

The PRESERVATIONIST

Newsletter of
the SPRINGFIELD PRESERVATION TRUST

Spring 1996

FESTIVITIES HAPPENING AT THE ALEXANDER HOUSE

The Springfield Preservation Trust will host the Alexander House Sunday Afternoon Social on Sunday, May 19th, from 2 to 4 P.M. at the Alexander House, 284 State Street in Springfield.

The "Social" will celebrate National Preservation Week. The event will be highlighted with a concert by *The Proper Ladies* from Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Proper Ladies' concert will offer "Passion and Pathos, Humor and Nostalgia" making history come alive with their unique a cappella arrangements of folk songs.

The program will begin with a brief overview of the history of the Alexander House. A historic treasure, the Alexander House was built in 1811 and is not only one of the oldest remaining buildings in Springfield, but also one of the finest examples of transitional Federal Style architecture in New England. It was the home of Israel Trask, one of the negotiators of the Louisiana Purchase; Chester Harding, a renowned American portrait painter; Henry Alexander, Mayor of Springfield during the Civil War; and Henry Phillips, also Mayor and Postmaster of Springfield. In the 1930's, the Alexander House was given to the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), a non-profit preservation organization based in Boston. SPNEA is currently seeking reuse proposals for the property.

Sponsors of this Preservation Week event are Hampden Savings Bank, Caffeine's of Springfield and The Coffee Roaster of East Longmeadow. Afternoon tea will be served. Guests will be limited to 100 for the event. There will be an \$8 admission fee. For reservations and additional information, please call (413)747-0656 or (413) 732-2687.



The Alexander House

SPT CALENDAR

Monthly meetings held at 7:00 p.m.
in the Wesson Board Room on
the High St. Campus of Baystate Medical Center
Next meetings are
May 1, June 5 and July 3

ALEXANDER HOUSE
SUNDAY AFTERNOON SOCIAL
Sunday, May 19th, 1996
2 - 4 p.m.



CAN YOU GUESS?

A typical day in downtown Springfield...In this familiar streetscape we can easily recognize the Civic Center, the old Chicopee Savings with the tower on the right-hand side of the picture and the old Masonic temple in the center with the clock tower and 1930's "skin" after all the original brownstone was removed (Ah...modernization). But what did it all look like before? Turn to Page 7 and see.

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CONTROVERSY SURROUNDS HISTORIC COMMISSION NOMINATION

The Trust filed a complaint with the Mayor's Office, the Springfield City Council and the Springfield Law Department regarding the selection of the SPT nomination to the Historic Commission in February. Sitting SPT nomination and former chair of the Commission Roger Harris's term expired in September 1995. The SPT Board renominated Mr. Harris for a second term and submitted the nomination to Mayor Markel who then submitted it to the City Council for approval. The Council did not act upon the nomination before the general election in November.

Upon entering office, Mayor Albano asked for the resignations of sitting commissions, including the Historic Commission. Mr. Harris was asked to resign; however, because his term had expired and his re-nomination had not been acted upon, he could not resign a seat he did not have. Mr. Harris was not re-appointed, nor was the SPT asked to

submit new nominations to the Mayor as specified by the ordinance which specifically gives the SPT a nomination to the Historic Commission.

When the Springfield Newspapers announced a new Historic Commission had been appointed and awaited City Council approval, the Trust nominee was not on the list. When questioned, the Mayor's Office stated that sitting commissioner Ron Carle was the SPT nomination because he had a current membership in the Trust. Such was not the case.

While the SPT Board does not take issue with Mr. Carle, it does take issue with the procedures followed by the Mayor's Office for selecting commissioners. The SPT Board has in fact gone on record as not objecting to the nominees submitted by the Mayor. The Mayoral staff has apologized for its incorrect assumption that Commissioner Carle was the Trust nomination and has asked the SPT Board to submit new nominations to the Mayor from which one name will be selected for appointment.



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GUIDE TO
RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE
IN SPRINGFIELD

Now in its second printing, the Springfield Preservation Trust's booklet will guide you to many fine examples of the various styles of residential architecture in Springfield. This 34-page paperback includes photos of distinctive city homes, as well as detailed drawings to accompany each architectural "style" section.

Price: \$5 plus \$1 shipping and handling. Please mail your check to: The Springfield Preservation Trust, 979 Main Street, Springfield, MA 01103.



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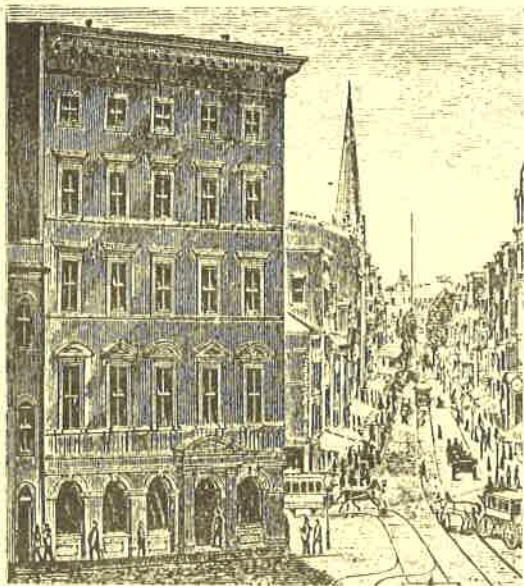


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PLAN OF ACTION PROPOSED FOR HOTEL CHARLES

The Trust has submitted a proposal to Mayor Albano and the City Council that may assist with exploring the reuse of the former Hotel Charles building. The Mayor and Council were alerted that any demolition of the Charles will require extensive state and federal preservation environmental impact studies that could delay the process. The Trust feels that vital community funds should not be used for demolition on speculation that will leave yet another vacant lot on Springfield's Main Street.

The Trust proposes that the Mayor and his staff conduct a regional marketing effort to attract a developer for the site. The City could offer any potential bidder a purchase price equaling the value of what the empty lot would have been. As an incentive, the City could also offer up funds equaling the full cost of the proposed demolition to be used exclusively toward the reuse of the building. The site would also qualify for the tax incentives which are available for historic rehabilitations.

The current owner of the Charles, the Springfield Redevelopment Authority, has never conducted a structural analysis, a feasibility reuse survey or a marketing analysis for the former hotel. In fact, in the several years that the SRA has owned the property, it has merely allowed the building to fall into decay and become an eyesore like so many properties owned by absentee landlords in Springfield.

If the City cannot find a developer for the reuse of either the building or even the street facades of the building after conducting a thorough search, the Boardmembers of the Trust would not object to the demolition of the Charles.



TRUSTVOICE
747-0656

**Springfield's 24-hour
preservation message center
and information line.**



ANNUAL MEETING WRAP-UP

The SPT Annual Meeting and Preservation Awards Reception was held on November 19th, 1995 at the "Pueblo of Seven Fires", located on the grounds of Springfield College. Over 80 members and award recipients attended the event at one of the most unusual locations in Springfield. This hidden jewel is an original pueblo built in 1932 and decorated with original paintings done by a former Native American student.

Guests mingled while admiring the wall paintings, columns made out of actual tree trunks, and the massive stone fireplace (one of seven). An impromptu presentation was given by Michael Boulden on the history of the pueblo and the artist. Michael, an intern at Springfield College, was invaluable in helping the Trust to put on this event.

This year's award recipients were celebrated for their preservation efforts. At the same time, the Trust also marked the passing of one of our members. Eleanor Dashevsky, who passed away this summer, was awarded the Donald E. Champion Award for Outstanding Achievement in Historic Preservation. Ellie, an active member of the SPT since its inception, left behind a legacy of preservation activities that included service on the Springfield Historic Commission and as a founding member of the Forest Park Civic Association. The award was presented to Ellie's son and nephew by Donald Champion's son, Egan, in a very moving ceremony.



SPT ANNUAL AWARD WINNERS

Springfield College
for careful stewardship of the Pueblo of Seven Fires

Mattoon Street Historic Preservation Association
for careful stewardship of Mattoon Street and Elliot Street

St. James Commons Associates
for careful stewardship of 573 State Street and 23 Oak Street

Daveda Provost and Thomas Howe
for porch restoration at 146 Bowdoin Street

Northern Star Development Corporation
for renovation of 92-96 Wilbraham Road

Donald and Martha Ashe
for exterior restoration of 23 Magnolia Terrace

Cardaropoli Realty Inc.
for renovation of 187 Pine Street

Springfield School Department
for adaptive reuse and new construction of the Milton Bradley School

South Congregational Church
for restoration of 45 Maple Street

Kenwyn Park Limited Partnership
for renovation of "The Kenwyn" at 413-415 Belmont Avenue

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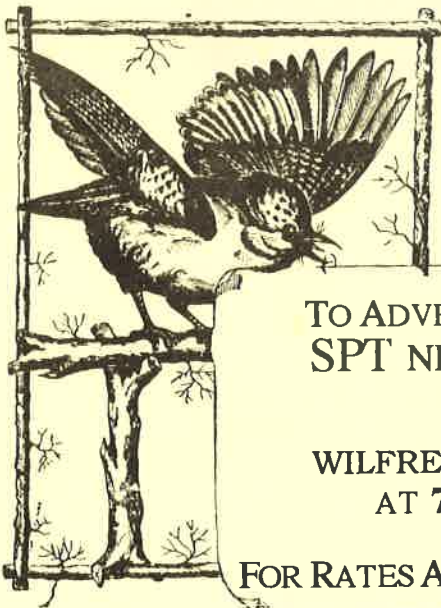
CAN YOU GUESS? continued from page 2

In this old postcard view, Main Street was a bustling commercial center with trolleys and crowded sidewalks. We see a real mixture of commercial buildings spanning many architectural styles. The glut of signs and advertising that we often worry about in modern times actually used to be much more pervasive. Also note the man on the right-hand side of the picture with the "sandwichboard" on his back, a very common form of advertising at the time.



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FOR RATES AND INFORMATION

The Springfield Preservation Trust

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

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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.

