

THE GRIFFIN NEWSLETTER

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Please email news items to the editor.

TWENTIETH ANNUAL MEETING

SATURDAY/SUNDAY, 1-2 JUNE 2019

JOIN US IN DECATUR and SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

MEETING: The twentieth annual meeting of the Walter Burley Griffin Society of America will be held in Decatur, Illinois, with a proposed extension on Sunday to Springfield, during the weekend of 1-2 June 2019. The morning session will be held at the University Commons, Millikin University. The tentative schedule looks like this: doors will open at 8:30am with the lectures beginning at 9:00 and ending at noon. The afternoon tour, which we hope will include the four houses on Millikin Place plus the Millikin Homestead, will begin at 1:00 and end at 4:30, followed by a reception at the Adolph Mueller house, No. 4 Millikin Place, lasting until 5:30pm. On Sunday morning, we hope to offer a tour of the Susan Lawrence Dana house in Springfield.

ACCOMMODATIONS: The conference hotel will be the Decatur Conference Center and Hotel, Route 36 & Wyckles Rd., Decatur, IL 62522, 217-422-8800. Please note that we have not yet made arrangements for a conference rate.

ARGUMENT: Millikin Place is a private street on the west side of Decatur, Illinois, that consists of four grand houses from 1909-11—two designed by Marion Mahony, one by Frank Lloyd Wright and one by a California firm—plus a large Italianate mansion from the 1870s (the Millikin Homestead) and a group of interesting houses from the 1920s-30s. The three Mahony/Wright houses were built by the Chicago office of Herman Von Holst, who assumed Wright's practice in September 1909 and hired Marion Mahony as chief designer. The three were landscaped by Walter Burley Griffin.

The Society visited Millikin Place once before, in 2007, to coincide with the publication of our first book, *Marion Mahony and Millikin Place*. With the supply of that work nearly depleted, we are planning to issue a second edition in time for this year's meeting. We are also hoping for another return visit by the Australian landscape and planning historian and Griffin scholar James Weirick.

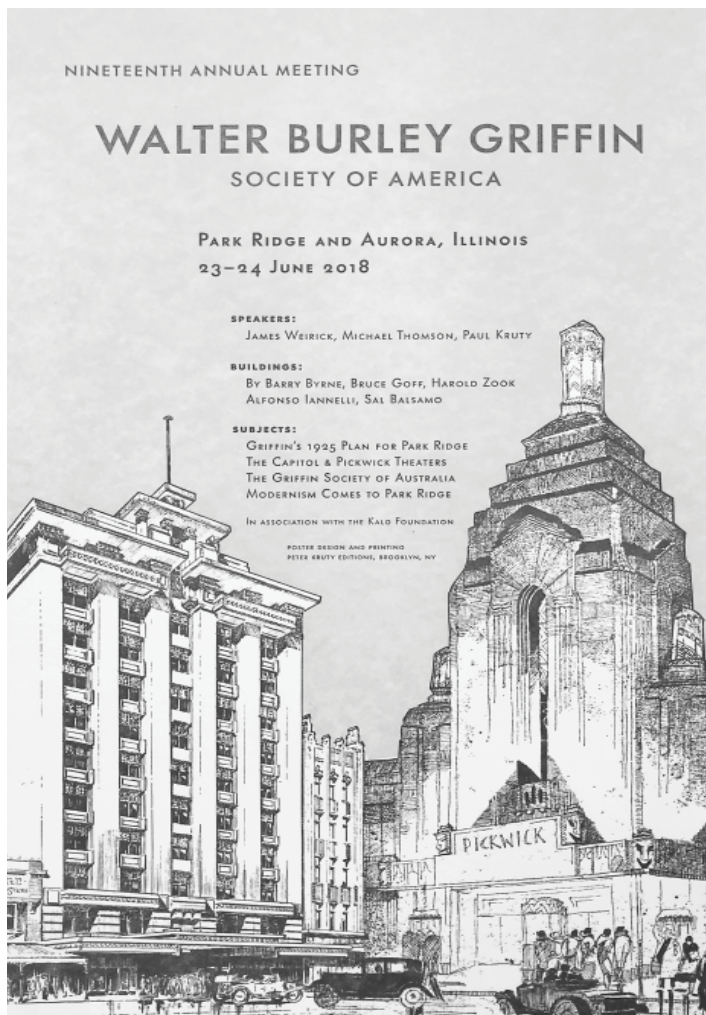
RENOVATING THE GRIFFINS' CAPITOL THEATRE IN MELBOURNE

Following the report in the last newsletter by Glenda Korporaal about the developments at the Capitol Theatre in Melbourne, the Griffin Society pledged \$1000 toward the renovation and offered to forward additional donations made by generous Griffin members. One of the finest examples of the Griffins' work in Australia, the Capitol Theatre is undergoing a \$A20 million (US \$14 million) renovation. For more information, please write to Peter Burley Griffin at info@WBGriffinSociety.org.

CIRCLES, SQUARES AND TRIANGLES IN PARK RIDGE

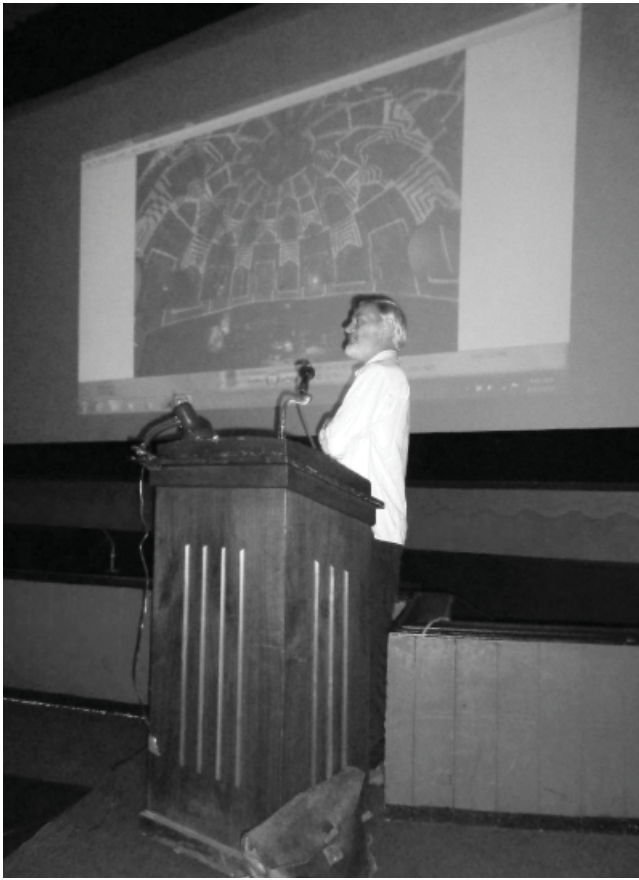
The 19th meeting of the Griffin Society, held in Park Ridge and Aurora, Illinois, on 23 and 24 June 2018, provided a feast of forms for more than seventy-five registered members and assorted last-minute guests. Buildings by the architect Bruce Goff offered a geometric array, from the squares of the Turzak house (1939) to the triangles of the Unseth house (1940) and the circles of the Ford house (1949). Circles in particular won the day, with Barry Byrne's five cottages (1923) set on a semi-circle; the surprise hit of the day, Sal Balsamo's Kroulik house (1965), opening on to Park Ridge's hidden Park Lake, with circles over circles surrounding the cascading waterfall of its entrance hall; while some of us even retired to Aurora's Roundhouse restaurant for lunch after circling through the Ford house. Yet there was every kind of decorative triangular variation on Zook & McCaughey's Pickwick Theater (1929), with its spectacular interior executed by the Iannelli Studio, as well

as the terra cotta ornamentation on the Maine Township high school. Triangular forms dominated every aspect of Lloyd Wright's Good Shepherd church (1959), while, finally, the reception at the Iannelli Studios (Kalo Foundation) gave us as a backdrop the triangular motifs of the big concrete block rescued from Frank Lloyd Wright's Midway Gardens (1914).



George Shutack and John Clouse prepare the room.

Saturday had begun in the Pickwick Theater itself, with tech mavens George Shutack and John Clouse preparing the seemingly gargantuan space for our lecturers. These included a trio of speakers, starting with Anthony Rubano introducing Paul Kruty, who—setting the *raison d'être* for the meeting's locale in Griffin's 1925 plan for Park Ridge—told us about the role played by Park Ridge in Chicago's Arts & Crafts Movement in the early years of the 20th Century; about its art colony; and about the arrival on the scene of sculptor Alfonso Iannelli and the architectural partnership of Zook & McCaughey. As Richard Mohr put it to Paul, "You managed to pull together and offer quite a fine conference from wisps, strands, and skyrockets going off in all directions."



Michael Thomson updates us on Australia.

Next, Sydney historian and Australian Griffin Society vice-president Michael Thomson, introduced by Peggy Bang, brought us up-to-date about the many developments both good and not-so-good in Australia concerning the Griffins' legacy there, in the four years since Adrienne Kabos reviewed the origins and accomplishments of the Griffin Society at our 2014 meeting in Mason City, Iowa. Michael was in the midst of a two-month's sojourn across America, seeing every kind of organic building from Griffin, Wright and Sullivan to Goff, Lloyd Wright, and a host of others. His account of the history and on-going restoration project for the Griffins' Capitol Theatre in Melbourne gave us a much-appreciated background for Peter B. Griffin's announcement that the Society was making a \$1,000 contribution to the project and his call for members to match that amount in the Society's name. The relationship between the Pickwick and the Capitol theaters was captured on the conference poster, for the fifth time conceived and printed by Peter Kruty and Sayre Gaydos at their letterpress studio in Brooklyn, New York.

Finally, James Weirick, professor of landscape architecture and director of the Urban Development and



Iannelli's fire curtain.

Design Program at the University of New South Wales, was introduced by Paul Kruty. Professor Weirick offered a wide range of sources and contexts in order to interpret what Griffin hoped to accomplish with his Park Ridge plan, the result of Walter and Marion's first return trip to America after their departure in 1914—a brief visit in January and February 1925—and the development of the plan over the next few months in Australia. Griffin's plan was revised and implemented on a very small scale by F. A. Cushing-Smith, an American landscape architect and town planner, before the economic crash of 1929 put a halt to everything. In his previous two presentations to the Griffin Society in 2014 and 2015, James first expounded on the origins of Griffin's later planning, including Rock Crest/Rock Glen and the Trier Center Neighborhood, in the Canberra plan, while in the second lecture proposed the possible influence of Madison, Wisconsin, and the 1911 plan designed by John Nolen on Griffin's thinking for Canberra. Together his three talks to the Griffin Society have provided a well-rounded account of Griffin's development as a town planner.

As Paul Kruty returned to the podium to review the afternoon's events and quite literally as he expressed regret that Iannelli's wondrous fire curtain was in no condition to be lowered—down it came!, the Pickwick management (under Anthony Rubano's persistent pleas) having decided to give it one more go. What a gasp of delight came from our group, as cameras and cellphones began clicking away!



Richard Mohr (l) & Peter Griffin (r) at the break.

Box lunches arrived on schedule, no one (to our knowledge) got a parking ticket (Judy Barclay of the Kalo Foundation having arranged for an extra hour being added to the normal three-hour grace period provided shoppers in central Park Ridge), and the afternoon tours began.



Tour behind Pickwick stage.

After dire predictions all week long of continued deluges on Saturday (certainly the case on Thursday and Friday), it was, in fact, a particularly gorgeous afternoon, continuing the run of nineteen meetings without a rain-soaked washout (although, admittedly, with several afternoons of intense Midwest heat and humidity). With four planned open-houses—by Goff, Byrne, Zook and the newly-discovered Salvatore Balsamo—and one big surprise (Goff's Unseth house), plus the church-cum-township headquarters by Lloyd Wright (kept open by special arrangement); and with a much-needed reception at the Iannelli Studios, expertly arranged by local staff under the direction of Judy Barclay and Maria Hrycelak: it was, truly, an afternoon to remember.



Jane Block, Paul Kruty & James Weirick at the Kroulik house.



Peter Kruty & Mark Hendee on the Kroulik balcony.



Tom Hagensick & Jane Block at the Turzak house.



John Clouse photographs the Unseth entrance ashtrays.

Finally, with their insatiable desire for more and more, most members traveled to Aurora the next morning to experience Goff's Ford house and hear the delightful and prescient analysis by longtime custodian of this treasure, Sidney Robinson, professor emeritus from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Which brought the meeting, well, full circle.



Bob Switzer, John McInerney, Caroline Pidcock et al. absorb Sidney Robinson's discourse.



Richard & Carol Betts hash over Hegel with Sid Robinson, while Mike Lawrence examines coal and glass.

CORNELL STORE UPDATE, SUCH AS IT IS

Tim Samuelson, Chicago's cultural historian and long-time Griffin scholar/enthusiast, reports, "The Cornell gets worse and worse—it just sits there and rots." Every attempt to rescue the dying building gets stymied by one snag or another, most too complicated and circumspect to report in a newsletter (Walter and Marion would understand). The positive news is: the 1908 store-and-apartment building, vacant though it has been for several years now, hasn't yet collapsed.

NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA

The Griffin Society in Australia is celebrating its thirtieth anniversary on 4 November at the Griffins' Grant house of 1922 at Castlecrag, hosted by the present owners of this extraordinary building. This continues the celebration of three decades' work to preserve the legacy of the Griffins in Australia that saw the annual meeting in September featuring a lecture and discussion about the Grant house. The recent newsletter of the Society, *News Update 70*, includes a timeline of the group's accomplishments from 1988 to the present—a remarkable achievement. Heartfelt congratulations from this side of the globe!

GRIFFIN SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

On His Own: Walter Burley Griffin's First Two Houses; The Gables, Diamonds and Flowing Spaces of 1906 and 1907.

By Paul Kruty, with contributions by Richard H. Berry, Tannys Langdon and Paul E. Sprague. 2017.

Marion Mahony and Millikin Place: Creating a Prairie School Masterpiece.

By Paul Kruty and Paul E. Sprague. 2007.

Walter Burley Griffin and the Stinson Memorial Library: Modernism Comes to Main Street.

By Paul Kruty. 2010.

Rock Crest/Rock Glen, Mason City, Iowa: The American Masterwork of Marion M. and Walter B. Griffin.

Essays by Robert E. McCoy, Paul Kruty, Paul E. Sprague and James Weirick. 2014.

To order copies of each, please see our website: www.wbgriffinsociety.org

MEMBERSHIP

The Walter Burley Griffin Society of America is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt corporation under IRS Code 501 (c)(3). We invite you to become a Friend of the Society. For annual dues of \$25.00, you will receive a periodic newsletter keeping you abreast of the Society's activities, such as lectures, tours, exhibitions, and other events related to the Griffins' work. (\$20.00 for seniors 65 and older.)

The Society seeks comments, advice, suggestions, and news from you, its friends. The Society needs your financial support. All donations are tax-deductible.

If you wish to join the Society or renew your membership in the Society, please fill out the following form and mail it to us at the address below - or email us that you are attending the Annual Meeting and you can pay for both membership and meeting at that time.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

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