

# ON THE WEST SIDE

THE UNIVERSITY CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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Joseph Minardi, Editor

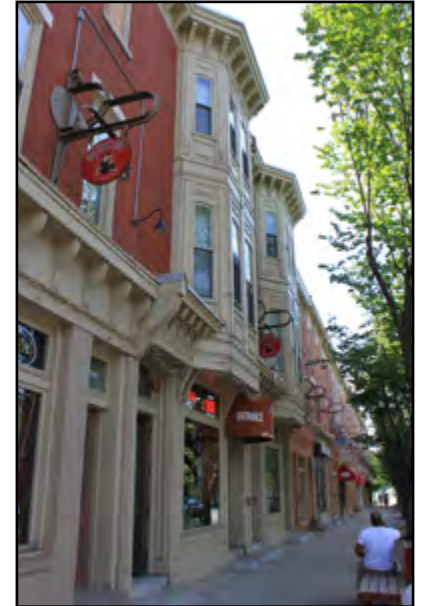
## TWO MAJOR VICTORIES FOR PRESERVATION AND UCHS

On the October 9th meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission, both 4300-4302 and 4304-4306 Osage Avenue and the entire 3600 block of the south side of Lancaster Avenue were designated as historical properties.

**3600-3630 Lancaster Avenue** is an excellent example of the store/dwelling combination, a common building type of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The row of three-story Italianate rowhouses with first-floor storefronts and rear ells was constructed between the late 1860s and the early 1880s. The block has significant character and exemplifies the expansion of the city after the Civil War and tells us much about the development of Philadelphia's built environment.

**4300-2 and 4304-6 Osage Avenue** are French Second Empire style twin houses and were built in the 1870s when this style was all the rage in America. They represent early, large-scale subdivisions in West Philadelphia, then known as Satterlee Heights. The development was built on the site of the massive Satterlee Hospital (over twenty acres), built for the care of wounded Civil War soldiers, which was able to serve 4,500 of the sick and wounded. The semi-detached homes on the 4300 block of Osage Avenue represent the last intact block from the Satterlee Heights development.

The UCHS extends its gratitude and applause to architectural historian Oscar Beisert, Jennifer Robinson, and UCHS Board member and Powelton Village resident George Poulin for making this happen. And let's not forget UCHS's President, Elizabeth Stegner's part in the nominations of these two properties for speaking on their behalf before the Historic Commission. These are superb steps forward in the Society's efforts to preserve and protect University City's rich architectural heritage.



3600 block of Lancaster Avenue, saved from demolition. Photo by Joseph Minardi.

## Valentine Tea & Awards Presentation 2016 *Get your nominations in now*



The UCHS will be presenting another slate of awards on Sunday, **February 21st, 2016** from **4:00 to 6:00** at the Castle, **930 South 48th (48th and Springfield)**. The 2015 Valentine Awards Tea was an outstanding success, and next year's promises to be no less entertaining.

There will be a wide array of tea, desserts, pastries, and petite sandwiches. The UCHS will honor its neighbors for this year's efforts in beautifying and improving University City's historic homes and neighborhood. The event is free to all UCHS members and is an opportunity to meet with members of the University City community.

The Valentine's Tea is the event where the UCHS has the opportunity to recognize work done on properties throughout the prior year that enhances the whole community. There are three award categories: **Gifts to the Streets**

**Awards** are given to high-quality exterior maintenance upgrades or restorations of historical features. **Outstanding Preservation Awards** are given to properties that have received full architecturally appropriate exterior renovations or restorations. **The Preservation Initiative Award** is given to a person or group of people who have acted unselfishly towards the preservation of a building or historical neighborhood resource in University City. Nominations can be emailed to [info@uchs.net](mailto:info@uchs.net) and will be accepted until **January 22, 2016**. And please feel free to nominate yourself!

Every UCHS member and their guests are invited to the Valentine Tea and Awards Presentation, Sunday, **February 21st, 2016**, 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. at the Castle, 930 S. 48th Street. As always, we look forward to seeing you there. Be sure to save the date!

*Highlights from the 2015 Valentine Tea and Awards Presentation. Top; Aaron Wunsch, Ph.D., Preservation Initiative winner; center, Drexel University and BLT Architects (Kevin Aires and Kimberly Miller), bottom; delicious display. Photos by Joseph Minardi.*

## Ask the Experts

### CARING FOR AN OLD CORNICE

**Q:** What is the best way to care for an old-fashioned cornice?

**A:** Old-fashioned tempera paints are water-soluble and can be removed with water. You can use water-soaked rags or sponges to wet the old paint, but this is a messy job and cannot be easily done without also soaking the walls and the floor. A steam sprayer (which can be rented), used for stripping wallpaper, does the job with less fuss.

When tempera is thoroughly damp you can scrub it out of crevices with a bottle brush or nail brush - and sometimes you can use a small spoon to gently to clean out the hollows. For intricate work, you may need to use wood-working tools bought from an art shop.

It is not advisable to paint tempera-laden plaster relief with oil-based paint as a stopgap until you can find time for a proper cleaning job. First, the oil-based paint cannot get a proper "purchase" on top of the flaky tempera; and secondly it will ultimately make the tempera much more difficult to remove.

From *Period Details: A Sourcebook for House Restoration*, Crown Publishers, New York, NY, 1987



Birds eye view of West Philadelphia and the Market Street Bridge, circa 1905. Joseph Minardi photo collection.

### UCHS WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBER

**Kelly E. Wiles** graduated from the College of Charleston in 2010 *cum laude*, with a Bachelor's of Arts in Historic Preservation and Community Planning as well as a Bachelors in Art History. Upon graduation from CofC, she held the position of Senior House Interpreter and Administrator at the Joseph Manigault (c. 1803) and Heyward-Washington (c. 1772) Houses, operated by the Charleston Museum. She received her master's degree in Historic Preservation in 2013 from the University of Pennsylvania. While at Penn, Ms Wiles completed internships with various non-profits and historic sites, including the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, Wyck Association, Eastern State Penitentiary and the Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks. She worked on multiple international preservation projects in Chile and Cyprus. She also held the Fall 2013 Digital Library Internship at Villanova University. Since 2013, she has served as an architectural historian for RGA, Inc., a cultural resources management firm based in Cranbury, New Jersey. She has lived in West Philadelphia since 2013 and currently resides on Springfield Avenue. She is originally from Rock Hill, South Carolina. Kelly replaces Moira Nadal who left the Philadelphia area to accept a position in Washington, DC.

### Did you know?

Maps and atlases from the 1840s to c. 1910 reveal an overall but uneven, pocketed development of West Philadelphia as a dense residential area, as a suburb in the city. Development occurred laterally along transportation corridors and within quadrants. Some neighborhoods like Mantua filled in quickly and densely with row houses; others, like nearby Powelton, maintained a stately quality with detached homes or twins on landscaped plots of land or became occupied in stages (i.e., Baltimore Ave). Some emerged directly from the extension of streetcar lines across the Schuylkill River, like Hamilton Village; Haddington, on the other hand, grew internally and only later merged with westward-moving transportation and real estate developments, though without losing its identity. In all instances, however, West Philadelphia neighborhoods became not just places of homes, but of various institutions as well.

<http://www.archives.upenn.edu/histy/features/wphila/history/history2.html>

### University City Then & Now: The Rotunda, 4014 Walnut Street



Photo courtesy of The University of Pennsylvania Archives.



Photo by Joseph Minardi.

The First Church of Christian Scientists was built in 1911. The Romanesque Revival church was designed by the New York firm of Carrere & Hastings, and is reminiscent of early Italian Christian churches. In 1996 the church was purchased by the University of Pennsylvania and renamed The Rotunda. Today it is used as an arts and cultural center.

### HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND COMMISSIONS

As concern for architectural preservation has grown lately, communities throughout the United States have established increasing numbers of historic districts and commissions to watch over those districts and the significant buildings in them. A historic district is a specific geographic area having a concentration of historically or architecturally important buildings or structures, a large proportion of which have a common heritage or aesthetic. Districts may be National Historic Landmarks, may be listed on the National Register, a state or local inventory, or all of the above. Such designations give all significant buildings in the district the privileges of the particular categories in which the district is listed.

Historic district designation has several purposes: to recognize historically heritage and aesthetic value of a particular area, and to prevent unwanted incursions into it. The elements such designation seeks to preserve are usually exterior ones: façades, paving, lighting fixtures, plantings -pleasant streetscapes. Generally, districts, commissions, and accompanying regulations are not as concerned with interiors and other features not visible from the street, although these may be valuable to each building individually and to its relative standing among buildings in the district.

In some cities historic districts are strictly regulated by local zoning ordinances especially designed to preserve the aesthetics of the district. Such ordinances restrict development and limit the alterations allowed on significant buildings. In addition to standard use, density, mass, and height regulations, they cover definitions of boundaries, architectural values to be preserved, and specific design controls.

A historic district commission is a body that regulated change within a historic district, enforces zoning regulations, and reviews and decides on proposed alterations, demolitions, and new construction within the district. Its criteria are generally based on zoning regulations, the existing design vocabulary, and relationships between structures. Criteria should be objective, flexible, and understandable, taking into account social and commercial needs as well as design considerations. They should not limit change to purist reproductions and restorations, but should require that alterations and new construction be compatible in scale and design with the surrounding structures.

Throughout the country there is great variety in the kinds of historic district legislation and powers and commissions. The Philadelphia Historical Commission, established in 1955, was the first such body in the nation to have jurisdiction over an entire city.

#### Landmarks

In 1935 when the Historic Sites act authorized the National Park Service to survey and preserve historic sites, buildings, and objects, the intention was to locate properties for inclusion in the National Park System. Over time it became clear that there were numerous eligible properties that could never become part of that system, and in 1960 the National Historic Landmark program was established to recognize private property of particular historical distinction.

The designation National Historic Landmark is the highest honor given by the federal government to a building, site, object, or district. Landmarks are important to the nation as a whole, as well as to a state or locality. In order to qualify, a property must "possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the historical heritage of our nation." Above all, it must have, and continue to maintain, "integrity," that is, "original workmanship, original location, and intangible elements of feeling and association." In addition to physical and historical integrity, a landmark must also have an appropriate use and relationship with its surroundings. Landmarks are visited periodically by Department of the

Interior staff to assure that they remain eligible. Landmarks are generally nominated by National Park Service staff in Washington, although state offices or Historic Preservation or other agencies or individuals may suggest appropriate buildings to the National Park Service.

National Landmark status gives a building or site a number of advantages in addition to prestige. Matching grants-in-aid (up to 50% of the total cost of a project) may be available for acquisition, surveys, and restoration of landmark properties. Grants are administered by the states in cooperation with the Department of the Interior. In Pennsylvania the Bureau for Historic Preservation is the agency responsible for grant administration.

Landmarks are protected from demolition or harm by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. They also are protect in certain cases by tax laws that provide advantages for rehabilitation of commercial landmark structures.

#### National Register

The 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, in an effort to extend recognition beyond the level of the nationally significant, authorized the establishment of the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register recognizes historic building, sites, objects, and districts that have state, regional, and local significance, in addition to those that have national significance. It is the official list of the nation's cultural resources considered worthy of preservation.

Amendments to the 1966 act require that all properties eligible for the National Register be nominated to it. Such properties are identified through surveys coordinated by state offices of Historic Preservation. In Pennsylvania, nominations to the National Register are made through the State Bureau for Historic Preservation. If approved by the bureau's Preservation Board, they are forwarded to the Office of Cultural Resources in Washington for consideration and official designation. Anyone, with the owner's consent, may nominate a property to the National Register. A district nomination must be approved by at least 50% of the owners of property within the district boundaries.

#### City Designation

At the local level the Philadelphia Historical Commission designates buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts as significant. Criteria used are similar to those of the National Register, but are more localized. All National Landmarks and National Register properties and districts are reviewed for city designation. Historic designation is obtained by applying to the Philadelphia Historical Commission.

Designated buildings and significant buildings with designated districts cannot be altered or demolished without prior review by the commission. (Alteration includes any changes for which a permit may be needed.) Commission review is automatic upon application for a building permit for a designated district. Criteria for alteration are based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The commission may approve the permit, approve it on certain conditions, deny the request, or postpone a decision for six months in order to search for alternative solutions. Appeals of commission decisions are made to the Board of Licenses and Inspections Review. The Department of Licenses and Inspections is responsible for inspection of designated historic properties and for assuring compliance with commission regulations. Information on local designation of historic buildings and districts and requirements for permit applications may be obtained from the Philadelphia Historical Commission.

From *Historic Rittenhouse: A Philadelphia Neighborhood*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1986



## PROFILES IN ARCHITECTURE

### *Robert K. Marple*

Robert Marple was active as an architect for a fourteen year span beginning in 1887, primarily working in residential projects. Marple began his architectural career by working in the office of Willis G. Hale. His work can be found throughout the city, mostly in North and West Philadelphia.

#### Selected Relevant Commissions:

- 1892:** William T. Gabel, residences (9), 34th and Spring Garden  
George Ross, residences (4), 4514-6, 4517-9 Baltimore Av
- 1893:** George Ross, residences (7), Springfield Av, west of 45th  
James A. Stovell Residence, 4526 Springfield
- 1894:** Frank S. Elliott Residence, 45th and Chestnut
- 1895:** Franklin I. Winner, residences (10), 4503-4521 Chester Av
- 1896:** William M. Freeze, residences (11), 45th and Locust area  
Residences (4), West side of 45th, near Chester Av  
Residence, southeast corner of 37th and Locust
- 1897:** George Ross, residences (7), West side of 51st, S of Florence

The UCHS would like to thank Mark Silber for acting as tour guide for our Fall Walking Tour (held on October 10th). Mark imparted his skills as a professional tour guide coupled with his comprehensive knowledge of local history. During the course of the 90 minute tour, Mark took the crowd on a historical journey through Spruce Hill, eloquently describing the beautiful architecture and the people behind it.



Mark Silber speaking before tour attendees in front of the Queen Anne style "Spruce Street Row" houses on the 4200 block of Spruce. Photo by George Poulin.

Do you have a favorite contractor that you like to recommend to friends and neighbors? Let us know!

UCHS is taking contractor recommendations for an upcoming issue of *On the West Side*. Contractor recommendations can be emailed to [info@uchs.net](mailto:info@uchs.net).

## Like the UCHS on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/UCityHistoricalSociety>

The University City Historical Society's Facebook page is the place to go for updates, information, links to our events and photos of the neighborhood. Visit our page and click Like. And be sure to share your memories with us. We can't wait to hear from you!



The UCHS is now on Instagram!  
Follow us at [@ucityhistoricalsociety](https://www.instagram.com/ucityhistoricalsociety)



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