

The Irvington Historical Society Newsletter

JANUARY 2012

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

Message from the President

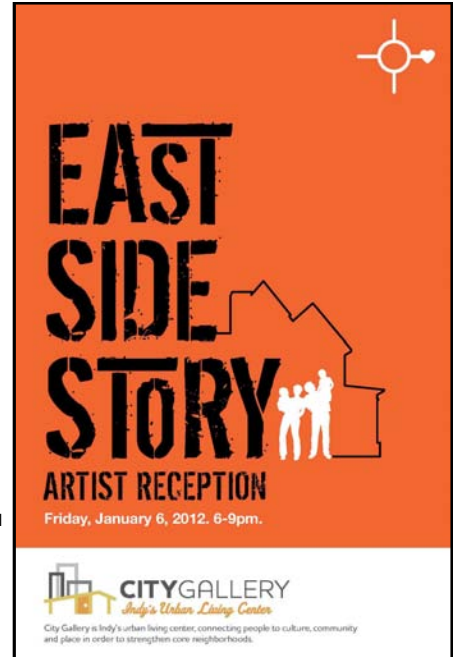
As this newsletter goes to press, Indianapolis is a month away from hosting the Super Bowl. One of the benefits of having the game is the revitalization efforts of the Near-Eastside that have been billed as part of a Super Bowl "legacy project". 10th Street from College Avenue to Rural Street has undergone a remarkable transformation with a new streetscape and several new buildings, and a new community center has been built at Arsenal Technical High School.

Coincidentally, 2012 is the 100th anniversary of Tech High School. Before Howe High School opened for classes in 1938, many an Irvingtonian was educated at Tech.

To celebrate the anniversary, a retrospective of the Tech High School Art Department, showcasing the work of Tech art teachers and students from its heyday, is being featured at the Harrison Center for the Arts during the month of January, leading up to the Super Bowl. The

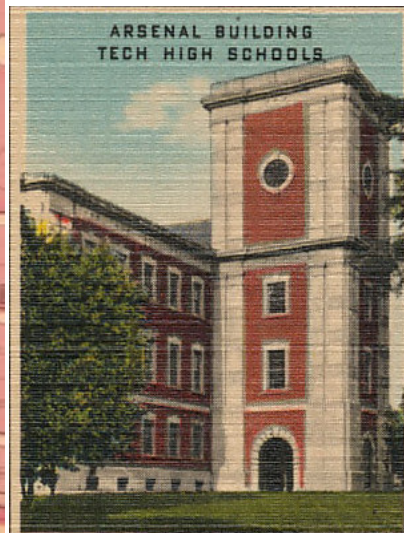
primary artist featured will be former Irvington resident Frederick Polley, former head of the Graphic Arts Department and a primary member of the Irvington Group of Artists (see accompanying articles on pages 2 and 3).

The Irvington Historical Society is loaning several Frederick Polley works from its collection to the exhibit. You can see the exhibit yourself from Jan. 6-27 at the Harrison Center for the Arts, 1505 N.



opening reception for the exhibit will be held on Friday, January 6, from 6-9pm. I hope you have an opportunity to visit the exhibit to see some fantastic art from Eastsiders past and present.

Don Flick,
IHS President



Frederick Polley; image courtesy of Rich Costello

Delaware St., located in the beautiful Old Northside. The Tech Retrospective is in Gallery 2; featured in Gallery 1 will be the work of twenty contemporary Eastside artists. Both of these exhibits are being billed as "East Side Story", and an

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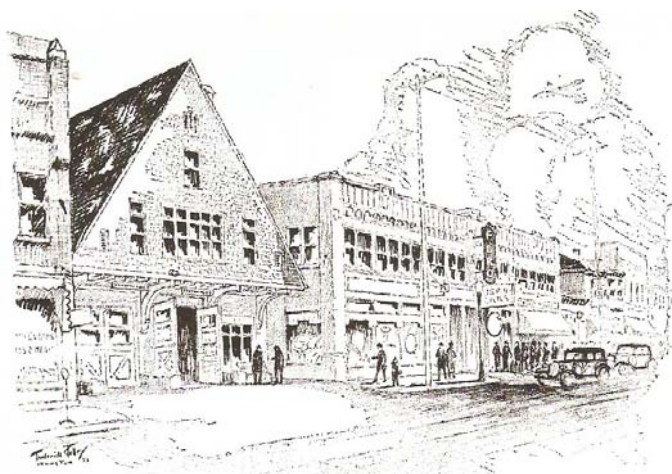
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The Irvington Group of Artists, 1928-1937

Tradition has played an important role throughout Irvington's history. One such tradition was the series of annual exhibits of the Irvington artists sponsored by the Union of Clubs from 1928 to 1937. These art exhibits were more than simple local shows of local artists. The exhibits attracted the attention and visitors from all over the state of Indiana and the surrounding states. As art instructors in the Indianapolis high schools and area art schools, the Irvington artists, and their works, have over the years proven to be influential factors in the development of the art and artists of Indianapolis, of Indiana, and the greater Midwest.

Seventeen resident, professional artists displayed their works at different times during the ten annual Irvington shows: Paul Baus, Simon P. Baus, Carolyn G. Bradley, Alice D. Cook, Robert Craig, Constance Forsyth, William Forsyth, Martha Lee Frost, Helene Hibben, Thomas Hibben; William F. Kaeser, Dorothy Morlan, Frederick Polley, Robert Selby, Clifton Wheeler, Hilah Wheeler, and Charles Yeager.

Eight of the ten exhibits were held in Carr's Hall, a large meeting room on the second floor of 5436 E. Washington Street (at the present site of Walgreens). The first exhibit took place in Carr's first floor auto showroom, while the ninth exhibit, in 1936, was conducted through five of the artists' studios/homes.



Different clubs, all part of the Union of Clubs, daily hosted the exhibits which for the most part ran eight days and observed the hours from 2 to 9 p.m. These were not juried exhibits, nor were there any prizes or awards given to the artists or their works. The hanging committees comprised of the artists and members of the art exhibit committee of the Union of Clubs. Special lectures by artists and guest speakers were scheduled throughout the exhibit periods; and the displaying artists themselves were present much of the time to meet with friends and the public alike.



Attendance figures for most of the exhibits approached 1,000, with over 1,500 visitors registering at the 1928 exhibit. The turnout during the opening days of the first show was so great that the artists were asked to bring more examples of their work, adding to what they had originally on display.

The annual exhibits were indeed popular. Perhaps one of the most remarkable things about their success was that nine out of the ten shows were held during the years of the Great Depression. In that period of our country's history when Americans were facing the greatest struggle for survival they probably would ever experience, the artist continued to draw, paint, and sculpt, while the limited income art lover and patron continued to admire and, when he could afford it, acquire some modestly priced art for the home. Primarily held in December, the art exhibits also gave the public the opportunity to purchase art for Christmas presents, while at the same time provided the artist with a little extra income for the holidays. Of the fifty works exhibited at the 1928 show, seven pictures were reported to have sold; by the 1933 exhibit, with eleven artists contributing 90 works, the number of pictures sold had reached twenty-four.

Adapted from

The Irvington Group: 1928-1937,

1984, Irvington Historical Society, Frank Owings, Jr., editor.

Above left: *Irvington*, etching by Frederick Polley; ca.1934. Carr's Hall, venue for numerous Irvington art exhibits, is shown on the right. At left is the Irvington Fire Station; image from *Greater Irvington: Architecture, People and Places on the Indianapolis Eastside*, by Paul Diebold; 1997.

Above: *Sycamores*, oil painting by Frederick Polley; undated; from the collection of the Irvington Historical Society.

Frederick Polley, Irvington Artist

A painter, etcher, lithographer, and instructor, Frederick Polley made many valuable contributions to the Irvington and greater Indianapolis community.

He was born on August 15, 1875, in Union City, Indiana. Mr. Polley attended the Corcoran Art School, Washington, D.C. and studied under James Hopkins, Provincetown, Massachusetts, and William Forsyth in Indianapolis. By teaching most of his career, he shared his extraordinary talent and guided countless artistic youth. He began as an art instructor at the John Herron Art School, was an instructor of design in teacher training classes and Indiana University, and during 1917-1941 Mr. Polley was associated with Arsenal Technical High School, becoming head of the Graphic Arts Department.



Mr. Polley was President of the Indiana Society of Printmakers, and the Indiana Artist Club, from which he received the First Selection Purchase Prize in 1939. Perhaps his best-known work was the special art features of Indiana Landmarks which appeared in the *Indianapolis Star* during 1924-1947. He also contributed full-page works to the *Women's Home*

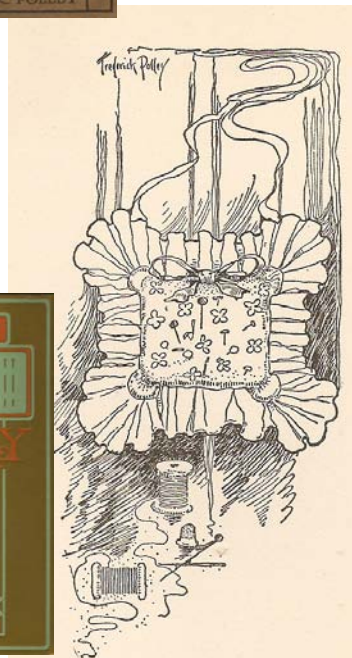
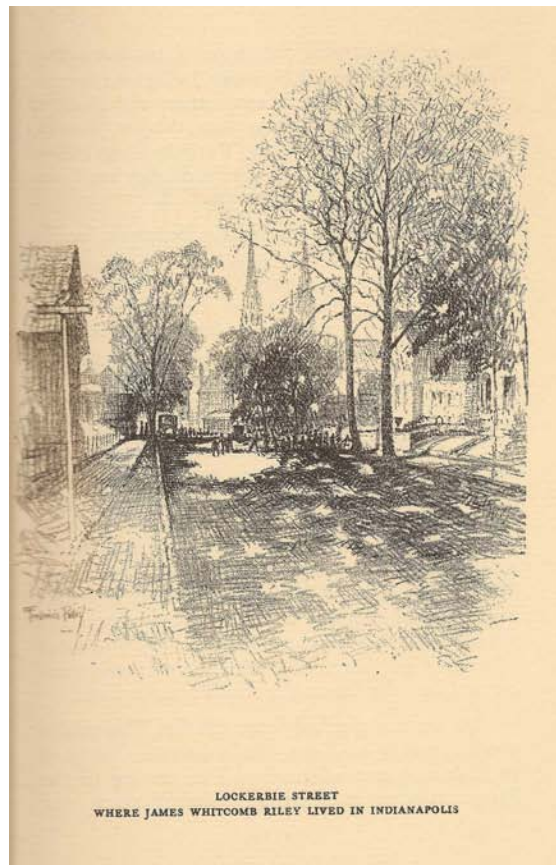
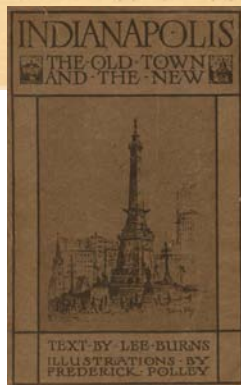
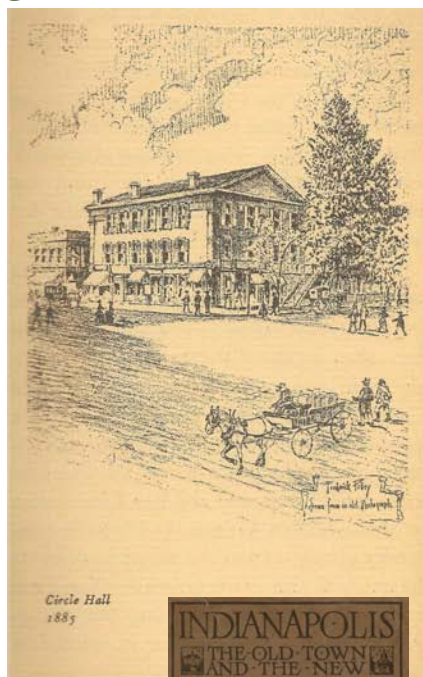
Companion, as well as other periodicals and newspapers.

For many years Mr. Polley made his home in Irvington at 371 South Emerson Avenue, however, he was visiting the home of a Brown County friend on September 9, 1957 when he passed away. He exhibited in nine of the Irvington Artists Exhibits.

Adapted from

The Irvington Group: 1928-1937,

1984, Irvington Historical Society, Sheri Patterson, contributor.



"A Pin-cushion that was a work of art."

Clockwise from center:

Indianapolis: The Old Town and the New, cover art; book written by Lee Burns; 1923.

Circle Hall, 1889, etching from *Indianapolis: The Old Town and the New*; 1923.

Lockerbie Street, etching from *Literary Indiana*, book written by Katharine Beeson; 1925.

Illustration for *A Story Told by Pins*; 1908.

A Story Told by Pins; cover, book written by Anna Virginia Russell; 1908.

Frederick Polley (self-portrait); from the 1931 Purdue yearbook for which he contributed drawings.

All drawings by Frederick Polley; images from the collections of Don and Lisa Flick and the Irvington Historical Society.

Irvington Terrace Achieves National Register Listing

By Paul Diebold

Irvington Terrace residents have considered their special part of Irvington historic for many years. Now, it's official. The U.S. Department of Interior listed Irvington Terrace on the National Register of Historic Places on December 19, 2010. The Irvington Historical Society researched and wrote the nomination. It was the capstone project of the Society's Preserve America grant project, the first and only project of its kind in Indianapolis. Irvington Terrace joins recent National Register district listings for Pleasanton, Emerson Heights, North Irvington Gardens and the "old" Irvington area, a total of over 4,000 buildings that are part of a historic district. The Irvington area has the greatest concentration of historic districts of any neighborhood or urban area in the state.

Preparing the nomination revealed a fascinating history, according to Steve Barnett, Executive Director of the Irvington Historical Society. "The Irvington Terrace Historic District includes about 600 historic houses, and stretches from Arlington Avenue to Irwin Street, so researching the area's development was a challenge," stated Barnett. The story began just after the initial development of original Irvington. Co-founders Johnson and Julian, along with Levi Ritter, had laid out the community as far west as current-day Emerson Avenue and as far east as Arlington Avenue in 1870. A group of Irvington real estate men filed a plat for the development of a small portion of what would become Irvington Terrace in 1873, just after Irvington incorporated as a town. This part of Irvington Terrace, the 300 block of Webster, still has a few older cottages as a reminder of its earlier development.

But it was a group of developers from Ohio that created the namesake land plat of the area. In 1913, the Buckeye Realty Company laid out the lots between Washington Street, Kenmore Ave., Kitley Ave., and Pleasant Run Creek. The trio included the Crayton brothers of Columbus, Ohio. The brothers had developed prestigious neighborhoods like Walhalla Park Place and Beechwold in Columbus. They hoped to repeat their success in Irvington, 160 miles west down the National Road.

The Craytons would have known about Irvington's transportation links – it's pure speculation, but they probably first saw Irvington after riding the interurban here. This innovative light

rail system, with its metal, self-propelled, electric cars, ran down Washington Street and connected Indianapolis to Richmond, Columbus, Ohio, and beyond. But Indy also had an electric trolley system, and Irvington was the end of the line, the east edge of the city, at that time. This made Irvington Terrace prime real estate.

The Ohio businessmen adopted many deed restrictions from Julian and Johnson's old Irvington development. They stipulated that the area was for residential use only, and houses needed to cost at least \$2,500 (about \$54,000 in current value). Beyond this, the restrictions stated:

"(Land owners)...shall not manufacture or sell...any intoxicating or malt liquors for any purposes whatsoever; other than medicinal or mechanical purposes...(owners shall not establish)...any slaughterhouse, tannery, fertilizer, or bone factory, soap factory, livery stable, brickyard or brick-kiln, nor shall at any time permit the soil...to be used for any manufacturing, mining or trading...nor (permit) any purpose which shall be or become obnoxious or detrimental to...said addition as a good residence neighborhood."

The restrictions were in place for a period of 25 years, according to documents filed with the Marion County Recorder's Office. The Ohio men must have hoped that the special character of Irvington Terrace would be well established by then, and they were right.

Left: 29 N. Arlington Ave.
Below: 60 N. Kenmore Rd.



The Buckeye Realty Company not only set development standards with their guidelines, they set the tone for the look of Irvington Terrace by designing, building, and selling new houses in the area. The house at 27 N. Kenmore is one house known to have been built by

the firm in 1914. The house reflects the trend toward the Arts & Crafts bungalow that dramatically changed domestic architecture in Indianapolis.

"The simple charm of bungalows is part of what attracted me to Irvington Terrace," stated preservationist and Irvington Historical Society board member Rebecca Smith, a new resident to the area. Smith, who works for Indiana Landmarks, enjoys the open plan of her Irvington Terrace bungalow.

At first, bungalow builders rejected the old historicism so popular in the 19th century. But into the 1920s, designers began incorporating elements from the past once again. The house at 60 N. Ridgeview illustrates this trend. Built in 1922, its unknown architect created a brick bungalow with a perfectly-scaled Palladian window, inspired by Colonial architecture, in the porch gable.

Irvington Terrace (continued from page 4)

At least a few homeowners in the Irvington Terrace neighborhood sought new avenues to get their dream bungalow. Kit housing was one way of reaching the American Dream. Starting in the early 1900s, lumber mills began to package lumber, pre-made windows, doors, and all other necessary items, along with full plans, so that homeowners could build their own home. The manufacturers and lumber yards could offer bulk savings and the included plans eliminated architectural fees, making kit housing competitive with local builders.



a Ranch house of its day. John Siegesmund was the Vice-President of Eli Lilly, Inc.

Not all of Irvington Terrace's early residents were corporate leaders. Most were middle class families in skilled labor, clerk, or small business owner occupations. But one resident, Dorothy Morlan, was a creative figure who lived only for art. Morlan was a member of Irvington Group of Artists, a band of painters, printers and sculptors who lived, worked and exhibited

Sears & Roebuck offered kit housing through their famous catalog and became a major provider of kit houses. The house at 310 N. Ridgeview is Sears' "Osborn" kit, a California-style bungalow built in 1922 for the family of William Jolly, a foreman for Citizen's Gas. The porch, with its flared roof peak and elaborate

triple porch posts, has elements of Japanese architecture. Another house at 331 N. Webster is likely from



a kit offered by Aladdin, of Bay City, Michigan. The Aladdin company originated the kit house idea, and this house closely resembles the "Victoria," a 1 1/2 story, stuccoed bungalow.

Other houses in the Irvington Terrace area reflect the 1920s trend toward historical styles in housing. Many homes along Pleasant Run Parkway fall into this category. The house at 6419 Pleasant Run Parkway, for example, reflects the Tudor Revival style. The house at 130 N. Pasadena, c.1926, is one of the better examples of American Colonial Revival architecture in the Irvington area. Its red brick walls, arched portico, and entry with fanlight transom panel are especially well-executed. Rudolph Crandall, a buyer for department store L.S. Ayres, lived here in the 1930s.



Unlike old Irvington, Irvington Terrace still had a few lots left after World War II, and its architectural development continued. The Siegesmund House, 6100 block of Pleasant Run Parkway, was built about 1952. While its limestone walls are common enough for a Ranch house, its green terra-cotta tile roof and classically-inspired cornice are unexpected refinements for



art in Irvington in the 1920s and 30s (see related story on page 2). Morlan's most famous commission was for a series of murals in Wishard Hospital in 1914. She lived a frugal

lifestyle and used her home at 6030 Lowell as her studio. Her

Top: Siegesmund House, 6161 E. Pleasant Run Pky., S. Dr.
Above: Morlan House, 6030 Lowell Ave.
Left: Jolly House, 310 N. Ridgeview Dr.
Below: Crandall House; 130 N. Pasadena Ave.

home and studio was featured during one of the famous Irvington Group exhibits. She exhibited at over 35 shows. Today you can enjoy some of Ms. Morlan's art at the Bona Thompson Memorial Center in Irvington. Though less active after 1947, Dorothy continued to live at 6030 Lowell until 1967.

The National Register of Historic Places is one of several new honors for the Irvington area. "We were so excited for the community, that we were able to make Irvington as a whole the first Preserve America neighborhood in the country," explains Society President Don Flick. "The National Register designation is an honor specific to Irvington Terrace, and it opens up a number of important benefits to homeowners in the area," Flick stated. Owners of historic, income-producing buildings can apply for a 20% federal investment tax credit on a sensitive rehabilitation of their building. The State of Indiana also has a Residential Historic Rehabilitation Credit for historic rehabilitations of owner-occupied historic homes. Successful applicants can deduct part of the cost of a home rehabilitation on their State of Indiana taxes. Those interested in the various credits should go to www.in.gov/dnr/historic for more information.

IHS Happenings

Calendar

- **Friday, Jan. 6, 6:00-9:00pm:**
"East Side Story" Artists' Reception, see below.
- **Jan. 6-27:**
"East Side Story", featuring the work of Eastside artists; Gallery 1, Harrison Center for the Arts, 1505 N. Delaware St., Indianapolis.
"Arsenal Tech. Retrospective, 1912-2012", featuring the work of Frederick Polley and other noted Tech art teachers; Gallery 2, Harrison Center for the Arts.
- **Sat., Feb. 25, 7:00-9:00pm:**
IHS Silent Auction ; BTMC

Permanent Exhibits & Attractions at BTMC

- International Harvester Memorabilia
- Eastside Fire Museum
- Irvington Garden Club Conservatory
- IHS Bookstore and Gift Shop (new and vintage)
- "Influence of the Railroad on the Development of Irvington" (including scale model of Pennsylvania Railroad and the original Irvington commercial district)
- "The Civil War and its Influence on Irvington" (featuring exhibits on Camp McClellan, historic lithographs of notable battles, etc.).

ABE MARTIN
OF IRVINGTON *Says—*



It was January 6 and I had an "epiphany":
Wise men think before they speak!

IHS Silent Auction

The year 2012 marks the 10th anniversary of the restoration of the Bona Thompson Memorial Center. To celebrate this anniversary, and to help sustain this historic structure and continue providing programs for the Irvington community, the Irvington Historical Society will be hosting a silent auction fundraiser on Saturday, February 25 from 7:00pm-9:00pm at the Bona Thompson Memorial Center. Donations are currently being sought for this fundraiser. If you have a new gift item, gift certificate, antique, or original art that you would like to donate, please contact Charlotte Ottinger at Cottinger@indy.rr.com or 509-8577.

We hope to see you there!

IHS Membership Information

Immediate Benefits for New Members:

- Discounts from Irvington Merchants: All members, new and renewed, will receive a card for discounts at the following merchants: Annie's Apparel, Bona Thompson Conservatory, Bookmamas, Black Sheep Gifts, George Thomas Florist, Lazy Daze Coffee House, and Wee-Play.
- Gift : All new members may pick-up a gift on their first visit to the Bona Thompson Memorial Center.

Annual Member Benefits:

- Special invitation for all events at the Bona Thompson Memorial Center.
- Newsletter
- 10% discount on Irvington Historical Society items at the Bona Thompson Memorial Society Gift Shop.
- Holiday gift.

To Join:

- Please complete the following application and mail it along with your annual membership dues for \$25.00 to:

*Irvington Historical Society
5350 East University Avenue
Indianapolis, IN 46219-7009*

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
Phone _____ Email Address _____

For more information about the Irvington Historical Society, visit www.irvingtonhistorical.org.