



ILLUMINATIONS

quarterly publication of the Historical Society of University City

Preserving Civic Plaza

Council responds to public enthusiasm for historic buildings

Prop H, the amendment to the city charter to protect historic buildings, passed overwhelmingly, and the city council has responded. On Election Day, April 5, Prop H received 3,974 yes votes, against 1,784 no votes. Councilmember Paulette Carr (Ward Two) commented in her newsletter that Prop H being on the ballot probably contributed to much higher voter turnout this year than in recent elections. At its April 11 meeting, the City Council voted to establish a citizen's commission on Civic Plaza preservation, which would include prominent Prop H supporters. Michael Glickert (Ward Two) offered a resolution to preserve two of the most threatened buildings in Civic Plaza, the Old Library (630 Trinity) and the City Hall Annex. The former is unoccupied, and the latter soon will be.

While cautioning that resolutions are "passive in nature," Glickert told *Illuminations* that "we are going to watch, maintain, fix, because these buildings belong to us." Some tuck pointing is already under way. The city is "in a tight spot," he said, because the Circuit Court has ordered that the police department be moved out of the Annex, which has been condemned for health hazards, by July 12. The police will go to temporary quarters while a new headquarters is built, possibly on Olive Blvd. That will leave the An-

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Ronald Bartels is presented with a Century Home plaque at his house on Waterman Avenue, built in 1914, by Liz Beall of the HSUC board.



Christine and Stefano Schena hold the Century Home plaque for their house on Washington Ave., built 1911. With them are Christine's parents, Judy and Craig Mold, longtime members of HSUC.

Save the Date!

Annual dinner announced

Mark Thursday, **Oct. 6** on your calendar. The Society's Annual Dinner Meeting will take place that evening. The venue will once again be the upstairs room at the University City Public Library. The speaker will be from the Missouri History Museum. The topic will be announced. Complete information will be in the August issue of *Illuminations*.

City Hall

HSUC holds open house

The Historical Society held an open house at City Hall on April 24. Archivist Sue Rehkopf and other members of HSUC acted as docents. A steady stream of visitors toured the building. Many were U. City residents who had been to the building on business and wanted to know more about its splendid interiors. Some, like City Councilmember Rod Jennings, were very familiar with the building. The HSUC extends thanks to all who helped out, especially Patrick Wall of the public library. Special thanks go to U. City staff, for opening up the building on Sunday without charge, allowing the HSUC to make the event free to all.

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nex empty. It was built by city founder E.G. Lewis to house his printing plant, which he claimed was the world's largest. It has housed the police and fire departments since 1938. The fire department moved out in 2011. Departure of the police will leave the building empty. The Old library was built as U. City's first public library in 1939. After the new library was built in 1969, the old building had various tenants, including the U. City Residential Service. The building has been empty for some time and is in

need of renovation. The City hopes that once the two buildings are rehabbed, they will attract new tenants.

Area History Groups Meet

Prop H lauded

The semi annual meeting of Regional Historical Societies took place in Florissant April 11. President Eleanor Mullin and newsletter editor David Linzee represented the UCHS. Daniel Gonzalez, St. Louis County preservation historian, said that the main items of current interest in local preservation were the passage of Prop H in U. City and the Meramec River Bridge in Route 66 Park. The county parks department is willing to take the bridge over to save it from demolition, but needs a contingency fund for maintenance. Fundraising is under way. He also said he would put a page of history society news and events on the county's website. Historical societies then gave brief reports on their activities. Missouri Aviation is completing a history book on Lambert Airport. Ballwin has restored two historic structures, a cabin and schoolhouse, which will open Aug. 25. Florissant Valley is restoring the Taille de Noyer house. The society at Greenwood Cemetery, founded in 1874 in north St. Louis, is busy with restoration and maintenance of the grounds, documentation, locating graves, and informing school groups. Next year will be the 250th anniversary of the founding of Carondelet, and its society is planning an exhibit of the oldest buildings. Clayton is opening a heritage center with library, displays, and genealogy information, at 50 Gay Ave. Bridgeton maintains the Payne Gentry house and is planning to publish a log Dr. Payne kept of his travels. Old Trails maintains the Bacon log cabin in Ballwin and opens it on the first and third Sundays of the month. St. Louis County library will hold a history fair at headquarters Aug. 20. The Missouri Humanities Council is working on establishing a German Heritage corridor.

The *Other* University City Historical Society

And here we thought we were the only one!

A few years ago when we were setting up the Historical Society's website, we realized that there was another University City, in Pennsylvania. And then last week when David Linzee was testing our new Facebook page, we realized once again that there is not only another University City, there is also another University City Historical Society! (To be exact, we are officially the Historical Society of University City, but we often refer to ourselves as the U. City Historical Society.)

University City, Pennsylvania is the easternmost district of West Philadelphia, encompassing the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University City, and can boast of having the nation's largest collection of Victorian houses. It is home to three National Register Historic Districts, Powelton, Garden Court and the West Philadelphia Streetcar Suburb as well as state and locally recognized neighborhoods. And they, too, offer historic home plaques for houses in their historic districts. We have lots of similarities

We've introduced ourselves and hope to stay in touch. If any of you are visiting Philadelphia, you might want to take the opportunity to visit their historic districts.

We also found another University City...this time in San Diego, though they don't seem to have a historical society. And, of course, the area includes the University of California, San Diego.

Now on Facebook

HSUC on the social network

The Historical Society of University City now has a page on Facebook, and that's ^ how to look us up. We'll post news and information about our events. Please visit and be sure to "like" us.



Rich Eating

Local company produced caloric treat

From the mid 1940s to the early 1960s, the Bonnee Frozen Products Corp. at 8144 Olive Blvd. in University City produced Bonnee Buttered Beef Steaks, as well as other products. Sam Brown, founder of the company, had observed during his years as a traveling salesman that the standard of cuisine at small-town restaurants was poor to middling. He thought restaurant owners (and their customers) would buy a meat product of reliable quality. He intended to distribute it coast-to-coast.

Advertisements described Bonnee Buttered Beef Steaks as "finely chopped beef, molded, frozen, sliced and buttered." They were sold in packets containing four two-ounce patties and four pats of butter. The "steaks" cost 58 cents per pound in 1956, which wasn't cheap. A cook could flip them onto a griddle or frying pan and they would be ready in a couple of minutes.

The rich taste of the patties was widely appreciated in a less health-conscious era. Bonnee Frozen Products was a multi-million dollar business, distributing its products to grocery stores and restaurants in 38 states and eight other countries.

The company was one of the sponsors of the "St. Louis Hop," a televised dance concert for teenagers, which is as fondly remembered by St. Louisans of a certain age as the butter steaks themselves.

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Inside

*Date of Annual Meeting

*Prop H passes!

*Regional meeting

History Round-Up

Events and Publications

The oldest house in U. City, the Sutter-Myer Farmhouse, will be open and holding tours on the following weekend dates this summer: May 21-22, June 11-12, June 18-19. Free and open to the public. (314) 721-0193

Tim O'Neil of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch has published a new history of the Arch, *The Gateway Arch: An Unlikely Masterpiece*. The illustrated hardback costs \$35.95.

The exhibition "Route 66: Main Street through St. Louis" opens June 25 at the Missouri History Museum in Forest Park. The exhibition explores the local history of the famed highway across the West, with artifacts and stories from motels, tourist traps and custard stands. The Museum will also hold a full roster of lectures, tours and other events. More info at mohistory.org

The Readings in History book club at U. City Public Library discusses *1920: The Year that Made the Decade Roar* by Eric Burns at 7 pm June 13.

The Age of Innocence, the 1993 film based on Edith Wharton's novel set in 1870s New York, will be shown in the Senior Film Series at the St. Louis Public Library Buder Branch at 1:30 pm June 1.

Not historical, but badly needed: Lions Against Litter opens its campaign against U. City trash at 10 am June 4 in Kingsland Park. Info: lmkingwall1251@att.net

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