

# PRESERVATION MATTERS

Spring, 2015  
Volume 35 Number 2

PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

## Lincoln Hall War Memorial Fountain and Courtyard

by Rich Cahill

Recently PACA nominated the war memorial fountain and memorial courtyard, formerly located in the south courtyard of Lincoln Hall on the University of Illinois campus, to be included in the 2015 Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois. Unfortunately Landmarks Illinois chose not to include it on their list, however PACA felt that raising public awareness to the state level was critical in our quest to seek potential funding to restore and re-erect the memorial. The following article is taken from that nomination.

The courtyard and fountain was designed and built by Donald Molnar and was located in the south courtyard of Lincoln Hall outside of the Lincoln Hall Theater. It was dedicated in 1969 as part of a memorial garden and the project was funded by the University of Illinois classes of 1918 and 1919 in memory of classmates who lost their lives in World War I.

The inscription on the nearby plaque read:

### *Memorial Court.*

*Development of this court was provided by gifts of members of the classes of 1918 and 1919 to honor Illini who lost their lives in World War I. Dedicated 1969.*

*Co-chairmen 1918 memorial committee: George S. Halas, Alexander T. Bush. President, class of 1919 Walter B. Remley. Chairman 1919 memorial committee Clifton E. Barnes.*

The fountain is a rectangular sand cast concrete slab decorated with relief numbers, weaponry, plowshares, and metal helmets embedded in the concrete. The



Lincoln Hall courtyard, 1973

helmets served as basins for the fountain outlets. A semi-circular concrete basin served as the base. It is approximately 117" x 54" x 8" with a base approximately 4" high and 70' diameter.

According to a June 13, 1969 letter from designer Donald Molnar, "The year softly stated at the bottom is symbolic of the relative lack of disturbance as the war began. The 1918-19 years above it and assembled in reverse to symbolize the disruption of these two classes due to the war. The dates above World War I are likewise symbolically confused to indicate the impact on succeeding classes." These numbers reflect World War II, the Korean Conflict, and the then in-progress Vietnam War, in computerized numbers suggesting how impersonal war had become in the 20th century. In ad-

dition to the obvious guns and swords, the monument contains plowshares to reflect the Midwest farm lands from which many of the class members came.

Don Molnar was born in Springfield, Illinois in 1938. He attended the University of Illinois, getting a BA degree in Landscape Architecture in 1960 and a master's degree in Landscape Architecture in 1964. He was a site Planner for the University of Illinois from 1964 to 1981. He left the UI for Purdue University in 1981 where he was Professor and Chairman of the Landscape Architecture Department until his retirement in 2001. Among his other notable projects at the UI were: Rehabilitation-Education Center, Morrill-Burrill Halls pedestrian corridor, and Sherman Residence Hall. He also helped design the Capron Me-



Sept. 2014 *News Gazette* photo.

morial in West Side Park Champaign. He currently is living in Urbana, Illinois.

The fountain's was considered as a significant sculpture by the Smithsonian American Art Museum (Control IAS IL000394). The memorial garden and fountain was mentioned in the LPCI listing of Lincoln Hall as endangered in their 2005 listing of the ten most endangered historic places in Illinois.

In 2009, during the renovation of Lincoln Hall the memorial courtyard was demolished and the fountain was put in storage. The fate of the plaque is unknown. There were no plans made during the renovation of Lincoln Hall to return the fountain to its original location. Currently there are no plans to place the fountain anywhere on the university campus. What does this say about how the University of Illinois treats a gift of these classes of alumni or those in the future?

Permanent removal of this historic fountain and courtyard is a poor representation of this university's dedication to the memory of the fallen and the trials and horrors of war itself – lest we forget entirely our history, whether tragic or triumphant.

*The Champaign News Gazette* published (7/21/2009) an article written by Tom Kacich entitled "Might memorial get lost in shuffle? It's not known what will happen to obscure courtyard at Lincoln Hall after reconstruction." A second article written by Dan Corkery (9/29/2014) entitled "A story to Tell. War memorial, which remains in storage, in need of a new home." The online version of this story includes a video interview with sculpture creator Don Molnar. A *News Gazette* editorial (10/7/2014) was entitled "New home needed. No one will benefit from the story told by a World War memorial until it's taken out of storage".

This is one of the many responses to the (9/29/14) article: *"This is an extremely interesting piece. I am fascinated, moved and informed by the sculptor's discussion of his work. His artistic vision, the historical representation, the artistic and artisan work, and simply the University of Illinois history of it, both from donors and the reasons for the donation - and, not least of it, the 'beauty' of this piece - all make this a most worthwhile focus of attention. It is simultaneously anti-war and yet honoring and respectful of the losses brought by war and very poignant. I really appreciated*

*this video of the artist discussing details of his concept - the broken number, for example. This work of art, this memorial, this donor-provided creation needs to be out of storage and on display! Maybe the artist has ideas about where he would like it displayed. It needs to be back on display and functioning with water as tears and perhaps with the option of this video or some other descriptive, explanatory material with it.*

*The artist's explanation of his work added greatly to appreciation of it as a work of art. Unsettling to realize, too, that since 1968, the last date incorporated into this work, the U.S. has engaged in endless war. Thank you, News Gazette, for this article and video."*

The memorial fountain should be returned to the south courtyard of Lincoln Hall on the University of Illinois campus. The renovated courtyards are now visible and are easy to use by students as quiet study areas. On September 9, 2013 Sgt. Shawna Morrison's Memorial in the north courtyard of Lincoln Hall at the University of Illinois was dedicated. Morrison was an Illinois National Guardsman killed from a mortar attack Sept 5, 2004 in Iraq while deployed with the 1544th Transportation Company in Paris, IL. It is very fitting and appropriate that the memorial fountain be returned to Lincoln Hall considering that over 100 students and staff from the University of Illinois gave their lives in the First World War.

### Recent Update

On May 10 the *News Gazette* reported that the memorial will return to the south courtyard of Lincoln Hall around Memorial Day. Chancellor Phyllis Wise released \$37,000 from her donor fund to pay for the move. The 2-ton monolith will be hoisted using a crane from the parking lot south of Lincoln Hall and lowered to its original location and bolted in place. A new plaque will be installed that is being designed by Don Molnar that will tell its meaning for future students and staff.



## 2015 Heritage Awards



Sidney library staff accepting their award

The PACA Heritage Awards were established in 1985 to recognize outstanding projects and individuals who have contributed to historic preservation efforts in east-central Illinois. To date over 400 awards have been given to individuals and institutions throughout the area and this year we had projects that ranged from a homeowner fixing a bullet shattered door to a major construction project that preserved part of Urbana railroad history and created a new urban park.

This year's winners were:

1- Francis and John Newman, owners of 703 West Delaware in Urbana, made the decision to have the windows of their early 20th century home restored, rather than replaced, retaining the architectural look and feel of the house. New Prairie Construction Co. performed the restoration.

2- On Memorial weekend in 2014 a drive-by gunfight took place in Chuck Segard's neighborhood. His house at 703 North State was hit with six bul-

lets. Thankfully Chuck escaped injury, however the 19th century hand carved, beveled glass front door was seriously damaged. Rather than have the door replaced, Charles chose to restore this unique entry door. Bacon and VanBuskirk Glass Co. provided and installed the new, custom-made beveled glass, and New Prairie Construction used epoxy consolidation methods and custom finishing in order to restore the carved wood motifs.

3 -Kathryn Bock and David Irwin's Tudor Revival house at 1012 West University in Champaign was built in 1913 for Harry and Kate Berks. Although this is very stately house, the original garage was small and in a state of disrepair so in 2014 the owners replaced their old garage with a structure that blends in so well with the main house that you would think it had always been there. David Seyler did the construction, Kevin Fahey was the architect and Ray Lytle did the concept drawings.

4 -Current owner Andrew Fell acquired the building at 515 North Hickory in

Champaign in 2010. This circa 1949 single story building was built as a welding shop and has housed a number of automobile related businesses over the years. In 2013 the renovation / creative reuse of the building began. The first floor was completely gutted and became office space. A second floor was added that has two apartments. The exterior underwent a dramatic aesthetic transformation in both mass and style and the front façade was given a contemporary look in keeping with changing face of the downtown. Wells & Wells Construction was the contractor.

5 - The building housing Justin Taylor's JT Walker's Restaurant & Brewery at 401 East Main Street in Mahomet was designed by Joseph Royer. Work included removal of drywall partitions, reconstruction of the front facade, restoration of the wood floor. Also, the bar was built with wainscoting and salvaged metal tin ceiling from building across the street. Mike Miller was in charge of the construction.

6 - Sidney's new Community Library is located in a building that served as a dry good and grocery stores from 1870 to 2007. They uncovered the original brick façade, added a new entry and did extensive work on the interior. The award went to the Sidney Community Library Board, architect Karen Edwards, and construction manager Wally Hoffman.

7 -The City of Urbana began a study to turn the Boneyard Creek into an amenity for the downtown environment in 2006. Ground-breaking was in the fall of 2012. The project was completed on schedule in the fall of 2014.

The project created an outdoor gathering space and plaza on the east and west sides of Race Street. The existing railroad trestle bridge was maintained in its original position, and was upgraded to include a decked walkway and decorative guardrail. The former railroad trestle is now a bridge that connects pedestrians from Race Street to the Sta-



Urbana mayor speaks about the Boneyard Creek project

tion Theater. A trail was created through the 1916 culvert so that the park is connected on the north and south sides of the rail tracks. Mayor Laurel Prussing and Brad Bennett represented the city, landscape design was by WENK, HNTB and Foth were in charge of engineering, Beth Reineke lead the construction and Jack Mackie oversaw the public art.

8 - The Inman Hotel opened in 1915 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1989. The hotel closed in 1974 and in 1975 became the National Academy of the Arts. In 1987 the building was sold and became senior citizen housing. In 2012 major renovation (\$5.7 million) began. It preserved much of the main level detail including the columns, decorative plaster work, detail work on the stairwells handrails and even the original door to the bar with old glass. The work was challenging in order to meet modern fire and safety codes, as well as ADA and senior friendly facilities. Inman Place now offers studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom apartments that have been newly renovated from top to bottom.

9 - The Orpheum Theater opened in Champaign, Illinois in 1914 on the site of a vaudeville theater built in 1904. De-

signed by the Architectural firm Rapp and Rapp, the Orpheum (also known as "The New Orpheum") was built to accommodate both live vaudeville performances and the projection of film. After a series of renovations and changes of ownership, the Orpheum screened its final film in 1986. Orpheum Children's Science Museum opened in December 1994. The Orpheum also offers other activities, including field trips, summer camps, 'weekend wizards', and a girls do science club.

10 - Champaign High School was opened in 1914. In the fall of 1956, the building became Edison Junior High School. In 1977-78, the school district reorganized into middle schools and moved sixth grade students to the middle level and ninth grade students to the high school campus. Edison Middle School serves approximately 700 students in three grade levels.

11 - November marked the 100 year anniversary of the first day of student instruction at Urbana High School. The building is currently home to approximately 1,200 students, faculty, and staff. The high school was conceived by famed architect, and Urbana graduate, Joseph Royer and built upon land donated by

former Congressman W.B. McKinley. The Tudor styled building began construction in October of 1913 and didn't open until November of the following year. Additions and major renovations were made to the school and surrounding complex in 1916, 1955, 1965, 1977, 1986, and 2011-12, including Cobb Memorial Auditorium and McKinley Field Athletic Complex.

12 - Did you know that Mahomet once had a Motordrome or that a lake was proposed on eastern edge of the town? If you find rural history interesting then Diggin' up Bones should be on your book shelf. Author Greg Pasley is a retired technology teacher living in his home town of Mahomet, Illinois and his book Diggin' up Bones is a series of those historical articles, anecdotes and village tales of the village of Middletown/Mahomet that were published in 2013.

13 - Retiring board member Sarah Neth has served on the PACA Board of Directors from 2007-2010 and 2012 to date as treasurer. Along with her husband Robert they have been active PACA members for a number of years and have helped on numerous salvage projects over the years. Sarah is a native of Urbana and works for the Army Corp of Engineers CERL Laboratory in Champaign.



Urbana High School principal Mathew Stark

## Annual Meeting

The PACA annual meeting was held on Sunday April 26 at Community United Church, 805 South 6th Street, Champaign. Sarah Nemeth presented the budget which was approved by the membership. An election was held for the three open seats on the board of directors. Since there were 5 candidates a paper ballot election was necessary. Elected for three terms were Betty Swisher, John Gadbury and Alice Novak.

The two graduate students in Urban Planning that received PACA scholarships made presentations. Marcia Klopf talked about her work in Washington Illinois to help create a historic district. Angela Urban talked about her field surveys in East Urbana, work in Quincy Illinois and her summer project in Danville Illinois. Following the heritage award presentation, Frank Butterfield from Landmark's Illinois made a presenta-

tion on programs of this state wide advocacy group for historic preservation. He highlighted some recent projects of Landmark Illinois including the fate of historic schools. Following a question and answer session the meeting was adjourned. Thanks to Becky Duffield, Betty Swisher, and Lori Dow for coordinating the refreshments at the meeting.

## Special Sale Items

With the help a loyal group of hard working volunteers we moved 7 box truck loads and 12 pick-up truck loads of materials out of Natural History Building last July. The items have been stored in space donated by CU Woodshop near Parkland College. We also used the space to store items from Mahomet School and University of Illinois Library. We have been moving items slowly over to the warehouse when space becomes available and we have also been showing and selling items at the site by appointment only. We may be losing this extra space soon so prices will be discounted. Check by the warehouse to see what items are still available.

We have two single oak card catalog units that are 60" tall, 54" wide at base and 22" deep. There are 4 large drawers that at 24" x 16" and 36 small drawers that are 11" x 15".



### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

PACA BOX 2575, Champaign, IL 61825

#### MEMBERSHIP STATUS

New       Renewal

#### MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY

Adult                 \$25  
 Student               \$15  
 Senior Citizen       \$15  
 Family                 \$40

Corporate  
     Bronze                 \$250  
     Silver                   \$500  
     Gold                     \$1000  
     Platinum               \$2000

I wish to make an additional contribution: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

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*Note: Please make your check payable to PACA. Your contribution is tax-deductable to the extent allowed by law.*

PACA is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of our natural and built environment. Offices are located at our salvage warehouse:

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*The newsletter of the*



PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION  
P.O. Box 2575  
Champaign, IL 61825

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U.S. POSTAGE  
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