Preservation Matters

Newsletter of the Preservation and Conservation Association

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

Summer-Fall 2025 Newsletter

At left and above, Bloom Township High School, exterior ornamental details.

INSIDE:

Leal School, Dixon, Ill., main entrance, sign detail.

Designing for Modern Times:

The Art Deco/Moderne Projects of Joseph W. Royer

By Brian Adams

The year 2025 marks the 100th anniversary of the advent of the Art Deco style, popularized at the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris.

> *The show introduced a style that reflected the new machine age and embraced all forms of design-fashion, film, transportation, product design, and architecture — and drew from a cocktail of art movements, including Cubism, Fauvism, and Futurism, and from the archaeological discoveries of the time, most notably the unearthing of Tutankhamen's tomb in 1922* (Schwartzman 2005, p. 11).

Generally, in architecture the style is characterized by "simple, streamlined, geometric, rectilinear lines and forms" and includes "[s]tylized decorative motifs, particularly sunbursts … and the repetition of forms and motifs" (Cunliffe et al. 2006, p. 220).

In American architecture, Art Deco falls within a broader classification termed Moderne. Temporally dating from 1920 to ca. the 1950s, three distinct expressions of Moderne architecture have been recognized:

> *Zigzag or Art Deco of the 1920s; the Streamline of the 1930s; and the stripped classicism of the PWA Moderne of the 1930s* (Martinson 2009, p. 175).

Morton Grade School, built in 1928.

Zigzag/Art Deco is characterized by angularity and decorative ornament. Streamline designs are more simplified, "reflecting both depression-era values and a reaction to the excesses and superficialities of the 1920s" (ibid., p. 176).

According to Schwartzman (2005, p. 11), Streamline Moderne was "an American invention of the 1930s that reflected the concept of speed." Streamline designs typically exhibit rounded corners, an emphasis on the horizontal, and glass block and colored Vitrolite surfaces.

PWA Moderne has roots in Beaux Arts classicism. Details such as columns were simplified, and sculptural ornamentation was minimal. The PWA Moderne style typically was employed for government and civic buildings.

While Urbana architect Joseph William Royer is known primarily for his competency with various historic revival styles — especially medieval Tudor styles — he also designed several buildings in the Art Deco style, the style characteristic of the so-called Jazz Age.

By this time, Royer was in his early 50s and his foray and successful venture into this unique new style illustrates his talent as an architect. Not only did he master the various styles inspired by the past, he also mastered the innovative new styles that emerged during his lifetime. Royer was undoubtedly inspired to add this new style to his repertoire by visits to Los Angeles where his sister-in-law, Nell Brooker Mayhew, had relocated and established herself as an accomplished artist. Royer and his wife Adelaide are known to have taken trips to visit Nell on the West Coast. According to Schwartzman (2005, p. 12), Los Angeles "was one of the first cities to embrace this new decorative language."

To date, the author has found 11 buildings designed by Royer's firms between 1928 and 1946 that can be classified as Moderne/Art Deco. Of these, six are schools and the remainder are a mix of military, civic/municipal, and commercial buildings.

Above, Bloom Township High School, main entrance. Below, Bloom school entryway, detail.

Morton Grade School

Royer's firms were known for designing many schools throughout the Midwest. One of his earliest projects in the Moderne style was for a school in Morton, Ill. (Tazewell County). It is of buff brick construction with minimal limestone trimming and ornamentation. It appears to combine elements of Zigzag/ Art Deco and Streamline design. The former can be seen in the verticality of the paired entrances, while the latter is suggested by the rounded façade between the entranceways.

Bloom Township High School

In 1931, Royer's firm designed what can be considered his masterpiece of the genre: Bloom Township High School in Cook County (Napoles 2018). This school, now listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), is "an outstanding example of art deco or zig-zag modern style" (Libles 1981). It is a four-story structure built of gray brick with terra cotta details. Libles (ibid.) describes the salient fea-

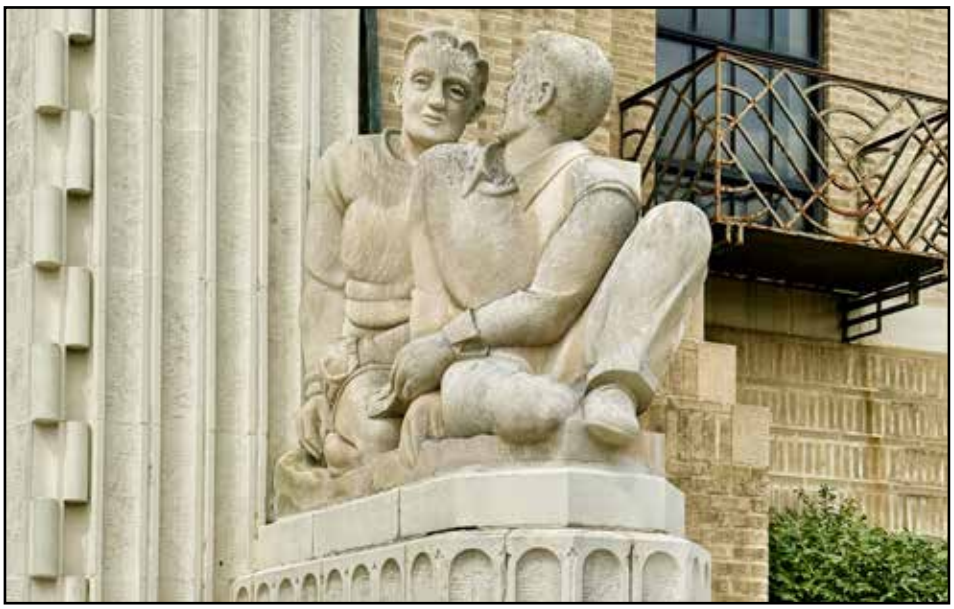
tures of the building best:

The main entrance dominates the structure due to its verticality and use of symmetrical projections. The use of chevrons and zig-zag may also be noted at the top of the main entrance as well as secondary entrances. Ornamental copper plates are located under the windows. In addition, extensive ornamental grillwork may be found directly over the main entrance-doors, on the small front balconies, on the doors of Veazey Gymnasium, and on the windows of the Social Science Resource Center. Ornamental copper decorations in a fleur-de-lis pattern are separated by fluted panels on the South (10th St.) side of the structure.

The main entrance is flanked by two Indian Bedford limestone sculptures depicting Bloom High School students, who posed for the sculptors. One of the sculptures was done by Felix Schlag, designer of the Jefferson Nickel, while the other was the work of Curt Drewes.

Interior details include stairway railings with spiral floral ornamentation and six murals by Edgar Britton. Britton was born in Odessa, Neb., in 1901 and was associated with the WPA/FAP Mural Division between 1935 and 1937. The murals depict six types of life work learned by students and their practice in adulthood.

David Newton, staff writer



One of two sculptures of Bloom students is positioned at the school's main entrance, with a small balcony to the right.

A Depression-era mural by Edgar Britton housed in Bloom school's interior, which was restored in 1987, depicts job possibilities in agriculture.

Above, Bloom Township High School entrance, detail.

for Historic Illinois, wrote in October 1988 about the 1987 restoration of the murals inside Bloom Township High School. The Depression-era murals by Britton had been damaged by decades of dust, pollution and graffiti, which was removed and the murals were renovated with the aid of funds from Bloom Township alumni, faculty and students, and a $4,400 Illinois Heritage grant from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

Amazingly, in 2010, a complete set of original blueprints for the school and other Royer projects was discovered by PACA salvage volunteers in the former Smith & Company Fire Proof Storage/Pure Ice Facility slated for demolition in Champaign (see Adams 2012 for details). These were given to the author, who donated them to the University of Illinois archives, where they were carefully curated and are available for study (Record Series Number 26/20/162) (Scheider 2013).

Leal School

The story of Royer's Leal School in Urbana com-

Above, Leal School, entrance. At right, a decorative lamp at the school.

mences in fall 1934. Like many projects in the 1930s, the new structure would be a Public Works Administration (PWA) project and the third school building to stand on the site within 70 years, replacing a structure built in 1872.

On Nov. 26, 1934, the Urbana Board of Education chose Royer's firm to design the planned building (*Daily Illini* 1934a). The plans were approved in late December 1934, and at this time the cost was determined to be between $172,000 and $175,000 (*Daily Illini* 1934b).

In January 1935, the plans were modified slightly and again approved by the board of education (*Evening Courier* 1935). The plans demonstrated the building would have facades on the north and south sides for ease of access on the narrow lot and other reasons. The plans also called for preserving as many trees as possible.

By October 1935 the building was half complete (*Daily Illini* 1935a). An account of a new method to pour concrete for the floors is reported. By June 1936 linoleum tile installation began and the project's final contract — installation of student seats and desks (American Seating Co.) — was awarded (*Daily Illini* 1936a).

The school was finished and dedicated during American Education Week, Nov. 9 to 15, 1936 (*Daily Illini* 1936b). According to the *Daily Illini*, "Thursday evening, Nov. 12, a formal open house will be held when prominent speakers will officially dedicate the best equipped lower-grade school in the Twin-Cities" (ibid). The final cost of the building was $212,000 (*Daily Illini* 1936c). The dedication ceremony

Color postcard of Lincoln grade school, Dixon, Ill., built 1937.

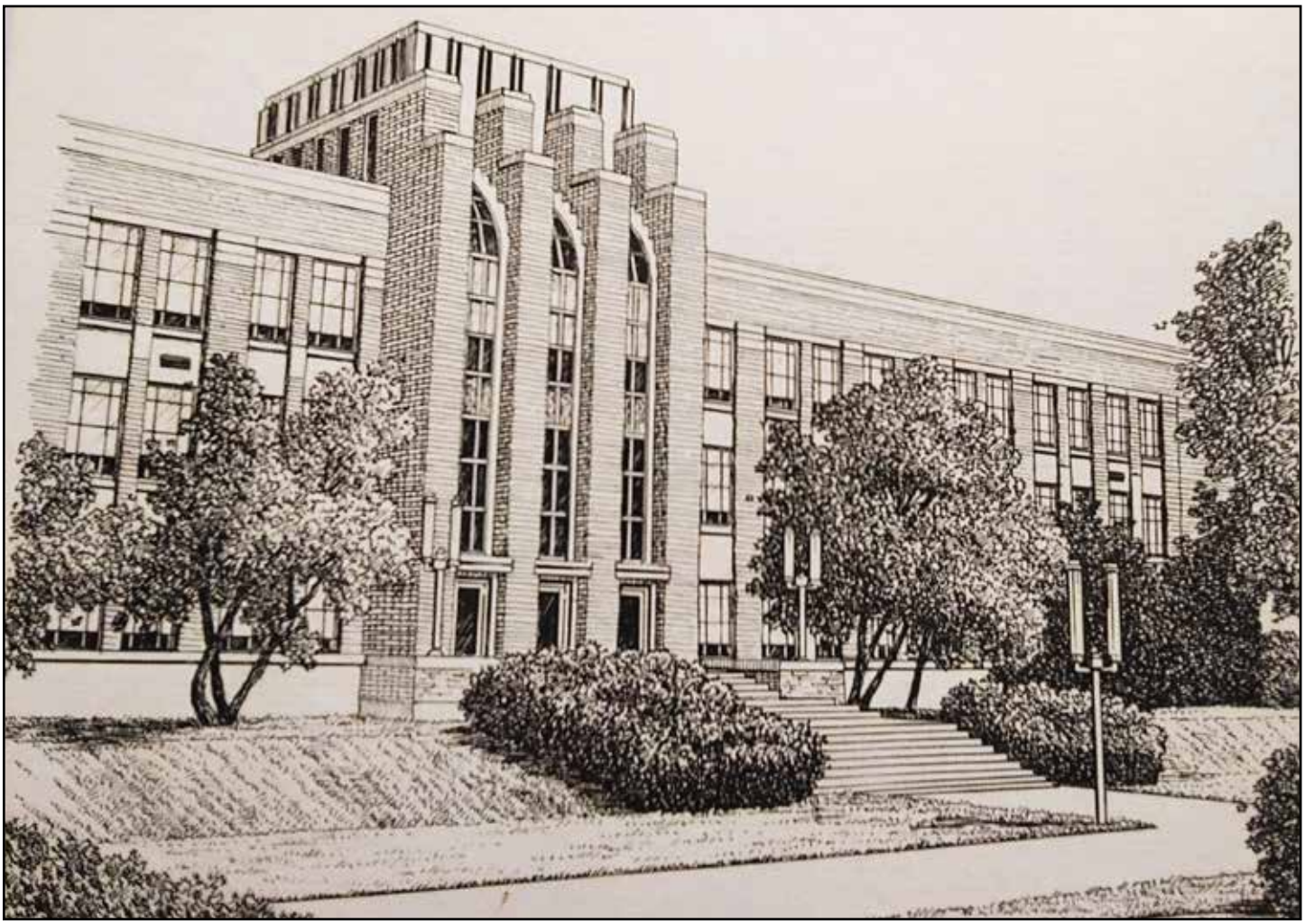
was attended by 500 people, and speakers were John A. Wieland (state superintendent of public instruction), B.S. Hopkins (president, board of education), C.H. Bauer (Illinois director, PWA), Robert B. Brown (director, division of University extension), T.H. Cobb (county superintendent of schools), and A.C. Willard, University of Illinois president. The new school could hold 670 students and included an intercom radio and public address system.

Leal School is an example of the PWA Moderne style, with minimal ornamentation. Decoration is pretty much restricted to the south façade entrance, with tall metal lamps and simplified column flanking the doorway. Above the doorway is the school name in typical period lettering, flanked by what appear to be geometric corn stalks/fasces surrounded by leaves and flowers.

Lincoln School, Dixon

This school, located in Lee County, was another project partially funded by the PWA. Costing $273,000, the school was finished in

Niles Township/Niles East High School, color postcard.



Sketch of Niles Township/Niles East High School entrance, 1938.

1938, and classes commenced on Jan. 24 of that year. An open house was held on Jan. 23, 1938, attended by more than 5,000 people. The general contractors were Berglund & Company. The school held classes from kindergarten through eighth grade.

The building is of brick and concrete construction, with minimal decoration. A unique feature is the curved entryway between the two wings of the building. This is similar to the design of Effingham High School, discussed later. Based on the low, horizontal profile of the building and the curved entryway, this school can be classified as an example of Streamline Moderne.

Niles Township/
Niles East High School

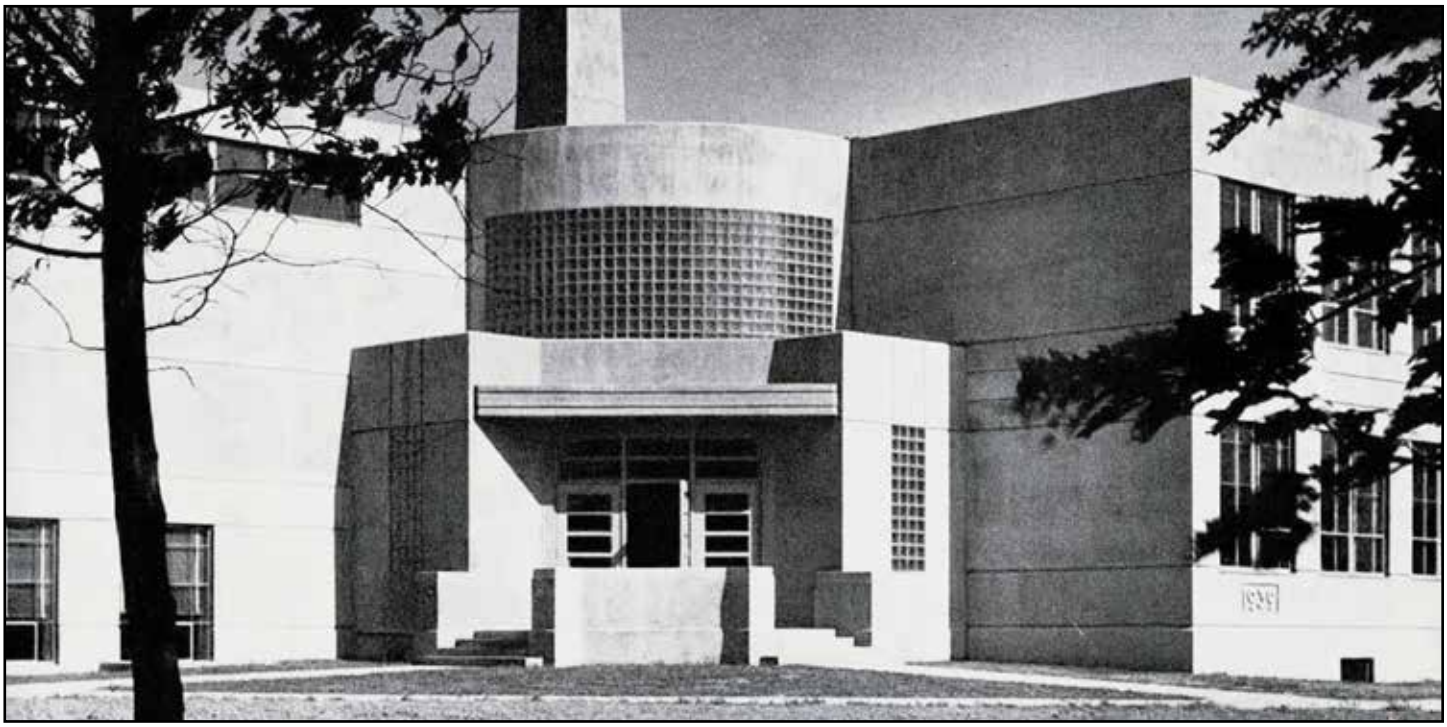
This school, located in Skokie (Cook County), Ill., was built in 1938 and has since been demolished.

It was constructed of buff bricks and features minimal exterior ornamentation. The tall central tower at the entrance is typical of the verticality of the Zigzag/Art Deco style. Four massive, angular ziggurat-like columns, suggesting ancient Mesopotamian inspiration dominate the façade, separated by panes of large plate glass windows.

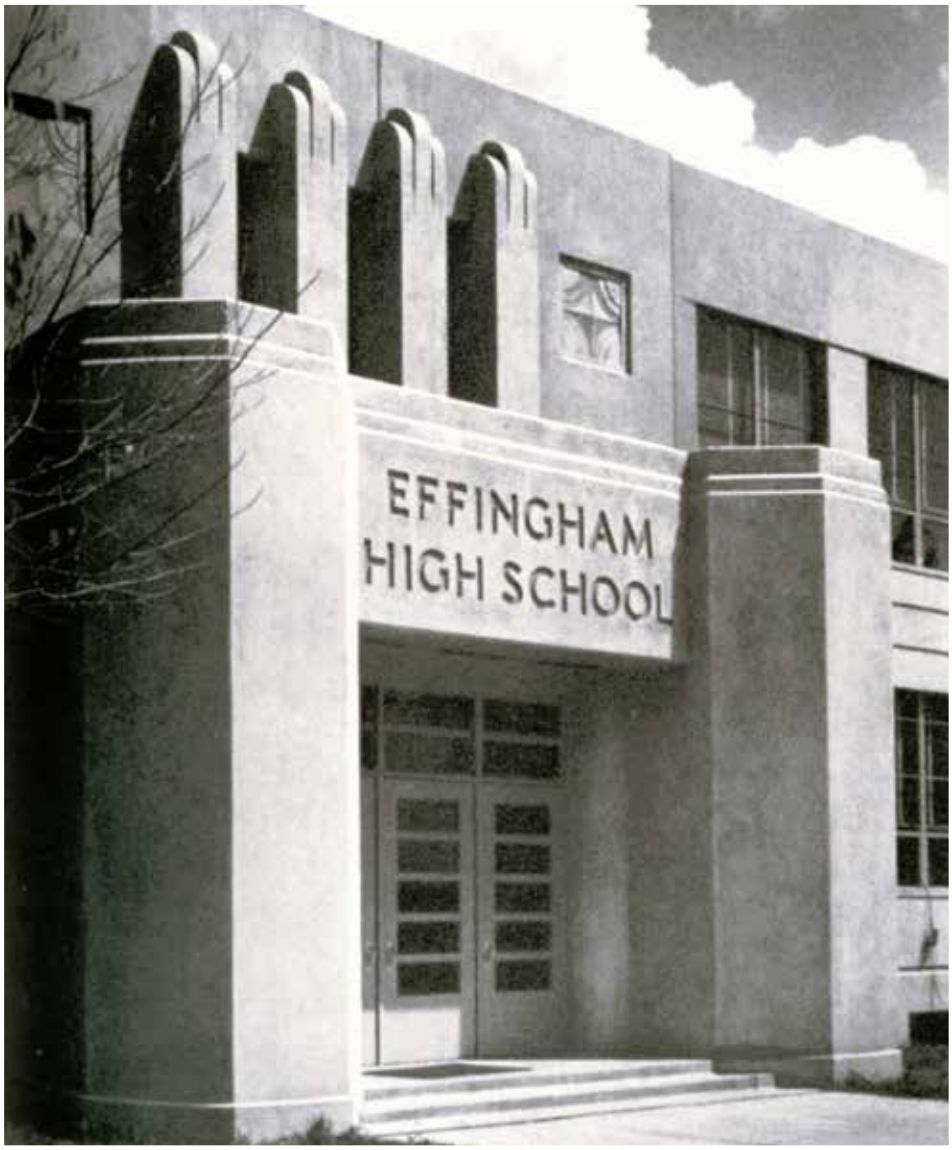
A horizontal band of decorative glass panes with geometric designs crosses the façade above the entrance doors. Above each of the three entrance doors are simple curved metal canopies with plain horizontal bands. The entrance is flanked by two modernistic lamps that look as if borrowed from a Buck Rogers serial set from the 1930s.

Access to the two wings of the building are through angled entranceways that resemble Mesoamerican stepped pyramids, suggesting additional archaeological inspiration.

The building's appearance with minimal exterior ornamentation is reminiscent of the New York Daily News building, built 1929-30 (Martinson 2009, p. 177).



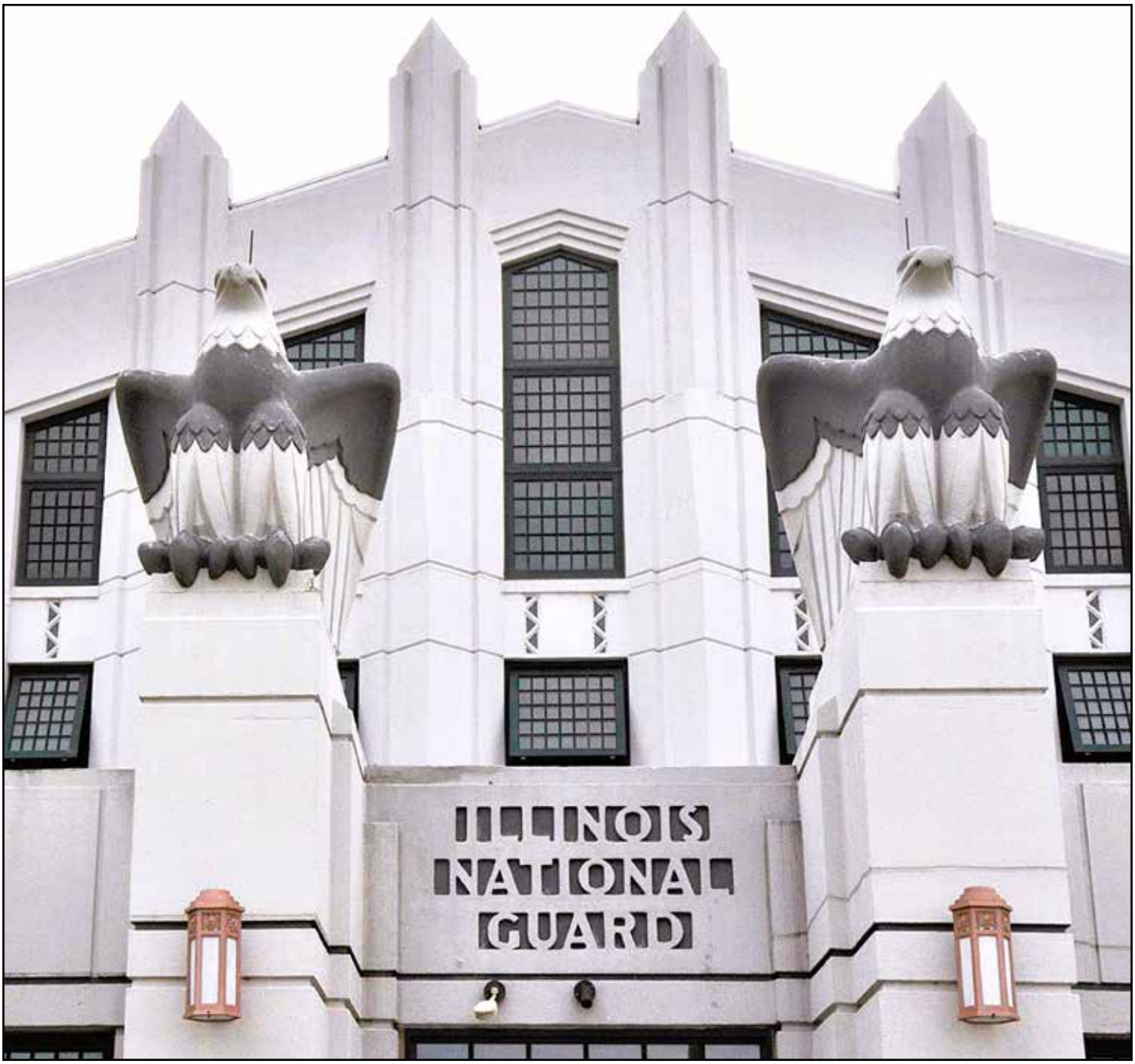
Above and below, Effingham High School, entrance.



Effingham High School

Effingham High School was dedicated in 1939. In general appearance it resembles the Lincoln School in Dixon with its long, low profile and curved entryway, and can be classified as another example of Streamline Moderne. What makes this school more unique was the use of concrete in its construction (Royer 1941).

Royer was no neophyte when it came to the use of concrete; his Urbana post office in 1906 utilized this material successfully, as did his Christian Church in 1909-10 (Adams 2011). By now Royer was confident in the use of concrete and stated that "the material seemed to offer interesting possibilities, both in design and in economy" (Royer 1941, p.15). Upon completion of Effingham School, Royer boasted: "We are very happy over our choice of material"



106th Cavalry Armory entrance, detail.

(ibid.). He praised the use of concrete "because it is the most flexible of all building materials…" and went on to highlight its advantages. According to Royer (1941, p. 17), "[w]here ornamentation was desired it was done by adding interesting molded detail to the structural wall itself." The Effingham building now houses the junior high school.

The remaining five projects by Royer in the Moderne style consist of an armory, library, courthouse, village hall and commercial building.

106th Cavalry Armory, Urbana

Between 1935 and 1939, Royer's Urbana Armory building was designed and constructed. This was a WPA project intended to provide a new facility for the 106th cavalry unit and medical department of the Illinois division of the National Guard, and "also to fulfill President Roosevelt's requirements for recreational centers" (*Daily Illini* 1935b; 1938a; 1940). Initially, the armory was to be located on a 10-acre tract north of the Crystal Lake Park swimming pool to be donated by the City of

106th Calvary Armory, Urbana, detail.

Urbana (*Daily Illini* 1935b, 1935c). However, the building was ultimately built on a 26-acre tract immediately east of the intersection of Cunningham and East University avenues (*Daily Illini* 1935b). This tract, also donated by the city, was the former city dumping ground (*Daily Illini* 1937). Like Effingham High School, the armory was built of architectural concrete and would measure 185×355 feet (*Daily Illini* 1937). *The Daily Illini* (1937) wrote: "Special plans were necessary for the building because it is a two-unit armory, twice standard size." It could accommodate 73 men and had stables for 36 horses (*Daily Illini* 1938b). The building, to be constructed by English Brothers, was to cost between $230,000 and $300,000.

Construction commenced in March 1937 and the building was completed in January 1939. At one point, 410 workers were employed on the project (*Daily Illini* 1938b). To expedite construction, 50 laborers worked night shifts beneath floodlights (*Daily Illini* 1938a). By October 1938 the regimental headquarters and medical department had already occupied the building, despite the fact that the roof over the 100×200 drill hall was still not finished (*Daily Illini* 1938b). Typical of the PWA Moderne style, the armory exhibits formality often used in such government buildings. Aside from two massive, seated eagles flanking the entrance, ornamentation is minimal.

Mills and Petrie Memorial Library and Gymnasium

Contemporaneous with the construction of the 106th Cavalry Armory was the Mills and Petrie Memorial Library and Gymnasium in Ashton, Lee County (*Ashton Gazette* 1935), PWA Project No. 6045.

Its construction was aided with funds from a trust established in 1924 by successful businessman Nathan A. Petrie. He had left $62,000 in the fund to have the building constructed for the citizens of Ashton in memory of himself and his business partner Sam Mills. Samuel Frank Mills and Nathan Albert Petrie were cousins from upstate New York who eventually settled in Dekalb, Ill., where they established a partnership, first in the grain and lumber business in 1863, then a mercantile business in 1865 (*Ashton Gazette* 1936).

Both men retired from the business in 1869 and established a bank in nearby Ashton. After the entire business section of the city was nearly destroyed by fire in 1889, Mills and Petrie were responsible for its reconstruction. Mills and his wife eventually would move back to upstate New York. Nathan Petrie died in March 1927. The building officially was dedicated in July 1936 (Ledlie 1986).

The building is of tan-buff brick construction and features an entryway framed in Indiana Bedford limestone and three bronze-col-

Above, Mills and Petrie Memorial Library and Gymnasium, views of the facade.

Mills and Petrie Memorial, detail of a simplified column with chevron decorations.

ored steel double doors.

The entry foyer was finished with mosaic terrazzo tile flooring and yellow Verona marble wainscotting.

The building included an "American Legion Room," with "ultra-modern" furniture, "very modern" table and floor lamps. The gymnasium/auditorium could be accessed from the American Legion Room, and included locker rooms, showers, a kitchen, and a "mammoth stage" with a "rich deep wine colored curtain" trimmed with yellow fringe. The library included two large reading tables and "modernistic" floor lamps and was built to accommodate 25,000 volumes.

This civic structure is another example of the PWA Moderne style. Exterior ornamentation is minimal and is largely confined to the entrance on the façade, with simplified columns and decorative chevrons.

Bureau County Courthouse, Princeton

In 1935, Royer and Danely submitted their plan for a remodel of the Bureau County Courthouse in Princeton, Ill., to the secretary of the special building committee of the board of supervisors of Princeton Township (*Bureau County Tribune* 1935). This was another WPA proj-

Bureau County Courthouse, detail of entrance with polished granite.

ect. The government would cover 45 percent of the cost of project.

The planned remodel would double the amount of floor space of the existing courthouse and increase accommodations for all county officers, some of whom occupied rental spaces outside the courthouse. A room for the historical society was also planned. The building's façade and north and south wings would be extended and the basement deepened and finished with additional office space. The exterior was to be clad with Indiana Bedford limestone, the "aristocrat of building materials."

In January 1936 the board of supervisors learned the federal government would contribute $97,500 to the project (*Bureau County Tribune* 1936). At that time Royer was to deliver the plans for the building but was snowbound in Urbana and delayed his Princeton trip.

In May 1936, it was reported the plans were modified slightly for safety reasons (*Bureau County Democrat* 1936). Royer's original plans retained existing parts of the old courthouse, such as old walls above the first floor ceilings. In addition, polished granite was to be used instead of limestone for the front and rear entrances, and aluminum was to be used instead of steel for the east and west entrance doors, stair rails and window frames.

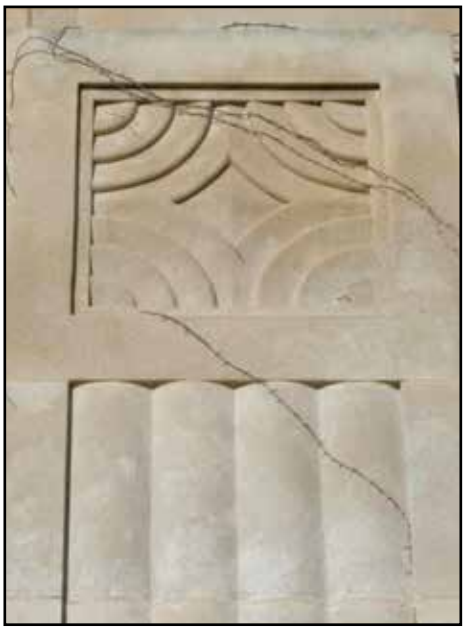
The remodeled building was dedicated June 6, 1937. *Bureau County Tribune* (June 4, 1937) wrote:

> *Placed among the stately elms of the old court house park, the building is an imposing structure from all four sides. Classic modern in architectural design, it is a public asset of which the entire county justly may be proud.*

The structure was hailed as "absolutely fireproof throughout." The architrave of the east main entrance was made of "rainbow granite," and Minnesota grey granite was used for the entrance pylons. Buff "Kasota" marble trimmed with Cardiff green was used for the lobby, and stair wells and landings in the basement and the second floor.

"Electric light fixtures in the lobby, on the second floor landing and the east and west entrances were designed by Royer & Danely especially to harmonize

Above and below, Village Hall decorative details, entrance, facade.



Homewood Village Hall, entrance.

with the treatment of the building as a whole."

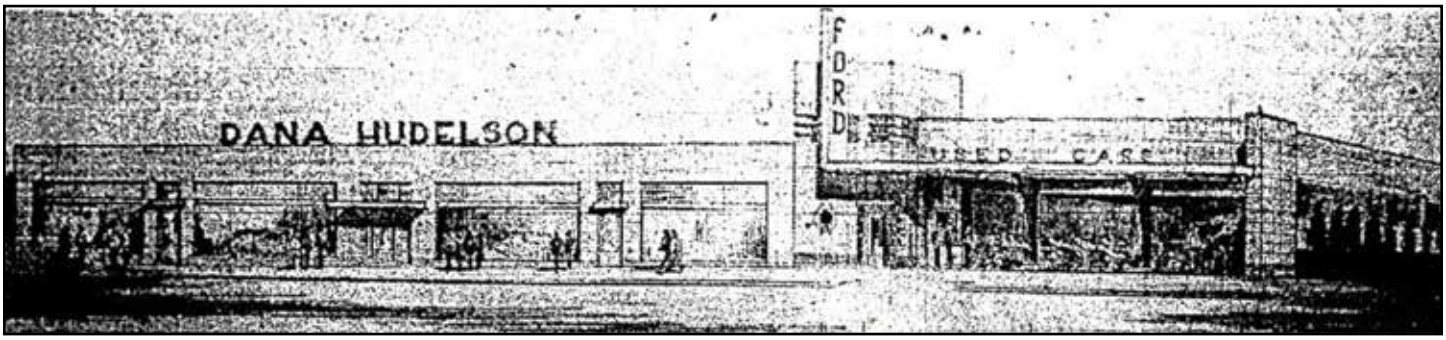
"Rift-sawed" white oak was used for interior woodwork, which was done by the Macey Cabinet Company of Detroit, "one of the largest manufacturers of fine cabinets in the country." The entire circuit courtroom on the second floor was paneled with this wood from floor to ceiling.

Lighting fixtures in the courtroom were "exquisite cylinders of glass and aluminum," suspended from the ceiling by aluminum rods. Hardware throughout the building was of aluminum, and public floor spaces were of terrazzo made from white Tennessee and yellow Verona marbles. Office space was floored with linoleum.

The Bureau County Historical Society occupied a large central room in the basement. The final cost of the "beautiful modernistic stone building" (*Ashton Gazette*, June 10, 1937, p. 1) was $221,476. This building closely resembles Leal School in Urbana and exhibits minimal exterior decoration as is typical of the PWA Moderne style.

Homewood Village Hall, Cook County

Homewood Village Hall was designed in 1938. Voters approved construc-



Dana Hudelson building, 306 E. University Ave., Champaign (demolished). Architect's sketch with proposed addition on the right.

tion of a new village hall in a referendum on Sept. 8, 1938, by a vote of 490 to 473. The building was constructed with WPA funding and work on the foundation started in December 1938. By August 1939 the building was finished, and village meetings were held in the second floor board room.

Formal dedication ceremonies took place on Sept. 30, 1939. The building initially housed all village offices and the police and fire departments. In addition, there was a 300-seat auditorium, which included a full basketball court, stage and kitchen for community events. The building cost $135,000 to construct.

The building underwent extensive renovations in 1967 after the police and fire departments moved to separate quarters. The building then served as offices for village administration. It was slated for demolition in 1997 by the village board, but a pro-preservation slate of candidates was elected to the board and the building was renovated and enlarged. It continues to house village offices and the auditorium remains and is administered by the local park district.

Homewood Village Hall is another civic structure in the PWA Moderne style. As such, it exhibits minimal exterior ornamentation, and this is largely confined to the entrance on the façade, with simplified, monolithic columns and decorative geometric panels, chevrons and lamps.

Hudelson Garage Expansion, Urbana

In April 1946, a sketch was published of the $40,000 Hudelson Garage expansion, designed by Joseph W. Royer and Harold B. Davis (*Champaign Urbana Courier* April 1946; *The News Gazette* April 1946). Hudelson's Ford, Lincoln, Mercury dealership was located at 306 E. University Ave.

Aside from a 26-foot tall tower at the southwest corner, the new addition consisted of a one-story used car showroom and refinishing shop made of terracotta tile, glass brick and steel. Of masonry and steel construction, it measured 60×125 feet. The tower's second floor held a private office, lavatory and coat room. A two-story residence was razed to make room for the addition.

Access to East University Avenue was via three overhead garage doors "and an aluminum and steel canopy will decorate the front of the new structure" (*Champaign Urbana Courier* 1946).

> *The building will have the benefits of natural lighting. Lighting will be aided by glass bricks as well as reflection from the tile interior… A 4-foot canopy is planned over the entrance. The old building will be remodeled with a canopy and glass brick entrance way"* (The News Gazette *1946).*

The new addition also would include "ultra-modern equipment, including an infra-red unit for quick-baking of a new paint finish on an auto, in the same manner as it is originally handled at the factory" (*Champaign Urbana Courier* 1946).

The Hudelson Garage addition can be considered a late example of the Streamline Moderne style. By 2018 only the addition remained as an extensively modified U-Haul moving supply business. This was subsequently replaced by a larger structure by the same company.

Conclusion

The buildings discussed

here demonstrate Royer's wide range of skills as an architect. Not only was he a master of popular historical revival styles that looked to the past for inspiration, but he was also able to produce successful and beautiful designs in emerging new styles with an eye to the future.

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Passion for Preservation:

Couple's Legacy Lives on Through Generous Gift

By Phyllis Williams, Doug Blair and Marilyn Blair

We are deeply saddened to report Mary Blair, a friend of PACA and an ardent, longtime advocate for preservation and conservation, passed away Aug. 7, 2024, with her children by her side at her beautiful home.

The association recently was informed that Mary and her late husband, Lachlan "Lock" Blair, chose to honor PACA with a generous gift to help us continue doing the work they believed was so important.

The Mary Blair Trust conferred a bequest to PACA. Though the trust is named for Mary, the Blairs' children say the Trust reflects the wishes of both parents. To place this generosity in context, we'd like to reacquaint our members and friends with Lock and Mary Blair, and the beginnings of PACA and historic preservation in the twin cities.

In 2001, executive director Karen Lang Kummer wrote in the *PACA Newsletter* (July-August 2001):

PACA lost a founder, friend and ardent preservationist when Lachlan "Lock" Blair passed away Aug. 5, 2001. In the 1970s, Lock advocated and worked tirelessly for the adoption of Historic Preservation Ordinances in Champaign and Urbana, and for the formation of the Historic Preservation Commissions. Lock served on the first Urbana Historic Preservation Commission.

Lock helped found PACA in 1981 and served as its first vice president and second president.

After six years on the board, Lock continued to offer his advice and counsel on preservation issues and shared his extensive preservation library with PACA, including hundreds of local slides taken over 30 years.

Lock inspired countless young graduates to embrace historic preservation planning, and "Lock's Flock" now is dispersed around the country putting his preservation message into action. He was instrumental in the appointment of the University of lllinois' Historic Preservation Committee and served as its first chair.

Nationally known for his College Hill (Rhode Island) Report, one of the first urban plans that included historic preservation as a critical part, Lock also was known for his work with the Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council and the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois, on whose boards he served.

Lachlan and Mary Blair in Venice in 1984.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DOUG AND MARILYN BLAIR

Lachlan Ferguson Blair was the youngest of three sons born to Scottish immigrants Neil and Rebecca Gunn Blair. The couple wed in 1904 and buried three children in Scotland before coming to the Cleveland area about 1910. Neil was a concrete and construction worker who abandoned the family. Rebecca and her sons moved in with her brother, Jimmy, and his wife Dott. The family sent for her sister Jean, "Aunt Nan," to be the boys' nanny.

Lock attended Western Reserve University until enlisting in the Army in 1942. In later life, as Lock traveled to conventions, seminars and short courses teaching others how to assess historic buildings and incorporate them into urban planning as art and opportunity, his traveling companion — who would stand by his side for 59 years, sharing his passion for simplicity, art and preservation — was his wife: Mary Novotny Blair.

Born 1919 in Cleveland to working class Czech immigrants, Mary knew at an early age she wanted to be a children's librarian. The family spoke Czech at home; the neighborhood was a melting pot of Eastern European languages with neighbors often unable to communicate while their children learned English in school.

Mary's father died when she was 7. She was her mother's caregiver during a two-year struggle with cancer. Mrs. Novotny died when Mary was 16. Childless neighbors took Mary to museums and plays, bought her clothes, helped her sell the Novotny home, and paid for her to attend Oberlin College where she earned a degree in English.

Mary studied library science in graduate school at Western Reserve University in Cleveland (Case-Western Reserve University was founded in 1967). As she recounted in a 2015 interview with Barbara Wysocki for the League of Women Voters, in the collection of the Champaign County Historical Archives, Mary considered herself a "Protestant-at-large" and searched for a church home near the college. On a visit to a Unitarian-Universalist Church youth group in 1940, she met a tall, handsome engineering student: Lachlan Blair. The two were married in the U-U church on Dec. 12, 1942.

The Blairs at their wedding on Dec. 12, 1941.

Lachlan enlisted in the Army Engineering 1308th Corps as a private and left for basic training after the couple's honeymoon in Williamsburg. Lock was away for 3.5 years, serving in the European Theater of War and occupied Korea. He returned home a captain. Mary worked at Cleveland Public Library in his absence.

According to the family, Lock's unit saw action at the Battle of the Bulge, sailed through the Panama Canal, and was stationed on the Island of Ulithe where there was a huge, allied supply depot. Once his service was up, the Pacific Operations commanders did not want to let Lock go as he was good at logistics. Mary wrote to the Secretary of War asking that he be allowed to come home to attend MIT in 1946. Permission granted!

The couple moved east so Lock could attend MIT on the GI Bill. MIT did not recognize all the pre-war credits from Western Reserve, and it took him 3.5 years to get his BA in city planning, while the rest of

his class received degrees in architecture. Lock was senior planner for the Providence City Planning Commission from 1949-51 and chief of the state planning division for Rhode Island from 1952-56.

Lock formed Blair and Associates with Stuart Stein, with offices in Providence and Washington, D.C. Lock earned national recognition for his work on College Hill, a Demonstration Study of Historic Area Renewal (City Plan Commission, 1967), one of the earliest plans for urban renewal in the U.S. to prioritize historic preservation concerns, combining public and private funding.

Mary became a librarian, a storyteller on Rhode Island Public Television and the mother of two children. She joined the League of Women Voters in Providence and became an officer. Mary's first presidential ballot was cast for Franklin Delano Roosevelt. (Her final vote was cast for Joe Biden.)

In 1966, the Blair family — Lock, Mary, Douglas and Marilyn — came to the university at the behest of Louis B. Wetmore, professor of city planning. Lock settled into teaching, and Mary became an officer in the League of Women Voters. She organized the observer corps of the League. At first considered female spies, League observers were often the only attendees at council, board and commission meetings — even the sewer commission — to report activities to the League. Even in the age of televised meetings, Mary said there was no substitute for in-person attendance to see how officials interacted with each other.

Throughout her long life, Mary embraced information and believed in the importance of being an informed voter. Just as Lock's scholarship brought a host of budding preservationists to C-U — including Karen Lang Kummer and Alice Novak — Mary's activities in the League of Women Voters helped produce fine candidates for public office — including Laurel Lunt Prussing, the late Jean Burkholder and Barbara Wysocki. Mary spent 74 years in the League.

Mary Blair visits her polling place to vote in November 2016 — voting for a woman candidate at last!

Mary was an early member of H.I.P.S — Housewives Interested in Pollution Solutions, later renamed Households Involved in Pollution Solutions. The expanded organization of citizens was determined to follow Lady Bird Johnson's example to beautify our landscape and reduce waste and environmental degradation. The group gained sign ordinances in both cities, pushed for recycling programs, and formed alliances with Bruce Hannon and Dannel McCullom.

After Lock's passing, Mary continued her League activities and became an import advisor on preservation and city matters. She often could be seen walking to Urbana Free Library, a tiny dynamo in size 6 Keds tennis shoes. She thoroughly enjoyed dining at Jolly Roger and attending Krannert Center performances.

Spring thrilled Mary, as she genuinely enjoyed bluebells and daffodils. "My daffies," she would say. She loved cookies, good cheese and a good laugh. The Blairs kept a close circle of friends all their lives.

As was her wish, Mary died in her home, her lovely yellow house, at the age of 104 and one-half on Aug. 7, 2024, with her children in attendance. Some of her very last words were: "I am Mrs. Lachlan Ferguson Blair."

Lock died Aug. 5, 2001, following a short illness. Among the local and national accolades, Julie Wurth reported Lock was a member of the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission, Champaign County Arts and Humanities Council, and Champaign County Design and Conservation Foundation, as well as a founding member of the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District (*News-Gazette*, Aug. 8, 2001).

One of Lock's proudest professional moments was his induction into the inaugural class of American Planning Association Fellows in 1999, in a ceremony in Seattle. According to the APA website:

> *Lachlan Ferguson Blair brings to the Urbana campus an exemplar of "Been there — done that" based on decades of practice at every governmental level, and in diverse specialties. He knows that historic preservation and comprehensive planning are two sides of the same coin: you can't have one without the other! Inducted in 1999 (*American Planning Association website — planning.org).

Lock and Mary are co-inurned at Mount Hope Mausoleum. They agreed to meet in the afterlife at a certain spot, but did not share the location with their children.

The Blairs' passion for preservation, and conservation extended to their home and modest lifestyle. The Blairs' gifts to PACA and the other nonprofits named in the Trust are a direct result of these practices. PACA is overwhelmed and humbled by this gift. As the struggle for preservation continues into the search for affordable housing solutions, continued advocacy for preservation, and educating the public and officials of the very real value of preservation, we as an organization pledge to continue this work and use this gift to make a real difference in communities.

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This article was written with help from Susan Appel, Tom Garza and Dannel McCullum.

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Despite being (figuratively) right next door to the University of Illinois, PACA seldom manages to interact with its students and faculty except as individuals. This is unfortunate, I think, because we have a great deal to offer one another.

Thankfully, from time to time, we find ways of bridging that gap.

On the evening of Sept. 29, for example, I hosted a theater set design class at the warehouse and had the opportunity to talk to students about what we do as preservationists and explain how salvaging and the warehouse fit into that work. This might seem like an odd pairing — theater and preservation — but it proved to be a very productive conversation.

Currently the class is reading *Spoon River Anthology*, a 1915 collection of poems by Edgar Lee Masters. The poems illustrate small town and rural American life in Illinois around the turn of the last century.

Each student was tasked with finding some item mentioned in one of the poems — or at least something contemporaneous with the period being described — and then talk about how its inclusion in a theater set might be used to help create the desired sense of time and place.

"Illinois River Town" by Doris Lee, above, and Edgar Lee Masters' collection of poetry titled *Spoon River Anthology* both are inspired by Lewistown, Ill., Masters' hometown. While this painting depicts physical landmarks of Ottawa, Ill., the poetry is set in the fictional town of Spoon River — and its residents and their stories are based on those of Lewistown.

PACA's warehouse is, as you might imagine, a perfect spot for this kind of research and treasure hunting, and students spent a great deal of time wandering around — puzzling over the wide variety of items we have there.

All in all, it was a very successful event, and I hope in the future we'll be able to bring in more groups and share our work with them as part of PACA's mission to promote historic preservation. We do so through collaboration, sharing, engaging and educating the community, and creating interest in and curiosity about historic preservation.

Thomas Garza,
Executive Director

Between These Walls: Identity Formation Through the Built Environment in Select Artwork

By Tamara Moore

While I appreciate a range of artistic styles and mediums, I am particularly drawn to pieces containing imagery and themes that resonate on a personal as well as intellectual level. These sketchbook pages by artist Pat Perry caught my eye because of the compelling ways he illustrates how personal identity, in part, is crafted by our memories of the physical spaces we have inhabited and spent time in and around.

Connections such as this are one reason I love historic buildings. The house my grandparents occupied has always loomed large in my imagination. Even when they both had died and my aunt and uncle moved into the house, I had my own key and would look forward to times when I could be alone within its walls. I'd seek out the hiding places that had soothed and delighted me as a child, stealing quiet moments of reflection.

I'd sometimes wander from room to room reflecting on the idiosyncrasies of each. For example, the complex pattern of hairline cracks that spider-webbed across the dining room ceiling like a map of forgotten places — a tangle of spindly striae tracing the shifting fault lines of a mind perhaps? Or a gossamer-thin blueprint documenting the secrets of one of its previous incarnations.

Standing on an interior balcony above the kitchen, my mind was awash with memories of 6-year-old me — my legs dangling through the wooden rails — trying desperately to hear what the adults below were saying late on a Saturday night while whiffs of cigarette smoke and bursts of bourbon-slicked laughter floated up to me. Perched up there — above and apart from those very adult activities and yet still surrupticiously connected to them — I felt a sense of peace and belonging. All the mysterious adults I loved were happy and warm beneath me. Returning to that space as an adult evoked similar feelings. And — as silly as it sounds — I felt as if the house remembered me somehow and even welcomed me back.

While Perry's work offers socio-economic critic and addresses themes of class, the vast American landscape, and the pull toward and away from the constraints of family life, it feels psychoanalytical in nature. And the artist seems to believe, as I do, that buildings have an important role in the construction of personal identity.

In "The Architecture of Happiness," Alain de Botton posits that architecture acts as a "guardian of identity," influencing how we remember and understand ourselves.

He writes: "We need a home in the psychological sense as much as we need one in the physical."

In an April Sustainability Directory article — "How Does Housing Shape Identity?" — the authors state: "Identity is deeply interwoven with specific physical settings ... particularly a home." They say the development of one's identity "involves emotional bonds, cognitive connections, and functional dependencies that make a location central to one's self-concept."

Thus, the dwelling we call home is a foundational cornerstone of who we understand ourselves to be. The authors say further:

> *From the earliest moments ... our housing begins to shape the narrative of our lives, offering clues about our place in the world. It acts as a physical manifestation of our needs, desires, and even our aspirations, quietly reflecting back aspects of our character.*

Just as buildings have an important role in the construction of identity, so too do objects. Those of us who collect things — antiques, heirlooms, flotsam and jetsam — do so for many reasons, often private ones.

De Botton insists we are incapable of seeing buildings or objects "without tying them to the historical and personal circumstances of our viewing." Thus they become, for us, "emotional souvenirs."

Why do we preserve structures (or if they cannot be preserved, keep their fixtures, hardware, doors, and so on?) Why do we hold onto objects for years? Decades even?

French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss famously said:

> *Objects are what matter. Only they carry the evidence that throughout the centuries something really happened among human beings.*

"Out in the Yard," pencil on paper, by Pat Perry.

This notion is a powerful one: What one leaves behind are not merely objects — in fact, they are clues that give context to an individual's history, personality and emotional landscape.

Artifacts from the past are tangible, physical links to human presence, creativity and the unfolding of events.

Our posessions, then, tell our stories. Marcel Mauss wrote: "Even when the thing has been abandoned by the giver, it still possesses something of him." Thus, we often collect what moves us, and what reassures us that though our experiences, and our very existence, are fleeting, our stories live on.

In Perry's sketchbook page drawing titled "Out in the Yard," a preteen girl's childhood home — and all that's transpired within its walls over her short lifetime — has replaced both her eyes and her mind. This house is what she knows — in fact, it's nearly everything she knows. And anywhere she fixes her gaze — now and long into the future — will be filtered through its lens.

Because she is a young girl, her childhood home embodies the primary life she has experienced so far. It delimits the boundaries beyond which she is capable of seeing.

And yet, hints and signs abound throughout the property, suggesting she could step away from this hindering space. Opportunity lingers on the periphery — most obviously, and enticingly, as represented by the tire tracks that stretch from somewhere within the opened back of her body (near her shoulders, her chest, and perhaps her heart: a place where courage might lie) and into the distance. The tracks form a literal path that leads to that most mysterious and promising of places: *away*. The tracks respresent an alternative — beckoning her to travel beyond the disgarded tires and car parts strewn in the yard, tempting escape. At the very least, they urge her not to become trapped where she is or to stagnate.

The isolated stacks of bricks which float outside the main image apear to be the beginnings of stone or concrete block structures. They may be the girl's own attempts to create, to build a place of her own. These endeavors appear abandoned. Were they practice? Experiments? Acts of will? Challenges? Perhaps she simply lacked the skill to go farther, or she began to perceive completion as malapropos.

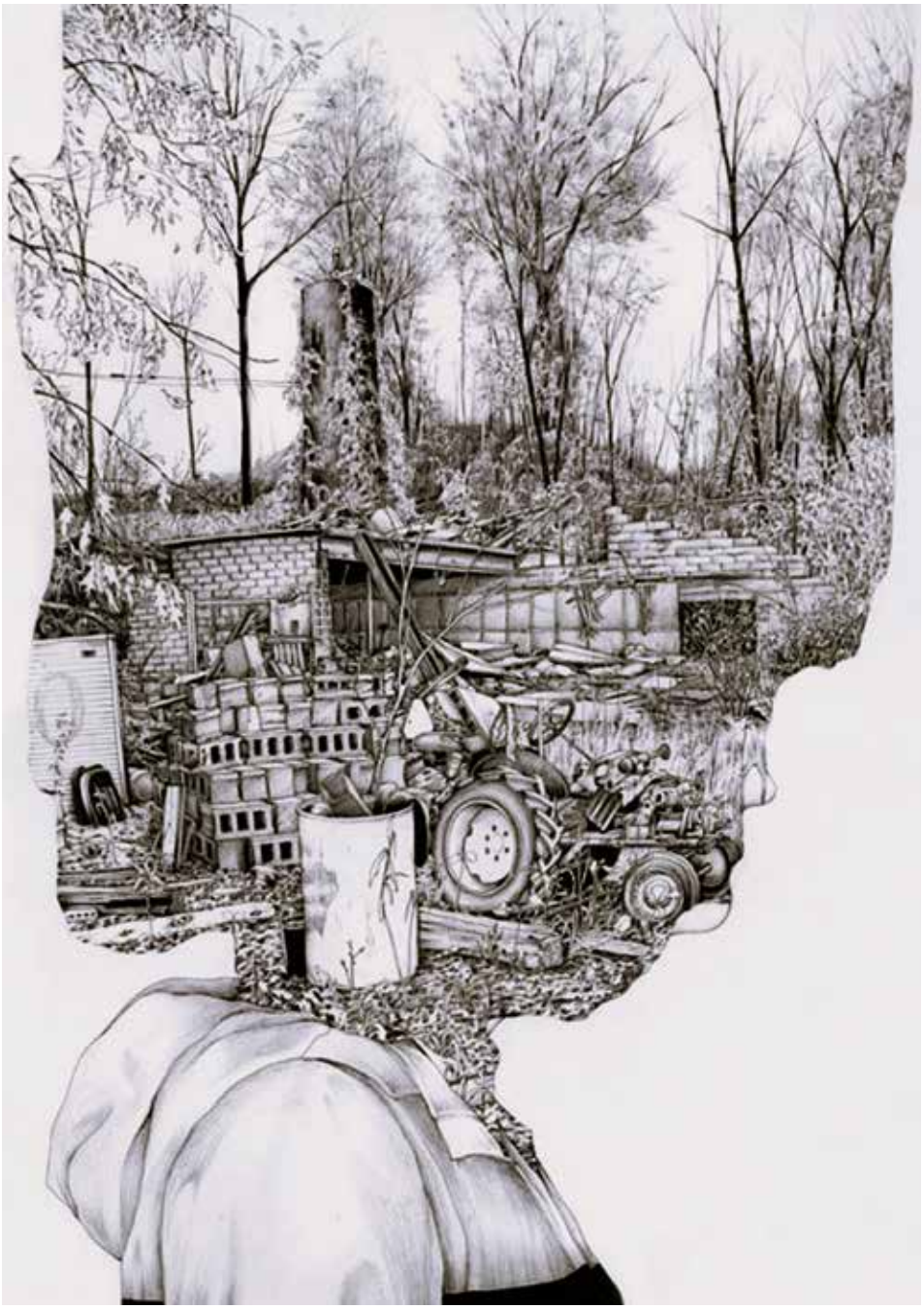
At her tender age, the girl is still actively defining who she is, determining her place in the world and how it should look.

In an article in Modern Met, "Artist's Detailed Sketches Display Memories as Tangible Objects and Intricate Landscapes" (May 18, 2015) Anna Gragert writes of the three Perry pieces discussed here:

A familiar sense of home is symbolically shown in Perry's surreal creations. Each piece has a specific personality, revealing that our memories are a key part of who we are in the present moment and who we will become in the future. The incredible details bridge the gap between fantasy and reality, so that onlookers can take a moment to visualize what their own histories would look like outside the confines of their complex minds.

In a review in Midtown Mocha titled "Pat Perry, Travelling Storyteller" (Nov. 17, 2013), the author says of "Out in the Yard":

We like to believe that the road of opportunity and self-discovery lays wide open to children, viewable and easy to navigate their way towards. But this path lies beyond the girl's shoulders and she alone must make the conscious effort to turn away from the comfort and ease of what she knows.



Above and at right, "Outlived," diptych, pencil on paper, by Pat Perry.

The next two pieces are actually one, a diptych, with two female figures facing each other. Titled "Outlived," both figures are submerged by lost opportunity and stagnation.

Weeds have permeated everything; they have grown unchecked. And they now climb over, among and between everything — twisting like snakes and staking claim to it all.

In the piece on the left, portions of brick walls and collapsed timber hint at a structure that once was — a house which may once have stood in that spot. Or perhaps this home was something started but ultimately unfinished or forgotten.

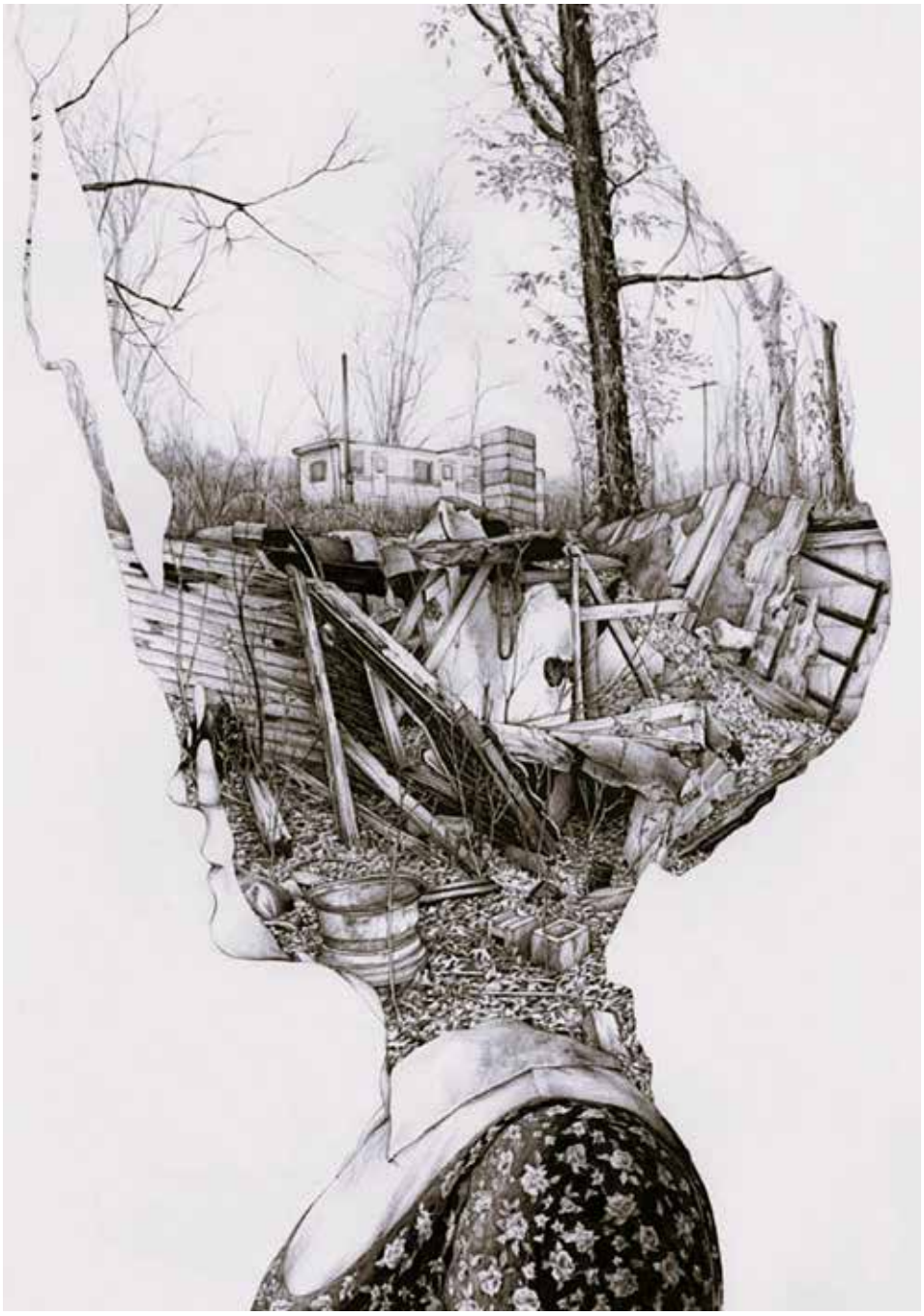
While both sides of the diptych are similar, there are important differences.

The piece on the left is far less hopeful. It's full of destruction and a sense of abandonment. The overall feeling is one of something wholly unrecoverable. The female figure is almost entirely obliterated. Only the tip of her nose and chin remain. There are no other human features on view.

Her property remains in collapse, fallen in on itself. While a wall and part of a room still stand, everything is covered in leaves, foliage, and creeping vines that threaten to continue to grow unhindered and overtake what's left. Piles of concrete blocks, random slats of wood and a corrugated plate have been kept but seemingly without purpose or intent. While they once may have been, or were intented to be, pieces of a larger, integrated whole, now they feel cast off, inconsequential — it's as if they will never be part of something again.

This is partially mirrored in the right half of the diptych.

A house seems to have once stood in this spot — the remnants of it take up most of the space in her head — but rather than rebuild, a trailer has been placed on the property. Unlike the ruins portrayed on the left, the woman on the righthand side of the diptych has a home.



Unlike the girl in "Out in the Yard," these women have few distinquishing facial features. Yet the woman on the right has part of her face: a mouth, lips, chin, and nose. The facial features of these women display stages of submergence. On the left, the home has caved in on itself, and nature has taken over. On the right, while features and remnants of a structure still stand — part of an interior wall, a door frame — apart from the wreckage sits a mobile home, which appears functional. It may be different from what she once had, but nevertheless it constitutes a home as well as a sense of moving on, making the best of things.

Magpies, writing in The Tidings of Magpies magazine, has a very different interpretation of Perry's work. An Aug. 4, 2023, analysis of Perry's characters refers to them as "the in-between people" who inhabit the in-between places of the American landscape — those people who fall through the cracks, so to speak, but — interestingly — are not lost.

> *[They] respond to the lucid invitation to live and to create in the vast spaces of burnished grass and gloomy sky weighed down by small clusters of human clutter.... With perfect American make-do, use-what-you-can eccentricity, their contraptions question our rituals, our conventions, and our values in a celebration of beautiful and wildly mysterious meaninglessness. They're ... creating a refuge to share the great loneliness we all share.*

While I'm not certain I entirely agree with this interpretation, I might just prefer it to my own bleak analysis.

So, what do you think?

A dwelling, a place we call home, is more than shelter from the elements; it functions as a foundational cornerstone of who we understand ourselves to be. From the earliest moments of establishing personal space, our housing shapes the narrative of our lives.

Identity — both as self-defined and interpreted by others — is bound to the places we are found in. Just as humans are perceived as having a character and an identity, so too are places given character and identity based on the elements both within and outside them. Humans form and shape the world around them, making it a reflection and a symbol of themselves. Thus, the identity of a place consequently encompasses the individual stories imbued within it.

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Tamara Moore, who cofounded Blue Ruin Art Gallery in 2002 and served as its curator for seven years, also was managing editor at Carnegie Museum of Natural History. In 2001, she was named to 40 Under 40 by Pittsburgh Magazine and the Pittsburgh Urban Magnet Project. She volunteers at PACA.

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