

# ON THE WEST SIDE

THE UNIVERSITY  
CITY HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY



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<http://www.uchs.net>

Mike Hardy, Editor

## UCHS HOUSE TOUR SEPT 21



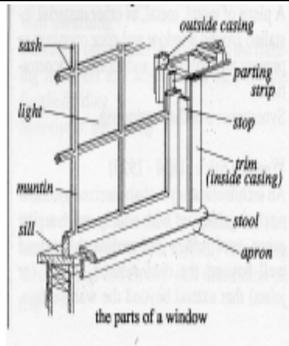
### Melani Lamond, Tour Chair

As summer ends, you may start to think about projects around the house - find inspiration at the University City Historical Society's **Renovations & Restorations House Tour** on Sunday, September 21, 2003, from 1-5 p.m.

This self-guided walking tour will feature state-of-the-art renovations and restorations at ten 19th- and early 20th- century University City houses in **Cedar Park, Garden Court** and **Spruce Hill**. View kitchens redesigned and bathrooms redone. See a spectacular whole-house makeover where a "plain jane" former rental triplex has been turned into a family's contemporary dream house! Visit the private owners' suite at a popular B&B. Enjoy refreshments at a new local restaurant. (And, take time for brunch or dinner at area eateries.)

Tickets are \$15 each (cash or check), (\$12 for UCHS members), and children under 12 may tour for free, accompanied by adults. Tickets will be available on the day of the tour at **Vientiane Cafe, 4728 Baltimore Avenue**, starting at 12:30 p.m., and also on Saturday, Sept. 20 at the UCHS booth at the **Cedar Park Neighbors Fair, 12-5 p.m.**, in **Cedar Park, 50th Street & Baltimore Avenue**.

For more information, call UCHS at (215) 387-3019, visit [www.uchs.net](http://www.uchs.net), or email [Mlamond@aol.com](mailto:Mlamond@aol.com). And please post or pass on the enclosed flyer to let others know of the tour.



## WORRYING ABOUT YOUR WINDOWS?

Considering repair or replacement? Have questions about life expectancy, dependability, costs, energy efficiency, maintenance and availability? Before you make a decision, get real information, not anecdotal opinion, from the first in a new **Practical Preservation Series** published by the **University City Historical Society**. This new series is designed to lay out the options, costs and "pros&cons" for solving repair and restoration problems faced regularly by owners of University City's historic properties.

Researched and developed by **Jeremy Wells**, a preservation specialist, neighbor and board member of **UCHS** and reviewed by those who have faced the problems themselves, "**Windows: Repair or Replace?**" considers the options and recommends solutions for treating period windows. These are not only cost effective but responsible to the long term needs both of property owners and their property values in University City's neighborhoods.

It comes at a time when too often one sees or hears of instances of highly dubious proposals for wholesale replacement of original windows with short lived and inferior replacements.

Before you act, get the right information and local resources. The answers in "Windows" will surprise you and can save you cash, heartaches and future troubles.

Free to **UCHS** members, "**Windows: Repair**

**or Replace?”** will be delivered to those who request copies. Call (215) 387-3019 or email [info@uchs.net](mailto:info@uchs.net) to request copies. Non-members may do the same by sending a check for \$3 to UCHS to cover postage & handling.

In the attempt to make them available as widely as possible, copies will also be available at the UCHS booth at the CPN Fair on September 20 and the House Tour on September 21. They may also be picked up at the **University City District, 3940 Chestnut Street** and the **Spruce Hill Center, 257 S. 45<sup>th</sup> Street**, during regular open hours.

This effort at **Practical Preservation** is funded, in part, by a grant from **Citizens Bank University City Neighborhood Partnership Fund**.

## LESSONS OF THIS SUMMER

included, in University City, encouraging signs and developments for the preservation of the architectural heritage of the area's neighborhoods, together with disturbing actions which cause us to remember, as the term attests, preservation is never assured, but must constantly be pursued.

A quick survey in the area would confirm to even the casual visitor what all us who live here know: there has been and continues to be a significant reinvestment in and recommitment to living and improving, as opposed to simply profiting from, University City's historical heritage. This new surge of renewal is beginning to increase owner occupancy and sparked the return of long-vacant or marginally maintained & blighted properties to deserved new places in the neighborhood's streetscapes.

This movement's depth is apparent in the over 50 commendations from UCHS that have been sent so far to owners responsible for new **“Gifts to the Streets”** of façade and landscape improvements undertaken during the spring and summer. And it made for summer festivities such as the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday party organized by residents for their block on 43<sup>rd</sup> Street and a tent party in **Clark Park** for craftsmen and others involved in the restoration of one of the elegant c.1901 twins overlooking the park.

The new and accelerating “pride in place” for

the area's special and irreplaceable architectural character was evidenced also by the sale of UCHS National Register date plaques, well over 300 to date, and the first-ever marking of the majority of an entire block. **Steve Abrams**, shown with his partner, **Ken Bittman**, promoted and organized all but five owners of the sixteen twins on **4800 Warrington Avenue**



to acquire and display UCHS construction date markers as part of the largest of University City's historic districts, the **West Philadelphia Streetcar Suburb**.

Others, outside the neighborhood, recognized these area strengths as well. As the **Inquirer** featured articles highlighting a new appreciation for “the porch” and walkable streetscapes in the suburbs (old news to us), **Cedar Park** was chosen for marketing (see enclosed brochure) as one of the city neighborhoods with the same friendly features closer at hand. Financial recognition also came, in the 100's of dollars, from **Merck Pharmaceuticals**, granted for partial payment for a state historic marker for the Civil War **Satterlee U.S.A General Hospital** and, in the 1000's of dollars, from the state to the **Spruce Hill Community Trust**, to offset Spruce Hill's contribution to the local **Spruce Hill Historic District** nomination. All of those responsible deserve thanks here.

From **Harrisburg** came promises of more substantial assistance for economic redevelopment through historic preservation. An **Elm Street Act** was passed in the house and received bi-partisan support in the senate for providing grants for revitalizing Pennsylvania's older communities and suburbs to support and extend the efforts of the **Main Street** program for rejuvenating older commercial districts. And proposals for 20% state tax credits for historic properties are also on the table. Such state tax credits for sympathetic investment in income producing properties would echo and complement those which currently exist for federal tax credits for historically certified properties. And, for the first time, 20% state income tax credits for

owners restoring historic residential properties is also being seriously considered. For more info, check out [www.pataxcredit](http://www.pataxcredit), with more to come about the same in the next newsletter.

But against this optimistic background, came a revealing “tale of two porches” that should remind us not to assume that the good times will roll forever. The historic open porches of two properties, both in the **West Philadelphia Streetcar Suburb District** and both with new owners, recently were subjected to radically different treatments at their hands. The curving classic shown under current restoration at the corner of **Springfield Avenue and Farragut Street** was until recently crumbling away in neglect. **Dorothy**



**Kussmaul**, a long time member of UCHS and owner when the porch was immaculately maintained years ago, saw and was heartbroken at the state of her former home during a Philadelphia visit last year.



Well, look again, Dorothy, at what a responsible new owner is doing to care for this jewel in Cedar Park!

But, alas, all of us will have to look also at the architectural vandalism inflicted on this twin at **4802 Walnut Street**, where another new owner destroyed a complete wrap-a-round porch with original details, to present us with a concreted yard!!



An adjoining twin with its porch intact reminds us of what the public has been denied. And this on a block of investor-owned

properties, facing **The Thriftway**, which was recently commended by UCHS for their **Gifts to the Streets** of both façade and landscaping improvements. It is a classic example of how one act of architectural mutilation can check the commitments and destroy the investments of a responsible majority.

In both of these cases, inclusion in a National Register district would neither have protected nor assured the restoration of these porches, although tax credits would have been available for work on the income producing property on Walnut Street. Only the additional requirements of a local historic district’s review and approval of demolition permits could have provided the community with the empowering tools to fight this kind of desecration.

So, the summer taught us again that historic certification does matter, and longtime community concern matters even more so.

## WORTH YOUR ATTENTION

Thursday, Sept. 18, 2-3:30 p.m. **A Neighborhood Preservation Forum** sponsored by the **Preservation Alliance & Fels Institute of Government** on the **Cleveland Restoration Society’s Heritage Home Loan Program** and its potential for Philadelphia. Free, **Penn Academy of Fine Arts, 111 N. Board Street**. RSVP by Sept 15, (215) 546-2246, x. 10.

Saturday, October 11, 12-6 p.m. **275th Anniversary Celebration** of Bartram’s 1728 purchase of the garden. Includes a **Schuylkill River Cruise** at 1 & 3 p.m. for \$15/person. **Historic Bartram’s Garden, 54th and Lindbergh Blvd.**, (215) 729-5281.

Saturday, October 18, Last **Spruce Hill Victoriana Walking Tour** of the year by **Walk Philadelphia**, departs from the **University City Arts League, 4226 Spruce St.**, 2 p.m., \$10/person.

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## **AND SPECIAL THANKS**

To new **Friends of UCHS: Fran Byers; Mary E. Blackson; Warren Cederholm & Don Caskey; Nina Hope & Steve Davis; Joanne & Leon Kellerman; Dr. Ann Mayer; John & Betsy McCoubrey; Fiona Proctor & Frank Purcell; Roy Harker & Bob Ranando; Debra Kimmelman & Pamela Seida; Marilyn & John Taylor;**

and new **Sustainers of UCHS: Drumcliff Foundation; Chris & Grace O'Donnell, O'Donnell Real Estate.**

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