

preservation

# issues

NEWS FOR THE PRESERVATION COMMUNITY

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

★ Vol. 3, No. 2 ★

## Understanding Louisa . . .



At the end of Charles Dickens' novel *Hard Times*, a regretful Mr. Gradgrind says to his daughter's unfeeling husband, "Bounderby, I see reason to doubt whether we have ever quite understood Louisa." When the husband denies any responsibility for Louisa's unhappiness, Gradgrind accepts the guilt himself and reiterates, "I doubt whether I have understood Louisa. I doubt whether I have been quite right in the manner of her education." This is a painful admission for a masterful Victorian man, accustomed to living in a well-ordered universe, in which his daughter had a natural and clearly defined place.

Abraham Lincoln also had difficulty understanding 19th-century women. According to proper Victorian ideology, women were naturally squeamish, small, defenseless, innocent beings, who needed protection from the male worlds of business and politics. Naturally, then, the great emancipator was somewhat perplexed when he confronted Harriet Beecher Stowe, the New England-bred matron who passionately denounced slavery in the pages of her big, best-selling novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Reportedly, the Civil War commander-in-chief said to the mother of six, who wrote her book on the kitchen table, "So you are the little woman who made this great War."

Although a surprising number of 19th-century American women did write books, and many more went out to work in factories and stores, the majority remained at home, rearing children and trying to cope with Victorian men. Confined to the domestic sphere, Victorian women made the middle-class home a place of power in a free market society. As consumers, they profoundly influenced the production and distribution of goods. As guardians of morality, they banded together in the temperance movement to








bring their erring husbands back home. As mothers, they instilled in their children the values of frugality, hard work, and sexual continence that virtually defined the Victorian Era.

Victorian women created homes that lavishly and sentimentally expressed the domestic ideals of their era. Heavy draperies asserted the desire for privacy and escape from the hubbub of business. Framed portraits expressed the significance of the family. Objects of art gave evidence of refinement and taste. Abundant collections of bric-a-brac attested not only to wealth, but also to the settled and permanent nature of the household.

In outward form, Victorian houses were gloriously feminine. Cozy gothic cottages suggested soft laps and encircling arms. Ornate "wedding cakes" seemed to emerge from the dreams of romantic young girls. Queen Anne, the

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March/April 1993

## Public Comments Requested . . .

Deputy  
State  
Historic  
Preservation  
Officer

Each year our federal partner, the National Park Service, requires that we prepare an annual work program. Preparation of the Fiscal Year 1994 work program is currently underway. To assist us in ensuring that your preservation needs are met, we encourage your comments on (1) Missouri's statewide preservation needs and (2) priorities for the selection and funding of Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) subgrants.

In Missouri, decisions regarding preservation needs and priorities are based on review and evaluation of Missouri's comprehensive historic preservation and planning process, a continually evolving approach based on analysis of the cultural resource database and consideration of input from the public and private sectors. Guided by the Secretary of the Interior's "Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation," the planning process is based on a methodical, sequential approach to preservation: identification, evaluation, registration, and protection.

The first step, identification, concerns documentation of Missouri's cultural resources and incorporation of that data into the statewide inventory (See *Updates* article on page 3). This information forms the foundation of our preservation effort, the cultural resource database. Compiled primarily through our ongoing state survey, this data assists state and local governments and private organizations and individuals in decision-making by providing sufficient information for evaluating resources and developing strategies for long-term preservation.

The second step, evaluation, is a logical outgrowth of the identification phase. Identified resources are evaluated in terms of their local, state, or national historic context, and recommendations are made as to which resources merit nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

The registration phase involves the preparation of nominations of evaluated resources to the National Register.

The final phase in the preservation sequence is protection. The extent, location, and significance of identified resources are analyzed and plans are developed for their long-term protection.

For Fiscal Year 1994, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has identified projects that conform to the above planning sequence, with specific priorities as follows:

### Survey Priorities

This includes architectural or archaeological surveys and survey plans.

- Surveys in areas representing data gaps in Missouri's cultural resources database (i.e., areas or properties not previously surveyed or surveyed at an inadequate level).
- Surveys of unidentified resources threatened by rapid development, destruction, neglect, or age.
- Subsequent phases of successful surveys begun under a previous grant cycle.
- Surveys contributing to the development of historic contexts.

### Nomination Priorities

- Nominations of significant properties identified in previously completed surveys or properties that

have been determined eligible through the eligibility assessment process.

- Nominations of eligible properties endangered by rapid development, destruction, neglect, or age.
- Nominations of properties filling data gaps in Missouri's National Register listings (e.g., counties, themes, or property types not adequately represented).

### Protection Priorities

- Protective activities (development of historic district design guidelines, preservation workshops, newsletters, etc.) are the final phase of successfully completed identification, evaluation and registration phases (i.e., survey and National Register nominations).
- Preservation education and awareness activities (brochures, newsletters, workshops, etc.) of a broad-based nature that have statewide or regional applicability.

### Certified Local Government Priorities

- Projects to develop a preservation plan for integration into a city master plan and planning activities.
- Projects to assist in the implementation of a local historic preservation program within city government procedures.
- Projects that encourage networking and provide an opportunity for commissions to exchange pertinent information.
- Innovative projects that will serve as a statewide model or that will address a specific common preservation problem or topic.

## SHPO Priorities

- Projects that provide maximum benefit in terms of federal apportionment.
- Reasonable distribution of funds between urban and rural areas.
- Distribution of available funds to the maximum number of applicants possible.

The SHPO is also considering earmarking a pool of grant monies for

“pre-development” or “acquisition and development” activities. Such grants could be used for developing plans and specifications for a preservation project, or for carrying out critical work to stabilize or restore an endangered property.

The SHPO is interested in funding quality projects that meet the priorities outlined above. However, projects that address the following priority themes will be of particular

interest: ethnic heritage (e.g., African-American, German, French), transportation, agriculture, and women’s history.

We welcome your comments and suggestions. Contact Jerald Stepenoff, grants manager, at (314) 751-7861. See the May/June edition of *Issues* for final grant priorities and application information. — *Claire Blackwell*

## History Meets Technology Head-On

### Cultural Resources Inventory

The Historic Preservation Program (HPP) is now assisted in its daily operation by a computerized database of buildings, sites, structures and objects recorded in the Missouri Cultural Resource Inventory. The development of the Cultural Resource Information System (CRIS) began in 1990.

CRIS is a mainframe system with two subsystems: a data input/edit system and a search/retrieval system. Approximately 25,000 records have been entered to date.

CRIS contains precise information about each resource’s location and ownership. Building and structure records include data such as architect/builder, date built, date altered,

style, physical characteristics, and materials. Archaeological site location data is entered but is available on a restricted basis.

The computerized records do not replace the conventional paper inventories; they make them more accessible. Searching through the over 100,000 records in the inventory is labor-intensive. When different fields of information in CRIS are combined to produce reports, it is relatively simple and quick to find like resources or to facilitate a comparison of resources by period, style, type, location or any of the other fields of entered data.

For example, churches recorded in the inventory can be selected by style or vernacular type within a specific time period to illustrate the popularity of that particular style or type.

Another example would be to select an architect like Nelle E. Peters. A report could be produced to illustrate her work within a geographic area, by architectural style, during a specific time period, according to her choice of materials, by historic function (house, apartment, commercial building), or

any combination of these pieces of information. These kinds of reports are useful for defining research topics or developing context for a National Register nomination.

Although the computer can readily identify a resource, the quality of the report is only as good as the information entered. Analysis of data by county or area of significance can reveal “gaps” in survey and registration information. These gaps then become goals that are incorporated into HPP’s comprehensive preservation planning process.

Future plans for CRIS include dial-in capabilities for users outside of the state office and the ability to place sub-files of information onto disk for manipulation by the user, who can then include data relevant on the local level.

The information in the Missouri Cultural Resource Inventory is vitally important to people engaged in preserving and interpreting the heritage of Missouri. CRIS is a valuable tool in historic preservation activities and its usefulness will continue to increase in the future. — *Lynn Shay*

PHOTO STEVE MITCHELL



Records Manager Lynn Shay points out how information in the CRIS database can be used to research Missouri religious properties.

## Kansas City’s Million Dollar Give-Away

### Certified Local Governments

Kansas City has converted a preservation loss to a preservation gain with the establishment of the Landmarks Historic Trust Corporation’s Downtown Fund. The fund, with an

initial balance of one million dollars, was created to assist owners of historic properties, located in the downtown loop of Kansas City, to preserve those resources. The term downtown loop is derived from the freeway system, Interstates 35 and 70, that loop around

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(LOUISA, from Page 1)

most emphatically Victorian of all architectural styles, rejected straight masculine lines for curves, color, texture, and frivolous ornamentation. Gilded Age businessmen maintained a sober exterior, but decked their houses, and their wives, extravagantly.

***“Victorian women created homes that lavishly and sentimentally expressed the domestic ideals of their era.”***

Ultimately these houses became “dolls’ houses” that imprisoned their mistresses. Twentieth-century women (and men) could scarcely wait to walk out of them and slam the door. For decades many of them remained scorned white elephants, suffering from neglect. By the 1970s, however, free from painful memories, people

Learn more about Victorian interior design and decoration; attend “Victorian Missouri – A Celebration”, April 16-18, in Carthage.

began to appreciate these houses for their charm and beauty.

But how much do we really know about the ladies of these houses? We tend to think, in stereotypes, of the fluttery girl, the blushing bride, the prickly spinster, or the jolly matron. If we were honest with ourselves, we might doubt, like Mr. Gradgrind, “whether we have ever quite understood” Victorian women. – *Bonnie Stepenoff*

*Bonnie Stepenoff, Ph.D, is a freelance historian and archivist who resides in Jefferson City. Stepenoff will present a special session on Victorian women at Victorian Missouri – A Celebration April 16-18 in Carthage. The session titled “Clothes and Consciousness” will include a lecture, a fashion show of vintage clothing, and a slide show of historic photos taken in Missouri.*



An interior view (above) of the Curtis and Nira Wright house in Carthage as it looked in 1898. Notice the use of four different patterns on ceiling, frieze, walls, and floor; the draped tables; an abundance of bric-a-brac; and family photos and other mementos. – *Photo courtesy of the Powers Museum*



The Moorish room at Rockcliffe Mansion in Hannibal ca 1900 (left) illustrates the Victorian craze for “exotica” in the late 19th century. Notice how the tufted Turkish divans piled with plump pillows from India and a rich assortment of other exotic objects combine to create this highly sophisticated “bazaar.”

# Missouri Wins National Preservation Awards

## From the National Trust for Historic Preservation:

The Clay County Visitors' Bureau has won a \$1,500 Preservation Services Fund (PSF) grant. The "seed" grant will be used to develop a master plan for the Jesse James Farm that will include a land use plan for 40 acres of associated property.

A second PSF grant of \$2,000 went to the Allied Housing Group, Ltd. of St. Louis. The grant money will be used to rehabilitate the Silk Exchange Building for reuse as housing for women and children.

For more information about National Trust grant programs, call Ben Handy at (312) 939-5547.

The John Garth House in Hannibal (see "Historic Architecture," this page) owned by Irv Seinberg, has won second place in the Great American Home Awards "Bed and Breakfast" category. The former house museum was selected for its sensitive adaptation of the interior for modern use.

For more information about the National Trust's Great American Home Awards call (202) 673-4283.

## From Jack Daniels Distillery:

The town of Clarksville was chosen as one of the top five finalists, out of 10,000 towns with 2,000 or fewer citizens, entered in the Best Small Town in America competition. The criteria for judging are town goals, leadership, and citizen involvement and enthusiasm. First prize is \$10,000.

## From the National Society for Historical Archaeology:

Kansas City received one of three national merit awards presented by the society. The award was given for the city's preservation of the Town of Kansas archaeological site and broad commitment to a city archaeological program. — *Karen Grace*

## MISSOURI Historic Architecture

### *French-Second Empire 1860-1885*

#### Characteristics:

- Primary characteristic is a mansard (dual-pitched hipped) roof with dormer windows on steep lower slope; a molded cornice trims both the upper and lower edge of the roof; decorative brackets usually support overhanging eaves; roofing material is slate — decorative patterns are common.
- Plan may be symmetrical or asymmetrical.
- Asymmetry is accomplished with projecting wings or bays — either one- or two-story, side or corner porches, or a tower.
- Materials may be wood, stone, or brick — St. Louis townhouses often have stone over brick primary facades.
- Arched or round topped windows are common and may be paired.
- Primary entry doors are generally paired and often have glass in the top half; transom windows, either flat or arched top, above doors are common on Missouri models.
- Doors, windows, and porches are often elaborately trimmed with a variety of Italianate-style moldings.



PHOTO: NARS

*The Second Empire-style Garth House, ca 1871, near Hannibal was a recent winner in the Great American Home Awards competition sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.*

**Learn more about Victorian Era architectural styles; attend "Victorian Missouri — A Celebration", April 16-18, in Carthage.**

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Editor: Karen Grace  
Designer: Musick & Co.

# The Amazing Nelle E. Peters

She was intrepid and resolute, defying tradition by entering the male-dominated field of architecture yet felt the need to observe the common practice of her day: concealing her gender. The name, "N.E. Peters, Architect," found on the 10th floor office door in the Orear-Leslie Building at 12th and Baltimore, gave no clue that the occupant, Nelle Elizabeth Peters, would one day be judged one of Kansas City's most successful architects and who, at the time of her retirement in 1967, had been responsible for the design of more than 1,000 buildings.

Her life began on December 11, 1884, in a sod house in Niagra, North Dakota. Early in her childhood a talent for drawing and a consuming interest in mathematics became evident. Both, credited to her millwright ancestors, served her well in her professional work since she regarded architecture as a problem, requiring not only a solution but preferably an attractive solution. Peters lacked formal training, possibly due to little being available at the turn of the century. However, on-the-job training as a drafts lady and the completion of several correspondence courses proved sufficient to allow her licensing in several states.

Peters came to Kansas City in 1907 to work in an architectural office. Four years later she married William H. Peters, a designer for the Kansas City Terminal Railroad. Although she continued to work during her marriage, it was following her 1923 divorce that she was most productive. Her association with Charles E. Phillips, a builder and developer, was important to her career. Among the credits given to this partnership were seven apartment

buildings located just west of the Country Club Plaza and known locally as the literary block because they were individually named for famous authors of English literature.

Her specialty was designing apartment buildings containing four or six units. They were comfortable and functional, although frequently lacking much exterior adornment. She was the local pioneer of the concept of siting apartment buildings around a central



courtyard. A good example of this technique is the Belnord Court, 4024-50 Warwick Boulevard, completed in 1921. Sizable apartment hotels were also designed by Peters including the Ambassador Hotel (1924) at 3560 Broadway and the Valentine Hotel (1927) at 3724 Broadway. There were

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*"... [Peters] left an enduring legacy of buildings as a memorial to her talent and tenacity."*

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occasional commissions to design commercial buildings. One of the best known is the Luzier Building located at 3216 Gillham Plaza, home for a cosmetics company. Modest single family residences are attributed to her, as well as more opulent ones such as a home at 1239 West 61st Street and at 5825 Overhill Road in Mission Hills, Kansas.

Nelle E. Peters died on Oct. 7, 1974, at a nursing home in Sedalia. One of Missouri's most prolific and least recognized architects, she left an enduring legacy of buildings as a memorial to her talent and tenacity. —  
*Jane Flynn*

*Jane Fifield Flynn, former director of the Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, is the current president of the Jackson County Historical Society and serves on the Missouri Advisory Council for Historic Preservation. Flynn has authored two books on Kansas City history. Kansas City Women of Independent Minds (1992) celebrates the lives of 92 women from all walks of life who challenged convention, and even the law, to enrich Kansas City by their accomplishments. Kansas City Style with Dory DeAngelo (1990) is a social and cultural history of the city as seen through its lost architecture.*

*(The photo of Nelle E. Peters is courtesy of the Jackson County Historical Society Archives.)*



*“Nelle Elizabeth Peters, . . . one of Kansas City’s most successful architects, . . . [was] responsible for the design of over 1,000 buildings.”*

*The Luzier cosmetics company of Kansas City commissioned Nelle E. Peters to design the building on the left in 1928; Peters unified the two buildings with a classical facade in 1933.*

*Kansas City’s Ambassador Hotel in the 3600 block of Broadway, ca 1924, was one of several large hotels designed by Peters during her most productive period.*



*The “literary block” or “poets’ row” (above), a series of apartment buildings on west 48th Street in Kansas City, were individually named for famous authors of English literature. Photo courtesy of the Kansas City Landmarks Commission.*

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the core of Kansas City's central business district. This innovative program is funded with money set aside for preservation purposes in 1991 as part of the General Hospital demolition agreement, a major preservation loss in Kansas City.

Under the General Hospital settlement, the city gave up an option to renovate the 83-year-old General Hospital for possible city health department offices in order that it could be demolished; the demolition will facilitate construction of an expansion to the adjacent Children's Mercy Hospital. The agreement was a blow to preservationists who fought for six years to save the structure, the first city-funded health institution. The hospital was demolished last year. However, the silver lining in this bitter preservation loss is the establishment of the Downtown Fund.

The Downtown Fund is administered by the Landmarks Historic Trust Corporation, a Missouri not-for-profit corporation associated with Kansas City's preservation programs. In addition to a downtown loop location, eligible buildings must be listed on either the Kansas City or the National Register of Historic Places and not owned by a government entity. Approximately 130 buildings meet those requirements.

## preservation **issues**

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
Historic Preservation Program  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, MO 65102

## Dates to Remember

**Introduction to Federal Projects and Historic Preservation Law**, April 13-15, Kansas City. Cost \$245. For more information call the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation at (202) 786-0505.

**Society for American Archaeology Annual Meeting**, April 14-18, Adam's Mark Hotel, St. Louis. Call Carol Duncan for more information at (314) 721-0386.

**Neighborhood Conservation: Building Blocks for the Future**, April 15-17, Kalamazoo, Mich. Fee \$135. For more information, contact the Midwest Regional Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation at (312) 939-5547.

**Victorian Missouri: A Celebration**, Missouri's eighth annual historic preservation conference, April 16-18, Carthage. call (314) 751-7959.

**Treasure Near at Hand**, April 17, Arrow Rock. Call the Friends of Arrow Rock at (816) 837-3231 to register.

**Route 66 Association of Missouri** quarterly meeting, April 17, St. Louis-Franklin area. Contact Jim Powell at (314) 982-5500 for more information.

**Sacred Trusts VI**, the sixth national conference on the stewardship and preservation of older religious properties, April 29-May 1, Salt Lake City, Utah. Call Partners for Sacred Places for details at (215) 546-1288.

**Missouri Advisory Council on Historic Preservation** quarterly meeting, May 14, Jefferson City. Call (314) 751-5365 for more information.

**Fifth Annual Great American Home Awards** application deadline. Call the Home Awards Hotline at (202) 673-4283 for an application.

Funds may be awarded in either a grant or loan format and can be used for the rehabilitation, restoration, stabilization, or improvement of historic properties and for pre-development costs associated with the above activities. Generally, funds will not be used for acquisition, additions, major reconstruction, equipment purchase, or the relocation of historic buildings.

All activities must meet the Secretary of the Interior's "Standards."

The application deadline for funding is March 1, 1993. To obtain additional information about the program, contact Landmarks Historic Trust Corporation, 414 E. 12th Street, 26th Floor, Kansas City, MO 64106-2714, (816)274-2555. — *Beverly Fleming*

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