

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	<b>PASSED</b>
DATE ENTERED	<b>9/17/77</b>

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  
Colonel Ira C. Copley Mansion  
AND/OR COMMON  
Aurora Performing Arts Center

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
434 West Downer Place  
CITY, TOWN  
Aurora  
STATE  
Illinois  
VICINITY OF  
\_\_\_\_\_  
CODE  
17  
COUNTY  
Kane  
CODE  
089  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
15th  
NOT FOR PUBLICATION

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Law Office

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
Anthony F. Slaerno, and JoAnne M. Salerno, husband and wife (under Land Trusts)  
STREET & NUMBER  
434 West Downer Place  
CITY, TOWN  
Aurora  
STATE  
Illinois  
VICINITY OF  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
Kane County Court House  
STREET & NUMBER  
South 3rd Street  
CITY, TOWN  
Geneva  
STATE  
Illinois

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
Illinois Historic Structures Survey  
DATE  
1972  
DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS  
Ill. Dep't. of Conservation, Div. of Land and Historic Sites  
CITY, TOWN  
Springfield  
STATE  
Illinois  
FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

After 60 years the exterior of the Copley Mansion has remained relatively unchanged. The white shutters, perforated with heart shapes on the first story, are probably a recent alteration. The slender, louvered shutters of the second story are more appropriate but their original paint covering would probably have been black instead of the present green.

The contemporary-styled lamps which flank the main entrance are an infringement on the fluted stone pilasters. They impede the flow of crisp lines from the painted wood to the stone and brickwork.

The brick veranda, which was outside the living and dining room French doors, has been removed.

The first alteration to the interior occurred in 1956 when the house was remodeled to accommodate the offices of the Copley Press, Inc., and an apartment for executives. The 80 square foot living room was converted to open secretarial space. However, the original lighting fixtures were removed for fluorescents. In spite of this visual impediment the Adamesque ornament has not been damaged.

Across the 34 foot foyer and behind wooden, sliding doors is Copley's former study which remains unchanged. The foyer was closed off by a wall built in front of the staircase; affording privacy for the living quarters.

The dining room was utilized as a conference room. The ceiling decoration and lighting fixtures along with the wall paneling, fireplace, and French doors appear undisturbed. The space is presently occupied by an open office.

The pantry, with its maple cabinets and white copper sink, is unaltered and presently functions as a law office library. The kitchen has been completely modernized with white appliances and cabinets.

The servants' dining room, entrance, and upstairs rooms in the east wing of the apartment are in their original condition especially the maple woodwork.

The mansion formerly had 12 bedrooms. The master suite, with dressing room and fireplace was redesigned to become the apartment's living room. The dressing room became the bar. Two of the adjacent bedrooms were remodeled into a large kitchen. Two bedrooms in the southwest corner of the building were redone as the master bedroom by removing a wall between them. The remaining 2 bedrooms in the west wing have remained untouched.

In 1974, the applicants had the living room/secretarial space recycled into a charm and modeling school. Temporary 3/4 inch protective walls were constructed for easy removal. The fireplace was covered and a false wall built in front of it.

Copley's study became the applicant's private law office. The dining room/conference room now serves as a reception area and secretarial space. This was accomplished by erecting a freestanding counter in the middle of the room.

The porch off Copley's office has been enclosed with a thermopane glass wall and steel exterior doors. Fourteen foot ceilings remain on the porch and throughout the house except in the old servants' dining room where a soundproof false ceiling has been installed.

The addition of ballet bars and mirrors to the ballroom walls are for dance instruction.

The reopened foyer has allowed the applicants to install iron gates to allow a view of the stairhall.

The heavy wood timbers making up the floor joists and the iron "Bridge Piers" remain structurally sound in the basement. All the valves and thermostats of the steam, gravity fed, vapor heating system have been repaired.

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The service entrance is recessed between two raised, Doric columns which support a brick arch which is part of the exterior wall. The voussoirs of the arch extend outward and pick up the radiating brick design of the oval, leaded glass window. This component is situated above the simple, stone doorframe and is sculpturally supported by spiral-shaped brackets. It would seem that the architect wanted to emphasize the theme of light pouring in and radiating from the oval window.

The raised, curved, polygonal bay in the rear of the mansion employs Doric columns and bracketing. It provides the rear facade with a veranda effect.

The Copley mansion interior contains a Georgian type 'open string' staircase with visible step ends. Swash-turned balusters, three variations to each step, are combined with scrolls carved into the step ends. The sunbeam patterns carved into the spandrels of the graceful hallway arch echo those at the front entrance.

The black and white tiling in the entrance hall could have been derived from that used in the vestibules of distinctive Federal era homes. The finished, polished hardwood floors of narrow, matched boards on the stair landings are conducive with the restrained but subtly rich interior.

The interior of the Copley Mansion displays the purer classicism of the early Republic. The correctness of the smooth, white plaster walls is juxtaposed against the Adamesque ceiling and fireplace ornament executed in carved wood and or molded plaster.

The living room ceiling is graced by an oval centerpiece done primarily in an interlacing pattern of festoons and curved astragal molding. The center of the design is an oval palmette while the edge of the centerpiece is formed by a continuous band of patera/rosette ornament. The livingroom is encircled by a band of dentiling beneath the cornice. The frieze under the dentiling contains festoons and the wide, fluted pilasters are surmounted by egg and dart molding. The French doorways and the windows are surrounded by simple architraves.

The dining room ceiling is enhanced by an oval band of ornament employing alternating triglyph and patera/rosette ornament. The centerpiece is a smaller, oval design done in astragal molding which extends out to festoons from an oval palmette surrounded by anthemion. The patera/rosette and triglyph ornament is repeated in the encircling frieze of the wall paneling which rises two thirds the height of the room. The molding of one of the doorways is capped by a elongated, cylindrical cornice atop a frieze of triglyphs terminated at each end by a rosette. This seems to be an attempt by the architect to echo the fine detailing of the fireplace. The thin pilasters of the fireplace wall are enlivened by an ornamental composition of anthemion and garland. The fireplace itself is surrounded by white marble framed with a simple molding. The frieze above this is accentuated by an urn flanked by garland inset panels. The frieze terminates on either side in scroll forms. Beneath the cornice is a band of egg and dart molding and a band of dentiling. The tripartite mirror arrangement above the mantel is more characteristic of the early twentieth century.

The former Copley office shows some decorative details which indicate that the Colonel occupied this space. The ceiling cornice, which is delineated by a band of astragal molding of bead and reel enrichment, is supported by scrolled brackets beneath which is a continuous band of dentiling. The bayleaf garland, set between the eared architrave and the mantel of the fireplace, seems to lend a masculine effect to the room in conjunction with the cornice. The straightforward bookcases with fitted glass and the refined window and door architraves reinforce the solidity of this room. The ornamental grilles beneath the window seats are more in keeping with the decorative vocabulary of the early twentieth century Beaux-Arts.

# 88 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	Press/Journalism Business Enterprise
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

1906-1917

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Jarvis Hunt

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

## Significance of Copley in the Utilities Industry

Copley became owner of the Aurora Gas Light Co. which had been owned by his father and brother-in-law. Under Copley the company grew to become the Western United Gas and Electric Co. He enabled Aurora buildings to become lighted with gas for the first time in 1868. Eventually, in 1882, Aurora became the first city in the world to have electric street lights. Copley was the first man to pioneer transmission of artificial gas under pressure for long distances. In 1902 he laid a line from his plant in Aurora to Batavia.

## Significance of Copley as a Politician

From 1894-1898 Copley was a member of the Illinois State Central Committee. In 1909, he was appointed a member of the commission to build a new Illinois State Penitentiary. He served 17 years on this commission. Copley was elected, as a Progressive Republican, to the U. S. House of Representatives from the 11th Congressional District of Illinois. He was present at the 62nd Congress (4 March 1911-3 March 1923) but was not a candidate for renomination in 1922. He was one of the few Congressmen ever from the city of Aurora.

## Significance of the Copley Press

Ira C. Copley was responsible for the development and publishing of daily newspapers in the Midwest and Southern California. He financed his newspapers from the sale, in the mid-twenties, of his northern Illinois utility holdings to what later became Samuel Insull's large Commonwealth Edison Co. His dominating and forceful leadership of the Copley Press was a key factor in its success and influence.

In 1927 Copley visited Springfield for the purpose of purchasing newspapers. He was attracted to the Illinois State Journal because of its staunch Republican position in the capital of his native state. However, he wanted a secure investment and this also required the ownership of the Illinois State Register at Vandalia.

In the haste of closing the Journal deal, the Colonel discovered that he had acquired the paper's commercial printing business. He sold it back, allegedly saying "I want a newspaper not a job plant." This remark indicated that Copley newspapers were the primary not a subsidiary interest of their owner.

In 1929 Time reported that Copley had gone to Washington, D. C. to issue a statement to the Federal Trade Commission which had been investigating interstate public utilities. The issue of private/public utility ownership was then a national concern.

A year prior to the statement, Nebraska senator George W. Norris had charged, in open Senate, that Copley papers were financed by "power-trust Money." Copley wanted a

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statement in the commission's records declaring Norris misinformed. Copley admitted that he once was the president and director of Western United Corp. but that he had resigned and sold his interests to buy newspapers. Under Copley's ownership, the Illinois State Journal did not pursue municipally owned power plants but, in fact, supported them.

Architectural Significance of the Copley Mansion

The imposing residence at Downer Place was designed by the noted architect, Jarvis Hunt, in 1906-1917. Besides being the dwelling and social center of an influential Midwestern man, the mansion is a prime example of an early twentieth century Neo-Classical Revival design highlighting the Federal style. In spite of its Federal appearance, there are certain eclectic elements throughout the house which keep the structure from being a literal copy of a Federal home.

The three storied, "L" shaped building has a large, semi-circular portico rising the full height of the facade. This portico, supported by unfluted, Ionic columns, has a porch on top which is reached via the ballroom. A large flagpole now occupies the porch space.

The roof treatment is Federal because the roof balustrades are positioned over the eaves and continue around the edge of the entire roof. The chimneys are rectangular with simple, molded cornices. The roofs of each wing are flat but the raised central section, housing the ballroom, has a hipped roof of slate. Double chimney stacks rise on the west side of the mansion to carry the fireplace of the original living room and basement fireplace. These are joined above the roof by an archway. One stack rises on the east side of the house carrying the stacks for the fireplaces in Copley's office and the old dining room. This stack also carries the fireplace of the new living room.

The front entrance shows the delicate aspects of Federal design in slender pilasters, narrow sidelights, and an elliptical fanlight of fitted glass. However, the surrounding stonework, with its rhythmic, arched corbeling and ornate ironwork on top, is reminiscent of Italian Renaissance design. The bellflower carving under the Ionic volutes is an eighteenth century motif.

The Roman brick walls are laid up in Flemish bond with a pattern of glazed headers to strengthen the verticality of the wall surface in contrast to the horizontality of the stretchers. Stone molding, which would have reinforced the horizontality of the wall and demarcated floor levels, has not been used.

Rectangular windows with a standard of 12 panes per window were characteristic of most Federal dwellings as well as the narrower windows set in recessed, arched panels. However, at Downer Place, the number of panes used in the narrow windows is fewer than would have been specified in the Federal period. The rear Palladian window derives from those used in America from 1750-1820 as sources of light for stairhalls. The lunette is separated, on the interior, from the whole window in order to illuminate the third floor, ballroom landing. The lintels and vousoirs are executed in the understated geometry of the Federal era.

The inclement weather porch uses Adamesque garlands, swags, fluted piers, and an iron fanlight. Its semi-circular projection is slightly reminiscent of the geometric shapes used in the time of the early Republic. However, the ironwork between the piers and Doric columns is more illustrative of early twentieth century Beaux-Arts design than that of the early nineteenth century.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Krohe, James Jr. A Springfield Reader: Historical Views of the Illinois Capital, 1818-1976  
Springfield, Sangamon County Historical Society, 1976.

Morrison, Hugh Early, American Architecture From the First Colonial Settlements to the National Period. New York, Oxford University Press, 1952.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A 

1	6	3	8	9	9	12	10	4	6	2	3	6	6	10
ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

B 

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

C 

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

D 

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Property runs north and south one block, bordered by Downer Place on the north and Garfield Avenue on the south.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Illinois		Kane	
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Anthony F. Salerno, Attorney at Law

ORGANIZATION

DATE

OWNER

STREET & NUMBER

2/5/77

TELEPHONE

437 West Downer Place

CITY OR TOWN

(312) 826-9795

STATE

Aurora

Illinois

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE x

LOCAL     

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

Director, Illinois Department of Conservation

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER