

From Library To Museum And Much More!

In the summer of 1985, I answered an ad for a position as a secretary at a museum; it wasn't just any museum, but a "museum of architecture and design." I knew little about museums and less about architecture, but I decided to give it a shot. And so, on a wet July morning I proceeded down the highway from Ursa to Quincy - and my car stalled! An hour late, I arrived for my interview, dress soaked, hair fallen and nerves shattered after an apprehensive ride with a "fatherly" truck driver. They must have felt sorry for me because they gave me the job!

So on August 20, 1985, I became a staff member of the Gardner Museum of Architecture and Design. My office was located in the basement of the former public library building at 4th and Maine. Built in 1888, this grand Romanesque style building had been re-developed into a museum after new library facilities were built at 6th and Jersey. My "desk" consisted of a door wedged between columns; my chair was a drafting stool. To answer the telephone I had to walk an obstacle course; to reach the visitors' door I went up a flight of stairs and through a maze of library stacks.

Despite all this, I soon learned that the Gardner Museum had been producing two quality exhibits each year, as well as providing educational programs for the public, such as demonstrations on antique furniture for their "The Best Seats in the House" exhibit in the fall of 1984. Other fine exhibits included: "Aspirations in Glass," a wonderful stained glass display (permanently installed in our second floor galleries); "Lost Quincy," an outdoor sculpture exhibit featuring ornamental stonework from demolished Quincy buildings (also on permanent display); "Impressions in Metal," a collection of ironwork from some of Quincy's "lost" architectural landmarks and "Early Quincy Architecture," a photographic display of architectural styles. The Museum was also active in the growing awareness of historic preservation and worked toward saving some of Quincy's best buildings, as well as salvaging and displaying ornamental pieces from buildings not saved from the wrecking ball. (An example is the I. O. Woodruff House, 1437 Maine, Second Empire, 1868-1877 - mantels and other pieces are permanently installed in the Museum's upper galleries).

During the 2½ years I have been with the Gardner Museum I have witnessed phenomenal growth - membership has grown to well over 200 persons. The quest for historic preservation continues to provide public educational programs. "Made in Quincy" opened in the fall of 1985. This exhibit included an outstanding collection of items from stoves to buggies - all made in Quincy. The exhibit was rich in historical information and provided visitors a glimpse of Quincy's productive past. Exhibits since then have included: "Hometown Talent," an exhibit of photographs featuring buildings designed by 10 architects from Quincy's past; "Once Upon a Time," a large collection of timepieces covering a 300 year period and "Tools of the Trade," a rustic display of over 500 pre-electric tools. And from October through December of 1987, "Quilts and Quilters," a collection of over 125 quilts dating from the late 1820's to the 1930's, will be on display at the Museum.

We also now have beautiful new offices complete with modern furniture, yet incorporating items such as an elegant chandelier from the Lincoln-Douglas Hotel. The offices are located on the second and part of the third floor of the old "stack" area and are a result of Phase I of a 3-phase renovation project begun in late 1986.

It has been a long time since my rainy day trip in July of 1985. I continue to learn about the operations of a museum and I view buildings now with a growing appreciation of the artisan's craft. I have met many interesting people from all areas of the "arts" and I have enjoyed meeting visitors from all over the country. I am looking forward to 1988, when the Gardner Museum of Architecture and Design will celebrate the 100th birthday of its building on "John's Square" (Washington Park).

—Nancy P. Kattelman

QUINCY ARTIFACTS PART OF MAJOR TRAVELING EXHIBITION

"The Spirit of Richardson on The Midland Prairies," is the title of a traveling exhibit planned by the University Art Museum at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. The exhibit features the influence of renowned architect, Henry Hobson Richardson, on architects in several mid-western states, including Illinois and Iowa. Richardson formalized the style, Richardsonian Romanesque (Romanesque Revival is its predecessor) during the 1870's, in Boston, where the bulk of his work is located. After his death in 1886, other prominent architects followed Richardson's popular techniques throughout the eastern United States and the Midwest. They were busy designing public buildings, churches, banks, office buildings and private residences. A few architects represented in the exhibition include Richardson himself, L. S. Buffington (Minneapolis), Patton and Fisher (Chicago), Burnham and Root (Chicago), J. R. Gordon (Texas), Louis Sullivan and Quincy architects, Ernest M. Wood, Harvey Chatten and John Batschy. Featured on display will be architectural ornament in terra cotta, limestone, copper, wrought and cast iron, glass, brass, stone and numerous original watercolors, pen and ink and pencil drawings, blue prints, lithographs, photographs and facsimile drawings.

The exhibition opens in mid-March, 1988, at the University of Minnesota and travels to other museums from there, and according to university officials is creating much interest. The Gardner Museum will contract the exhibition for the fall period of 1989. The museum has included on loan pieces of its collection for this exhibition from the old Quincy High School (1891, Harvey Chatten, architect), two carved limestone date stones. George M. Irwin, museum vice president has loaned terra cotta frieze bricks and pilaster capital blocks from the Musselman Building (1892, John Batschy, architect) and original watercolor rendering of the State Savings Loan and Trust Company's addition (1906, Ernest M. Wood, architect).

The Gardner Museum is pleased to be involved in a major traveling show of this nature and to have Quincy's architectural heritage included in the exhibition.

—David Bonnett



Ian Dudley (L), from Minneapolis and museum staff member, Bob Troutman prepare carved limestone from the old Quincy High School for transport to Minneapolis