

ON THE WEST SIDE

THE UNIVERSITY CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



January/February 2017

<http://www.uchs.net>

Joseph Minardi, Editor

Celebrate our 50th!

2017 marks the University City Historical Society's 50th anniversary, and we are excited to have our members sharing in the celebration. In the upcoming issues of *On The West Side* we will be looking back at each decade of our organization's existence with photos from our neighborhood, beginning in the 1960s and continuing up to the present era. And if you have any photos you'd like to share, please send them to info@uchs.net and we will give you credit for any photos we use in the newsletter. Furthermore we are looking forward to having a dinner for our members and their guests at the Restaurant School in October of this year to commemorate our founding, complete with a guest speaker.

Stay tuned to future issues of *On The West Side* as we will inform you of further details pertaining to our dinner and any other events we will be planning for our 50th anniversary and help us make 2017 a very **Golden** year.

Flashback: the 1960s

Locust Street before it was Locust Walk

How many people remember Locust Street before the construction of Locust Walk? Locust Street between 36th and 37th Streets was closed off to automobile traffic and turned into a tree-lined promenade, perfect for a quiet respite away from Penn's bustling urban campus. The landscaped walkway was completed in the fall of 1964 by Tri-County Constructors, Inc. The landscape architect for the project was George Patton. Locust Walk was a gift from the Class of 1938 and Vernon Stouffer, a 1923 Wharton grad.



Top photo: 3600 block of Locust Street in 1962. **Bottom photo:** Locust Walk, June of 1965. Courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania Archives.

Preservation Updates

The Philadelphia Historical Commission met on December 14th to recommend properties for historic designation, several of which are in West Philadelphia.

The Christ Methodist Episcopal Church (Mt. Pleasant Primitive Baptist Church), 435-441 N. 38th St. was nominated by Michael J. Lewis and UCHS Board member, Amy Lambert. The 145-year-old Furness & Hewitt-designed church was recommended to be added to the historic register.

420-434 S. 42nd Street, a group of eight c. 1885 Queen Anne dwellings was nominated by Justin McDaniel, a resident of the block. The eight Victorian homes were recommended by the Committee.

The Pennsylvania Industrial Home for Blind Women, 3827-33 Powelton Ave. was nominated by the staff of the Historical Commission, and was recommended by the Committee.

The West Philadelphia Institute, 22-26 S. 40th St. was nominated by Benjamin Leech of the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia. The building, attributed to Furness, dates from the time of the Centennial and has been extensively altered over the years. In the end it was recommended by the Committee by a 2 to 1 vote, with Emily Cooperman, chair of the Historic Designation Committee, casting the lone dissenting vote.

4054 Chestnut, an attempt by Off Penn Properties to remove 4054 Chestnut (half of a twin) from the local register (it was added in August) was defeated at the meeting. As many of you may now know, the UCHS has been trying to save this house and several others on the 4000 block of Chestnut Street from demolition.

4046-8 Chestnut Update

It was a valiant effort, but unfortunately 4046-4048 Chestnut Street is in the process of meeting its fate. We hope that our attempts to save this circa 1875 twin started a conversation on the (lack of) preservation laws in the city and what we can do to change and enforce policy to protect more of our decreasing number of historic properties from the city's demolition derby. Perhaps looking back, this building will be considered a martyr for a bigger cause.



4046-8 Chestnut in the process of demolition, 12/5/16. Kelly Wiles, photographer.

New Board Members

The UCHS would like to welcome three new members to our Board of Governors.

Heather Calvert is staff person for the Botswana-UPenn Partnership, a global health program of the University of Pennsylvania focusing on HIV and TB in Botswana. She has a Master's in Public Administration from Penn's Fels Institute of Government and is also on the Board for Calvary Center for Culture and Community. As a resident of University City for 15 years, Heather volunteers for a number of local organizations across a wide spectrum of interests.

Amy Lambert is an architect and historian living in Spruce Hill. She moved to Philadelphia from Texas to pursue a Master of Science in Historic Preservation from Penn. Amy is currently a Project Manager with Historic Building Architects in Trenton, a preservation architecture firm specializing in design/construction services, National Register nominations, and preservation vision planning. Amy has written nominations of historic buildings to the Philadelphia Register and believes fervently that preservation can be a tool for social justice in the built environment.

Jennifer Loustau restored a number of properties in the National Historic District of North Wheeling, WV. She and her husband moved to West Philadelphia in September of 2015 from Chester County, after renovating and restoring their home on Regent Street. Jennifer taught design history at the University of Delaware for four years and published a scholarly paper on the subject.

What's in a name?

As many of you know, the moniker "University City" has been around for many decades, even though there are some who still insist that the name is a real estate marketing ploy of recent vintage. The concept and term "University City" was thought to date back to the late 1950s, as described by historian Leon S. Rosenthal, Esquire in his 1963 book *A History of Philadelphia's University City*. However, a newspaper article dating from November 10, 1921 simply titled **University City**, makes the name nearly a century old.

The article, which appeared in the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, was written to extoll the virtues of the new Philadelphia Divinity School. It speaks of the surrounding neighborhood almost as an afterthought, but is still noteworthy. The article goes on to say:

[The Divinity School] will create a new educational center in the locality bordering on the "University Section," as that part of West Philadelphia, east of Forty-Second and from Market to Woodland avenue, is termed by reason of its several-thousand student residents.

The Philadelphia Divinity School sits on a site that was once occupied by Clarence H. Clark's mansion and stable, dubbed "Chestnutwold," on the north side of Spruce Street between 43rd and 44th Street. The houses stood among a thickly wooded grove.

As the Universities of Penn and Drexel expanded their campuses, so expanded the boundaries of what is considered University City. The western border is now generally considered to be as far west at 50th street, and, in some instances, 52nd Street.

The article later goes on to mention another obscure fact; the nearby area was once known briefly as "Drexel Hill" for the large number of Drexel-family owned properties in the district. Thanks to Melanie Lamond for unearthing this article.

Ask the Experts

OLD AGE IN AN INSTANT!

Q: We are reflooring a room with yellow pine flooring. What can we use on the floor to give it a "used" look?

A: How to deal with your floor depends on what you intend to use for a final finish. Try various choices on small pieces until you arrive at a color and finish that satisfy you and blend with the other floors of your house. You may want to tone down the floor color with a light stain before the final finish to prevent "the shock of the new." But beware of going too far. Almost all finishes, especially on floors, darken with age and use. You may soon find your new floor standing out dark and dingy against the old. We recommend against any attempt to artificially "distress" elements of houses. Be patient, and let time and use do the work for you.

From *The Old-House Journal*, November, 1982.

University City Then & Now: Latvian Evangelical Church, 47th and Cedar Avenue



Courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania Archives

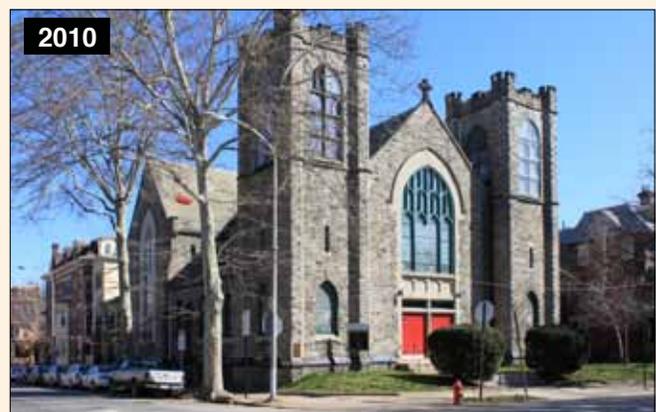


Photo by Joseph Minardi.

Now known as the Greater Enon Baptist Church, this century-old house of worship was formerly known as the Latvian Evangelical Church. A church dating from 1889 stood on this site (the 1889 date is still evident) until a devastating fire in 1905 necessitated the construction of this present structure.

Powelton Village “Castle” For Sale For \$2.9 Million

At the southeast corner of 36th and Baring stands one of the more unusual dwellings in University City. It is a castle-like structure that was built in 1893 for Patricius McManus, a general contractor who struck it rich constructing railroads and bridges. As grand as this house is, McManus felt it was too small for a man of his stature and his large family, so he eventually moved on to bigger digs. Over time the house went through multiple uses, such as a nunnery, a frat house, and an apartment building. Luckily, after all of its uses (and a few abuses), the Romanesque Revival-house still maintains much of its internal and external integrity. And it is now up for sale for \$2,899,000. For that price you will get 12,000+ square feet of Gilded Age splendor, including ornately carved woodwork, stained glass, and coffered ceilings.

When this house was still fairly new, it was described as “occupying one of the choicest and most pleasant residential sites in all of Philadelphia.” Construction on the house began on June 2, 1893. The architects were the Wilson Brothers and the contractors were William Steele & Son, builders of Connie Mack Stadium (1909). The McManus Mansion was built for \$35,000, a princely sum for a single house in those days (for comparison, the average row house was built for about \$1,000 back then). The mansion also comes with a modern amenity, a six-car garage complete with a deck and garden.



Top photo; The McManus Mansion as it appeared c. 1900. Moses King, photographer. Bottom photo; The Mansion in 2010. Joseph Minardi, photographer.

WINDOW TALK: A GLOSSARY

Continued from previous issue.

Cames: Lead strips to hold small pieces of glass in leaded window.

Cap: A decorative cornice covering the lintel of a window.

Casement Window: A single, or double-sash window that is made to open outwards by turning on hinges attached to its vertical edge. This was one of the earliest type of movable windows, uses from medieval times on. Often found in Gothic Revival, Elizabethan and Tudor Revival houses.

Chicago Window: A large fixed sash flanked by a narrow movable sash on either side. First used by the Chicago School architects in the late 19th century and early 20th century.

Clerestory: A row of windows mounted high in a wall. Most often refers to windows above the nave of a church. Also used in Prairie Style houses. (pronounced “clear-story”)

Crown Glass: Large panes that became available in the 17th century and were incorporated in wooden sash windows. The glass was handblown through a pipe (pontil) into a circular disc, leaving a bubble or bullion where the pipe was inserted. Also known as bottle glass or bull’s eye glass when the bullion was used in a window.

Diocletian Window: A semi-circular window divided by

wide uprights, or mullions into three lights. This ancient Roman motif was later used by Andrea Palladio (1508-1580) for use in the 16th century. Also called a therm. Often used in Classical Revival buildings of the early 20th century.

Dormer: A vertical-set window on a sloping roof; also the roofed structure housing such a window. If the roof slopes downward from the house, they are known as shed dormers. Flat-roof projections are commonly called dog-house dormers. Those with pointed roofs are called gabled dormers.

Double-Hung Window: A window with an outside sash that slides down and an inside one that goes up. The movement of the sash is usually controlled by chains or cords on pulleys with a sash weight. The earliest double-hung windows were known as Georgian windows.

Double Window: Two vertical windows separated by a mullion, forming a single architectural unit. Also called a coupled window.

Eyebrow Dormer: Low, inward-opening windows having no sides, the roofing smoothly curving upward over the dormer window. Commonly used on Shingle Style houses.

From *Talk to Me of Windows: An Entertaining Story About Windows*, F. Palmer Cook, New York, New York, 1971.

To be continued in next issue.

ON THE WEST SIDE



PROFILES IN ARCHITECTURE

J. Elvin Jackson (fl. 1878-1920)

Examples of J. Elvin Jackson's work appears all over Philadelphia, primarily with residential designs in South, West and Southwest Philadelphia. He began his career in 1878, according to city directories. Jackson worked solo except for a brief partnership with J. Harris Reed in 1887. One of his most reliable clients was John Megraw, a builder who built over 1,300 houses between 1902 and 1910.

Selected Relevant Commissions:

1892: Gleseck, Albert, residences (26), Baltimore Ave, W of 47th

1895: Warren St, West of 36th

1902: 5925 Woodland Avenue

1903: Clark, James E., residences (22), 53rd and Vine area

1904: Clark, James E.,

Residences (30), Peach, North of Vine St

Residences (9), 1742-1758 Lindenwood St

Megraw, John, residences (40), Hadfield St, W of 57th

Residences (24), East side of 61st, 93' N of Market St

1905: Clark, James E.,

Residences (37), 57th and Chester area

Residences (32), Cecil St, West of 57th

Residences (26), Alden, North of Chester Av

Megraw, John

Residences, (55), 54th and Christian area

Residences, (107), 55th and Webster area

Residences, (53), Webster, West of 53rd

Residences, (22), South side of Catharine, W of 53rd

1906: Megraw, John,

Residences (61), 52nd and Kingsessing area

Residences (18), 53rd and Baltimore Avenue area

Residences (43), 54th and Catharine area

Residences (76), 52nd and Upland area

Residences (3), 3308-3312 Haverford

1907: Megraw, John,

Residences (87), 52nd, North of Greenway

Residences (64), 53rd and Kingsessing area

1908: Megraw, John,

Residences (40), 53rd and Greenway area

Residences (26), Yocum St, West of 53rd

Residences (24), Ditman St, East of 53rd

Residences (62), Regent St, 15' West of 54th

1909: Megraw, John,

Residences (83), 54th and Kingsessing area

Residences (58), Yewdall, 65' S of Kingsessing Av

Residences (30), ES of Conestoga, 65' S of Kingsessing

1910: Megraw, John,

Residences (52), 53rd and Springfield Av area

Residences (66), Peach St, 17' North of Springfield Av

Residences (66), Ruby St, 17' North of Springfield Av

Residences (52), Wilton St, 17' North of Warrington

1911: Megraw, John,

Residences (29), East side of 55th, 90' N of Whitbey

Valentine Awards Tea

Just a friendly reminder, the UCHS Valentine Tea and Awards Presentation is **February 12th, 2017** from 4:00 to 6:00 at the Castle, **930 South 48th (48th and Springfield)**. We will be recognizing noteworthy restorations and improvements done to the University City community and is accompanied by a large spread of finger sandwiches, pastries, and beverages appropriate for the occasion. The event is free to all members and their guests. Plus it's a great opportunity to meet your neighbors and like-minded individuals on this festive occasion.

University City Historical Society

PO Box 31927

Philadelphia PA 19104-0627