

# Carondelet Historical Society NEWSLETTER

*Perpetuating the Heritage of Carondelet*

Vol. 42, No. 2

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Autumn 2015

## Restoring Carondelet

Marcia and Tim Dorsey are restoring one of the few remaining mid-19th century stone buildings of Carondelet, the crumbling stone shell at 124 E. Steins Street. Located near the stone home of Jacob Steins, the building was once in the midst of a concentration of stone homes built by German immigrants and known as Steins Town. In the process of authentically restoring 124 E. Steins and saving an important piece of Carondelet's heritage, the Dorseys are learning about pre-Civil War era construction in Carondelet and discovering new mysteries about this particular historic structure.

Though abandoned for years, and roofless for a decade, the stone walls of the structure seem to be telling them its story. The stones still bear the chisel marks of mid-19th century pioneer craftsman who settled in what was then wilderness along the Mississippi.

The 1½ story rough-cut limestone building is now centered in a large lawn. However, it had been hidden behind houses on Steins and on Water Streets. Over a decade ago, when all the houses on the quarter block were scheduled for demolition, Brian Kolde saw the corner of a sun-bleached white stone wall peeking through the thick green underbrush. Trudging through wild shrubs, trees and weeds, Brian discovered this significant structure. As a Neighborhood Improvement Specialist assigned to the Carondelet neighborhood, and as past president of the Illinois Association for Advancement of Archeology, Kolde brought the stone building to the attention of the City's Cultural Resource Office. That office stopped the proposed demolition of the stone building. But stopping its demolition did not preserve the building for future generations. The developer razed the surrounding buildings, leaving this stone building in the center of the

land, then completely removed its deteriorated roof. For nearly a decade, rains, snows and freezes ate away at the exposed top of the stone walls, with their primitive mortar. If this neglect had continued, the historic stone structure would have crumbled into a pile of rubble.

In 2014, Marcia and Tim Dorsey bought the structure to save it. The roofless shell, with stucco hiding some of its stone walls, had a sentimental value for Marcia.

Marcia had lived in the front house and attended nearby St. Boniface Elementary School. When Marcia was a child, her grandparents, Romano and Nazarena Cogo, had lived in the front house at the sidewalk at 124 E. Steins (razed). Her aunts lived in both the front house and in the back stone building. (The Cogo family, whose roots were in Italy, owned the parcel at 124 E. Steins from 1943 until 1969.)

The Dorseys hired craftsman Lee Lindsey of Stone Works, who had restored the masonry on the stone row houses at Steins Street and Pennsylvania

Avenue, to begin the process of restoring the structure. One of the first steps was to determine the content of the original mortar. He placed a chunk of the that mortar in a glass of water. Only a very little lime rose to the top, indicating that the mortar was mostly mud, clay and sand that matched the clay and sand from the immediate site. The clay gave the mortar its reddish tint, against the white limestone.

The side-gabled building measures 22 feet and 6 inches wide and only 18 feet and 4 inches deep, with rough cut stone walls 18 inches thick. It appears that each floor originally had just one large room. The windows



**Thanks to restoration by Marcia and Tim Dorsey, the historic structure at 124 E. Steins sports an authentic roof and gallery constructed of historic, recycled materials. Photo by Lee Lindsey.**

*See Restoring, page 6*

# HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Perpetuating the  
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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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**Carondelet Historical Society**  
**6303 Michigan Ave.**  
**St. Louis, MO 63111**  
**314-481-6303**

## Upcoming Events

**Sunday, September 20**

1:30 p.m.

Author Pat Treacy

“Grand Hotels of St. Louis”

**Sunday, December 13**

1:00-4:00 p.m.

Christmas Open House

## Change of Address Requested:

If you have moved, please notify the Society of your new address. In that way you can save the Society volunteers hours and postage.

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## More Stone Houses in Steins Town



Lifelong Carondelet resident Donald Dates took this photo of the southeast corner of Vulcan and Marceau Streets about 1946. At that time, the house retained the original wood shutters. An immigrant stonemason from Baden, Charles Schlichtig built the corner house, 8402 Vulcan, in 1852. The Schlichtig family lived in the house for more than a century. He likely crafted the one story stone cottage and the two story stone building to the south. While the Schlichtig house was renovated, the other three buildings on the block have been razed. These buildings were part of Carondelet's German settlement named for German “immigrant agent” Jacob Steins.

### Carondelet Historical Society

#### Membership Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

_____ Individual .....	\$15	_____ Victor Kunz Art Gallery Benefactor .....	\$50
_____ Family .....	\$25	_____ Fred Bouchein Library Benefactor .....	\$75
_____ Business .....	\$40	_____ James Eads Engineers .....	\$100
_____ Life .....	\$250	_____ Susan E. Blow Educators .....	\$125

Make checks payable to Carondelet Historical Society.  
Mail to Carondelet Historical Society, Mary Ann Simon, 6303 Michigan Ave., St. Louis MO 63111

# Archives Collections Growing

Seven binders filled with copies of the Tesson Family Papers now fill half a shelf in the Society's Library. Copies of the handwritten deeds and contracts, maps, articles and other documents date from the end of the Spanish colonial era through the mid-20th century. Hundreds of pages in the collection are dedicated to genealogical research on the family and related families that was compiled in 1991. Other materials, including some of the handwritten documents, are chilling reminders of life in antebellum United States.

An emigrant from France, Michael Honore Tesson came to St. Louis County via Connecticut. According to the 1911 *History of St. Louis County*, Tesson "settled in Carondelet and lived there a short time. He was attracted by the beauty of the country now known as Sappington and entered the Tesson homestead site during President Monroe's administration" (p. 31). His original home was a two room log house. His only son, Asa Parmalee Tesson, was born in the house on June 23, 1823.

One document that bears the name of Asa Tesson is dated May 23, 1861, less that two months after the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter and only two weeks after Union volunteers had secured the City of St. Louis for the Union at the Battle of Camp Jackson.

This document, in its brutal brevity, recalls the issues that erupted into the Civil War. A few words in the handwritten bill of sale are illegible and there does not appear to be punctuation. The cruel meaning of the document is still perfectly clear.

"Received of Asa Tesson three hundred and fifty dollars in full payment for a negro girl named Fanny of black complexion aged about twenty five years the above described negro girl We warrant... a slave for life and free from all Claims."

The document is signed by Margaret Knotts, H. R. Crowe, and Margaret Crowe.

President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 would not have freed Fanny, since the Proclamation did not apply to people held in bondage in states that had not officially seceded from the Union. Her status as a free person was not assured until Missouri passed its own ordinance for unconditional freedom to Missouri slaves, in the Old Courthouse in Downtown St. Louis, on January 11, 1863.

Another handwritten document in the collection recalls a practice common in the colonial era, people indenturing themselves for years of servitude to pay for the voyage to America. This legal document from 1850 recalls that indenturing continued for decades, and in this specific case, applied to apprenticeships. Interestingly, the document refers to the tradesman as "Master." It also reflects that the skill of a mason was prized. It clearly states both the responsibilities of the indentured apprentice and the "Master." *(Editor's note: Once again, the handwriting is sometimes hard to decipher. I have transcribed as best I can, including incorrect spelling and spelling names as they appear each time in the document, even if the spelling varies in different passages.)*

"This Indenture made this 14 day of March 1850 by and between William Runnolds and William Ringer of the County of St. Louis and State of Missouri Witnesseth: that the William Runnolds [sic] hereby binds his son Valentine Runnolds to the said Ringer as an Apprentice to learn the trade and art of a Brick and Stone Mason ... Valentine agrees that he shall faithfully serve and perform all the duties of an Apprentice to the said Ringer in said business from the date here of until the said Valentine shall arrive at the age of twenty one years, which will be on the 25 day of March 1853.

"The said Valentine Runnolds also consents to and joins in this indenture, and also binds himself to faithfully serve and perform all the duties of an Apprentice to the said Ringer for the time aforesaid; that he will in all cases, keep his master's secrets, work to his master's interest and benefit, and obey and do all lawfull requirements of him as such Apprentice by the said Ringer as his said Master.

"In Consideration where of he the said Ringer on his part agrees and binds himself to furnish to the said Valentine Runnolds at all times and seasons suitable clothing food and attention in sickness and in health and to teach him the said trade and Art ...."

The Tesson Family Papers are available to members and researchers in the Society's Library and Archives.

## In Memoriam

Ronald P. Bolte  
1938-2015



"Ron" Bolte passed away on August 7, 2015. Raised in Carondelet, the neighborhood was always dear to his heart. He served continually on the Board of Directors of the Carondelet Historical Society since 1983. He was president of the Historical Society from 1988 to 1990, from 1993 to 1995, and from 1996 to October of 2012. Ron spearheaded the effort to design and build an addition to the Historical Society to house the archival and library collections, The Bouchein Library. Ron's friendship and leadership will be missed.

# Dover Christian Archives

The congregation of Dover Place Christian Church of the Disciples of Christ denomination recently gave their archival collection to the Carondelet Historical Society. The church attendance records, programs from special events, financial records and photos of activities document the congregation's 120-year history in Carondelet.

When a struggling, new congregation, this Christian church met at a number of addresses associated with other historic Carondelet churches. Mrs. Martha Skinner of 510 Kansas Street (now Holly Hills Avenue) planted the seeds of the congregation by conducting a Sunday School in her large frame

home. That led to a revival meeting hosted at Carondelet Baptist Church. Participants in the revival rented the "Old Temperance Hall," originally a mission at Minnesota and Robert that was operated by Carondelet Presbyterian. There they founded Carondelet Christian Church, a local congregation of the Disciples of Christ, a denomination that was born in the 19th century on the American frontier. They had 17 charter members. Then they rented the old German Methodist Church at Pennsylvania and Upton. In 1899, the growing congregation purchased the mid-19th century house that stood at 6801 Virginia (razed). That house had served as the offices of Reverend McAnally, a Southern Methodist, who became a noted religious writer following the Civil War.

After only a few years, the young congregation purchased a more spacious setting, the corner of Alabama and Dover Place. There was debris from an abandoned nursery on the site, and only a few houses in the area when they bought the property in 1903. They renamed their congregation "Dover Place Christian Church" and held services in a temporary tabernacle built at the back of the parcel.

As houses were built along Bellerive Boulevard, Dover Place, Bates Street and Wilmington Avenue, the congregation grew. In 1933, they commissioned local architect Theodore Steinmeyer, who was known for his

designs of local Lutheran churches, to design a sanctuary at the corner. By that time, the neighborhood was crowded – its streets lined with two story brown and red brick houses with welcoming porches set atop terraced lawns. He seemed to tuck the charming red brick church,

that seems like an English Gothic village chapel, into the corner. The wood hood over the Gothic door, the pottery tiles set as ornaments into the brick walls, and the diamond-paned leaded glass windows gave the new church an immediate beauty and sense of permanence.

With the post-World War II housing shortage and baby boom, the neighborhood and the church

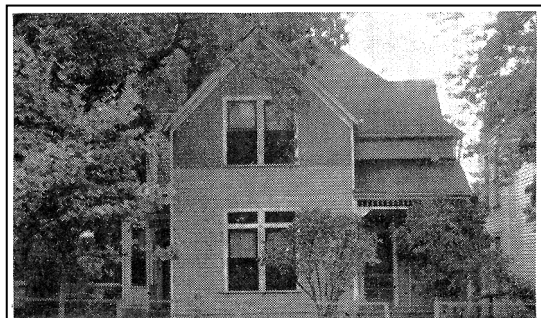
were packed. Attendance for the two Easter services of 1953 totaled 428. A nursery was started to care for young children during services.

In recent years the congregation served the community by hosting community meetings and meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous. Their beans and ham dinners, served with old-fashioned cornbread and slaw, added to the neighborhood's community spirit. However, the congregation's numbers dwindled. The church closed its doors in June of 2015.

The archival collection from Dover Place Christian



**The handsome variegated red brick church faces Dover Place at Alabama Avenue. Smooth stone surrounds the Gothic style windows and is at the shoulders of the Gothic style buttresses.**



THE SKINNER HOME

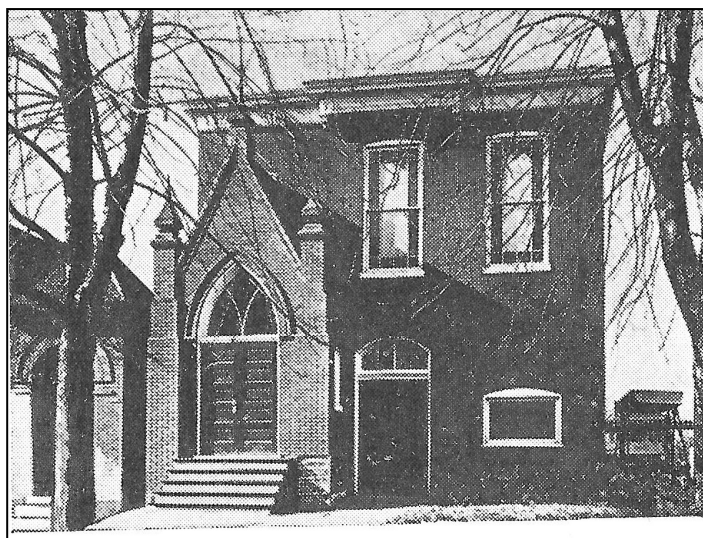
**Mrs. Martha Skinner's home at 510 Holly Hills as it appeared in 1945. This image of the Skinner home is from a souvenir booklet published for the 50th anniversary of the congregation.**



Church includes many records with the names of neighborhood residents and records that reflect neighborhood life from the turn of the century.

This archival collection had been lovingly assembled and maintained by the late Betty Treiber, who passed away in 2012 at the age of 88. Betty, who was a member of Carondelet Historical Society, grew up in the Carondelet and Bevo areas of South City. Her home for most of her adult life was a cottage on Wilmington Avenue near the church. Her three sons walked to Woodward School and she baked treats for their class parties.

The congregation also gave the Society a beautifully crafted Amberg's letter file. The oak cabinet, measuring 31 inches wide and 47 inches tall, houses 18 drawers. The design for this style cabinet was patented in 1876.



**The mid-19th century house at 6801 Virginia Avenue served as a publishing house before it was converted into a church. Later it was used as a convenience store.**

**At the beginning of the 20th century, the one-story triplex at Robert and Minnesota Avenues was known as the Temperance Hall. In this hall, Dover Place Christian Church was officially organized as a Disciples of Christ congregation.**



**This photo from about 1940 is identified as "Pastor's Helpers Class."**

inside have wood lintels. Outside, massive, irregular stones form the lintels.

Lindsey points to the dark, hard gray and black horizontal stripes in the stones, and explains that they are layers of chert in the stone. (Chert is common in this area and was used by the local Native Americans to shape tools, spearheads and arrowheads.) Then Lindsey shows where the walls have patterns of dimple marks on the stones. He explains that the dimples resulted from craftsmen using a mash hammer (a hammer with a pointed head) or a toothed chisel to shape and smooth the stones.

To recreate the roof, the Dorseys bought huge pieces of lumber, measuring 25 feet long and 18 by 18 inches, salvaged from a mid-19th century factory. He had them sliced to create the 2.5 inch by 8 inch joists for the floor and ceiling. The beams measure 4 inches by 9 inches. A side-gabled roof, matching the pitch of the walls, was reconstructed and covered with wood shingles. The gallery style, full-width porch, with a roof at a gentler pitch, was reconstructed along the north side of the house.

Mysteries persist concerning the lower floor. The lower floor is now below grade, yet it has an original door opening and window openings under the upper floor gallery. Though the door and windows open into a full-width well, now framed by a stone retaining wall, they could be evidence that the lower floor was originally at ground level.

The large stone hearth on the lower floor has unusual characteristics. Instead of a traditional fireplace mantle, a huge stone slanted down from the chimney to the fireplace. (This stone slid to the ground and broke between 2004 and 2014.)

Because 124 E. Steins dates to early in the area's history, documentation is scant.

Architectural historian Mimi Stiritz determined that the City of Carondelet sold the entire block to John Maeder, a former lessee, for \$200. Two months later, Maeder sold the corner parcel, fronting 140 feet along Steins and 100 feet on Water, in 1851 for \$712 to John Bohrer. This suggests a theory that Bohrer, identified alternately in census records as a bricklayer from France or Germany, likely built the houses along Steins (three row houses remain) and the stone rear house being restored by the Dorseys. Some experts, however, believe the below grade lower floor indicates early French or Creole construction.

Marcia and Timothy Dorsey plan to use the restored stone building as an art gallery. They hope that their preservation efforts will attract others who will appreciate and want to preserve the remaining historic structures scattered east of Broadway.

**This photo from 2004 shows the rock building at the back of 124 E. Steins after debris was cleared away from the front of the structure. Photo by NiNi Harris.**

## Our Members are Generous

Since the last newsletter the following friends and members of the Carondelet Historical Society have made financial gifts to help support the Society's operations: Linda Ballard, Jaymes Dearing, A. J. Metzler, Laura Rand Orthwein, Jr., Mary Lou Pleiman, and Betty Tonneas.

After their members enjoyed a tour of the Historical Society, the following groups and organizations made donations: Cape Albion, Eliot Unitarian Chapel, Friendship Village, Road Scholars, and St. Charles Community College.

The following donations were made in memory of:

June Norman	<i>by the Panzica Family</i>
Jean Garcia	<i>by Mary Ann Rodriguez</i>
Christ Hrastich	<i>by Bob &amp; Mary Ellen Svoboda</i>
Helen Reisner	<i>by Mary Ruth Kettenback by Jo Ann Nare by Corrinne Pailer by Susan Wolff by Robert Wolff</i>
Don Seymour	<i>by Diane Hinkamp by Sandra Mears by Karen Schmitt by Deb Zeman by Chesterfield Villas</i>

Lifelong resident of Carondelet and Society Board Member Paul Rathgeber left a bequest to the Carondelet Historical Society. His gift will help the Society fulfill its mission of preserving the community's history.

President John Remelius asks that the Carondelet Historical Society's friends, supporters and members let him know if they have a bequest in their will for the Society. He wishes to personally thank them for their generosity.



# From the Tom Weil Collection

The Tom Weil collection, donated in 2013, has substantially expanded the resources of the historical society's library. Many of the collection's historic volumes on St. Louis include nuggets and tidbits concerning the evolution of the Carondelet neighborhood from its days as a French farming village, to its citizens transforming public education, through to its mid-20<sup>th</sup> century industrial life. The titles of one of the books is so boring that it could scare away the most serious researcher. Yet the *St. Louis Reference Record* contains valuable leads, curiosities and images from Carondelet's history during the Gilded Age.

The author of the *Reference Record*, William A. Kelsoe, decided to present a picture of St. Louis for one year, the twelve months ending June 30, 1875, based on the news stories carried in local papers. The veteran journalist examined all the files of the *Times*, the *Globe*, the *Democrat*, the *Globe-Democrat* and the *Republican*. In the *Reference Record*, month by month, he gave brief accounts or condensations of the major stories and interests of St. Louisans based on those articles. Kelsoe's *Reference Record* tells researchers the newspaper and specific dates to look for more information.

Some of his entries act as teasers for the study of Carondelet history, like this one sentence statement. "January 13<sup>th</sup>, a counterfeit nickel factory was discovered in Carondelet."

Carondelet was the subject of Congressional debate, according to Kelsoe's notes for January 29. Congress authorized the construction of a bridge over the Mississippi River at Carondelet. The Congressional

discussion resulted in an amendment that added fifty feet to the bridge that was never built.

An entry titled, "A Red-Letter Day In Carondelet" announced that "Carondelet's first street car line was formally opened, May 29, with a banquet at Lafayette Hall, on the main thoroughfare in that part of the city." Lafayette Hall, located at S. Broadway and Loughborough, had served as Carondelet's City Hall beginning in 1860 when the German Republicans were elected to majority control of Carondelet municipal government. This news item confirms that the hall continued to be a center of civic life after Carondelet was annexed by St. Louis in 1870. The principal speaker at the dinner was Lewis V. Bogy, then U.S. Senator.

A few of Kelsoe's entries included the names of people who played a prominent role in Carondelet. However, these references show the Carondelet leaders in a larger community. For instance, in a piece about the building of the Eads Bridge, Kelsoe referred to William Taussig, who had served as Mayor of Carondelet from 1853 to 1854 and built the home at 6719 Michigan Avenue. Kelsoe's brief comments state that Taussig was a director of the Illinois and St. Louis Bridge Company which built Eads Bridge, an engineering marvel that stunned people around the world. He also noted that Taussig served as President of the St. Louis School Board.

Kelsoe included obituaries for a few Carondelet residents including that of prominent St. Louisan John C. Ivory, who had extensive landholdings in Carondelet and for whom Ivory Avenue and the Ivory Triangle are named. In information from the obituary for Mrs. Henry T. Blow, he noted that she had died in her home in Carondelet. Kelsoe described her husband, the civic leader and businessman Henry T. Blow, as "one of President Lincoln's staunchest supporters here." He referred to the success of her daughter "Miss Susie Blow," as the Mother of the Kindergarten, and noted that Mrs. Blow was the daughter of Col. Thornton Grimsly. Grimsly made a fortune in the saddlery business.

He quoted an article about Susan Blow's kindergarten experiment that was carried in the Sunday edition of the *Republican*, February 28, 1875. "Nature has blessed her with a great heart and a resistless vitality, and happily having it in her power to devote her time to some great purpose of good to her kind, she has selected the kindergarten as her field of human usefulness."

William Kelsoe began compiling and condensing the newspaper articles in 1919. In 1927, he was still working at it. The result was this unique 329 page reference book.

In addition to donating his own collection of books and pamphlets of regional interest, including *St. Louis Reference Record*, Tom Weil has also made a large donation to the Carondelet Historical Society dedicated to purchasing books for the Society's Library.

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## Progress Report

### Renovations

With the roof completely rebuilt, the damages to the upper walls and ceilings on the second floor could be repaired. Mid-July, craftsmen began chipping away the cracked plaster and replastering in the hallway and all the second floor exhibit rooms. When the plastering is completed, the walls and ceilings will all be painted.

A complete renovation of the second floor restroom was completed this summer including new fixtures and ceramic tile flooring.

### Volunteers

Longtime Society member Jerry Martin recently joined the volunteer force. Martin is helping one morning each week entering new library additions into the computerized index.

This summer, Bob Fox, recently retired from A. G. Edwards and Wells Fargo, joined the volunteer crew. He is assisting in the library, streamlining the library and archives systems.





This photo of one of Carondelet's German-built mid-19th century stone houses was taken about 1946. While most of the stone houses were built near the Mississippi, this one and one-half story stone cottage stood far to the west, at 6733 Idaho Avenue. It was razed to construct Interstate 55. Donald Dates, a charter member of the Carondelet Historical Society, took this photo when he was still a teenager.

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*Researched and written by NiNi Harris*  
*Layout by Lynn Josse*

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**Hours**

The Carondelet Historical Society will be open for visits or tours on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 3:00 p.m. Visit any time we are open. To schedule a special tour, call (314) 481-6303.

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