



PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

for greater philadelphia

PRESERVATION

MATTERS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PRESERVATION ALLIANCE FOR GREATER PHILADELPHIA

WINTER 2009

The Alliance's New African American Outreach Initiative

In 2008, the Preservation Alliance received a three-year Partners in the Field Challenge Grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, made possible through a gift from the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust. The challenge grant, which must be matched on a one-for-one basis, is designed to enable the Alliance to establish a new initiative to engage African American community organizations, historic sites and residents around issues related to historic preservation and preservation of community character.

The goals of the grant are first, to increase awareness of historic preservation and preservation resources among African American communities and how preservation tools can be used for community revitalization; and second, to increase awareness of African American historic sites and neighborhoods among the general public.

This new initiative incorporates programs already begun by the Alliance including the Old House Fair in March of each year, workshops for homeowners on how to maintain historic properties, grants for low- and moderate-income

owners of historic homes to assist with exterior repairs, and a citywide gathering of neighborhood organizations planned for May 15. (See elsewhere in this newsletter for information on Old House Fair and Homeowner Workshops. Watch www.PreservationAlliance.com for details of the May 15 event.)

With the National Trust grant and first-year matching funds from the Samuel S. Fels Fund and individual donors, the Alliance was able to hire Melissa Jest to coordinate the African American initiative. Melissa comes to the Alliance with eight years of experience at the

Historic Savannah Foundation in Savannah, Georgia, where she ran a similar program of outreach to historic African American neighborhoods.

Since joining the Alliance staff in August 2008, Melissa has covered the city, attending neighborhood meetings, weekend festivals and church services and visiting historic sites. "I've been greeted with everything from enthusiasm to suspicion—but everyone is curious to know more about how historic preservation relates to their neighborhood," says Melissa.

Meetings with community organizations have begun to open up a new dialogue about historic preservation and community revitalization. Lay historians in several communities have expressed interest in doing oral history projects. Even though these projects don't necessarily involve building preservation, Melissa assures neighbors that these efforts are an important step to documenting the evolution of their neighborhood and may ultimately lead to the preservation and revitalization of their community's character.

Several specific projects have emerged from these meetings which the Alliance is now exploring with community organizations, including:

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

As we begin 2009, the issue on everyone's mind is the state of the economy. The dramatic change in economic conditions in the United States at the end of 2008 has affected every one of us as individuals as well as many sectors of the economy. The virtual collapse of financial markets, making it difficult to obtain bank financing, has brought most real estate development to a halt including historic preservation projects. And the economic impact in other areas—the City's budget, for example—jeopardizes other historic resources such as the Carnegie-funded branch libraries, four of which are proposed to be closed.

At the same time, other projects continue as developers attempt to secure approvals even though the projects may sit and wait for many months for the economy to turn. This newsletter documents this mixed picture of difficulty and progress.

Often economic downtimes are good for historic preservation. Fewer buildings are threatened with demolition for new development and often the availability of special financial assistance, such as the federal historic preservation tax credits, enables preservation projects to proceed while new real estate development is stalled. It can also be a good time for planning ahead, which is what the Alliance is trying to do in two areas.

In 2008, we began two important new initiatives. Our African American outreach program is intended to bring historic preservation to communities not normally part of the preservation picture. Alliance staffer Melissa Jest has been doing a great job of expanding our network of contacts with many promising results. Our work on a preservation plan and citywide survey of historic resources is continuing, and some of the early work can be seen on our new website www.PreservePhiladelphia.org.

In the months ahead the Alliance will be proceeding cautiously with its programs and special events—notably, the Old House Fair in March and the Preservation Achievement Awards Luncheon in May—keeping an eye on the hopefully improving economy. We are grateful to the support provided by members and friends in 2008 and hope we can look forward to your continuing support in the coming year.

JOHN ANDREW GALLERY
Executive Director

Alliance Secures Garrett-Dunn House



In a major historic preservation victory, the endangered Garrett-Dunn House in Mt. Airy has been stabilized and secured after a Court of Common Pleas judge authorized the City of Philadelphia late in December to engage the Preservation Alliance to retain contractors.

Working closely with the Philadelphia Historical Commission, the Philadelphia Law Department and the Philadelphia Department of Licenses & Inspections, the Alliance participated in the court proceedings that culminated with Judge Peter F. Rogers' order.

The Garrett-Dunn House, a significant historic structure, was abandoned during rehabilitation, leaving the structure exposed, vulnerable to the elements and unlikely to survive the winter without intervention.

The Alliance retained contractor JRB Historic Restoration, LLC to protect exposed sections of the exterior walls of the house from the weather, shore up a decaying section of the first floor and stabilize and protect the gable wall of the adjacent stone barn. In addition, the property was better secured. The scope of work was determined by an evaluation by the

Philadelphia engineering firm Keast & Hood Co., commissioned by the Historical Commission after Judge Rogers granted the City the right to examine the property. National Penn Bank, the mortgage holder on the property, agreed to pay up to \$20,000 for the necessary work under a "protective advance," secured by its mortgage.

The Garrett-Dunn House at 7048 Germantown Avenue is a rare example of the residential work of noted architect Thomas Ustick Walter, who designed the dome of the U.S. Capitol, Girard College and other 19th-century landmarks. Listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, the property was home to the Garrett family, one of Philadelphia's founding families. Records discovered in the Girard College archives at the time the building was nominated to the Register confirmed that the house was designed by Walter. The Garrett-Dunn House and the Biddle family estate Andalusia on the Delaware River are among the few surviving examples of Walter's residential work.

In April 2008, developer John Capoferri ceased work converting the Garrett-Dunn House to condominiums. In October, after Capoferri failed to correct code violations issued by Licenses & Inspections, including "failure to preserve and protect historic property," the City filed suit in the Court of Common Pleas.

Preserving Philadelphia's African American Churches

By Emily Cooperman

For centuries, Philadelphia has been a center of African American religious activity, and the city's historic black church buildings are replete with history and tradition. Yet few of these churches are listed in the National or Philadelphia Registers of Historic Places.



Tindley Temple United Methodist Church

In 1998, the Alliance commissioned a study on the history of the African American church in Philadelphia. "From Refuge to Strength: the Rise of the African American Church in Philadelphia, 1787-1949" by Matthew S. Hopper was intended to be used as a historic context statement to prepare a nomination of African American churches to the National Register of Historic Places.

In the summer of 2008, as a consultant to the Preservation Alliance, I set out to make greater use of this rich study for preservation planning and public education purposes by undertaking phase two of this project—the creation of an inventory of the city's historic churches built and used by Philadelphia's African American congregations.

Matt Hopper had compiled extensive materials, including 19th- and early-20th-century directories that identified and located the city's black churches. Using these materials, original information available on the city's architects and buildings, historic real estate atlases and aerial photography, I identified and tracked 121 historic congregations of a variety of denominations in 170 locations (a number of congregations have been located in over three different places), beginning with the city's first African American churches of the late-18th century and continuing through to the middle of the 20th century. The information that I gathered was then used to create an inventory of these important historic places which identifies not just the name and denomination of the congregation, but also includes the founding date and the location(s) of the house(s) of worship of these congregations, and gives a brief account of the known information about the buildings or sites associated with them.

Only a few of the churches have been recognized for their historic significance. Mother Bethel AME and the Church of the Advocate are National Historic Landmarks, and Wesley AME Zion Church at 1500 Lombard St. is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Eighteen churches are on the Philadelphia Register.

The inventory identifies five churches that the Alliance considers highest priority for evaluation for nomination to the National Register. They are:

- **Tindley Temple United Methodist Church**, 762 S. Broad St. Working with congregation members, the Alliance supported the successful nomination of this historic church to the Philadelphia Register last year. Tindley Temple is significant for its association with Dr. Charles Albert Tindley, the "father of Gospel music," and for its architecture.

- **Church of the Crucifixion Building and Parish House**, 620 S. 8th St. Founded in 1846, this is one of the earliest African American Episcopal congregations. The 1880s building is on the original site.

- **Waters Memorial AME Church**, 609 Kater St. (Originally Shiloh Baptist Church #1, later Murray Chapel and Mt. Olive AME Church.) One of the oldest surviving church buildings of its type, the building has been in continuous use by African American congregations since the 1840s.

- **St. Peter Claver Church and Rectory**, 1200 Lombard St. St. Peter Claver was dedicated in 1892 as the Mother Church for Black Catholics in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. The 1841 building was designed by pre-eminent architect Thomas Ustick Walter.

- **Union Baptist Church Building**, 1910 Fitzwater St. This church is significant for its involvement in the 20th-century civil rights movement, and for its association with the early life of Marian Anderson.

In 2009, the Preservation Alliance intends to seek a grant to develop National Register nominations for two of these churches to serve as models for further nominations. National Register designation will not only honor these important places in Philadelphia's history, but will also assist the individual churches to become eligible for state and federal grants to help preserve these wonderful historic places.

Emily T. Cooperman is the principal of ARCH Historic Preservation Consulting based in Philadelphia.

Matthew S. Hopper and Emily Cooperman's reports are both available from the Alliance's website on the research reports page. (www.PreservationAlliance.com/publications/research-reports.php)

Purvis House Endangered

Robert Purvis was at the epicenter of Philadelphia abolitionism and the Underground Railroad. He founded the Philadelphia Vigilant Committee which, along with its successors, he later claimed helped a slave a day journey north to freedom.

Born in 1810 in Charleston, South Carolina, to an English cotton broker and a free-born daughter of a slave, Purvis was sent to Philadelphia at age nine for private schooling. Affluent, well-educated and widely traveled, Purvis became an influential pamphleteer, orator, activist and political leader on behalf of the anti-slavery movement.

After the Civil War, Purvis advocated for civil rights and women's suffrage, first as a gentleman farmer from an elegant home in what is now Northeast Philadelphia and, later, from his home at 1601 Mount Vernon Street where he lived for 20 years until his death in 1898.

Today, Purvis' last home, the only extant residence associated with him, is surrounded by a chain link fence and stands vacant, deteriorating and covered with graffiti in Philadelphia's Spring Garden Historic District.

The Preservation Alliance has listed the property on its 6th annual Endangered Properties List in hopes of saving the structure, possibly for use as a center to interpret the critical, and underrepresented, role of 19th-century African American leaders in the anti-slavery and early civil rights movements.



Historical Commission Designates Odd Fellows Building

The Philadelphia Historical Commission designated the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows Building at 12th and Spruce streets to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places in December. The structure was built in 1908 as national headquarters for the largest African American society in the country at the time.

"Owing to its significance in African American history at the local and national levels, the Odd Fellows building is an important addition to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places," said Commission Executive Director Jonathan Farnham. "Its designation will protect the building, not only from inappropriate alteration and demolition, but also neglect."

According to the nomination prepared by Historical Commission staff, free African Americans in Philadelphia and New York prior to the Civil War formed societies for "literary improvement and social pleasures." By 1842, the groups sought to expand their mission to include social benevolence, but were denied a charter by the Odd Fellows, a whites-only

organization. In 1843, Peter Ogden, an African American ship's steward and member of an Odd Fellows lodge in England, suggested petitioning for a charter from his lodge in Liverpool. England granted the charter to the New York group, which in turn was given the power to grant charters to other lodges in the United States.

The Philadelphia Unity Lodge received its charter on May 14, 1844 and was the third such lodge in the country. In 1849, the African American branch of the Odd Fellows in the United States, operating under the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows (GUOOF) name, voted to move its headquarters from New York to Philadelphia. By the turn of the century, the GUOOF was the largest and most powerful of the African American societies.

The organization commissioned the Philadelphia architectural firm of Watson & Huckel to design its new headquarters building. Although only five stories, the building, with its Chicago-style projecting bay windows and handsome terra cotta façade, is a distinctive



landmark in the Washington Square West neighborhood.

The building was dedicated on July 15, 1908 with a service at Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church and a celebratory parade through the streets of Philadelphia. Today, it stands vacant and appears neglected and deteriorated. Listing on the Philadelphia Register insures that it cannot be demolished or inappropriately altered.

There Must Come a Change: Murder, Baseball and the Battle for Equality in Civil War America

Wednesday, February 18
6 p.m. at Mother Bethel AME Church, 419 S. 6th Street

Veteran journalists Dan Biddle and Murray Dubin will read from their intriguingly named forthcoming book, to be published by Temple University Press, on African American civil rights leaders in Philadelphia and elsewhere of the 19th century. Biddle and Dubin will share stories of the men and women whose names are relatively unfamiliar—Martin R. Delany, Charles and Sarah Remond, Charles and John Mercer Langston, Caroline Le Count, Henry Highland Garnet, Octavius and William Catto, Fanny Jackson Coppin—who were heroic, canny and courageous leaders, 100 years before Dr. Martin Luther King. Mother Bethel AME Church is a National Historic Landmark and one of the significant African American church buildings in the nation. Free. Advance registration requested: email info@preservationalliance.com or call 215-546-1146 x3.

The 6th Annual Endangered Properties List



Each year, the Preservation Alliance publishes a list of significant historic buildings in the region that are threatened, either by neglect or by redevelopment proposals. The 6th annual Endangered Properties List includes the buildings below. Visit www.PreservationAlliance.com for full descriptions of the endangered buildings, the nature of the threat and the Alliance's recommendations for the properties.

Carnegie Libraries Philadelphia

Four early-20th-century branch libraries constructed with grants from philanthropist Andrew Carnegie are threatened as a result of the City's planned library closures. (See related article, page 4.)

Historic Industrial and Archaeological Sites

Along the central Delaware River waterfront and the Delaware Generating Station, Philadelphia

Resources associated with the city's industrial heritage, including the massive 1917 generating station, are threatened by redevelopment of the riverfront.

Elkins Estate and Elstowe Mansion

Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County

This 42-acre estate, including the Elstowe mansion designed by Horace Trumbauer, is in the hands of a new owner who is committed to preserving the site, but needs funding to preserve and protect the property.

Garrett-Dunn House Philadelphia

Working with the City of Philadelphia, the Alliance has stepped in to stabilize this significant residence, designed by 19th-century architect Thomas Ustick Walter, left open to the elements after a developer ceased work last spring. (See related article, page 1.)

Lower Dublin Academy Philadelphia

This very early school building, with portions dating to 1808, is vacant and unsecured after a 2006 fire gutted the interior.

Parkgate/McIlhenny House Philadelphia

This 1899 English Tudor house is associated with a significant Philadelphia family, but has been allowed to deteriorate by its owner, the School District of Philadelphia.

Robert Purvis House Philadelphia

The home of one of the 19th century's preeminent African American abolitionists and civil rights leaders sits deteriorating in Philadelphia's Spring Garden Historic District. (See related article, page 2.)



JOSEPH E.B. ELLIOT



[From Top to Bottom] Holmesburg Library | Delaware Generating Station | Elstowe Mansion



Stephen Girard Building

New to the Philadelphia Register

In addition to the Odd Fellows Building (see page 2), the Philadelphia Historical Commission recently added three buildings to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

In December, the Commission approved the Alliance's nomination of the **Stephen Girard Building** (1896) at 21 South 12th Street. The building was designed by James Hamilton Windrim, who also designed the Masonic Temple, the Academy of Natural Sciences, and many buildings on the campus of Girard College. Commissioned by the Board of City Trusts/Estate of Stephen Girard, the building is thought to be the earliest extant example of the skyscraper form in Philadelphia and a driving force in the shift of private enterprise and city business toward the new City Hall location.

The Commission also designated **John Torrey Windrim's Bell Telephone Building** (1914-1916) at 1631-37 Arch Street along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Windrim, the son of James Windrim, was often referred to as the best-known practitioner of the Beaux Arts style of architecture in Philadelphia and also designed the Franklin Institute and the Philadelphia Municipal Court Building.

At its January meeting, the Commission designated the **Margaret Esherick House** (1959-61) in Chestnut Hill. The Esherick House is one of only a few built residences designed by Louis I. Kahn, one of the 20th century's most influential architects. Despite its small size, the house exemplifies the design elements that would become characteristic of Kahn's later work, including strong geometry, the abundant use of natural light and ventilation and the use of an innovative wall construction system.

Historical Commission to Proceed with Three New Historic Districts

The Philadelphia Historical Commission has decided to move forward this year on three pending proposed historic districts: Awbury Arboretum, Parkside and East Falls.

"At its October and November 2008 meetings, the Historical Commission established a plan to process the nominations for three proposed historic districts during 2009," said Commission Executive Director Jonathan Farnham. "Before processing the district nominations, the Commission will enhance its processes and procedures to provide additional permit-review capacity without expanding its staff."

With just 25 properties, Awbury Arboretum is the smallest of the three proposed districts. Located in the Germantown area of the city, it

encompasses a picturesque landscape and distinctive portfolio of homes built by successive generations of the Cope family between 1849 and 1922. Nestled among mature trees are Gothic Revival, Italian Villa, Queen Anne, Tudor Revival and Colonial Revival-style structures, as well as Awbury Arboretum itself, developed between 1916 and 1940.

The proposed 162-property Parkside District in West Philadelphia was developed following the Centennial Exhibition in 1876 by German immigrant and brewery magnate Frederick Poth. Architectural details such as ornamental brickwork and decorative gables reflect the culturally influenced tastes of the German middle class for whom the residences were intended.

The proposed East Falls District encompasses

distinctive, English Tudor Revival-style houses on the 3400 blocks of Midvale Avenue, West Penn Street and West Queen Lane. Representing a shift in housing style and function, the residences were built between 1925 and 1931 for speculation, and not as worker housing for near-by factories.

Philadelphia currently has nine local historic districts: Diamond Street (1986), Park Mall (on the Temple campus) (1990), Rittenhouse-Fitler (1995), Historic Street Paving (1998), Society Hill (1999), Girard Estate (1999), E.D.R. Park (2000), Spring Garden (2001), Old City (2003) and Greenbelt Knoll, which was designated in 2006 in honor of its 50th anniversary. Other nominated districts awaiting review include Spruce Hill and Overbrook Farms.

Advocacy Updates

Carnegie Libraries

Just as 2008 drew to a close, the Alliance submitted nominations to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places for four historic branch libraries that were slated for closure. The four libraries, each constructed with grants from early-20th-century philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, are Holmesburg (built 1907), Haddington (1915), Logan (1918) and Kingessing (1919).

The Alliance is concerned that the four historic buildings could be threatened if the city declares them surplus property and makes them available for sale or lease. Demolition or any alterations to the exteriors of the four buildings would be subject to approval by the Historical Commission as soon as the Commission staff officially accepts the Alliance's nominations. The Alliance also identified possible legal restrictions on the use of the sites that might limit the City's right to close, sell or lease the buildings.

As of mid-January, the branches remained open. Meanwhile, the Alliance has included the four buildings on its 6th annual Endangered Properties List. (See page 3.)

Commission, the Planning Commission and the Zoning Board of Adjustment of developer ARC Wheeler's plans to fully restore the Art Deco theater and build an adjoining 28-story hotel.

The Preservation Alliance has agreed to serve as ARC Wheeler's nonprofit partner, in order to help obtain funding from philanthropic and government sources. ARC Wheeler is expected to take ownership of the property early this year.

Campus Inn, 40th and Pine

In December, the Philadelphia Historical Commission approved the Campus Inn project, a proposed long-term-stay hotel complex incorporating an 1850s Samuel Sloan-designed mansion and new construction at 40th and Pine streets in the Spruce Hill section of West Philadelphia. The project had earlier been voted down at the Commission's November meeting, where discussion and public testimony focused on the project's massing, height and compatibility with its surroundings. As a result of confusion created by the Commission's contradictory actions, the developers have appealed the November decision; the Alliance and nearby neighbors have appealed the December decision.

Interiors Amendment to Preservation Ordinance

The Preservation Alliance is actively encouraging support for Bill 080527, which has been pending at City Council since mid-2008. The bill, sponsored by Councilman Bill Green, would amend Philadelphia's Historic Preservation Ordinance to allow for the designation of historic interiors that are open to the public or were designed to be open to the public. (The interiors of private residential spaces are specifically excluded from eligibility.) Councilman Green has prepared, but has not yet introduced, amendments to the original bill to reflect recommendations made by the Historical Commission and the City Planning Commission, both of which voted to support the measure.

The Alliance intends to present a petition urging Council to approve Bill 080527. To sign the petition, visit us online at <http://action.preservationalliance.com/node/19>.



A rendering of the restored Boyd.

Boyd Theater

The restoration of the Boyd Theater on Chestnut Street, the last of the city's great movie palaces, moved closer to reality in late 2008 with approval by the Philadelphia Historical



In mid-2008, the Preservation Alliance began work on the first phase of planning for a Preservation Plan for Philadelphia and a citywide survey of historic resources. Each Preservation Matters newsletter will include an update on our progress.

Preservation Plan Website

In order to provide ongoing information on the development of the Preservation Plan, the Preservation Alliance has created a separate website devoted solely to this work. The most exciting aspect of the site is a section devoted to Philadelphia neighborhoods that allows users to post photographs and comments about historic buildings and places in their own neighborhood. The site also contains copies of reports being produced by consultants and other information about the project's progress. Visit www.PreservePhiladelphia.org to stay up-to-date and to submit information about your neighborhood.

Online Survey

The website also contains a survey intended to gain broader information about historic preservation in Philadelphia. The survey was distributed to various email lists in December 2008. As of mid-January, there were 300 responses. You can contribute to the development of the plan by filling out the survey at www.PreservePhiladelphia.org.

Discussion Groups

In the fall of 2008, Donna Harris of Heritage Consulting, Inc. facilitated 14 discussion groups to gain information on current views about historic preservation in Philadelphia. Approximately 70 people participated in groups, covering such topics as house museums and historic sites, commercial corridors, historical societies and African American heritage. Read a summary of the discussions at www.PreservePhiladelphia.org.

Strategic Interviews

Prof. Randall Mason of the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate Program in Historic Preservation has been conducting individual interviews with civic, community and non-profit leaders to gain their perspective on historic preservation and ideas about the future. Approximately 25 interviews had been completed as of mid-January. A summary of the interviews will be posted on the Preserve Philadelphia website later this month.

Preservation Planning In Other Cities

Prof. Mason also produced a report on preservation planning in other cities. This report is available at www.PreservePhiladelphia.org.

Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation

In addition to preserving landmark buildings and distinctive neighborhoods, historic preservation in Philadelphia creates substantial economic benefits for the City and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. To document these benefits, the Preservation Alliance commissioned Econsult Corporation to analyze the economic benefits of preservation between 1999 and 2008. The report indicates that during that time period, historic preservation had a total economic impact on Philadelphia of \$652 million, generating nearly 2,800 jobs and more than \$6 million in local tax revenues. For the Commonwealth, historic preservation in Philadelphia had a more than \$4 billion economic impact, generating more than 94,000 jobs and \$239 million in total state tax revenues. In addition, Econsult undertook an analysis of the impact of historic district designation on property values in the city and concluded that such designation had a positive impact. Watch for a summary along with the full technical report at www.PreservePhiladelphia.org.

The 2009 Preservation Achievement Awards Luncheon: Monday, May 11

The Preservation Alliance will host its 16th annual **Preservation Achievement Awards luncheon** Monday, May 11 at the historic Park Hyatt Philadelphia at the Bellevue.

Honoring outstanding achievements and leaders in historic preservation throughout the region, the luncheon has become a much-anticipated annual gathering for supporters of preservation and a highlight of May, Preservation Month.

The awards include the James Biddle Award for lifetime achievement in historic preservation, the Board of Directors Award for sustained stewardship of historic properties, the Community Action Award for achievements by community organizations and the Grand Jury awards, made to outstanding built projects or advocacy, education or documentation initiatives. Watch the Alliance's website, www.PreservationAlliance.com, for an announcement of the winners.

To learn more about sponsorship opportunities and benefits, visit the website at www.PreservationAlliance.com or contact Holly Keefe, director of membership development, at holly@preservationalliance.com or 215-546-1146 x3.

A Preservation Plan for “Historic Disston” in Northeast Philadelphia

In fall 2008, a team of graduate students from the University of Pennsylvania’s Graduate Program in Historic Preservation researched Henry Disston’s one-time company town along the Delaware River in the Tacony section of Northeast Philadelphia and prepared a preservation plan for the neighborhood, which it dubbed “Historic Disston.”

The team included Alexander Balloon, Pierson Booher, Taryn D’Ambrogi, Elise Kemery, Jessica Kottke, Caitlin Kramer, Meredith Marsh, Kate Ritson, Jayne Spector, Melissa Steele, Sarah Van Domelen, Ning Wang and Professor Randy Mason, who also serves on the Alliance’s board of directors. Louis Iatarola, Jr. of the Tacony Civic Association and Anthony Naccarato of the Tacony Community Development Corporation served as client contacts, providing access to archives and background on the neighborhood preservation and planning efforts.

As reported in the Fall 2008 issue of *Preservation Matters*, the Preservation Alliance continues to work with the Tacony Community Development Corporation and the Tacony Historical Society towards eventual designation of Tacony as a historic district on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

The following article is based on the students’ final project.

The history of Historic Disston began in the 1870s when Henry Disston, owner of Disston & Sons Keystone Saw Works, purchased 300 acres in Tacony in order to relocate his company. He selected Tacony because of its existing railroad terminus and its proximity to the center of Philadelphia. Because the area was still rural, it could accommodate large factories as well as rows of housing for the firm’s many employees. Disston built houses, institutions and workplaces to create a whole town for his workforce—a prime example of a 19th-century company town.

Company towns such as Disston’s were regarded as a way to merge industrial development with social responsibility. These towns, built all over the U.S., were inhabited chiefly by the employees of a single company that also owned most of the real estate and houses. By the mid-20th-century, increased worker mobility, government welfare programs and unionization made company towns obsolete, leading companies to sell their residential holdings, frequently along with the company as well.

Disston’s original holdings are still clearly organized into industrial and non-industrial areas neatly separated by I-95 and Septa’s R7 rail line. West of the rail line, Disston Park buffers a dense collection of twin, single and row homes, a commercial corridor along Torresdale Avenue and historic landmarks such as the Tacony Music Hall, Tacony Trust Building and numerous churches. East of I-95 there remains a sizable collection of Disston’s original factory buildings among vacant lots, brownfields and a maze of dead-end streets. The planned North Delaware Greenway would run along the river, renewing focus on Tacony’s waterfront development while providing recreational access to the water and the riverside historic neighborhoods. The idea of mixed-use development along the waterfront is a potential threat to the historic industrial buildings and the integrity of Disston’s company town.

Team members spent 14 weeks researching Disston’s history and studying the area’s potential. In its work, the team collected many historic maps, photographs, plans and reports, gained an



understanding of the neighborhood’s social and physical structure and studied towns with comparable histories. It also surveyed the present-day community and its residents to understand the contemporary relevance of the town’s historic significance.

The team concluded that Disston’s history remains visible in both the physical and social fabric of Tacony. Original architecture, street design, land use patterns and regulations remain integral to the neighborhood’s character. The core of Tacony’s physical fabric remains intact, as seen in the remaining but neglected industrial buildings, the scale and massing of residential buildings, surviving institutional buildings, public transit networks and Disston Park.

The vernacular architectural styles of the industrial, residential and institutional buildings reinforce the visual cohesion of the neighborhood. Perhaps most important, community groups—such as the Tacony Historical Society—actively preserve and promote the neighborhood’s history. All these attributes contribute to Tacony’s significance as an irreplaceable asset in Northeast Philadelphia.

While the major objective of the preservation plan is to research, recognize and preserve the history and architectural fabric of Historic Disston, the highest value of such preservation lies in its contribution to the contemporary community. Historic Disston’s unique characteristics support the quality of life of today’s residents and should form a foundation for growth and adaptation into the future. To this end, the students presented a number of recommendations, including:

- *Preserve industrial uses along the riverfront.* The preserved industrial core, reusing historic buildings in many cases, would serve as Philadelphia’s model for eco-industrial devel-

opment and would be buffered by creative light industrial, commercial and institutional parcels. This complex would benefit from easy access to I-95, waterfront connector streets and the planned waterfront greenway. This development approach preserves Historic Disston’s industrial heritage, employing existing models of sustainable industrial use while responding directly to local demographic, economic and infrastructure needs.

- *Designate both the residential and industrial resources within Historic Disston to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places and the National Register of Historic Places.* These designations will help document and protect historic resources, as well as qualify contributing historic buildings for federal preservation funding and tax incentives for rehabilitation. Protecting historic factory buildings from the potential threats of future demolition or insensitive development is critical to the preservation of Historic Disston; likewise, the residential, commercial and institutional buildings west of the railroad are important aspects of the historic landscape and designation will help encourage appropriate maintenance and historically sensitive alterations.

- *Brand Historic Disston.* “Historic branding” will increase residents’ awareness of the historic significance of their neighborhood and homes, encouraging maintenance and improvements. Branding can also attract new residents and businesses to fill vacancies, realize development opportunities for the industrial waterfront and welcome visitors to appreciate the area’s historic character.

The full report can be viewed at the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation’s website: www.design.upenn.edu/new/hist/index.php.

New Easements Protect Historic Properties in Perpetuity



Andalusia Interior

Owners of eight historic buildings gave preservation easements to the Preservation Alliance in 2008, providing perpetual protection for their properties.

Two of the easements were given as a condition for receiving Save America's Treasures grants. Both properties are National Historic Landmarks: **Andalusia**, the Bucks County home for generations of the Biddle family and one of the finest examples of Greek Revival architecture in America; and the circa 1765 **Johnson House**, home to well-known abolitionists who worked tirelessly to end slavery and who turned their house (6306 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia) into an Underground Railroad stop on the network used by runaways en route to freedom.

Andalusia, built in 1795, but best recognized for its imposing Greek Revival colonnade added in 1835-36, was awarded \$50,000 by Save America's Treasures to restore the interior of the library wing (designed in 1834 by Thomas Ustick Walter) and provide museum-quality climate control for the library's historic collection. The easement protects both the exterior and interior spaces of the library and study.

The Johnson House received a \$275,000 Save America's Treasures grant for the restoration of its roof and other exterior features. The easement protects the exterior of the main house, an out-building and the site's open spaces.

In December the owners of a group of six historic townhouses in Center City donated preservation easements for **309 and 311 South 12th Street, 1015 and 1820 Pine Street, 910 Clinton Street and 406 Spruce Street**. The 406 Spruce property differs from the five other Federal-era properties in that it features an unusual, large rear addition designed in the early 1970s by architect Adolph Marx that resembles a hybrid of the Brutalist and Gaudi architectural traditions.

The Alliance now protects more than 225 historic properties throughout the Philadelphia region with its easement program. Most property owners qualify for a charitable-gift tax deduction by donating an easement to the Alliance. For more information on the easement program, contact Randy Cotton at randy@preservationalliance.com or 215-546-1146 x2 or visit the "Programs" section at www.PreservationAlliance.com.

The Alliance's New African American Outreach Initiative

[continued from page 1]

Yorktown

Residents of the historic Yorktown neighborhood in North Philadelphia invited the Alliance to advise on preservation options as they search for tools to protect their neighborhood. Yorktown, developed in the 1950s, is significant for its modern-era architecture and as Philadelphia's only residential development specifically for African American homebuyers before integration. The Alliance is now exploring next steps with Yorktown leaders, including a possible historic district nomination.

Marian Anderson Society and Residence Museum

Society founder Blanche Burton-Lyles recently shared her vision for the future of both the residence museum and the society with Melissa during her visit to the museum. As a result, the Alliance has partnered with professionals who are volunteering to provide technical assistance on board development, succession planning and nonprofit tax compliance.

West Philadelphia Cultural Alliance and the Paul Robeson House

Executive Director Fran Aulston invited the Alliance to participate in the fall strategic planning process. Melissa represented the Alliance in a series of tactical meetings with Mrs. Aulston, board members and commu-

nity partners. The Alliance has also been invited to help prepare a local designation nomination for the 1911 residence.

Waters Memorial AME Church

Waters Memorial congregation worships in one of the earliest surviving examples of St. George Methodist-type church buildings in the city. Rev. Cheryl Coleman has invited the Alliance's input as the church begins to plan the rehabilitation of its historic edifice and one of its nearby historic properties in South Philadelphia.

Citywide Conference

The Alliance is eager to increase its contacts with African American communities. In order to accomplish this, the Alliance is now planning the May 15 citywide neighborhood preservation gathering, which will provide preservation training and tools to community organizations, with a special emphasis on African American neighborhoods. To participate in the conference or to learn more about how the Alliance is at work to save Philadelphia's rich African American heritage and historic resources and strengthen the city's diverse neighborhoods, contact Melissa Jest, neighborhood preservation program coordinator, at 215-546-1146 x6 or melissa@preservationalliance.com.

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE ALLIANCE'S 2008 ANNUAL APPEAL



The Alliance expresses its thanks to all these donors who contributed to the 2008 annual appeal. Special thanks to Signe Wilkinson, the *Daily News'* Pulitzer-prize-winning editorial cartoonist, who created this original cartoon especially for the appeal, and to Ursula Hobson Fine Art Framing. Congratulations to George Bryan Jones, Jr., who won the artwork in a random drawing of contributors to the appeal.

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The 2009 Old House Fair

Saturday, March 28



Tickets are on sale now for the Preservation Alliance's popular Old House Fair, which returns Saturday, March 28, to the Germantown Friends School, 31 W. Coulter Street, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The 2009 Fair will feature over 70 booths marketing products and services related to the preservation and maintenance of older and historic homes—everything from windows and doors to green products to roofing and masonry, along with specialty craftspeople and products, interior designers and hardware purveyors. A select group of preservation consultants and representatives of non-profit preservation and design organizations will also be on hand.

All day long, there will be presentations, workshops and hands-on demonstrations on a variety of skills and techniques related to old-house preservation. Design and preservation professionals, including "The Color Doctor," John Crosby Freeman, as featured in the *Old House Journal*, will also provide free, 15-minute, personalized consultations at the "Ask the Experts" table. Also at the Fair, the Alliance's 2009 Homeowner Awards will be presented.

Plan to make a day of it—breakfast, lunch and snacks will be available at the on-site Tastebuds Café.



To buy tickets or for more information, visit www.PreservationAlliance.com or contact George Hoessel at 215.546.1146 x7 or george@preservationalliance.com.

Would you like to help make it happen? If you are interested in being a volunteer, presenter, vendor, advertiser or sponsor, please contact Patrick Hauck, director of Neighborhood Preservation Programs, at 215.546.1146 x4 or patrick@preservationalliance.com.

Free!

HOMEOWNER WORKSHOPS

APRIL & MAY

The Preservation Alliance's ongoing series of free workshops for owners, and aspiring owners, of historic homes continues in April and May, offering a great opportunity to learn about the best practices for the restoration and maintenance of older and historic homes. These workshops are free and open to the public, but reservations are required. To reserve a space, or for more information, contact Melissa Jest, neighborhood preservation program coordinator, at 215-546-1146 x6 or melissa@preservationalliance.com.

Lecture Workshops in Queen Village

All Queen Village workshops start at 7 p.m. at Weccacoe Playground Building, 400 Block of Catharine Street (south side).

Energy and Resource Efficiency in Older Houses Wednesday, April 15

Masonry and Lime Mortars Wednesday, April 22

Insuring Older and Historic Homes Wednesday, April 29

Repairing Historic Windows and Replacement Options Wednesday, May 6

"Hands On" Workshops in West Philadelphia

All West Philadelphia workshops start at 6 p.m. at Calvary Center for Culture and Community, 801 S. 48th Street.

Self-Inspection of Historic Homes Thursday, April 16

Historic Windows Thursday, April 23

Masonry and Pointing Thursday, April 30

Traditional Roof Repairs Thursday, May 7

The Alliance's free homeowner workshops are sponsored by the William Penn Foundation and are presented in collaboration with the Fairmount Park Historic Preservation Trust, the Queen Village Neighborhood Association, the West Philadelphia Tool Library and the University City Historical Society.

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW

**There Must Come a Change:
Murder, Baseball and the Battle
for Equality in Civil War America**

WEDNESDAY **February 18**

6 p.m. at Mother Bethel AME Church

See page 2 for details.

The Old House Fair

SATURDAY **March 28**

Germantown Friends School

31 W. Coulter Street

Tickets on Sale Now!

See page 7 for details and sponsorship opportunities.

**The 16th Annual Preservation
Achievement Awards Luncheon**

MONDAY **May 11**

The Park Hyatt Philadelphia at The Bellevue

See page 4 for details and sponsorship opportunities.

**A Sense of Place: Preserving
Philadelphia's Neighborhoods**

A Citywide Conference for Philadelphia
Neighborhood Leaders

FRIDAY **May 15**

8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Temple University Center City

1515 Market Street

Neighborhood organizations and leaders from
throughout Philadelphia are invited to convene for
this first-ever citywide conference focusing on historic
preservation in neighborhoods. Participants will have
the opportunity to expand their understanding of the
important role of preservation in neighborhood stabi-
lization/revitalization, learn about successful examples
from local communities and meet with representatives
of the non-profit and governmental organizations that
are playing an active role in these efforts.

Visit www.PreservationAlliance.com in the coming
weeks for more details or contact Patrick Hauck,
director of Neighborhood Preservation Programs at
215.546.1146 x4 or patrick@preservationalliance.com.

