

The PRESERVATIONIST

Newsletter of
the SPRINGFIELD PRESERVATION TRUST

Winter 1995

SPT NOW HAS PHONE NUMBER!

Did you ever want to pick up the phone and give us a call? Now you can! The Springfield Preservation Trust's new phone number will be activated on February 1, 1995. Now anyone will be able to get the latest information on Trust membership, tours and other events and activities. The phone number is (413) 747-0656.



Mayor Markel speaks at SPT's Annual Award ceremonies.

INCREASING DEMOLITIONS RAISE ISSUES FOR SPRINGFIELD

What is the point in demolishing a building based simply and solely on the fact that it is vacant? This is a question we should be asking frequently in Springfield. There are numerous examples at the present moment, but, right off the top, the most glaring example would have to be that of the Steiger's block.

Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company is proposing a \$10 million renovation to their Baystate West Shops, with the eventual development and incorporation of the Steiger's site as a multimedia entertainment facility. The key factor in this development plan is the success of the renovated Baystate West Shops. Until the shops are proven to be a draw for the general public, no new construction will begin on the Steiger's site.

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TRUST HOLDS 22ND ANNUAL MEETING

On Sunday, November 20th, the Trust held its 22nd Annual Meeting on the campus of the MacDuffie School in the elegant confines of Wallace Hall. About 75 people were in attendance at the reception held on the lower floors of the former Wallace mansion located at the foot of Maple and Central Streets. Mayor Robert T. Markel was also on hand to give a short speech to the crowd.

As in recent years, the election of officers and Board of Directors for 1995 was followed by the presentation of the 1994 Preservation Awards. Jim Boone, longstanding Board member presided over the ceremonies, stating that "Historic preservation is alive and well in Springfield; we easily came up with these award winners".

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SPT CALENDAR

Monthly meetings held at 7:30 p.m.
in the Wesson Board Room on
the High St. Campus of Baystate Medical Center
Next meetings are
February 1, March 1, and April 5

SPRING HOUSE TOUR

Sunday, May 7, 1995



DEMOLITIONS continued from page 1

\$1 million of the renovation budget is being spent on the acquisition and demolition of the Steiger's building. Mass Mutual plans on landscaping the vacant site, making it into a public park or square until development is feasible, *if it ever is*. The one bright spot in the picture is the removal of the "airwalk", which will once again allow light into Main Street.

Removal of the airwalk and renovation of the Shops is fine, but it would be nice if a little bit of the character of Downtown's once bustling shopping district could remain intact. Bridge Street, which up until now has retained much of its historic integrity, will now lose about a quarter of its shopfronts. Where there was once a lovely promenade of storefronts, there will now be a vacant sweep of land from the Stearn's building to Main Street.

The Steiger's building had been beautifully maintained by the Steiger's family. Why could it not have been "mothballed"? The large street-front windows might have been used for advertising of local community and cultural institutions that do not have high visibility. The Springfield Symphony, the Library & Museums, Stagewest and the Basketball Hall of Fame could have made excellent use of these display windows. Or local artists could have showcased their work. Any of these uses would have been a perfect accompaniment to the new Shops at Baystate West with their proposed "streetfront" character. The city of Hartford is making good use of the vacant G. Fox building.

Steiger's is but one example of the trend toward demolition which is sweeping Springfield. The commercially sound blocks at the northeast corner of Worthington and Dwight Streets have been demolished only because the owner did not want to pay taxes and utilities. The former Hotel Charles, a National Register property, is also facing demolition. There are no imminent plans for development of either of these sites, *even if they were vacant*.

The city could make it less desirable to demolish by providing some form of tax abatement on privately owned buildings not meeting their commercial potential. The city could also take a leadership position by better maintaining and aggressively marketing those properties they have taken over. There is no good reason why Springfield should be losing its architectural heritage. Without sound development plans in place, boarding and securing is far less costly than demolition.

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CAN YOU GUESS?

Problem: You want to build a very large, modern library building but...the land you want to build it on is already occupied by a huge Victorian Gothic edifice (seen in the right half of this picture) containing the current city library and all of its thousands of books. What do you do? How can you keep the library business up and running on a daily basis? Turn to Page 7 and find out.

If you are considering marketing your property, Colleen Westberg is

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TOP 10 ENDANGERED PROPERTIES UPDATE.

In the sixteen months since our previous update of the "Top 10 Endangered Properties" list, this city's penchant for demolition has been abetted by vandalism and a tough economy.

The "Nader the Hatter" building (338-342 Worthington Street, former location of Springfield Central) is being demolished as this written. We will never get back such a handsome, stout "business block", but we *will* be able to park more cars! Next to go: Steiger's, where demolition has started. Our most abused Art Deco treasure is being sacrificed to...well...nothing! There are no plans for the site, other than yet more parking. Funds and approvals are being rounded up for a host of other sites around the city; a particularly sensitive target right now is the Hotel Charles.

There are some bright spots. We are particularly impressed with the Tapley School apartments, occupied since mid-1994. Metro Realty really worked miracles there, including doing masonry cleaning which revealed previously concealed decorative color accents. Also, funding commitments have been received for 415 Belmont Avenue (the "Green Building") and another well known, fragile site (yet to be announced). Plans have also been discussed for Tech High. However, occupancy is a long way off for some of these projects, so they are still of concern and will remain on the list. During a recent visit to one of our listed properties, an old Molotov Cocktail (obviously a "dud") was found inside, illustrating just why these buildings need safeguarding.

Herewith, the current "Top 10", as well as a new feature... the "Watch" list, for sites which are being actively considered for improvements by various parties.

"TOP TEN" List

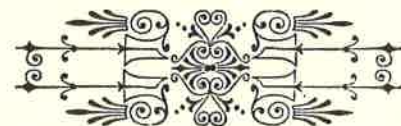
<u>PROPERTY</u>	<u>OWNER</u>
(1)Hotel Charles.....	SRA
(2)Carew Street School.....	City
(3)Union Station.....	SRA
(4)Winchester Square Fire Station.....	City
(5)Temple Street Carriage House.....	Private
(6)York Street Jail.....	County
(7)30 High Street.....	Private
(8)Gemini Mfg. (lower Central St.).....	Private
(9)Lower Franklin Street	Private
(10)Lower Florida Street houses.....	Private

"WATCH" List

(1)Technical High School.....	City
(2)St. George's Old Parish House.....	Private
(3)Chestnut Street School.....	City
(4)415 Belmont Avenue.....	Private




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HOLLYWOOD REVISITED

Ten years ago, a major urban renewal process was begun in Hollywood, an area of the South End eligible for listing on the National Register as the largest apartment neighborhood in the region. More than a dozen apartment buildings (mostly occupied) were to be razed by the Springfield Redevelopment Authority. The remaining buildings were to be renovated for a mix of subsidized and non-subsidized housing. While the Trust objected to that demolition plan, significant demolition occurred in an altered pattern.

Millions of taxpayer dollars were spent to acquire property, relocate tenants, and demolish buildings. A private developer then used government subsidies to renovate 14 buildings with nearly 200 housing units for lower income tenants. Three buildings near the corner of Marble Street and Dwight Street extension were to be renovated for market-rate housing. They never were. In 1988, they were instead turned over to the SRA, who did little to market them. Recently, the SRA sought permission for their demolition from the Springfield Historical Commission.

The Trust did not object to the request because Hollywood has already been ravaged by an ill-conceived and badly implemented project. Both the South End residents and the preservation community have been disappointed with the resulting degradation of the social and architectural fabric of the area. The Trust did use the public hearing, however, as an opportunity to express concern about other poorly managed historic properties held by the city or SRA, such as the Hotel Charles, Union Station, Technical High School, Carew Street School, and the Winchester Square Fire Station. The failure of government to carry out its promised plans and to maintain its historic buildings cannot be allowed as an excuse to raze them.





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ANNUAL MEETING continued from page 1

The Donald E. Campion Award for "Outstanding Achievement in Historic Preservation" was awarded for the rehabilitation of the Tapley School. This 1887 design by F.R. Richmond and B.H. Seabury, and its 1910 addition, were on the Trust's list of most endangered buildings for several years. With the combined efforts of Metro Realty of Farmington, Connecticut, several area banks, and state and local funding, the formerly dilapidated structure is now about 30 residential units.

Other award recipients included the Springfield Parks Department for its restoration work on the Barney Carriage House and "Marsh's Rest" in Forest Park, Sacred Heart Church for the careful stewardship of its landmark church building at 395 Chestnut Street, Paul and Josephine Sears for their stewardship of the Chatham Court apartment building on Sumner Avenue, Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity, Inc. for sensitive new construction at 101 Marion Street, the Marketplace Group for removal of non-original enclosures at 56 Market Street, and various private residences in the McKnight and Forest Park neighborhoods for restoration (the McKnight homes were part of the SRA's first-time homebuyers program). The specific list of 1994 Preservation Awards is as follows:



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ACHIEVEMENT IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION:

Metro Realty Group
Tapley School

AWARD FOR RESTORATION:

Springfield Parks Department
Barney Carriage House and "Marsh's Rest"

AWARD FOR RESTORATION:

Putnam Vocational High School
Barney Carriage House

AWARD FOR STEWARDSHIP:

Paul and Josephine Sears
127-133 Sumner Avenue

AWARD FOR STEWARDSHIP:

Sacred Heart Church
395 Chestnut Street

AWARD FOR RESTORATION:

Cynthia and Neville Maxwell
121 Sherman Street

AWARD FOR RESTORATION:

Daniel and Deborah Bramelus
44-46 Catherine Street

AWARD FOR RESTORATION:

Leroy and Jane Moser
1063 Worthington Street

AWARD FOR RESTORATION:

Patrick and Frances Griffin
188 Sumner Avenue

AWARD FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION:

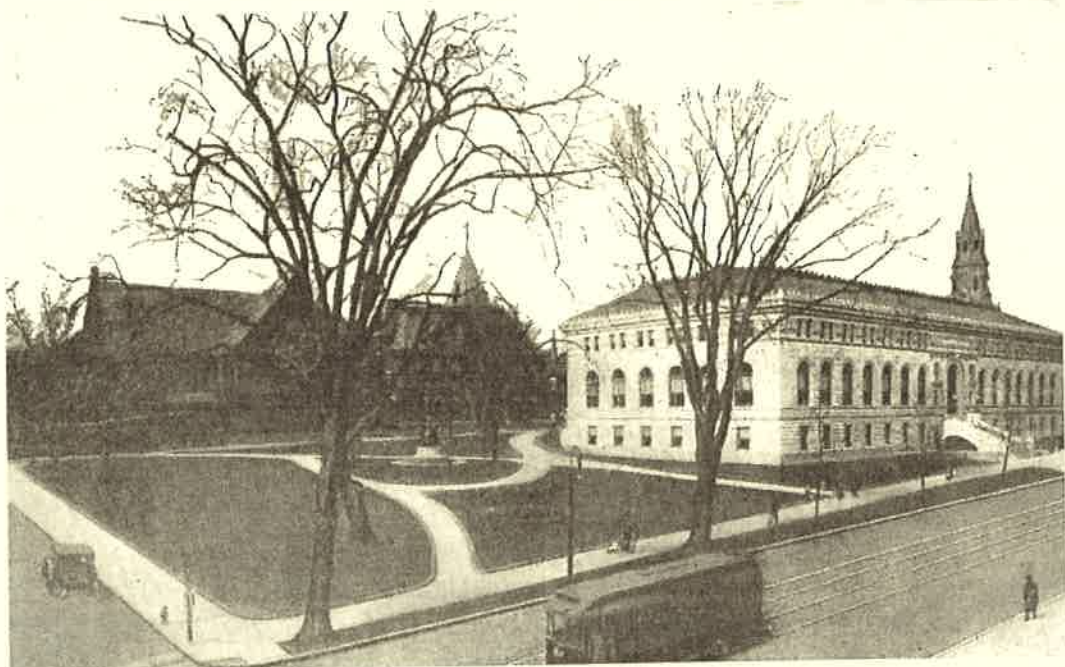
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CAN YOU GUESS? continued from page 3

Solution: Move the entire building! Yes, the "old" library building was relocated in its entirety, books, bricks and all, back onto the Quadrangle area while the "new" library was under construction. When the new building was completed in 1914, all the books were then moved and the old library was demolished. This postcard view shows the newly finished building on State Street with the old library still standing behind it. During its history, the Preservation Trust has moved two buildings and thought that to be quite an accomplishment. In retrospect, it seems to pale next to this incredible feat that was performed by our early 20th century predecessors.



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FOR RATES AND INFORMATION

The Springfield Preservation Trust

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Springfield Preservation Trust is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of historic structures in the City of Springfield, Massachusetts.



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