GRAND PRAIRIE FRIENDS
PRESERVE PRAIRIE

by Wendy Garrison

Grand Prairie Friends of Illinois is a not-for-profit organization formed and incorporated in 1984. Its purpose is to preserve prairie ecosystems and species through various means ranging from land ownership to propagation of locally collected prairie seed and assisting with the management of protected sites owned by other organizations or individuals. Although based in Champaign County, the name is meant to indicate that the organization’s activities will not be limited to the county, but may include any part of the “Grand Prairie” in Illinois. This region includes the northeastern 2/3 of the state, an area where prairie grasses such as big bluestem and Indian grass, and forbs (“broad-leaved” flowering plants) such as prairie dock and purple coneflower comprised the original vegetation.

Grand Prairie Friends currently has several projects underway. One project may be of particular interest to PACA members. Last summer, 6 acres along an abandoned railroad right-of-way in Champaign County was purchased by Grand Prairie Friends. At least 40 typical prairie plant species have been found along this 7 mile tract. The acreage will be preserved as a conservation area under the ownership of Grand Prairie Friends, and will be open to the public for walking, botanizing, birdwatching (indigo buntings, meadowlarks, goldfinches and a Marsh hawk were among the birds seen there this year), and other such activities. This fall and winter, field work was begun which will be continued in the spring. Work will include posting signs, fencing, weed control of the more aggressive non-native species, and continuing the plant and animal inventory.

The more familiar one becomes with the countryside, the more one recognizes that land use patterns are not coincidental, and that the historical interaction between the land and its settlers is reflected almost everywhere in today’s landscape. The railroad line on which this prairie is located furnished one more example. Locally known as the “Shortline,” it was constructed 10 years after the end of the Civil War, in 1875. The names of the enterprising founders are now immortalized, for better or worse, in the county: Gifford, Penfield, Dewey, Fisher, and Tomlinson. To cut costs, the line was built as a narrow gauge which meant that cargo had to change cars at the interface with the North/South Illinois Central line. In 1903 the Shortline was bought and rebuilt as a standard gauge by Illinois Central. In the 109 years that have elapsed since the railroad’s construction, native prairie plants have managed to persist along the line. Although the land was graded and otherwise disturbed, 33 feet on each side of the track (the railroad’s property) was not farmed. In the shelter from disturbance provided by an abandoned windmill, grow the paucocoon, leadplant, new jersey tea, and toadflax. In lower areas, where water tends to stand, grow cattail and cattails. There are patches of desmodium and lespediza and obedient plant along with the more common prairie dock and compass plant. Beneath a stand of walnut trees, no prairie plants grow at all, probably due to the presence of juglone from the walnut. The roadbed from which the track has been removed now serves as a trail. Next to it there is another linear, raised section—the original narrow gauge roadbed? The trail, in short, provides a continuing opportunity for observation, and in saving a small natural area some reminders of the history of the county have been preserved as well.

The above is only one project. Many more remain to be done. Grand Prairie Friends welcomes all those who support the goals and activities of the organization—those who wish to actively participate as well as those who simply wish to show their support by joining. Membership categories are: Student $5; Individual $10; Joint $15; Not-for-profit organization $25; Profit-making organization $100. Donations are also being sought for the successful completion of the Shortline Prairie purchase. Please send membership contributions to Jean Nance, Membership chairperson, R.R. 1, Box 151, St. Joseph, IL 61873 (1-469-2556). More information is available from Jean, or from Wendy Garrison, President, 408 W. Nevada, Urbana, IL (344-8028).

ARCHITECT-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM

The Champaign County Historical Museum has been fortunate to receive a grant from the Illinois Arts Council to host the Architect-in-Residence Program for the school year 1984-85. The program is unusual in that the Artist-in-School Program will operate from a community facility rather than an individual school. Gary L. Olsen, a local architect with his own architectural design firm, Olsen-Lytle Architects, and a specialty in historic preservation has been chosen to be the Architect-in-Residence at the Museum. Gary has served the Illinois Arts Council in this education program for the past seven years in both the Champaign and Macon County Schools. Olsen was recently selected as a National coordinator for Education by the American Institute of Architects for his outstanding work in the public schools.

The Architect-in-Residence program at the Wilber Mansion will have two thrusts, the first will include direct involvement in the local schools at the elementary level in which volunteer schools will receive services in the form
of lectures, slide demonstrations and creative activities. In addition, two schools will be chosen for mini-residences in which the students will work with the architect to plan and execute a model community. Drawings of these communities and models will be displayed in a public open house at the Wilber Mansion in the Spring.

The second role of the Architect-in-Residence involves community education. Workshops are being offered to area teachers and interested members of the public on such topics as Illinois Architectural Heritage, the Architecture of Champaign County, and the Aesthetics of Architecture. This fall, Gary Olsen led a tour of the architecture of Chicago and Oak Park for members of the Krannert Art Museum. Another tour of Chicago and Oak Park is being planned for teachers in May, 1985. It is hoped that the Architect-in-Residence Program will extend the Museum's educational interest into many new areas of the community and throughout Champaign County.

For more information contact: CCHM - 356-1010.

MEMBERSHIP REVIEW

The 1985 PACA membership year has begun. Please check your mailing label for the month in which your membership expires. If your label has letters in the lower right corner instead of numbers, that means that you have been receiving a complementary newsletter. Since we are continually updating and revising our mailing list in order to reach more people in the community, we ask that you join PACA today to assure your continued receipt of this informative newsletter. Memberships dues provide 75% of our general operating budget so everyone's support counts. Remember, PACA memberships are tax-deductible!

THE OLD HOUSE SCHOOL

Over 30 people braved the zero degree cold to attend the very timely discussion of insulating the old house at the first session of the Old House School. Marylee MacDonald and Bill Rose, University of Illinois Small Homes Council research associates, presented a detailed program covering the general principles of insulation and common problems that can occur. Suggestions for do-it-yourself projects as well as what to look for from an insulation contractor were discussed. The informal format of the presentation also allowed for plenty of time for audience questions.

If you missed this session but still have questions on insulation, PACA suggests these references available on loan from PACA's library—Insulating the Old House: a handbook for the owner, Greater Portland Landmarks, 1979; and the OLD HOUSE JOURNAL articles: Types of Insulation (Aug., 1976); Insulating the Old House (Sept., 1976); Energy-Efficient Old Houses (Sept., 1977); Paint on Vapor Barriers (June, 1980); Special Energy Issue (Sept., 1980); Special Energy Issue (Sept., 1981). Remember, the next old house school sessions are February 28 - Plastic Repair, and March 28 - Furnaces, Furnace Efficiency and Radiators. They will be held at the Urbana Library Auditorium beginning at 7:00 PM.

PACA ANNUAL MEETING

The fourth Annual Membership meeting was held January 27, 1985 at the old Masonic Temple building, 115 West Main Street, Urbana. Hats off to the staunch preservationists who braved the cold, both inside and out!

The business portion of the meeting was conducted by President Neil Strack. Reports were given on the following topics: Salvage, Downtown Champaign IDOC Survey, Endangered Buildings, Victorian House Series, Urbana High School, Consultations, Urbana Facade Improvement Program and Revitalizing Downtown: A National Main Street Conference. Activities for 1985 were then previewed: 1985 budget, Urbana Residential IDOC Survey, Arts Council Grassroots Regrant Display Exhibit, residential Heritage Award (Residence of architectural and/or historical significance): Solon House, 503 South State Street, Champaign. Institutional/Commercial Heritage Award (Institutional or commercial building of architectural and/or historical significance): Illinois Power Building. Environmental Heritage Award (Accomplishments for the environment or other sites such as commercial, residential or farm outbuildings, bridges, streets, roads, alleys, signs, vehicles): Penfield Grain Elevator.

A special award was given in memory of William Schmidt, a charter PACA Board member and diligent researcher who passed away in 1984. Each award winner will be the subject of a future Newsletter article.

PACA would like to thank the Heritage Award Committee (John Gamer, Leslie Lareau, Tom Napier, Doug Miller and Greg Hargus) for their efforts in choosing this year's recipients. Narrowing the field from an initial forty nominations to three per category and then choosing a single winner involved much lively debate and hard decision making. All remaining nominations will be kept on file for reconsideration next year. PACA urges everyone to nominate their favorite building or site for the second annual Heritage Awards.

HERITAGE AWARDS PRESENTED

Presentation of the first annual Heritage Awards was made by Vice President and Committee Chairman Gregory Hargus at the Annual Membership meeting. The purpose of the Heritage Awards is to increase awareness of the important buildings in the community and to promote the interests of preservation and conservation. Six buildings/sites were chosen for having either architectural or historical significance for the community or for having undergone a recent restoration or renovation.

This year's recipients are:

Outstanding Heritage Contribution Award (Residential, commercial or institutional property which has accomplished recent renovation or restoration and is architecturally or historically significant): Holy Cross Church.

Landscape Heritage Award (Recognition of significant landscape, related structures or landscape art): Carle Park and Pavilion.

Landmark Heritage Award (Anniversary of significant date or recent accomplishment of National Register or landmark quality building): Wee Haven House, 1509 West Park Street, Champaign.

Residential Heritage Award (Residence of architectural and/or historical significance): Solon House, 503 South State Street, Champaign.
NATIONAL TRUST MEMBERSHIP

The Preservation and Conservation Association of Champaign County and the NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION invite you to receive a full year of National Trust membership while making an important contribution to PACA.

When you join the National Trust using this special card, the Preservation and Conservation Association of Champaign County will receive a donation equal to twenty percent of your membership dues in your name.

The National Trust saves America's special places—great urban and quaint rural main streets, stately homes, irreplaceable public monuments and landmarks, celebrated historic ships and waterfronts and picture perfect countrysides.

When you become a member of the National Trust, you will receive our exclusive membership benefits and privileges, including:

- **HISTORIC PRESERVATION** . . . our richly illustrated, award-winning bimonthly magazine featuring “Open House”—our forum for members’ home preservation projects, “Home Work”—a restoration Q & A column, historic bed and breakfast inns, planting “how to's” for authentic period gardens, as well as photographic studies and stories of renovation across America.

- **PRESERVATION NEWS** . . . each monthly issue brings news updates on current national preservation policies, as well as preservation efforts in your own community, plus the popular Historic Properties section, a real estate listing of available historic properties.

- “Members Only” Discounts . . . a 10% savings on a distinctive selection of books exploring our rich heritage and how to preserve it—including What Style Is It?, a popular, comprehensive guide to American architecture. You also get a 10% discount on unique gifts and handcrafted items, all featured in our own Preservation Shops and periodic catalogs.

- Personal Membership Card . . . a passkey to history across the country, guaranteeing free admission to and a special welcome at our fourteen historic house museums.

- Exclusive Invitations . . . to National Trust seminars, domestic and international study tours, our annual meeting and our annual preservation conference.

Join Now! One full year of Trust membership is just $15.

☐ YES! I would like to join the National Trust. Please send a contribution in my name to the Preservation Association of Champaign County.

☐ $15 Enclosed ☐ Please Bill Me

NAME _______________________

ADDRESS _______________________

Mail to: National Trust for Historic Preservation; 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW; Washington, DC 20036.

TOURS

The UIUC Student Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians invites interested PACA members for a tour of Louisville, KY and Madison, IN, (a “Main Street” city) April 12, 13 and 14. Although plans are still being made, the student group estimates the cost for transportation and lodging for the three-day trip at approximately $85-150. More information will be available soon. Interested members may contact Mike Lambert, at 384-6369 (evenings) with any questions.


TENTATIVE ITINERARY

Friday, April 12, 1985
12 noon - Board bus in front of Architecture Building (eat beforehand or bring a sack lunch; we will leave by 12:30 pm)

Saturday, April 13, 1985
9:30 a.m. - Bus leaves for Farmington, Kentucky; mandatory tour.
10:00 a.m. - Tour of Farmington
11:00 a.m. - Return bus trip to Louisville
12:00 p.m. - Buffet lunch aboard paddlewheel boat
1:00 p.m. - Free tour time; three suggested tours available
6:30 p.m. - Tour of St. James Court

Dinner en route (McDonald's or other fast-food restaurant)

Arrive in Louisville approximately 8:00 pm

Check into the restored Seabach Hotel, remainder of evening free

Sunday, April 14, 1985
11:30 a.m. - Board bus for Madison, Indiana (leave by 12 noon)
2:00 p.m. - Approximate arrival time in Madison, Indiana
5:00 p.m. - Return to Champaign, Illinois (we will leave at 5 p.m. SHARP!)
8:30 p.m. - Approximate arrival time in Champaign, Illinois

The Champaign Library and Parkland College are sponsoring an overnight trip Saturday and Sunday, March 23-24 to Madison and New Harmony, Indiana. Madison is a treasure trove of beautifully restored turn-of-the-century homes, and New Harmony is the site of two 19th century Utopias. Price includes round trip bus fare, all entrance fees, hotel accommodations, and more. Please register by March 1. Cost: $80 (single accommodations); $70 (double-occupancy); $60 (three to a room). Call the Champaign Library for more information.
Annual Spring House Tour, Preservation Week Activities, Old House School, and other upcoming events by related organizations.

The membership also elected three Directors to serve on the Board until 1987: Neil Strack, Gregory Hargus, and Lachlan Blair. Currently serving are Hermenia Kruidenier (85), Judith Huisinga (85), Joan Severns (85), Robert Swisher (86), Richard Cannon (86) and Norman Baxley (86).

After the business meeting, the first Annual Heritage Awards were presented by Gregory Hargus (see related article). Lachlan Blair also presented a lively slide program "Hysterical Travels through Historical Champaign." Short tours of the upper floors of the Masonic Temple were conducted.

PRESERVATION CALENDAR

The preservation scene is going to be quite busy over the next few months with tours, lectures and conferences. So mark your calendars now!

February
28 Old House School, 7P, Urbana Library Auditorium

March
14 History of American Architecture lecture, 7P, Champaign County Historical Museum (CCHM)
21 History of Illinois Architecture lecture, 7P, CCHM
23-24 Trip to Madison & New Harmony, IN, Champaign Public Library

April
11 History of Champaign County Architecture lecture, 7P, CCHM
12-14 Trip to Lexington KY, SAH
18 Case Studies in Historic Preservation, 7P, CCHM
25 The Victorian House lecture, 7P, CCHM
28 Third Annual Spring House Tour, 1-5P, Florida & Delaware, Urbana

May
12-18 Historic Preservation Week
17 Forum: Issues in Local Preservation, 1:30P, Champaign City Council Chambers

ARTS COUNCIL OF CHAMPAIGN COUNTY
709 West University Avenue
Champaign, Illinois 61820

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:

INDIVIDUAL
- Adult $10.00
- Student (1/2 time or more) $5.00
- Senior Citizen $5.00
- Family (includes all members of a household with no more than two members being over age 21) $15.00

- Additional Contribution

CIVIC
- Over 100 members $100.00
- 50-100 members $75.00
- Up to 50 members $50.00

CORPORATE
- $50.00

NAME

ADDRESS

Street State Zip

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