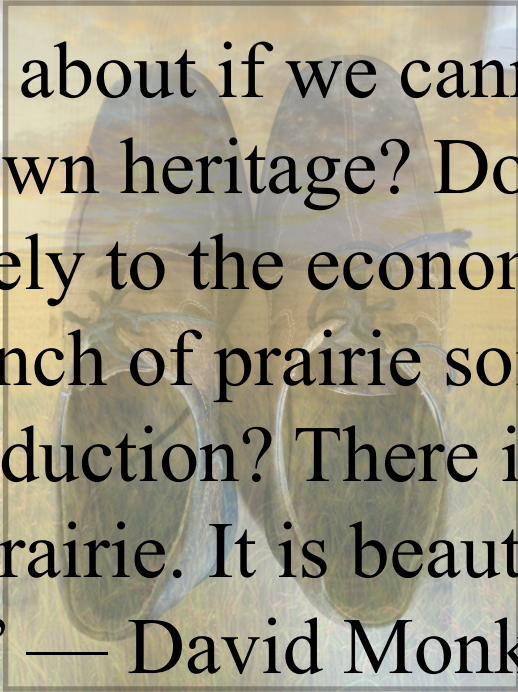


Preservation Matters

Newsletter of the Preservation and Conservation Association

To foster and encourage preservation and conservation, focusing on the built environment of Champaign County and East Central Illinois.



“What is life about if we cannot know and enjoy our own heritage? Do we have to bow completely to the economic dictates in which every inch of prairie soil is valued for row crop production? There is an aesthetic value to the prairie. It is beautiful in its own right.” — David Monk, 2003

How Many Miles?

By Tamara Moore

David Monk, known in the Champaign-Urbana area and in environmental circles as the “Prairie Monk,” was many things — a skilled artist, educator, born

naturalist, activist and dedicated conservationist who spent more than five decades defending his life’s passion with a fervor most often reserved for the religiously

converted. That passion was the preservation of the prairie ecosystem native to east central Illinois.

Dave died on Friday, Dec. 2, 2022, in Urbana at the age of 91. Born in 1931 in Australia, he earned a degree in agricultural science from the University of Sydney before coming to Illinois in 1961 to pursue an advanced degree. He would earn a master's in education in 1963 from the University of Illinois, where he would also meet his future wife, Janice "Jan" Jones, herself an academic and fellow Australian.



David and Janice. Wedding photo

The beauty and richness of the prairie ecosystem he discovered here captured Dave's interest and imagination immediately. In a 2010 blog entry, he recalled his surprise at discovering that few local residents knew that most of their state was once covered in prairie grass.

"When I arrived in Illinois from Australia some years ago, I was looking for the local prairie ecosystem. I found it hard to find. I started to put prairies in the context of their geology and history. I realized that most locals

were also immigrants and that they did not know much about their ecosystem."

In the 1820s, Illinois had 22 million acres of prairie land, but by 1900, most of it was gone; it had been converted to farmland. By 1978, just 2,300 acres of prairie remained in the entire state. Most of the undisturbed prairie remnants today can be found along railroad rights-of way, highways, and cemeteries — places that would take on an almost sacred quality to Dave. If he wasn't writing or speaking about them, or devising short - and long - term plans for the restoration of the prairie ecosystem, he was himself haunting those places — walking along or beside railroad beds, trestles and bridges where his precious remnant prairies could still be found.

This was an untenable loss to Dave, and his life's work became the preservation of prairie land in Illinois. His passionate defense earned him the moniker "Prairie Monk."



The Prairie Monk



115 Taylor Street, downtown Champaign

In 1969, Dave formed an organization that would eventually come to be known as Educational Resources in Environmental Science, or ERES, which sought to educate and conserve remnant prairies. One ongoing project was the amassing of prairie seeds that Dave and others from ERES would later plant at restoration sites.

To work in tandem with ERES, Dave founded Heartland Pathways in 1987. He brokered a deal with the Illinois Central Railroad, which at that time was trying to divest itself of unneeded railroad corridors throughout the region. It was a fortuitous opportunity, and Heartland Pathways purchased from the Railroad 33 miles and more than 330 acres, much of which included invaluable prairie remnants as well as three truss bridges.

Dave saw Heartland Pathways as having multiple uses: hiking, communing with nature, and educating school groups among them. By controlled burning and seeding, the prairie ecosystem along the corridor grew more diverse and dynamic over time.

Throughout his life Dave devoted his efforts to three primary projects: ERES, Heartland



The Prairie Monk

Pathways, and a weekly radio show he hosted called The Prairie Monk.

At well over 6 feet tall, with an unruly mass of salt-and-pepper hair, often fashioned into a ponytail, and white beard — not unlike a modern-day Walt Whitman — Dave cut a striking figure. While he was considered a compassionate and kind person, he could come across as assertive and zealous. He was known to clash with farmers, as well as with fellow conservationists over how best to use the natural resource and restore it.

In 2005, he explained to reporter Molly Stephey of The Green Observer: *“I’m not a compromiser. I am sometimes a lone body doing my own thing and making decisions without consulting with the world.”*

Dave was not afraid to ask difficult questions, and he demanded answers to complex problems because he wanted people to engage with him on the topic of most importance to him — his

passion for preservation. He wanted others to be as fired up about prairies as was he. While he could provoke and exasperate some, Dave inspired and motivated hundreds, many of whom would carry on his work in various ways and form their own conservationist practices and projects.

Dave grew to see Illinois as more than its landscape. Being a true environmentalist meant including society and infrastructure as well as nature. He worked to preserve historic buildings, bridges and railroads in the Champaign-Urbana area.

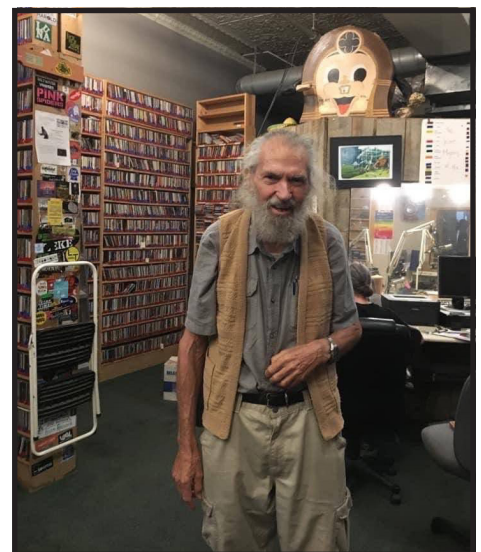
He had an ongoing relationship with Preservation and Conservation Association (PACA) to help repurpose building materials from demolition sites.

PACA member Rich Cahill remembers meeting Monk sometime in the early 1990s. “My first adventure with him was to march with Heartland Pathways in the annual 4th of July parade,” he said. *“Dave was pulling a small*

wagon with prairie plants. I can remember the crowd waving and cheering him. Later those plants ended up in the yard, where they still survive.”

Knowing those prairie plants are still growing in Cahill’s yard would doubtless make Dave Monk very happy indeed. It may be a single yard at one man’s house, but Dave would consider this small victory an important one — another step toward preserving the natural landscape. After all, battles are won in the hearts of individuals. Dave himself was one of those individuals, and his hope was that many would follow after him and make his dream of a revitalized prairie ecosystem a reality.

Dave was many things in his long life, but one thing he most certainly wasn’t, was ordinary.





The Van Doren Residence, 710 West Oregon Street, soon after construction in 1915.

The Van Doren Residence: A New Local Historic Landmark in Urbana

By Brian Adams

On August 3, 2022, the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission unanimously voted to designate the Van Doren residence at 710 West Oregon Street an Urbana Historic Local Landmark. The house was nominated by the author and the owner Denni Hubert.



Charles Lucius Van Doren in 1911



Eudora "Dora" (nee Butz) Van Doren in
1914

The Van Dorens of Urbana

The Dr. Charles L. and Eudora (“Dora”) Butz Van Doren House was constructed in 1915 in the Tudor Revival style. Charles Lucius Van Doren was born May 21, 1857, in Farmington, Illinois (Fulton County), the son of William H. and Hannah Van Doren. He graduated from Bennett Medical College, Chicago in 1881, and soon after opened a practice in Hope, Vermilion County. Here he married Eudora (“Dora”) Ann Butz on May 9, 1883. Dora was born in Hope on May 4, 1863. The couple moved to Urbana in 1900 where Charles continued his medical practice. Dr. Van Doren also operated farms near Hope and Villa Grove, totaling about 1,000 acres. Charles and Dora had five sons: Carl, Mark, Paul, Robert Guy, and Frank. Carl and Mark Van Doren would become writers and professors at Columbia University, and both would win Pulitzer Prizes for their works.

When the family moved to Urbana, Charles had a large house built in 1901 at 712 West Oregon Street, and the northeast corner of the intersection with Busey Avenue in the Sarah M. Hall’s Subdivision of Campbell & Kelly’s Addition to Urbana. At this time, Oregon Street was at the extreme southwest edge of Urbana’s corporate limits, with little development to the south.

During his tenure in Urbana, Charles Van Doren wore many hats and contributed to the community in many ways. In addition to his medical practice, he also served on the Urbana school board and in 1909 created “Van Doren Heights”, an addition to Urbana that surrounded newly established Carle Park. Bordered by Washington Street on the north, Pennsylvania Avenue on the south, Orchard Street on the west, and Race Street on the east, Van Doren’s Addition would expand the residential limits of the city to the south and encourage additional development of that area.

Carle Park, the third oldest park in Urbana, was donated to the city on March 5, 1909, by Mrs. Margaret Carle Morris in memory of her first husband Albert G. Carle, an early pioneer who died in 1881. She also donated \$10,000 to beautify the

park with a fountain and statues. Mrs. Morris had sold 30-acres of her property to Dr. Van Doren, who platted the “Van Doren Addition to the City of Urbana”. Mrs. Morris stipulated that as part of the sale, about 10 acres was to be turned into a public park.

On 25 March 1909, the *Urbana Courier-Herald* wrote:
D. (sic) C.L. Van Doren is having his new addition surrounding Carle Park surveyed and will begin improving the land as soon as the weather permits.

By May 6, 1909, grading and planting of grass seed had been completed in the park, and Van Doren had placed an order for “forest” shade trees, which arrived by May 19 and were soon planted by a large work force.

The Van Doren Addition with Carle Park was a success, and quickly attracted buyers, spurring urban expansion southwards. On October 30, 1909, the *Urbana Courier-Herald* wrote:

Lots on Van Doren Heights are going like hot cakes on a cold morning.

And on October 6, 1910:

There is just now a lively scramble for lots fronting on Carle park. People who have bought are highly elated. Those who have secretly planned to buy, in the future, have suddenly awakened to the fact that nearly all the choicest lots are already gone, and that it will very soon be impossible to secure any kind.
(*Urbana Courier-Herald*, 1910)

Charles Van Doren also played a role in the ill-fated “Kankakee and Urbana Traction Company”, or “University Route”, designed to connect Urbana with Kankakee to the north and Charleston to the south with electric rail service. Incorporated in 1909, the planned system caused much fanfare in Urbana, which anticipated the electric service would attract riders interested in local connections to nearby communities without relying on traditional steam rail service. Apparently still smarting from the chosen route for the Illinois Central Railroad through Champaign in the

1850s, Urbana city leaders anticipated the community would benefit from a rail system that directly connected Urbana with other communities. Van Doren was on the board soon after incorporation, and by August of 1917, had replaced George M. Bennett as president. Trains began operating in November of 1912, although the line had not reached its planned final destinations, stalling out at Paxton in the north. Soon however the system began experiencing financial problems, partially due to the rise of motorized vehicles, especially trucking companies which began competing for hauling business. The traction company’s holdings were sold in 1926 and the road was abandoned.

Despite his dedication to multiple personal and community endeavors, Charles Van Doren often found himself in financial distress. Son Mark Van Doren (1958, p. 39) wrote in his autobiography:

It was years before I realized that he had crushing problems with his farms and the other enterprises he took on.

Apparently, the failure of the traction system proved to be a great burden:

People put money into it because he asked them to; they believed in him as he believed in it, for his initial faith in it was very strong; and thoughts of these people were to rob him of much sleep before he died. The railroad never did prosper...we all witnessed the dismal, slow disaster without any power to stop it on our part. It was eventually, in combination with the agricultural depression of the 1920’s, to take away from him whatever wealth he had...”

(Van Doren 1958, p. 42)

In order to help with the family finances, his mother bought a few houses as rental properties and also rented out rooms in the family house (Van Doren 1958, p. 42).

Mounting financial problems may explain why Charles Van Doren had the house at 710 West Oregon Street built in 1915 (Van Doren 1958, p. 71). This house, designed by his son Robert Guy Van Doren, was built immediately east of their original residence at 712 West Oregon Street.



Robert Guy Van Doren (1887-1960)
Architect of 710 W Oregon St.

Robert Guy Van Doren was born on November 3, 1887, and attended Thornburn High School in Urbana, graduating in 1905. Afterwards, he attended the University of Illinois, graduating in 1910 from the College of Engineering with a degree in Architecture. His thesis was entitled “A Design for a University Library” and was approved by N. Clifford Ricker. In June 1910, he moved to Muskogee, Oklahoma where he assumed a position with the architectural firm of Smith, Parr & Van Doren. Here he had built a new house in the summer of 1910 after graduating from the university. In October of 1910, he briefly returned to Illinois to marry Verla E. McCray in Danville. After the wedding, the couple returned to Muskogee. Verla was a graduate of the Women’s College at Jacksonville, Illinois. In August 1911, the couple had a daughter, Mary Elizabeth. The 1914 City Directory indicates Guy and his wife were back in Urbana at this time. He was employed as a draftsman by architect Archie Henry Hubbard of Champaign. Hubbard was a faculty member at the University of Illinois and also served as Associate to the Supervising Architect, James M. White. In 1915, he and C.J. Pankow of Urbana formed an architectural firm. Hubbard headed an office in Champaign, while Pankow oversaw the Urbana office. By 1916, the Guy Van Doren is residing in Detroit, where for a while he was employed with

the Kahn architectural firm. He continued to reside in the Detroit area through the 1930s, eventually opening a business in Jackson. In 1945, he and his wife established an antique business in Clinton, Michigan. Guy Van Doren passed away on November 11, 1960, in Jackson.

The Van Doren Residence



The Van Doren residence in 2022

The Van Doren house is situated on an irregular-shaped lot bordered by an alley to the east. This lot, which is oriented north-x-south, was created from the eastern portions of Lots 5 and 6 of Sarah M. Hall’s Subdivision, both of which were owned by the Van Doren’s at one time. They purchased Lot 6 in 1899 and Lot 5 in 1914, and between 1924 and 1927 sold the western portions of the two lots. Thus, the current shape and orientation of their lot on West Oregon Street was created by 1927. Prior to the division of Lot 6, the Van Doren’s had built their first residence in the western portion of this lot, at 712 West Oregon Street; this house burned down in February 1968 [Clements 1968]).

Built in 1915, the Van Doren House is a unique example of the Tudor Revival style. Tudor Revival style encompasses a range of varied types based on late Medieval models. In America the style tends to emphasize steeply pitched, front-facing gables that dominate the façades. Ornamental half-timbering is common, while walls are typically constructed of stucco, masonry, or masonry-veneered walls. The Van Doren house exhibits features that can be classed

within the “Parapeted Gables” and “Brick Wall Cladding” subtypes of McAlester and McAlester (1984:355-356). The distinctive Parapeted Gables Subtype... is based on more formal English building traditions of Late Medieval times. In these, the walls of the characteristic front-facing gables rise in a parapet above the roof behind.

The distinctive entry porch of the Van Doran house exhibits such a parapeted gable. The Brick Wall Cladding subtype is the most common Tudor subtype. As noted above, the house is situated at the southern end of a rectangular lot. However, when originally constructed, the house was at the east end of Lot 6 owned by the Van Doren’s.

The lot is bounded by an alley to the east and West Oregon Street to the south with shallow setbacks. To west the lot is bounded by the west halves of Lots 5 and 6. A low, common-bond brick wall with a concrete cap separates the property from a herringbone brick sidewalk to the south and the asphalt alley to the east. A high metal triad spear picket fence, not original to the property, is located along the inside of the brick wall, extending along the entire length of the south side of the lot. The fence continues along the east side of the lot along the alley, terminating at a point in line with the house façade. A high wooden fence partially obstructs views of the south and east side of the back yard. The carriage house at the northeast corner of the lot is accessed from a gravel lot that opens from the alley. The alley is accessed from West Oregon Street by a short brick-paved drive with concrete curbing that terminates in line with the wall along the south edge of the lot. A metal hitching ring is located in the concrete sidewalk near the curb along West Oregon Street.

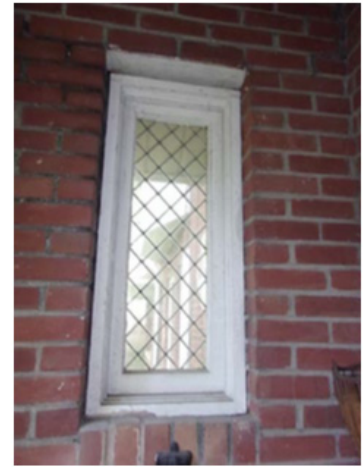
The Van Doren House is 2-1/2 stories with a simple rectangular ground plan and end gable roof. It is asymmetrical with an



Parapeted east entry porch.



Parapeted east entry porch, side view to east (left) and porch window detail (right)



off-center entry porch on the east side of the façade, a front gable above a second story, semi-hexagonal bay window near the center, and a 2-story wing on the west side. A historic photograph of the house indicates the west wing was originally an open porch with no windows. The house is constructed of smooth dressed red brick laid in common bond. The exterior walls rest on a horizontal, decorative string course of bricks resting on vertical soldier bricks. The brick chimney can be described as a combination gable wall and slope type. The lower portion of the chimney is currently not visible on the exterior of the west elevation where it is obscured by the west wing/former porch. The stack passes through the soffit and the south-facing roof of the south elevation. The top of the stack is T-shaped with a stone cap resting on a rowlock course of bricks. All roofs are clad with asphalt shingles.

The house exhibits elements of the Tudor architectural style, though some of these have been masked by recent additions to the exterior. However, the original architectural details still exist beneath the additions and could easily be exposed once again. These details can be seen in historic photographs of the house. The most characteristic and imposing elements of the style can be seen on the façade of the house. The center of the second story is dominated by a large bay window. Historic photos show this window with

the original decorative half-timbering and stucco infill. Above the bay window is an end gable, also clad in modern siding. Within this gable is a small square window. Historic photographs show this gable, like the bay window below, with half-timbering and stucco infill. The first floor of the façade is dominated by a distinctive off-center entry porch at the east end. This is of brick construction with a stone, semi-elliptical Tudor arch beneath a steeply pitched roof with a stone-capped parapet. Between the peak of the roof and the arch is a decorative diamond of brick and stone. The steeply pitched porch roof is clad in asphalt shingles. On the west and east sides of the porch are narrow windows glazed with diagonal panes. Two gabled roof dormers are located on the eastern half of the roof. The dormers and soffits are clad in modern siding, but again, historic photographs indicate these dormers originally exhibited half-timbering with what appears to be stucco infill. In the center of the east gable are paired sash windows with a stone sill. Above this, decorative brickwork at the peak of the gable features a vertical, narrow recess terminating with stone squares at top and bottom. The west gable also features this decorative brick work. Another interesting feature of the house is a large one-story unit that projects from the back of the house. This projection originally functioned as Dr. Van Doren's medical office. Immediately east of this is a well that is now covered for safety

reasons. Apparently, the Van Doren's permitted their neighbors to use this well as needed.

Following Charles Van Doren's death in 1933, his wife Dora remained in the house until 1942, when she moved to 602 West Oregon Street, a house the couple purchased in 1923 as a rental property. She sold 710 West Oregon Street to Carl G. Hartman in 1942. He was Head of the Zoology and Physiology Department at the University of Illinois from 1941 until 1947. The next owner was another University of Illinois Professor, Arthur Lincoln Scott, who purchased the property in 1947 from Hartman. He was an assistant professor of English who retired in 1970. The 1971 city directory records Bruce Shurts residing at the house. By the 1980s the property was known as the Shurts Bed and Breakfast. In early 2001, it had reopened as the Hubert House Bed and Breakfast.

Carriage House/Garage

At the northeast corner of the Van Doren property is the carriage house. It is a 2-story Craftsman-style structure with a simple rectangular ground plan and moderately pitched, flared side gable roof with a south-facing gable roof dormer. The south facing roof plane is longer than the north facing plane, extending from the roof peak to the brick wall on the south elevation. The north facing roof plane is



Carriage house/garage, east and north elevations.

about half the size of the south facing plane, and rests on the shingled second story of the north elevation. The first story is constructed of smooth dressed red brick laid in common bond. The end gables and second story north elevation feature boxed soffit ends and are clad in wooden shingles. The soffits appear to be original wooden beadboard. Mark Van Doren (1932) describes the carriage house in a fictionalized account from his childhood about ponies the family owned. He describes the building thus: *The outside walls were low and pretty, and made of red brick, with square white windows not too close to the ground and with the roof pitched high like the roof of an old cottage. The front door...was at the end of a passage which ran through the middle of the barn to a door exactly like it at the other end...A door just wide enough to let one pony through with his saddle on opened into the alley...*

This description closely matches the current carriage house on the property. It also accurately describes the location of this structure on an alley along the property; alleys are relatively rare in this neighborhood. In the 1990s the carriage house was extensively renovated and won an "Adaptive Use Award" from the Preservation and Conservation Association (PACA) of Champaign County in 1995.



Carriage house/garage, south elevation.

Selected Sources

Alumni Register of the College of Engineering, November 1913. Urbana, Illinois

Champaign County Historical Archives

Champaign/Urbana City Directories 1904-1999

City of Urbana Historic Resources Survey Form: 3 March 2003

Clements, Denny
1968 Blaze Guts Old Van Doren Home. *Champaign-Urbana Courier*, February 18, 1968.

Daily Illini, 20 May 1924, p. 2; 22 January 1925, p. 3; 10 January 1926, p. 3; 27 March 1926, p. 3.

Deed Records, Champaign County Clerk & Recorder of Deeds' Office, Urbana, IL.

George A. Ogle & Company
1893 *Plat Book of Champaign County, Illinois*. Chicago: Geo. A. Ogle & Co. 1913
Standard Atlas of Champaign County, Illinois. Chicago: Geo. A. Ogle & Co.

Heitzman, Frank E.
1974 *The Architectural Survey of Champaign-Urbana*. Copy on file, Champaign County Historical Archives.

Lohman, Karl B.

1961 *100 Houses of Urbana: Who Lived in Them and When?* Copy on file, Champaign County Historical Archives.

Mancuso, Dana L.

2007 *A Century of Growth: The Urbana Park District's First 100 Years*. Urbana Park District.

McAlester, Virginia Savage.

2015 *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America's Domestic Architecture*. New York: Knopf, 2015.

News-Gazette 18 August 1991; 9 April 1995; 6 February 1992; 12 March 2001.

Urbana Daily Courier, 29 August 1917, p. 4; 3 August 1921, p. 2; 27 October 1933, p.1.

Urbana Courier-Herald, 26 April 1908, p. 1; 25 March 1909, p. 1; 19 August 1909, p. 1; October 2, 1909, p. 4; October 30, 1909, p.3; October 6, 1910, p. 5; 31 October 1912, p. 12.

11

Van Doren, Mark

1932 *Dick and Tom in Town*. New York: The Macmillan Company.

1958 *The Autobiography of Mark Van Doren*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

Western Contractor, Vol. 21, No. 587, April 10, 1912, p. 18



PRESERVATION MATTERS

The newsletter of the



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

Winter 2023

President: Joe Zalibak

Vice President: Geoffrey Haider Badenhorst

Secretary: Thomas Warda

Treasurer: Geoff Bant

Executive Director: Thomas Garza

Newsletter Editor: Tom Garza

If you would like to contribute to the PACA newsletter, please contact us at pacaexdir@gmail.com

Warehouse: 44 E. Washington St., Champaign, IL
Hours: Tuesday - Friday from 12pm - 4pm and Saturday from 10am - 4pm
Telephone: 217-359-PACA (7222)
Web: <http://www.pacacc.org>
E-mail: pacaexdir@pacacc.org



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION PACA BOX 2575, Champaign, IL 61825

MEMBERSHIP STATUS

New Renewal

NAME: _____

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY

ADDRESS: _____

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

PHONE: _____

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

E-MAIL: _____

I wish to make an additional contribution: \$ _____

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