

Landmark Charnley-Persky House in Gold Coast Flooded by Storm

(Chicago) August 20, 2014 – The [Charnley-Persky House](#), at 1365 North Astor Street, experienced serious flooding brought on by storms that blew through Chicago on Tuesday afternoon. Water poured into the National Historic Landmark, which serves as the headquarters of the [Society of Architectural Historians](#) (SAH), through the sink and toilet of the second-floor powder room, on the north side of the house. The water flooded the room and traveled down through the ceiling and walls to the living room library on the first floor and on to the basement.

It was all hands on deck Tuesday, as SAH staff tried to mitigate the flooding of the 1891-1892 house, which was designed by Louis Sullivan with assistance from his junior draftsman, Frank Lloyd Wright. Once the flow of water stopped, staff members vacuumed up about two inches of water from a storage room in the north side of the basement and the flooded powder room. Water had rushed down along the eastern wall of the library, onto Sullivan's ornately carved fireplace surround and enclosed bookcases. The original white oak woodwork and wood floors were dried with rags and towels, but a portion of the ceiling, saturated with water, collapsed from the weight.

SAH Executive Director Pauline Saliga commented, "While this quirky flood caught us off guard, I am grateful that it happened at noon on a weekday when the SAH staff was ready to spring into action. We were able to avoid more serious damage that would have occurred if the flood happened at night or over a weekend. I sincerely thank the SAH staff and all who have contacted us to offer their help and financial support. The Chicago architectural community is a tight knit one and we are very grateful for our many friends."

Plumbing professionals were on-site today and found a blockage in a drainage pipe, which was likely the source of the backflow. They will be back tomorrow with a detection device to find the cause of the blockage and make necessary repairs.

SAH is assessing the damage and working with professionals to make repairs. Restoration architect John Eifler is advising SAH as it works to restore the damaged ceiling and walls of the house, which is recognized as a pivotal work of modern American residential architecture. Professionals will help dry out the walls and ceiling before plaster and painting restoration can be undertaken.

The Charnley-Persky House is open for public tours on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and also

hosts public lectures. Tours have been cancelled for this week due to the flooding. Saliga hopes the house will be open again for tours and lectures soon.

If you would like to help support the restoration efforts, please contact Carolyn Garrett at cgarrett@sah.org or 312-573-1365.

Founded at Harvard in 1940, the Society of Architectural Historians is a nonprofit membership organization that promotes the study, interpretation and conservation of architecture, design, landscapes and urbanism worldwide. SAH serves a network of local, national and international institutions and individuals who, by vocation or avocation, focus on the built environment and its role in shaping contemporary life. Housed in the Charnley-Persky House since 1995, SAH uses the house to promote meaningful public engagement with the history of the built environment through advocacy efforts, print and online publications, and local, national and international programs.

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