

Mansion Musings: Fossils in the Façade

Explore the Turnblad Mansion's carved stone exterior and some of its most unique features in the second episode of Mansion Musings.

Ginny Lackovic shades her eyes from the sun as she gazes up at a carved stone gargoyle perched on the Turnblad Mansion. A Historic Preservation Specialist and Project Architect at HGA Architects and Engineers, Ginny has contributed to the preservation of some of Minnesota's most iconic structures – from the Minnesota State Capitol to Fort Snelling, the Orpheum Theatre to Northrop Auditorium. Her eyes now turn to the Turnblad Mansion where she spearheads a range of activities that will preserve the building for future generations.

“That’s really the whole point of historic preservation. To conserve and protect facets of our collective history that are truly irreplaceable.”

When the Turnblad Mansion was first constructed, masonry experts Herman Schlink and Albert Corwin carved the building's façade and its unique features out of a sedimentary rock known as Bedford Limestone. Quarried from a narrow geologic formation in south-central Indiana, and used in some of the nation's most



Curt Pederson and Ginny Lackovic

iconic structures including the Empire State Building, this high quality stone is formed from the accumulation of shell-bearing marine organisms. Small fossils and fossil fragments — from the Mississippian age, 340 million to 335 million years ago — are still visible to the public on the Mansion's exterior.

Among many other features, the fabulous Horse Head carving is an example of Schlink and Corwin's exceptional craftsmanship. Relocated during construction of the Nelson Cultural Center, this work of art underwent conservation treatment and now remains accessible to ASI visitors thanks to support from a generous anonymous donor. It now overlooks the inside entrance to the museum adjacent to the Carriage House doors.

The Mansion's east-facing veranda — the original entrance to the Turnblad Mansion — is another superb masonry example. With its impressively carved banisters and balustrades, raised surface above street level, and the backdrop of the Mansion itself, the veranda has been the site of many important events in Minnesota history. It's a place for education through ongoing ASI programs, and the setting of thousands of weddings and moments of importance in the lives of ASI's community members.

Ginny joins Curt Pederson, ASI's Senior Curator of Historic Properties, in the second episode of Mansion Musings, ASI's video

series that explores some of the many untold stories and unique features of the Turnblad Mansion. In this episode, Ginny and Curt explore some of the Mansion's iconic stoneworks, and discuss what steps can be taken — with the support of the community — to preserve the building's irreplaceable character for the future.

Watch all episodes of Mansion Musings here: [ASImn.org/mansionmusings](https://www.asimn.org/mansionmusings)

If you are interested in contributing to the preservation of the Turnblad Mansion, please contact Christy Stolpestad at christys@asimn.org, or Eric Wilson at ericw@asimn.org. Or, as staff are working remotely, please call ASI's offices at (612) 871-4907 to be connected by phone.

