

# THE PRESERVATIONIST

Newsletter of  
THE SPRINGFIELD PRESERVATION TRUST

Fall 2000

*The Springfield Preservation Trust is a not for profit, all volunteer organization dedicated to the preservation of Springfield's historic and architecturally significant architecture.*

## HISTORIC RIDGEWOOD SHOWS OFF HIDDEN TREASURES

Historic Ridgewood was the focus of the SPT's spring walking tour, "Springfield's Hidden Treasures". The tour featured 3 private houses and 2 penthouses on Ridgewood Place, Ridgewood Terrace and Mulberry Street along with the SPT's most recent rehab project on Stebbins Street in the Old Hill. The tour was punctuated with original floral designs in each of the homes created by area florists specifically for the Spring Historic Homes Tour.



*SPT Board Member Marilyn Sutin and longtime SPT supporter George Pooler enjoy a turn on the dance floor at the Summer Sock Hop hosted by Marc & Mary Prince.*

The Ridgewood Historic District features some of Springfield's most magnificent residential architecture, primarily designed by architect G. Wood Taylor, from the turn of the last century, which was built for some of the city's most prominent business families. (The former Steiger mansion (Steiger's Dept Stores) and the former Wallace mansion (Forbes & Wallace Dept Stores) are both located in the district.)

Also open for the tour were two penthouses in the Mulberry House on Mulberry Street. The Mulberry House is a vintage 1950's "American Modern" apartment house. Both penthouses featured terraces with sweeping views of Springfield and offer a rare view of 1950's American Modern urban dwellings.

A special feature of the tour was an open house at 59 Stebbins Street in Springfield's Old Hill Neighborhood. The Second French Empire house has one of the few true mansard roofs in Springfield and is the Trust's first rehab project in nearly a decade.

The SPT thanks the following florists for their generous participation in the "Hidden Treasures" Tour.

**PLEASE SEND THEM YOUR BUSINESS!!!**

Flowers, Flowers, Sumner & White in Springfield (Forest Park)

The Flower Box, 596 Carew Street, Springfield (Liberty Heights)

Durocher Florist, 184 Union Street, West Springfield

Westfield Flowers, 297 Elm Street, Westfield

## SAVE THE DATE — SPT Annual Meeting & Awards Ceremony

The SPT continues to look for interesting venues in which to hold its Annual Meeting and this year will not be an exception. This year's Annual Meeting and award ceremony is scheduled for Sunday November 19th at the Indian Orchard Mills in the Indian Orchard Neighborhood of Springfield. This former knitting mill is now home to 30 artist studios as well as several light industries. Several artists have agreed to open their studios on the day of the meeting, giving attendees an opportunity to meet with tenants of the mill and explore the property. The guest speaker will be John

Mullin, Professor of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning from the University of Massachusetts. Professor Mullin will present a talk on the New England Mill community.

Indian Orchard is undergoing revitalization and this year's Annual Meeting presents an opportunity to visit the neighborhood. Invitations to the Annual Meeting & Awards Ceremony will be postmarked the beginning of November. The cost of the ticket is \$20.00. See you in Indian Orchard.

## Springfield Then...



This semi urban setting pictures a well-known Springfield intersection in 1908. The right side of the photograph shows a factory and at the left electric streetcars travel up the dirt road. Note the horse drawn carriage and lone pedestrian at the center of the image, just below a mansion house, which sets atop the hill overlooking the thoroughfare.

What intersection in Springfield is this?




**DIANE FISHER, CBR**



**DeWolfe**  
*One stop and you're home.*

175 Dwight Road  
Longmeadow, MA 01106

(413) 567-0110  
24 Hour Voice Mail: (413) 846-0664  
Fax: (413) 567-9882  
E-Mail: [dfisher@javanet.com](mailto:dfisher@javanet.com)



**DANIEL STEZKO** (413) 732-8813  
758 SUMNER AVE., SPFLD., MA 01108 (1-800) 299-1382



**william j. devlin aia, inc.**  
**architect – springfield**  
**732·6197**

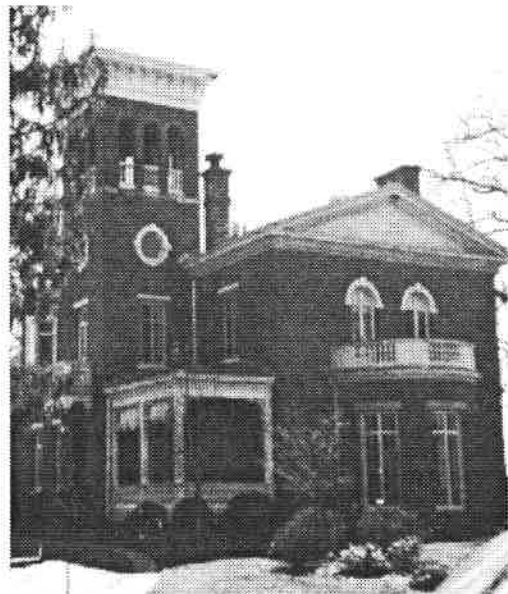
---

# MAPLE HILL TOUR GUIDE UNVEILED AT SPRING TOUR.

A guide to Maple Hill, Springfield's 19th Century "Gold Coast" was unveiled at the Spring House Tour. The walking guide covers 16 properties along and around Maple Street between Springfield Cemetery and the Mill River. The guide is free and can be found at any of the Tourist Information Centers located around Springfield.

## HOLYOKE PRESERVATION GROUP IS CHARTERED.

The city of Holyoke has been losing historic and architecturally significant buildings at an alarming rate over the last decade. When the Hotel Jess was threatened with demolition in 1999 a group of concerned citizens was prompted to form a private preservation group. Save Historic Holyoke Inc. was chartered this past spring. It is a not for profit development corporation which is dedicated to reversing the demolition trend in Holyoke center and developing some of Holyoke's older neighborhoods such as the Churchill neighborhood located off High and Maple Streets. Information about the group can be found on the web @buyholyokey.com.



## CONTACT YOUR SENATOR:

The Historic Homeownership Assistance Act is likely to pass in this session of congress. It provides owners of homes in moderate income historic districts with a tax credit of up to \$20,000 for home improvements. Qualifying neighborhoods must be designated as historic and not have a median household income more than twice the statewide median income. This bill has passed the house and has strong backing in the Senate.

The SPT urges its membership to contact our Senators in Washington regarding the Historic Homeownership Assistance Act.

The Honorable Edward M Kennedy  
U.S. Senator  
315 Senate Russell Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
202-224-4543  
fax 202-224-2417  
Error! Bookmark not defined.

The Honorable John F. Kerry  
U.S. Senator  
315 Senate Russell Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
202-224-2742  
fax 202-224-8525  
Error! Bookmark not defined.



**JAMES A. BOONE**  
SPECIALIZING IN HISTORIC HOMES

97 FLORIDA STREET  
SPRINGFIELD, MASS. 01109

OFF.: (413) 785-1636  
RES.: (413) 734-9110



**ROSEMARY MORIN**  
ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT,  
RETAIL AND MORTGAGE LENDING

HAMPDEN SAVINGS BANK  
19 HARRISON AVENUE  
P.O. BOX 2048  
SPRINGFIELD, MA 01102-2048

(413) 784-0541  
FAX (413) 747-7427

# TIPS FOR UPDATING PORCH RAILS

Porch railings are of course an important element wherever they are used; this is especially true in historic houses. When our grandparents' houses were built, porches were actively used for relaxing, entertaining, greeting the neighbors. Rails are a more prominent element than their size might suggest; light paint colors on a strong design, against the dark background of a shaded porch, can be a very prominent part of a house's appearance.

Many of the old railings were much lower than what current safety standards call for. Stairs/ steps/ ramps have a few more requirements, but "guard (rail)" design is fairly straightforward:

## 1 & 2 Family Houses:

36" rail height required where levels' differential exceeds 30". Maximum opening spacing shall not allow a 5" diameter sphere to pass (but 4" has been recommended for many years because small children can be strangled with a wider spacing).

## Most Other Uses, Include Houses With 3 of More Units

42" rail height. Required at all level changes. Maximum opening spacing shall not allow a 4" diameter sphere to pass.

We've all seen thousands of houses mindlessly butchered by people meeting these standards in the cheapest way possible. This usually occurs during a rehab project, or in response to a Code-violation citation. The typical approach is to build-up the top of the rail with scraps of treated wood. Even when the work is carefully done often the tall "empire-waist" rail looks ridiculous in relation to the overall height of the porch, especially where the rail is 42" high.

The way to address this problem is really very simple- Make the actual rail meet the required height, while its visual design does what it "wants" to do. The accompanying "tricks" illustrate some of the basic approaches to designing rails; their variations and combinations are of course endless.

## HOW DO YOU GET STARTED?

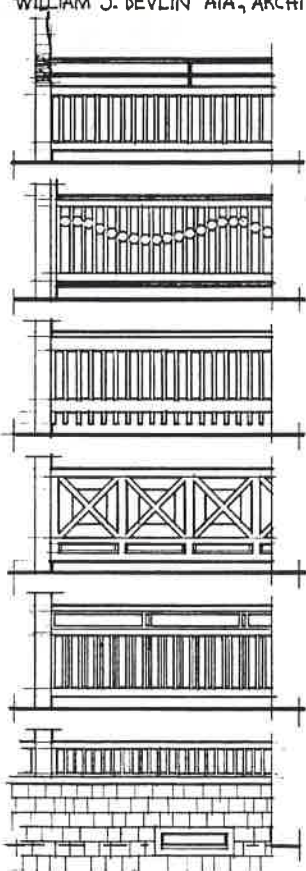
For both existing and new-construction projects, this usually works (for you alone or with design consultation):

1. Look at the building's design to see its "style", horizontal elements that need to be considered, proportions of porch roofs, etc.
2. Remember, "existing" is not necessarily "original". Look for evidence on the building of what might have been there, and look for historic photos, similar buildings nearby, etc.
3. Consider whether the rail wants to be a strong element over its entire height, or only part of its height. If, say, a 24"-high rail is being restored, everything above that height wants to visually disappear.
4. Is the existing rail in good condition, to remain? Or is all-new work needed? Select the "make-up" method to suit.
5. What is the skill level of the people doing the work? This could affect the approach taken (or the people used!).

*Thinking-out what the job wants  
can do wonders for the final result.*

## TRICKS FOR UPDATING PORCH RAILS

WILLIAM J. DEVLIN AIA, ARCHITECT      SPFLD., MA      JUNE 2000  
SEE ACCOMPANYING TEXT.



- 1 THICK OR THIN PIPE RAIL - PAINTED - OUT DARK TO FACE OR REAR OF POST. GOOD W/ ROUND POSTS.
- 2 RESTORE MAIN RAIL TO ORIG. HT. (OR DESIGN NEW RAIL TO HT. WHERE IT WANTS TO BE) MAKE UP REST OF REQ. HT. W/ PIPE RAIL ON TOP.
- 3 STEEPLY-SLOPED TOP SHEET WATER WELL. CAN DISCOURAGE SITTING & "LOSES" ONE INCH OF VISUAL HT.
- 4 STRONG DECORATIVE ELEMENT (SHOW: BALLS BTW. PICKETS) DISTRACTS THE EYE FROM HEIGHT.
- 5 RIB OR FIN ALONG BOTTOM - PAINTED - OUT DARK - "LOSES" ANOTHER COUPLE OF INCHES OF VISUAL HEIGHT.
- 6 BIG HORIZONTALS - 2x4s - 2x6s - "REDUCE" HEIGHT OF PICKETS "IN BETWEEN."
- 7 HOLD BOTTOM OF FRAME UP SEVERAL INCHES - LET PICKETS ALONE GO DN. TO 4" ABOVE FLOOR.
- 8 PROPORTION-OUT RAIL PATTERNS OF PANELS TO SUIT SPACE BETWEEN THE PORCH POSTS - THEN:
- 9 MAKE-UP THE DIFFERENCE WITH ONE BOTTOM - VERY GOOD CAN BE PANELLED (SHOWN) OR OTHERWISE DETAILED.
- 10 IN ALL-NEW RAIL SWITCH PATTERN AT TOP TO KEEP HEIGHT OF VERTICAL PICKETS SHORTER.
- 11 VARIED SPACING OF PLAIN VERTICALS ADDS INTEREST AND CAN REDUCE IMPACT OF EXTRA HEIGHT.
- 12 HAVE OPENWORK PART OF RAILING BE JUST ONE FOOT OR SO, LOCATED ON TOP OF:
- 13 SOLID WALL. USE PANELING OR SHINGLES OR OTHER SOLID MATERIAL TO RELATE TO HOUSE BODY.

## ...and Springfield Now



This photograph of the intersection of Mill St. & Belmont Ave., one of Springfield's major traffic arteries, was taken on a quiet winter morning without the traffic. The mansion has been replaced with apartment blocks and the streetcar tracks have long since been removed. The Mill River, of course which flows beneath this intersection through a stone tunnel which had already been built by the 1908.



297 ELM STREET, WESTFIELD, MA 01085  
413-572-4895

WILFRED STEBBINS • OWNER

### NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS

Jim Boone  
Wilfred Stebbins  
Marilyn Sutin  
Bill Devlin

### THOR CONSTRUCTION

Restoration & Remodeling  
Specialist

161 Florida Street  
Springfield, MA 01109

Hank Thorburn  
(413) 734-5546

HISTORIC HOMES TOUR GREAT NEIGHBORS

## Join THE FOREST PARK CIVIC ASSOCIATION

Send \$15 to: FPCA, Membership Chairperson  
P.O. Box 80841  
Springfield, MA 01138-0841

PROTECT NEIGHBORHOOD ZONING

TERRACE BEAUTIFICATION

ILLUMINATION NIGHT

FARMERS MARKET

Springfield Preservation Trust  
979 Main Street  
Springfield, MA 01103

NON PROFIT  
ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
SPRINGFIELD, MA  
PERMIT #219



# **“BORDERS ON THE PARK”**

## **A Tour of Forest Park Homes**

Saturday October 21st, 2000 – 1pm to 4pm

Tour includes homes in the Colony Hills,  
Forest Park Heights & Trafton Road Neighborhoods.

Call the SPT Voice Mail  
for information on tickets. 747-0656