

# ON THE WEST SIDE

THE UNIVERSITY CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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<http://www.uchs.net>

Joseph Minardi, Editor



## UCHS Walking Tour - 2015 Architecture & Its People



## UCHS FALL WALKING TOUR 2015

Put on your comfortable walking shoes and prepare to explore the glorious Spruce Hill neighborhood with a professional tour guide.

We at UCHS are proud to announce our fall event for 2015: a walking tour of Spruce Hill architecture and the people behind it. Many fascinating stories await you as professional tour guide and UCHS Board member, Mark N. Silber, gives you a behind-the-scenes look at the lives of the people from University City's past, not to mention its amazingly diverse architecture. You'll see the "Painted Ladies" of Spruce Street, the Chateausque mansion of a cigar mogul, the international intrigue of a dentist to European royalty, and much more.

The tour starts at **40th and Spruce** at **10:30** on **October 10th** and will last approximately 90 minutes. The cost is \$5.00 for UCHS members and \$10.00 for everyone else, payable at the day of the event or in advance at: <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/university-city-historical-society-walking-tour-architecture-its-people-tickets-18335021543>

## Ask the Experts - George Poulin, A.I.A., LEED AP

**Q:** We need to replace our old, drafty windows. What would you recommend?

**A:** First, let me try to convince you that in most scenarios, window replacement may not be the best option. If you own a Victorian home and still have the original windows, chances are the original windows can be repaired or restored to a condition that is comparable, if not superior, to new window replacements. Read on to learn why.

Beyond aesthetic considerations, an original window would have been made with old growth hard lumber. This older wood is much more resistant to rot and, if rot does appear, can often be repaired with a two-part epoxy. On the other hand, new wood or vinyl windows may only have a lifespan of up to 30 years.

If draftiness is a concern, older windows can often be refitted to eliminate pesky air infiltration. Sash-weight pockets can often times be insulated, and gasketing can be applied to sash-stops to reduce draftiness. A properly fitted historic single pane window when fitted with either an interior or exterior storm, can match the thermal performance of a modern, vinyl double-pane window.

Although frequently overlooked, aesthetic considerations are another reason to consider maintaining your original windows. Replicating a custom window profile can be expensive. Original windows may have a unique mullion configuration, arched top, or leaded glass. Another added benefit is that with an original wood-window, you can paint the interior or exterior whichever color you prefer! Unless the trim on your house is painted white, a vinyl window will look out of place.

If your windows are truly beyond repair, there are good options for replacement. Depending on the size of the window, be prepared to spend \$1,000 per window for historically accurate replacements. Look for local companies specializing in older homes. Ask about exterior cladding options and mullion configurations (i.e. two over two or six over one). If the windows are wood, ask which species is being used. And, most importantly, ask for references or addresses of homes that have received similar windows so you can take a look for yourself.



*Powelton Village Victorian house with original window. Photo by George Poulin.*

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOR HOMEOWNERS\*

*Continued from previous issue*

### Venetian Blind

A window covering made of horizontal slats connected by cords that open or close the slats.

### Venetian Carpeting

A reversible flat-pile carpet usually woven of wool and jute and commonly striped along the warp.

### Vestibule

An antechamber or small room located between the outside door and the inside one, usually opening into a hall.

### Vitromania

A method of decorating window panes to imitate stained glass.

### Wainscoting

Woodwork, often paneled, that covers the lower portion of the walls of a room.

### Whitewash

A water-based paint containing finely ground chalk, salt, and lime. It could be tinted various hues.

### Wilton

A cut-pile carpet in which the various colored yarns are woven into the body of the carpet when not part of the face pile.

### Wood Carpeting

An inexpensive substitute for parquet employing thin pieces of wood glued to a paper or fabric backing and nailed to the subfloor.

\*From *Victorian Interior Design*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, New York, 1986.

## The Tiberinos: The Art of Life

There will be a screening on **Friday, September 11th at 7:00 p.m.** at Scribe Video Center, 4212 Chestnut Street, Third Floor, of **The Tiberinos: The Art of Life**.

The Tiberino family, often referred to as “The West Philly Wyeths,” have been creating art in the Powelton Village neighborhood for over half a century. Joe Tiberino, his late wife Ellen Powell Tiberino, and their children have firmly established themselves in Philadelphia’s art community and beyond. Produced over a three-year period, the film serves as a chronicle of the family’s history as Philadelphians and artists. Directed by Derrick Woodyard and Joseph Tiberino, the film was premiered January of this year at the Trocadero.

Admission is free but a donation of five dollars is suggested. **Visit** <http://scribe.org/events/>



*Original poster art from The Tiberinos: The Art of Life.*

## A SAD FAREWELL TO 40TH & PINE

The Samuel Sloan-attributed Italianate mansion at 400 South 40th (40th and Pine Streets) was demolished the week of August 23rd, 2015. The house, which stood at that location since 1853 was cleared for demolition by the Historical Commission on December of last year. A compromise plan to save and restore the mansion, which included the addition of an apartment building (the “Azalea Gardens”) for student housing, was rejected by a handful of locals. Penn, the owner of the property, claimed financial hardship, allowing for them to demolish the mansion for student housing.

Although not a confirmed commission by Sloan, he did design a number of houses in the area around 1853 and it does resemble some of his popular designs. Sloan biographer, Harold N. Coolidge, Jr., notes that there were two confirmed commissions by Sloan in 1853 on “Till [40th Street] between Spruce and Pine.” One was described as a “Swiss Villa” for a Mr. Maloney, the other, “in the Elizabethan Style” for Nathaniel B. Browne. Both have been demolished.

400 S. 40th was built for John Patterson Levy, a captain who was looking to retire from his seafaring life to the bucolic charm of rural West Philadelphia. The house later passed into the hands of David Porter Leas, a leather manufacturer who made some modifications to the home, most notably a Colonial Revival front porch (see photo).

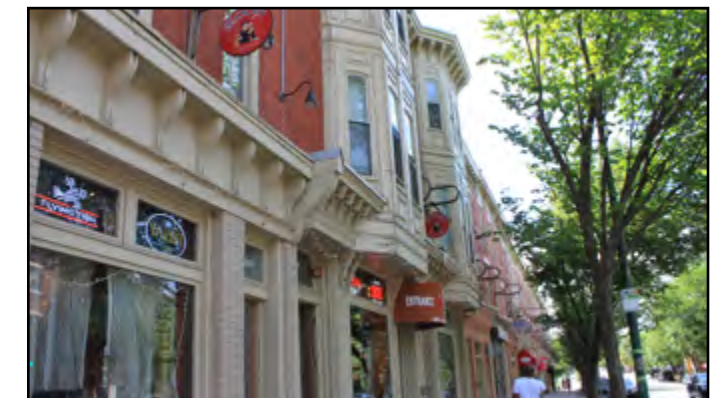
The house didn’t get much respect from many observers, mainly due to some rather unattractive additions made during the 1970s when it was used as a nursing home. The hidden beauty of the original architecture was obscured by layers of cinder blocks. Oddly enough, it wasn’t until the demolition began that the original house reappeared. With the mansion removed, Penn can now build a student housing building. The failure to reach a compromise between Penn and neighbors constituted a lose-lose situation.



**Top;** 40th and Pine Street, as it appeared during the ownership of David Porter Leas, 1901. Described as “recently enlarged and modernized,” and “among the finest west of the Schuylkill River.” Image scanned by Joseph Minardi from “Philadelphia and Famous Philadelphians,” 1901. **Bottom;** demolition, August 24, 2015. Photo by Joseph Minardi.

## REVIEW OF 3600 LANCASTER AVE.’S NOMINATION RESCHEDULED

The nomination of 3600-3630 Lancaster Avenue to the **Philadelphia Register of Historic Places** will be considered by the **Historic Commission’s Committee on Historic Designation** at their **September 16th meeting**. Recommendations made by the Committee will get passed on to the Historic Commission for their consideration at a future agenda. This property was nominated by the Powelton Village Civic Association, with support from the University City Historical Society, in response to what was perceived to be an imminent threat of demolition to the block. Subsequently, the developer, interested in redeveloping the parcel, has since rescinded their offer to purchase the property. However that does not mean the block is not still threatened. The current owner of the block, AP Construction, has expressed interest in rezoning the block, currently zoned CMX-2 (with a 38’ height limit, which typically allows for three or four stories) to the much denser category of CMX-4. The CMX-4 zoning, with an unlimited height restriction and Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 500%, would almost certainly open the door for demolition, and would set a bad precedent for other properties on Lancaster Avenue moving forward. The PVCA and UCHS have vehemently opposed any rezoning of this block. Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell has convened a series of meetings between the PVCA, City of Philadelphia, and owner of the block in order to identify alternate means for preserving the structures that do not involve historic designation. That said, given the intact and contributing nature of the 3600 block of Lancaster, PVCA and UCHS believe historic designation is the best tool available for preservation of this outstanding group of structures. *Meetings of the Historic Commission are open to the public, and UCHS members are invited to attend. The Committee for Historic Designation Meeting will take place on September 16th, 9:30 a.m. at Room 578 in City Hall.*



3600 block of Lancaster Avenue, June 2015. Photographs by Joseph Minardi.

## University City Then & Now: The Ivan Apartments, 47th Street and Baltimore Avenue



1910

Photo courtesy of The University of Pennsylvania Archives.



2010

Photo by Joseph Minardi.

As West Philadelphia became more populated in the early 1900s, multiple housing options such as flat houses, tenements and apartment buildings became more in vogue. The Ivan Apartments (1901) at 47th and Baltimore Avenue was a prime example. Ideally situated on a wide avenue with excellent trolley service, the Ivan is still in use today as the **University House Apartments**. Before the advent of air conditioning cloth awnings, also known as bonnet blinds, were used on summer days to shield windows from the mid-day sun.

# ON THE WEST SIDE



## PROFILES IN ARCHITECTURE

### *Henry E. Flower*

Henry Flower's career as an architect began in 1895. He went on to become one of Philadelphia's most prolific architects in late-1890s and 1900s, with many commissions for brewer and real estate developer Frederick A. Poth. Little is known about his personal life. Henry E. Flower died in 1912.

#### Selected Relevant Commissions:

- 1896:** Charles Hall residence, 38th and Powelton
- 1897:** W.G. Patton, residences (16), Warrington Ave, W of 49th  
W.G. Patton, residences (64), St. Bernard, N of Springfield  
F.A. Poth, residences (22), Parkside Ave, W of 42nd  
F.A. Poth, residences (8), NS of Viola, E of Belmont  
F.A. Poth, residences (24), NS of Viola, W of 42nd  
Thomas Twibill, residences (3), 3423-7 Spring Garden

## VISIT THE UCHS AT THE BALTIMORE AVENUE DOLLAR STROLL, 9/17/15

The University City District's highly successful Baltimore Avenue Dollar Stroll makes its triumphant return for 2015 on **Thursday, September, 17** from **5:30 to 8:30**. As with the June 25th "Stroll," the University City Historical Society will have a table on Baltimore Avenue in front of the Calvary Church. We will be offering a variety of items for sale, including one dollar "Green" memberships. Other items are books, mugs with art-work from Sylvia Barkan, posters and historic date markers for your University City home. So stop by and say "Hi" while you stroll on the avenue this September.



Baltimore Avenue Dollar Stroll, from last year. Photo by Joseph Minardi.

## Did you know?

On July 2, 1858, the West Philadelphia Passenger Railroad opened for business after the completion of the laying of tracks from Third Street along Market across the Permanent Bridge to Forty-first in West Philadelphia; further track extended north to a depot at Haverford Avenue and along Haverford to the city's western boundary.



Illustration of an omnibus from 1876. Courtesy of the Free Library of Philadelphia.

Horse-drawn omnibuses on the tracks now carried numbers of passengers in a regular and swift fashion. Within months, other lines opened, serving other parts of West Philadelphia.



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