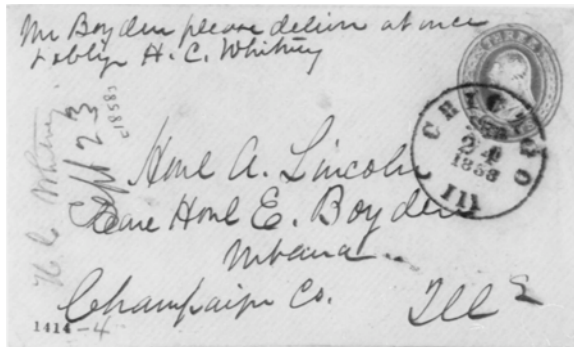


LOOKING FOR CIVIL WAR URBANA:

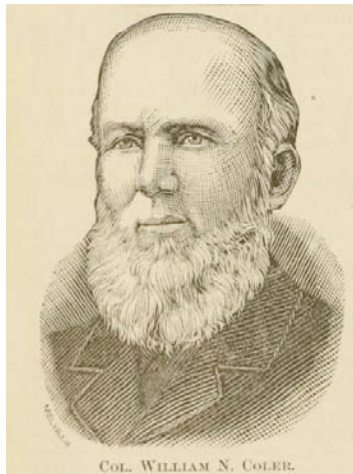
A SEARCH FOR SURVIVING CIVIL WAR ERA URBANA BUILDINGS USING THE 1869 A. RUGER PANORAMIC MAP



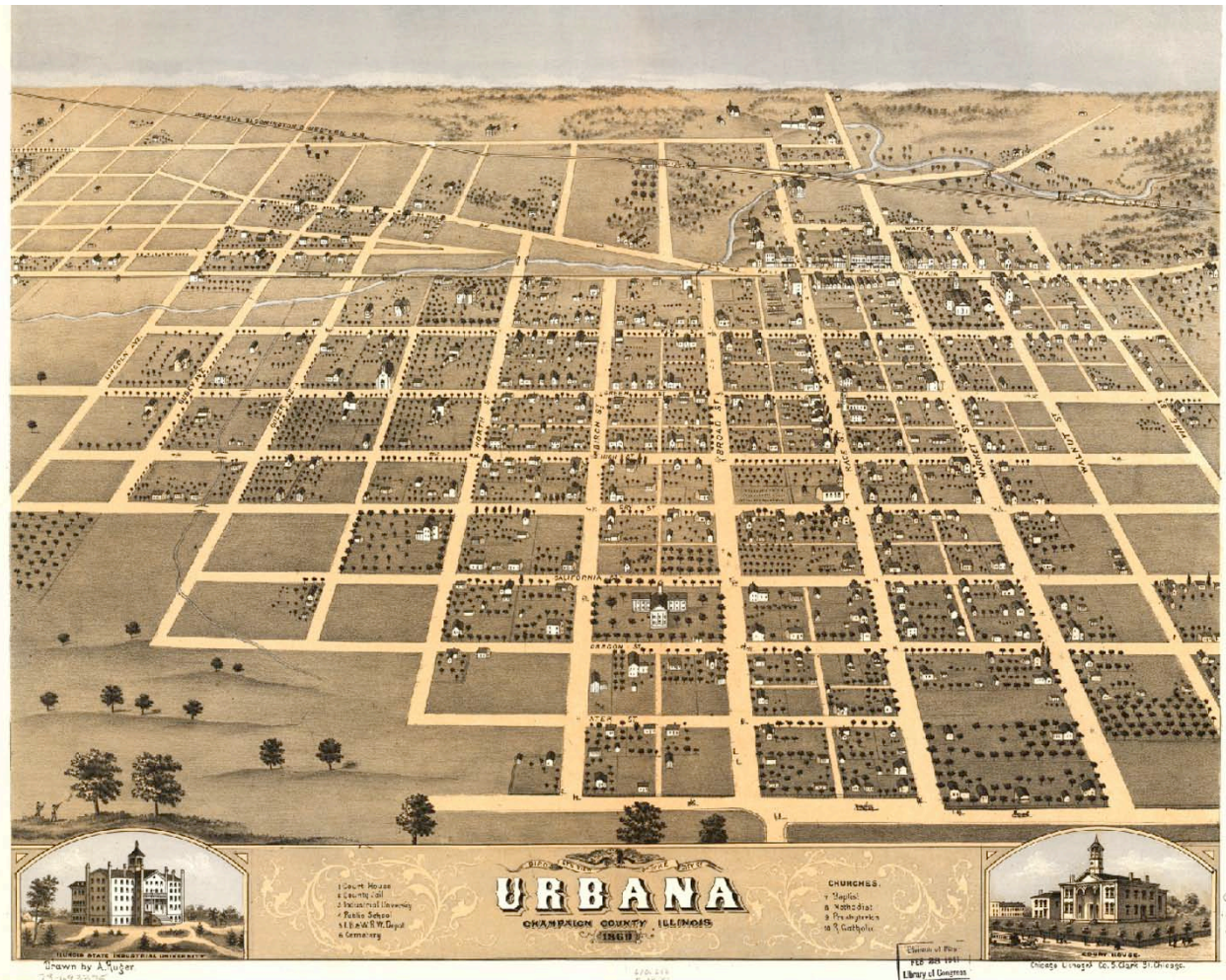
Stewart H. Berlocher
stewartb@illinois.edu



Letter to Abraham Lincoln, care of Mayor Ezekiel Boyden in Urbana, from H. C. Whitney, Sept. 23, 1858.



Col. William N. Coler, first commander, 25th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Urbana, Illinois



CIVIL WAR ERA URBANA BUILDINGS ON THE 1869 A. RUGER PANORAMIC MAP

2

Stewart H. Berlocher stewartb@illinois.edu

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All the houses described here are private residences. None are open to the public for tours, so please don't bother the owners. Looking from the sidewalk is legal, trespassing on private property is not.

Why I have put this website together?

Ever since I was a child I have been fascinated by the Civil War. For one thing, I had ancestors who fought on both sides. I have also always been fascinated by Abraham Lincoln and his heroic struggle to put the Union back together. But it was only a couple of years ago that I realized that Lincoln, a frequent visitor to Urbana, could have actually walked down my own street. I decided to learn more.

I discovered that Urbana has a number of houses that, rather amazingly given the odds, still survive from the time of the Civil War — houses Lincoln could have visited. I also discovered that in 1869, just four years after the war ended, Albert Ruger made panoramic, “birds-eye” maps of both Urbana and Champaign. Looking at the tiny little house drawings, I had the idea that one could use the map drawings as surrogate photographs, and match the drawings with existing houses to find Civil War era survivors. Other sources (below) were also very useful.

My goal – to both inform, and add to our history

I decided early on to include not only the well-documented houses, but the less well-known ones, the “maybes”, as well. My hope is that readers who have heard old house stories will write me, so I can correct and add to this work — so that it becomes better and better over time. If you know any history about one of these houses, or any other old houses, or if I have made a mistake - especially if it is about your house! - by all means let me know. Write me at stewartb@illinois.edu.



Disclaimer: This is a work of personal research and should not be used for any legal purposes.

Sources and thanks:

Ruger map images (public domain) 2009-2010 aerial photography from are from the Library of Congress American Memory site (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/pm.html/panhome.html>).

The 1873 campus photo is used with permission of the University of Illinois Archives.

Google maps (in compliance), (<http://maps.google.com/maps>).

The 1858 Alexander Bowman map was accessed via paper copy, purchasable from the Urbana Free Library.

Urbana. 2009. I. Matkovski and D. Roberts, Arcadia Publishing.

Karl Lohmann’s “100 Houses of Urbana: Who lived in them and when” is only available at the Urbana Free Library.

Many thanks to the staff of the Champaign County Historical Archives, Urbana Free Library.

2009-2011 photographs copyright Stewart H. Berlocher (unless otherwise noted).

Abraham Lincoln in Urbana:

On his twice-yearly visits to Urbana for the 8th Judicial Circuit between 1841 and 1860, Lincoln frequently walked in the Big Grove and around town, often visiting his many friends. Since Urbana had only around 200 houses in 1858, and far fewer before that, any house surviving from the 1850s has at least some chance of having been visited by Lincoln, if only for a front porch chat, and is so identified here. Future research may document more visits to particular houses than are known at present.

“He always remembered old friends on the Circuit. Up to 1860 he could, without doubt, have called more men, women, and even children in Illinois by their proper names than any man living, and would always do when meeting them”.

“Daylight leisure often afforded opportunities for out of door pastimes, chief among which was that of strolling about the little town or upon the roads leading though the nearby forest”.

J. O. Cunningham, *Some Recollections of Abraham Lincoln*, 1907.

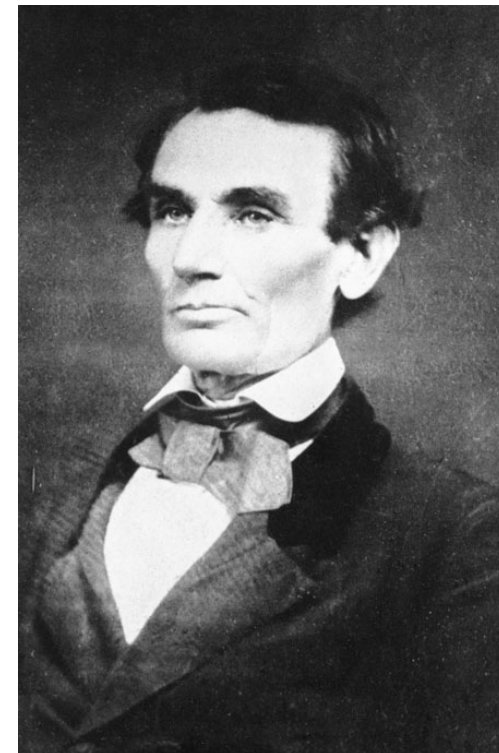
Right: The Alschuler photograph of Abraham Lincoln taken in April, 1858, in a building that was on the corner where Busey Bank is now located. Cunningham was present for the photograph, and tells the story of how Lincoln had to borrow a dress coat for the photograph. Photo image from the Library of Congress, public domain.



This symbol means that Abraham Lincoln is *known* to have been in this house or building.

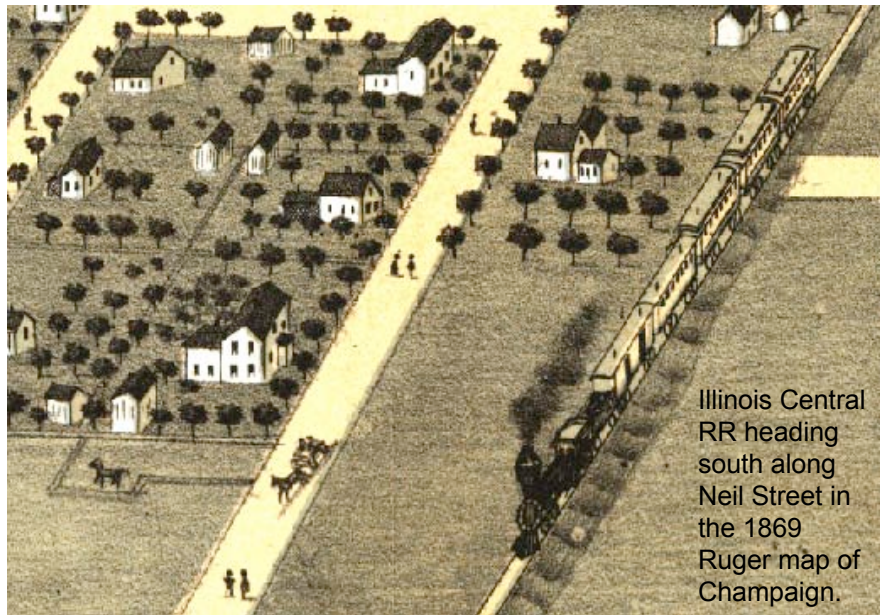


This symbol means that Abraham Lincoln *could have been* in this building; building dates from at least 1858.



Are 19th century panoramic maps accurate enough for historical research?

Panoramic maps produced by Albert Ruger (1829-1899) and others in the years after the Civil War are very appealing, with their depictions of tiny houses and churches, miniscule trains, and little figures hunting or horseback riding. There is a certain magic in looking up the location of one's house and seeing what was there in 1869, just 4 years after the end of the Civil War.



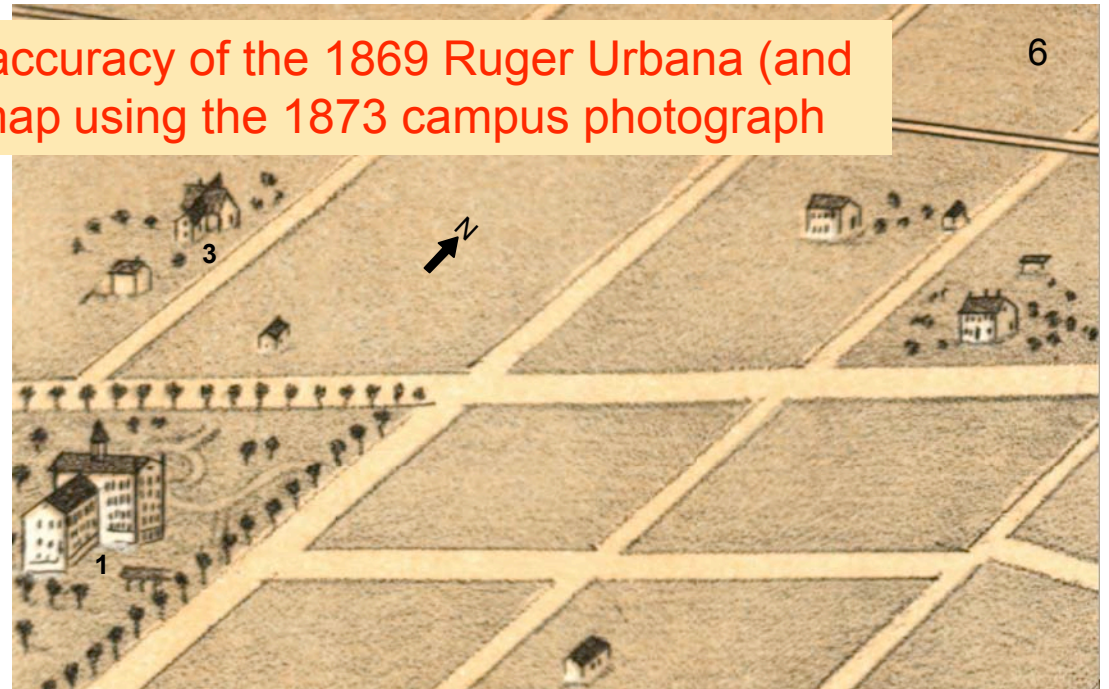
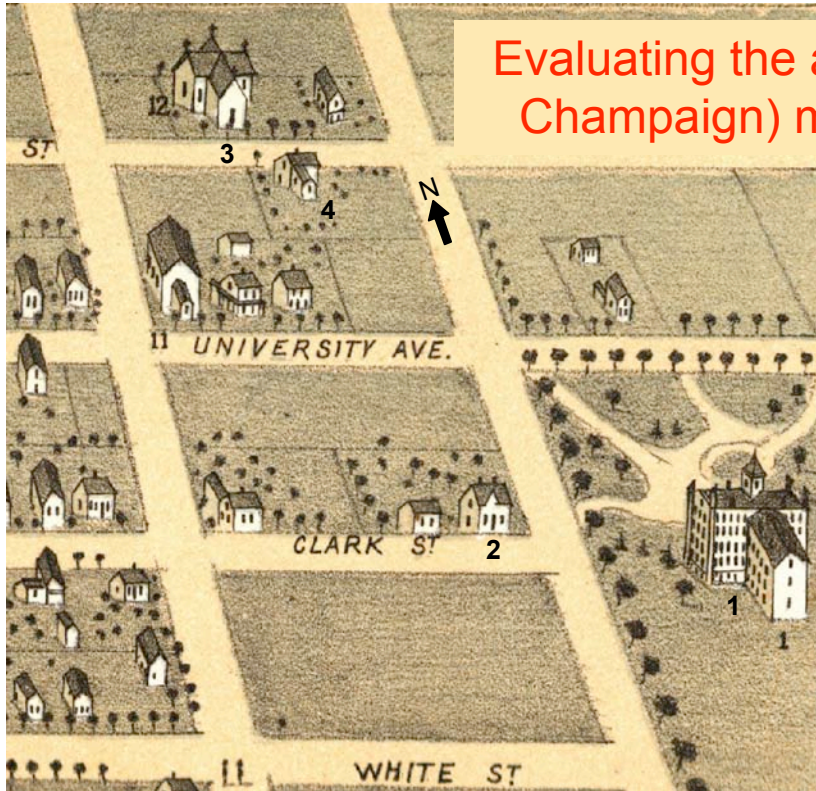
But despite their appeal, there are some reasons why one might wonder about the accuracy of panoramic maps of Ruger and others:

1. The maps are not to scale, having only a rough, relational scale.
2. The perspective is essentially intuitive, with structures in the distance being only somewhat smaller than those in the foreground.
3. The lithographers drew directly on the plates following the on-site pencil drawings made by Ruger or assistants (no optical or physical reduction tools seemed to have been used), thus as one would expect there are some errors in the maps.
4. The lithograph drawings were tiny (see below), so that detail could be added only to foreground structures.
5. The exact date when data gathering for the maps ceased was not recorded, so that the maps depict towns as they were at some unknown date earlier than the publication date.

Despite these problems, however, the consensus is that these maps, while not perfect, are remarkably accurate (see John W. Reps, 1984, *Views and Viewmakers of Urban America*. Lithographs of towns and cities in the United States and Canada, Notes on the artists and publishers, and a union catalog of their work, 1825-1925. University of Missouri Press, Columbia). As Reps discusses, before printing, pencil drafts of the maps were posted in a public place in each town as advertisement, and so that home owners could comment on the depiction of their homes.

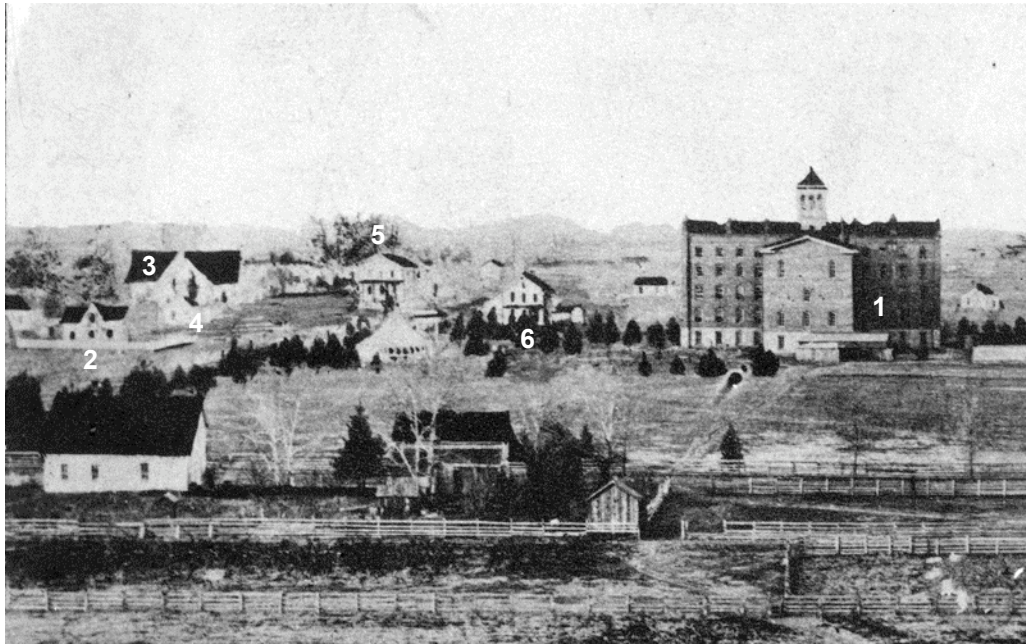
To decide for myself, I decided to compare the Urbana map, and the companion Champaign map of the same year, with an 1873 landscape photograph, made only 4 years after the maps were published. As an independent "control" for the accuracy of the Urbana map, I also compared the depictions on the Champaign map of three well-documented, existing historical structures in Champaign.

Evaluating the accuracy of the 1869 Ruger Urbana (and Champaign) map using the 1873 campus photograph



Old Main in 1869 maps of Champaign (left) and Urbana (right).

Earliest photo of the **University of Illinois** (used with permission of the UIUC Archives), 1873. The foreground of the original (not shown) has much detail, but the photo seems to have been underexposed in the background, where the buildings of interest are located. The original print appears to have been made with high contrast, to reveal the details in the back-ground, but this has rendered it almost like a drawing.



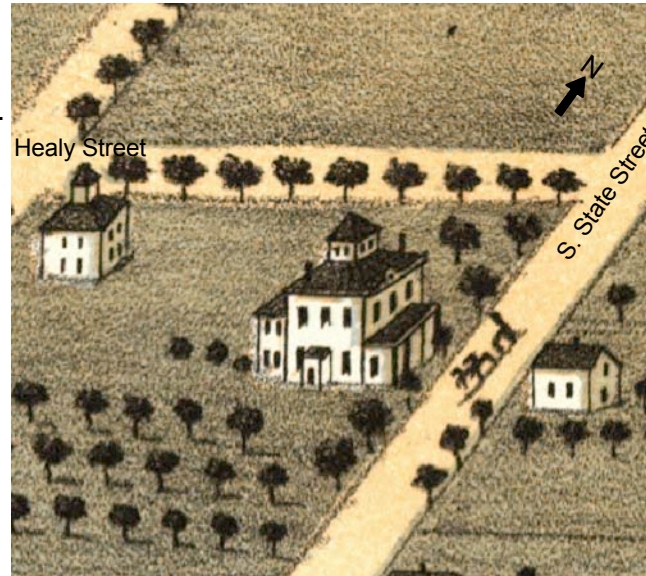
“Old Main” (1) is shown in good detail in the 1869 maps (e.g. the 5 floors are correct in both), although map window details differ (in both maps this area is at the very back of the map.) The small Gothic house (2) at far left seems to be the one depicted at the corner of Clark and Wright in the Champaign map. The larger “Gothic house” (3, 12. in original map) behind the small one is almost certainly St. Mary’s Church, the oldest Catholic Church in Urbana-Champaign. A very faint image of a house (4) can be seen in front of St. Mary’s in the photo, which corresponds to the house across the street (south) of St. Mary’s in the Champaign map. Two 2-story gable-front houses (5,6) in the photo must have been built between 1869 and 1873. Overall, the 1869 maps are in good agreement with the 1873 photograph. © SH Berlocher 2012

Evaluating the accuracy of the 1869 Ruger maps using surviving buildings.

The **Harwood-Solon House** is probably the most widely recognized historic building in Champaign-Urbana. It is very accurately depicted on the 1869 Ruger map.

The location is correctly shown at the northeast corner of S. State and W. Healy Streets (Thomas St. at the time) in Champaign (an area which was mostly prairie in 1869).

The 1869 map drawing is a very good although not quite perfect depiction of the extant house.



Among the details of the 1869 map drawing that match the house are:

1. Cupola with hipped roof.
2. Bay window on south side of house.
3. All window number and placement on south side of house is correct. Center 2 upstairs front windows appear to have been combined into 1 window in drawing.
4. Circular window on top front of the house (look closely at map!)
5. Original two chimney locations.
6. Porch across front (east side) of house.
7. Pyramidal hipped roof.



Solon house late 19th or early 20th century

<http://pacacc.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/solonhouse1.jpg>



South side of Solon house, Feb. 6, 2010



East (State Street side) of Solon house, 2008

<http://pacacc.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/solonhouse2.jpg>

Conclusion: the 1869 Ruger map image is unambiguously identifiable as the Harwood-Solon house

Evaluating the accuracy of the 1869 Ruger maps using surviving buildings.

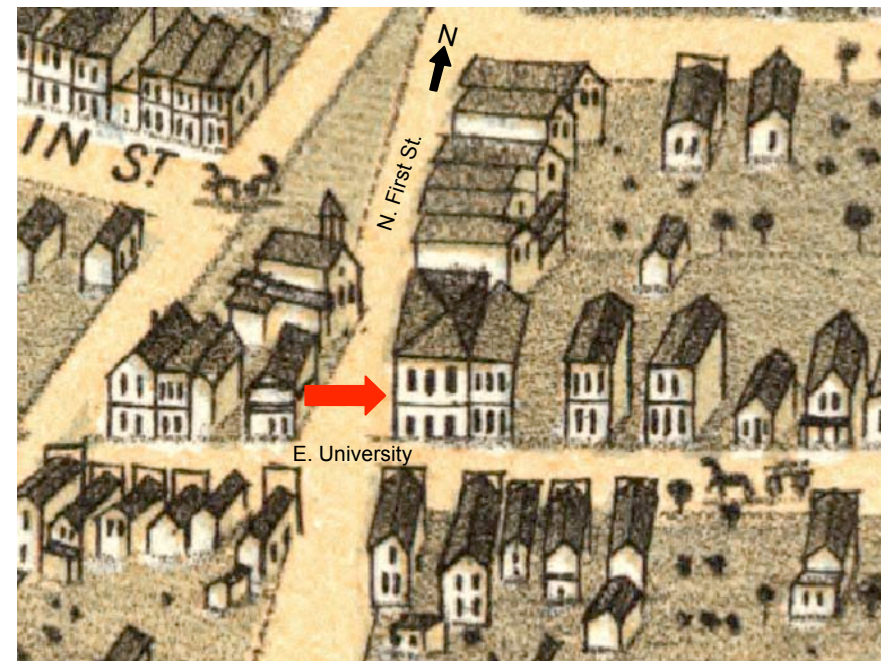
8

The **Cattle Bank** is one of the most historically significant buildings in Champaign-Urbana. Lincoln gave an important speech at the “Goose Pond” church across the street in 1858 (the church is shown on the 1869 map.)

The location is correctly shown at the northeast corner of N. 1st St. and E. University in Champaign, and the orientation on the block is correct.

Among the details of the 1869 map that match are:

1. Two stories.
2. Number of windows on visible south side of drawing (but doors and windows are not distinguished on 1st floor).
3. Hipped roof on bank, gable roof (behind facade) on annex to east.



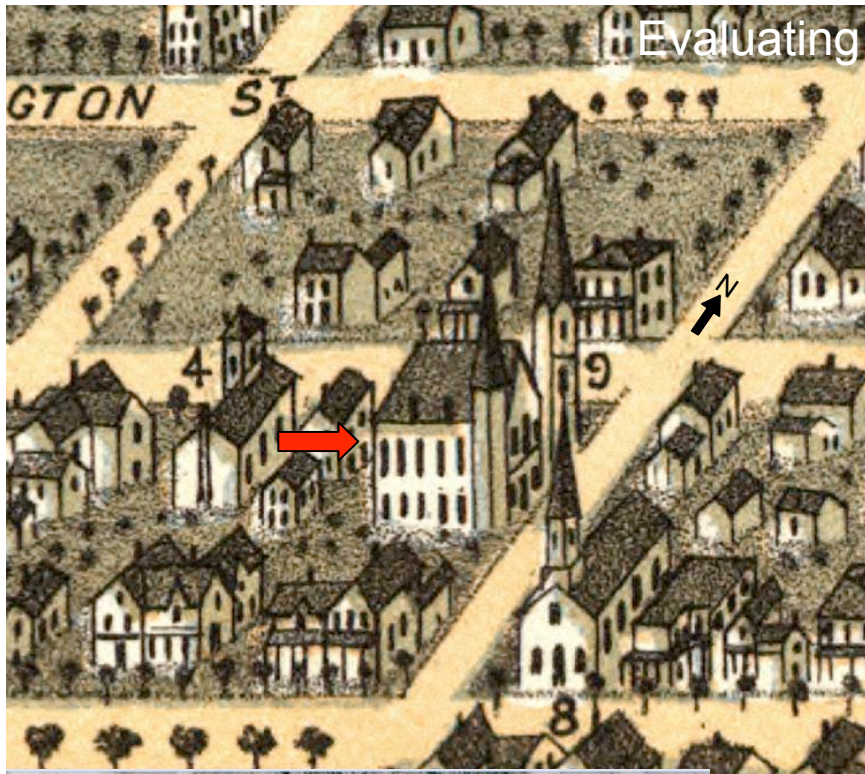
Despite some discrepancies (e.g., map shows a pyramidal hipped roof rather than the simple hipped roof clearly shown in the aerial photo), the Cattle Bank is quite accurately presented on the 1869 Ruger map. (South side shown above)



Because the Cattle Bank is also on the 1858 map (and because he was known to be in the church across the street), Lincoln may have been in this building.

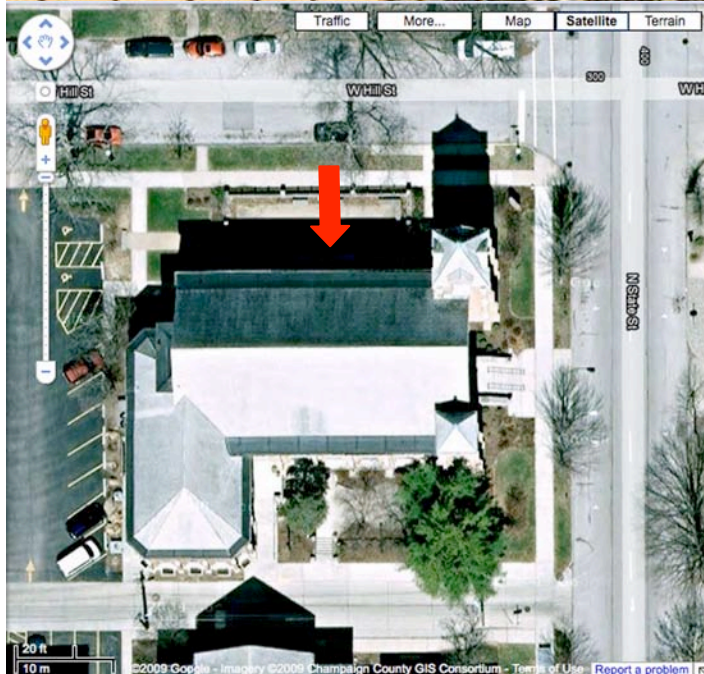


© SH Berlocher 2012



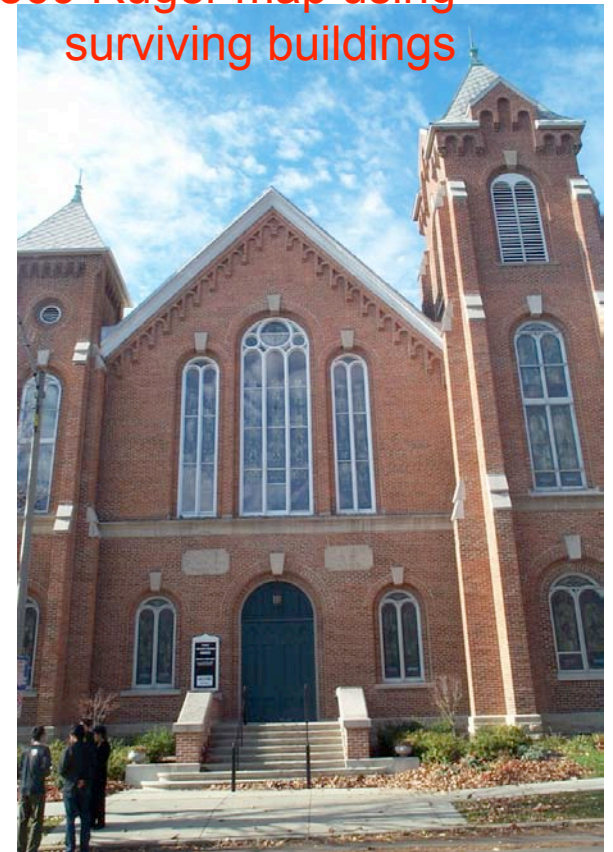
First Presbyterian Church of Champaign is the oldest church building in Urbana-Champaign. It was built in 1867, and thus should be included in the 1869 map - as it is.

The location is correctly shown at the northeast corner of W. Hill St. and N. State St. in Champaign, and the orientation and footprint on the block is correct on the map.



Among the details of the 1869 map that match the extant building are:

1. Two stories.
2. North bell tower is taller than south tower (and north tower has more complex ornamentation).
3. East side (entrance), 3 windows (2nd floor), and 2 windows and one door (1st floor). Middle 2nd floor window on map is correctly shown as taller than other two.



http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a9/FirstPresbyterianChurchChampaignIllinois200511_KaihsuTai.jpg

4. The correct number (5) of major stained glass windows on south side (before extension was built).

There are some discrepancies. The most noticeable is the extreme height of the bell tower roofs; extant roofs are not nearly as tall.

In all, the match between the map and extant building is very good.

© SH Berlocher 2012

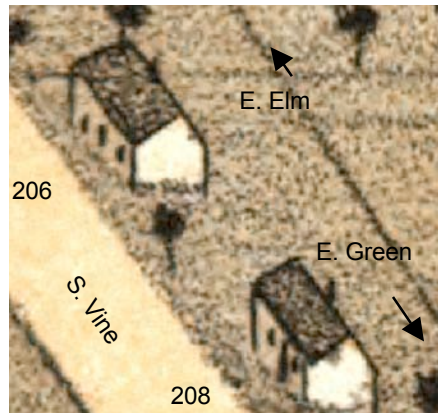
A cautionary note: The “Clapboard Cabin” problem

While the 1869 map is clearly useful for identifying houses with distinguishing features, it is often less useful in dealing with the ubiquitous one story, gable-roofed, clapboard cabins (“hall and parlor” house if there were two rooms inside, “center hallway” house if there were two rooms and a central entrance hall) so common in early Urbana. Not only do these little houses have few distinguishing features, but they were so small that they could be very easily moved - and they were, often. And to add to the confusion, similar-looking designs were built well into the 20th century (see the example below right).

The house at 206 S. Vine St. (long since gone) is a perfect example of the type and the problem. The 1869 map drawing does match the footprint, the location on the block, and the house front door/window positions in the photo, but the drawing also looks like those of other cabins on the block (such as 208 E. Vine, shown).



206 S. Vine, from Lohmann 1961



206 S. Vine, 1869 Ruger map



Three possible old cabins (out of many such) at addresses at which there was no structure on the 1869 map. These could have been built after - or much after - 1869, but might also have been built before 1869 and later moved and modernized; only internal features and more research will reveal the truth.

Not all “clapboard cabins” are from the Civil War - this is where I lived in Houston the first few years of my life!

© SH Berlocher 2012

108 W. Washington St.

404 W. California St.

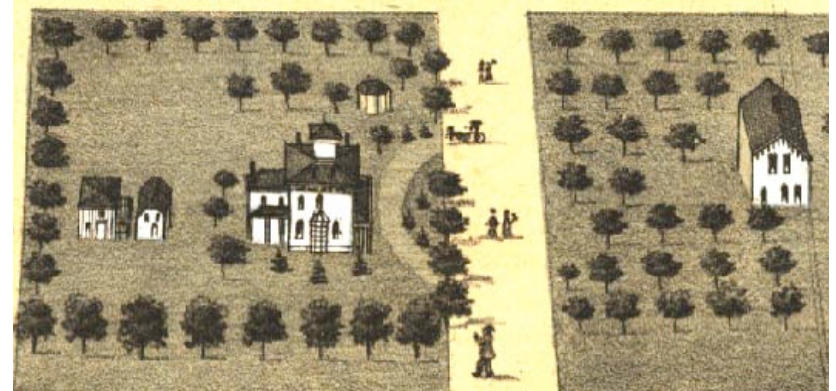
510 W. Illinois St.



Determining how well an existing Urbana house matches a house on the map

Since the 1869 Ruger panoramic map of Champaign seemed to be quite accurate, I assumed that the 1869 map of Urbana was equally accurate. I began by studying each house sketch on the Urbana map for a possible match with an existing house, comparing the following physical features:

1. Location of house on the block.
2. Orientation of house on the block.
3. Footprint (outline from the top) of the house.
4. Architectural details of the house:
 - roof type (gable, hipped, truncated hipped, etc.)
 - number of stories
 - window placement and number (occasional mismatches expected)
 - other details (cupolas, porches, ornamentation, etc.)



Houses in the foreground often were drawn with great detail, such as the verge boards on the gable front of the house on the right, and what appears to be board-and-batten siding on the barn at far left (Champaign Ruger map). But such fine detail is lacking further back in the maps.

I also made use of other sources, such as Lohmann's "100 Urbana Houses", the 1858 Alexander Bowman map of Urbana and West Urbana, and documentary resources at the Urbana Free Library, where available.

I then put each house into one of three categories, based on my intuitive level of confidence that I had correctly matched a given structure on the 1869 map with a house in present day Urbana.

These categories are for convenience only, and will be revised when more information becomes available!

Match Excellent - Matches for most of the physical features above, or matches for at least two features as well as unambiguous documentation from other sources.

Match Good - Matches for at least three physical features, or matches for at least two features and at least one informative mention from other sources.

Match Suggestive - Matches for at least two physical features; other sources lacking or contradictory.

Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

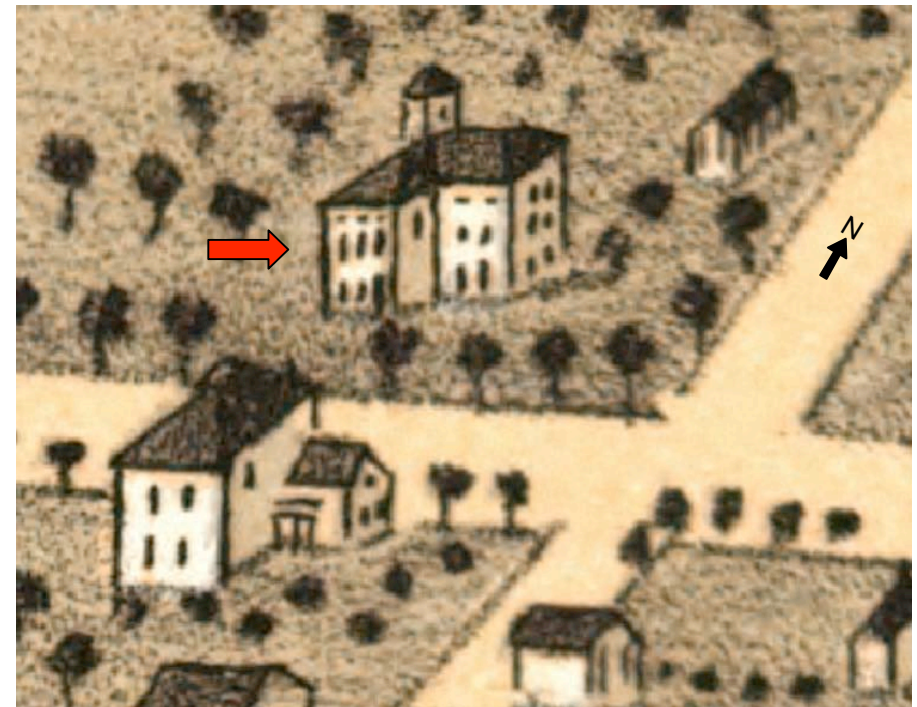
The **Matthew Busey House, 804 W. Main**, is one of the finest old homes in Urbana. It was built in 1867, and thus only 2 years old when the Ruger map was published.

The location is correctly shown at the northwest corner of W. Main St. and N. Busey Ave. in Urbana, the orientation is correct, and the footprint is similar in the map (see below).

Among the details of the 1869 map that match the extant building are:

1. Two stories, high attic.
2. Cupola.
3. Correct number and placement of windows and doors on s. and e. sides of house.
4. Small, wide attic windows! (except drawn as regular windows on e. side).
5. Hipped roof.

Match: Excellent



The footprint in the map appears L-shaped (with the cupola at the angle), while in reality it is a left-rotated "T" (right). This is almost certainly due to the tiny size (~3/8 inch) of the house drawing - it is at the very back of the map. And the map depiction is consistent with the way the present-day photograph "sees" the house.



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Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

The **Park House, 311 W. Elm**, is one of the great gems of Urbana (a “delightful house” according to Lohmann, dating to 1856), but is basically unknown to the public. William Park ran the first steam flour mill in Champaign County, and was a supporter of Abraham Lincoln. This is the only surviving Urbana house with ornate cast iron window hoods such as were fashionable in the East at the time. Although the house is thoroughly documented, the drawing on the Ruger map is one the least informative, showing the back of the house where there are few diagnostic features. But the house is shown in the correct location, with two stories, a 1-story section at the back of the house, and a hipped main roof (but the truncated top shown in the map is not present in 2009 - it may have been altered later like others of this kind). The addition roof is not the same as at present, and the absence of a window on the north wall of the 2-story section cannot be checked because the apparent modification of the addition now covers that part of the wall. On the 1858 Bowman map, which is more to scale than the 1869 map, the footprint of the house matches the 2009 aerial map almost exactly.



Match: excellent

© SH Berlocher 2012



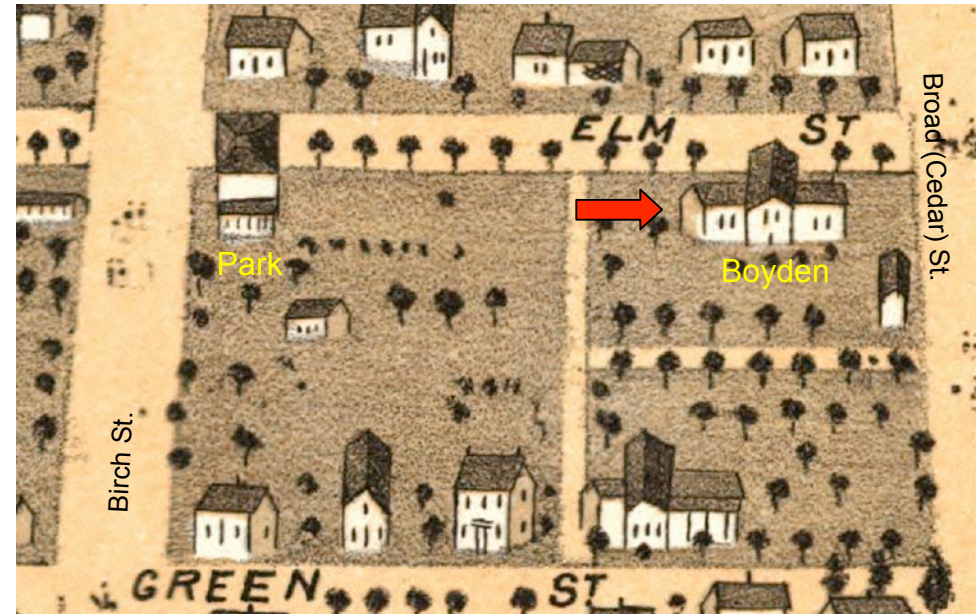
Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

The **Ezekiel Boyden House, 404 W. Illinois**, is not only one of the oldest houses in Urbana (~1856), and the former home of two term mayor Ezekiel Boyden - but is the only surviving home that Abraham Lincoln is documented to have visited in Urbana. As documented in the reference to the right, Lincoln lodged with Mayor Boyden and family the night of Sept. 24, 1858, after his afternoon campaign speech at the old County Fairgrounds. However, the house is not now at its original location at 303 W. Elm (see map at right), but was moved around 1900 to the present 404 W. Illinois location. Because of extensive alterations (e.g. removal of the two wings seen in the drawing), the map drawing does not match many features of the original house, but the two story core with simple gable roof does match the current house. The upstairs back also does have two windows as shown on the map. The house is on the 1858 Bowman map (at the W. Elm St. location).



Reference: Berlocher, S. H., An Illinois Lincoln Site Rediscovered: The Ezekiel Boyden House in Urbana. *Journal of Illinois History*, Vol. 13 (Autumn 2010), pp. 211-222.

Match: excellent

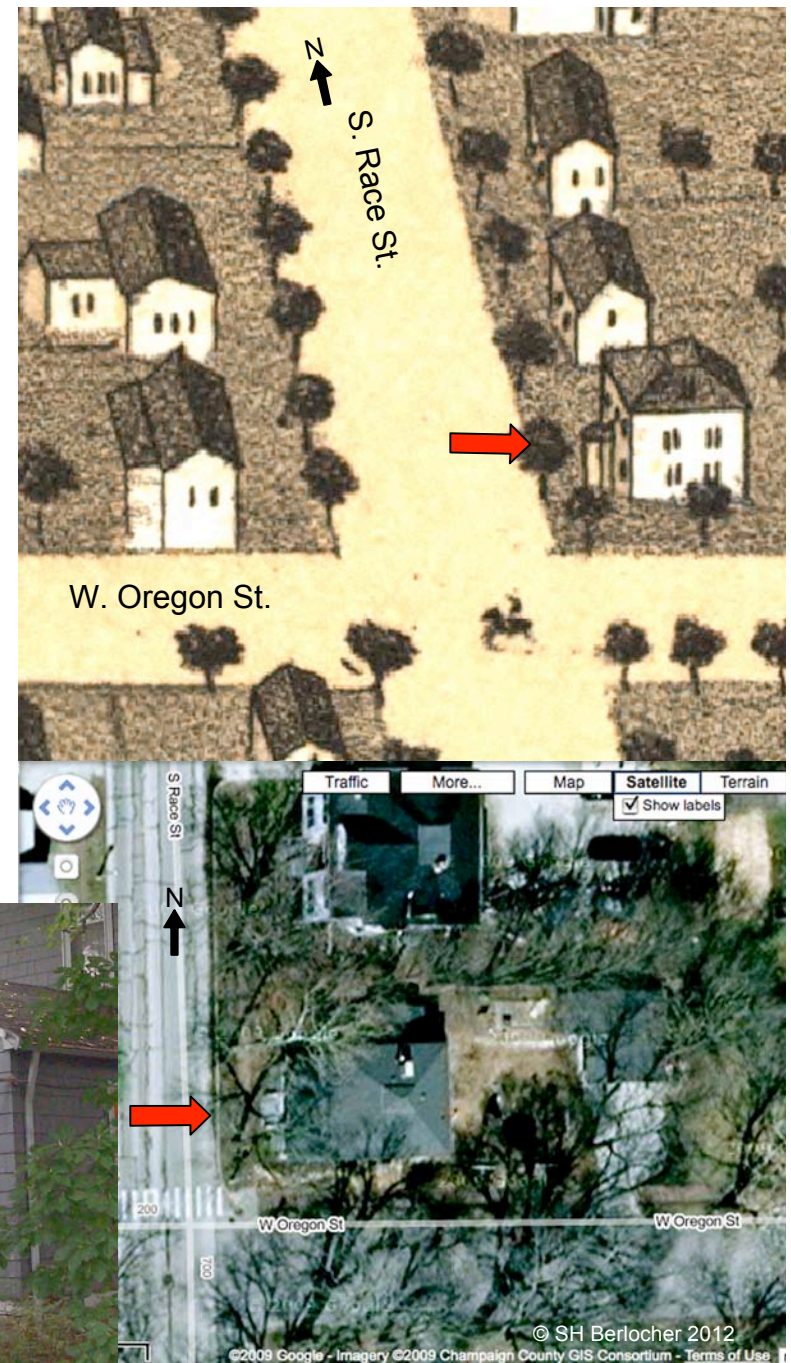


Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

The **W. McWilliams House at 608 S. Race St.** seems to not be well-known: other than the 1869 and 1858 maps, the only other documentation I could find is the 2001 City of Urbana Historic Resources Survey Form, which takes up the history of the McWilliams family and their house starting in 1878. But the house is without doubt the same as drawn on the 1869 map - the square footprint is the same, the window counts on the s. and w. sides match (Ruger sometimes used double lines for foreground single windows, but alternatively this may be a way to imply original windows with more than a single pane), and the truncated pyramidal hipped roof is the same (except that a conspicuous roof “cap” has been added to cover the flat top). The first floor extension room on the n. side has what appears to be verge boards (see inset photo), but these are probably not original. The front porch was replaced around 15 years ago as a result of an automobile colliding with it; however, the 1869 map shows only a very small original porch. A lovely and charming old home.



Match: excellent



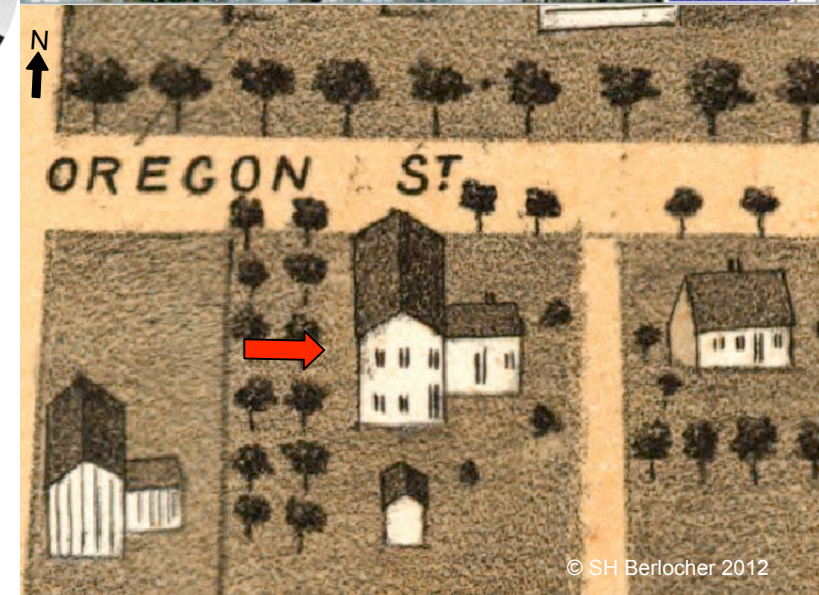
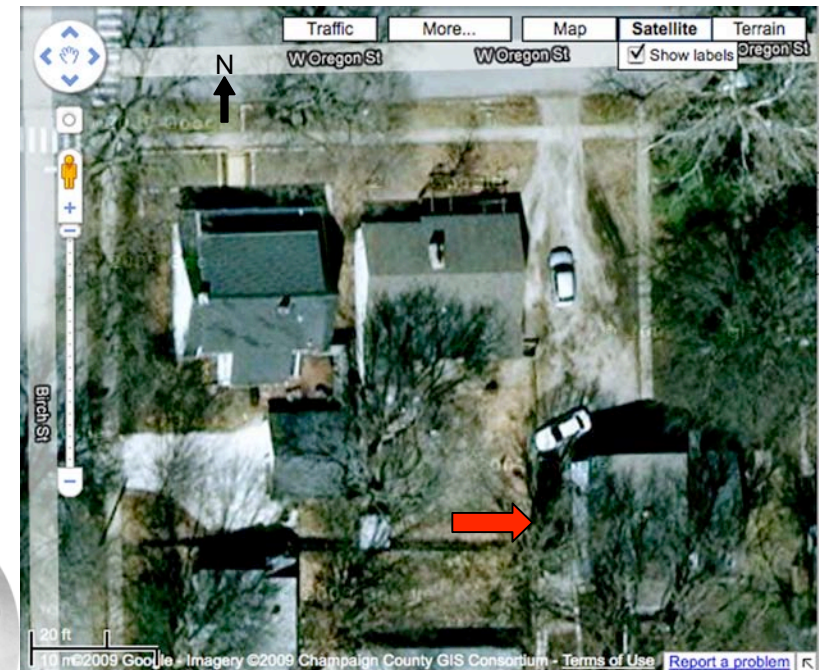
Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

The house at **307 W. Oregon St.** has attracted the attention of local residents for decades, as it is an obviously old house that is also directly across from Leal school. The cornice returns are pure Greek Revival: the porch ornamentation is not, but it was almost certainly added later.

The 1869 drawing is a very good match for the house as it presently exists - it has two stories, a gable roof, and the footprint of house is correct. It is noteworthy that on the back of the house there are 3 windows on the upper floor, and two windows and a door (at the east end) on the lower floor - just as shown in the map. Note again the use of double lines for windows in houses either near the front of the map or with multiple panes (both apply here). A new screened porch obscures the back of the extension to the east, but the extension may have been enlarged, judging from the two-step roof in the front. The house is on the 1858 Bowman map. Lohmann notes that the house is very old, with "interior hewed sills fastened with wooden pins and other evidences of early construction, this could be the oldest house in the county.



Match: excellent



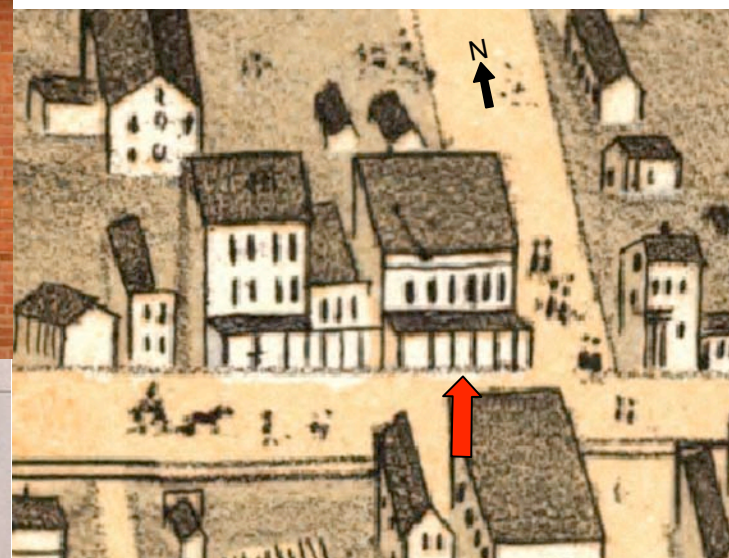
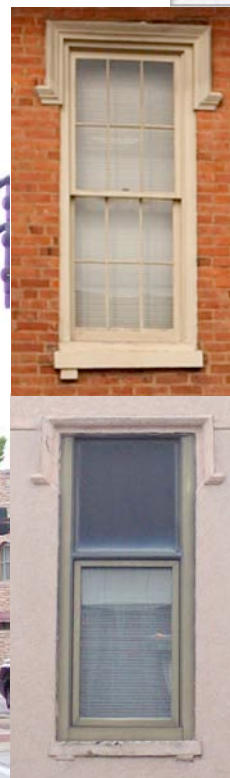
Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

Karen Kummer of the Preservation and Conservation Association, one of the most knowledgeable sources for historic Urbana architecture, first brought my attention to the fact that the buildings at **202 and 204 W. Main St.** were from the 1850s. On the 1858 map 202 is labeled “J. Dunlap” and 204 is “Ingersol & Cutohan”.

The 1869 drawings match the present building in location, footprint, stories, and in the 3 windows on the upstairs front (in 204 - the front of 202 has been altered extensively). The window hoods, which can still be seen on the front of 204 and on the e. side of 202 (although covered in some plaster-like material), are similar in style to those on the Cattle Bank in Champaign, although those on the Main St. buildings seem to be cast iron rather than wood. It is possible that the window hoods on both buildings are replacements.



Match: excellent



Left above: window hood detail on Cattle Bank. Left below: window hood detail on extant e. side of 202 W. Main St. Note similar hoods on the front of 204 W. Main, far left.

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Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

The **G. Wilson House at 401 S. Race St.** attracts the attention of many passers-by, as the front of the house has a very “Civil War” look about it.

The drawing contains many diagnostic features, several of which match the present house well. The house has clearly been added onto several times. The east section is an excellent match, with 2 stories, the same number of windows on the south end in both 1869 and 2009, a north-south gable roof with a cross gable on the east side, and a location very close to Race St. (the house originally had a small porch on the east side, which was removed when Race was widened, but the house appears to have always been close to Race). The footprint of the north and back additions in the drawing seems to match that at present (the vinyl siding section was apparently added later), but the original additions appear to have been 1 story instead of the present 2 stories. I do not know if the present brick north and back additions are new or built up from the 1-story originals. There is a structure on the 1858 Bowman map that is in the same location as the north addition, so the north addition could be the first part of the house built. An unusual feature for Urbana are the “star nuts” (above back upstairs window in photo) that cap the reinforcement bolts. The house is in Lohmann’s “100 Urbana Houses”.



Match: excellent



Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

I owe my initial knowledge of the **J. O. Cunningham House** now at **206 W. California St.** to the students of Leal School, and to my colleague John Cheeseman. I overlooked this house the first time I inspected the 1869 map for this part of Urbana, but John insisted I read a 1989 local oral history project by Leal students - and there it was!

I had missed it because the house was originally at the southeast corner of S. Race and W. California but was moved at some point 3 addresses to the west to the current 206 W. California address. The 1869 map drawing, the aerial map, and the current photo are in substantial agreement. Despite extensive modifications (e.g., picture windows like the one in the upstairs front from were not built in 1869), the basic footprint of the house has remained the same (just rotated 90° clockwise during the move). The windows on the west side of the house in the 1869 drawing agrees with the present house in number but not exact location. The entire front porch was probably added after 1869 and subsequently enclosed.

The house is on the 1858 Bowman map at the Race-California corner location (the Leal project gives an 1854 date), and is labeled "J. O. Cunningham". The is the second house of the renowned Judge Cunningham, who figured so prominently in the early history of Champaign County, among other things being a friend and correspondent of Abraham Lincoln. Although there is no direct documentation, it would seem very likely that Lincoln was a visitor of the Cunninghams.



Match: excellent

Inset: The house image from Google maps was extracted and rotated to match, by eye, the 1869 drawing of the house.



Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

The house at **606 W. Main St.** is an example of the “I-house” designs so common in the Midwest. The extant house is at the correct location to be the house on the 1869 map. The gable roof is correct, the number and location of windows and doors on the south and east sides match perfectly, and the single chimney is as shown in the drawing. The house has clearly been added onto on the north side. No house is on this location on the 1858 Bowman map.

I include this house in the Excellent match category based on the good match of physical features of map and extant house; I have not found any other information on the house.



One of the unique features of this house is the foundation, which is made of what appears to be undressed or at best very roughly worked pieces of limestone (left), as if they came from a local river exposure. Very few structures in Urbana-Champaign have limestone foundations of this kind.

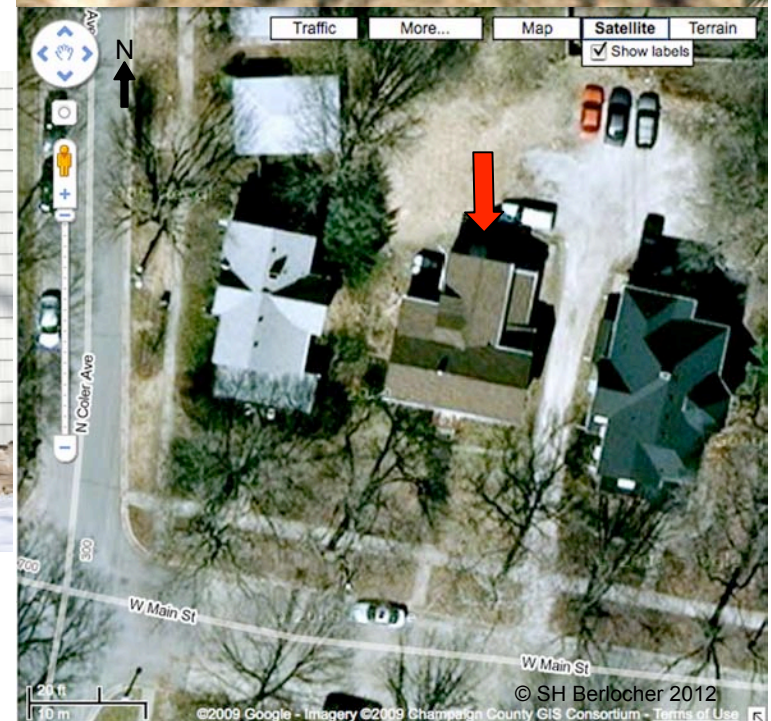
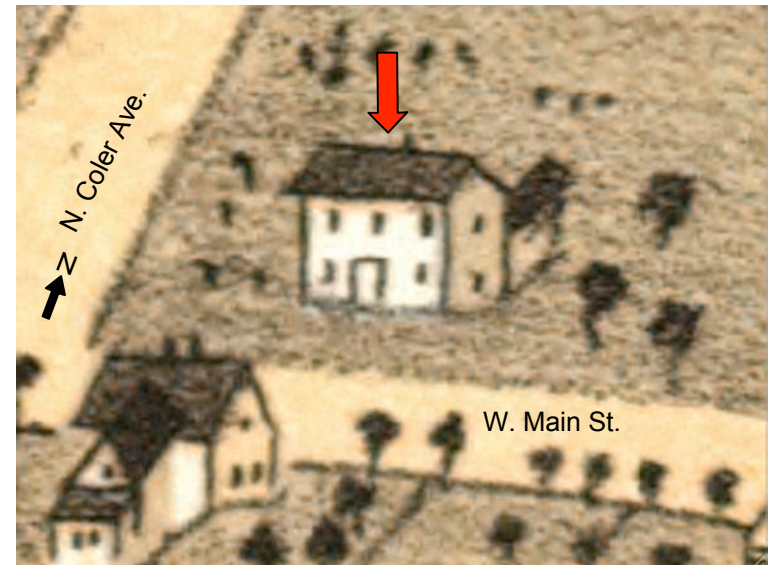


South side of house



The large front door outline shown on the Ruger map seems to be showing the window lights around the door of the house.

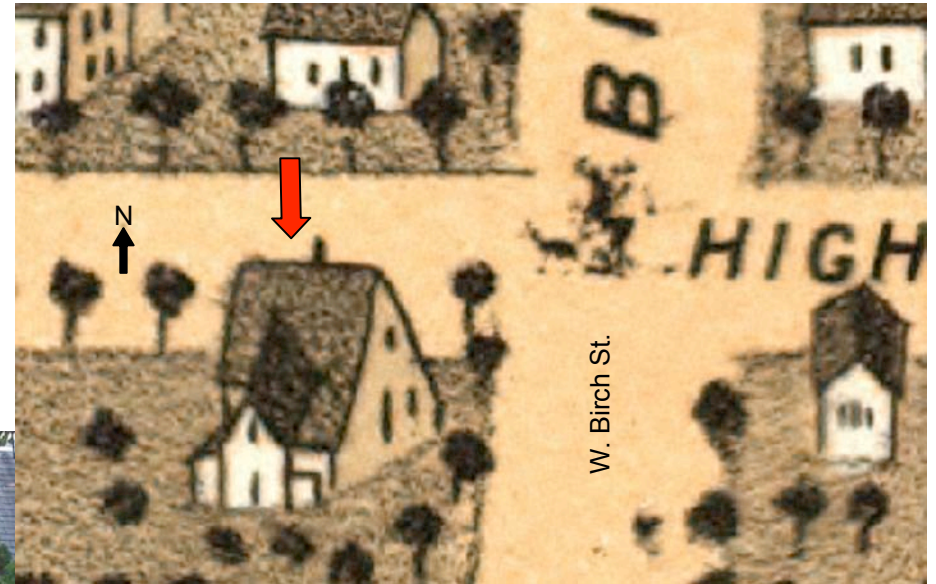
Match: excellent



Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

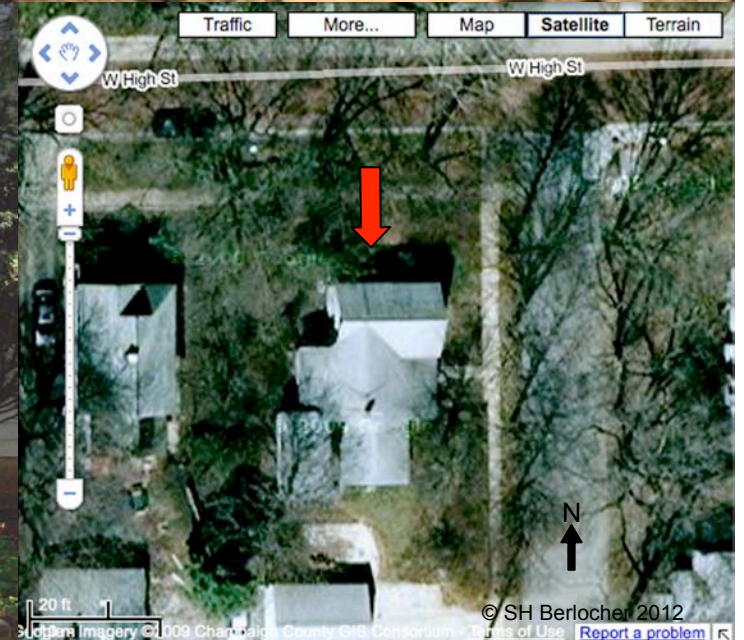
The house at **401 W. High St.** is a gem, as it seems to be relatively little altered from its original construction. The match of the 1869 map and the extant house is excellent, with the exception of the chimney. The roof of the south part of the house, with its double pitch, is almost unique on the 1869 map, and matches the aerial photo and the extant house perfectly. There is a more

recent addition on the back of the house. The house is not on the 1858 Bowman map.



The small front door (suitable for hobbits perhaps) and narrow windows on the north side of house are very consistent with 1860s vernacular architecture.

Match: excellent



Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

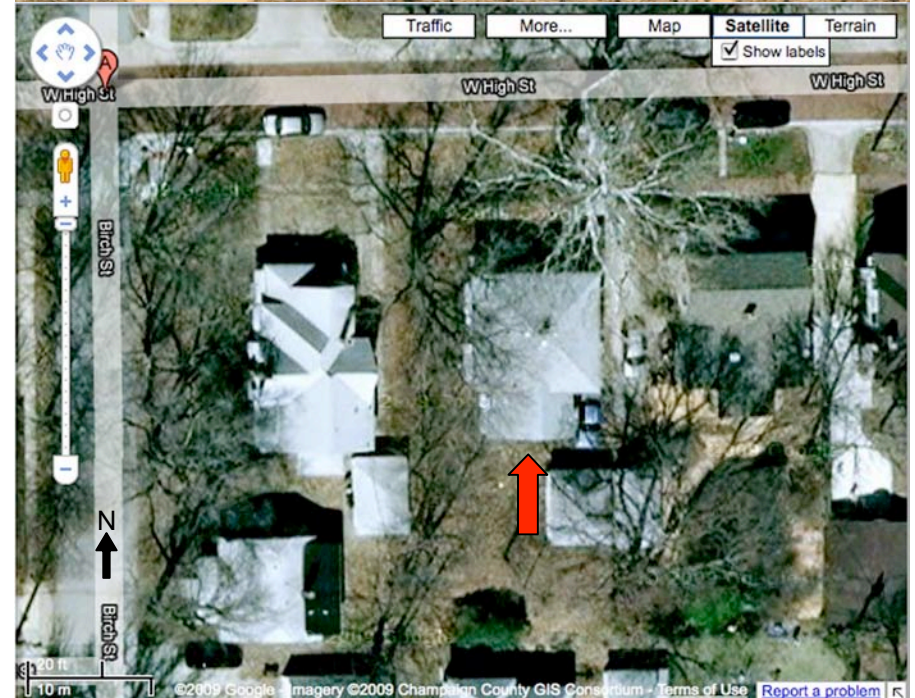
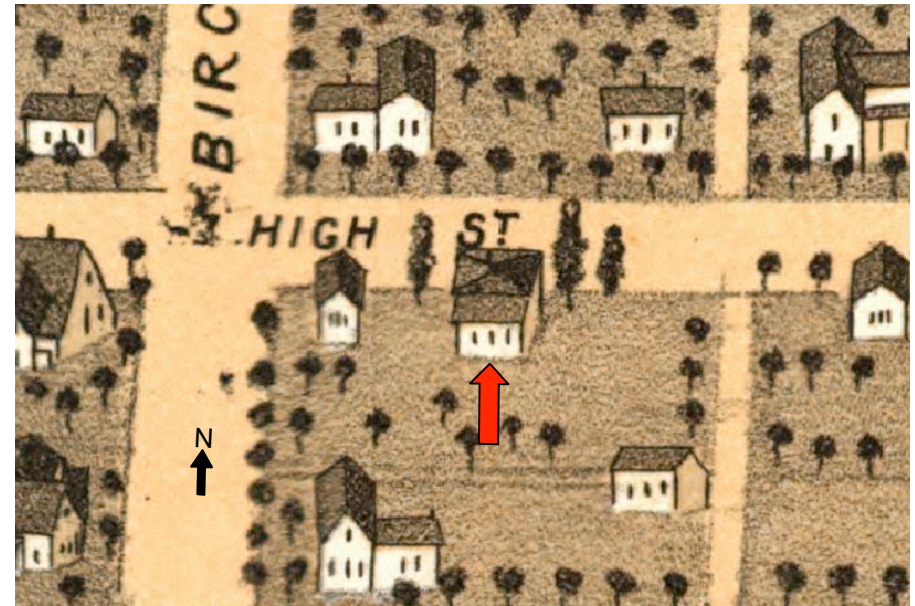
The **house at 309 W. High St.**, like several of the preceding houses, does not have much written historical documentation.

Furthermore, like the Park house, the depiction in the 1869 map is a rear view, and shows few diagnostic features. The house is shown in the correct location, correctly shows a small addition protruding from the back of the main house, and the pyramidal hipped main roof is correctly shown. The roof on the addition room is, however, shown as a shed roof on the map, but is a gable roof now. This may be map error, or the roof may have been rebuilt at some point. In fact, the house seems to have a number of 20th century modifications of the windows and porch, and could pass for an early 20th century “foursquare” design. Lohmann in “100 Urbana Houses” dates the house to 1856, and there is indeed a house of roughly the correct size at this site on the 1858 Bowman map. However, despite Lohmann’s account I have rated it as only a Good match because of the lack of clear 1850s features. If anyone has information please write.



Match: good

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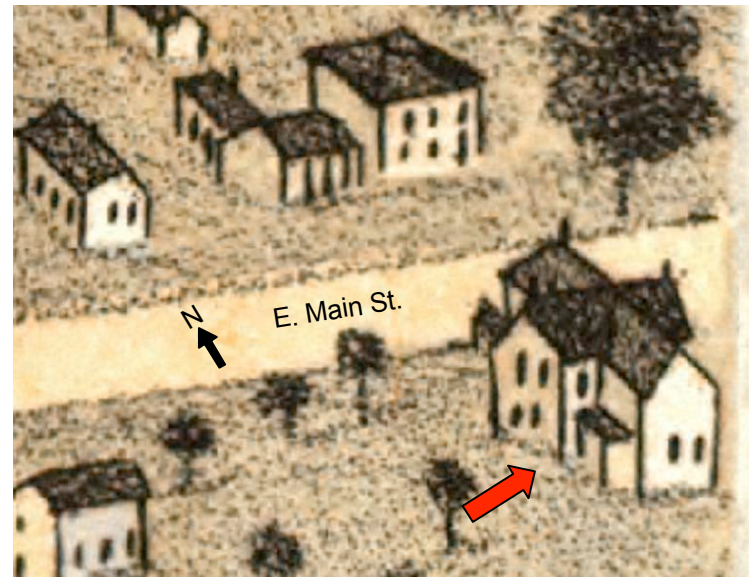


Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

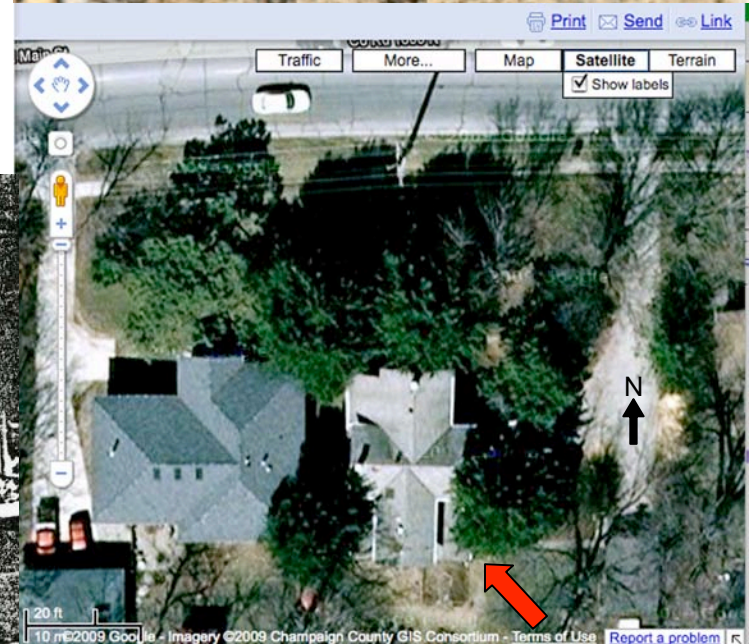
The early history of the **George Webber House, 605 E. Main St**, is confusing, at least to me. Karl Lohmann called it “among the oldest of Urbana homes”, there is a print in Matkovski and Roberts *Urbana* labeling it “circa 1850”, and there is a recurrent story that Lincoln visited the house, which would require it to date at least to 1860. On the other hand, Ilona Matkovski’s excellent research has revealed newspaper stories on its construction in 1870-1871. The house is not on the 1858 Bowman map, which shows only trees east of Vine St. Based on physical features alone, however, the drawing on the 1869 Ruger map matches the current house very well. The location and footprint of the house are correct. The cross-gable roof is almost unique among the 1869 house drawings. Most remarkably, the 4 chimneys appear to be correct, the north, east, and west chimneys at the ridge lines, and the south chimney down from the ridgeline towards the west. However, there is at least one inconsistency, which is that the windows on the west side of the 1869 drawing do not match the current windows. This may be due to alteration, the bane of old house study. There is also difficulty in matching the location precisely on the Ruger map, because there are no lot lines and few other houses to use as landmarks on the map in this area. The house is in Lohmann’s “100 Urbana houses”, but comparison with the photo there suggests that the porch has been drastically reduced or even replaced at some point. It is not clear whether the two columns on the present porch are survivors from the original larger porch. Because of these inconsistencies, I give the house only a “good” match; I would greatly appreciate any information on this lovely old house.

Match: good

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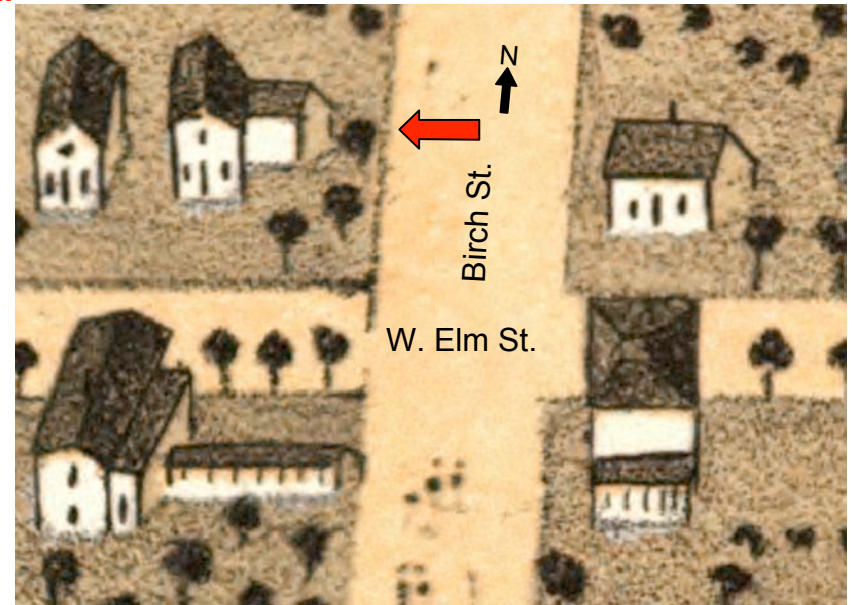


Below: Lohmann photo showing porch on front in 1940s or 1950s.



Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

The **J. C. Sheldon house at 402 W. Elm St.** is stated by Lohmann to date from the 1850s. J. C. Sheldon and his partner Royal Sutton played important parts in the history of early Urbana; among other things, they operated the first brickyard in the area. The extant house generally seems to match the 1869 drawing of the house at the northwest corner of Elm and Birch, but with the extension to the front of the house (perhaps originally a front porch) and the addition in the corner between the north-south section and the east-west “el”, most of the diagnostic features of the front, as shown on the 1869 map, are covered up. The general footprint of the house is correct. The house is on the 1858 Bowman map of Urbana, although the footprint on the 1858 map suggests that only the north-south section (not the “el”) of the house was there at that time. The el on the map drawing seems to be only one story rather than the two of the extant house. The house now at 402 W. Elm is almost certainly the same as the 1850s Sheldon house, but more research would remove any doubts.



Match: good



Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

Discovering the history of the old house at **705 S. Cedar St.** was a very pleasant surprise to me. I had often wondered about the house when I walked my children to Leal School (around the corner from 705. Cedar, on Oregon), and I was disappointed when I found that there was no house at 705 S. Race on the 1869 map.

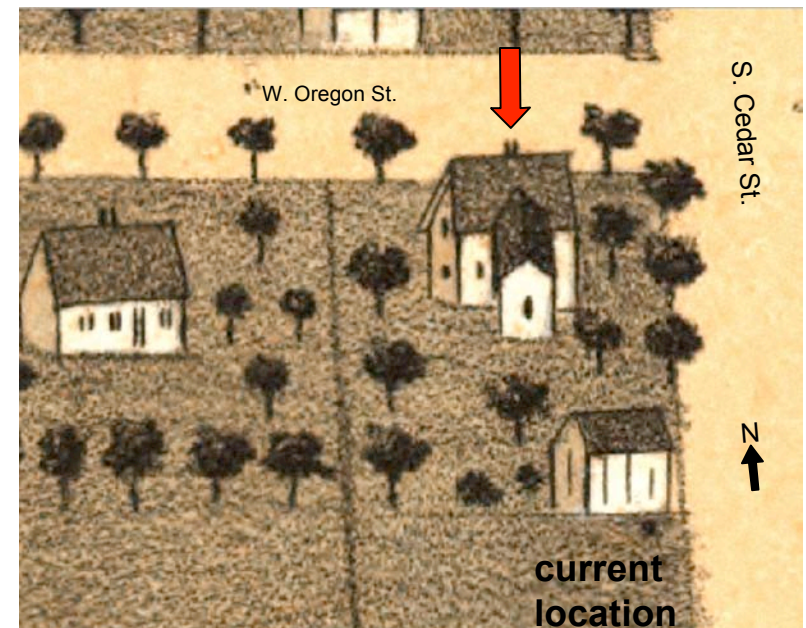
But the mystery was solved when I talked to knowledgeable local residents - it turns out that the house was moved from the southwest corner of Oregon and Cedar to its present location in c. 1900 to make way for a more modern house. And when I compared the extant house (rotated to face east instead of north) with the 1869 drawing, it was clear that there was a fairly good match. The drawing shows the steep pitched gable roof and the chimney centered on the ridge line (it is unfortunate that the more diagnostic front of the house is not shown). The drawing shows only one first floor east side window instead of the two on the extant house, but there may not have been room on the very fore-shortened drawing (remember the tiny size of the original drawings) to draw two windows. The addition at the back of the current house has a

hipped roof, while the 1869 drawing shows a gable roof, which is explained by the fact that the current addition is a replacement of the original. There is a house at the original location on the Bowman map of Urbana, so the house likely dates at least as far back as 1858.



Match: good

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Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

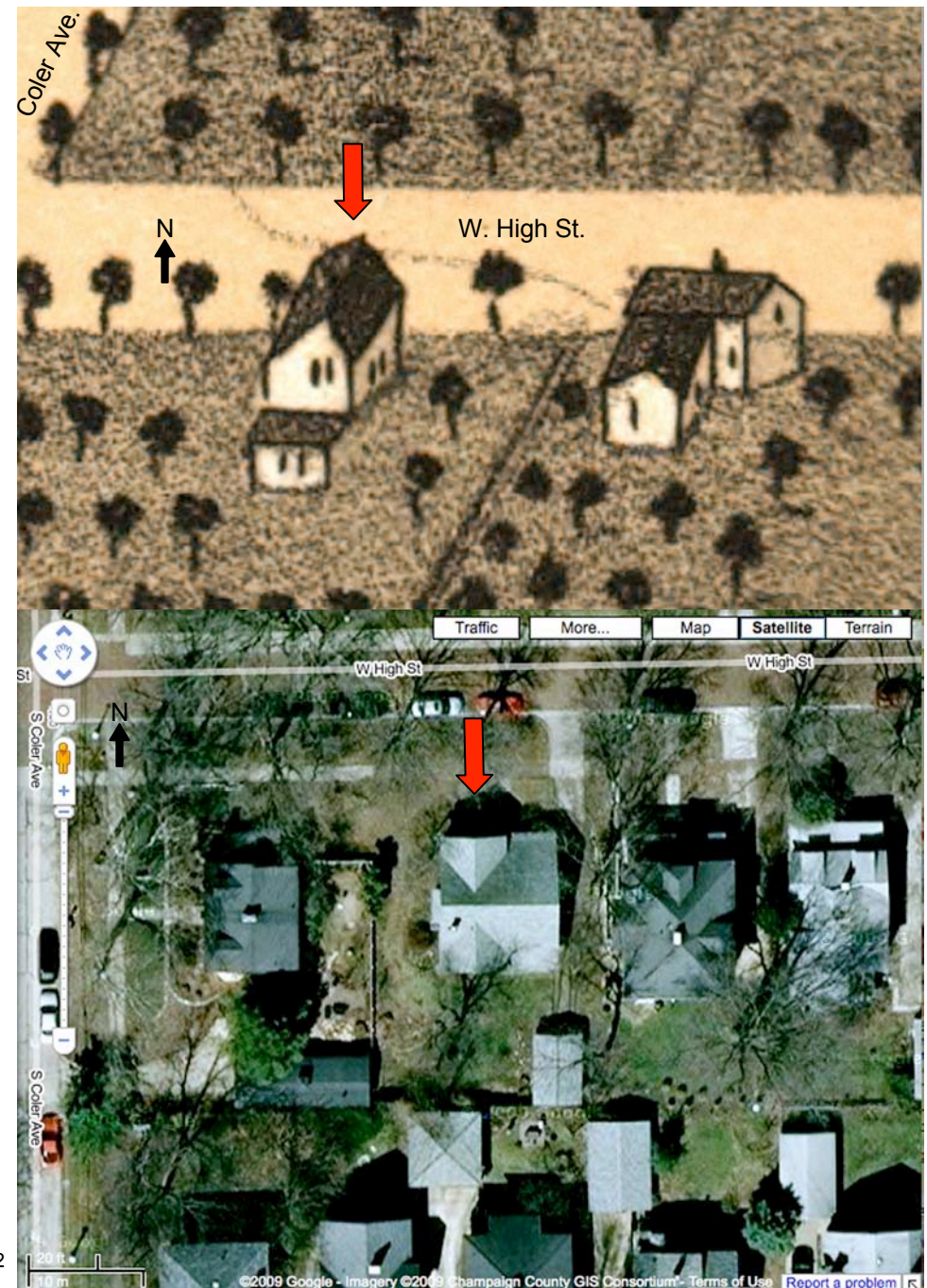
The house at **609 W. High St.** has been extensively extended and modernized. The extant house would be difficult to match with the drawing on the 1869 map, but Lohmann reports that the house is from the 1850s, and in fact there is a house with a footprint matching the north-south portion of the house at the correct location on the 1858 as well as the 1869 Ruger map. Also, the chimney location is correct. However, the foundation brickwork, at least that visible from the sidewalk, does not appear to be from the 1850s.

There is no reason to doubt Lohmann, but I have given the house only a “good” match until more information becomes available.

Match: good



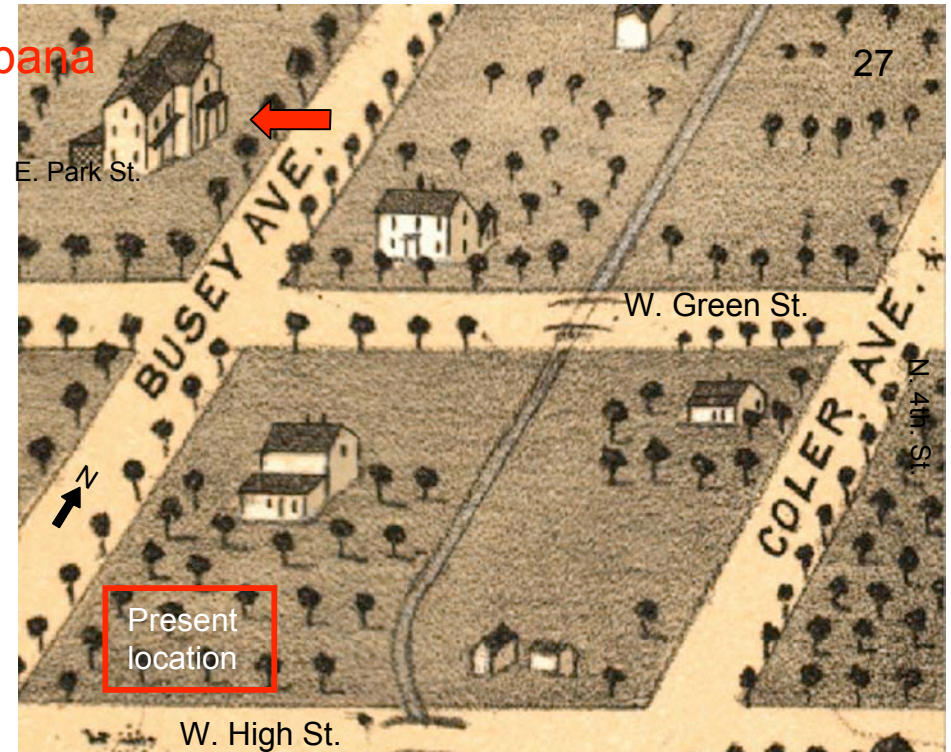
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Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

The **W. B. Webber house** presently at **304 S. Busey Ave** is yet another house that has been moved during its history, in this case from the corner of W. Green and S. Busey in 1898 (Lohmann). The footprint of the extant house and the house in the map, with the gabled room extension on the east side of both floors, is rare in both the 1869 house drawings and in extant Urbana houses. However, the window counts do not match well in the 1869 drawing and the extant house; either 1) Ruger was being uncharacteristically inaccurate, 2) the window locations have been reworked (the current windows are in fact modern replacements), or 3) a different gable-front I-house (such as one further north on S. Busey) is actually the correct match. The house certainly has been much modified, as it has been added to on the east side to accommodate multiple apartments. The house is not on the 1858 Bowman map.

Match: good



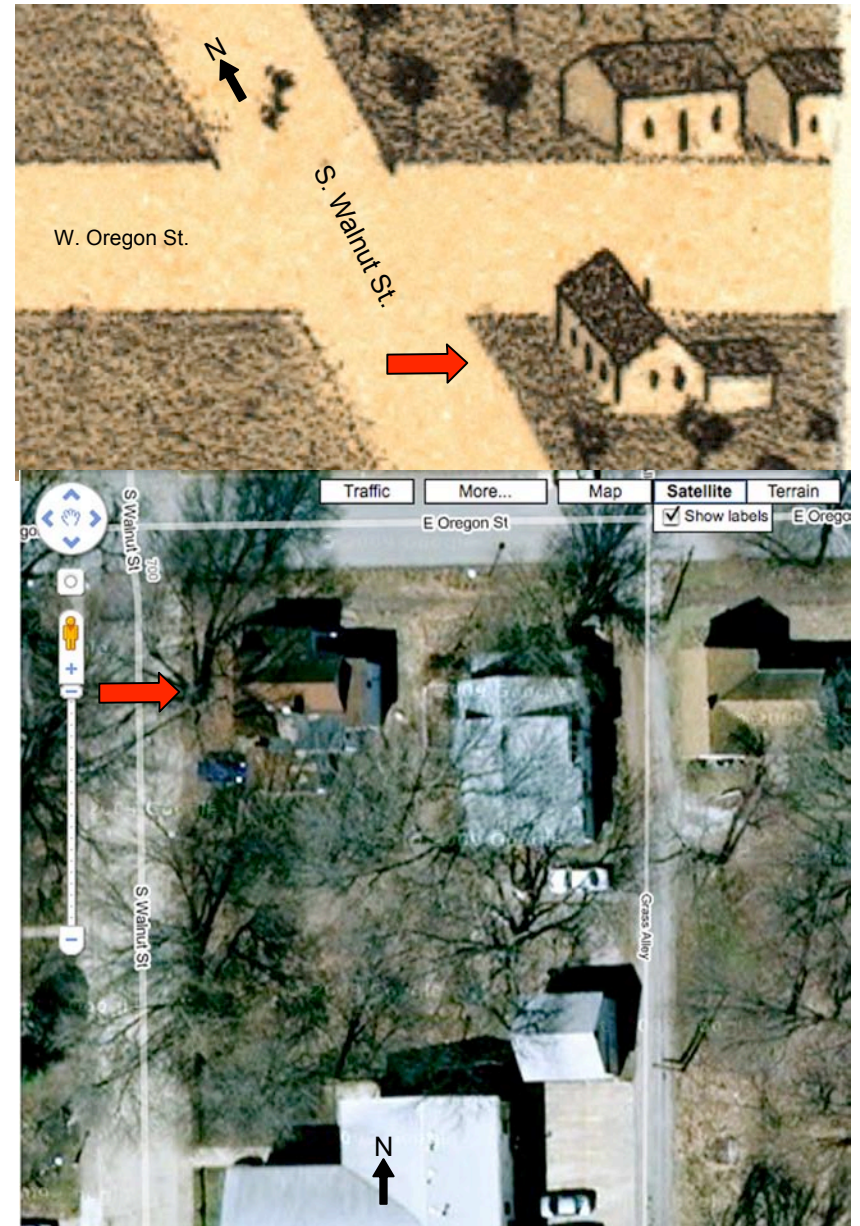
Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

I cannot find any written information on the house at **201 E. Oregon St.**, but there are several features that match well between the 1869 map and the extant house (bearing in mind that this is a “clapboard cabin” of the kind discussed earlier). What appears to be original is the one-story western (fronting on Walnut) part of the house, for which the gable roof axis runs north-south as in the map. The door in the center of the west side of the 1869 drawing has been filled in; the repair can still be seen in the correct position on west side of the extant house. The windows that can be compared do match. The cornice returns are a Greek Revival feature. No houses are shown in this block on the 1858 map of Urbana. The house appears to have been added to several times.

Match: good



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Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

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I became aware of the house at **201 N. Busey Ave** because of a WILL broadcast by Alice Novak about the beautiful c. 1900 arts and crafts house on the southwest corner of W. Main and N. Busey. In the show it was mentioned that an older house had been moved “around the corner” so the new one could be built, and sure enough, there is a good match between the house on the 1869 Ruger map at this location and the house now at the northwest corner of Busey and Stoughton. Both the drawing and the extant house are two stories with a hipped roof. The arched, Italianate door frame in the house (below) is a common feature of 1850-1870s structures. A feature I have seen only once before in Urbana (in photos of the now-raised Sims house) is the unequal upper and lower sash arrangement of the double hung windows in the front (right). The addition on the east side of the house at the original location must have been removed, and the second story porch extension in the front has clearly been added. The house must have been built after 1858 because it is not present on the Bowman map.

Match: good



Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

The house at **306 W. Nevada St.** is a lovely modernized cottage with several extensive additions on the rear. Like 305 W. Nevada across the street, key information has come from the current owner, who has a letter about the history of the house from a earlier 20th century owner. When the earlier owner bought the house in 1950, he was told about the history of the house by old residents on either sides of the house. The letter relates that the house was moved from its original location on Oregon straight south to its current location on Nevada St., without rotating the house (although if so, the door position in the map conflicts with the current door position). A small house at the Oregon location is shown on the 1858 Bowman map of Urbana, and the small, narrow window openings, are consistent with mid-19th century construction. Future research will hopefully cast more light on the history of the house.



Match: good

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Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

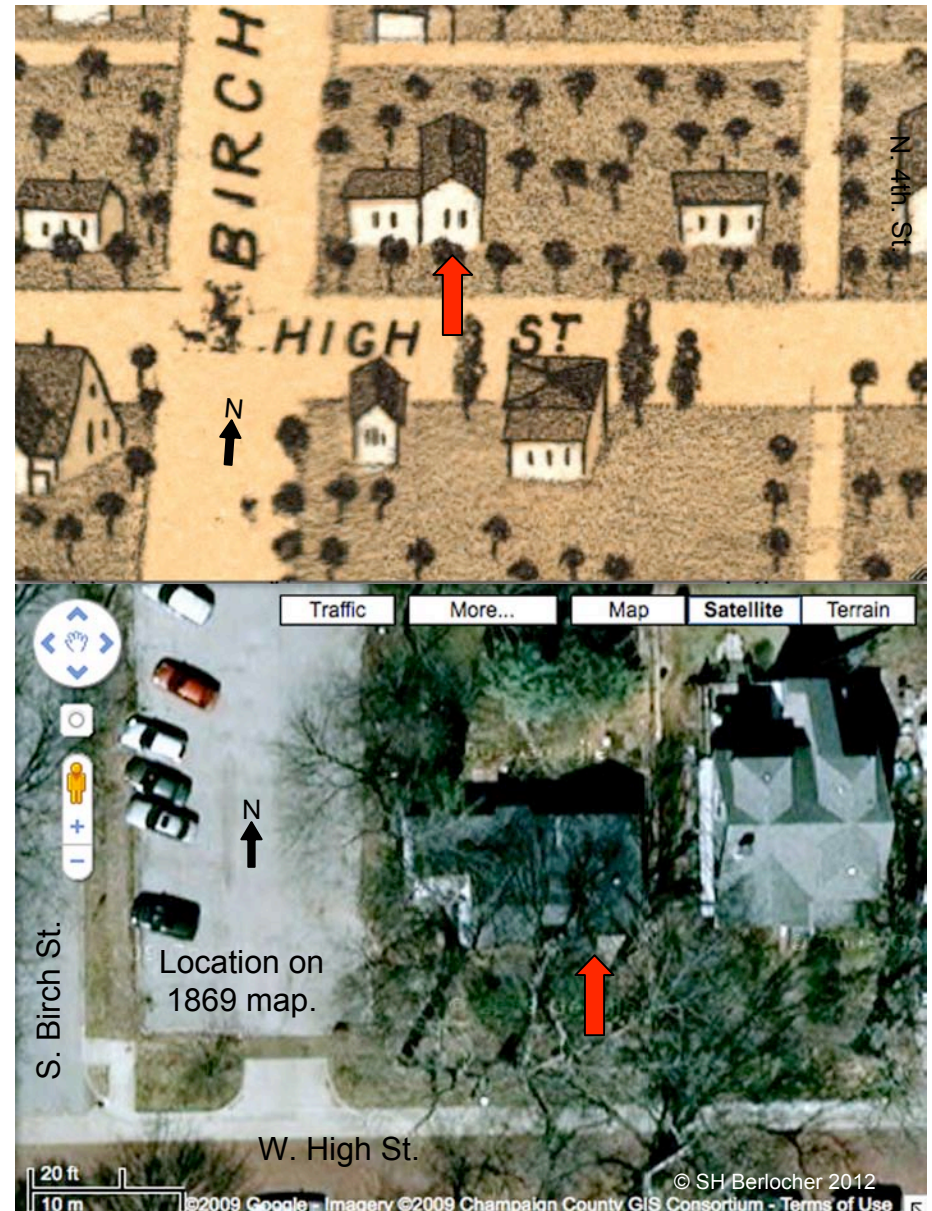
The **Carson house at 310 W. High St.** is problematic. Lohmann states that "...the original portions of the house were constructed in 1850", which would make this the oldest surviving house in Urbana.

The basic footprint of the extant house does agree with the 1869 map, and the lack of agreement on windows, and the 20th century chimney, can easily be explained as the result of the 1936 remodeling of the house (Lohmann 1961). Yet a problem remains: The 1869 map clearly places the house at 312 W. High, on the corner, not at 310 where the present house is located. The 1858 Bowman map would seem to resolve the matter by showing a house with the same footprint as the extant house at 310, thus agreeing with Lohmann and the location of the present house. Unfortunately, the 1858 map labels the house "J. P. Cunningham", a name not mentioned in Lohmann's list of the occupants of the house. There is thus at least one inconsistency among the historical records; Ruger may have erred in locating the house on the 312 W. High corner site, or Lohmann is incorrect. Although my admiration for Lohmann knows no bounds, until more information is obtained I must give the house a low match.

Match: suggestive



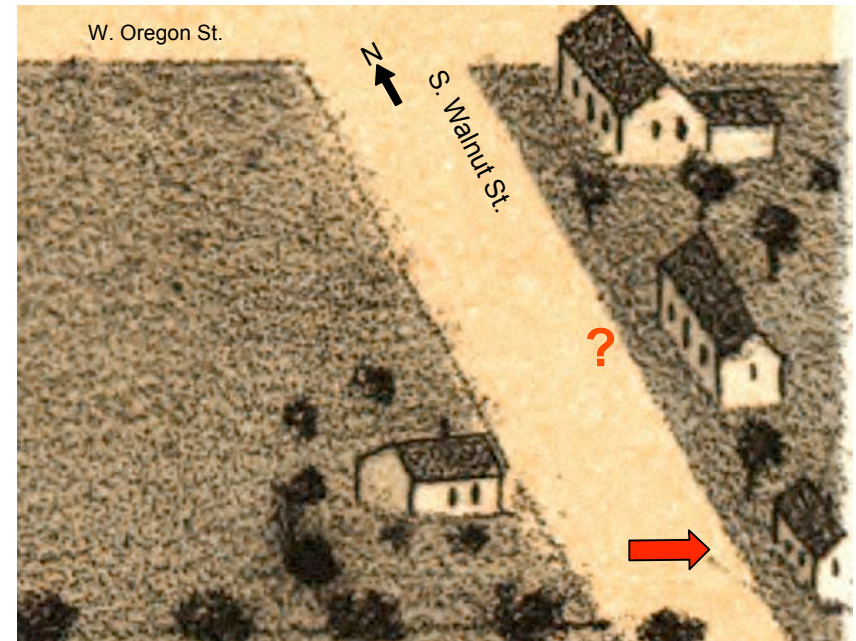
Note: The footprint of the extant house is obscured by tree limbs in the Google map image below, but is in fact the same as shown in the Ruger map.



Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

The house at **708 S. Walnut St.** is a guess, but the general position on the block and similar appearance in the 1869 map and extant house are suggestive. What appears to be original is the western (fronting on Walnut) part of the house, for which the roof axis runs north-south; additions to the east and southeast are much larger than the original house. One feature that does not match is that the extant house has a center door flanked by a window on each side, while the drawing has only two windows shown. However, the drawing is right on the very edge of the map and only part of the house is shown. There is some possibility that the extant house matches the house with the question mark on the map, but the position on the block seems to be too far north on the map for this. No houses are shown in this block on the 1858 map of Urbana.

Match: suggestive

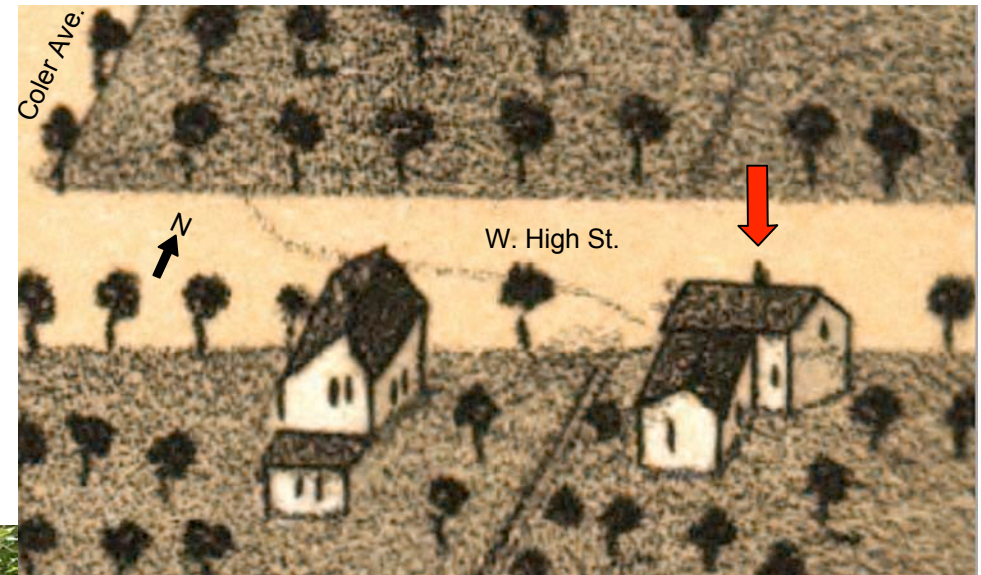


Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

The house at **605 W. High St.** seems to have been less extensively altered than the house at 609 W. High, two houses west. However, the front of the house, which would be quite diagnostic, is unfortunately not shown in the 1869 map. There is no house at this location on the 1858 map (in fact the only house on the entire block in the 1858 map is at 609 W. High). The chimney location does match in the extant house and 1869 map drawing.

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Match: suggestive



Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

The house at **103 S. Coler Ave.** is obviously old, with the north section (facing Springfield) being a classic “I-house” of the kind built in the Midwest throughout most of the 19th century. The north section of the extant house seems to match the 1869 drawing of the house at the southwest corner of Springfield and Coler - there are two windows on the upper s. side of the drawing that presumably would have had matches on the north side as shown in the photo of the extant building. The chimney location seems to match, roughly. The house is not on the 1858 Bowman map.

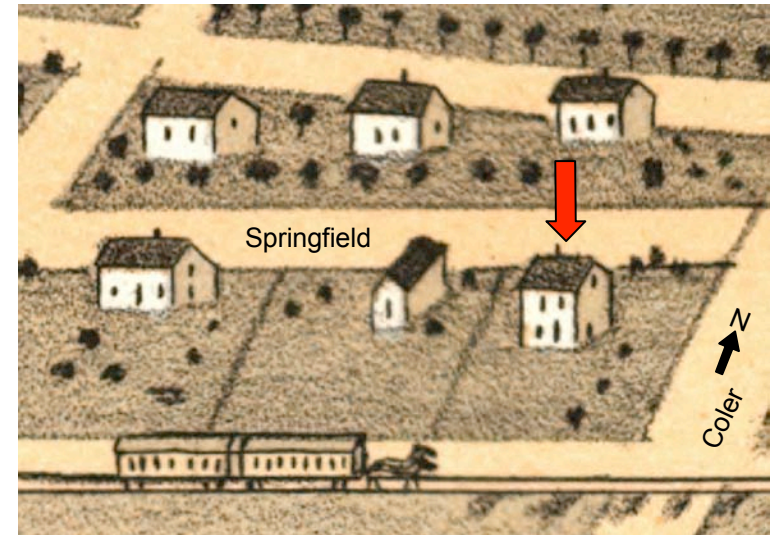
However, the extant house has obviously either been enlarged on the south side, or has been combined with another house moved to the location. The mixture of roof styles and window shapes strongly suggests the latter explanation. If so, then the original location of the “added” house is a mystery.

An interesting feature is that at least part of the north part of the house appears (at least as viewed from the sidewalk) to be on a foundation of undressed limestone, like the house at 606 W. Main St.

Match: suggestive



Note the horse-drawn trolley line that connected Champaign and Urbana; it crossed Boneyard Creek in Champaign on a bridge that is still there.



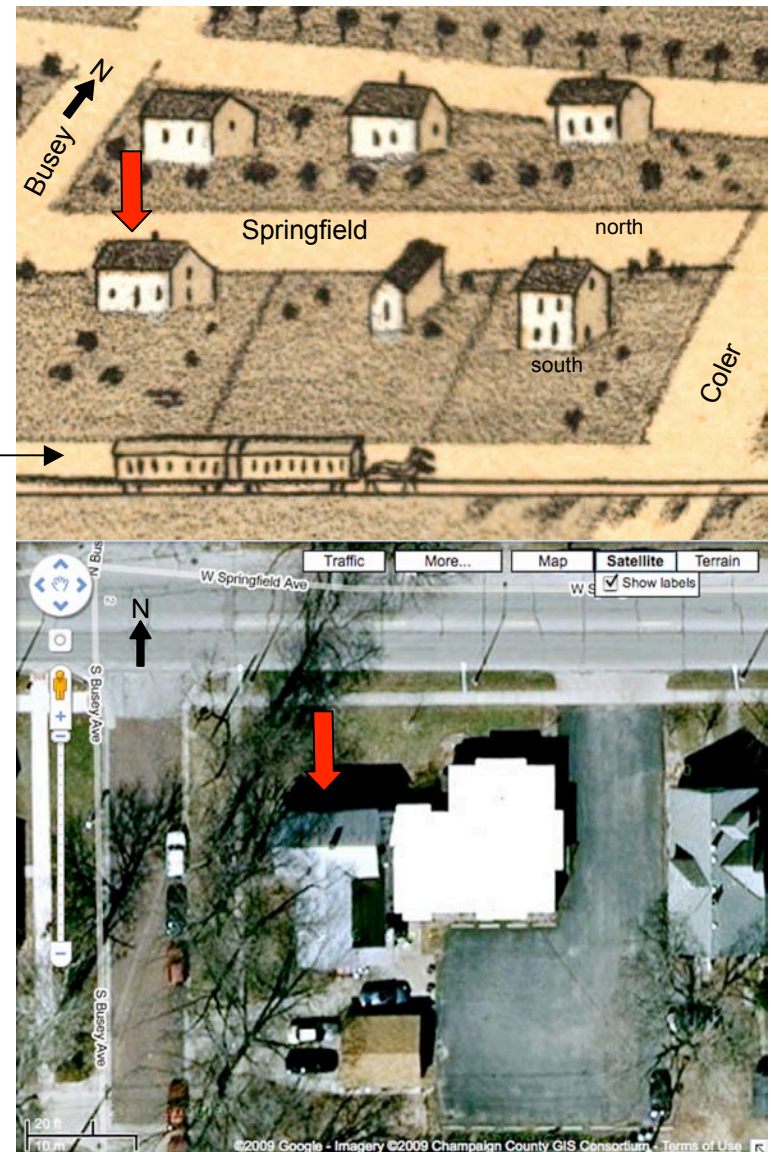
Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

The house at **713 W. Springfield Ave.** is another of the “I-house” designs so common in the Midwest. The extant house is at the approximate location to be the house on the 1869 map. The e. side of the drawing seems to indicate that the house has 2 stories, and the single window upstairs and downstairs is a match. However, the n. side of the drawing seems to have only one story - or maybe no windows upstairs (and this could also just be a drawing error). The difficulty in making a better match lies in the fact that the extant house is attached to an office building on the e. side, and there is an apparent addition (an “el”) on the s. side, so important details of the drawing cannot be tested. No house is on this site on the 1858 Bowman map.



Note the horse-drawn trolley line - 19th century “light rail” - that connected Champaign and Urbana; it crossed Boneyard Creek in Champaign on a bridge that is still there.

Match: suggestive



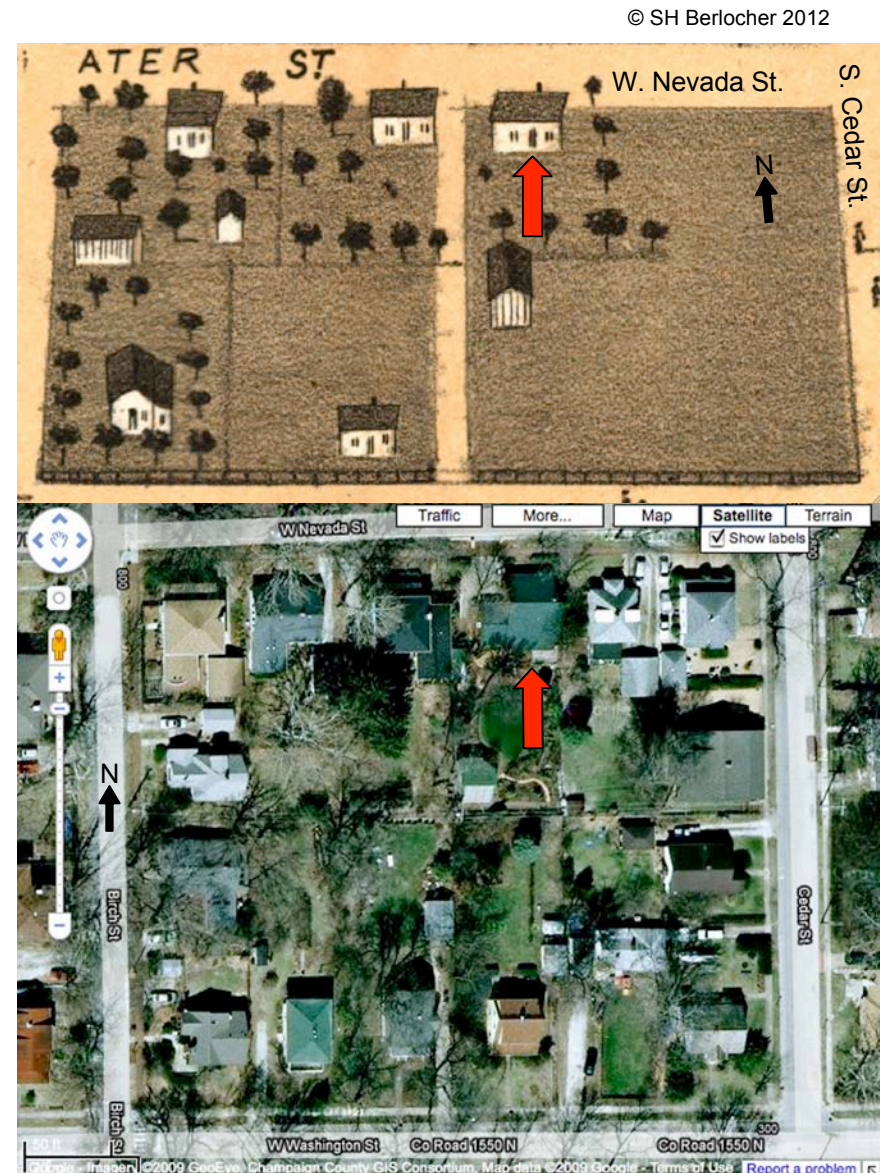
Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

The house at **305 W. Nevada St.** has been very extensively modernized, and I might not have included it except for the fact that the owner has verified from interior construction features that it is, in fact, very old, perhaps dating to the mid-19th century. Some exterior features, such as the small, narrow window openings, are also consistent mid-19th century construction.

No structure is shown at this site on the 1858 Bowman map of Urbana-Champaign.

The “suggestive” match reflects only the lack of supporting documentation, which can perhaps be rectified with more research.

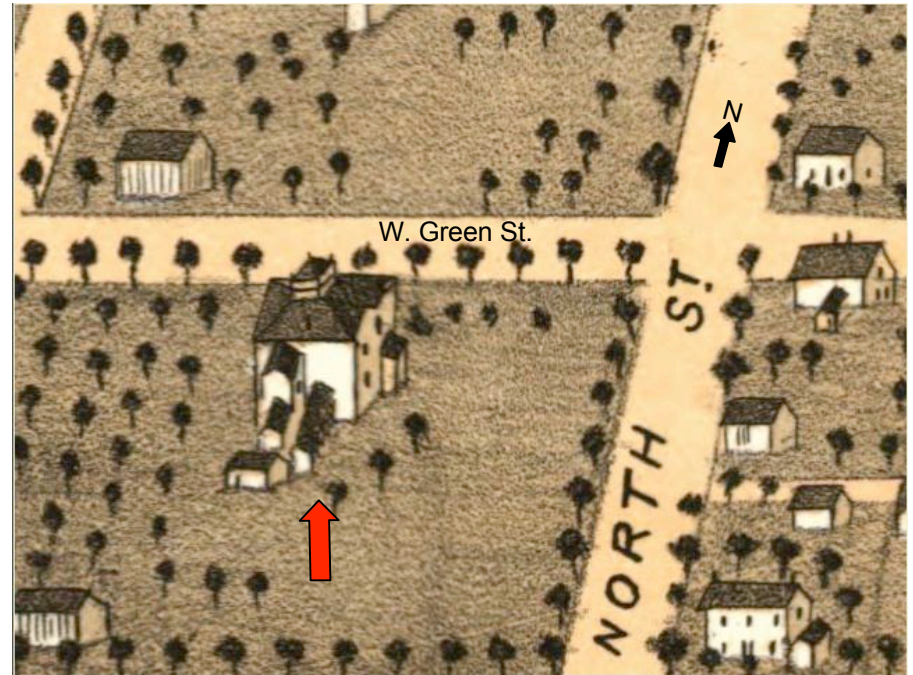
Match: suggestive



Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

This match is, admittedly, something of a guess, a guess that must be verified by further research on the house. But the grand house now at **409 W. California** does share some features with the 1869 map depiction of a house on the south side of W. Green St. between North St. (now McCullough) and Coler. Both houses are two story, of the same square shape, both have a roof gable on the front (although the image on the drawing is not completely clear, and also requires the assumption that the house originally fronted on North St, rather than Green), and both have a pyramidal hipped roof. Finally, the extant house has a flat area on the truncated hipped roof where a cupola of the kind shown on the drawing might originally have gone.

Match: suggestive



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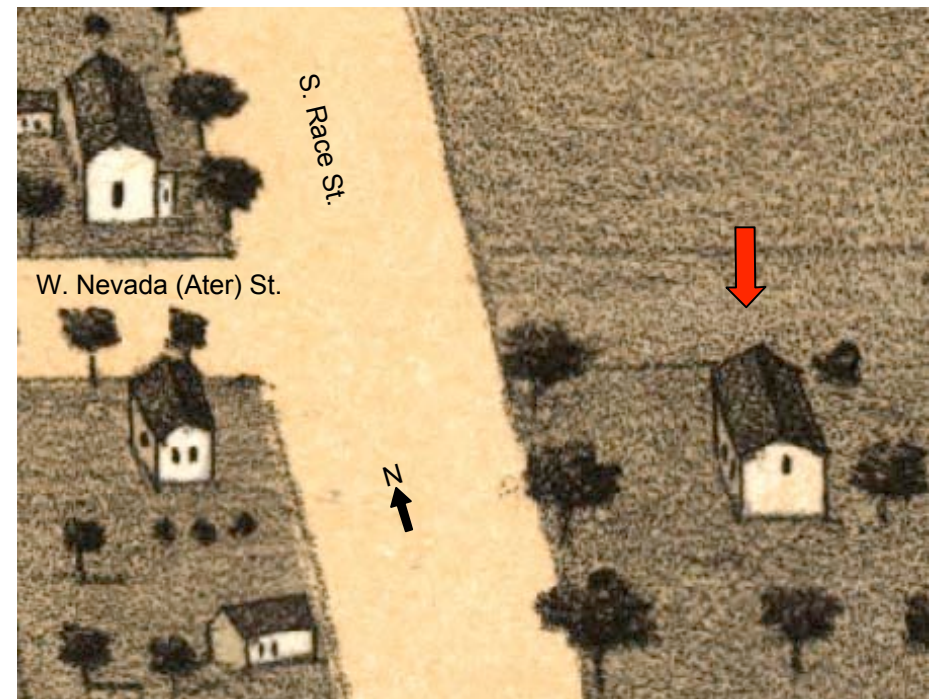
Urbana 2011, Champaign County GIS Consortium, 2011 Google, Terms of Use Report a problem

Finding all surviving pre-1869 buildings in Urbana

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This house at **802 S. Race St.** should perhaps be listed as a “barely suggestive match”, because the 1869 drawing shows very few diagnostic features. Moreover, it is not clear whether a one story or two story house is being drawn. While the south end (the side shown best) shows only one window, suggesting a single story, the window is placed quite high, suggesting that it is an upper story window in a two story house. The west side in the drawing is at such an oblique angle that there was probably not room for the lithographic pencil to make more than two marks to indicate windows/doors; there are obviously two windows and a door on the first floor of the extant house. The placement on the block and orientation of the single gable roof do agree. The house is not on the 1858 Bowman map..

Match: suggestive



Three special cases (1): The Greek Revival Cottage

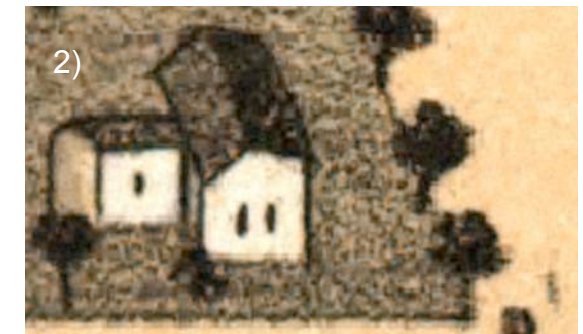
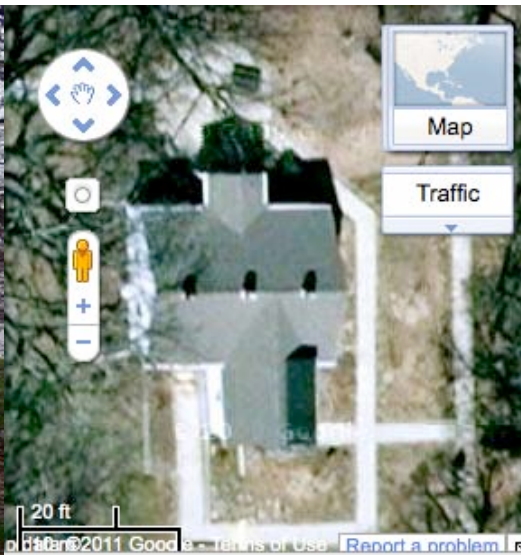
The **Greek Revival Cottage** (or Workman's Cottage) is in the National Historic Register as a rare local example of Greek Revival style. This lovely house now resides in Leal Park on University Ave, and houses Urbana Park district offices. The house was moved in 1978 from 1205 W. Springfield Ave, where it had been for many years, but it is unclear if the house was built on Springfield (there is no house at the location on the 1858 map, and the Ruger map does not include the area), or moved. It has been suggested that the house may originally have been built near downtown and moved out to Springfield (see 206 W. California or 404 W. Illinois for examples of this) during the late 19th century. I have tried to find possible matches in the 1869 Ruger map, but none of them are perfect, and there are other possible matches. None of the houses at the right are at their 1869 sites now.

- 1) The house at the NW corner of Market and California correctly shows the offset of the el to the left (as viewed from the front) of the house, the window count on the main house is correct, and the window count on the el is correct if one window is meant to be on the back of the main house; there is even a hint of a correct double window. There is no portico (the "porch" on the front), but porches were often not drawn.
- 2) The house at the NW corner of Oregon and Market has the correct number of windows in the main house, and the correct number of the el (there was probably no room to draw the window on the back of the main part). But the el is incorrectly centered on the main part, and there is no portico.
- 3) The house one lot south of the SW corner of Oregon and Market has too many windows on the el, and no porch. The way the house is drawn leaves the centering of the el unclear. No portico.
- 4) The house on the NE corner of Illinois has 1 instead of 2 windows on the main part and 2 instead of 1 window on the el, and the el is centered, but it is the only drawing showing what appears to be a portico.

Maybe someone out there has some information?



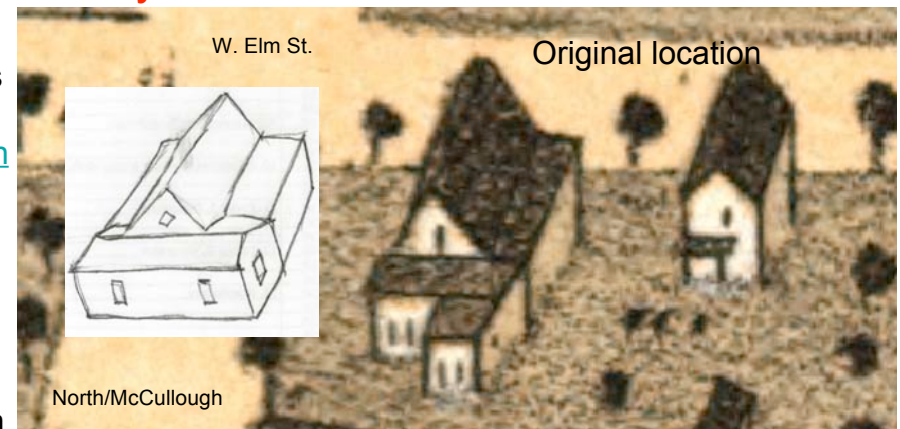
<http://pacacc.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/greekrevivalhouse.jpg>



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Three special cases (2): The Gothic Revival /S. J. Toy house

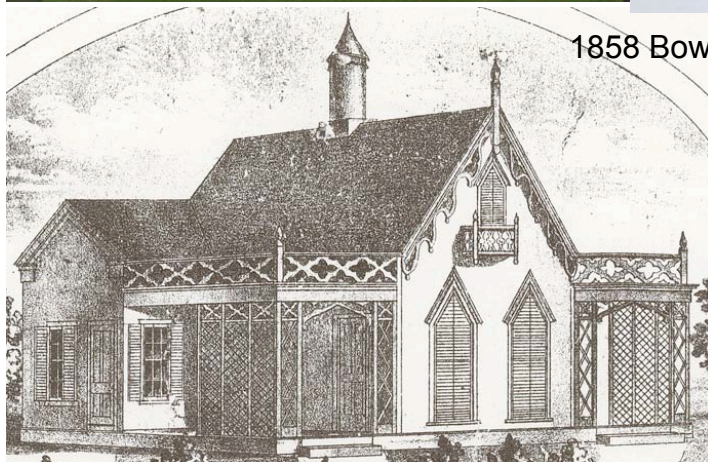
The **Gothic Revival Cottage (108 N. Webber St.)** has Urbana Local Landmark status, and is the only Gothic house in the area retaining its original wooden “verge-boards” (or “barge-boards”) on the gable ends (http://www.ci.urbana.il.us/urbana/community_development/planning/historic_preservation/gothic_nomination.htm). However, as first discovered by Ilona Matkovski, it is actually the S. J. Toy house, originally at Elm and McCullough). The house clearly matches the illustration and footprint of the house in the 1858 Bowman map (below). It also matches the 1869 Ruger drawing at the original Elm and North/McCullough location very well, when the perspective of the drawing is accounted for. To show this, I have inserted a pencil sketch of the extant house from the same imaginary point of view as Ruger -



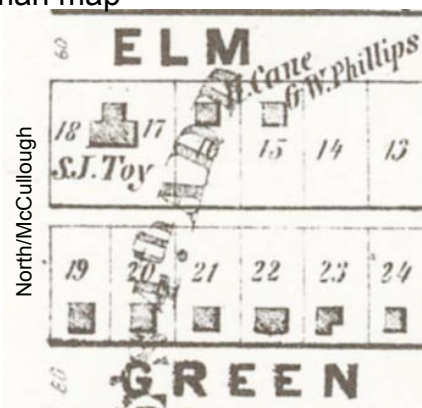
Extant front



Extant rear



1858 Bowman map



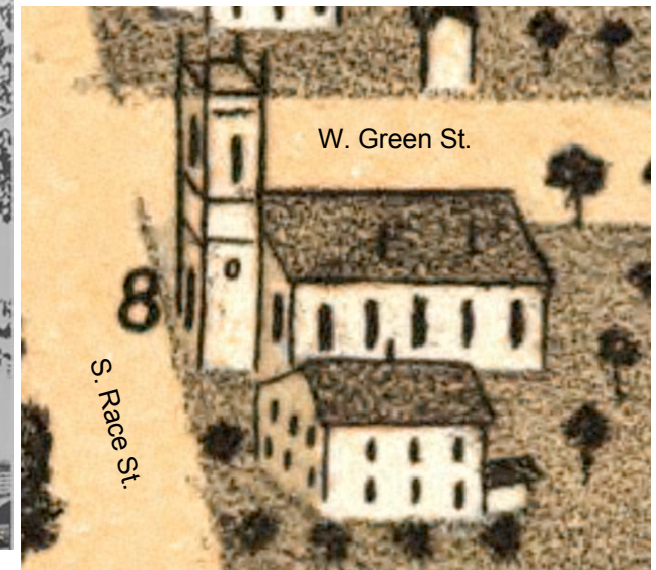
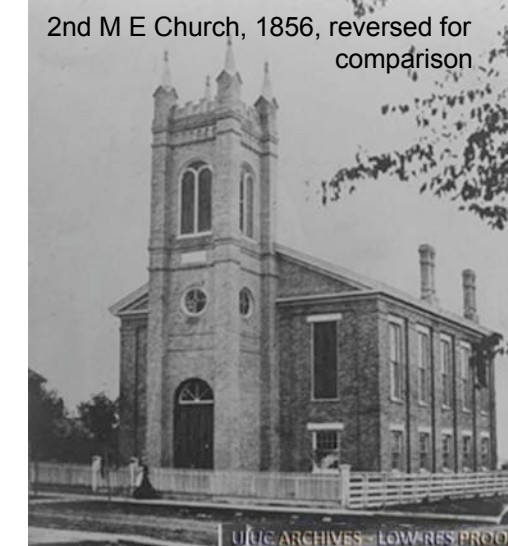
the two drawings agree quite well, considering that the Ruger drawing is tiny. There is a removed window on the lower south rear of the house, and of course the lower front windows have been replaced. (Close inspection reveals reworking of the siding at these locations. Also note that I made a mistake in drawing the rear windows, so we can forgive Ruger his few mistakes!).

Not only are the verge-boards original, but the rear chimney cover (does not show well in the photo) looks somewhat like the metal contraption shown on the center chimney in the 1858 drawing.



Three special cases (3): 310 W. Washington

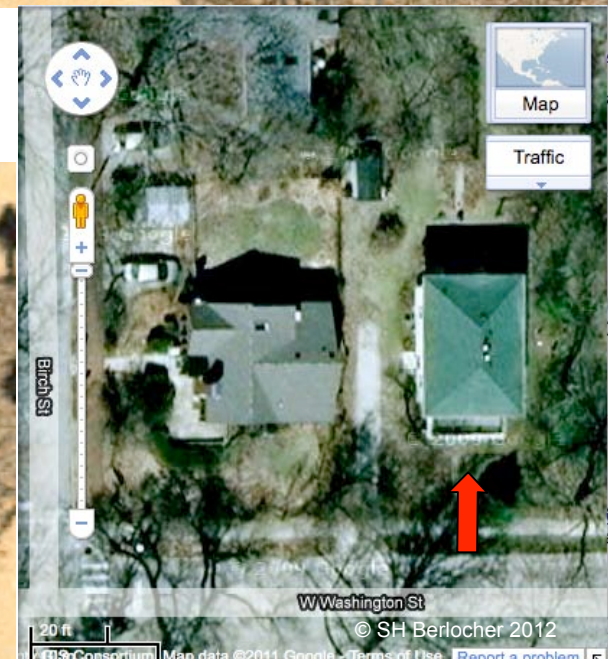
The old house at **310 W. Washington** has been the focus of a great Abraham Lincoln story for decades - I first heard it when I moved into the neighborhood in 1986. As related by Lohmann, all the hotel rooms were filled one night, and Lincoln stayed in the parsonage of the Methodist Episcopal Church on Race St. Unfortunately, documenting this has been very difficult. On the 1869 map the building adjacent to the M. E. Church (where one would expect a parsonage to be) is clearly not the extant house. Even allowing for the occasional error in the drawings, the width/length proportions are different, the 3 equally spaced windows on the side of the drawing are clearly different from the windows on the house - and most significantly, the extant house has a hipped roof, unlike the simple gable roof of the drawing. Note that the details on the 2nd M. E. Church in the 1856 photo and the drawing are remarkably similar; this implies equivalent accuracy of the adjacent structure.



310 W Washington



A possible map match for 310 W. Washington is the house formerly on the SW corner of Busey and Green, which shares the uncommon hipped roof.



Other possible Civil War era Urbana houses that may have been moved (1)

If you have any information on these houses, please let me know. All of them are old, although many are probably not pre-1869. But because so many old Urbana houses have been moved, and because it is often difficult to date houses exactly, some of these houses *may* have been on the 1869 map originally, but at a different location. They may also have been in existence but outside map boundaries.



105 N Lynn St. Old, probably local brick.



902 E Main. Truncated hipped roof.



201 N McCullough St. Original porch brackets?



401 S Lynn. Lovely Italianate windows.



104 S McCullough. Originally a stable.



608 E High. A tiny gable-front house.

Other possible Civil War era Urbana houses that may have been moved (2)

If you have any information on these houses, please let me know. All of them are old, although many are probably not pre-1869. But because so many old Urbana houses have been moved, and because it is often difficult to date houses exactly, some of these houses *may* have been on the 1869 map originally, but at a different location. They may also have been in existence but outside map boundaries.



704 W Illinois St. A striking old house with pilasters (photographed during repairs).



802 E California. A classic gable-front I-house.



304 S Maple. Italianate door - original?



404 S Maple. Another cozy little cabin, with porch trim.

A bunch of Gothics! (more possible Civil War era Urbana houses) (3)

If you have any information on these Gothic Revival houses, please let me know. All of them are old, although many are probably not pre-1869. But because so many old Urbana houses have been moved, and because it is often difficult to date houses exactly, some of these houses *may* have been on the 1869 map originally but at a different location. They may also have been in existence but outside map boundaries.



306 S Maple, East Urbana



306 E California, East Urbana.
Remnants of verge-boards.



103 S Cottage Grove, East Urbana

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607 E California, East Urbana



312 W Illinois, West Urbana

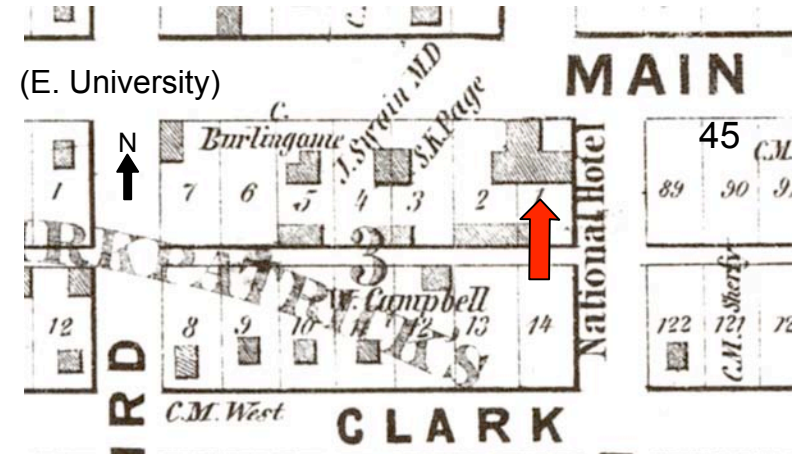


511 W California, West Urbana

A word about Champaign... and about mystery

I have focused on Urbana simply because I live there - I walk to work past many of these houses every day - but also because I just do not have the time to study Champaign at this point in my life! But Champaign also has significant Civil War era houses, and I hope someone will work on them.

I want to close with a bit about the mystery of old houses. If you try it, you may find that local history is one of those engaging things that just draws you in. It's sort of like being a TV CSI, but with real cases. For example, this old Champaign structure at **408 E. Church** has intrigued me for some time. The Italianate windows and brackets under the eaves are a clear sign of 1850s-1860s construction. But I have so far found no historical information on the house, and there is no structure at this location on the 1858 or 1869 maps. But what *is* close to 408 E. Church, on both maps, is the old National House hotel. Although a newer building is at the hotel site now, 408 E. Church may be a moved, surviving fragment of the original. Abraham Lincoln reputedly stopped often at the hotel for a drink from the well behind the hotel when traveling between Urbana and Champaign, so he may have been in this very building.



Most likely not... this will probably turn out to be some other old building, perhaps an Italianate building built later than is typical. But how much fun to find out... the ghosts of our past are everywhere, waiting for us to visit them.

