

# PRESERVATION MATTERS

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PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

## Washington/Hill Neighborhood House Walk

By Barb Oehlschlaeger-Garvey

*"Since the city of Champaign's incorporation in 1860, one neighborhood has witnessed more history than any other. The residential area to the west of downtown Champaign was essential in establishing the city as a center of commerce, refined architecture, and social diversity (Smile Politely, (June, 4, 2019)."*



Champaign Garden Inn aka the David Bailey house.

On June 1st, a sunny but not-too hot Saturday afternoon, four volunteer tour leaders led over 150 participants through the Washington Hill area to experience a neighborhood that has stood witness to much of Champaign's history.

In an event cosponsored by PACA, this first house tour in many years focused on architecture and personal histories, social/immigrant history, and the hidden history of this historic area. Tours were led by Barb Garvey (PACA Board) Ken Salo (UI Urban Planning), Brenda Koenig, and Mark Taylor. All of whom live in the neighborhood and hope to protect it.

Looking from the sidewalk, the curious visitors learned about the great diversity of house types represented on the architecture tour.

The oldest home on the tour, the Munhall Home at 502 W. Washington,



Munhall Home at 502 W. Washington St.

was begun in 1869, probably as a single story, and then it grew over time to become a gabled-ell with fish scale siding, spindled porch railing, and stained glass windows. The Munhall home grew as the family's fortunes grew: Thomas Munhall first worked for the Champaign Gazette and then began a very successful business working as a printer in downtown Champaign.

The most recent home on the tour, a ranch house at 510 W Washington, was built in the 1970s. Also discussed was a glorious Queen Anne at 411 W. Hill, the David Bailey House. Yes there were two Bailey houses backing on



607 W. Washington St.

to the Hill Church alley. Captain Bailey's house, subject of the previous newsletter and slated for destruction by the Unit 4 School District, faces onto Church Street. David Bailey's house is now the Champaign Garden Inn, a bed and breakfast. David Bailey first used this lot for a dry-goods store, but later built this several story home for his third wife. David Bailey is best known for building the Bailey-Rugg, or Metropolitan Building, in downtown Champaign at the corner of Neil and Church (which burned down in 2009), and for donating land to the City of Champaign for the city hall.

Many other house types were discussed as well: the neighborhood teems with kit home four-squares, Dutch colonials, and bungalows. In addition to these, the architecture tour looked at the older apartment/condo buildings in the area including the Pembroke, and the San Carlos at 410 and 308 North Prairie, respectively.

The social history tour focused on some of the people who have lived in the homes throughout the life of the neighborhood. The Sullivans were early Irish immigrants who lived at 512 W Washington, from 1874 on. Patrick Sullivan built the home and

ran a bakery from his back yard for a generation. The Sullivan family owned the home continuously for 140 years. Significantly, the Kuhn family lived in the home which once stood at 202 W. Hill. John Baddeley, an early resident, sold his home to a young Jewish clothing merchant named Joseph Kuhn. Kuhn's son, Isaac, would eventually raise the funds for University of Illinois' Hillel Foundation. Later the Kuhns would sell the lot to the Masons who built a massive edifice for a lodge on that site. The former lodge is now luxury apartments.

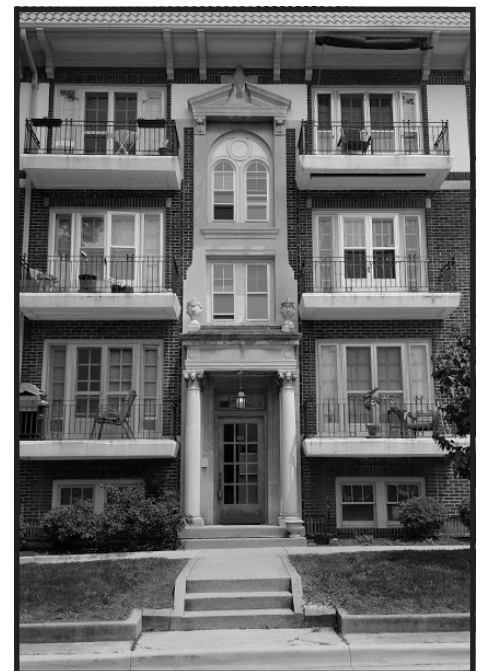
Also of interest on this tour was the continuously integrated character of the neighborhood. For example the Gregory School at 202 W. Columbia was integrated from its start in 1895. Gregory School produced luminaries such as Taylor Thomas, the first black teacher in Urbana School District #116. Despite Gregory's progressiveness, it would be decades before its black graduates would be allowed to join the Champaign High School band, or sit on the main floor of the Virginia Theater.

The hidden history tour revealed unknown facts about neighborhood structures and their residents. For

example, did you know that between 408 and 410 W Maple Residents held an integrated, all-neighborhood 4th of July party every year during the 1920s and 1930s? Or that the YMCA (now an empty lot) was haunted? Were you aware that from 1971 through 1990, the house at 404 W Hill was home to 27-time Grammy Award winner, Alison Krauss? Krauss produced her first album in 1987 at age 16 and won her first Grammy in 1990. Or maybe you knew that George Will the Washington Post columnist and Pulitzer Prize winning editorial writer grew up at 805 W. Hill, played baseball for Mittendorf funeral home, and attended University High School.

After the tours there was time to sit on the porch of the Koenig home and talk about the neighborhood while enjoying a glass of lemonade and homemade treats. The 29 structures on the three tours hold many stories, and those stories helped to create a sense of place for the 150 plus people in attendance.

Those stories deserve to be told.





## PACA survey - the results are in!

By Thomas Garza

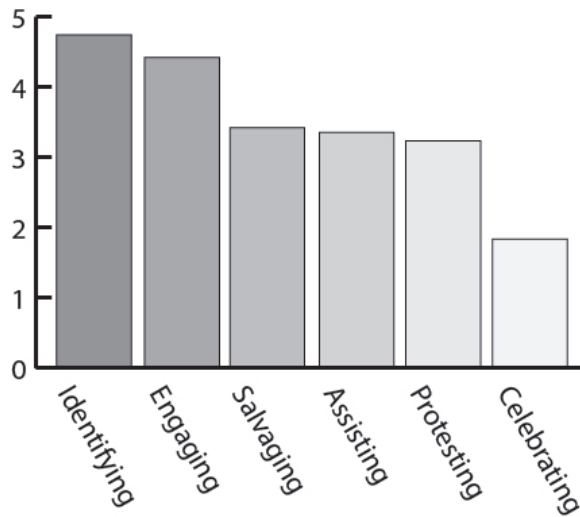
Recently we asked people to take part in a survey designed to help our strategic planning committee create a comprehensive plan. We wanted to involve as many of our stakeholders as possible, so we reached out in a variety of different ways. We had paper copies of the survey at the warehouse, we emailed an electronic version of it to the membership, and we included a link to it on our social media pages. Your response was gratifying (thank you!), and we wanted to share some of the results with you here in order to give you an idea of what everyone had to say.

First lets take a look at who participated. 52.8% of those who responded were PACA members, 18% were directly affiliated with the operations of PACA as regular volunteers, board members, etc, and the rest were social media followers, customers, or 'other' (people who described themselves as having no particular relationship with the organization).

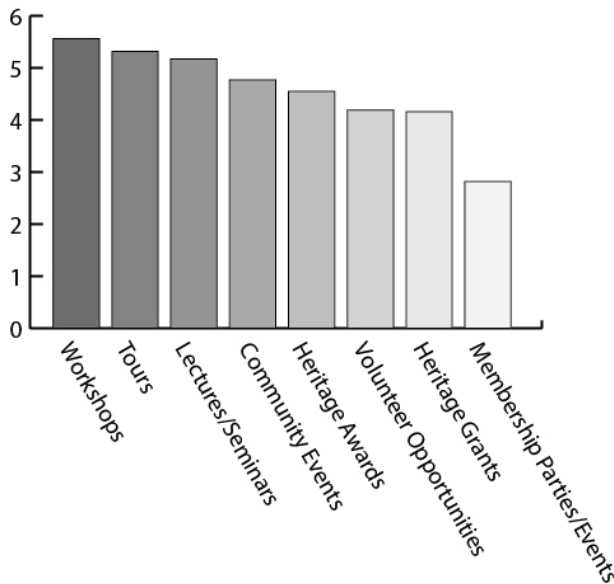
The two questions that we asked that I wanted to highlight here were: "Please rank the following preservation initiatives in order of importance", and "Please rank your interest in the following potential/current programs"

With 'rank in order of importance' we wanted to see what you thought of our current activities, and with 'level of interest' we wanted to see where you thought we should concentrate our energies for future growth.

Rank of Importance



Level of interest



For the 'rank in order of importance' question, 'Identifying historic properties' and 'Engaging with local governments' were the clear favorites, with Salvaging, Assisting property owners and Protesting demolition all nearly tying for the next place. 'Celebrating preservation successes' came in a distant third.

As far as your 'level of interest' goes, 'Workshops', 'Tours', and 'Lectures' were the favorites, followed by 'Events', 'Heritage Awards', 'Heritage Grants',

and 'Volunteer Opportunities'.

Not so high on your list was 'Membership Parties and Events'.

The strategic planning committee has taken these ratings, as well as all of your written responses into account, and hopes to have a plan ready for public input prior to the next annual meeting.

Again we thank you for your input. Please stay tuned !

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## Preservation Alert!

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Our members don't often get a chance to see what we do 'behind the headlines' so to speak, and so we thought that by sharing this story, we might help you to understand a little bit about how we respond to some of the various situations that come to our attention, and give you a sense of why the path to preserve our architectural heritage can be such a convoluted one.

This story concerns recent changes made to the Art Theatre building in downtown Champaign. First opened in 1913 as the Park Theatre, the building that houses the Art has been in more or less continuous operation as a movie theatre ever since. Just about everyone in this area is familiar with the Art and it has contributed a great deal to our cultural life over the years, (albeit for awhile in a rather questionable way) but the fact that the Art is a local landmark may not be something that a lot of people are aware of.

### Landmarking

In order to be considered for landmark status, a structure must meet one or more of the following criteria: (I'm going to paraphrase here because these are all rather long) (a) Significant value as part of the historical heritage of the community. (b) Associated with an important person or event. (c) Representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type. (d) Notable work of a master builder, designer,

architect. (e) Identifiable as an established and familiar visual feature in the community. (f) One of the few remaining examples of a particular architectural style. (g) If it is less than fifty (50) years old it shall not be considered for landmark designation unless it is of exceptional importance.

The Art was designated a landmark in 1998 based mainly on it's having significant value as part of the historical heritage of this community. There are various benefits and restrictions that go along with this status and it is one of the restrictions that we will be discussing here.

Since the Art is a historic landmark, the owners are required to seek a certificate of appropriateness (CoA) whenever they wish to make any changes that include "Activity involving the exterior of the structure including alterations, construction, relocations, or demolition, whether or not a building permit is required."

This restriction is in place in order to ensure that the overall character and appearance of the building remains intact despite any necessary changes that must be made in order to deal with the natural aging of materials and/or any damages that may occur over time.

And this is where we get to the situation we mentioned earlier. Recently, the owners of the Art Theatre made changes to some

prominent features of the building. The upper story windows in the front of the building were replaced with modern replicas. The original window sashes featured multiple panes, and the new replacements are single pane with flat applied strips that are intended to mimic the raised mullions of the originals.

This change drew the attention of some watchful local preservationists who in turn passed the word onto us, inspiring PACA president Susan Appel to send the following letter to Champaign's Historic Preservation Commission.

*"I'm writing to alert you to an issue that requires an immediate response from HPC and Planning & Development. I've just heard that windows are being changed out in the upper stories of the landmarked Art Theater. According to the HP ordinance, this is significant enough a change to warrant the necessity of a Certificate of Appropriateness.*

*I believe that there's need for a City representative to inform the Art Theater organization of the requirement for a CoA. The windows in that building are essential features of its architectural character, so losing them will have a very important negative impact on the historic nature of the building. If this is true, it needs to be stopped ASAP, so that the alterations can be properly considered by HPC."*

I have included this portion of Susan's letter in order to help you visualize the situation. We do our

best to keep up with what's going on in this area, but we can't be everywhere and often find out about important developments only as, or even after they've already happened. Unfortunately, by the time that Susan sent this letter, the replacement process had already been completed and she was informed that this work had in fact received administrative approval. Portions of her response follow:

*"Was the HPC informed of this administrative approval? Shouldn't it have been? I have reason to be familiar with the HPC practices in Milwaukee, and the agenda for each meeting there includes issues to be discussed at that meeting, as well as CoA's administratively approved since the previous meeting. That keeps the information public, so that people aren't surprised, even shocked, when something like the current issue here occurs. I'd certainly suggest that Champaign consider that practice.*

*. . . I sympathize with the probable cost of really replicating the original*

*windows. But there are ways to update things like windows to take advantage of, for example, the energy-saving qualities that today's construction favors. The point is, however, that the historic character of buildings selected as landmarks is something that the Planning Director and the HPC together should exercise far more concern to preserve. They also should be held accountable for the kind of unfortunate decision seen here at the Art Theater, which once more undermines historic preservation in this community."*

Unfortunately, this is where my recitation of events ends, with no resolution to speak of.

PACA has no power to compel as we have seen time and time again. We can influence, persuade, even nag a bit, but that's all we can do. There are rules in place that are designed to govern these types of interactions but they are only as successful as they are properly interpreted or enforced, and neither seems to have been the case here.

This is only a change to one part of the building, but it's never just a single feature that gives a structure its identity, it is the combination of all of the different components and how they work together, and this is why even small changes must be carefully considered by those who care enough to understand how important they are.

Which brings us to what you can do. As I said, our power is that of persuasion, and we are the most persuasive when it is clear that PACA, as an organization, isn't the only voice speaking out. We need as many people as possible to write letters to the newspaper and to the city. We need folks to show up at meetings and speak up. We need everyone involved to understand that the people in this community care about our history and preserving its character.

Only if enough people show up and speak out will preservation be taken seriously by those with the power to do something about it.

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*



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