

Decorah Historical Preservation Commission
June 5, 2017 Meeting Minutes (Final)

1. Meeting was called to order at 4:30 by Mark Muggli, Chairperson. Commissioners present besides Muggli were Tony Clarke, Lois Humpal, Hayley Jackson, Kris Lynch, Diane Scholl and Judy van der Linden.

Also present was Janelle Pavlovec, Decorah resident.

2. Mark reported that Hayley's application to join the commission was being acted on by the City Council today.

3. Diane moved, Kris seconded and members voted to approve minutes of the April 10 meeting as written.

4. The Charles Altfillisch project was discussed.

a. Judy, Kris and Mark toured Altfillisch's West Side School building in April. School officials have blueprints for both the original structure and the addition. Kris said she felt the building was sound and hopes it can be saved and used for other purposes. Everyone agreed that would be ideal, although Mark said he doesn't think it is so unique that DHPC should put all our effort and energy into saving the building if no other use for it is found. Members will monitor the situation for now.

b. Diane and Judy reported on their visit with Susan Tone Pierce and Mike Tone, the architect's grandchildren. (see addition to minutes – Judy's Notes on Visit). Susan and Mike gave us permission to look at the Altfillisch books and items stored in the Mound Street house basement. *Commissioners plan tentatively to meet this Thursday, June 8 at 9 a.m. to scan the items.*

c. & d. Commissioners had agreed to do certain parts of the project, but Mark suggested those assignments might change. Conducting oral interviews for a growing number of people (the Richard Carlsons, the Gipps, David Wright, owners of the Sprat house and Lowell Erdman) was discussed. *Hayley offered to draft a permission or waiver form that would be completed before each interview.*

Mark will write a general news release about the Altfillisch project to give residents who may have information about the architect to contact DHPC.

Regarding the capacity to copy blueprints, *Lois will ask Calmar Manufacturing, Hayley will check at Luther College and Tony will ask the city of Decorah.*

To begin inquiries of people who knew Charles Altfillisch or live in one of his homes, *Diane will meet with the Sprat house owners, Kris will talk to the Gipps, Tony will talk to Lowell Erdman later in June and Judy will contact David Wright.*

Mark, Judy and Hayley plan to meet Wednesday in Hayley's office to talk about how to keep records of the data gathered.

5. May's Historic Preservation Award presentation for maintenance of the brick pavement on Court Street went well. For next year, Kris suggested making awards to

a group of homes, and Judy suggested having a person designated to take photos of the presentation ceremony.

6. Commission members agreed to proceed with work to add the city library to the Broadway-Phelps Park Historic District. Mark sought formal permission from the city council to do so, but he received no response and feels his announcement to the council of the project will suffice.

7. Hayley will attend the Preserve Iowa Summit June 9-10 in Fort Dodge. She may also attend the SNRC meeting on June 8, when the application for Decorah's commercial district will be voted on. Plans to celebrate the nomination this fall will be discussed and finalized at a later meeting.

8. Mark suggested and members agreed to leave as a tabled motion the possible continuation of the Landmark Project in one form or another.

9. *Lois will serve as a DHPC representation on the ad hoc Oneota Drive bridge replacement committee, unless Jody indicates that she still wants to serve.*

10. Commissioner Reports:

a. Mark reported that Elizabeth Lorenzen's book about the "Walk Into the Past" signage has been delayed until fall. We will have time to consult with her on it.

b. Judy and Hayley reported on the NE Iowa Historical Preservation Workshop they attended in May in Fayette.

c. Mark encouraged DHPC members to work with all historical organizations in the county and to avoid taking sides in the current dispute between Decorah Genealogical Association and Winneshiek County Historical Society.

d. Tony reported that Lindsay Erdman has a worker who is inventorying Altfillish items. Tony suggested we ask Dean Thompson about blueprints he had copied at the University of Iowa. Finally, Tony submitted his resignation from DHPC because of possible conflicts of interest arising from him serving on both DHPC and the city's Planning and Zoning Commission.

11. Public reports: Janelle informed members about an annual celebration for Winnebago Indian basketmaker Emma Big Bear. It will be on July 1. She also said DHPC may want to contact Arlan Branhagen about a new technology for recording oral histories.

12. Next meeting was tentatively set for Monday, Sept. 11 at 4:30 p.m. An additional meeting can be scheduled before that time if the need arises.

Addendum to minutes: Judy's Notes on Visit:

RE: Meeting May 27 between Diane S. and Judy vdL and two of Charles Altfillisch's grandchildren, Susan Pierce and Mike Tone, both from Chicago.

Both Susie and Mike seemed very grateful that we are doing this project, and both said their grandfather and grandmother would have been honored.

It did not sound like they have many documents, artifacts, etc., themselves. Their grandmother was not a saver. They do think they have 3-4 of CA's **ledger books** that detail expenses and projects. They are in the Mound Street house basement. They also have several framed newspaper articles (one a Red Book Notes article) and one from the 80's or 90's after a town flood. Susie said they would check the basement for these and other items and get back to us.

They also have **letters** their grandfather wrote to their grandmother while he was in military service. Susie has compiled these letters into a booklet for the family. I said the DHPC would be interested in having a copy, if possible.

Their grandmother apparently used to have a **card catalogue** of names of school board officials in Iowa towns. She apparently wrote to officials to promote CA as a builder of schools. (They believe the card catalogue has disappeared, but will double check.) Mike said his grandfather felt designing schools was his specialty.

Both said there were quite a few items in the old county jail. These included **blueprints, two framed watercolors of the University of Iowa dorms CA designed and three (not just one) audio tapes of recollections. Susie helped record these tapes along with Kim Glock.** Two of the tapes are in good condition, but Susie was not allowed to borrow these the last time she was at WCHS to have them copied. One was broken, and Susie got permission to have it repaired, but the person in town who they found to splice it did not fix it. They couldn't get it to work after that. (Susie said this may be the tape that Kris Lynch has???)

Another possible source of **documents, blueprints**, etc., is Eric Olson, son of Roger Olson, who for many years was Charles' architecture firm partner. Mike and Susie are not sure what happened to all of CA's plans, which were at the architectural office on Water St. for a long time. Mike suspects Olsons may have some, and offered to talk to Eric's wife.

The other person both Mike and Susie suggested we talk to is **David Wright**. His parents were friends of the Altfillisch family and David is very knowledgeable about CA's career. Mike suggested we tell David that he said it was OK for David to give us any information he has. At one time CA and his wife lived essentially across the street from the Wright house.

Charles was born in Bellevue, Susie said. She has done some family research and said she'd give us her information. CA's family originally was from Munich, Germany. Susie believed they came to Decorah in the 20's. Her grandfather and grandmother met earlier. Mrs. CA was about eight years younger than him. She lived part of her childhood in Decorah in a house on Jefferson Street.

Both Mike and Susie said they would be willing to do oral histories at a later date. Mike reminisced more, although he said his memories are mostly anecdotal. Susie is much younger and doesn't remember her grandfather as well. Mike told us several interesting recollections of driving around town with his grandfather and looking at houses – I think these memories would be good to have on paper. Mike was glad to know that Hayley, Luther College's archivist, is on our commission, and both Mike and Susie seemed enthused that at some point all their grandfather's memorabilia might be archived at the college.

Among the Altfillish homes and buildings mentioned were:

Ben Grimstad's house (formerly what CA called the Carlson house)

The Helen and Roy Carlson house on High Street (CA was especially proud of a design element on the porch that he added to "liven" up the front)

"Many homes on the East side" per Mike (David Wright would know which ones)

Two dormitories at the University of Iowa

Brandt Hall and the tower dormitories and union at Luther College

"Many" buildings in Elkader, per Mike or Susie (can't remember which)

Many schools all over the state, per Mike

The Sproat House on East Broadway and Oak or Pershing (these owners have CA blueprints)

The Algar House, probably 132 Pleasant Hill, where Anundsons live

The Goodman house, 609 W. Broadway (owners have blueprints)

Leytze B & B on College Drive