

# SPRINGFIELD PRESERVATION TRUST



## Quarterly Newsletter

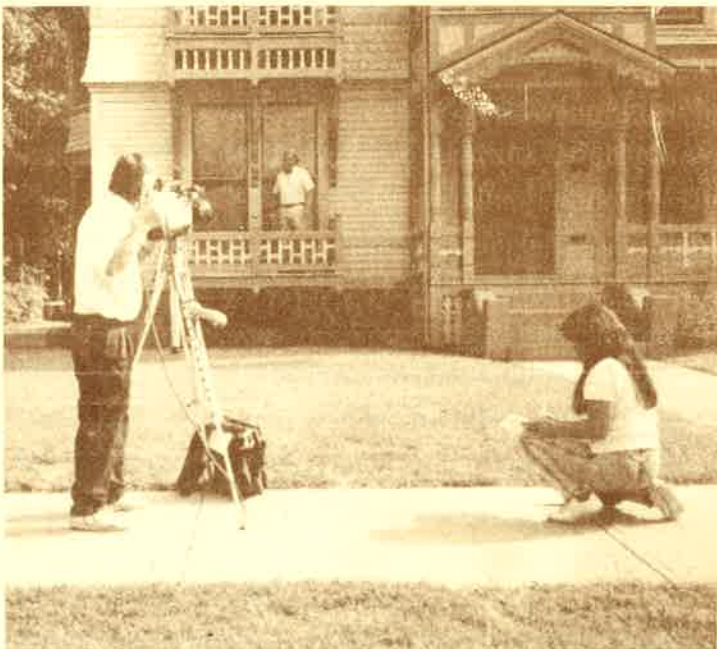
FALL 1989

### ANNUAL RECOGNITION RECEPTION SET

The third annual recognition reception is scheduled for Sunday, November 19 in the newly-renovated atrium of Classical High School. All current Trust members will soon be receiving an invitation.

The concept of a reception was begun two years ago to celebrate the Trust's fifteenth anniversary. Last year, the Board honored people who had removed artificial siding from buildings. This year, the Trust will honor people and groups who have significantly and sensitively renovated historic buildings for multi-family housing. Approximately two dozen such projects have been identified.

The reception will feature hors d'oeuvres and champagne, so circle your calendar for the biggest preservation party of the year!



Videographers Vinnie and Joanne Yacovone prepare to film Trust member Jim Boone as he explains various historical architectural styles and details.

### SPECIAL ELECTION ISSUE

*Candidate Surveys on pp. 3-4*

### AUTUMN "AT HOME" TOUR CANCELLED

Although the Trust had planned to mount its sixth annual "At Home" tour in Indian Orchard, the Planning Committee was not able to locate enough houses. The Executive Committee reluctantly chose to cancel the tour rather than hold one with an inadequate number of homes. Planning will begin this winter for next autumn's tour. If enough homes can be located, the Trust will feature the Orchard; if not, another neighborhood will be chosen by the Board in the spring.

### VIDEO GUIDE ALMOST COMPLETE

The Trust video on architectural styles in Springfield is progressing rapidly. The Video Committee of Jim Boone, Dan and Lisa Sotak-Cooper, Bob McCarroll and Marilyn Sutin met several times to convert the booklet *Guide to Residential Architecture in Springfield* into a working script. The video will take us through Springfield's neighborhoods focusing on the varied housing stock and the architectural details which define each style. The narrative, given by Jim Boone, will include historical information on the development of the city as well as technical details on the architectural styles.

Final approval of the shooting script has been received from the Springfield Cable Endowment Program. The videographers, Vinnie and Joanne Yacovone, have filmed over 70 different homes in the Springfield area and logged over four hours of tape.

*Continued on last page*

## NEW OFFICERS, BOARD MEMBERS ELECTED

The annual election of Officers and Board of Directors returned many familiar and dedicated faces to their positions of last year. The most significant change was in the presidency. Dan Sotak-Cooper will be assuming this position from his wife Lisa. Bob McCarroll will continue as Vice President of Education, Jim Boone as Vice President of Advocacy, Marilyn Sutin as Treasurer and Sandi Vella as Secretary.

Members elected to the '89-90 Board of Directors are: John Bellows, Pamela Brecknell, Phil Burdick, Leslie Clement, Ted Devanski, Diane Fisher, Steve Haddad, Roger Harris, Ed Pomeroy, Dave Premont, Anne Rice, Ed Sims, Lisa Sotak-Cooper, Hilton Abbott, Wilfred Stebbins, Denise Brouillette, Terri Ward, Carol Rucinski, Paul Mann, Mike Stevens, Audrey Higbee, Arlene Luis and Sarah Murray.

The election was held at the annual pot-luck picnic held at Sandi Vella's home this past August.

## TRUST OFFERS TO SECURE TAPLEY SCHOOL

In a letter to each City Councillor sent in March of this year, the Trust expressed concern about both the Tapley School and Technical High School. The Trust offered funds to the city to cover the cost of the Public Building Department's boarding up of the third floor of Tapley in order to prevent further deterioration of the 1887 building, now vacant for almost a decade.

Damage to the building has come in two forms: moisture from being exposed to the elements through open windows, and from pigeons whose droppings and dead carcasses pose a health hazard, according to Trust member, Jim Boone.

Finally this fall, Councillor Santaniello raised public concern over the condition of these and other empty city-owned buildings proposed for eventual sale or municipal use. He has already visited some of these buildings to assess their conditions.

Although the Trust did not receive a reply to our offer to secure Tapley, within days of the offer, the building was boarded up by the city. Hopefully interest in our vacant historic buildings will continue into the future.



*The exterior colors of the Sotak-Cooper home reflect their interest in authenticity.*

## McKNIGHT VICTORIAN IN THE HANDS OF DO-IT-YOURSELFERS

Although the plaque outside the Victorian double entryway jokingly reads, "Nothing of importance happened on this site in 1897", it doesn't tell of the important changes this National Register house is undergoing in 1989.

Owners and Trust members Dan and Lisa Sotak-Cooper are do-it-yourselfers, and when they moved into their 1893 McKnight district home just over two years ago, they already had plans to restore the house themselves, inside and out.

"It had been remodeled a lot," Lisa said, "but not so irreversibly that you couldn't put it back to how it should have been." The house had undergone significant changes during the 1930s, she added.

Approaching the large undertaking with nothing more than a limited background in furniture restoration, the Sotak-Coopers have worked slowly and methodically. Having savvy, they said, would have helped them save time, but careful observation of how things are put together is making it possible for them to successfully restore their home.

"You should live in a house a year or two before doing any major work, so you can get a feel of the house and what it wants to do," Dan advised. And it was

*Continued on page 5*

## SPT CALENDAR

Nov. 19 Annual Recognition Reception

(See related article.)

Monthly meetings are held in the Community Room at Forest Park Library at 7:30 p.m. the first Wednesday of each month. All members are welcome. The next meetings are scheduled for December 6 and January 3.

### *Sotak-Cooper continued from page 2*

this approach that led to their discovery that the original traffic pattern had been altered in what they felt was an unnatural way.

Much of their approach to restoration has been based on similar gut feelings corroborated by some research. The use of "twin" or identical house floor plans, of which there are many in McKnight, has helped steer the Sotak-Coopers on the correct path before they made any actual changes.

Help has also come in the form of advice and tips from neighbors and friends, many of whom have done restoration work of their own, they remarked.

Photos of a Queen Anne house restored by the Trust were particularly helpful in verifying Lisa's instinctive feeling that some of the doorways had been moved. Since then, restoring old entrances and blocking up newer ones has been the major project on the first floor.

Concentrating on one room at a time, the couple has made the dining room one of their first priorities since it has undergone the most extensive changes. Dan has already reconstructed the wall with a wide entryway leading into the front parlor. He also uncovered and is rebuilding a china cabinet and will be removing the 1930s "oak carpet" or wood flooring to expose the oak parquet underneath.

Although he has had little difficulty adapting his furniture restoring skills to the house, he noted there was one thing he wasn't prepared for: dust..

"No one has any concept of filth until they tear out a plaster wall. It gets into the hot air ducts and gets blown all over the house. Everything looks like a powdered doughnut -- including the cats."

Other changes in the dining room such as alteration to windows which added more light to the room, however, will remain as is, Lisa noted.

"That's an example of good work that (the prior owner) added to the house that you wouldn't want to remove. So you keep some things and you try to restore as much as you can without taking out better things that were added later but which are a definite asset to the house."

Much of the work planned for other rooms will primarily consist of general wall repair of stripping woodwork and paint, and adding decorative trim. The kitchen, however, will be last, Dan said, because of major planned changes and the large expense.

"When you're doing your own rehab on other rooms, you're spending \$50 here, \$100 there-- it's very easy to do. But in the kitchen, you start getting into systems, subcontractors and appliances." The couple eventually plan to create an old-fashioned kitchen by removing much of the existing counterspace and overhead cabinets and by adding a large slate sink, an old gas stove, and a large work table in the middle of the room.

The only contractor they've hired to date, in fact, was a roofing company which replaced the main slate roof damaged in a freak hail storm before they moved in. Dan, however, repaired the lower porch roofs himself.

Other exterior work has involved removal of two layers of artificial siding and repainting the house in traditional Victorian colors.

The siding removal has proved the most challenging work so far, according to Dan. While the aluminum covering came off quickly, the

*Continued on last page*

FREE ESTIMATES

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### FUNDS SENT TO CHARLESTON

Charleston, one of the oldest and most beautiful cities of the South, was severely damaged by Hurricane Hugo earlier this fall and many of its historic buildings were harmed. In the spirit of good will towards our historic neighbors, the Trust has voted to send \$500 to the local preservation group there to help with repairs.

#### *Video Update, continued from page 1*

Now that all the field production is complete, the hard task of editing all the footage into a half hour format begins.

The anticipated date of completion is the end of this year. The Trust will host a reception later this winter to preview the completed video which will ultimately be distributed to area schools and the public library.

#### *Sotak-Coopers, continued from page 5*

cement-composition shingles had three nails each and furring strips underneath which had been recycled from the removed pantry.

"It's kind of depressing to find the pantry on the outside of your house when you really would like a pantry!" Lisa laughed ruefully. They plan to restore this room to the house one day.

The couple considers themselves fortunate that they have not suffered any major setbacks or surprises. These could come in the form of electrical conduits or air ducts at the proposed site of a restored doorway, they said.

A more usual surprise is the time involved in restoration. Most people, they said, expect to complete the work in one to two years, but, in their opinion, five to 10 years are necessary if the work is done by the owners and is to be done right.

Even after saying that, though, the couple has no projected completion date.

"You just do (the restoration)," Lisa said, "until you're satisfied with each room."

### NEW MEMBERS WELCOMED

We would like to welcome the following people as new Trust members: Thomas McCurry.



JAMES A. BOONE

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