

## A TOWER GROVE HEIGHTS RITE OF SPRING: THE 2000 GARDEN AWARDS

By Mark Abbott

Spring is a special time in Tower Grove Heights-the South Grand House Tour, Operation Brightside, the annual plant sale. But perhaps the culminating Spring event is the annual Tower Grove Heights Garden Award competition.

For the past decade, the Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association has sponsored a lively competition among neighborhood residents to produce the best front yard garden. Until last year, the



awards committee nominated an undetermined number of gardens and picked from the list of nominees three first place winners. Nominees were presented certificates at the June meeting and the first prize winners were given yard signs that passed from the year-before-winners to them.

Because of the popularity of the awards and the need to differentiate among the growing number of outstanding gardens, the Physical Improvement and Beautification Committee made two significant changes last year. One innovation was to present permanent yard signs to the first place winners with the year of the award clearly marked. The second innovation was to choose from past first place winners one designee that would be inducted into the Tower Grove Heights Garden Hall of Fame. The idea was that the Hall would be just for residents who had demonstrated consistent excellence for a number of years and that only one garden would be inducted into the Hall

each year. The first inductees were Mary Jackson and Bob Babel of 3734 Hartford (the southeast corner of Spring and Hartford). Due to their incredible terrace garden of perennials, Mary and Bob were a consensus choice to be awarded the first yellow yard sign that indicates induction into the Hall. Changes that the committee is contemplating for this year include introducing categories for awards and designating the ten best nominees as finalists.

The Physical Improvement Committee will be busy this summer. Besides the garden awards, the Committee is looking to initiate a number of trash programs this year. The Committee is trying to secure trash containers for street corners. It also wants to start a new "adopt-a-block" program where residents pledge to pick up trash on their blocks once a week. A third idea for reducing trash in the neighborhood involves distributing flyers and posting signs as a way of encouraging residents and passersby to litter less.

In addition to trash, the Committee is considering proposals for securing additional streetlights, a landscape workshop, and various means for reducing traffic speed. If you would like to become a member of the Committee or have ideas for award categories for this year's garden awards, or have suggestions for other areas that the Committee should turn its attention, please call Mark Abbott at 776-5354.





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The Gazette is a non-profit  
publication published bi-monthly by  
the Tower Grove Heights  
Neighborhood Association. For  
information concerning advertising  
call Colleen Santino at 773-5772.  
Your letters and comments are  
always welcome at the Gazette. Mail  
them to: The Gazette/TGHNA, 3735  
Connecticut, St. Louis, MO 63116 or  
email slangan@stlnet.com. TGHNA  
General Meetings are held at 7:15PM  
on the 4th Tuesday of each month  
(except Dec) at the First Church of  
Divine Science, 3617 Wyoming.

## RESTAURANT REVIEW

By Tim and Deb Akin

St. Louis certainly has its share of excellent Italian restaurants. We are particularly blessed since our neighborhood is very close to "The Hill". LoRusso's Cucina is a wonderful example of the "Hill" experience. It is a warm and friendly place with plenty of seating for large groups and cozy nooks for a quiet dinner for two.

Of course you should expect Chef (Rich) LoRusso to make an appearance sometime during your meal. The night we were there he sat down at the table next to us and shared one his fabulous desserts with a few of his friends. Some might say that this is not very "proper" but HEY!...you're in his kitchen. Chef LoRusso prepares the food in an open kitchen for all to see.

I tried the Alaskan Halibut that was dusted and charbroiled with a caper tomato wine sauce then served with a side of sautéed vegetables. Halibut is one of my

favorite fish and I was not disappointed. Deb tried the Portabella vegetarian tortalloni filled with portabella mushrooms and cheese then sautéed with roasted garlic cloves, fresh tomato and wild mushrooms. Deb loved it and we were both impressed with the number of vegetarian dishes on the menu. We also did a "bad, bad, thing" and had dessert. However, it was a wonderful thing. The desserts are off the menu but you won't have to ask twice what the selections are for the evening. Pick one and enjoy.

LoRusso's says they are "Not your usually Italian". We concur with this claim. The restaurant is located at 3121 Watson Rd. You can reach them at 314-647-6222 or at <http://www.the-hill.com/lorussos/> for additional information. They are open for lunch from 11:30am-2:00pm Monday - Friday. Dinner is served from 5:00pm-10:00pm on Monday-Thursday, 5:00pm-11:00pm on Friday-Saturday and 4:00pm-8:00pm on Sunday. The bar is open until 12:00pm on Friday-Saturday.

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# Letter from the President

By Cheryl Jones

The March Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association meeting was quite an experience for me. One astute resident led the charge against the proposed median down the center lane of Arsenal from Grand to Kingshighway. Thanks to her efforts, people who live along this stretch as well as other neighborhood associations tangent to Arsenal, were uniformly informed about the impending construction. About 200 people attended our meeting, which usually draws only 20-45 people.

Many of you know already that the outcome of the meeting is to go back to the drawing board to craft the most workable traffic calming methods and/or devices for the stretch of Arsenal between Grand and Kingshighway. We are inviting an expert to speak to us and designing a survey to determine the true wishes of the residents.

But the most rewarding aspect of the evening for me is savoring the way everyone interacted with one another. There were several opinions and agendas represented and people were in various stages and degrees of being upset. There were different age groups, races and financial backgrounds present. Long time and newly arrived residents, business owners and renters, investors and home-

owners all sat next to one another and aired their viewpoints in an organized and mostly civilized fashion.

There were people who were happy with the plans for the medians, people who were unhappy with the plans, and people who questioned how the plans came into existence. Some people were there didn't care about the plans themselves but were mostly concerned with the intentions and methods of the alderwoman. Others, it seemed, just came to watch.

This rich mixture of people sat together in one room and came to terms with an issue that affected them all to one degree or another. The result is that the politician who represents us heard what everyone had to say because we demanded to be heard. We couldn't agree on the final plans for Arsenal but we agreed, with a few dissenters, on what to do next. And in the end, even the people who strongly disagreed with one another, bid one another at least a polite good night.

We'll come together again, we'll disagree from time to time again, and we'll still all stand shoulder to shoulder again to do whatever it takes to continue to create a neighborhood that works and a neighborhood that we love.

I can't help but wonder if the people who penned the Constitution aren't smiling about us right now.

## Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Calendar

### Tuesday, May 9

Block Representative Meeting, 7 PM  
Spring & Conn

### Tuesday, May 23

General Meeting, 7:15PM First Church  
of Divine Science, 3617 Wyoming

### Wednesday, May 24

Baseball Game Concession Stands  
**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**

### Tuesday, June 13

Block Representative Meeting, 7 PM  
Spring & Conn

### Thursday, June 22

Baseball Game Concession Stands  
**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**

### Tuesday, June 27

General Meeting, 7:15PM First Church  
of Divine Science, 3617 Wyoming

### Wednesday, July 5

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Cincinnati. Group tickets available for  
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# TREASURES OF TOWER GROVE PARK

By Don Hardin

According to the Victorian chronicler of Tower Grove Park, whether "at motion or at rest, water must always be an important element of beauty in park scenes." Unfortunately, water could only be brought into Henry Shaw's Tower Grove Park at "considerable trouble and expense." Shaw's sailboat pond with its fountain bubbling amidst "ruins," the gorgeous lily ponds (photo ca. 1915) and the picturesque iron bridges across the man-made brook were, all agreed, well worth the additional effort!

It was not Tower Grove Park's founder Shaw, but its chief gardener Gurney who made water lilies an important feature of the park. In 1872, the pavilion near today's lily ponds was built for \$600 following plans drawn up by Eugene Greenleaf, but the small water lily ponds themselves were not added until 1902, more than a decade after Gurney had assumed the



superintendency in accordance with the provisions of Shaw's will. By the time of his own death in 1920, Gurney was well-known as a specialist in the cultivation of water lily seedlings and hybrids; he played a role in the development of the Victoria regia lily and several other varieties.

After his death and the succession of his son James Gurney, Jr. as park superintendent, James Gurney, Sr.'s fondness for water lilies was commemorated in a series of stained glass panels added to the staircase hall of the Superintendent's house in which he had lived from 1895 to 1920.

**Grand South Grand**  
from Dine St. Louis Web Page  
<http://www.dinestlouis.com/grand.html>

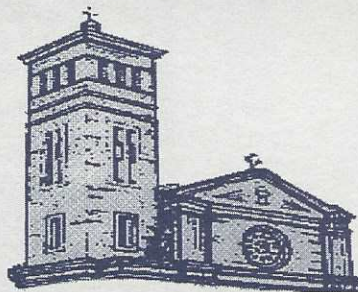
The neighborhood dubbed Grand South Grand is located just south of Tower Grove Park, a Victorian-era park designated as a National Historic Landmark, where you'll find ornate bandstands, grand busts of composers, writers and explorers, lovely picnic areas, gardens, gazebos and a fountain designed with the look of planned ruins. The park is bounded by the Missouri Botanical Garden on the north and Grand on the east. South of the park along Grand Ave. Vietnamese, Thai and Chinese restaurants and groceries, as well as, Asian import stores and unique boutiques draw visitors to one of St. Louis' more fascinating neighborhoods.

## A Century of Change

by Don Hardin

	1900	2000
<b>Population</b>	76,000,000	274,000,000
<b>Rural Areas</b>	60%	25%
<b>High School Education</b>	6.4%	69%
<b>Motor Vehicles</b>	8,000	208,000,000
<b>Italian Immigrants</b>	2,000,000	54,000
<b>Mexican Immigrants</b>	50,000	1,800,000
<b>Life Expectancy (Women)</b>	48 years	79 years
<b>Life Expectancy (Men)</b>	46 years	74 years

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# Arts In The 'Hood: Corinne Didisheim, Multimedia Artist

by Suzanne Rhodenbaugh

Who knew? It turns out a "multimedia artist" is NOT someone who can read a newspaper, watch TV, talk on the phone, listen to the radio, and use the computer, all at the same time. Nor does such refer to someone who manages filmmaking, TV programming, CD production, etc.

Turns out even back when libraries were not yet called "media centers," even back when there was nothing electronic, there were already multimedia artists. In fact, a cavewoman who used pulverized rock for cave wall painting, and crushed berries for body ornamentation, was already way into multimedia.

Here in the 'hood, (late of Arsenal, now on Hartford), we have one of these explorers in the visual arts: Corinne Didisheim. Corinne creates enamel wall hangings; handmade jewelry; origami (the Japanese art of paper-folding), often made into mobiles; "light boxes" of plexiglass and wood, which incorporate paper, woven twine, transparencies, shells, fossils and other found

objects; paintings; prints; and collages.

Corinne can forge steel, and she can make delicate "treebooks" — hinged books of handmade paper. The range of her artistic exploration perhaps reflects a life spent in literal and figurative exploration of a large and complex personal world.

The daughter of Swiss Jews who came to this country when the Holocaust was overtaking Europe, Corinne is a woman whose journey has

time back in New York helping her family, when both parents were gravely ill; and a move to St. Louis in 1996 to open a house for sisters of her religious order here from other countries for study. No longer a member of this order, she feels she is nonetheless still on a journey whose artistic and spiritual dimensions have been part of her life since childhood.

Since coming to St. Louis she's earned a Master of Arts in printmaking and paper-making from Webster University. In the years prior to her work overseas, she had studied art in Geneva, and at the New York Studio School of Painting, Drawing and Sculpture, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts School, and New York University.

Fluent in French, intensely interested in geology and fossil collecting as well as art, Corinne is also a "whole foods" (non-dairy, non-meat) chef who teaches cooking classes privately

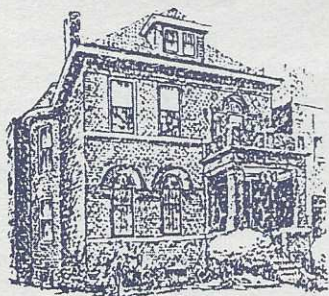
and at the Wild Oats health food store in Ladue, and Kitchen Conservatory in Clayton. The range of whom and where she teaches art is almost as wide as the art forms she undertakes. — She gives workshops on book arts and origami at Borders Bookstores, the Missouri Botanical Garden and Powder Valley Nature Center; and teaches at the Taproots School of the Arts, Guardian Angel Settlement Association, The Learning Tree and Red Lead art store in Maplewood.

She has enamel wall hangings and jewelry presently for sale at American Visions Contemporary Crafts, 9854 Manchester. July 14 a show of her work and that of another artist will open at Three Sinks Gallery in Webster Groves.



Corinne Didisheim searching for fossils along the Mississippi.

included extensive art study; studies of Christianity undertaken first independently, and then at Mundelein College in Chicago; work in Guadeloupe and French Guiana, as a member of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary; a



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# RESIDENT PROFILE

By Erin O'Reilly

Sue and Myron Freedman moved to St. Louis from Chicago and settled in the TGH neighborhood in 1997. They are both originally from Reno, Nevada where most of their extended family remains. They moved here for Myron's job as Director of Exhibits and Special Projects at the Missouri History Museum.

Myron's background and education is in theatre. He started working in community theatre as a child, attended the University of Nevada at Reno, and got

his degree in Theatre. He met his future wife, Sue Free (all she had to do was add "d"man to her name when they got married), in the theatrical production of HAIR in which she was a dancer. They enjoyed their dance and theatre partnership and decided to expand their partnership into marriage in 1980. They worked together on several theatrical productions including Hamlet, in which Sue played Ophelia. Myron and Sue moved to Chicago and Myron worked with the Chicago Shakespeare Co. for 10 years, 6 of which he was artistic director.

His favorite theatrical part in which he acted was Richard the Third.

Working in theatre involves and encourages many talents and Myron became a Renaissance Man over the years. He learned and utilized carpentry, music and dance, costume design, makeup, directing and artistic design and, of course, how to effectively communicate with an audience. For Myron, theatre is more than acting or directing—"it is a whole society"—and is very fulfilling.

The only drawback to their theatre work was lack of a steady salary and benefits. When Myron and Sue started their family, they decided they needed financial security, and that is when Myron started working for the Chicago Historical Society. He started utilizing his carpentry skills in "gallery maintenance" but soon advanced into the job of "Exhibit Design" which was very much like Scene Design in theatre work. He also produced exhibit videos for the Chicago Historical Society in which he put his directing experience to good use.

Myron and Sue now have two lovely daughters; Zoe is 9 years old and in 3rd grade at Kennard Classical Junior Academy and Eva, soon to be 5 years old, is in Neighborhood Preschool. Myron and Sue still enjoy dancing and like to get all fancied up and go to the Casa Loma Ballroom on a Friday night for ballroom dancing. Lately though, Myron has been very busy with the expansion of the Missouri History Museum. He is director of the core exhibit, "Seeking St. Louis", which encompasses three galleries and 18,000 sq. ft. He states it is a "mission driven exhibit" and the mission is for the History Museum to use its resources to foster dialogue in the community about persistent societal issues.

Myron and Sue miss theatre work and are interested in starting a community theatre here in the TGH neighborhood! Is anyone interested?! We do have a couple of churches in the area that have stages. Myron has already recruited my husband, Jay, for a theatrical part.

I'm glad that a mutual friend introduced us—we really enjoy being their neighbors and friends! They are really a fun and talented family to have in the neighborhood!

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## Public Good

By Brian Marston

**T**he thing I love most about living in the city is the sense of community. When I walk my dogs around the block, kids come running off their porches to pet them, and I usually end up talking with two or three of my neighbors on the sidewalk.

The city has a large surface area for unplanned social interaction because it was originally designed for people rather than cars. Unlike most new subdivisions, city neighborhoods are built around parks, markets, and gardens. These public gathering spots offer places to meaningfully relate to others and are the physical manifestation of the common good.

Unfortunately, somewhere along the line, "public" came to mean "inferior" in the lexicon of the general populace. Most people regard public transportation as an unpleasant alternative to single-passenger private cars. Public schools are written off by parents who assume that they have to send their kids to private schools to get

a good education.

When it comes to preserving historic buildings (e.g. the South Side National Bank building), Americans' long-standing obsession with private property rights often overshadows the public good. People have given up their role as citizens who participate in the civic life of their community to become consumers who have no obligations to anything higher than their own needs and desires. Town squares and city halls have been replaced by privately owned shopping malls as the locus of life outside the home. Public spaces are even disappearing from our houses as developers shortchange living and family rooms (which are just a place to put your TV) to concentrate on enormous, elaborate bathrooms where you can sit all alone for hours on end.

These pejorative attitudes toward the public realm are reflected in the social isolation and dispersed way of life that characterize much of contemporary American society. Living in the city offers a great opportunity to establish a dense social network and connect to a larger, shared community.

## Recipe Corner

By Audrey Anderson

I had the pleasure of meeting Jim and Alice Mooney in pursuit of a recipe for this column. We sat in their living room and chatted for an hour or so about city living, St. Louis, animals and just telling funny stories.

They have lived in their house on Juniata for the last twenty years. Their son Matt went to St. Pius School, CBC and is now attending college in Rolla. All three of the Mooneys are firm believers in city living, especially living in The Heights. "You have to want to be here, because the upkeep is continuous."

Twenty years after moving in they are still in the process of renovating. The house is friendly and comfortable and full of character and mysteries. Many changes have already been made, but they have busy lives and other priorities. Alice is a registered nurse and Jim is a supervisor at the post office. Alice is a bibliophile and books and bookcases are everywhere.

Sprawled on the living room floor is Patty, the large dog they rescued from the pound. Actually, Patty was the featured "Dog of the Week," and Alice took one look at the newspaper, put on her coat, and went over and adopted the lucky dog. Sprawled on top of Patty is their other dog Rocky. Rocky is about the size of Patty's head.

Alice included these recipes for Beef Noodle Soup and Pumpkin Pie Cake. We all hope you enjoy it!

### Beef Noodle Soup

- 1 Cup each of diced onion, celery and carrot
- 1 lb. beef shanks
- 1 or 2 cloves garlic
- 3 T olive oil
- 5 Cups of beef broth (canned or homemade)
- 28 oz. can crushed tomatoes
- 1/2 tsp. thyme
- salt and lots of pepper
- 1/2 Cup red wine (optional)
- 1 bag of kluski noodles

Saute vegetables in olive oil until tender. Add beef shanks and lightly brown. Add beef broth, 3 Cups of water, and tomatoes.

Bring to a boil, and then simmer for at least 4 hours. Add noodles, additional salt to taste.

Serve with crusty bread and cold milk.

### Pumpkin Pie Cake

- 2 or 3 Cups pumpkin
- 1 large can evaporated milk
- 4 eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 tsp. Pumpkin pie spice
- 1/4 tsp salt.
- 1 box of yellow cake mix
- 2 sticks of margarine (melted)
- 2/3 Cup chopped nuts

Mix in large bowl. Pour into 9x12 pan. Sprinkle cake mix over top of batter. Do not stir. Drizzle butter over top. Sprinkle nuts over that.

Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour. Serve with whipped topping.

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# Hayes Joins TGP Board

by Terry Winkelman

Described by historian Esly Hamilton as the largest and best preserved 19th Century Gardenesque-style city park in the United States, Tower Grove Park is owned by the City of St. Louis and governed by a special Board of Commissioners appointed by the Missouri Supreme Court.

In December, Tower Grove Heights resident Tim Hays was asked to join that unique group, which includes such personages as Peter Raven, Susan Lammert, and bankers Crosby Kemper and Drew Bauer among others.

"I found Tower Grove Park to be an exciting place from the first day I saw it," commented Hays recently. "And (director) John Karel is doing a masterful job (of conserving) the park. When he first arrived in 1987 there were of lot of challenges to address, a lot of deterioration of not only the structures, but of the trees. The number of varieties of trees in the park is without equal in the U.S."

Hays notes that shortly after Karel took over the park, Tower Grove was designated a National Historic Landmark. "That recognition put a type of certification on the quality of the park...and made clear that the relative indifference of individuals in much of the metro area to the park was their loss," he said.

Awareness is "one area where

amazing progress is being made, but much more is needed and appropriate," Hays continued. One of his goals as a commissioner will be to aid in the Board's and the Friends Association's ongoing efforts to "secure area-wide recognition of what we have here."

Born in Chicago, much of Hays' personal and professional life has been spent in Riverside, California, where he ran the Pulitzer-prize winning newspaper The Press-Enterprise from 1949 to 1994.

Graduating from Stanford in 1939 and Harvard Law in 1942, Hays passed the California bar and immediately went into journalism, signing on as associate editor of a newspaper partly owned by his father. (Check out Tim's paper, recently sold to a national conglomerate, at <http://www.inlandempireonline.com/>)

Associated Press president Louis Boccardi once referred to Hays as "a quiet man who has devoted his life to good journalism...who does good work and doesn't go around making speeches about it." That about describes Hays' life in Tower Grove Heights, too.

Hays often recalls spending summers as a boy in Montana's Glacier National Park, where his father owned a sightseeing bus line. Perhaps it was in Glacier that he acquired an affinity for great parks, whatever their size.

Since marrying Tower Grove Heights Homes president Susie Gudermuth and relocating to St. Louis in the late 1980s, Tim has been a quiet presence in his adopted neighborhood, making his daily rounds, keeping a sharp eye on the alleys and boulevards.

Tim and Susie first got involved in the park when they threw a party at the Palm House to call attention to the building's need for renovation. "It's an amazing structure," said Hays of the now restored greenhouse.

According to Park Director John Karel, the board of directors legally bears "all the authority that the state can confer over this land (bordered by Kingshighway, Arsenal, Grand and Magnolia.)" The Board's responsibilities include overseeing "all aspects of the park, focusing on policy and governance issues with a high responsibility for the financial aspect of park and its efficient operation," he explained.

When Henry Shaw gave the land to the city in 1867, it was outside municipal boundaries, requiring dispensation from the state before the city could accept the property. Included in the subsequent state law assigning ownership of the land to the city was a provision making the city responsible for maintaining the land through annual appropriations, originally amounting to \$25,000 a year. The law also established a board of commissioners numbering between five and seven men to be appointed by the state. "The commissioners work pro bono and are appointed for a term of five years each," said Karel. They meet quarterly, either in the park or at one of the members' home or office.

Perhaps someday within his term Hays and his fellow commissioners will gather for board meetings in the restored Plant House—John Karel's next project. Similar to the Palm House, the Plant House stands just behind the former to the North. Currently it is being used to store maintenance equipment, but Karel hopes to restore the building and install offices on the first floor and a meeting room and archive on the balcony level as funds become available. Hays heads the "small gift" fundraising committee.

To Join the Friends of Tower Grove Park or make a donation to the Plant House Restoration Project, please call: 771-2679

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# Moving on up—to Your Third Floor

By Rich Iezzi

If someone asked you which area of your home was the least used, what would you say? My guess would be the 3rd floor. While Tower Grove Heights homes don't have full third floors like Mansard roofed Lafayette Square homes enjoy, our third floors still account for almost a third of our total home square footage.

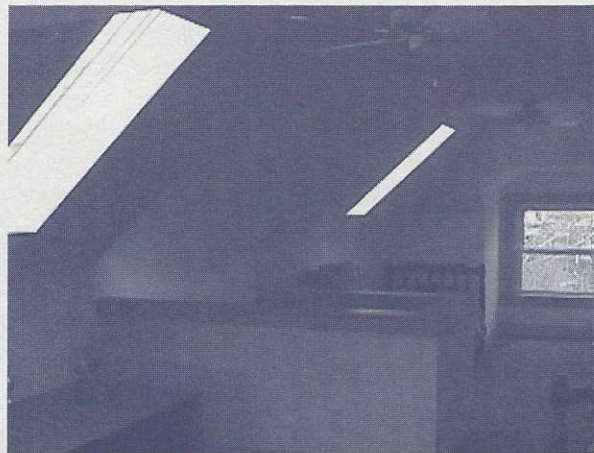
Unfortunately, most third floors are the only original part of the house. The 'features' include vintage wallpaper,

cracked plaster, floorboards with 1/4" gaps and drafty windows. They're impossible to cool in the summer and the idea of carrying building materials up three floors to work is out of the question.

Tim and Anita Barker's third floor was in 'original' condition and they needed extra space for their family. With no extra time for anything, doing the project themselves was not an option so their 'wish list' was contracted out. They expected a lot from their 'new' third floor—two bedrooms, zoned heating and cooling, closet space, phone lines and a even a full bath.

Contractors are costly but the money is usually well spent. They can bring in boom trucks and deliver directly to the third floor and complete the work in a fraction of the time. Anita summed it up when she said "they got it done in 2 months—we'd still be working on it two years later".

Tim and Anita planned every square inch and used the original layout to their advantage. The 'knee walls' (the short vertical walls from the floor to the sloping ceiling) provided room for the

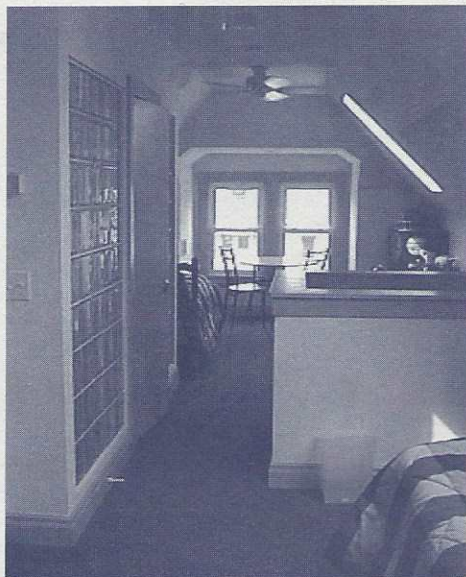


A/C ducts and air handler unit as well as plumbing and wiring. Two skylights were installed in the pitched roof, providing direct and defused lighting throughout the room. The bathroom features a glass block wall that forms a shower, permitting sunlight to permeate the glass block. There is also new carpeting, ceiling fans, phone lines, electrical outlets (plural!), fresh new drywall and new thermo windows that pop out for cleaning.

There's an advantage to sealing off the entire third floor to contain it's own mess, almost like converting a two family flat into a single. Tim advised anyone undertaking a major project to obviously choose your contractor carefully. "Contractors tend to be less careful with your home than you would". Make sure they don't make excessive cuts in load bearing members and know how to 'read' load distribution. Tim and Anita used Premier Construction and thoroughly recommend their work. Zoned heating and cooling is a must and Tim engineered some relief for their existing C/A system by cooling a second floor room from the third floor.

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# Learn about St. Louis Architecture through the Internet

By Matthew Fernandes

**D**id you know ... That in designing downtown's Wainwright Building (1891), architect Louis Sullivan has been credited with giving birth to the modern skyscraper? That most of the now-demolished 1904 World's Fair structures in Forest Park were not built to last in the first place? That the Campbell House was just one of many extravagant mansions in St. Louis' first "gated community" made up of similarly decadent homes?

These and other factoids about St. Louis' architectural heritage can be found at sites within the vast World Wide Web. Here is a look at a few individuals who have documented St. Louis by way of the information highway. St. Louis' land-locked status notwithstanding, lets get our modems running and "surf" St. Louis? "Built St. Louis," (<http://www.netaxs.com/~repowers/arch.html>) created by Robert Powers, is a nice wave to catch first. In the site, Powers offers an extensive collection of photos and a long list of "links" to other local architectural sites. If you want to learn about any given structure in the region, there is a good chance that Powers' site can get you there.

Powers, a native of Shreveport, Louisiana, attended Washington University during the mid-1990s. Upon arrival in St. Louis, he was awe-struck by the city's fabulous structures. "I started noticing the city's historic buildings," said Powers, who now lives in Philadelphia and works for an architecture firm. "St. Louis was the first big city I had been associated with. I had never seen buildings like that before. As dazzled as he was with the city's well-kept gems, Powers was equally mortified by the amount of once proud buildings that laid in ruins. "These buildings are being torn down at an astonishing rate," he said. To produce the site, Powers combined his three loves: architecture, photography and cycling. He pedaled through neighborhoods of all types, documenting what he saw with his camera. The result is a web site that captures the color of many parts of the city, including the Tower Grove area. The tone of the text accompanying many photos is one of unabashed preservationism, tinged with a bit of cynicism, as is apparent in the site's "disappearing

neighborhoods" area: "Welcome to the city of St. Louis, or what's left of it," the text begins. "It's a place many area residents are afraid of. And it's a gold mine of solidly-built, handsome old houses." Powers, who admits to having a "morbid fascination with decaying old buildings," was inspired to create the site after the demolition of the Ambassador Theater in 1996. "My main hope is to raise people's awareness of what exists and what has been lost," said Powers. "It blew my mind that someone could try to tear these buildings down." Powers continues to update and add photos to the site, despite having moved away over two years ago. "The architecture in St. Louis needs the help more than Philadelphia," he said. While Built St. Louis is intended to stir emotions with its images of decaying structures, its links compile a diversity of sites offering snapshots of buildings and neighborhoods with informative historical context.

Many of the individuals who produce these sites do it as a hobby. Tower Grove

Heights' own Ian Wilkinson has compiled a group of photos of "Vanishing Saint Louis Buildings at [www.geekforce.com/downtown/](http://www.geekforce.com/downtown/). The site shows images of historic buildings slated for demolition. Wilkinson moved here from Pittsburgh and, like Powers, was wowed by the city's architecture and saddened to see so much being torn down. He wandered downtown during a lunch hour one day and shot the photos that are on his site. "I don't want to come off as critical, there are enough people who are critical of the city," said Wilkinson, who is an Internet consultant. "But to see these buildings just fall down is ludicrous." Wilkinson's larger website, [geekforce.com](http://www.geekforce.com) (where "surfing can be spiritual"), is used as a tool to aid in his consulting activities.

Erik Olson's "Forest Park Attractions" site (<http://walden.mo.net/~eriko/forest/attract.html>) was also produced as a personal hobby. Here, Olson has clearly done his homework on all things Forest

(continued on page 11)

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# The Riverfront Trail

(continued from page 10)

by Rick Clinebell

Park. The site features high-quality photos of many structures in the park with historical text alongside. Although some of the attractions lead to a blank page with an "under construction" note, the site is a good place to learn about the park's buildings, monuments and statuary. Olson, a transplant from Chicago-via-North Carolina, grew up amid many grand urban parks. "I found Forest Park going to the Science Museum, and fell in love with the place," said Olson. "There was nothing on the web at all about Forest Park or the museums and zoo," said Olson who built the site in 1995. "Fortunately, Forest Park changes slowly, but the site is finally becoming dated," said Olson, who plans to update the site once the park's master plan takes effect.

Olson shed some light on the oft-lamented loss of the elaborate buildings erected for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. "I'd love to have seen the Fair buildings, but they were built to last only a year," said Olson. Even the Statue of St. Louis in front of the Art Museum was plaster, only replaced with a Bronze after the fair, after it had become the symbol of the fair." Olson's site has fairly in-depth construction histories and descriptions of each building. The black and white photos are classy and crystal-clear. Of particular interest are Olson's photos and sketch of the Forest Park Field House.

From viewing the institutions and scenes of Forest Park, we now surf to artist Salvatore Ventura's web site ([www.salventura.com/](http://www.salventura.com/)) and narrow our focus to the minutest details of St. Louis architecture. Ventura, who is based in St. Charles, creates watercolor paintings of gargoyles, columns, arches, art-deco castings and other minutia of some of St. Louis' historic buildings. Included is a series of paintings of the Compton water tower. Ventura said he has observed St. Louis' architecture since childhood and laments the loss of older buildings. The buildings Ventura paints "are remnants of things past. The losses would not be as significant if aesthetically equal or superior structures were commonly constructed," said Ventura. Ventura has recently shown his work at the Sheldon art gallery.

Along the Mississippi, roughly from the Jefferson Memorial Arch to the Chain of Rocks Bridge a new city park is taking shape. The Riverfront Trail is being designed not only as a hiking and biking trail, but also as a magnet for "ecotourism" and community development in the city's North Side. Since "ecotourism" is usually associated with wild animals, such as whales, gorillas or rain forest birds, it might seem a bit odd to associate this buzzword with any resource in the city.

Further thought, however, brings to mind the river itself, and the farsightedness to consider the possibility of restoring the riverfront to the way it looked to Lewis and Clark, which means the planting and maintenance of native wildflowers and prairie grasses, as well as improvement of biodiversity in the forested areas. It has been interesting over the past couple of years to attend some of the meetings involved with the development of the Trail, which includes many governmental entities, but seems centered around Grace Hill Community Center, which is at the northern end of Grand Avenue.

My role has been to help with suggestions for prairie restoration, and the actual planting of the first seeded area. I was pretty excited to get to see the trail before much had been done to it, as it turns out there are already several stands of noteworthy native plants in place that have somehow survived the long urban history of the area. One is a large population of a native prairie grass called little

bluestem, into which we seeded some of the low-profile native wildflowers which naturally grow with little bluestem, but which are no longer present at this site. Another area, this one quite low and along the railroad track, contains a fine stand of the dominant native wetland sedge of the Mississippi bottoms. This sedge lacks a common name, but is a member of the genus *Carex*, *Carex hyalinolepis*. This is a major fuel matrix species of the lowlands, as little bluestem is a major fuel matrix species for the uplands. Fuel for what? Fuel for the prairie fires that are extremely useful for the maintenance of native grassland communities. Using fire as a management tool certainly makes prairies a lot easier to maintain, if not absolutely necessary. While fire is desirable, and this *Carex* is so flammable that it gets ignited along the roads a lot by burning cigarettes tossed from passing cars, the pathway to a burning permit for any of the prairie areas in the city is something of a maze!

And so, the first seeds of the Riverfront Trail are in the ground. The planning and economic development of the Trail in such a way as to benefit the community of the North Side of Saint Louis, as well as providing recreation, public education and urban conservation is impressive, and deserves the support of those who believe, as I do, that the City is worth developing and improving. It is gratifying to have the opportunity to play a small role in this interesting and important project.

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Past President: Elizabeth Braznell  
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**Gazette:** Tod Martin  
**Membership & Social:** Robert Jones  
**Neighborhood Safety:** Robert Jones  
**Physical Improvements:** Mark Abbott  
**Tenant Committee:** Jeff Muse

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# **Top Ten Reasons for Joining TGHNA**

**By Cheryl Jones**

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