

The Soulard Restorationist

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FEBRUARY 1982

SOULARD SKI CLUB ENJOYES BLIZZARD

Twenty inches of snow brought uncontained joy to the small, but devoted Soulard Ski Club. Because the members tend to spend their extra cash on lining three-story flues and replacing battered sliding doors, Forest Park had been the westernmost goal of these Soulard Slalomers. They soon realized this had been good practice. The thunder and lightening blizzard of January 30 and 31 provided a new challenge for urban skiers. After several exuberant phone calls, the group met at the corner of 12th and Lami next to our landmark neighborhood hotel. From there they poled their way up Lami and schussed down Thirteenth Street where it was possible to practice short jumps from the roofs of cars buried in six foot snowdrifts. The group continued up Russell and paused to admire the arctic stillness of The Gravois.

Exhilarated by the sights and the silence, the skiers practiced cross-country techniques and soon experienced the unusual pleasure of skiing over an abandoned interstate highway. Arriving in Lafayette Square, the club was amazed not to see any of the Lafayette Square Ski Club enjoying the urban ski experience. One member learned later that the LSSC members only skied where chair lifts were available.

After several runs over the park, the group returned to Soulard via Lafayette and Twelfth Streets where they again practiced jumping from buried cars. An apres-ski party was quickly organized and the club members spent the afternoon extolling the rare joys of urban skiing and designing cloth patches to be made for their parkas that would officially identify the area as a ski haven.

NEW OWNERS COMPLETING HOUSE

by Clark Rowley

Sometimes a new owner is what is needed to put the finishing touches on a rehabilitation project. Such is the case with Tom Lochhaas and Janet Young, who recently bought and moved into 2349 South Eleventh Street, the house with the side yard and the spiral staircase, across the street from Jim and Judy Marquis. The new owners brought considerable energies to their first home and are busy putting the finishing touches on the house. Parquet floors, dry-walling, new doors and other matters have been tackled or are projects underway. Besides being energetic in their home improvements, the owners have a busy professional life.

Janet is an attorney. She passed her bar exam shortly before the couple purchased the house. She is in private practice and specializes in cases involving sex and age discrimination. Tom's occupation is less easily summarized. For one, he is a part-time house husband. When he is not enjoying that, he works on his Ph.D. in English Literature. Tom has about three years more to go before receiving his degree. For spending money, he is teaching part-time at Washington University and he is also a freelance medical editor. What that means is that he edits textbooks, making the materials more readable and understandable. He engages in other writing projects, and presently has a manuscript under contract for a movie. Several of his short stories have been published, and Tom comments that "he is always looking for new material".

Tom and Janet are native St. Louisans. However, they have been away for a while,

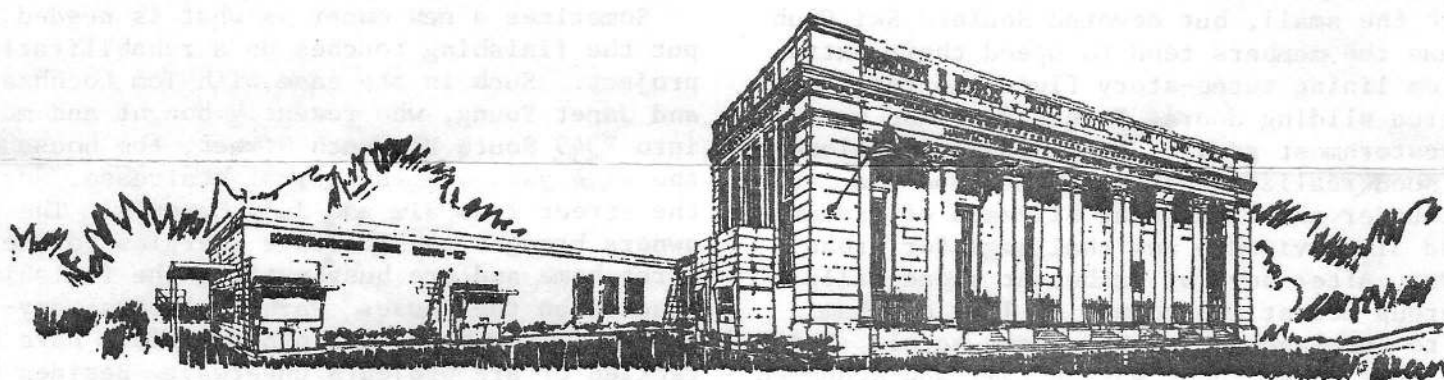


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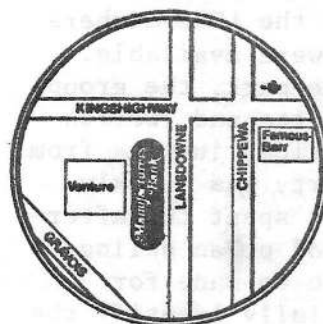


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gathering educational credentials and such. They had long known about Soulard before buying a home down here. Shopping at the Soulard Open-Air Market constituted an activity even before they moved to the area. Also, Janet knew Louise Tonkovich during Louise's CDA days. They have another claim to fame, of course. Janet's sister's boyfriend's brother's wife won the Friendship Quilt in the drawing during the September House Tour.

Now that things are settling down about the house, Tom and Janet have manifested an interest in getting more involved in Soulard activities, including working on the publicity committee and, possibly, participating in the September House Tour. That would be a natural, Tom says, because Janet's sister, Sue Young, could provide floral arrangements to brighten the house on tour days. Sue owns Geechi's Flower Shop on Eleventh and Locust, downtown.

If the flowers are not forthcoming, it would make little difference. The house looks great, and Tom and Janet are friendly, energetic, interesting people - and their moving to Soulard is a compliment to the continuing appeal of the area. Drop by and welcome them to the neighborhood. Their telephone number is 711-7923.

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THE STORY OF BARR BRANCH LIBRARY

The Barr Branch Library, located on the corner of Lafayette and Jefferson is the oldest operating library in the St. Louis system. It was named in honor of William Barr (Famous-Barr).

William Barr was born in Lanark, Scotland, October 7, 1827. Mr. Barr began his marketing career in New York in the employ of Ubsell, Pierson & Co. He was transferred to St. Louis to open a branch store, located on the corner of Fourth and Olive Streets. In 1880, Mr. Barr bought controlling interests in the store and it became known as the William Barr Dry Goods Co. and was moved to the block of Sixth, Locust, Seventh, and Olive Sts. The William Barr Dry Goods Co. was, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the largest department store in the midwest.

Mr. Barr was not only a merchant/businessman but also a philanthropist. In 1877, he set in motion the building of the Barr Branch Library when he purchased a grazing commons site and shortly resold this parcel of land at Jefferson and Lafayette Streets to the Mount Calvary Building Association. The Association commissioned architect Theodore Link (designer of Union Station) to build his first building in St. Louis: The Mount Calvary Protestant Episcopal Church. The "Great St. Louis Cyclone of 1896" demolished the church and Mr. Barr rebought the parcel of land.

In 1901, the Board of Directors of the St. Louis Public Library sought funds from Andrew Carnegie for the building of a library system. Mr. Carnegie donated \$1,000,000 and in 1903, Mr. Barr gave the land at Jefferson and Lafayette for the erection of the first Carnegie library in St. Louis.

The Barr Branch Library was constructed at a cost of \$72,000 and designed by Theodore Link. It was officially dedicated on September 17, 1906 and named after its St. Louis benefactor, William Barr.

The library is open from 9 to 7 on Mon. and Wed. and 9-5:30 on Tues., Thurs., Fri., and Sat. The library offers a variety of programs throughout the month for adults and children. Last year, with the celebration of its 75th anniversary, the library was restored as nearly as possible to its 1906 condition. In addition to loaning books, the St. Louis system offers records and paintings for loan. If you have not registered to vote, you may do so at the library. Barbara Stewart, branch librarian is particularly helpful and welcomes patrons from Soulard.

RESTORING WITH RUG RATS

People may wonder why the restoration of a home goes so slowly. Is it because of money? Occasionally. What about time? Perhaps. A better reason than either of these is rug rats (kids, urchins, children, etc). People have no idea how traumatic it is to restore a house with kids - not even Erma Bombeck could guess!

Even the most simple restoration task becomes a major project. The challenge of painting a wall is akin to trying to find a parking space in the St. Louis Blizzard of '82. As I open the can of paint two little voices pipe up in unison, "Daddy, can we paint?" Instantly my heartbeat races faster than the winner of the Indy 500. With no backbone to say no (I can't bear to hear children cry) I convince myself thinking, yes, it will encourage responsibility, make them appreciate what hard work restoration is, right? The two little Rembrandts begin. Everything below four feet is their territory and all else is mine. All is going well until I hear, "He put paint in my hair!", "I did not!", "Yes, you did!" As I look down it's not only paint in the hair, but on the floor, clothes, furniture, my shoes, etc.

So much for encouraging responsibility. Caulking a window with children can be fun. I don't believe I just wrote that, oh well. The phone always rings when I work and I always run to answer. Returning I find my son playing Darth Vader and the caulking gun is a laser gun. Unfortunately, my daughter did not have "The Force" with her-only gooeey caulk.

Putting a new concrete floor in the basement was work, and it turned out perfectly except for some small footprints. Questioning my daughter about the small footprints she informed me that the doggie did it. I informed her that the family dog does not wear jogging shoes. One more example with rug rats should illustrate why, after years of restoring my home, it looks as homey as a vacant shell. Soulard gangways are fairly narrow. At times they are so narrow that two people can not pass one another. One day a baseball went through the basement gangway window while my son was playing ball with a few friends. I have a question about this - if my basement window was right field, where the hell was home plate?

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LYNCH STREET REGULARS

One visit on a busy night is not the best way to thoroughly describe another of the neighborhood's eating and drinking emporiums. But believing that first impressions are often true, this is a good place to add to your list. The atmosphere and the patrons are warmed by a double fireplace which was doing a good job on a very cold night. Most of the walls are exposed brick which reflect the firelight very cozily. Large blow-ups of early photographs of the nearby brewery are displayed and the seating is varied and comfortable. Two hamburger enthusiasts in the group were very pleased with Lynch Street's offering, but the highlight of the visit was the variety of deep-fried appetizers. A sampler special was ordered which included artichoke hearts, carrots, cauliflower, cheese-balls, cucumbers, mushrooms, pearl onions and zucchini. Maybe even something else; there were so many and they were so good. There are a variety of sandwiches, omelets, soups and a salad bar. The service was especially pleasant and we all left glad to know that the corner of 11th and Lynch was just a short walk from home.

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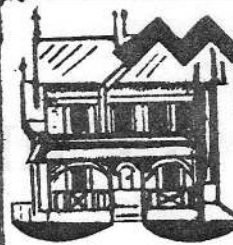
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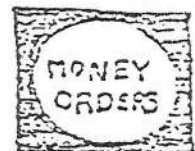
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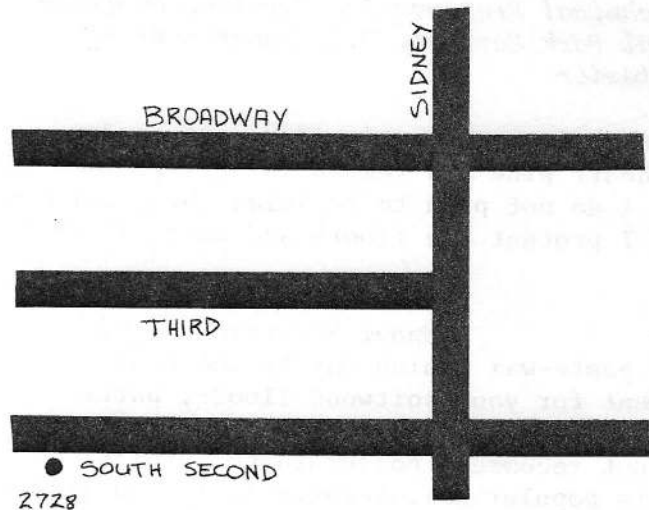
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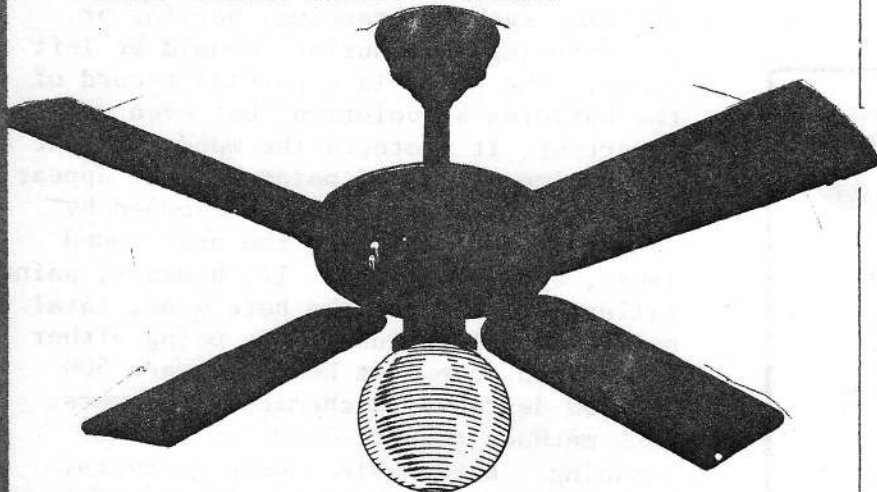
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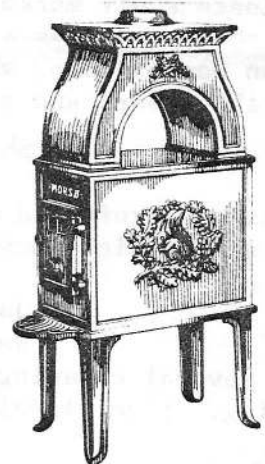


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PEDESTAL

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The floors in my house (c.1800) are random-width heart pine and remain in very good condition. I do not plan to refinish them, but how should I protect the floors and maintain them?

Dan Filippelli
Upper Marlborough, MD

A good paste-wax finish may be the best treatment for your softwood floors, particularly if they are not splintered or knotty. We do not recommend polyurathane varnish, which is popular now, because it is too hard a coating for pine, may not take well, scratches easily and will not yield the rich luster your historic floors deserve.

Using a soft cloth, apply the paste wax to a small area of clean floor. Do not try to wax an entire room at once. Allow about five minutes of drying time before buffing with an electric floor polisher. The polished floor can be easily maintained with regular dusting and periodic buffing to renew the shine and to eliminate scuff marks. Do not wax the floor more than two times a year, as this will hasten wax buildup, which will require stripping the floors and starting all over again.

Sharon C. Park, AIA

Is there a preferred method for removing dirt from a historic limestone building?

James Harrison
Waterloo, Iowa

No. Several cleaning methods, including water washing, steam cleaning and chemical cleaning

can be used on older or historic limestone, but there are advantages and disadvantages to each.

Water washing, a technique that includes prolonged spraying, aided by hand scrubbing with natural-bristle brushes, followed by a moderate-pressure (200-600 psi) rinse, is probably the gentlest method. However, some limestones may be stained by impurities in the stone from extensive water soaking, may dry unevenly and, because of their higher solubility, may even dissolve slightly.

The primary advantage of steam may be its ability to clean ornately carved areas. But it is usually more expensive and often slower than water washing. Since limestone is extremely sensitive to acid, chemical cleaners must be of an alkaline type. Alkaline cleaners consist of a detergent and some type of alkali, usually ammonia or potassium hydroxide. (Do not use sodium hydroxide on older or historic masonry because efflorescence and subflorescence are likely to result.) After application, alkaline cleaners are rinsed off in a two-part process. The masonry is given a slightly acid wash (possibly with acetic acid) followed by a water wash in order to remove all of the chemicals.

Anne E. Grimmer

The original carving on the wooden brackets of my 1880s Italianate row house porch is hidden under years of paint. Should I remove all the paint or leave well enough alone?

M. L. Jensen
Washington, DC

Opinion varies as to whether heavy paint buildup justifies removing layers of paint. In our view, if there are no signs of paint failure, such as cracking, peeling or alligating, the surface should be left alone. The paint is a partial record of the building's evolution, but even more important, it protects the wood. If, at a later time, signs of paint failure appear, the damaged paint should be removed by scraping and sanding to the next sound layer, then repainted. If, however, paint failure has reached the bare wood, total paint removal is justified, using either a heat gun (one that heats between 500 and 750 degrees) or chemical strippers. Both methods require laborious manual scraping. Detachable wooden elements, such as exterior shutters, may be sent out for commercial dip stripping, but the

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Kay D. Weeks

I am planning to restore the interior of my post-Civil War house (c.1870), and I have discovered a historic photograph of the front parlor that shows the furniture, curtains and rugs. Can I use this photo as a guide in my restoration or were such photos frequently staged?

Norman Smith
Frederick, MD

The majority of photos from this period were taken by photographers who were interested primarily in documenting a room as it actually appeared, although they may have added a few additional palms or other insignificant decorative items. Even if this were the case with your photograph, the essential character of the interior would hardly be affected.

In your attempt to re-create the desired period, you should bear in mind that middle-class American homes, unlike mansions of the wealthy, usually reflected a mixture of styles. (For additional information, see *The Tasteful Interlude, American Interior Through the Camera's Eye*, 1975 by William Seale; and *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery, and Other Details*, 1878 by Charles L. Eastlake.)

Garrett R. Arabak

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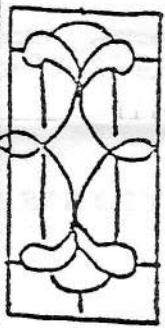
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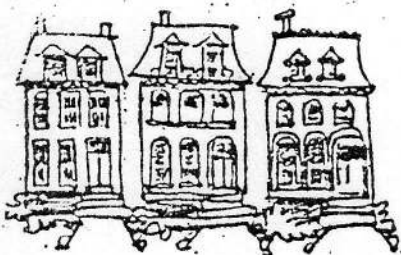
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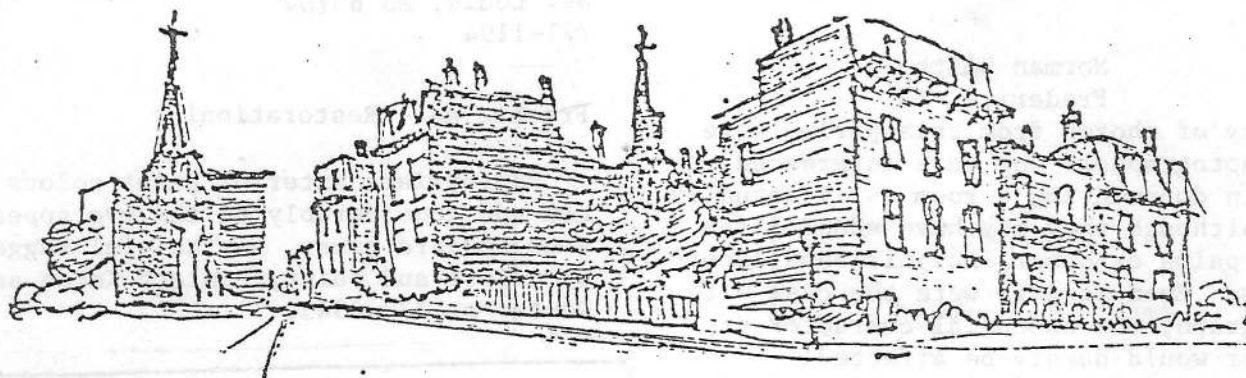
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