New plans approved for Delaware-Virginia

By Pete Carroll

A new design for a $2-million office and residential building at the northwest corner of Delaware Ave. and Virginia St. has been approved by the city Preservation and Planning Boards and a construction start is forecast this fall.

The new design calls for nine apartments on the portion of the three-story building facing Virginia St., including studios, one and new-bedroom units. The building’s corner at the intersection will feature a glass tower.

The new design for the 20,000-square-foot building is more traditional than plans approved in a split vote by the Preservation board last September. The exterior will be brick and terracotta, Karl Frizlen, architect for the developer, Scott S. Croce, told the Planning Board July 17.

The board approved the plans although the Allentown Association asked that a decision be deferred until the Association could review the plans.

Plans for converting the 1860s carriage house to three 850-square-foot apartments were approved by the Preservation Board Aug. 9.

Plans call for two new doors and two new windows on the east side of the carriage house.

The site was the home of Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain) and his bride in 1870-71. The house was destroyed by fire in 1963 and was subsequently the site of the Cloister restaurant.

The carriage house, occupying the northwest part of the site on Holloway Alley, is the only portion of the Mark Twain home still standing. A driveway from Delaware Ave. to Holloway Alley will allow part of the carriage house to be visible from Delaware Ave.

“Parking is tucked away underneath the building,” Karl Frizlen said.

There will be three garages on the Virginia St. side of the main building, 11 car ports on the rear side of the main building, and eight parking spaces around the carriage house.

In other preservation news:

The Funky Monkey bar at 20 Allen St. received permission from the city for use of its patio with no smoking or outdoor music after 11 p.m. weeknights and midnight weekends, and a dance license.

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First Fridays enhanced by collaboration with other groups

By Barbara Hart

The Aug. 3 First Friday brought new possibilities and excitement to Allentown as the Greater Allentown Galleries Association (GAGA) collaborated with GO Buffalo and the Infringement Festival to present "Artists and Cyclists."

Allen St. was closed between Franklin St. and Delaware Ave. so that cyclists could freely and safely try out GO Buffalo’s new Bike Share bike, as well as cycle along the First Fridays gallery path for our usual FF receptions. Local artisans were also on tap with sidewalk tables and imaginative wares. The event burst to life when the 12/8 Path Band began a roving brass and percussion performance. It was a great night, with over 300 people in attendance. Organizers hope to repeat the event next year.

Look for more fun street events, as well as the increased participation of local businesses and restaurants as First Fridays continues to grow. Autumn First Fridays will be Sept. 7, Oct. 5, Nov. 2. Each month, we publish a schedule of activities on our web page: www.firstfridaysallentown.com. Don’t miss these opportunities to enjoy the rich culture of our area: free gallery openings, live music, shopping, and more.

Barbara Hart is Greater Allentown Galleries Association chairperson and an Allentown Association vice president.

First Church plans to stay, lease some space and seek grants.

First Presbyterian Church has decided to focus on continuing in its own building. The church, Buffalo’s oldest and celebrating its 200th anniversary this year, had considered earlier this year options to vacate its landmark sanctuary on Symphony Circle.

By leasing some space to outside organizations, the church hopes to be able to continue to maintain and occupy the building, said Christina Trachtenberg, church business manager. The church is also seeking grants to restore and maintain the building. It has received a $3,000 grant from the New York Landmarks Conservancy to develop a restoration plan for the tower, roof and portions of the exterior. The Romanesque Revival structure, designed by E. B. Green and William Wick and completed in the 1890s, is on the National Register of historic sites.
Secrets 2012, with an exciting range of sites, is Sept. 15

By Elizabeth Licata

With a starting point at the magnificent Twentieth Century Club, the decades-old home tour that has become one of Allentown’s signature events will be held Sept. 15 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Over the years, Secrets has evolved to include apartment buildings, non-profits, offices, and other commercial buildings as well as private residences.

Participants in the tour get a rare glimpse of the interior of historic structures, instead of just an exterior walking tour, which is what is usually offered. The Twentieth Century Club at 595 Delaware Ave. is the starting point and headquarters for the tour. Participants may buy tickets if they have not already done so and pick up their tour booklets. They can also sign up for a guided tour of the E.B. Green-designed TCC, which just received National Landmark status. The Twentieth Century Club contains, among many other details, a central court with ionic columns and leaded glass skylights, a music room with murals by Alice Glenny, an oval ballroom with an adjoining loggia, and several beautifully-appointed smaller reception rooms. It is one of Buffalo's least-seen treasures, and a rare opportunity for Secrets tickets holders, as the Club is rarely opened for any kind of tour.

As always, a free wine tasting will be held at the Hamlin House on Franklin during the tour.

Tickets for Secrets can be purchased through Tickets.com, at the Quaker Bonnet at 175 Allen St. and through the Allentown.org website. Tickets are $20 in advance and $25 the day of the event. The Secrets committee is led by co-chairs Elizabeth Licata and Sandra Sieminski, with help from Jonathan White, Gretchan Grobe, and Melissa Dayton. Visit Allentown.org for more information.

Elizabeth Licata is a former Allentown Association president.

Annual meeting is Oct. 9

The Allentown Association’s annual meeting will be Oct. 9 at 7 p.m. in the Allendale Theater, 203 Allen St., preceded by a social hour with light refreshments in the theater lobby at 6 p.m.

Three new businesses open, another to come

New businesses in Allentown:
—Buffalo Cakery, offering baked goods, was opened in June by Justina and Brian Adams at 94 Elmwood Ave. at Allen St. Open Tuesday to Thursday noon to 8, Friday, noon to 9, Sunday, noon to 6. Call 882-2211, see www.thebuffalocakery.com.

—Coming Home Buffalo Center for Holistics and Arts, 140 Elmwood Ave., was opened by Toni Melvuk in June, offerings art, jewelry and other products, massage therapy, hypnotism, call 884-2626, email, chb@cominghomebuffalo.com.

—Elmwood Beverage Center has been opened at 161 Elmwood Ave., beer and soft drinks, by Lahki Singh, owner of adjacent Elmwood Liquors. Dave Salatka is manager.

Chris Connolly hopes to open Madonna’s Italian Restaurant and Wine Bar at 488 Franklin St., at Allen St., in October.
Elmwood Village Charter School is ready to move to the former School 36 at Days Park and Cottage St. on Sept. 4 when school reopens for its 300 youngsters in kindergarten through eighth grade.

Autism Services Inc., a state-funded non-profit organization, plans to sublease the building at 124 Elmwood Ave. which Elmwood Village School is vacating, its executive director, Veronica Federiconi said. The program will enroll 30 autistic young people to start, she said. The agency provides care and education for autistic children in Williamsville and adults in North Buffalo.

As The Neighbor went to press, contractors were preparing the Days Park building for the school to move in, said John Sheffield, Elmwood Village School director.

The school hopes to reach an agreement with the Days Park Block Club to permit use of the school playground after school hours, but with it locked at night, he added,

Elmwood Village School purchased the former School 36 from the city in 2011. It was built in 1957 and closed in 2009 as a Buffalo public school. The school opened in Allentown in the former Telephone Building leased from Savarino Construction Services Corp.


On May 10, Allentown lost a kind, talented neighbor in the passing of Michael Hamilton. A resident of Park St., he was a founding partner of Hamilton Houston Lownie Architects, established in 1969. One only has to take a short stroll to visit examples of his architectural work – the Market Arcade with its colorful interior (a hallmark of Mike's design sensibility), Theater Place, and Erie Community College’s Flickinger Athletic Center are just a few highlights.

Mike Hamilton provided designs for a number of businesses and residences in Allentown including Plum Dandy (Franklin and Virginia Sts), the former Painters Union Hall (Virginia and Elmwood), and a Franklin St, property owned by Don Gilbert. Recently, Mike participated in the neighborhood public forums regarding the new office building at Delaware and Virginia.

Embracing an active life beyond his professional trade, Mike was an avid outdoorsman and birder. A member of the Buffalo Ornithological Society, he also devoted time to the Buffalo Niagara Riverkeepers. Mike’s appreciation of nature, devotion to family and friends, and generous smile will always be remembered by those that had the honor of knowing him.

The Allentown community extends condolences to his wife, Susan, and family.

—Maki Tanagaki
Tree planting set in November, help needed

By Daniel Culross

GO Bike Buffalo has teamed up with Re-Tree WNY, a program of Keep Western New York Beautiful, and the City of Buffalo to provide trees to groups like the Allentown Association.

On Nov. 3 from 9 to 11 a.m. we will once again be helping to plant trees in our own neighborhoods. The Allentown Historic Preservation District, on the National Register of Historic Places, has been the recipient of at least 70 new trees over the last five years, and this fall is no exception.

The benefits to planting street trees are energy conservation, water quality protection, air quality protection, carbon sequestration, increased property values, more profitable businesses, physiological benefits, smarter children, greater community, lower crime rates, more privacy, and beautiful neighborhoods.

Please join the group of volunteers who are planting trees this fall. You don’t need your own tools, but we encourage everyone to bring shovels, pick axes, sledge hammers, and gloves. The trees we receive are all grown locally in Western New York. The trees weigh only 15 pounds, come bare rooted, and install in around 30 minutes. What a great way to give back something to your neighborhood that will have a lasting impact! If your home or business has a spot between the sidewalk and street that can use a brand new tree, or if you know a spot that needs a tree, and you’d like to have a tree planted, please contact Daniel Culross at 716-888-0733 or at djculross@excite.com before Sept. 7. Please note that tree availability and planting dates are largely determined by weather. The alternate planting dates are November 10-11. You will be contacted prior to confirm.

A half dozen deciduous trees were planted along Allentown streets by the city in June.

We are concerned about all the trees planted since our first planting in 2007. This summer, Western New York is way down in rainfall totals, and especially the street trees that our volunteers have planted are at-risk! PLEASE water the tree in front of your home or business. Even though it may be public property that the tree occupies, we really need YOU to help ensure the long-term survival of your tree. Please take 10-15 minutes, twice a week to deep-water the tree, until we get the soaking rains that are necessary for these trees to thrive. All you need to do is drop the hose at the base of your tree and let it soak the ground till about 15-20 gallons have run.

Daniel Culross, a St. John’s Place resident, is a member of the Allentown Association’s Beautification Committee.
Calendar of Events


**Allentown Association**, 14 Allen St., Secrets of Allentown tour of homes, Sept. 15, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., see page 3. Annual meeting Oct. 9, 7 p.m., Allendale Theater, preceded by social hour in lobby. Board of Directors meeting, Sept. 11, Nov. 13, 7 p.m. For information call 881-1024 or see www.allentown.org.

**Art Dialogue Gallery**, 1 Linwood Ave., Tuesday to Friday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Annual regional artists exhibition, juried by Anthony Bannon, through Sept. 28; Trilogies XXIV, works of Anita Easter, Patti Harris and Joyce Hill; 18th annual Artful Gifts Oct. 5 to Nov. 9; Nov. 16-Jan. 4. Book signings by Donald Scheller, photographer and poet, Sept. 22, and Joan Fitzgerald, artist and writer, Sept. 22, 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. For information and other events call 885-2251 or see wnyag.com.

**Betty’s restaurant**, 370 Virginia St. at College St. Paintings by Norma Kassirer, through Sept. 23.

**Buffalo Big Print gallery**, 78 Allen St. Mon-Fri, 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. For information call 884-1777.

**College Street Gallery**, 244 Allen St., Wednesday to Friday, 5 to 8 p.m. Saturday by appointment. Works by 20 artists in co-op. For information call 868-8183.

**El Museo**, 91 Allen St. Tuesday through Saturday, noon to 5 p.m. For information call 578-3782.

**First Friday Gallery Tours**, Allentown galleries will have extended evening hours, some with new exhibits and receptions, Sept. 7, Oct. 5, Nov. 2. See page 2 and www.firstfridaysallentown.org.

**Indigo gallery**, 74 Allen St., Tuesday to Friday, noon to 5, Saturday, noon to 3. “Intimate Gaze,” paintings by Nava Gidanian-Kagan, June 1-30. Summer in the City, large group exhibition, July 6 - Aug. 5. For information, call 984-9572.

**Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum**, 220 North St. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily except Mondays, “The First Long-Distance Telephone Number,” development of long-distance telephone, through December. For information call 885-1986.

**Kleinhans Community Association**, bimonthly meeting Oct. 10, 6 p.m., D’Youville College Center, room 201, see kleienhansca.org.

**Kleinhans Music Hall**, Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, classics series: Galway’s Golden Flute, Harty, Mozart, Sept. 22, 8 p.m.; Joyce Yang Returns, Guere, Beethoven, Gershwin, Oct. 6, 8 p.m., Oct. 7, 7:30 p.m.; Sheherezade, Rimsky-Korsikov, Oct. 11, 7 p.m.; Brahms’ Blue Heaven, Debussy, Michael Daugherty, Brahms, Oct. 20, 8 p.m., Oct. 21, 2:30 p.m. A Poet’s Inspiration, Nov. 2, 10:30 a.m., Nov. 3, 8 p.m.; Trombone Times Three, Prokofiev, Eric Ewazen, Beethoven, Nov. 16, 10:30 a.m., Nov. 17, 8 p.m. Family series: Superheroes at the Symphony, Oct. 28, 2:30 p.m. Pops series: Indigo Girls, Sept. 28, 8 p.m.; Wynona Judd, Sept. 29, 8 p.m.; Three Dog Night, Oct. 12, 8 p.m.; Cavanaugh’s Tribute to Elton John, Oct. 27, 8 p.m.; The American Songbook, Nov. 9, 10:30 a.m., Nov. 10, 8 p.m. For tickets, call 885-5000 or see bpo.org.

**Quaker Bonnet Eatery**, 175 Allen St., Oils by Peter Dyett and watercolors by Wendy Caldwell Maloney, September; mixed media by Megan Smaldino, October; oils by Tony Nash, November.

**Nina Freudenheim Gallery**, Hotel Lenox, 140 North St. Tuesday through Friday 10 to 5, Saturday by appointment. Reopening by September. For information call 882-5777.

**Rust Belt Books**, 202 Allen St. Tangential poetry readings, open slots, 6:30 p.m. Sept. 20, Oct. 25, Nov. 29. Play performances by Brazen Faced Varlets, 8 p.m., Sept. 22, 28, 29, Oct. 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13. For information call 885-9535.

**Studio Hart**, 65 Allen St. Tuesday through Saturday, 11 to 3. “Uncommon Threads,” a group invitational curated by Gerald Mead, September. Paintings by Barbara Baird, and A. J. Fries, October; works by Jeanne and Ben Dunke, November. For information call 536-8337.

**Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site (Wilcox Mansion)**, 641 Delaware Ave. Hours, Monday to Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. Annual awards dinner, Sept. 12, Buffalo Convention Center. For further information, call 884-0095 or see www.trsite.org.
Federal Funds for Allen St.

By Ed Castine

Rep. Brian Higgins and Mayor Byron Brown announced at a June 25 press conference at Allen and Main Sts. that $4.8 million of federal funds is available to establish a "western gateway" for the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus. This funding was identified as excess from a grant that was awarded to the BNMC in 2005. Rep. Higgins, the city and the BNMC worked with the Allentown Association to pave the way for using these funds to make an impact in Allentown. One key point is that the entire length of Allen St. is potentially in scope. Previously, the funds had been intended for use outside of Allentown.

As the planning and design is underway for the new Medical School at the end of Allen St., we intend to coordinate with their efforts to advocate for more synergy between the neighborhoods. Timothy Dun from the Allentown Association is acting as liaison to the UB planning efforts. We want to plan how we invest in Allen Street in conjunction with the UB planning efforts.

At this stage, the details and scope of the Western Gateway to the BNMC are in a formative stage. Various architects, engineers and consultants are engaged with the City of Buffalo and UB Medical School. In the process, we will seek neighborhood involvement to weigh in with ideas and opinions. Some opinions may conflict, but all will be heard in the process. You can contact us through our website at www.allentown.org.

An Allentown Almanac

Christopher Brown was honored by Preservation Buffalo Niagara with the Community Conservation Award at its annual luncheon May 30. Cited as “community servant extraordinaire,” he is a former Allentown Association and Kleinhans Community Association president, a longtime community activist and writer on preservation and local history.

Park St.’s newest resident is Maxwell Major, son of Tim and Dorene Major, born July 18.

Julia Hall has resigned from the Allentown Association Board of Directors, citing the press of family and professional responsibilities.

Buffalo’s eighth annual Infringement Festival, centered in but not limited to Allentown July 26 to Aug. 5, was called “indispensable” and “one of the city’s most significant cultural phenomena,” by Colin Dabkowski, Buffalo News arts writer. “The very best moments came unexpectedly on walks up and down Allen St.,” he added.

Expansion of the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site is progressing with the demolition of the adjacent bank building and landscaping expected to be near completion this fall, with final touches in the spring. The fund drive for the expansion has reached 86 percent of its $1-million goal, Janet Kuzan, the site’s assistant director, reports.

Preservation News

Continued from page 1

Jason Ryburg-Elliott and James Elliott of 16 Allen told the Preservation Board there were “a lot of problems” with the patio in a previous bar operation.

The Preservation Board approved exterior changes at Friends of the Night People, 394 Hudson St., to include an awning and removal of a damaged canopy and broken concrete and asphalt, and the planting of three trees. Also a parking pad sought by Richard Sasala at 355 Pennsylvania Ave., was approved with conditions.

The Allentown Neighbor

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Allentown in later years

The beginning of historic preservation

This history of Allentown was written by Francis Kowsky and Martin Wachadlo and submitted to the State Office of Historic Preservation to document the Allentown Association’s application for a boundary expansion of the Allentown Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places so that it is contiguous with the City of Buffalo’s Allentown Historic District. Frank Kowsky is a State University of New York distinguished professor emeritus who taught art history at Buffalo State College. He recently completed a book on the creation of Buffalo’s Olmsted parks to be published later this year by the Library of American Landscape History and the University of Massachusetts Press. Martin Wachadlo is an architecture historian. Christopher Brown edited the article and wrote a portion of the recent history.

This is the third and final installment to be published in The Allentown Neighbor.

Architecture and Landscape Architecture Development during the Post-Civil War Era, 1860s-1920s

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a period of wonderful growth and development in the Allentown Historic District. Fine buildings by local and national architects went up on its major thoroughfares while on smaller streets more modest buildings were erected. These more compact streetscapes are among the most charming and evocative in the city of Buffalo. While some of these buildings came from architects' drawing boards, most were anonymously designed.

The most significant development affecting the area in terms of landscape was the planning and implementation of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux's comprehensive park and parkway plan. By including Delaware Avenue in this system, the designers made sure that it would become a major thoroughfare from downtown to the new park in North Buffalo. Where the avenue passed through Allentown, it maintained its character as a street of mansions and was the most prestigious address in the district. Franklin Street, North Street, and The Circle were only slightly less valued locales for large homes. The distinction between big and small streets is one of the physical features of the Allentown Historic District. For that reason, it is best to approach the rich legacy of architecture that supports Criterion C by address.

Delaware Avenue, North Street and Franklin Street in the Historic District-

In the early 1870s, Delaware Avenue became part of the Buffalo Park and Parkway System (NR listed, 1982) that Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux designed in 1868-1870. Olmsted and Vaux incorporated this street, which was an extension from the Ellicott city plan, into their system, as the major approach from downtown to The Park (present Delaware Park), the largest of the three pleasure grounds they laid out in North Buffalo. By the end of the nineteenth century, Delaware Avenue had become one the grand residential avenues in America.

Many important buildings stand along the avenue within the historic district and represent a variety of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century architectural styles. The Wilcox house, the oldest distinguished home on Delaware Avenue, became on September 14, 1901, the scene of a significant event in national history. On that day, following the death of President William McKinley, Vice-President Theodore Roosevelt was sworn in as president of the United States by Judge Wilcox in the front parlor of his home. The most well-known resident of Delaware Avenue within the district was Samuel Clemens. From 1869 to 1871 the famous humorist lived in an Italian Villa style dwelling on Delaware at Virginia. Although the house was demolished around 1960, the original carriage house still stands in the alley behind the vacant property. At 581 Delaware, the present Tempo restaurant is housed in a large Italian Villa house. Its distinctive cupola has been a landmark on the street since the house was built in the mid-1850s. Further down the street at 434 Delaware is the William Dosheimer house (1868; NR listed 1982). Designed by Henry Hobson Richardson three years after he had returned to America from studying and working in Paris, it is the only significant example of the Neo-Grec Second Empire Style in that famous architect's career. The owner was a prime mover in the park movement in Buffalo; and as New York's lieutenant governor, was responsible for having Richardson, Olmsted, and Leopold Eidlitz take over the completion of the unfinished capitol in Albany. A more traditional Second Empire house stands at 506 Delaware Avenue. Built in 1876 for the Farrar family, it was designed by Richard R. Waite of Buffalo. In 1915 Max Beierl greatly enlarged the building for the Knights of Columbus as its local headquarters, with the principal façade a continuation of Waite’s original elevation. Next door to the Dosheimer house at 469 Delaware is the only significant example of High
designed a major building at the so-called Great White City. Exposition. Together with McKim, Mead & White, Beman had vival movement, which is identified with the Worlds Colombian finest examples in the city of the monumental Neo-Classical Re-

North, together with the Williams-Butler house, are among the lon S. Beman's First Church of Christ Scientist (1911) at 220 which stood nearby on Delaware Avenue. Chicago architect So-

sions in 1920, is of special interest because it was built of Medina falo. The parish house, which was designed by E. B. Green & Streets is one of the noteworthy Gothic Revival churches in Buf-

sion Episcopal Church (1873) at the corner of North and Franklin ascension mansion of the S. Douglas Cornell family, whose daughter Katherine became a nationally known actress. Built in 1894, it is one of the best surviving works by Buffalo architect Edward A. Kent, a fatality of the Titanic disaster. At 595 Delaware, the Twentieth Century Club (1895; NR listed, 2010), an important women's social club, is another fine example of the Neo-

Classical style by Green & Wicks, the Buffalo firm that has been compared to the more renowned designers of the Williams-

Butler house. A few years later, Green & Wicks designed the University Club (1903-1904) at 538 Delaware in the Federal Re-

vival style. Further down the avenue, north of Edward Street, on the east side of Delaware is the group of contiguous dwellings as known as the Midway. These elegant brick houses are the finest Eastern style terrace residences in the city. Built between 1892 and 1896 by various architects, the designs conform a set standard of proportions and window heights. One of them, the Katharine Horton Chapter of the Daughter of the American Revolu-

tion, was listed in the National Register in 2008.

After Delaware Avenue, the section of North Street between Delaware and Symphony Circle, the circle itself (see below), and the first block of Porter Avenue beyond Symphony Circle, are other parts of the district that have more costly dwellings than are generally found elsewhere in the district. Unfortunately missing from this category is McKim, Mead & White's 1884 Metcalfe house, which formerly stood at 125 North Street, which was demolished in 1980, despite a spirited preservation fight to save it. Other important houses that still stand along North Street include Silsbee & Marling's J. M. Bemis house (1886) at 267 and Richard Waite's George L. Williams house (1877) at 249.

Together with large homes and comfortable apartment houses, institutional and religious buildings contribute to North Street's sophisticated urban character. The YWCA building at 271 North (this building has recently been adaptively reused for apartments) is a large Georgian Revival structure distinguished by an impres-

sive portico that stretches across the front of the building. Ascen-

sion Episcopal Church (1873) at the corner of North and Franklin Streets is one of the noteworthy Gothic Revival churches in Buf-

falo. The parish house, which was designed by E. B. Green & Sons in 1920, is of special interest because it was built of Medina sandstone reused from H. H. Richardson's Gratwick house, which stood nearby on Delaware Avenue. Chicago architect Sol-

lon S. Beman's First Church of Christ Scientist (1911) at 220 North, together with the Williams-Butler house, are among the finest examples in the city of the monumental Neo-Classical Rev-

vival movement, which is identified with the Worlds Colombian Exposition. Together with McKim, Mead & White, Beman had designed a major building at the so-called Great White City. Beman's Ionic portico complements nicely McKim,

Mead & White's more ornate Corinthian portico down the street.

Like many city neighborhoods throughout the country, Allentown went into decline after World War II, as many middle class American families began to leave the city for the suburbs. "Allentown was not only the city's largest residential neighborhood but also a bar-

ometer of its decline," wrote Linda Levine and Maria Scrivani, "conditioned by post-Depression de-

industrialization and exacerbated by post-World War Two white flight." Adding to the city's ills was the de-

cline in its status as a railroad and steamship transporta-

tion hub linking the East Coast and Mid-West. This was due in large part to the opening of the St. Lawrence Sea-

way in 1959 and the construction of the interstate high-

way system. The construction of high speed highways from the center city to the suburbs eased the exodus of the middle class from the city. And for Allentown in particular, the pernicious practice of "redlining" by local banks inhibited investment in the neighborhood.

But already by the late 1950s, the seeds of a new Allentown were planted as the area began to attract artists and intellectuals. This trend continued during the early 1960s, turning the area into Buffalo's Greenwich Village and laying the foundation for the appeal of pre-

sent day Allentown. No one has described the phenom-

enon better than Mark Goldman, historian and longtime advocate for the area: "By then," he wrote, the neighborhood had begun to attract a small but vibrant group of artists and the area was be-

inning to take on a distinctly Bohemian aura. Dotted with small mom-and-pop stores and a few galleries and tiny restaurants, the area had a scruffy casualness to it that appealed to local artists. By the late 1960s, the artists Wes Olmsted and Ben Perone had rented studios there. Hanging out in local restaurants and cafes --"Kisses" at Allen and Wadsworth, Jerry Baker's Blacksmith Shop around the corner on Delaware, the Cafe Limelight, and Laughlin's bar across Main on Franklin near Allen--a hip scene of artists, poets, performers, and musicians emerged, giving color and flavor to Allen-

town. Dave Sharpe, an Allentown poet and in-

vive hangout, described the scene: 'Those were exciting times in Allentown. Jazz people, beats, all got along down there. There was looseness in Allentown in those times.'
Out of this new infusion of arts and culture into the neighborhood came an event that has become an institution in the cultural life of the city, the Allentown Art Festival, sponsored by the Allentown Village Association. "In April 1958," wrote Goldman, "a few of the denizens of the neighborhood, meeting at Jerry Baker's Blacksmith Shop restaurant at Delaware near Allen formed the Allentown Village Society, which in September of that year sponsored the first of what would become many Allentown art shows." Since then, every June, local and out-of-town artists fill Delaware Avenue and Allen Street in Allentown with displays of their works. It attracts a wide audience of buyers and non-buyers who just come to enjoy the lively ambience.

The growth of a distinctive art culture in Allentown soon gave rise to a concern to preserve its physical environment, which was being threatened by demolitions. Major losses to the historic fabric of the neighborhood were especially disturbing in the early 1960s. Mark Twain’s house at 472 Delaware and the St. Mary's Infant Asylum and Maternity Hospital at the southeast corner of Edward and Elmwood were two of many important landmarks demolished. Another tragic loss was the fiery 1961 destruction of the Byzantine-Romanesque Temple Beth Zion at 599 Delaware. At the same time, about ten mansions on the west side of Delaware, between Allen and North, as well as a few houses on adjacent Irving Place, were demolished for new development. An entire streetscape vanished.

Sensing the beginning of a disturbing trend that if left unchecked would not only destroy the architectural character of the neighborhood, but derail the cultural renaissance as well, long-time Irving Place resident Olive Williams took action. In 1960, she organized the North Street Association, which three years later grew into the Allentown Association, now one of the city's most important civic organizations. It was not only destruction for new construction and parking lots that threatened the neighborhood, but also highway construction. A proposed connector along Virginia Street, running from the new I-190 at the lakefront to the new Route 33 expressway, threatened wholesale demolition of many blocks rich in historic fabric, including the southern portion of what is now the historic district. This prompted the first survey of historic architecture in Buffalo in 1970, covering the blocks south of Virginia Street that were in danger. Surveying continued for several years, laying the groundwork for the historic districts that would materialize at the end of the decade. As a result of these efforts, in 1974, the Landmark Society of the Niagara Frontier published Paul Suozzi's Three Walks Around and About Allentown. The first comprehensive guide to the neighborhood, it did much to raise public awareness of Allentown's significant historical and architectural legacy.

In 1974, Carole Holcberg, a longtime resident of Irving Place, assumed the executive directorship of the Allentown Association determined to reverse the decline of her neighborhood. Her first task was to change the minds of area banks on their practice of redlining. "A widespread resurgence of Allentown, however, required the cooperation of banks," observed Levine and Scrivani. "So Holcberg invited a group of bankers to take a tour of the old streets with her in July 1974. She rented a bus, weaving through streets sometimes almost too narrow--they were that old--and pointed out the straightening of sagging roof gutters, the painting of architectural trims, the upward trend... After the trip, they relaxed redlining in Allentown. The freeing up of mortgage money to house buyers gradually led to an increase in property values. That was the point of the district: to encourage investment and discourage disinvestment." Eventually, she convinced her neighbors that local historic district and National Register designation would be a key element in the neighborhood's regeneration.

Pursuing local historic district designation came first. With the assistance of Olaf William Shelgren Jr., one of the fathers of historic preservation in Buffalo, Holcberg initiated a research project. During the summers of 1975 and 1976 Shelgren and two interns, in the words of Levine and Scrivani, "did the exhaustive task of walking door to door, filling out 'blue forms' for each building: its style, age, condition, history of ownership, colors, size, lot size, additions to the original, architects where known." When all the forms were in, Shelgren studied the inventory of 2000 structures and drew the boundaries of the proposed district. The next task was to convince the common council to approve the district and to create the Preservation Board to oversee it. Drawing on interviews with Holcberg, Levine and Scrivani recounted the events that followed:

Holcberg next had to impress the virtues of the district on Buffalo's Common Council. It had the say over whether or not to institute an entity to which citizens would be encouraged to
conform. 'There was strenuous opposition initially on the Council,' Holcberg stated. 'The preservation district seemed a silk-stocking, do-gooder, elitist thing to some Councilmen.' Such legislators associated preservation with a concurrent battle by a group of preservationists to save a strip of Delaware Avenue mansions, and didn't see how it could benefit a blue-collar city personified by workers and labor unions rather than by debutante balls and weight-button kid gloves. 'But those who in the early days were the biggest opponents turned out to be the biggest proponents. They saw what could come to their districts. Preservation wasn't just for fancy buildings but for maintaining vitality.'

On Thursday, February 14, 1978 at 7PM the Common Council held a legislative hearing on the district in its City Hall chambers. The Allentown Association hoped for a full turnout of residents coming to ask questions and express concerns, and delivered announcements of the meeting to every house. Did Holcberg, a decade later, remember the event? 'Do I remember it!' she exclaimed. Was it dramatic? 'Yes, it was dramatic. The chambers were filled. When the hearing started, we were very much in doubt that we'd get the district through. The hearing lasted six and a half hours. There was a lot of bickering. . . .

The 'silk-stocking' Delaware district Councilman consistently supported the district; the Councilmen who most opposed it were two young representatives. Holcberg caught up with them in the halls outside Council chambers to argue her case that neighborhoods were being revived by becoming historic districts in Rochester, New York, Philadelphia and at least warranted a try in Buffalo. More persuasive than her lobbying effort outside chambers were the 200 residents in support . . . back inside chambers. The overwhelming grass roots wish sufficed to convince the full Council to approve the district.

In 1979, the association sponsored the original National Register historic district nomination. The Association is also the sponsor of the present historic district expansion project so that the National Register district will have virtually the same boundaries as the local historic district.

The Emergence of the Gay Community in Allentown-

Allentown's post-war reputation as a bohemian community drew a large population of western New York’s gay population to the neighborhood. Similar to New York City's Greenwich Village, the gay community in Buffalo found Allentown to be neighborhood where they could live more openly than elsewhere in Western New York. Part of the draw to Allentown included a number of gay friendly and owned businesses. The piano bar "Black Magic," located in the basement of one of the Midway row houses, was especially popular. Coffee Encores (located at 341 Franklin Street) was the first coffee shop in Allentown and one of the first in Buffalo. It opened in 1955 and quickly became a popular spot, particularly for gay patrons. Operated by Dom Trapani as both an art gallery and coffee house, it was one of the few contemporary art galleries in the city and attracted aficionados of modern art. Among them was Seymour Knox, the great collector of Abstract Expressionist painters and devoted benefactor of Buffalo's Albright-Knox Art Gallery. On a typical evening, Trapani recalls, many patrons would crowd his establishment, which remained an Allentown fixture until 1968 when he moved to New York. On a good evening, the business might make as much as $140 for the night, at a time when a cup of coffee cost only $.49.

A large concentration of Allentown’s gay community resided along upper Park and Mariner Streets and Irving Place. Parties held in these homes by gay men in the late 1950s and 1960s did much to reinforce the sense of community among this group that were often made to feel unwelcome elsewhere in Buffalo. "These cocktail parties were where people could talk, socialize, and learn about how to renovate houses!" recalls Trapani who was often in attendance at these lively neighborhood gatherings. The movement to renovate historic buildings gained momentum as gay homeowners sought to outdo one another. Most of those "urban pioneers" were in their late thirties to early fifties. This nascent gay community encouraged additional gay men to buy and rehabilitate nineteenth-and-early-twentieth-century dwellings. As it is today, many of the gay community continue to play a significant role in the development of historic preservation in Allentown.

Allentown is also the home of the Stonewall Democrats, a branch of the local Democratic Party that is an important political voice of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community in Western New York. Since the mid 1990s, the group has met at 91 Allen Street in Allentown. Members come from state, county, and city government. Among them are Democratic committee members who serve on various committees in Erie, Niagara, Chautauqua, Cattaraugus and Allegany counties. The local branch of Stonewall Democrats has long maintained affiliation with the National Stonewall Democrats.

Mid-Twentieth Century Architecture in Allentown

While pre-modern architecture predominates in the district, there are several good examples of mid-
The Allentown Neighbor          Fall-2012

The twentieth century Modern Movement design that were not identified in the original National Register nomination. Before World War II, some commercial buildings introduced the fashionable Art Deco and Moderne styles into the area. However, the single-story business block at 443-445 Delaware designed by Bley & Lyman in 1930 is the outstanding example in the district of the Art Deco style. It features stylized floral and other ornaments in cast metal. The multi-storied building at 470 Franklin, built as a film exchange facility in 1930, is a larger, masonry instance of the same style in the district.

After World War II, Allentown was generally passed by in the great migration of commerce from downtown to the suburbs.* The single-story film exchange building at 464 Franklin, erected in 1925, received a new stone façade in 1946 that is one of the earliest post-war examples in Buffalo of the International Style. Along the Delaware Avenue corridor, some mansions ceded their place to small, multi-storied office buildings. These buildings were modest in comparison to earlier tall buildings in downtown. The low rise office buildings with ribbon windows of plate glass and flat roofs at 560 and 570 Delaware Avenue, dating from c. 1963, are conventional versions of the International Style. Although their construction provoked an outcry from neighborhood activists over the destruction of former nineteenth-century mansions on the prominent site, these buildings brought an air of modernity to the neighborhood.

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### ALLENTOWN ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please select a membership level:  
- Benefactor $1,000  
- Patron $500  
- Contributing $250  
- Sustaining $100  
- Business $50  
- Family $40  
- Individual $35  
- Student/Senior $20  
- A generous gift $______  

If business, name of manager

Please make checks payable to: Allentown Association, Inc.
Mail to: Allentown Association, 14 Allen St., Buffalo NY 14202

### OPTIONAL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES (Please check the committee of interest to you):

- Allen West Festival  
- Beautification  
- Secret of Allentown tour of homes  
- Membership/PR  
- Crime Reduction  
- Fundraising  
- Hot Dog Stand  
- Volunteer Office Staff  
- Board of Directors

The purpose of the Allentown Association, Inc. is to serve its community. It does that through efforts to beautify the neighborhood; to encourage historic preservation and property maintenance; to promote appropriate business development; to fight crime and to protect and enhance Allentown’s unique urban ambiance.