

Preservation Matters

PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

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Two Hidden Gems

To the general public, the term "historic property" brings to mind a stately architectural confection or a grand mansion steeped in history. Glossy magazines devote pages of color photographs to the wonders of Mount Vernon or Monticello and local publications rhapsodize on the beauties of Silk Stocking Row on University Avenue or its counterpart on West Main Street in Urbana. Certainly those major works are worthy of attention, but of equal interest should be the simpler vernacular houses of the middle or working class. Many of these houses contain aspects of interest but because of their location, often on "the wrong side of the tracks," they are prime candidates for neglect or demolition. With this thought in mind, herewith are presented two gems from the north side of Champaign.

Boyle House

For years, people have been fascinated by a house at 408 East Church Street, Champaign; the house with the big yellow brackets. Compared to its neighbors, it is an enormous house, quite out of scale with its contemporaries. The main facade is a full two-story gable front that is three bays wide with a double-door entrance on the east. It has classic Italianate wide overhanging bracketed eaves and tall round arched windows with simple moldings on the first story. There are two lights in each original double-hung sash. Presently, transite shingles cover the house, but its walls appear to be extremely thick, as the first-story windows have paneled jambs. It is possible that the house is actually brick in construction. The second-story windows are nearly as tall as the first story, but have flat arches. In the gable's apex is a rectangular attic light. The main block of the house appears to contain three large rooms on each story and a generous side stair hall. A slightly lower wing at the rear probably contains the kitchen and service

rooms with bedrooms above. Unfortunately, a concrete block garage with a picture window at its back has been grafted to the northeast corner of the rear wing.

The house sits on an oversized lot devoid of trees, but it seems evident that at one time the property had more elaborate landscaping. An equally unfortunate concrete block front porch mars the front facade. Originally, it is likely that the front door was sheltered by a simple porch hood on brackets and was approached by a small stoop with three or four steps. The porch is definitely a later addition.



The Boyle House is located at 408 East Church Street in Champaign. Photo by Mark Chenail.

It was not possible to gain access to the interior, but the few details visible through the first-story windows are intriguing. Although the original double front doors have been replaced, their transom is intact. The transom reveals a fine ceiling medallion at the foot of the staircase. This magnificent walnut staircase, with an enormous carved newel post, curves along the right hand wall to gracefully meet a balconied upper hall. Also visible through a small window in the front door is a large and extremely ornate pier glass and hat rack, which seems to be a permanent fixture on the west wall of the hallway. There is also a small carved niche and bracket under the curve of the stairs. There is at least one fine Italianate-style mantle in the front parlor and another elaborate ceiling medallion. Interior doors are four paneled

with large transoms and wide elaborate molding. Large windows flood the house with light. Despite the concrete block alterations, the house is an excellent example of an Italianate side-hall plan house, which is very rare in Champaign-Urbana.

The original plat indicates that the McKinley family first owned the property, but no house is indicated. The earliest mention of a house is in *Johnson's Directory* for 1878-79. Patrick Boyle is listed as resident and he is employed as the night supervisor of the Illinois Central Railroad train yards. Further research in the earliest directory, *Lothrop's Directory* for 1870, indicates that the Boyle family was living on the northeast corner of Fourth and Church streets, but there is no house listed at 408. However, the house appears on the Bird's Eye Map of 1869. It seems likely that Patrick Boyle may have constructed the house around this time. The first Boyle house, now numbered 404 East Church, was occupied (1878) by relatives John and Frank Boyle. These two gentlemen were butchers in the firm of Dallenbach and Boyle and maintained a shop at 71 North Neil Street in downtown Champaign. This shop was in direct competition with the better-known firm of Dallenbach Brothers of 8 Main Street, Champaign's premier butcher shop.

In 1893, the house at 408 East Church was sold to John Brannon Achilles Collan and his new bride, Mary Clarke of Galveston, Texas. Mr. Collan was born in Champaign (1858) and received a public education. He learned the cigar maker's trade before he entered high school and became superintendent of the Sain and Epstein Cigar Factory. He quickly rose to social prominence joining Western Star Lodge #240 A.F. & A.M. (Masons) and winning election as Alderman for the First Ward. By 1890, Mr. Collan had bought out the cigar firm and was running his own cigar business at 41 Main Street. He was later elected to the County Board and was treasurer of the Twin City Building and Loan Co. Collan

died unexpectedly while on a business trip to Attica, Indiana in 1902. His widow Mary and her mother Mrs. Anna Clarke remained in residence at 408 East Church until Mrs. Collan's death in 1928.



Architectural detail of the Boyle House.
Photo by Elisabeth Jericek.

After Mary Collan's death, the house lost its cache and saw a succession of owners and rentals. By WWII, it was a boarding house. However, in 1948 the house was purchased by Edward E. Jones and his wife Kathryn and once again became a single-family home. The Jones family lived there until Mrs. Jones death at age 88 in 2001. After her death, the house once again became a rental and has deteriorated considerably. Currently, the house is one of many involved in a dispute between its owner, the City of Champaign, and various banks. The house and its neighbor to the east are both in danger of condemnation or demolition.

Lutz House

In the years following the arrival of the railroad in West Urbana and the establishment of Champaign as a separate city in 1859, the area between the Depot and Urbana was primarily open ground and very lightly inhabited. Officially, the edge of Urbana was Lincoln Avenue and it wasn't until the arrival of the Illinois Industrial University that the land between the two villages began to be subdivided and platted. Much of the ground was initially used for small-scale "truck" farming, as was the case with the next gem. The John Lutz House at 512 East Park Street was built as a farmstead, probably for the Lutz family. *Johnson's Directory* for 1870-71 shows the Lutz family in residence as farmers and draymen. By the 1870s, the Lutz's were well established in the neighborhood. John Lutz had worked as one of the principal brick masons involved in the building of the original 1866 Urbana Seminary, "The Elephant" that would eventually become the first University building. It was located where the Beckman Institute stands today,

a mere two blocks from the Lutz farmstead. John and his family could easily have watched the building's progress from their front porch.

The one-and-one-half story house is a vernacular type known as a Gabled Ell with a pleasant front porch in its reentrant angle and a few small additions at the rear. Its one concession to fashion is a wide bay window on the front facade, which lights the principle living room. John Lutz managed to father and raise thirteen children in this small house. The family continued to be prominent members of the neighborhood and the City of Champaign.

By the 1880s and into the 1890s, most of the Lutz family was involved in the cigar business. John Sr. was living at 512 East Park Street and working as a teamster, but his son, John Jr. was proprietor of a cigar store located at 71 East Main Street in partnership with his brother, William. Brother George Lutz and his son were similarly employed at 77 East Main Street and were to soon build a new building at 125 East University Avenue. This two-story commercial building still exists although its facade was modernized with white glazed brick in the 1930s. George Lutz and his son made cigars on the first floor and lived above the shop and in a small house behind the new building.

The turn of the century saw the Lutz family firmly established in the Champaign business community. In the 1904 *Johnson's Directory*, John Sr. was still in the old homestead and actively employed, although he must have been of considerable age. George Lutz and his son were running the new cigar factory on University Avenue, which was a fashionable shopping block for the east side of the railroad tracks. Among their neighbors were the prominent grocer's Singbusch and Stoltey, the Henry drugstore, and the Broadway department store. Jacob Busch, city magistrate, lived next door at 127 East University Avenue. John Jr. was now the senior partner in the firm of Lutz and Vaughn, cigar makers, but he also ran the Diamond Saloon, a popular gentlemen's establishment at 38 Main St. Brother William worked for J.A. Dillman cigars just down the street. By the close of WWI, the Lutz family had scattered and no longer was in the cigar business, but John Sr. was at home at 512 E. Park. By 1925, the house was occupied by the Thomas Palmisano family. The Palmisano's were in the fruit and vegetable business, with some family

members employed by J.K. Howse, who ran a prominent import business at 52 Main St, just across Chestnut St. from the new depot. During the depression of 1929, the house became a rental and saw numer-



The Lutz House is located on Park Street in Champaign. Photo by Mark Chenail.

ous owners and tenants, changing hands many times. Currently, the house is for sale and is involved in the same property dispute as 408 E. Church. It is also close to the north end of campus and the Provena Hospital campus and could easily become of interest to property developers in the near future.

Both of these properties, the Boyle House at 408 E. Church and the Lutz farmstead at 512 E. Park may not fit the general concept of historic homes, but they were intimately involved in the growth of Champaign and reflect the type of house that sheltered the general population. They may not be on Silk Stocking Row, but they should be preserved.

This article was researched and written by Mark Chenail, architectural historian.

Nominations for the Annual Heritage Awards are being accepted through 1 February 2010. The nomination form is included in this newsletter. Mail nominations to:

**PACA
P.O. Box 2575, Station A
Champaign, IL
61825**

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Historic Champaign County: Neighborhoods and Homes

Champaign County possesses an unusually rich historical documentation, with a number of institutions dedicated to the collection and preservation of the historical record. This fall, the Champaign County Historic Archives at The Urbana Free Library has released *Historical Champaign County: Neighborhoods and Homes*, a project that serves as the first phase of a portal to digital content about the County.

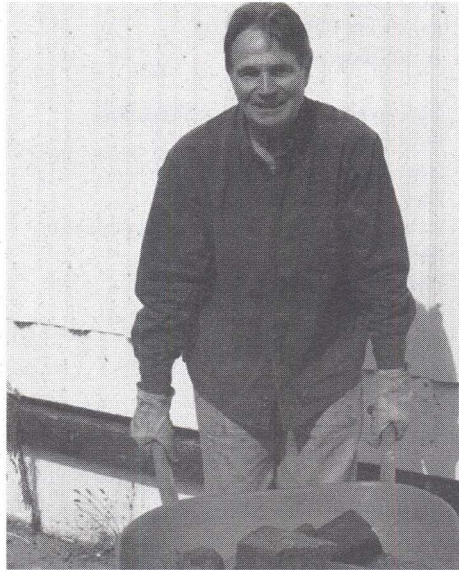
Developed by staff at the Champaign County Historical Archives and hosted at the Illinois Digital Archives, the collection will be of great interest to historical preservation enthusiasts and architectural historians. The collection also makes primary source material available to a broad audience of students, genealogists, historians, and others interested in the history of east central Illinois. PACA newsletters from 1981 through 2008 are included in the collection in a searchable format.

You can access *Historic Champaign County* via The Urbana Free Library website by visiting the Champaign County Historical Archives Collections page, or by visiting the Illinois Digital Archives at idaillinois.org. For further information, please contact Anke Voss, Director of Archives at 217-367-4025 or avoss@tufl.info.

Funding for this project comes from a grant awarded by the Illinois State Library, a Department of the Office of the Secretary of State, using funds provided by the U.S. Institute of Museum of Library Services, under the federal Library Services and Technology Act.

Street Paver Blitz

PACA is under contract to restack thousands of street pavers for the City of Champaign. Due to the rainy summer and with only a few stalwart volunteers helping, this project was way behind schedule. But two weekends in October totally changed the unsightly brick pile at the city's public works yard.



PACA volunteer Jerry Schmidt helps to move street pavers during the "Paver Party" on Saturday October 17th. Photo by Brian Duffield.

PACA volunteers (Mary Shultz, Bill McNeill, Vicki Smith, Anne Schmidt, Jerry Schmidt, Jon Bryan, Diane Wilhite, Ed Wilhite, Tod Satterthwaite, Stuart Martin, Tom Garza, Thom Fehrmann, Jerry Ziegler, Dave Deutscher, Giselle Atterberry, Al Friederick, Peggy Shaw (plus two daughters), Sarah Nemeth, Bob Swisher, Karen Kummer, Mike Miller and two public service workers) cleaned and stacked forty-six pallets of pavers in five hours! The

following Saturday, twenty-eight cadets and two supervisors from Lincoln's Challenge beat that PACA record and stacked fifty-nine pallets in six hours, almost completing the entire pile (about five more pallets of brick remain to be stacked).

This is a win-win situation for the City of Champaign and PACA. The city received eighty-five pallets of pavers stacked on durable plastic pallets; the pavers were cleaned and sorted with unusable and broken pavers discarded. In addition, PACA made arrangements for the discards to be recycled as road pack rather than sent to a landfill as was previously done. PACA received sixty-five pallets of pavers also stacked on durable plastic pallets supplied by Kraft, which was looking for a way to reuse their pallets.



Lincoln's Challenge cadets volunteer a day of their time in service to PACA sorting and stacking Champaign street pavers on Saturday October 24th. Photo by Brian Duffield.

Street pavers are sold by PACA at a very reasonable price of fifty cents per paver. Each pallet holds 325 pavers, which translates into over \$10,500 for PACA!

Thanks to everyone who helped. Watch for the next paver blitz and join the fun!

P.A.C.A. Membership Application

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY

- Adult \$15
- Student \$10
- Senior Citizen \$10
- Family \$20
- Corporate \$75

Additional Contribution _____

Make checks payable to PACA

TYPE

- New _____
- Renewal _____

PACA

Box 2575, Station A
Champaign, IL 61825

www.pacacc.org
217 359 7222

INFORMATION:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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Volunteer Party

PACA members and friends joined together on October 18 for an afternoon of camaraderie and to honor all our wonderful PACA volunteers. A special volunteer salute was given to Betty Swisher, who has spent hours organizing, pricing, and creatively displaying PACA's salvage. Come check out the "new" warehouse!



Betty Swisher was recognized for her many hours of volunteering for PACA.

Special thanks to Becky Duffield who organized this year's party and volunteers, Brian Duffield, Betty Swisher, Bob Swisher, Dan Leasure, Anne Schmidt, Jerry Schmidt, Kathy Reeves, and Linda Foste. Thanks also go to the following for donations to the festivities: Chevy's Fresh Mex, Cameron's Catering, County Market, and Hickory River BBQ.

New & Renewing Memberships (received since the last newsletter)

Charter Members

Rex & Karen Kummer
James & Mare Payne

Fantastic Supporters

(Over Twenty Year Members)
Ruth Miller
Sandra & George Batzli
Trent Shepard

Eleven to Twenty Year Members

Dorothea Blue
Irma Lore
Kay Vermillion-McCool
Randy Kangas & Suzanne Bissonnette
Ann Zahner
Pius Weibel & Sue Feldman
Rita Gentry
Ann Bergeron & Kevin Fahey
Monica Cox
Tod & Beth Satterthwaite
Community Deveopment Department,
City of Urbana (Corporate)

Five to Ten Year Members

Kevin Brumback & Davee Davis
Dannie Otto & Barbara Shank
Rosemary Kaye
Flo Lanford

Mary E. Jones
Sue Waller
Michael Strange
Tari & Sam Bricker
Wendy & Chris Harris
Chris & Susan Harbourt
Fred Gleave
Thelma Fite
Christine Cleaton
Mark Bush

One to Four Year Members

Beckee Bachman
Walter Hoffmann & Ann Johnson
Bill, Diana & Cori Williams
Dorothy Baker
Joan R. Zagorski
Barbara Wysocki
Leonard E. Wilson
William Schumacher
Fred & Judy Heilich

New Members

Terry Stone & Brenda Nielson
Rod Stith
Vidar Lerum
Charles Beetz
Paul Sack
Richard & Suzanne Harris
Sonia Depa



Richard Cahill
307 South Orchard
Urbana, IL 61801

membership runs 1 yr from: 04/10/06

OR CURRENT RESIDENT



Telephone & Answering Service: 359-PACA
Website: www.pacacc.org
E-mail: pacacexdir@comcast.net

Brian Duffield, President
Tom Carza, Vice-President
Sarah Nemeth, Treasurer
Claire Deal, Secretary
Karen Lang Kummer, Exec. Director
Preservation and Conservation Association
P.O. Box 2575, Station A, Champaign, IL 61825

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