

MARQUIS

MAY 2010

Founded by the residents of Lafayette Square

VOLUME 32, NUMBER 5

It's House Tour time!

Lafayette Square prepares for thousands of visitors at 41st annual Spring Home and Garden Tour

By Ian Stallman
2010 Spring House Tour Chair

On June 5 and 6, Lafayette Square will again open itself to thousands of visitors for the 41st annual Spring Home and Garden Tour. Appropriately themed "City Life in Bloom," this year's tour features 10 private homes, seven gardens and a local church with a unique surprise in its basement. Among the highlights for this year's tour are:

1834 Lafayette – New Lafayette Square residents Carlos Zamora and Juliana Varela have quickly transformed this classic row house to reflect their great taste in color and design.

1626 Mississippi – This corner townhouse overlooking Lafayette Park is an excellent example of modern development maintaining historical design.

1842 Kennett – Sonya Quarterman welcomes you to her beautifully decorated home on one of Lafayette Square's favorite streets.

1831 Kennett – This row house once had a third story which was blown away by the cyclone of 1896 and never replaced. Longtime resident Suzanne Sessions has guided the property through an extensive gut rehab, which included removing a few tons of excess concrete from the Gateway Arch that had been poured into the back yard.

1725 Carroll – This attached home was once constructed on the exterior of 1727 Carroll to house the daughter of the original owner and builder. The home remained in the same family for over 100 years. Today it houses one of a growing number of young Lafayette Square families.

1826 Hickory – One of the matching set of 11 houses on the 1800



Photos courtesy of Ian Stallman

This home at 2035 Park Ave. started as a house before being converted to a single-story church. It's now back to being a home, and will be featured on the June 5 and 6 House Tour.

block of Hickory, this home was originally built to serve as a rental property for the upper class.

1820 LaSalle – From a single-family residence to a duplex and back to a single-family residence, this home once had seven layers of linoleum covering the original hardwood floors, and a kitchen located in the current dining room. Now Mark and Terry Etling welcome you to their beautifully restored home.

2035 Park – After sitting vacant for many years following an early 20th century fire that destroyed most of

the original home, this property was converted to a single-story church. Today it has seen a remarkable transformation back to a unique residence, featuring second-floor balconies overlooking the north side of Lafayette Park.

2332 Whittemore – Longtime residents Bill and Lisette Odell have performed a near-gut rehab of this Second Empire home during their 30-plus years on Whittemore. Pay special attention to the extremely narrow original staircase in the rear of the home.

2118 Lafayette – One of the matching "Three Sisters" located on the south side of Lafayette Park, this home has served as a boarding house and a music school for young girls.

2300 Lafayette – Unknown to most residents of Lafayette Square, the Lafayette Park United Methodist Church had a four-lane bowling alley installed in the basement during the 1950's, which featured one of Brunswick's original semi-automatic pin setting devices. After decades of neglect

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June Marquis Deadline:
Wednesday, June 9

LPC to host annual plant sale during House Tour

By Susan Pinker-Dodd
Lafayette Square

The Lafayette Park Conservancy is having its third annual plant sale from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. June 5 and 6. The booth will be set up by the Park House, at the corner of Mississippi and Lafayette avenues.

Proceeds from the sale will be used to beautify Lafayette Park. The floral gardens in Lafayette Park are maintained by Flora Conservancy volunteers and the city of St. Louis Parks Department, which work in a partnership. Seedlings and cuttings have been growing in the

city greenhouses since January for the sale and for planting in Lafayette Park.

A small sampling of the plants offered at the sale includes: alocasia, alternanthera, angelonia, aquilegia, asclepias, asparagus, canna, celosia, citrus, coleus, Boston and Kimberly ferns, gomphrena, an assortment of herbs, iresine, jade plants, lantana, monarda, Moses in the cradle, pandanus, Persian shield, pentas, plectranthus, ruellia, talinum, thunbergia and tradescantia.

Lafayette Park Conservancy T-shirts and park booklets will also be available for purchase. A free plant or pair of wine glasses will be given to everyone who

joins the Lafayette Park Conservancy during House Tour weekend.

Updates on the park projects that the LPC are currently working on will be on display, which include the re-roofing of the boathouse, cleaning and conserving the Benton statue, creating architectural documents for resurfacing and edging park pathways, and remounting on a new carriage and pad the first of three Revolutionary War ship's guns.

If you would like to help out with the plant sale, call Susan at 231-5367. For more information about the Lafayette Park Conservancy visit www.lafayette-park.org.

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Editor's Note

It is the goal of this publication and those who support it to bring you the news about your neighborhood each month. This is your news, and we want to do our best to bring it to you in the most accurate and professional manner possible. So if you have something you'd like us to include, feel free to contact us. We're always happy to accept article submissions, photos, press releases or story ideas from anywhere in our coverage area, and we'll do our best to include them.

As your community newspaper, we want your contributions and input. So keep us informed and we'll do the same for you.

— Kara Krekeler, editor
367-6612 x30 or kara@westendword.com

The Marquis is published monthly by Virginia Publishing Company on behalf of the Lafayette Square Restoration Committee. Originally founded by Lafayette Square Restoration Committee as a small newsletter, the paper has grown into the voice of St. Louis' strong near southside neighborhood groups, serving Benton Park, Compton Heights, Fox Park, Gate District, Lafayette Park, LaSalle Park, and McKinley Heights neighborhoods.

Submissions, including articles, photos and story ideas, are highly encouraged, but the editor reserves the right to edit for grammar, space, clarity and appropriateness. Deadline for submissions is the 18th of the prior month. Contact the editor at kara@westendword.com or call 314-367-6612 x29. For advertising info, contact jsackman@westendword.com or call 314-367-6612 x23.



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Embrace life's little surprises, changes

By Linda Skinner
LSRC President

I believe that life is full of surprises, if you're open to them. Why do I believe this to be true? Because a little over three years ago I would have never dreamed that I would be the president of the Lafayette Square Restoration Committee, much less living here in Lafayette Square, so close to downtown!

I was born in St. Louis city, but my parents quickly fled for the homes across the city-county line in Affton, like so many families were doing at the time. And when I had a family of my own, we moved further south to Mehlville. The city became a distant memory; a place where no one I knew lived, only a destination for events like Cardinals games or trips to the Zoo with my kids.

The years passed and eventually my husband, Steve, and I became empty nesters. The big house we bought for our blended family of eight was no longer needed. It was time to move on, but to where was the surprise that was coming my way.

Our children suggested we look at the city, especially since several of them had moved there to start their own families. Steve liked the idea, so our search began within the city limits. We decided that we would look for a neighborhood that had shops and restaurants we could walk to, a neighborhood that friends and family would enjoy visiting.

It was eye opening to see all these vibrant, beautiful neighborhoods in this city my parents were so eager to flee. Soulard and the Central West End were obvious possibilities, so we looked there first. But then my daughter suggested Lafayette Square, a neighborhood I honestly didn't know anything about.

The beauty of this neighborhood that would soon be our home shocked me. We were attracted to so many things — the history, the amazing architecture, the beautiful park, the restaurants with

delicious food — all within walking distance of every home in this small neighborhood. But the biggest attraction was yet to come.

While searching for the perfect home, one stood out above the rest and we bought it. We got rid of half our stuff and moved to the city. I have to admit that it was an adjustment for a county girl like me. City life is different than county life in a lot of ways, there are concessions to be made, but the benefits have far outweighed any negatives.

We weren't here long when we realized how lucky we were to be living here. The residents here are amazing; they truly put the "neighbor" in neighborhood. After living here only a few months, we knew more neighbors than all our years combined in our former neighborhoods.

Residents look out for each other and for their neighborhood. They take pride in their homes and the neighborhood as a whole. It is unbelievable the amount of volunteer hours that are spent making the neighborhood look beautiful for residents and visitors alike.

Many residents have been here since the 1970s and are the "pioneers" who revitalized Lafayette Square one home at a time. Us newbies are grateful to those who came before us, and we are excited to see young families move in after us. (My oldest daughter and her family moved here last September!) I often comment that it feels like a small town in the heart of the city.

Being open to this surprise move was one of the best decisions we ever made. And just to show you how it has come full circle for me, I am now living in the neighborhood my father played in when he was a child. I regularly take my grandkids to look at the ducks in the same lake their great-grandpa used to ice skate on. I feel like I've come home.

So my parting advice for you is to be open to the unexpected; you won't regret it.

May safety tip

A good way to thwart car break-ins is to place your car keys on the nightstand by your bed. If you hear anything suspicious outside, just hit the "panic" button on your key fob, the car alarm

will sound and scare off the potential car thief.

Granted, you may wake a neighbor or two, but they will be grateful if the thief was heading to their car next.

**LAFAYETTE SQUARE
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Post card courtesy of Carolyn Willmore

Discover where this popular water feature was located in Lafayette Park.

Historic tours in full swing

By Carolyn Willmore
Lafayette Square

Join knowledgeable Lafayette Park Conservancy docents for a historic walking tour of Lafayette Park. The next tour is at 2 p.m. June 13. Meet your guide in front of the Park House, located inside the park at the corner of Mississippi and Lafayette. The walking tour will last about one hour and is limited to 25 people. The cost of the tour is \$5 per person.

All proceeds go to the Lafayette Park Conservancy and will be used to restore and enhance the park. Currently, the

LPC is working to restore the Benton Statue, the Revolutionary War cannons, the Boat House and the deteriorating pathways, and working on improving the park's landscaping.

The Lafayette Park Conservancy also offers your organization docent-guided tours of the park. If you are unable to come to the park, the LPC will bring a slide presentation on the fascinating history of Lafayette Park to your meeting.

To register for the June walking tour of Lafayette Park, or to arrange a private tour or program for your organization, call 772-5724, option 5, or visit www.lafayettepark.org.

Get connected!

There are lots of ways to get connected with your neighbors in Lafayette Square:

In person — Neighborhood meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m. in the basement of the Lafayette Park United Methodist Church, located at the corner of Lafayette and Missouri avenues. Meeting agendas and minutes are located on the Lafayette Square Restoration Committee site of SquareShare.

By e-mail — Lafayette Square has a group on Yahoo. For a link to join, visit www.lafayettesquare.org. You will need a Yahoo e-mail address to join, but you can use your own e-mail address to send and

receive messages.

By web — SquareShare is the collaborative gateway (website) for Lafayette Square. Every resident or business owner can contribute. Visit www.lafayettesquare.org for a link. To register, send an e-mail to helpdesk@lafayettesqr.com with your name, address and preferred e-mail address.

By print — All residents are invited to submit articles to be published in the *Marquis*, space permitting. Registered users can submit articles and photos via SquareShare on the News Desk tab, or you can e-mail them directly to newsdesk@lafayettesqr.com.

Neighborhood directory

The Lafayette Square Neighborhood Directory will be published in July, and we need your help to ensure that we have your correct information. Please visit www.lafayettesquare.org for a link to SquareShare. Registered users can update their phone number and address, or they can choose to opt out of the directory. If you have not registered, please send an e-mail to helpdesk@lafayettesqr.com with your name, address and preferred e-mail address.



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Plenty on tap for library this summer

Once again it's summer and time to read all those books you've been meaning to get to! Pageturners, our adult summer reading club, kicked off in May and is already going strong. The children and teen book clubs start June 5.

Along with our regular story times, crafts and movies, Barr Library has a ton of amazing programs for kids this summer. These include: Nitro Joe and his explosive science from 2 to 3 p.m. June 8;

Juggling with Krista from 2 to 3 p.m. July 7; Mother Goose stories presented by Piwacket Theater from 4 to 5 p.m. July 15; and a family field trip night to The Magic House from 6 to 8:45 p.m. July 21 (more details to follow)! Most programs are free of charge, although some require advance registration. Stay tuned to the *Marquis* and the St. Louis Public Library newsletter for more information or contact Barr Library at 771-7040 for details.

Barr Branch Public Library upcoming events

JUNE

- | | |
|--|--|
| 3 GED Paths to Success. Adults. 4-6 p.m. | 15 Creative Kids: Mineral Mosaics. 4-5 p.m. Grades K-12. |
| 5 Summer reading club begins! Sign up all day long. Kids. | 17 GED Paths to Success. Adults. 4-6 p.m. Family Movie: <i>Toy Story</i> . 4-6 p.m. Families. |
| 7 Storytime. Stories, songs and more. Groups of five or more register in advance. Toddler/preschool. 11-11:30 a.m. Summer Reading Club Kick-off Party. Come and make a splash at this pirate kick-off party. 2-4 p.m. Families. | 21 Creative Kids: Paper Fans. Beat the heat with your custom-made fan. 2-3 p.m. Grades K-6. |
| 8 It's a Gas. Nitro Joe's explosive science will amaze you. 2-3 p.m. Grades K-5/families. PAID PROGRAM. | 22 Sick Shades. Fashion a pair of designer sunglasses. 4-5 p.m. Grades 6-12. |
| 9 Got Game? Have fun with Xbox 360 and Wii games at your library. 4-6 p.m. Grades 5-12. | 24 GED Paths to Success. Adults. 4-6 p.m. |
| 10 GED Paths to Success. Adults. 4-6 p.m. | 26 Movies that Rock/Movies that Mock: <i>Zelig</i> . Two Saturdays a month, we will show music documentaries or mockumentaries. 3-5 p.m. Adults. |
| 12 Movies that Rock/Movies that Mock: <i>No Direction Home</i> . Two Saturdays a month, we will show music documentaries or mockumentaries. 3-5 p.m. Adults. | |

All events take place at the Barr Branch of the St. Louis Public Library, 1701 S. Jefferson Ave. For hours or more information call 771-7040.



Dave Moore photo

Play ball!

St. Louis Perfectos player Fred "Molasses" Lathan swings for a hit during the 2008 Shepard Barclay Vintage Base Ball Festival in Lafayette Park. The Perfectos and Cyclones will be hosting several teams from out of town during this year's festival on June 5 and 6. For more information, including game times, go to www.GSLBBHS.org.





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Historic plaques leave their mark on Square

By John Bishop
Lafayette Square

Over the last several months a group of residents has been working to bring Lafayette Square's history to life. They are developing a plan to put bronze historic plaques in the sidewalks and create an audio tour to be downloaded on today's smartphones.

The committee members are Pat Barber, Andy Ecker, Jason Bittle, Tim Gore, Tom Keay, April Breeden, Crystal Peairs, Jeff Jensen and John Bishop.

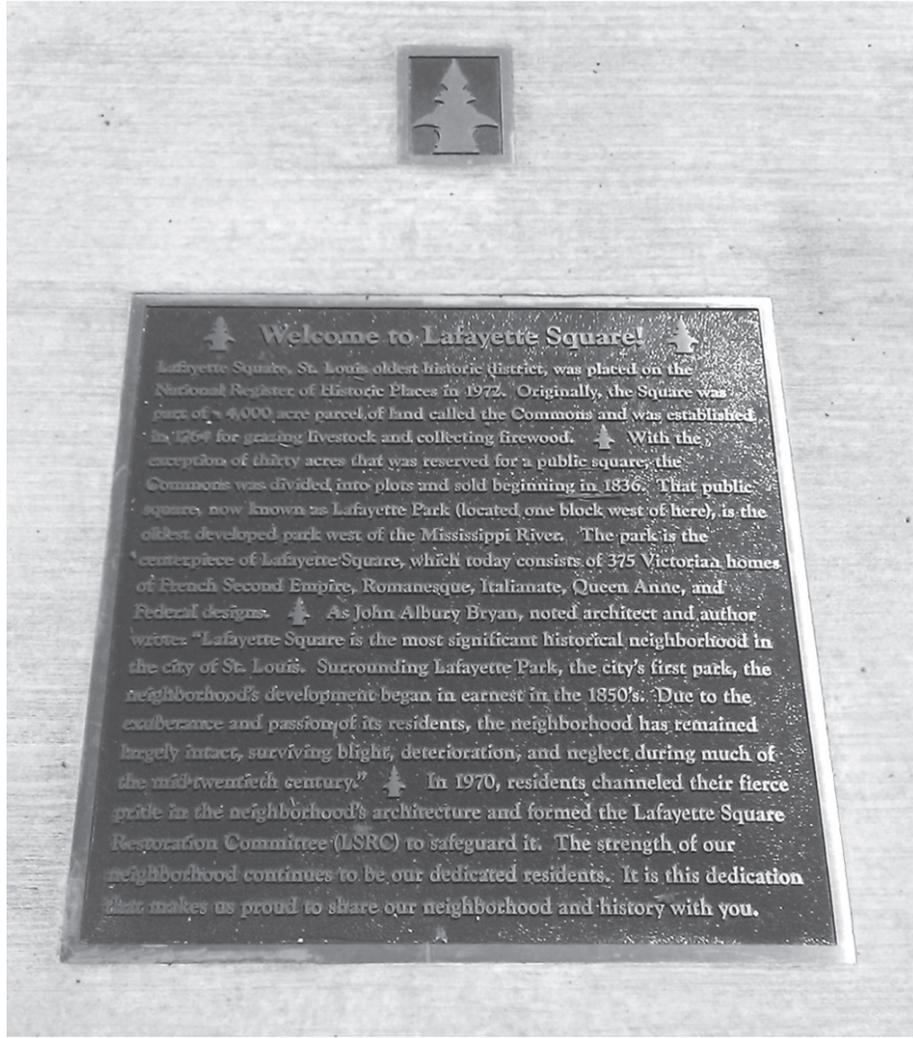
The first plaque is located in the Plaza near SqWires Restaurant and includes an overview of the history of Lafayette Square. It also compliments the many past and present residents who have made the LSRC a strong neighborhood association and the Square such a special place to live. The plaque reads:

"Welcome to Lafayette Square!

"Lafayette Square, St. Louis oldest historic district, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972. Originally, the Square was part of a 4,000-acre parcel of land called the Commons and was established in 1764 for grazing livestock and collecting firewood.

"With the exception of 30 acres that were reserved for a public square, the Commons was divided into plots and sold beginning in 1836. That public square, now known as Lafayette Park (located one block west of here), is the oldest developed park west of the Mississippi River. The park is the centerpiece of Lafayette Square, which today consists of 375 Victorian homes of French Second Empire, Romanesque, Italianate, Queen Anne and Federal designs.

"As John Albury Bryan, noted architect and author, wrote: 'Lafayette Square is the most significant historical neighbor-



Above is the first of a planned 30 historic plaques that will be placed in the sidewalks around Lafayette Square.

hood in the city of St. Louis. Surrounding Lafayette Park, the city's first park, the neighborhood's development began in earnest in the 1850's. Due to the exuberance and passion of its residents, the neighborhood has remained largely intact, surviving blight, deterioration, and neglect during much of the mid-20th century.'

"In 1970, residents channeled their fierce pride in the neighborhood's architecture and formed the Lafayette Square Restoration Committee (LSRC) to safeguard it. The strength of our neighborhood continues to be our dedicated residents. It is this dedication that makes us proud to share our neighborhood and

history with you."

Over the next five years we will embed roughly 30 plaques into the sidewalks around the Square to highlight the historical information about our architecture, the Great Tornado, famous residents, characteristics of individual houses and more.

The largest plaque will be the signature piece for Lafayette Square. It will be a timeline of the significant U.S., St. Louis city and Lafayette Square historic events from the 1700s to the present. For example: In 1969 Neil Armstrong lands on the moon; In 1962 construction for the Gateway Arch begins; In 1972 Lafayette Square is placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The new timeline plaque will be located at the corner of Park and Mississippi avenues in front of Frontenac Cleaners. The goal is to bump out that area to accommodate the plaque and slow down the traffic entering the Lafayette Square business district without losing any parking spaces. The timeline plaque will be in the sidewalk by the end of October.

The committee's next project will be a downloadable audio tour about our neighborhood. We will roll it out in segments. The first couple of segments will be completed by the end of the year and then we will continue to add more segments over the next several years. The first segments will include the highlights of the Park itself and a look at what life was like in the Square in the 1850s.

Future audio tour segments will include the history of the individual residents and houses on Mississippi, Park and Lafayette avenues, and a discussion of the Great Tornado.

Thank you for coming to this year's House Tour. We hope you visit our historic neighborhood again to see our historic plaques.

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28 Benton Pl. Spectacular renovation of Historic 3-Sty Manse w/ 3 car garage & rental townhouse. \$850,000
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1814 Kennett Pl. Restored 3 story with many historic details plus garage. \$549,900
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1421 Dolman Charming 2-story home w/ 2 Br, 1.5 bath. Big yard. \$225,000
3947 Shenandoah 3 bedrm, 2.5 ba townhouse, ALL redone! Newer everything \$229,900
1505 Missouri 1B Stunning 1st fl condo in the Abbey on the Park. 2 BR, 2 bath \$249,900
2012 James St. 3 Sty completely rehabbed in '07 features 3 bdrms/2.5ba. Tax Abated thru 2015
2020 Washington 2 br, 2 ba condo with huge patio + gar \$199,000
1219 Barton #A light/open 1st fl condo. Convenient to all of Souldard. Tax Abated



2335 Whittemore Pl.



3408 Longfellow

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7351 Chamberlain - U.City, 3 bdrm, 1.5 bath plus main flr fam rm & garage \$ 235,000
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House Tour from page 1

and use as a storage room, a dedicated team of church members has restored the bowling alley to operational conditions and their hard work will be on display during this year's tour.

In addition to the homes and gardens on tour, the weekend will feature many events and activities. Free carriage and trolley rides will be offered both days, providing weary visitors a chance to relax and take in the neighborhood. The antiques on the Park sale will feature more than 60 antique vendors from all over the region. The Artisans of Lafayette Square will again be displaying and selling their locally inspired and created art and other wares.

Lafayette Square now features two vintage base ball teams — the Perfectos and the Cyclones. Both will be playing in the annual Shepherd Barclay Vintage Base Ball Festival, which is governed by 1860 rules.

Chaumette Winery of Ste. Genevieve will again host a wine tasting near the Mississippi and Lafayette entrance to the park. The Lafayette Park Conservancy will also be holding its third annual plant sale at this corner.

The first summer concert of the year will feature the Power Play Band. The concert begins at 6 p.m. on June 5 at the Betsy Cook Pavilion. The concert is free, thanks to the continued support of the Arts Council of Lafayette Park through your generous donations.

Last but not least, be sure to stop by



Above: 1834 Lafayette Ave.
At right: 2118 Lafayette Ave.
Below left: 1831 Kennett

our merchandise booth at the end of the tour to pick up that perfect souvenir to remember your tour experience. Tickets for this year's tour are \$20 on the days of the tour, and are available at the corner of Lafayette and Mississippi avenues. The spring tour represents the largest annual fundraiser for the Lafayette Square Restoration Committee, which is devoted to the preservation and continuous improvement of the Lafayette Square neighborhood.

On behalf of the LSRC, I would like to thank this year's tour sponsors:

Victorian: Wells Fargo Advisors

Carriage: AmerenUE; BSI Constructors Inc.; Church of Scientology of Missouri; Jon Ritter and Hannah Krigman; Meyerkord, Rineberg & Graham, LLC

Trolley: Glenn Eckert Insurance Agency

Tour Friends: 90 Degrees West; Alderwoman Phyllis Young; AT&T; Butler's Pantry; Chuck Jung, RE/MAX Gold; Gardenwalk Massage Therapy; Joanie's Pizzeria; 1111 Mississippi; Laclede Gas Company; Linhardt Chiropractic Health Services; Looking Glass Designs; Midwest Petroleum Company; Missouri Valley Conference; Ploch Financial Services Inc.; RE/MAX Results – Merry Dahms & Judi Chapnick; Scott Holdridge, State Farm Agency, LLC; Trova



Special Donations: SqWires Restaurant (post-tour party); Carlos Zamora (poster and advertising design); St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department; Walter Knoll Florist (flowers for tour homes)

Special thanks to the hundreds of volunteers and residents who have given up their free time in order to beautify Lafayette Park and neighborhood public spaces this spring.

Finally, thanks to all of the Lafayette Square residents and friends of the neighborhood who have devoted your time and

effort to make this year's tour yet another success. This includes, of course, this year's House Tour Committee and the homeowners who have graciously opened their doors for us.

I look forward to seeing all of our guests on June 5 and 6 for the 41st annual Lafayette Square Spring House and Garden Tour. Until then, please check out our Facebook page for more tour previews. Call me at 610-7103 if you would like to volunteer to assist with the tour.

Legislative session limps to an end, with few bills passed

By Jeanette Mott Oxford
59th District State Representative

Much has been written about the low volume of legislation passed during the 2010 legislative session. The number of bills filed in the House was 1,321, but only 74 of these became "Truly Agreed and Finally Passed" (approved by both the House and Senate and sent to the governor for signature or veto). Only 32 Senate bills made it all the way through the process, but even more importantly, few of the bills we debated were of major consequence. Many were non-binding resolutions, asking Congress to rein in President Obama and the U.S. Congress on everything from environmental protection to healthcare to "unfunded mandates." Some reporters and legislators saw these resolutions as little more than an "appetizer" for the fall elections. With our states' high unemployment, foreclosure crisis and other very real problems, I considered this inexcusable.

"The Missouri Constitution requires the general assembly to do only one thing — pass the state budget — and this year that's basically all it did," said House Minority Leader Paul LeVota of Independence at the session-ending press conference. "From the outset, those

setting the agenda for debate made inconsequential non-binding resolutions to Congress their top priority. They set out to do nothing and got their wish — a non-binding legislative session that produced little of substance."

My biggest disappointment of the session was the deep budget cuts to essential health, mental health and social service programs, as well as to public education. There were many common-sense ways we could have raised revenue to prevent these cuts, but House and Senate leadership were unwilling to give these proposals serious consideration. Gov. Jay Nixon did press for tax credit reforms, and that prompted some public discussion. I would have liked to see him take a more public role around other revenue-generating strategies: raising the tobacco tax to closer to the national average (we are now last in the nation); progressive income tax reform; and/or the "Mainstreet Protection Act" (to collect sales tax on internet sales; our failure to do so is disadvantaging bricks-and-mortar businesses here in Missouri).

The session's few accomplishments included passing a bill to require state-regulated insurance companies to provide coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of children with autism and enacting legis-

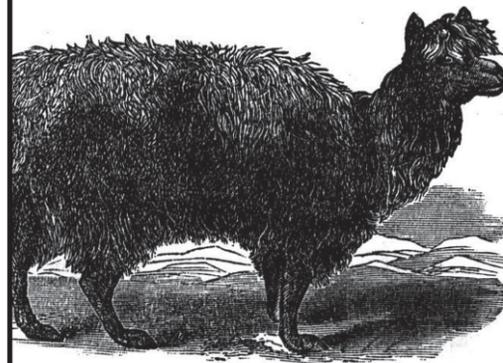
lation to crack down on repeat drunken drivers. Lawmakers also approved modest improvements to state ethics laws, but since the bill failed to include several key reforms such as reinstating campaign contribution and banning elected officials from simultaneously working as paid political consultants, I voted no. I want *real* ethics reform, not "reform-lite," as one GOP colleague called it.

I had a small, but important victory on May 13 when the General Assembly "truly agreed and finally passed" a version

of Senate Bill 583 containing language that I had filed as a bill. This reform closed a loophole that had allowed some health insurance companies to refuse to cover adopted children. I couldn't get a hearing on the bill in 2009 since I'm in the minority party, but this year I recruited a majority party member to be lead sponsor, and we managed to get the language onto several bills including one that finally passed! I am so pleased for my constituents who were hurt by this loophole and glad to have found a bi-partisan way to get the job done.

Wild llama terrorizes Lafayette Park

What? It could happen.



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Lafayette Square was once home to movie houses

By Tom Keay
Lafayette Square

As a long-time resident of Lafayette Square, I have always been curious about our long-gone neighborhood movie houses.

I have discovered that the earliest "moving pictures" in what we know as Lafayette Square were storefront attractions identified as "nickelodeons." They were located less than a block apart at 1709 Park Ave. (presently Prea Signature Realty) and 1915 Park Ave. (now Bailey's Chocolate Bar). They were both in operation by 1908 and probably offered the earliest opportunity for local residents to view this new type of entertainment.

While doing research for this article at the downtown public library, the librarian sat me down beside Mr. Jerry Alexander. What a stroke of luck for me! Mr. Alexander is THE authority on the history of St. Louis movie houses.

He kindly provided me with a wealth of new "movie information," and abandoned his own research to assist me. Mr. Alexander shared information on early theaters in the neighborhood. One theater existed at Jefferson Avenue and Hickory Street, appropriately named The Hickory, and another, The 18th Street, located at Park Avenue and 18th Street. The latter was possibly an extension of the older nickelodeon at 1709 Park Ave. All were early venues and had disappeared by the 1920s.

Nearly every St. Louis neighborhood had one or more single-screen movie house. Movies in those days served as major sources of entertainment and escape. Often these neighborhood theaters served as centers of the community, places where friends and neighbors



Tom Keay photo

The former New Merry Widow theater stands at Chouteau and 18th Street and Truman Parkway. Since the theater closed in 1956, the building has served as a trucking garage and headquarters for a hardwood company; today it's owned by AmerenUE.

could meet and socialize and where younger people could "hang out."

Two of "our" nearby venues were The Lafayette at 1643 S. Jefferson Ave. and Merry Widow at 1539 Chouteau and 18th Street. Keep in mind that our neighborhood had become a working class residential area in the early 20th century, and residents did not identify themselves as living in "Lafayette Square" — that term was long extinct. They either considered themselves as part of the "near south side" or the "Lafayette Park neighborhood." The boundaries we consider as defining our historic district were nonexistent.

The Lafayette was a beautiful little theater that opened around 1909. It anchored the commercial block on the west side of South Jefferson between Park and Lafayette avenues. What a

gem it was! The façade was particularly unique as it was covered with beautiful black marble. Inside, two small crystal chandeliers lighted the elaborate lobby. It had a seating capacity of 756 with a balcony seating 100. The architect was believed to be G. P. Stueal.

The Lafayette provided nearly 50 years of motion picture entertainment. In the first week of October 1935, *Charlie Chan in London* was playing as part of a double feature, and in an October 1940 *Post-Dispatch* movie ad, the Lafayette was enticing local moviegoers with "Rodeo Night," a double feature of Gene Autry in *Rancho Grande* and Johnny King in *Range Busters*.

Not always did newspapers print the theater's listings of its attractions. If you lived nearby you kept up with this major source of local entertainment; you knew

what was playing and what the coming attractions might be. After all, the only real competition was radio!

The Lafayette closed in 1957, and the building became the home of the Gateway Temple Church until its move in the 1960s to Lafayette and Mississippi avenues (now Mississippi Place). I recall the building, as it was in the early 1970s, rather forlorn and derelict, its name not even remembered. Urban renewal arrived in the early 1970s and the entire block was razed to make way for a super-market and mall complex, which is now also abandoned.

The first of four motion picture theaters to bear the same name opened in 1906 on the northeastern edge of our neighborhood. All would be operated in a space of two blocks on Chouteau Avenue. All bore the title Merry Widow, probably named after the Franz Lehr operetta.

The original Merry Widow was a 90-seat nickelodeon located at the corner of Chouteau and Dillon. An article in *Boxoffice Magazine*, Aug. 7, 1943, reported a naming contest won by Lester Bona who received an ice cream cone and \$5 for his winning choice. Bona later became a ticket-taker and regular singer on amateur nights, and as an adult he managed Warner Brothers movie distributions in St. Louis.

A few years later the Hayes brothers opened a second Merry Widow a few blocks west on Chouteau. It seated 250 patrons and advertised the latest in projection equipment and screen (no talkies yet).

In 1916, the third Merry Widow to bear the name opened under the management of John P. Murphy. This Merry Widow operated in the Concordia

Continued on facing page

COUNTING CHICKENS

The Secrets of Raising 8 Kids (and 4 hens) in the City

by Jeff Fister



Jeff Fister, publisher of the West End Word, has written a new book that draws from his newspaper column about raising a big family — and chickens — in a 112-year-old house in the Central West End.

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From previous page
Club Hall at 1435 Chouteau. It seated 435 patrons. Murphy sold out to Sam Komm in the late 1930s. Komm, owner of a circuit of St. Louis theaters, constructed a new building at 1539 Chouteau Ave.

The New Merry Widow debuted on March 21, 1942. A *Boxoffice Magazine* article described the new theater, "It has about 800 seats and is among the city's most modern and best equipped neighborhood show... close to a big federal housing project opened within the last year and populated by workers in local war industries."

Moviegoers entered the New Merry Widow through a circular lobby with a terrazzo floor. The auditorium ceiling boasted two small chandeliers and draped walls. According to James Grebe of the St. Louis Organ Society, this was the only theater in town equipped with a Wurlitzer organ especially designed for use in small theaters. Tickets cost 15 cents plus tax.

A former resident of LaSalle Street, who lived about a block from the theater, remembered how popular the New Merry Widow was during the war years of the 1940s. She recalled the devastating news her family received reporting her brother as missing in action on the European front. About a week later she and her sister were at the New Merry Widow. The *Movietone News*

preceded the feature and there on screen at a Red Cross Hospital was her brother, alive and recuperating, a memory about the little neighborhood theater she will always remember.

Lafayette Square resident Steve Pillow recalled that at age 4 in the early 1950s, he and his older brother shined shoes in front of the theater at a time when soldiers changing trains at Union Station during the Korean War patronized it.

Neighborhood deterioration was setting in by the 1950s. Employee William Cummins, whose official

title was usher, spent most of his time breaking up fights and throwing people out of the theater. There was a serious fire in 1947. When the theater reopened, it was simply the Merry Widow again. It finally closed in May 1956.

The former theater building has since served as a trucking garage and more recently as the headquarters of Hibdon Hardwood Company. Presently AmerenUE owns the building.

The shell of the New Merry Widow theater still stands at Chouteau and 18th Street and Truman Parkway. While the marquee is long gone, the building is still recognizable for its original purpose. It remains the only former movie theater near the historic district, once so popular to residents of Lafayette Square of another time and place.

Not always did newspapers print the theater's listings of its attractions. If you lived nearby you kept up with this major source of local entertainment; you knew what was playing and what the coming attractions might be. After all, the only real competition was radio!

Upcoming events in the Square

- June 5 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Home Garden Tour
10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Lafayette Park Conservancy Plant Sale
10 a.m. Park House Gazebo Dedication
6 to 9 p.m. Concert — Power Play Band
- June 6 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Home and Garden Tour
10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Lafayette Park Conservancy Plant Sale
- June 19 6 to 9 p.m. Concert — Pepperland
- July 3 6 to 9 p.m. Concert — Ralph Butler Band
- July 10 7 p.m. Movie in the Park
- July 17 6 to 9 p.m. Concert — BJ Allen and Blue Voodoo
- July 31 6 to 9 p.m. Concert — Anita Rosamond
- Aug. 14 6 to 9 p.m. Concert — Big Bamou
- Aug. 28 6 to 9 p.m. Concert — The Wild, Cool and Swingin' Orchestra
- Sept. 11 6 to 9 p.m. Concert — Javier Mendoza
- Sept. 18 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Urban Health Fair and Market
6 p.m. Movie in the Park

Visit www.lafayettesquare.org for more information



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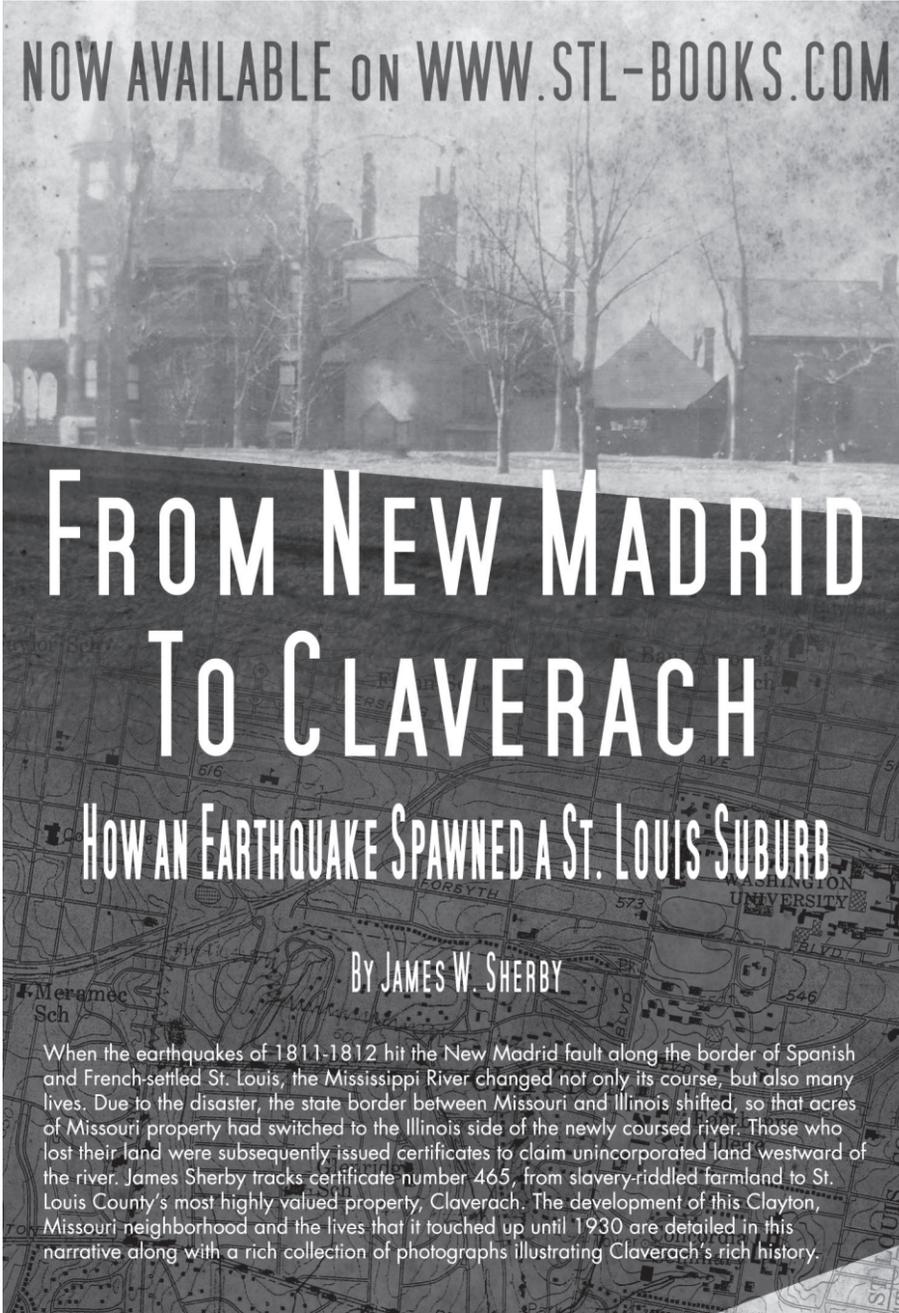
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**FROM NEW MADRID
TO CLAVERACH**
HOW AN EARTHQUAKE SPAWNED A ST. LOUIS SUBURB

By JAMES W. SHERBY

When the earthquakes of 1811-1812 hit the New Madrid fault along the border of Spanish and French-settled St. Louis, the Mississippi River changed not only its course, but also many lives. Due to the disaster, the state border between Missouri and Illinois shifted, so that acres of Missouri property had switched to the Illinois side of the newly coursed river. Those who lost their land were subsequently issued certificates to claim unincorporated land westward of the river. James Sherby tracks certificate number 465, from slavery-riddled farmland to St. Louis County's most highly valued property, Claverach. The development of this Clayton, Missouri neighborhood and the lives that it touched up until 1930 are detailed in this narrative along with a rich collection of photographs illustrating Claverach's rich history.

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May LSRC general membership meeting minutes

MINUTES FOR MAY 11, 2010 LSRC GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The meeting was held at Lafayette Park United Methodist Church with approximately 50 residents in attendance. President Linda Skinner called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. A motion was made, seconded and passed to accept the April 2010 meeting minutes.

Committee reports

Problem properties update — Don Owens and group are currently focused on five problem properties in the neighborhood with the potential to utilize the court system for a proper resolution.

Security/mobile patrol — \$3,175 was raised in the recent progressive dinner, which is designated for the new police substation on Park Avenue. The substation phone number is 588-8582. Call 911 first, then call the substation in the case of an emergency. We are one of 30 finalists in a national program sponsored by MetLife. The focus is on neighborhoods that have proactive relationships with their police departments. The award is a \$25,000 grant to improve neighborhood security. The Victim Advocates, trained volunteers to help with victims of crime, is up and running. Contact Mike Petetit for more information at 588-9004.

April crime update — Crime increased the first three weeks of April. Three individuals were arrested in April with alleged ties to the recent crime in the neighborhood. Crime is currently down in May. Leave porch lights on for additional

lighting. Call the Citizens Service Bureau (622-4800) if you see street lights out. Copper thefts are on the rise. We need more people going out on night patrol. Continue to call 911 with ANYTHING suspicious or out of the ordinary.

Circuit Attorney's office — Brian Sanger gave an update on the three individuals arrested in April. The Hot Block (e.g. no tolerance) designation has been extended another six months.

Charter school update — Robin Wahby, the mayor's official charter school liaison, spoke. If you would like to work on helping to find suitable options for a charter school supporting our neighborhood contact her at 622-3746 or wahbyr@stlouiscity.com.

Community Affairs — Steve Skinner reported that house tour tickets and merchandise will be able to be purchased on line. Additional info for the neighborhood can be found on SquareShare — go to www.lafayettesquare.org and follow the links.

Development — J. Watson Scott is finalizing proposed changes to the historic code. Proposed changes can be viewed at www.lafayettesquare.org. A separate website will be up and running shortly, focused only the historic code. It will be reviewed once again in a public meeting at the Barr Branch Library in the near future (date pending). It will be voted upon during the public meeting. Cultural Resources and the Commission will review the plan if it is passed by majority rule at the neighborhood meeting and finally go the Board of Alderman for final approval.

Projects — Houston Smith reviewed details on the proposed entrance features

throughout the neighborhood. The primary function of the entrance features is as a traffic-calming measure. A public meeting on a Saturday is pending.

Finance — Income is at 6.3 percent of budget and expenses are at 20 percent of budget. There is \$44,760 in the unreserved fund balance. A motion was made by J. Watson Scott to approve \$999.99 to mount and secure the bust of Lafayette on a new pedestal. The motion was seconded and approved by the membership.

House Tour — Ian Stallman, tour chairman, is looking for volunteers for tour day.

Lafayette Park Conservancy — Bob Bischoff reported that they have raised \$2,245 toward the \$3,000 challenge grant for the rock garden irrigation system. The plans are to have a new roof on the boat-house by the end of summer.

Beautification — Linda Weiner will be planting marigolds and dianthus from Operation Brightside on Sunday morning in the medians. Contact her at 621-7071 on how to assist in neighborhood beautification.

Arts Council — Jennifer Weston reported that the summer movies in the park will be on July 10 and Sept. 18. Movies and charity partners are pending. More info to be posted on SquareShare (sign up via www.lafayettesquare.org) Questions, contact Jennifer at 256-1786.

Neighborhood yard sale — There will be a neighborhood yard sale on the morning of May 15 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Ads have been placed and signs in the neighborhood entrances will go up. You are responsible for signing your own street.

LSBA fundraiser — Reminder that from 5 to 8 p.m. May 20 is the LSBA fundraiser for security enhancements in the neighborhood. It will be held on the Plaza. Tickets are \$15. Neighborhood restaurants will have food and drink and there will be treasures to win in the silent auction. New coordinated banners will be going up on neighborhood businesses and in the plaza this summer.

Pride 5K run — St Louis Frontrunners is sponsoring the first Pride Run in Lafayette Square on June 26. Registration begins at 7 a.m. and the race starts at 8 a.m. For more info, visit www.stlouisfront-runners.org/pride5k.

Upcoming meetings and events

The neighborhood yard sale will take place at 8 a.m. May 15.

The Development Committee will meet at 7 p.m. May 18 at the Park House.

The LSBA security fundraiser will take place at 5 p.m. May 20 at the Plaza.

The LSRC Board of Directors will meet at 7 p.m. June 1 at the Park House.

The Park House gazebo will be dedicated at 10 a.m. June 5.

The first concert in the park of the summer will take place at 6 p.m. June 5 at the B. Cook Pavilion.

The LSRC general membership meeting will take place at 7 p.m. June 8 at Lafayette Park United Methodist Church.

President Linda Skinner adjourned the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

The after-meeting social was hosted by Glen Cole at 2139 Hickory. Many thanks to our host!

Respectfully submitted,
Jeff Jensen, membership secretary

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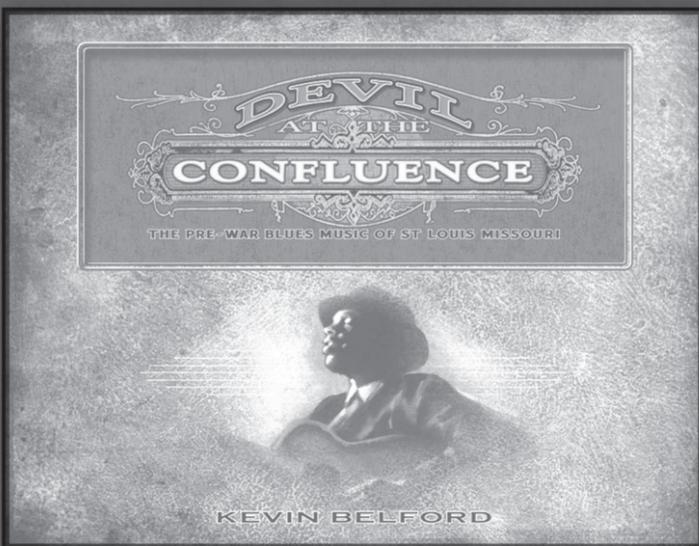
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By Kevin Belford**

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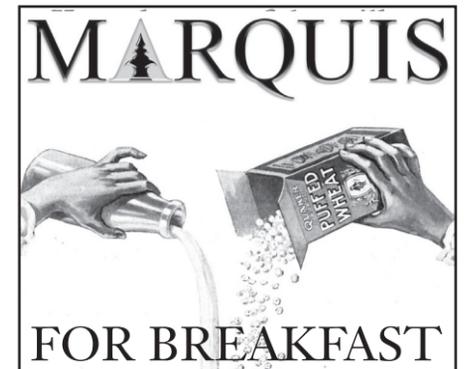
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**Lafayette Square Restoration
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2010 Membership Form**

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This donation is eligible for a corporate matching gift. (*Please submit a matching gift form from your company.)

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Stunning Restoration of this early 19th century home. No details left unfinished! 3 large bedrooms, 2.5 premium bathrooms, luxurious new kitchen and signature driveway with wrought iron fence.



1828 CHOUTEAU \$299,000
This Grand Victorian Lady has undergone an extensive renovation from top to bottom for most all of today's demands. Great living in Lafayette Square. Includes a wonderful gourmet kitchen, master suites, original woodwork, new wooden windows, marble and tile floors throughout and off-street parking.



3241 MISSOURI \$234,900
2 bedrooms upstairs and a 3rd bedroom on the lower level that can be used as an office. Chefs will love the kitchen with all stainless appliances! Everyone will love the quality and upgrades of this home.



5405 THOLOZAN \$229,900
Must see charming Tudor with gorgeous updates. 4 bedrooms, 2 car garage. Finished basement. Your Den! Great location.



5730 KINGSBURY \$209,000
Spacious 3 bedroom townhome in a great location near the History Museum at Forest Park in the Central West End. Master suite, finished lower walk-out level to a bi-level deck and hot tub area and garage!



2826 EADS \$221,000
Newer construction 4 bed/2.5 bath home with an attached 2 car garage. Fully maintained with updated kitchen, finished basement, gas burning fireplace, open family room off kitchen and master suite with Jacuzzi tub. So close to downtown.



13389 EAST LN. \$217,900
Light, contemporary South County home on cul-de-sac w/partially finished walk-out basement. Expansive deck which backs to wooded vista on a 1/4 acre lot. Impressive master bedroom suite w/double vanity, whirlpool tub & shower.



2348 RUTGER STREET \$200,000
Great renovated brick Victorian 3-family in Lafayette Square. All modern units! All apartments have great floor plans and come with all the appliances including washer and dryer in every unit!



2347 HICKORY \$195,900
Contemporary living in a historic Lafayette Square home. 2 bed/2 bath with newer kitchen featuring granite countertops, stainless appliances and loads of cabinets. Superb master suite. Large yard and side lot.



4148 CONNECTICUT ST. \$190,000
Unique treat with turrets, towers and more. Updated with new furnaces, roof, windows, plumbing, electrical, bathrooms, double lot, three separate units with living & dining rooms, large eat-in kitchens! One of a kind.



3912 RUSSELL BLVD. \$184,490
Classic historic Shaw Neighborhood home offering modern conveniences and historic character. This 3 story yellow brick beauty boasts 12' ceilings and four fireplaces, updated kitchen and a high efficiency furnace.



2243 JULES ST. \$159,900
Three bedroom, two bath townhouse, located in historic McKinley Heights. Walking distance to Lafayette Square and Souldard. Newer wood floors, granite counter tops, private fenced yard, 2nd floor back porch. Great value.



2320 HICKORY \$155,900
2 bedroom/1 bath in Lafayette Square. Hardwood floors on the entire first floor. Wood-burning fireplace in the living room and a great galley style kitchen. Offstreet parking



811 RUSSELL BLVD. \$150,000
Large two-family in the heart of Souldard. Upstairs is a two bedroom and two bath unit featuring a wood burning fireplace, deck, and washer/dryer. Main level is a spacious 1 bedroom, 1 bath apt. 2 car off-street parking.



9910 PARKWAY DR. \$150,000
This sprawling ranch is located on a hill overlooking the Missouri RIVER. Great new windows, updated kitchen, updated baths, and new carpet floors complete this 3 bedroom 2.5 bath home.



12192 PARKWOOD PL. \$149,900
Impressive rehab w/ architectural shingle roof, two car garage, hardwood flrs, thermal windows, spectacular kitchen w/granite countertops, & stainless steel appliances, remodeled Tuscan bath, partially finished lower level & delightful landscaped yard.



4060 OLEATHA \$137,900
Superdaring brick and stone bungalow on a cute street. Hardwood floors, stained glass, excellent colors, lots of updates. Has a 1 car garage and a large unfinished attic space that could easily be turned into additional bedrooms.



3828 CARONDELET \$80,000
Spectacularly preserved, kitchy-cute, 2 bedroom home. Newly refinished hardwood floors, vintage furnishings, new lighting and new paint throughout. Perfect for someone looking for an affordable home on a large lot.



326 TOWER GROVE DR. \$67,900
Very nice arts and crafts style home with white stucco and a pleasant front porch, updated kitchen, deck off master bedroom, 2 car garage. Partially finished basement with full bath. Whirlpool tub in main floor bath. Fenced yard.

CONDOMINIUM/CLUSTER HOMES



2347 PARK \$243,000
Elegant renovated townhome in a secluded private sanctuary. Great layout with an entry foyer, formal living and dining, eat in kitchen, spacious deck, family room, 3 large bedrooms, 2.5 premium baths and a 2 car garage.



2323 LOCUST #406 \$189,900
Spacious 2 bedroom loft with a contemporary flourish and awesome views of the city through large picture windows. This is urban living at its finest. Assigned garage parking and the best rooftop deck and pool in the city.



5367 PERSHING \$161,500
2 BR condo in the Pershing/DeBaliviere neighborhood with a 1 car garage space. Living room opens to large sunroom. Fully appliances kitchen with electric ranges and all appliances. Great location for walking to everything! Minutes from Forest Park Metro-link station.



1523 S. 10TH ST. \$104,000
REHABED TURNVEREIN CONDO. Garden level unit with walls of windows! Spacious floorplan with 2 bedrooms and 2 baths. Sharp new kitchen with new cabinetry, designer backsplash, breakfast bar and stainless steel appliances.



1426A DOLMAN \$125,000
Charming Lafayette Square condo w/hardwood floors, exposed brick wall, stainless steel appliances, granite countertops, 2 BR, 2 baths, large deck w/ great view of arch & downtown, garage parking. Excellent condo for an affordable price.

McAVOY REALTY • WE'RE STILL SELLING HOUSES!!!