

INFORMATION SOUGHT ON BARAT LANDSCAPE, BUILDING

Historians Look To Alumni For More Research Options

by Arthur Miller
Lake Forest Historian

As the story in the last *Communiqué* reflected, on the background of the site and architecture of Barat's original main building "Upon a Hill," the College is in the process of launching an effort to learn more about its roots, and to understand and honor them. In the Spring '97 semester, a new class was introduced, "Historic Preservation" taught by historian Susan Benjamin and is focused on spadework for preparation of an application for National Register of Historic Places status the College's 1903-04 Main Building and adjacent stately grounds.

While the College has many important records to assist in this process it seeks information from alumni and friends, too, about the construction of the original structure and the 1920s Chapel, about the laying out of the grounds, and about life at the College in earlier days — people, events, daily routines, etc.

Assisting in this data gathering process, Janelle Miller, Director of Annual Giving, is soliciting input about the old Barat when all campus life was centered behind the well-known stately facade. Readers of *Communiqué* can help!

Many members of the College family

responded favorably to the story about Barat's early history in Lake Forest. That article discussed the way the Religious of the Sacred Heart, headquartered in St. Louis but active in Chicago since the 1840s, after the turn of the century consciously chose to locate their new campus at the seat of suburban power, the home of the Protestant Establishment. Then they chose an architectural firm — Egan and Prindeville — which was led by a distin-

guished Irish Catholic architect, James Egan of Chicago, to erect an impressive Colonial Revival hall on their hill near the North Shore line at the south edge of Lake Forest. Just as the early seventeenth-century New-England Puritans had set up their new society "Upon a Hill" in Massachusetts as a beacon to the world, a new model, the religious founders of Barat asserted to Chicago's

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 16)



Barat College front lawn circa 1940

ALUMNI CAN HELP

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14)

leaders their assimilationist goal for their most promising young women. We share your vision; let us join in your mainstream life.

The linking of the College's venerable Main Building to turn-of-the-century Americanization provided a backdrop for a brand-new course at the College "Historic Preservation." Susan Benjamin who teaches the course has been a major force in North Shore architectural and historic preservation efforts, through her 1988 book *An Architectural Album: Chicago's North Shore*, and through her many applications for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places, in Lake Forest and elsewhere.

This spring her class is pursuing the basic archival and related research which will be the groundwork for a National Register of Historic Places application for the original Barat site, buildings (main and Chapel), and grounds. Documents in the College library tell much about the early history: construction documents, correspondence plans, etc.

Also, information about the architects can be found in architectural, historical and in biographical sources, common and uncommon. Early County property

records, too, may yield helpful information. And careful analysis of the building and grounds themselves may offer important information opening further directions for research. For example, what is the origin of the rock garden at the foot of the hill, near the eastern drive outlet onto Sheridan? Could it suggest who laid out the grounds? And what can we learn about the handsome mosaic-tile ground floor covering glimpsed in the corridor serving the maintenance office? Who planned and carried out this intricate work? When was it covered, resurfaced? Why?

The answers to questions like this may well be known to readers of *Communiqué* -- alumni, religious, former faculty and staff, friends, etc.

Seeking out the answers to questions like these can renew old ties, recover lost memories, and help document what truly is a remarkable place created by visionary, assertive, creative, people. Restoring the honorable memories of them, as well as their work building, adapting, and preserving "Old Main," its Chapel, and its lawn even as the College grew beyond them a generation ago can help the College gain recognition on a national level for this important -- this landmark -- place.

Even as the new Library nears comple-

tion, a symbol of Barat's continuing growth and progress, this historical effort anchors the College in its traditional educational and spiritual purposes -- a beacon "Upon a Hill" lighting a new generation of students into the mainstream life of education rooted in values offered here for nearly a century.

As this effort progresses to document Barat's construction and development physically, *Communiqué* readers are urged to write down their experiences or information and send them to Janelle Miller, Director of Annual Giving, who -- at this initial stage -- is gathering this material.

She can be reached by phone or a voice-mail message may be left for her at 847-604-6245. Ms. Miller can make arrangements then for a follow-up interview by phone or in person.

The intention is to continue the series of historical articles, incorporating new material found through the new course and through learned experiences by the Barat community. The next step in the process is your involvement: write or call if you can contribute family traditions or personal first-hand knowledge about the evolution and earlier life of Barat's Main Building Chapel and front lawn or park.

James Egan