



## SPRINGFIELD PRESERVATION TRUST, INC

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[www.springfieldpreservationtrust.org](http://www.springfieldpreservationtrust.org)

Dedicated to Preserving Springfield's Architectural History

**September 2008**

### **Autumn Tour Being Planned**

The Springfield Preservation Trust Board is working on a McKnight Twilight Tour scheduled for October 19<sup>th</sup> from 4:00 until 7:00 p.m. McKnight is one of the largest, late nineteenth century wood framed neighborhoods in New England. We are focusing on the area within a few blocks of the Thompson Street Triangle. We already have 2 houses committed and are looking for 4 more. Anyone interested in helping to plan or staff the tour, please contact Bob McCarroll at 736-0629 or [bobmccarroll@juno.com](mailto:bobmccarroll@juno.com)

Look for additional tour information on our website [www.springfieldpreservationtrust.org](http://www.springfieldpreservationtrust.org)

### **Successful Spring House Tour**

May 18<sup>th</sup> was the annual spring house tour, focusing this year on the part of Forest Park Heights from Sumner Avenue south to Forest Park. The area was primarily developed by the Forest Park Heights Company, formed in 1893. General Manager Lewis Newman supervised the construction of approximately 100 homes over the next 11 years. The six houses on the tour were built between 1895 and 1914.



Despite the rain, we had approximately 250 people purchase tickets. We received many compliments on our selection of homes. Following the tour, a reception for the homeowners and volunteers was held at the home of SPT President, Michael Marcinkewich.

Special thanks go to participating owners for sharing their homes: Lynne Goldberg and Robert Wool, Michael Triggs and Angelo Cosme, Karl Rubenis, Jeffrey and

Allison Sullivan, Jon and Kathleen Sandman, and Diana Henry.

### **2008 SPT Awards Ceremony**

The Springfield Preservation Trust Preservation Awards Ceremony honors the people and organizations that are helping to restore historic properties in Springfield. This year, the event was held on May 3<sup>rd</sup> at 183 Dartmouth Terrace, one of the houses receiving an award.

This grand 1894 Colonial Revival home had been neglected over the years but after being purchased by award recipients Richard and Jamie Gray, the house has been thoroughly renovated



Many Trust members, Award recipients, and guests enjoyed the ceremony. Attending guests also got a special treat in taking a tour of this historic house.

The Trust thanks everyone who put forth the extra effort to care for their homes and who restored their homes and buildings in such a way that respect the architectural integrity of the property and preserve the property for generations to come. Our Awards each year reflect everyone's efforts. Special thanks go out to the event planning committee who did such a wonderful job with the food and drinks.

### **Awards Recipient List**

#### ***Christine Hansen - 59 Garfield Street***

This 1903 Colonial revival house had been covered with aluminum siding prior to the creation of the rest of the Forest Park Heights Historic District. Its exterior has

been returned to its original appearance, including the once-covered oval attic window.

**Michael Wiersma - 85 Melrose Street**

Inappropriate siding was removed and the original siding was repaired and partially replaced to bring this small historic home back to its original look.

**Rocco Terriaca - 93 Bowdoin Street**

This grand 1883 Stick style house was converted to a rest home many years ago. Abandoned by its owners, the house sat vacant for several years before being foreclosed by the City for back taxes and then sold. Both house and carriage house have been restored.

**Joseph Williams - 109 Buckingham Street**

This 1882 Stick style house lay vacant and gutted for many years. It has been rehabilitated.

**Gary Lewis - 11 Ingersoll Grove**

This 1889 Victorian home had been covered with aluminum siding before the creation of the McKnight Historic District. Its interior, garage, and yard were piled with junk. Foreclosed by the City for back taxes, the house has been sold and restored inside and out. Gary was also the recipient of this years Donald E. Campion award.

**Richard and Jaime Gray - 183 Dartmouth Terrace**

This grand 1894 Colonial Revival house had been sadly neglected over the years. Purchased at bank foreclosure auction, it has been thoroughly renovated.

**John Bakos - 403 Maple Street**

This 1906 Colonial Revival style house was covered with artificial siding before the creation of the Maple Hill Historic District. The siding has been removed and the exterior repaired and painted.

**Jefferson Park LP - 1245 & 1391 Dwight Street**

These two early twentieth century apartment buildings were deteriorated and vacant prior to being renovated.

**Sunset Properties LLC - 216-220 & 222-226 Pearl Street**

These large early-twentieth apartment buildings had been in a state of decline for many years before their recent renovation and conversion to condominium units.

**Worthington Commons LP - 90-98 Federal Street & 900-902 Worthington Street**

These two early twentieth century apartment buildings sat vacant and deteriorated for several years before being rehabilitated along with nine other apartment buildings along Federal, Worthington, and Summit Streets.

**3640 Main Street LLP - 3640 Main Street**

This historic industrial building was completely renovated for modern office space and a portion of one of the first

floor walls was preserved as a wall separating the parking lot from Main Street.

**Why we are 'McKnight'...**

John and William McKnight were brothers who came from central New York in the 1850's to work as clerks in a dry goods store. During the 1860's the brothers were partners in several different stores and finally started a company in 1866 called McKnight, Norton and Hawley. They ran this business throughout the 1870's.

In 1870 the McKnight's partnered with Tilly Haynes who owned the Haynes Hotel and the Haynes Music Hall, and bought 22 acres of land between Thompson, Catherine and Bay Streets, once the farm of Josiah Flagg.

The brothers each built large homes on State Street. John's house, the former Byron's funeral Home, is the only one left.

Economic times were tough in the 1870's so only Thompson, Westminster, Buckingham and Sherman Streets were laid out. As things improved in 1880, they purchased land north of Bay St. from Colonel James Thompson and development really took off. New streets got set off, parks planned, houses built, and land sold to others to build houses to the McKnight's specifications.

During the 1880's, more land was bought going north all the way to the railroad tracks. These new streets were named after famous high status colleges. During the 1880's, the McKnight's built an averaged 35 houses per year, each costing between \$3000-\$8000. The money was made on the land itself with properties selling between \$3500-\$10,000, some as high as \$10,000-\$20,000.

Most of the McKnight's building was done by the early 1890's and the brothers moved on to develop Ridgewood and parts of Forest Park. But it is "McKnight" that they are remembered for and it remains the largest, intact wood frame neighborhood in New England. We are proud of our heritage and our namesake. We are "McKnight", not Hill McKnight. We honor these builders by calling our neighborhood by its real name.

This continues a series on the history of McKnight, and comes from a write up done when the neighborhood was made a Historic District. If there are special areas of interest you want to know more about, email at [jimboone@hotmail.com](mailto:jimboone@hotmail.com)

**Postcard History of Springfield**

Arcadia Publishing is out with its newest book in the Postcard History Series, "*Springfield*", by G. Michael Dobbs.

## Springfield



*Postcard of Court Square  
Reprinted with permission from  
"Springfield", by G. Michael Dobbs.*

Dobbs, also known as Managing Editor of *The Reminder*, has done yeoman's work in assembling a catalog of historic postcards that will serve as an excellent reference for years to come. Like all Arcadia local history books, the focus is on the images rather than the text. Mr. Dobbs does include an introduction that covers some of the important points of Springfield history along with some of its famous sons and daughters. Many of the postcards in the book were made available from local historians Jim Boone and Robert Walker.

While many of the postcards give scenes of familiar places in Springfield, there are many that might leave you thinking, "where is that exactly" or "I wonder what that building was". One such image was that of a beautiful tree lined State Street near downtown. The postcard states; "State Street is the finest example of a picturesque thoroughfare to be seen in Springfield. From the banks of the Connecticut River it extends the length of the city. In Colonial days it was the 'Old Bay Path' and stage road to Boston. Beautiful Elms and Maples line its borders for miles." Perhaps we may see State Street gain back some of this beauty after all the future changes that are planned.

While the book is not intended to be a complete history of Springfield, it serves as a great look at what generations of residents thought made interesting scenes for postcards.



Especially fun are some of the postcards that have text on them, like the postcard of the shell of old city hall after it had burnt; below the image is written: "Aunt Alice sent me this". Like all of the Arcadia books, they leave you wanting more after you have examined the over 150 images within the book. *Springfield* is a must book for anyone interested in local history of Springfield.

"Springfield", available for \$19.99, can be found at local retailers, online bookstores, or through Arcadia publishing at [www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com) or (888) 313-2665.

### Helpful Hints to Save Energy This Winter

We are all dreading this coming winter as oil prices are out of control. We can't change the cost of fuel, but we can have some effect on how much we use. The papers are full of articles about caulking, insulating and general weatherizing so I shall not repeat those. Let's talk about some other things you can do on a day to day basis to prepare winter that will each help a little, and maybe in total, help more than a little.

Fireplaces are charming and their warm glow gives a sense of closeness and really warms up a room. However, fireplaces in winter are terribly inefficient. A fire requires a lot of oxygen to burn. That oxygen comes from the other air in your house that you just spent a lot of money heating up, so now that goes up the chimney as well. If you want a fire, use a fireplace in a room you can close up and open the window a little to draw the needed air for the fire, without pulling from the rest of the house. You can be cozy, heat one room, and not lose all the other warm air in the house.

When not burning a fire be sure that your flue is tightly closed. If you do not use your fireplace, put some insulation around the flue. Remember flues are designed to pull air up the chimney; you do not want it to be heated air. Fires in the fireplace are a good way to extend the fall and spring season of not having your furnace running, cozy up in one room and leave the rest of the house cool.

When you are not home, turn down the thermostat to 58-60 degrees. Turn it back up when you get home, keeping your coat on for a few minutes. This really works well if you have hot air furnace, but is good with any system if you are gone from home all day. The savings will be noticeable. Turn the heat back down when you go to sleep.

If you have a hot air furnace, change the filter every month, it increases the efficiency. Think about how fast an oven cools down when you leave the door open for even a short time. When you open the door on your house, coming or going, or to say high to someone, the same thing happens on a huge scale. Come and go quickly. Remember your mother asking you if you were trying to heat all outdoors when you left the door open? She was right.

Do not use electric heaters to supplement your heat, even the efficient ones use huge amounts of electricity. Make some draft excluders. These are the easily home made devices that you put where the top and bottom sash of your window meet. You can make them by sewing a long, snake like tube, 3 - 4 inches wide and

loosely filled with sand. They lie across the top of the lower window and really help prevent drafts. They also work at the bottom of doors that are used infrequently.

If you go away for several days in the winter, or even in the summer, turn your hot water heater to Pilot, no need to heat hot water when you are not home. If you have an electric hot water heater, install a timer that only goes on before the time you usually need it. If you tend to shower or do laundry in the morning, have it go on an hour before you get up. There is an over ride so you can turn it on other times too.

Keep your window shades up on sunny days in the winter, lots of free heat. Be sure to have your oil burner tuned up each year and drain the sludge from the bottom before the heating season starts. This all gives better efficiency. Keep rooms closed so if you have rooms that are cooler than others, they will not suck warm air from other rooms.

If you have a steam system, use adjustable valves so you can balance the system. If your steam pipes or air ducts in the basement are not insulated, do it, who needs a toasty warm basement?

None of these things are going to solve the high cost of oil, but if you can save 5-10% through these measures, you will be better off. Remember, sweaters are cheaper than oil.

## EDITORIAL

### **“DENSITY” is not a dirty word!**

Since before the 1960s, Springfield, like many American cities, has been busily demolishing the City's core, with most of this waste applied to apartment houses. It continues to this day. Since this writer returned in 1979 and began watching, thousands of apartment units have been lost, along with schools, commercial buildings, etc.

By far, most of these buildings were entirely OK for rehab, and/ or use for different purposes. They were “innocent victims”, torn down for a wide variety of excuses.

This has been highly detrimental to our City. High-density living is what makes a City work! Reasons include:

1. More efficient use of resources
2. Reduction of sprawl
3. Can reduce crops-to-market distances
4. Easier access to cultural, educational, other facilities increases viability and usage
5. High-density areas usually lead to higher property values
6. Public transportation becomes more feasible

7. Some commutes reduced to walking, or bicycling
8. Foot-patrol policing is more efficient
9. Most of all, it can provide an exciting, neighborhood feeling

European cities as well as many cities in this country are full of examples with very-high-density communities, with plenty of privacy for individual units, yards, etc. Judicious use of well-designed open space is a requisite.

The habit of “down-zoning” (density reduction by zoning law) must be stopped, and reversed. We should be replacing the wonderful buildings that have been removed. Remember that the “North Blocks” area, from the railroad station North to Carew St., was once an area of thriving neighborhoods. Now, it's an inner-suburban office park with no vitality. “Sub-urban” is, by the way, quite an appropriate word.

Finally, please note: If we never removed a single apartment unit over the last half-century, the City's density would have been reduced by about 1/3. How? People's changing lifestyles have gone from 2 adults and 2 kids in each bedroom, plus maybe 1 or 2 others, in an apt. to private bedrooms for everyone. Young singles, who used to stay “at home” or get a room, now have their own apartments. Remember that 80 or 90 years ago, the City's population was not much less than our current population, yet half or more of the City's land was farm or forest/ meadow.

Please, let us return urbanity to our City.

*Bill Devlin is an architect who has lived in downtown Springfield for 28 years.*

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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