



# LANDMARKS LETTER



Can you guess the building this architectural detail is from? See *Elements* on page 2.

## The True Tale of Three Treasures on Chouteau

A Perspective by Julius K. Hunter

WHEN MY LONGTIME BUDDY and personal attorney, Richard Banks, recently relocated his law offices to the first floor of a quaint South St. Louis building, I learned that the floor above his space is currently occupied by the popular *Sauce Magazine*. And you might say that fact whetted my appetite to learn more about 1824-26 Chouteau Avenue.

Thus, armed with far more curiosity than credentials, I sought out the architectural savvy of a distinguished gentleman with masterful creds: Architect/Historian John C. Guenther, FAIA. On a fascinating virtual building inspection, John had me speaking the Romance Language of Italian Renaissance Revival in almost no time.

First up on this intriguingly unique “101” Course with the original 1824 Chouteau Avenue the focus, John first pointed out all the building’s alignments: the street level facades align as do the upper levels; the tower references the Italianate Villa style popular between 1830-1880; and the tower, by John’s observation, “calls attention to the main building entryway by aligning with the street-level facade.”

Even the uninitiated can see the name “KUENSTLER VEREIN” molded in the terra-cotta panels above the arched entryway. One can also see the building’s once finely cut ashlar base and a distinct belt course that defines the first and second floors. John pointed out how artists – creating or exhibiting – particularly love light streaming in from the north. The architrave framed windows give a classic period look to the building. There is a little balustrade at the second-floor setback. I’d always thought balustrades were at the roof level. But I learned the word “hybrid” can be folded into a description of the Kuenstler-Verein building with no disrespect.

Then John noticed something missing. The building’s original projecting cornice, like



*Johannes Schumacher, founding member and driving force behind the Kuenstler Verein  
(St. Louis Post Dispatch, 6/13/1895)*

that on the building just down the block at 1800 Chouteau is gone. This beautifully restored building designed by architect Fred Zimmerman played a key role in the Kuenstler Verein story. More on that later.

There are some stories floating around that the devastating “Cyclone of ‘96” ripped the cornice off the building that became 1824 Chouteau, but City Hall records indicate that the cornice was removed for safety sake in 1950 due to irreparable deterioration.

The original name of the building that is now 1824-26 Chouteau was the “KUENSTLER VEREIN.” Translated from the German, this means “Artistic Society – or Guild – or even Club.” As stated in its Constitution, the goal of the verein was to “broaden and strengthen creative art in St. Louis by means of a permanent exposition of selected paintings, etc. and by lectures, etc. on art and kindred subjects.” (The “et ceteras” are actually the literal language used in the Kuenstler Verein’s formal constitution to bring understatement to a new level.) Further, the Verein’s founding fathers expressed “hopes also to bring to the city from time to time, renowned works of the old as well as the modern masters.”

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## LANDMARKSLETTER

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## Elements

### ARCHITECT FRED ZIMMERMAN'S KUENSTLER VEREIN BUILDING

THE FOLLOWING  
DETAIL IS of the terra-  
cotta panels above the  
arched entryway of the  
KUENSTLER VEREIN.  
From the German,  
KUENSTLER VEREIN  
means Artists' Society –  
or Guild – or even Club.

For all the details,  
please see the article on  
pages 1, 4-5.



## Letter from the Director

Dear friends,

With things opening up, Landmarks' Board and staff look forward to seeing everyone in the summer and fall! We are starting to plan some tours and events and thanks to our amazing volunteers, the Downtown Walking Tour Program will be back up and running on June 19th (for more information and online reservations visit: [www.landmarkstours-stl.com](http://www.landmarkstours-stl.com)). We have been making steady progress on our new office and education complex in Soulard and we can't wait to get folks down to see these incredible buildings. Efforts to date are focused on repairing both stone and brick masonry and buttoning up the buildings against the elements. It's a BIG job, but worth it. Check out the chimney collapse in the front building's attic!



Chimney collapse

As the workers dig in, we learn more about the property each day. The building facing 9th Street (1805-07) was apparently hit by the 1896 tornado and significant portions were rebuilt with a mixture of "low-fired" interior wythe (inside the wall) brick and "high-fired" face brick as well as some "wasters" which were bricks that got too hot in the kiln and warped or ended up with a vitreous glaze. Given their age, all these materials are much softer than modern brick, but the bricks that were meant to be inside the wall were never meant to be exposed to the elements. As such, many parts of the walls are essentially turning back into clay and have to be removed and replaced!



Brace supporting the primary façade.

We speculate that this admixture of bricks may indicate that the building was repaired using salvaged material from other buildings in the area that were utterly destroyed by the "Great Cyclone." The differences between types of bricks, as well as the differences between "hand pressed" and more modern machine pressed bricks are among the lessons that the building itself will allow Landmarks to teach students about historic building materials.

As you may have seen, the front wall, which was bowing dangerously out over the street, has been supported with a massive brace to keep it from falling. This brace will allow the masons to carefully take the primary façade down and put it back up while properly tying it into the rest of the structure.





Rear "ell" portion of the front of the building with two types of stones

The rear "ell" portion of the front building has a first floor with walls constructed of limestone. Interestingly, one can see that the stone sections were constructed at two different times because of differences in the stone and the different wall heights. The western section (to the right in the photo above), which was the original one room cottage portion, has smaller softer stones which were likely carted from a nearby creek bed or rocky outcropping rather than sourced from a formal quarry. The eastern section has larger pieces of quarried stone that came from much deeper in the ground. The differences between the stones and the tales they tell are yet another teaching tool the new building provides.

While the interior of the building remains boarded and dark, preliminary investigations have revealed other interesting lessons about historic architectural technology. The frame components of the building are held together by various sizes and specialty use-forms of "cut" nails with their rectangular heads and shanks. As with modern "wire" nails with their round heads and shanks, there were many different types of cut nails that were used by carpenters for specific purposes.



A range of "cut" nails

Looking up at the second floor joists in the oldest section of the building, one can clearly see the vertical kerf marks of a reciprocating saw. The regularity of the marks indicate that it was probably cut by a steam-powered mill, the likes of which rose to a brief period of dominance in the area from around 1830 until switching over to circular saw blades after about 1850 (see "The Plouder House and the Evolution of Sawmill Technology in St. Louis" *Landmarks Letter* Vol. 51 #4)



Vertical kerf marks of a reciprocating saw, and hand planed subfloor boards

In the same photo, one can also see the marks of a hand plane on the irregularly sized subfloor boards.

A final interesting note with regard to preliminary discoveries in the "old" section of the home is the presence of a large wood-burning hearth that was converted for stove use at a later date. As so many of you who own old homes in St. Louis know, your narrow, shallow hearths were designed to burn coal. Coal was a superior heating source to wood; it was cheap, readily available, required a fraction of the tending of a wood fire, didn't generate creosote (obviating the need for chimney cleaning) and took up much less space than wood per BTU among other advantages.

The switch to coal was also in part driven by the expansion of the City and the logging off of nearby forests for a multitude of wood products. Nearby supplies of firewood became scarce while coal was a seemingly inexhaustible resource. If you see a wood burning fireplace in a historic home in St. Louis, you can bet that it was either constructed at a time when there were still enough trees nearby to make wood a viable fuel source (a very early home like Landmarks' cottage) or it was constructed at a much later date by a wealthy homeowner for the sake of ambiance. An example of the latter would be the magnificent wood-burning hearth that Charles Stockstrom had installed in his library in the Magic Chef Mansion (3400 Russell, constructed 1908).

Landmarks' Board and staff wish you all the best and stay tuned for announcements about upcoming activities. We hope to have our renovation project finished by fall or early winter and can't wait to welcome everyone in to see. **If you are interested in donating to support the renovation or discussing naming rights for rooms etc., please contact me directly: [aweil@landmarks-stl.org](mailto:aweil@landmarks-stl.org) or call the office at 314-421-6474.**

Sincerely,

Andrew B. Weil  
Executive Director





1820-24 Chouteau, The St. Louis Kuenstler Verein at center  
(note the terra cotta sign above the round arch entry).



1800 Chouteau (corner building), home of the Schumacher family in the 1880s

Photos by John Guenther, FAIA

John Guenther then pointed out to me something I might have missed: the building's unique signature identifiers. Check out the corner ornamental terra-cotta panels that frame the entryway and arch. They feature a stylistic compass, triangle, palette knives, brushes and arc. All the tools of master artists.

The charter members of the Kuenstler Verein were Johannes Schumacher, William W. Riess and Alfred Westermann. But the spearhead of the operation was, without a doubt, Herr Schumacher.

Born near Dresden, Germany in 1852, he followed in his father's brushstrokes by establishing an art school, studio and exhibit space in the city of his birth. Twenty to thirty students at a time studied art there. The course of study involved the students unabashedly copying the works of the Great Masters and selling facsimiles to cover materials and tuition.

Back to that corner building down the street east of the Kuenstler Verein at 1800 Chouteau. I particularly love the cast iron facade that is reminiscent of the mercantile buildings on the old Riverfront. This handsome structure is important to this story in that upon arriving in America in 1880 it became Schumacher's first St. Louis home in the heart of the welcoming

German community. He, his wife Maria, infant daughter Catherine and African American maid Nora Jones moved into the two upper floors of 1800 Chouteau in 1883. A second daughter Gertrude was born there and they all lived comfortably in the spacious 2,100 sq. ft. apartment on the second and third floors for ten years.

While living on the corner, Schumacher oversaw the construction of a modest, but spacious, studio/gallery next door to the west at 1820 Chouteau Avenue. By 1894, Schumacher and his cohorts were ready to take the art-lovers' interests to a higher level. On June 23 of that year, the group was formally incorporated as the "Art Union Palette". Acoustically-friendly music rooms were then added to the more formal Kuenstler Verein complex.

In 1895, once the headquarters building was in full operation, Schumacher and associates raised the impressive sum of \$25,000 (that's nearly \$783,000 in today's money); their goal: a grand European shopping spree! The energetic Schumacher set sail for a return to Europe to acquire art to display at the then new St. Louis Kuenstler Verein. The ambitious adventure allowed Schumacher to flash cash and influence talent in the artistic centers of Berlin, Frankfurt, Dusseldorf, Paris and Rome among other prime art havens.

The colorful impresario could promise all the European artists he approached sweet deals they could hardly refuse. He'd buy their pieces outright or take their works on consignment. He'd offer "spacious and well-lighted" galleries and studios." And in written contracts Schumacher guaranteed "the safe return of all loaned artworks FREE OF CHARGE!" Plus, the wheeler-dealer impresario promised to cover any damages to any objet d'art in "transport, storage or display." The boldest and riskiest of all promises was Schumacher & Company's solemn oath that the Kuenstler Verein buildings were absolutely "FIREPROOF!!!"

In March, 1895 the Kuenstler Verein's first major art exhibit featured more than 300 paintings and sculptures.

The Kuenstler Verein's contribution to classical music appreciation was also a major point of pride. In fact, the Mendelssohn Musical Society celebrated its Fourth Anniversary with a gala concert at Kuenstler Hall on May 27, 1894. This homage presentation was just 47 years after the composer's death. Pre-concert promotional material promised "a great many of the rising young musicians of the South Side and (a hall) in flourishing condition." The anniversary concert seemed to offer Mendelssohn musical delicacies ranging from "A to Z" – an ARIA for soprano, to a ZITHER duet. An additional concert treat served up was the St. Louis

debut of Mendelssohn's now-familiar, often-butchered *Wedding March*.

By 1904, the Kuenstler Verein's glow began to dim. Schumacher blamed the decline on excessive folderol over the World's Fair. In fact, when he failed to secure a proper permit to exhibit or sell art on the Fairgrounds, the deflated art teacher/dealer was relegated to peddling art out of a wagon on the Fair outskirts. Schumacher had seen the dark paint strokes on the wall. Just two years before the Fair opened, he hurriedly launched a company to manufacture and paint signature "unique" chinaware (immodestly, he named the product "Schunique.") The dishware venture cracked irreparably after just five years.

A deflated Schumacher packed up and moved to Decatur, Illinois where by 1911 he had achieved popular acclaim largely by affiliating his art school with Catholic convents and schools all across the nation in re-creating the influences on the arts he had exerted from his South St. Louis base. He passed away in November, 1927 and is buried in Calvary Cemetery.

But the Kuenstler Verein complex on Chouteau has been sustained by a long and variegated succession of respectable businesses that might have given a jolt to Johannes Schumacher's bravura . . . starting in 1907 with, of all enterprises:

"The Peter Geiger Overalls Company."

Then in 1915, the onetime art-centered Kuenstler Verein became home to the "Lafayette Brush Company." And thereafter:

- \* 1920 I.E. Raines Garment Company
- \* 1925 Missouri Barber Supply/Missouri Razor Strop Co.
- \* 1929 St. Louis Tent Company
- \* 1934 Chouteau Cooperative Mission/Allied War Vets
- \* 1939 Wright-Ferguson Dental Supply
- \* 1941 Atlas Office Furniture
- \* 1942–1997 Atlas Lithographing & Printing Co.
- \* 1998–2002 Druids Woodworking
- \* 2005 Structural Art, LLC

\* 2010 Weinbauer Financial Group

\* Weinbauer Attorneys, David Antognoli, Mark Goldenberg, Elizabeth Heller, Thomas Rosenfeld, Robert Rowland

Here's to the Kuenstler Verein's rich and historic contribution to the arts and to all the fine companies that have kept the wrecking ball far, far away.

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April, 2021

In addition to the enlightening observations provided by John C. Guenther, FAIA, the author wishes to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of the St. Louis Public Library, St. Louis County Library, The History Museum, The St. Louis Genealogical Society, St. Louis City Hall, Decatur Public Library, Landmarks Association and some dedicated preservationists.

Julius K. Hunter is a veteran award-winning broadcast and print journalist whose popular published works include bestselling perspectives on the great mansions of Kingsbury, Westmoreland and Portland Places

\* *Anzeiger des Westens*, May 1, 1892, Page 1

\* *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 23, 1894, Page 3

\* *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 13, 1895, P. 5

\* *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 7, 1894, Page 13

\* *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 4, 1895, Page 10

\* *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 13, 1895, Page 5

\* *St. Joseph News-Press/Gazette*, February 6, 1909, Page 5

\* *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 27, 1894, Page 13

\* *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 27, 1904, Page 54

\* *Decatur Daily Review*, March 30, 1928, Page 4

## "St. Louis' Movie Studio Row"

by Ron Elz



The Bonanza Theatre (right) at 2917 Olive Street



This 2-story building at 3203 Olive Street was built for the local home of Universal Pictures Film Exchange which became Universal-International.

IN THE EARLY TO MID-DECADES of the last century, cars, theaters and motion picture companies each had their own "row" in Midtown. For cars it was what's now known as "Historic Automobile Row" which is the stretch of Locust between 18th Street and Channing Avenue. Of the 2 dozen auto makers that had showrooms there were: Hupmobile, Packard, Studebaker, Nash, Peerless, Maxwell, Stutz, Moon, Locomobile, Marmon, Durant, Velie, and REO. Many of those buildings remain and are marked with plaques installed by the Horseless Carriage Club of Missouri and Hilliker Corporation. The street's well worth a visit and to make it even better, consider stopping in the Stutz building that's now home of The Fountain on Locust for a Johnny Rabbitt Monkey Malt.

Theater row was centered on Grand Boulevard from Lindell to Bell. There was the Odeon, Grand-Morgan, St. Louis (Powell Hall), Grand Central (New Grand Central), Missouri, Mid-Way, Fox, and the Princess (later named Rialto, Shubert-Rialto, Shubert, American, Loew's Mid-City, Sun Mid-City, and lastly Campus Mid-City). Plus the Empress was just off Grand in the 3600 block of Olive, and the Victoria which was west of Grand on the section of Delmar that's now Grandel Square. That theater would become the Liberty, Fox-Liberty, World, Club 400, Sun, Faith Tabernacle, Lyn . . . and again the Sun. Of those 10 the 3 that remain are Powell Hall, the Fox and the Sun.

Then there was the now almost forgotten "Movie Studio Row" located principally on Olive with a few places on Lindell west of where Olive veers to the right at Channing Avenue (Josephine Baker Boulevard). The dozens of studio and other film related firms were in the 2900 to 3300 blocks which made most of them parallel to the auto agencies and distributors a block north on Locust. According to the late Robert Johnson who represented several studios following the hey-day of "The Row," the studios selected their locations to be near the "Grand White Way" theaters and the downtown movie houses. Johnson's last offices were in the Humboldt Building at 539 N. Grand next to the Fox.

All photos by Katie Graebe, Landmarks

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Hall Walsh of Warner Brothers Studio with Natalie Wood at the Warner Brothers office on Olive.

Photo courtesy of the Missouri History Museum

Over the course of the 6 decades of "Movie Studio Row's" existence there were nearly 150 movie houses in metropolitan St. Louis of which many were "chain" operators with multiple locations, but that's a story for another time. For information on most of those theaters I suggest these websites: CinemaTreasures.com, CinemaTours.com., and stlouiscitytalk.com for "Ghosts of St. Louis Movie Theaters."

There were more than a few star-struck citizens who would hang around the movie studio offices in hopes of spotting a celebrity OR being spotted by a Hollywood talent scout. This was the case with singer-actress Marion Marlowe who as a girl would put on her Sunday best and parade before the studio offices in hopes of being "discovered," not realizing these studio satellites were merely distribution and marketing operations. Marion did have an entertainment career in early TV with Arthur Godfrey, a hit song "The Man in the Raincoat" and on stage. When she got to Hollywood she was Marilyn Monroe's room-mate.

One of the 3 prime places that remain on "The Row" are the 2-story buff and red brick building on the northwest corner of Compton and Olive at 3203-3205 Olive. Before the building was constructed, Paramount Pictures was at 3201 and then they moved to 2949 Olive. The 2-story building was built for the local home of Universal Pictures Film Exchange which became Universal-International. They stayed until the 1970s. Their building almost had a date with the wrecking ball but Harris-Stowe University came to the rescue and it's now being remade into an educational hall for the school.



The former Art Theatre at 3143 Olive Street

Photo by Katie Graebe, Landmarks

Then, just across the street at the northeast corner of Olive and Compton (3143 Olive) there's a one-story buff-colored brick building with black trim that today is home of the Barnard Rubber & Plastic Stamp Company, which was built as the local headquarters for RKO Radio Pictures. If you were able to see behind the Barnard sign above the entrance you'd see the letters RKO.

The west-coast studio-style structure housed a 115-seat screening room that was also used as a public movie theater between 1938 and 1952. It was first named "The Movies" and then "The Art Theatre." RKO also provided for film storage in a special fire-proof, temperature controlled vault . . . which is still there. The theater was also called the S'Renco Film Screening Company. The screening room was used to preview movies for theater operators, the media, and reviewers such as Myles Standish of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.

And S'Renco rented 16 and 35mm motion picture projectors and arranged for moving picture entertainments. A newspaper ad in the '40s proclaimed "Our little air-conditioned theater is available for sales meetings with all facilities." In the mid-'50s the building also housed the film distribution of Loew's Incorporated and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. M-G-M had been at 3010 then 3012 Olive dating to the 1920s. A nearby screening room, which was never used as a public theatre was in the Premier Film and Recording Studio's basement at 3029 Locust. It was operational from 1940 until 1985. The Fox Theater also had a basement screening room.

The 3rd significant place that remains is the only other movie house on "Movie Studio Row" – the 602-seat Bonanza at 2917 Olive. It shuttered decades ago and the old film equipment that remained was purchased by a Pennsylvania firm 17 years ago. It's now part of the Wellspen Brewery, and one of their beers is cleverly named "Bonanza."

The 2 dozen motion picture studio operations on "The Row" between the late 1920s to the late '60s will follow, and it's of interest to note some of the same addresses in the 3300 block have been listed in phone books and criss-cross directories as either Olive or Lindell:

Monogram Pictures – 3012 Olive

PRC (Producers Releasing Corporation/Pathe – 3206 Olive

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# The Downtown Clubhouse – A Historic Treasure

by Missouri Athletic Club



*Stately exterior of the Missouri Athletic Club at the corner of Washington and 4th Streets.*

*After the Missouri Athletic Club Preservation Foundation spent a half million dollars on the restoration of its building's historic exterior over the course of 2020, Landmarks wanted to highlight the institution and its steadfast commitment to Downtown St. Louis. As such, we invited the Club to submit a history of its presence at 4th and Washington.*

The spirit of the Missouri Athletic Club has stood the test of time. Over the course of more than 115 years, thousands of members and guests have taken part in the time-honored traditions of the Club and celebrated some of life's biggest moments together. Within the clubhouse walls, these same people have continuously fostered a decades-spanning spirit of camaraderie and friendship.

Many of these relationships began at Missouri Athletic Club's Downtown Clubhouse, an iconic 10-story structure at 4th and Washington streets that has been a key historical asset to downtown St. Louis since the first brick was laid in the summer of 1915.

But it wasn't an easy task to get to the initial brick-laying. Just a year prior, the original Missouri Athletic Club building, which opened in 1903, was destroyed in a fire. What hadn't been destroyed, though, was the morale of the Club's members and the tenacity of the acting Board of Governors. Just a few weeks after the blaze claimed the structure, they set about rebuilding what is still standing today.

Lauded local architects William Butts Ittner and George F. A. Bruggemann began the daunting task of creating a building type that was unknown to St. Louis at the time. The proposed structure would

need to house everything from athletic facilities to hotel rooms – and still look cohesive and architecturally beautiful both inside and out. They opted for an exterior design that clearly displays the different functions the building would contain, done in the Renaissance Revival style.

The first and second stories were done in Bedford limestone with decorative cornices, and the walls above are composed of red brick enriched with terracotta. Stately windows allowed guests dramatic views of the city and below Washington and 4th streets from the second and third floors. The windows drew the eye up to the remaining top floors, which were accentuated by a pattern done in bricks from Hydraulic Press Brick, the city's biggest brick manufacturer in the early 1900s.

Below the surface, the building's bones were framed in steel, with concrete floor slabs anchoring the structure into the ground. With the fire still fresh in their minds, Ittner and Bruggemann made sure wood was used only for doors, windows, ornamental work and gymnasium and banquet floors.

Construction of the new building was made possible through \$100 bonds, purchased by members. Some contributors, like Boatmen's Bank and brewer August Busch, went above and beyond, purchasing \$5,000 worth of bonds to kick off the financial campaign. When completed, the building cost \$1.2 million and satisfied the tricky task of combining form and function in a multi-purpose space.

As the cornerstone of the building was laid on June 15, 1915, a

*continued on pg. 8 >*



speaker at the ceremony is reported to have expounded on his hopes for the new clubhouse. According to an issue of the *St. Louis Republic*, A. J. Shapleigh, a hardware wholesaler and business leader, said that “this building when completed will be the superior of all of the athletic clubs in the United States or the world – except possible for that beautiful club in Los Angeles, California.”

The new Missouri Athletic Club facilities opened March 1, 1916, with a three-day celebration. According to records, 5,000 people attended the initial opening house event, and hundreds more attended a dinner dance the next evening.

They were likely wowed by the elegance of the building’s lobby, which to this day previews the grandeur of many other rooms of the MAC. Elegant flooring, done in grey marble squares, leads visitors through a stately wooden archway and into the main reception area. From there, members can access athletic spaces and dining and social areas.

One such space that’s been used for decades as one of the MAC’s biggest gathering spaces is the Missouri Room. This ballroom has hosted countless weddings, awards ceremonies, meetings and more, welcoming guests with its ornate ceiling, towering windows and sparkling chandeliers. Many details of the space were restored to their original beauty in the early 2000s, allowing guests to experience the classic room as it would’ve appeared in 1916.

Elsewhere in the Club, Ittner and Bruggemann’s state-of-the-art exterior design is mirrored internally, too, retaining the grandeur and character of its large public and athletic spaces from day one. The MAC quickly became a popular venue for socializing and entertainment among St. Louis businessmen, who admired the integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

The St. Louis Art League, too, recognized the significance of the building at the time it was built, acknowledging the Club with a certificate that commended the “best work in architecture executed in St. Louis during the year 1916 as exemplified in its Club Building at Washington Avenue and Fourth Street.” The award also honored the “civic spirit, community pride, and love of beauty” exhibited by the Club.

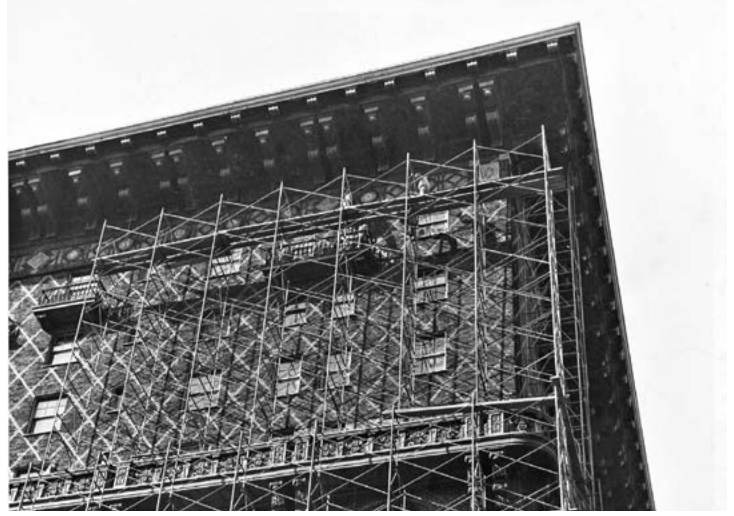
In the years since it opened in March 1916, the Downtown Clubhouse has welcomed thousands of guests through its doors to dine, celebrate and take part in countless athletic activities. Also, over the course of those years, the Club has made a variety of updates to its facilities to keep up with technology and meet the requests of its members.

These updates have included large projects like a sixth-story addition in 1927, a 1950 addition to house additional kitchen and office space, and extensive interior remodeling in 1959, along with periodic redecorating of guest rooms on the top floors to freshen up the design.

More recently, the Club underwent major renovations at both clubhouses’ fitness facilities that included equipment updates and converting spaces into more usable exercise rooms.

In 2007, the Missouri Athletic Club established the Preservation Foundation to focus on preserving the history and architecture of the Downtown Clubhouse. Between the spring and winter of 2020, the Foundation spent approximately \$500,000 to fully restore the exterior of the building once again demonstrating the MAC’s commitment to retaining a presence Downtown. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places by Landmarks Association that same year, joining the ranks of other St. Louis institutions like the Anheuser-Busch Brewery, the Eads Bridge, the Old Post Office, the Scott Joplin House and the Gateway Arch. The Downtown Clubhouse is also said to be the longest-running building still serving its original purpose in downtown St. Louis.

Andrew Weil, the executive director of the Landmarks Association of St. Louis, notes that over the decades the MAC building has thrived at 405 Washington Ave., as downtown has “transformed” around it.



*A photograph of the Downtown Clubhouse undergoing exterior renovation.*



*Architectural details of the MAC Downtown Clubhouse exterior.*

“Washington Avenue rose and fell as the city’s garment district. The department stores thrived for decades and then closed one by one. The riverfront was cleared and replaced with the Arch. The Chinese American neighborhood derisively referred to at the time as “Hop Alley” was cleared and replaced by another Busch Stadium. The streetcars—which once were the lifeblood of the central business district—were discontinued, and the shoe industry largely moved overseas. More than half a million people left St. Louis City. Through more than a century of change, the MAC has remained true to its roots, earning its reputation as one of our community’s most stalwart institutions and an icon of downtown.”

While the inside of the building may not appear exactly as it did when the doors first opened in 1916, the exterior and many details of the interior architecture and décor allude to the rich history of the Missouri Athletic Club and the decades of festivities that have taken place inside the celebrated building.





Illustration of the Missouri Athletic Club taken from an old postcard.

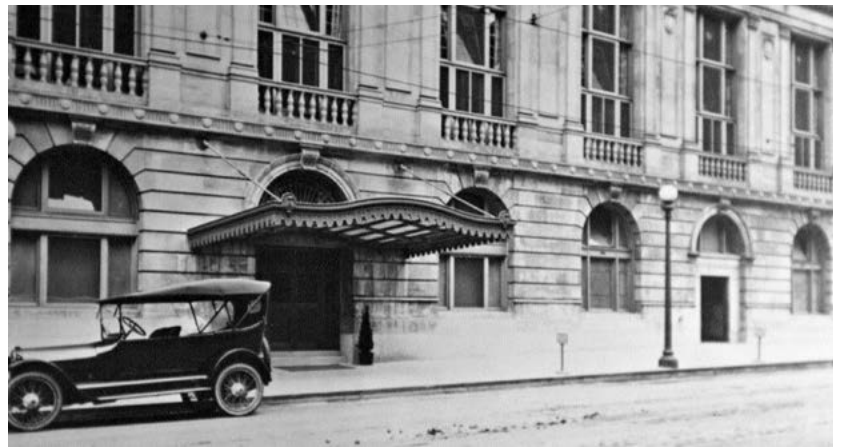


Image of the MAC Downtown Clubhouse exterior in the 1920s.



Present day MAC Downtown Clubhouse exterior with distinctive "Cherry Diamond" logo

## New Exhibit at the Eugene Field House Highlights Its Long History, Including Involvement of Landmarks Association

By Caira Stairns, Field House Museum

**MOMENTOUS MILESTONES** IS THE NEWEST EXHIBITION to open at the Field House Museum. It highlights the historic home's 175-year history, but primarily focuses on how the house was saved from demolition in the 1930s and its transformations through the years. What was once a popular destination for lovers of children's poetry and toys became a frequently passed hidden gem in the city, overshadowed by the neighboring ballpark. Yet this National Historic Landmark continues to thrive thanks to some dedicated individuals and organizations, including Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc., who assumed operations of the museum from 1968 to 1981. How exactly was this single rowhouse, originally one of twelve, saved from demolition and how did Landmarks, Inc. contribute to its success?

The Eugene Field Shrine opened on December 18, 1936 operated by the St. Louis Board of Education after having been saved from demolition in honor of Eugene Field, the "Children's Poet," who was born in the house in 1850. However, by 1967 the Board was looking to relinquish operation of the museum. Landmarks, Inc., recognizing its potential, chose to enter into a three-year contract where they would assume the day-to-day operations of the museum, but the Board of Education would pay for utilities, staff, and exterior upkeep while also retaining the title.

It was during this critical time in the Field House Museum's history that it went from a fading attraction to a truly self-sustaining and thriving museum. Landmarks, Inc. began with a full interior restoration of the home. Their efforts were praised in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, which boasted the home was "possibly in better condition than at any time in its long and interesting history."

The mission was also reevaluated at this time as Eugene Field's popularity had waned. It was decided to start a toy collection as the house was Eugene's childhood home and he himself collected toys during his lifetime. Upon reopening, a critical change was made when



Eugene Field House, circa 1940



Eugene Field House, present day

the first admission fee was set at 50 cents per adult and 25 cents per child. Not only did Landmarks, Inc. revive the museum, but it was also during their tenure that it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1981, Landmarks, Inc. relinquished the museum to the newly formed Eugene Field House Foundation. Thanks to those formative years, the museum continues to flourish, becoming a National Historic Landmark in 2007 and adding a museum expansion in 2016.

**To learn the full story of not only Landmarks, Inc.'s contributions, but also those made by countless others to the Field House Museum, you can explore *Momentous Milestones*\* on the third floor of the historic house through November 14, 2021. The Field House Museum is open Wednesday-Saturday, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, and Sunday noon to 4:00 pm. Admission is now \$10 for adults, \$5 for children 7-16, and free for children under 6. \*Please note, this particular exhibit is NOT handicap accessible as this National Historic Landmark does not have an elevator.**



# Forest Park Greenhouses, Forgotten Treasures

by Rebecca Clendenen



Central hallway between rows of greenhouses in Forest Park

ON AVERAGE MORE THAN 140 THOUSAND CARS pass the City Greenhouses in Forest Park on their daily commute down 64/40 each day, but what memories are called to mind as they do? Some think of the annual plant sale that city gardeners have hosted for residents since the beginning of the 20th century. Others might remember when the city school children took field trips to meet the city gardeners and learn about the greenhouses and the plant cultivation that takes place here. In recent history, these are the functions for which the City Greenhouses are most widely recognized. There is a much deeper history in this space as well, one that goes all the way back to 1895. As industrial air pollution began to choke the city in the late 19th century, the need for garden spaces that could offer respite from the coal-smoked air of cities increased the utility of greenhouses beyond the function of simple plant propagation.

In 1895 the City of St. Louis hired John Moritz to manage the newly built City Greenhouses in Forest Park. Moritz was a transplant from Europe where he had trained in horticulture at the gardens in Versailles. Moritz and a team of gardeners were tasked with propagating plants and trees for all of the city's parks. Under his leadership, the city's parks, gardens, greenhouses, and gardeners became nationally renowned. In St. Louis, Moritz was a familiar public figure that regularly invited the public into the greenhouses for flower shows that drew tens of thousands of visitors. His greenhouse gardeners also grew roses and delivered them to sick patients at the city hospitals, and each year they supplied lilies to local churches for their Easter celebrations.

In the 1920s, the Parks Commissioner lobbied the city for the budget to build one additional greenhouse each year and in so doing, the greenhouses expanded to accommodate the growth of the city's

parks. While Moritz retired in 1929, it was the immense public pride that his greenhouses had brought to the city which catalyzed the construction of a dedicated glasshouse for public shows in 1936. Indeed, while we all know this art deco building as the Jewel Box today, that name was actually borrowed from the earlier greenhouses that the public would visit during Moritz's tenure.

In 1963, the expansion of Highway 64/40 through the southernmost part of Forest Park required the demolition of half of the existing greenhouses. The greenhouses we see today were added to replace the capacity of these earlier structures. The historic records available indicate that the St. Louis architecture firm Rathman, Koelle and Carroll collaborated on the design with the world-famous glasshouse architecture firm Lord & Burnham, which was best known for building the greenhouses in Central Park and Golden Gate State Park.

The City Greenhouses in Forest park are first and foremost a productive space. The architecture will not likely take your breath away, but the building complex does bear marks of mid-century design. Time and deferred maintenance have reduced their capacity so that while city gardeners continue to propagate within them, broken glass panes and an outdated boiler system mean that they are only able to produce and store enough plants each year for Forest Park, Lafayette Park, and the gardens downtown and around City Hall. These limits are deeply felt across St. Louis neighborhood parks, some of which are little more than a bare patch of grass. Consequently, it is hoped that in coming years restoration and remediation of deferred maintenance will not only allow the greenhouses to retain their historic functions, but return to a level of productivity that will help to beautify more areas of the city and contribute to a sense of civic pride.





Structural detail of a greenhouse. Note the adjustable nets that filter sunlight.



Forest Park Greenhouse complex



Architectural detail of the internal structural system of the greenhouses



An empty greenhouse awaiting seedlings, and restoration



Young plants getting ready to beautify the City.



A view of the lush greenery propagated in the City Greenhouses in Forest Park.





## Questions and Answers with [then] Mayoral Candidate Tishaura Jones

**DURING THE RECENT MAYORAL CAMPAIGN, LANDMARKS ASSOCIATION PRESENTED A LIST OF PRESERVATION-RELATED QUESTIONS TO THE CANDIDATES. THESE ARE THE RESPONSES FROM (NOW) MAYOR TISHAURA JONES.**

SINCE 1959, LANDMARKS ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN ARGUING that the historic neighborhoods and beautiful buildings of St. Louis are both cultural and economic assets. Through the years, research has clearly shown that density of human-scaled environments, interesting historic architecture, and the integration of new buildings within existing urban matrices contribute to vibrant cities. **Given the billions of dollars of private investment that historic redevelopment projects have leveraged for St. Louis since the late 1990s, would your administration embrace economic development through historic preservation as a priority?**

JONES: I believe that development must happen with a community, not to a community, because the most important cultural asset we must protect in a community is its people. I am in support of embracing economic development through historic preservation, as long as the communities who seek development see that as a priority. Allowing the community to be the driving force of development in each neighborhood will protect their cultural and historical assets, while ensuring we are meeting the needs to help those people and those communities thrive.

Demolition by neglect is a huge problem in St. Louis. **What can the City do to ensure that property owners don't simply let their buildings become public safety hazards and eventually vacant lots?** Code enforcement measures don't seem to have the necessary teeth to tackle this pervasive problem.

Property owners have taken advantage of our passive approaches to the abandonment of buildings and lots throughout our city. These areas with numerous abandoned lots and buildings have become hot spots for dangerous crime and illegal dumping, this is furthering the public health crisis plaguing many neighborhoods in our city. As mayor, I will be

an active enforcer and problem solver pushing property owners to maintain and /or develop properties. We can not accept an approach that does not take action to make our communities safer.

The State and Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits (HTCs) have had a massive positive impact on the revitalization of many parts of St. Louis. Independent economic analyses have demonstrated that such programs both generate a net return on investment for the State and Federal Government while also helping to rebuild the tax base of struggling communities, improve community morale, attract follow-on investment, generate community pride, attract tourism etc. Unfortunately, the State credit is under constant threat in the Jefferson City.

### **1. How (or would) you work to defend the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit at the State level?**

Prior to serving as Treasurer, I was Assistant Minority Floor Leader in the Missouri House of Representatives. I stand ready to immediately use my legislative experience and relationships to help defend the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit. I have made it a point to regularly visit Jefferson City since departing the state legislature in efforts to maintain the relationships I built while serving. Between St. Louis and Kansas City, our urban centers, we contribute the majority of our state's GDP. Working with urban center executives we can band together to apply pressure and fight against the worst of what Jefferson City has to offer. Additionally, I will work with groups like the Landmarks Association and the Missouri Workforce Housing Association to educate rural legislators on how state tax credit programs positively impact their communities as well.

### **2. Would you consider exploring the creation of a St. Louis City Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit, or City historic preservation**



revolving fund (MANY precedents exist nationwide for the latter), or any other new mechanisms that would help build on the redevelopment momentum we already have, help spread that momentum into disinvested neighborhoods, and provide a hedge against anti-HTC actions by the state legislature in the future?

This concept is new to me, so I would be open to discussions on this issue so that I can learn more. I am not against additional development tools, as long as they are used responsibly and not just within the Central Corridor. As mayor, I want to leverage an array of development tools, including inclusionary zoning, which allows for developers to either set aside affordable units in their developments or contribute funds towards development in other areas. I also intend to restructure SLDC's priorities on steering development in this area.

**3. Considering that listing in the National Register of Historic Places is the prerequisite for Historic Tax Credit eligibility, would your administration consider allocating funds on an annual basis to support the creation of new National Register Historic Districts where possible within the City?**

My administration would absolutely be open to it if it proves to be a valuable tool for leveraging additional resources, and especially if this opens the doors for more state-level funding to support the revitalization of these historic districts. As I have said from the beginning, I want to ensure that any development and revitalization efforts don't take away the property taxes necessary for funding our public school system.

With very few exceptions, existing National Register Districts were created from the 1980s-early 2000s at the behest of Aldermen using CDBG funding. It has been years since any new National Register Districts have been created in St. Louis. Historic redevelopment is a major driver of economic activity in St. Louis. Ironically, many of the City's most beautiful neighborhoods and architectural treasures at one time had fallen into significant disrepair or even sat vacant for years or decades before their value and potential were once again recognized. The 1947 City Plan called for tearing down approximately 1/3 of the City including many of the neighborhoods that are the most valuable today. Neighborhoods have cycles of decline and resurgence. If we preemptively destroy them under the assumption that they will never come back, they certainly never will. We do not argue that every building can or should be saved, but current City policies and tax payer money, funds from private philanthropists, funds from utilities, and other forces are combining to pay for the decimation of historic neighborhoods (primarily on the north side) on a scale not seen in many decades.

**1. Does the current scale of demolition in North St. Louis concern you?**

Yes, to a degree. Decades of disinvestment have led us to this point, where structures are no longer stable enough to rehab. However, there are plenty more than can be saved, and I plan to ensure that the funds raised from Prop NS are invested properly to do the necessary rehabilitation work they were generated for. If we can preserve our beautiful historic buildings, we should.

**2. Do you see the current scale of demolition as a positive or negative step toward neighborhood revitalization?**

I see the scale of demolition as a sign of our city's intentional disinvestment in many neighborhoods. Demolishing homes and displacing families is not the sign of a healthy community. However, this can be an opportunity to encourage new

development that prioritizes the needs of the community, including reducing food and bank deserts, creating new recreational space, and affordable residential and commercial spaces so that everyone can live in and even start a business in their own neighborhoods.

**3. Would you be willing to reallocate a portion of existing demolition funds for stabilization/or rehabilitation so that there is financial parity between the two approaches in the City budget?**

I support reallocating some demolition funding towards stabilization and rehabilitation; however, I believe we can also strengthen other funding structures for stabilization and development such as revenue generated via Prop NS. We also have an opportunity to increase the amount of money that goes into the Affordable Housing Trust fund that we could dedicate towards stabilization, including home repair programs. Above all, we need to ensure these funds remove the barriers for the average homeowner to rehab their properties, and I believe city funding combined with putting pressure on our banking partners to support rehab efforts, especially in red-lined neighborhoods, is going to be key to bringing our neighborhoods back.

### School Buildings

St. Louis City School buildings are icons of our City's architecture. They are also public property, paid for by tax revenue. **While our organization understands the challenges facing the SLPS and the reality that schools need to be closed, what steps would you take to try to put closed schools into the hands of new owners as quickly as possible so that they are not destroyed by vandals while vacant?** The cost for a developer or community group to repurpose a City School building goes up exponentially when it is left to rot. Conversely, the sale price of the building plummets after it has been ransacked for scrap metal etc. Everybody loses when the schools sit vacant for prolonged periods of time.

The biggest disconnect in our city is that between our public schools and City Hall – including SLDC. As Mayor, I am dedicated to being an active rather than passive partner to SLPS so there is a tighter connection between development and our education system. This strengthened relationship will not only encourage a faster transition of a closed school building into a developer's hands, but it will keep SPLS from continuing to play a guessing game as to where development will be driven and where schools are going to be needed most. Having our school system active within the development strategy of the city will help the school system increase its student population and stabilize public education in the City of St. Louis.

### Preservation ordinance(s)

Having regularly attended meetings of the St. Louis City Preservation Board for 14 years and having spoken with many Commissioners as well as having known most Cultural Resources Staff during that time, I know that there are ambiguities and omissions within our existing preservation ordinances. **Would you support a review of the existing ordinances for clarity of definitions and procedures?**

Yes, I would support a review of current ordinances. There are many laws and ordinances in the city that are antiquated, including in the Charter, that need to be evaluated and preservation ordinances are no exception. As Mayor, everything will be on the table and questioned as to its relevance to operating a city in the 21st century, and I will have a seat at the table for anyone who is concerned about reforming these laws to reflect our current reality.

# Landmarks Association Membership

DECEMBER 1, 2020 – APRIL 30, 2021

## Dear friends,

As you know, Landmarks Association relies heavily on the support of our membership to meet our humble financial needs. We would like to thank you for your continuing support, and encourage you to pass this newsletter along to a friend with an invitation to join! Becoming a member is easy. Simply call the office at **314-421-6474** or visit **landmarks-stl.org** and click on the "join" tab.

*Thanks!*

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# 2021 STL City Heart Bomb

By Katie Graebe

THIS YEAR LANDMARKS URBANITES PARTNERED with the DeSales Young Ambassadors for our 2021 STL City Heart Bomb. They braved the negative temperatures to show their love for this City's buildings.

"Heart bombing" is a public display of love for historic sites and local landmarks. We bring our homemade valentines and pose for photographs in front of properties to bring attention to abandoned buildings and disinvested neighborhoods throughout the city.

The 2021 STL Heart Bomb took place on Saturday, February 13th, and the sites we visited included:

START: Fox Park Field House – 2716 Shenandoah Ave, St. Louis, MO 63104

1. 2347 Virginia Ave – St. Louis, MO 63104
2. Geyer Ave in Fox Park (2618, 2648, 2704-06, 2714)
3. Becker-Anthes House – 1111 Missouri Ave., St. Louis, MO 63104 (Lafayette Square)
4. 1501-1507 Monroe Street, St. Louis, MO 63106
5. Dunbar Elementary School – 1415 N Garrison Ave, St. Louis, MO 63106
6. Sumner High School – 4248 Cottage Ave, St. Louis, MO 63113



3. Becker-Anthes House at 1111 Missouri Avenue

"St. Louis' Movie Studio Row" continued from page 6

Tiffany Productions – 3209 Olive

Allied Artists, First National & Realart Pictures – 3212 Olive  
In the '60s Allied was at 3203 Olive and Realart was at 3301 Lindell.

Republic Pictures – 3220 Olive (earlier at 3214 Olive)

Warner Brothers Pictures and Vitagraph – 3304 Olive.  
They had been at 3214 Olive. By the '60s WB was at 3311 Lindell.

Columbia Pictures – 3306 Olive  
By the '60s Columbia was at 3310 Lindell.

Premier Pictures Corporation – 3308 Olive

Buena Vista & Walt Disney Productions – 3309 Olive  
In the '60s their address was 3314 Lindell.

Tiffany-Strahl Productions – 3318 Lindell (Rear)

United Artists – 3318 Olive, previously at 3328 Olive  
In the '60s the UA address was 3377 Lindell.

Superior Pictures – 3317 Olive.

Gotham and Progressive Pictures – 3320 Lindell

Gaumont British Pictures – 3330 Olive  
In the '60s Paramount Studios was at this address.

Grand National Films – 3334 Olive

Chesterfield Picture Corp. – 3335 Olive

American-International was in the Universal-International complex by 1964.

M-G-M in the '60s had moved to 3316 Lindell.

20th Century Fox & Fox Movie-Tone News was first at 3314 Olive then 3330 Olive. In the '60s the address was listed as 3330 Lindell.

Plus from the teens to the early seventies there were over a dozen other businesses related to the movie industry on "Movie Studio Row" such as: National Screen Service, C. S. Earnhart Motion Picture Supplies, St. Louis Movie Service Posters, Photoplay Movie Poster Rental Service, Educational Film Exchange of Missouri, and the U. S. Army Motion Picture Service. Embassy Pictures Corporation, M-G-M, and National General were at 539 N. Grand and Warner Brothers-7 Arts was at 1139 Olive.

By the end of the 1960s, the era of "The Row" was fading out and today only the Bonanza and Art Theaters, and the Universal Film Exchange remain.



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## Tribute to Henry Meade Summers, Jr. 3/12/36 – 5/26/21



MR. SUMMERS WAS A PAST PRESIDENT OF LANDMARKS ASSOCIATION, a great benefactor of our organization, and a champion for historic preservation in St. Louis and across the state. His abilities, passion, and generosity will be sorely missed.

*Below is the obituary for H. Meade Summers Jr. from the Lupton Chapel website.*

"Born March 12, 1936, and passed away on May 26, 2021, of a heart attack after a long illness. He was the son of H. Meade Summers, Sr. and Josephine Elizabeth Hicks Summers.

He is survived by his son, H. Meade Summers III and daughter, Elizabeth Summers Aladham and six grandchildren: Caitlin and Alexandra Aladham and Meade IV, Hollis, Avery and Piper Summers.

Mr. Summers grew up in Ladue, graduated from "Little Ladue" school now the Reed Elementary School, John Burroughs School '54, Brown University '58 and University of Michigan law school '61. He started his law practice at the firm of Thompson, Mitchell. His fraternity was Beta Theta Pi.

His volunteer work was in the area of historic preservation. He was an officer on the board of trustees of Landmarks Association of St. Louis and served as the President in the 1970s. He funded "The Meade Summers Jr. Award for Lifetime Contribution for Historic Preservation".

He served on the Board of Trustees of the Missouri Historical Society at the History Museum in the 1980s. He also served as Chairman of the Missouri State Bi-Centennial Commission.

He was an excellent singer and was a member of the Brown University Jabberwocks octet and other civic singing groups.

He shared his love of history and architecture with his children. In the 1970s he brought the importance of the St Louis Wainwright Building to then Governor Kit Bond, in order to have it saved and reused as a state office building as it continues to be used today.

Services: Due to the COVID-19 virus a memorial service will take place at a later date. Private interment at Bellefontaine Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts are requested to MICDS, 101 N. Warson Rd. 64124 or Landmarks Assoc. of St Louis, 3115 S. Grand Blvd., Suite 700, 63118."