

PRESERVATION MATTERS

Winter 2021

PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION



2021 will find us embarking upon the first year of PACA's first ever five-year strategic plan.

PACA was founded upon the belief that our community was in need of an organization that could raise awareness about the importance of Champaign County's historic places, and do the work necessary to protect and preserve them.

We also sought to involve ourselves in helping to influence the direction of any inevitable changes in our local landscape.

Over time, since some loss is unavoidable, we included an emphasis on the salvaging of still useful building parts from structures that could not be saved, and began advocating for recycling and the use of green building practices for new construction.

This broadening of our range of activities hasn't always been matched by an equivalent increase in active membership however, and the resulting disparity has sometimes forced PACA to retreat from its more idealistic goals and seek to find the

path of least resistance simply in order to continue moving forward at all.

Even in the face of economic downturns, Champaign and Urbana have continued to be rapidly expanding communities fueled primarily by the relentless growth of the University of Illinois. This has created a climate that is often hostile or at best indifferent to calls for preservation, leaving PACA more of a lonely voice of conscience than the influential community opinion maker it was created to be.

While this dynamic is unlikely to change anytime soon, how we react to it can, but only if we are realistic about the obstacles that lie ahead.

Economic forces seldom work to our advantage, and the transient nature of many in this community (and 21st Century American workers generally) has created a situation where it can be difficult to inspire a sense of ‘belonging’ or ownership of the community itself, or of its legacy. Because of this we feel that we must make a conscious effort not simply to try to only save structures as they become threatened, but to also increase our efforts to identify and highlight important local treasures well before they become the objects of concern or negative attention.

If we are successful in stressing to the members of our community how preservation and knowledge of local history can contribute to the character and well being of our society generally, we will be able to take on the more challenging aspects of our work with greater enthusiasm and confidence in our ability to succeed in our mission.

To help us achieve this end, and position ourselves for positive growth, we have undertaken an extensive process to review our previous efforts, assess current trends in preservation, and use this information in order to develop goals and objectives to guide our efforts in the future.

PACA’s 2021-2025 strategic plan is the result of this process, and it is based on the cumulative experience of PACA’s board and director, our committee members, feedback from our membership, and community input.



In June 2019, the Strategic Planning Committee sent out an electronic questionnaire to our membership, social media followers, and warehouse customers. With roughly 125 members, we had 71 respondents. Respondents included members (52%), volunteers (8%), board members(10%), warehouse customers (18%) and social media followers(7%).

The Strategic Planning Committee turned these responses into a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) which contributed to our Strategic Plan.

This graph summarizes the opinions of those who responded.

PACA’s strategic plan was formulated to address the following key challenges:

- The need to create an organizational structure that will allow for continuity even though volunteers regularly come and go;
- More easily align individual volunteer expertise and interests with organizational priorities;
- Achieve and maintain community influence sufficient to positively affect

relevant issues;

- Create a way to track our progress and guide future efforts; and
- Properly direct and conserve our limited resources.

We will regularly measure our progress on these various initiatives according to the individual time lines set out in the plan, and we will consider new ideas as our changing situation warrants, revisiting the plan and revising its details as needed. Our ultimate goal is for this strategic plan

to become a road map that will allow us to confront changing realities, and yet still remain true to our core values.

We see this document as a new beginning for PACA and a way for us to collectively pursue — despite changing times and alternating members — the important goals this organization was created to achieve.

Very soon we'll have printed copies of the strategic plan available. We will announce when and how to get them in the near future, so please stay tuned.



The initial layout of our member library and museum space.



Volunteer opportunities at PACA

The pandemic has placed on hold a variety of the initiatives outlined in the strategic plan, however we still want to look ahead to a brighter future when we can get together again and work collectively on projects.

One key area we have been exploring is how to create opportunities for our membership to become involved in the work that we do.

Currently the main ways someone can volunteer is either to join us when we salvage, or else come into the warehouse and help us with some of the work that exists there. In the future however, we are looking forward to holding workshops -- where we can teach each other skills related to preservation and restoration -- educational seminars -- where we can share knowledge and

information about how to research historic properties, how to identify building styles, and other matters related to the work of preservation -- and educational but more entertaining activities like house walks, guided tours and other similar events.

To this end we've created four committees designed to focus on specific aspects of our overall efforts. We have an advocacy committee which will concentrate its efforts on monitoring and working with local governments to achieve preservation friendly legislation; an education committee that will focus on sharing information, offering workshops, lectures, etc.; a relations committee that will deal with membership issues and seek to form and maintain relationships with other like-minded community organizations;

and a finance committee that will work to manage our assets and maintain good financial health for the organization.

Some members have already been contacted to work on these committees and more will be needed, so if you have a special area of interest or a specific skill to offer, by all means please contact us and we'll connect you with the committee that handles that specific area.

PACA has always been a membership driven organization, yet we haven't always been able to connect members with activities that interest them, but we hope that's about to change as we move further into the new year and organize our activities in such a way as to make them accessible to all of our members.

In Small Things Forgotten: Overlooked Architectural Details in Historic Buildings

By Brian Adams



Detail from schoolhouse doorway ,
LaPlace Illinois

Plymouth, Massachusetts, 1658

The appraiser appointed by the court worked slowly and carefully from room to room in the small, dimly lit house. Its owner had recently died, and his property had to be valued so that a proper tax could be levied on his estate. The list covered several pages: chairs, fireplace equipment, beds, napkins, chests, clothing—all of the property that had been used to make the world a more comfortable place in which to live. At the end of the listing, the appraiser made a final entry: “In small things forgotten, eight shillings, six-pence.” In this he acknowledged things that he may have overlooked but that nevertheless had value.

It is terribly important that the “small things forgotten” be remembered. For in the little and seemingly insignificant things that accumulate to create a lifetime, the essence of our existence is captured.

(James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life*.)

Evaluating a building for its historic significance generally entails a detailed discussion of its architectural style and, if known, the architect or architectural firm responsible for its design. Attributes such as building materials (brick, clapboard, stone,

etc.), window and door types, roof type, etc., are important components of the evaluation process. Also included in detailed descriptions are ornamental features, such as door and window hardware, weathervanes, ceiling decorations, mantels, and

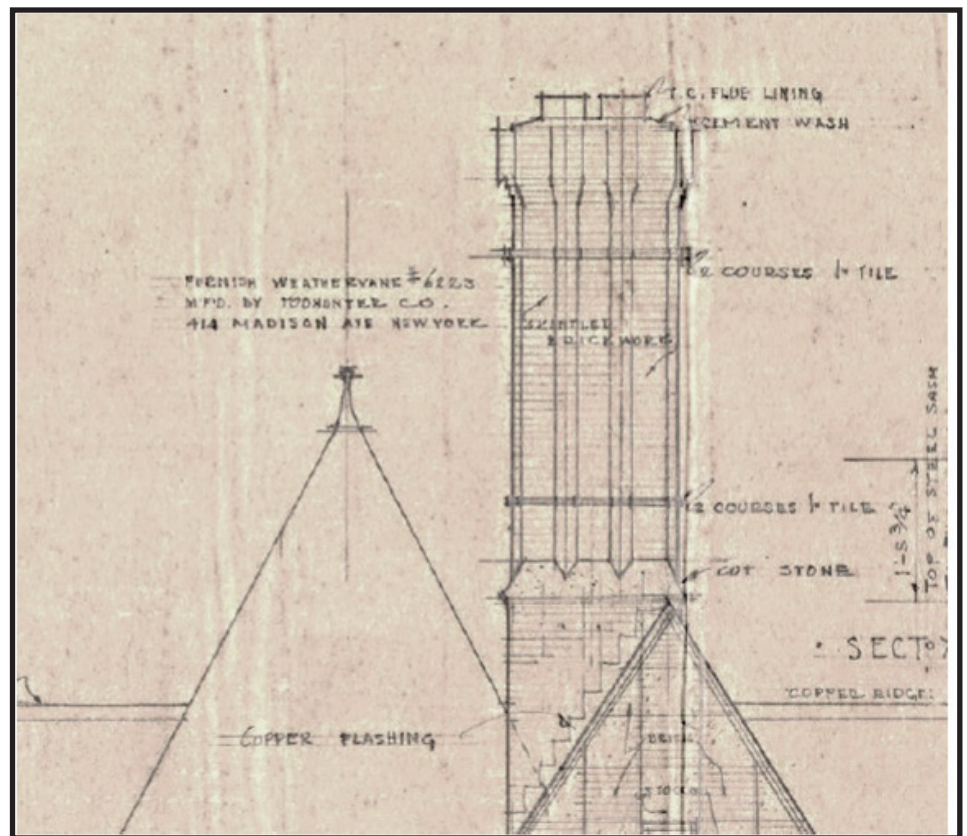
fireplaces. However, while a building as a whole might be recognized and praised as the creation of a specific architect or architectural firm, very often the various ornamental features are the products of specialty companies that generally receive

little or no recognition for their contributions to a historic structure. This is often because such companies no longer exist or whose contributions were overshadowed by the final product (e.g., the building as a whole) and/or the renown of the architect responsible for its design. Also, such features were components of the whole, and as such were not the “featured” aspect of a building. One exception to this might be the famed Indiana limestone, “the aristocrat of building materials”, which was sought out by architects due to its quality and durability and was often touted in articles describing the construction of a new building utilizing this material. In this article I want to recognize and discuss other forgotten or unfamiliar firms that contributed distinctive details to historic buildings in our community, further demonstrating how unique the structures are and how they can inform us about other aspects of our architectural heritage.

On some occasions, particularly for high profile commercial or public projects, newspaper coverage of the construction of a new building might identify companies producing decorative details, especially if local companies were employed. For example, construction of Champaign’s “new” Lewis/Illinois Building (1915/16), designed by local architect N.S. Spencer, was closely followed in the newspapers, which reported local companies were employed, including the Caldwell Lighting Company for all the lighting. However, construction of residential buildings generally did not go into detail about the sources of decorative elements incorporated in the building. Fortunately, architects often made notations on building plans indicating where a particular

architectural element was to be acquired from, and often included the inventory number of the item. Such was the case with the Zeta Tau Alpha (ZTA) sorority house designed by the Urbana firm of Royer, Danely & Smith and built in 1928 at the corner of Lincoln Avenue and Vermont Street in Urbana. A few years ago, about 15 sheets of the original plans for the house, designed in the French eclectic style, were discovered.

TODHUNTER CO., 414 MADISON AVE, NEW YORK.” On sheet #10, which illustrates interior details, are two fireplace mantels. One of these, to be installed at the east end of the living room, is labeled “MANTEL #7987, DECORATORS SUP. CO., CHICAGO”. The other, for the north side of the solarium, is labeled “MANTLE #7990, DECORATORS SUPPLY, CHICAGO”. So, what do we know about these two firms that

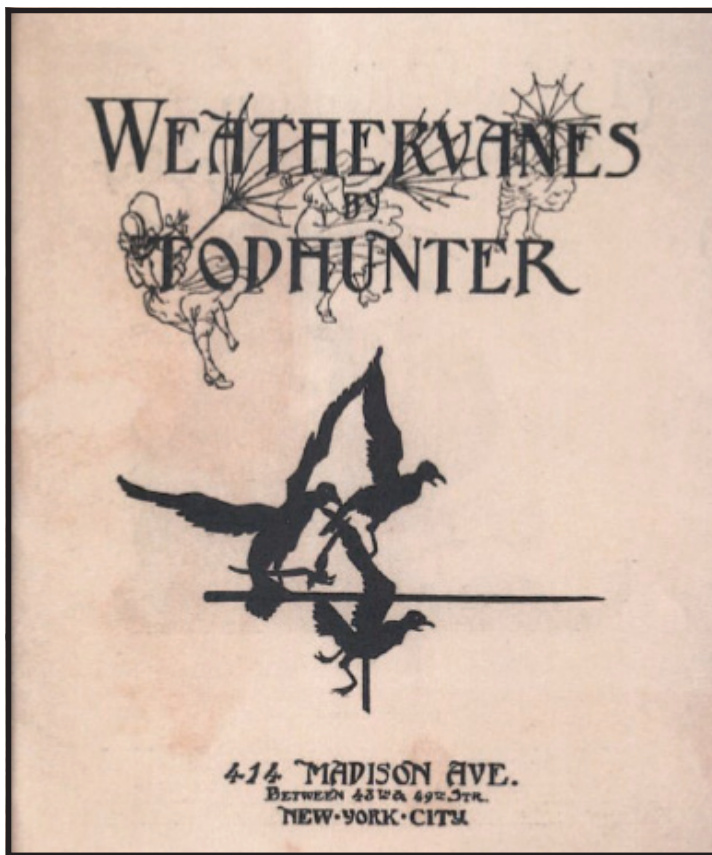


Detail from the Royer, Danely & Smith plans for the Zeta Tau Alpha (ZTA) residence, sheet 6, describing the type of weathervane to be installed (“Furnish Weathervane #6223, Mfg. By Todhunter Co., 414 Madison Ave, New York.”)

These detailed plans included specific information on the style of weathervane and interior fireplace mantels to be incorporated into the design of the house. On sheets #6 and #9, a notation was made above the roof of the house: “FURNISH WEATHERVANE #6223, M’F’G. By

furnished unique architectural details for this residence?

The Todhunter Company was established by Arthur Todhunter, a member of an English family of antiques dealers. He was born in Herefordshire, England in 1887



The 1924 Todhunter weathervane catalog.

weathervane from a Queen Anne building, and much of the window glazing. Unfortunately, this unique building was razed in the early 1970s and replaced with a modern apartment building. One Todhunter advertisement for “colonial hardware” included items such as shutter hinge plates and fasteners, foot scrapers, thumb latches, key plates, and casement fasteners. One catalog was devoted to lanterns that were “hand wrought reproductions of Early English and Colonial originals of distinctive design”. Arthur Todhunter remained in business until the early 1940s, when he moved back to England to help with the war effort there.

Fortunately, the author was able to track down a 1924 Todhunter weathervane catalog online, and to my surprise, the first page featured

and moved to New York in 1909. Initially he imported mantelpieces and entire rooms, but in 1914 he established a factory and began to produce iron and woodwork reproductions including things such as weathervanes, hinges, and paneling. His shop in New York City was a whimsical structure created from a gutted 19th century brownstone in 1927. The new façade was designed with the assistance of architect Lewis Patton and as was typical of the time, resembled a late 16th century English neo-Tudor structure. The medieval façade, which included many authentic items salvaged from old structures, included tiny-paned windows, a scalloped bargeboard and a second story balcony accessed by a circular staircase. Salvaged authentic medieval elements included English red hand-made tiles, a wrought iron

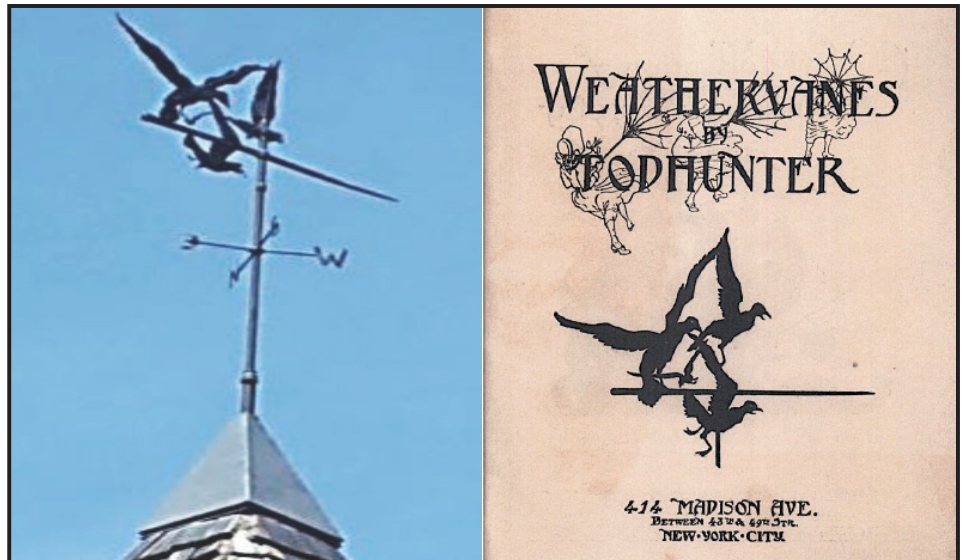


Weathervane No. 6223 “Santa Maria” in the 1924 Todhunter Weathervane catalog



Weather vane on the ZTA house today

weather vane #6223, the same as installed on the ZTA house. This weather vane was made in the image of the “Santa Maria” and was “...an authentic reproduction in silhouette of that famous ninety-foot caravel of the 15th century in which Christopher Columbus sailed from Palos on Aug. 3rd, 1492”. The price was \$55.00. Though not in the best of condition, the Santa Maria weather vane still exists atop the ZTA house. While the rolling waves and ship’s hull are relatively intact, the sails and most of the rigging are missing. The weather vane catalog also advertises another weather vane procured by Royer, Danely & Smith. This one can be seen on the former Alpha Rho Chi fraternity on First Street in Champaign. It is featured on the cover of the catalog and is #6216, priced at \$47.00. This weather vane features a flock of birds and appears to be in relatively good condition. One wonders if other Todhunter



Weather vane on the Alpha Rho Chi fraternity house (left); cover of the 1924 Arthur Todhunter catalog, weather vane No. 6216 (right).

weather vanes exist in the area. Perhaps one may show up in the PACA warehouse someday!

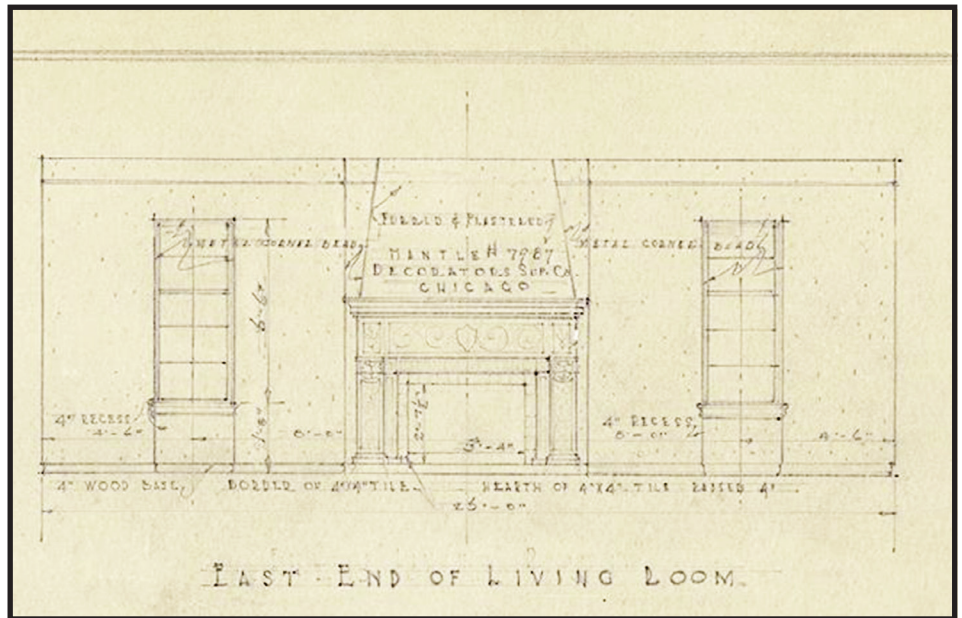
But back to the ZTA house. The plans for this residence included notations for two mantel pieces to be secured from the Decorators Supply Company

in Chicago. This company, which is still in business today, was founded in 1883 by Simon Strahn and Richard C. Foster to produce “artistic and decorative accessories”. By 1893, the company was manufacturing cast ornamental plaster and would produce the mouldings installed in

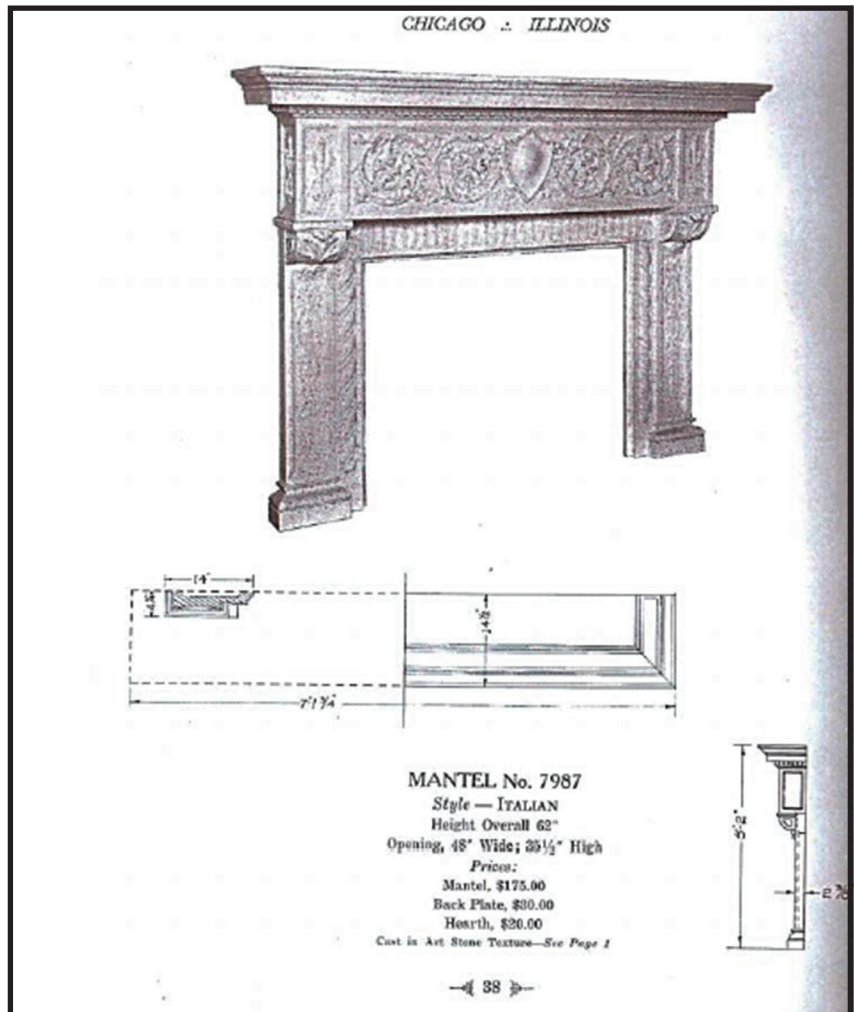


Logo of the Decorators Supply Company of Chicago

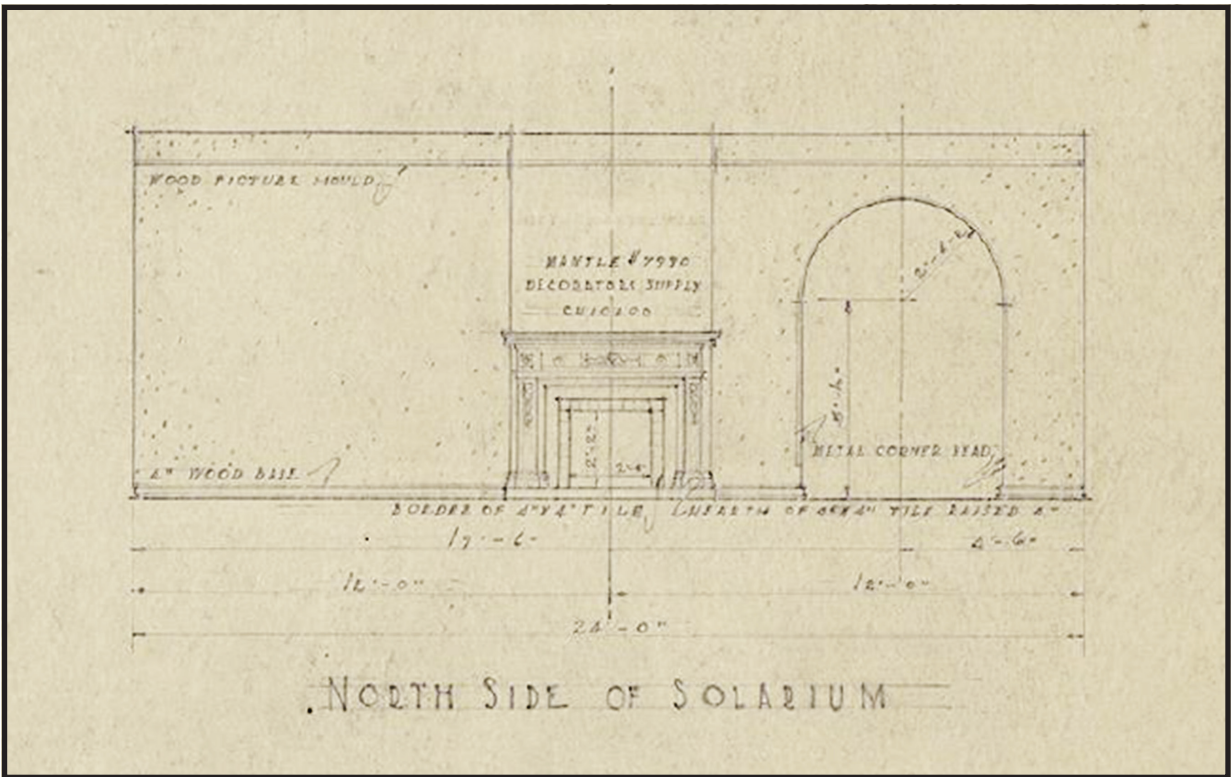
the buildings and halls constructed for Chicago's Columbian Exhibition of 1893. The fair attracted highly skilled artists, sculptors, carvers, and craftsmen, and many from Germany, Poland, and Italy were permanently hired by the company. The company's decorative elements can be seen in the Jimmy Carter Library, the Gerald R. Ford Museum, the Smithsonian Institution, the U.S. Capitol Building, and the National Art Gallery. As noted above, the ZTA house plans indicate that mantel #7987 was to be installed in the east side of the living room, and mantel #7990 was to be located on the north side of the solarium. In October of 2014, the author contacted Jack Meingast of the Decorator Supply Company who was able to provide additional information about these mantels derived from a 1920s catalog in the company's archives. Mantel #7987 is featured on page 38 of the catalog, which indicates it is an Italian style piece and cast in "art stone texture". The price was \$175.00. Mantel #7990 is described on page 39 as a French style piece and priced at \$85.00.



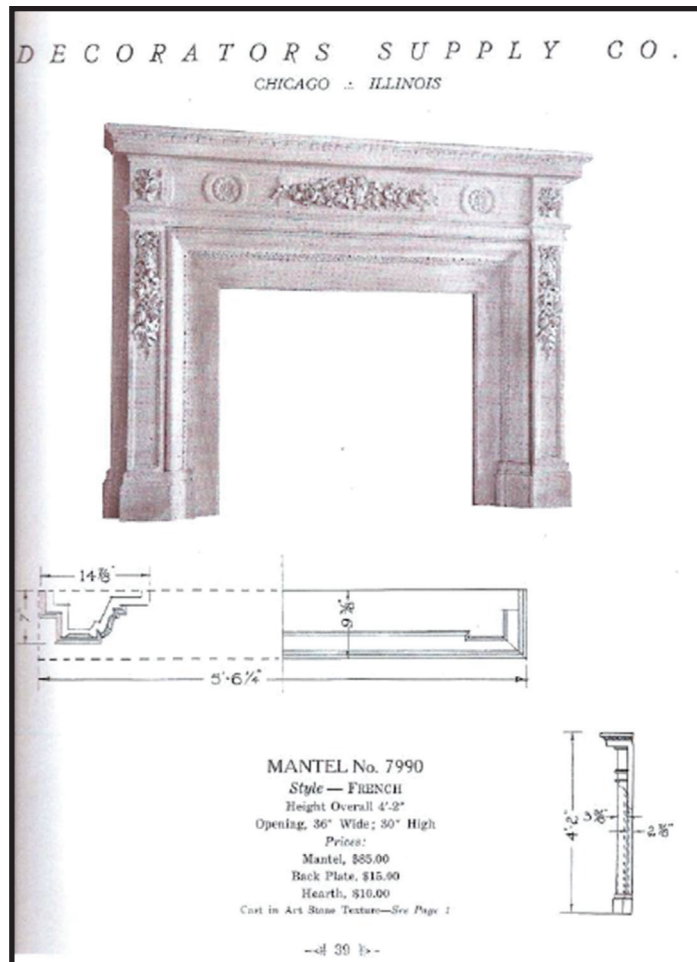
Mantel No. 7987. Detail from the Royer, Danely & Smith plans for the ZTA residence, sheet 10



Mantel No. 7987. Page 38 of the 1920s Decorators Supply Company Catalog



Mantel No. 7990. Detail from the Royer, Danely & Smith plans for the ZTA residence, sheet 10



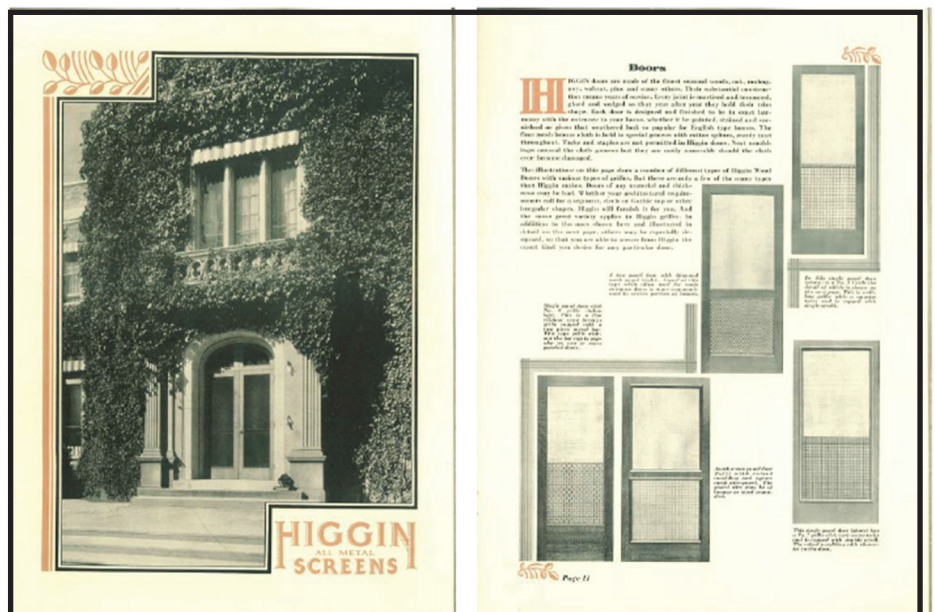
Mantel No. 7987. Page 39 of the 1920s Decorators Supply Company Catalog

Recently the author submitted a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nomination for the Henson House in Villa Grove, which was listed on the NRHP on December 31, 2020. This house was built in 1871 in the Italianate style by George and Eliza Henson and was remodeled in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. When the house was first built, it was the only residence in the grove near the Embarras River, and due to the size and elegance of the farmstead, became known as “The Villa in the Grove”. When the railroad finally arrived in the late 19th century, the town that was established nearby was named “Villa Grove” in honor of the Henson family, who sold the land on which the community was built. One of the early 20th century modifications to the house consisted of the addition of Arts & Crafts details, including plain plank doors for the two main entrances on the west façade of the house. Added in 1913, doors exhibit a small brass plate stamped Higgin Mfg. Co., Newport, KY. The Higgin Manufacturing Company was organized in 1893 and specialized in the construction of screens for windows and doors. Their catalogue from 1925 (p.11) states:

“Higgin doors are made of the finest seasoned woods, oak, mahogany, walnut, pine and many others. Every joint is mortised and tennoned, glued and wedged so that year after year they hold their trim and shape... The fine mesh bronze cloth is held in special grooves with rattan splines, evenly taut throughout”.



Henson House, Villa Grove, Illinois. Arts & Crafts Entrance doors produced by the Higgin Manufacturing Company of Newport, Kentucky.



Excerpts from the 1924 Higgin Manufacturing Company Catalog. Cover (left) and page 11 (right).

The intricate patterns of the mesh bronze screens evoke Asian and Oriental decorative styles, popular during the Arts & Crafts period.

Historic buildings represent the cooperative efforts of many specialists, from talented architects to skilled craftsmen and laborers. Just as today, the contributions of each of these specialists can be “lost” in the finished product. However, it is the sum of each that make our historic structures unique. Investigating and researching the many specialists whose combined efforts produced these structures shines a light on part of the lost, forgotten, or neglected history encapsulated in them.



50FORWARD

A Landmarks Illinois Anniversary Celebration

On March 25, 2021, Landmarks Illinois will be holding an hour-long virtual fundraising event celebrating its 50th anniversary, as well as the people who have shaped the organization and preservation throughout the state.

50Forward will include live entertainment, inspiring videos focused on the past, present, and future, and features about Landmarks Illinois Influencers.

Registration is required so please visit

<https://e.givesmart.com/events/k6b/>

for more information.



Colonel Wolfe School



PACA is working with Landmarks Illinois on trying to save the historic Colonel Wolfe School, located at 401 E. Healey St., Champaign.

The building has been owned for many years by the University of Illinois, which used it for a variety of different purposes, but it now sits vacant, and is at risk of demolition.

Landmarks has been involved in attempts to market the school and has succeeded in generating proposals, but no public reaction to these offers from the University has been forthcoming.

Along with the building's obvious attractions from a design standpoint, it is also notable as being the work of architect Walter Thomas Bailey, the first licensed Black architect in Illinois.

PACA applauds Landmarks for its efforts and we hope that you'll advocate on behalf of this historic building as well.

You can contact the UIUC Chancellor's office about this topic at chancellor@illinois.edu



It's not too late to renew your membership!

November is our renewal month, but you can join or renew at any time throughout the year, and now it's easier than ever to pay your membership dues. You can simply pay online by visiting our website at: <http://pacacc.org/become-a-member/>

You can also print out a copy of our membership form (see below) and pay through the mail.

Now, during the pandemic, we appreciate timely renewals more than ever as we try to stay afloat with decreased revenues from our architectural salvage warehouse.

Your membership is important in other ways too though. As an organization dedicated to educating the community about its valuable architectural heritage, the more people who are connected and know what's going on and

understand what's at stake the better.

PACA exists because of you, and as members you are an inextricable part of the work that we do.

Thank you for your continued support and let's all look forward to a brighter 2021!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION	PACA BOX 2575, Champaign, IL 61825
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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: _____

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

217-359-7222 * www.pacacc.org

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The newsletter of the



PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

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Winter 2021

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