



PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Box 2555, Station A, Champaign, Illinois 61820

"The Past Has A Future"

Volume 7

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Number 5

1988 HERITAGE AWARDS — CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

PACA is seeking nominations for the Fourth Annual Heritage Awards. The purpose of the Awards is to increase awareness of the important buildings in the community and to promote the interests of preservation and conservation. Any building or site in Champaign or surrounding counties which has architectural or historical significance for the community and/or which has undergone recent restoration or renovation is eligible. Nominations are open to the public and everyone is encouraged to participate. The following are descriptions of the 1987 winners:

Outstanding Heritage Contribution Award:
Ahrens-Divan-Wojner House (212 E. University, Champaign)

Built in 1893 by Henry Ahrens, this lovely residence is an example of the Queen Anne style of architecture. The architect for the house was F. Brown and the contractor was William Neal.

Now the home of Mrs. Divan and Dr. & Mrs. Victor Wojner, the house was beautifully restored in 1986. The exterior work included a victorian paint scheme, a new slate shingled roof, and restoration of the original iron fence; it also included a total energy upgrade.

Unique and of special importance to the house is the fact that the owners are only the second family to occupy the house and they are in possession of the original blue prints and handwritten workmen's change orders. All of this plus the care that went into the restoration combines to make the Ahrens-Divan-Wojner house especially noteworthy.

Landmark Heritage Award:

Gere-Meharry-Thompson House, (305 N. Second, Tolono)

The Gere-Meharry-Thompson house was built between 1870 and 1872 by George W. Gere. It was subsequently acquired by William Meharry, a prosperous farmer who endowed considerable lands and money to establish DePau University in Greencastle, Indiana. Mr. Meharry died in 1903 and the house was subsequently owned by the Dowell and Crackel families. It was



recently purchased by Laird Thompson.

The Gere-Meharry-Thompson house is an excellent example of Second Empire architecture, one of the few in this region and the only known example in Champaign County. Built of bricks from the Tolono brick yard, the walls are 13" thick. Among many of its features, the Gere-Meharry-Thompson house boasts of original gas chandeliers, 400 feet of wrought iron fencing, and marble fireplaces. The new owner hopes to restore the interior to its former victorian splendor.

Landscape Heritage Award:
Downtown Streetscape (Urbana)

This is the original downtown shopping/meeting area for the City of Urbana. Like many midwestern downtown areas, downtown Urbana had gradually been abandoned in favor of shopping malls, and many of the storefronts were vacant and in disrepair. Within the last ten years, however, this area has been revitalized. Through creative financial mechanisms, many storefronts have been renovated and the City is providing an attractive streetscape in which to conduct business. The



intent of the design was to make the downtown area more attractive for pedestrian use while maintaining good vehicular flow. The actual design elements have been selected in an attempt to blend the various architectural features of the downtown area.

Honorable Mention:

West Side Park (Champaign)

Bounded by State, University, Elm and Church streets, West Side Park is the oldest park in Champaign County, in fact it is the same age as Central Park in New York City. John P. White donated the ground in 1854 with the stipulation that it be used for a park. Originally used by nearby residents as a place to graze livestock, the park is now a lovely area, featuring sculpture groupings and a central fountain. The Champaign Park District takes great pride in maintaining this historic park.

Honorable Mention:

Bald Cypress Trees (Illini Union Area, University of Illinois)

Planted in the late 1890's, the trees are rapidly approaching 100 years of age. Both trees have lightning rods which were raised four years ago. An interesting point about the trees is that they both have iron chlorosis as a result of being planted on top of the lime and debris remaining after the construction of Harker Hall, one of the oldest buildings on the University of Illinois campus. Preservation of these two trees has remained of importance to the University.



Residential Heritage Award:

Davidson-Vennum-Kirby House (1110 Davidson Drive, Champaign)

This neo-colonial residence was begun in 1902 by James Davidson, a speculator in grain and salt from Mahomet, and completed in 1904. Mr. Davidson's speculations failed and he sold the mansion to Frank B. Vennum and his wife Sarah before ever occupying it. Mr. Vennum held banking interests throughout Champaign County and was instrumental in establishing the Illinois Title and Trust Co., Champaign County Abstract Co., and three banks. Later owners included Jack M. Shaffer, Richard Jones and currently, Dr. & Mrs. Robert Kirby.

The house is the focal point for Davidson Park, an area that was once a private development which features its own central heating plant, community stable and bell-

shaped private park. The original street names in the area were in honor of the Davidson's (James, Harriet, Sarah, and Elizabeth).

The exterior of the house includes stone lintels and ornamental stone work. The interior features oak woodwork and ornamental trim, ornamental brick work, leaded glass windows, and an especially distinctive entry with leaded glass windows and mosaic floor.

Honorable Mention:

Fisher-Melander House (710 W. University, Champaign)

Built before 1900, this house had numerous occupants before being recently purchased by Jeff Melander. Some of the previous residents include Mrs. David Fisher, R.A. Stipes, the McDermott family, and the Murphy family.

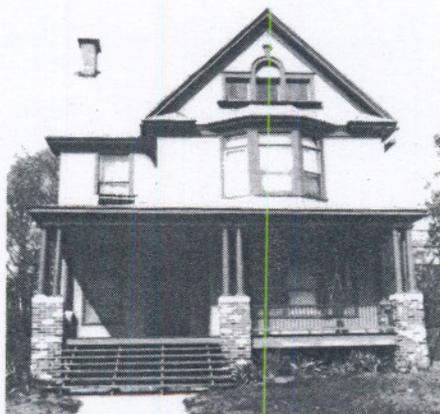
After purchasing the house, Mr. Melander set about the huge task of restoring and renovating this neglected house. This included installing a new furnace in the dead of winter and having the exterior stripped and repainted. During the course of the renovation a fireplace was uncovered. The house features restored interior woodwork and leaded glass windows.

Honorable Mention:

Somers-Macomber House (301 W. Oregon, Urbana)

Built in 1904, this was the home of Frank Somers, a prominent Urbana businessman who was an original partner of Somers-Barr Building Materials, now Central Materials. His name is stamped on many of the City's brick sidewalks.

The residence is typical of the type that a turn-of-the-century businessman would have had. The house features Doric columns, oak and yellow pine woodwork, beveled glass mirrors in bay windows, and leaded glass windows. It appears that the house was built of used lumber; some of the supporting beams show evidence of where door hinges once were. The current owner, Janet Macomber, takes great pride in continuing the restoration of her home.



Honorable Mention:

Rogowski-Kent House (604 E. Elm, Urbana)

Moving and restoring historic houses is

becoming a more widespread practice. One such successful move and restoration is the Rogowski-Kent house which was relocated in the fall of 1984 to make way for the expansion of the Urbana Library parking lot on Green Street. The owners coordinated the move, and were the primary contractors for the installation of the new mechanical systems, new basement, and new chimneys. The owners are continuing the laborous interior restoration and have begun a victorian paint scheme on the exterior.



Institutional Award:

Alpha Xi Delta Sorority (715 W. Michigan, Urbana)

A large and attractive Tudor Revival house, the Alpha Xi Delta sorority building was originally constructed as the residence of Mathew Wales Busey. The house was built in 1898 by Busey, who was the son of prominent Urbana resident Samuel Busey. The architect was Joseph Royer. Another Busey, Mathew's son Paul, built his home at 1301 South Busey, across the street from his father's house.

Alpha Xi Delta sorority has undertaken extensive restoration and renovation of this historic house. They have taken extra steps to keep the historic character of the building intact while meeting current code requirements. It is a very successful example of an institutional use of a residential building.

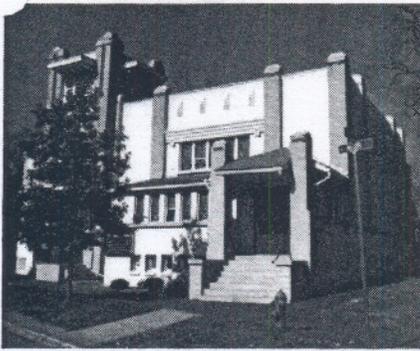


Honorable Mention:

Masonic Temple Building (115 W. Main, Urbana)

This building was constructed after the fire of 1871 and was part of the old Tiernan Block. The Masons purchased the building

for the then substantial sum of \$11,000 in 1889 and had their lodge on the top two floors. In 1914 the present terra cotta facade was placed on the building. It was renovated for offices and commercial space in 1985 by Steve Weidemier.



Honorable Mention:

Canaan Missionary Baptist Church (402 W. Main, Urbana)

Originally built by the First Christian Church, and later used by the Good

Shepherd Apostolic House of Prayer, this unique and charming building is now the home of the congregation of the Canaan Missionary Baptist Church.

The building's cornerstone was laid with a masonic ceremony in 1909; it was designed and constructed by local contractor Frank Somers who also produced the concrete building block. The cost was \$25,000.

The Canaan Missionary Baptist Church acquired the building in 1977 and has been doing an excellent job of preserving this architecturally unique Prairie style building.

Environmental Heritage Award:

South Broadway Avenue Rezoning Efforts (Urbana), West Main Street Rezoning Efforts (Urbana), Champaign County Rehabilitation Loan & Relocation Program

The above three programs were recipients of the 1987 Environment Award for their efforts at maintaining and preserving the nature of various areas in Urbana and Champaign.

Honorable Mention:

Prairie Restorations

In addition to the above recipients of the Environmental Heritage Award, the following received Honorable Mentions for their Prairie Restorations: Educational Resources in Environmental Science, Grand Prairie Friends of Illinois, Rantoul Public Library, Champaign County Forest Preserve, and the Urbana Park District.

Special Heritage Award

Lachlan F. Blair

A Special Heritage Award was presented to Lachlan F. Blair. Professor Blair is a member of the faculty of the University of Illinois Department of Urban and Regional Planning, past board member and president of PACA and a highly active and respected member of the national preservation community. He is a guiding force for preservation on the local, state and national levels and we are fortunate to have access to him and his knowledge.

(This article was prepared by Angela Finet.)

COTTAGE UPDATE

A significant benchmark has been reached at the Cottage construction site. Insulation was installed in early October and now the drywalling of the first floor is basically complete. Painters Local 363 has volunteered to tape, mud and prepare the walls for painting which can be done as soon as the heating system has been installed. The other mechanical systems are progressing with the electrical work finished on the first floor and the plumbing about half completed. However, that still

leaves quite a lot of work to be done by December 31.

The weather in October was not conducive for the exterior painting efforts, but we still plan to finish the exterior this fall. J & R Painting has volunteered to coordinate the painting and has been doing the preparatory work; Browns's Paint and Glass has donated the paint.

At their meeting in early October, the Urbana Park District Board agreed to proceed with the construction of the parking lot, to be located in the northwest corner of the park, and the sidewalks to the building.

A handicap ramp will be located to the east of the front porch and a ramp will also be provided for the basement rear entry. Next spring, site development and landscaping will take place, aided by a \$5,000 grant from CCDC.

PACA sent out a second fund raising mailing in October and about \$1,000 has been received thus far. As with all non-profit efforts, funds are tight so any and all donations are welcome. If you haven't sent in your contribution yet, please do; if you already have, thank you, it's being put to good use.

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 _____

RENEWAL

NEW MEMBERSHIP

ADDRESS _____
Street State Zip

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



NEW BOARD MEMBER APPOINTED

At the September Board of Directors meeting, Angela Graham Finet regretfully submitted her resignation from the Board due to a relocation to Cleveland. PACA will miss Angela for she has been a dedicated volunteer and a good spokesperson for community preservation issues.

In October, the Board appointed Henry (Hank) Kaczmarek to fulfill the unexpired term of Finet. Hank is a dedicated preservationist who helped lead the fight to save the old Mahomet School building. He is currently spending countless hours at the Cottage where he has been in charge of the telephone, computer, and security system installation, while at the same time devoting hours to general construction. In his "spare" time, Hank and his wife are renovating a historic farm house near Mahomet; his "real" job is assistant chief engineer for WICD, Channel 15.



Preservation is taking care of America.

V.I.P.'s

Gene Jacobs
Dick Cannon
Bob Swisher

NEW & RENEWING MEMBERS

Mr. & Mrs. Walter Lembke
Sharon Irish
Mr. & Mrs. James Dobrovlny
Mr. & Mrs. F. Kruidenier
Ms. Cathy Colbery Inman
Mr. & Mrs. John Deppe

Kennedy Hutson
Barbara Rogowski-Kent
Mr. & Mrs. Norman Baxley
Bernadine Stake
Dr. & Mrs. Rex Kummer
Jerry O'Bryan
Mike & Bonnie Irwin

Mr. & Mrs. Donald Miller
Rachel Foster
Trent Shepard
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Mr. & Mrs. Reid T. Milner

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

