

# PRESERVATION MATTERS

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PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

## LOCAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION & THE UPCOMING SCHOOL REFERENDUM

### PLEASE HELP!

by Susan Appel

Voters in Champaign are increasingly aware of the Unit 4 School District's referendum on the November 8 ballot. The school board is asking for citizen support -- in the amount of \$183.4 million -- to expand and upgrade a number of schools. We're not sure that the citizenry, especially those concerned with historic preservation, realize what an impact one of those projects would have on the historic character of a central Champaign neighborhood in particular. This article hopes to clarify that issue, as it also asks PACA members to spread the word and help the PACA Board of Directors respond to this situation.

The overall school project involves several buildings: Central and Centennial High Schools, Edison Middle School, Dr. Howard and South Side Elementary Schools, and the International Preparatory Academy. Of these, the most historic are Dr. Howard and South Side, Edison, and Central. As plans stand now, Dr. Howard would be demolished and replaced, and South Side may either be added onto or demolished and re-

placed. Additions to Edison will likely not change its historic exterior appearance greatly. And while Central High School will be preserved, at least in part, its expansion has triggered what may well be the biggest preservation issue in Champaign for many years.

Little public response seems to have been voiced about the prospect of losing Dr. Howard Elementary, although structural and environmental issues there may make its preservation virtually impossible. The South Side El-

ementary neighborhood has a strong attachment to that school, but we wonder how it might respond if the demolition/replacement option is eventually chosen. Neighbors of Edison Middle School were adamant that the Tier Two Facilities Committee should not pursue the idea of moving the middle school elsewhere. The largest proposed project, that for renovating and enlarging Central High, has garnered some public response, including input from PACA, but it deserves more.

To make room for the expanded Central facilities, which includes new parking lots and outdoor athletic facilities, the Unit 4 Board of Education has purchased options on nine properties near the school where several important structures now stand. Plans call for all of the nine historic structures to be demolished and replaced. Perhaps the most significant of these buildings, both architecturally and in terms of its relationship with local history, is the Burnham House at 603 West Church



Burnham House, 1883-84, as designed by the Chicago firm of Burnham & Root

Street, but others of the nine are also more than worthy of greater consideration than they are receiving.

The PACA Board has exchanged ideas with the School Board, during the Tier



607 W Church St



606 W Church St



500 W Church St



203 N Lynn St



201 N Lynn St



602 W Church St



606 W Park St

Two Facilities Committee's discussions and since the particulars of the referendum were established. We have pointed out that absolutely no attention has yet been given to the historic nature of the optioned properties that are slated for demolition. We have also suggested that there are perfectly reasonable alternatives that could not only preserve the character of the Central High neighborhood, but also achieve an enlarged and improved high school facility.

The School Board has been polite, but for the most part, they have ignored our concerns, assuming that, for a fully modernized, state-of-the-art school to remain centrally located, the optioned properties simply must be removed. While we appreciate the need for upgrading Central and the other schools, we feel that the School Board is misguided in pointedly not recognizing

the architectural importance of these multiple buildings and the sense of place to which they contribute so strongly. The historic and the modern can and do exist side-by-side in many contemporary cityscapes. Making that happen, of course, requires valuing the historic and working consciously to preserve it as much as is possible.

Because we have made little or no dent in the School Board's thinking, we now feel the need to call upon our membership and the community at large to raise further the questions about the School Board's lack of consideration for the historic buildings in the path of the current plans to expand Central High. If this issue concerns you, and if you value Champaign's historic architecture and neighborhoods, please write letters to the editor of the News-Gazette. Send emails and/or letters to the Unit 4 School Board, explaining your feelings and asking them to reconsider the destruction of these important buildings.

Public input and community action are always the most effective ways to have our voices heard. Please join us, and ask your friends and neighbors to do the same!

[Information on the Unit 4 proposals can be found online at <http://facility-planning.champaignschools.org/>; click on "Referendum" for specifics on the upcoming vote; "Documents" for a record of the Tier Two Facilities Committee proceedings; and "Community" for public response to the Tier Two planning and more recent developments (including PACA Board members' statements from May 19, 2016, and the Board's letter to the School Board of September 2016).]



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## Robert E. Hieronymus Residence

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by Brian Adams and Alice Novak

In May 2016, the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission voted unanimously to approve Local Landmark designation for the Royer-designed Robert E. Hieronymus Residence at 702 West Pennsylvania Avenue, Urbana. Robert Enoch Hieronymus was an English professor and later President of Eureka College. He was hired in 1914 as “Community Adviser” at the University of Illinois, and his active involvement and leadership in the municipal arts movement made him especially significant locally.



Robert E. Hieronymus Residence 702 W Pennsylvania Ave. (1919)

Graduating from Illinois State University in 1886, Hieronymus began his teaching career at Carrolton High School. He studied at the University of Michigan and afterwards moved on to Eureka College in 1889, where he received his A.B., A.M. and LLD degrees by 1914. He married Minnie Frantz of Wellington, Sumner County, Kansas on June 26, 1890. Between 1890 and 1897, he began teaching English at Eureka College and also served as Vice President of the college during this time. In 1897, Hieronymus went to the State Normal School in Los Angeles, California to teach English and history for a year. After this, he became superintendent of university extension work at Southern California. Minnie died on October 27, 1898 in Pasadena. The couple had had three children by this time: Faith Helene (born 1892), Frantz Mountjoy (born 1893), and Rexford Eugene (born 1895). By 1899, Hieronymus returned to Eureka College where he assumed the position of Professor of English and college President (1900-1909). Robert married Lois Campbell in LaHarp, Illinois in

1900; the couple had one daughter, Grace, born in 1902. Between 1900 and 1909 he was president of Eureka College, and during this period also became secretary of the Educational Commission of the State of Illinois.

Hieronymus began his career at the University of Illinois in 1914 (*Daily Illini*, November 30, 1938). During his tenure at the University of Illinois, Hieronymus was active in educational organizations. He became president of the Federation of Illinois Colleges (1906-1908), the Illinois Schoolmasters' Club (1907-1908), and the Illinois Chautauqua Alliance (1911- 1913) (*ibid*). Beginning in 1920, six years after his arrival at the University of Illinois, Hieronymus began his association with noted Urbana sculptor Lorado Taft (*Daily Illini*, July 25, 1920). In July 1920, the University of Illinois created an Art Extension Committee affiliated with the Better Community movement (*Daily Illini*, July 25, 1920). Among the 21 members of this committee were R.E. Hieronymus (community

adviser), Lorado Taft (chairman), and Mary W. Wetmore (art and design instructor). The creation of this committee initiated a long period of association between Hieronymus and Taft. According to Hieronymus: “The general purpose of the Art Extension committee is to assist in making art a more potent elevating force in the lives of the people of Illinois. It aims to help the people discover beauty in nature and enjoy it, and to stimulate the production of beautiful things” (*Daily Illini*, June 22, 1924). The committee made plans to plant public and private grounds and organized lectures on art and community improvement. According to Chairman Taft, an important goal of the committee was the beautification of town squares and school yards as well as landscape gardening. Taft stated in his first address to the committee that “. . . artistic awakening is coming in Illinois. . .” By 1923, 150 communities in the state were represented on the committee, as were such organizations as the Art Institute of Chicago, the Audubon Society, the Illinois



Robert E. Hieronymus

State Historical Society, the Illinois Forestry Association, the Wildflower Preservation Society, and the League of Women Voters, among others (*Daily Illini*, July 1, 1923). According to the *Daily Illini* (August 6, 1921)

*“ . . . R.E. Hieronymus [sic.] is vitally interested in the development of the better community movement throughout the state. It was largely through his efforts that the art extension committee has been organized and its work developed. Dr. Hieronymus outlined the purpose of the movement making definite the fact that it is not an organization but a means to band together all organized groups, clubs, chambers of commerce, and other institutions and organizations, already existing and to combine them all into a related unit working for community health and betterment.”*

One of the earliest undertakings of the Art Extension Committee was a three day tour of “scenic wonders” of the Rock River country between Dixon and Rockford (*Daily Illini*, August 6, 1921). The group was welcomed by citizens in the area, including residents of the Eagles’ Nest Art Colony. On

the first day, an informal reception was held in Dixon, Illinois, followed by dinner at former governor Frank Lowden’s residence. On the next day, the group met in Oregon, Illinois and discussed future exhibitions and activities of the Art Extension Committee. In 1924, Hieronymus led “. . . 200 artists and lovers of beauty . . .” on a tour of central and northern Illinois (*Daily Illini*, June 22, 1924). Among those on the trip were Lorado Taft, Dr. J.C. Blair (Department of Horticulture head),

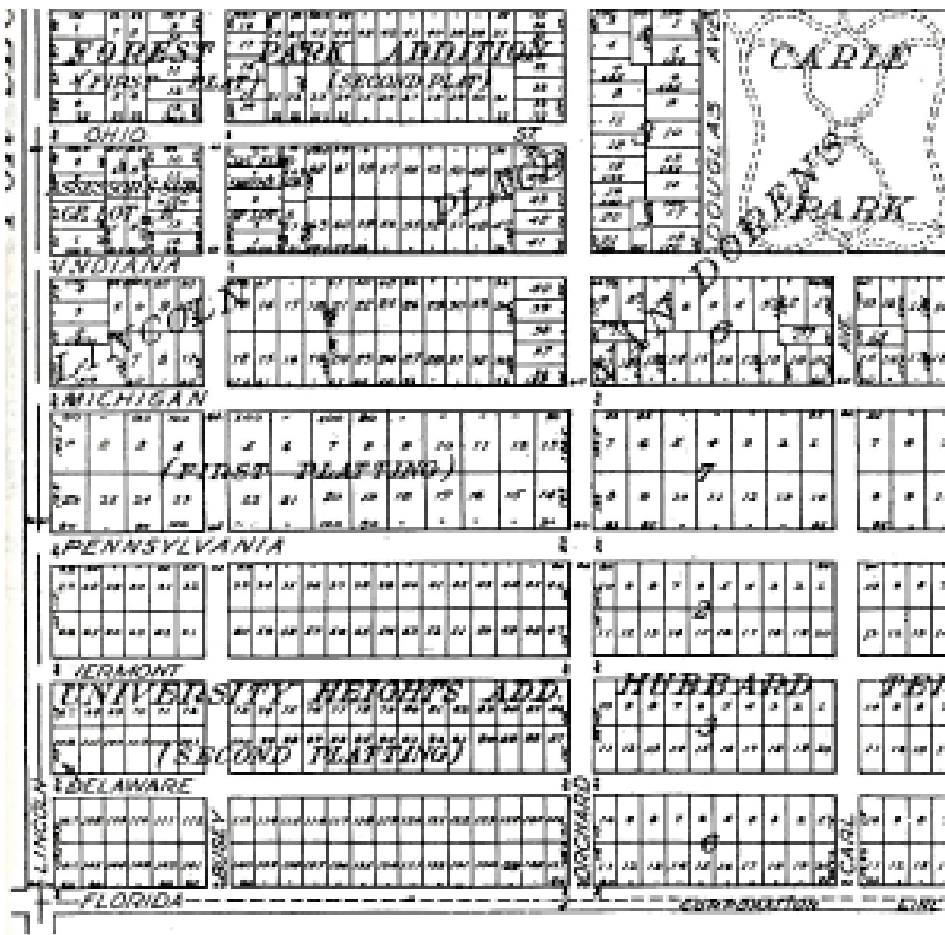
“. . . and a number of other prominent artists, landscape gardeners, and road experts . . .” In October 1929, Taft and Hieronymus represented the Art Extension committee in Herrin, Illinois at the unveiling of a marker honoring George Rogers Clark’s march through Williamson County in 1778 (*Daily Illini*, October 9, 1928). A year later, Hieronymus invited members of the Art Extension Committee to the dedication of Taft’s “Alma Mater” statue at the University of Illinois (*Daily Illini*, June 6, 1929). Hieronymus led the campaign to raise funds to establish the Taft lectureship (*News-Gazette* December 19, 1941). Hieronymus retired from the University of Illinois in September 1932, “. . . but continued active in his work, conducting many programs and appearing in various communities regarding his particular field of endeavor (*News-Gazette* December 18, 1941). According to city directories, Robert and his wife Lois lived in 702 W. Pennsylvania until 1935 or 1936; the 1935 directory lists them in the house, but the 1936 directory lists them both at 804 South Michigan in Urbana. In 1938, Hieronymus presided over the unveiling of a bronze bust of Lorado Taft during a two-day commemoration of the late artist’s life (*Daily Illini*, January 12, 1938).

R. E. Hieronymus died 18 December 1941. By this time, he and his wife resided at 1605 South Orchard Street

in Urbana. Dean Rexford Newcomb, of the College of Fine and Applied Arts at the University of Illinois, spoke at the funeral services (*News Gazette* December 21, 1941). Dr. David Kinley, good friend of Robert Hieronymus, spoke these words at his funeral: “Quiet in manner, with a genial personality, Doctor Hieronymus was 3 well and widely liked and had a host of friends throughout the state who mourn his loss” (*News-Gazette* December 19, 1941).

The house at 702 West Pennsylvania is on a lot in the “University Heights Addition” to Urbana, platted in 1911 and expanded in 1923. The current boundaries of the addition are: Lincoln Avenue (west), Michigan Avenue (north), Florida Avenue (south), and Orchard Street (on the east.) At this time, the city corporation line was located between Michigan and Pennsylvania avenues; Orchard Street ended at Pennsylvania Avenue, where the two streets created a right angle. South of this was a large tract of ca. 66 acres owned by Fred C. Hubbard. The second platting dates to 1923 when the southern boundary was extended south to the newly created Florida Avenue; by this time, Florida Avenue marked the city corporation line. The second platting also included the establishment of Delaware and Vermont streets south of Pennsylvania Avenue.

The University Heights addition was developed by Joseph C. Blair of the University of Illinois, a professor of horticulture, and practicing landscape architect. An article in the *Daily Illini* from 1923 states: “To carry out concretely one of the principles which he advocates as a landscape architect, and build a better and more beautiful Urbana, Prof. Blair has developed in the southwestern part of the city an ideal and parklike subdivision which is the show place of the city, and the home places of many University



faculty members. The University Heights Addition was developed by prominent University of Illinois horticulture professor Joseph Cullin Blair” (1871-1960).

Built in 1919, the Hieronymus House is an outstanding example of the Dutch Colonial Revival style, designed by local architect Joseph W. Royer. The house is midway on this double-long block framed by South Orchard Street on the east and South Busey Street on the west. Lots are unusually deep, accommodating both a deep front setback and ample rear yards for elegantly sited houses. A concrete sidewalk near the southwest corner of the property gently curves to lead to the front porch. (Perhaps not coincidentally, the sidewalk is on the side of the property closest to the university.) The sidewalk now continues to from the front porch to the driveway near the house, but this

is not an original feature. Without exception, garages on this block are located on the rear lots behind or partially behind the houses, accessed by single car driveways. The houses are mostly period revival, including Colonial Revival, Georgian Revival, and Craftsman. The Hieronymus House is 2-1/2 stories with a symmetrical core block. Overall, the house is only slightly asymmetrical due to side porches of slightly differing sizes, though Royer’s plan called for identical porches, including the sleeping porches, on each side. As is typical with the expression of the Dutch Colonial Revival style, the house chiefly displays the style through its side gambrel roof (which is now covered with architectural asphalt shaped shingles. The original roof was wood shingle.) The roof has a slight bellcast on all sides. On the east and west sides, the full return is bellcast, largely interrupted on both sides with

porches. An extended eave on the first story is clad with beadboard on its underside. The house is generally without ornament, with a few exceptions. Multi-light windows and a very complex detailed roof provide the house with its character-defining features. The size, materials, design, and setback of the house give a very notable impression.

The house is constructed of red brick laid in English bond, alternating rows of headers and stretchers. Like the main body of the house, the east first story porch is also brick. The second and upper half-stories are wood shingle (unpainted), accommodated with a broad central shed roof dormer for the second story and a jerkinhead central dormer for the upper half-story. On the first story, triple sets of 9/1 double-hung sash flank the entral entrance. These windows retain the original storm windows, as do most windows on the house. They have stone lug sills, but no header detailing whatsoever. The original 18-light door is framed by 4/1 double-hung sash tightly fitted within the flat roof entrance porch which is supported by knee braces. The porch has a two-tiered cornice and the recessed ceiling is clad in beadboard. A new porch light in period design has been added. Brick cheekpieces with concrete caps frame the four broad concrete stairs to the concrete porch stoop. Two basement windows are located beneath each of the triple window sets. A molded wood cornice tops the first story.

On the second story, a 9/1 double-hung sash is flanked by single 9-light casement sash in the middle bay. Single 9/1 double-hung sash are at the shed roof dormer ends. In the upper half-story are three replacement awning sash in a “9-light” appearance, though single light sash. Windows on the wood-shingled second and upper stories have simple wood surrounds

(painted white.) A brick chimney is off-set to the east above the jerkinhead roof dormer.

A one-story flat-roof brick side porch occupies much of the east elevation. The porch is set back approximately 2' or so from the façade; a single basement window faces east on the main block of the house. Screens the width of two full-size double-hung sash face front/south and back/north. Two paired screens frame the screen door and transom on the east façade of the porch. The sides of the frames which are next to the screen door are treated as pilasters with simple wood caps, as are those on the front and rear frames. Wood stairs with a south-side wood rail are not original. Inside the porch, the multi-light door and storm door in the middle bay are framed by single 9/1 double-hung sash covered with "4/1" storm sash in the end bays. The porch walls on either side of the screened opening are treated as piers and have concrete caps. The second story of the east elevation is chiefly occupied by a wood-shingle sleeping porch atop and set back on all sides from the brick screened-in porch below. Two 9-light casement sash face front/south and rear/north, and a set of five 9-light sash face the side/east. A replacement casement sash is in the upper-story level above the sleeping porch. On the main block of the house, single 6/1 double-hung sash are set adjacent to the porch. The one to the south is fitted just under the gutter of the sleeping porch to the south and north of the porch. A 4/1 double-hung sash with a 4/4 storm sash is on the first story east elevation, just past the screened-in porch.

The rear elevation has a central rectangular bay which includes an at-grade entrance with a 9-light original door and a shed hood supported by knee braces; a 4/1 double-hung sash is set high to the left of the door hood; another faces east in the narrow bay

side, but the west side of the bay is blind. The left/east section of the rear façade has paired 6-light casement sash set high; a single basement sash is at grade here and on the bay. To the west of the rectangular bay, a pair of windows set high is covered by two 12-light storm sash, original to the house; paired basement sash are at grade below.

The roofline of the house becomes especially complex on the rear elevation. Here, the bellcast is more pronounced. A second-story shed-roof dormer extends over the bay and paired multi-light windows cut into the bellcast; a small 4-light sash is set high to the left/east. A tiny 4/1 double-hung sash faces east from the shed dormer extension; the west side is blind. To the left/east of the bay is an 8-light storm sash (original) over a 6/1 double-hung sash; the same is on the west side of the shed-roof dormer. On the upper story, the flat-roof dormer is more pronounced as well, extending to the shed roof dormer on the second story. Two replacement awning sash mimicking 6-light sash face the rear/north; a small square replacement sash faces east, but the west side is blind.

A flat-roof porch occupies much of the first story of the west elevation, and like the porch to the east, it is set back from both the front and back of the main and rear facades. This porch is frame and accessed from the rear only on the exterior. Oversized 9-light storm sash enclose the porch, one to the rear adjacent to the door with a two-light transom; five windows are to the west side and three are to the front. A short wood-paneled wall is beneath the storm sash, with wood trim and lattice between short brick foundation piers. The porch is trimmed with a wide plain wood cornice. Inside the porch, two multi-light doors are in the end bays and lead to the kitchen and dining room inside. To the rear/north of the porch within the setback,

a 9-light storm sash is set high on the main block of the house; to the front is a 9/1 double-hung sash. The west side of the second-story gambrel has two 6/1 double-hung sash set far apart toward the edges of the roof. Between them is a multi-light door with a multi-light storm door covered by a flared door "hood" of only a few inches deep, supported by small end brackets. Paired 6/1 double-hung sash are in the upper most story.

The driveway for the property is on the east lot line and leads to the rear garage. The 3-bay brick garage was designed by local architect Kim Smith of Smith/Burgett in 1995 and reflects the material and style of the house, with a brick first story and broad wood-shingle jerkinhead dormer. While the garage is highly compatible with the house in style and materials, it was considered non-contributing in the original landmark application due to its date of construction. The property formerly had a single-car garage in approximately this same area, adjacent to the east property line. The garage, part of the plans by Royer, had a gabled front roof with returns, and single-light garage doors. The 9-light side windows were the only key element incorporated from the house.

### **The Dutch Colonial Revival Style**

The Dutch Colonial Revival Style occurs from around the turn of the century through at least the 1930s and sometimes later, depending on location. One of many "period revival" styles of the early twentieth century, the Dutch Colonial Revival style is a subtype of the Colonial Revival style, set among Neo-Classical Revival, Late Gothic Revival, Tudor/English Revival, French Revival, Mediterranean, and lesser used exotic revivals such as Egyptian, Moorish, and Swiss Chalet. Many style guides do not even

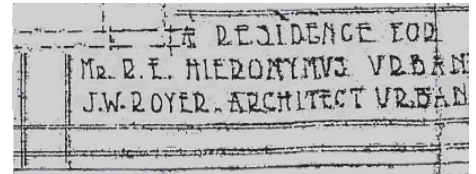
mention the Dutch Colonial Revival style. The National Park Service's Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form notes only Colonial Revival style and Georgian Revival as a subset. Like the other period revival styles, Dutch Colonial attempted to recreate an earlier historic house style, in this case based on Hudson River antecedents (Gordon, 104). The style became popular in pattern books and catalogue companies such as Sears and Montgomery Ward. Sears, Roebuck and Company manufactured twenty-seven different Dutch Colonial Revival homes from 1911 to 1940 (Gordon, 104). The Architects' Small House Service Bureau of the American Institute of Architects (and endorsed by the United States Department of Commerce), also produced a number of Dutch Colonial Revival designs, including "Authentic Small Houses of the Twenties: Illustrations and Floor Plans of 254 Characteristic Homes," edited by Robert T. Jones, Technical Director of the Bureau (and reprinted by Dover Publications, Inc. New York.) The style was especially popular in middle-class urban and suburban neighborhoods (Gordon,

104). Elements of the style include the characteristic gambrel roof, multi-pane upper sash, large roof dormers (commonly shed-roof dormers), lunette windows in gambrel ends, and Colonial style elements such as door hoods, porch details, and cornice treatment (Gordon, 104). Occasionally, examples of the style feature gambrel front facades or bellcast eaves. Even less common is the cross-gambrel roof, which reflects the Flemish eaves of many Dutch Colonial originals (McAlester, 424).

In the design of the Hieronymus House, Royer used the most common form, the side gambrel roof, along with the less common bellcast eaves, including the unusual use of a bellcast eave as a full cornice return on the side elevations. The use of a front shed roof dormer was also common, but despite the large scale of the house, the dormer does not extend as widely as it could. The upper story jerkinhead, or hipped gable, roof dormer adds complexity not commonly found on Dutch Colonial Revival houses, in addition to the side jerkinhead gambrel ends, and the rear elevation rectangular bay and resulting dormers. The multi-light upper sash

are characteristic of the style, as are side porches; however, the use of both brick and frame for the side porches, as well as the east elevation sleeping porch are stylistic attributes which are unmatched locally.

The Hieronymus House is an outstanding example of the Dutch Colonial Revival style, designed by Joseph W. Royer, and retains a very high degree of integrity. The Hieronymus House appears to be the only example of the style in Urbana executed in brick. The exterior materials are completely intact except for a few upper-story windows.



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