

THE GRIFFIN NEWSLETTER

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Please email news items to the
editor.

TWENTY-FIRST ANNUAL MEETING

SATURDAY 7 MAY 2022

ELMHURST, ILLINOIS

The 21st Annual Meeting is scheduled for Saturday, 7 May 2022 in Elmhurst. The morning session will take place at the lecture hall in the Schaible Science Center, which is located at the southeast corner of the Elmhurst University campus, on the northwest corner of Prospect and Elm Park avenues. There is parking for this event in the university lot on the north side of the building. Doors to the Schaible center will open at 8:00AM for registration, etc. The meeting will begin at 9:00 and run until 12:00 noon, with a coffee break mid-morning. Box lunches will be available and can be ordered on the enclosed registration form. They will arrive at noon. Tours will start at 1:00 and end at 4:30. As always, you will proceed at your own pace. (The tour notes given out at the meeting will provide more details.)

The morning lectures include four speakers: Preservationist Michael Allen will talk about the National Building Arts Center (NBAC) near St. Louis at Sauget, Illinois, of which he is now the president (members will remember his talk at the Edwardsville meeting of 2017, as well as his tour of downtown St. Louis the next morning); preservationist Mary Brush will explain the complex task of restoring the exterior of Bruce Goff's Bachman house in Chicago, a remodeling of an existing building; Aaron Holverson of the Rockford firm of Studio GWA describes the digital recording of Solid Rock and subsequent as-built drawings created from those scans, a project funded by the Griffin Society; and Paul Kruty recounts the Griffin family's years in Elmhurst, Walter's maturing in this suburb, and his work in Elmhurst from 1900 to 1914 (two of his surviving buildings are on the afternoon tour). He will also outline the afternoon's activities, which include open houses at Griffin's Emery and Sloane houses and Wright's Henderson house.

The Society has not reserved hotel rooms for this event, primarily because the Mother's Day celebration on Sunday has made it prohibitive. Out of town members will find it best to stay at one of the many hotels located where the Kennedy expressway meets 294, just east of O'Hare airport. Several of the hotels have already filled up with Mother's Day travelers, but there were rooms available as of this writing at the Hyatt Rosemont, 6350 N. River Road, Rosemont, 847-518-1234; also the DoubleTree by Hilton, 5460 N. River Road, Rosemont, 847-292-9100. There is an entrance to the Kennedy at River Road that leads directly to 294 South (direction Indiana). The exit, several miles downroad, is North Avenue/Elmhurst. Proceed west to York Road, turn left, drive through central Elmhurst, turn right on Church Street, drive west to Prospect Avenue. The Schaible Center will be ahead on the right.

[NB: According to its Task Force Update of 7 March, Elmhurst University announced “that our campus-wide indoor mask mandate will be lifted effective March 19, 2022.” The report added that masks are still highly recommended and that if at a subsequent date “there is a shift in Covid-19 indicators that require action,” mitigation strategies might be re-implemented. Please bring masks and be prepared to wear them at each of the open houses and the university classroom.]



Griffin's Sloane House, 1909. Kruty photo.

CORNELL STORE UPDATE

On Feb 27th, Dennis Rodkin of *Crain's Chicago Business* reported that the sale of the Cornell Store was pending, then three days later was able to report that the property had been purchased by a sympathetic buyer, John Olevich, who intended as far as possible to save the building. The headlines of the two articles say it all: “Will a buyer save this crumbling architectural treasure in Grand Crossing?” and “Buyer of decrepit Prairie School treasure could be every preservationist's hero.” Noting that the previous owner had “done little to stop its decline since buying it in 2015,” Rodkin recapped the recent history of the building and interviewed Tim Samuelson as well as Griffin board members Meg Kindelin and Paul Kruty, architectural historian Elizabeth Blasius, and the new owner. “Chicago needs its buildings like this,” owner Olevich said. Samuelson pronounced, “After years of heartbreak about that building, it's wonderful that somebody wants to reuse it and create economic vitality in the neighborhood.” Kruty pointed out the significance of the access provided to the roof garden above each of the original four apartments. We are all holding our collective breath concerning the future of this great Griffin building.

MORE NEWS FROM SOLID ROCK

In late January, board member Eleanor Grumman reported that the Solid Rock house at 82 Essex in Winnetka was back on the market, now for an increased asking price of \$850,000. The owner of the past two years, with whom we have been dealing in a roundabout way, decided to find another house in town. While this sounded like good news, in fact we were told by both Chris Enck of the Winnetka Landmarks commission and Chris Marx of the Winnetka Planning commission, that this might not prevent a quick demolition because the stay of execution provided by the required historic value assessment had already been completed and there is no need for a new one. Then on March 15th it was made public that a new buyer had acquired the property for the asking price. At this point we do not know who this is or what their intentions may be. If only this new owner has the foresight to choose restoration over demolition. We continue to wonder why has it been impossible to find an enthusiastic buyer for this amazing masterpiece, which retains its Byrne/Iannelli interior encased in a Griffin original?

JON POHL RETIRES FROM THE BOARD

Jon Pohl will retire this term from the Griffin board that he has faithfully served for the past sixteen years, since 2006. Jon organized the 7th annual meeting, held in Evanston, which included tours of the Myron Hunt houses on Wesley. An architect who has worked for some of the major Midwest firms, including SOM, HOK, Perkins & Will, and Murphy/Jahn, Jon was involved with airport design at O'Hare, Orlando, London, and Cairo airports. His interest in the history of American architecture is long-standing and deep. As one of the original surveyors of the Illinois Historic Structures Survey, under the direction of Paul Sprague, Jon traveled throughout the state in the early 1970s recording all manner of significant building types. A longtime resident of Evanston, for much of the time living in Harry Weese's first house, he served several terms on the Evanston Landmarks Commission. We wish him and Luci well in their Sarasota retirement.

ROGER BANG

As this newsletter goes to press, we received the sad news that board member Peggy Bang has lost her beloved husband Roger, one-time mayor of Mason City and great friend to the Griffin Society. Peggy reported that for the past nine months Roger has had a special seating area in their living

room in the Melson house where he could view nature and life from every direction through the windows. A memorial service will be held at a later date, with burial at the Elmwood-St. Joseph Cemetery. Online condolences may be left for the family at www.majorericksonfuneralhome.com

REMEMBERING KATHY CUMMINGS

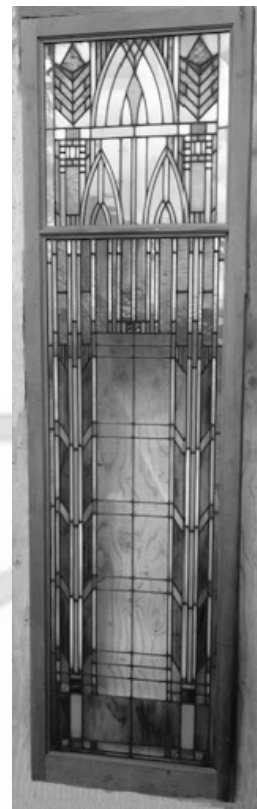
The Griffin Society mourns the loss of board member Kathleen Cummings, who passed away peacefully on 15 December 2021. Kathy joined the Griffin board in spring 2009, the year that she helped organize the 10th annual meeting, held in Kenilworth at George Maher's Kenilworth Club. At that meeting she lectured about Maher's role in planning the suburb of Kenilworth, as well as his nearly forty houses built there between 1893 and 1926. She also arranged for us to tour two Maher houses. Her knowledge of Chicago architecture, especially the best work of the Prairie School, was wide-ranging. A long-time member of the board that manages Maher's great Oak Park masterpiece Pleasant Home (the site of 2011's annual Griffin meeting), Kathy wrote the monograph on the building published in 2002. From the earliest Griffin gatherings until the most recent in-person board meeting, held in fall 2019, Kathy was a strong presence in planning the work of the Griffin Society. Her perceptive suggestions coupled with her engaging and pleasant personality were a joy to us all. With a generous sense of team spirit, she was always ready to lend a helping hand. Kathy will be greatly missed.



Griffin board meeting, November 2019
L to R: Tannys Langdon, Kathy Cummings,
Eleanor Grumman, Rich Berry, Mary Woolever.

ANOTHER WINDOW FROM ALL SOULS CHURCH

A second window from Marion Mahony's All Souls Church has surfaced, apparently from the same source as last year's large lancet and presumably to be sold at the same Denver, PA, auction house if it is not acquired privately beforehand. While the first was bought anonymously, it is rumored that the Art Institute of Chicago is the final recipient, although this has not been confirmed. Once again, James Weirick encouraged the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra to acquire, in his words, "this magnificent work, unique in scale and significance, for the Australian nation." We look forward to learning the ultimate placement of this masterpiece.



Window from All Souls Church,
designed by Marion Mahony in 1903.



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.

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.

Walter Burley Griffin and the Stinson Memorial Library: Modernism Comes to Main Street. By Paul Kruty. 2010.

Marion Mahony and Millikin Place: Creating a Prairie School Masterpiece. By Paul Kruty and Paul E. Sprague. 2007.

Copies of the exquisite posters hand-printed on fine paper by Peter Kruty Editions of Brooklyn, New York, are still available for the past six meetings, including Mason City, Madison, Beverly, Edwardsville, Park Ridge, and Decatur.

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.) 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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Griffin's Emery House, 1903-04. Kruty photo.