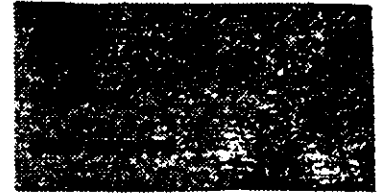


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HISTORIC PROPERTY NAME: Chemical Laboratory
COMMON PROPERTY NAME: Harker Hall

LOCATION: 1305 West Green Street
CITY: Urbana
COUNTY: Champaign
STATE/ZIP: Illinois 61801
UNIVERSITY BLDG. NO.: 25

OWNER'S NAME: University of Illinois
Board of Trustees
LOCATION: 506 South Wright Street
CITY: Urbana
COUNTY: Champaign
STATE/ZIP: Illinois 61801

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Office of University Counsel
266 Administration Building
506 South Wright Street
Urbana, IL 61801

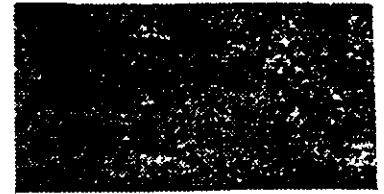
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: Starting at a point at the southwest corner of
the structure the boundary line follows a line
five feet from the edge of the building walls.

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE: Less than one acre.

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1878 ~~1877~~
ARCHITECT AND/OR BUILDER: Nathan Clifford Ricker/N. C. Terrill & Co.

DESCRIPTION:

Built in 1877 as the Chemical Laboratory, Harker Hall was designed by Nathan Clifford Ricker, Professor of Architecture, and constructed by N. C. Terrill and Co. of Kankakee. The millwork for the building was made in the woodshop on the campus by the architecture students. The Chemical Laboratory was the second building built south of Green Street on the campus, following the adjacent University Hall. In designing the Chemical Laboratory, Ricker was instructed to follow the Second Empire style of University Hall, (which was demolished in the 1930s). As originally constructed, the Chemical Laboratory had exterior stairs which led to the entrances on the raised main floor at the north and south ends of the building. The building was fully outfitted with up-to-date laboratory facilities and included a photographic studio and darkroom in the attic of the mansard roofed structure.

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On August 16, 1896, a fire destroyed the roof and much of the interior of the Chemical Laboratory. President Draper's report to the Board of Trustees indicates that the fire was believed to be caused by lightning. Charred joists can still be seen in the attic today. Associate Professor of Architecture James M. White was placed in charge of the repairs.

White designed the present hip roof as an expedient to get the building enclosed, at the direction of the Board of Trustees. When the building was assigned to the College of Law in 1902 there were numerous interior changes, including the construction of the law library on the top floor. Although it has been subdivided and is no longer used as a library, this space retains its skylight and five levels of glass-floored bookstacks which are above the north entrance. The stacks and the entrance were designed by James White in 1909 and resulted in the removal of the original exterior stairs. Ricker had designed alterations in 1888 which removed the south steps.

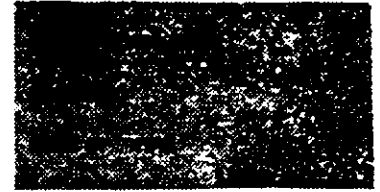
Although the structure has undergone several changes since its construction in 1879, it retains its integrity from the period of significance for this nomination, 1876-1927, since all of the major alterations took place during that period.

The north entrance to the building reflects the status of the campus plan in the early days of the University. Harker Hall and its contemporaries, Altgeld Hall, the former University Hall, and the Natural History Building were built to face Green Street. The Quad is a later development in the campus plan, coming in the 1900s.

Harker Hall is currently occupied by the School of Life Sciences and is used for classrooms, instructional laboratories, and some office space.

The building is constructed of brick, laid in a common bond, and is "I"-shaped in plan, measuring 60 feet by 90 feet. It stands 2 1/2 stories plus a tall basement and is capped by a hip roof with slate shingles. The foundation and water table are of rough-faced coursed ashlar.

The main (north) elevation has 3 bays, and the center bay projects forward. The entry is an arched opening in the center bay with a limestone surround including a key cartouche which supports an entablature. Within the arched opening are two wood and glass doors with an entablature transom bar and flanked by pilasters. A stilted arch lunette window above the doors completes the frontispiece. At the basement level each side bay has two 4 over 4 double-hung windows with vermiculated segmental arch lintels. The first and second floors also have 4 over 4 double-hung windows, with round arched top, stone hoods and sills. Again, there are two in each side bay.

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Each bay has corner pilasters and corbel table across the top. There is a 1 over 1 double-hung triple window with continuous stone hood and sill over the entrance at the second floor level. The building has an overhanging sheet metal cornice with dentils and there is a skylight in the main roof.

The west facade has end sections which project forward and are similar to the end bays of the north facade. The center section of the west facade has an entablatured entry at the north end, with Greek Doric columns, two wood and glass doors, and a leaded glass transom. Basement windows on this facade are similar to those on the north facade. On the upper floors, the windows in the center two bays are similar to the other facades. The end bays of the center section each have paired arch top 4 over 4 double-hung windows under a single stone three-centered arch window hood with a single stone sill. There is a hip roof dormer in the center of the facade, with three 1 over 1 double-hung windows and there are brick chimneys in the center of the end sections.

The east facade is similar to the west, but without the entrance. There is a door in the south end section in an enlarged window opening and a fire escape at the south end of the facade.

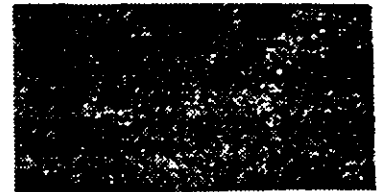
The end bays of the south facade are similar to those of the north facade. The center bay has a panel door with a transom to the east of the center line at the basement level in an enlarged window opening with exterior steps and a ramp. There is a typical basement window west of the center line. The window and door are flanked by narrow 1 over 1 double-hung windows with segmental arch lintels. At the first floor, the center bay has a 1 over 1 round arch topped window in the center with an air conditioning unit, wood spandrel panel, stone hood and sill. This window is flanked by two narrow round arch topped 1 over 1 double-hung windows with stone hoods and sills. The center bay of the second floor has two typical 4 over 4 double-hung windows.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Chemical Laboratory is significant as Nathan Clifford Ricker's first major built work. It represents his philosophy of combining historical reference with current technological advancements, which he put into writing in 1885:

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"The only method of attaining success in the use of a past style is to become thoroughly imbued with it, then trying to design a modern building in the manner which would have been employed by an ancient architect placed under similar conditions, and having our building materials and methods at his command."¹

The University Board of Trustees mandated that the Chemical Laboratory be in the same Second Empire style as University Hall, even requesting the use of similar stone details. The architect of University Hall, J. M. Van Osdel, from Chicago, was hired as a consultant but his role, beyond reviewing Ricker's plans, is not clear. Although he used the same style as that of University Hall, Ricker's design went beyond slavish copying. He worked with Professor Weber of the Chemistry Department to design a laboratory facility that was one of the best and largest in the country at the time of its construction.

Ricker was able to make the project a learning experience for his students, several of them being employed as drafters, while some of the furnishings for the building were made in the Architecture Department's wood shop.

When the building partially burned in August of 1896, Ricker's colleague in the architecture department, James M. White, was placed in charge of the repairs. White chose to replace the destroyed mansard roof with a hip roof, supported by wood Howe trusses with metal tension rods. The trusses were a quick method of enclosing the structure and, because they were supported by the exterior walls, they allowed flexibility in planning the interior repairs.

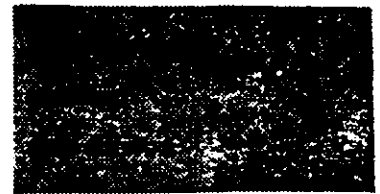
With the construction of a new Chemical Laboratory in 1902, the Buildings and Grounds Committee of the Board of Trustees decided that the old laboratory should be devoted to the newly formed College of Law. The president of the University, Andrew Draper, requested that the Architecture Department prepare plans for alterations to suit the building's new use. Although the responsibility for this work fell to James White, the working relationship of White and Ricker undoubtedly meant that Ricker influenced the design.

FORM PREPARED BY:

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Endnotes

Chemical Laboratory (Harker Hall) Inventory Sheets

1. Ricker, N. C. "Possibilities for American Architecture" (paper read at the second convention of the Western Association of Architects, St. Louis, November 18, 1885), Inland Architect and Builder, 6 (1885), pp. 62-63.