



# PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Box 2555, Station A, Champaign, Illinois 61820

"The Past Has A Future"

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## HISTORIC COHEN HOUSE AVAILABLE FOR RELOCATION

The First Presbyterian Church of Urbana is offering the historic Cohen family home for relocation. A parking lot is planned for the site, located at 511 West Elm, Urbana, across Orchard Street from the church. In granting the necessary variance for the parking lot, the Urbana Zoning Board of Appeals requested that the church give consideration and adequate time to allow the building to be relocated. In fact, the church had already begun a quiet "word of mouth" solicitation for parties interested in relocating the building.

The Cohen House was built by Addie B. and Nathan H. Cohen in 1890 and had been in the same family until their son, Sol Cohen, passed away on September 29. The house is an 1890 "original" with a fairly elaborate unpainted Victorian interior including pocket doors, beveled mirrored fireplace, and "Eastlake"-style staircase. Many of the original gas/electrical light fixtures remain as do some of the kitchen and bathroom fixtures. The house has six bedrooms and is approximately 2600 square feet.

The Cohen family was prominent in Urbana history. Nat Cohen built the "Nat Cohen" building (located at Race & Main in Urbana) in 1882 to house his successful cigar manufacturing business, the building was enlarged in 1890. Mr. Cohen was prominent in Republican politics and was rewarded with a seat on the state fish commission as well as with the honorary title of "Colonel". Addie Cohen was the daughter of a pioneer Urbana family, the Bernsteins, who operated the "Great Western Clothing Store" in Champaign (located on the site of the Lincoln Building). Both she and her husband were very musically inclined and their home was a mecca for musical and conversational gatherings.

Their sons, Julius and Sol, were nationally known musicians. Julius accepted a two-year appointment at the Paris Academy of Music and Sol played the violin in a number of prestigious orchestras including the Cincinnati Symphony and the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. Numerous awards were bestowed upon both individuals during their lifetimes.

The First Presbyterian Church and PACA are looking for individuals willing to relocate the house to a new site by March, 1989. Some preliminary work preparatory to moving the house has been done and is available to interested parties. For further information contact the church at 367-8357 or PACA at 328-7222. If in the event the house cannot be relocated, the interior will be documented and a salvage sale arranged.



## THE RIGHT TO OWN PROPERTY... AND AMERICAN PRIDE

By Ryan Hedgepeth

The right to own property has contributed to American's pride in their heritage ever since the early colonists split logs for their cabins, sowed their beans, and shucked their corn. Many of the original settlers came to the New World because they wanted the freedom to possess their own plot of land, and not simply work on a wealthy lord's land. When they declared their political independence, they established definite rights of property ownership.

The right to own property enabled people to pass on their property, especially land, to the next generation. With each generation, individual and community pride in

their heritage increased as a sense of identity solidified and made *Americans* from the melting pot of diverse peoples and cultures.

Because land is a private and personal possession, landowners feel more personal responsibility and more incentive to maintain and improve their property. Landowners take pride in the work that they put into their property, especially into their homes, which are the most visible signs of their efforts. If you see people washing windows, mowing lawns, tending gardens, trimming bushes, framing a porch, or pouring a patio, they are more likely to be owners than renters.

The freedom to own property means that housebuilders are also free to choose the design they want according to local zoning

regulations and subdivision covenants. There is no law dictating style. A drive around the Champaign-Urbana area, for example, will reveal a diversity of architecture ranging from Victorian Gothic and American traditional to Western ranch and contemporary solar. The styles are enhanced by green lawns, decorative fences, rock gardens, trees, shrubs, and flowers. Ownership seems to stimulate improvement and beautification.

As the freedom to own property is passed from generation to generation, a sense of personal identity is established in each landowner. Each consecutive owner has a little more history and past work to protect, but also something of himself to add. For instance, I have a neighbor whose personal conservatism is reflected in the



square simplicity of his house as well as in the gray-brown earth tones of the color he chose to paint it. Another neighbor who is very sociable has a bright green house with many windows that let in the sunshine and give him a view of the outside world and its inhabitants. He has also added a swimming pool which is the scene for many summer parties.

The right to own property also contributes to a community's pride in its heritage. If most landowners take pride in their own property and heritage, they naturally expect their neighbors to do likewise. Thus, as the community develops a historic identity, the members of the community take pride in maintaining and preserving it.

In Champaign County, we see this in homes and buildings marked as historic sites such as the Greek Revival Cottage and the Jacques House in Urbana, or the Wilbur Mansion, the Amtrak Station, and the Cattle Bank where Lincoln did business in Champaign. When a community develops pride in its historical identity, it also becomes more devoted to defending and protecting the feelings of security and stability that go along with a rich heritage.

Property owners' interest in current community affairs develops as issues emerge which might affect their property's appearance and value. They take an active role in the government process when a road-widening threatens to destroy beautiful old trees, when a school closing is projected, or when re-zoning is projected.

The right to own property means that Americans are able to fulfill their ambitions, express their identity, make their individual lives more secure, and establish stability for their communities. This right contributes to Americans' pride in their heritage by creating something for them and their future generations to be proud of and to protect. For heritage is that most precious bit of the past in our future; it is what we decide to be the precious bit of present for the future.

*Reprinted from The Illinois Realtor® September 1988.*

*Ryan Hedgepeth is an 11th grade student at University High School in Urbana. His essay is the first place winner in the American Home Week essay contest sponsored by the Champaign County Board of Realtors®.*

*Ryan's essay was also recently awarded 3rd place in the National Association of Realtors® American Home Week essay contest.*

*The official title of the essay is "How the Right to Own Property Contributes to Americans' Pride in Their Heritage."*

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Now that the Greek Revival Cottage project is completed, the salvage opera-

tion going strong, and the office organized, it's time to return to a fundamental part of the PACA organization - Membership solicitation and retention. A group is only as strong and vibrant as its members and while PACA is a going, recognized concern, it could be stronger and better. There is a large preservation constituency in the community, as attested to by the interest in both cities' Interim Development Ordinances, real estate demand for older houses and the strong sales at our salvage warehouse. But PACA has probably only tapped a small portion of that constituency for membership.

The Preservation and Conservation Association of Champaign County is committed to preserving the character and vitality provided to Champaign County by its historic architecture. PACA is concerned about the eroding of the area's sense of place by the gradual elimination of the County's historically and architecturally significant buildings. Each town and community has its own unique character and individuality which is expressed, in one way, through its built environment. PACA is dedicated to preserving what is unique and important to the history and character of Champaign County.

PACA President Joan Severns recently sent out a request to all past members asking them to renew their commitment to preservation and PACA. Letters have also been sent to numerous individuals who have been receiving complementary issues of the newsletter. Please take the time to respond to this solicitation and support the mission of PACA.

PACA would also be very interested in the names of your friends or acquaintances that might be interested in hearing more about PACA. Complementary issues of the newsletter will be sent to them so that they too can be informed of preservation happenings in the area. Call 328-PACA and let us add them to our mailing list.

## FOR SALE



Italianate-styled marble fireplace; 68" long, 12" wide; marble opening 38½" wide, 35" high; overall height 45¾"; hearth 57½" x 16"; grate unit 31" across, 20½" opening; 32¾" high. \$1900. Contact PACA if interested.

## FOCUS ON: RESEARCHING THE HISTORY OF YOUR CHAMPAIGN COUNTY HOME

The Champaign County Historical Archives has numerous books, maps, and other materials that could be helpful to you in determining the history of your home. For instance, if your home is a historic landmark, or an example of interesting architecture, it might already have been researched by students of historic preservation at the University of Illinois. In addition, the Preservation and Conservation Association (PACA) has completed architectural surveys of selected areas of Urbana and Champaign, and placed copies in the Archives.

The Archives also houses an extensive photograph collection, including pictures of many Champaign County buildings. Clippings of newspaper articles about individual homes and their occupants are located in the Vertical Files. Ask the librarian to check the files for photographs, articles, or previous research that may have been done on your house. Feel free to make copies of anything you find.

## Title Abstracts

If you have the title abstract for your property, you already possess a great deal of information about your home. The abstract contains the record of all of the transactions involving your land since the U.S. government claimed ownership generations ago. It will not tell you when your house was built, but does contain clues that are helpful. For example, a sudden increase in the value of the property, or a substantial mortgage taken out, often indicates that a house is being built or was built since the last transaction.

## Land Records

If you do not have the abstract, the same information can be obtained at the Champaign County Recorder's Office at the Courthouse in Urbana, open Monday through Friday from 8 to 4:30 p.m. Microfilm copies of the older records (generally pre-1900) are available in the Archives. The information found through these land records is scattered; therefore, you must go through the individual records from buyer (grantee) to seller (grantor) to buyer, etc., back to the first transaction involving the government. Following the chain of title and reading the legal descriptions for the land can be the most difficult parts of your search, so don't hesitate to ask for help. The Archives also has copies of the original Illinois public domain land records, the earliest transactions available for Champaign County.



## City and County Directories

City and county directories can be of considerable help in documenting the history of your home, particularly if you live in Urbana or Champaign. The earliest Champaign County directory is dated 1870. These directories are housed in chronological order at the Archives under the call number, A/ILLINOIS/(Champ)/DIR. Starting with the most recent directory, look through them to see the changes in occupancy for your address. When you find the first mention of your address, compare that to the date(s) in the land records that seemed most likely for construction of your house. If the dates are the same, or close, this may indicate when the house was built.

## Maps and Atlases

Maps and atlases can also be a useful source of information about land ownership. Champaign County residents are fortunate in having several maps that indicate the placement of individual structures on the land, and three even feature pictures of individual homes as well. Maps in the Archives that may be helpful include the following:

1858 Bowman Map of Urbana-West

Urbana (Champaign)

1863 Bowman Map of Champaign County

1876 Map of Champaign County

"Birdseye" views of Champaign and Urbana

*Combined Atlases of Champaign County, Illinois, 1893, 1913, and 1929*

*This is Champaign County, Illinois, 1954*  
aerial views

Aerial Maps of Champaign County, ca 1960s-1980s, organized by township and updated as the specific area is developed

Plat Maps of Champaign County, various years

## Sanborn Maps

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps are excellent sources of information about individual structures. They were originally compiled for fire insurance purposes, and show all of the streets, individual lots, and buildings standing during a particular year. Microfilm copies of Sanborn Maps are available through interlibrary loan at the Archives. In addition, the Map and Geography Library, #418 Library at the University of Illinois, has an extensive collection of Sanborn Maps, including the following for towns in Champaign County:

Broadlands - 1914

City of Champaign - 1887, 1892, 1897, 1902, \*1909, 1915, 1924, 1929, 1941, 1949, 1959, 1962, and 1963

Dewey - 1925

Fisher - 1899, 1906, 1911, 1932

Gifford - 1929

Homer - 1893, 1898, 1909, 1928

Ogden - 1914, 1928

Rantoul - 1893, 1899, 1902, 1910, 1924

St. Joseph - 1898, 1909, 1928

Sidney - 1898, 1909, 1928

Tolono - 1893, 1898, 1907, 1929

City of Urbana - 1887, 1892, 1897, 1902, 1909, 1915, \*1923, 1929, 1940, 1951, 1959

Those entries preceded with an \* are also owned by the Archives. The Map Library phone number is 333-0827. Hours are weekdays from 9 to 5, with additional nightly and weekend hours.

## Biographical Sources

By now, you are familiar with some of the individuals who have lived in your house, and might want to learn more about them, particularly those most likely to have built it. The Archives has several books containing information about individuals who have lived in Champaign County:

Brink-McDonough's *History of*

*Champaign County, 1878*

*Early History and Pioneers of Champaign County, 1886*

*Portrait and Biographical Album of Champaign County, 1887*

*Biographical Record of Champaign County, 1900*

Cunningham's *History of Champaign County, 1905*

Stewart's *History of Champaign County, 1918*

If you are very fortunate, you might find a picture of your house and references to it in a biographical sketch of the original owner.

## Champaign County Records

As the official repository for Champaign County, the Archives houses numerous records, dating from 1833, that pertain to residents of the county. The *Surname Index* to these records contains over 300,000 cards with information about the following:

Births, Marriages, and Deaths

Obituaries and Estate records

Chancery Court cases, and various other records

By checking the *Surname Index*, you might find a reference to a will, a land partition suit, or other record that affected the history of your house. Simply knowing more about the people who have lived there can be interesting.

## Oral History

If possible, talk to individuals or their descendants who have lived in your house. They can probably tell you a great deal about it. Likewise, talk to your neighbors. They might remember when changes or additions were made to the house, and what it looked like previously. These in-

dividuals could also be a source for photographs of the house or its previous occupants.

## Newspapers

Newspapers have been outspoken "boosters" of the community over the years, and as such could possibly provide interesting information about your home and the individual(s) who built it. For example, the *Champaign Daily News* had a regular column, "Building News", during the summer months (construction season). It listed houses or other projects under construction, their locations, and sometimes listed an architect or contractor for the job. To get the most out of local newspapers, you should have a pretty good idea of the time period in which to search; otherwise, you could spend hours searching without results. Microfilm copies of Champaign County newspapers dating from 1856 are housed in the Archives.

## What Style Is It?

Your home, like many others in the Midwest, is probably a combination of architectural styles. For help in determining its dominant style(s), look at a book on the subject. The *Field Guide to American Houses* by Virginia and Lee McAlester (call number 728/MCA) is highly recommended because it is factual, yet simple for anyone to use. It is located, along with other books about houses and architectural styles, in the 720s in the Adult Department of the Urbana Free Library. If you have questions at any time during your search, ask the librarians for help. Finally, after you have completed your research, and know all there is to know about your home and its former occupants, please consider making a copy of your findings available to the Archives for future researchers.

Champaign County Historical Archives

201 S. Race St.

Urbana, IL 61801

(217) 367-4025

Hours: Monday through Saturday 9-4,  
Sunday 1-5

Contributed by Francis Roehm.





## THANK YOU...THANK YOU...THANK YOU

The Preservation Association would like to thank once again all of the area businesses and organizations that responded so readily to the call for materials, supplies and funds for the Greek Revival Cottage renovation project. Please remember to patronize these businesses and thank them for their support. Their help was greatly appreciated!

Champaign County Development Council (CCDC)

J & R Painting

News Gazette

Busey Bank

Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois

Henigman Oil

Washington-Hill Neighborhood Association  
Ray's Heating & Air Conditioning Company  
Minuteman of Urbana  
Hillcrest Lumber  
R. Cory Design and Construction  
Mutual Home & Savings Association  
Olsen-Lytle Architects  
Devonshire Realty  
Cunnington Development  
American National Bank  
Rogers Supply Company  
A-1 Alarm Service  
Tepper's Electric  
Champaign Telephone Company  
American Institute of Architects,  
Champaign-Urbana Section,  
Central Illinois Chapter  
Caradco Corporation  
Ace Hardware

Cotter Glass Company  
Downtown Electric  
Brunkow Electric Company  
Christie Clinic  
Alexander Lumber Company  
Kemper Company  
Fans, Lamps & Shades  
Sullivan Plumbing  
High & Dry Neighborhood Association  
K. Reinke, Jr. & Company  
Smalley's Woodworking  
Urethane Insulators, Inc.  
Helen Bess Cone Interiors  
Ron's Locksmith  
Abana Press  
Kinkos  
Tri-Color Locksmiths  
Wickersheimer Engineers  
Fasprint  
Brown's Paint & Glass  
Armstrong Lumber  
Design, Build Service  
Thompson Lumber Company  
Tile Specialists, Inc.  
G. T. Hardwick Architects  
Marvin Manship  
Painters Local 363  
Kaczmariski Supply  
Mac's Electric  
Jack Garner Electric  
Morgan Distributing MAB Paints  
Gary Ross Disposal WICD, Channel 15  
Bacon & Van Buskirk  
Hart & Schroeder Mechanical  
Contractors, Inc.

### 1989 HERITAGE AWARDS — CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

There is still time for **you** to nominate a worthy building or site for a Heritage Award. 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. Call 328-PACA to place your building in nomination.

### SOURCE NOTEBOOK

At the request of the Old House Networkers, PACA will publish sources for information on various products or services as they become available.

#### Property Tax Homestead Provisions:

The Illinois Revised Statutes provide for a Homestead Improvement Exemption of owner-occupied residences. This exemption permits the homeowner to delay paying taxes on structural improvements to her/his existing residence, which result in an increase in property value by up to \$30,000 full value or \$10,000 assessed value. The exemption applies for a four year period, beginning with the initial application year.

Cancelled checks, receipts or contracts are required to assist in determining eligibility for this exemption. You may apply for the exemption at your township assessor's office or at the Champaign County Board of Review, Courthouse Annex, 201 E. Main, Urbana (384-3760).

**V.I.P.'s**  
Bob Swisher  
Hank  
Kaczmariski  
Rex Kummer  
Mark Replogle  
Bill Bogner  
Stuart Muir

### NEW & RENEWING MEMBERS

Diane Meisenhelter  
Rebecca Adam &  
Tim LaTourette  
Dana Pratt  
Gary Henigman

PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION  
ASSOCIATION

Box 2555, Station A, Champaign, Illinois 61820

#### PACA Newsletter

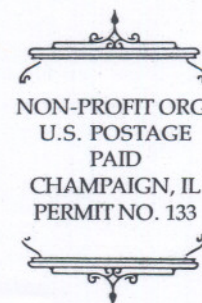
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Conservation Association

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**Vice President:** Kennedy Hutson

**Secretary/Treasurer:** Patricia Jensen

**Exec. Director:** Karen Lang Kummer  
328-PACA



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