

# The Preservationist

Newsletter of the Springfield  
Preservation Trust

Winter, 2005 • 979 Main Street, Springfield, MA 01103-2111 • 413-747-0656

## ANNUAL MEETING

February 27, 3-5 p.m.

All Springfield Preservation Trust members, guests and the public are invited to the Trust's Annual Meeting to be held on Sunday February 27, from 3-5 at the Alexander House at #19 and #21 Elliot Street.

The Annual Meeting of the Trust will be very special this year, as the Alexander House was recently moved. It was exciting to follow the incredible journey of this very important Historic House from State Street to Elliot Street this summer as its State Street site was being prepared for the new Federal Court House.

The Trust will be honored to have, as speaker, Joseph Corish of Historic New England (formerly SPNEA), the organization that owned the house through the time of its move. Joe is not only an expert on the history and architecture of the house - he is also the one who coordinated the move. He will share pictures and stories of how the house was brought to its new home.

Refreshments will be served.

**Inside this issue:**

*The Alexander House, built in 1811, is Springfield's oldest dated house still in recognizable form.*

*It was constructed by local builder Simon Sanborn, using designs by the noted architect Asher Benjamin*

*Occupants have included James Byers Jr.; Israel Trask, who helped negotiate the Louisiana Purchase; the artist Chester Harding; and Henry Alexander, Jr., Mayor of Springfield in 1863 and 1864.*

Welcome, new  
Historical Commission  
Members

Who is your favorite  
contractor?

Call to Action:  
Chestnut Street  
School

Thank you, STCC  
**and much more....**

## McKnight Twilight Tour

October 24, 2004:

Six homes visited...

Three hundred visitors!



Betty Griffin, enthusiast of the Springfield Preservation Trust tours, leads the way to tour the former Besse Mansion on Ingersoll Grove. (see below)

## Thank you, STCC

We would like to compliment and encourage President Ira Rubenzahl, the new President of Springfield Technical Community College, for taking an active interest in the historical buildings on the campus.

STCC was gifted with a very important historical asset, the former home of the Springfield Armory, when the college was founded. Many buildings have been restored, and sadly quite a few have been demolished.

STCC's recently announced initiative to restore and reuse three architecturally and historically significant structures is a great contribution to the community. The Cavalry Stables stand out, as they are the most significant example of that style of architecture in the country, and most deserving of preservation.

The recent restoration of the Armory's oldest building, Building 11, signified a new commitment to the school's architectural heritage. We look forward to the French Second Empire style Officer's Quarters at the southwest corner of the campus being added to the restoration list.

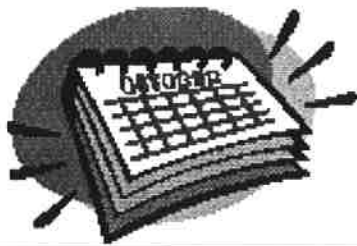
Thank you, President Rubenzahl, for your forward thinking, and for your interest in preserving the architectural and historical integrity of the STCC campus.

## Autumn Twilight Tour

The Trust's annual "McKnight Twilight Tour" was held on Sunday, October 24 and featured six homes within easy walking distance of one another.

More than 300 people viewed houses that ranged from the 1880's Besse and Adams mansions - two of the largest homes in the district - to a compact 1947 Cape designed by the noted architect Barry Wills.

Also open were an 1885 Victorian, a 1912 Colonial Revival, and a 1928 Tudor Revival.



Please mark  
your calendar

SPT exhibit and awards  
will highlight  
National Preservation Month

From May 1st to 21st, at Tower Square, the Springfield Preservation Trust will present its annual display of significant examples of rehabilitated, endangered, restored, notable, new, and stewardship buildings for public enjoyment and edification. The annual awards in each category will be announced on May 10th at a public reception, at which time the Champion Award recipient will also be honored. You are most cordially invited to attend.

## A Call to Save Chestnut Street School

The Republican reported on December 14 that the Chestnut Street School was going to be closed for safety reasons and that all its programs would be moved to other locations. This architecturally and historically significant building has been left to deteriorate over the last 40 years. Once again, we are threatened with the loss of a valuable asset due to lack of maintenance, always the first item to be cut and deferred.

The Trust has written to the Mayor and encouraged him to immediately have Requests for Proposals put out for redevelopment of the Chestnut Street School. Among other schools redeveloped in Springfield have been Classical, Myrtle St., Acushnet Ave., Jefferson Ave., Tapley and Morris - all made into housing - and the original Cathedral High School that now houses the Catholic Diocese.

Time is of the essence so that Chestnut Street does not suffer the same ravages of nature and vandalism that befell Technical High School, and led to its demolition. The community cares a lot for this school. It should and will be saved.

# *How You Can Protect Our Historic Districts*

The Springfield Historical Commission is the body that hears requests for changes to the exterior of properties in the historic districts and gives or denies permission to ensure that each district's guidelines are followed. It is important that we, as citizens, help this all-volunteer commission be aware of what is going on.

If you observe, for example, work going on in an historic district that is inappropriate, such as:

- window replacement
- vinyl siding installation
- porches being enclosed, altered or removed
- fencing in front of the property line
- satellite dish installation

or anything else that does not seem in keeping with the district, please call the Planning Dept. at 787-6020, and let them know.

If it turns out that the homeowner has been given permission to do the work, the Planning Dept. will be able to tell you. If not, Dept. staff will have the homeowner cease work until they can come before the Commission.

If we are to protect what we have worked so hard to achieve with our Historic Districts, we must all pitch in to ensure their integrity.

*\*These citizen reports are confidential.\**

*Newsletter editor: Diana M. Henry*

Heartfelt thanks for articles contributed to this issue by Sarah Murray, Jim Boone, Bob McCarroll, Paula Schindlecker, Bob Holbrook and photos by Diane Fisher.

## *New and Returning Historical Commission*

To improve communication with the public, to educate the public about the historic Districts and to enforce the guidelines for each.

- Bob McCarroll, our SPT designated representative and a former city planner who lives in the Quadrangle-Mattoon District
- Maria Acuna, realtor representative
- Ralph Slate, designated from Historic New England (the organization formerly known as SPNEA), who lives in Forest Park Heights
- Joseph Devenuto, who lives in the Maple Heights Historic District and is active with the South End neighborhood
- Tom Belton and Marjorie Guess remain on the Commission
- Architect Steve Jablonski, who was recently elected Chairman, has resigned.

### *Come to Historical Commission*

*meetings, held on the first and third Thursdays of the month at*

*6:30 on the second floor of*

*City Hall, and support their*

*good work. For info: 787-6020*

[www.springfieldplanning.org](http://www.springfieldplanning.org)

## WNEC intern sponsored by SPT at City Hall

Springfield Preservation Trust (SPT), the City of Springfield's Planning Department and Western New England College (WNEC) have joined forces to sponsor an intern.

Amanda Curtin, a History major, is busy four 1/2 days per week at City Hall, with support and office space in the Planning Dept. Her SPT mentors are Bob McCarroll and Paula Schindlecker, while History Professor Jonathan Beagle is coordinating her requirements for WNEC.



Our intern is scanning in Works Progress Administration (WPA) files from the 1930's, including photos, and adding them to the Geographic Information System (GIS).

Thanks to Amanda's efforts, this record will now be far easier for the public to access. Hopefully, the WPA records for all historical districts within the city will eventually be input to the GIS. We also hope th this will be the beginning of a long relationship with the Career Center at WNEC.

**Do you have a question?  
....Or a suggestion?**

Is there a subject about Preservation or Restoration or the History of Springfield that you would like to see addressed in a program or workshop given by the SPT? This is your organization, and we want to speak to your interests. Please let us know by message at 747-0656, or drop us a note.

### A Reminder to Members:

We invite you to attend our monthly Board meetings, held every first Wednesday to the month at 7 p.m. at the Hampden Bank on Harrison at Main. Please call 747-0656 if you are planning to come, just to confirm that there has not been a change of location. Your input is welcome.

### Helping Restore Springfield's Architectural Environment Preservation Trust Membership

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City, Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

*General Membership: \$30  
Patron: \$60 Sponsor: \$120  
Benefactor: \$200*

All members receive discounts to Trust events. **Patrons** receive one coupon for a complimentary tour ticket. **Sponsors** receive two coupons. **Benefactors** receive two coupons plus a copy of *Homes of the City* video produced by the Springfield Preservation Trust. Contributions are tax-deductible to the amount allowed by law. Please make check payable and mail to:  
Springfield Preservation Trust  
979 Main Street  
Springfield, MA 01103-2111

## Do you know good contractors?

As a service to our members and the community, the Trust wants to put together a list of quality, honest contractors who can and will work on our wonderful old houses. We need electricians and painters, roofers wallpaper hangers, carpenters, - and anyone else you can think of. To recommend them, please fill out and send this form to Jim Boone, 97 Florida St., Springfield, 01109 or call him at 734-9110. We'll follow up with each contractor for permission to list them.

•Contractor's name      • Phone number:

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•Expertise:

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•Address:

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•What they did for you or that you know of:

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•Were you satisfied?

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## Winter & Spring Festivities

Trees, gourmet food and drink were the theme for the January Springfield Preservation Trust holiday fundraiser held at Bob and Robert's store and condominium at the Kimball.

From the front door of the grand lobby of the old hotel you were taken on a winter celebration stroll through halls lined with trees and decorations.

This unique home was filled with beautiful trees decorated in different themes - there had to be ten or more trees.

The many SPT members and guests in attendance all had a wonderful time. Please come to the next holiday function - you will not be disappointed!

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Stay tuned for news of an Atwater area tour, still in the planning stage for spring. If you know anyone there who might like to open or if you would like to help on the tour, please call Bob McCarroll at 736-0629.

Springfield Preservation Trust, Inc.  
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