



The PRESERVATIONIST

Newsletter of
the SPRINGFIELD PRESERVATION TRUST

Fall 1995

UNIQUE SETTING FOR ANNUAL MEETING

The 1995 Annual Meeting and Preservation Awards Reception is taking place on Sunday, November 19th, 1995. This event, which gives our organization a chance to recognize those people who have made a significant contribution towards preserving the historic fabric of our city, is being held in a building most unique to Springfield. Called the 'Pueblo of Seven Fires', this structure was built in 1932 on the East Campus at Springfield College.

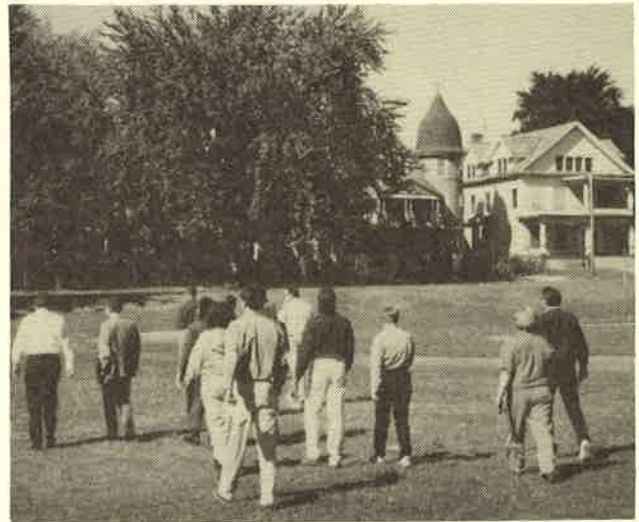
Originally built to be a headquarters for the training of camp counselors, this building holds the distinction of being the only true pueblo east of the Mississippi. The inside of the building is decorated with Native American art which was done by a full-blooded Native American student enrolled at Springfield College at the time. Since its construction in 1932, every effort has been made to maintain this structure in its original form.

We hope you will join us as we celebrate the ongoing preservation efforts of this year's award recipients.

TRUST TOURS THE HISTORIC NORTH END

On Sunday, October 1st, SPT President Wilfred Stebbins led Trust members on a bus tour of architecturally significant buildings in Springfield's North End neighborhood. Beginning in Memorial Square, St. George's Cathedral (c. 1860's) opened the 2-1/2 hour tour. Services having just ended, the incense-filled atmosphere was suffused with the light of the noontime sun illuminating the Tiffany windows of the cathedral. Across the square, visitors descended the stairs of the Trolley Barn (c. 1897) to see the original safe belonging to the Street Railway Company; the safe comfortably fit all 30 tour-goers inside! Moving up Chestnut Street, past St. Peter and Paul's church (closed to the tour due to an orthodox holy day), visitors moved on to another landmark North End church, Sacred Heart (c. 1894), where the recently

continued on page 5

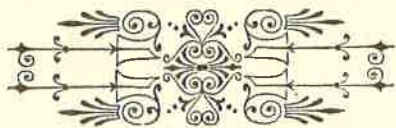


The Fall 1995 Tour visits historic sites in the North End

SPT CALENDAR

Monthly meetings held at 7:00 p.m.
in the Wesson Board Room on
the High St. Campus of Baystate Medical Center
Next meetings are
December 6, January 3, and February 7

ANNUAL MEETING & RECOGNITION
RECEPTION
Sunday, November 19th, 1995

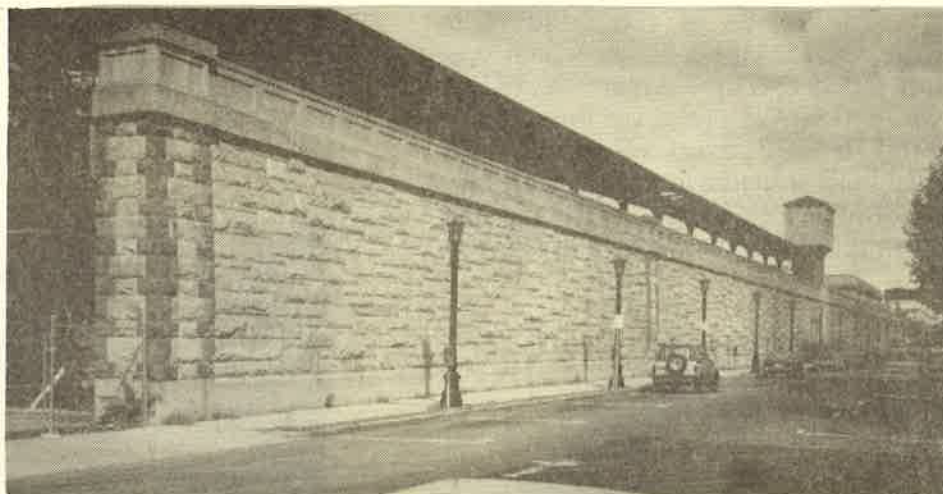


IN MEMORIAM

Long-time Trust member Ellie Dashevsky passed away this summer leaving a void not easily filled. Ellie was always a strong advocate for Forest Park Heights, the City of Springfield and for historic preservation in general. As a realtor, housing was her specialty. A founding member of the Forest Park Civic Association, Ellie always gave her all.

But most of all Ellie was a friend and mentor to everyone she ever worked with. Her guidance, encouragement and gentle pushing gave each of us the direction that made us all better people and, in turn, a better city. We will miss you Ellie.

--Jim Boone



CAN YOU GUESS?

You have probably noticed the magnificent granite wall on Lyman Street. Situated below the railroad tracks and leading to the Amtrak station, it is truly a beauty. Since the old Union Station on the other side of the tracks looks like it has been there forever, what is this wall a remnant of? Well, as usual, there was something there before and wow, was it wonderful. Turn to Page 7 and see.

SPT HELPS SAVE HIGH ST. HOUSE

Work has finally begun on the rehabilitation of the Rice-Bangs House at 30 High Street in Springfield. The Trust has worked for years to find a use for this house and has even considered moving it. The circa-1845 house, one of the City's oldest, housed a pioneering Kindergarten a hundred years ago and contained three suites of medical offices before it was abandoned in the early 1970's. The building had about five additions constructed from its inception and up until 1957. By incredible good grace, it survived ten or more fires to arrive at its new use. The Mental Health Association of Greater Springfield is developing the property as a six-person "Safe Havens" site, an innovative new program for mentally-ill homeless persons. The Springfield Preservation Trust is proud to have contributed funds to this worthwhile project.

Work is progressing well, with much of the major framing done and the exterior finishing to start in late October. The ell's second floor was


removed and replaced with a new one two feet higher to add headroom and insulation space. Old stairs have been filled in and a new one has been cut-in. Partition changes, etc. are all currently underway.

Demolition/cleanout for this project was an interesting process. Most of the work was slated for donated services and, with the help of Community Development at City Hall, donors were found and coordinated. The Mass. Migrant Workers' program was ready to donate time in midsummer, but the site was not legally free and clear until late August when their program was over. Instead, Mass. Career Development Institute and the Hampden County Jail Pre-Release program together completed 90%-95% of the work before running out of available time. The General Contractor then tidied up. Occupancy of the property is expected in early 1996.

--Bill Devlin



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NORTH END TOUR continued from page 1

completed interior restoration was viewed. Across Carew Street, the Chestnut Knoll retirement home opened the doors of its Colonial Revival manor home (c. 1899); although the dinner hour had already begun for the residents, Trust members were treated to a re-ringing of the dinner chimes donated by Mr. Albert Steiger. Next door to Chestnut Knoll stands Chestnut Middle School, opening up on a Sunday so that tour-goers would have an opportunity to visit the interior. Despite the obvious neglect of maintenance to the building, the elegance of the 1901 design work of Gardner, Pyne & Gardner is still evident. Two structures on Calhoun Park, developed in the 1890's were on view; 90-92 Calhoun Street, a recent Habitat for Humanity rehab and the former Jefferson Avenue School, which was adapted in the late 1980's for use as elderly housing. Back on to Main Street, the tour ended at the spectacular renovation of the Main Street Fire House (c. 1892), now home to the PVTA. Highlights of the building were the illuminated conference table of the board room and the "floating glass" floor of the hose tower. The 1990's renovation of the fire station is a fine example of adaptive reuse of buildings which have outlived their original purpose but are far from "dead".

The Trust would like to offer special thanks to Peter Pan Bus Lines for their support of the 1995 Fall Tour. Thanks go to all who opened their doors to showcase this special part of Springfield.

--Wilfred Stebbins

**UNCLE SAM CONSIDERS NEW
HOMEOWNERSHIP TAX CREDIT**

Congress is considering The Historic Homeownership Assistance Act, HR 1662. If passed, the bill will provide federal income tax credits to owners who rehabilitate historic houses and then live there for five years. Happily, Representative Neal is one of the co-sponsors.

Many historic commercial buildings in Springfield were renovated in the 1980's with the historic tax credit for income producing properties. A new credit for owner-occupants should spark the same type of interest in our historic neighborhoods. The tax incentive would help increase owner-occupancy while encouraging renovation of deteriorated houses in both local and National Register districts. Forest Park Heights, McKnight, Maple Hill, Lower Maple, Ridgewood, and Quadrangle-Mattoon contain approximately 1600 residential structures. The credit could be used by owners rehabilitating their present homes or by owners purchasing newly renovated homes from developers. The credit applies only to personal residences, but it does include condominiums. In order to qualify, work will have to meet federal standards for historic rehabilitation and a threshold level of investment.

NOTE: A similar bill, S.1002, has been filed in the Senate. It needs co-sponsors. Please write Senators Kennedy and Kerry and ask that they become co-sponsors.

--Robert McCarroll

GUIDE TO
RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE
IN SPRINGFIELD

Now in it's second printing, the Springfield Preservation Trust's booklet will guide you to many fine examples of the various styles of residential architecture in Springfield. This 34-page paperback includes photos of distinctive city homes, as well as detailed drawings to accompany each architectural "style" section.

Price: \$5 plus \$1 shipping and handling. Please mail your check to: The Springfield Preservation Trust, 979 Main Street, Springfield, MA 01103.

ASK THE TRUST

Q. I want to save energy costs in my large older home but have been told that insulating the walls will cause more problems than it solves. Also, some people question the percentage of heat lost through the walls as opposed to the attic. Doesn't heat rise? What are the facts?

A. In reality, wall insulation is one of the biggest energy savers in older 2-story houses. Victorian homes with high ceilings have significant amounts of outside wall area. Uninsulated wall surfaces are directly exposed to outside temperatures and account for a large percentage (20-40%) of the heat loss of a house. While warm air does indeed rise, heat flows in all directions as a function of what is known as "delta T", or "difference in temperature". The greater the difference in temperature between inside and outside, and the greater the conductivity of the building materials, the greater the heat loss per square foot of surface area.

Attics are important areas to insulate because ceiling areas have slightly higher temperatures than average wall temperatures. Attics are also relatively easy to insulate. On the other hand, an unventilated attic area has a slightly lower "delta T" for any given conductivity rate since there is a "buffer zone" to outside temperatures. This, combined with the windswept losses of exposed walls, often results in a per square foot heat loss for walls which exceeds ceilings.

In terms of creating problems, a properly retrofitted blown-in wall insulation job can actually solve problems injurious to an older home. First of all, uninsulated balloon frame wall homes enable fire to spread much more quickly than in an insulated older home. Filling the tremendous volume of air in walls with fire resistant insulation has proven itself to slow the pace of a fire. It will also provide some degree of soundproofing to deaden the noise of busy city life around the house.

Most concerns about blown-in cellulose wall insulation center around moisture. The first thing to understand is that wall insulation is not some new invention that is untested. Two hundred years ago, early houses used seaweed, straw and other techniques for insulation of walls. Use of mineral fiber batt wall insulation in some Victorian homes is well documented in 100-year-old builders' magazines. During the World War II energy crunch, many homeowners had mineral wool

insulation blown into the west and north sides of their houses. Cellulose blown-in insulation has been used as retrofit insulation for at least 25 years.

It is important to choose a qualified insulation contractor who has years of experience. The proper technique is to remove clapboards and/or wood shingles in each stud bay every four to five feet up the wall, drill holes into sheathing, blow insulation and replace original siding. It is inevitable that some paint will chip off during the process so it is best to have the job done before a new paint job is eminent. If electrical wiring is in need of upgrading, this should also be accomplished before insulation is blown in.

Two independent studies of over 100 homes have shown that artificial siding and excessive moisture generation are much more detrimental than blown-in wall insulation to homes. Studies included the removal of inside or outside wall materials and probing of the insulation and sheathing for moisture content. The only homes with any significant moisture problem in building materials had excessive bathroom moisture (no vent fans in smaller bathrooms with low ceilings) and air gaps into the walls which need to be sealed.

Most moisture flows through cracks and crevices, not through diffusion through the wall surface. Therefore, it is important to carefully caulk gaps around baseboard and window casings and repair cracked plaster walls before the insulation is blown in. This will prevent moisture migration into the wall cavity. With no insulation in the wall cavity, moisture will flow through cracks and condense on the cold sheathing of the outer portion of the wall. If you remove clapboards on a 100 year old house that has not been insulated you will find that wherever there are sheathing gaps there will be black dust and slightly curled building paper. This is the result of air and moisture passing into the wall cavity and condensing on the inside of paper. With insulation in the wall cavity, there is practically no air flow and therefore less moisture migration. This is especially true if the gaps along walls are caulked up.

It is true that insulated homes will have more moisture trapped within the house. On the other hand, the inside wall surface is now warmer inside so condensation is less likely. Larger homes are especially immune to moisture problems, unless

heavy moisture is accompanied by very low heating temperatures. The large volume of heated space readily dilutes the moisture and relative humidity levels are low to normal. My own home stays around 40% relative humidity during the winter months, even with several house plants. In smaller ranch style homes with lower ceilings and lots of occupants, bathroom and kitchen fans are a necessity and superinsulated homes require a heat recovery ventilation system to exchange air. It is also important to have adequate passive attic ventilation to allow moisture to escape instead of condensing on cold sheathing under the roof.

In summary, wall insulation properly installed by a qualified contractor can have significant benefits for the old house with few drawbacks. A savings of \$100-\$600 per year in heating costs (dependent on fuel and efficiency, average heated temperature and size of house), increased fire resistance, improved comfort, increased ability to use a setback thermostat effectively, and sound deadening are the chief benefits.

- Roger Harris

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CAN YOU GUESS? continued from page 2

In this old postcard view, we enter from Lyman Street into this fabulous Victorian train station! This station served Springfield until the hundreds of trains each day were too much for it to handle and a replacement was built. You can still see the original wall, which was later built higher when the station was moved to the other side.

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The Springfield Preservation Trust

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