

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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05-11-00

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Ricker, Nathan C., House

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 612 West Green Street [N/A] not for publication
city or town Urbana vicinity N/A
state Illinois code IL county Champaign code 019 zip code 61820

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William L. Whole /SHA
Signature of certifying official

5-10-00
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of Keeper	Date of Action
___ entered in the National Register ___ See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
___ determined eligible for the National Register ___ See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
___ determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
___ removed from the National Register	_____	_____
___ other (explain): _____	_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Queen Anne

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

roof Asphalt

walls Clapboard

Shingle

other Wood

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

a owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

b removed from its original location.

c a birthplace or a grave.

d a cemetery.

e a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

f a commemorative property.

g less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Education

Period of Significance 1892 - 1924

Significant Dates N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above) Ricker, Nathan C.

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Ricker, Nathan C. / Architect

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: University of Illinois, School of Architecture, Ricker Library of Art and Architecture

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	16	285269	4440530	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jamie Clapper
organization University of Illinois at Urbana - Champaign / UP 327 date 16 October, 1999
street & number 311 W. Clark St. #304 telephone 217.356.3564
city or town Champaign state IL zip code 61820

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Preservation and Conservation Association
street & number P.O. Box 2555, Station A telephone 217.359.7222
city or town Champaign state IL zip code 61825

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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RICKER, NATHAN C., HOUSE

7. Description

Summary

The Nathan C. Ricker House built in 1892 is a single family, two-story, wood frame house located on West Green Street, the main east-west corridor from the University of Illinois campus to downtown Urbana. The house is located in a neighborhood comprised of late 19th and early 20th century single and multi-family housing. The south façade of the house faces Green Street, which is lined with several mature trees. Coler Avenue, on the house's west side also has mature trees. Vegetation appears on the house's east side; however, the rest of the lawn is void of trees.

The massing is predominantly symmetrical on the west, north and south facades. The east façade is asymmetrical. The main hipped shape of the roof is intersected in the west façade by a gabled projecting bay. On the south, a single bay gable projects from the hip form. The east façade has a projecting half-conical roof form and an angled ridge from the three sided corner to the hip point. The north façade has a two bay gable projecting from the main hip. The Nathan C. Ricker House is finished in the Queen Anne style, which is apparent by the irregular form, the many projecting bays, the exterior wall finishing, the front porch, and the windows. The exterior of the house is covered with wood clapboard siding and wood shingles. The entrance is on the west side of the house, in a projection facing south. There is a curved herringbone brick walkway leading to the front porch from Green Street. The wood front porch spans the west façade and contains highly decorative post, railing and frieze. Another similar but smaller porch appears on the north façade located off the dining room. The roof is covered with brown asphalt shingles and the foundation is brick. The interior has spacious rooms arranged around a central hall. The rooms feature tall ceilings, and rich woodwork; the front formal rooms have handsome fireplaces.

Exterior

The front/west façade faces Coler Avenue. This façade includes the large full-façade front porch with a wood balustrade, and tongue and groove wood flooring. The porch, which was rehabilitated in 1997, is raised from grade and supported by brick foundation piers. Six steps

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located at the north and southwest sides of the porch provide access. The exterior finish on the west side is white painted (primed) 4" clapboard. The gable bay contains an exterior covering of white painted overlapping wood sawn shingles. The foundation of the house is the original brick foundation with two openings, below the porch on the west façade. One opening is a wood frame, double-hung window with four-over-four lights. The other opening is a door. These openings were once accessed by chutes from the porch and were used to supply the house with coal.

The west façade is divided into four bays. The north bay has a single replacement wood door on the first story. The second story contains a wood double-hung window with one-over-one lights. The second bay has a single wood frame, double-hung window with one-over-one lights on the first floor. The second story opening is a smaller wood window, also double-hung, with multi-lights over one. The top light has a center of textured clear glass surrounded by seven pieces of rose and gold stained glass. The third bay is a central projecting pavilion with a gabled roof. It contains a wood frame, multi-light over one light double-hung window, framed with sixteen pieces of stained glass in the top light, on the first story; above is an identical window. The gabled section of the pavilion, above the second story, contains a rectangular wood-frame hopper window. The fourth bay on the west facade contains a rectangular wood frame awning window set high at ceiling level on the first floor; the second floor opening is a wood double-hung window with one-over-one lights.

The south façade facing Green Street is predominantly symmetrical. The main forms are a two and one-half story projecting gabled bay and a three-sided bay turning the southeast corner. The walls are mostly covered with white painted 4" horizontal clapboard, however white painted overlapping sawn shingles are used in the semi-hexagonal bay. The basement has one, two-light awning sash on the west side of the south façade.

There is a south facing entrance located in the projecting front/west facing two and one-half story gabled pavilion section on the west porch. The door is a single entrance wooden door with a large single light framed with egg and dart molding.

The western bay of the south façade contains three openings. The first floor opening is a large double-hung wood one-over-one light window. Centered above the first floor window is a pair of wooden one-over-one light, double-hung windows. The gable contains a three light rectangular wooden hopper window.

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The eastern bay of the south façade is treated as a semi-hexagonal bay. One basement window is centered in the angled section. The first and second stories contain triple window sets. All windows are one-over-one light double-hung, with the center or angled section's window being wider than the flanking windows. The roofline includes a shed wall dormer with a horizontal wood frame, hopper window with decorative glass. The window has three clear centerpieces with eighteen pieces of rose and gold stained glass surrounding them in a geometric pattern.

Like the front and south facades, the east façade reinforces the Queen Anne style through its disrupted facade. A two-story semi-circular bay projects the main wall plane off center forming an asymmetrical facade. The exterior is covered with white painted 4" clapboard siding on the flat wall planes, and overlapping white painted sawn shingles on the semi-circular bay. The areas to the side of the windows are covered with linear sections of sawn shingles. The basement contains two openings, one on the flat wall plane is covered with a decorative iron grate painted to match the colors of the brick, and the other is a window centered on the semi-circular bay.

All windows located in the east facade are on the semi-circular projecting section. The first floor section is consumed with a set of five one-over-one double-hung windows; there is an abbreviated set of three windows on the second story. Also visible on the east façade is the ornate side/north entrance porch. This porch, located to the right of the semi-circular bay, contains detailing identical to the west/front facade porch. The porch roof is steeply sloped with a diagonal ridge which connects in the corner at the second story level.

The north façade of the Nathan C. Ricker House is divided into two bays on the north/south facing gable end, which dominates the facade. The exterior of the north façade is white painted, clapboard wood siding on the first and second stories, and overlapping white painted sawn wood shingles in the gable end. The foundation has two openings in line with the bays of the façade. The first bay has a single window opening covered with plywood; there is a pipe projecting from the opening. The second opening is a double wooden window.

The north facade's two bays are identical. Each bay has one, double-hung, one over one light window aligned on the first and second stories. The gable has a pair of one over one light, wooden double-hung windows. These windows are a recent replacement. Other elements on the north façade include the porch off the dining room to the left of the two bay gabled section, and the gabled basement entrance. The original bulkhead doors of the basement

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entrance were replaced with a small, low-pitched gable frame entrance at grade sometime after 1950. This alteration cuts across a portion of the left one-over-one, double-hung sash of the first story window pair. The modified basement entrance is built upon the original bulkhead's low wall, which extends out from the foundation, and on which the former bulkhead doors were placed.

Other elements of the house include a continuous projecting cornice which goes across all gables except the front/west facing pavilion, and a continuous wood water table which surrounds the entire exterior just above the brick foundation wall. There are also two rebuilt red brick chimneys.

A one and one-half story carriage barn was once located on the north end of the property. The garage entrance faced west towards Coler Ave. The carriage barn was first documented in a 1909 Sanborn insurance map; when the house was also first documented. The carriage barn was razed by the City of Urbana in 1993.

Interior

The Ricker House has eleven rooms and a full basement and attic. The house is currently undergoing restoration, however, the interior details remain intact. The first floor features the house's family spaces including the parlor and living room, which are dominated by richly trimmed windows and fireplaces (figure 1). The dining room, kitchen and a bathroom are also located on the first floor. The second floor includes the house's four bedrooms, one bathroom and a trunk room. All the second story rooms have the same rich trimming as the first floor rooms, but are less formal. The master bedroom includes a fireplace along the west wall.

From the exterior of the west facade, a single-light central front door opens into the hallway off of which the parlor, living room and dining room are accessed. All rooms on the first floor have the same 5-1/2" pine window and door trim with bull's eye corner blocks, 10" pine baseboard and 10' ceilings. The first room on the right of the hall is the parlor. The parlor is 195 sq. ft. It has one window in the west wall, one window in the south wall and a fireplace in the northeast corner. The fireplace is 58-1/2" wide with green tile surrounded by dark stained oak. There is a beveled horizontal rectangular mirror above the fireplace and green

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and maroon tiles in the hearth. A black iron grate decorated with an organic pattern covers the opening. The opening on the east wall leads to the living room.

The living room is 240 sq. ft. with three southeast facing windows and one fireplace. The fireplace is 58 1/2" wide with brown tile surrounded by dark stained wood. There is a built in cabinet with a mirror and shelves incorporated into the mantelpiece. hearth is tile with one row having a decorative leaf pattern. There are three entrances to the living room. One is the opening from the parlor; there is also a swinging door from the hall and a pocket door to the dining room.

The dining room is 235 sq. ft. and has five windows aligned on the bay projection. There is a door from the dining room onto the north porch. The door and transom along the north wall appear original. There is also a swinging door from the hall into the dining room and an opening from the dining room into a pantry area. The pantry area has been altered to include a 63 sq. ft. modern bathroom. The room includes one north-facing window, which is 35-1/2" wide. Across from the pantry entrance there is a historic, although non-original, built-in counter with cabinets.

The kitchen is located west of the pantry. The 135 sq. ft. kitchen has historic cabinets and a built-in corner unit although they are not from the Ricker era. The kitchen has three exterior openings. There are north and west facing windows and a west-facing door. There is also another interior opening in the kitchen. The door on the south wall of the kitchen leads across the top of the basement stairway into the front hall.

The stairway in the front hall shows the high level of craftsmanship that went into the Nathan C. Ricker House. The newel post is approximately 4' 11-1/2" tall and 7-3/4" wide (figure 2). It is constructed of dark wood with five squares recessed 1/8" into the surface. The top square is divided into five segments and is more decorative than the others. The top of the newel post is essentially a pyramidal shape with bulging concave sides. It is 7-3/4" wide and deep and sits on a 10-1/4" square base. The stairs are open rail with wood square balusters. There is a landing above the entrance foyer with two more posts. These are similar to the newel post, but smaller. The posts have six squares recessed 1/8" into the surface. The recessed squares are all identical; the top one is equally as decorative as the other squares. Also on the landing is a decorative window identical to the one in the entrance foyer.

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The first bedroom (bedroom 2) to the right at the top of the stairs is directly above the parlor (figure 3). The baseboard, window and door trim is identical to the trim and baseboard down stairs. Three windows illuminate this 160 sq. ft. room. Two windows face south and one faces west. There is a walk-in closet on the east wall of the room, which connects to the closet in the next room.

The southeast bedroom is the master bedroom. It is 235 sq. ft. and has a 48" ivory tile and oak trimmed fireplace on the west wall. This room is directly above the living room down stairs and has windows identical to the downstairs windows in the angled southeast corner. There is another large closet located on the east wall of the room, just inside the entrance from the hall.

Directly over the dining room is the third bedroom. This bedroom is 155 sq. ft. Its rounded projection has windows identical to those used in the projection of the room below, only there are two fewer. There is a walk-in closet in the northwest corner of the room. The entrance is through a small hall off the main hall on the room's west side.

The room (studio) in the northeast corner is located above the old pantry (currently a bathroom). This 50 sq. ft. space differs from the other rooms because it uses a simplified molding and trim. The room is small in size and therefore was probably used as a storage or as a trunk room. There is one window in the north wall.

The fourth bedroom is located west of the storage/trunk room directly above the kitchen. This is 110 sq. ft., the smallest bedroom and was probably used as a nursery or for guests. The closet is on the east wall and the entrance is in the southeast corner. There are two windows in the room -- one on the north wall and one on the west wall.

Located south of the fourth bedroom and above the kitchen is the 63 sq. ft. second floor bathroom. The bathroom is long and narrow with the entrance on the east wall and a decorative stained glass window on the west wall above the bathtub.

South of the bathroom is the staircase to the attic. Walls enclose the staircase on both sides, and a door on the east wall provides access. The 925 sq. ft. attic is unfinished, it remains one large space without any room divisions. The rafters are exposed, and the floor is partially covered with tongue and groove wood flooring. Charring in the south gable shows evidence of a circa 1917 fire.

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The basement is also 925 sq. ft. The basement is accessed by interior stairs located between the kitchen and the main hall, or exterior stairs on the north side of the house. The basement is unfinished; it has a concrete floor and painted brick walls. Three rooms divide the basement space. Two rooms are located to the west, and the eastern most space is one large room. Coal was stored in the southwest room. It entered through two openings facing west.

Integrity

Nathan C. Ricker House retains its integrity. Outside of minor changes, little has been done to alter its condition (figure 4). The exterior was sided with white aluminum siding, but it has been removed in the last year, exposing the original clapboard and sawn shingles. Two windows in the attic of the north facing gable section have been recently replaced with modern sashes. Also on the north side, the cellar entrance was covered with a gable roofed section sometime after the 1950's. In 1997, the front porch was restored and the supporting brick posts were reconstructed. The roof of the house has also recently undergone rehabilitation. The roof project was completed in 1998.

The interior of Nathan C. Ricker House has also been slightly modified through the years. Carpeting now covers the original wood floors. Drop ceilings were added in the first floor and the original window trim was cut when the ceiling was installed. The dropped ceilings have since been removed. After Ricker's occupation of the house, the room between the kitchen and dining room was converted to a bathroom. This room was probably originally a pantry or a breakfast room. Two short walls with a single door were added to make the conversion. The kitchen has also been changed from its original appearance. The original cabinets have been removed and replaced. Also, a built-in corner cabinet appears to have been added. The interior basement staircase appears to have been added, but this could be a historic alteration. The small passage from the front hall to the kitchen contains original doorways, indicating that the basement stairway was perhaps once storage under the original stairway to the second floor. Joist pockets visible in the opening for the stairway to the basement also indicate that the stairs were added after the house was constructed. Originally, the only entrance to the basement would have been from the cellar doors on the north side of the house.

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The second floor of the house does not appear to have undergone spatial alterations. The only change to the second floor appears to be the modernization of the bathroom. In 1917, a fire damaged the roof causing the attic framing to undergo repairs; some charring remains on the north gable.

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8. Statement of SignificanceSummary

Nathan C. Ricker House meets Criterion B for statewide importance, due to its association with Nathan C. Ricker. The areas of significance associated with the building are education and architecture because Ricker was both a pioneer in the area of architectural education and the architect of his home. The house's period of significance is from its construction in 1892 to Ricker's death in 1924. Ethel Ricker, Nathan's daughter, continued to own the house until 1927. Ricker's house, located at 612 W. Green St. in Urbana, Illinois, is the only known residential building designed by him.

Nathan Clifford Ricker had a profound and lasting affect on the practice of architecture in Illinois, as well as the architectural education program at the University of Illinois. He used his European experience to develop an innovative instruction format and incorporated the use of modern materials and technology into both his lesson plans and his building designs. Ricker's combination of educational and practical knowledge guided him as he established the architectural education program at the University of Illinois. His program, which emphasized technology, building design, construction, and history, is still utilized. In addition to his educational achievements, legislation passed under Ricker's influence continues to guide the architectural licensing procedure in Illinois. While the four National Register-listed university buildings that Ricker designed remain as excellent testaments to his significance as a designer, Ricker's house at 612 West Green Street is the property which is most personally associated with Ricker's productive life. The only known residence designed by Ricker, the house served as Ricker's home from 1892 until the time of his death in 1924.

Ricker held many important offices within the University of Illinois's College of Engineering, including Dean, and Head of the Department of Architecture (now School of Architecture). Due to the status Ricker achieved during his residence at 612 W. Green, the structure is most closely associated with his personal and professional life. The only other structures associated with Ricker are the buildings he designed for the university. While he likely had a campus office (or offices over the years) where he conducted his university duties as an educator, administrator and designer, no particular space has been identified as having been Ricker's office. Because the Department of Architecture and School of

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Engineering were located in University Hall then Engineering Hall, it is likely that Ricker once had an office space in each building. Despite the amount of scholarly research that has been done on Ricker, no office has been identified. Furthermore, a review of Champaign-Urbana city directories over the years associated with Ricker's productive life, specifically 1885-1924, reveals only his residential address, which was 612 West Green Street, and his current university title. A search of architects in the business directories contained no office listing for Nathan Ricker. Because of the accomplishments and status of Nathan C. Ricker during his residence 612 West Green Street and the lack of an office space, the only remaining structure associated with Ricker's productive life is his house.

Ricker's Early Years

Ricker's childhood exposure to education and his experience teaching at the country school did much to set the stage for his life as an educator. His interest and skill in handicrafts foreshadow his eventual involvement in the field of architecture.

Ricker was born in Acton, Maine, a farming community, on June 24, 1843.¹ His first day of school is one of his noted memories, as well as his father teaching him arithmetic using apples, eggs and sheep. Ricker's memories also include the literature available to him as a child and the difficulty of farm work. When Nathan was thirteen, his family moved so he could attend high school in Springvale, Maine, ten miles from the Acton area. While attending school, he worked in the shingle mill and ground corn. He remained in Springvale until he was twenty-one.²

During Ricker's high school years, his love of learning, academic talent and future potential became evident. In *The Story of a Life*, Ricker recalls the supplies at the school, noting the lack of a library. The only mentioned supplies were chalk, boards and a few maps. One important event in Ricker's high school years was his success with spelling. This success attracted the attention of Ricker's father and aunt, and they came to the conclusion that, "... he might be worth cultivating."³ The opportunity to teach at the country school arose in 1861 when he was eighteen years old. Ricker said that his first experience with instruction was "very enjoyable"; this experience allowed him to purchase books and continue his personal studies in the evenings.

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This experience in high school was critical to Ricker's development of personal study and his quest for knowledge not commonly available. Ricker taught himself French and Latin and began his lifelong chore of translating books for his personal library. The skills and values Ricker obtained during his high school years helped drive his later studies and achievements at the university.

Before Ricker attended the university, he worked in Washington D.C., at his father's request. During the interruption from his studies, Nathan was employed by the U.S. Commissary from 1862-1863. This job is significant because it was his first experience away from home. Ricker said that no difficulties occurred during his stay.⁴

After his experience in Washington D.C. Ricker returned home to Springvale to continue working in the mill and studying in the evenings. Ricker learned the skill of woodworking in the mill during his free time and used these skills throughout his life. In 1864, he acquired a position in a factory making piano cases. Ricker became skilled at this job and soon was promoted. He held the piano case job for two-and-one-half years, then left his position in 1867 to go to La Harpe, in Hancock County, Illinois, to visit his uncle.⁵

Nathan's original intention was to work for a year while visiting his uncle. However, an opportunity arose in 1868 for Ricker to purchase half interest in a wagon and blacksmith's shop and Ricker left his previous job in carpentry to begin working at the shop. While he was employed at the shop he met an Illinois Industrial University student home on holiday vacation. This meeting changed the path of Ricker's life. He developed an interest for studies during his high school years and, through his previous jobs, developed skills in craftsmanship. This combination of interests led him to sell his part of the wagon and blacksmith shop for \$750 and go to Urbana, Illinois to pursue an education in architecture.⁶

Illinois Industrial University

The responsibility given to Nathan C. Ricker during his terms at Illinois Industrial University established the beginning of his career as an educator. Ricker advanced from being placed in charge of his own education to becoming the head of one of the most noted architectural schools in the United States.

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Ricker began his university education in 1870 during Illinois Industrial University's sixth term. The university appealed to Ricker as a chance to continue his education and further his personal studies. When Ricker enrolled, there were 147 men attending the school (women were admitted the next year). When Ricker entered the university he was twenty-six, many of his friends considered him too old to begin a college education and tried to discourage his attendance; fortunately Ricker did not listen. Ricker mentioned in his autobiography that the university was challenging in both its pace and living conditions. At that time, there were no sports, professional or amateur, and there were no social clubs like fraternities.⁷

Ricker continued his interest in libraries; he mentioned that the library of the Illinois Industrial University was small, and that one librarian placed a book on the *Planting of the Christian Church* with books on agriculture.⁸ Perhaps it was this lack of knowledge about books that inspired Ricker to develop an important architectural library.

Architecture was chosen as his course of study because of his interest in civil engineering and experience in building. Ricker's first instructor was James W. Bellangee, recruited from the University of Michigan, and course work included mathematics for three years, German for two, and as many classes as possible in drawing and rendering.⁹ Ricker noticed deficiencies in his courses and compensated for them by reading architectural books in the library. No one was able to evaluate his extra studies; however, he none the less received credit. In order to have more time for studying, Ricker did not work in the school carpentry shop much during the school term. He spent his vacation time in the workshop improving his carpentry skills.¹⁰

During Ricker's second year in 1871, he was placed in charge of the carpentry shop. His duties included maintaining buildings and equipment. He mentions one project to convert an old barn into a dormitory. He also instructed students in woodworking, and the proper use of tools. Ricker's appointment to the carpentry shop conflicted with a course he was supposed to attend in the Strength of Materials taught by Professor Robinson. To compensate for this class, Ricker worked out the lessons on his own and submitted them to Professor Robinson for evaluation.¹¹ Again, this demonstrates Ricker's determination regarding his education.

In 1871 Ricker's first instructor resigned and was replaced by Harold M. Hanson, a Swedish professor who was educated for two years at the German Berlin Bauakademie. Hanson made an impression on Ricker who later became a student at the Bauakademie.¹²

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Chicago became a destination for Ricker when he was sent there as part of the university corps to help restore order in 1871 after the great fire. Ricker's association with Captain Rickard's sixth regiment Illinois National Guard was his only military experience. Perhaps it was due to his visit to Chicago that Ricker decided to postpone graduation and seek office experience in Chicago during the spring and summer of 1872. Ricker was employed by J.W. Roberts, an architect whose office was located in the upper story of a mansion on the corner of Wabash and Harrison. Ricker's first job for Roberts was to review the plans for the Briggs House, a Chicago hotel, to ensure that each bedroom had a separate flue in the wall. Ricker also designed the name plaque for the hotel, which was deeply cut into a large stone on the building's south facade.¹³ Ricker gained experience dealing with clients who did not understand architectural drawings. It became his duty to translate these drawings to the client so the client could then determine whether the plans suited him. During times of leisure Ricker observed the work conducted in the office. At a time when work was rapidly finished, Ricker probably observed many projects through to completion. In his writings Ricker refers to the Chicago experience as, "... a great practical training, perhaps not equaled since the burning of Rome."¹⁴

Ricker returned to Urbana for the fall 1872 term to find that Professor Hansen was absent due to illness. University President John Milton Gregory asked Ricker to take charge of the architecture curriculum including three students, as well as his own course work. This arrangement satisfied President Gregory who asked Ricker to remain in charge for the next two terms of 1872-73. Gregory also offered Ricker an appointment as the head of the architecture program starting September 1, 1873, contingent on a six-month travel/study period in Europe prior to the appointment. Ricker was also required to complete his course work and graduate at the end of winter term 1872. Ricker did graduate in 1872, and was the first graduate of an American school of architecture.¹⁵

Ricker in Europe

Ricker's European experience was critical in his future development of the architectural program at the University of Illinois. Instead of following the teachings of the Ecole Des Beaux Arts, he incorporated courses and teaching styles that he observed at the Bauakademie in Berlin.

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Ricker sailed for Europe in the company of President Gregory and Gregory's family and friends. The ship landed in Glasgow, and Ricker spent almost a month traveling to London, Harwich, Rotterdam, Antwerp, Brussels and Cologne before arriving in Berlin April 1, 1873. Ricker had chosen Berlin because of his former professor, and because the German instructional system represented the American system in that it was based on individual accomplishment and examinations. Ricker believed the instruction in Berlin to be superior to the instruction of French schools. The Bauakademie was an architecture and engineering school teaching courses in all branches of engineering including agricultural. Architecture had a total enrollment of 250 students.¹⁶

To prepare for his appointment in Illinois, Ricker spent nearly three months observing the Bauakademie's instructional methods, teaching tools, and library. Ricker was very impressed with the library, and commenting that it was, ". . . large and very valuable, affording a good acquaintance with the best standard works on architecture and art."¹⁷ Ricker also commented on the teaching tools employed at the Bauakademie. He made notes on the instruction and refined the methods for use at Illinois. Ricker made other observations including how students passed on to a professional career through examination, and how students could become professors by obtaining a doctorate degree, publishing books and becoming distinguished in their profession. Ricker noted that sophomore students took fourteen different subjects. He also noticed that professors were only paid for lecturing and therefore did not answer student's questions or offer other help; professors even prohibited non-students to sit in on lectures. Ricker found fault with this strict form of lecturing which deviated from the American custom.¹⁸ This prompted Ricker to experiment with his teaching style.

After his observation of the Bauakademie, Ricker continued to travel. He visited Saxony to study the art and architecture of Dresden; he believed the paintings there to be superior to those at the Louvre. An attempt was made to meet President Gregory at his request at the Vienna Exposition, however, due to mail delay and transportation problems; Ricker arrived after President Gregory had left for Italy. Regardless, Ricker spent ten days studying the Exposition and the architecture of the city. One of his favorite exhibits was the Russian system of shop practice in mechanical engineering.

Ricker made rather detailed architectural observations on the development of Vienna and Ring Street. He commented that Ring Street is one of the most beautiful in the world and is superior to the boulevards in Paris. After visiting the Exposition, Ricker visited Prague.¹⁹

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Ricker made his trip to Paris before the end of term at the Bauakademie; therefore, he missed the examination period. The Paris visit lasted ten days including one day spent in Versailles. Ricker observed and noted the difference in the historic buildings and the current architecture in the French Second Empire style. Ricker passed through Rouen before a ten-day trip to London. After London Ricker visited Glasgow, York, and Edinburgh before returning to Illinois to begin instruction.²⁰

Ricker summarized his travels as a very valuable experience. In his writing, Ricker reflects on the organization and instruction of the German Bauakademie, and on its library, which provided him the knowledge to establish an architectural library at the University of Illinois.²¹

Ricker as an Instructor

Nathan C. Ricker was thirty years old in 1873 when he started his first term as head of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Department of Architecture. One of Ricker's first observations was the lack of suitable textbooks to aid the students. He also noticed that the students were not responding to the lecture system, and it was imperative to find a new form of instruction. His job as head of the department was very demanding. Ricker describes his duties:

Further the young instructor (Ricker) was required to teach all studies in architecture according to the programme given, to assist for the first year in freehand drawing, to teach projection and descriptive, supervise the shop, furnish gratis all sketches and drawings for new buildings, as well as to make occasional surveys and levels for drains and put in a sewer system when needed. Therefore he had sufficient work laid out to keep him busy.²²

In addition to other duties, Ricker also developed a library and texts for his students. Ricker purchased an early 'Remington machine' used for printing, and devised a way for students to print texts. The texts consisted of original works for subjects such as construction, history, and graphic statics and some translations from German and French books when one was found to be appropriate. Approximately two thousand letter size pages were collected and used. This process was so important that a laboratory was dedicated to it in the new

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Engineering Hall (1894) so this work could also benefit the College of Engineering. Later, entire foreign books were translated for use by students.²³

Other changes made in the department included additional course offerings. In 1874, Graphic Statics was introduced; until then the class had only been offered at the University of Michigan and Yale University. Another newly introduced class was Russian shop practice which was adapted to wood work and began instruction in 1875.²⁴ (The introduction of the Russian shop practice class was likely due to Ricker's observation of Russian shop practices at the Vienna Exposition.)

Ricker as Dean of Engineering

In 1878 at the age of thirty-five, Ricker was elected Dean of the College of Engineering to replace a colleague, Professor Robinson, who moved to Ohio. Deans formed an executive committee of the faculty called the Council of Administration; this legislative body represented the final authority of the university.²⁵

During his term as Dean, Ricker won an appropriation for the College of Engineering to be used for two years worth of maintenance and equipment. The total sum was \$150,000. Later the appropriation was changed so that \$75,000 was to be used for maintenance and equipment, and the other \$75,000 was to go to a new use suggested by the Dean. Keeping in mind the Agricultural Experiment Station, Ricker suggested an Engineering Experiment Station. The idea was approved and, thanks to Dean Ricker, the nation's first engineering experiment station was formed at the University of Illinois. This experiment station produced such work as the ". . . great achievements of Professor Talbot in the practical study and development of formulas and methods in reinforced concrete."²⁶

Ricker is also credited with starting the School of Architecture's slide library. Ricker requested the purchase of and was granted an electric lantern and five hundred slides. After developing lectures to accompany the slides, he was granted the purchase of ten thousand slides as well as other mounted images. Ricker continued to give lectures associated with these slides until his retirement from the department.²⁷

Ricker developed the school's library. He convinced University President Draper that library funds were insufficient for the Department of Architecture, which relied heavily on books.

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President Draper appropriated most of the equipment fund for the School of Architecture for books and journals. The selection of books for the library began and continued for roughly thirty years.²⁸ Even in Ricker's time it was considered the best of its kind in the country; the library remains an amazing asset to the School of Architecture. The books were well chosen due to Ricker's immense knowledge of books and his observation of the library at the Bauakademie in Berlin. The school recognized Ricker's commitment of the library by naming it the Ricker Library of Art and Architecture in 1917.

Another innovation Ricker made, as Dean of the College of Engineering, was to establish a four-year program for Architectural Engineers. This program was established in 1890, and was the first of its kind in the country. The program was developed due to Ricker's realization that some students were prone to design, and others were prone to higher mathematics, but few students were capable of both. This new program was aimed at the development of those interested in construction since the active architecture program developed designers. After the establishment of the new program, students were equally divided between the two; graduates of both programs became successful practitioners.²⁹

Ricker continued his personal education even as he was named Dean of the College of Engineering. In 1878, the year he was appointed Dean Ricker again graduated from the school of architecture, this time with a Masters Degree in Architecture.³⁰

Ricker's Other Contributions to Architecture

Ricker resigned his position as Dean of the College of Engineering in 1906 after twenty-seven years of service. He was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Architecture in 1909.³¹ In 1911, after his wife's death, he retired from the School of Architecture. Ricker had spent a total of forty-four years in charge of the school, and was awarded the status of Professor Emeritus for his achievements. Ricker made many contributions to Architecture outside of his amazing service at the University of Illinois. His achievements included research, translations of foreign architecture books and service on professional boards.

Ricker in conjunction with Dankmar Adler, a Chicago architect, acted to pass the Illinois Architectural Act in June of 1897. This act requiring the licensing and registration of practicing architects in Illinois, was the first of its type in the United States. Currently every state has similar legislation. Ricker was a member of the Illinois Board of Examiners of

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Architecture for its twenty years of existence, spending the last eighteen years as president. He also spent two years as Chairman for the Illinois Commission for Codifying Building Laws.³² He was also among the original organizers of the University of Illinois Alumni Association.³³

Over thirty years during his vacations, Ricker produced approximately forty translations. He used his knowledge of French and German to translate important works so that they would be available for students. One of his best known translations is Wagner's *Modern Architecture*, which Ricker translated in 1902.³⁴

In addition to translations, Ricker researched roof trusses. He developed two original formulas for wood and steel roof trusses and had three writings published on the subject. *Design and Construction of Trussed Roofs*, (1885) was the first book published by a faculty member while associated with the university. *Simplified Formulas for Beams, and Roof Trusses* and three station bulletins on "Roofs," "Base and Bearing Plates," and "Decimal Classification for Building and Architecture" followed.³⁵

In February 1951, Ricker's daughter Ethel Ricker donated his personal library to the university as an addition to the School of Architecture's Ricker Library. The collection included twenty-eight wooden boxes full of volumes of architecture books. The volumes were in storage for twenty years before the donation. Ricker's personal translations were among those donated.³⁶

Ricker's Buildings

Aside from his administrative and instructional duties, Ricker was also the University Architect. His five campus buildings, Harker Hall (Chemical Laboratory, 1877), Kenney Gymnasium Annex (Drill Hall, 1890), Natural History Building (1893), Aeronautical Lab B (Metal Shop, 1895; razed 1993) and Altgeld Hall (Library Hall, in conjunction with Campus Architect James McLaren White, 1897), were added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.³⁷ Ricker included his students in the design and construction of these buildings in the form of shop workers and draftsmen. The buildings reflect Ricker's philosophies in design and architecture by displaying historical values and modern technology. Ricker displayed his advanced knowledge of roof trusses in the Kenney Gym

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Annex. The building is spanned with trusses to avoid interior columns that would be disruptive to military training.³⁸

Ricker's technical contributions to other buildings included the modern methods of natural lighting and ventilation employed in the Natural History Building. Each room had a ventilating flue and steam heat from the main boiler at University Hall. The building's central corridor contained light wells stretched vertically.³⁹ Aeronautical Lab B (Metal Shop) was designed for maximum flexibility using steel trusses spanning the entire width of the shop.⁴⁰

Altgeld Hall, named after Governor John Altgeld was Ricker's finest design for the campus. Use or budget constraints restricted other buildings, but Altgeld Hall did not follow such restrictions. Altgeld Hall had a budget of \$150,000. Ricker worked on the design of this building with his colleague James McLaren White who later designed additions for the building. Altgeld Hall is showcased at its site on the corner of Wright and Green streets, one of the most visible intersections of the campus. Altgeld Hall remains one of the university's most recognized and loved structures to this day.⁴¹

Ricker worked on buildings in addition to those on campus, for instance his two-story Queen Anne style house at 612 West Green Street in Urbana. Ricker built his home in 1892 and it was described in the newspaper:

One of the most artistic houses from an architectural point of view and also for perfect arrangement and convenience it that of Prof. N.C. Ricker on Green street. The cost is not far from \$5,000. Everyone expected something convenient and handsome on account of the Professor's well-known ability as an architect, and they were not disappointed. He has lately removed to his new home.⁴²

This account of the Ricker House describes its cost, according to similar articles, few other houses in the area cost more than \$4,000; therefore, Ricker's house was truly impressive for the time. Ricker built his home fourteen years after he assumed the position of Dean of the College of Engineering. The home, Ricker's only known residential design, was built on the site of his previous residence, which is located on one of the main corridors into downtown Urbana. A comfortable walking distance from campus. This area contained some of the city's premiere late nineteenth century houses.

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Although Ricker's house is a private building, it reflects qualities he included in the design of his campus buildings. Due to its size and use, it was not necessary for Ricker to display his knowledge of building technology in his residence. However, the fine craftsmanship of elements such as the newel post, mantels and the glazed tile fireplace surrounds reflects the use of carpentry in Ricker's campus buildings. The newel post used in the residence is strikingly similar to a newel post in Ricker's Altgeld Hall, which was constructed five years after the Ricker House. This relationship between his residence and his campus buildings as well as the thirty-two years Ricker and his family lived at 612 West Green Street, tightly associate the house with the man who designed it.

Ricker also played a role in the construction of an area church. He served on the building committee and was among the founding members for the National Register-listed Unitarian Church of Urbana located at 1209 West Oregon street. Ricker served as director of the Unitarian Church construction project (1907-08) and collaborated on the Church's decoration with Newton A. Wells, a fellow Professor in the School of Architecture. Ricker did not design the church. The design was provided by the American Unitarian Association in the form of a booklet containing eight model churches, which were altered to form the final design.⁴³ The church still stands on its original site.

Ricker also served as an expert adviser in student and public design competitions. Some of his noteworthy associations include: Carnegie Library, Davenport Iowa; high school building, Burlington, Iowa; State Arsenal, Springfield, Illinois; and the Department of Justice Building, Washington D.C.⁴⁴

Ricker's Personal Life

Aside from his involvement in the profession of architecture, Ricker was an active member of his community. He married the niece of one of the most influential residents of Urbana, served in community organizations and raised a daughter who also became an architect.

Nathan C. Ricker married Mary Carter Steele in August 1875. Mary was the niece of Judge and Mrs. J. O. Cunningham, a prominent and founding family of Urbana, Illinois. Judge Cunningham was a lawyer, journalist, and jurist. He also was a friend of Abraham Lincoln and wrote the first history of the Champaign-Urbana area. Mary lived with the Cunninghams while she attended the University of Illinois. She graduated in 1875. Mary

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died of illness in 1910 at the age of fifty-eight.⁴⁵ The couple had one daughter, Ethel Ricker, who also attended the University of Illinois and studied architecture. She graduated in 1904. Ethel lived in the family home in Urbana until 1927, then moved to the Chicago area. Ethel died in 1971 at the age of eighty-eight; she was the last surviving member of her family.⁴⁶

Ricker was also an active member of the Western Star Lodge No. 240 A.F. & A.M. In *A Biographical History of Western Star Lodge*, Ricker's service is described:

Brother Ricker was raised in Fraternal Lodge No. 55, A.F. and A.M., Maine, on March 12, 1866. Later, he affiliated with La Harpe Lodge No. 19, La Harpe, Indiana. He affiliated with Western Star Lodge No. 240, October 12, 1874. He was a member of Champaign Chapter No. 50, Royal Arch Masons and Urbana Commandery No. 16, Knights of Templar having served as Eminent Commander.⁴⁷

Although the information is slightly incorrect (La Harpe is in Illinois), this illustrates Ricker's contributions to the community beyond the University of Illinois.

Ricker's Legacy

Ricker had a profound impact on the University's School of Architecture and College of Engineering. His lengthy service brought him into contact with many students. Some of the most noteworthy students from Ricker's era include:

Arthur Peabody, for many years supervising architect for the University of Wisconsin and Wisconsin State Architect; Clarence H. Blackall, architect of Boston's first steel-framed building; Alfred Fellheimer, co-designer of the Cincinnati Union Terminal; William L. Steele, trainee under Sullivan and an important architect of the Prairie School; William E. Drummond, noted Prairie School architect who apprenticed to Frank Lloyd Wright; Walter Burley Griffin, another Wright associate and planner of Canberra, Australia; Henry Bacon, architect of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C.; and Mary L. Page of the class of 1878, perhaps America's first woman graduate in architecture.⁴⁸

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George Rapp, of Rapp and Rapp architects, who designed hundreds of theaters around the country, also graduated under Ricker in 1899. Ricker's impact is even more impressive when one realizes the percentage of architects nationally that studied at the University of Illinois under Ricker. Ricker was the sole instructor of architecture for twelve years between 1873 and 1885. The University of Illinois offered the only school of architecture outside the East Coast until 1889. "By 1900, one-quarter of all students enrolled in architecture schools in the United States studied under him. When Ricker retired, his school was called the largest in the world."⁴⁹

The foundation that Nathan C. Ricker built at the University of Illinois School of Architecture continues to educate new generations of architects. The program, which Ricker developed around a German model, remains strong in technical areas of study and in history, Ricker's two personal emphases. The Ricker Library of Art and Architecture continues to be among the best of its kind in the country providing students numerous resources. Ricker's campus buildings continue to serve the university and its students, providing both functional space and pride. The Alumni Quarterly summarized the importance of Nathan C. Ricker in April, 1912 by stating, "No one connected with the University gave more hours during either term time or vacation, or worked with greater zeal or less diversion than Professor Ricker."⁵⁰

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- ¹ Geraniotis, p. 15
- ² Ricker, p. 2-3
- ³ Ibid., p. 4
- ⁴ Ibid., p. 5
- ⁵ Ibid., p. 5
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 6
- ⁷ Ibid., P. 8
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 9
- ⁹ Geraniotis, p. 15
- ¹⁰ Ricker, p. 10
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Geraniotis, p. 15
- ¹³ Ricker, p. 11
- ¹⁴ Ibid., P. 12
- ¹⁵ Ibid., p. 13
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., p. 14
- ¹⁸ Ibid., p. 16
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p. 18
- ²⁰ Ibid., p. 22
- ²¹ Ibid., p. 23
- ²² Ibid., p. 24
- ²³ Ibid., p. 25
- ²⁴ Ibid., p. 27
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Ricker, p. 30
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Ibid., p. 31
- ²⁹ Ibid., p. 33
- ³⁰ Stein
- ³¹ Whitley & Whitley, p. 512
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Godwin, p. 134
- ³⁴ Baker, p. 101

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- ³⁵ Ricker, p. 34
 - ³⁶ Daily Illini Article, 2/14/51
 - ³⁷ Cassens et al., p. 2
 - ³⁸ Ibid., p. 12
 - ³⁹ Ibid, p. 13
 - ⁴⁰ Ibid.
 - ⁴¹ Ibid., p. 13
 - ⁴² Article 10/26/1892
 - ⁴³ Irish, p. 4
 - ⁴⁴ Baker, p.101
 - ⁴⁵ Alumni quarterly October, 1910
 - ⁴⁶ Champaign News-Gazette Article, 8/24/71
 - ⁴⁷ Godwin, p. 135
 - ⁴⁸ Charney, Stamper, p. 266
 - ⁴⁹ Alofsin, p. 6
 - ⁵⁰ Baker, p. 100

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10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

Parcel number 92-21-17-111-008 in the Cunningham Township in Champaign County, Illinois.

Legal Description

Lot 4 of N.C.R.'s subdivision of lot 1, Block 6 of J.W. Sim's addition to Urbana, as per plat recorded in plat book "B" at page 45, situated in Champaign, County Illinois.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the house and lot that have historically been part of Nathan C. Ricker's property and that maintain historic integrity.

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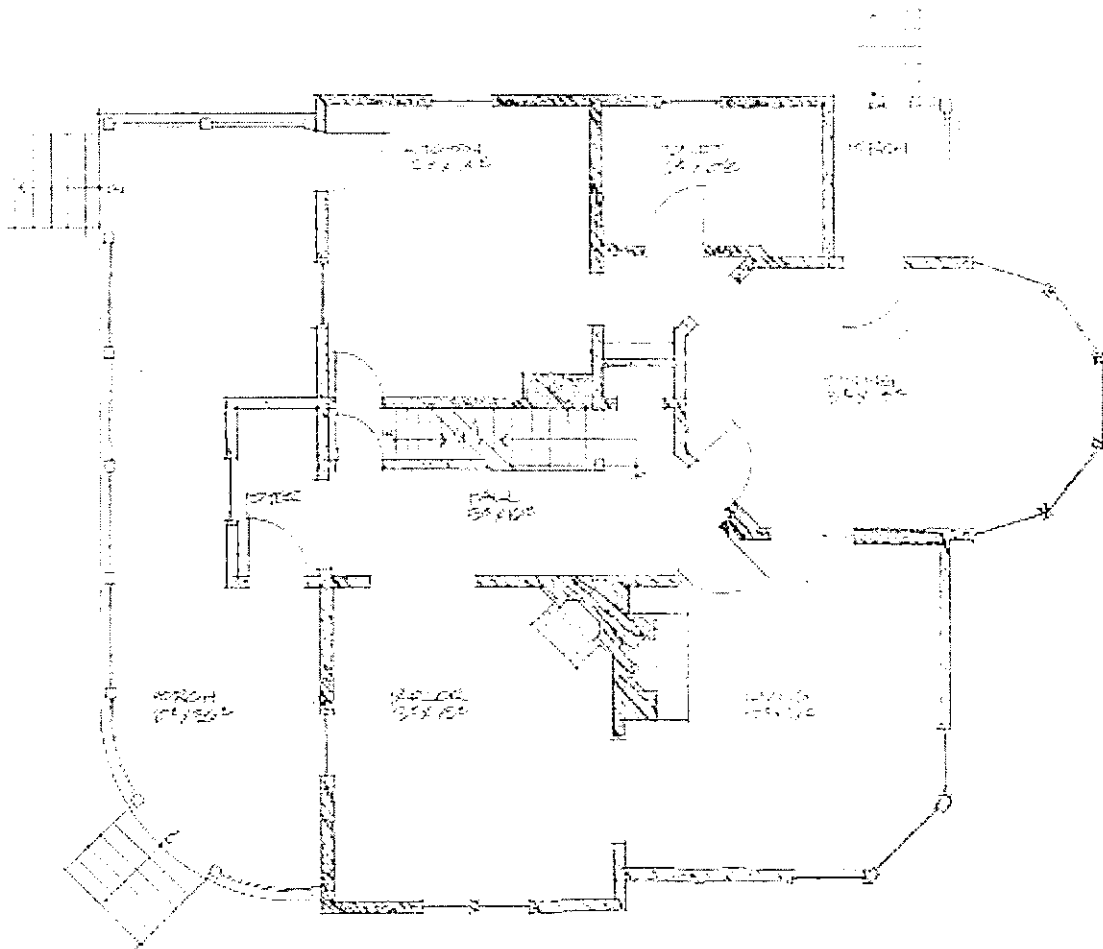


Figure 1: First Floor Plan Nathan C. Ricker House - Champaign County, Illinois
Drawing by David Garner.

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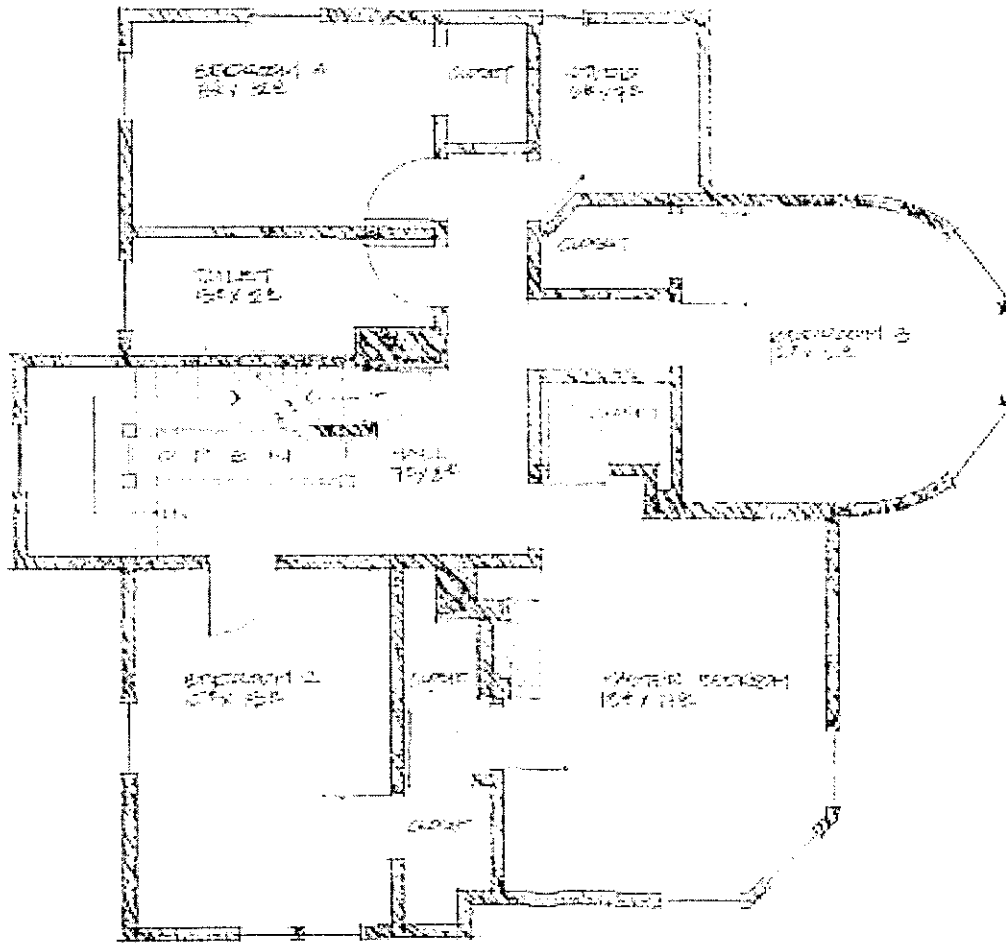


Figure 3: Second Floor Plan Nathan C. Ricker House - Champaign County, Illinois
Drawn by David Garner

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Figure 4: View of Nathan C. Ricker House (Circa 1930) Champaign County, Illinois
Photo from University of Illinois Archives

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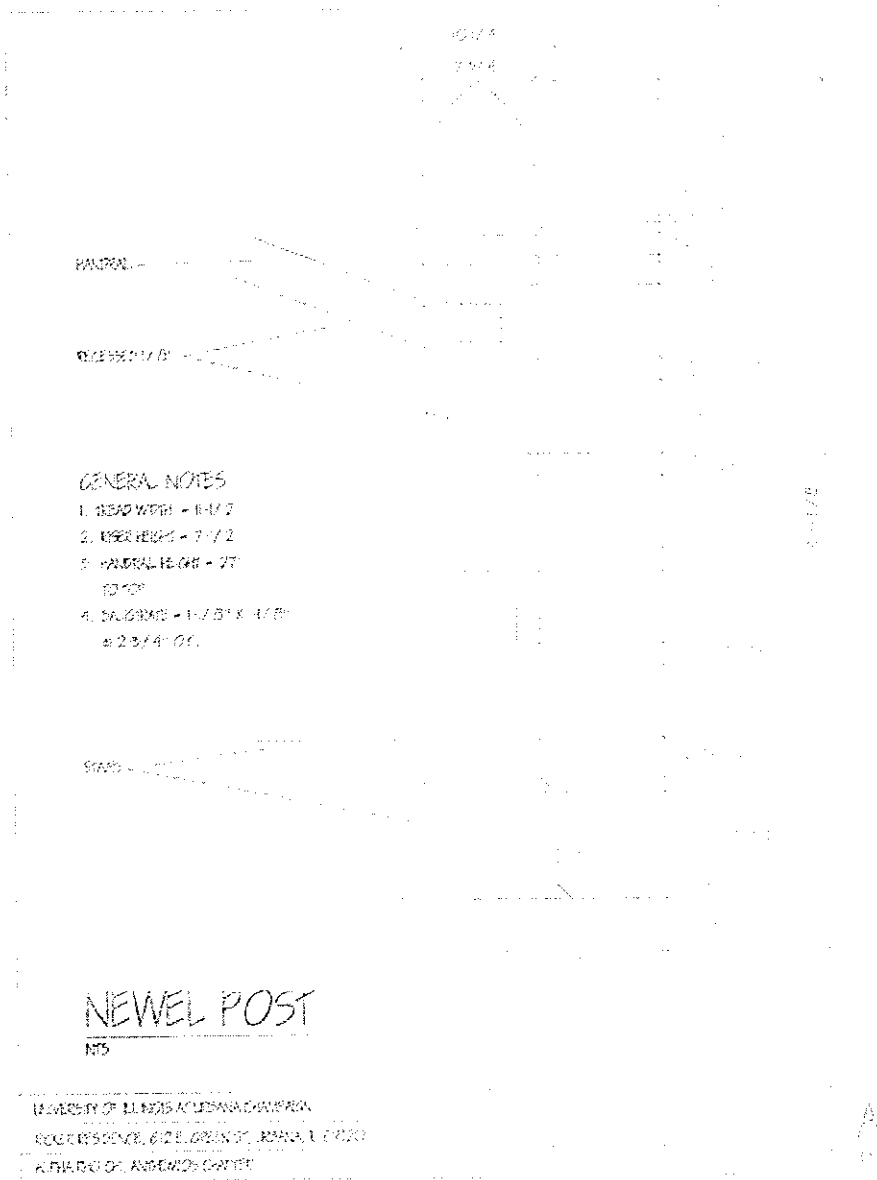
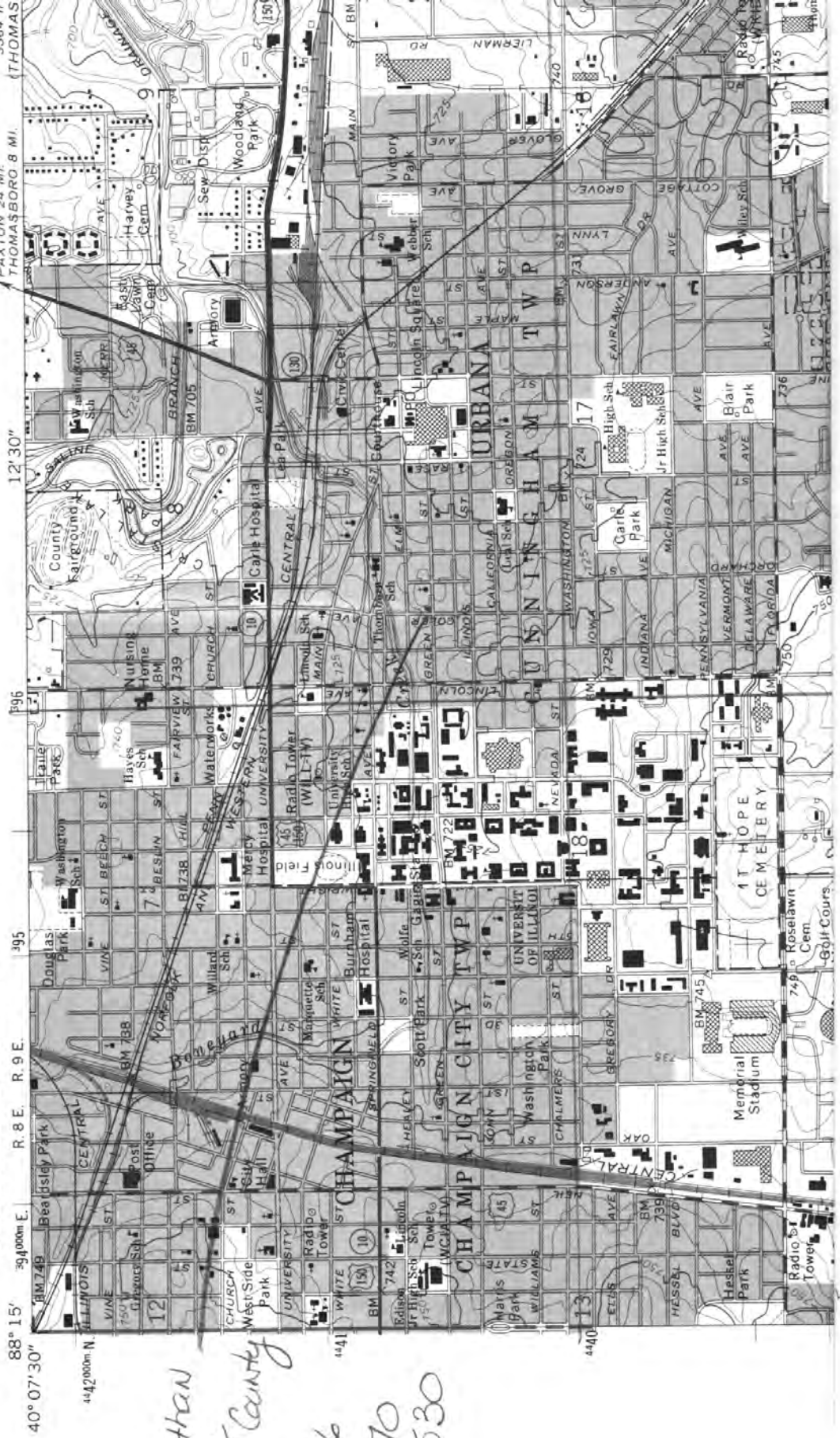


Figure 2: Newel Post - Nathan C. Ricker House Champaign County, Illinois
Drawing from Alpha Rho Chi, Anthemios Chapter

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