

Preserving and
promoting the
architectural heritage of
St. Louis for over 50 years.

WINTER NEWSLETTER & ANNUAL APPEAL 2013



The Year in Review

2013 has been a year of collaboration for Landmarks Association. Throughout the year, we strove to create partnerships with the growing number of individuals, organizations and institutions that recognize the important role that historic preservation can play in enhancing the prosperity of a beautiful old city like St. Louis.

When Landmarks was formed more than fifty years ago, the number of organizations and people that were expressly concerned with the preservation of our region's architectural heritage was a fraction of what it is today. Fortunately, in the 21st century the clear voice of Landmarks



Association continues to be joined by a diverse chorus of people and organizations that recognize unique historic environments as valuable civic assets. The progress that has been made in the revitalization of many historic areas of the region in recent years has demonstrated beyond question that historic buildings and neighborhoods can attract investment, residents, businesses and tourism. Indeed

there is something close to a religion of adaptive reuse in St. Louis that has been gaining converts for decades; even in the darkest days of the recent recession, new lights continued to be lit in windows that had been dark for years.

Of course, the reason why people are flocking to the banner of preservation and adaptive reuse is because, surprise surprise, historic buildings are useful. Only in very rare instances are "preservationists" interested in keeping old buildings standing so that they can be examined and appreciated like objects in a museum. On the contrary, perhaps the most important underlying premise of preservation is the idea that historic buildings, even those that have been abandoned and neglected, can be made to serve the needs of current populations. Preservation can contribute to the health and vitality of a community, and should be employed in the service of the community. This is why Landmarks Association strives to create cooperative relationships with a wide variety of entities whose missions collectively make the St. Louis region a stronger, healthier, and more interesting place.

Opportunities to Opportunity

In 2013, Landmarks worked with museums and historical societies such as the Belleville Historical Society; the St. Stanislaus Seminary Museum Society; The Chatillon-DeMenil House; the Campbell House; the staff of the Missouri History Museum; members of the St. Louis Genealogical Society; and the St. Louis City Museum on programming, promotional activities and research initiatives. We also continued cross-promotional relationships with organizations such as Modern-StL, The Frank Lloyd Wright House at Ebsworth Park, the St. Louis Chapter - Society of Architectural Historians, the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, and the Sheldon Galleries to help keep the public informed about interesting activities..

We worked with representatives of Maryville University on tours, exhibits, and research. We worked with Washington University through a lecturer

appointment, special presentations, and by supporting student research projects. We worked with the University of Missouri-St. Louis by helping to plan and execute a neighborhood history class and by providing tours of St. Louis and current preservation issues. With the support of the Regional Arts Commission, we worked with primary and secondary schools including the Rockwood, Clayton, Ladue and Lindberg school districts as well as Mary Institute Country Day School and the Alberti summer program at Washington University. We reached continuing education and senior audiences by working with OASIS, and have been lending a helping hand in creating a creation of a non-profit organization focused on social services and raising awareness of African American historic sites at Tillies' Corner in the Jeff VanderLou neighborhood.

Increasing Our Visibility

We partnered with organizations such as Grand Center Inc., the St. Louis Regional Arts Commission; the Partnership for Downtown St. Louis; the Missouri Humanities Council; the National Park Service; the Gaslight Theater, and the St. Louis Public Library to create lecture series and exhibits. We worked closely with venerable institutions such as Bellefontaine Cemetery, the Ainad Shrine of East St. Louis, and the Missouri Athletic Club to document and protect their important architectural assets. We promoted our mission via media outlets including: the Nine Network, Distilled History, 88.1 KDHX Community Radio, 1120 KMOX CBS St. Louis, 90.7 KWMU St. Louis Public Radio, many of the major local television news stations, *the St. Louis Post Dispatch*, *The West End Word*, *the St. Louis Business Journal*, and *the Ladue News*.

Advocacy

We consulted closely with the Missouri Alliance for Historic Preservation and representatives of the St. Louis chapter of the American Institute of Architects on important policy issues. We worked with elected officials and the Missouri Alliance for Investment Jobs and Preservation (AIJP) to protect the State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit. We also provided preservation consulting services (both pro-bono and fee-based) to regional communities ranging from the congregation of the historic African American Salem Baptist Church in Alton, Illinois to municipalities such as the cities of Troy and Washington, Missouri.

Within the city limits of St. Louis, we secured National Register of Historic Places designations for nearly



two thousand buildings through the expansion of the Hyde Park Local Historic District, the creation of the Tower Grove East and Bevo Mill Commerical Historic Districts, and single site nominations such as the National Cash Register Building on Olive Street downtown. We also created an important historical context for understanding the architecture of mid-century manufacturing and distribution facilities that will make many future nominations possible. As always, we monitored the agendas and attended the meetings of the St. Louis City Preservation Board and maintained close contact with the City's Cultural Resources Office. Our library hosted researchers of all ages; our tours provided opportunities to explore the history and architecture of the region; our gallery hosted educational exhibits; our classroom hosted community meetings; and our Facebook page, website and e-mail alerts kept people up to date on preservation-related programming and calls to action.

A Resource for the Public

In addition to serving local residents, we also functioned as an ambassador for St. Louis' architecture for tourists and business travelers. Throughout



Egon Schwarz and Irene Lindgren receive an honorary Most Enhance Award for their home designed by Harris Armstrong

the year, we enjoyed a steady stream of inquiries and visitors to our office ranging from genealogical pilgrims to conventioners from the nearby America's Center. We even facilitated an architectural bus tour (led by our good friend Esley Hamilton) for a student group from Palermo, Italy, which was exploring the architecture and history of the Mississippi Valley.

Through the Most Enhanced Awards, which were generously hosted by the St. Louis Public Library, we honored the outstanding work of the people who perform the difficult task of putting St. Louis' historic buildings back together, literally. Through our Most Endangered List (prominently published by *the Post Dispatch* this past November) we worked to alert potential developers to opportunities to save some of the most iconic and threatened buildings in the area. In one case, we successfully matched a beautiful home that was slated for demolition with a new owner who has already begun rehabilitation work.

The wide reach of these collaborative efforts and the ready audience they find is a clear indicator of the extent to which residents of St. Louis are interested in protecting and celebrating our architectural heritage. In part, we believe that the growth in the preservation community since the founding

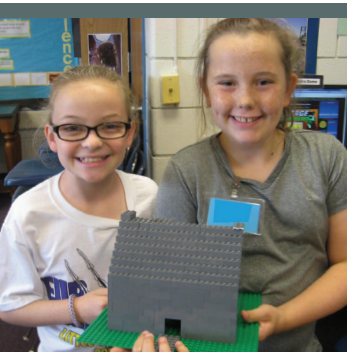
of Landmarks can be attributed to the simple fact that time has proven the intelligence of many early preservationist positions. For example, through the lens of time, we now see that the federally funded urban renewal projects that decimated several of St. Louis' historic neighborhoods and helped catalyze the creation of the local preservation movement in the mid- 20th century failed to achieve their goals. These experiments were designed to test the hypothesis that a city could demolish its way to prosperity, but the results proved the exact opposite.

The Path to Preservation Today

The scale of "make-work" and urban renewal projects like those that cleared the riverfront and decimated historic St. Louis neighborhoods such as Mill Creek and Desoto-Carr began to force a change in the way people thought about preservation. Prior to the mid-twentieth century, preservationists had largely focused their attention on protecting and memorializing sites with national significance. This led to the protection of iconic historical sites (i.e., those related to themes such as the "founding fathers," presidential and military history, places to significant to "mainstream" culture), but it did very little to preserve many aspects of history that we realize as highly significant today. The resources that early preservationists focused their attention on collectively told and reinforced a version of American history that in the second half of the 20th century began to come under fire for its largely mono-cultural perspective and tendency to focus on "great men" and the upper echelons of the socioeconomic spectrum. Critics charged that historians and preservation groups were actively creating an American historical mythology complete with a landscape of sacred sites and a pantheon of gods and heroes. Certainly, a lot of monuments had been erected, house museums created, and whitewash (both metaphorical and literal) applied. Through the selective focus on particular aspects of history (and the disproportionate protection of their associated sites), the depth and diversity of the larger American experience was being sacrificed on the altar of a tidy and coherent narrative. Urban planners and city leaders, intentionally or not, were supporting this trend by wiping entire neighborhoods that embodied cultural and historical diversity off the map.

The voices calling for the democratization of American history found many open ears in the 1960s. Increasingly people began to insist that their side of the story be told and as a result, a wide variety of buildings, neighborhoods, sites and landscapes – not just those associated with the prestigious few "greats," were pressed into service as carriers of the country's history and culture. The pool of historic preservationists grew accordingly.

The push toward the democratization of historical perspective in the 1960s and 70s spurred scholarship that began to focus on the historical experiences of racial and religious minorities, women, and people of varying economic means. In 1966, the creation of the National Register of Historic Places was authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act. Conceived as a mechanism by which Americans could evaluate, identify, and provide at least procedural protections for the country's historical and archaeological resources, the National Register was designed to meet places of historical significance on their own terms.



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Importantly, the criteria that this program created to evaluate buildings, sites and districts were deliberately made broad enough to incorporate the widest possible range of historical perspective as long as a persuasive and scholarly argument could be constructed for significance.



For example, buildings “associated with the lives of significant persons” or that “embodied the work of a master” were deemed eligible, but terms like “significant person” and “work of a master” were left purposefully undefined. Levels of significance within the National Register were also stratified vertically from local to state and national, which allowed communities of any size to identify and recognize the

histories that were significant to them. The National Register system and its ability to accommodate a diversity of perspectives played a crucial role in making the preservation movement accessible to a wider audience. It also had the happy effect of generating an efflorescence of historical and architectural scholarship that continues to this day.

Another evolution of the preservation movement in the 1960s involved the identification of strong links between preservation and environmental responsibility. While subjective arguments for preservation based on historical or architectural significance had largely dominated the conversation prior to this time, the rise of the environmental movement allowed preservationists to introduce science as an ally to their cause. In recent decades, arguments that framed the reuse of historic buildings as “recycling on a grand scale,” or illustrated how the re-occupation of abandoned core areas could reduce sprawl began to resonate with people who may not have previously identified themselves as preservationists. As environmental consciousness has become more common and society is increasingly concerned with the need to conserve energy, reduce pollution, and live sustainably, the adaptive reuse of functional buildings (aka historic preservation) has arrived as a mainstream idea. Today

because of this evolution, the field of historic preservation is concerned with the protection of buildings that embody important aspects of cultural heritage, as well as with sustainability and environmental stewardship. Perhaps the greatest opportunity to address these concerns lies in the movement’s ability to play a role in multidisciplinary strategies that are focused on returning prosperity (and residents) to older core areas.

Ideally this means that the field of historic preservation is becoming more proactive. Rather than simply reacting to proposed demolitions, the cause is clearly better served by working to create conditions in historic areas which render buildings too valuable and useful for demolition to make sense. In order for these conditions to exist however, historic areas have to be places where people want to live. This means that the goals of the preservation movement are inextricably tied to the overall stability and desirability of the communities in which historic buildings exist.

Landmarks Association has spent 2013 (and many years before it) building partnerships with a diverse range of organizations, institutions, and individuals who are all working in various ways to make our community a stronger and more desirable place to live, work and invest. Just as preservation is critical to the prosperity of the community, the prosperity of the community is critical to preservation.



Thank you!

In the coming year, (Landmarks’ 55th year of operation!), you can rely on us to continue to be a resource for the St. Louis region. Through scholarship, education, promotional activities, and community service we will continue to serve St. Louis and the outstanding architectural heritage of our entire region. Thank you for your continuing support.