Focus On: The Farm House
(Mumford House)

The Farm House, oldest building on the campus of the University of Illinois, is associated with the founding of the University. As part of the University's early agricultural curriculum, the Farm House was conceived and designed as a model farmhouse on the Experimental farm. The Farm House has strong ties to two important administrators who played key roles in the establishment of the University, John Milton Gregory (1822-1898) and Thomas Jonathan Burrill (1839-1916). Gregory is recognized as being largely responsible for developing the academic policy of the Illinois Industrial University, one of the newly-formed land-grant colleges in the Midwest. Gregory played a formative role in the founding and early development of the University. He wanted to give to the state "a true University, a center of learning and of education of the highest grade. . ." Thomas J. Burrill, the Farm House's first occupant, lived there from 1870 to 1877. Burrill contributed to scientific advancements in plant pathology through his research at the University.

The architectural significance of the Farm House lies in the fact that it is an example of the nineteenth century practice of designing architecture from pattern-books. The Farm House's simplified, Victorian Gothic design shows the influence of Andrew Jackson Downing, an influential architectural theorist and planner. Downing wrote about the need for an appropriate architectural style for domestic life. The architectural books of A. J. Downing helped to create a distinct aesthetic for rural buildings.

The Experimental farm lay about a half mile south of the University Building. In 1870 the Farm House was built for the total cost of $2,500. The Farm House's early appearance was the result of Gregory's familiarity with contemporary theories of residential design. The minutes of the Executive meeting of the Board on April 6, 1870 state:

"A plan, presented by the Regent, for a house on the experimental farm, was adopted, except it was ordered to be built two stories high, with such changes in roof as the change in plan might require."

Since the catalogue of the University library in the same year lists only five works pertaining to architecture, all by A. J. Downing, it is likely that Gregory combined several of Downing's designs to make the Farm House.

Downing recognized the truth that a house should be in keeping with the scenery by which it is surrounded. One would build a very different style of house among the rugged hills of New England from that which would be appropriate on the prairies of Illinois. The house here shown is not so marked in style as to demand surroundings of any extreme type.

The Farm House displayed traits that Downing valued: broad proportions, a large and simple porch, a high roof line broken by chimneys, and an absence of borrowed ornament.

The average farmhouse was not designed to be beautiful or picturesque. As the family grew, additional rooms would be added on without aesthetic concern, creating a telescoping effect on some houses. Most farmers were not trained in or did not care for aesthetics. Gregory sought to change this attitude with the University's educational program and, by example, with the Farm House. A course in rural architecture was part of the curriculum as early as 1869.

Although the Farm House was not an ornate example of the Victorian Gothic style,
its design reflected Gregory's concern that the rural dwelling should be aesthetically pleasing as well as functional. The Farm House and Experimental farm were considered to be models for the agricultural and educational community.

The Farm House's location and design reflects the needs and values of the nineteenth century farmer, according to Samuel D. Backus' report for the U.S. Patent Office. It was believed that heavy vapors gathered by their own gravitational force over low-lying areas, creating an unhealthy atmosphere. Therefore, a good house was to be built on rising ground to have wholesome air and to keep the area near the house dry. The Farm House had other advantages cited by Backus: a main entrance that opened into a hall, large windows, a veranda, a convenient plan with a large kitchen centrally located, many closets (especially for the woman's convenience), and an office for reading and for the transaction of farm business. Backus also cites the aesthetic factors of formal regularity, gracefulfulness, and lack of superfluous ornament as being aspects of a well-designed farmhouse. He cautions that a farmer should build according to his particular needs. He should not build a farmhouse to look like the house of a lawyer, because each respective house serves a different function.

The Farm House's design was widely disseminated through the University's first several catalogues. These circulars were distributed all over the state to advertise the University and to encourage even the poorest student to attend. They were part of Gregory's campaign to recruit students to the University.

The Illinois Industrial University developed a singular curriculum under the direction of John Gregory, a combination of the technical and liberal arts, one which it maintains today. Gregory gained first-hand knowledge of the working of a new land-grant college, the Michigan State Agricultural College, when he served as superintendent of public instruction in Michigan, from 1859-64. Following his service in this elected position, he was president of Kalamazoo College, a private, liberal arts college. Experience, with these institutions helped Gregory, with the Committee on Course of Study and Faculty, forge a new institution for higher learning. At that time there was doubt that farming could be made scientific or mechanic arts a learned profession. Many people wondered if the farmer and worker even needed an education. Despite doubts and disapproval for his ideas, Gregory persisted in his efforts to bring culture to the Illinois prairies. In his inaugural address of the University he stated: "We have an ambition to send forth to the great industries of the world, not men who are puffed up by some little smattering of science, but clear-headed, broad-breasted scholars, men of fully developed mind-fit leaders of the those great productive arts by which the world's civilization is fed and nourished."

The Illinois Industrial University's broad conception was to proceed on two assumptions: first, that the agricultural and mechanical arts were most important in their dignity, importance and scientific scope; and second, that the mastery of those arts required an education as systematic and complete as that of the learned professions, but of a different kind. Gregory supported the liberal and technological education of the industrial classes. However, he did not want the University to be a mere trade school. Consequently, the University offered courses in agriculture, horticulture and landscape gardening through the Agriculture Department, courses in civil engineering, mining and metallurgy through the Polytechnic Department, courses in mathematics, natural history, chemistry, ancient and modern languages, English, history and social sciences through the Department of General Science and Literature. Thus, a student of the Illinois Industrial University could expect to receive a liberal and practical education, something unique among higher educational institutions in existence at the time.

Another significant aspect of the Farm House is its role in Gregory's agricultural innovations. In 1869, Gregory traveled to Europe to witness the educational philosophy and methods of colleges in England, France, Germany, Switzerland, Russia, and Belgium. He inspected the colleges of those countries in which scientific techniques were applied to agriculture. In England Gregory saw a model experimental farm at the Royal Agricultural College. In Germany he saw the highest level of scientific agriculture, a result of the amalgamation of agricultural and polytechnical schools with the universities. The Germans had higher admission standards and provided more general and liberal study in their higher education curriculum. Gregory saw his educational ideas reinforced in Germany.

Upon his return, Gregory set out to convince the farmers of Illinois to learn from what he had witnessed from leading European agriculturists. He chose to work harder to expand the interest and enrollment in the Agriculture Department. He laid the groundwork for scientific agriculture with several measures: requests of funds for experimental farming, readjusting the operation of University lands, and setting up lecture series to bring new knowledge to the practicing farmers of the state. Thomas J. Burrill's tenure with the University as teacher, scientist, and administrator was part of Gregory's agricultural development.

The first resident of the Farm House was Burrill, who lived there from 1870-77. Burrill became assistant professor of natural history in 1866. The next year he started contributing articles to the Illinois Horticultural Society's publications. Burrill wrote on diverse subjects in horticulture, botany, and pathology, being one of the first of the modern microscopists. He devoted nearly fifty years of energetic service to the Illinois Horticultural Society and the Agricultural School of the University. His pathological investigations included important crop diseases such as ear rot of corn, potato scab, blackberry rust and bitter rot of apples. He became famous for his work with the fire blight bacterium disease of pear trees.

John Gregory took an active interest in every aspect of the university. He initiated the early physical development of the campus, including the construction of the Farm House. As first Regent of the University, he was fully committed to launching this new institution, the land-grant college, in Illinois. Due to Gregory's enlightened ideas about education, his hard work, and his tenacity in the face of opposition, the University of Illinois lead the way in developing an outstanding public institution that offered a technical as well as liberal education. The Farm House, one of the earliest buildings of the Illinois Industrial University, is one of the few extant symbols of Gregory's administration and the University's inauguration; as such, it deserves to be preserved.

This article is excerpted from the recently passed National Register nomination prepared by Lisa Lipinski.

Preservation Legislation
Protecting Illinois' Historic Resources Signed

Preservation legislation recognizing the state's leadership role in protecting, preserving, and restoring Illinois' historic resources was signed into law by Governor James R. Thompson in September.

Senate Bill 467 (Public Act 86-707) now requires projects that involve state funds or licensing to be reviewed by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (HPA) to minimize the impact on places of historic,
architectural or archaeological significance. The mining industry is exempt from the review process. Prior to the passage of this bill, only federally funded or licenses projects were required to submit to an environmental review, known as a Federal 106 Review.

“This legislation establishes the State of Illinois, through its many departments and agencies, as a leader in the protection and preservation of our valuable historical and cultural resources,” said Thompson. “It is hoped that others will follow our lead and work together, both public and private sectors, will work toward the continued preservation of Illinois’ heritage.”

The law establishes procedures for examining project alternatives to help protect irreplaceable historic resources through consultation and review by the HPA. For example, consideration can mean that a historic building being rehabilitated with state funds would be treated in an architecturally sensitive manner or that important archaeological data is recovered from the ground rather than being destroyed by a public highway.

“The Historic Preservation Agency will work to ensure that the state historic resources review process is initiated and completed during the planning stage of each project,” noted Dr. Michael J. Devine, HPA Director. “We hope to avoid all unnecessary delays and will work to expedite the process for all involved.”

This legislation will have a direct impact on preservation activities in Champaign-Urbana since the University of Illinois is under its jurisdiction. All building activity affecting historic buildings or sites under the University will be reviewed by the HPA. Public input into the review process is encouraged and PACA is expecting to become actively involved. The fate of the newly National Register-listed Mumford House will be among the first cases to come under review. The University is planning a new Architecture building in the vicinity of the house, but these plans will be reviewed for their impact on the Mumford House, and hopefully, the House and its site, will be preserved.

In addition, Senate Bill 467 increases penalties for vandals, thieves and others who loot publicly owned archaeological and paleontological sites and establishes systematic procedures for conducting archaeological and paleontological research on state land.

The penalty for destroying or vandalizing archaeological or paleontological sites or public lands has been increased to a Class A misdemeanor with a fine of up to $5,000. If a human burial is disturbed, the penalty increases to a Class 4 felony, which can mean fines of up to $10,000 and one to three years in prison. The Act also allows the HPA to offer rewards of up to $2,000 for information leading to the apprehension of looters.

The Act further designates the Illinois State Museum as the official repository for artifacts from public lands, protects archaeological and paleontological resources at the local government and university level, and designates the fossil, Tulimonstrum gregarium, as the official state fossil of the State of Illinois.

Effective January 1, 1990, SB 467 was sponsored by Senator Judy Baar Topinka and Representative Jack Kubick, both of North Riverside.

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**Membership Application P.A.C.A.**

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NAME __________________________
ADDRESS __________________________
Street __________________________
City __________________________ State ________ Zip ________

Make checks payable to: PACA, Box 2555, Station A, Champaign, Illinois 61825

Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.
Annual Membership Meeting

The Board of Directors is in the midst of planning for the 1990 annual membership meeting to be held on a Sunday afternoon in mid-February. Plans are underway to hold the meeting at a historic campus sorority house near the Quadrangle with a program on the history and significance of the UI Observatory. A tour of the newly designated National Historic Landmark will follow the meeting. Details as to the exact time and place will be sent to members and guests next year.

Volunteers in Preservation

Steve Whitsitt
The following individuals were PACA's representatives on the recent WILL-TV 12 telethon. They answered pledge calls during This Old House and the following programs. "Hats off" to them.

Kennedy Hutson, Karen Kummer
Ann Boswell, Hank Kaczmarski
David Garner, Pat Jensen
Alice Edwards, Joan Severns
Steve Roemmel, Rose Geier-Wilson
Kathy Roemmel, Mark Replogle

New and Renewing Members

Thanks to all of you, PACA's membership level has reached a new high! And, even more significantly, only 15 members from 1988 failed to renew for 1989. PACA hopes to continue this trend and reach new membership highs in the new decade.

Charles Pipal
Barbara & Jeff Rogowski-Kent
Gary Henigman Family
Kennedy Hutson
James Dobrovolsky
Mary Beth & Bill Bogner
Meg Gardiner
Dave Ellis
Gary Brummet & Donna Juhl
Mr. & Mrs. Roger Yarbrough
Alice Edwards

Salvage Donations

Wes Gillespie
Daniel Lepetit

1990 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.