Rock Island Preservation Society

RIPS NEWS

Advocates for Historic Architecture

Membership Meetings

Our normal meeting schedule has been disrupted by Covid-related restrictions on gatherings advised by our nation, state, and city. Uncertainty of when public gatherings will be safe to attend means we will be addressing meetings on a month to month basis. Watch for email updates and keep abreast of the latest happenings on our Facebook page.

February 16, 2021 Tuesday — A virtual membership meeting on Zoom is planned. Election of officers will be on the agenda. You will receive login information by email on the day before the meeting.

March 16, 2021 Tuesday — Location or virtual scheduling to be announced. Annual Preservation Awards discussion will be on the agenda.
See related article

April 20, 2021 Tuesday — Location or virtual scheduling to be announced.

Remember to keep the third Tuesday of each month marked on your calendar for monthly RIPS meetings and activities

MEMBERSHIP DUES

This is normally the time when we solicit our members to renew their dues, which are usually $15 for an individual and $25 for a household. However, this year, we are following the lead of our friends at Moline Preservation Society and not asking you to send dues. If you are a current member, your membership will be automatically renewed until February 2022.

Because of Covid, our activities and any related expenses, have been drastically curtailed. And since we are a volunteer organization with no office, our overhead is minimal. Moreover, many of our members have opted for online newlsetters, rather than mailed newsletters, which saves postage.

We do encourage you to make donations to other preservation organizations which are in the position of maintaining staff and buildings, whether at the national and state levels or right here at home.

PRESERVATION AWARD NOMINATIONS

RIPS is requesting ideas for potential Preservation Awards.

Awards and Certificates of Recognition will be given for work completed in 2020 (or earlier, if we overlooked a prior year's project). Candidates will be reviewed at our March 16th membership meeting. Please send award suggestions (address and description of work completed) to Daryl Empen at daryl@gaselectriccu.com or Diane Oestreich at blueskies78900@yahoo.com or call 788-1845.

Candidates can be an individual, group, or business that has made special efforts to preserve or restore historic structures or whose actions have served to support historic preservation in Rock Island. When awards are for structures, they are given primarily for exterior work that can be enjoyed from the public right-of-way. Generally, a building must be 50 years old or more and lie within the city limits of Rock Island.

Bill Hesko, who grew up in R.I. county, recently returned to the QCs and was appalled at the condition of the Historic Courthouse. He prepared concept drawings integrating the old and new courthouses, utilizing Joe Lemon's development plans for Federal Courtrooms, and with plans for anticipated needs of the County. See more of his ideas on our Facebook page *here*

REPURPOSING ROCK ISLAND SCHOOL BUILDINGS

Central Jr. High School (New Lincoln) 2100 6th Avenue

A long-awaited new kitchen facility to serve Rock Island Schools is planned. It will be sited on the open playing field between 6th and 7th Avenues on 20th Street and will accommodate both the kitchen as well as administrative offices. RIPS encourages the school board to make every effort to make this functional building attractive and compatible with the adjacent and nearby National Register Districts - Broadway and Downtown.

This new construction also means that the former Central Jr. High (later Lincoln) and the Manual Arts Building, both on 6th Avenue, will no longer be needed. Central is used primarily for its kitchen, which provides meals throughout District 41, while administrative offices are in the former Manual Arts Building. Both of these buildings are historically significant and both were designed by important Rock Island architects.

Central wasn't a school that was in a long-range plan - rather it came from necessity. The eastern portion of the site was the home of Rock Island High Schools for decades and, when the new hilltop school was built and occupied in 1937, the old 1902 High School on the corner of 6th Avenue and 21st Street became Central Junior High.

A dozen years later, on December 11, 1949, a fire was reported by two 14-year-old girls (who later admitted setting the fire). Minutes later, the fire engulfed the school pushed by 50mph winds. At that time, Central had nearly 700 7th and 8th grade students. Replacement plans were immediately made and Architect Rudolph C. Sandberg was hired to design the new school. 21st Street was vacated to accommodate that building.

The school, costing just over $1M, was completed in 1953 by Langman Construction. Sandberg's design featured a two-story, sawtooth-shaped, nine-classroom wing, with much natural light. The taller recreational wing to the east had a cafeteria and kitchen on the ground floor, a 700-seat auditorium above it, and a gymnasium at the top level. Original plans called for another 1-story gymnasium for the nearby historic Lincoln School, which would have reused the stone columns from the old High School. That was not constructed.

An aerial walkway at the second story level extended to the Manual Arts building, which was used for basic shop, home economics, and art classes by the Junior High students until the school closed. More recently, the walkway was removed.
(Photo, left is from 2011)

Central, with its brick and architectural concrete exterior, is largely unchanged today. It served as a Junior High until Lincoln School, now demolished, was closed in 1980. At that time, Central was renamed Lincoln, a grammar school, and even later was designated the "Intermediate Academy." The school closed completely after construction of the Center for Science & Math on the former Villa de Chantal site on 16th Avenue between 20th and 22nd Streets. However, the kitchen remains in use, providing food for the entire school system.

Manual Arts Building (Administration) 2101 6th Avenue

A manual arts building was proposed as early as 1911 to provide better training facilities and alleviate crowding at the high school. The school board solicited proposals, and, in 1912, decided that Olof Cervin's was the most suitable. A site across 6th Avenue north of the old high school was selected and several houses were demolished to make room for the new building.

The Manual Arts Building was budgeted at $60k and featured 20 rooms accommodating such things as wood turning, foundry, and domestic arts. There were extensive windows, to ease eye strain among the students and the main work rooms reportedly had light on three sides. Collins Brothers was selected as contractor. A cornerstone, laid without ceremony in July 1912, contained various historical documents about the building. Some students moved into the building, still incomplete, in January 1913 although formal dedication did not take place until May of that year.

REPURPOSING ROCK ISLAND SCHOOL BUILDINGS

Today the building remains much as it did in 1913. The only significant exterior change is in the multitude of original windows – most openings have been made much smaller and the windows themselves are new. Otherwise, the beautiful cornice, stone trim, and detailed brickwork – complete with green tile inserts (like the YMCA built at the same time) – are there.

RIPS believes that these two buildings could be adapted to other purposes. We also believe that they have National Register potential which would open additional tax credits to a developer. They are an integral part and contributor to the history of Rock Island Public Schools.

The significance of both of the architects involved – Sandberg and Cervin – is immense. Cervin was the founder, in 1896, of the architectural firm that continues today as Studio 483. His original plans are retained by that firm. Even in early days, he and his firm were responsible for many local buildings from the Safety Building to the Masonic Temple. His significance to the Quad Cities cannot be overstated.

Sandberg, who trained at Armour Institute (predecessor of IIT), was also an artist who was responsible for the terra cotta decorations on today's Circa 21 building. He began his Rock Island career at Cervin & Horn, but soon opened his own firm. He developed a structural concrete system, probably used in Central, and was a collaborator on St. Pius Church, a masterpiece of structural concrete. Sandberg also taught at Augustana College and designed many high-end homes.

Board Accepts Sketch of New Central Junior High

Photos, previous page, from Google Streetview. Drawing, left, from The Argus, March 8, 1950

PRESERVATION PARTNERSHIPS

Nurturing a culture of preservation in Rock Island and the Quad Cities has long been a goal and objective of RIPS. Approximately two years ago, Jan Stoffer, with Butterworth Center & Deere-Wiman House, proposed the idea of a Preservation Consortium, bringing together representatives from preservation organizations, historic homes, museums, preservation commissions, marketing experts, historians, aldermen, city planners, and county officials from both sides of the river to build a Quad Cities wide culture of preservation. Some of the representatives attend regular meetings. Some come by invitation for specific discussions.

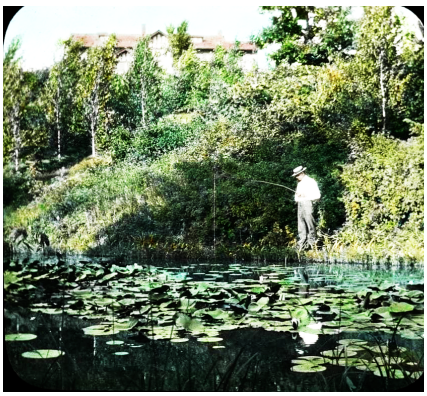
Over the past months we have delved into a variety of topics: how different preservation commissions work; how the different cities address demolition by neglect; preservation and economic development; attracting visitors to historic sites, neighborhoods, and downtowns; researching and telling the story of a building; what makes an effective tour; finding and/or training craftsmen to work on historic properties; a realtor's view of the positives and negatives of historic neighborhoods; and the list goes on. Coming together with other organizations and entities helps us understand their priorities and can lead to more effective strategies that will better meet the objectives of all of us.

Here is at least a partial list of the Preservation Consortium regular member organizations: Butterworth Center & Deere-Wiman House, Hauberg Estate, George Davenport House, Rock Island County Historical Society, Arsenal Museum, German American Heritage Center, Media Link, Scott County Preservation Society, Moline Preservation Society, Downtown Partnership Directors, Davenport, Moline & Rock Island Preservation Commissions.

RIPS has been a member of the Consortium since its beginnings. Diane Oestreich and I represent RIPS and act as liaisons to Hauberg. I think working with and learning from this great group of knowledgeable people is most beneficial. It will help us in our efforts to preserve Rock Island's history through its buildings and neighborhoods. I am sure I speak for both of us when I say we are pleased to represent RIPS in this preservation partnership.

Submitted by Linda Anderson

HAUBERG ESTATE GROUNDS RESTORATION



Many may not know that the original gardens of the Hauberg Estate in Rock Island were designed by renowned landscape architect Jens Jensen. Jensen was known for his "prairie style" designs which often incorporated native plants. Jensen's use of indigenous landscape materials allowed his designs to be not just visually stunning but also beneficial and sustainable in their existing environments.

Jenson's impressive landscape design at Hauberg began with an entry at base of the hill (now 22nd street) that was flanked by two posts inscribed with the letter "H". A long winding road then led to the mansion at the top of the hill. The landscape design along this paved route included native plants and trees, a stream, fishing ponds, reflecting pools, hidden vistas, many flower varieties, stone benches, and a bridge.

Over the decades, these beautiful gardens have fallen into disrepair and the ponds have been filled with silt since around the 1960s. However, due to an exciting private/public partnership, these gardens are currently undergoing a massive restoration to reestablish many important features of Jensen's original landscape design. The beautiful, lily-filled fishing ponds that John Hauberg is seen enjoying here were also one of the most functional pieces of Jensen's landscape design because they acted as basins to help control water flow and erosion down the hill. Unfortunately, since the ponds are no longer in use, it has affected storm water runoff which has caused flooding and damage to the streets in the Broadway Historic District below Hauberg.

Restoring the ponds, dam and waterfall and replanting the native plants and trees from Jensen's original design will help control water runoff and it will provide a wide variety of native plants for local wildlife and pollinators. Furthermore, it will be a beautiful outdoor setting for local residents to enjoy for years to come. This historic restoration collaboration project is being coordinated by the Friends of Hauberg Civic Center and most of the funding for this project is coming from Illinois Department of Agriculture's Partners for Conservation (PFC) program. Other funding for this endeavor has come from the City of Rock Island's Rain Garden Program, Rock Island County Soil and Conservation, and the Broadway Historic District Association.

Photos from Hauberg Estate archives. Left, John Hauberg fishing in his garden pond. Right, restoration in progress of the entry column

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