

LANDMARKS LETTER

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DESIGN PROCESS: THANKING OUR DONORS

By Tom Peterson, Mackey Mitchell Architects



The Hesch House donor board built by Tom Peterson

One day, I received an email from Andrew Weil asking me if I could recommend someone to design and produce a donor recognition system. The question wasn't a surprise to me, because I knew from past conversations with Andrew that Landmarks wanted to recognize the patrons who contributed to the recently completed Hesch House renovation.

Mackey Mitchell Architects has had a long relationship with Landmarks Association – our firm's founder, Eugene J. Mackey III, served on the Board of Directors for years, we have sponsored the Most Enhanced Awards and Fall Fundraiser, Landmarks hosted our Gene Mackey Exhibition in its former office, and we also provided design and rendering services *pro bono* for the renovation of the Hesch House.

In the spirit of continuing the Landmarks + MMA connection, I explained Andrew's request to Steve Emer, our President, and I asked: "Steve – why don't WE design a donor



Can you guess which building this image is from? See Elements article on page 14.

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dear friends,

Hello there!

My name is Stuart Keating, and I am the new Executive Director of Landmarks Association of Saint Louis. Pleased to meet you!

I first visited Saint Louis in earnest in 2008 while trying to decide where to attend law school. I stayed with a friend in the Central West End and made a point of walking to the Washington University in Saint Louis' campus to get a feel for what my outside-of-school life as a student would look like. Said walk took me through the Central West End and past the grand houses on Lindell along the northern edge of Forest Park; the return walk took me through Skinker-De-Baliviere and the West End.

That's all it took, I was immediately smitten with the city and decided to attend Wash U. I moved to Saint Louis in 2009 and realized during my first year of law school (not a time period commonly given over to fond recollection by anyone who has lived through it) that I wanted to build a career and a life in this city.

My love for Saint Louis stems from the things that attract many out-of-towners to put down roots: the beautiful brick buildings, the cost of living, the amazing parks and museums, the incredible bar and restaurant scene, the hint of chaos that adds a frisson of excitement to one's daily errands. There is a sense of possibility and enthusiasm from the people who live here, a palpable excitement for whatever project you want to work on, often accompanied by offers of advice and assistance.

My first experience with Landmarks was receiving a Most Enhanced award for the renovation of the Cherokee Brewery Company, a 150-year-old brewery on Cherokee Street. The renovation used Historic Tax Credits and involved a truly insane scope of work—we removed the paint from five stories of brickwork, tuckpointed the entire building, restored the facade using reference photos taken in the 1890s, and excavated (by hand!) over two million pounds of dirt, clay, and rocks from the lagging cellars 25 feet under the building. Going over the top on the preservation and redevelopment of the Cherokee Brewery Company stockhouse was absolutely worth it: we were given the opportunity to showcase to people from around the world the ways in which human activities and desires shaped the built environment, and then how the built environment shaped the lives of the people that lived and worked in our neighborhood.



My proudest/most insane historic preservation experience (to date) was excavating the lagering cellars under the old Cherokee Brewery Company by hand. It took six weeks and 25 people. Excited to do more for Saint Louis' historic buildings at Landmarks!

Seeing the joy and wonder of guests at Earthbound highlighted for me the importance of historic preservation—buildings don't just provide the fabric of our city, they are the set-pieces for the daily drama of our lives. The way buildings look and feel and the way we interact with them create our sense of self, our sense of place, and, broadly speaking, our culture.

My first two months on the job have been continued proof of the contagious goodwill of the people of Saint Louis, with introductions, advice, stories, information, and offers of sponsorship and financial support pouring in from board members, community partners, volunteers, friends, and neighbors alike. Something I appreciate is how frequently the people I meet with offer up a timeline of all the neighborhoods they have lived in throughout the city and county. In that spirit, here is a history of my seventeen years in Saint Louis (so far):

I first lived in a three-unit apartment on Pershing Avenue in Skinker DeBaliviere. I chose the apartment because I loved the huge trees and the peaceful nature of the neighborhood, Plus, being able to walk to campus and stare at all the beautiful buildings offered a respite from the occasionally harrowing experience of attending law school. I lived there for five years, then moved to Benton Park and eventually an apartment on Cherokee Street to be closer to Earthbound Beer, which I co-founded in 2014. In 2015, my partner and I rehabbed a two-story brick house in Gravois Park, then a sprawling rooming-house to two-unit to single-family conversion in Benton Park West in 2022. Currently, I live in Shaw, where I run into many Landmarks Members on my walks through the neighborhood.

I consider it an incredible honor and an awesome responsibility to lead Landmarks in our mission to preserve, enhance, and promote Saint Louis' unique buildings. I am excited to fight for the buildings that add such richness to our lives, to educate the public on the historical context that shapes their surroundings, and to convince people to pay attention to their built environment. As board member Jeff Vines put it in a recent conversation—"If Saint Louis didn't have its buildings, what would it have?"

Stuart Keating
Executive Director



The original glass pane in the window frame before being cleaned



Original floorboard pieces before being reworked and refinished



Dovetail joint sawn into the wood frame



Dovetail joint in the process of being refined



Test pressings of text on glass

“... Landmarks wanted to recognize the patrons who contributed to the recently completed Hesch House renovation.”

DESIGN PROCESS *Continued from page 1*

board for Landmarks as another *pro bono* project?” He thought for a minute, and responded: “I have a better idea: why don’t YOU design it, AND build it?!” (Now, he suggested this knowing that I’m pretty good with this kind of fabrication and I have a fairly large workshop.) I didn’t hesitate to answer: “Sure!”

DEVELOPING THE CONCEPT

Our first meeting touched briefly on previously proposed solutions, and the group quickly agreed that “off the shelf” donor signage components were not conducive to the ethos of Landmarks, and that a custom solution, hopefully incorporating materials of the Hesch House itself, would better support Landmarks’ mission. After discussing various materials, we selected an original window sash (with one pane of glass still in it) from the basement storage, and it was just the right size for the desired location in the office if it were rotated 90 degrees.

At that point, we switched from the familiar term “Donor Wall” to the unique “Donor Window” – who else had one of those? From there, we studied many options – would we light this from the ceiling, or would there be internal illumination? Would this sash be mounted directly to the wall or “floated” in front of the wall? Would we want to build a frame around the sash, or behind the sash? Should we keep the dirty old pane? Each of these decisions affected other aspects, for example: we decided a larger frame around the perimeter of the sash would give me better

options for hiding lights, wiring, etc. And with a preliminary layout of all of the text in InDesign, we found we could group the text into 5 new panes, allowing us to just clean the original pane and remount it in its original location.

One of the easiest decisions was regarding the frame – I proposed wood, which could be painted or clear-coated, and I even volunteered as an option some of my own vintage copper flashing that I could wrap around the wood frame. But Hesch House offered up a better idea: I could create the frame from one of the original attic floorboards, which were thick and wide planks, and I selected one that had recently been altered for HVAC modifications. Another appropriate utilization of repurposed materials. With the design concept in place, it was time to focus on fabrication in my workshop.

FLOORBOARD FOR FRAME

I thought turning the floorboard into frame members would be pretty straightforward. While pulling it out of the attic, the floorboard appeared to be simply very dirty. But on closer inspection in my shop, there was a thick tarry coating, beneath the dirt, that was still pliable. After planing, another issue was revealed – that tarry material had soaked into the wood, leaving patchy discolorations. We all agreed that it was best to plane the wood to the desirable thickness, and let whatever stains remain be part of the story.

“I thoroughly enjoy making things with my hands, and I especially like projects where I get to repurpose old and forgotten materials.”

That statement evolved into a mantra for the whole project: this would not be a true restoration project – more of a preservation effort, and one that could appear to be purposely stopped partially through the process.

THE SASH

The sash work turned out to be a larger task than I expected. Paint strippers would not soften the old paint, and selective manual paint removal revealed rotted wood, cracked and split muntins, and even a burned section of the sash’s rail that had been covered by many layers of paint. So, I made the decision to completely disassemble the sash and its components. While more time-consuming, I was able to sand every piece individually to remove the paint and thoroughly glue every joint, making the entire sash structurally sound.

THE FRAME CONSTRUCTION

I like to hide hardware when I can, and the frame could have been fastened with screws and the screw heads hidden with wood plugs. Instead, I went in the other direction, creating dovetail joints at each corner. They are a strong hardware-less joint and have been used as traditional joinery for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Instead of hiding, it clearly expresses how the joint works. These dovetail joints are custom-designed in their angle and spacing, and I cut them with simple hand tools: a dovetail saw, which has fine teeth and a thin, wide blade; and chisels, to remove the waste stock after the fine cuts are made. A good hand-cut dovetail joint will have slight variations between the tail and pin combinations, even when made by the most skilled craftsman. While they take a lot of practice to cut properly, there’s something really satisfying when the pins and tails slide together perfectly and tightly.

Rather than use a traditional wire hanging system for the frame, I wanted the Donor Window to be securely fastened to the wall. But I didn’t want any attachment to be visible. After assembling the frame, I took some red oak scrap and cut what I called “crossbars” and attached them to the back of the frame. In addition to strengthening the frame, these crossbars had a second purpose – I would fasten the Donor Window to the wall with screws through the crossbars.

THE PHOTOGRAPH

As soon as the project became a “window” (instead of a board or a wall), Katie and Andrew knew what background image the viewer would “see through” the window: a vintage photograph of Hesch House. We had several discussions about how that visual would represent the past, and the viewer sees the donor names hovering in front of the image – they are the present, and were essential to making the restoration possible. But, there were some technical issues, the biggest being that the photograph we wanted to use was scanned from a book – Katie and Andrew tried to track down the author for a higher resolution image, but no luck. Fortunately, Adobe Photoshop had just released a new feature

in its beta version called “Generative Upscale”, which uses AI to increase resolution while adding realistic detail, rather than just stretching existing pixels. That helped a great deal; the children’s faces in the original photo were blurry, and AI sharpened them.

THE LIGHTING

I had the majority of the Donor Window fabricated, so now we could make some decisions about lighting by seeing all of the materials in place. I set up the assembled window in Landmarks’ conference room, and the team took turns viewing it from different viewpoints as I changed the angle of the lighting strip. The consensus was that the angled light was better for the photograph, but was too visible to the viewer. So the LED strip is mounted flat on the aluminum sash.

I tried to hide the wiring as much as I could. The wires get around the photo panel via holes I drilled within the frame (think of a tiny tunnel inside the wood), and they emerge from the inside face of the frame just a fraction of an inch away from the light strip. Only the most committed observer will be able to see them.

THE WORDS

A critical component of the entire Donor Window project is how the donor names would be portrayed. Early on, we decided on the layout, but several options remained: font, color, frosted, etc. Also, what technology – vinyl cutout, direct print on glass? Which surface – the front or back of the glass?

I predicted the text on glass component would give us the greatest challenge, only because it would involve third-party vendors, either someone with a vinyl cutter or a printer service.

The Landmarks team liked several text-on-glass examples that are easy to find online – and a gold metallic was a favorite. Over the course of weeks, perhaps it was months, I consulted with signage vendors about our Donor Window project. The common threads of rejection were: the project was too small, they couldn’t get to it for several months, and/or the intricate process of manually removing vinyl film around words was cost-prohibitive (we had a LOT of text). Just acquiring stock samples turned out to be a challenge.

In frustration, I bought myself a Cricut, which is a small-scale cutting machine, and something I’ve wanted for a few years. Within a couple of evenings, I was able to produce half a dozen different samples, from colored and metallic vinyls, and brought those samples back to the team. Everyone liked the gold metallic lettering the best – just one problem – the gold is on the non-sticky side, and we wanted the lettering on the inside of the sash, for easier maintenance and to keep guests from picking at it. It took another day or two to find a gold film with the metallic color on BOTH sides. But eventually we had the products we all liked!

I mentioned earlier that some vendors stated that, due to our large amount of text, the removal of unwanted film (called

Continued on pg. 6>

“weeding”) would be cost-prohibitive, because that is still a manual process, even though the cutting process is by machine. Every center of a letter “a,” “e,” and “o,” and any other undesired film, needs to be picked out with a sharp implement. Fortunately, I spent many years in the 70s and 80s cutting silkscreen stencils out of film by hand, so I did not mind spending a few hours sitting in my favorite chair, “weeding” the gold lettering while catching up on episodes of Shrinking.

THE FINISHES

Pun intended, the “finishing” touches were to decide on the finishes for the wood – both the sash and the frame. A window sash would normally be painted on the exterior side, but we went back to our mantra that this would not be a true restoration, and leaving the sash looking freshly sanded would be appropriate. We didn’t need to protect it from weather, but a finish would help with maintenance, so I brushed on several coats of a “dead flat” clear polyurethane, one that dried perfectly clear with no amber cast, so it looks like there is no finish at all. In contrast, we wanted a bit more gloss for the frame, so it was coated with a medium-gloss polyurethane.

INSTALLATION

Months of careful planning and decision-making paid off, and the installation went smoothly. A couple of days before, the

electrician installed a new junction box with building power coiled within, and a low-voltage wire running from the box to the pre-determined exit point behind the photograph. We were able to set two of the four anchors into studs – I estimate the Donor Window will withstand 500 pounds on it. I think the frame wood will fail before it comes off the wall. Wiring, installation, and cleaning went off without a hitch. We turned on the lights, and I breathed a sigh of relief.

CLOSING

I thoroughly enjoy making things with my hands, and I especially like projects where I get to repurpose old and forgotten materials. The Landmarks team was a pleasure as a “client” – they were very collaborative throughout the whole process, and the project turned out better because of their input and feedback. As a long-time supporter of Landmarks, I’m proud to be able to contribute my talents and expertise in my own way.

For additional photographs of the construction process and final product, please visit landmarks-stl.org/about/donor-board/ or scan this QR code.



QUINN CHAPEL CLEAN-UP

On Saturday, April 18, more than 20 volunteers gathered at Quinn Chapel in Carondelet for a morning cleanup, marking an important first step in efforts to stabilize and preserve the historic building.

Originally constructed in the 1860s by the independent City of Carondelet as the North Public Market, the building was purchased by the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in July 1880. The congregation added the entrance tower in 1900 and a small parsonage in 1908. Quinn Chapel was individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974 and later included in the Central Carondelet Historic District in 2010.

The cleanup brought together Landmarks members, AME congregants, Sisters of St. Joseph from the Carondelet Motherhouse, and neighborhood residents. Working from 9:00 a.m. to noon, volunteers focused on exterior cleanup clearing debris, cutting back overgrowth, and improving conditions after a February 2025 fire left the building exposed and vulnerable.

Landmarks was first alerted to the potential demolition of Quinn Chapel by Alderperson Anne Schweitzer. Since then, we’ve been working with Reverend Edmund Lowe, who has been highly responsive and proactive in moving efforts forward. He has taken the lead on securing the site and coordinating next steps.

Despite the challenges, Rev. Lowe notes that the AME Church remains “totally committed to restoring it to its grandeur.” The April cleanup is an early but meaningful step, and a clear sign of the growing coordination and community support behind saving this important Carondelet landmark.



Bowen, By Andrew B. Weil for Landmarks nomination of the Central Carondelet Historic District (2009)



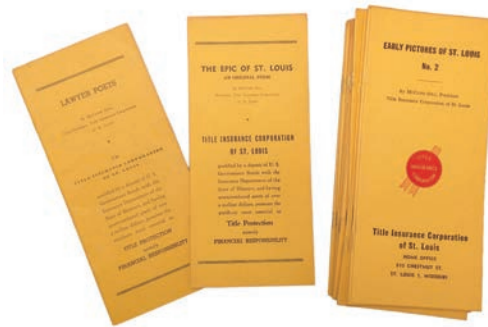
Some of the Clean-up crew

MCCUNE GILL: THE LAWYER-POET WHO LOVED SAINT LOUIS

By Stuart Keating

*“Of trade and the man I sing
Who first from the shores of France
Came to our river’s edge to bring
Commerce, Industry and finance.*

*Laclede was his name,
Pierre Laclede-Liguest,
A business man who sought his fame
In the valley’s treasure chest.”*



Some of the 37 pamphlets written by McCune Gill

So begins a forty-stanza poem titled “The Epic of Saint Louis” that goes on to cover the contributions of Clement Delor, Gottfried Duden, John Mullanphy, Henry Shaw, Hiram Leffingwell, and David R. Francis to the city of Saint Louis. The poem is published in a slim yellow pamphlet designed to advertise the Title Insurance Corporation of St. Louis, which makes sense when you realize the poem’s author is McCune Gill, the company’s president.

In the Brambila Architectural Library, we have a collection of 37 of these fascinating pamphlets, all written between 1942 and 1963 by McCune Gill (presumably with some level of assistance from secretaries and underlings) during his tenure as President of the Title Insurance Corporation of St. Louis. The pamphlets in our collection range from histories of neighborhoods and suburbs of Saint Louis to memorable Saint Louis events (e.g. the visits of Charles Dickens and the world-famous Swedish chanteuse Jenny Lind) to a house history/philosophical treatise on his own house at 743 Tuxedo Avenue in Webster Groves.

The origin of the “St Louis Aeneid” appears to have come from a pamphlet he authored on famous English lawyer poets (less distinguished than warrior poets, though not necessarily less feared). While our collection focuses nearly entirely on the history of Saint Louis and its built environment, the Saint Louis Public Library hosts a collection of 245 pamphlets by McCune Gill¹ that range from explanations of technical real estate matters to histories of Babylonian and Egyptian deeds to the intriguingly vague “Islands.”

So who was McCune Gill? Born in 1883, Gill gained employment at the Lincoln Trust Company—later renamed the Title Insurance Corporation of St. Louis—but took a leave of absence to earn a law degree at Washington University of Saint Louis. He gained a reputation as a legal expert, author and historian, publishing books on real estate law and Saint Louis history, which led to his becoming a trustee of the Missouri Historical Society

and eventually the President of the Title Insurance Corporation.²

An interesting Landmarks Association connection: The Lincoln Trust Company built the Lincoln Trust building at 7th & Chestnut in 1894. Later known as the Title Guaranty building, this H-shaped tower, designed by Eames and Young, was famous for its Renaissance-style panels and cornice made of terra cotta angels. Landmarks Association moved its headquarters into the building in 1981 during the debates



The Title Guaranty building

over clearing the area for the ill-starred Gateway Mall plan.³ The building was nominated for the National Register of Historic Places in 1981 by Jane Porter, researcher, and Carolyn Toft, Executive Director, from our office on the 12th floor. Despite the best efforts of preservation-minded citizens and Landmarks members, the Title Guaranty building was demolished in 1983, a move that former Mayor Vince Schoemel Jr. said “wasn’t the greatest decision ever made.”⁴

Undoubtedly, if McCune Gill had lived in the era of blogs and Wikipedia, he would have been a blogging impresario and preeminent Wikipedia editor. Fortunately for us, he had a lifelong curiosity about the world (and Saint Louis), wanted to share the fruits of his interest, and was willing to write his hobby off as a marketing expense by mailing his original research out to customers and partners of the company he ran. Over seventy years after his death in 1965, McCune Gill’s curiosity is still paying dividends.

² Abstracted from <https://www.holden100.info/articles/mccune-gill/>

³ <https://www.builtstlouis.net/ opos/titleguaranty.html>

⁴ https://www.stltoday.com/news/localmetro/a-look-back-explosives-drop-old-buildings-for-gateway-mall/article_954a8148-d2b0-5815-82e1-f6e2340db6aa.html

¹ <https://www.spl.org/mccune-gill-pamphlets/>

INTERVIEW WITH JOY CHRISTENSEN OF THE FRANZ ARZT HOUSE

By Stuart Keating



Joy Christensen relaxing in her newly-restored Arzt House Conservatory
Photo courtesy of Joy Christensen

Easily one of the most distinctive houses in Saint Louis, the Franz Arzt House on the corner of 12th Street and Lami in Soulard is a French Second Empire mansion constructed between 1874 and 1876. Featuring a three-story tower, a man-made cave, and exquisite interior and exterior detailing, the Arzt house presented a number of rehabilitation and preservation challenges. Fortunately for the city of Saint Louis, Joy Grdnik Christensen stepped up and spent eight years restoring this incredible gem to an almost unbelievable standard.

With renovations substantially completed by May of 2023, Joy and her husband won a Most Enhanced award from Land-

marks in 2024. Given the Arzt House's immense curb appeal and enduring popularity with Landmarks membership as a tour location, we sat down with Joy to check in on living in such a wonderful house.

Interview has been edited for length and clarity.

LA: Please tell us about your project!

JC: They say you pick your friends and you pick your jobs, but houses pick you. And that's exactly what happened when I first saw The ARZT House. My husband was driving. I spotted the house and did what people do every day when they see it: I said

“Stop! Stop the car, look at that house! LOOK at that house!!”

I couldn't believe my husband actually stopped. If he hadn't, we wouldn't be living here today. The house was so unusual. A Second Empire Slate Mansard roof with the remains of ornate cast-iron roof cresting, a marble paneled facade, tall arched windows outlined with rope-mold, and so many remnants of intricate ornamentation. I made my husband turn the corner so we could see —what?? A grotto!! What we couldn't see then was that it opened to a century-and-a-half-old man-made cave, with what a 1901 newspaper reported as ten thousand specimens taken from Missouri natural caves. All of this . . . in a severe state of deterioration. But the house grabbed me. And it made me save it.

LA: What was your favorite part of your project?

JC: Just getting through it. At every step of the way. Starting with getting the house. The house wasn't for sale. I had to stalk it for a year and a half, trying to get the current 42-year-long occupants to agree to sell.

It was clear the outside was in extremely poor condition, with bowed marble panels, broken and missing windows, corrugated drainage pipes protruding from the second floor over scaffolding on a weird brick box on the south side of the house. But I figured people usually keep the inside of a house up and let the outside go, so I fantasized about how wonderful the interior would be. I was wrong.

When we actually got to visit the inside of the house for the first time, I was so shocked by the condition that I couldn't process what I was seeing. It was a 98-degree hot July day in St. Louis, but even hotter INSIDE!! The door opened, and I nearly fell over from a blast of hot and heavy mildew permeated humid air.

Sections of loose plaster were hanging from the ceiling, but before I could think to protect my head, I was instructed not to step here or there to avoid gaping holes and soft spots on the floor where I could fall through. Enough treads on the steps were still there to get upstairs, but so many were missing it made the few remaining spindles and random sections of handrail a lifeline in accomplishing the climb.

Upstairs, the weird brick box was partially shut off with what was left of once grand pocket doors that had been cut up and turned upside down with refrigerator box cardboard replacing the center panels. One peek inside explained the corrugated drain pipe on the exterior: the room was filled with rotten ceiling beams floating in water along with a couple of dead pigeons. And the house was surprisingly small inside —very deceiving from its outside appearance.

And yet there were a few things that told what the house once was. Although in exceedingly decrepit condition, gold-leafed 10-foot pier mirrors, smoke and dirt-encrusted crystal chandeliers with elaborate ceiling medallions, and inlaid burl walnut moldings offered a glimpse into what was originally a gilded aesthetic period mini mansion.

We made it through the rest of the tour with no good news to offer any hope at all. There were interesting double one-sided pocket doors on the second floor, but absolutely every inch of every surface and below-grade structure in the entire house needed to be repaired or replaced.

We got back in the car, and I just sat there unable to speak. I

was overwhelmed. Stunned. The thought of all the time I had invested into imagining how wonderful it would be was now just a mockery. I was utterly and completely heartbroken.

After an eternity of hot silence, my husband said, “Well . . . it needs a lot of work.” I looked at him like he was insane. And then a lightbulb went off in my head, and I said, “Yeah. Yeah, that's what it needs. It needs a lot of work.”

LA: What was the biggest challenge?

JC: People may think they can find a great contractor and he or she will do everything and they won't have to do anything; and in some cases that happens, but not here!!

This restoration was SUCH a staggering amount of work, no one who knew anything wanted to take it on. So I became G.C. by default. Initially, I had to hire people who just needed money—they would often not show up, or sometimes just disappear completely.

I was required to do a lot of handholding and babysitting. There were people who lied and SAID they could do the work. There were others who didn't lie: they actually THOUGHT they could do the work, but then found out they couldn't. And there were people who were capable of doing the work but had no sense of how to get it done in a timely manner. So many things get done by people who have no idea how hard it is going to be!

I went into it thinking I would have everything ready for decorative finish work in six months. It took eight years. Seven people working on the Arzt House restoration died over the course of those 8 years¹. But like Winston Churchill said, “When you are going through hell, keep going.” Our theme song was Bon Jovi's “Living on a Prayer” (*Oh Oh we're halfway there —Oh, Oh livin on a prayer.*). Except it seemed like we were never even halfway there: no light at the end of the tunnel. For a long time, not even a tunnel.

But the one enormous positive thing that was critical for this project happened the day after we closed on the house. I was lucky to be put in contact with Eric LaVelle, a man who had purchased machinery from two decades-old milling houses in St. Louis that were closing up.

Both were going to scrap their antique heavy monstrous machines: they didn't even know how to clean them, much less operate them. But Eric was able to get them working to start making the millwork that was such a huge part of the Arzt House. It is likely these were the very machines that made the original wood millwork for The Arzt House back in the day!

We started with re-creating the widow trim and dormer on the back of the tower that had pretty much rotted away completely. I had a roofer repair and re-roof all the property's roofs with TPO and silicone roof sealant for the metal. We then took the remaining cast iron cresting sections and reattached them—Eric and I would get to work at 5 AM, but by 8 AM it was too hot to continue. Missing corners and panels had to have a pattern cut from wood by Eric so I could send them to be recast by the Amish Cattail Foundry in PA. Luckily, Dr Arzt was into photography, so we had enough old photos to re-create ornamental cornices and trim panels.

¹ Said deaths were not related to the restoration of the Franz Arzt House.



Joy Christensen restoring one of the first floor ceilings
 Photo courtesy of Joy Christensen

INTERVIEW *Continued from page 9*

I called upon my long-time mason, (the late) Bill Richardson to demolish, the ugly brick box on the South Side of the house, and we cheered the removal of this eyesore. But the process to re-create the solarium from historic photos, with 14 arched windows, was slowed by a shortage of available walnut at the time. I drove to North St. Louis, Waterloo, Illinois, and Ohio to source enough dried walnut, and Eric LaVelle made the window frames.

I took the frames to a childhood friend who now had a glass business for double-pane argon gas sashes. Then I glazed them with putty mixed with linseed oil. Bill also rebuilt the stone foundation for the solarium and removed the facade's marble panels, allowing them to un-warp by leaving them on the ground through several months of rain.

On the North side of the house, we excavated the rubble of the remains of an aviary grotto and went through two concrete contractors to get the foundation built correctly for the new two-story addition of a kitchen, pantry, and office.

I struggled with the difficulty every restorer faces: decision making about when to repair and when to replace. Plaster vs. drywall is a classic dilemma. I ultimately chose to remove almost all of the plaster. It was "dead" and full of mildew.

But we had to keep the wood baseboards and moldings, and since all interior walls were brick, once the plaster was removed, the irregular surfaces presented challenges in applying hat channel and studs², which caused this scope of work alone to take

two years. Dr. Arzt also used railroad steel to strengthen interior walls and ceilings, so this, combined with the brick, made running plumbing and electric service very difficult.

The Arzt House is historically significant for being the FIRST residence in St. Louis to have radiant heat (pipes in faux fireplaces) as recorded in the Missouri History Museum in Forest Park. But unfortunately, the system had been dismantled and partially destroyed over the years. So we decided to go with geothermal. This is a messy project! But our entire project was a mess, so for us it wasn't a disruption from the norm.

The house is a slope house—built into the side of the hill. From the front it is two stories, but from the back courtyard entrance, it is three stories over an underground tunnel that is the source of many ghost stories and urban legends. To this day, we don't know why Dr. Arzt built them. But we do know the underground lower level that had been the kitchen and dining room was created that way to be at least 10 degrees cooler in St. Louis summers before air conditioning existed. We also knew the original subgrade stone foundation was in need of waterproofing. This was impossible to do the best way, which would have entailed digging down sixteen feet and out sixteen feet to tuck point and tar the exterior stone foundation wall. No, we had to do everything from the inside and do it on two levels that were underground on the front side of the house.

Dr. Arzt and his fellow Naturalist Society members were responsible for the fancy goldfish we have today. The pop-eyes, fan fins, and brain caps are all hybridizations created by them. So outside, we re-built the original fishpond. We used mortar, hydraulic cement, and load locks for restoring the caves and

² A "hat channel" or "furring channel" is used to create a level, elevated surface over uneven materials. It is called a "hat channel" because the cross-section resembles an old-fashioned men's hat when viewed from the front edge.



The first floor dining room ceiling after being restored and repainted
 Photo courtesy of Joy Christensen

grotto. We re-surfaced the courtyard floor. We reconfigured the back alley houses that were once Dr. Arzt's carriage stable and medical office.

Inside, I created four 3'x7' panels of etched glass and glue chip glass to replace what I was told were originally night-blooming Cerus designs on glass in the solarium parlor pocket doors. I also worked with one of my handymen to clean the smoke-stained plaster ceilings in the front and back parlors to reveal stencil work that needed a great amount of restoration, which I did on scaffolding with paint I mixed to color match as I went. I also painted faux bois on the upper and lower levels. All told, I faux-grained or sanded and stained more than 3 miles of wood-work.

It was 4 years before we discovered the rotten floors all the way up to the tower were not a result of water damage, as everyone had assumed. It was TERMITES!!! They made their way up inside the wall's five stories!!!

LA: What helped you decide to apply for Most Enhanced?

JC: My husband (of 52 married years) nominated me. He saw the immense amount of time (8 years) and work (G.C. by default and through my hands on personal finishes) and thought my blood, sweat, and tears deserved recognition.

LA: What do you like most about living in a Most Enhanced winner?

JC: The award validates all my efforts, not just as a stamp of approval, but as a professional endorsement of high integrity.

LA: Have you made any changes to the building since you won Most Enhanced?

JC: Yes, almost all cosmetic, except for a few unseen different structural approaches

LA: Do you anticipate any big changes to the project in the future?

JC: Yes, but the ones planned are all cosmetic

LA: Are you working on any new projects?

JC: Yes! Finally taking the steps, although they are baby steps, to complete the Safe Building. It's a 10,000sq ft two-story building in Midtown, which I white-boxed years ago.

Joy continues to offer tours of the Arzt House (we may book a tour for Landmarks members in September) and is a fountain of energy and ideas—she is on the committee to save the church at 1222 Allen Ave in Souland. We're excited to see what's next for the Safe Building in Midtown!

ACROTERIA AND THE SHELDON: CLASSICAL ORNAMENT IN ST. LOUIS

By Katie Graebe

Architectural ornament often highlights the most important parts of a building, and one of the most distinctive examples is the *acroterion* (plural: *acroteria*). The term comes from the Greek ἀκρωτήριον, meaning “peak” and “place for”, referring to decorative features placed at the highest points of a structure.¹ [Image 1]

Acroteria originated in Archaic Greek and Etruscan architecture, evolving from simple ridgepole terminations into sculptural elements set on pedestals at the apex or ridge of the roof and the corners of a triangular pediment, emphasizing the classical order. [Image 2]. The earliest examples, dating to the 7th century BCE [Greek Archaic Period],² were made of painted terra-cotta and often took the form of stylized floral motifs such as palmettes or honeysuckles. Over time, they became more elaborate, carved in stone or marble, and contributed to a rhythmic silhouette along the roofline. While most original examples do not survive, their forms are seen in reconstructions.

¹ “acroterion etymology” dictionary.com akros (ἄκρος): meaning “highest point” or “edge” and -tērion (-τήριον): a Greek suffix designating a “place for” the extremity.

² The Sphinx on the Roof: The Meaning of the Greek Temple Acroteria. cambridge.org. 30 July 2013.

The motif persisted through later periods, reappearing during the Renaissance and in the Classical Revival movements of the 18th through early 20th centuries. Architects drew on Greek and Roman orders to reinforce symmetry, proportion, and a sense of permanence, visually linking their designs to the past.

This example is found on **The Sheldon Concert Hall and Art Galleries**, built in 1912 as the home of the Ethical Society of St. Louis [Image 3]. Designed by Louis C. Spiering, the building reflects the classical vocabulary common to civic architecture of the period, with a prominent pedimented façade conveying dignity and permanence. The building was named for Walter Sheldon, a founding member of the Ethical Society, and served as a place for lectures, discussion, and community gatherings.

The acroteria at the roofline are pressed in metal and above the entry entablature are carved stone. Here they are stylized as palmettes, resembling the fan-shaped leaves of a palm tree. There does not appear to have been a central acroterion at the apex, making the corner elements the primary decorative accents. [Image 3] These details reinforce the building’s symmetry while subtly animating the skyline.

Over time, the Sheldon has played several roles in St. Louis

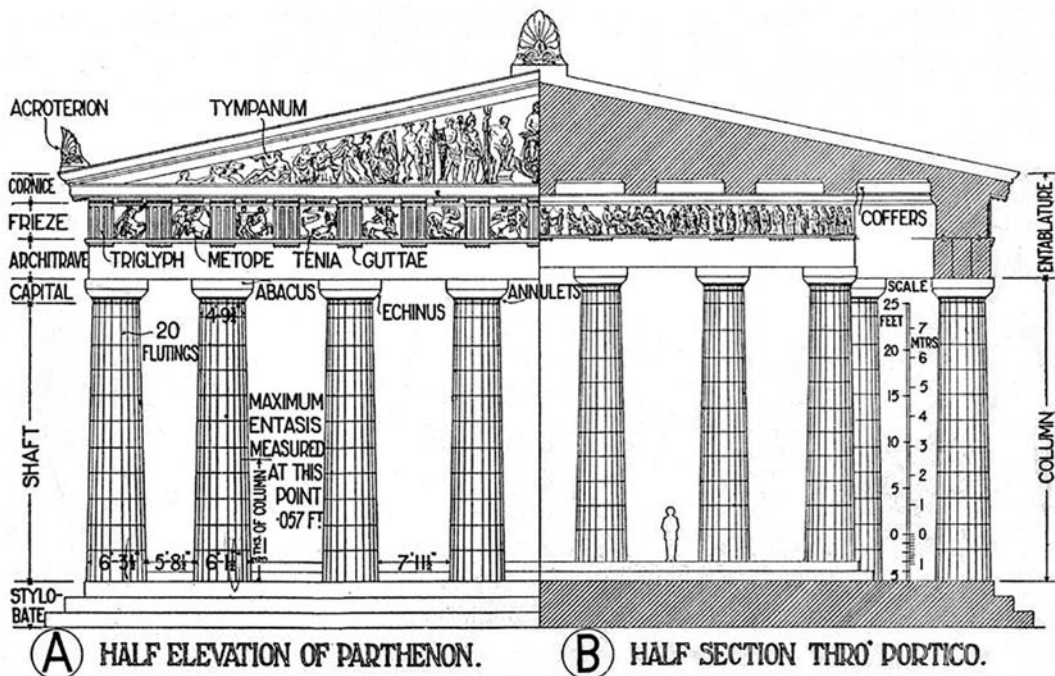


Image 1: Illustration from *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method* by Banister Fletcher.

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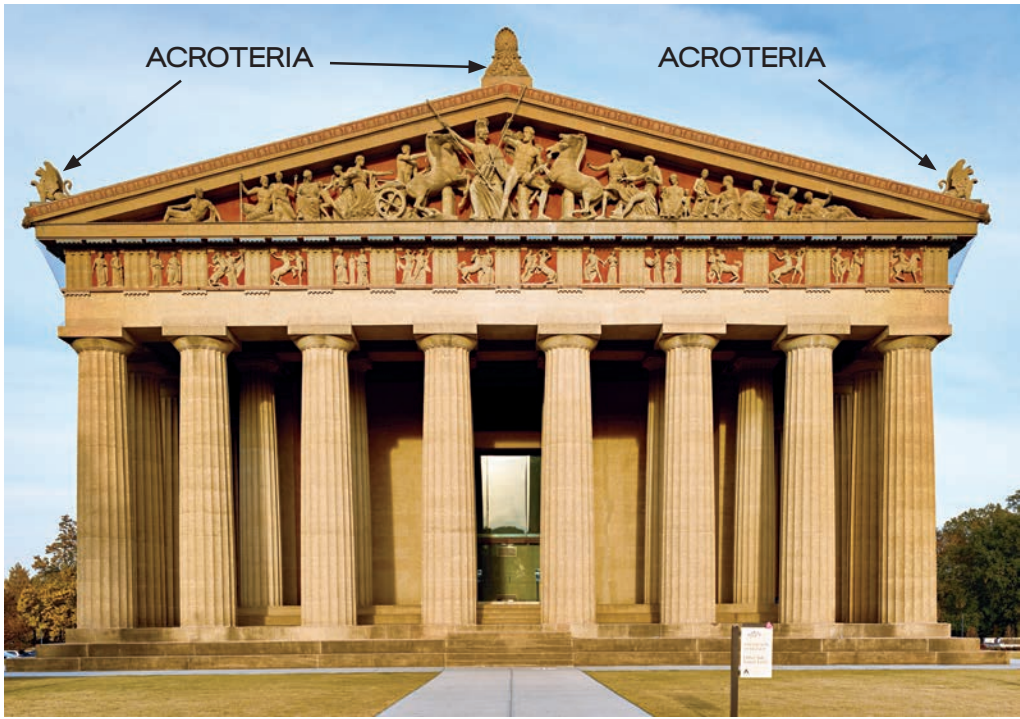


Image 2: Replica of Athens, Greece's Parthenon in Nashville
Public Domain

cultural life. After the Ethical Society relocated in 1964, the building was repurposed before ultimately being preserved and restored. Today, it operates as a vibrant arts venue, hosting concerts, lectures, and exhibitions.

Though sometimes easy to overlook, these crowning acroteria reflect a design tradition spanning more than two millennia, linking the concert hall to the architecture of the ancient world.



Image 3: The Sheldon, 3648 Washington Ave.
Katie Graebe, 2026

2026 SPRING LECTURE SERIES

JOIN US FOR LANDMARKS' SPRING LECTURE SERIES

Explore the history, architecture, and culture of the St. Louis region in our free spring lecture series, held Wednesdays at 6:00 PM at the Landmarks Association office.

This series is made possible through the generous support of the Regional Arts Commission.

Registration is requested for each lecture. Seating is limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis.

To register:

Visit landmarks-stl.org/events/, email office@landmarks-stl.org, or call 314-421-6474.



DATE: APRIL 29TH, 2026, WEDNESDAY AT 6:00 PM



Disinvestment and the Built Environment: Legal Strategies to Reverse Vacancy in St. Louis

Speaker: Peter Hoffman
Managing Attorney,
Neighborhood Advocacy, Legal
Services of Eastern Missouri

Synopsis: St. Louis's vacancy reflects decades of disinvestment, concentrated in specific neighborhoods and shaped by legal and structural conditions. This lecture examines Missouri's framework for addressing vacant properties, including receivership, and explores why traditional tools fall short. Through local case studies, it highlights how legal action can support preservation, stabilize neighborhoods, and return historic buildings to productive use.

DATE: MAY 6TH, 2026, WEDNESDAY AT 6:00 PM



Gambling on Preservation: A History of Redeveloping Laclede's Landing

Speaker: Amanda Clark
Public Historian, Missouri
Historical Society

Synopsis: For more than 60 years, the 10-block historic district just north of the Gateway Arch has been shaped by an ongoing push and pull between preservation and development. In this talk, Amanda Clark, Public Historian with the Missouri Historical Society, traces the cycles of reinvention that have defined Laclede's Landing. Attendees will come away with a deeper understanding of how the neighborhood's fortunes have shifted over time as well as how its story mirrors the evolving challenges of historic preservation today.

DATE: MAY 13TH, WEDNESDAY AT 6:00 PM



St. Louis Before the Civil War: The Photography of Thomas Easterly

Speaker: Nick Sacco
Historian and Curator, Ulysses S.
Grant National
Historic Site

Synopsis: An exploration of pre-Civil War St. Louis through the daguerreotype photographs of Thomas Easterly that are housed at the Missouri Historical Society. No other photographer in St. Louis captured the city's built landscape of the 1840s and 1850s quite like Easterly.

DATE: MAY 20TH, 2026, WEDNESDAY AT 6:00 PM



Forest Park

Speaker: Amanda Doyle and
Cameron Collins
Co-authors of the *Forest
Park* book from Reedy Press

Synopsis: A discussion of the planning, construction, and history of Forest Park, exploring its origins in a rapidly growing St. Louis and its ambition to rival older American cities. From its Gilded Age beginnings to today, the park has evolved into a flexible, enduring public space serving millions as a place for recreation, reflection, and connection.

2026 SPRING TOURS

By Katie Graebe

PRESERVATION MONTH AWAITS — JOIN US!

DON'T FORGET TO USE YOUR MEMBER CODE **LANDMARKS26** FOR TOUR DISCOUNTS.



Missouri Athletic Club Tour

Date: Saturday, May 2, 2026

Time: 10:00 – 11:30 AM

Location: 405 Washington Ave. | 63102

Tickets: \$15 member | \$20 non-member

Tour Overview:

Explore the rich history and refined interiors of the Missouri Athletic Club on this guided tour of its downtown clubhouse. Founded in 1903, the MAC has long been a hub for athletics, business, and civic life in St. Louis. Guests will experience its grand architectural details, historic gathering spaces, and athletic facilities while learning about the club's role in shaping the city's social and cultural landscape.

*Reception with refreshments and light bites pre/post-tour.



Muny: Behind the Curtain Tour

Date: Thursday, May 7, 2026

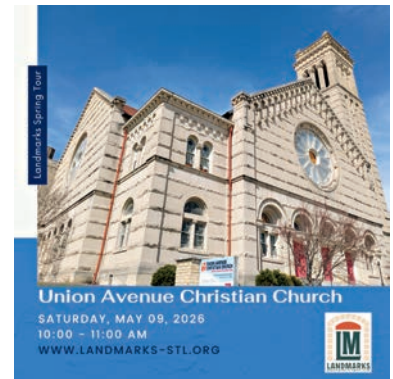
Time: 5:00 – 6:30 PM

Location: 1 Theatre Dr. | 63112

Tickets: \$15 member | \$20 non-member

Tour Overview:

Go behind the scenes at The Muny for a rare look at how productions come together at America's oldest and largest outdoor musical theatre. This guided tour takes you beyond the audience seats and into the working spaces that power each performance, from the expansive stage and backstage areas to set, lighting, and technical operations. Along the way, hear stories of the Muny's history, its evolution in Forest Park, and the behind-the-scenes coordination that makes each season possible.



Union Avenue Christian Church Tour

Date: Saturday, May 9th, 2026

Time: 10:00 – 11:00 AM

Location: 5322 Enright Ave. | 63112

Tickets: \$15 member | \$20 non-member

Tour Overview:

Tour the historic Union Avenue Christian Church and learn how a small but dedicated congregation is stewarding this landmark through ongoing restoration and active community use. From arts programming and theatre and opera to social services and outreach, this tour highlights how the building continues to serve as a vibrant hub for both neighborhood and citywide engagement.



Tornado Anniversary Clean-up

Date: Saturday, May 16th, 2026

Time: 9:00 – 12:00 PM [1 hour]

Location: 5228 Enright Ave.

Join Ali and Carroll for the Tornado Anniversary Clean-up on May 16 in the St. Louis Academy Neighborhood. We'll be helping with yard debris and construction debris removal as the community continues its recovery efforts. Bring work gloves and any yard tools you have.

STL HEART BOMB 2026

By Katie Graebe

On Friday, February 7, 2026, we gathered for our annual STL Heart Bomb, celebrating St. Louis' built environment through handcrafted valentines and shared stories about the buildings that shape our city.

This year, we spotlighted two historic buildings at **DeBaliviere & Delmar**: the **DeBaliviere Building (1928)**, a striking Mayan Art Deco landmark designed by architect Isadore Shank, and the **DeBaliviere Streetcar Powerhouse (1902)**, originally constructed to supply power for the city's streetcar system, including routes serving the 1904 World's Fair. Heart Bomb highlights places like these not only for their history, but for their potential future.

The morning began with Valentine crafting and presentations on the history and significance of these sites, graciously hosted by **Grace & Peace Fellowship**. **Gordon** of Grace & Peace Fellowship opened with remarks on the church and the surrounding neighborhood. He was followed by **John C. Guenther**, FAIA, LEED AP, who spoke about the development and design of the DeBaliviere Building, and engineer **Frank Trampe**, who offered insight into the structure and floor plans of the Streetcar Powerhouse.

We were also fortunate to welcome special guests **Peter and Paul Shank**, sons of architect Isadore Shank, who shared personal reflections and archival scrapbooks related to their father's work. After the program, attendees toured the church and then walked together to the buildings for a group photo, valentines in hand.

Thank you to everyone who joined us and contributed to making **STL Heart Bomb 2026** such a meaningful celebration of St. Louis architecture and preservation. We are especially grateful to our speakers for sharing their time and expertise. We loved seeing the creativity and community spirit for our buildings on display.

BUILDING HISTORIES

THE DEBALIVIERE BUILDING

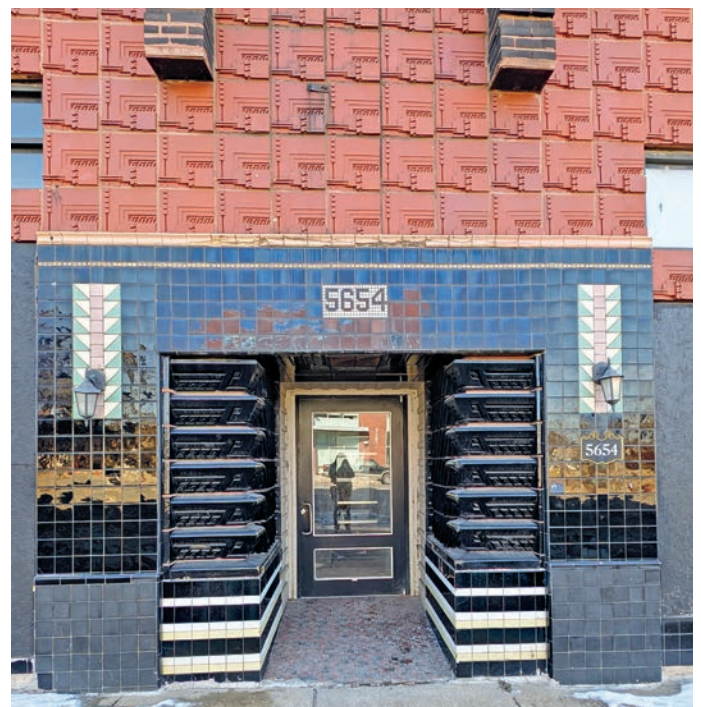
The DeBaliviere Building, designed by St. Louis architect Isadore Shank and completed in 1928, stands at the corner of DeBaliviere and Delmar as an early example of modern architecture in the city.

Shank, a Washington University graduate who traveled extensively in Europe, was influenced by Dutch masonry traditions. That influence is visible in the building's geometric brickwork and custom terra cotta, which Shank designed and local craftsmen from the Hill produced. The patterned façade, sometimes compared to Frank Lloyd Wright's textile block work, gave the building a distinct identity and helped establish Shank as one of the leading architects of St. Louis' modernist era.

Designed as a mixed-use building, the ground floor originally housed retail, including a Walgreen's pharmacy that served the surrounding neighborhood, with offices and apartments above.



The DeBaliviere Building at the corner of DeBaliviere and Delmar



Shank intentionally varied the brick and terra cotta to distinguish the street-level storefront from the upper floors, reinforcing the building's relationship to the pedestrian environment.

Today, the DeBaliviere Building remains an important early work in Shank's career and a defining presence along the Delmar corridor, reflecting both the craftsmanship and architectural innovation that shaped St. Louis in the early 20th century.

DEBALIVIERE STREETCAR POWERHOUSE

Built around 1902 to support St. Louis' expanding streetcar system ahead of the 1904 World's Fair, the DeBaliviere Streetcar Power Plant played a critical role in powering the city's transit network.

The building functioned as a substation, converting alternating current (AC) from a central power source into direct current (DC) needed to operate streetcars. Its industrial design includes a tall, clear-span interior supported by steel trusses, brick masonry walls, concrete roof, skylights, and swing crane.

After streetcar service ended in 1966, the building became part of the Metro bus garage complex. A ruling noted they could not demo the building and needed to renovate it. It remains largely intact but underutilized.

As one of the few surviving streetcar power facilities in St. Louis, the DeBaliviere Powerhouse represents an important



The DeBaliviere Streetcar Powerhouse

chapter in the city's transit and industrial history. Its scale, construction, and association with the streetcar era make it a strong candidate for preservation and adaptive reuse.



Thank you to everyone who joined us and contributed to making STL Heart Bomb 2026 such a meaningful celebration of St. Louis architecture and preservation.

LANDMARKS URBANITES TRIVIA NIGHT 2026

ON SATURDAY, MARCH 28TH LANDMARKS URBANITES hosted their 7th Annual Trivia Night at the IBEW Local 1 Hall in The Hill. Twenty-six teams joined us for an evening of friendly competition under this year's theme, Made in Missouri.

A special thank you to our master of ceremonies, Debbie Monterrey, whose energy set the tone for the night, as well as our trivia committee and volunteers who made the event run smoothly. We're grateful to everyone who attended and helped make it a success.

Thank you also to our generous donors [The Fountain on Locust, Ted Drewes, STL Style, Urban Chestnut, and Civil Life], and to our sponsors for their continued support.

We look forward to seeing you again next year.



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