

## PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

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## Joseph W. Royer Historic District

The Joseph W. Royer Historic District consists of two residential buildings, 801 West Oregon Street (Joseph W. Royer House) and 701 South Busey Avenue (Ella Danely House). The district was nominated under Criteria one, two, and three. Under Criteria One, the district is "associated with an important person or event in national, state, or local history"; it is "representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, method of construction or use of indigenous materials and which retains a high degree of integrity"; it is the "notable work of a master builder, designers, architect or artist whose individual genius has influenced an area"; it has "significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political, or social heritage of the nation, state or community"; and the buildings are "identifiable as an established and familiar visual location or physical characteristics." Under Criteria Two the district "contains a contiguous grouping of properties having a sense of cohesiveness expressed through a similarity of characteristic of style, period, or method of construction." Under Criteria Three, the district "contains sufficient historical integrity to convey a sense of time and place."

The Joseph Royer House was designed and built in 1905 by the noted Urbana architect, Joseph William Royer as his personal residence. In 1923, Royer designed and built the small cottage at the south end of his property for his mother-in-law, Ella Danely. The large main house is a good example of the Mission Style with Arts and Crafts influence, while the cottage is a picturesque rendition of the English Revival architectural style. Neither residence has been significantly altered and both retain a high degree of integrity.



The Joseph W. Royer House, 801 West Oregon, was recently designated an Urbana Landmark as part of the Joseph W. Royer Historic District. The house was built in 1905 and served as the residence of the prominent Urbana architect until his death in 1954. Photo by Dan Leasure

## History

Joseph William Royer, Urbana's most prominent architect, designed both buildings contained within the Joseph W. Royer Historic District. Royer was born in Urbana in 1873, the son of John D. and Mary Royer. He graduated from the University of Illinois in 1895 with a degree in civil engineering and worked as Urbana's city engineer from 1898 to 1906 during which time he designed the 1901 Champaign County Courthouse; he also was responsible for the Sheriff's Residence and County Jail, constructed in 1905. The firm of Royer and Brown was formed about 1905. At other times the firm was known as Royer and Smith; Royer, Danely, and Smith; and Royer and Davis. Other well known local buildings designed by Royer include: Urbana High School (1914), Urbana Lincoln Hotel (1924), Urbana Christian Church (1910), Urbana Free Library (1918), Alpha Rho Chi Chapter House (1927), Champaign Country Club (circa 1895), Urbana Flat Iron Building (1906), and the Urbana

Country Club (1922).

Royer purchased the lot at 801 West Oregon in 1902 for the sum of \$1250; this was the same year he married Adelaide Danely. Adelaide was a noted poet and interior designer, who collaborated with her husband on some of his projects. Most likely he felt that with the successful completion of the County Courthouse project his architectural career was set; he continued in practice, both locally and statewide, until his death in 1954. The lot on Oregon was bought from the estate of Thomas S. Hubbard with the following condition:

It is hereby expressly agreed by the grantee, his heirs and assigns that no house shall be erected on the said land of a contract value less than \$2000; that the front wall of any such house shall be at least 30 feet from the front Street line of said land, that the grade in front of said house shall be uniform with that of adjoining lot and when walks are laid in front of said land, they shall be of concrete and uniform with adjoining walks.