

SPRINGFIELD PRESERVATION TRUST



Quarterly Newsletter

SPRING 1990

Spring Tour Already Scheduled

Continuing our most important educational project, the Trust announces the Annual Spring House Tour. The event is scheduled for Sunday, May 6.

Now celebrating its fourteenth year, the tour will cover all six historic districts. Trust members and the public are invited to sample an array of successfully restored homes.

To date, the Tour Committee has obtained homes in the McNight and Mattoon Districts and are looking for volunteers to open their houses in Forest Park Heights, Maple Hill, Lower Maple and Ridgewood. If you or someone you know is interested in participating in the tour or if you would like more information, please contact Bob McCarroll at 736-0629.

Tickets will be sold in advance and on the day of the tour. Trust members are entitled to a discounted admission fee.



Can You Guess?

Do you know this building? Turn to page 4.

Conn. Valley Museum and Trust Sponsor Lecture Series

The Connecticut Valley Historical Museum and the Springfield Preservation Trust will be sponsoring a lecture series in April entitled "Old Home Ownership."

The four-part program will be presented Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. in Blake House, the gray building adjacent to the Historical Museum.

The program represents a collaboration which came out of the success of the "Valley Victorian" series presented by the museum last year. Several Trust members were featured speakers in that lecture series.

Jim Boone, Vice President of Advocacy for the Trust, will present the first lecture entitled "Old Houses: Styles and Maintenance." He will review local architectural styles and discuss maintenance focusing on problems inherent to specific styles of houses. Attendees are encouraged to bring photographs of their homes.

The second talk, called "Researching the History of Your Old House", will instruct residents on how to use local resources such as the Registry of Deeds to document the history of an older home. The lecturer, Paul D. Mann, has studied Art History at UMASS, Amherst and Oxford England and is a Trust Board member.

Trust President, Dan Sotak-Cooper will discuss "Interior Woodwork Restoration" the following week. He will cover the proper methods of conserving old woodwork, refinishing techniques and safety procedures. Participants may bring a sample of woodwork for advice.

The final lecture will be "Energy Efficiency in the Old House." Roger Harris, the Technical Director of the Hampden County Energy Office and Trust Board member, will first identify energy "loopholes" in older homes and then

Continued on page 5.

President's Column

De-leading: An Up-and-coming Issue

One of the biggest issues facing preservationists in the 1990s will be the proper handling of lead paint. Since we can assume that all historic properties have been painted with lead, we must be prepared to fight its insensitive removal (i.e. artificial siding and wholesale replacement of woodwork and trim with inappropriate materials) and push for proper de-leading techniques.

The current lead paint laws are somewhat ambiguous and subject to wildy different interpretations. As with asbestos, the initial reaction has been to completely remove the offending substance, yet this can cause a greater health hazard by creating millions of microscopic, airborne particles of the material in question. We must impress upon our lawmakers that stabilization is the safest and most sensitive method of treatment. Until the laws are defined properly and reasonable standards are agreed upon, we must deal with this issue on a case by case level.

We cannot allow our efforts towards the sensitive rehabilitation of older buildings which have been accomplished over the past 17 years, to be jeopardized!

— Dan Sotak-Cooper

Trust Donates Books to Library

In appreciation for use of a meeting space in the Forest Park Library over the years, the Trust has donated several books to the branch. In a brief ceremony during the December

Book Descriptions

Turn of the Century Houses, Cottages and Villas — A collection of floor plans and line illustrations of 118 homes from Shoppell's catalogs.

Victorian Exterior Decoration and Victorian Interior Decoration — Guides to painting and decorating your home in an historically accurate manner.

Craftsman Homes — Details the architecture and furnishings of the American arts and crafts movement.

A Field Guide to American Homes — A guidebook to identifying and placing houses in their historic and architectural contexts.

Members Invited to Hear Special Speaker

Trust members are invited to hear a special guest lecturer at the March 7 meeting. The half-hour program will begin at 7:30 p.m. in the basement of the Forest Park Library.

Stefania CATERA, an Italian born and trained Fine Art Restorer, will present her restoration work on Italian Frescos, oil paintings, and on a recently discovered stencilled wall in Springfield. Ms. CATERA came to the attention of the Trust through Trust member Elaine Godek. Ms. CATERA won an award from the State Historical Commission last May for her restoration work.

Members are encouraged to remain for the monthly meeting which follows.



Jim Boone, Vice President of Education, presents John Clark, Branch Supervisor of the Forest Park Library, with books donated by the Trust. Trust President, Dan Sotak-Cooper looks on.

meeting, Trust President, Dan Sotak-Cooper and Vice President of Advocacy, Jim Boone presented the books to Branch Supervisor, John Clark. The five titles are *Turn of the Century Houses, Cottages and Villas* by R.W. Shoppel, et al., *Victorian Exterior Decoration* and *Victorian Interior Decoration* both by Roger W. Moss and Gail Caskey Winkler, *Craftsman Homes* by Gustav Stickley, and *A Field Guide to American Homes* by Virginia and Lee McAlester.

The book selection was based on the architectural styles prevalent in the Forest Park district and considered to be of interest to Forest Park residents.

The Trust has met in the library for over eight years.

Trust Donates Money to Connecticut Valley Museum

The Connecticut Valley Historical Museum will begin 1990 a little richer thanks to help from the Trust.

When it came to the Trust's attention that a large quantity of historic Springfield memorabilia had come on the market at a local antique shop, the Trust felt it was important to help the Museum obtain items needed for their collection. As a result, the Trust donated \$250 to the Museum for the express purpose of purchasing items from this collection.

To date, the Museum has purchased oversized photographs and plat maps dating between the 1880s and 1920s. The photographs document various structures and downtown scenes. The plat maps outline the shape and layout of buildings and can include itemization of the building materials.

According to Museum Director Joseph Carvalho, the photos and maps are important historical documents.

Heritage Center Sponsors Workshop on Grants

The New England Heritage Center will be sponsoring a workshop entitled "Funding Preservation: Grantsmanship for Historical Non-Profits" on Saturday, March 3 (snow date, March 10) at Bentley College in Waltham Mass.

The program will cover the entire process of obtaining grants from the initial stages of focusing on the project and identifying the donors, to writing an effective proposal, and using the grant productively.

For more information, contact Dr. Margaret Storch, Acting Director, New England Heritage Center, Bentley College, Waltham, Mass. 02154-4705; (617) 891-3481.

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Trust Receives Thanks From Charleston Society

Last fall, the Trust voted to send \$500 to our counterpart in Charleston, South Carolina towards restoration of historic properties which were ravaged by Hurricane Hugo. In early December, we received a letter of thanks from The Preservation Society of Charleston which is reprinted below.

Thank you for your generous donation to aid the Preservation Society of Charleston in the repair of damages caused by Hugo. The Board and members of the Society greatly appreciate your concern and your commitment to assist us in our time of need.

The Society has created a Preservation Disaster Fund for donations such as yours. The money will be used for administrative costs of surveying damage to historic structures and for funding repair.

Please let me know as we can be of assistance to your organization in the future. I hope you will visit with us so we can express our gratitude. Thanks again for your generous contribution.

Sincerely,

John W. Meffert, Executive Director

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Reception Honors New Housing Projects

At a gala reception held on Sunday, November 16, the Trust toasted developers who have renovated historic buildings for multi-family housing.

The affair was attended by 70 Trust members and honorees, and was held in the newly-renovated atrium of Classical High School. The school itself was recently converted into condominiums.

Those receiving honorary certificates included local and Boston-based developers, individuals and limited partnerships. Examples of such renovation projects were a factory, a school and a commercial building. The new housing projects had to have six or more units to be eligible for recognition.

The highlight of the evening was a slide show of the recognized projects and an awards ceremony. Bob McCarroll, Vice President of Education for the Trust, gave an overview of the various projects and Dan Sotak-Cooper, Trust President, announced the awards.

The concept for the reception began two years ago to celebrate the Trust's 15th anniversary. Its purpose is to honor people or groups who have contributed to preservation efforts in the city.



St. Joseph's Convent being razed.



Trust President, Dan Sotak-Cooper announces the names of developers who have successfully converted buildings into multi-family housing.

Preservation Alert!

Trust members are asked to be aware of a number of buildings in Springfield that are "at risk." Those heading the list are Carew Street School, Technical High School, Tapley School, the Hotel Charles and the railroad station, and the York Street Jail.

These buildings are either on the National Register of Historic Places or have been deemed eligible for the Register. At present the Trust is closely monitoring them to insure that they are not adversely affected during various development plans.

Members are asked to keep alert and contact the Trust of any unusual activity which may endanger the preservation of these historic properties.

Can You Guess? St. Joseph's Convent

The photo on page one is of St. Joseph's Convent formerly located on Elliot Street. Built in the 1890s, the convent was home to the Sisters of St. Joseph who taught at Cathedral High School.

In the 1970s the Catholic Church wished to demolish the building which had been vacant for several years. The Trust filed a lawsuit to stop them claiming that the 1972 ordinance delineating the city's historic districts was unconstitutional because it gave preferential treatment to the church whose property was deemed exempt from historic controls.

The Trust lost its suit on a technicality and the convent was razed in 1977.

SPT CALENDAR

Wednesday, April 4 Blake House, 7:00 p.m.

Lecture: Old Houses: Styles & Maintenance

Wednesday, April 11 Blake House, 7:00 p.m.

Lecture: Researching the History of Your Old House

Wednesday, April 18 Blake House, 7:00 p.m.

Lecture: Interior Woodwork Restoration

Wednesday, April 25 Blake House, 7:00 p.m.

Lecture: Energy Efficiency in the Old House

Sunday, May 6

Spring Historic House Tour

Monthly meetings are held in the Community Room at Forest Park Library at 7:00 p.m. the first Wednesday of each month. All members are welcome. The next meetings are scheduled for March 7, April 4 (**meeting to follow 7 o'clock lecture**), and May 2.

Joint Effort Informs Newcomers of Historic Guidelines

The Trust and the Springfield Historical Commission are planning a joint project to inform all new residents of Springfield's historic districts of their responsibilities concerning their historic properties.

A letter from the Commission and a copy of the regulations pertaining to the newcomer's district will be forwarded by the Trust who will take responsibility for monitoring real estate transactions and making the appropriate mailings. Representing the Commission will be Frances Gagnon (Chair) and Al Albano (representative for the Board of Realtors). Representing the Trust will be Dan Sotak-Cooper, Sarah Murray and Anne Rice.

At present, houses located within designated historic districts are subject to regulations overseen by the Historic Commission. Questions regarding changes to your property can be addressed to Bill McGrath at 787-6020.

LECTURE SERIES, *continued.*

address individual improvements that can be made to the heating and hot water systems. Attention will also be paid to cost-effective improvements to windows and insulation.

Admission is \$2.00 for Trust members and \$4.00 for the general public.

House Tips:

Blocked Gutters Threaten Water Damage

Ed. Note: The following is the second article in a four-part series.

How many times have you been showered by water spilling over the edge of your gutter, or stepped into a puddle of poorly draining water from a down spout?

These can be the least of your troubles if you don't maintain your gutters. That same water can cause serious damage to your house. It is better to have no gutters than to have gutters that are hung improperly, leak, are stopped up with leaves or debris or whose down spouts do not work properly.

Gutters should be visually inspected at least twice each year — once just before winter to be sure all leaves are out of them and again in May after the trees have dropped their early spring droppings. It does not take much to block up a gutter and the result can be very bad for your house. Go out in a rain storm and see where the gutters are overflowing or backing up and then clean them the first nice day.

The risk of stopped up gutters is that they back up water or ice under your roof where it gets into your house. Stopped up gutters dump a lot of water over the edge where you don't want it and can cause damp basements. Down spouts that leak or are stopped up can cause water to run down the side of your house in abnormally large quantities and thus increase deterioration of the paint.

At the bottom of your down spout, have a splash basin so that the water will be carried a little way away from the foundation. An old piece of wooden gutter works really well, or you can buy cast cement ones. And be sure the earth is graded away from your house so that it drains properly around your foundation and avoids dampness in the cellar.

If you have wooden gutters, do not put tar in them; it does not work. If there is tar in them, scrape it out. Wooden gutters should be treated with linseed oil and kept clean. Dirt sitting in wooden gutters hastens rot.

Gutters are a great help, but like everything else, if they are not maintained, they become a problem that far exceeds their benefit.

Next issue: Caulking

-Jim Boone

This newsletter is published by and for the members of the Springfield Preservation Trust, Inc., 979 Main Street, Springfield, MA 01103.

Editor Pamela Brecknell
Contributors Bob McCarroll, Jim Boone,
Dan Sotak-Cooper
Photos Marilyn Sutin
Advertising David Premont

Trust Seeks Visibility Through Volunteerism at Science Museum

In an effort to heighten visibility in the community, Trust members volunteered their time to assist the Springfield Science Museum with their blockbuster exhibit Dinosaurs Alive!

On the exhibit's opening day, a group of Trust volunteers helped sell tickets, dispense information, and direct visitor traffic.

In return for the Trust's help, the day was unofficially called "Preservation Day" and a prominent sign acknowledged the Trust as one of the volunteer groups.

In the past, the Trust has been involved in other efforts to increase awareness of its preservation activities.

New Members Welcomed

We would like to welcome the following people as new Trust members: Margaret O'Donnell, William and Lisa Lonergan, Mary Harris, Hank Thorburn, and Nonpareille Wallcovering.

Membership Renewals Begin Soon

Do you like receiving discounted tickets for the Trust's house tours?

This is just one benefit of belonging to the Springfield Preservation Trust. Members also receive the quarterly newsletter, any special publications, plus invitations to our special events!

As dues coincide with the calendar year, it will soon be time to renew. Look for your renewal letter sometime in March.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Historical Commission Seat Still Vacant

The seat on the Historical Commission designated for the Trust by the City Council has still not been filled by Mayor Mary E. Hurley.

Last year the City Council voted to designate one seat on the Historic Commission for a representative of the Springfield Preservation Trust. The Commission is a public board which oversees preservationist regulations in the city's historic districts. In accordance with procedure, the Trust sent its nominations for a representative to the Mayor. Although Mayor Hurley publically announced that all board positions would be filled by December 31, 1989, no action with regard to the Historical Commission openings has been taken.

In the interim, members of our board have been attending the Commission meetings informally to represent our membership and preservation concerns. The Trust is eager to serve the city and hopes action will be taken soon.

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