

PRESERVATION MATTERS

PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

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Mumford House A Preservation Success!

At their March 11, 2009 meeting, the University of Illinois Board of Trustees affirmed that the historic Mumford House would not be moved. This decision was the outcome of the groundswell of support for keeping the house on its original site organized by PACA, Landmarks Illinois (LPCI), concerned alumni, and the community at large. The grassroots campaign succeeded!

The Issue

Last year, Facilities and Services at the University of Illinois, revealed a plan to relocate Mumford House (1870), the oldest building on campus, from its central South Quad location to a new site near the corner of South Race Street and Windsor Road - a move of about two miles. Previously, the Mumford Barn (1880) and one chicken laying house (1925) had been moved to the same location from the historic Poultry Farm to make way for new tennis courts. The plan was to create a College of Agriculture Visitors Center and agricultural museum at the far eastern edge of the South Farms. However, funding for the center and museum is not in place and the house would languish until the projected \$2 million was raised.

Although a visitors center is a commendable project, its implementation using significant historic structures was not well thought out. Moving historic buildings should only be the choice of last resort when no other option is available. That was not true with Mumford House, which is not in the way of any planned building, but was only being moved for open space and to complete an idea for a "Military Axis." Since the 1909 campus plan showed a bell tower on the South Quad (the recently completed MacFarland Memorial Bell Tower) and did not show Mumford House, an argument was made that the

Mumford House, the oldest building on the UIUC campus (1870), will remain on its original site thanks to a successful state-wide grassroots campaign.



house should go. However, numerous campus plans beginning in 1905 (Blackall Plan), continuing with the 1922 plan (Platt Plan), and through a series of modern era plans, rarely, if ever, have included the Mumford House, the Morrow Plots, or the Observatory. Nevertheless, they have remained.

An argument was also made that the historic context of the house was gone, as it was no longer surrounded by farm outbuildings and fields. However, that only reinforces the significance of Mumford House's original location. Little is left from the early years of that original agricultural campus. Two remnants remain: the National Historic Landmark Morrow Plots and the National Register of Historic Places Mumford House. They are the tangible reminders of the University's agrarian foundation. Once surrounded by farm buildings, Mumford House now sits in the midst of monumental buildings. But historic context is constantly changing. The Chicago Water Tower, built the same year as Mumford House, is now surrounded by shopping malls and high rise towers. Yet it is celebrated as a significant landmark in Chicago's history. In St. Louis, the Old

Cathedral (1834) and the Old Court-house (1839) are bordered by interstate highways and the 1966 St. Louis Arch. But they are important parts of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Park.

Public Law "707"

Since Mumford House is a state resource and state monies would be involved in its move, the Illinois State Agency Historic Resources Preservation Act (Public Act 86-707) came into force. This law ("707"), requires that any state action which affects a historic resource or involves state funds or permits be reviewed by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA) for its effect on that resource and seeks a way to mitigate that effect. The UI and IHPA have been involved in this review process for many years. Since state money is involved in virtually all building and rehabilitation projects on campus, review should be standard. However, for various reasons, including changes in university administrators, the review process has not always been followed in recent years.

Most reviews are handled quickly and efficiently if enough information is supplied to IHPA in a timely manner. Others,

such as the recent changes made to Memorial Stadium, have a more involved process with design review and meetings with architects. However, many large scale projects have successfully been through the review process, including Harker Hall, Engineering Hall, and the Grainger Library. The purpose of the act is to protect, as far as is feasible, the integrity of the state's significant historic buildings from state-financed undertakings. IHPA carefully weighs the significance of the historic building, the proposed undertaking, and any feasible alternatives in making their decision to let the project to proceed. Often no project changes are needed, as there will be little effect on the historic resource. Sometimes, the historic building may not be significant, but merely old; or it may not have sufficient integrity; or there is no "prudent or feasible" alternative to the proposed action, and so the project is allowed to proceed. In these cases, IHPA may request that the building be documented through research and photographs before it is demolished.

Mumford House

In the case of Mumford House, however, none of the above rationales pertained. Moving the house would have a major impact, not only on the physical condition of the structure, but also on its historic context as the oldest building on the Urbana-Champaign campus. The building is clearly significant historically, as noted in its National Register of Historic Places nomination (1989). Mumford House has wonderful integrity with only minor changes, including a historic addition (c. 1922), and there were alternatives to moving the house - restoring it in situ. Based on these considerations, IHPA refused to approve the relocation, and requested that ALL alternatives to moving be explored. The University objected and a public meeting was held on January 22, 2009 to allow public comment on the proposed move and seek alternatives. This meeting is required by Public Law 707.

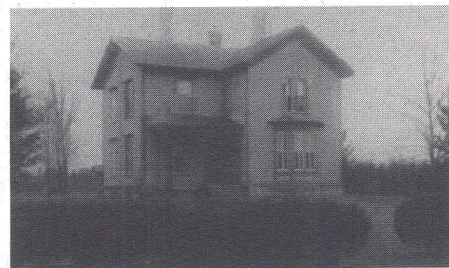
At the meeting, attended by over seventy-five people, twenty audience members spoke after lengthy presentations by a number of University representatives. Each audience speaker spoke eloquently, in his/her three allowed minutes, about the significance of Mumford House and the importance of restoring it on its original site. No one spoke in favor of moving the house. In addition, a number of letters and e-mails were sent prior to the meeting

to be entered into the record. Only four correspondents, out of nearly fifty letters, were in favor of relocation. After the meeting, the University continued to object and requested that the required Mediation Committee be called.

According to "707," the last step in the process is a review of the project by a Mediation Committee, which is composed of the heads or division chiefs of five state agencies. This committee is to evaluate the existence of a feasible and prudent alternative to the proposed undertaking. The committee then provides a statement of findings setting forth an alternative to the undertaking or stating the finding that there is no feasible alternative. The University would then consider the committee's comments and respond in writing. However, after that, the University could proceed with moving Mumford House. It should be noted that in the nearly twenty years since the law was enacted, no project has ever reached the mediation stage, and rarely the public meeting stage. Normally, a compromise between IHPA and the owner of the historic resource is reached.

Mumford House Campaign

The Mediation Committee for Mumford House was scheduled for mid-March. It was generally known, however, that whatever the recommendation of the committee, the University planned to move the house as soon as was feasible. The committee hearing was merely a legal formality. Therefore, a statewide grassroots campaign to save Mumford House on its original site was initiated. The focus of the campaign was to generate statewide attention to the relocation plan and to urge citizens to contact the University Board of Trustees and their state legislators with their opposition to the proposed move. A Facebook site was developed by alumni of the UI Art History Department (whose faculty was once headquartered in Mumford House), and the message was promoted on PACA's, LPCI's, and NTHP's websites. Posters urging letters to the Board sprang up around campus and town. Tom Kacich and Bob Swisher of *The News-Gazette* wrote columns about the proposed move. In March, the UI student chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians staged a rally at the house. The Mumford family, now in Arkansas, also wrote letters of support for keeping the house on site.



Mumford House before the addition of its west wing, c. 1922.

As a result, the Board of Trustees received letters and e-mails from UI faculty, staff and students, as well as from many local citizens. Letters came from concerned citizens from around Illinois, and alumni from around the country wrote letters of support for keeping Mumford House in place. State legislators became involved. Representatives Cultra and Rose and Senators Frerichs and Rutherford made inquires, while Representative Jakobsson made phone calls and wrote letters of support. Congressman Timothy Johnson also expressed his concern about the proposed move. Both PACA and LPCI made efforts to contact each trustee personally and discuss the importance of Mumford House to the history of the University and the significance of its original site. Behind the scenes, IHPA was also continuing their discussion with University administrators.

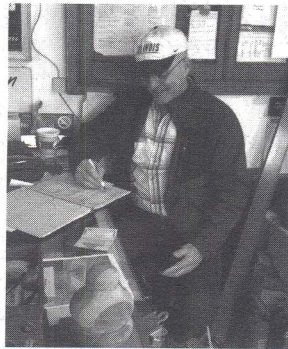
All of these efforts culminated at the March 11, 2009 Board of Trustees meeting. LPCI and PACA addressed the Board during the public comment portion of the meeting. In his opening comments, Niranjan Shah, Chair of the Board, stressed the historic importance of both Mumford House and Lincoln Hall. IHPA Director Jan Grimes arrived in mid-morning and was acknowledged by Chairman Shah. And, while Mumford House was not officially on the agenda, a brief discussion ensued. Shah stated that "Chancellor Herman has assured me that there is no intention of relocating Mumford House." Shah and Trustees Vickrey, Carroll, Dorris, and Schmidt made strong statements in support of the house remaining in its original location. Comments were also made on the number of letters received on this issue! Cooperation between the UI, IHPA and preservationists was encouraged by the Board, and LPCI offered pro bono architectural and engineering help. Chancellor Herman was asked to have a report on the status of the building for the September meeting (held in Urbana). Most

importantly, Board Secretary Michelle Thompson was instructed to draft a resolution for the next meeting (May) stating that the Mumford House shall remain in its original location permanently.

Mumford House's Future

Saving Mumford House is only the first step. Now a use for the building and funds for its rehabilitation need to be found. Although the house has been vacant and neglected for over fifteen years, it is still structurally sound and in generally good condition. A coalition of architecture, planning, and agriculture faculty has formed to develop a plan for the sustainable rehabilitation of Mumford House. It is hoped that this rehabilitation will become a national model for historic rehabilitation combined with sustainable environmental practices. LPCI and the National Trust are interested in participating in this exciting project. Funding for the rehabilitation is being sought from several grant sources. The plan, once developed, will be presented to Chancellor Herman and the Board of Trustees.

PACA would like to thank all of its members, the general public, and University faculty, staff, students, and alumni that took the time and effort to contact the University about the importance of Mumford House. Without that support, the outcome probably would have been much different. Please take the time to write a note of thanks to the Board of Trustees for their support of Mumford House.



Spotlight Volunteer: Darrel Foste

Volunteer Spotlight

PACA cannot exist without volunteers - it is a totally volunteer-driven organization. PACA is fortunate to have a wide range of volunteers, from those who devote hours to the group, to those who help with specific projects, to those who contribute a few hours here-and-there. But all volunteers important. Beginning with this issue of the newsletter, the Board of Directors would like to acknowledge some of the people who have made PACA so successful over the past twenty-eight years.

Darrel Foste

The first *Spotlight Volunteer* and newly appointed Salvage Coordinator is Darrel Foste. Darrel grew up on a farm in Mason County, Illinois. He has a BA (psychology) and MS (counseling) from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and a BS (Agriculture) from the University of Illinois. In the 1960s, he served with the Air Force in Viet Nam and later became a flight instructor at the UI Aviation Institute. While at the UI, Darrel met his lovely wife, Linda (maker of great Saturday morning treats!) and they have two grown children, Christopher and Elizabeth (who have helped salvage).

The Foste's have owned rental property in Urbana since 1980 and Darrel was always salvaging parts for his own historic rehab projects. He first joined PACA's salvage efforts when the City of Urbana was razing buildings at Goodwin and University streets for a redevelopment project. Since then, Darrel has been an ACTIVE salvage volunteer and in recognition of his outstanding efforts, was named "Salvage Coordinator." (Great title, no pay!)

An example of Darrel's philosophy of "finding homes for everything" is the PACA coordinated salvage of five apartments on White and Stoughton streets, owned by the City of Champaign. These buildings are being demolished as part of the Boneyard Retention Project. Through countless hours of work, Darrel was able to salvage and recycle almost the entire interiors of all these buildings. Furniture, appliances, staircases, cabinets, water heaters, and electrical equipment all found new homes. Among the groups who benefitted, besides PACA, were Habitat for Humanity, Urbana Community Development, Champaign Neighborhood Services, Empty Tomb, Canaan Baptist Church, Urbana and Champaign School Districts, and the University of Illinois. A number of local individuals also benefitted as did a non-profit group in St. Louis that rehabs houses for low-income people. Darrel is currently coordinating salvage projects in Windsor, Mattoon, and Charleston.

In addition to actively salvaging, Darrel helps out at the warehouse. He is willing to share his remodeling advice, search his own private salvage "stash" for a special piece, or take an "order" for a PACA customer. As you can see, Darrel is one of our special VIPs (Volunteers In Preservation).

Sidewalk Pavers Available in April. Volunteers needed.

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- Family \$20
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SAVE THE DATE

PACA Annual Membership Meeting

Sunday, April 26, 2009

Place: TBA

The Editors would like to hear from you.



New & Renewing Memberships **(received since the last newsletter)**

Charter Members (1981-1983)

George & Elizabeth Miley
Patricia Miller
Antje & Edward Kolodziej
Anne A. Ehrlich
Rex & Karen Kummer
Sharon Rapp
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Fantastic Supporters (Over Twenty Year Members)

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Art Zangerl & Kathe Brinkmann

Preservation Matters: newsletter of the Preservation and Conservation Association

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David & Yashua Baker
Suzanne Skaggs
David Monk

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Linda Carter
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