

PRESERVATION MATTERS

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PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

URBANA'S 100 MOST IMPORTANT BUILDINGS PROJECT: Part Two

Rebecca Bird and Sasha Cuerda

613 W. Vermont Avenue

Architectural Description

613 W. Vermont exemplifies the Art Moderne style of architecture. Art Moderne was the modern architectural style that emerged around the same time as Art Deco. Art Deco was commonly used in public buildings and rarely for domestic architecture, as opposed to Art Moderne, which was almost always used in domestic architecture. Art Moderne became popular after 1930 when streamlined industrial design for ships, airplanes, and automobiles were introduced. Streamlining also became popular due to the poor economic climate of the 1930s when the dismissal of unnecessary ornament drastically reduced the costs of design. Art Moderne drew influences from Art Deco, but the styles differ slightly. Some common features of Art Moderne are smooth surfaces, curved corners, emphasis of the horizontal with grooving and balustrades, flat roofs, asymmetrical façades, glass-block windows, round windows, and windows turning corners.

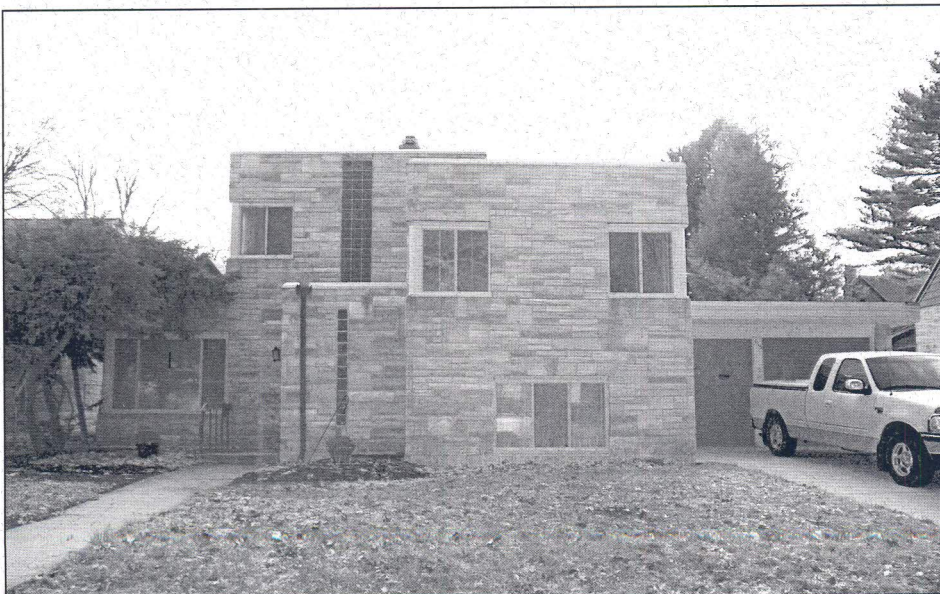
613 W. Vermont was built in 1935 as the Robert Kirkwood Residence. Some characteristics of Art Moderne as seen on the Kirkwood Residence are a flat parapet roof with coping, or a ledge, around the roofline, an asymmetrical façade, a modular form, windows continuous around corners, and glass blocks used for windows. The house has a rectilinear geometry. The walls are constructed of cut tan stone with no organized coursing. The walls have prominent horizontal lines, or grooves, which give emphasis to the horizontal plane, a characteristic of modern architecture. The house has a complex roofline of varying roof levels. Several of the windows are comprised of glass blocks. One of the window sections consists of one vertical row (one block by ten blocks) and a large three-row section (three blocks by thirteen blocks). There are several windows that wrap around the corner of the house. The corner support of the windows is a rounded

piece of steel. All the windows are articulated with white trim. Several windows are made up of large individual panes of glass. A tall chimney can be seen near the rear of the house. The main entrance is not obvious, as it is not on the center axis of the house. Instead of being parallel to the street, the main entrance is perpendicular to the street.

Historical Description

Built in 1941 for UIUC Professor and head of the campus ROTC program, Robert G. Kirkwood, 613 W. Vermont is perhaps best known as the Dovring House, named for its long-time residents Folke and Karin Dovring.

Folke Dovring was a well-known professor of Agricultural Economics and Agrarian History at the University of Illinois. According to his biographer, Janken Myrdal, Dovring was both entirely typical of mid-century academics in the United States as well as atypical. Dovring was part of a group of post-War European academics whose migration to the United States helped establish the dominance of the American university in the intellectual world system. However, as a historian and agricultural economist, Dovring was an atypical figure for his time. He was an early practitioner of "agrarian" history. His alienation from the Swedish academy stemmed from his advocacy of examining history through the lives of everyday people, as opposed to elites. He was also a strong advocate for using statistical information in his agrarian histories. Both these positions were highly unpopular in Sweden. Moreover, Dovring was vocal in his criticism of prominent Swedish historians, a position that quickly led to him



613 W. Vermont Avenue

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BUILDING CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

Wendy G. Harris

We often take time to admire the structures around us, but what about the construction materials? Where did the bricks in our Champaign County buildings and streets originate? All across the county, as it turns out!

In the early 1850s a number of brick manufacturers were located in Urbana and owned by Matthew W. Busey, Alanson Tucker, William J. Foote, and the firm of Bissel & Sherrill. Tucker moved to Mahomet in 1861 and set up the first brick manufacturing facility outside of the Champaign-Urbana area. Shortly after the Civil War, Peter Sackrider joined brickmaking in Mahomet, and Mortimer Smith started a factory in Homer.

By the mid-1870s, the need for construction brick had greatly increased. As a result, brick manufacturers emerged across Champaign County, many built with the assistance of architect John A. Voss. Farmer City appears to have had the first factory in this period, with additional facilities constructed in Fisher, Tomlinson,

Mahomet, and Urbana. In 1879 Simeon Weeks opened a brickyard north of Urbana with a workforce of 65 men and a weekly payroll of \$375. Around the same time, R. A. Sutton, who became one of the biggest names in the area for brick, had his office at the northwest corner of Main Street and Market Street in Urbana.

Clay for drainage tile became more readily available in the late 1870s and into the 1880s, and many of the existing facilities began to manufacture four-inch diameter pipes. Drain tile for fields revolutionized farming in the vast low areas of Champaign County, prompting the establishment of brick and tile companies in nearly every small town during this period. In 1883 alone, Pesotum, Philo, Seymour, Savoy, Tolono, Parkville, Urbana, Mahomet, Thomasboro, Gifford, Ogden, and Champaign all had documented factories. In the next ten years Homer, Sadorus, Longview, rural Prospect, Broadlands, and LeRoy housed brick and/or tile factories.

In Champaign and Urbana, a number of manufacturers were interconnected as factories were bought and sold or as managers relocated. Royal Sutton, Sutton and

(CC) Sheldon, Champaign Tile Factory, Champaign Tile Company, United Manufacturing Company, Champaign Tile and Brick, and Simeon Weeks, Andrew Barr, JW Stipes, and AM Scott were all local names in the business prior to 1900. To illustrate the prominence of brick making in Champaign County, in April of 1898, one brickyard employed 150 men and made 85,000 bricks daily, while another made 20,000 bricks per day and could not keep up with the demand.

By the early 1900s, the manufacture of local brick started to decline, with the exception of the Sheldon Brick Company, which continued supplying materials such as the 2,200,000 bricks required for the construction of the Illinois Theater in 1907/8. By 1915, local clay was exhausted and the cost of transporting it from long distances to manufacture locally left no room for profit. Reportedly, John B. Bennett made the last local bricks in 1923, and in 1924 the old kilns in C-U were demolished. Sheldon Brick Company, the final holdout in Champaign County, dissolved in April 1925, effectively ending the local manufacture of brick and tile.

Sources: business directories, local newspapers, plat books, local histories, Sanborn maps

URBANA WINS STATEWIDE AWARD FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Robert Myers

On October 12, 2012, the Illinois Association of Historic Preservation Commission (IAHPC) awarded the City of Urbana's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) its 2012 Preservation Award. The award recognizes the City of Urbana's "significant contributions to historic preservation in the state of Illinois" over the past two years.



Rebecca Bird accepts the IAHPC 2012 award recognizing Urbana's Historic Preservation Commission's significant contributions to historic preservation in the state of Illinois.

Rebecca Bird, a Planner with the City of Urbana who was instrumental in carrying out these activities, accepted this award in Blue Island, Illinois, at IAHPC's annual member meeting. The award is based on the following achievements and programs for 2011-2012:

- **In Lincoln's Shadow Podcast Tour.** The City created a walking "pastcast" tour of Abraham Lincoln-related historic sites in Urbana. These videos are also provided online. <http://www.urbanainillinois.us/pastcast>
- **100 Most Important Buildings in Urbana.** The Historic Preservation Commission adopted a list of the 100 most important buildings with public input and discussion about significance. The project was funded with an Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA) grant. With a follow up IHPA grant, the Commission created an online guide to all 100 properties with architectural and historical descriptions of each. <http://urbanainillinois.us/residents/historic-urbana/100mostsignificant>
- **Modern Urbana Homes Tour, May 5, 2012.** The City of Urbana worked cooperatively with the University of Illinois' architecture program to organize a Modern Urbana Homes Tour, which had more than 400 participants. <http://urbanainillinois.us/node/2921>

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100 MOST IMPORTANT

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being ostracized. When it became clear to Dovring that he would never be able to secure a full professorship in Sweden, he accepted an offer from the University of Illinois in the Department of Agricultural Economics. An intellectual iconoclast through and through, his work at UIUC was no less conformist. He was an early, vocal advocate of "appropriate technology" in development, contrary to the mainstream Green Revolution-based technology transfer paradigm that characterized international agricultural development during the second half of the 20th century. Not to be limited to his native field, he was a strong advocate for alternative fuels and was one of the first academics to openly argue that American dependence on oil would lead to prolonged military involvement in Mid-East politics. Perhaps not surprising, given that neither he nor Karin ever owned a car, he argued for a reduction in the number of urban parking spaces years before this became a popular progressive planning position. Folke passed away in 1998 and Karin passed away in 2011.

701 N. Coler Avenue

Architectural Description

701 N. Coler is a mail-order home purchased from the Sears Catalog and erected in 1920. This particular catalog house is known as "The Osborn" and was listed in the Sears Catalog selling for \$2,192.00 in the early twentieth century. The Osborn model is a one-story bungalow house designed in the Spanish mission architectural style. 701 N. Coler was assembled by an unknown Urbana family. The house sits on a brick foundation and has a tall brick chimney.

The house is long and thin and has a low-pitched gable roof. It has three gable-roofed porches, described in the catalog this way: "The Osborn will appeal to the lover of nature because of its two open porches both sheltered by the main roof and the sleeping porch in the rear." The porch roof is supported by four square timber columns resting on large square brick piers. The roofline of the house has wide verge boards and protruding timber purlins. Overall, the house has brown wood shingles and cream stucco siding, which has been recently covered up with vinyl siding. The windows are double-hung with decorative bands of stained glass at the top of each. The home kits ordered from Sears could be customized. Several other "Osborn" houses still exist around the country, including a well-preserved house in Sydney, IL.

Historical Description

The Sears mail-order modern home program started at a time when more and more people were acquiring automobiles and moving to the suburbs, where they would inevitably need a house. Sears offered these

sprawl-ers an easy solution to build their dream house in the suburbs. The Sears catalog estimated that it took 90 days to assemble one entire house. This estimate was a gross understatement, as it actually took more than a year to assemble, especially if the owner worked a full time job and assembled the house in his or her spare time.

Like many Sears homes, 701 N. Coler is located close to railroad tracks. Owners were responsible for transporting all the building materials, which were shipped in a wax-sealed boxcar, to the final building site within 48 hours of delivery. Sears kits were shipped from two locations: Most of the millwork (e.g. windows, doors, interior trim and molding) was produced in Norwood, Ohio, while the rest of a house kit came from the great Sears Mill in Cairo, Illinois. Not only was Cairo located at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, but four major railway lines passed through, making it an excellent site for connecting Southern lumber suppliers with Northern home builders. The mill was massive, almost forty acres with twenty covered acres for storing lumber.



701 N. Coler Avenue

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

PACA

BOX 2575, CHAMPAIGN, IL 61825

MEMBERSHIP STATUS

- New
- Renewal

NAME:

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY

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

ADDRESS:

PHONE:

E-MAIL:

- I wish to include an additional contribution of \$ _____

Note: Please make your check payable to PACA. Your contribution is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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URBANA WINS AWARD

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- **Historic Resource Survey Digitization.** Working cooperatively with the Champaign County Archives and the Illinois Secretary of State's office, most of the 1,300+ historic resource survey forms completed for Urbana properties have been digitized and made available online through the Illinois Digital Archives. <http://www.idaillinois.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/ufi>
- **Urbana Historic Resources Database.** With the assistance of an IHPA grant, the City of Urbana created a database to be used by City staff and officials as a tool for managing the community's historic resources and guiding public decisions which might affect these resources. The database includes historic resource survey information on all 1,300+ surveyed properties, local landmark and National Register designations, inclusion on the City's demolition delay list, and the 100 most important historic resources. The database includes verified and standardized addresses and PINs for eventual links with the City's GIS system.
- **Urbana Landmark Hotel.** The City oversaw the designation of the Urbana Landmark Hotel (formerly the Urbana Lincoln Hotel) as a local historic landmark, a key downtown

property in terms of both economic development and historic preservation. The hotel is now being rehabilitated by a new owner/investor who relocated from California. Designation as a local landmark was a City condition for developer acceptance of City TIF funds for rehabilitation.

- **Halberstadt House Landmark.** Successfully designated the endangered Halberstadt House. A church planned to demolish the house to make space for a parking lot. The city council delayed action on a pending landmark application to give time for the church to market the property, and City staff found a new buyer who has completed rehabilitation as a residential duplex. The City purchased an adjacent lot from the church and constructed a public parking lot which church members and others can use for free on evenings and weekends.
- **Ezekial Boyden Home Landmark.** The City supervised local landmark designation of the only surviving pre-Civil War building in Urbana directly connected with Abraham Lincoln (Lincoln slept here, literally!), as recently identified through extensive research by Stewart Berlocher.

Congratulations should be extended to not only the Urbana Historic Preservation

Commission and Rebecca Bird, but also the Urbana City Council and Mayor, and concerned Urbana citizens who stepped forward at critical times to help make this work possible.

PACAroni RETURNS AT PACA'S ANNUAL VOLUNTEER PARTY

Benny Dow

PACA volunteers convened at the warehouse on November 4, 2012, for the annual PACA party. The celebration involved a fairly strong turnout of old friends and new faces. There were widespread conversations about salvages this past year. Folks discussed what was saved and where it started its new life. Volunteers also had conversations on the progress of the Solon house and where PACA hopes to be by the end of the grant-funded improvements. We had a bounty of good food—especially everyone's favorite "PACAroni"—and more desserts than we ever needed. Wait, is that possible? I don't think so! A good time was had by all!



OR CURRENT RESIDENT

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The newsletter of the

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