



SPRINGFIELD PRESERVATION TRUST, INC

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Dedicated to Preserving Springfield's Architectural History

July 2009

77 Maple Street

This is SPT's first rehab project in several years, and probably it's "nerviest"!

Construction was completed in May on a small area of footing in the cellar which needed immediate attention. This area, which we refer to as the "hole", will next receive some overall "hole" repair. This is a section of wall on the south side of the "main ell" (circa 1860?), and a small part of the main building (1832), which failed due to a previous owner's construction error. This will be done as "structural-only" work, to stabilize the building, get it enclosed against the weather, and to help with security. It includes rescuing some windows, removing and rebuilding masonry walls, leveling and re-anchoring ell floors and roof, adding some framing at the roof, re-installing windows, plus some miscellaneous related repairs. An option is to re-open an old hatchway in that area.

For the "hole" work, Architectural "Construction Documents" (Drawings and Specifications) are under way while the SPT's Building Committee is working on the paperwork for the CDBG funding. This includes a "Request for Qualifications" for interested General Contractors (GC); who may then bid on the actual construction.

The final phase would be a complete rehabbing of the building as a multi-family with 4 apartments as condominium units. State and Federal laws now require that first-floor units be handicapped-accessible.



During our Maple St. Historic House Tour on May 17th, 77 was a big hit. Since the building is gutted, people got unusual views of its interior, floor-to-floor and through multiple walls. Attractions included a membership table, a large poster, 10 signs about elements of the framing etc., some drawings and photos, Jim Boone pitching the job at the front door, and one VERY enthusiastic docent pointing-out features. It's a GREAT project for "before" pictures!

2009 House Tours



The annual spring house tour on May 17th focused on the historic Maple Street area. Homes ranged from the 1832 Female Seminary (see previous article) to a 1989 Wyndhurst condo. The tour included some interesting linkages. It featured the 1873 High Victorian Gothic South Congregational Church and the 1876 Stick-style Mill Street home of the church's second minister, Rev. Samuel Buckingham. It also included the 77 Maple Street home of Frederick Harris, President of the Third National Bank, and 270 Maple Street, home of his son, also Frederick Harris, and a subsequent president of Third national Bank. Other homes included a 1907 Tudor Revival, an 1897 Queen Anne, and a 1926 Tudor Revival.

Despite the cool, overcast day, approximately 220 people purchased tickets for the tour. Following the tour a reception was held for all home owners and volunteers at the 80 Maple Street home of new owner, Steve Shultis.

Special thanks go to participating home owners: Raymon and Patricia Ray, Derek and Rhonda Lewis, Timothy Fitzpatrick and Martha Moriarty, David and

Kathryn Gibson, Thomas Valentine, William Duquette, and South Congregational Church.

With the spring tour over, the Board has turned its attention to organizing the October 18 annual autumn house tour which will focus on the Longhill Street area of Forest Park. Several homes have already agreed to open. If you know of anyone who might be interested in participating, contact Bob McCarroll at 736-0629 or bobmccarroll@juno.com

2009 Preservation Awards

Every year the Springfield Preservation Trust's Preservation Award Ceremony showcases the great work in preservation that has been completed in the past year in the City of Springfield. The event honors the people and organizations that are helping to restore and preserve Springfield's historic resources. This year there were 12 awards representing removal of artificial siding, restoration of dilapidated homes, and continued stewardship of historic buildings. The awards ceremony was held at Tower Square on June 17th. The SPT board of directors was joined by awardees and other guests to present the awards.

It's important to recognize historic preservation projects because they are significant economic engines that promote tourism, creates unique places that foster civic beauty and community pride, and help stabilize property values. In other parts of the country, communities can only dream of having the wonderful collection of historic assets that are found in Springfield. Through heritage tourism and adaptive reuse, historic preservation is a valuable tool in economic development and must be at the forefront of the renewal of the City of Springfield.

The following is the list of the 2009 award recipients who have invested their time and money in lovingly restoring and maintaining the architectural integrity of their property and preserving it for generations to come.

2009 Preservation Award Recipients

98 Amherst Street, Carlo Delizia: This deteriorated two family house was beautifully restored inside and out.

50 Buckingham Street, Dwaine Clarke: This abandoned home was deteriorated when it was restored.

118 Carew Street, St. Peter & St. Paul Russian Orthodox Church, Father Michael: This prominent building continues to be beautifully maintained; most recently three onion domes were re-gilded in gold leaf.

69 Clarendon Street, Ruby Long: This home was appropriately reshingled.

49 Florentine Gardens, Samuel & Alison Stonefield: The shingles were both restored and replaced and decorative shingles restored.

71 Ingersol Grove, Richard & Jamie Gray: A side porch that had been missing was rebuilt to appropriately match the front porch of this home.

Oak Grove Cemetery: The grounds and structures of this landmark landscape have been wonderfully maintained throughout the years.

192 Saint James Avenue, Jessica & Julie Soba: Inappropriate siding was removed, the old siding repaired, and railings on the porch restored to their original look.

344 Saint James Avenue, Michael Begley: Artificial siding was removed and the exterior was restored.

73 Saint James Avenue, Dan & Margaret Kiohnfelder: This home's exterior was completely restored. Missing brackets were restored and the front porch was rebuilt to match the style of the house.

273 State Street, Atty. Frank Pelligrino: This International style building across the street from the new Federal Courthouse was refurbished to its original luster.

81 Walnut Street, Mary Spruell: This apartment block has been well maintained over the years.

Who were the McKnight's?

John and William McKnight were brothers and came from central New York in the 1850's to work as clerks in a dry goods store. During the 1860's the brothers were partners in several different stores and finally started a company in 1866 called McKnight, Norton and Hawley. They ran this business throughout the 1870's.

In 1870 the McKnight's partnered with Theodore Haynes (whose brother Tilly owned the Haynes Hotel and the Haynes Music Hall) and bought 22 acres of land between Thompson, Catherine and Bay. It had been the farm of Josiah Flagg. They each built big houses on State Street. John's house, the former Byron's Funeral Home, is the only one left.

Economic times were tough in the 1870's so only Thompson, Westminster, Buckingham and Sherman Streets were laid out. As things improved in 1880, they purchased land north of Bay St from Colonel James Thompson and development really took off. New streets got set off, parks planned, houses built and land sold to others to build houses to the McKnight's specifications.

During the 1880's, more land was bought going north all the way to the railroad tracks. These new streets were

named after famous, high status colleges: Yale, Princeton, Vassar, Amherst, Cornell, Harvard, Wellesley, and Dartmouth. During the 1880's, the McKnight's averaged 35 houses per year, costing \$3000 - \$8000 to build. The properties were sold for \$3500-\$10,000 with a few in the \$10,000-\$20,000 range.

Most of the McKnight's building was done by the early 1890's and they moved on to develop Ridgewood and then parts of Forest Park. But it is "McKnight" that they are remembered for and it remains the largest, intact wood frame neighborhood in New England. People who live in McKnight are proud of their heritage and name sake. They are from "McKnight", not Hill McKnight (the Hill is on the south side of State Street). We honor these builders by calling this neighborhood by its real name.

This history of McKnight comes from research done when the neighborhood was made a Historic District. If there are special areas of interest you want to know more about, email Jim Boone at jimboone@hotmail.com

Bing! Arts Center

The Bing! Arts Center (yes, it apparently was named after Mr. Crosby) is moving along. The Bing! Theatre opened in 1950, with about 900 seats. Most of its lower, front area was built as Cossaboom's Garage in 1919 and was subject to neglect from early-on. Many of us have fond memories of attending movies there over the years. Sadly; the blue clock was vandalized when the building was vacant.

About 15 years ago, the Bing Movie Theatre closed its doors and ultimately the City took it for taxes. A few years later, the City named a Preferred Developer to rehab it, but nothing ever happened until about 7 years ago when another RFP led to the naming of X-Main St. Corp. as Preferred Developer. With Brian Hale (Design Workshop, Gallery 137) in charge, forward progress was not going to be a problem.

After zoning issues were resolved with the City, a new roof was put on the front area of the building. Fencing went in to protect the rear yard area and most of the exterior was painted. Continuing vandalism is an issue, but good maintenance has kept it looking good.

Finally, a modest project was started to open-up the front area for smaller events. The 2 storefronts are to be galleries, the lavatories rehabbed, an X-Main/Management Office provided, the concession area upgraded, and the central area to be an events/gathering space. The BIG project, involving the theater space, is a future project. A small "tunnel" was built through the theater for a second means of egress from the front space. The current work had State funding, but at about 90% completion, the money disappeared in the big cuts late last year. Brian Hale has held 2 more fund-raisers, AT THE BING! in late January and just

recently on June 20th. That was a nice, well-attended affair, with artworks on display and for sale, a silent auction, a jazz combo, 2 wine stations, 4 food locations, and media on-site. The new Marquee sign (by Design Workshop) is in place, and the lights were on! Very nice!

Second Saturday Walking Tours

The Springfield Museums and Armory-Quadrangle Civic Association are again putting on a great series of walking tours.

The tours are held the Second Saturday of every month from April through November. The tours happen rain or shine, and begin at 10:30 AM and end around noon. Tours start and finish at the Springfield Museums Welcome Center on Edwards Street (*please note – NOT in October). The tour admission is \$5.00 per person, but it is free for AQCA or Springfield Museums members.

Upcoming Tours:

July 11: Steve Shultis, historian and SPT member, on the Spanish influence in downtown Springfield.

August 8: Henry Duffy, from the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, on Saint-Gaudens in Springfield. Tour will include the Puritan, Stearns Square, and the Saint-Gaudens bas relief in the Springfield Cemetery. Not to be missed!

September 12: Brian Connors, SPT member from Springfield's Office of Economic Development and Planning, will be updating us on the State Street Corridor project. We'll see what's been done and what is to come. This is the weekend of the Mattoon Street Arts Festival – two great events in one weekend!

October 10: John O'Connor, historian and genealogist extraordinaire, will take us on a tour through the Springfield Cemetery. Because this is the opening weekend of the new Museum of Springfield History, parking will be at the Springfield Cemetery, NOT at the Museums' Welcome Center.

November 14: Gloria Russell, art historian, will talk about some of the more famous painters who have spent time in Springfield; Chester Harding, Whistler, and more!

This is the third year of offering these wonderful walking tours. We'd love to have you join us! If you are interested in leading a tour next year, or if you have suggestions for future tours, please contact SPT member Erica Walch at eiwalch@verizon.net.

Mattoon Street Arts Festival

The 37th Mattoon Street Arts Festival will take place on Saturday and Sunday, September 12th and 13th. This year's festival features over 80 exhibitors selling handcrafted items from soap to sculpture and salsa to scarves. There's something for everyone; food, strolling un-amplified musicians, and the popular "Hidden Gardens of Mattoon Street" tour. It's a great place to get all your holiday shopping done while supporting local artists. The festival runs from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM both days. There is ample free parking, and no admission fee. Find out more at www.MattoonFestival.org.

The Springfield Preservation Trust will have a table at the festival. If you would like to volunteer, please send an email to info@springfieldpreservationtrust.org.

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.

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