



The Allentown Neighbor

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Inside this issue:

Association moves to save Delaware Ave. building

By Pete Carroll

Although a demolition order has been issued, the Allentown Association is trying to save the three-story brick structure at 591 Delaware Ave. which has been vacant since a fire caused extensive damage in 1996.

The Association's Board of Directors has asked its president, John Cromwell, board members Jeff Sawyer and Roger Schroeder, and executive director Kathy Toepfer to approach city officials to try to find the means to preserve the building.

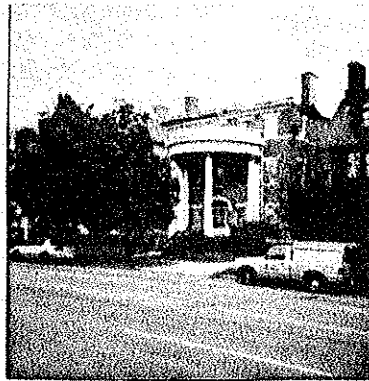
"We're trying to find other alternatives," said Lou Petrucci, the city's chief building inspector. The most pressing need is to replace the missing roof, which would secure the walls and prevent further deterioration, he added.

The three-story building with a columned portico stands next to the historic Twentieth Century Club building in an important block of Buffalo's most noted avenue, between Allen and North Streets, where it is part of the fabric which preserves Buffalo's appearance as it ascended to prominence. It is one of only six pre-1950 buildings on the block, including the historic Wilcox Mansion.

The threatened building was owned by Dr. Charles Battista, who maintained a dental practice in the building which also contained apartments at the time of the fire. It has since been acquired by Witness Cathedral of Faith Church. There are liens against the property for unpaid taxes.

There is \$40,000 in escrow from the insurance settlement for the fire. Officials are divided whether the escrow funds could be used for repairs, or only for demolition.

The situation is complicated by the recent resignation of Jennifer Persico from the City Law Department.



Her position as assistant corporation counsel for housing and historic preservation had not been filled at press time.

There is hope that a developer could be attracted by tax incentives to acquire the property for \$1 and invest the funds needed to restore the building, but so far no one has come forward, building inspectors said.

The demolition order was issued in August by Judge Diane Devlin of City Court's Housing Division, after the court was told the present owner has no money to repair the building. The court case has been adjourned until Oct. 6.

The demolition has not taken place because of lack of city funds, but it is uncertain how long this reprieve will last.

Representatives of the Twentieth Century Club have expressed concern to Judge Devlin that the present condition of the building poses threats to safety.

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Cromwell faults Red Cross plan for shelter

By John Cromwell
Allentown Association president

Why shouldn't Allentowners get behind the Red Cross when it wants to establish an emergency shelter? Why has the Allentown Association Board of Directors opposed this plan by the Red Cross?

In fact, the Allentown Association has joined in a neighborhood coalition with Forever Elmwood and several block clubs to reject the Red Cross's plan to operate an emergency shelter in a building at the rear of its site at Delaware and Summer. I attended the Red Cross's presentation of its plans in the early summer held at the Jewish Center on Delaware Avenue. I was open to persuasion when I arrived. Regretably, in my opinion, the Red Cross didn't "close the sale" and did not reveal its real motives.

Currently, the Red Cross provides temporary emergency shelter primarily to fire victims mostly at the Lenox Hotel and Salvation Army. Two-thirds of its

clients come from the East Side. One-third comes from the West Side.

The problem that I have is not what the Red Cross does. Rather, it is how the Red Cross allows its purpose to be corrupted in the pursuit of federal dollars from the U.S./ Housing and Urban Development Department. And the Red Cross wants to use those dollars to solve a problem unrelated to its emergency shelter mission. To pursue those HUD dollars the Red Cross would lay aside the best interests of its neighbors.

Briefly, the Red Cross found itself with vacant space in its rear building after it consolidated its blood program with its Rochester Chapter. It located HUD funds intended to be used in Congressman Jack Quinn's district which covers the East Side. It applied for those funds and then intended to switch locations from the East Side to Delaware Avenue. Thus it would obtain over one million dollars previously unavailable and fill the vacant space at the same time.

The Red Cross justified removing cli-

ents from their neighborhoods by claiming that bringing them closer to "other services" that their clients might need. This is a circular argument. The Red Cross doesn't answer why those services aren't in the neighborhoods their clients come from. It doesn't explain why it couldn't use those HUD dollars to lead by example and bring some of those services to the people.

At the same time the Red Cross offers no off-site supervision of its clients, some of whom have been among the panhandlers at Walgreens and have added to the neighborhood stress and annoyance.

The corrupting temptation of getting HUD dollars to flow to the Red Cross is driving this scheme, not the best interests of its clients or this community. What do you think?

Garden at Allen-Main to be enhanced

By Elizabeth Licata

Under the guidance of the Beautification Committee, the Allentown Association is pursuing new initiatives for improving the appearance of our neighborhood.

The community garden at Main and Allen Streets, meant to serve as a welcoming green space, is maintained with the help of the Towne Restaurant and is currently planted with a selection of annuals, shrubs and trees. Starting in October the Beautification Committee will be completely renovating the garden, transforming it into a perennial garden. New planting areas will be added so that the garden can be filled with spring, summer and fall bulbs, spring-summer and fall-blooming perennials, new shrubs and seasonal annuals for accents.

Rather than completely replacing the garden with traditional annuals each year, this strategy would transform the garden into a diverse and shifting seasonal palette of lowers, foliage and grasses, in a similar vein to the community garden at Elmwood Avenue and North Street.

Work is expected to begin the second weekend of October. Volunteers are needed to help with the plantings and the installation of raised beds. Please contact Mary Beth Bartlett (MarybethBartlett@netscape.com) or Elizabeth Licata (elicata@localnet.com), co-chairs of the Beautification Committee, if you can help with the plantings or donate materials.

The annual Garden Walk has grown. It would be wonderful to see it include more streets in Allentown. For this to be possible, several homeowners on each street need to participate by opening at least part of their gardens to public view for the weekend, usually in late July. If interested please contact Elizabeth Licata.

Old First Church: history, tradition and change

The 163-foot spire of First Presbyterian Church overlooking Symphony Circle is a familiar landmark to Allentowners, but many are unaware of the church's striking interior and its rich history.

An excellent example of the late 19th century Romanesque revival architecture, the church was designed by Buffalo's E. B. Green and William Wicks. At the foot of Richmond Avenue, it provides a harmonious counterpoint to another Romanesque tower, the Richardson Building at the Buffalo Psychiatric Center at the opposite end of the avenue. For many of us, the First Church tower delineates Allentown's western edge, as the Gothic tower of St. Louis church marks the easterly point.

The interior of the First Church is Byzantine in style, evoking Constantinople, Greece, and St. Mark's in Venice, and provides a sharp contrast to the Romanesque exterior recalling medieval western Europe.

The interior is now undergoing a gradual renovation. David Bond, the church's administrator, organist and choirmaster, says the combination of Romanesque and Byzantine styles is unusual.

Founded in 1812, First Church is the oldest religious organization in Buffalo, and occupied a downtown site until the present building was erected between 1889 and 1891, with the tower completed in 1897.

"This is a church rich in heritage and proud of its history," says the Rev. Daniel E. Hale. He was appointed interim minister a year ago for a transition to a new permanent pastor.

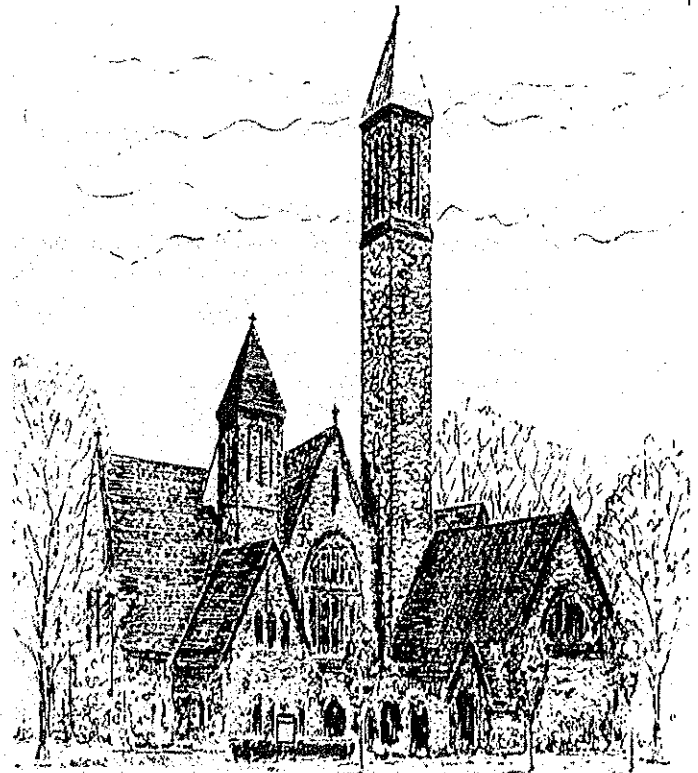
First Church's membership has declined in recent years to about 250 members, and changes of pastors in recent years have been "painful," resulting in an undeserved reputation as a place of turmoil, he said. Dr. Hale came with "some experience in churches in conflict," he added. "This church developed a sense of anxiety and tension. I think they are learning to manage it. That comes through strong, fearless, purpose-driven leadership," he said. The search for a permanent minister is proceeding, but a decision seems to be some months away.

The congregation "takes pride in having well-planned worship services, a lot of ceremony and most people enjoy it," at 11 a.m. Sundays, he said. "We have a wonderful music program," with a choir that is Buffalo's oldest musical organization as well as a handbell choir, he added.

The church's mission is "to bring diverse people together to follow Jesus Christ through worshipping God, fostering spiritual growth, and serving the community."

The church also offers Christian education programs for children and adults, a food pantry, part of an area-wide network, a thrift shop and is host to Alcoholics Anonymous groups.

"We also have a fun, interesting relationship with School 36," three blocks away on Days Park, Dr. Hale says. "We read to kids, provide a Thanksgiving dinner, help families in need, and are trying to work out a tutoring program," for the predominantly Hispanic student body, he added.



First Presbyterian Church

Mr. Bond welcomes calls to schedule guided tours of the church, with "at least eight" windows by Louis Tiffany and others by Mary Tillinghast, a pioneer woman designer and artist. The interior and windows were crafted between 1912 and 1925, with designs by William C. Francis, a church member.

— Pete Carroll

(This is the third in a continuing series on churches in the Allentown area.)



Tour of Homes draws 1,700, a major success

The Secrets of Allentown Tour of Homes Sept. 24 was a smashing success, with nearly 1,700 visitors to 13 houses, a near record for the tour which the Allentown Association has sponsored annually since 1996. Christopher Brown, general chairman for the event, deserves accolades of congratulations and thanks, to be shared with his hard-working committee, homeowners who opened their houses to the public, and Bill Maher, chairman for past tours who provided much help, Association President John Cromwell said. The event raises funds for a variety of services to the Allentown community.

Oktoberfest set for Allen St. Oct. 21

An Oktoberfest is planned for Saturday Oct. 21 when, Allen Street from Elmwood Avenue to Days Park will be closed from noon to 11 p.m. Saturday Oct. 21, resuming an event last held here in 1984.

Organizers are planning a music stage, food and beverage stands, craft displays and artists' booths.

Bill Regan and Kim Rossi of Mulligan's Brick Bar, assisted by Joe Rubino and his team from Nietzsche's and other Allentown businesses, are organizing the event and encourage families to come and enjoy the festivities which will be fun for all and raise funds for the Coit House renovation.

The city band shell will be set up at the corner of Allen and College Streets with live music from 3 to 9 p.m. The Frankfurters, a well-known German band, will provide traditional German music, followed by a selection of Buffalo bands providing music ranging from folk to rock.

The Oktoberfest will offer traditional German fare, ranging from sausage to sauerkraut. Mulligan's will be serving in the dining room and under an Oktoberfest tent filling the lot next to the restaurant. Other restaurants are to offer specialties at food stands up and down the street. German beer and soft drinks will be available from 3 to 10 p.m. Nietzsche's, Cybele's, Jim's Steak Out, the Jupiter Room and the "Old Pink" will be open to serve festival-goers.

Oktoberfest tickets will be sold at the entrances to Allen Street at Days Park and Elmwood Avenue, the only entrances to the street for visitors to the event. Each person entering the Oktoberfest area will be asked for a suggested donation of \$5 to go toward restoration of the Coit House, Buffalo's oldest house at 414 Virginia St., which has been acquired by the Allentown Association. Each person who makes a minimum \$5 donation will receive a ticket good for any beverage at any of the participating bars or restaurants. Advance donation/drink tickets will be available for purchased at all Ticket.com outlets at the customer service desk in all Tops Friendly Markets.

Although the Allentown Association is not a sponsor of the event, it wishes the organizers success.

Allan G. McTaggart remembered by Allentown

The board and membership of the Allentown Association express their sincere condolences to the family of Allan G. McTaggart who died at the age of 82 on June 2, 2000.

A resident of Buffalo from the age of seven when his family moved from Canada, Mr. McTaggart was a well regarded architect who designed many commercial and residential buildings throughout Western New York.

Mr. McTaggart gave generously of his time and money to civic and social causes. Among the many contributions to the city, he, along with the late Olive Williams, Max B.E. Clarkson and others, spear-headed the formation of the Allentown Association in the early 1960s.

We thank him for his vision and determination in working to lay the foundation on which we continue to build a vibrant neighborhood in the Allentown Historic District.



Association meets with gas company on meters

If you live in Allentown and are approached by representatives of National Fuel Gas seeking to relocate your gas meter, call the Allentown Association office for guidance.

John Cromwell, association president, and Sean Dennis Hill, a lawyer and member director of the Association, are negotiating with National Fuel Gas representatives seeking to reach agreement on location of exterior gas meters in historic preservation districts. The negotiations were requested by the city Historic Preservation Board and guidelines to be reached in the talks are expected to apply to all historic preservation districts in Buffalo. One session has been held and another is planned.

Until an agreement is reached with the gas company, Kathy Toepfer, Association executive director, can advise you if you are approached by the gas company seeking to relocate your meter, or refer your question to our negotiating team.

An Allentown Almanac

Thank you to all – especially the Allentown Village Society, Allentown Association members and local business owners – who contributed to purchase our buffalo, “Golden Renaissance of Buffalo” which graces the corner of Allen and College Streets...

Congratulations to Lorraine Vallone Sweeney and Bob Sweeney, newest homeowners in Allentown, who purchased the home they rented from the Allentown Association at 108 Cottage St...

Great expansions: Drool Music and Clothing at 185 Allen now includes the storefront at 187 Allen, (formerly Nocturnal Café.)

Congratulations to Cozumel Bar and Grill at 153 Elmwood Ave. which celebrated its fifth anniversary Sept. 13...

The Theater of Youth opened its second season on Allen Street Sept. 22 with a wonderful performance of “The Swiss Family Robinson.” Call the theater at 884-4400 to reserve you tickets for this memorable show...

Start thinking about Christmas! Anyone interested in volunteering to help the Allentown Association holiday promotion, call Kathy Toepfer at 881-1024...If you're interested in placing an ad in the next issue of The Allentown Neighbor, due out Dec. 1 in time for holiday shopping, talk to Kathy...

Is your membership up to date? If not, use the form on the back of this issue to renew. Membership has its privileges!...

Best wishes to our good friend Police Officer Charlie Schack who retired recently after 30 years, and won the respect and gratitude of the Allentown community as a detail officer in our neighborhood. Thank you; we'll miss you!...

This is the second issue of The Allentown Neighbor under a new editor. Our aim is to publish bimonthly and improve with each issue. Let us hear your comments at bonjouraloha@aol.com or leave a message at the Allentown Association office...

The Allentown Association will be purchasing Victorian animated window displays for business owners to display in front windows. Businesses which have the space to display in their windows should contact Kathy as soon as possible. After the holidays, the Association will collect and store the displays for use by a new group of businesses next winter. Businesses wishing to enter the window decorating contest should fill out the attached form and drop it off at the Association office, 234 Allen (fax 882-5332. Judging will take place during the Allentown Victorian Christmas celebration Saturday, Dec. 16.

Allentown Victorian Christmas Window Contest Entry Form ***Judging to Take Place Saturday, December 16, 2000***

Participating Business: _____

Proprietor: _____

Address: _____

Contact Phone Number: _____

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



Name _____ Date _____

Street Address _____

City _____ Zip Code _____

If business, name proprietor or manager _____

Telephone (____) _____ Best Time To Call _____

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL (please check):

- Sustaining \$50.00 Individual \$15.00 Contributing \$100.00
 Household - Family \$20.00 Patron \$250.00 Business \$25.00

All membership contributions are tax deductible. • Make checks payable to: The Allentown Association, Inc. • Amount Remitted: \$ _____
Your Continued Support Is Greatly Appreciated

Would you have any interest in volunteering to assist with any of the following activities?

- Beautification and Litter Control Fund Raising Business Development Membership Solicitation
 Crime Prevention Special Events Housing and Preservation Board of Directors

Please return completed form to: The Allentown Association, Inc. • 234 Allen Street • Buffalo, NY 14201-1418



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