

# THE PRESERVATIONIST

Newsletter of  
THE SPRINGFIELD PRESERVATION TRUST

Winter 1998

## TECH HIGH SCHOOL UPDATE

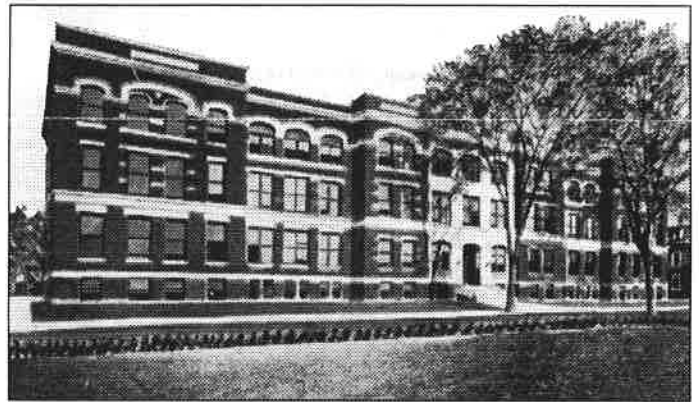
It was just about a year ago that several items appeared in the Springfield Union News that led readers to believe that the demolition of the Technical High School Complex was near at hand. In fact, a local civic group, the Armory-Quadrangle Association, had publicly spoken in favor of demolition of the blighted building if some sort of development for the property did not materialize. Then fire struck one of the adjacent annex buildings in 1997, which seemed to be a sure sign that the 1905 structure would not make it to its centennial.

However, in the last months of 1997 a group of concerned citizens and members of local government gathered for a series of several meetings to discuss the future of the Tech High School Building. Led by City Council President Bill Foley, members of the SPT, the Springfield Historic Commission and Bishop Joseph McGuire (the Tech property is located directly across the street and adjacent to St. Michael's Cathedral and the Diocese's offices) agreed that the loss of the building would be detrimental to the neighborhood, part of the Quadrangle-Mattoon historic district.

Although Tech was a functioning building when it closed over a decade ago, it has suffered damage from exposure to the elements caused by the neglect of its sometimes absent landlord, the City of Springfield. Certainly, the economic priorities of the past three or four mayoral administrations did not allow for major renovation or extensive maintenance of the Tech complex. However, the simple patching of holes in the roof and slightly better security would have prevented the damage that has been caused by the exposure to rain and snow. Mayor Albano, who has included demolition of blighted buildings as part of Springfield's revitalization plan has to his credit recognized the significance of the building and has been quoted as expressing hope that a new use can be found for it.

At this time the reuse of the Technical Complex depends on Springfield City government, as owners of the property, to take some very specific actions to support its verbal inter-

est in rehab and reuse of Tech. To begin, the City must step up to the plate and make some badly needed repairs to button up the building from the elements. Besides the obvious benefits of strengthening the structure, this action would also show some serious commitment by the City to save the complex. With the building properly mothballed, a serious marketing effort and search for a developer can begin. The SPT has already committed funds to the City to help support a marketing effort.



*Tech High School*

It does not make sense at this time to even consider demolition of Tech. The recovery of Springfield's economy seems to be at hand. The Museum & Library Association and the Diocese of Springfield, both neighbors of the Tech complex, have made major investments in their properties in the last year, signaling their own commitments to the metro center neighborhood. And the recent property sales on Mattoon and Elliot Streets shows a renewed interest in living downtown. Clearly, for Springfield to spend nearly 1 million dollars (which was the approximate cost of demolishing the Hotel Charles) to demolish the complex, when it can possibly market the property and put it back on the tax registers, does not make sense.

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# The Who, What and Where of the Springfield Historic Commission.

Springfield is fortunate to have more than one active preservation group working to preserve its built environment. One such group is the Springfield Historic Commission. The commission, chartered in 1972, is the official overseer of Springfield's historic districts and individually registered properties. The group of seven Commissioners are appointed by the sitting Mayor. The Greater Board of Realtors and the American Institute of Architects, along with the SPT, are allowed to nominate names for appointment, while the remaining seats are filled by mayoral choices. Property owners wishing to make changes to buildings located within historic districts must go before the commissioners for permission to make changes that will be visible to the public from the street. The Historic Commission will also, on occasion, take a more pro active role in policing districts as they did several years ago during the demolition of a house on historic Mulberry Street. The historic commissioners are scheduled to meet monthly, and their meetings are open to the general public. If your property is located in one of Springfield's historic districts and you would like more information about district guidelines, you can write to the Springfield Historic Commission at City Hall, 36 Court Street, Springfield, MA 01103 or to find out the date of the next meeting call 413-787-6020.

## Current members of the Springfield Historic Commission

Thomas Belton	Stephen Jablonski
Lydia Blazquez	Dot Lortie
Ron Carle*	Justine Williams
Frances Gagnon, sitting chairperson	

\*Current SPT seat.




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# CAN YOU GUESS

*from back cover*

The Massasoit House was the finest hotel in Springfield in its day. It's register was replete with famous people and its convenient location near the railroad station made it ideal. The formal, older building to the right was not sufficient for the growing demand for hotel accommodations, so a much larger four story addition was built to the left.



*The Massasoit House*



*The New Massasoit House*

There still was not enough room, so the older building was torn down and a new one added in its place. With the addition, there was added a new facade that incorporated the previous addition, thus making one grander structure with retail shops along the street front. In a 1914 visit to Springfield, J.M. Thayer wrote to a friend written from the Massasoit House that "Springfield has changed so much, grown so fast, I hardly know the place (since) I left 12 years ago." There was, however, yet one more transformation to me made to the hotel.

The Paramount Theater was built in the rear of the Massasoit House, and its entrance and lobby were put in where there had once been store fronts. Eventually, the hotel was converted into office space. Today in the old section of the building, you can still see the marble fireplaces from the old hotel.



*The Paramount Theater*

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# Annual Meeting Celebrates 25 Years of Preservation in Springfield.

Over 75 SPT members and guests joined the SPT Board of Directors for the Annual Meeting and Preservation Awards Ceremony this past November. The focus of last years meeting was the twenty fifth anniversary of the Springfield Preservation Trust. The meeting was held in the lobby of the Community Music School (former Shawmut Bank) on State Street. Guests enjoyed a seasonal buffet, served atop former banking piers along the center of the lobby, while enjoying the music of the CMS's faculty.

SPT president Wilfred Stebbins gave a brief overview of the preservation movement in Springfield, pointing out some of the highlights of the last 25 years then the membership voted the slate of officers elected by the Board at the November 1st Director's meeting.

The 1997 Preservation Awards were presented by Jim Boone, a longtime member of the SPT, and a local historian. The presentation began with a detailed slide presentation of the SPT's successes and failures since its inception in 1972, including photographs of several of the houses that the SPT rehabbed during the middle 1980's.

## The 1997 Preservation Awards

Nominees for awards come from the SPT membership. The slate of nominees is traditionally presented at the September Board Meeting and voted upon at the October Board Meeting by the SPT Board of Directors. Nominees do not have to be located within a historic district, but structures must be located within Springfield, and must be either historically or architecturally significant to Springfield's built environment.

Award for Careful Stewardship

*Trinity United Methodist Church, 361 Sumner Avenue*

Award for Careful Stewardship

*Baymeadow Apartments, 100 Baymeadow Road*

Award for Residential Rehab

*Jennifer Gowdy for 56 Harvard Street*

Award for Residential Rehab

*Hank & Fawzia Thorburn, for 161 Florida Street*

Award for Reuse

*Springfield Housing Authority for the reuse of the Memorial Parish House, Memorial Square*

Award for Removal of Artificial Siding

*Alan Agnitti & Sandra Collins, removal of siding from 161 Longhill Street*

Award for Rehab, Renovation & Continuing Use

*Springfield Museum & Library Associate for Blake House, Edwards Street*

Award for Sensitive New Construction

*William Disisto & Lisa Houlihan, 34 Pineywoods Avenue*

Award for Sensitive New Construction

*St. Michael's Cathedral for 260 State Street*

Donald E. Campion Award for Preservation Excellence

*Marilyn Sutin, for nearly two decades of unflinching dedication to historic and architectural preservation in Springfield.*




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## Join the SPT and Help Keep the Spirit of Preservation Alive in Springfield!

The SPT is always looking for new members who would be interested in working on one of our events. The Spring & Autumn Historic Homes Tour, the Quarterly Newsletter, the summer outing and many advocacy issues all require volunteer resources to make them a success. If you or someone you know is interested in historic preservation and would like to make a difference in Springfield's built environment, call the SPT Voicemail at 413-747-0656 or come to one of our Board Meetings.

The Springfield Preservation Trust is a not for profit, all volunteer, private organization dedicated to the preservation of Springfield's historic and architecturally built environment. The SPT meets the first Wednesday of each month in the former board room of the Wesson Memorial Hospital at the South Campus of Baystate Medical Center. If you would like more information about our meetings call 413-747-0656 or write to

The Springfield Preservation Trust  
979 Main Street  
Springfield, MA 01105

## Twilight Tour A Sparkling Success

More than four hundred people, undeterred by wet and windy weather, attended the Trust's "Twilight Tour of McKnight". The event took place between 4 pm and 7 pm on Sunday, November 1, and featured six grand houses clustered around stately Dartmouth Terrace.

McKnight has one of the best collections of late Victorian houses in all of New England. The walking tour featured some of its most outstanding homes gently illuminated by candles and subdued electric lights. Elaborately carved pumpkins donated by Maggie Brace decorated the porches. The six houses, dating from 1888 thorough 1908, represented some of the best examples of the Queen Anne, Shingle, and Colonial Revival styles in the region.

Thanks for sharing their homes go to Ed Sims and Paul Kenney, David Hall, Wilfred Stebbins, Bill Guzzy and Ted Devanski, Wayne Gates and Tom Potorski, and Larry Slezak

and Judy Bowerman. Proceeds from the event have financed a second printing of the Trust's walking/driving guide to McKnight. If any members would like a copy of the guide, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the Trust at 979 Main Street, Springfield, MA 01103.

## Congress Considers Historic Home Assistance

Congress is still considering The Historic Home Ownership Assistance Act (House 1134 and Senate 496). If passed, the bill will provide federal income tax credits to owners who rehabilitate historic houses and then maintain residency for five years.

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 1,600 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 includes condominiums. In order to qualify, work would have to meet federal standards for historic rehabilitation and a threshold level of investment.

The bill has been stalled for several years because of the fear of significant tax revenue decrease. Preservation activists in Washington are attempting to show that not as much tax money would be lost as projected by some, and that many of the eligible historic districts are also in lower income areas.

Numerous historic commercial buildings in Springfield were renovated in the 1980's with the historic tax credit for income producing properties. A credit for owner-occupants should spark the same type of interest in our historic neighborhoods. Let Representative Richard Neal and Senator Edward Kennedy know that you support enactment of this important legislation.

## Maple Hill Tour Planned

A "High Tea on Maple Hill" walking tour is being planned for the first Sunday in May. The tour will highlight six homes in the Maple Hill historic district. Circle your calendars for the afternoon of May 3rd and stay tuned for more information.

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## 1998 Slate of Officers and Directors

President, Wilfred Stebbins  
Treasurer, Rosemary Morin  
VP Education, Ted Jarrett  
VP Advocacy, William Devlin  
Clerk, Annemarie Tucker

Board of Directors  
Marilyn Sutin  
Diane Fisher  
Hank Thorburn  
John Bellows  
Jim Boone  
Alicia Zoeller  
Dee Howe  
Tom Howe  
Bob McCarroll  
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## “CAN YOU GUESS”

Can you guess the address of this block of buildings from 19th century Springfield?