URBANA FACADE DESIGN PROGRAM

In cooperation with the Urbana Community Development Department, PACA has initiated a new program to help downtown property owners with facade improvements.

The City of Urbana and Busey Bank have made a $200,000 loan pool available to owners of property located in the Urbana Downtown Redevelopment District, which is bounded by University Avenue, Illinois, Urbana and Cedar streets. The loans will be repaid over four years and can vary from $5,000 to $20,000; because of a City subsidy of $30,000, the borrowers’ interest rate should be only about 5 percent.

Half of each loan must be used for exterior improvements and PACA has begun a Facade Design Program to help property owners with these improvements. For a nominal $50.00 fee, PACA will make suggestions for a facade plan which would be in keeping with the historic character of the building. To insure that a great deal of improvement will result with the smallest expenditure on the part of owners or tenants, a sensitive rehabilitation approach will be used. This process does not advocate a period restoration, but acknowledges the evolution of the building over time.

Included in the design package will be a brief history of the building and a sketch of the facade showing the design suggestions. Recommendations will be listed in priorities. Generally, the most visible improvements for the least expenditure will be listed first, followed by the more expensive and perhaps less immediately effective improvements. However, if serious building maintenance problems are evident, this approach is changed in favor of recom-
mandations to attend to maintenance problems first.

It will be stressed to the property owners, that PACA is offering design suggestions only. To insure success, consultation with an architect or a builder is advised. Preferably, they should be familiar with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, which are the national guidelines for rehabilitating buildings while preserving their original features and design integrity.

There are also certain tax advantages for rehabilitating older buildings. A 15% investment tax credit is available for industrial or commercial buildings 30-39 years old, a 20% credit is available for buildings 40 years or older. A 15-year cost recovery period for the adjusted basis of the building can be used. If the business area was in a historic district, however, certified rehabilitations would be eligible for a 25% tax credit and rental housing units would qualify.

MAIN STREET VIDEO CONFERENCE: THE FIRST NATIONAL CLASSROOM FOR DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

Hundreds of preservationists, planners and city officials from around the country will participate in a satellite-delivered videoconference September 18 when the National Trust’s Main Street Center produces “Revitalizing Downtown.”

The 5½ hour conference will be based on the four point “Main Street Approach,” which emphasizes incremental improvements in organization, promotion, design and economic restructuring to promote downtown revitalization. Live question and answer periods will be featured.

PACA and a number of other co-sponsors will be bringing the conference to Champaign. The conference will be open to anyone interested in the economic revitalization of downtowns—public employees, businessmen, students or concerned citizens. Flyers with detailed information as to place and time will be mailed out shortly or call PACA, 359-0114 to reserve a place.

NOTES

PACA is sad to report on the death of one of our founding members and past vice-president, William H. Schmidt. Bill was very active in the preservation community and spent many long hours researching important buildings and people for PACA’s use. He was a main force in the organization of our walking and house tours and was a vital component of the Cattle Bank Restoration Committee. His expertise will be greatly missed.

NEW BOARD MEMBER APPOINTED

The Board of Directors is pleased to announce the appointment of Joan Severns to the Board to fulfill the unexpired term of James Mathien. Ms. Severns has been very active in the community for a number of years. She has served on the Board of Directors of the Champaign County Development Council (CCDC) since 1973, is currently serving on the Endowment Committee of the University of Illinois YWCA, and is the chair of the Nominating Committee for the League of Women Voters. In addition, she was elected to the City Council of Champaign from 1973-1979 and served as Mayor of Champaign from 1979 -1983. During her tenure as Mayor, Ms. Severns was very instrumental in saving the Cattle Bank from demolition and in finding private developers willing to renovate the building.

THE PROBLEM SOLVER

I have just renovated my store, which is in the middle of my town’s historic district, and want a new sign as a final touch. What are the guidelines for the use of signs?

Signs were an integral component of 19th- and 20th-century storefronts and today play an important role in defining the character of a business district. Photographs of historic streetscapes reveal a multitude of signs—in windows, over doors, painted on exterior walls and hanging over (and sometimes across) the street. Although this confusion was part of the character of 19th-century cities and towns, today’s approach towards signs in historic districts tends to be much more conservative.

Removal of modern backlit fluorescent signs, large applied signs with distinctive corporate logos and other signs attached to the building that obscure significant architectural detailing can dramatically improve the visual appearance of a building; for this reason, removal of these signs is encouraged in the process of rehabilitation. If new signs are designed, their size and style should be compatible with the historic building and should not cover or obscure significant architectural detailing. During the 19th century, signs for buildings were commonly mounted on the lintel at the top of the first story. Another common approach, especially at the turn of the century, was to paint signs directly on the inside of the display windows; frequently these were painted in gold leaf. New hanging signs may be appropriate for historic commercial buildings if their scale and design are compatible with the historic building. Signs and advertising painted on exterior walls should be retained if they have historical or artistic significance, especially if they provide evidence of early or original occupants.

I am considering adding an awning over the window of my shop, which was constructed at the turn of the cen-
nity. What are the guidelines for installing awnings? The building is in a local historic district.

When based on historical precedent, canvas awnings can be an attractive addition to older commercial buildings. Awnings can help shelter passersby, reduce glare and conserve energy by controlling the amount of sunlight hitting the windows. In many cases, awnings can disguise inappropriate alterations to a facade that may be too expensive to remove; they can also provide additional color as well as a strong commercial identification. Fixed aluminum awnings and awnings simulating mansard roofs and umbrellas are generally inappropriate for older commercial buildings. If you add awnings, choose a style made from soft canvas or nonshiny vinyl materials; be certain that they are installed without damaging the building or visually impairing distinctive architectural features. To achieve maximum energy conservation, awnings should also be operable.

Our house has several painted wooden doors and mantels that I would like to strip to bare wood. Would the wood be damaged if it were commercially dipped in a lye or caustic bath to remove the paint?

The effect of this treatment varies, depending both on the type of wood and how carefully the work is done. Although dipping softwoods and oak in lye is usually acceptable if done quickly and carefully, walnut and other hardwoods should not be dipped in lye because dipping darkens the wood. Although hardwood can be lightened later with bleach, bleaching may destroy the appearance of the wood, a change that would be particularly noticeable if the wood were refinished with a traditional varnish coating.

First, find out whether your pieces are made of softwood or hardwood. Then, before contracting to have large pieces dipped, take a small, insignificant piece to be dipped. If you are satisfied with the results, have your doors and mantels dipped. Dipping has the effect of raising the grain of the wood, and some wood that has been dipped comes out looking like shredded wheat. To reduce the risk of damage, talk to people who have had wood dipped by firms in your area. Ask to see the piece that was dipped; what one person thinks is a good job may not satisfy you. Finally, always take the work to the company in the morning and pick it up in the afternoon; some companies do the easy work during the day and let the difficult jobs soak overnight.

The kitchen in my house, which dates from 1903, has a tin ceiling covered with many layers of paint. How can I get rid of the paint easily, touch up rust spots and protect the ceiling after the paint has been removed?

First, you should give up the idea of removing the paint and, instead, accustom yourself to having a painted ceiling. Removing paint from a ceiling can be quite difficult and dangerous. Repainting is the easiest and, thus, the most logical way to approach this problem; it can be done after sanding lightly by hand to remove any rust spots or chipping paint.

If, however, you are still determined to remove the paint, you may wish to use a chemical paint stripper, applying it with a brush. Be very careful to keep it out of your eyes and off your skin, as most chemical paint removers are caustic. In this instance, it is not safe to use a heat gun to assist in removing paint because of the high risk of igniting flammable material on or above the ceiling. If you are successful in removing the paint completely, you can eliminate any rust spots by sanding lightly; the bare metal ceiling can then be coated with a clear lacquer.


PRESERVATION FOR THE ELDERLY

The Elderhostel 1984 Fall/Winter Catalog lists nearly 2000 short courses available for those 60 years of age or older at schools or campuses all over the United States and abroad. A quick tally shows 107 of these dealing with preservation-related topics such as architecture, history, archeology, genealogy, and local cultural heritage. Some interesting ones nearby include the following:

"American Antiques", Mount Carroll, IL Sept. 16-22
"Archaeological Field Work", Kampsville, IL Sept. 2-8
"Archaeological Laboratory Methods", Kampsville, IL Sept. 2-8
"Beyond Old MacDonald's Farm", Palos Park, IL Oct. 21-27
"Genealogy", Pleasant Hill, KY Dec. 9-14, Jan. 13-18
"Heritage Crafts", Lake Barkley, KY Oct. 14-20
"Historic Galena", Mount Carroll, IL Oct. 7-13
"Historic Nauvoo", Macomb, IL Oct. 14-20
"Kansas City: The Truman Heritage", Kansas City, MO Sept. 30-Oct. 6
"Kentucky Bluegrass", Pleasant Hill, KY Jan. 20-25, Jan. 27-Feb. 1
"Mark Twain: The Man, the River, and an Early Home", Quincy, IL Oct. 21-27, Nov. 4-10
"Native American Technology", Kampsville, IL Sept. 2-8
"Natural and Human History of the Mississippi Valley", Carbondale, IL Oct. 7-13
"Peek at the Prairie", Oregon, IL Oct. 21-27
"Preserving Artifacts", Pleasant Hill, KY Dec. 9-14, Jan. 13-18
"Preserving Our Architectural Heritage", Pleasant Hill, KY Dec. 9-14, Jan. 13-18
"Preserving the Past", Mount Carroll, IL Oct. 7-13
"Quincy Architecture", Quincy, IL Oct. 21-27
"Roots and Branches: Exploring Your Family Tree", Mount Carroll, IL Sept. 16-22
"Shaker History and Culture", Pleasant Hill, KY Dec. 2-7, Jan. 6-11
"Styles in Domestic Architecture", Mount Carroll, IL Sept. 16-22
"Tracing Your Heritage through Oral History", Kansas City, MO Sept. 30-Oct. 6
"Wood Crafts", Pine Mountain, KY Sept. 9-15
"Wood: Sheep to Shawl", Potosi, MO Oct. 21-26

Each of the programs has an all-inclusive charge of about $190, covering accommodations, meals, registration, and five days of classes. For more information call PACA, 359-7404 or write Elderhostel, Inc., 100 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116.
WHAT STYLE IS IT?

Many people are puzzled as to what architectural style their house or building is. The following books should help answer that question, but remember that most of the buildings in this area are vernacular interpretations of “academic” styles. In many cases, elements of many different styles are incorporated into one building.

- Poppeliers, J., et al. What Style Is It?

THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE HAVE BECOME HISTORICALLY IMPORTANT WITH PACA

The following people have become historically important with PACA. Won’t you?
- Leslie Lareau
- Ella Leppert
- Dr. & Mrs. Rex Kummer
- Allen S. Weller
- Kathleen Henry
- Mrs. J.L. Fairchild
- Jean Yearsley
- Mrs. Anna Williams

ARTS COUNCIL OF CHAMPAIGN COUNTY
11½ E. University Avenue
Champaign, Illinois 61820

ATTENTION, ATTENTION

PACA has a new phone number and a directory listing. The new number is 359-0114.

PACA Newsletter

Published by the Preservation and Conservation Association of Champaign County.

President: Neil Strack
Vice President: Gregory Hargus
Treas.: Norman Baxley
Exec. Director: Karen Lang Kummer

Please submit material for publication in the next newsletter before 15th of month.

Membership Application P.A.C.A.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY:

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<th>INDIVIDUAL</th>
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<td>Adult</td>
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<td>Additional Contribution</td>
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NAME ____________________________
ADDRESS ____________________________

Make check payable to: PACA, Box 2555, Station A, Champaign, Illinois 61820.