



# PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Box 2555, Station A, Champaign, Illinois 61820

"The Past Has A Future"

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## FOCUS ON: THE VERMILION ACADEMY

In 1824 — just six years after Illinois became a state — gentle Quakers lit the lamp of learning in a grove northwest of present-day Ridge Farm.

Today, 163 years later, the light glows in the eyes and hearts of those who graduated from the old Vermilion Academy, Vermilion Grove.

The log school was the first in the county. Its successor, the handsome brick Vermilion Academy, was built in 1874 — the area's first high school.

The 113-year-old landmark still stands, but the Vermilion Grove Friends Church plans to raze it soon unless money can be found to save it.

It closed in 1932, but was used, first as a public school, then as a community center and residence, until a few years ago.

If it goes, an iron link to the early Quaker heritage will be lost forever, said Mary Rowe, 86, of Chrisman, Ill., who earned her Academy diploma in 1918.

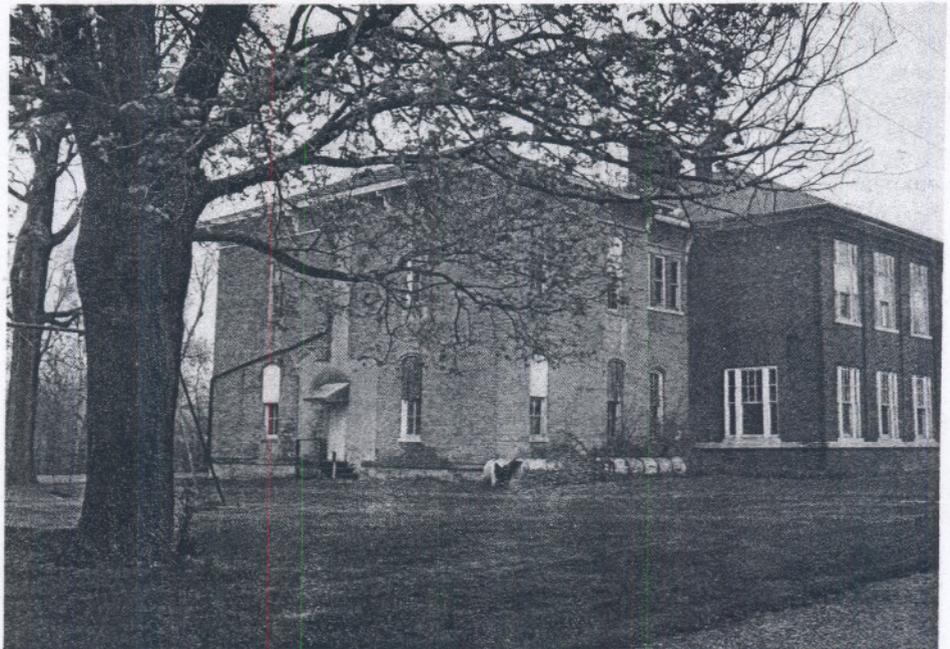
"I know that the people my age won't want the Academy torn down," she said, "If it goes, people your age won't know anything about it. It seems strange that education can't hold on to it, and save it. The Academy was something to be respected, in our thinking."

Education was important to the Quakers.

Mrs. Rowe grew up in the Quaker settlement 10 miles east of Vermilion Grove. Her father, Samuel Ellis, sent her and a brother to live with a family in Vermilion Grove so they could attend the Academy.

"You didn't have to be a Friend to go to the Academy, but our teachers emphasized a religious attitude, a religious teaching," Mrs. Rowe said.

In the days before public high schools, the Academy provided hundreds of students with the education needed to teach or begin university work. Funding came from tuition, donations and profits from nearby farmland.



*Vermilion Academy, Vermilion Grove, IL*

"It was not understood in those days that you went to high school. It was a blessing to us to be able to attend the Academy," Mrs. Rowe said. "The students who went there meant business.

"My brother and I would leave home in a horse and wagon on Sunday evening, attend school all week, then drive home on Friday," she said. Once, snow drifts were so deep that they drove over the tops of fences.

Mrs. Rowe did the cooking all week, and her brother took care of the horse. Studies were all-important, and teachers tolerated no sluggards.

"We came to learn. It was a good place for young folks."

Vermilion Grove, just off Route 1, was settled in 1822 by Quakers who came from Tennessee to escape slavery and farm virgin land. They formed the first Quaker settlement in Illinois, four years before Danville was founded. Tombstone inscriptions date to 1823.

Abraham Lincoln sometimes visited the hamlet — called Vermilion until 1873 — while riding the circuit to Danville. Former House Speaker "Uncle Joe" Cannon, reared as a Quaker, often visited family friends there.

Around 1920, there was a railroad depot, post office, grain elevator, grocery stores, other businesses and about 250 people. Vermilion Grove now consists of the 1884 Quaker Vermilion Grove Meeting House, the abandoned Academy, and a few scattered houses.

The Academy closed when the Great Depression crippled the farm economy. Public high schools posed tough competition.

It was long the education and social center of the area. Weekly church services for students were mandatory. Lecturers from Earlham College in Indiana drew big crowds.

In 1900, the curriculum included Latin, Virgil, Cicero, Caesar, surveying, trigo-

nometry, English, astronomy and zoology. In 1911, an addition was built which included the first gymnasium in southern Vermilion County. The Academy had a laboratory, library, newspaper, dramatic productions, speech club, basketball team, even dormitories.

Business people hired many Academy graduates. Other alumni went on to become teachers, ministers, doctors and lawyers.

Financial aid was offered, and adults were invited to return to school to study. Scholarships to five colleges helped many alumni continue their educations.

The 1874 building, designed to serve 300 students, was built by Reed & Hoffman, builders from Georgetown, for \$8,000. The tawny beige bricks were made from local clay, burned on the site.

"The academy presents a healthy, quiet home, free from the influences which are a snare to the feet of the young, as well as all the advantages of higher education, and is in the charge of earnest men, who believe in education," wrote Hiram Beckwith in his *History of Vermilion County* published in 1879.

Elwood Township, which includes Vermilion Grove, was long a leader in education and religion, he noted. "Twelve live churches in a single township, with their religious zeal well maintained, one would judge must have an abiding influence for good which will last through all time.

"It will readily be believed that Elwood has not filled the jails or the poor-houses. It has been what those devoted old Quakers who first settled it hoped it would be — a light set upon a hill. From the very earliest day it has been a bright spot, and no one is in any doubt why."

Speaking of that heritage still brings light to the eyes of Florence Mote, 97, also of Chrisman, who graduated from the Academy in 1911. She was behind her classmates because she quit school following her mother's death.

Miss Mote's father was a carpenter in Vermilion Grove. They lived just south of the Academy.

"Everyone was very proud of the Academy," she said. "If you went on in school, you went to the Vermilion Academy."

"We went to get an education, not to play. It was considered wrong for boys and girls to dance," she said. "People had higher ideals of what children should be allowed to do."

Unmarried teachers often roomed together in nearby houses.

A school-bell, which for decades sounded the start of classes, is now in the churchyard. "One of the teachers always rang it. They knew the boys would ring it

too long. Still, they weren't as outrageous then as they are now," she said.

The Academy library was always a favorite place. "The students loved to have something to look up, so they could go there and meet their friends," she said.

Miss Mote said she can still remember nervously preparing for her commencement oration in the spring of 1911. "I sat up for hours trying to think of something to say. Each oration lasted 20 or 30 minutes," she said.

"I always like it there, at the Academy," she said. "I liked the school, and all those pretty trees around it."

"And I always liked our Thursday morning church service. I can see all the students lined up, walking to church. It was nice to not have to get your lesson that morning."

*Reprinted from the Commercial News, April 26, 1987. Written by Kevin Collen, a News reporter & PACA Board Member representing Vermilion County.*



## BARN AGAIN! PROJECT LAUNCHED

The Mountains/Plains Regional Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and *Successful Farming* magazine have launched BARN AGAIN!, a national program to preserve historic farm buildings. BARN AGAIN! will offer farmers cash prizes for the best examples of historic farm buildings that have been preserved or renovated for new uses. The program will also sponsor demonstration projects illustrating innovative solutions to the problems of reusing older farm buildings. The BARN AGAIN! program aims to encourage farmers to adopt a conservation ethic which includes stewardship of historic farm buildings along with other agricultural resources. The program is based on the premise that older farm buildings can be economically rehabilitated and reused as part of a modern farming operation. To date, this practice has not been widely accepted by farmers for a number of reasons — a general perception that "new is

better," a lack of awareness of the historic value of buildings, a perception that preservation is costly, complicated, and inefficient, and a lack of knowledge of rehabilitation techniques. The BARN AGAIN! program will document completed projects and develop new projects, in order to provide farmers with the plans, designs, cost estimates and other information they need to make reasonable choices about preservation and rehabilitation of older farm buildings.

The Trust's partner in this project, *Successful Farming* magazine, is a national publication serving "families that make farming their business." Its 575,000 subscribers are responsible for 85 percent of the nation's cash farm income from major row crop, forage, and livestock production. "This project fits into our conservation philosophy," says *SF* conservation editor John Walter. "Barns are an available agricultural resource that we feel is underused. There are also economic incentives, including investment tax credits, for farmers to look at their old barns for new uses."

The BARN AGAIN! program will sponsor three demonstration projects to illustrate reuse of historic farm buildings for grain storage, machinery storage/repair, and expanded livestock operations. Resource teams made up of an agricultural engineer, a preservation architect, and an agricultural economist will provide detailed construction plans and cost analyses for each project. BARN AGAIN! will pay for project design and materials. Labor will be provided by the farm owner.

Farmers who have already completed farm building rehabilitation projects will be invited to compete for cash awards by submitting information about their projects to *Successful Farming*. Awards of \$1000 will be paid for the best examples of projects in four categories: continued maintenance and use of an older building, modernization of an older building for continued use, rehabilitation for a new use, and addition to an older building for a new or expanded use. Honorable mention awards of \$100 will also be presented for projects of special interest.

Award-winning projects will be featured in *Successful Farming*, and a series of articles will chart the progress of the demonstration projects from initial selection to completion. The articles will contain detailed information about the construction process and techniques as well as the farmers' personal and economic reasons for doing the projects. Reprints of the articles will be available for distribution outside the *SF* audience. At the conclusion of the program, an informational booklet will be published with plans and descriptions of several of the projects.

The BARN AGAIN! program is being supported by grants from Deere and Company and Pioneer Hi-Bred International. For more information, contact Mary M. Humstone, National Trust Mountains/Plains Regional Office, 511-16th Street, Suite 700, Denver, Colo. 80202 (303) 844-2245.

## ISSUES IN CHICAGO ARCHITECTURE

To inaugurate the opening of the permanent exhibition, "Fragments of Chicago's Past," the Department of Architecture of the Art Institute, in cooperation with the Department of Museum Education, has organized a free series of issue-oriented panel discussions. The programs are designed to initiate debate and questions concerning Chicago architecture. The discussions will be held Tuesday evenings at 6:00 p.m. at the Arthur Rubloff Auditorium of the Art Institute of Chicago.

July 7, 1987

### Beyond the Chicago School: Public and Scholarly Perceptions of the Architecture Between the Wars

Fragments from buildings dating from the teens, 1920's, and 1930's are becoming available more frequently as demolition clears sites to make way for larger structures. Although buildings from this period have not yet been declared landmarks, they nonetheless contribute tremendously to the texture of the streetscape and skyline. The panel will discuss the often underrated contribution of these 50- to 60-year-old buildings that stand as a peculiar class most seriously endangered by demolition today.

#### Panelists

**Rita Caviglia**, Boston Redevelopment Authority, Department of Urban Design and Development

**Michael Jackson**, Chief Architect, Preservation Services, Illinois Preservation Agency, Springfield

**Stanley Tigerman**, Partner in the architectural firm Tigerman, Fugman, McCurry and Director of the School of Architecture, University of Illinois at Chicago

August 4, 1987

### Louis Sullivan and the Meaning of his Ornament

Louis Sullivan, sometimes called the "Father of the Skyscraper," is renowned for his role in the development of the tall office building in America and for the key role he played with his partner, Dankmar Adler, in the formation of the Chicago School of architecture. He is equally renowned for the exquisite decorative orna-

ment that he skillfully incorporated into his buildings. This panel will discuss the European and American sources that influenced Sullivan in order to question whether he really invented a new form of American architecture, as he theorized he had, or simply reworked European precedents, in the late 19th-century tradition.

#### Panelists

**Margaret Henderson Floyd**, Chairman, Fine Arts Department, Tufts University

**Robert Twombly**, Professor of History, City College of New York

**Wim de Wit**, Curator of Architecture, Chicago Historical Society

September 15, 1987

### Frank Lloyd Wright and the Marketplace: Prairie School Windows

Today many decorative elements, particularly windows, are being removed from Prairie School buildings, thereby destroying their integrity. The recent skyrocketing auction prices for Frank Lloyd Wright windows and furniture are the impetus for this frequent dismantling of Prairie School buildings. The ethical questions involved in selling windows from houses that still stand and the economic realities behind these sales will be the topics of this panel.

#### Panelists

**Donald Hoffmann**, Historian and Art and Architecture Critic for the *Kansas City Star*

**Nancy McClelland**, Director of the Art Nouveau/Art Deco Department, Christie's Auction House

**R. Craig Miller**, Associate Curator of Design and Architecture, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

**John Vinci**, Architect and partner in the architectural firm, the Office of John Vinci

To culminate the series of issue-oriented panel discussions, the Art Institute will host a day-long symposium focusing on preservation issues and problems that may well determine how Chicago will be developed during the next decade and beyond. Utilizing the expertise of preservationists who are familiar with the specific problems related to preserving the architecture and urban fabric of Chicago, the symposium will outline creative solutions for the continued preservation of Chicago's architecture, parks, and urban landscape.

Saturday, September 19, 1987  
**PRESERVATION ISSUES  
CHALLENGING CHICAGO  
TODAY:**  
A Day-Long Symposium

## Arthur Rubloff Auditorium The Art Institute of Chicago

10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Free Admission

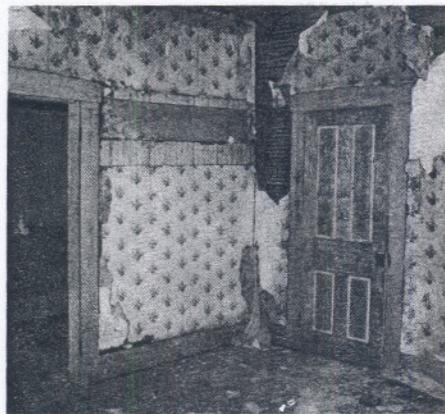
The symposium is co-sponsored by the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois and the Art Institute's Architecture Society, Department of Architecture and Department of Museum Education.

## WASHINGTON-HILL HOUSE TOUR

Over 450 people toured the Washington-Hill neighborhood May 17 and the watch word was "Great!" Comments ranged from "I grew up in a neighborhood like this," to "It's so good to see houses I can afford," and "We came to get inspired for our own renovation project."

The mayor, four Council persons, and two City planners participated in the tour which focused on rehabilitation efforts in the 600-700 blocks of Washington-Hill in Champaign. This area is part of a larger planning study to see if rezoning of certain neighborhoods is in order. Residents of these blocks have petitioned for a less dense zoning designation to help protect their investments and their revitalized neighborhood from large scale developments.

Proceeds from the tour went to benefit the W-H Neighborhood Association and the Greek Revival Cottage Renovation Project.



Northwest room before plaster removal.

## COTTAGE UPDATE

Exciting things are taking place in Leal Park. The Urbana Park District has taken over ownership of the Cottage, uniting both land and building once again, and has agreed to insure the building and the construction process. So far the site has been cleaned up, unnecessary materials have been removed from the basement and the paint has been scraped on three sides of the building.

In the interior, all of the deteriorated plaster and lath has been removed. This totaled about 90% of the building; only the front hallway plaster was thought stable enough to repair. The removal of the plaster has allowed the entire structure of the building to be exposed and a number of structural deficiencies were discovered. While the basic system of oak diagonal post and beam construction is sound (actually over-engineered for the building's size), some wood rot was found and it was discovered that the majority of ceiling joists had split in the center. The floor joists will need to be strengthened in order to meet city building codes for commercial office occupancy. The open interior will also allow for ease of installation of the electrical and mechanical systems.

The Cottage Campaign has made good progress in the past few months. The Champaign-Urbana Section of the Central Illinois Chapter of the American Institute of Architects awarded the Cottage \$300. The *News Gazette* has created a \$2500 matching grant fund at the First National Bank, Champaign, to help the Campaign. Substantial contributions have been received from Hillcrest Lumber, Devonshire Realty and Hartigan Oil. Browns Paint and Glass is donating the necessary paint and A-1 Alarm is helping provide the security system.

A major contributor to the project is the Champaign County Probation and Public Service Program. The court service has adopted the Cottage project as one of their programs and is assigning workers to renovation work. The majority of the work thus far accomplished has been done by unskilled workers under PACA supervision. They have done an excellent job and are willing and able to continue. Skilled carpenters and craftsmen will soon be joining PACA volunteers in putting the building back together. Frankly, without the help and interest of the public service supervisors, the Cottage renovation would not progress in such a timely manner.

Don't forget to make your contribution to the *News Gazette's* Cottage Matching fund in care of PACA or the First National Bank, Champaign. The Cottage is open Saturdays and Sundays if you are interested in helping or just seeing the work in progress.

#### NAIL-PULLING PARTY!!

The first salvage warehouse nail pulling party will be held Saturday, July 11 from 4-8 p.m. at 65 East University, Champaign (PACA's salvage warehouse). Volunteers are invited to help remove nails from salvaged woodwork and help measure and inventory the warehouse stock. As a

reward for hard work, pizza and drinks will be furnished by PACA. Volunteers are requested to bring nail-pulling equipment — claw hammers, vise grips, nail pullers, and saw horses. Let PACA know if you plan to attend so that we can order the food!

#### NEW & RENEWING MEMBERS

Michele Agusti  
 Shirley Stillinger  
 Carol Marlin  
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Espeseth  
 Mr. & Mrs. Carl Dohme  
 Dr. & Mrs. Robert Sutton  
 Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Bartell  
 Mr. & Mrs. Tony Graham  
 Mrs. Donald V. Dobbins  
 Caroline Hibbard  
 Margaret Steffensen  
 Helen Bess Cone  
 Harry & Marilyn Querry  
 Mrs. Anna Williams  
 Mrs. J. L. Fairchild  
 Louis & Marion Wetmore  
 Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Replogle  
 Mr. & Mrs. Romas Sparkis  
 Stephen P. Dickerson  
 Philip Hanegraaf, CCRPC  
 Dr. & Mrs. Edward Kolodziej  
 Illinois Historical Survey  
 Robert & Claudia Kirby



PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION  
 ASSOCIATION

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#### PACA Newsletter

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