

PRESERVATION MATTERS

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PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Focus on Forgotten University of Illinois Buildings

The University of Illinois is home to a significant number of buildings that are over one hundred years old. Many are well known and are located on the Main Quadrangle including Harker Hall (1878), Natural History Building (1892), Altgeld Hall (1897), Foellinger Auditorium (1907) and Lincoln Hall (1909). Other buildings, including Kinney Gym (1890), the Observatory (1895), Forestry Science Building (1905), Stock Pavilion (1913), Ceramic Engineering (1915) and the Vivarium (1916) are often overlooked. PACA has highlighted the history of a number of university buildings in past newsletters and this article continues that tradition.



1917 View of west elevation of the Vivarium with the pond still under construction

Victor E. Shelford Vivarium

by Rich Cahill

When Victor Shelford became the first President of the Ecological Society of America in 1916, he had recently moved from the University of Chicago to become Assistant Professor of Zoology at the University of Illinois, Urbana, and a biologist with the Illinois State Laboratory of Natural History. He had already published on a wide range of topics, including ecological succession of beetles, fishes, and land invertebrates, ecological classification, fish migrations, physiological animal geography, animal communities, and the general principles of animal ecology. Shelford was a champion of experimental ecology, improved laboratory facilities to assist ecological studies, and promoted

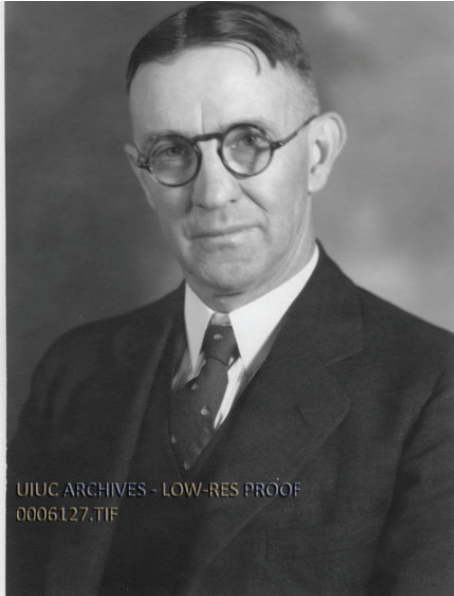
the preservation of natural areas. Upon moving to the University of Illinois in 1914, he championed the construction of a new laboratory, the Vivarium, to support experimental work.

In contrast to other Vivariums that were being built on college campuses in the early 1900s the Vivarium occupied a minimal natural setting. The building was a substantial two-story laboratory with two large, climate controlled greenhouse wings. It had the usual fresh and saltwater aquaria, but like ordinary labs it was a strictly private space – no grottoes or exhibit spaces there. The grounds were simple and utilitarian:

two shallow ponds flanking the front door served as holding tanks for experimental animals. As one disgruntled local complained “The pond will be used for experiments in the rearing of fish and other pond animals, and of mosquitoes for the neighbors. It will not be large enough to skate on in the winter”. This emphasis on lab over setting reflected the dual purposes for which the Illinois Vivarium was built: to lure Victor Shelford from Chicago and to remedy the university’s shortage of facilities for experimental biology. (Labscapes: Naturalizing the Lab, 2002, Robert Kohler, Science History 489-490)

The Vivarium was dedicated in 1916

and is located on the northwest corner of Wright and Healey streets at 606 East Healey Street. The term Vivarium means a place for keeping or studying land animals. It was designed by James White; A. W. Stoolman was the general contractor at a cost of \$82,000. The University



Victor Shelford in 1935

of Illinois renamed the Vivarium in 1982 to the Victor E. Shelford Vivarium to honor the scientist considered the father of animal ecology.

Victor Shelford was born in 1877 in Chemung, New York. He began his undergraduate studies at West Virginia University before transferring to the University of Chicago where he finished a B.S in zoology in 1903. His PhD dissertation completed in 1907 at the University of Chicago focused on the ecology of tiger beetles in the sand dunes. His Chicago-area studies also led to an important early book on physiological ecology, *Animal Communities in Temperate America* (1913). He taught zoology there until became an associate professor at the University of Illinois in 1914. During his long career at the University of Illinois he served on the National Research Council, helped form the Grassland Research Foundation and was the co-founder of the Ecologists' Union in 1946 that became the Nature Conservancy in 1950. He retired from the University of Illinois in 1946 and continued to work up to his death in 1968. He was married in 1907

to Mabel Brown and had two children. Mabel died in 1940 while on a field trip to Panama. His most famous book *Ecology of North America* was 50 years in preparation. It was published in 1963 and there were 22 editions published between 1963 and 1978. It was held by 1,502 libraries worldwide.

The Architect

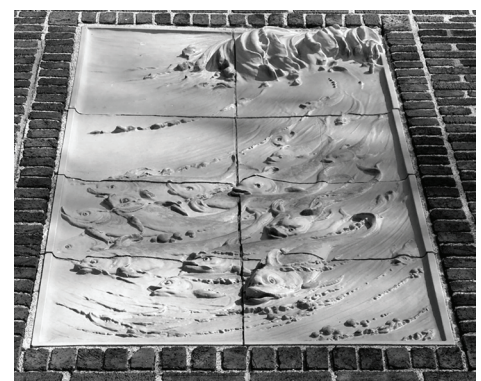
James McLaren White, born in Chicago on October 16, 1867, commenced studies at the University of Illinois in 1886 (*Daily Illini*, February 7, 1933, p. 1). Affectionately known as "King Jim", White graduated from the College of Engineering in 1890 and became an assistant in architecture. White studied in Paris and Munich in 1894 and 1896 (*Daily Illini*, January 7, 1923, p. 2). By 1901, White was a professor and served as Dean of the College of Engineering beginning in 1906. In 1907, White was appointed supervising architect of the University of Illinois and superintendent of business operations in 1921. "As supervising architect he was in close touch with the building activities on the campus, having designed the Law building, both Women's Residence halls, the Vivarium, the Ceramics building, Smith Memorial hall, and most of the buildings on the new south campus" (*ibid*). Among the latter is the Horticulture Field Laboratory at 1707 South Orchard Street (*Daily Illini*, July 22, 1923). White had collaborated with Nathan Clifford Ricker on the design of the Law building (*Daily Illini*, February 7, 1933, p. 1). Outside the university, White worked with other architects on various projects, including the Douglas County Sailor's and Soldier's monument, many private residences, and buildings for the Lewis and Clark exposition in Portland, Oregon (1905) and the Illinois State Building at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York in 1901 (*Daily Illini*, January 7, 1923, p. 2; Withey and Withey 1970:652). White was elected President of the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, and later as Chairman of the A.I.A. Committee on Registration Laws. White's death on February 6, 1933 made the front page of the *Urbana Daily Courier*.



Ceramic plaque, west side of building

The Ceramic Tile

The east and west elevations of the Vivarium have very prominent 40" x 80" sculptural tile installations. The copper colored base relief panels depict a roiling carp under a braking wave that have Japanese inspiration. The panels were made by Teco which was the art division of the American Terra Cotta Tile and Ceramic Company that was founded in 1881 by William Day Gates. The company became the country's first manufactory of architectural terra cotta. Its main business consisted of the production of drain tile, brick, chimney tops, finials, urns, and other economically fireproof building materials. Gates used the facilities to experiment with clays and glazes in an effort to design a line of art pottery which led to the introduction of Teco in 1899. The smooth, micro-crystalline, matte "Teco Green" glaze of Teco Art



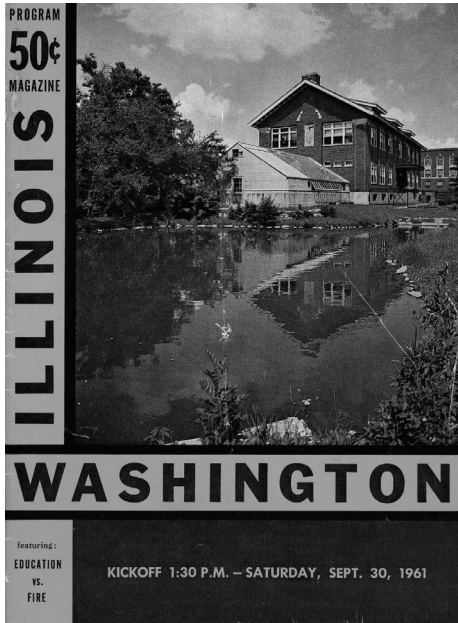
Pottery is their trademark. The pottery shapes derived from line and color rather than elaborate decoration. While most of the 500 shapes created by 1911 were the product of Gates' efforts, many of the remaining Teco designs were the work of several Chicago architects that were involved in the Prairie School style as expressed by Frank Lloyd Wright.



Central stair case



Planter detail



1961 view of west elevation

The Building

The Vivarium is probably best known for the two ponds that were homes to ducks, geese and turtles. Over the years maintenance became major issue. Up to 7,000 gallons of water a day had to be pumped into the ponds daily to maintain water levels. In 1988 over the protest of some faculty the ponds were drained and filled, some tree and most of the iron fence was removed, and the area converted into lawn. In 2005 the original west greenhouse was demolished and replaced with a new greenhouse. Currently the building houses research laboratories and offices for the Department of Animal Biology (formerly the Department of Ecology, Ethnology and Evolution).



Detail of cast iron marquee on the South entry



1926 view from the SouthEast



Annual Meeting

by Rich Cahill

The PACA Annual meeting was held on April 10 at the Community United Church at 805 South 6th Street, Champaign. There was a brief business meeting with opening remarks by Brian Duffield and the presentation of the annual budget by Betty Swisher. The five candidates for the Board of Directors made brief statements on way they wished to serve. Brian Adams, Susan Appel and Neil Strack were selected by the membership to serve three-year terms



The annual heritage awards were then presented.

Phyllis Wise former University of Illinois Chancellor was recognized for her work as a preservation advocate,

The Victor Shelford Vivarium, University of Illinois, 606 East Healy, Champaign received an award for 100 years of research in ecology

The McKinley Presbyterian Church 509 South 5th Street Champaign was given an award for restoration of the original wooden doors.

The house at 919 W University Cham-



paign received an award for restoration of its historic steel windows.

The owners of 450 S Charter Street, Monticello were awarded for restoration of this 1880's Queen Anne home.

I&I Tractor club in Penfield IL received an award for moving an 1875 one-room school house to their grounds and beginning a restoration.

Papa Del's Pizza Factory, 1201 South Neil, Champaign was recognized for the work done on the former Coca-Cola Bottling Plant designed by George C. Ramey.

Saint Patricks Catholic Church, 708 W. Main St, Urbana, IL was recognized for the major building expansion of this historic church.

Black Dog BBQ, 320 North Chestnut, Champaign won an award for the conversion of the original 1890's Rail Road Depot into restaurant.

University Baptist Church, 314 East Daniels, Champaign was recognized for 100 years of serving student in this Joseph Royer designed church.

Old Urbana Foundry at 208 West Griggs Street in Urbana was recognized for its recent conversion to a grocery store with a mural painted by Glen Davies.

Gibson City Downtown Revitalization Committee was awarded for their efforts to promote and preserve downtown Gibson City



SpeakEasy Salon & Spa, 205 N. Sangamon Ave, Gibson City, was recognized as one of the success stories of restoration in downtown Gibson City

Engelbrecht Farm 1432 East 200 North, Paxton won for the preservation and reuse of a large dairy barn.

Black Hat Barber and Shave Company, 211 West Washington, Monticello was recognized for the conversion of the old Globe Theater.

And finally, long-time PACA volunteer Lee Stoops was recognized for his years of service. Lee is retiring from the board, is a past president, and an active salvage volunteer.



Reminder

The PACA board of directors meets every second Wednesday of the month here at our Architectural Salvage Warehouse located on the corner of Washington and Walnut Streets in downtown Champaign. Our meetings are open to the public and members are welcome to come and join us. If you'd like to speak on a topic please contact us at least a week in advance at 359-7222, or via email at pacaexdir@gmail.com, and we'll make arrangements put you on the agenda.

Minutes of our meetings are available by request.

Volunteers Needed

by Thomas Garza

Occasionally I send out a generic call for volunteers, but in this instance I wanted to be more specific, as I have a few special projects that I could use some help with.

As some of you may know, PACA has a library that is, or would be if we had it in shape, available for use by its members.

Our library contains a variety of different books and magazines containing information about preservation, fixing up an old house, local history, etc.

In its present shape it's not very accessible, and we don't have a system in place for tracking things that people have borrowed, or even a way to check to see if we have a book on a given subject.

That's hopefully where you, and your library experience, come in handy.

I would like to identify a PACA member (or two, or more) who would be interested in coming into the warehouse and putting a little time into sorting through what we have and attempting to organize things a bit. This project can be as

involved or simple as you have time and inclination. Even if all we did was get things out of piles and onto shelves in a way that made sense that would be an improvement.

If this sounds interesting to you please call me at 359-7222 during regular business hours and we can talk about it.

We also have some warehouse maintenance issues that we could use some help with. One of these projects involves a broken chain-link fence support. This is causing our gate to hang at a bad angle and makes locking the gate difficult.

All someone would need to do is identify the broken piece, acquire a replacement, and then put it all back together. Probably not more than an hour so of effort, but not something I can do while also running the shop at the same time.

Another task would be to replace the pavers in front of the building.

Last year the city was good enough to come by and regrade our front lawn and replace the concrete sidewalk in front of our building. They did a great job and this has greatly improved the drainage problems we were having, but in order

for them to do this work we had to take up the segment of the front walk that we'd put in that went from the sidewalk to the street. This was paved with vintage street pavers and what we need for someone to do is dig out that spot and re-lay those same bricks back where they were. A bit of skill and experience is required here -- not to mention time and effort -- so the job remains undone despite the fact that the sidewalk repair was done last summer.

If you can help with this, please let me know.

Thanks!



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: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

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:

44 E. Washington St, Champaign, IL 61825
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Vice President: Brian Adams

Treasurer: Betty Swisher

Executive Director: Thomas Garza

Newsletter Editor: Tom Garza

*If you would like to contribute
to the PACA newsletter, email
pacaexdir@gmail.com*

OR CURRENT RESIDENT

Warehouse: 44 E. Washington St., Champaign, IL

Hours: Tues. 10-4, Wed. 10-7, Thurs. & Fri. 10-4,
Sat. 9-12

Telephone: 217-359-PACA

Web: <http://www.pacacc.org>

E-mail: pacaexdir@gmail.com