



**December 2007**

## **SPRINGFIELD PRESERVATION TRUST, INC**

74 Walnut Street, Springfield, MA 01105  
Telephone Number – 413-747-0656

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

Dedicated to Preserving Springfield's Architectural History

### **Trust Law Suit Settled**

The Springfield Preservation Trust has concluded its lawsuit against the Dioceses of Springfield and the Springfield Library and Museums Association. The suit originated because of the 2001 demolition of the Donahue House on Chestnut Street (which was gifted to the Library and Museums Association), and addressed the issue of whether property acquired by the Dioceses or S.L.M.A. after the formation of the Quadrangle Mattoon Street Historic District in 1972 would automatically receive the exemption from the Historic District controls that were originally given their properties when the District was started.

This Trust took the case all the way to the State Supreme Court, challenging the original exemption of all their properties from the District rules, as well as the issue of rescinding the exemption of future property acquisitions.

The final ruling protected the original exemption as given in 1972 but struck down the assumption that any further acquisition of property would also be exempt. This was a very important victory for preservation and results in the remainder of the Historic District being fully protected from any change of status and threatened demolitions through acquisition.

The Museum Association has made a generous \$10,000 contribution to the Springfield Preservation Trust to further our good work in the area of Historic Preservation. The Museums Association has also welcomed the Trust's input on architectural displays in the Connecticut Valley Historical Museum. The Trust looks forward to working with the Museum Association in the future by furthering Historic Preservation and appreciation throughout the City.

The Trust thanks all of its members and supporters for their generous support over the years that have allowed us to be able to pursue important legal issues when they arise. It is this advocacy work that protects our historic resources and makes the Trust the respected Preservation group that it is.

### **Save the Date**



The Springfield Preservations Trust's Annual Winter Fundraiser will be held on Saturday, January 26<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. at the home of Ed Sims and Paul Kenney, 179 Clarendon Street. This year's party will feature a tapas menu accompanied by Spanish beers and wines.

The 1894 Shingle Style house was built for Lillian, the only daughter of William McKnight. She married G. Wood Taylor, a young Boston architect who may have designed this house. Taylor worked closely with his father-in-law on the development of the Forest Park Heights and Ridgewood areas. Of special interest to many will be the vast collection of Santa figures as well as the lavishly decorated Christmas trees that adorn several rooms in the home.

Tickets are \$35 and are available by calling 747-0656. If you would prefer to pay by credit card, please visit our website at [www.springfieldpreservationtrust.org](http://www.springfieldpreservationtrust.org).

### **Atwater House Tour**

The Trust sponsored its first house tour in the Atwater Park area in nineteen years on October 21. Five Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival houses built between 1903 and 1931 were open. Additionally, the home of the twentieth century impressionist painter Harriet Randall Lumis could be viewed from the outside along with its grounds while one of her paintings was on display on the front porch. Saint Matthew's Cemetery, the oldest Catholic burial grounds in Springfield, was also open. Board member Michael Marcinkewich provided an inventory list of graves.

Thanks go to the owners who shard their homes: Melinda Phelps, Jeanne LaLancette, Brian Connors & Ben Murphy, Todd Markwell & David Bovat, Paula Shindeldecker, and Joan Jasinski.

## **The City of Homes Receives Regional and National Attention**

The November issue of *US Airways Magazine* included a feature article about Springfield with a prominent photograph of SPT member Ed Zuckerman's Queen Anne house in McKnight and a mention of <http://www.choosespringfieldmass.com/>, a web site launched by SPT members Bob McCarroll and Erica Walch to promote living in the city.

*Living Spaces*, a new publication showcasing residential design in Western Massachusetts and Northern Connecticut, recently ran an article about the Queen Anne home of Jim and Merry Boone in McKnight. Jim, by the way, was honored on November 26 with a City Council proclamation recognizing his many years of dedication to historic preservation in Springfield.

Local artist Marke Kregeloh has created an interesting note card featuring SPT board member Michael Noonan's restored home at 81 Mulberry Street. Cards are for sale at the Springfield Museum Welcome Center.

## **World Class Web Site**

This summer saw the launch of a new web site, [www.ChooseSpringfieldMass.com](http://www.ChooseSpringfieldMass.com), which was designed to encourage more middle-class home ownership in Springfield. SPT members Bob McCarroll, Erica Walch, and Brian Connors worked together to make the site a reality, and people from several city neighborhoods have volunteered to promote their neighborhood on the site.

The idea for the project was Bob McCarroll's, and it was an idea he had been trying to bring to fruition for several years. The group worked together to create content for the site, interview people for the "Faces of Springfield" feature, and photograph homes and other points of interest throughout the city.

The web site features selected homes for sale (mostly in the \$200,000+ category), recent sales of spectacular homes, arts and entertainment highlights, Springfield amenities, short descriptions of several neighborhoods, FAQs about relocation, and some of the city's hidden gems. The "Faces of Springfield" pages showcase some people who have purchased homes in the city in the past 5 years or so. The interviewees discuss why they chose Springfield and what they love about their new city.

Response to the web site has been overwhelmingly positive, and it has been featured in articles in the *Springfield Republican*, the *US Airways* in-flight magazine '*Attache*', and the *Boston Globe*. People from other areas of the country who are considering relocating here have contacted the Choose Springfield volunteers and the group hopes to be able to report new Springfield residents as a result of the site in the next year.

The site is part of a multi-pronged approach to encouraging more middle-class resident homeowners in Springfield. Employers and realtors are encouraged to make use of the site by sharing it with people relocating to the Western Mass/Northern CT area for work, retirement, or change of pace. SPT members who would like to help can forward a link to the site to the HR directors of any local employers and asking them to encourage new hires to consider homeownership in Springfield.

## **EDITORIAL**

### **St. Joseph's Church**

Springfield has been fortunate enough to escape the specter of church demolition over the past 20 years, one all-too-familiar in nearby Holyoke (the ornate, Gothic Immaculate Conception) or Chicopee (the 1842 Chicopee Falls United Methodist Church). However, that has recently changed with the sad announcement of the pending demolition of St. Joseph's Church on William Street to make way for the construction of a retail commercial center.

Although the South End of Springfield is better known for its Italian heritage, a significant French presence there resulted in St. Joseph's parish being founded in 1871. The William Street church was built over the course of several years, starting in 1873 (parishioners worshiped in the roofed-in basement of the under-construction building) and finishing in 1877. The attached school was constructed circa 1883. Faced with dwindling attendance, the school was closed in 1997 and the church was closed 2005.

There is no chance to save St. Joseph's church. It is not in a local historic district. It does not have a preservation restriction on it. Springfield has no demolition delay bylaw that could offer a "cooling off" period while reuse is explored. A private developer has a plan and a demolition permit in hand.

We must instead use this loss to look to the future, to stop the next building from coming down. We can't afford to sit back and wait for an angelic developer to come forth and save our historic structures. We have to identify properties that are threatened even before they are boarded up and abandoned. We need to find avenues to receive preservation restrictions on churches that are not in local historic districts. We must seek out parties interested in adaptive reuse of historic properties, or even create such groups ourselves.

Finally, it is imperative that we impress upon our political leaders and the general public that preservation beyond properties that have unique architecture or some other special significance is vital to this city. There is little outcry over St. Joseph's because it is the least architecturally significant of our downtown churches, and

because it does not hold as important a place in people's hearts as the Old First Church.

But Springfield does not derive a benefit from just a handful of preserved buildings; it derives a benefit from the overall fabric of preserved buildings woven across our landscape. If we let that disintegrate, we lose an important distinguishing characteristic of our city.

By Ralph Slate, Springfield Historic Commission

### Speakers Bureau

As an ongoing effort to bring the good news of Historic Preservation to the people of Springfield, Jim Boone gave a talk on November 7th to more than 50 participants of the Learning in Latter Life program sponsored by Springfield College. The program was held at Reeds Landing Retirement Community and a number of residents also joined the group. The Trust's Video **Homes of the City** was shown followed by pictures of the City's Historic Districts, interiors of a number of restored Springfield homes and then a visual tour of the McKnight Neighborhood where almost all the styles of architecture in Springfield are represented. If you are a member of a group that is interested in such a presentation, please contact the Trust.

### Victorian Society in America visits Springfield

Springfield threw open its doors figuratively and literally over the Columbus Day weekend to welcome a group from the Victorian Society in America. More than 50 of its members stayed at the Sheraton during a three-day study tour of the Pioneer Valley. SPT board member Bob Holbrook arranged for the VSA national board meeting in the Hotel Kimball ballroom while SPT board member Bob McCarroll organized a "mobile" opening reception at four homes on Mattoon Street and an open house featuring eight of McKnight's large homes. The VSA contingent also visited the Springfield Museums and four of the Victorian-era churches while on a Downtown walking tour led by Bob.

Tour organizers said they received more positive feedback from their members on this study tour than any tour in recent years. The SPT is now considering targeted marketing to preservation and museums groups who might be interested in tours focusing on Victorian heritage.

Want to help preserve Springfield's built environment? Join our organization and become a vital part of the movement to preserve our built environment and promote our architectural heritage.

- **(\$30) Household** - Includes discounted admission to Trust events
- **(\$60) Patron** - Includes discounted admission to Trust events and one complimentary event ticket
- **(\$120) Sponsor** - Includes discounted admission to Trust events, two complimentary events tickets and an architectural guide
- **(\$200) Benefactor** - Includes discounted admission to Trust events, two complimentary tickets and a Trust produced video titled "Homes of the City"

As per your request, two levels of lifetime membership are now being offered

- **(\$300) Lifetime Household** - Includes discounted admission to Trust events
- **(\$600) Lifetime Patron** - Includes one complimentary event ticket per year in addition to discounted admission to Trust events

### Monthly Meetings

Monthly meetings of the Springfield Preservation Trust are held on the first Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m., at the Mason Wright Retirement Center, 74 Walnut Street. All Trust members are welcome.

Newsletter contributors:

Jim Boone  
Erica Walch  
Linda Langevin  
Ralph Slate  
Bob McCarroll  
Michael Marcinkewich, photography

Marilyn Sutin, Editor