But it appears that Mumford House has been neglected. It needs a new coat of paint and its stairs are sagging. Although it has not been well cared for, this building still holds status in our community and will hopefully last a very long time.

### Harker Hall Youyang Gu, second place

Harker Hall, first known as the Chemical Laboratory, was designed by Nathan Clifford Ricker, Professor of Architecture, and John M. Van Odsel, architect of University Hall. Built by N.C. Terrill & Company between 1877 and 1878, the building was dedicated in April of 1878. Harker Hall was Ricker's first major work, and it represents Ricker's philosophy of combining historical reference with current technological advancements.

In March of 1873, Nathan Clifford Ricker became the first student to graduate from any university of architecture in the United States. He was the Dean of Engineering for twenty-seven years and in charge of the Department of Architecture for forty-four years. He designed five buildings on campus: Natural History Building, Aeronautical Laboratory, Kenney Gymnasium Annex, Altgeld Hall, and Harker Hall. All five were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

Harker Hall was the second building built south of Green Street on the campus, and is today the oldest continually occupied building and the oldest classroom building on campus. (The Mumford House is the oldest building on campus.) The building is located at 1305 West Green Street in Urbana, Illinois, and is situated on the northeast side of the Quadrangle, east of the Illini Union.

The Chemical Laboratory used to have an exterior stair at the north end of the building, but it was torn down during a renovation. The building was fully equipped with up-to-date laboratory facilities and included a photographic studio with a darkroom on the fourth floor.

The University Board of Trustees mandated the building to be built in the Second Empire style, which was the style of the adjacent University Hall. University Hall was demolished in the 1930s after it was feared that the building was not strong enough, and the Illini Union was built in 1941 on the same land. The millwork for the building was first made by architecture students in a campus woodshop. The design is an I-shaped, Italianate style structure of three stories plus an "English," or tall basement. The 60-foot by 90-foot structure features an exterior stair that led to the entrance on the raised main floor. The basement was constructed of "Kankakee limestone, course rubble." Upper floors were built using reddish brown brick with a "Joliet limestone trim." The original roof used black slate figured with red and green slate shingles, and was similar to the roof on University Hall.

When Harker Hall was built, it was hailed as "one of the best and largest chemistry buildings in the US." The total amount of money used for the project is

\$40,000, including furniture and equipment for the five labs. However, on August 16, 1896, a fire, most likely caused by lightning, destroyed the mansard roof and much of the interior of the Chemical Lab. James M. White, who was Ricker's colleague in the Architecture Department, was in charge of the repair, and used wood trusses with metal tension rods to create a hip roof, which was a quick and more flexible method to fix the roof. However, it reduced the fourth floor to just an attic which made the fourth floor not very practical. In addition, the original exterior stairs were removed, along with other reconfigurations.

In 1900, University of Illinois president Andrew Sloan Draper won an appropriation from the state legislature for another chemistry building: Noyes Lab. Therefore, he suggested that Harker Hall be remodeled and given to the College of Law. Finally, in 1902, after deep consideration, the Buildings and Grounds Committee of the Board of Trustees decided to remodel the building for the newly formed College of Law. The Chemical Lab was turned into classrooms and a library, while the porticos were lowered, in the west and north entrances to add more dignity. The College of Law used the building from 1903 until 1927. After the College of Law was moved to Altgeld Hall, the building was remodeled again, and used for botany and entomology. According to a personal interview with Ronald R. Hermann, Director of Administrative Services of the University of Illinois Foundation, the building's name was then changed to The Entomology Building. A black outline for a greenhouse used for the Department of Entomology can still be seen on the south-east side of the wall.

Harker Hall was nearly torn down in 1940 to make room for the Union. However, students rallied against the decision and Harker Hall was spared. In late 1941, the name was changed from The Entomology



Harker Hall - Second place composition by Youyang Gu

Building to Harker Hall. It is named after Judge Oliver Albert Harker, Dean of the College of Law from 1903-1916, and the university's legal counsel. Howard Cheney, architect of the Union Building and V. C. Kretschmer, director of the Union, planned to build an addition around Harker, rather than destroying it, during a meeting in mid-July of 1957. Since then, Harker Hall has been used for science classrooms, instructional laboratories, and office space for the School of Life Sciences until 1989. In 1986, Harker Hall was listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1991, Harker Hall underwent a restoration process that restored the architectural integrity of the building's exterior to its original Italianate style, including the reconstruction of the slate mansard roof. The entire internal structure was removed, leaving only the four walls, and rebuilt to regain its original style. Also, an entrance plaza was built to make Harker Hall look more dazzling, and fit into its surrounding. The restoration plan brought back the space of the fourth floor after the fire. Twenty-one columns were added to add extra support to the building while new light fixtures were made to look like the original gas lights. The walls and floors are all supported by steel while the exterior was renewed, thus adding a more charming view from the Quadrangle. The south entrance is the new entrance, while the interior was thoroughly refurbished and modern

One interesting feature was the cast iron columns incorporated as structural members; each weighed 900 pounds, and

tured unique designs. The University salvaged over a dozen of these while the restoration project was at work. Prior to the demolition, the Preservation and Conservation Association also saved tons of objects, such as cast iron air return grates, lighting fixtures, transoms with hardware, and decorative marble in the entrance hall. All this was made possible by one alumnus from the Class of 1932: Maybelle Leland Swanlund, who donated \$3.5 million to restore and enhance Harker Hall. Other private gifts raised the total budget to over \$5.5 million. The building was rededicated in 1992. One year later, the newly-built conference room on the third floor won numerous awards for its modernity, including being listed in the Top Ten Best of Boardrooms in *Presentations* magazine.

Today, Harker Hall serves as the headquarters of the University of Illinois Foundation, which raises, administers, and manages the fundraising efforts for the U of I. Although the Foundation is scattered, its main operations are from Harker Hall. This convenient location will advance the Foundation's mission to increase private funding for the University of Illinois. Its responsibilities include receipting and acknowledging private gifts as part of stewardship, directing gifts to the specified area or project within the University as designated by the donor, making regular reports to the donor, and many more.

Harker Hall is a historic landmark that is a piece of the University of Illinois' history. Through restoration and renewal, the historic Harker Hall provides a worthy headquarters for continuing efforts to raise the private funds so essential for expanding and strengthening the

University of Illinois. Future generations will be able to enjoy the great majesty and beauty of a building that has survived almost 130 years of technological advancements and population growth. This building is appreciated by many people around this campus, and we should do our best to preserve Harker Hall, so that other people can have the chance to learn and

appreciate the wonderful architectural and historic importance of one of Nathan Clifford Ricker's most famous works.

*The third place winner's submission, "The Fairy House" by Zach Korol, will be featured in the next newsletter. Thanks to Anna Hochhalter, Public Arts Coordinator, City of Urbana, for the information in this article.*

The Urbana Historic Preservation Commission Presents  
**The Window Repair Workshop**  
*free registration*  
 "Old Windows Aren't a Pane  
 -- They're a Gold Mine"  
 A Primer On  
 • How to cost effectively repair & restore old window  
 • How to make old windows as energy efficient as replacement windows  
 Saturday, August 25  
 8:30 am - 5:00 pm  
 At the Independent Media Center  
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 Limited availability  
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- Adult \$15
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Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

## The National Preservation Conference

The 2007 National Preservation Conference will be held in St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota's famed Twin Cities. Sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the conference will take place October 2-6. The setting will provide participants with the chance to explore and compare the urban preservation challenges and success of two metropolitan areas along with their surrounding suburbs and rural areas. Riverfront revitalization, creative responses to development pressures, and the diversity of immigrant contributions are just some of the areas of focus for this year's conference. To request registration information, call 800-944-6847; e-mail [conference@nthp.org](mailto:conference@nthp.org), visit the web site at [www.nthpconference.org](http://www.nthpconference.org), or stop by the PACA warehouse for a brochure.

### Francis & Abbie Solon House

Work has begun on the repair of the gutters, eaves, and soffits at the Solon House. By the end of the summer, it is hoped that a new roof will be installed and once again the historic house will be watertight.

Landscaping projects are also in progress through the efforts of PACA volunteers Ed and Diane Wilhite, Kathy Nicholas, Robert Craft, and Vicki Burkhalter. The City of Champaign conducted a controlled burn of the southwest corner noxious weed area and has provided a number of truck loads of landscaping wood chips. Grass mowing is being done by Aaron Peters. We appreciate all of these efforts!

**Preservation Matters: newsletter of the Preservation and Conservation Association**  
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### Salvage Donations

Christopher's Fine Jewelry Design  
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(received since the last newsletter)

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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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