

# ON THE WEST SIDE

## THE UNIVERSITY CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



February/March, 2015

<http://www.uchs.net>

Joseph Minardi, Editor

The UCHS would like to thank all of those who came out to our Annual Valentine's Tea Award Ceremony on Sunday afternoon. Congratulations to our recipients for their hard work in the neighborhood. Thanks also to those who assisted in the food preparation. A special shout out goes to our Awards Committee (George Poulin and Moira Nadal) for gathering info about contributors to University City improvements, evaluating nominees and creating the actual awards. And an extra special thanks to Ellie and Nick Cernansky for opening up their beautiful home to the UCHS for the event and welcoming dozens of strangers into their house. Here's to a successful 2015 and let's keep up the good work in making University City the premier neighborhood in Philadelphia.

**Gift to Streets winners:** 244 S 46th - **Patricia and Robert Duncan:** 4722 Hazel - **Marvin Caldwell:** 4222 Osage - **David and Jamie Vann;** 4441 Spruce - **Stephen Shade & Lani Borgman-Shade:** 421 S. 44th - **Christopher O'Donnell:** 4821 Windsor - **Nancy Juergens & Bob Behr:** 4706 Windsor - **Rick Freeman & Noreen Shanfelter:** 4708 Windsor - **Beverly Bowe:** 816 S. 48th - **Jim and Viet Huong Kurtz:** 4041 Baltimore - **Apartments at Penn, Inc.:** 4807 Springfield - **Ray & Julie Davis:** 3504-06 Hamilton - **Karin Rhodes and Lance Becker:** 3608 Hamilton - **Debra McCarty and Rich Stasiowski:** 3610 Hamilton - **George Poulin and Keith Roeckle:** 3619 Baring - **Danielle Kalish & Michael Lehman:** 3429 Powelton - **Drexel University & Connie Lotz:** 506 S. 48th - **Michael Froehlich:** 508 S 48th - **Dorothy Berling.**

**Outstanding Preservation winners:** 1001 S. 47th - **Sisters of the Assumption:** 3509 Spring Garden Drexel University & **BLT Architects:** 1118 S. 46th - **Stephen Fisher.**

**Preservation Initiative winners;** **Guy Laren, Aaron Wunsch & Wilson Goode** for activism responsible for the preservation of St. Peter's Church at 4700 Kingsessing, previously scheduled for demolition by the City of Philadelphia.



Left; Aaron Wunsch, Ph.D., Preservation Initiative winner; top center, food display; bottom center, Drexel University and BLT Architects (Kevin Aires and Kimberly Miller), right; Catherine Moorwood and Stephen Fisher.

### New Mission Statement Voted On at Awards Tea

The revised Mission Statement for UCHS was voted on at the Award Tea, approved, and will be effective as of March 1, 2015.

### UCHS HOUSE TOUR PLANNED FOR '15!

With this cold and dreary winter upon us, one can only dream of warmer spring days, with flowers blooming and birds singing. It's also the time when folks get to check out some of the most fascinating houses in University City. Last year we at UCHS held a very successful house tour and this year promises

to be no less eventful. On Sunday, May 31st, 2015 UCHS will be holding its annual tour of the neighborhood. In the next issue of *On the West Side* we will have more details about the tour. We at the UCHS can only hope this year's event will be as successful as last year. And, of course, we hope to see you out there enjoying the beauty of the neighborhood.



Mark your calendar for the 2015 UCHS House Tour.



### "YOUR WEST PHILADELPHIA HOUSE" WORKSHOP AT THE WOODLANDS

The UCHS is pleased to announce a joint "how to" workshop project with The Woodlands Mansion on April 12th (2:00 to 4:00 p.m.) titled, "Your West Philadelphia House: How Old is it? Who Lived There?" This event will be fun and informative, and be sure to bring the kids along for coloring and other fun activities! So come along and uncover your house's story!

This workshop will be led by architectural historian **Aaron Wunsch, Ph.D.** Dr. Wunsch is an Associate Professor in the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate Program in Historic Preservation and a West Philadelphia resident.

**Cost:** Free to members of University City Historical Society or The Woodlands, \$10 for non-members. Make your reservations at:

<http://woodlandsphila.ticketleap.com/yourwestphiladelphiahouse/>

# A Note to Society Members

**THANK YOU** for your membership support - and a special thanks to our 2014 Sustaining and Friend members listed below:

**2014 Sustaining Donors:**

Scott Wilds & Martin Bodtmann  
Arthur & Jan Bye  
Nick & Ellie Cernansky  
Dan & Sarah Gordon  
Mike Hardy & Barry Grossbach  
Genie Siegler & David Hochman  
E. David Horowitz  
Brian Ratigan & Melani Lamond  
Tom Lussenhop  
Steve & Betsy McCoubrey  
Sue & Jack Minnis  
Ellyn Sapper  
Brian Spooner  
Chip & Marci Staddon  
Elizabeth Stegner  
Aaron Wunsch

**2014 Friend Donors:**

David Othmer & Maureen Barden

Warren Cederholm & Don Caskey  
Eva Christensen  
Libby Rosof & Murray Dubin  
Mary Goldman  
Jeff Rubidge & Grace Kao  
Joanne & Leon Kellerman  
Carolynne Martin  
Brian Yachyshen & Jacqueline McCrea  
Bruce & Sharon McCullough  
Rachel & Gregg Mohrmann  
Joe & Betty Moloznik  
Janet Reitano  
John Puckett & Karin Schaller  
Brian Donlen & Jessica Senker  
Paul Steege  
David Ade & Paul Steinke  
Joan Weiner  
Michael & Peggy Wright

*And finally, thanks to our "green" members, who elected to receive e-newsletter mailings from the Society, saving us the cost of postage and printing. (If you'd like to change your subscription to "green," email a request to [mlamond@aol.com](mailto:mlamond@aol.com).)*

University City: **Then & Now:** Locust Street Theatre, 224 South 52nd Street



Photo courtesy of The University of Pennsylvania Archives.



Photo by Joseph Minardi.

Originally known as the Locust Theatre, the Bushfire Theatre on the corner of 52nd and Locust, was built in 1914 and still operates as a theater with a seating capacity of up to 700. The Bushfire Theatre is dedicated to providing a performing arts experience featuring the works of African-American playwrights and a resident ensemble of actors. Visit <http://www.bushfiretheatre.org>

## 4224 BALTIMORE MEETING - FEBRUARY 19, 2015

The Spruce Hill Civic Association held a meeting to discuss zoning for 4224 Baltimore Avenue on February 19th. About 45 people braved the frigid temperatures to hear from U-3 Ventures and the design team of Cecil Baker and voice their opinions. The massing of the project, which was arrived at after three public meetings during 2014, was the prime matter of the evening, even though some in attendance were still focusing on parking and other issues, after which things got a little contentious. One local resident stated, "this would be an ornament to our community and that Cecil Baker is an extremely talented architect." Also, "at first I was extremely sceptical but now I'm a convert." Another person said that retail at the corner of 43rd and Baltimore was a "no-brainer." A show-of-hands to gauge the approval of the project was overwhelmingly positive. Failing this the lower density (with no retail) "by-right" design would be built instead. This is now to go to the ZBA for final approval. A date had not been set yet.



Cecil Baker. Photo by Joseph Minardi.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOR HOMEOWNERS\*

*Continued from previous issue*

### Filling

A term used at the end of the nineteenth century to identify carpeting woven in a single solid color.

### Floorcloth

A term used through the first half of the nineteenth century to identify a linen, cotton, or jute cloth painted with oil-based paints and commonly used in entry halls and dining rooms, where it sometimes protected better carpeting.

### Fresco Paper

Plain or patterned wallpaper used during the middle of the nineteenth century to create the illusion of panels.

### Frieze

The area at the upper portion of the wall between the picture rail and the cornice.

### Geometric Tile

Floor tiles without pattern produced in a limited number of colors and polygonal shapes. In America, these plain tiles, as well as the patterned ones, were marketed as “encaustic” tiles.

### Grass Matting

A product woven in the Orient of various grasses and used as a summer floor covering or as the base for smaller carpets at other times of the year.

### Ground

Background color or wallpaper or carpeting.

### Hue

A term that designates a color, such as red, yellow, or blue.

### Imperial

Another name for three-ply ingrain carpeting developed in Scotland c. 1824.

### Ingrain

An American term for a flat-pile, reversible carpet resembling a coverlet, in which the colors of the design on one side are reversed on the other.

### Ingrain Paper

A thick, textured wallpaper permeated with color because the pulp is dyed before the paper is made. Ingrain paper was sold in plain and patterned varieties.

### Intensity

The purity or saturation of a particular hue.

### Kidderminster

Another term for ingrain carpeting denoting the waving center near Birmingham, England, where ingrain was first made in the early eighteenth century.

### Lambrequin

A stiffened, unpleated fabric suspended from a cornice above a window and often embellished with cords, fringes, and an ornamentally cut hem.

### Leno

A weave in which the warp and weft threads are interlocked, producing a loosely woven fabric suitable for use as windows.

*Continued in next issue.*

\*From *Victorian Interior Design*, 1986.

## Ask the Experts (from *Period Details*, 1987)

### RESTORING MARBLE FIREPLACES

**Q:** What is the best way to restore a marble fireplace?

**A:** Before attempting to restore a marble fireplace, make sure that you allow yourself plenty of time. It is certainly not a job to be done in a hurry. A point to remember before you begin cleaning is not to use any acids, dyes or alcohol: marble is a porous substance, and fluids such as these will soak into it and stain, or eventually cause the marble to disintegrate.

There are three main problems to be overcome when restoring marble. First, it is likely to be broken or chipped; second, it may have been painted; and last it may be heavily stained. If you are unlucky you may have to deal with all three!

If the fireplace has been badly damaged - large chunks have been broken off the mantel ledge, for example, or slabs have fallen off the mantel face - then you may have to break apart that part of the mantel-piece and start from scratch, gluing together sections with special marble glue. For that you will need a stone chisel and ballpeen hammer to chip away ragged edges and to pry off discarded pieces. You may have to replace parts with new marble, your local marble dealer will help to supply matching pieces. Always protect your hands with heavy-duty,

leather-lined workgloves.

You can remove paint from marble by using special paint stripper formulated for stone. Work on only a few square inches at a time, using swabs of cotton wool to take off the excess stripper. Repeat this until the paint disappears. It is essential to wear rubber workgloves during this process. If you are careful, you can use a paint scraper, but remember that marble scratches easily.

When polishing marble, use a white hard polish: any coloring in the polish will stain. Rub the polish hard into the marble using a soft white cloth. Any dye in the cloth could seep into the marble. For a matt finish use a softer cloth.

After a long and laborious restoration, it is important to look after the marble. For day-to-day upkeep use a white furniture polish to keep it clean. Remember that marble is a porous stone, and careless placement of plant pots and glasses will cause staining.



*Marble fireplace in house in Powelton.  
Photo by Joseph Minardi.*



# ON THE WEST SIDE



## PROFILES IN ARCHITECTURE

*Robert A. Pitts*

Robert A. Pitts is one of the lesser-known, but still important architects that shaped University City during the late nineteenth century, mainly due to his prolific work in this part of Philadelphia. Pitts graduated from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and became a working architect by 1889. By 1890 his projects begin to appear in the *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders Guide*, and the 1891 Philadelphia city directory notes that he operates out of an office at 224 South 3rd Street, an address in which he remained through 1905, adding a real estate office from 1903 to 1905 at 6151 Vine St.

Pitts remained active as a Philadelphia architect/real estate developer until 1936.

### Selected Relevant Commissions:

- 1893:** John Airy, residences (7), Chestnut St, west of 33rd St.
- 1894:** Robert Airy, residences (2), 3461-3 Chestnut St.  
John Airy, residences (5), 48th St, south of Westminster.
- 1895:** John Airy, residences (2), 46th St, below Chester Ave.  
Residences (8), 4230-44 Chestnut St  
Residences (16), North side of Walton, east of 49th St.  
Rex, Walter E., residential development of 42nd Street, Chestnut Street, and Sansom Street.  
Twadell, Horace G., 46th and Cedar Ave developments
- 1896:** Joy, James F., 4400-2 Pine Street  
Joy, James F., residences (10), NW 46th and Pine St.
- 1897:** Stillman, Water, residences (11), NW cor 44th & Locust.  
Residences (6), WS of 46th, N of Springfield Ave.  
Residences (4), NS of Spring Garden Ave., corner of 37th.
- 1898:** 3549 Chestnut Street  
Residences on 48th St, north of Hazel.  
Residences (48), 48th & Baltimore Ave. area  
Residences (98), New St, rear of Cedar Ave, west of 49th.  
Residences (12), 4809-31 Baltimore Ave.
- 1899:** Residences (314), 62nd and Vine St.

## University City Historical Society

PO Box 31927

Philadelphia PA 19104-0627

## Did you know?

Construction on the Men's Dormitories at Penn (the "Quad") began on July 18, 1895 for an estimated \$530,000. Horace E. McPherson (1862-1899) was the contractor for the project and Cope & Stewardson were the architects.



*Dormitory Quadrangles (the Quad), May 1903. University of Pennsylvania Archives*



Have you liked the UCHS Facebook page yet? Whatcha waiting for? Go to [www.facebook.com/ucityhistoricalso](http://www.facebook.com/ucityhistoricalso) 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](http://UCHS.net). Now you have two new ways to connect to your favorite historical society and all the goings on in your neighborhood.

