



May 2014

# ILLUMINATIONS

A quarterly publication of the Historical Society of University City

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## "Navy Plane Falls in University City Yard; Pilot Hurt"

by Sue Rehkopf



*March 1945: The wrecked plane is trucked away. Photo courtesy of Robert Haefner.*

The Library received a phone call several weeks ago from Emory Van Kirk, a former U. City resident, asking what information the Library or Historical Society might have on a plane crash in U. City. We were a bit puzzled. How could we NOT have information on an event like this? Our caller had an approximate date...1944 or early 1945...and a where...northeast U. City. But he was looking for a date. He'd heard stories from his mother, who witnessed the event. He's found a photo on line. But no date.

So we went to work. None of our retired firefighters remembered it or remembered hearing about it. Without a date, it was going to be difficult to check minutes of the Board of Aldermen meetings for possible mention or newspapers for sto-

ries. Fortunately, Mr. Van Kirk called back with what he hoped was a date, and we turned to St. Louis' daily newspapers on microfilm at the St. Louis County Library.

And there was the story in the *Post Dispatch*, *Globe Democrat* and *Star Times*.

On March 8, 1945, Lt. (jg) Roger E. McCaughey, age 24, was flying from Tulsa to his home base at Floyd Bennett Field in New York when his Corsair Navy fighter developed engine trouble. He was attempting an emergency landing in a field next to Wagner Electric in Wellston, but he was losing altitude rapidly. The plane sheared trees and snapped wires, finally crashing nose down in the front yard of 1167 Sutter, home

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## A Message from the Vice-President by Ed Nickels

A true test of art is its longevity. In the case of University City Pottery, it has surely passed the test of time.

In 1909 E.G. Lewis established the Art Academy and Porcelain Works. For his art academy, Lewis brought together a faculty of renowned ceramists from Europe and America to teach and to produce exquisite vases, tiles and other ceramics.

This talented group was lead by Taxile Doat, a French ceramist who was an expert on both porcelain and high-fire glazes, and Adelaide Alsop Robineau, one of America's leading ceramists. Faculty members included: Emile Diffloth, a French ceramist who assisted Doat; the British-trained potter Frederick Hurten Rhead; and native St. Louisan Kathryn E. Cherry, who taught china painting.

Although the collaborative group of artists only lasted two years, each produced some of his or her most celebrated work during this time in University City.

In the spring of 1911, Lewis declared bankruptcy. As a result the academy closed in July of that year and the faculty departed. However, Doat came back to develop a line of artistic porcelains

and commercial wares that could be sold to make pottery self-supporting. That goal was never realized, and by 1914 the renamed University City Porcelain Works was closed.

While the Academy only existed for a few short years, the creations by the faculty and students have lived on as some of the most recognized and valuable ceramics from this period. Today University City Pottery is known worldwide.

Recently, the St. Louis Art Museum opened a special gallery on the third floor of the Cass Gilbert building for some of its collection of University City Pottery. Works include those by Doat, Robineau and Rhead, as well as a ceramic jar produced by Lewis and a picture of him working on the jar. The exhibit also includes a picture of the entire staff and the magnificent fireplace that Rhead and his wife created for John Meacham in 1911.

Like all exhibits at SLAM, this will be rotated or changed. You, as a University City resident, whether current or former, will not want to miss experiencing this exhibit.

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*(Continued from page 1)*

of Mr. and Mrs. John Norath. The plane caught fire. The pilot released the shoulder straps, but caught his foot in his parachute as he tried to get out of the cockpit. Residents rushed to the rescue. With County Deputy Sheriff William Blake holding off the flames with a fire extinguisher he kept in his car, Conrad Hafner and William Blake pulled the pilot to safety and cut away the parachute. Soon five fire engines arrived to put out the fire, and an ambulance took the pilot to St. Louis County Hospital for treatment; he was then transferred to the U. S. Navel Air Station Hospital at Lambert Airport.

What could have been a major disaster that day caused just a small amount of damage to the Noraths' house and to neighbor Theodore Smith's home at 1169 Sutter, thanks to those who rushed to

help. Other than the pilot, no one was hurt. More than a thousand spectators were attracted to the scene, including dozens of children who were home from school for lunch.

Once we had the date, we were also able to find this event on a list of military plane crashes, though that entry reports that this crash happened in Wellston.

Thanks to Mr. Van Kirk for asking for information. The list of forgotten events in our history is long...we like having the opportunity to share them with you.

Have a story from U. City's past that you'd like to know more about, or maybe find out if it's fact or fable? Send us an email at [uctyhistory@hotmail.com](mailto:uctyhistory@hotmail.com)

## Save the Date!

The annual dinner meeting will be Tuesday, October 14 at the Pasta House, 8213 Delmar. **Joe Edwards**, a man who needs no introduction, will be the speaker. He will discuss and sign his new book, *St. Louis Walk of Fame: 140 Great St. Louisans*.



## Parkview Gardens Program

In the final program of the spring, Society board-member David Linzee presented a slide lecture based on his new booklet, *Parkview Gardens: Its Rise and Fall and Rise*. The neighborhood, a century old this year, grew up on the grounds of the former Delmar Racetrack and Delmar Garden amusement park. Between the wars it was a fashionable apartment district and a center of Jewish life in St. Louis. The neighborhood came through the Urban Renewal era with only moderate demolition and new construction, but in the '70s and '80s it seemed doomed to succumb to urban blight. In the '90s, bold efforts by the landlords' association reversed the decline. Washington University bought up much of the area in 2000. Since then, Parkview Gardens has thrived.

*Parkview Gardens: Its Rise and Fall and Rise* is the newest in a series of Historical Society publications on old neighborhoods of University City. Others are: *Ames Place*, *University Hills*, the *Linden-Kingsbury Historic District*, *Maryland Terrace*, *Civic Plaza*, and *The Cemeteries of University City*. All are on sale at the public library, 6701 Delmar, for \$6. They can be ordered by mail with addition of a \$5 shipping and handling charge.

## Local Historians Gather

The semi-annual meeting of St. Louis-area historical societies was held May 3 at Manchester City Hall, the 1873 Lyceum building. It was hosted by Old Trails Historical Society. Manchester Mayor Willson made the opening speech. Representatives of the historical societies described a variety of educational and fundraising activities. Old Trails is holding a "Hat Extravaganza," a slideshow survey of headgear through the centuries. Fenton holds an annual "antiques road show" fundraiser. Wildwood is making progress on a small museum. Rebecca Thorn, a University of Missouri graduate student working at Clayton Historical Society, is interviewing archivists about what documents and artifacts local societies are collecting and preserving. Kirkwood reports that representatives of the Kirkwood family are coming from Scotland for an event in June. Overland is hosting a talk on Civil War cartoons by Bob Schultz of Civil War Roundtable and holding a porch sale fundraiser. Carondelet plans an event in June, with tours of historical buildings and displays from the archives. This society recently completed renovation of the 1873 Des Peres School where Susan Blow taught. Esley Hamilton, St. Louis County Historian, said that two historic structures are under reconstruction in Faust Park. All these events and activities will be easier to keep track of soon, when the Sappington-Concord Historical Society adds a page listing local programs to its website.

## Correction

In the March issue, the article "Cakes in the Loop." said there were three of the fiberglass birthday cakes celebrating the 250th birthday of St. Louis on Delmar. In fact, there is a fourth: in front of Blueberry Hill, honoring the bar-restaurant "that started the revitalization of the Loop," to quote from the Cakeway to the West website. The cake is the work of Indy Bowers. Thanks to Joe Edwards for pointing out the omission.

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Address Service Requested

**Inside**

\*Annual Dinner Announcement

\*Plane Crash in U. City

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## **Century Plaques**

Last year's mailing to the owners of University City Century Homes generated considerable interest. Now, we are preparing this year's mailing, inviting owners of houses built in 1914 or before to apply for Century plaques. Our researchers found approximately 70 houses that qualify. Establishing the construction dates of old houses is a difficult process, and it's possible, even probable, that we missed some. If you believe that your house was built in 1914 or before, and have documentation, please get in touch with us.

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