



LANDMARKS
ASSOCIATION of SAINT LOUIS

LANDMARKS LETTER



BLOSSOM HOUSE: 5531 Enright Avenue

by Bill Seibert

DESIGNED BY ST. LOUIS architect Herbert W. Powers, the Blossom House at 5331 Enright (until 1917, Von Versen) Avenue was built for Mr. and Mrs. Dwight Blossom in 1910. It was situated on the southern part of the Blossom estate, a large property then bounded by Union Avenue on the east, Windermere Place on the north, Von Versen on the south, and the Smith Academy, predecessor of St. Louis Country Day School, on the west. The impressive 1851 mansion of Mr. Blossom's father, Howard, and grandfather Captain Chalmers Dwight Blossom stood just to the north on what are today the playing fields of Soldan High School. (It was razed in 1942.)

Dwight Blossom's grandfather and great uncle came to St. Louis from New York State in the antebellum period and made their respective fortunes first in the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers trade as owners and operators of steamboats; and later in the insurance business, eventually becoming controlling partners of "one of the largest insurance agencies

in the West," fittingly titled The Insurance Agency Company. Chalmers Blossom, his son Howard, and grandson Dwight were all congregants of William Greenleaf Eliot's Unitarian Church of the Messiah, which in 1907 located across Union Avenue from the Blossom estate. The church still stands today and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

For many years owned by the St. Louis Board of Education, the Blossom House was allowed to stand vacant and deteriorate before it was eventually sold to a developer a decade ago. Over the next ten years the property became completely derelict and was threatened with demolition in 2013. Landmarks members Bill Seibert and Michael Allen testified before the St. Louis Preservation Board, objecting to the proposed demolition and pointing out that the house was an extremely important contributing resource in the Visitation Park Certified Local Historic District; was eligible for State and Federal historic preservation tax credits; and was

Continued on page 3 >

Can you guess which building this architectural detail is from? Test your knowledge with our column, [Elements](#) on page 2.

IN THIS ISSUE >>

- 2 Elements
- 3 Tours
 - 4/11: Kinloch Telephone Company Exchange
 - 4/18: Most Holy Trinity Church and Divoll Branch Library
- 4-6 Most Endangered Buildings
- 7 ANNOUNCEMENTS!
 - Trulaske Grant
- 7 Funds Matching Information
- 8 Organizational Update



WINTER 2015 Volume 49 Issue 4

911 Washington Avenue, Suite 170
St. Louis, Missouri 63101
Ph: 314-421-6474
www.landmarks-stl.org

©2015 Landmarks Association

LANDMARKS Board of Directors

MATT GHIO
President

MONICA McFEE
Vice-President

SHELLEY DONAHO
Secretary

KEVIN KELLEHER
Treasurer

STEPHEN ACREE

AUSTIN BARZANTNY

JEFFREY A. BRAMBILA

G. JOHN CHEN

KATE DOUGLAS

KAREN GOERING

KARL GRICE

JIM HESLOP

CHERYL JONES

DAVID LOTT

DOROTHY MARTIN

MARGARET MCDONALD

MONICA MCFEE

PATRICK MURPHY

BILL SEIBERT

JEAN STECK

H. MEADE SUMMERS, JR.

JEFF VINES

RANDY VINES

WILLIAM P. WISCHMEYER

Advisors

CAROLYN HEWES TOFT

MELANIE M. FATHMAN

DAN MCGUIRE

Staff

ANDREW B. WEIL,
Executive Director

SUSAN TSCHETTER,
Office Manager

RUTH KEENOY,
Preservation Specialist

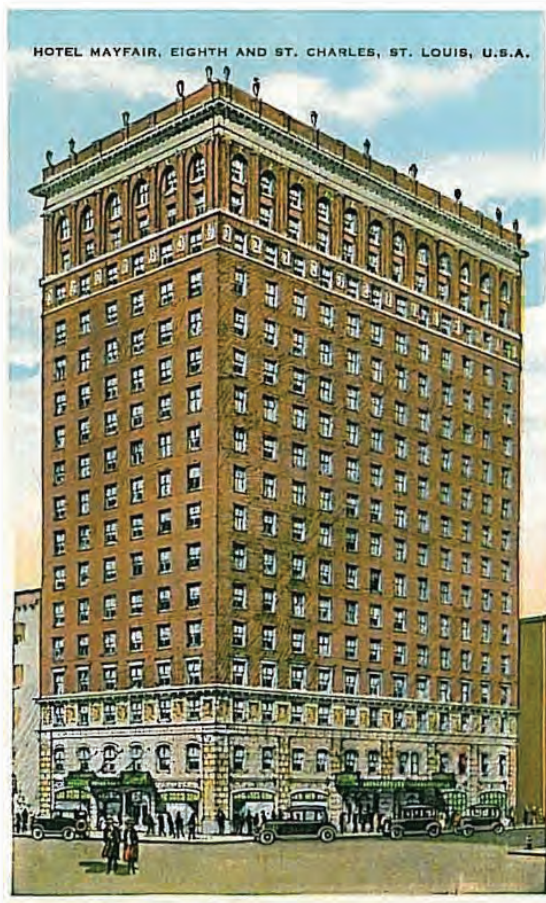
LANDMARKS LETTER

is the official publication of Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc. for its members and friends. Opinions expressed in articles are those of the Editor and contributors and do not necessarily represent the opinion of the Board or membership of Landmarks Association. Please address all correspondence, comments and inquiries to the Editor.

©2015 Landmarks Association

Elements

THE FORMER MAYFAIR HOTEL at 806 St. Charles Street in downtown St. Louis (the Magnolia Hotel, St. Louis) was designed by Preston Bradshaw c. 1924. The art glass in the Mayfair's "Hofbrau Restaurant" was made by the Jacoby Art Glass studio of St. Louis and its designer was Lee Cook. A postcard from 1936 in Landmarks' collection states that at the time the hotel boasted 150 air conditioned rooms (out of a total of 400) and three air conditioned restaurants. Among those restaurants in the early years was the Mayfair Room, Missouri's first five star establishment where chef Fred Bangerter is credited with the creation of Mayfair salad dressing. Diners looking for a less formal atmosphere could visit the hotel's "Hofbrau" which, according to the same postcard, was "... widely known by bon vivants for its mellow drinking and dining atmosphere." Today the hotel is in wonderful shape having undergone a 19 million dollar renovation that was completed in the summer of 2014. The former Hofbrau is now a lounge area for hotel patrons, but the original art glass remains.



Blossom House contined...



Dwight and Marion Blossom

structurally sound. The Preservation Board denied the demolition application, and Seibert set about to find a potential developer who would restore the building. He contacted Guy Slay, a Landmarks member and past winner of our Most Enhanced Award for historic preservation. Guy stepped forward, was able to acquire ownership of this wonderful historic house (with the cooperation of the former owner, who had not actually wanted to see the building demolished, but didn't think there was another option) and began what is a truly spectacular preservation project. His Mangrove Redevelopment Company has as its motto: "Restoring community...one historic building at a time", and thanks to its work, the Blossom House is re-blooming today in magnificent fashion.

**"Restoring community...
one historic building
at a time"** —Mangrove Redevelopment Company

Tours

SATURDAY, APRIL 11: 11:00-12:00

Former Kinloch Telephone Company exchange building, 2201 Indiana Avenue

TODAY, THE NAME KINLOCH is known by most St. Louisans as the name of a community in North St. Louis County, but in the early 20th century it was best recognized as one of St. Louis' two major telephone companies. While Kinloch was eventually purchased by Southwestern Bell, Missouri Bell's successor, evidence of the company remains in the form of the buildings it constructed including multiple neighborhood exchanges and Kinloch's headquarters downtown (now more commonly known as the Farm and Home Building). Come see this interesting building and hear about its ongoing rehabilitation by Jason Deem of South Side Spaces.

TOUR BEGINS: 11:00am at 2201 Indiana Avenue

TOUR COST: \$10.00 for Landmarks members,
\$15.00 for non members



SATURDAY, APRIL 18: 10:00AM-12:30PM

Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church and former Divoll Branch Library (Hyde Park Atelier of the Arts and Sciences), in Hyde Park.

WITH A DESIGN influenced by Strasbourg Cathedral, Most Holy Trinity's 215 foot twin spires have towered over Hyde Park on St. Louis' near north side since 1897 and its elaborate stone and glass ornamentation are among the finest in the city. Come see this masterwork designed by Swiss architect and sculptor Joseph Conradi which features the stone sculpture of George Pickel & Sons as well as stained glass by Anthony Wallis.

Following the tour of Most Holy Trinity, we will stroll three blocks to the former Divoll Branch Carnegie Library. Constructed in 1909 and designed by Mariner & LaBeaume, this beautiful building is currently being restored by artist Mark Pappas, who hopes to open it as an art and cultural center known as the Hyde Park Atelier of the Arts and Sciences. After touring the library, tour participants are encouraged to visit the Sun Café in the Most Enhanced Award winning restored building at 1435 Salisbury for lunch (not included in tour price).

TOUR BEGINS: 10:00am at Most Holy Trinity
3519 N. 14th Street

TOUR COST: \$20 for Landmarks Members,
\$30.00 for non members



Clockwise: (above) Most Holy Trinity Church, Divoll Branch Library and 1435 Salisbury before and after rehabilitation.

**PLEASE NOTE: RESERVATIONS ARE
REQUIRED FOR ALL TOURS**

Please call Susan Tschetter 314-421-6474
or email stschetter@landmarks-stl.org



Hempstead School, 5872 Minerva Avenue

In May of 2014, fire swept through the upper floors of Hempstead School in the Hamilton Heights neighborhood of north St. Louis. Vacant since 2003, the William Ittner school was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2007, the year it turned 100 years old. Despite efforts by SLPS Real Estate Director Walker Gaffney and Landmarks Association to find a new owner for the building (structurally sound, but severely damaged by the fire) so far nobody has stepped forward with a viable plan for reuse. Mr. Gaffney thought the SLPS could be convinced to essentially give the property away to a qualified non-profit organization with the means to repurpose it—but to no avail. Now it seems the building is considered to be a liability for the school district and demolition may soon be proposed.



Missouri Belting Company, 1021 South Grand Boulevard

The long-expected application for a demolition permit for the Missouri Belting Company building on South Grand (designed by Otto Wilhelmi and constructed in 1911) was heard and denied by the St. Louis Preservation Board in December of 2014. Several years ago the threat to the building was assumed to be associated with St. Louis University's now abandoned plan for an ambulatory care center on the site of the wrecked Pevely Dairy plant. In fact, it seems the the owner (not SLU) wants to dispose of the building with no plan for the site. Reason given: minor damage to the south wall caused by a fire at an adjacent building in 2009. Considering the owner's actions to date indicate no interest in maintaining, repairing, or selling the building, it is anticipated it will be left to deteriorate.



Church of the New Jerusalem, 1629 North 14th Street

Constructed in 1859 by the Swedeborgian Church of the New Jerusalem, this little church is a contributor to the rapidly eroding Mullanphy Historic District on St. Louis' near north side. When the district was created by Landmarks Association in 1983, it was noted as an outstanding example of 19th century vernacular residential architecture surrounding substantial institutional buildings such as the Mullanphy Emigrant Home and the Church of the New Jerusalem (which had been converted into the Nord St. Louis Bundeschor or Singing Society in 1878). Today, much of the context for the emigrant home and the church is gone and the church's hand-pressed brick walls are failing due to water infiltration. The church's current owner is interested in repairing and using the building, but lacks sufficient funds for rehabilitation.



James Clemens Jr. House, 1849 Cass Avenue

This formerly grand antebellum mansion designed by Patrick Walsh for James Clemens Jr. in 1858 bears little resemblance to the home where a ceremonial signing of two aldermanic bills in support of developer Paul McKee's North Side Regeneration Plan took place in 2009. Every year there is less and less to save of the Clemen's Mansion and its associated chapel. Open to vandals and the elements for years, the buildings no longer appear to be long for this world.

PROPOSED RAMS STADIUM IMPACT:

- North Broadway Wholesale Historic District
- North Riverfront Industrial Historic District
- Cotton Belt Freight Depot
- St. Louis Stamping Company buildings

Since plans were announced in early January for enormous new parking lots and a new stadium for the St. Louis Rams, an existential threat to major National Register resources on St. Louis' north riverfront has emerged. The plan as proposed would effectively annihilate two historic districts (and likely result in the remaining buildings being removed from the National Register for lack of context) as well as level the NR listed St. Louis Stamping Company buildings and Cotton Belt Freight Depot. Leaving aside all issues of whether the Rams should stay or go, or continue to use the Jones Dome, the waste and utter contempt for the useful and attractive historic buildings (including the Hammond Apartments in the 1871 St. Louis Stamping Company Building which won a Landmarks Most Enhanced Award in 2014 for excellence in historic rehabilitation) demonstrated by the proposal is outrageous.



The St. Louis Palladium, (aka Plantation Club) 3618 Enright Avenue

After being recognized by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 2014, which named it among the 11 most significant endangered buildings in the country, the St. Louis Palladium continues to languish. Threats from a proposed expansion of the John Cochran VA Hospital and deferred maintenance continue to haunt the future of this formerly prominent jazz club where the likes of Nat King Cole and Ella Fitzgerald once graced the stage. Arguably the last building in the thriving Grand Center Arts District still in need of rehabilitation, the Palladium's association with the early 20th century jazz scene in St. Louis perhaps could serve as an inspiration for a future use.



Crunden-Martin Manufacturing, 757 South 2nd Street

Since a catastrophic fire in December of 2011 burned through the roof of this enormous warehouse building, the interior wooden structural system has been exposed to the elements. The building is currently in the same situation that resulted in the destabilization and eventual demolition of Cupples 7, and unfortunately appears to be headed down the same path. Despite the fact that the current condition of the building is in violation of city code, we are not aware of any efforts that have been made to repair the damaged roof or otherwise mitigate the deterioration.



“...the proposal is outrageous.”

Carr School, 1421 Carr Avenue

Perhaps William Ittner’s most beloved and interesting school, Carr has been abandoned for 31 years and shows it. While the building’s angled wings still lovingly embrace the projecting kindergarten bay and Henry Chapman Mercer’s mosaics still beautifully depict children at play, more than half of Carr’s roof is gone and trees strive skyward from its ruined classrooms. Another building located within the Northside Regeneration footprint, Paul McKee offered a glimmer of hope for Carr in October of 2013 in testimony to the St. Louis Board of Aldermen when he stated that he had plans to put a technology incubator into the school, and new renderings released by Northside in January of 2015 show the building intact at the center of the “Cartex” technology district.



1711 Locust Street

This building was constructed in 1903 as a power substation for the St. Louis Transit Company, one of the major operators of the streetcar system. The architect is unknown, but Martin Arhelger was the contractor. The building was recognized as endangered in 2010 due to partial failure of its roof. The same building-killing process of water infiltration continues to erode 1711 Locust with telltale signs of water problems most obvious near the roofline of the west wall. With multiple examples of how a power house such as this can be reused around town, it would be a shame to lose such beautiful and versatile building.

919 and 923 Locust Street

In August of 2013, a redevelopment plan was adopted which blighted and cleared the way for the demolition of the two buildings at the northeast corner of 10th and Locust. The destruction of these two buildings has been called a necessity by their owners, who wish to redevelop the building to the east, the former Scruggs Vandervoort Barney Annex at 917. The small corner building, beneath its late 20th century Tudor Revival cladding, may have portions that predate 1875. From 1912–1958, it housed the world-renowned Noonan-Kocian Art Company. The larger building at 923 (constructed in 1916 and designed by Nat Abrahams) was the longtime home of Leacock Sporting Goods. If demolished, the space the buildings presently occupy would be filled with some combination of landscaping, a semicircular drive, and modest lobby/drop off area. The buildings anchor one of the last fully intact four-way intersections left in the central business district and 919 in particular is the kind of small-scale, but highly adaptable building that downtown desperately needs more of.



Henry L. Wolfner Memorial Library for the Blind, 3842-44 Olive Street

The National Register-listed Wolfner Library Complex consists of two buildings constructed in 1898 and 1904 and designed by Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge and Mauran, Russell & Garden respectively. Originally built as the Lindell Exchange for the Bell Telephone Company, the buildings were repurposed in 1938 and put into service as the first “stand alone” library for the blind in the United States. By 1940 only the Library of Congress exceeded Wolfner in its collections and circulation of Braille and “talking” books. The facility closed in 1971 and merged with the Missouri State Library in Jefferson City in 1985. Located on a block of Olive adjacent to Grand Center and St. Louis University, decades of arbitrary demolition have rendered the area desolate and the library devoid of context. Currently neglected and condemned, the Wolfner library, once a symbol of St. Louis’ progressive nature, appears to be on the verge of disappearing.

Landmarks Applied for and Received a Challenge Grant from the Robert J. Trulaske Jr. Family Foundation to Create a Historic Preservation Revolving Loan Fund

IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE that I announce Landmarks Association has been awarded a challenge grant of \$75,000 by the Robert J. Trulaske Jr. Family Foundation to create a revolving loan fund for the rehabilitation of historic buildings in St. Louis City! This money becomes available after Landmarks raises a \$25,000 match (or more) resulting in a fund capitalized at a minimum of

“While a traditional lender’s goal is to generate profits, the goal of our lending activities will be to preserve and enhance historic buildings.”

\$100,000. This money will be used to provide low interest loans for important historic preservation projects. Loans will be evaluated by a panel of experts from Landmarks’ Board of Directors as well as consulting professionals and will be awarded to provide things like bridge funds for rehabilitation or to assist property owners in taking advantage of existing programs such as the City’s façade grants. While a traditional lender’s goal is to generate profits, the goal of our lending activities will be to preserve and enhance historic buildings.

While the size of the initial loan fund will limit the scale and type of projects it can support (this is a pilot project at this point), we will use the experience gained through its administration to assess how we can best operate such a fund to serve the community and catalyze rehabilitation. Initially, we anticipate working with modest neighborhood buildings, but our goal is to eventually grow the fund to a level where it could also be used for more ambitious projects such as stabilization in anticipation of future development or to move a complex rehabilitation of a major building into the realm of economic feasibility. While many states, cities and preservation organizations around the country have used revolving loan funds to support the preservation of significant architectural resources for years, Landmarks’ new program is a first for St. Louis and a happy step back into direct involvement in rehabilitation, something the organization has not done since the 1970s.

Please help us in our efforts to create a fund to support the rehabilitation of St. Louis’ historic buildings. Not only will your donation help to protect our architectural heritage, it will assist with the ongoing revitalization of our beautiful city. To make a pledge toward meeting (or exceeding) our goal of the needed \$25,000 match, please send a check or donate through our website and designate the funds for the **Landmarks Revolving Loan Fund**. All money so designated will be used for this express purpose or returned in the event that the goal is not reached.



2730 McNair before and after rehabilitation

<< *How you can help Landmarks reach it’s goal of \$25,000 in matching funds!*





LANDMARKS

ASSOCIATION of SAINT LOUIS

911 Washington Ave., Ste. 170
St. Louis, Missouri 63101

PRESORTED
Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
St. Louis, MO
Permit 2055

Organizational Updates

THINGS REMAIN BUSY FOR Landmarks' Board and staff. Between the recently announced plan to level the north riverfront for a new stadium, the need to advocate for the protection and interpretation of the St. Louis Arsenal, the annual threat to the Missouri Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit, and the disheartening Most Endangered List, there is no shortage of preservation concerns on our radar. At the same time, we continue to be encouraged by progress being made in many of the city's historic neighborhoods and expect yet another bumper crop of Most Enhanced Building nominations this spring!

The phone is beginning to ring with school groups planning warm weather field trips downtown to participate in our "What Are Buildings Made Of" program and we are getting geared up to put the Preservation Month calendar together. Volunteers are making progress in the office with various projects including the creation of a comprehensive index to almost 50 years of the *Landmarks Letter*, the digitization of our slide collection, the creation of a standardized Washington Avenue architectural tour, and with the help of Lindenwood University, the digitization of the Heritage St. Louis architectural survey which

provides an unparalleled inventory of the city's neighborhoods from the late 1960s and early 1970s. Staff members are putting together the new exhibit on architect William Levy, various National Register nominations, planning for the administration of the new Preservation Revolving Loan Fund and tending to the daily inquiries from researchers, students, media, and residents regarding disparate aspects of St. Louis' architectural history.

We hope that you value our efforts and would like to thank you for your ongoing financial support. Please consider helping us to grow our membership by sharing this newsletter (or free, additional copies available through our office [Susan Tschetter: stschetter@landmarks-stl.org 314-421-6474]) with a friend. A standard annual membership starts at just \$45 and includes quarterly newsletters; new member thank you gifts; discounted access to tours and events; invitations and notifications about lectures and gallery openings; and the satisfaction of knowing that you are supporting the cause of historic preservation in St. Louis. Also, follow us on Facebook and Twitter for daily updates on preservation related news, and check out the growing catalogue of videos on our Youtube channel.



www.landmarks-stl.org