



# Illuminations

February 2013

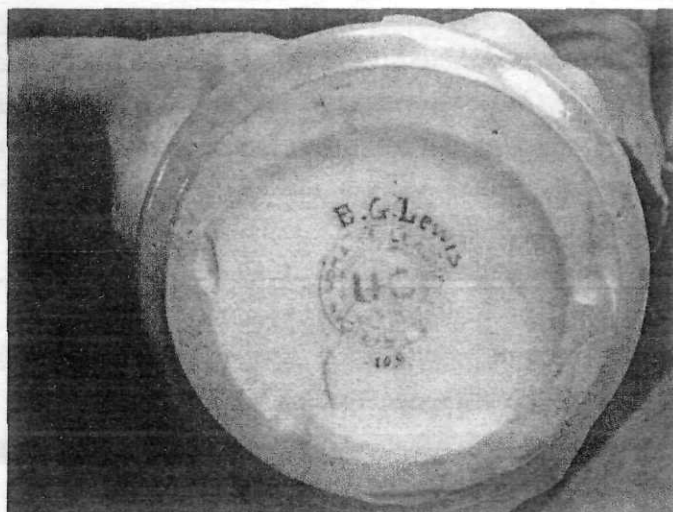
A quarterly publication of the Historical Society of University City

## Lewis Vase Returns

by Eleanor Mullin

Aleene Schneider Zawada has generously given our Society a most meaningful gift. In December, she presented us with a vase crafted by city founder E. G. Lewis. It is proudly displayed in the glass case on the Library's main floor, along with other examples of U City Pottery.

Ms. Zawada grew up in St. Louis City and graduated from Washington University with a degree in chemistry. She moved to University City in the 1960s. She still lives in U City and operates a business here. In 1969, she attended an auction of items that had been brought in from Atascadero, California. These were items from E. G. Lewis' estate which his heirs did not want, and they thoughtfully decided to have them auctioned in the first city he had founded. Ms. Zawada was a  
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The Lewis vase, side and bottom views.

## A Message from the President

by Eleanor Mullin

I've thought long and hard about this letter, and honestly, the events I'm excited about have been covered by other stories--our E. G. Lewis vase, our February program by my friend Kiki Jordan on St. Louis architecture and interior design, and next month's *Gangs of St. Louis* program. So, this will be short and sweet. We have included a return envelope for your 2013 membership, and would truly appreciate you joining again this year. There are many of you who receive and--I trust--enjoy getting this newsletter as well as coming to our programs, who did not pay dues in 2012, and perhaps even in 2011. We have been more than happy to keep you on our lists. But we would be even happier if you did let us know you do support our mission by sending in your dues.

### **Lewis Vase** *continued from p. 1*

member of the U City Arts Association at that time. On nothing more than a whim, she bought a lot containing two vases. One was by E.G. Lewis, and the other by Emile Diffloth, a prominent artist who taught at Lewis' Art Academy.

Then she thought no more about them; she displayed them casually but not prominently in her home, and went about her life. Fast forward to 2004--while visiting the Art Museum, she saw a poster advertising an exhibit of U City Pottery, and it dawned on her that the two vases might have real historic and artistic value. Ms. Zawada brought them to David Conradson, in the department of American Decorative Arts at the museum, who was clearly impressed to see two fine examples of our pottery school.

In 2011, Ms. Zawada donated the Diffloth vase to the St. Louis Art Museum. In 2012, as we know, she donated the E. G. Lewis vase to the Historical Society of University City. We cannot adequately express our appreciation for her gift. Please stop and look at the vase the next time you are at the Library.

### **St. Louis Style: Feb. 5 program**

At the public library Feb. 5, Kiki Jordan entertained a large audience with a slide lecture on architecture and interior design in turn of the century St. Louis. Urbanization and industrialization created a demand for large, open-plan interiors. Engineering came into its own as a profession distinct from architecture. These trends resulted in two imposing St. Louis buildings with steel skeletons, built in the 1890s and still standing: the train shed of Union Station and the Anheuser-Busch Brewhouse. In another development, the French Second Empire style, as seen in the Old Post Office and Lafayette Square, was giving way to the less ornate, classical Beaux Arts style, seen in the Central Library. Queen Anne, inspired by the rural past of England, was one of many "revival" styles, examples of which can still be seen in the old neighborhoods of St. Louis.

## U City Shoot 'em Up

by Frank Reedy

Daniel Waugh, author of *Gangs of St. Louis: Men of Respect* and *Egan's Rats: the Untold Story of the Prohibition-Era Gang that Ruled St. Louis*, will tell us about the gangsters who once shot up our town in the next HSUC program, scheduled for 7 pm Tuesday April 9, at University City Public Library, 6701 Delmar.

*Gangs of St. Louis* details several significant criminals and crimes of University City. The infamous Giannola brothers were members of the Green Ones gang of the 1920s. Vito lived on Princeton and Pasquale on Cornell. A third brother, John, resided in north St. Louis. They commuted to the family butcher shop in Little Italy downtown. Their chief business interest, however, was a moonshining operation in Madison County, Illinois. Murder, bigamy and kidnapping were among their alleged crimes. Another criminal with U City ties was 'Belvedere Joe' Gonella, who owned and operated a roadhouse on Olive Street Road, just west of North and South. Many local hoods patronized the 'country club roadhouse.' On Sept. 15, 1926, a gunfight broke out between members of the Green Ones and another St. Louis gang, the Cuckoos, leading to a car chase into Vinita Hills and more gunfights in the next several days throughout the city. In October, at the corner of Purdue and Teasdale, Giannola's thugs ambushed two

Palestinian-American salesmen they mistook for hit men. The unfortunate salesmen were oblivious to the ongoing gang war in the city and to their proximity to the Giannola brothers' homes. The peddlers were shot; one of them staggered to Greenway, where he died, and the other was taken to St. Mary's Hospital, where he died that evening.

1927 was another violent year in University City. On December 19, Hodiament Bank on Bartmer and Bank of University City on Delmar were robbed, probably by the Egan's Rats gang. They used tommy guns--a first in the St. Louis area. The same year, Vito Giannola was killed in a fusillade of machine-gun fire. He was laid out in his home on Princeton. For irregular church attendance, or other reasons, Archbishop John Glennon denied the poor fellow a Catholic funeral, but a local priest was allowed to pray with the family over the casket, which was interred the next day at Calvary cemetery.

Daniel Waugh will also enlighten us about more recent criminals who have called U City home. His books are published by History Press. He is a St. Louis cab driver with a passion for history, particularly true crime, which he has been researching and writing about for fifteen years. He has written for true crime publications and is currently at work on a project about the Detroit underworld.

