

# ON THE WEST SIDE

THE UNIVERSITY CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



November/December, 2014

<http://www.uchs.net>

Joseph Minardi, Editor

## You're Invited

### UCHS Valentine Tea & Awards Presentation 2015

The UCHS will be presenting another slate of awards on Sunday, **February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015** from **4:00 to 6:00** at the Castle, **930 South 48th (48th and Springfield)**. The 2014 Valentine Awards Tea was an outstanding success and this year's promises to be no less entertaining. There will be a wide array of tea, desserts, pastries, and petite sandwiches. And, as per usual, the UCHS will be handing out a number of awards to worthy neighbors who have done their part to beautify and improve their homes and surroundings. The event is free to all UCHS members and is an opportunity to meet with members of the University City community and partake of some delicious homemade sweets and delectables. As with all UCHS events, items such as mugs, posters, and books will be available for purchase.

Please contact the UCHS to inform us of anyone you know who has performed a superior restoration or renovation job during the previous year for our **Gift to the Streets Award, Outstanding Preservation Award, or Preservation Initiative Award**. And please feel free to nominate yourself. Email your nomination to [info@UCHS.net](mailto:info@UCHS.net).

Our next issue of *On The West Side* will be coming in the next several weeks with a list of the 2015 Preservation Award nominees.



2014 Highlights, top right; Gregg and Rachel Mohrmann, 2013 Outstanding Preservation Award; bottom left, Ryan Spak, 2013 Preservation Initiative Award. Photos by Joseph Minardi.

## DEMOLITIONS IN POWELTON/MANTUA

As many of you are already aware, there have been a large number of demolitions in Powelton Village and the adjoining community of Mantua, ranging from small (artist studio at 3105 Hamilton) to significant (34th Baptist Church, 34th and Brandywine). At present there are a few "threatened" structures (at 3705 Spring Garden and 3600 block of Lancaster). Luckily, zoning for these properties doesn't support great density, so they may be safe for a while. There have also been a number of unfortunate demolitions in the rest of University City which have been discussed in back issues of *On The West Side*.

The Powelton Village Civic Association (PVCA) has proposed a conservation district to protect the unique character of Powelton Village to combat pressure from redevelopment. The boundaries of the proposed district are; Spring Garden Avenue to the north, Lancaster Avenue to the west, 34th Street to Powelton Avenue and down to Summer Street, to 32nd and 31st Street on the east. One of the tools at their disposal is a Neighborhood Conservation Overlay (NCO) district, which is intended to encourage conservation and preservation through the revitalization of the physical environment that is unique to a specific neighborhood.

PCVA provides a reasonable degree of control over the alteration and improvement of the exterior facades of existing buildings and the

design of new construction to preserve the aesthetic fabric of these areas, without modifying the availability of permitted and special exception uses in the neighborhood. It is also intended to complement the goals of the Planning Commission and the Historical Commission as they seek to develop, revitalize, preserve, and conserve the many diverse and historic neighborhoods of the city.

The design guidelines adopted as part of each NCO district may address building and site designing, but may not address the availability of permitted and special exception uses pursuant to Chapter 14-600 (Use Regulations), related to any of the following:

- (a) Alterations to architectural features of existing buildings that are visible from a public street;
- (b) The new construction or expansion of a building; and
- (c) Construction of a new building or use of a vacant property after substantial demolition of an existing building on a property.

In a 2012 survey, 87% of Powelton residents agreed the District should prevent the conversion of single family homes into boarding/group homes. 100% said the District should dictate a minimum amount of living space in a unit above and beyond the requirements of the Property Maintenance Code.

What's next? Survey of every structure within boundaries of neighborhood, meeting with Planning Commission/Councilwoman, draft legislation and introduction to Council, and public meetings.

# Ask the Experts

## IDENTIFYING OLD WALLPAPERS

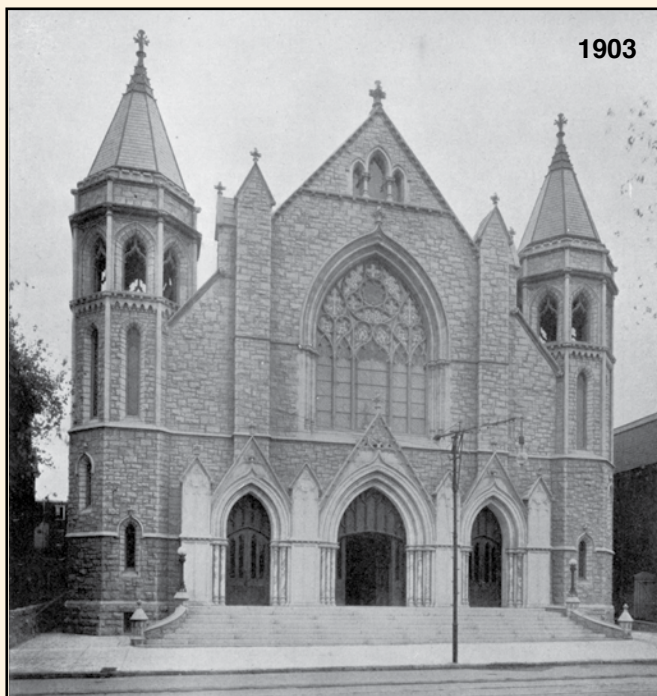


Example of original nineteenth century wallpaper used in a large single dwelling in West Philadelphia, in this case the Joseph D. Potts mansion, 3905 Spruce Street. This c. 1850 wallpaper was uncovered during recent renovations. Photo by Joseph Minardi.

**Q:** How can I determine the age of an old piece of wallpaper?

**A:** Should a remnant of old wallpaper be discovered, there are a few simple tests to determine its age. First, with a large enough sample, it can be determined whether it was printed or on a continuous roll or glued together from smaller (handmade) sheets. Continuous-roll paper is undoubtedly from the second half of the nineteenth century or later. If the sample is small, break off a piece. If it breaks to a straight edge, the paper was probably made by machine; if it breaks to a crooked edge, it was probably made by hand. Next, examine the color and texture of the fragment. Wood-pulp paper from the nineteenth century will be brown and brittle. If the fragment appears creamy or gray and in fairly good condition, it may be earlier rag paper. Look closely at the pigments. Test a small area with a drop of water; if the pigments do not run, the paper has either been varnished (in which case you will see a shine) or was printed toward the end of the nineteenth century, when insoluble pigments came into common use. Finally, examine the pattern under 10X magnification. If the surface is pitted, the paper was block-printed using thick pigments common early in the nineteenth century. If each color seems more intense at the edges of the pattern, it was probably printed by roller, which causes the pigments carried by the brass edges to appear heavier than those trapped by the felts.

## University City: **Then & Now:** Christ Community Church, 4017 Chestnut Street



West Philadelphia Illustrated

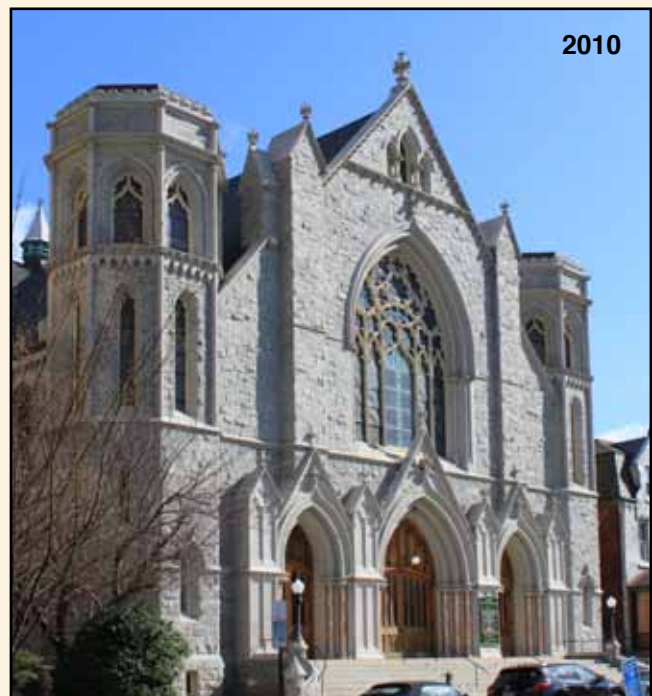


Photo by Joseph Minardi

The Christ Community Church, formerly the Borean or Tabernacle Baptist Church, is an outstanding example of the Gothic Revival style and features an impressive sanctuary, elaborate plaster ceiling ornaments, and carved oak furnishings. The church was dedicated on May 7, 1897. It once sported two turrets on top of its bell towers. They have long since been removed.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOR HOMEOWNERS

### Architectural Papers

Wallpapers printed to imitate architectural elements such as columns, arches and balustrades.

### Architrave

The molded trim above a door or window opening.

### Ashlar

A masonry wall built of square, or rectangular-cut stones; wallpaper or decorative painting having the appearance of cut stonework.

### Axminster

A cut-pile carpet that was first woven by hand in the eighteenth century to imitate Oriental carpets. Machines capable of weaving Axminster carpeting were developed in America between 1867 and 1877.

### Bead

A simple decorative molding with a semicircular profile used in architectural elements such as cornices or the frames of doors and windows (also called "beading").

### Brussels

A durable looped pile carpet developed in Brussels c. 1710 and woven by machine in America by the mid-nineteenth century. The various-colored yarns are woven into the body of the carpet when not part of the face pile (also called "body Brussels").

### Calcimine

A term used principally in America to describe a paint made of tempera colors, water, and sizing (sometimes spelled "kalsomine" in the nineteenth century). The addition of sizing made calcimine more durable than whitewash.

### Cartridge Paper

A thick, stiff wallpaper generally produced in a single color although occasionally in patterns.

### Ceiling Medallion

A rosette or disk, which might be made of various materials (plaster, wood, papier mâché, or metal), used to decorate the center of a ceiling, generally above a hanging light fixture (also called a "center").

### Chair Rail

A plain or molded strip of wood fixed to a wall to protect it from being rubbed by the backs of chairs

### Cornice

Molding placed at junction of the wall and ceiling.

### Cove

A simple concave molding placed at the junction of the wall and ceiling.

*Continued in next issue.*

## "Epitaphs"

Compiled by John Torre

John Torre began taking note of the more interesting epitaphs at the Woodlands Cemetery during his second stint as caretaker from October of 1983 to May of 1985. It was during this time that he got the idea to compile them into a booklet titled *Epitaphs of Woodlands Cemetery*. One copy was given to Ruth Molloy, a former UCHS Board member. It is from this copy that some of the epitaphs are being reproduced here.

*"That they may rest from their labours  
And their words do follow them."*

*"Too pure, too frail, too gentle for Earth."*

*"Love is as strong as death."*

*"Say not 'Goodnight' but in some brighter clime bid  
me, 'Good Morning'."*

*"They have awakened from the dream of life."*

*"And they that are wise shall shine  
As the brightness of the firmament  
And those that turn many to righteousness  
As the stars for ever and ever."*

*"For venerable old age is not of long time  
Nor counted by the number of years  
But a spotless life is old age  
And the understanding of man is grey hairs."*

*"Heaven hath gained a saint - Earth hath lost one."*

*"His charities secured for him a place above."*

*"He fought the good fight."*

*"He has outsoared the shadow of our night."*

*"Who plucked that flower? cried the gardener  
And his fellow servant answered: The Master.  
And the gardener held his peace."*

*"Born in mortality - raised in immortality."*



Have you liked the UCHS Facebook page yet? Whatcha waiting for? Go to [www.facebook.com/ucityhistoricalsociety](http://www.facebook.com/ucityhistoricalsociety)

to get all of our updates and info about future events. It's fun and free! Also be sure to check out our evolving homepage at UCHS.net. Now you have two new ways to connect to your favorite historical society and all the goings on in your neighborhood.



## Did you know?

The relocation of the University of Pennsylvania to the area after the Civil War was a key development. Benjamin Franklin had founded the University in colonial Philadelphia in 1749 and originally located it in a single building on 4th Street, just below Arch. In 1802, looking for better facilities and more space, the Trustees moved the University to the west side of 9th Street, between Market and Chestnut Streets. By the mid 1860s, however, the area around the 9th Street campus had become highly congested with commercial and industrial activity and traffic. The Trustees again looked for open space and the opportunity to build better, more modern facilities. They soon decided on city-owned land at 34th and Walnut Streets, in suburban-like West Philadelphia.



College Hall, 1876.

## PROFILES IN ARCHITECTURE

### *Angus Wade*

Born in Vermont, Angus Wade (1865-1932) came to Philadelphia in 1883 to work in the office of Willis G. Hale (1848-1907) where he gained valuable experience and picked up on Hale's flamboyant style of Victorian Eclecticism. In 1886 Wade opened his own office on 1017 Chestnut Street, getting commissions for hotels, apartment buildings, and private residences. In 1887 he had a one-year partnership with J. Harris Reed. In the early twentieth century, Wade formed other brief partnerships before moving on to New Jersey and Brooklyn after 1904. Evidently, his later years were spent in Florida where he became a member of the Florida Association of Architects. Wade was a member of the Union League, the Philadelphia Art Club, and the AIA. He died in Florida in 1932.

#### Relevant Commissions:

- 1888:** W.R. Nicholson Residence, 4001 Spring Garden St. Residence, 40th and Spring Garden St. Residences (nine), between Spring Garden & Preston St. Residences (four), between Spring Garden & Warren St. Store, Lancaster Avenue below Preston St. Frank Wallace Residence, 37th and Hamilton St.
- 1889:** Residences, John M. Sharp, 41st and Walnut St.
- 1894:** Charles M. Keeler, store and residence, 40th & Locust St.
- 1895:** Residences, 4038-4040 Walnut St.

#### Attributed Commission:

- 1891:** John Devlin Residence, 1006 South 46th St.

