PRESERVATION RACINE, INC.

NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2010

Robert Johansen's Gifts

We Preservation Racine members don't often think about the imagery in print that says historic preservation in Racine, the logo that crowns our every communication be it a newsletter, a tour booklet, or our letterhead. We all are aware that, in reality, it is the beautiful cupola atop the 1868 Olin House, the cream brick Italianate that stands at the corner of Main and Twelfth streets. But do we remember how it came to be?

Watercolorist and commercial artist Robert Johansen offered to create a logo for us early in our beginnings. The story goes that he and Pat Murphy, who lived in the Olin House at the time, got together to brainstorm on the subject. Her cupola came up, and she said they ought to consider other Racine architectural gems in their search. "Well," he said, "that would involve asking other owners for permission and take some time. You could say 'yes' right now." So it was!

Marian Cantele's recent gift to us of Bob Johansen's pen and ink drawing of the Blake House was the impetus for this trip down memory lane. It brought to mind the many artistic offerings that were given us by this talented man. In 1982 we first offered for sale our notepaper, featuring his sketches of eight historic buildings in Racine. The line drawings from which the notepaper was made now hang in our office at the Blake House. Also in 1982, we were offered a new fundraising item: a drawing of the Wind Point Lighthouse for a mug. In the years to follow, we were given artwork for five additional mugs: the Civil War Monument in Monument Square; Firehouse No. 3 at Sixth Street and Grand Avenue; the S.C. Johnson tower and administration building, coinciding with the Johnson centennial celebration in 1986; the Shoop building at Main and State streets; and DeKoven's bell tower and clock. Bob also did tour sketches, then, as now, gifts for the owners of the tour buildings.

In 1985 the logo that Bob created for us was incorporated into the design for the bronze plaques that are presented to the owners of Racine landmark buildings. The plaques, designed by local architect George Holt Blaustein, are funded by the Racine Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Bob Johansen was born in Kenosha in 1923 and graduated from Mary Bradford High School there. After serving in the military during WWII, he

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Blake House, 936 South Main Street. Pen and ink drawing by Robert Johansen.

attended the Layton School of Art in Milwaukee. There he became interested in painting with watercolors. Professionally, he became a commercial artist, working for about six years for J.I. Case Company, and then for thirty-two years for Eisenberg's Studio in Milwaukee. When that firm closed, he was hired by Snap-On Tools Corporation of Kenosha.

Meanwhile, away from his job, Bob painted watercolor images. He said he considered himself to have two careers. He belonged to a number of art associations and was the recipient of several awards. In 1972 one of his paintings, a picture of a house and outbuildings in winter, was chosen as part of a national traveling exhibit of the American Watercolor Society.

Bob Johansen died on September 15, 1991, at his home in Racine. We continue to benefit from his generous gifts to us. He gave historic preservation a face in Racine, and we will remember him through his work.

Mary Whitman

Century Buildings

Long time preservationist and Preservation Racine past president, Don Rintz, came back from a conference in Madison, Wisconsin, with the idea of honoring one hundred year old buildings in Racine County that have been lovingly cared for, preserved, renovated, or restored. From this idea, PR members developed the first Century Building Awards event in 1988. Every year since, buildings have been selected, researched, photographed, and owners given a Century Certificate as part of National Preservation Month. This year's theme is "Old is the New Green." Twelve buildings have been chosen to be honored this year.

The ceremony will be held on Monday, May 3, 2010, in the Great Hall at the DeKoven Center. It will start at 6:30 p.m. with a reception honoring the building owners, followed by the program at 7:00 p.m.

Members are asked to please bring an appetizer or dessert for the reception table. Beverages will be provided.

Wisconsin Barn Census

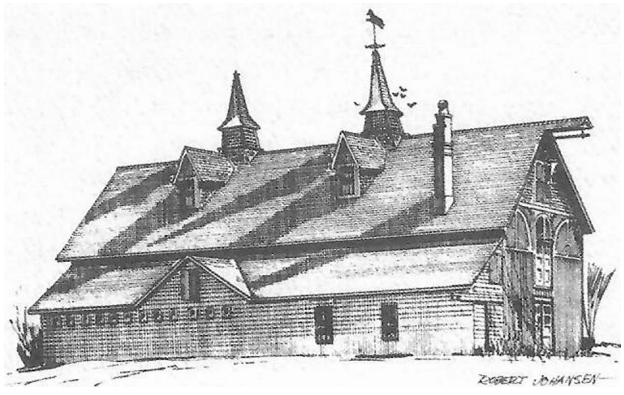
Once the most revered architecture on the American farm, and truly the symbol of American farming, the elegant and impressive barns of our past are fast disappearing from our landscapes. In a state such as Wisconsin, known for its agricultural production, the loss of these historic structures threatens the cultural history of the state.

According to Wisconsin historical census reports, farming reached its peak in Wisconsin in 1935, with over 199,876 farms reporting that they were farming 35 million acres of land. By contrast, the 2007 agricultural census reported that of those 199,876 farms, assuming they all had a barn, only 35,386 historic barns remain standing throughout the state.

There are several reasons for the losses: changes in use, catastrophic loss, farms sold for development, farms consolidated, and abuse.

There is hope, however; grass-roots groups, recognizing the importance of the preservation of these icons, are taking steps to preserve them, one barn at a time. A prime example of these efforts is the work of the Chase Stone Barn volunteers from Pulaski. Through hard work, grants, and community commitments, the Chase Stone Barn will live to see another century. The undeniable affinity for barns remains the hope of those formerly revered structures.

(Citizens for a Scenic Wisconsin Newsletter, www.scenicwisconsin.org)



Klinkert Barn, 4717 Lathrop Avenue. Pen and ink drawing by Robert Johansen.

From the President

"A leader is best when people barely know he exists, not so good when people obey and acclaim him, worse when they despise him....But of a good leader who talks little when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say, "'We did it ourselves.'"
- Lao Tzu (famous Chinese philosopher whose trip to Racine is undocumented and doubtful)

This is my last letter as your president and it is my sincere hope that you, the members of Preservation Racine, will say, "We did it ourselves."

For more than thirty-six years, we have dedicated ourselves to identify and actively encourage the preservation of buildings, sites, and districts in the Racine community that have historical, architectural, or cultural value. I am very proud of what our membership has accomplished.

There are so many hardworking people to thank for the last two years with whom I have been honored to serve. Rather than trying to name them all individually, I would like to highlight their many accomplishments:

●Following more than thirty years of tradition, two very successful Tours of Historic Places have been held for the greater Racine community. The sacrifices, trials, and challenges their leaders have made are beyond words. The contributions of hundreds of volunteers, florists, artists, photographers, patrons, homeowners, and more have been tremendous and appreciated by all of us.

●For more than twenty years, Preservation Racine has honored buildings in the area that are at least one hundred years old and have been maintained with care by presenting Century Building Certificates to their owners. The last four years have also commemorated The National Trust for Historic Preservation's annual National Preservation Month. The researchers, photographers, and especially the homeowners have so graciously given of their time.

●Our newsletter committee and its authors have produced educational and entertaining articles chronicling our rich history. By the way, it is not uncommon for the committee to meet and review each newsletter for several hours to ensure you are getting the very best we have to offer.

●We originated and provided an instructor for a local Racine history class at UW-Parkside that focused on beginning a collection of recorded history including the Racine Belles, Western Publishing, J.I. Case Company, the Sienna Center, the Danish in Racine (and not just kringle!) and more. It is our hope that the university will continue to offer the course.

●We applied for and received a mini-grant from the Racine Arts Council.

●We expanded our relationship with the City of Racine adding its principal planner as an ex officio, active member of our board of directors.

●We purchased a computer, printer/scanner, workstation, and high speed Internet connection to begin to digitize the content in our office, beginning with digitizing all of our newsletters.

●We worked with UW-Parkside's Community Partnership and Root River Recreation Center to develop a Racine bike tour identifying and documenting thirty historic sites. We are hopeful this program will begin this summer.

●The membership voted to spend $5,000 to help the Caledonia Historical Society in moving the Sturtevant train depot to Linwood Park and another $5,000 to help in the restoration process. The generosity of our membership was an important element of their success and the historic depot has been saved and is now resting on a new foundation at the park.

●We developed an ordinance to protect Racine's historic artifacts and remain hopeful it will complete its journey through city hall and become law.

●Our Blake House Committee led the restoration of this beautiful historic house and continues to diligently guide the ongoing preservation and operation of the house as well as its financial stewardship. From the roof to the furnace and from storm windows to landscaping, repairs, rentals, and more, this unsung group operates

quietly under the radar on one of our most important projects.

●We are privileged to have so many outstanding membership meetings. Speakers, topics, and locations are carefully planned and wonderfully carried out. From the Horlick Building to Fish Brothers Wagon Company, to the Masonic Center and Mound Cemetery, all have been memorable (and weren't those tavern meetings fun?).

Being your president is probably the easiest job in the organization when you have such a hardworking board of directors. They are not just colleagues but have truly become personal friends for whom I will always be indebted and will never forget. Thank you for giving me the distinct honor of leading this organization for the last two years.

Eric Marcus

Wright and Like 2010

Frank Lloyd Wright/Wisconsin has announced its Wright and Like 2010 Tour, entitled "Racine/ Kenosha: Poetic Spaces and Quiet Places" during the weekend of June 5. The tour will take place on Saturday, June 5. Eight buildings will be open plus the Durand Mansion at 1012 South Main Street which will serve as tour headquarters as well as provide tours of that building.

The Racine buildings will be the S.C. Johnson Administration Building and Wingspread, the Walker House, three designed by John Randal McDonald– the Erskine, the Petersen, and the Christensen houses–and two houses in Kenosha. One, the Isermann House, was designed by Russell Barr Williamson, and the other was designed and built from 1957-60 by its owner, William Mason, a structural engineer. These were all built in the twentieth century.

The weekend will honor buildings which span three centuries. On Friday night, June 4, Mark Hertzberg will present his illustrated show of the S.C. Johnson research tower. Following this presentation will be a tour and reception and dinner at Fortaleza Hall, Project Honor, a twenty-first century building designed by Lord Norman Foster. The price for this evening's events is $100. This will be the only opportunity to see Fortaleza Hall during the weekend.

Sunday morning brunch at DeKoven's Great Hall will honor a nineteenth century Gothic style complex. Wright considered Gothic style as organic, both in character and treatment. Taylor Hall and St. John's Chapel will be open for tours. The cost for June 6 will be $50.

All of the sites on the Saturday self-drive tour will be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tickets for members are $45 in advance and $50 on the day of the tour; tickets for non-members are $50 in advance and $55 on the day of the tour. The Friday and Sunday events require separate tickets and quantities are limited. For more information, call the Frank Lloyd Wright® Wisconsin office at 608-287-0339 or visit wrightinwisconsin.org.

The opportunity to serve as a tour guide is still available. In exchange for two to three hours of volunteer time, guides receive a free ticket to the tour, worth $55. To volunteer call Jill and Bob Hartmann at 637-5305.

PRESERVATION RACINE

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Editors' note: As we have done in the past due to the length of our feature article, this issue of the Preservation Racine newsletter is being printed in two parts.