



The Soulard Restorationist

Volume XII Issue IV

December 1987/January 1988

Soulard Holiday Parlour Tour



For the Child in All of Us!

Saturday, December 5, &
Sunday, December 6, 1 to 7 o'clock

- * Guided walking tour of 7 festively decorated historic homes
- * Anheuser-Busch stables and half a million lights on Pestalozzi Street
- * Carolers
- * Mithra Glassworks stained glass studio
- * Tour begins at Jesus Church, 12th & Victor
- * Tickets \$5 in advance (call 771-5563), \$6 days of tour
- * Traditional holiday treats in every house: roasted chestnuts, gingerbread men, hot cider, more!
- * Sponsored by the Soulard Restoration Group



NOTES FROM THE BRICK HOUSE

After one month as president of the Souland Restoration Group, it is clear to me that the remaining 11 months will be most challenging. (Don't worry, I'm not counting the days to the end of my term—at least not yet.)

Before I was elected, I stated that my two highest priorities for the upcoming year were to increase the fundraising activities of the SRG and to stimulate the development of new single-family housing in our neighborhood.

With respect to the first of these goals, I invite any SRG member who is interested to serve on our fundraising committee. This will be very challenging work, but it must be done. Most—if not all—of the plans we have for how the SRG can work to improve our neighborhood hinge on our ability to successfully increase our organization's revenue.

The second priority will be the main topic of our monthly membership meeting on Wednesday, December 2, held at 7:30 p.m. at Trinity Lutheran Church, 8th and Souland Streets. At that meeting, we will hear from a developer who is interested in constructing single-family housing on several vacant lots in Souland (10th and Emmet, 9th and Souland, and 10th and Souland).

While fundraising and the devel-

opment of single-family housing are top priorities of mine for the upcoming year, the SRG's top priority at this specific time of year is the Souland Holiday Parlour Tour. I think it is safe to say that no other organization in the metropolitan area sponsors house tours that are more fun, more innovative, or more successful. I look forward to seeing all SRG members working—and having fun—on December 5 and 6.

I would like to leave you with a couple of thoughts. First, I think it most important to thank Phil Willman for the wonderful job he did as president of the SRG. I can only hope to approximate the quality of leadership provided by Phil during the past year.

Second, it is important for us to remember—and appreciate—the diversity of our neighborhood. I want to assure all SRG members and all residents of Souland that I will make every effort to work and communicate with all residents of our community while president of the SRG.

And last, I wish to extend to all members, all Souland residents, and all of our readers (even those of you of questionable judgment who are not living in Souland!) my wishes for a pleasant holiday season.

Rod Wright, president
Souland Restoration Group



The Souland Restorationist

The Souland Restorationist has a circulation of 6,000 and is published every two months by the Souland Restoration Group. It is mailed to SRG members, advertisers and subscribers, and is distributed in Souland and St. Louis-area businesses.

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Editor & Designer: Barbara Alice MacRobie

Copy Editor: Lana Downing

Editorial Assistant: Edward R. Fliss

Business Manager: Thelma Hemmen

Contributing Writers: Edward R.

Fliss, Jay Gibbs, Paul Kjolrie, David Lester, Ruth Uxa Weaver, Phil Willman, Rod Wright

Photography: C.C. Everly, Edward R.

Fliss, Jay Gibbs, John William Nagel

Illustrator: David Lester

Distribution: Richard Eaton, Kathy

Hurst, House Tour Committee,

SRG Board of Directors

Production: Type 1

CALENDAR

December 2 SRG General Membership Meeting, Trinity Lutheran Church, 7:30 p.m.

December 5-6 Souland Holiday Parlour Tour, starting at Jesus Church, 12th & Victor, 1-7 p.m.

December 16 Chanukah Beethoven's Birthday Boston Tea Party Anniversary and SRG Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

December 22 Winster Solstice, 4:46 a.m.

December 25 Christmas Day

JANUARY IS NATIONAL HOBBY MONTH

January 6 SRG General Membership Meeting, Trinity Lutheran Church, 7:30 p.m.

January 20 SRG Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

And From the "Retired" Brick House...

It is difficult to believe a year has passed since I first addressed you in this column. Then, my tenure as Souland Restoration Group president began with high expectations, many of which were realized, others not. Now I write my last column, and I want to share some of my thoughts about the last year.

It became readily apparent to me that the greatest strength of the SRG is the voluntary nature of the organization. The SRG accomplishes its goals only if you, the members, wish to work hard towards these goals. Many of you found this out during the year. Examples abound: Russell and Nancy Farber with the What's Brewing in Souland Tour, John Soderberg with the Gardening Fair, Barbara MacRobie with the Restorationist, C.C. Everly with the Halloween Hop, and the Code Committee with the Code Revision Report. They, and others not mentioned, spent countless hours as volunteers on these projects. They can take satisfaction that their sacrifice has made Souland a better place to live.

I was also impressed with the quality of leadership provided by the board of directors. At every meeting, the board tackled difficult issues with maturity and idealism. I ask all of you to express to them your apprecia-

tion for their service to the SRG. And, I want to thank each of them—Fred Andres, Richard Eaton, C.C. Everly, Russell and Nancy Farber, Kathy Hurst, Pat Price, John Soderberg, and Rod Wright—for their effort.

The experiences of the past year have convinced me that we need to encourage and support the construction of new single-family homes in Souland. In the upcoming year, we will be asked to review several proposals for such construction. Because the development of apartment units, which was the foundation of Souland's rebirth, has slackened off recently, these proposals may be the ingredient necessary to assure the stability of Souland for years to come. I urge all of you to consider them seriously and with reason.

Finally, I leave the office of president with mixed emotions. Certainly I feel the sadness anyone feels when there is change. I know I will miss working with the board members and the SRG membership. But, I am also confident I will continue many of those relationships in a different capacity.

See you next year!

Phil Willman, immediate past president
Souland Restoration Group

A Home for Christmas

Would you like to buy a house in Souland, but don't know where to ask? The Souland Restoration Group regularly publishes a list of properties for sale in the Historic District. There's something for everyone on this list: empty lots for you homebuilders, shells for you rehabbers, multi-family dwelling for you investors, and finished townhouses and rowhouses just waiting for you to move in.

A special feature of the latest list is the selection of condominiums on

the market. If you'd like to buy in Souland but can't afford the purchase or the upkeep of a house, these listings are for you. There are also a couple of large mansions available. Soon Souland will see the construction of "in-fill" housing—new for-sale houses that look old, built on some of the vacant land.

All this and more is contained on the Souland housing list. To get your free copy, call 771-5563. Good luck househunting!

McAVOY

2043 PARK AVENUE



REALTY

231-4155

2011 Park **SOLD** **\$165,000**
Three story, 3 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths, w/finished basement of Lafayette Park.

3710 S. Jefferson **SOLD** **\$130,000**
Incredible rehab, modern dressing room and steam shower, quality appliances. Second floor three bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths.

1304 S. 9th St. **SOLD** **\$115,000**
Fabulous 3 bedroom, 2 fireplaces, jacuzzi, beautiful landscaping and extras.

1512 Mississippi **\$99,500**
Lovely Lafayette Square flounder house w/ delightful garden overlooking Lafayette Park.

2924 Lemp **SOLD** **\$91,300**
Three bedroom, 1 1/2 bath townhouse w/ \$12,750 tax abatement.

1904 Rutger **SOLD** **\$89,500**
Contemporary interior, three bedrooms w/ finished yard.

1207 Mississippi **\$85,000**
Two bedroom, 1 1/2 baths, townhouse w/ fireplace, security system, attic fan and assumable FHA loan.

2013 Rutger **\$79,900**
Charming brick flounder house w/ attractive contemporary interior 2 bedroom bath.

2121 Arsenal **SOLD** **\$79,900**
Two story, 1 1/2 bath townhouse overlooking Benton Park.

335 North Boyle **\$74,900**
Attractive 2 bedroom, 1 1/2 bath townhouse condominium w/ fireplace in CWE.

821 Russell **\$56,500**
Completely rehabbed two bedroom, three story in Historic Souldard. Great value!!!

1834 Lafayette **\$69,900**
Large partially rehabbed rowhouse w/ striking facade and architectural detail.

1909 LaSalle **SOLD** **\$79,900**
Three bedroom, 1 1/2 bath on a charming residential street.

1523 South 10th #118 **\$55,500**
Attractive two bedroom, two bath condo — walking distance from Souldard Market.

1523 S. 10th St.-211 **SOLD** **\$47,500**
Two bedroom, 1 1/2 bath, dramatic contemporary ceilings and loft bedroom.

3971 Botanical **\$45,000**
Three bedroom condo w/ three fireplaces and all appliances, in Shaw neighborhood.

2019 S. Grand - 200 **SOLD** **\$39,900**
Two bedroom, 1 1/2 bath, Water Tower Place.

2021 S. Grand #301 **\$37,900**
One bedroom, one bath, condo, w/ updated systems and great view of Compton Hill Reservoir.

3016 Missouri **\$32,500**
Two family income property in Benton Park.

1200-02 S. 18th St. **\$150,000**
Rehabbed 4 family, decks, off-street parking. 3 townhouse units and 1 garden apartment.

3114 Illinois **SOLD** **\$129,900**
Spectacular rehab overlooking Benton Park, 4 plus bedrooms, hardwood floors, enclosed sunroom, impressive facade and landscaped yard.

1917 Hickory **SOLD** **\$106,000**
Dramatic rehab, 3 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths, deck, patio and fenced yard.

1907-09 Congress **\$97,500**
Completely rehabbed two family flat in Benton Park neighborhood.

2922 Lemp **SOLD** **\$90,000**
New construction, 3 bedroom, Benton Park w/ \$12,750 tax abatement.

1920 Senate **\$89,500**
Exciting 3 plus bedroom rehab on nicely developed street in Benton Park.

2641 St. Vincent **SOLD** **\$87,750**
Two story, 1 1/2 bath townhouse in Lafayette Park.

2213 Winnebago **\$79,900**
Two story, two bedroom, two bath, complete rehab. Seller will pay closing costs.

2315 Pestalozzi **SOLD** **\$79,000**
Three bedroom, 1 1/2 bath, room and attached garage, completely rehabbed 15% FSIP grant and tax abatement.

2126 Sidney **\$72,000**
Two bedroom, completely rehabbed rowhouse in Benton Park.

1614 South 18th **\$69,900**
Large partial rehab w/ automobile courtyard, could be two family.

2311 B Hickory **SOLD** **\$61,000**
Charming two bedroom, 1 1/2 bath, w/ fireplace, deck, parking and private entrance.

1907 Congress **\$53,900**
Completely rehabbed two bedroom condo in Benton Park.

2040 Victor **\$45,000**
2 1/2 story, 3 plus bedrooms, 2 baths, partial rehab in Benton Park.

1716 Waverly Place #118 **SOLD** **\$44,000**
Spacious two bedroom, 1 1/2 bath, near Lafayette Park, fireplace, stained glass and updated systems.

4045 Nebraska **\$39,900**
Charming rehabbed two bedroom, one story, w/ new plumbing, wiring and windows.

1200-02 Mackay **SOLD** **\$38,000**
Two story, 1 1/2 bath, Square Historic District.

2850 Accomac **SOLD** **\$135,000**
Spectacular rehab, 3 bedrooms, 3 1/2 baths, w/ large deck, dramatic interior.

#15 Columbus Square **\$129,500**
Two-year-old two bedroom townhouse with spectacular view of St. Josephs Shrine and two car garage.

823 Russell **\$105,000**
Completely rehabbed two bedroom, three story, two family flat ideal for owner occupant or investor.

1204 Mackay **SOLD** **\$95,000**
Three bedroom, 1 1/2 bath, professional rehab w/ \$8,500 cash grant for purchaser.

1223 Mississippi **\$89,900**
Three bedroom, 1 1/2 bath Lafayette Square townhouse w/ four fireplaces.

1823 Hickory **SOLD** **\$89,500**
Three bedroom, 1 1/2 bath, finished floor laundry room and full kitchen.

3864 Russell **\$84,900**
Four bedroom, 1 1/2 bath rehab in Shaw neighborhood, central air, deck, fencing, fireplaces, detached parking.

2932 Wisconsin **SOLD** **\$84,400**
Complete rehab, 15% FSIP grant.

2232 Rutger **\$75,900**
Two story, two bedroom "Charleston" home w/ two story side porch.

2928 Lemp **SOLD** **\$69,900**
Two story, two bedroom, 1 1/2 bath, security system, Professional rehab, \$10,000 cash grant and tax abatement.

1842 South 10th **\$69,900**
Three bedroom, totally rehabbed, Souldard townhouse.

1909 Congress **\$55,900**
Completely rehabbed two bedroom condo in Benton Park.

2308 A Park **\$52,000**
Two bedroom condominium 1/2 block from Lafayette Park.

3935 Shreve **\$45,000**
Two family flat w/ nice corner lot, large workshop garage building.

1716 Waverly A **SOLD** **\$41,500**
Two bedroom, 1 1/2 bath, 1/2 block from Lafayette Park, near Souldard.

2112 Withnell **SOLD** **\$39,000**
Professional rehabbed two bedroom home in Benton Park.

— COMMERCIAL LEASE SPACE —

1915 Cherokee **\$4 sq. ft.**
Professionally rehabbed 2nd floor office in Cherokee Antique District. For lease at \$6,000 per year.

"we sell the city"

COMMENTARY



Are We Stuck in the Mud?

The question is rhetorical, but there are still folks out there who would have you believe just that. You know to whom I'm referring...those same people in whose company you hesitate to mention that you belong to the Souard Restoration Group. Some of them are indigenous to the Souard area. Some of them are indigent in the Souard area. Some of them are indignant about the efforts to revitalize a historic neighborhood. Some of them are just plain indifferent to the issue. So what do these people have to do with you and me? Many of them live in this very same neighborhood. You may know of one of these folks living right next door!

Why do they feel this way? It wasn't long ago that Souard was nothing more than a slum (albeit a historic slum). Anyone who lived in, worked in, or visited the area more than 10 years ago can attest to this fact. More than one Souard pioneer has answered the door with a pistol in his or her belt. Occasionally the door was left unanswered. Anything might be stolen, and often it was. The acrid smell from the chemical plants was quite common in those pre-EPA days. All, in all, one could visit the area and leave having had an unpleasant experience.

Then the neighborhood fell into the hands of preservationists almost

overnight. All of a sudden, buildings that you could not give away became national treasures. People you had never seen before were now telling you what color to paint your windows and doors. A building inspector would rather quit than tell Souardians what they ought to do to their houses. The term "headache ball" was used fondly by not a few officials. But like it or not, the community was entering a new era.

So how do you approach a neighborhood with so many negative aspects built into it over such a long time? Carefully? Gradually? Forcefully? Yes! These ways and many others had to be used to turn the tide of neighborhood obliteration. Many large morsels of pride had to be swallowed. More than a few toes were stepped on, and will continue to be stepped on. Many feelings were hurt, and no doubt more will be hurt in the future. After all, a person's home is his or her castle, so they say, not to mention life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness! Right?

Well, things being what they are, this is no longer the Souard of old that I outlined earlier. Scores of new people have repopulated and revitalized the "Old Victorian Gal." Many underclass folk have been boosted into middle class by mere proximity, willingly or not. Some have become

downright rich. This is fine and dandy, but the wealth of a community is not measured solely in monetary terms. To be truly wealthy, a community must also incorporate its citizenry. It is my gut feeling that the human element can and must be juxtaposed with our rich architectural element in order for the Souard Restoration Group to thrive.

So maybe now you're asking "What are we supposed to do?" Well, my friend, I have not quite run out of rhetoric yet. One look at the SRG membership list will tell you that we are not a majority as far as neighborhood population goes. Moreover, a glance at a membership meeting will assure in you the need for participation. A great deal of clout rests in the hands of just a few people. This in itself is not immoral, but it does open the door to abuse. A neighborhood organization needs the cooperation and participation of all its residents, dissenters or not.

We also need to address our public relations aspect. We have a fine vehicle in *The Souard Restorationist* to do this, and it is already being done. At present, we have a formidable newspaper staff, not to mention no less formidable writers and other contributors. The *Restorationist* can go a long way toward dispelling the rumor of our snobbery and enhancing apprecia-

tion of our historic neighborhood. Public opinion is vital to our survival.

Last but not least is the continuing vigilance of our rigid but necessary historical building codes. It may be a "pain in the ass" to some, myself included, but it is the cornerstone of our efforts and more than likely the key to the success of our neighborhood. I believe that with understanding and up-frontness we can solve present and future discrepancies concerning our architectural heritage. It is a sizeable task and must be carried out by homeowners, renters, businesspeople, visitors, and the community as a whole.

I want to see the neighborhood we fondly call Souard thrive and prosper. I have a sizeable commitment in time, money, blood, sweat, and tears, as do many other residents. Some said it couldn't be done, but it is being done and with greater success than many advocates had envisioned in those early days. Let's welcome back old and inactive members, and attract first-timers. Let's encourage non-residents to become friends of Souard. Let's work together to form a community where we can safely live, work, play, raise families, and do whatever Americans aspire to do. It is essential to our singular and common welfare.

David K. Lester Jr.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A Fellow Rehab Chef Responds

To Jay Gibbs, the Amateur Rehabber:

Bravo! Bravo!

Your article "Gastronomical Glut" [August/September 1987] was wonderful. While it's been nearly six years since I moved out of the four-family flat that I was rehabbing, I remember vividly such gourmet meals. There's hope for all of us yet. I moved into a completely redone home on Shenandoah with a 450-square-foot kitchen/dining area with Charlie, my gourmet chef husband. The best part of rehabbing was, that's how I really got to know Charlie, my neighbor—he couldn't believe what I ate. Taking pity on me, he'd invite me for a "decent home-cooked meal" next door.

My favorites of that era, which I feel are important enough to add to your personal cookbook, follow:

Entrees: Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches

1. Find both jars under the old window sashes.
2. Find bread under same (hopefully it will not be crushed).

3. If utensils other than paint scraper cannot be located, use fingers to spread.
4. Add potato chips if desired.

Frosted Flakes

1. Open box.
2. Pull out handful, stuff in mouth.

Food in boiling bags (especially helpful if sans microwave)

1. Any pan will do, since bag is enclosed and plaster won't penetrate. Fill with water from bathroom sink.
2. Place pan on stove, bring to boil.
3. Cut bag open with Exacto knife.
4. Dump onto clean paper plate.

Desserts

The only logical choice May 31-September 10: TED DREWES!!!!!!!

Your recipes certainly deserve a place in the Souard cookbook.

Remember, don't give up the bathroom sink (or the refrigerator)!

Ruth Uxa Weaver

McAVOY REALTY

2043 PARK AVENUE 231-4155



This totally rehabbed townhouse with contemporary interior in historic Soulard has a beautifully landscaped courtyard with privacy fence and a 15 x 16 deck, which make it ideal for entertaining. The designer kitchen comes equipped with European-style cabinetry, dishwasher, disposal and range. The living room is complete with gas fireplace and recessed/track lighting. The two bedrooms are very spacious and have many large closets. The laundry is conveniently located on the second floor and the skylight adds just the right touch of natural light. Thermal windows and a full basement are just a couple of the other features that make this house a real bargain for the price.

821 Russell Avenue

\$56,000 **Monthly Payment \$374**
(Based On a 30-year loan)

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...in Historic Soulard

Christmas in Soulard, 1905

Two sisters who grew up in Soulard at the turn of the century (they decline to be identified because of a feminine reticence about their age) share some of their Christmas memories with us:

The tree was trimmed on Christmas Eve after the children went to bed—by Santa Claus, of course. Santa also filled the stockings hung on the mantle with hard candy, and left presents to be found on Christmas morning. The tree was lit by candles, which were extinguished with a small wet sponge on a long stick.

Grandpa, a widower, used to come to town with his horse and wagon. He'd board his horse at Peterson's stable on 7th Street when he visited. For Christmas dinner, he'd bring a live goose. The goose was beheaded in the back yard or cellar and cooked up into a delicious meal. Other families in the neighborhood would eat duck; a few would eat turkey.

Dinner included home-canned peas and home-canned plums—never cranberries. Sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, carrots, and rutabaga were stored in the ground and dug up when needed or before the ground froze. Breads and rolls were home-baked, though there were good bakeries in the area. A dairy with its cows out back was a few blocks away. People who lived further out, toward Tower Grove Park with its pond nearby, kept their own cows.

After the feast there was always a small musical recital, since almost everyone played an instrument—mostly the piano.

The fire in the living room stove stayed warm all day on one bucket of hard coal. The kitchen and bedroom stoves used soft coal because it was easier to start.

The sisters and their parents lived in rented rooms in the 1200 block of Sidney in the 1890s. Later they moved to their own home on Lynch near 18th Street—gone now because of I-55. An uncle, aunt and cousin lived nearby at 2401 South 13th. The family later moved west near Grand Avenue, south near Carondelet Park, and finally to Francis Park, where the sisters live today.



Bearing a wealth of handblown glass ornaments, this goosefeather tree—over 130 years old—is a treasure itself. The toys are part of the Field House's ever-growing collection.

Victorian Christmas at the Eugene Field House

Always a delight to visit, the Eugene Field House and Toy Museum is at its peak at Christmastime. To its standing collection of gently worn Teddy bears and mementos of Field, "the children's poet," are added all the warmth and nostalgia of a home decked out for a Victorian Christmas.

A tradition in St. Louis for almost a half century, the exhibit opened November 27 and will be on view through Sunday, January 10. The museum is open Tuesdays through Saturdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sundays noon to 5 p.m. Admission is \$1.50 for adults, 50 cents for children under 12. It is located at 634 South Broadway, three blocks south of Busch Stadium, between Soulard and downtown.

Red velvet bows highlight sprays of evergreen hung in every window of the historic house, built in 1845. The dining room mantle groans with fruit carefully stored from the autumn to

be enjoyed during the holiday. Holly and evergreen tied with red bows garland the banister and chandeliers.

Each holiday season, toys and dolls donated to the museum during the past year are put on view for the first time, so even if you've been to the museum before there's something different to see. Among the many new items are an eight-inch German doll called a "Dream Baby," a 19th-century oak highchair that converts to a stroller, board games, stuffed animals, and an electric train. Best of all, there are no less than three Christmas trees.

Cookie cutters from the collection of Fred Perry, a museum volunteer, have been used by the museum staff to create the fantasy shapes of the cookies that adorn the Christmas tree that almost brushes the 12-foot ceiling in the front parlor. There are Teddy bears, butterflies, geometric shapes,

even a Kewpie doll cutter that once belonged to the grandmother of John Scholz, a volunteer and Soulard resident who's often on hand to give visitors a guided tour. John points out that the large glass balls on the tree aren't the fragile ones we associate with Christmas decorations, but heavy weights whose job it is to pull down the branches so the candles above do not set the house ablaze.

It's on one of the trees upstairs that visitors will find blown glass ornaments—and what a collection it is. Over 500 ornaments, donated to the museum one by one over the years, adorn an artificial tree made in Germany well over a century ago. The glass blowers created dogs and cats, birds, horses, and rabbits, as well as baskets of fruits and flowers, angel heads, Santa Clauses, and exotic abstract shapes.

Don't let the soft glow of the an-

tique ornaments blind you to the tree itself. It's made from hundreds of goose feathers. Having come to St. Louis from Germany in 1851, it is the oldest documented feather tree in the United States. The tree stands well over five feet tall. It turns upon a revolving stand (no hard decisions on which ornaments to place in the back for this tree!). Made in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1871, the stand plays Christmas music as you look at the room's toy collection.

A smaller tree in the children's bedroom on the second floor dates from the 1920s and is made of goose quills. The quills themselves are trimmed diagonally to simulate needles—beautiful, but prickly, unlike the soft feathers on the large tree. This tree came from St. Louis; it was originally purchased at Becker's, the German gift shop and delicatessen on Grand Avenue. Becker's still has a few feather trees of its own, which adorn the shop at this time of year.

Christmas at the Field House is the Christmas most of us hold in our fantasies. Even if you didn't have a grandmother to tell you stories about when she was a little girl, even if you grew up with aluminum trees and pink spotlights, you'll find that the deepest dreams of childhood and the days of the past come flooding back when you visit this lovely, living museum. •

Making a Comeback

Until a few years ago, if anyone visiting an antique shop looked twice at a feather tree, it was probably to wonder why anyone would bother with such a scraggly little item. But these artificial trees have suddenly become one of the hottest items on the antique market, according to an article in the December issue of *Yankee* magazine. They're prized for the craftsmanship that went into their making and for the opportunity they afford to display antique ornaments unobscured by bushy greenery.

The trees were crafted to resemble *weiss tanne*, a German evergreen. According to Philip Snyder, author of *The Christmas Tree Book*, the *weiss tanne* grows about one foot per year, "sprouting branches that circle the tree like spokes on a wheel. Wide gaps, up to 12 inches between branches, offered plenty of room for candles and ornaments, so these trees became the traditional German Christmas tree."

Feather trees were imported from Germany during the 19th century. During the two world wars, they were made in America as a cottage industry. They fell out of favor after the 1940s, but are now being made again, mostly by individual craftspeople. They're available in St. Louis at the Michael's crafts supply chain, with a 36" model costing \$90.

The date of manufacture on an antique feather tree is not easy to determine. According to Christmas collectible expert Robert Brenner, cylindrical wooden bases are considered older. Square bases haven't been positively dated before 1927. Cream- or red-enamel bases painted with red berries, poinsettias, and wreaths appeared in the 1930s. Old berries fade and should not be bright red, and they will most likely be cracked. When squeezed, they feel spongy, since they were made of tightly wrapped cotton with a red glaze. Trees with unusual colors of purple and blue and with branches tipped in white were

Christmas Trees

Made of Feathers. Branches Stout and Heavy with Many Side Twigs, with Candle Holders and Red Berries



IN PAINTED WOODEN POTS

From a 1900 Marshall Field's ad.

probably made in the 1930s and '40s, when companies were trying to revive interest.

For more detail about feather trees, see the December issue of *Yankee* or *The Christmas Tree Book*, by Philip Snyder; *December Twenty-Fifth*, by Philip Snyder; and *Christmas Past*, by Robert Brenner.

Up to \$10,200 Mortgage Assistance Available*

Come enjoy the best of city living in the LaSalle Park neighborhood. Contemporary... new... and affordable condominium homes. Three models to choose from... each with attached garage, fireplace, deck, security entry and an extensive standard features package. FHA, VA approved.

LaSalle Place is located at 11th and Carroll. Limited number of pre-construction pricing packages available. For sales information call Re/Max Central—533-7100.

*Up to \$10,200 mortgage financing assistance available to qualified buyers from the St. Louis Community Development Agency. Mortgage financing assistance reduces mortgage interest rates to below market rates, pays points and closing costs. LaSalle Place also qualifies for tax abatement.



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More Adventures of an Amateur Rehabber

Not Exactly Poetry In Motion

by Jay Gibbs

There comes a time in the evolution of a room under rehab when the framing, plumbing, wiring, air ducting, insulating, and drywalling are finished. At that point the room appears—to the eyes that beheld it through all of those stages—nearly completed, what with smooth ivory-colored sheetrock "covering a lot of sins," as my contractor once said. The only problem is the presence of the seams between drywall sheets. The art of covering these seams is called "taping."

Briefly I'll describe the taping process as it is intended. You slap some goop called "joint compound" on the seam, or "joint." You smooth out the goop (those in the know call it "mud") along the joint. You apply a special two-inch-wide strip of paper "tape" into the goop you've just spread, using your six-inch-wide "knife" (a.k.a. oversized paint scraper), and then you "imbed" the tape in the mud for a "smooth" first coat. Two or three succeeding coats "bury" the tape and result in an "invisible bond" by "feathering" the goop—beveling its edges—so afterward you cannot tell where the dried goop ends and drywall sheet begins. The joint is covered and hence visually eliminated. No problem! Wellllll....

In the previous room I had finished, I'd hired a local drywall taper to do the honors, but after I painted the room his handiwork was quite visible—the exact opposite of the intended result! I could have done that myself. So as another room approached this stage, I debated: to tape or to hire? Friend and fellow rehabber Kathy told me, "It's not that difficult; just don't put on heavy layers." My dad said, "Save your money and do it yourself! That's why you're doing this old house, isn't it?" The deciding factor, though, was the level of my bank account.

"Good grief, Jay, that's enough tape to finish 20 rooms!" Dad exclaimed as he arrived to help on the first day of the drywall-taping crisis.

"Well, I didn't know!" I retorted. "Maybe I'll build a couple more houses later."

After an hour of observing Dad work, I was ready to give it a go.

"Slop!" the goop went on a wall joint.

"Plop!" Most of the aforementioned goop splashed down on my left shoe.

I finally applied the tape, but when I attempted to imbed it in the mud, it slid along with the knife.

When I tried to smooth and feather the edges of this first coat, I dragged the finally-imbedded tape out of line.

When I attempted to straighten the tape again, my smoothed goop began to resemble the surface of a puddle in the rain.

When I attempted impatiently to re-smooth the mud, the by-now-soggy tape tore, and I swore.

After about 25 minutes of this, I was ready to throw something—like my checkbook—at the first professional drywall taper I could find. But Dad admonished, "Don't get discouraged, you're on the 'learning curve.' Keep trying!"

Unfortunately, I'd seen real pros in action. They apply mud and tape with wide, sweeping motions, deftly catching excess mud before it lands in their hair. They smooth their work with ease while carrying on a couple of simultaneous conversations and scratching their noses too. Words can't do justice to their poetry in motion. My taping work, on the other hand, more closely resembled the product of unsuccessful potty training.

Dad left me alone to my own devices a couple of hours later, but I didn't quit until every joint was covered (!) at 9:00 that night.

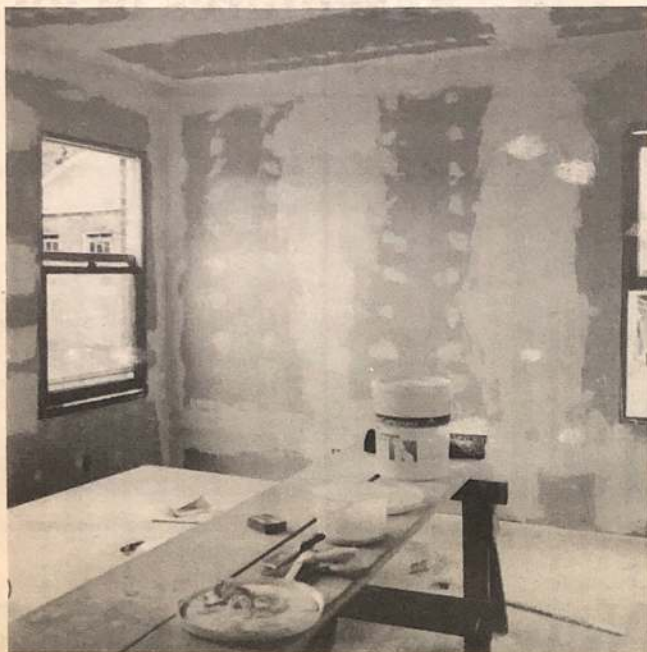
The battle of bad hand-eye coordination continued the next day. Professional tapers know how to do the job with a minimum of mud; we amateurs slop it on, let it dry, and then sand. And sand. And sand. And sand. If fingernails on chalkboards perturb you, then imagine adding to that sensation showers of choking, ultra-fine airborne white dust. I spent twice as much time sanding as I did troweling the goop on in the first place. The uncomfortable tedium is beyond description.

Dad perked up my second day's work by confiding, "I've never really done this before—only minor plaster repairs."

"What?!" I gasped, nearly dropping a glob of goop on the floor, again. I looked at his work, some of which was even worse, can you believe it, than mine.

"You only learn how to do something by trying it," Dad reasoned. "You're doing better; keep at it."

I was trying to recall a cliché dealing with blindness, but I was heartened the way some guy swim-



JAY GIBBS

The horrible carnage of mid-battle.

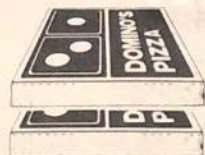
ming across the English Channel must feel when he's told, "You're already a third of the way there." My work was improving, I could see the difference. And hadn't I been swearing much less frequently than yesterday?

And so it went. Dad helped me the first three days; we troweled, smoothed, sanded, and patched while listening to Jack and Mike's play-by-play daytime baseball action. Then Labor Day weekend was over. It took me eight more days, but finally the job was done. The drywall was taped, the floor was totally obscured by a snow of fine white powder, and I had survived the carnage. Thank you, Dad.

What would have taken a pro maybe eight hours took me about 40, and my work isn't as nice. But it's done, and I saved a couple hundred bucks, too. I guess that's the way all rehab tasks are (like a lot of other life situa-

tions, come to think of it): one starts out clumsily, and learns and improves and perfects, though my taping has not reached that last stage yet. So please indulge me, folks, while I pat myself on the back, salut!

With a mindful eye toward the coming winter, I know that the money I saved can buy a rear stormdoor to keep the cold wind out of my non-kitchen. But right now I've got some dust to sweep; and wire to run for future cable TV; and windows to paint; and my just-taped room to paint, trim and furnish; and other rooms to dry-wall; and flower bulbs to plant; and another *Restorationist* article to write. Here's a tip: since I have nine more rooms to tape, invest in shares of Bondex stock. Keep the faith, all ye rehabbers; it can only get better, or at least cleaner. Bye!•



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Infill houses under construction on the 800 block of Ann Avenue in 1984. Their next-door-neighbor is an old flounder house, an authentic Souard style.



This entire block in Lasalle Park is new construction, yet creates a traditional streetscape.

From Clean Slate to New Homes: Infill Ho

by Jay Gibbs

Vacant lots. Souard residents constantly walk by them without so much as a glance. Yet in the fate of these lots lies the direction of the neighborhood for years to come.

The document that in the 1970s proposed that Souard become a historic district (the so-called "Green Book") advocated a mixture of contemporary and traditional "infill" housing—new houses built in existing neighborhoods, thereby filling in vacant land—as well as judiciously placed parks and green spaces. So far, however, few vacant lots in Souard have been developed for any of these purposes. There are exceptions. Some rehabbers have purchased lots adjacent to their homes and improved them for side yards. And there have been several infill housing projects and one park carved from the neighborhood's inventory of vacant lots. The majority of these lots, however, owned by developers, have lain fallow until now.

But that may soon change. Due to the changes wrought in federal tax law by the Tax Reform Act of 1986, property developers in city neighborhoods can no longer profitably renovate old buildings for rental use [see "Tax Time for Rehab: Is Reform the End?" in *The Souard Restorationist*, August/September 1987]. Apartment development has nearly stopped. So profit-minded developers have cast their eyes upon for-sale housing as their next boom. In Souard, a few scattered existing buildings are being renovated into for-sale single-family dwellings, but the coming trend (barring the appearance of some philanthropist who enjoys spending money on building

parks) will likely be newly constructed for-sale homes: infill housing.

When one renovates an existing historic house, most of the exterior design decisions have already been dictated by the house's structure and style. Building mass, window size, roof pitch, cornice style—these items and more that make up the scale and appearance of the building are set, literally, in brick. But a vacant lot provides a blank canvas, a clean slate, for the designer, whose only boundary is the imagination. This creative freedom has led to a plethora of architectural opinion nationwide and here in Souard as well. Setback from the sidewalk, off-street parking, density of units per vacant lot, and fee-simple townhouse versus condominium/flat configuration are now questions to be feverishly discussed, for all are largely embodied in the overriding issue of traditional versus contemporary design.

Saving the status quo

There are two main schools of architectural thought on the subject of renovation and new construction in the context of old neighborhoods. The first is the traditional, or preservationist, camp. The preservationists, as the name implies, want to preserve the past in basically unaltered form, regardless of current, transient design trends. Renovations, they feel, must include historically accurate replacement windows, doors, and other materials, so as to recreate the look and texture—the "feel"—of the past.

On new construction, preservationists are no less adamant. They insist on "replica" residential housing which closely imitates the existing housing in visual scale and material, so the new con-

struction is as unobtrusive as possible.

In a Washington, D.C. historic district known as Capitol Hill, tough historic standards have a strong preservationist bent, as described in *Historic Preservation*, September/October 1987.

The district's regulations stipulate that no building or renovation within this district can have "... an adverse visual impact on the Capitol or its grounds." This means that no existing structure can be torn down or remodeled without first passing a stringent architectural review process. In addition, no new construction can exceed 40 feet in height, 10 feet below the previous ceiling.

"Capitol Hill is probably the toughest place in the world to be a developer," says real estate broker Kitty Kamp. "Building anything here means playing by a different set of rules." Kitty's own development company has been trying vainly for more than a year to tear down what she describes as a one-story eyesore and replace it with a small office building. "So far," she sighs, "we've had 23 meetings."

But what's bad for developers, most residents agree, has been good for Capitol Hill.

Architecturally, Capitol Hill has been able to keep so much of its integrity only because of such restrictions. Unaltered by large-scale development, it retains the modest scale and the structural features of the old federal city of 100 and 200 years ago.

In St. Louis, perhaps the most outstanding example of replica housing lies in Lasalle Park. A group of seven rowhouses in the 1400 block of South Tenth Street is so designed and scaled as to be virtually indistinguishable

from its century-old neighbors. Other projects in Lasalle Park, Lafayette Square, and Souard have enjoyed similar assimilation into their neighborhood fabric. In 19th-century neighborhoods like these, the typically tall and narrow massing of the original rowhouses has made traditional infill housing an efficient way to fill the gaps. The idea has been to create new housing units whose facades mimicked those of their antique neighbors and unobtrusively added character and value to their streetscapes.

History as raw material

In contrast, the other school of thought is that of contemporary architecture. Proponents of this school do not object to the pragmatic preservation of historic structures, but desire the freedom to draw upon and combine a wide variety of architectural elements and styles. In terms of historic neighborhoods and new construction, they usually agree to use historically accurate materials (such as red brick on facades) but favor what Robert Venturi calls "messy vitality over obvious unity" in their design—that is, multi-period variety instead of historic, one-period homogeneity. Philip Johnson, an architect of international repute, explains the philosophy of this design direction in his article in *Architectural Digest*, September 1987.

We don't need to be afraid to touch or approach the geniuses who have gone before. Things that are handsome should be preserved, and I suppose so should places that are historically significant. [However] we have become excessively reverent about the past, which is different from using it creatively.



Infill houses mingle comfortably with antique homes on Park Avenue.

Using Is Coming

Unfortunately, now preservationists would like to preserve everything in aspic, just the way it was at a certain period. And if buildings have grown over decades or centuries, they tear down additions to take them back to one date. I think that's making too many rules. Wren could not have built Hampton Court in front of Henry VIII's palace if the present vogue for purity had been current in the seventeenth century.

I think today's excitement in architecture comes from this range that goes from historical allusion to experimenting.... For the last 10 years at least there have been no rules in architecture. Instead, there is a wonderful feeling of freedom—of endless years of history to enjoy and choose from.

On the subject of contemporary residential design, Johnson states, "I wanted to be able to explore the past without being bound by rules." What this means is that contemporary design "refers to" the historic "in style," but is unmistakably modern. Johnson enjoys houses that "... refer to our own pasts, to the past of everyday private life, and they're completely new at the same time."

What Do You Think?

Do you prefer contemporary or traditional styles for infill housing, and why? What impact do you think the resolution of this issue will have on the future of the neighborhood? Send your opinions to *The Soulard Restorationist*, Box 13312, Soulard Station, St. Louis, MO 63157. We'll print your ideas in our February/March 1988 issue.

This concept of historical reference without mimicry is the basis for the often-used term "post-modern" architecture. There are examples of this contemporary style locally. St. Louis Centre downtown and Mark Conner Builder's "The Castle" and Columbus Square Townhouses on the Near North Side show historic design elements combined with modern styling.

Recently in Soulard, a proposed 13-unit townhouse project sported unmistakably contemporary design which loosely referred to historic styling: the flounder house silhouette, the red brick facades, and the use of stone and ornamented iron. Following a storm of confusion and controversy over design elements, specifically the on-street garage doors and window treatments in the front facades, the developer withdrew the design. Many residents felt that the design veered too strongly to the contemporary side for Soulard. The status of the project remains clouded.

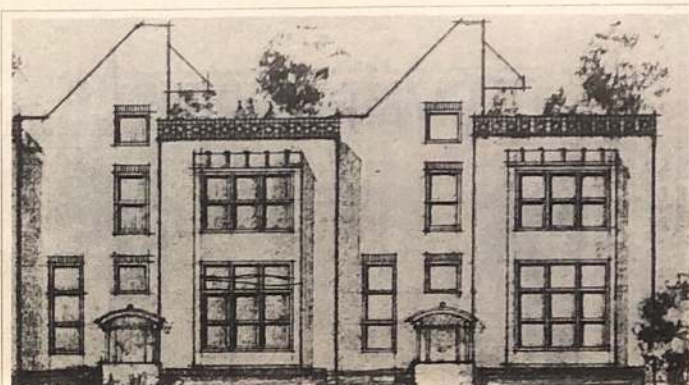
Ironically, the "Green Book" did advocate some contemporary infill housing. Subsequent years and the perspective of the new housing in LaSalle Park and Lafayette Square have galvanized the majority of the Soulard community into advocating the traditional styles of the preservationists.

The issue may be decided if the new Soulard Housing Code becomes law. The Code favors a traditional bent by requiring an infill house builder to cite a "model example" from the Soulard area as the basis for any project's design. For its part, the Soulard Restoration Group has retained an architect to review all infill housing proposals presented to it for

INFILL HOUSING, page 12



This set of rowhouses, built on 10th Street a few years ago, is a model of traditionally styled fee-simple townhouses.



Never built, this design for a proposed townhouse development by Cordage-Nivek exemplified what architect Philip Johnson calls a "range that goes from historical allusion to experimenting."

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Should be Your New Home

If you are longing to live in a landmark but are concerned with energy and space efficiency, then THIS NEW HOUSE should be your new home. Mark Conner, Builder has constructed these townhouses to "fill-in" gaps caused by demolition of older structures. But while they are brand new, they replicate the Victorian architecture for which St. Louis is famous. The display units at 911-13-15 Rutger Street in LaSalle Park are prototypes for 75 townhouses to be built on sites in LaSalle Park, Soulard and Lafayette Square.

The townhouses combine contemporary conveniences with Victorian styling. Standard features include:

- Energy efficient heating and air conditioning systems
- Hardwood flooring in the main living areas
- Carpeting in bedrooms
- Tiled baths
- Full basements
- R30 ceiling and R13 wall insulation
- Oak or formica kitchen cabinets
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The two story display homes each have two bedrooms. Plans for three story three and four bedroom homes are available for inspection. Because the townhouses are offered on a pre-sold basis, many options can be accommodated. These options include:

- Fireplaces or wood stoves
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This portion of an ad for a 1982 development by Mark Conner, Builder illustrates not only typical traditional styling but the appeal to many homebuyers of new infill housing over older construction.

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Lusty Love in South St. Louis

White Palace
A novel by Glenn Savan
406 pages, Bantam, \$7.95

by Paul Kjarlie

As a reader of mostly job-related technical writings, I don't have the time to read "pleasure" books. However, a recent story in the *Neighborhood News* about Glenn Savan's new novel, *White Palace*, piqued my interest. The *News*, in a rather inflammatory way, reprinted a passage from the book that featured a hilarious description of those denizens of the south side, hoosiers (the "H word" that polite people only whisper in mixed company). Any book that describes South St. Louis young men as looking like "roadies for heavy-metal bands" will be read by this reviewer, time or no time for it.

White Palace is about a hot love affair between Max, a snobby West County ad exec, and Nora, a lusty "H word" waitress who works at a south-side hamburger stand. Much has been made of the book's unforgiving descriptions of South St. Louis. It's true

afloat through difficult years. The author, a former Souland resident, has found a gold mine right in our own back yard and has written the novel many of us only dream about. His understanding and knowledge of people make great reading, and his original writing style makes *White Palace* a fun book to tackle.

Max is described as the typical West County liberal—"democratic at a distance." Like most of his friends, he finds that concern and championing the causes of the poor and unfortunate are okay, as long as he doesn't have to look at or live near the poor. After two years of mourning his beautiful wife, who died in a car crash, the 27-year-old Max meets Nora while she is working the counter at the White Castle (er, Palace) at Grand and Gravois. At first, it is Nora's animal-like sex that attracts him to the foul-mouthed, large-bottomed, fried-onion-smelling, 42-year-old waitress. Up until Nora, Max has been exposed only to his wife's vanilla-flavored obligatory sex, whereas Nora has no inhibitions whatsoever. Much to his concern, as well as that of his "liberal" friends, Max later finds himself falling in love with this woman who has a Marilyn Monroe shrine in her house. Crushed velvet paintings, lava lights, Trans-Ams—the author has the "H word" experience down perfectly, as well as many other details St. Louis residents will recognize. Even the phenomenon of higher prices in inner-city supermarkets is accurately mentioned.

Book Review

that passages such as these make St. Louis out to be like a dying Pennsylvania coal town: "...South St. Louis, with its century-old red brick houses crumbling in the shadow of the brewery..." "...Dogtown, the rundown little area south of Forest Park..." "...dilapidated corner bars..." the "sewer" River Des Peres and "...haggard outline of the abandoned Scullin Steel mill." It seems the Arch with its "gleaming legs" is the only structure in St. Louis that isn't in decay.

However, I hope that St. Louisans' over-developed image-sensitivity won't keep them from enjoying this very readable story about people. After all, New Orleans has nicely weathered the gritty descriptions of Tennessee Williams—the "Desire" streetcar is a tourist sight. Besides, we all know that South St. Louis has kept this city

The book is really about relationships, however, not places. Can the love two people have overcome their prejudice and differences? Will their friends accept the other lover? Sorry, I'm not going to tell you the ending. Buy the book, or, if you're a lazy reader like me, wait for the movie. Producer Sidney Pollack has bought the film rights, so look out South St. Louis!

Congratulations and thanks to Glenn Savan for a fine effort. He's writing another book (he doesn't have to wait tables at the Webster Grill any more), and this lazy reader can't wait to see it. •

Infill Housing, from page 11

approval. By this means other neighborhoods have successfully avoided the hard feelings that this devious design debate can create, because an architect is better qualified to speak with builders and their own architects on their rarefied level and in their lingo than are we "civilians."

Whatever may become of the new Code, the bottom line is that the quality, taste, and style of the architectural designs used by builders of infill houses will have a major impact on defining the future of the Souland neighborhood—not only the look of its buildings, but the lives of its people. •

In Our Next Issue: New Buildings Going Up

The February/March 1988 issue of *The Souland Restorationist* will feature a review of existing infill projects in Souland and a preview of those to come. There are at least three townhouses and one condominium on the drawing boards around the area right now. See the next issue for a sneak peek!



TYPICAL SOULARDIANS?

Well, no—despite Soulard's reputation for fun-loving free spirits, they don't usually dress this way. The fancy dress was in honor of the Soulard Restoration Group's Halloween Hop, held on October 10 at the Soulard Market (second floor). A DJ and eatables provided a festive evening for the neighborhood. Thanks go to these folks for their support: City of St. Louis, Cumberworth's Flowers and Gifts, Ralph Allen's Flowers, MCI Telecommunications, Centerre Bank, Domino's Pizza, Pizza Hut, Tucker's, Sidney Street Cafe, Pat Lloyd, Tinsley's 20/20, Metro Salon, Ralston Purina, and American Bank.



Volunteer Pruners Perk Up Trees

A valiant ad-hoc group of Soulard residents took shears and saws in hand this summer to transform Soulard trees from unkempt nuisances into healthy beauties ready to flourish and adorn the neighborhood after the winter has passed.

Having first obtained written permission from the City of St. Louis Park Department, the group spent about two months of Saturday mornings pruning trees south of Russell Boulevard. The Forestry Division helped out by picking up the discarded limbs during the week. Many of the trees resembled bushes, as they had never been pruned since their planting several years ago.

Pruning is essential to a tree's attaining its full height. Lower limbs and "suckers" rob the tree of growth on top and can lead to the development of multiple trunks. A limb does not move up on a tree's trunk, but stays in the same spot. This hinders pedestrians' movement and visibility, and creates potential shelter spots for

criminals.

Next year, the pruning squad plans to complete the rest of the neighborhood. If you'd like to volunteer and learn about proper tree pruning techniques, a clinic conducted by experts will be held next spring. Watch *The Soulard Restorationist* for the time and location.

Shed Some Light On Soulard

Soulard is currently experiencing problems with street lights that either need a new bulb or are flickering on and off. It is important that our streets be well-lit, since darkness is a burglar's and mugger's best friend. If you know of a darkened street light, please note the address of the building closest to it and call the Citizens' Service Bureau at 622-4800 with this information. There is a two-week repair wait—so call today!

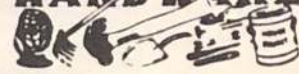
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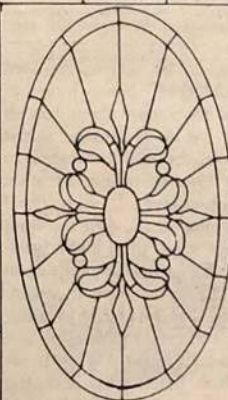
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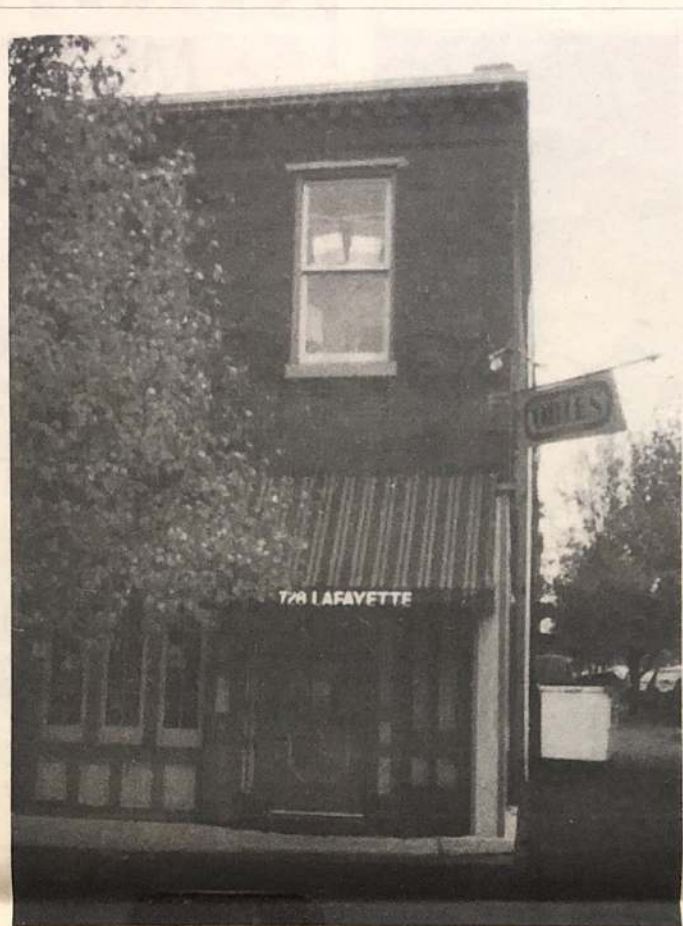
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EDWARD R. FLISS

Obie's as viewed from the Soulard Market.

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Night**

by Edward R. Fliss

To most of St. Louis, Soulard means "the Market." Since long before I moved to Soulard there has always been a bar or restaurant across the street from the main entrance to the market. This particular location has undergone several changes of identity in recent times. Not too long ago it was Big Jake's, then it was briefly Aunt Sophie's (which was only open for lunch and had no liquor license). Now it is Obie's, and its latest incarnation is larger and better than ever.

Like Caesar's Gaul, Obie's is divided into three parts: a bar, a dining room, and a game room. The bar has an old beveled glass mirror, a large

selection of liquors, and both Busch and Michelob Dark beer on tap. The decor features an odd assortment of "stuff," such as brewery memorabilia, toys, and paintings of local houses. There is also an illuminated Spuds McKenzie icon perched atop the T.V. set. School house lights and ceiling fans add to the coziness of the room.

BUSINESS REVIEWS

The small dining room separates the bar from the game room and is decorated with sports photos. Red table cloths (really cloth!) add to the overall ambience. The game room features some old familiar tavern favorites (shuffleboard and pool tables) as well as video games, pinball machines, and a jukebox.

By now you are probably wondering about the food. Appetizers include chicken wings, fried mushrooms and fried zucchini, but our little group opted for the potato skins. These thick potato chunks were fried until crisp, then topped with cheese flakes and bacon. The cheese remained in its flakes and did not turn into the gooey glop that is often found on top of potato skins. Soup is not on the menu, but available by request. When we were there, the soup was fresh and not overly salted beef stock base with fresh carrots, unskinned potatoes, and what appeared to be canned string beans and Chinese noodles. It was much appreciated on a cold November afternoon.

Sandwiches range in price from \$2.75 for the hamburger or sub to \$4.25 for the Special Triple Decker. Sandwiches are served with potato chips and half of a real garlic pickle (not over-sweetened dill chips). The turkey club was very neatly assembled and served with the toast still warm. Slices of turkey breast were combined in good proportions with bacon, lettuce and tomato. Unlike many club sandwiches, this was not mayo'ed to death.

In addition to sandwiches, Obie's also offers a fried shrimp special (\$4.95) and pizza. The shrimp dinner starts with a generous portion of breaded and deep-fried medium-sized shrimp, then adds wedge-cut fries and creamy Cole slaw. This is accompanied by a very mild (not enough horseradish) cocktail sauce. The shrimp were tasty, and together with the side dishes, made quite a filling meal. The pizza menu is written on a blackboard in the bar. Prices start at \$3.50 for a 10" cheese pie. Unlike the Italian or Greek pizzas which use mozzarella or other Mediterranean-style cheeses, the pizza at Obie's uses what tasted like a combination of American and Cheddar cheese. This is not unusual for pizza in St. Louis, although I never have encountered it anywhere else. The crust was thin but firm, and when the pie is "dressed up" with a little pepperoni, it is really very good. But I would not choose Obie's as a place to try to satisfy a really serious pizza craving.

The desserts offered were pumpkin and cherry pie, served with whipped cream (\$1.25). The pumpkin pie had a firm but still creamy filling that was not overspiced. Pumpkin flavor really dominated. The cherry pie had a firm filling that was neither too sticky nor too sweet. Again, the cherries could be tasted. While the crusts were not truly flaky, they were not soggy either. The pies, on the whole, were a fitting conclusion to the meal.

Waitress service was prompt and attentive. The kitchen was rather slow in preparing our orders, but I think that this reflected the care with which the dishes were prepared.

Although our visit was for a late lunch on a quiet afternoon, I'm sure that Obie's can provide a delicious and amusing evening's entertainment. •



EDWARD R. FLISS

HOLIDAY HORSE HOUSE: Ordinarily accessible only as part of the full brewery tour, the exquisite Anheuser-Busch stables will be on view as part of the Soulard Holiday Parlour Tour on December 5 and 6, 1-7 p.m. The lavishly restored Victorian building is home to the famous Clydesdales and more Dalmatian dogs than you've ever seen before. For tour tickets, call 771-5563, or stop by Jesus Church at 12th & Victor on the days of the tour.



JOHN WILLIAM NAGEL

St. Joseph's Croatian Hall looking northeast toward the rear wall of the main sanctuary.

New Soulard Building Gets National Notice

The Archdiocese of St. Louis has set a high standard for commercial construction in Soulard with the new St. Joseph's Croatian Hall—known fondly to many Soulardians as the "Bingo Hall"—and has received nationwide recognition to boot. The new building was featured in the June 1987 issue of *Progressive Architecture*, a nationally circulated magazine.

Occupying the area where the church once held its popular Sunday carnivals, the Hall is located high atop the stone wall "plateau" at the southwest corner of 11th and Russell Streets. The brick structure houses a large meeting hall with a stage, kitchen and bar.

The design by St. Louis architect

Philip Holden is rich in details characteristic of the post-modern style of architecture, which has been defined as a modern interpretation of forms from the past and is believed by some designers to be the perfect style of architecture for new structures in historic districts such as Soulard [see "From Clean Slate to New Homes," this issue, page X].

The 34-year-old designer accented the building with light-colored bricks running as long lines or "courses" along its length. The placement of the ventilation grills, lighting, doors and windows also adds interest.

The contractor of the new St. Joseph's Croatian Hall was the Vince Kelly Construction Company.

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Crazy Over Flounders

bump on the head inspires Jean McLane to weave Soulard into art

by Barbara Alice MacRobie

"Manic is the word, I believe," says Jean Larson McLane. She sits down on the sofa in her living room at 2109 Menard, flashes a wide-eyed grin, and starts spinning tales about fuzzy wools and shining silks and soft colors made from flowers. "I'm a fanatic—I can't do anything but weave!"

A respiratory therapist by training, Jean is one of those lucky people who have discovered their life's passion. Up in her third-floor studio, five different looms are strung with the threads of her imagination, ranging from a free-wheeling colorburst of magenta, crimson, and gold glitter to a carefully worked out depiction of that most characteristic Soulard house—the "flounder." The flounder house has played a pivotal role in Jean's development as an artist—and has brought her award-winning recognition as well.

No one really knows where the flounder house name comes from, or why builders in the 1850s decided that it would be clever to make their houses look like a child's drawing sliced in half. On the third story, the roof cuts diagonally from the ceiling to the floor, leaving on one side not even enough room to crawl. If you're trying to keep a six-foot-tall loom up there, you're going to have collisions.

"I've kept hitting my head on the ceiling," says Jean. "Actually, that's what started getting me interested in flounder design!"

Now the flounder silhouette has become Jean's trademark. She uses it on her business cards and on the tags of the handwoven clothing she designs. She has even devised a way of weaving the flounder shape itself into tapestries and rugs.

Jean's flounders won her honor in the Artists at the Station II "visual arts performance and exhibition" presented by the Women's Caucus for the Arts on October 17 as part of the St. Louis Arts Festival. From 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., over 50 St. Louis artists gathered at Union Station to create artwork on the spot that reflected the theme of "Sold on St. Louis." Jean's work was chosen for second place.

What's all the more remarkable about Jean's achievement is that she's been a weaver for only two years.

"I'd been a half-interested spinner for several years—had lots of yarn spun but didn't knit or crochet, so it piled up!" Jean recalls. "One day I was in a spinning and weaving shop with a guy I'd met in the personal ads and had been dating for two months. I patted a loom, saying, 'I always wanted one of these.' He returned and



Jean Larson McLane, self-confessed fanatic weaver, with one of the flounder house tapestries she created for an exhibit at Union Station in October. In the background is the giant Swedish loom on which she wove it, and the sloping roof of her studio on the third floor of her life-sized flounder house. The tapestry is made of wool hand-dyed by Jean.

bought it, and much to my surprise I got it for Christmas. Fortunately, I touched the right loom—it's still one of my best. I fell deeply in love with weaving and I had to marry Peter to repay him for the introduction!"

Jean created two pieces for the Union Station performance—a silk tapestry and a fuzzy woolen throw. Both start out on the bottom with

flounder houses in the traditional Soulard colors of brick red and black, each one fading almost to nothing in the middle, then coming back in the contemporary colors of plum and teal. For Jean, that's a metaphor for the rebirth of Soulard.

"The theme of the show, 'Sold on St. Louis,' was easy for me—I'm a real city supporter. When I moved here

from Seattle two years ago because my husband had been transferred, as soon as I saw all these old buildings I was hooked.

"The one thing I don't like about St. Louis is the weather. I once designed a warp I called 'It's So Hot I Can't Stand It.' I did it at night, which you never do 'cause the light's so bad for seeing color, and I came up in the morning thinking, 'I don't even want to look at this thing,' but it was great—it's been one of my most successful."

Paradoxically, the St. Louis weather has been a source of inspiration for Jean. "See, in Seattle it drizzles all the time. I was working in a lot of blues and greys, a very low-key palette. Here it's all so explosive! I did a coat with lots of blue-greens, that's the rain coming down, and one with lightning streaks all over the front. I name all my clothes—like 'Tucker's Coats,' 'Lights in Soulard.'

"All my work's heavily influenced by Soulard. I work with red all the time from being around this brick. I don't know what'll happen when I move to Lafayette Square with all the funny colors of those houses—I may really go wild."

Crowded Out

Jean and her husband, Peter, are currently rehabbing a house in Lafayette Square, to where they plan to move after the first of the year. Jean sorrows over leaving Soulard—"there are no flounders in Lafayette!"—but she was unable to find a house with enough space for her expanding studio. Soulard homes, built for craftspeople and brewery workers, tend to be modestly sized, and Jean has noticed little market turnaround on the grand Victorians.

It's easy to see from her studio why she needs more space. A narrow stairway lined with pictures of sheep opens into a tangle of weaving paraphernalia. There are the five looms, ranging from the huge six-foot by eight-foot model to one that's a mere nine inches. The crawl-space side is crammed with books and paint buckets filled with yarn—"no room for shelves." Pinned to the walls are photos and sketches of clothing examples.

Jean's large loom was a craft project on its own. "I got it from someone who hadn't woven in years and had stuck the loom up in the attic," she remembers. "All that came with it was a California address and a sheet of instructions in Swedish. There were pieces missing—it was a mess. Finally I called California. I got a guy named Lars on the phone. I say, 'I've got this piece of firewood I'm going to burn with your name on it!' He says, 'Vell,

ve make a good loom or de weavers would have kicked us out of this country long ago!" Back and forth we go—he sends me parts—I ask for more—finally after \$200 I have the loom back together. Now when other people are having trouble with this type of loom I help them out—I feel it's my duty!"

Hanging on a rack at the top of the stairs are skeins of multi-colored yarn, some in delicate pastels of mauve and lilac and powder blue, some in brilliant jewel tones. "That's my latest project," says Jean, "painting yarn. You use a paintbrush or sponge and your pots of dye and lots of paper towels, and it's just so much fun—I had practically the whole Weavers' Guild over here doing it. This one in orange and peach and yellow—that's some chrysanthemums my neighbor had in her garden—she was amazed that I got them so well! Isn't this stuff gorgeous? I can't wait to try it."

Jean dyes all her own yarn. Long a fan of natural materials, she has recently expanded into chemical dyes. "You can't get enough control of the color with natural dyes to do precise fading effects," she says. Favorites among her natural dyes are bark and sawdust from exotic South American woods for blues and reds—"It still amazes me every time I start up a pot that you get blue from a tree"—and cochineal bugs, a tropical insect that yields reds and purples. "Cochineal is a very old technique," Jean says. "In ancient times they would use urine to deepen the colors—weavers make a lot of jokes about how somebody discovered that worked!—but now we use ammonia." She does the work in her back yard, protected by a gas mask. "I almost gave the U.P.S. man a heart attack!"



Jean donned Victorian garb to give a weaving demonstration at the Fall 1986 Soulard Restoration Group House tour. Her home was also on the tour.

Jean started making clothing just this past May. It began with a Weavers' Guild group project. Weavers were given a package of materials to use up. Jean wove the yarn into a ballooning "cocoon" coat, but she was stumped over one other ingredient—feathers.

"I was having my hair done at Tinsley's 20/20 and was groaning to Chris about my problems—'...I'll never fin-

ish this project, what am I supposed to do with feathers'—and he said, 'You've got to put them on the shoulders!' I ran out of there with my hair still wet—the coat sold right off the model's back at the Junior League show. I was so excited that somebody actually bought it, and now my clothing's really taking off."

Jean weaves in many fibers, including silk, linen, wool, heavy cotton, and rayon. She obtains her yarns by mail order. "There are no shops left in St. Louis anymore," she says regretfully. "Weaving is not big here, though we have some very good weavers, like Barbara Hunter, Julius Hunter's wife." Eager to bring more weavers into the fold, Jean has become increasingly involved with the Weavers' Guild, and is now co-vice-president. "Seattle is smaller than St. Louis, but there are 600 members of the Weavers' Guild; only 100 here. About the only places that give classes are Myers House and Crafts Alliance."

Jean herself has a few students. She has not planned to teach, but a visitor to last year's Soulard Restoration Group House Tour, seeing her weaving demonstration, asked her for lessons. "First thing I looked at was how tall she was!"

Neither Jean nor her students will have to worry about knocking their heads against the 11-foot ceilings in her new studio. But she says she knows there will be something missing. "The flounder is my logo, because so much in my life has happened here. I've cursed hitting my head for two years, yet that room has been the place of my best work. Everything has come out of the experiences I've had here in Soulard."•

Fiber Art Exhibit December 3-8

If you'd like to see Jean at work, she'll be on hand with two looms and her spinning wheel every day at "Fabulous Fibers," an annual exhibit and sale sponsored by the St. Louis Weavers' Guild from December 3 through December 8, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., at 55 Maryland Plaza in the Central West End. And you might get your Christmas shopping finished as well.

"Fabulous Fibers" offers a treasure trove of gift ideas. Scarves, jackets, hats, coats, purses and hand-knit sweaters not only keep winter's chill away but are wearable works of art. Warm woolen blankets and other beautiful home furnishings like pillows, rugs, and table linens will be for sale, as well as tapestries and fiber art wall sculptures.

Even if you're not in a shop-

ping mood, "Fabulous Fibers" is worth a visit to see what artists can do with one of humanity's oldest and most useful crafts. There will be demonstrations of weaving, spinning, and bobbin lace-making. A lunchtime fashion show will be held on Friday, December 4, from 11:30 to 2:30 p.m.

The non-profit St. Louis Weavers' Guild, the second-oldest in the country, has many varied artistic voices. Some weavers spin and hand-dye their own yarn, others import it from around the world. Items range from traditional to avant-garde fashions and include elegant silk evening dresses, cotton cruisewear, and full-length wool coats. Custom work is available. Call 991-3348 for information on "Fabulous Fibers" or the Weavers' Guild.

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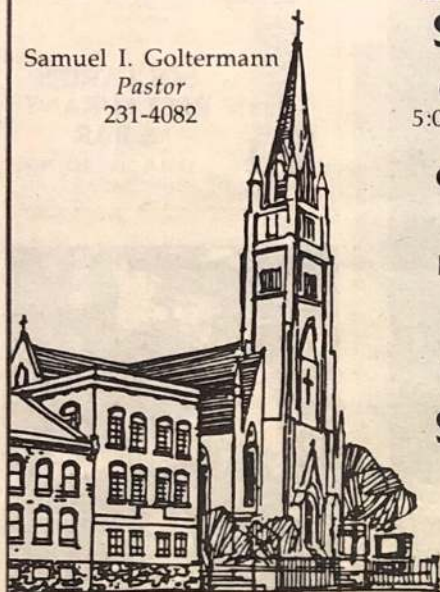
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History Museum Exhibit Links Modern Freedoms With Ancient Struggle

It's a long way from Runnymede, England, to St. Louis, and longer even in time than in space if you take as your starting point the one moment in history that the little meadow on the bank of the Thames River became something more than a good place to graze sheep.

But the ideas first given written form at Runnymede during the week of June 15 through 19 in the year 1215 are still shaking up the world. What happened there laid the foundation for English and American civil liberties and has empowered the cause of freedom for all people. You can trace how this happened, and see the trouble-making 772-year-old document itself, at a major new exhibition at the History Museum in the Jefferson Memorial Building: "Magna Carta: Liberty Under the Law." It opened on November 22 and will run through January 31.

The centerpiece of the exhibit is the document itself, Magna Carta, the "Great Charter." To this now-fragile piece of vellum, a parchment made of calfskin, King John of England was forced to affix his royal seal. The charter was drawn up by a group of barons aided by the liberal-minded Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton. They had long been frustrated by the king's losses in French wars and his consequent demands for money and abuses of liberties the nobles had taken for granted. After a series of unsuccessful meetings and various battles, the barons and Langton cornered the king in the Runnymede meadow and hammered out the document known as Magna Carta.

The barons had no thoughts for the rights of the common people—that just wasn't in their world view—but they had set an earthshaking precedent. By forcing the king himself to recognize their liberties, they had founded the principle that no person is above the law. Even many of the more trivial articles of the charter, such as one that stipulates that no town shall be forced to build a bridge unless it has an ancient obligation to do so, have inherent human rights as their underlying motive. And then there are

passages such as this one, which in one shining swoop established trial by jury, due process of law, and *habeus corpus*:

No free man shall be fined or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights and possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any other way, nor will we [the king] proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgment of his equals, or by the law of the land.

Not unexpectedly, King John tried to renege on the charter as soon as the ink was dry. Many of its provisions were changed or rescinded in later reissues. But the core remained. Over the centuries, jurists like Sir Edward Coke, whose portrait hangs in the exhibit, broadly interpreted the Magna Carta as a statement of civil rights for all citizens. English settlers brought this vision of Magna Carta to the American colonies. Their descendants called on it to support their own fight for liberty. The American Constitution, Bill of Rights, and Missouri Constitution are children of Magna Carta.

The exhibit tells this story of Magna Carta's birth and lasting influence on the walls ringing the document. Colorful banners bearing the coats of arms of the original barons welcome visitors into the new Lionberger Gallery. Paintings, letters, rare books, and historical artifacts set the stage for their time and illustrate Magna Carta's place in it. There is the massive chair used by King Edward I when he reconfirmed the charter at Lincoln Cathedral in 1301, elevating it to the position of a fundamental statute. The 1787 draft of the U.S. Constitution, prepared by Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, is on loan from the Library of Congress. Missouri's quest for liberty is illustrated with drafts of the 1820 Constitution and letters from the History Museum's Thomas Jefferson collection. Lighting levels throughout the gallery are low to protect the precious documents.

The copy of Magna Carta on dis-



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The people behind the documents come alive in a series of programs showcasing various aspects of the times that gave rise to Magna Carta and the conflicts that followed afterward. School groups will be treated to a playlet, written and performed by the museum's educational staff, involving an unexpected meeting between a 13th century English wool merchant and a Colonial American housewife. For the rest of us, there's a roster of special events. Movies, presented on Thursday nights at 7:30, are introduced by short commentaries by guest experts. Admission is \$2 per person, and popcorn and lemonade are available.

December 3

The Lion in Winter. Family get-togethers at Christmas don't always run smoothly, as the Plantagenets find out one cold December.

December 10

Robin Hood. Errol Flynn as the noble outlaw, Basil Rathbone as the villainous Sir Guy of Guisborne. What more could you ask for?

December 13

"The Americanization of Magna Carta." Historian David T. Koenig, Ph.D., of Washington University talks about how the 17th century colonists made Magna Carta their own. 2 p.m., free.

December 17

A Man for All Seasons. Sir Thomas More sticks to his conscience and the principles of law despite Henry VIII at his worst (and that's pretty bad).

January 7

Cromwell. Execrated by many, adored by others, he began by championing the rights of Par-

liament in the battlefield and ended as a dictator worse than the king he executed.

January 8

Medieval Feast. Enjoy hearty food and drink and musical entertainment. 7:30 p.m., \$25 per person, reservations 361-9265.

January 10

"Life Along the Mississippi in 1215 A.D." A slide lecture on what the Cahokia Mound Indians were up to while the barons were hashing it out with King John.

January 14

1776. The Founding Fathers in song and dance in the movie version of the hit musical about the Continental Congress and the Declaration of Independence.

January 16

Medieval Day. The Society for Creative Anachronism, a group devoted to the medieval way of life, present a day-long festival of crafts, games, and dancing. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., free.

January 17

"They Have No Rights: The Dred Scott Case." Magna Carta's principles put to the test for black people. Walter Erlich, Ph.D., UMSL, discusses the landmark case. 2 p.m., free.

January 21

The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman. Cecily Tyson in a bravura performance as a woman who begins life as a slave before the Civil War and lives to see the Civil Rights movement.

January 28

Absence of Malice. Feature writer Patricia Rice of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* introduces this probing look at newspaper ethics, starring Paul Newman.

play is one of four still in existence from 1215. Since that time, it has been in the keeping of Lincoln Cathedral in the north of England. It was customary in the days before the printing press for hand-inscribed copies of important documents to be entrusted to major churches. Of the other three extant copies, one is housed in Salisbury Cathedral and two in the British Museum.

The museum has extended its hours for the duration of the exhibit. It will be open from 9:30 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. seven days a week, except for Tuesdays and Thursdays, when it will be open until 8 p.m. It is closed on Christmas and New Year's Day. Admission to the exhibit is \$3 for adults, \$2 for senior citizens, \$1 for children

between 6 and 18, and free for children under 6. Discount coupons are available through National Supermarkets, the major sponsor of the exhibit.

St. Louis is one of four cities to host the Magna Carta, in celebration of the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution. The group of organizations that make up Magna Carta in Missouri, responsible for bringing the exhibition to St. Louis, include the Missouri Historical Society, the St. Louis Chapter of the English Speaking Union, the Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis, the St. Louis Mercantile Library Association, the St. Louis Chapter of the American Jewish Congress, and the Winston Churchill Memorial and Westminster College. •

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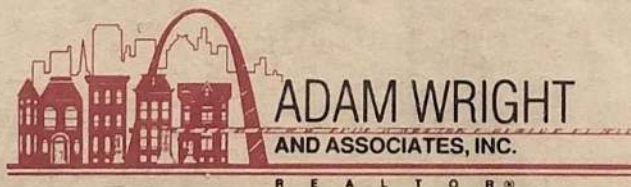
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