

My name is Darius Bryjka and I'm a project designer at the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. I am also spearheading the 'got mesker?' initiative, which focuses on the identification and increased awareness of the ornamental metal products produced by the Mesker Brothers Iron Works from St. Louis, Missouri, and those made by George L. Mesker & Company of Evansville, Indiana.

I am contacting you in regards to the facade of the Grainfield Opera House, which was manufactured by the Mesker Brothers in 1887. I was aware of the building for a couple of years now but at the time I wasn't sure of its condition or how it compared to other similar facades in the country. According to your website, the building has been restored or is undergoing restoration, which is wonderful. I also know that there are few other Mesker Brothers facades that are of the same vintage and magnitude, both in scale and importance. I was recently in Ouray, Colorado, to present a program about Mesker products to the local historical society. We held the lecture in Wright's Hall of 1888, which has a facade very similar to that of the Grainfield Opera House (see attached). To my knowledge, these are the only two facades to share this design in the country.

I am very pleased to see that local volunteers have embraced the building and that lots of work was done to preserve and maintain it. Its facade is important not only to the local community but to the nation. The Mesker companies had a tremendous impact on small town architecture nationwide and the facade of the Grainfield Opera House is in very small company of intact early examples of their work.

We maintain a website, www.gotmesker.com, where you can find more information about our efforts to recognize the three Mesker brothers and their two companies. Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me. If there's something that I can do to help with the preservation of this great resource, I will gladly be of assistance.

Sincerely,

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