



SPRINGFIELD PRESERVATION TRUST, INC

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Dedicated to Preserving Springfield's Architectural History

October 2007

The End of an Era

It is with much sadness that the Springfield Preservation Trust (SPT) accepts the resignation of our President, Jim Boone. With an energetic and forward thinking Board at the helm, Jim thinks the time is right to turn the leadership over. After a 30-year commitment to Preservation, the City of Springfield, and the SPT, he and his wife Merry would like to pursue other personal ventures.

Jim began his tenure in the mid 1970's when neighborhood preservationists resurrected the inactive organization. He has served as SPT President (twice), Vice President, and Treasurer. Jim coordinated house renovation projects, worked on house tours, served on the Springfield Historic Commission as the realtor nominee, and was the voice and face on our "Homes of the City" video. In each position Jim was passionate about his desire to preserve history and the structures that embodied those moments by writing letters to anyone who could help or was willing to read his pleas.

Jim was never alone in the efforts to save a home or structure that faced demolition. But while others moved on, Jim stayed. One wonders if the Alexander House would be where it is today if Jim had not written the numerous letters to senators and congressmen both locally and nationally. Jim is a true and dedicated preservationist not only in word, but also in action. He and his wife, Merry, meticulously restored their home on Florida Street to its original grandeur and beauty, well before saving old homes was in vogue. They received the City's Preservation Award in 1977 for their wonderful efforts. His commitment became clear when Jim began his career as a realtor specializing in Historic Properties.

Jim emphasized in his letter that he had the confidence to leave and pursue more personal interests knowing there was a seasoned, committed board accompanied by newly appointed board members who share his passion and desire for preservation. We will miss his guidance, tremendous knowledge of Springfield's history and architecture, his hard work; but most of all we will miss his friendship.

The Board of the Springfield Preservation Trust wishes Jim and Merry a long, happy and healthy retirement. But Jim, don't get too used to taking it easy, we are definitely planning to take you up on your offer of assistance in future projects.

Atwater House Tour

The Trust will sponsor a house tour in the Atwater Park area—it's first since 1988!! The tour will feature six homes on Sunday, October 21 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Much of the Atwater neighborhood was developed from the 300-acre estate of George Atwater, founder of the Springfield Street Railway. Ten years after his death in 1902, the Atwater heirs hired the Boston firm of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. to create a plan for a pleasant residential area. Noted local architects were involved in designing some of the houses: Eugene and George Gardner, Napoleon Russell and his partner Fred Knowlton, and Max Westhoff.

The neighborhood's park-like setting, proximity to Springfield Hospital, and access to the trolley line encouraged development. (A remnant of the trolley tracks can be seen at Atwater Road and Crestwood Street). Prior to the Great Depression, many houses were built in the popular Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival styles.

Tickets will be \$15 for the general public and \$12 for Trust members. They can be purchased after October 12 at Flowers Flowers at 758 Sumner Avenue and The Flower Box at 596 Carew Street. Tickets can also be purchased on the day of the tour from 12:45 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the corner of Springfield and Sheffield Streets.

For further information, call Bob McCarroll at 736-0629.

Update on Endangered Buildings in Springfield

Due to recent events, there are 3 new buildings of current concern:

Old First Church

The congregation at OFC is shutting-down at the end of this year! Springfield's oldest institution and the seat of local government for about our first 175 years, will be gone. The fate of the building (Church # 4, 1819) is unknown. Its incredibly large sanctuary seats 1,000. Considering the tiny rooms most people lived and worked in when that was built, entering that space must have been breathtaking, akin to our walking into the Vertical Assembly Building at Cape Canaveral. So now, what do we do with it?

Former Byron Funeral Home, 684 State Street

This grand, sided-over French-Second-Empire house, vacant for 7 years, had been a funeral home since 1924. Its owners applied to the Springfield Historical Commission for a Certificate of Hardship, intending to demolish it. Fortunately, the Commission denied this request on 20 September. Discussion included:

- Some "demolition by neglect" (roof leaks) has started!
- Building is in good condition
- Layout suitable for office or residential use, remediation needs vary by use
- Handicap access not difficult, building has an elevator tower
- It was "bundled" with other funeral homes in 2000; it served that purpose, so now sell it.
- Price to suit, remove/ modify deed restriction.
- Work with City on uses, zoning
- It has not been aggressively marketed; consider "open house" events, etc.
- And, especially, it was the home of John David McKnight, one of the developers of the Hill-McKnight area!

Former White St. Schoolhouse / New Fire Station Site

The schoolhouse, backing-up to Vermont St., was built in 1872. It was a school for 30-plus years when it was converted to its present use as a 2-family residence. Now, the triangular parcel South of the building, and the schoolhouse itself, constitute the site for a new fire station. Concern centers on preservation of the building, one of the last 2 remaining small schoolhouses in the City. It can be incorporated into the fire station, or, moved, which would be quite expensive. An Architect has offered to review some preliminary layout ideas with Fire Dept. officials.

Please keep us alerted to things you see going on, and send us any ideas you have on the above properties or on any other properties at risk.

Getting Ready for Winter

It's time for you to do your preparation so your old house is snug and ready for the harsh New England winter. Walk around the outside of your house and look for the obvious. Are your bushes cut away from the house so they do not hold all that extra moisture from snow? Do you have dead or dangerous branches hanging over the house that might brake in a storm? Are your gutters firmly attached and the hangers in good shape so that they drain towards the drains? Of course at the last moment before the first snow or freeze, be sure they have been well cleaned. Stopped up gutters are worse than having no gutters at all. Are your storm windows and doors in place and closed tight?

Look at your roof for any missing shingles or slates or loose flashing; it's easier to get it fixed now rather than in an ice storm in February. Are there vines or ivy that should be trimmed down so they don't hold moisture over the winter? Are there any small places that need touch up paint; you don't want snow or ice getting to any exposed wood. Be sure all leaves are up from driveway so as not to clog your snow blower. All the normal energy saving steps should be taken. Be sure to clean and tune up your boiler or change the filters in your hot air furnace. Make sure your chimney flues are closed tightly.

Before winter arrives apply a fresh coat of paint to your exterior wooden steps and porches for protection. When you shovel that snow, that will be here before you know it, be sure to also shovel your porches, don't let that ice and snow build up and stay there all winter, very hard on the porches. Get a plastic shovel without a metal edge to shovel the porches. Remember, you just painted them and don't want to damage, scrape, and expose the wood. All of these things will make your home suffer less in our harsh climate and make your chores in the spring easier. Have fun, get ready to snuggle up; you will need the rest if you did all these things.

William Henry Wright

William Henry Wright was a successful businessman who, together with Primus P. Mason, was responsible for the establishment of a retirement community later known as the Mason-Wright Retirement Community.

Born on June 6, 1833 in East Granville, CT, he learned the trade of cigar-maker as a boy and became foreman and buyer for a factory in Suffield, CT before he turned twenty-one. In 1858 he came to Springfield and worked at a cigar store owned by Calvin L. Loomis. He subsequently became a partner with Mr. Loomis and upon the death of Mr. Loomis in 1866, Mr. Wright bought out the business and established a reputation for certain lines of goods. Some of these lines were on the market for more than thirty-five years. His long experience in the business made him an expert and he was called one of the best, if not the best, judge of Havana tobacco. This expert knowledge enabled him to produce a very fine cigar and his "Gold Bar", "Massasoit" and "Wright's

'Hand-Made' brands were well known through the western part of the state. He accumulated a considerable fortune and owned considerable real estate.

Mr. Wright was a Republican, served on the board of alderman in 1887-88, and was a member of the board of public works from 1890 until his death. His practical good sense and sound judgment made him a valuable public servant. He was a director of the Second National Bank and a trustee of Hampden Savings Bank. He was a member of the Nayasset and Springfield clubs and of the Hampden Lodge of the Masons, Springfield Commandery Knights Templar. He was a lover of a good horse and was a stockholder of Hampden Park and guaranteed purses for races there. He was also one of the directors of the early baseball association in 1879-80 and was a member of the old Horse Guards before the Civil War.

His first residence in Springfield was on Bridge Street near the site of the former Winkler's Hotel. He later moved to the corner of Mattoon and Elliot Streets then to Benjamin Bowles place on the corner of Union and School Streets where he lived for several years before he sold it to Mrs. Horatio Lyon. After that for a time he lived at the corner of Elliot and Salem Streets just opposite his former residence. About 1893 he moved to the Warren place on State Street where he lived until his death on August 26, 1897.

EDITORIAL

Many Voices..Lots of Action

Over the last two months several matters regarding Historical Properties have become headline news, the White St. School House and Byron's Funeral Home. An August 30th article in The Republican "History in the way of fire station" had Ralph Slate, Commissioner of the Historical Commission, speaking about the historical significance of the brick building at 382-382 White St. that was being threatened with demolition to make way for a new fire station. Nobody is contesting the need for an updated, modern fire station. However, everyone seems to have forgotten that this building was once a single room schoolhouse. It is only one of two that still remain standing in this beautiful city, which is surrounded by historical and architectural treasures. One aspect of this article really hit home when Mr. Slate said, "Our power right now is persuasive," "We can convince people it should be saved."

Thirty-three days later as I write this, only ONE article has appeared in the Republican regarding Historic Preservation and that was written about the need for communities to adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA). It has been seven years since this law was put into place helping communities protect open space, housing and preserving Historic Properties. Springfield has an abundant collection of historically significant homes and buildings, yet we have not adopted the CPA. The very thought of how many building could have been saved from the wrecking ball with CPA money should make a preservationist shutter.

CPA is not the intention of this article, the sole purpose of this article is to emanate the words "Convince people it should be saved" and to ask our members, their families and friends to speak up about preservation issues to anyone who will listen; especially your city officials, councilmen and councilwoman, even the Mayor. There are many homes and structures in this beautiful city that need to be saved, right now. The Historical Commission and Springfield Preservation Trust have been the voices for preservation. It is time for the City to hear from its people too. Byron's Funeral Home is a great example of how people's voices make a difference. While everyone was very confident that the petition for demolition from Sowamco XXIX Ltd., of Waco, Texas would be denied, it did not stop people from calling the Mayor's office and writing letters to the Historical Commission. The McKnight community's opposition to the demolition of Byron's funeral home was heard loud and clear through several articles in the Republican, as was many others. Please take the time to voice your concerns and resolutions to the Historic Commission, The Springfield Preservation Trust, and every City official about saving the Historic Properties of Springfield, the quintessence of "City of Homes".

By Michael Marcinkewich

SPT, 35 years of Service

Thirty-five years ago a group of citizens concerned about the blighted buildings in Springfield got together and established what is known as The Springfield Preservation Trust, Inc. October 24th marks our anniversary; future newsletters will include articles about what we have accomplished and some fond memories. Please feel free to contact us if you would like to share your memories on past projects.

Guide to Residential Architecture

In celebration of the Trust's 15th birthday, the Springfield Preservation Trust put together a 'Guide to Residential Architecture in Springfield'. First published in 1987 and reprinted in 1994, this timeless guide celebrates our local architecture. Little remains of the buildings constructed during the first 175 years since Springfield was first established. With the printing of this guide, the SPT hoped that recognizing and understanding building styles would lead to a greater appreciation of our local architecture. Each page has several photos of Springfield's different architectural styles w/ a detailed drawing emphasizing the unique characteristics of each style. 'The Guide to Residential Architecture in Springfield' is available for a \$5.00 contribution. Call our office at 747-0656 or drop us a note at SPT, 74 Walnut St., Springfield 01105.

Want to help preserve Springfield's built environment? Join our organization and become a vital part of the movement to preserve our built environment and promote our architectural heritage.

- (\$30) Household - Includes discounted admission to Trust events
- (\$60) Patron - Includes discounted admission to Trust events and one complimentary event ticket
- (\$120) Sponsor - Includes discounted admission to Trust events, two complimentary events tickets and an architectural guide
- (\$200) Benefactor - Includes discounted admission to Trust events, two complimentary tickets and a Trust produced video titled "Homes of the City"

As per your request, two levels of lifetime membership are now being offered

- (\$300) Lifetime Household - Includes discounted admission to Trust events
- (\$600) Lifetime Patron - Includes one complimentary event ticket per year in addition to discounted admission to Trust events

Monthly Meetings

Monthly meetings of the Springfield Preservation Trust are held on the first Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m., at the Mason Wright Retirement Center, 74 Walnut Street. All Trust members are welcome.

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