



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Planning Division

m e m o r a n d u m

TO: The Urbana Historic Preservation Commission

FROM: Rebecca Bird, Historic Preservation Planner

DATE: August 28, 2008

SUBJECT: 305 W. High Street (Richards-Latowsky House): Public hearing for a historic landmark application, Case No. HP 2008-L-03

Introduction

Historic Preservation Case No. HP2008-L-03 is an application submitted by John and Betsey Cronan to designate the property at 305 W. High Street (referred to as the Richards-Latowsky House) as a local historic landmark. John and Betsey Cronan are the property owners. At the Historic Preservation Commission meeting on August 6, 2008, the Commission made a preliminary determination to consider designation of this property as a landmark, finding that the property qualified under the following criteria (Section XII-5.C of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance):

- a) *Significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political or social heritage of the nation, state, or community;*
- b) *Associated with an important person or event in national, state or local history; and*
- c) *Representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, method of construction or use of indigenous materials and which retains a high degree of integrity; and*

The Historic Preservation Ordinance requires that the Commission hold a public hearing within 45 days of the preliminary determination. According to the ordinance, if the landmark designation application is submitted by the property owner, the Commission may approve or deny the application by a majority vote of the Commissioners then holding office. The Historic Preservation Commission has final authority in this case, as the property owner submitted the application.

Should the application for designation as a local landmark be approved, the owners would be required to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Commission for future exterior changes to the property.

For background information on this case, please see the Background, Discussion, and Summary of Findings sections in the July 31, 2008 memorandum to the Historic Preservation Commission.

Summary of Findings

Recommended statements of findings based on the application, Staff analysis, and Commission discussion at the preliminary determination are below. The Commission may revise these findings based on public input provided during the public hearing, and the Commission's review and consideration of the case.

1. Article XII. of the *Urbana Zoning Ordinance* provides the City of Urbana the authority to designate local landmarks and historic districts with the stated purpose to promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the community.
2. The City of Urbana on June 17, 2008 received a complete application to designate the property located at 305 W. High Street as a local landmark.
3. The property located at 305 W. High Street and known as the Richards-Latowsky House was constructed circa 1911 in the Craftsman architectural style.
4. The Richards-Latowsky House has significant value as part of Urbana's architectural and social heritage being a fine example of the hipped roof subtype of the Craftsman architectural style and with an array of significant owners and occupants including an Urbana mayor and prominent banker.
5. The Richards-Latowsky House is associated with important persons in national and local history, particularly Urbana Mayor Chester Richards, prominent banker Erwin Latowsky, and physicist John Manley, who later contributed to the development of the atomic bomb.
6. The Richards-Latowsky House is representative of the distinguishing characteristics of the Craftsman architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, method of construction or use of indigenous materials and retains a high degree of integrity.
7. The Richards-Latowsky House is not a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, or artist whose individual genius has influenced the area.
8. The Richards-Latowsky House is not identifiable as an established and familiar visual feature in the community owing to its unique location or physical characteristics.
9. The Richards-Latowsky House is not a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure.
10. The Richards-Latowsky House is not known to be located in an area that has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

Options

On August 6, 2008, the Historic Preservation Commission made a preliminary determination to consider designation of this property as a landmark, finding that the property qualified for designation as a local landmark under the criteria provided in Section XII-5.C of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance. The Commission's task at the September 3, 2008 public hearing is to take public comment and then approve or deny the application by a majority vote of the Commissioners then holding office. As the property owner is the applicant in this case, the Historic Preservation Commission can approve or deny the designation.

In Case No. HP 2008-L-03, the Historic Preservation Commission may:

- a) Approve the application; or
- b) Deny the application.

In either case, the Historic Preservation Commission should include Findings of Fact in their motion.

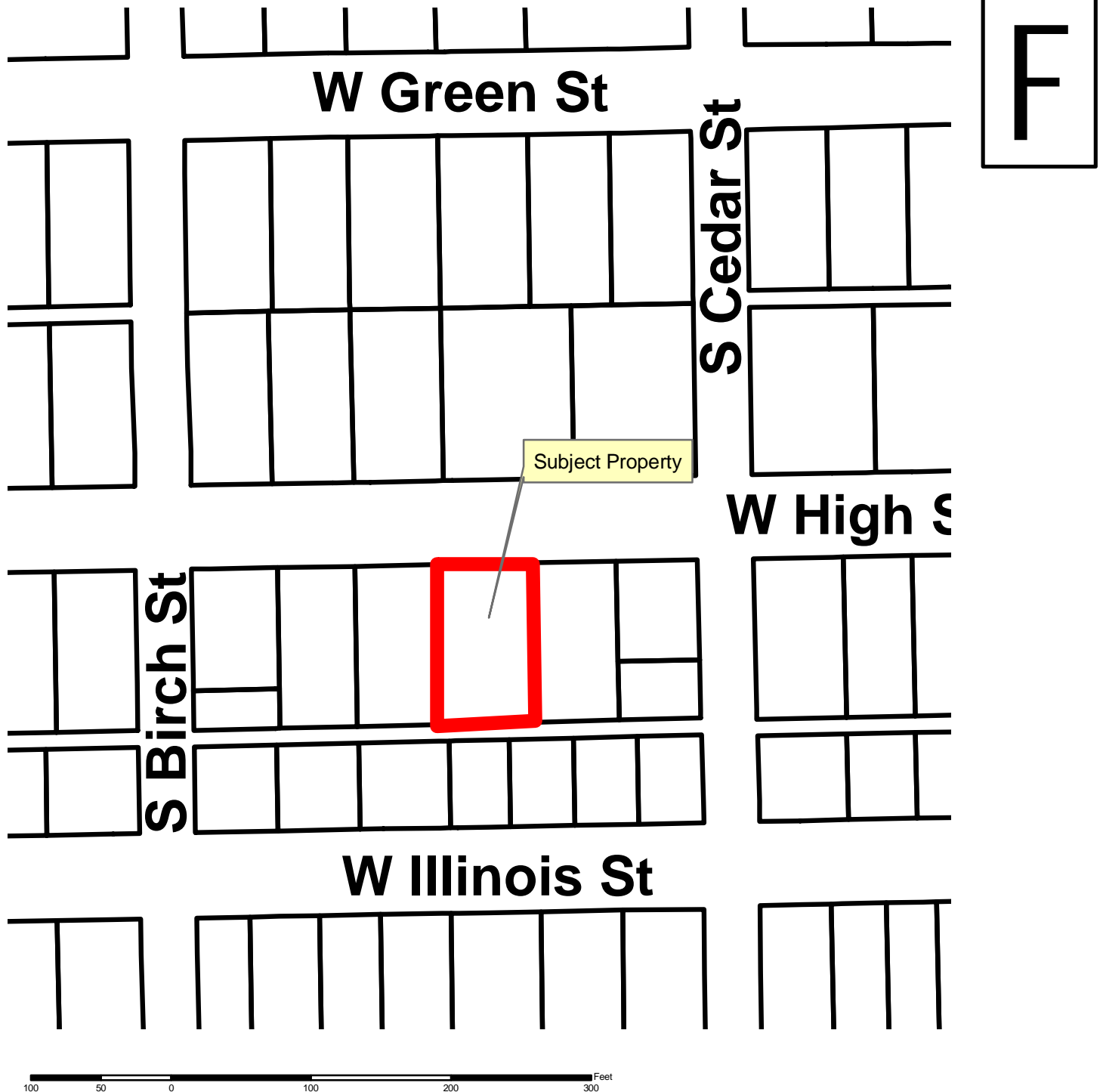
Staff Recommendation

The Historic Preservation Commission determined on August 6, 2008 that 305 W. High Street qualifies for designation as a local historic landmark based on criteria a, b, and c of Section XII-5.C of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance. Based on the documented significance of the Richards-Latowsky House provided in the application, the attached memorandum dated July 31, 2008, and the fact that the property retains sufficient integrity, but without benefit of any public input provided at the September 3, 2008 public hearing, staff recommends the Historic Preservation Commission **approve** the application.

cc: John & Betsey Cronan, applicants & property owners

Attachments: Application for HP 2008-L-03 Richards-Latowsky House, 305 W. High St
Including photographs and maps
July 31, 2008 staff memorandum to the Historic Preservation Commission

EXHIBIT A: Location Map

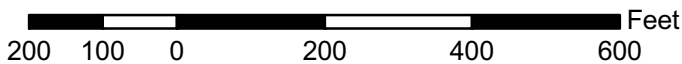
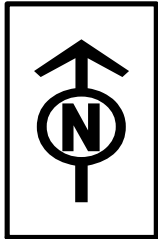
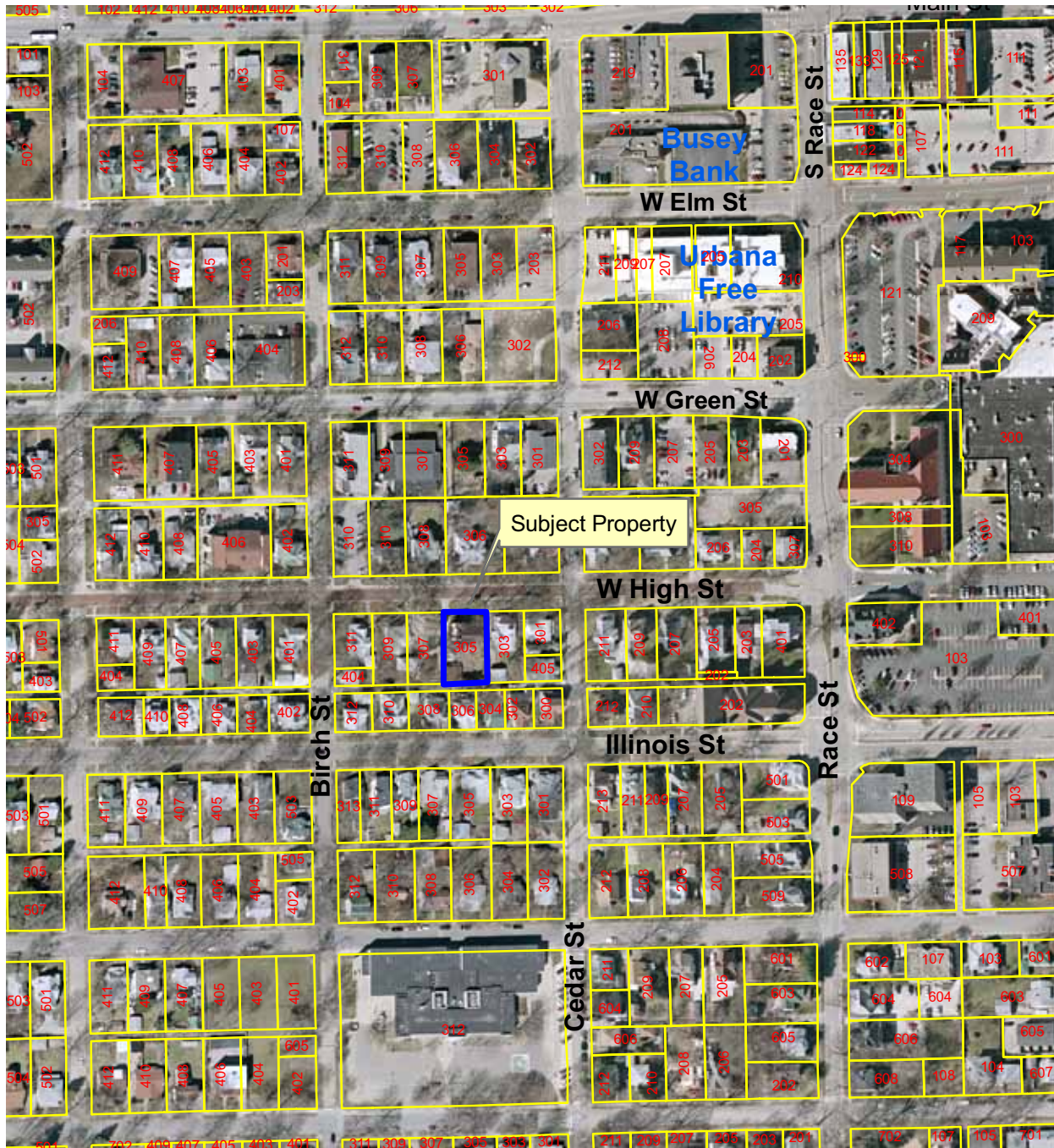


HPC Case: HP-2008-L-03
Subject: Richards-Latowshky House
Local Landmark Designation Application
Location: 305 W High Street
Zoning: R-2
Petitioner: John & Betsey Cronan

 Subject Property

Prepared 7/24/2008 by Community Development Services - rlb

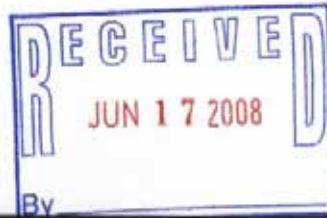
EXHIBIT B: Aerial Map



HPC Case: HP-2008-L-03
 Subject: Richards-Latowshky House
 Local Landmark Designation Application
 Location: 305 W High Street
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 Petitioner: John & Betsey Cronan

 Subject Property

Prepared 7/24/2008 by Community Development Services - rlb



Application for Historic Landmark Designation

Historic Preservation Commission

APPLICATION AND REVIEW FEE – NO CHARGE

Although there is no fee to file an application for Historic Landmark Designation, the Applicants are responsible for paying the cost of legal publication fees. The fees usually run from \$75.00 to \$125.00. The applicant will be billed separately by the News-Gazette.

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE - FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Application Filed June 17, 2008 Case No. HP-08-L-03

PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION

1. Location 305 W. HIGH ST
2. PIN # of Location 92-21-17-138-005
3. Name of Applicant/Petitioner(s) John + Betsey Cronan Phone 328-3863
 Address 305 W. High, Urbana IL 61801
(street/city) (state) (zip)
4. Property interest of Applicant(s) owners
5. Name of Owner(s) See above Phone _____
 Address _____
(street/city) (state) (zip)

DESCRIPTION, USE, AND ZONING OF PROPERTY: Attach an additional sheet if necessary

Legal Description LOT 15 JAMES T. ROE'S THIRD ADDITION

owner-occupied, single-family occupancy

zoned R-2

WHEREFORE, petitioner prays that this petition be heard by the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission and the Application for Historic Landmark Designation be granted.

Respectfully submitted this 16 day of June, 2008

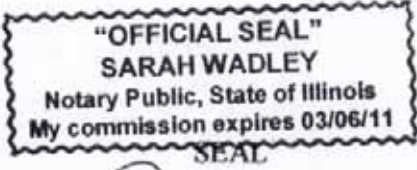
Elizabeth J Cronan
Signature of Applicant

STATE OF ILLINOIS }
 }
CHAMPAIGN COUNTY }

I, Sarah Wadley being first duly sworn on oath, deposes and says, that Elizabeth & John Cronan is the same person named in and who subscribed the above and foregoing petition, that Elizabeth + John Cronan has read the same and knows the contents thereof, and that the matters and things therein set forth are true in substance and in fact as therein set forth.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 16th day of June, 2008

Sarah Wadley
Notary Public



Signature of Applicant Elizabeth J Cronan
Petitioner's Attorney (if applicable) _____
Address 305 W. High, Urbana 61801
Telephone 217 328-3863

6. Date of Construction of Structure ca. 1911
7. Attach a map showing the boundaries and location of the property proposed for nomination.
8. Attach photographs showing the important structures or features of the property or structure
9. Indicate which of the following criteria apply to the property or structure (check all that apply). Additionally, attach a statement that describes the proposed landmark and its historic significance; list reasons why it is eligible for nomination; and show how the proposed landmark conforms to the criteria for designation (see attached Suggested Format).
- Significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political, or social heritage of the nation, state or community;
 - Associated with an important person or event in national state or local history;
 - Representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, method of construction or use of indigenous materials and which retains a high degree of integrity;
 - Notable work of a master builder, designers, architect or artist whose individual genius has influenced an area;
 - Identifiable as an established and familiar visual location or physical characteristics;
 - Character is a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure, including, but not limited to, farmhouses, gas stations or other commercial structures with a high level of integrity or architectural significance;
 - Yields, or may be likely to yield information important in history or prehistory

Urbana Landmark Application
prepared by Kathleen Duffy
May 2008

Richards-Latowsky House
305 W. High Street

Introduction

The house at 305 W. High Street is a well-preserved example of an early twentieth century Craftsman style house that has been home to a number of distinguished Urbana residents during its more than ninety years. It qualifies for Urbana local landmark status under the following criteria:

- Significant value as part of the *architectural*, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, education, ethnic, political, or *social* heritage of the nation, state or community
- Associated with an important *person* or event in *national*, state, or *local* history

The home qualifies as a significant part of the social heritage of the community with an array of significant owners and occupants, several of whom are important people in national and local history. Chester W. Richards, Urbana Mayor from 1917 to 1919, and his wife Amelia owned a series of Craftsman inspired homes in Urbana. The Richardses built 305 W. High Street around 1911. Other significant owners include Charles Creek, a longtime Urbana jeweler and Erwin Latowsky, a longtime Urbana banker. John H. Manley resided in the home for two years as a student. Manley would go on to be a key scientist coordinating experimental physicists for the establishment of the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos. Occupants of the home are reflective of the social heritage and local history of the West Urbana neighborhood and the City of Urbana.

The Richards-Latowsky house is also a significant part of the architectural heritage of the community as a good example of a Craftsman style house, a style relatively uncommon in West Urbana. The home maintains a high level of integrity today. It must be noted that the interior of the home is well-preserved with exquisite wood floors, trim, and built-in cabinetry, typical of Craftsman homes. Although the interior is not relevant for landmark status, it adds to the overall historic quality of the home. The Richards-Latowsky home is a significantly valuable piece of the varied architectural fabric of the neighborhood.

Property Description

The Richards-Latowsky house is a two-story historic residence, built of wood frame construction and stucco and clapboard-clad in the Craftsman style. It was constructed circa 1911 and the architect and builder are unknown. The house is wrapped in a brown-painted clapboard base, which extends to the first story window sill level. This treatment is consistent with historic photos of the home taken in the 1920s. All the historic windows on the first and second floors have storm windows.

The front façade consists of four bays. The first bay is a side shed roof enclosed porch, flush with the front façade plane. Three two-story bays complete the front façade. Four steps lead to

the small front porch, rebuilt in 1996, in the third bay. The single front door is framed by sidelights with the clapboard base continuing from the façade and a historic screen door. The entry is covered by a small projecting shed roof hood supported by knee braces, typical of Craftsman homes. To the left/east of the front door in the second bay is a set of four, square casement windows, and to the right/west is a semi-hexagonal bay window. The bay window consists of a paired window front and single window sides that are all casement windows with six-light transoms above. Rising above the first story bay window is a projecting second floor oriel pavilion supported underneath by two massive wood consoles. This pavilion contains a pair of centered double-hung windows on the second floor, a pair of six-light small attic windows, and a jerkinhead roof. The third bay of the second floor is a set of four rectangular windows centered above the entryway. To the left/east is a pair of double-hung windows in the second bay.

On the east façade of the building is the enclosed porch, with a shed roof first floor. A second story shed roof square bay extends onto the shed roof of the first story in a sleeping porch fashion. The shed roof of this bay is a continuous extrusion from the south side of the jerkinhead roof of the main house. The first floor porch has a set of three front-facing modern windows on the first floor and a set of three side-facing windows. To the left of the east-facing windows are two squares of apparent stucco infill of former openings between piers. The second floor bay contains a set of three front-facing double-hung windows and a set of two side-facing double-hung windows on each side of the bay. To the right/north of the second-story bay, in line with the main plane of the east elevation is a single double-hung window and a small square attic window above. The left/south of the bay is similar with a single double-hung window and a small square attic window above.

The western façade, which overlooks the single-car driveway, has a brick chimney rising just to the right/south of center. This shaped exterior end chimney pierces the extending jerkinhead roof eaves. Two basement windows, just at grade are centered to the left/north of the chimney, with a set of four casement windows with six-light transoms (similar to those in the front bay window) above on the first floor. The second floor contains three windows evenly spaced with two to the left/north of the chimney and one to the right/south. Above the second floor, to the left/north of the chimney is a set of three square attic windows. The western façade has a jerkinhead roof, similar to the extended pavilion on the front façade.

The rear façade of the home contains more layers than the front of the house due to recent renovations (1989 and 1996). The clapboard base continues on the first story. The extended pavilion on the left/west of the second story also has the clapboard base. Clapboard covers a slight protrusion of the kitchen in the central bay of the first floor. The rest is clad in stucco as is typical for the other façades. The left/west section of the first floor contains basement windows similar to those on the western and northern façades. A set of four, square casement windows and a small single rectangular casement window to the right/east make up the left-most section of the first story. The central section of the kitchen extends about three feet with a single modern door and a set of three windows in a window box. It has a shed roof, only visible at the right/east end. The kitchen door, window, and deck are modern renovations. Next to the central kitchen pavilion, in the main plane of the façade, is a set of two modern casement windows and one

modern casement window. To their right/east is a modern sliding glass door that opens from the enclosed porch onto a modern deck.

The second story of the rear façade contains one double hung window on the left/west. Next to that is a large, modern extended pavilion with a jerkinhead roof supported by a rectangular column on the left. One modern casement window is in the center and a pair of modern casement windows are on its right/east. The side of this pavilion contains one modern casement window. The right/east section, in the main plane of the façade, contains two double hung windows in their original location.

The side porch has been enclosed, and the second story on the rear has been extended with replacement windows, which are the only significant modifications to the building. The enclosed porch does not alter the massing and style of the home. The second story rear addition, while altering the massing slightly, does not detract from the overall feel of the home, especially since it is in the rear and is not at all visible from the street.

The southwest corner of the lot contains a garage constructed in 1971, in a similar location to the original garage as noted from the 1915 Sanborn map. It is a gable front, wood-frame construction, clad in stucco and clapboard similar to the home. It is a two-car garage with side storage on the left. The front façade contains a pedestrian door and overhead double garage door. The concrete driveway was paved in 1964 and is one car-width wide.

High Street, first paved in 1905, remains paved with historic brick pavers and brick sidewalks. Somewhat mature trees line the street and the front yard is terraced and well-landscaped. The setback is relatively small but is consistent with other homes on the block. The rear yard is nicely landscaped with a stone paved path and deck.

History

Community Background

European Americans first settled the area of what would be Champaign County in the 1820s. The County was officially recognized by the state on February 20, 1833, consisting of 111 households and approximately 720 people. Urbana was named the county seat and was platted in September of 1833 with four east-west streets and four north-south streets that now comprise the historic downtown. Population growth was slow at first and consisted of mostly farmers. The construction of the railroad in the 1850s brought enormous population and economic growth to Urbana and neighboring West Urbana (Champaign). The City of Urbana was incorporated on February 14, 1855. As the selected city of the state's first land grant college, Urbana cemented its place as an urban center in central Illinois.¹

Issac Busey, Champaign County's well-known pioneer, originally owned 80 acres west of Downtown Urbana, which upon his death was subdivided among his heirs. His daughter Lillis and her husband, James T. Roe, came to possess the land that would eventually include High Street. On April 23, 1852, James T. Roe's 3rd Addition was platted along with three other additions around that time, which extended from Springfield Avenue to Illinois Street and from

¹ Adams, Brian and Iona Matkovszki. Landmark nomination for 502 W. Elm Street

Race Street to McCullough Street. The neighborhood's close proximity to downtown attracted many families to build homes there. The neighborhood quickly expanded south and west. West Urbana's growth was a result of rising enrollments at the University due to its close proximity to campus. As the University grew, so did West Urbana, with many faculty building stylish houses in the nearby neighborhood. The University was originally contained to what is now the north part of the Quad and the Engineering Quad bordering Green Street between Wright Street and Mathews Avenue. The expansion of campus south and east was met with the expansion of the West Urbana neighborhood south and west toward Lincoln Ave., where now they seamlessly integrate. West Urbana's prime location situated close to both the University and downtown made it attractive to prominent residents looking to build stylish homes.

The Richards-Latowsky House is situated on the south side of High Street, just three blocks from historic downtown Urbana. It is a relatively new home within this section of High Street, compared to the nineteenth century homes nearby, since it replaced the lot's original home. The block is now filled on both sides of the street with mostly two-story vernacular houses with fewer homes conveying an influence of architectural style as is typical in the south and west of the neighborhood. The neighboring homes are all wood-frame construction with clapboard, aluminum, or vinyl siding with minimal stylistic elements from Colonial Revival, Dutch Colonial Revival, and Greek Revival styles. The house types are primarily of the Gabled Ell and Foursquare vernacular type.

Roughly every other home along High toward Race is shown on the 1887 Sanborn map with the 300 block not even shown. The first home on the property, with the address 215, appears on the 1892 map but is the furthest west home on High Street depicted. Most of its neighboring homes are also evident on this map. The original house, detectable by a different footprint on the Sanborn map and directory listings of previous owners, was a small, one-story home with a rear addition giving it an L-shape, presumably of the Gabled Ell vernacular form. Successive Sanborn maps indicate a series of various outbuildings at the back of the lot, presumably a garage that changed location. Prior to the current house being built, the nearby homes often occupied more than one lot. By the time the current home was built, nearly every lot had an individual home on it.

Ownership History

The Richards-Latowsky home at 305 W. High Street was home to a series of significant residents in its more than 90 year history. These residents contribute to the social heritage of the community and several are important people in local and even national history.

The Richards-Latowsky House property originally belonged to Samuel Busey as part of his 160 acres in 1831. Upon Samuel Busey's death, his property was separated into six shares, one of which went to Lillis Busey Roe. In 1852, the land was platted as part of James T. Roe's 3rd Addition.² The first house on this lot had the original address of 215 W. High Street. Both the 215 and 305 addresses appear on the 1902 Sanborn map. John C. and Eliza LeRoy occupied the property from about 1887 to 1908. John LeRoy was listed in city directories as a drayman, plasterer, domestic launderer, and insurance agent, and retired in 1904. The first house, owned by the LeRoys, first appears on Sanborn Maps in 1892. Earlier maps do not include the portion

² Abstract of Title.

of the block containing the LeRoys' house. That home's footprint remains the same in subsequent maps, with an addition in 1902, and last appears on the 1909 map. The original house would have been torn down between 1909 and 1911. Eliza LeRoy was listed as a widow in 1908, just prior to the Richardses acquiring the property circa 1910.³

Chester W. Richards and his wife, Angie, built 305 W. High Street circa 1911 and started their family around the same time: Chester Jr. was born in 1909 and Elizabeth in 1912. The family sold the house in 1916 to the Williamson brothers, Joseph S. and Harry K., according to the title abstract, one year prior to Chester Richards' tenure as mayor. (A detailed description of Mayor Richards' significance follows in the next section.)

City directories show Walter G. Welch, a granite cutter for Atkinson Monument Company, 106 S. Neil Street in Champaign (now Precision Graphics), and Jessie Welch living in the home in 1918. From 1919 to 1920, Mrs. Annie Potter, a widow, resided there with two children under 16.

Charles and May Creek owned the home from 1920 to 1922. They lived there with Charles's mother, Mary, and children Elva and Wilma. In May Creek's memoirs on file at the Champaign County Historical Archives, she writes that, "In 1920 we sold our home on Washington St. and Cha[rle]s's mother sold her's [sic] on Oregon and we all bought one at 305 W. High, thinking we could all live there together. But it didn't work out. Old people and children won't mix for long. We sold the place in 1922..." (A detailed description of Charles Creek's significance follows in the next section.)

The Creeks sold the home to Erhard and Bertha Latowsky, who lived in the home until 1954. Their children, Erwin and Hilda, resided with them in the 1920s. Erhard's occupations were listed as inspector, and janitor at the University of Illinois.⁴ In 1925 Hilda was listed as a bookkeeper for Lowenstern and Son, and Erwin was a teller at First State Bank on 119 W. Main Street. Erwin married Margaret Smith in 1926, and the couple lived with his parents for approximately two years. During this time, the elder Latowskys took in a series of borders. In 1925-1927, during his first two years at the University, John H. Manley lived with the Latowskys.⁵ Manley would go on to be a physics professor at the University and worked on the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos, New Mexico. (A detailed description of John Manley's significance follows in the next section.) Erwin and Margaret moved back to 305 W. High in 1936. Erhard died in 1940 and Bertha in 1953, after which Erwin and Margaret Latowsky sold the home.⁶ (A detailed description of Erwin Latowsky's significance follows in the next section.)

Philip and Charlotte Wadsworth bought the home in 1954.⁷ Philip, a professor of French and executive secretary of the Department of French from 1962 to 1964 at the University of Illinois and his wife lived there until 1964. Clive A. and Donna Follmer bought the home in 1964.

³ Abstract of Title.

⁴ City Directories.

⁵ UI Student Directories, University Archives

⁶ City Directories and title abstract.

⁷ Title abstract.

Clive Follmer was a lawyer downtown who worked for a series of firms. Robert J. Waaler, also an attorney, and his wife Diane S., bought the home in 1972, followed by Elizabeth J. and John E. Cronan, current owners of the home.⁸ John Cronan serves as Head of the Microbiology Department at the University of Illinois and Betsey Cronan is a ceramic artist who owns Griggs Street Potters at 305 W. Griggs Street, Urbana.

Timeline of Ownership/Occupants

1890-1908	John C. and Eliza LeRoy own previous home on property
1910	Amelia Richards purchases for son, Chester
1911-1916	Chester W. and Angie Richards build current home
1916-1920	owned by Joseph S. and Harry K. Williamson
	1918 W.G. and Jessie Welch, occupants
	1919-1920 Mrs. Annie Potter and children, occupants
1920-1922	Charles and May Creek, Mrs. Mary Creek
1923-1954	Erhard and Bertha Latowsky, Erwin and Margaret Latowsky, took borders
	1925-1927 John H. Manley, future Manhattan Project physicist, occupant
1954-1964	Philip and Charlotte Wadsworth
1964-1971	Clive A. and Donna Follmer
1972-1978	Robert J. and Diane S. Waaler
1978-present	Elizabeth J. and John E. Cronan

Histories of Significant Residents

Chester W. Richards

Even though Chester W. Richards only served one term as Urbana mayor, he was a prominent Urbana citizen during his youth, college days at the University of Illinois, and as a respected local lawyer. Richards was an Urbana native, who was born in 1883, the son of Patrick and Amelia Morgan Richards, early Champaign County settlers. Patrick was president at First National Bank at 102 E. Main Street from 1885 to 1899, where his son, Chester would later serve as vice president. Richards graduated from Urbana High School, where he was part of the 1901 State Champion Football team, and went on to play one year of varsity football at the University of Illinois. While at the University, he lived at 302 W. Green Street. He graduated with a degree in law from the University in 1906. Richards practiced law in Urbana at the First National Bank Building at 102 E. Main Street as well as serving as vice president the bank. From 1908 to 1910, he and his wife lived at 503 S. Coler Avenue, before building 305 W. High Street. He served as Master in Chancery (an appointed court official) for Champaign County from 1911 to 1917 prior to becoming mayor. They resided at 305 W. High Street from 1911 to 1916. Richards was mayor of Urbana from 1917 to 1919, and during this time he lived at 805 and 806 W. Green Street, which have since been demolished. Richards' tenure as mayor seemed uneventful from the City Council's minutes during his term. With no listings in the city directories in the 1920s except for 1925, it seems as though the family moved from Urbana during that time. The 1925 City Directory lists him as a lawyer and vice president of First National Bank, residing at 502 W. Elm Street, now an Urbana Landmark. During the 1930s, the Richardses occupied a series of Craftsman-influenced homes throughout West Urbana: 411 W. Indiana, 401 W. Nevada, and 1001 W. Nevada. (See section below for discussion of Craftsman homes in West Urbana.) In the 1930s and 1940s, Richards worked for a series of law firms at the Flat Iron Building, 301 W.

⁸ City Directories.

Main Street. The Richardses retired to California in the late 1940s or early 1950s. Angie Richards died in 1964 and Chester Richards died in California in 1974 at the age of 90.⁹

Charles Creek

Charles Creek was a lifetime Urbana resident who owned a jewelry shop in Downtown Urbana for over 30 years. Creek was born in Urbana on December 7, 1879. His parents, John F. and Mary Bonner Creek lived on the 500 block of W. Oregon Street when he was born. John Creek moved to Urbana at the age of 19 and Mary moved to Urbana at age 9. They married in 1874, and Charles was their only son. His father, John, was a contractor who taught young Charley cabinetry, where he put his love for tools to good use. Charles Creek married May Johnson Creek in 1901. Charles Creek installed the cabinets and woodwork into the Woman's Building (now the English Building) on campus when that was dedicated in 1905. His father encouraged him to find another trade, since back then carpenters could only work in the summer. Creek started working for John Nelson in 1905 to learn the watch trade at 118 S. Race Street. He apprenticed under Nelson for 12 years before starting his own shop at 128 W. Main Street where he would work for about 30 years. An article in the Champaign-Urbana Courier was published on him on December 7, 1947 for his 68th birthday, describing him as the oldest practicing jeweler and watch repairman in town. May Creek often worked behind the counter at the shop.¹⁰ Charles died January 14, 1959 and May Creek died July 19, 1965.¹¹ Charles Creek resided with his mother and family at 305 W. High Street from 1920-1922.

Erwin Latowsky

Erwin Latowsky was a prominent member of Urbana as a longtime banker involved in many community organizations. He graduated from University High School, the University of Illinois, and Rutgers Graduate School of Banking. Erwin and his wife, Margaret, resided with his parents, Erhard and Bertha, for 30 years at 305 W. High St, the longest of any residents of the house. Erwin Latowsky was in the banking business in Urbana for 45 years, working for First State Bank at 119 W. Main Street (1925-1926), First National Bank at 102 E. Main Street (1927-1933), and Busey First National Bank at 201-203 W. Main Street (1933-1946), before obtaining a position at Champaign County Bank and Trust at 102 E. Main Street, where he retired in 1969 after 23 years of service as director and executive vice president.¹² As an Urbana resident, Latowsky served as a member and trustee of First United Methodist Church, president of the Urbana Exchange Club, president of Illinois State Exchange, member of Urbana Lodge #157, member of Urbana Commandry, president of Family Service, treasurer of the Urbana Park District, board member of the United Fund, board member of the Chamber of Commerce, and board member of the Arrowhead Council of Boy Scouts. Latowsky retired to Florida and died in 1975.

John Manley

The Latowskys took on a series of borders during their ownership of 305 W. High Street. During this time, John H. Manley, coordinator of experimental physicists working on the

⁹ Feb. 4, 1974 Obituary in Family Files, Champaign County Historical Archives

¹⁰ Waterman, Charles. "Charley Creek Marks Birthday" *Champaign-Urbana Courier*. 7 Dec. 1947.

¹¹ Obituaries in Family Files, Champaign County Historical Archives

¹² *Urbana Courier*. Erwin Latowsky obituary Sep 25, 1975, retirement, June 1, 1969, and biography in family files at Champaign County Historical Archives.

development of the atomic bomb, resided at the residence during his first two years at the University in 1925 and 1926. John H. Manley was born in 1907 in Harvard, Illinois, receiving his BS from the University of Illinois in 1929. His other two years as an undergraduate he lived at 407 and 401 E. Daniels in Champaign.¹³ He received his PhD from the University of Michigan in 1934. From 1934 to 1937, he was a lecturer at Columbia University and was then an assistant professor of physics at U of I from 1937 to 1942.¹⁴ While a professor, he lived at 604 S. Gregory and 717 S. Prairie in Champaign.¹⁵ Manley was a Research Associate in 1942 at the University of Chicago metallurgical lab when he began researching nuclear weaponry. He coordinated the work of experimental physicists across the country working under J. Robert Oppenheimer at the University of California-Berkeley to develop plans for nuclear weaponry. Coordination among the various labs proved difficult, necessitating the need for a single site: Los Alamos, New Mexico. Manley, along with Oppenheimer and Edwin McMillan provided specifications and planned the equipment for the laboratory. To Los Alamos, he brought with him various equipment including a particle accelerator from the University of Illinois.¹⁶ Manley was a principal aide to Oppenheimer during the war. After the war Manley served as executive secretary of the general advisory committee for the Atomic Energy Commission before returning to Los Alamos as assistant director for research. Manley taught physics at the University of Washington from 1951 to 1957. He returned to Los Alamos as a research advisor, retiring in 1974.¹⁷ He died on June 11, 1990 at age 82 in Los Alamos, New Mexico.

Architectural Significance

The Arts & Crafts style was a relatively short-lived style compared to other revival styles of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, such as Colonial Revival which lasted well into the 20th century. It was set among the beginning of Period Revival styles including Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Mediterranean and Spanish Colonial Revival, and Dutch Colonial Revival. These styles dominate the West Urbana neighborhood, with few good examples of Arts & Crafts existing. Clean and simple Arts & Crafts style homes are starkly contrasted to their ornate Queen Anne neighbors, a style Arts & Crafts designers were reacting against.

The Arts & Crafts movement started in England as a rebellion against the ornamentation of the Victorian era and machination of the Modern era. Its followers sought to return to handcrafted simplicity restoring “dignity, joy, and morality to work and home.”¹⁸ In England the style as applied to home design was primarily for the upper-class, but its application in the United States was widespread among the middle-class.¹⁹

Builders of Arts & Crafts homes borrowed from 17th and 18th century English vernacular housing for its simple, “unaffected design and craftsmanship.” Typical to Arts & Crafts homes are plain, stucco or plaster-clad walls with bands of mullioned windows and wide eave overhangs.²⁰ The

¹³ Student Directories, University Archives.

¹⁴ *Physics Today* Nov. 1991, in the University Archives

¹⁵ Faculty Directories, University Archives.

¹⁶ *Los Alamos and the Development of the Atomic Bomb*, p. 32.

¹⁷ Los Alamos National Laboratory website: http://www.lanl.gov/history/people/J_Manley.shtml

¹⁸ Massey, James C. and Shirley Maxwell. *House Styles in America* p 189.

¹⁹ Massey, James C. and Shirley Maxwell. *House Styles in America* p 191.

²⁰ Jakle, John A. “Twentieth Century Revival Architecture and the Gentry” p. 31.

style was at its height from the turn of the 20th century until after World War I. People “favored simpler design, natural materials, and fine craftsmanship.”²¹ The Arts & Crafts movement was characterized more specifically into two sub-styles: Prairie and Craftsman.²² Arts & Crafts homes in Urbana have stylistic elements of both Prairie and Craftsman, although the Craftsman elements are more dominant. Particular to the Prairie style is an emphasis on the horizontal with clean lines and often asymmetrical massing and a single building material popularized by such architects as Frank Lloyd Wright. The Craftsman style is more typical of smaller, vernacular residences with features influenced by pattern books and magazines.²³

Gustav Stickley’s *The Craftsman* magazine, published between 1901 and 1916 was influential in bringing the Craftsman style to the masses. It was here that the Craftsman Bungalow was popularized.²⁴ Some pattern books even offered pre-cut packages of lumber ready for assembly on site. This led to the Craftsman Bungalow becoming the most popular small home style in America.²⁵ The high style original Craftsman Bungalows started in Pasadena, California, designed by Sumner & Greene and defined in a sub-class called Western Stick Style.²⁶ Elements such as triangular knee braces, pier porch supports, exposed rafters and roof beams and false half-timbering are typical of the Craftsman style. Windows often are casement windows with geometric mullions, sometimes with transoms or a multi-pane sash over sash with one large glass pane. Roof patterns vary with Arts & Crafts homes, although gables dominate more than hipped roofs. With fresh air a requirement, outdoor “rooms” or porches, are typical as well as well-landscaped gardens.²⁷

This home, with its stucco cladding and dark brown trim, features classical elements of the Arts & Crafts style. The sets of leaded mullioned windows are an excellent feature of the style. Horizontality, an influence of the Prairie style, is emphasized through the brown clapboard base cladding. The building’s asymmetrical massing is a reference to the Prairie Style as well. Gables that are typical to Craftsman homes are truncated in this home with jerkinhead style roofs. The wooden consoles supporting the pavilion on the front façade suggest the handmade craftsmanship typical to Arts & Crafts furnishings. Triangular knee braces support the entry awning, a tell-tale sign of the Craftsman style. The side porch, now enclosed, is a typical element of the style, used to draw fresh air into the home.

Context

The historic West Urbana neighborhood is comprised primarily of English, Colonial, and Dutch revival and vernacular homes with very few examples of the Arts & Crafts style. English and Colonial revival styles were used particularly by University faculty and local businessmen as a sign of prestige.²⁸ Several homes have elements of the Craftsman style, such as exposed rafter beams and knee braces, but there are only a few that are good examples of the style in the neighborhood. It seems as though Chester and Angie Richards were particularly fond of the

²¹ Gordon, Stephen C. *How to Complete the Ohio Historic Inventory*. p 102.

²² McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. p 10.

²³ McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. p. 454.

²⁴ Massey, James C. and Shirley Maxwell. *House Styles in America* p 193.

²⁵ McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. p. 454.

²⁶ Whiffen, Marcus. *American Architecture since 1780*. p 209.

²⁷ Massey, James C. and Shirley Maxwell. *House Styles in America* p 196.

²⁸ Jakle, John A. “Twentieth Century Revival Architecture and the Gentry”

Craftsman style, since several of their remaining homes have very similar elements to 305 W. High Street and the style: 411 W. Indiana, 401 W. Nevada, and 1001 W. Nevada.

The house at 411 W. Nevada is an Arts & Crafts influence Foursquare home with a side porch and trellised roof, typical of Craftsman homes. The house at 401 W. Nevada's Craftsman elements are its side porch, large eaves, and knee braces. The house at 1001 W. Nevada has Craftsman elements such as geometric mullioned windows, stucco cladding, and the front porch that is now enclosed when open would have made this house appear more like a bungalow. It has a jerkinhead roof on the second floor similar to other homes mentioned here.

Several other Arts & Crafts homes in the West Urbana neighborhood include 207 W. Indiana and 804 W. Nevada. The home at 207 W. Indiana has a similar front entry awning as the Richards-Latowsky house and a jerkinhead roof over the left porch. Although its trim is painted blue, it has the same clapboard base and stucco walls as the Richards-Latowsky house. 804 W. Nevada has very similar styling as well, with the sets of mullioned windows, square attic windows, stucco cladding, and a wooden-clad base.

Summary

The Richards-Latowsky house at 305 W. High Street, as one of only a few Arts & Crafts homes in the West Urbana neighborhood, contributes significantly to the architectural heritage of the community. Its series of owners, from local businessmen and professionals, to the Mayor of Urbana and resident future atomic bomb physicist make it significant for its social heritage value and association with important people. The Craftsman home retains a high level of integrity both inside and outside and is a good example of the style, especially in this neighborhood with so few examples.



The north and west facades—taken looking south-southeast



The east and north facades—taken looking southwest



Photos, presumably, of May Creek and her daughters Elva and Wilma in the rear yard ca. 1920 (courtesy Betsey Cronan)



The current rear façade

Comparative West Urbana Arts & Crafts Examples



411 W. Indiana (built ca. 1911, Richardses lived here ca. 1930)



207 W. Indiana



401 W. Nevada (built ca. 1911, Richardses lived here ca. 1936)



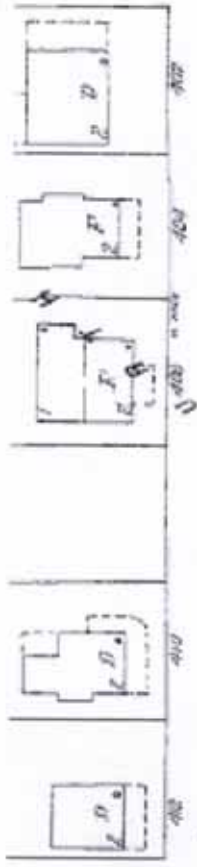
804 W. Nevada



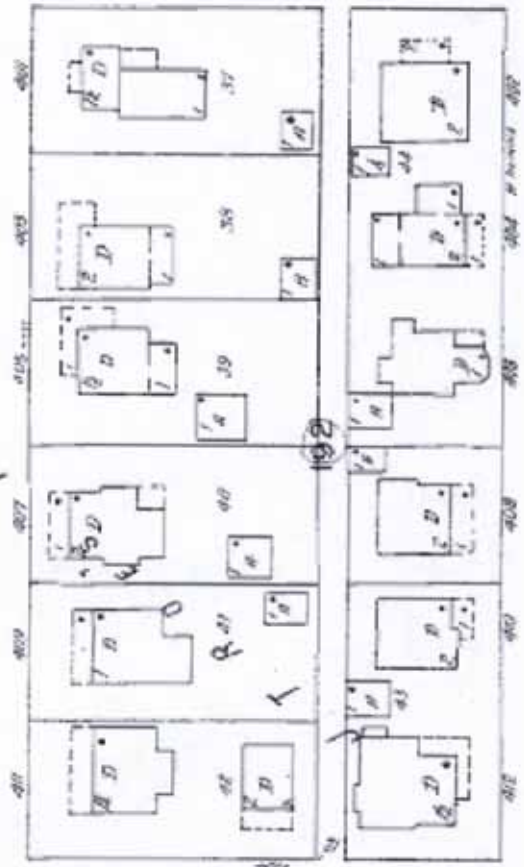
1001 Nevada (built ca. 1919, Richardses lived here ca. 1940)



204 W. Nevada



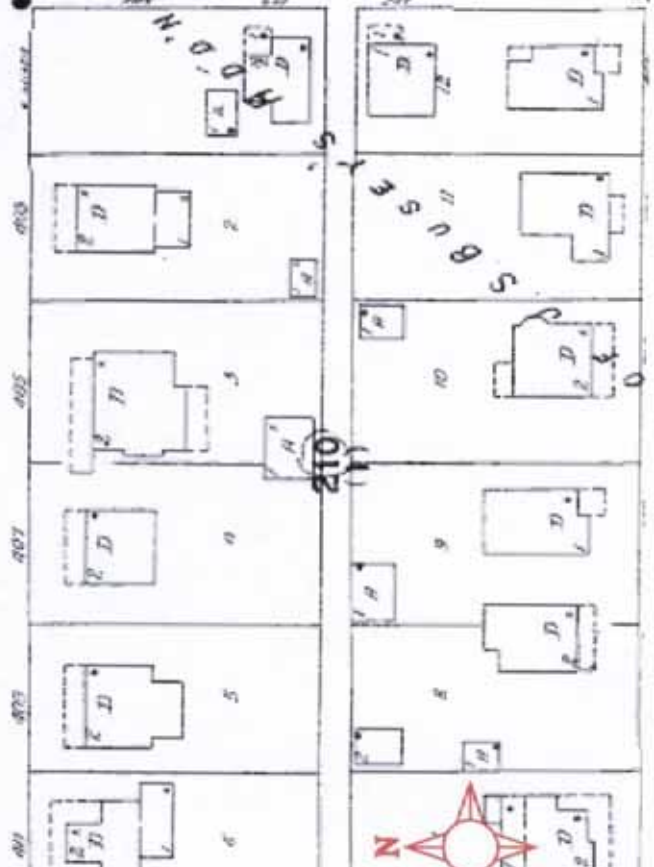
W. HIGH



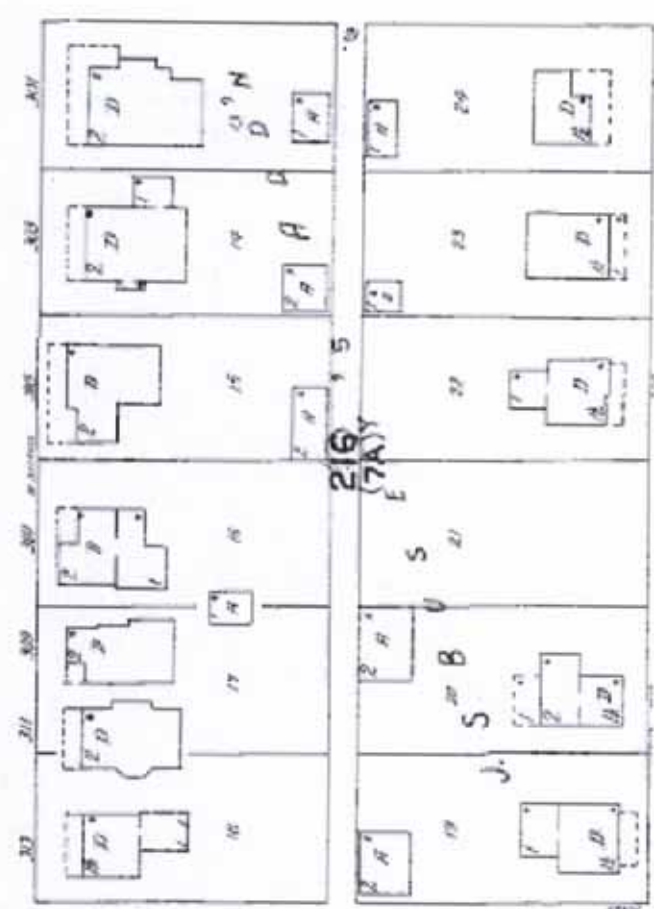
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W. ILLINOIS



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S. McCULLOUGH (S NORTH)

BIRCH



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Planning Division

m e m o r a n d u m

TO: The Urbana Historic Preservation Commission

FROM: Rebecca Bird, Historic Preservation Planner

DATE: July 31, 2008

SUBJECT: 305 West High Street (Richards-Latowsky House): Preliminary determination for a historic landmark application, Case No. HP 08-L-03

Introduction

Historic Preservation Case No. HP 08-L-03 is an application submitted by John and Betsey Cronan and prepared by Kathleen Duffy to designate the house at 305 W. High Street (referred to as the Richards-Latowsky House) as a local historic landmark. John and Betsey Cronan are the property owners.

The Historic Preservation Ordinance requires that the Commission first make a preliminary determination as to whether the proposed landmark is eligible for designation. Should the Commission find that the property qualifies for designation as a local landmark by meeting one or more of the criteria provided in Section XII-5.C of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance, a public hearing will follow within 45 days of the preliminary determination. In this case, the public hearing would be scheduled for September 3, 2008.

If the application is submitted by the property owner, the Commission may approve or deny the application by a majority vote of the Commissioners then holding office. Should the application for designation as a local landmark be approved, the owner would be required to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Commission for future exterior changes to the property, including any proposed demolition.

Background

According to the application, the house, a good example of the Craftsman architectural style, was built circa 1911 by Chester W. Richards, Urbana Mayor from 1917 to 1919, and his wife Amelia. Based on extensive research and documentation in terms of the criteria for designation, the applicant states that the Richards-Latowsky House:

- Has significant value as part of the *architectural*, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political or *social* heritage of the nation, state, or community;
- Is associated with an important *person* or event in *national*, state, or *local* history;

Discussion

The action necessary at the August 6th Historic Preservation Commission meeting is a preliminary determination as to whether the property is eligible for designation as a local historic landmark.

Criteria

Under Section XII-5.C of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance, the proposed landmark must meet one or more of the following criteria for designation. Following each criteria (*provided in italics*) is analysis offered by City staff.

- a) *Significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political or social heritage of the nation, state, or community.*

According to the application, the Richards-Latowsky House has significant value as part of Urbana's architectural and social heritage. The house was built, circa 1911, in the Craftsman architectural style. The identifying features of the Craftsman style are generally low-pitched gabled roofs with wide, unenclosed eave overhangs, exposed roof rafters, decorative beams or braces found under the eaves, and porches with tapered square columns supporting the porch roof. This house falls into the hipped roof subtype of the Craftsman style, which make up less than 10 percent of the style. The hipped roof subtype is similar to some simple Prairie houses, often lacking the exposed rafters and other typical Craftsman details. The application states:

This home, with its stucco cladding and dark brown trim, features classical elements of the Arts & Crafts style. The sets of leaded mullioned windows are an excellent feature of the style. Horizontality, an influence of the Prairie style, is emphasized through the brown clapboard base cladding. The building's asymmetrical massing is a reference to the Prairie style as well. Gables that are typical to Craftsman homes are truncated in this home with jerkinhead style roofs. The wooden consoles supporting the pavilion on the front façade suggest the handmade craftsmanship typical to Arts & Crafts furnishings. Triangular knee braces support the entry awning, a tell-tale sign of the Craftsman style. The side porch, now enclosed, is a typical element of the style, used to draw fresh air into the home.

In terms of Urbana's social heritage, the application states that the Richards-Latowsky House qualifies as a significant part of the social heritage of the community with an array of significant owners and occupants. The house was built for Chester W. Richards, Urbana Mayor from 1917 to 1919. Additionally, prominent banker Erwin Latowsky and his wife, Margaret, lived in the house for a number of years with Erwin's parents, Erhard and Bertha Latowsky. During the Latowsky's tenure in the house, John Manley, coordinator of experimental physicists working on the development of the atomic bomb, resided in the house as their tenant. For further information on the historic significance of the owners and residents of the Richards-Latowsky House, see the application.

City staff finds that the house has significant value as part of Urbana's architectural and social heritage. The Craftsman architectural style, particularly the hipped roof subtype, is relatively unusual in Urbana

and although Chester Richards was not living in the house when he was serving as Mayor of Urbana, the houses that he did live in during those years have since been demolished.

b) Associated with an important person or event in national, state or local history.

According to the application, Chester Richards was a prominent Urbana citizen as well as Mayor of Urbana from 1917-1919. Richards attended Urbana High School, where he was part of the 1901 State Champion Football team, attended the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and played one year of varsity football while he was there. Richards went on to practice law in Urbana and serve as the vice president of the First National Bank in downtown Urbana. John Manley, who lived in the house as an undergraduate at the University, went on to coordinate the work of experimental physicists across the country working under J. Robert Oppenheimer developing plans for nuclear weaponry. Further information about the significance of the residents can be found in the application.

City staff finds that the Richards-Latowsky House is associated with an important person in local history as well as associated with an important person in national history. The application clearly demonstrates Chester Richards importance to the community and John Manley's national significance.

c) Representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, method of construction or use of indigenous materials and which retains a high degree of integrity.

According to the application, the Richards-Latowsky House does not qualify under criterion c).

d) Notable work of a master builder, designer, architect or artist whose individual genius has influenced an area.

According to the application, the Richards-Latowsky House does not qualify under criterion d). The architect and builder are not known.

e) Identifiable as an established and familiar visual feature in the community owing to its unique location or physical characteristics.

According to the application, the Richards-Latowsky House does not qualify under criterion e).

f) Character as a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure, including, but not limited to, farmhouses, gas stations or other commercial structures with a high level of integrity or architectural significance.

The Richards-Latowsky House does not qualify under criterion f). The house is not a utilitarian structure.

g) Located in an area that has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

The Richards-Latowsky House does not qualify under criterion g). City staff and the applicant are not

aware of any archaeological significance of the area.

Summary of Findings

Recommended statements of findings based on the application and Staff analysis are below. The Commission may revise these findings based on the review and consideration of the case.

1. Article XII. of the *Urbana Zoning Ordinance* provides the City of Urbana the authority to designate local landmarks and historic districts with the stated purpose to promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the community.
2. The City of Urbana on June 17, 2008 received a complete application to designate the property located at 305 W. High Street as a local landmark.
3. The property located at 305 W. High Street and known as the Richards-Latowsky House was constructed circa 1911 in the Craftsman architectural style.
4. The Richards-Latowsky House has significant value as part of the architectural and social heritage of the nation, state, or community.
5. The Richards-Latowsky House is associated with important persons in national and local history.
6. The Richards-Latowsky House is not representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, method of construction or use of indigenous materials and retaining a high degree of integrity.
7. The Richards-Latowsky House is not a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, or artist whose individual genius has influenced the area.
8. The Richards-Latowsky House is not identifiable as an established and familiar visual feature in the community owing to its unique location or physical characteristics.
9. The Richards-Latowsky House is not a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure.
10. The Richards-Latowsky House is not known to be located in an area that has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

Options

In making a preliminary determination in Case No. HP2008-L-03, the Historic Preservation Commission may:

- 1) Find that the nomination does not meet the criteria for designation as a local landmark, in which

case the application shall not be further considered; or

- 2) Find that the nomination does meet the criteria for designation as a local landmark, in which case the application will proceed to a public hearing.

In either case, the Historic Preservation Commission should include Findings of Fact in their motion. The Findings of Fact should summarize the Commission's justification for finding that the nomination either does or does not meet the criteria.

Staff Recommendation

Based on the application and analysis herein, staff recommends the Historic Preservation Commission find that the landmark nomination for 305 W. High Street **QUALIFIES** for designation as a local historic landmark based on criteria a) and b) as set forth in Section XII-5.C of the *Urbana Zoning Ordinance*.

cc: John & Betsey Cronan, applicants and property owners
Elizabeth Tyler, FAICP, Community Development Director
Robert Myers, AICP, Planning Manager

Attachments: Exhibit A: Location Map
Exhibit B: Aerial Map
Exhibit C: Application including photographs and maps