

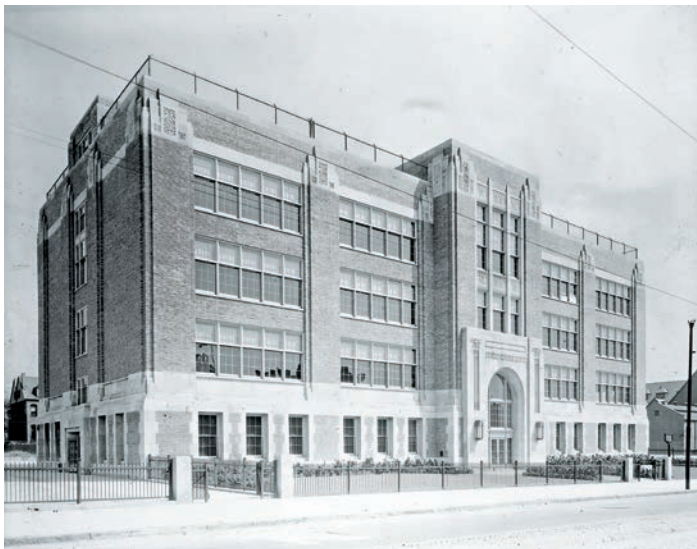
LANDMARKS LETTER

1805 S. 9th Street • St. Louis, MO 63104 • 314-421-6474 • www.landmarks-stl.org

LANDMARKS SCHOOL DAYS

By Julius K. Hunter

A personal reflection by Julius Hunter on the St. Louis Public Schools that shaped his life, career, and connection to the city.



Cole School building, Sept 1931
Courtesy of the Missouri Historical Society.

Before I ever entered a newsroom television studio, I entered St. Louis public schools. Looking back, I realize those buildings shaped my life every bit as much as the teachers inside them. They influenced how I learned, how I taught, how I viewed my community, and ultimately who I became.

"We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us."

— Sir Winston Churchill, October 28, 1943

The fact that this Churchillian piece of wisdom was proclaimed exactly two weeks before my birth most certainly has absolutely nothing to do with anything. Churchill could not have known that those words would perfectly describe my own story. Four St. Louis public school buildings, designed by three remarkable architects, quietly shaped the course of my life and, I suspect, the lives of thousands of others who walked through their doors.

FIRST LESSONS: COLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The first school building that began shaping my life as an impressionable student was the Richard H. Cole Elementary School. It's located on the north side of Enright Avenue just a quarter block west of Vandeventer. The school's design emerged from the drawing board



Can you guess which building this image is from? See Elements article on page 15.

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LANDMARKS LETTER

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SEE DOWNTOWN DIFFERENTLY

DISCOVER THE STORIES HIDDEN IN ST. LOUIS' MOST ICONIC BUILDINGS
ON A GUIDED WALKING TOUR LED BY LANDMARKS ASSOCIATION.

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✓ PRIVATE TOURS AVAILABLE

RESERVE YOUR SPOT TODAY!



HISTORIC MAIN STREET: A PRESERVATION WALK & TALK



Urbanites "Abroad": St. Charles Edition

Saturday, September 12, 2026

1pm-2pm: Main Street Walk & Talk

After 2pm: Free time to explore boutiques, coffee shops, ice cream parlours, and more!

RSVP: Free event! Please RSVP



150 S. Main Street
Meet at 1pm at the "Forget-Me-Not Park" between Jake's on Main and the MO State Parks Visitors Center.

Preservationist **Penny Pitman** has restored **12 buildings** on St. Charles' Main Street in her career from 1975 to 2008. We'll **stroll down Main Street** with Penny as she recounts **preservation stories** and points out significant **restored features** that preserve St. Charles' unique sense of place.



ANNUAL MEETING



Sunday, September 13, 2026
5:00 - 7:00 PM
Stupp Center, TGP,
3616 Southeast Dr.

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



Hello!

Landmarks is a truly wonderful place to work. Every day I learn something new about Saint Louis, meet someone working on a truly interesting building, or find myself walking through a totally unfamiliar block to look at cool buildings. On top of that, I get to hang out with Katie and Zeck, whose historical knowledge of and enthusiasm about Landmarks, the city of Saint Louis and historic preservation generally are daily sources of joy.

This issue is all about schools. We have an article from Carolyn Green about trademark masonry techniques found in William B. Ittner's school buildings, an essay from Julius Hunter about the pride instilled by attending an Ittner "palace" and an update on our campaign to prevent the current and future demolition of SLPS buildings.

With the impending demolition of Euclid, Hempstead and Scullin schools and SLPS announcing the upcoming closure of between 17 and 22 schools, we have been very busy on the advocacy front, but we have been toiling away on many other projects, which I am thrilled to share with you.

We launched *The Brickbuilder*, a monthly email newsletter, to give our members and supporters more regular updates, a roundup of preservation news and opportunities to get involved. We have seen excellent email list growth, so thank you for forwarding it to friends!

We hosted our annual Preservation Month lecture and tour series, which was very well attended, and honored 13 stellar projects at our Most Enhanced awards, and then we all took a day off to celebrate the end of Preservation Month before immediately diving into our summer projects.

We leased out one of our alley houses to Missouri Preservation, meaning we now have daily contact with one of our major allied organizations. You can smell the synergy! Or that might be the bagels from the shop next door. Either way it smells amazing in the courtyard!

Our biggest summer project is a three year strategic plan to help us grow our capacity and better fulfil our mission to preserve, enhance and promote Saint Louis' historic buildings. We have been meeting with community partners, developers, allied non-profits and government agencies to figure out how we can best tailor our work to this cultural moment and we have held many planning sessions with staff, board and volunteers to identify new opportunities, figure out how to capitalize on our strengths and plan out what's next for our organization.

Over the next three months we expect to have major updates for you on Saint Louis schools, Heritage/Saint Louis and the Conrad Log Cabin we saved in Carondelet, along with announcements about our annual meeting and fall fundraiser. We couldn't do any of this important work without you, thank you so much for your continued support!

Yours in preservation,



Stuart Keating
Executive Director

UPDATE ON SLPS' PLANS TO CONSOLIDATE SCHOOLS

By Stuart Keating

Over a century ago, SLPS set the standard for the construction of beautiful, modern school buildings that highlighted education of future generations as a major social and economic priority. Now SLPS and the city of Saint Louis have a chance to set the standard for a massive, coordinated transformation in what it means to be a school district.

The single biggest risk facing our historic buildings is the mismatch of supply and demand. Quite simply, we have about twice as many buildings as we have people—that number used to be closer to three times as many buildings as people, but decades of strategic disinvestment, demolition-by-neglect and misguided “demolish it and they will come” redevelopment policies have done their dire work and left gaping holes (and an oversupply of parking facilities) in the fabric of our cities.

Saint Louis once boasted 859,000 residents and we retain much of the built infrastructure for a population of that size, despite having roughly a third of our peak population. The situation is more dire within our school district, as private and charter schools have further whittled away at SLPS student counts. SLPS had more than 41,000 students in 1991, most of whom attended schools in historic school buildings that had been neighborhood and community focal points for generations. Though there are roughly 35,000 school-aged children living in Saint Louis, SLPS projects fewer than 17,000 students will enroll for the 2026-2027 school year. This decline comes from a complex set of factors that can, nonetheless, largely be boiled down to “structural racism” and “white flight”, though macroeconomic factors like de-industrialization, the declining birthrate and the erosion of trust in government institutions in favor of “market solutions” are also to blame.

SLPS currently holds a number of deteriorating, vacant buildings in difficult real estate markets. They face a staggering \$1.8 billion in deferred maintenance across their 62 school buildings. Many schools currently operate significantly under capacity, with some school classrooms having enrollment as low as 25%. **In short, it is beyond debate that SLPS must close schools.**

While we want to see the redevelopment of historic school buildings that have already been closed and maintain that any developer is a better solution for Euclid school than demolition, our current focus must be working with SLPS to ensure that their closing of schools is done in such a way to prevent more of our city’s historic schools falling into ruin.

At Landmarks, we have reviewed the Future Ready SLPS and met with Superintendent Dr. Berry to discuss their vision and provide recommendations. **We are heartened to see that SLPS has plans for every school building they intend to close.** Our job is to help SLPS achieve their ambitious goals.



Euclid School Rally, June 24, 2026

Photo by Stuart Keating

SLPS intends to develop wraparound services for students and their communities in some facilities, develop teacher and student housing in other facilities and adapt several facilities for new and interesting scholastic uses. They intend to use a mix of internal development, public-private partnerships and sales to third parties to achieve these goals. Should Dr. Berry and her team be successful, this will result in an enormous, structural transformation for future generations of students and maintain school buildings throughout the city as anchors to their neighborhoods and symbols for what we can achieve as a community.

While attending a Future Ready visioning session, we were thrilled to hear Dr. Berry highlight the fact that these schools are most suitable for redevelopment or adaptive reuse the moment they close, and state that SLPS would be moving administrative offices into school buildings that close so they do not remain vacant and thus a target for crime and vandalism. This was one of the recommendations we made in our meeting with SLPS.

We are very encouraged by our dialog with Superintendent Berry, and look forward to working with SLPS leadership, SLDC, the Mayor’s office and the real estate development community to ensure these true landmarks remain in public use for generations to come.

We are currently developing an online tool to showcase the school buildings that will be transitioning to new uses along with relevant historic and cultural information so that we can prioritize our efforts in assisting SLPS and keep you, our membership, apprised of the situation. Please look for the launch announcement in an upcoming email.



George W. Sanger
St. Louis Post-Dispatch,
9-13-1939

of George W. Sanger immediately following the devastating Tornado of 1927.^{1, 2}

Sanger's draft notes called for "vertical emphasis placed on what is a very simple building by the use of stepped brick pilasters topped by stepped stone caps ornamented with a stylized floral design."

Cost of construction in 1930: \$337,167. Certainly nothing to sneeze at. In today's dollars that would come out to about \$6,647,000.

When it was time for me to enter Cole Elementary school in 1950, I could read circles around the other little kindergarten guys and dolls.

Hallelujah! An ingenious older brother,

Van, had taught me to read voraciously at home. We had no books in our tiny "shotgun" apartment upstairs over a storefront barbershop on Vandeventer between Enright and Delmar. (It's now the site of the Cardinal Glennon High School track and field.) But Van—recently graduated from Cole Elementary School himself and headed for injury in the Korean Conflict—was hellbent on a daring experiment! This teenage, undecorated genius was super-confident that he could prep me to blow right past the dark caves in which the grim Brothers Grimm lurked. Plus, Van, without ever being able to express it, saw no need for me to share in the storybook tragedies happening to children like "falling out of a treetop in a cradle;" or possibly getting a concus-

sion after falling down a hill in search of water; or being stalked by a wolf.

The "Van Plan" was a homemade version of "Hooked on Phonics" long before phonics was hooked onto classroom curricula.

In his pre-school, non-Board certified, free-range lesson plans, Big Brother Van recognized the allure of learning names from the then thick Southwestern Bell telephone book. And then, how about all that beautiful reading material printed on grocery products? Have you ever thought about how much of a story there is on a soup can for the preschooler in your life? A box of Quaker Oats? A bottle—yes BOTTLE (now carton)—of milk? Eventually, the pages of the *Post-Dispatch* and *Globe-Democrat* were child's play for me before I ever got to kindergarten.

So, perhaps to make their jobs less complicated, Cole School kindergarten teachers—Miss Lauric, and Miss Hayes (about the same height as we kindergarteners)—convinced stern Principal Creamus Evans to make me an Instant First-grader. What might not have happened in my gallivanting life had I been forced to dally a year in kindergarten?

One of the first things my classmates and I learned at Cole School was discipline!! Mr. Evans allowed absolutely ZERO talking after the school bell ordered us kids to either enter or vacate the building several times a day. ABSOLUTELY NO TALKING!!! That rule produced a certain reverence for the grey stone box that was Cole School. The "No Talking Rule" was underscored with each passage through the hallways. There was such an absence of sound in Cole's hallways that we kiddos learned respect for a near-forgotten concept: silence. When we formally traversed the hallways in silence, Principal Evans planted himself in his first-floor, center-hallway chair. His pose was always Rodinesque. Was our silence out of respect for him? Or for the Cole School building itself? For the rare absence of sound? All of the above, I'd say. Shhhh.

And speaking of reverence: When our parents were sum-

¹Sanger followed Rockwell M. Milligan as the St. Louis School Board's official czar of school building design, but he copied mostly the less elaborate elements from his two immediate predecessors, Milligan and Ittner. Sanger had more memorable interior plot designs than those you'd recognize out front.

²The twister left a reported 76 people dead—including five students at Central High School, then located in the 4000 block of McPherson.



Tornado Damage to 4201
Westminster, by unknown, 1927.
Courtesy Missouri Historical Society, P0981-0000.



Woman and Boy in front of Tornado
Damaged Home (West Bell), by
unknown, 1927.
Courtesy Missouri Historical Society,
P0981-00005



Cole Elementary School, 3935 Enright Ave
Photo by Chris Naffziger, 2016

Continued on pg. 6>



This photo was taken the year that Churchill made his statement and is the year of Julius Hunter's birth. Cole Elementary School graduates, January 1943, by unknown, 1943.

Courtesy Missouri Historical Society, P0900-22608-01-8a.

“Sanger shaped a building . . . and a building shaped a community. A mighty (little) fortress was our Cole!”

SCHOOL DAYS *Continued from page 5*

moned to visit the building to answer for something we kids had done—or undone—our elders always got dressed in their “Sunday-go-to-church” best togs. Out of respect for parental responsibility? Reverence for Principal and teachers? Or respect for the building? I’d pick a three-way tie.

Teachers and Mr. Evans, and, thus, our parents, spoke to each other in quiet tones inside the Cole School walls. It always appeared there was a slight echo bouncing off marble. In the conference room the final score always seemed to be: “Big Folks”-1 / “Littler Folks”-0. Was that outcome intentional when the architect designed Cole School?

Cole Elementary School, just 17-years older than I, remained a colorless—but impressionable—big grey box to my young eyes for a lot of years. Architectural Historian Chris Naffziger notes: That “by the 1930s, the St. Louis School Board had turned away from the more traditional school building styles promoted by Ittner and Milligan—such as Tudor Revival—and adopted the Art Deco influences.” Nothing wimpish about Art Deco.

Oh, and did I mention in the list of functions—unintended by any architect—that the Cole School playground was a favorite gathering place for the entire family and neighborhood on sweltering hot summer evenings? The internationally heralded Tom Powell VFW Marching Drum and Bugle Corps practiced on Cole School’s big playground lot. (The group was named after a Black U.S. Army “Messenger” killed in WWI France in 1918.)

During the summer months, in particular, when clocks struck anytime around six, entire families would drag out the

blankets, picnic baskets, lemonade, adult beverages, and home-made barbecue grills for a marching band’s after-school treat. In fact, if you knew Sousa like we knew Sousa! The Police Department actually heralded the marching band’s rehearsal hours on the Cole School property as a major deterrent to general crime in our poor, but proud Cole School neighborhood! Everybody marched—even in place—to the pounding of drums, crashing of cymbals, brashness of bugles and piercings of piccolos on summer evenings!!

It may have been all illusion in retrospect, but it sure seemed like the big gray school box that bore the name, Cole Elementary, commanded a wave, a bow, a genuflect, a salute, a smile from everybody passing by the quietly imposing building from any direction. Any time of day or night. I also remember that regular pedestrian passersby—including my family and I—would always take a minute or two to pick up any truant trash blown or tossed irreverently onto the school’s tiny lawn. And then that refuse would be deposited in a nearby trashcan. Cole School lawn care was a second-nature thing for Cole School’s neighbors to do. Sanger shaped a building . . . and a building shaped a community. A mighty (little) fortress was our Cole!

PRIDE AND PLACE: SUMNER HIGH SCHOOL

After 8th Grade at Cole, it was off to the vaunted Sumner High School in the already historic “Ville” neighborhood. I registered as a Freshman in January 1957 at the oldest high school specifically dedicated to African Americans west of the Mississippi! And

Ittner splurged as he crafted Sumner High School on 5-1/2 acres—including a track and field, tennis court and a football field

my classmates and I were privileged to enter a campus crafted by St. Louis' undisputed champion of school architecture. William Butts Ittner became the St. Louis School Board's first ever Commissioner of School Buildings in St. Louis history.³ He took the job in 1897. And following petitions, after threats, after pleas, after entreaties, the STL School Board finally bowed to the community pressures and purchased a big hunk of property on Cottage Avenue in the "Ville". For the first time in its history, Sumner High was not getting a hand-me-down school. And Ittner was allowed to go to bat and then go to town on the first decent and ONLY "high school for colored" in St. Louis. In fact, the first high school specifically for Blacks west of the Mississippi!!!! Named after a distinguished White abolitionist Senator, Charles Sumner. He was almost caned to death on the floor of Congress on May 22, 1856, by a slaveowner enraged by Senator Sumner's anti-slavery rhetoric. Just a few months more than 170 years ago.

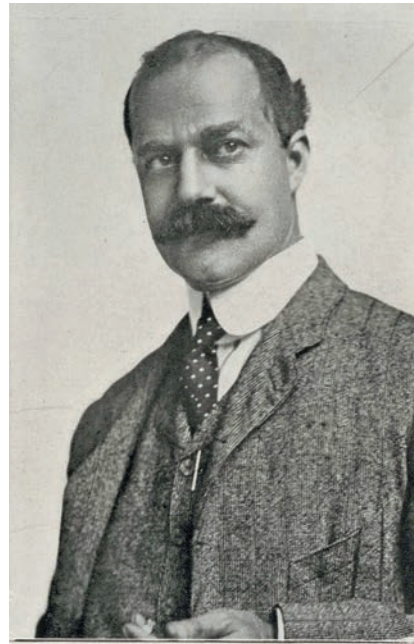
Ittner splurged as he crafted Sumner High School on 5-1/2 acres—including a track and field, tennis court and a football field directly across the street from Sumner's front door.

Disgracefully, Sumner High in St. Louis had debuted in 1875 in a hand-me-down dump of a building at 11th & Spruce. Then, ten years later, the school was relocated to a dilapidated worn warehouse of a building at 15th and Market. In 1906, when "THE Fair" was still in the air, a group of concerned Black citizens dared to petition the School Board for a brand new "high school for colored."

Permission granted!

Ittner must have hastily filed away all his World's Fair renderings to start working mightily on the sketches for this new Sumner High School. While he worked, Black students walking to and from classes each day were being subjected to a cacophony of catcalls from cathouses . . . and slimy slurs from saloons. What's more—actually what was less—was the fact that Sumner students and staff had to twice daily walk past the City Jail gallows where public hangings—easily seen from the sidewalk—took place until 1930!—long after Sumner students, teachers and staff had been rescued.

Acting with all deliberate speed, Ittner's Charles "Sumner High School for Colored" regally opened its doors for the first



WILLIAM B. ITTNER

Portrait photograph of William B. Ittner
from *The Makers of St. Louis*, 1906
Courtesy Missouri Historical Society.

time in 1908. Architectural Historian, Chris Naffziger, describes the then \$1.8 million high school that made eyes . . . and then buttons pop:⁴

"For the then new Sumner High School, Ittner turned to a style he had not yet visited for a high school: the "Georgian Revival," Chris notes. "Rejecting the Collegiate Gothic of many of his other compositions, Sumner featured classical influences such as Palladian windows and cupolas high above a strict symmetrical composition. Rejecting complex decoration, the brick and windows are simple, but elegant, reflecting a more classic edifice."

The classy architectural description would have been Greek to us Sumner students. But we've known for more than a century that "Classical" was our Alma Mater's birthmark.

That distinct heritage created many, many generations of proud, persnickety, and perfectly pompous Sumner students and graduates! Blame it on Sumner's palatial architecture, if you must! (Perfectly acceptable, if not mean-spirited and hurtful to others, of course.)

In 1909, the late and still-esteemed "Duchess of African American History," Julia Davis, had earned enough credits to matriculate in the then new Sumner's second Senior Class. She confirmed to me during a 1970's TV interview that Sumner was gloriously born a "Latin Classical High School." Her Class Motto and Class Song, she proudly told me, were recited and sung in Latin!!!!

While I was a proud "Sumnerite," (1957-1961) the dress code reflected who we purported to be. I called the Dress Code "QP" for "Quasi-Parochial." For Sumner's young ladies and female teachers: NO TIGHT-FITTING, LOW-CUT DRESSES NOR BLOUSES. NO SKIRTS FASHIONED ABOVE THE KNEES!! No slacks nor shorts of any sort for females.

For Sumner High boys from 1908 until after what we might call the "Brantley Era": NO JEANS. EVER!! Khaki pants during warmer months (starched and ironed to razor sharp creases); CORDUROY and wool during colder temps! All shirts (and blouses) had to have collars. No open-toe shoes for any males or females. Socks or stockings with ALL footwear. Penny loafers prevailed. Oxfords, saddle shoes, patent leather. Sandals okay in the Bible. But not at Sumner High.

³Ittner is the undisputed Granddaddy of all St. Louis Public School architects. More than 50 St. Louis school buildings rose from his drawing board.

⁴Today the \$1,800,000 would be worth \$65,338,000 to construct.



Educational Museum Lantern Slides: Sumner High School, by unknown, ca1908.
Courtesy Missouri Historical Society of St. Louis, N46489.

Churchill was right after all. We shape our buildings . . . and then our buildings shape us.

SCHOOL DAYS *Continued from page 7*

Male teachers were expected to wear neckties, suits, white starched shirts with collars, jackets, and preferably polished shoes! (1857? Or 1957?)

Sumner High Principal George Dennis Brantley reigned at Sumner High from a remarkable 1928 to 1968. He could remember parents, relatives and your next-door neighbors that had attended Sumner way back when. Without a doubt and unabashedly Sumner's supreme "Cheerleader-in-Chief!" Mr. Brantley promoted "Sumner Snobbishness." For FORTY YEARS!!!

Architect William Ittner went directly from drawing up layouts for the World's Fair to fashioning the first "*high school for colored*" west of the Mississippi. Ittner was able to see Sumner evolve into an elite "academy!" Was this what Sir Winston would have called a building "shaping" students, faculty, alumni, and an entire community?

When I was a student at Sumner, whenever the folks in The Ville saw a couple school buses parked in front of the Ittner Classic near supertime, it was highly likely the vehicles were to convey the famed *Sumner High School A Capella Choir* to Powell Hall to perform exclusively with the nation's second oldest symphony orchestra. Under the direction of the brilliant Kenneth Brown Billups, the Choir's repertoire ranged from soulful

spirituals to Slovakian folk tunes. At Powell Hall the *Sumner A Capella Choir* was frequently called on to sing classics with the full orchestra ranging from Bach to Beethoven; Mozart to Mahler and more.

And when there were a couple Greyhound buses parked out front of Ittner's classic, it was likely an indication that the Choir was off to concertize in places like New York City, Washington, D.C. or Philadelphia. And in addition to the backyard *Ebonics* we Sumnerites spoke with fluency, we young choristers were musically adept at French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Latin, Russian, Dutch and/or Italian. And more. (See *Carmina Burana* and *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Both performed by the Sumner A Capella choir/SLSO/Powell Hall.)

And here's something else that would have surely made William Ittner particularly proud: Each and every local concert appearance and each road tour was prefaced on the printed program by a robed group picture of youthful choristers posed on the Sumner High front steps—framed by our Ittner palatial high school's architectural classic frontage. The photos underscored who we were . . . and from whence we came.

Before Sumner High, there was no other public high school in St. Louis for Blacks until Vashon High School was born in



Sumner High School graduating class from 1921 standing in four rows on the steps to the front of the school, by unknown, 06-1921.
Courtesy Missouri Historical Society of St. Louis, P0203-02148.

1927. No Roosevelt, Central, Southwest, McKinley, Beaumont or Soldan High Schools rolling out a red carpet (or other school colors for Blacks in St. Louis) until sometime after the 1954 Supreme Court Decision. There was certainly no “deliberate speed” in STL public school racial integration. So, a couple key questions here: “Should Sumner High School Students—beginning in the very earliest sector of the 20th Century—have rightfully developed attitudes of pride, elitism and even a certain measure of “snootiness?” And were those elements propellant “shapers” for success? Wonder what Sanger and Ittner would have thought? Churchill was right after all. We shape our buildings . . . and then our buildings shape us.

CONTINUE THE STORY ONLINE

Julius Hunter’s journey continues at Harris Teachers College and Hamilton Elementary School, where architecture, education and community intersect once again.

Read **Part Two** at landmarks-stl.org.



AFTER-SCHOOL SNACKS!

A FEW BITE-SIZED TIDBITS FROM
ST. LOUIS PUBLIC SCHOOL HISTORY,
FROM JULIUS HUNTER’S SNACK BAG.

- St. Louis public schools did not have indoor toilets until 1898, when William Ittner installed the first ones at Eliot School.
- The St. Louis School District banned married female teachers from employment until the Missouri Supreme Court ultimately ruled the policy unconstitutional and lifted the ban in 1948.
- Some St. Louis Public School classes were taught in German from the end of the Civil War until World War I.
- William Ittner’s father was a bricklayer turned brick manufacturer.
- After designing more than 50 schools, Ittner resigned as school architect in 1910 but continued as a consultant.
- Cole School at 3915 Enright Ave, formerly Von Versen St. before WWI.

LANDMARKS 2026 FALL ACTIVITIES

Mark your calendars! Join us this fall for another season of tours, lectures, and special events celebrating St. Louis' architecture, history, and preservation. Additional details and registration information will be available on our website.

SAT 12 SEPT

Urbanites Abroad: St. Charles

1:00 - 2:00 PM, @ "Forget-Me-Not Park", 150 S. Main Street | 63301

SUN 13 SEPT

Annual Meeting

5:00 - 7:00 PM, @ Stupp Center, 3616 Southeast Dr. | 63110

WED 30 SEPT

Lecture: *After Mill Creek: Uses and Fate of LaClede Town's Iconic "Experiment in Integration"* by Benjamin Looker

6:00 - 7:15 PM, @ Landmarks Assoc., 1805 S. 9th St. | 63104

SAT 03 OCT

Urbanites: Forest Park Photo Walk

10:30 - 12:00 PM, @ Forest Park Visitors Center, 5595 Grand Dr. | 63112

WED 07 OCT

Lecture: *The Timeless Character of William B. Ittner Schools* by Carolyn Green

6:00 - 7:15 PM, @ Landmarks Assoc., 1805 S. 9th St. | 63104

SAT 10 OCT

Savor the Past, Celebrate the Future

6:00 - 9:00 PM, @ La Verona, 4925 Daggett Ave. | 63110

WED 14 OCT

Lecture: *From Hearth to Hearse: The Strange and Surprising History of American Funerary Traditions* by Lacey Reinhardt

6:00 - 7:15 PM, @ Stupp Center, 3616 Southeast Dr. | 63110

SAT 17 OCT

Tour: Cahokia Heights: Log Buildings

10:00 - 12:30 PM, @ Visitors Center, 159 Elm St., Sauget, IL 62206

MON 19 OCT

Tour: New Mount Sinai Cemetery

12:00 - 1:30 PM, @ 8430 Gravois Rd, Affton | 63123

WED 21 OCT

Lecture: *Where Are All the Old Buildings At?* by Andrew Weil

6:00 - 7:15 PM, @ Landmarks Assoc., 1805 S. 9th St. | 63104

SAT 24 OCT

Tour: Cathedral Basilica with John Guenther

10:00 - 11:30 AM, @ 4431 Lindell Blvd | 63108

WED 28 OCT

Lecture: *German Influence in St. Louis Architecture* by Nathan Jackson

6:00 - 7:15 PM, @ Landmarks Assoc., 1805 S. 9th St. | 63104

ITTNER'S MASONRY LEGACY STILL VIBRANT TODAY

By Carolyn K. Green, AIA

When I go to a city where there is an historic Ittner school, I see it as an opportunity to find treasure. Sometimes these buildings have been updated, built in front of or obscured in some way. But that makes it even more interesting when I can find a piece of original Ittner construction, like his signature engraved on a cornerstone or some section of an exterior entrance with intricate brickwork or stone detail.

These buildings are identifiable and noteworthy in large part to the detailed masonry design and craftsmanship that went into these structures many years ago. William B. Ittner's intention when designing a school for a community was to provide, in his words "efficiently planned, beautiful and economical school buildings" with modernized functional uses for new progressive educational theories developing in the early 20th century. What came as a result was a body of work that exceeded those goals with functional innovations, grace and aesthetic unity.

He listened to the needs of the school community and then set out to provide a complete facility that would serve their needs and foreground the importance of fresh air, natural light, properly sized (and appointed) rooms for each activity, generous building sites for outdoor use and of course, an elevated image of the school. Ittner's desire to bring importance and respect to the school building led him to develop his considerable masonry genius and attention to every detail.

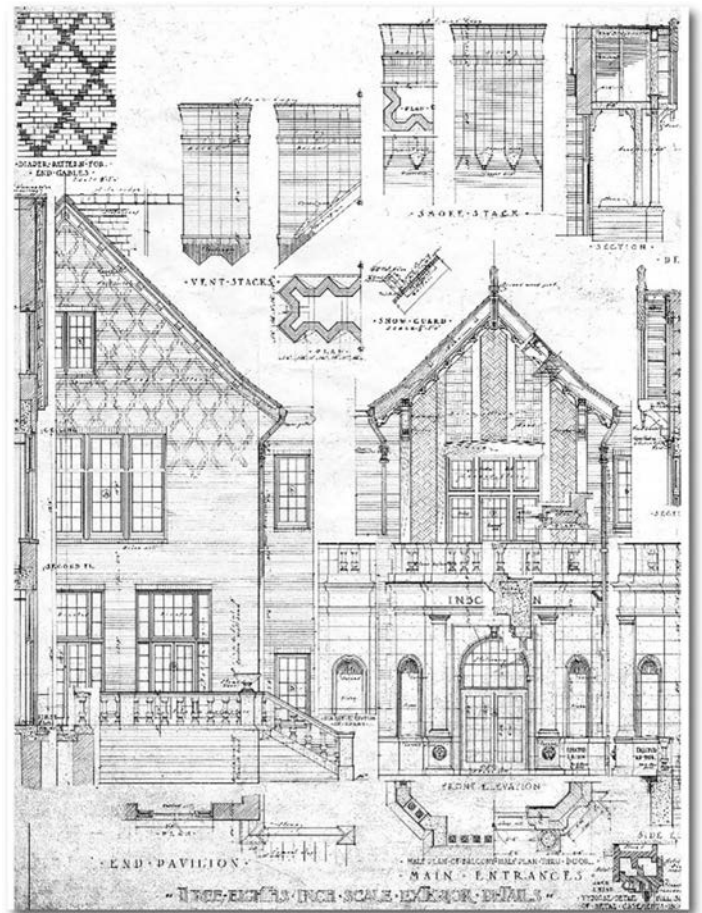
INNOVATIONS WITH BRICK

Ittner was not afraid to experiment with brick design, and it became a trademark of his construction legacy, along with stonework that added character and elegance to the image of the building. These are indeed treasures in today's world, where few new builds install stonework to match that of Ittner.

William B. Ittner was born in St. Louis in 1864, the son of a brick mason, and he spent a good deal of time as a youth playing with the bricks in the brickyard and learning the masonry trade in the summers. As a result, later in his career, he had no fear of using bricks in different ways. Once out of high school, he attended the Manual Training School (part of Washington University in St. Louis,) where he developed his hands-on skills and then went on to Cornell University to study architecture. After completion there, he spent some time traveling in Europe, returned to St. Louis and then practiced architecture for several years during the 1890s. During this time, the St. Louis Board of Education underwent a reorganization and launched a campaign to construct new school buildings for the city of St. Louis.

In 1897, Ittner was elected to the position of commissioner of school buildings for the St. Louis Board of Education. He served in that role from 1897 to 1910 and then continued to provide

architectural services to the board until 1914 as an independent consultant. Over this period, Ittner designed and built 50 new school buildings for the city of St. Louis. During this period Ittner honed his craft as an architect and mason and combined both to achieve a truly visionary plan for what a school building could be. Ittner proved himself to be an innovator during this period, transforming the shape of the school building footprint and elevating the importance of air and light and other "modern amenities" as well as the overall aesthetic. He was focused on



A blueprint showing the intricate detail and level of craftsmanship expected by Ittner.

establishing a "modern school building plan" for the stock of new schools that were needed in St. Louis.

While developing new schools for the city, Ittner made study trips to see what other cities were doing as far as new school design. He traveled to Europe on two or three occasions to find inspiration and examples of beautiful masonry style and detailing.

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This is where he encountered much of the aesthetic that he adopted in his subsequent work. He spent a good deal of time at the campuses of Eton and Harrow, both preparatory schools in England. Here he found the grand building style that he transformed into many of his St. Louis schools. Ittner also brought back renderings and sketches of English manor houses with particular brick detailing that became recognizable in many schools he designed. He spent time in Berlin as well and studied the buildings of Ludwig Hoffman, who was designing interesting facades, many with a Georgian style and form. Ittner returned each time to St. Louis and got to work making the next St. Louis school building with a distinct character and connections to what he saw abroad.



An example of brick diapering common to many Ittner schools.

A masonry pattern that Ittner used often, and became known for, is the "Diaper Pattern" where accent-colored bricks are arranged in an "x" formation repeatedly. This can be seen all around the St. Louis area and in his regional schools. Again, his aim was to bring beauty and positive attention to these important buildings and establish a level of respect for the teaching and learning that was being provided for the children of St. Louis.

Ittner was eager to try different types of brick, sometimes turning the brick around backwards in a design. And on several occasions, he called for the use of "cull" brick in his buildings. This was the less expensive brick that had imperfections in shape or coloring, generally used where it could not be seen. He had great success in his experiments with these techniques, and so much so that other architects started to follow suit.

A popular story from Ittner's past is the day when the masonry crew could not figure out how to go about building the brick detail that was before them on the drawings. They said "it couldn't be done." As a response to this grumbling, William B.



The use of cull bricks adds visual interest.

comes back to the crew with his coveralls on and a trowel in his hand. He said politely, "step aside" and he proceeded to work up the entire brick pattern in front of them, much to their amazement. Since Ittner's designs demanded a high level of craftsmanship, and he knew how to use a trowel, incidents like this happened throughout his career.

STORYTELLING

Ittner's masonry creations included grand configurations of detailed stonework throughout the building exteriors, in keeping with the style of the European buildings he admired. Stonemasons were plentiful in this time of construction. Stonework, then, became a means of storytelling and character development that Ittner used to make each building unique. While his goal is to elevate the image of the school building for its occupants, students, teachers, and parents, his influence carried further. The neighborhoods surrounding his schools developed a long-lasting pride in having an Ittner school.

One example is the Shepard School, illustrated below in photographs and built in 1906. Ittner added a frivolity to this design using gargoyle characters and a playful brick pattern to engender a feel of imagination and a place that is conceived and built to be welcoming for children. One could say



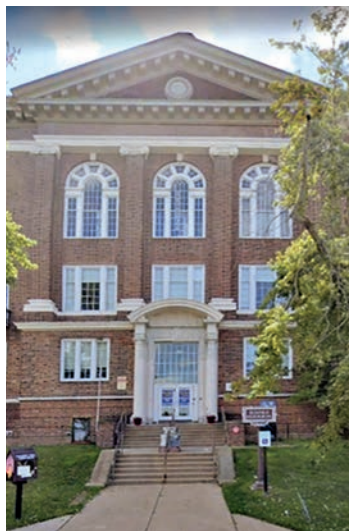
Shepard school. Note the detailed stone window surrounds, the brick patterns and the carved stone figures.



Two of many decorative stone carvings found on Shepard School.



Cote Brilliant School



Sumner High School. Built in Neo-Georgian Style.



Façade detail of Soldan High School



The grand entry façade of Soldan High School

Ittner's determination to elevate the importance of the school building is carried through from the exterior to the interior . . .

that this particular style of classical revival construction at Shepard School was, at the time, a nod to the south city neighborhood of breweries and German working class tradition where the school was built.

The Cote Brilliant School, built in 1904, was given a flair of European aesthetic in this Tudor/classical revival style. It contained the same warm features of the typical Ittner school of being an open plan, generous daylight, fresh air and spacious grounds. The school, located in north city on Cora Avenue, recently received serious storm damage during the tornado that passed thru North St. Louis.

Sumner High School, completed in 1910, has thrived as a neighborhood center in the St. Louis Ville area, with a legacy of educational excellence since its beginnings. Ittner designed this tremendous structure with a clear Georgian revival reference and has a commanding street presence.

Soldan High School, completed in 1909, was considered the grandest of Ittner's St. Louis city schools, and at that time, he won national recognition for its design and construction. The building is expansive and contains many enhanced educational features, including full auditorium, shop classrooms, athletic facilities, a well-appointed cafeteria and skylit library (now music room.) The stone sculpture at the entrance depicts an adult, likely a teacher, with youth on each side, books in hand, and looking directly down at the front door to the school as if to greet the students each day.

This building served as a mark in time when other school districts around the region and around the country began to take notice of Ittner's facilities for the "enhanced learning curriculum" at the turn of the century. By 1911, Ittner had started his own private practice, William B. Ittner, Inc., and the demand for his architectural services was growing from school districts nationwide. By the time of William B. Ittner's death in 1936, he and his

firm had performed the planning, design, and construction of almost 500 schools across the country.

TRADEMARKS

Ittner implemented a number of common architectural features that serve as identifiable "trademarks" of an original Ittner building. Among my favorites to watch for are the continuous groupings of large windows, the "diaper" diagonal brick pattern, the detailed masonry work at functional openings like vents and exterior site elements.

Also there are trademarks in the building interiors. Ittner's determination to elevate the importance of the school building is carried through from the exterior to the interior with examples of spacious entrances, day-lit corridors, elegant staircases, stained glass, custom light fixtures, built-in wood cabinetry and artisan produced mosaic tile work at the drinking fountains. The original "kindergarten room" with all its comforts of home (such as fireplace, bay windows, and built-in bookshelves), has usually been remade into school offices or a library or other purposes, but can still be found in most schools that had them in the early construction of the building.

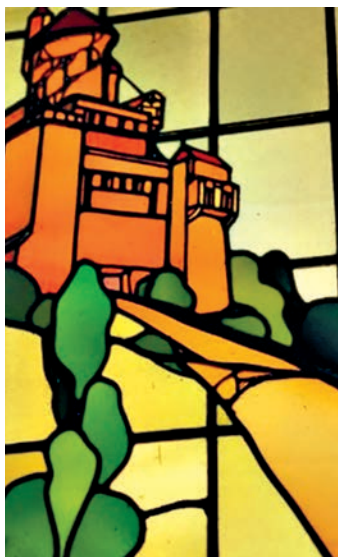
These are all distinct components of a William B. Ittner school. The clues are there if one looks in the right places. With the current changes taking place in the St. Louis City Schools such as enrollment decreases and building closings, this is certainly a time to reflect on the legacy of the Ittner schools that served the district for so many years.

There are many essays, articles and books that describe Ittner's lifetime of school construction and building innovations. I hope this article provides an insight into the masonry work particularly, which has undoubtedly left an impression on our city

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Ittner's schools were known for their interior natural light and graceful stairwells.



Stained glass depicting a school on a hill.

neighborhoods. As some of these buildings cease to offer public education, I hope they remain as neighborhood landmarks and find alternative uses. I believe the efforts of Ittner during his lifetime brought educational environments up to a high level of function and status, which then demonstrated to many generations of school leaders and school builders what significance they can have, in their respective era, by paying attention to the important details of making schools inspiring and healthy places to be. To help us remember, we'll be able to find remnants of Ittner's masonry legacy and other bits of treasure for decades to come.

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Carolyn K. Green is a partner with BRS Architects, LLP in St. Louis and has long been a follower of the Wm. B. Ittner collection of school buildings. She was employed as an architect for the firm of Wm. B. Ittner, Inc. over a period of fifteen years and assisted with historical exhibits and archivist projects throughout that time. She continues to give presentations on the history of Wm. B. Ittner schools to interested audiences when opportunities arise.

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GARGOYLE? NOT QUITE

By Katie Graebe

At first glance, this carved stone face on the front façade of Cote Brillante School in the Greater Ville neighborhood might be mistaken for a gargoyle. However, because it neither projects from the building nor functions as a waterspout, it is more accurately described as a *mascaron*, an ornamental carved face or “mask.”

Designed by William B. Ittner in 1903 and opened in 1904, the school features Jacobean Revival architecture with a touch of Dutch influence. A stone belt course wraps around the second floor, continuing onto the canted central entrance bay, where four carved mascarons accent each corner. Decorative details like these showcase the quality of craftsmanship that characterized many of Ittner’s turn-of-the-century public schools.

Carved faces have appeared on buildings for centuries. Some were believed to ward off evil spirits, while others simply demonstrated the skill of the stone carver. We’ve even heard jokes that this particular *Elements* face bears a resemblance to former President Jimmy Carter. We’ll let you be the judge.



Cote Brillante School, 2026, located at the corner of Marcus, Cora and Kennerly, was damaged by the May 2025 tornado.

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LANDMARKS 2026 MOST ENHANCED AWARDS

Landmarks Association proudly recognized thirteen outstanding preservation, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse projects during the 2026 Most Enhanced Awards, held May 28 at The Sheldon Concert Hall and Art Galleries. The awards celebrate the individuals, organizations, developers, and property owners whose work preserves St. Louis' historic places while strengthening neighborhoods and communities. This year's winners highlight preservation projects from North and South St. Louis to across the river in East St. Louis. Congratulations to this year's recipients for their commitment to ensuring our city's historic buildings continue to serve and inspire for generations to come.

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**3306 WASHINGTON AVENUE
THE SOVEREIGN**

Located in St. Louis' historic Auto Row, this former commercial building was designed by prominent architect Preston Bradshaw. The rehabilitation transformed the century-old structure into The Sovereign, a live music venue, while preserving its soaring interior, industrial character, and distinctive terra cotta façade. The project gives new life to a historic Washington Avenue landmark while supporting the city's growing arts and entertainment district.



**3427 S. KINGSHIGHWAY BLVD
THE ORIGINAL UNCLE BILL'S**

Originally constructed in 1932 as Medart's Log Cabin, the building became home to Uncle Bill's Pancake House in 1961 and has been a St. Louis institution ever since. Garcia Properties modernized the restaurant while preserving the look and feel generations of customers recognize. The rehabilitation ensures this longtime neighborhood gathering place continues serving St. Louis while retaining its historic character.



3435-37 OREGON AVENUE

Located within the Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District, 3435-37 Oregon Avenue is a classic St. Louis four-family flat. After years of vacancy and moisture damage threatened the structure, the building was stabilized, its masonry repaired, and the interior transformed into two thoughtfully designed townhomes. The rehabilitation preserves the building's historic character while providing a new residential use.



1201 MACKAY PLACE

Originally constructed as the Congregational Mission Church, 1201-03 Mackay is the smallest of Lafayette Square's original church buildings. Vacant for nearly 20 years, the structure was condemned in 2022 after much of the roof and interior collapsed. An extensive rehabilitation rebuilt masonry walls, reframed the roof and tower, and reconstructed damaged structural elements. Today, the building has been adaptively reused as townhouses, preserving an important piece of Lafayette Square's architectural history.



**2831 CHIPPEWA STREET
ZELLA MAE**

Constructed in 1893 and designed by Frederick Meyer, 2831 Chippewa Street is best remembered as the longtime home of Slim and Zella Mae Cox's furniture store and recording studio. The rehabilitation created eight apartments on the upper floors while restoring two commercial storefronts below. Historic hardwood floors, wood windows, trim, and masonry were preserved, ensuring the building remains an important neighborhood landmark.



1312 WARREN STREET

Located in Old North St. Louis, 1312 Warren Street sat vacant for nearly two decades before Habitat for Humanity Saint Louis stepped in to rehabilitate the property after it faced demolition in 2024. While the exterior remained largely intact, the interior required a complete gut rehabilitation. The project gives new life to a long-vacant historic building while contributing to continued reinvestment in the Old North St. Louis neighborhood.



**504 NEWSTEAD AVENUE
NOTEWORTHY CAFÉ**

A long-vacant Standard Oil service station has been transformed into Noteworthy Café, a piano café and yoga studio. The rehabilitation retained the building's defining features by adapting the former office into a café and the historic service bays into a flexible performance space. New gardens and outdoor gathering areas replaced deteriorated pavement, demonstrating how a modest neighborhood landmark can be successfully adapted for a new use.



**718 N. GRAND BOULEVARD
POWELL HALL AT THE JACK
C. TAYLOR MUSIC CENTER**

Originally opened in 1925 as the St. Louis Theatre, Powell Hall was designed by the renowned Chicago firm Rapp & Rapp. The renovation balanced preservation with the needs of a modern orchestra by restoring the historic lobby and auditorium, improving accessibility, acoustics, and seating, and adding rehearsal, storage, and musician support spaces. A contemporary glass addition complements the historic structure while providing a welcoming public entrance.



**4111 MCREE AVENUE
MCREE HOUSE**

Constructed in 1909, 4111 McRee Avenue is a modest example of the working-class housing that developed alongside the Liggett & Myers industrial complex. The rehabilitation preserved the home's defining features, including its brick exterior, shotgun floor plan, arched openings, and hardwood floors, while introducing updates for modern use. Exterior work included masonry repairs, restoration of transom openings, and historically appropriate wood windows and doors.



**3221-3223 OLIVE BOULEVARD
THE KEY**

Once threatened with demolition, this market and hardware store complex was saved after Landmarks Association helped identify the Kranzberg Arts Foundation as its new steward. Today, the restored buildings house The Key Music Venue & Restaurant. The rehabilitation preserved character-defining features, including the market's wood trusses and clerestory windows and the hardware store's stamped tin ceilings, while adapting the buildings for a vibrant new use.



**411 E. BROADWAY
THE NEW BROADVIEW**

Opened in 1927, the Broadview Hotel was a landmark in Downtown East St. Louis. Designed by Arthur J. Widmer in the Classical Revival style, it featured 260 guest rooms, a ballroom, restaurant, rooftop garden, and the area's first radio station. The rehabilitation transformed the building into The New Broadview Apartments, providing 110 affordable apartments for adults age 55 and older, including veterans, along with commercial space.



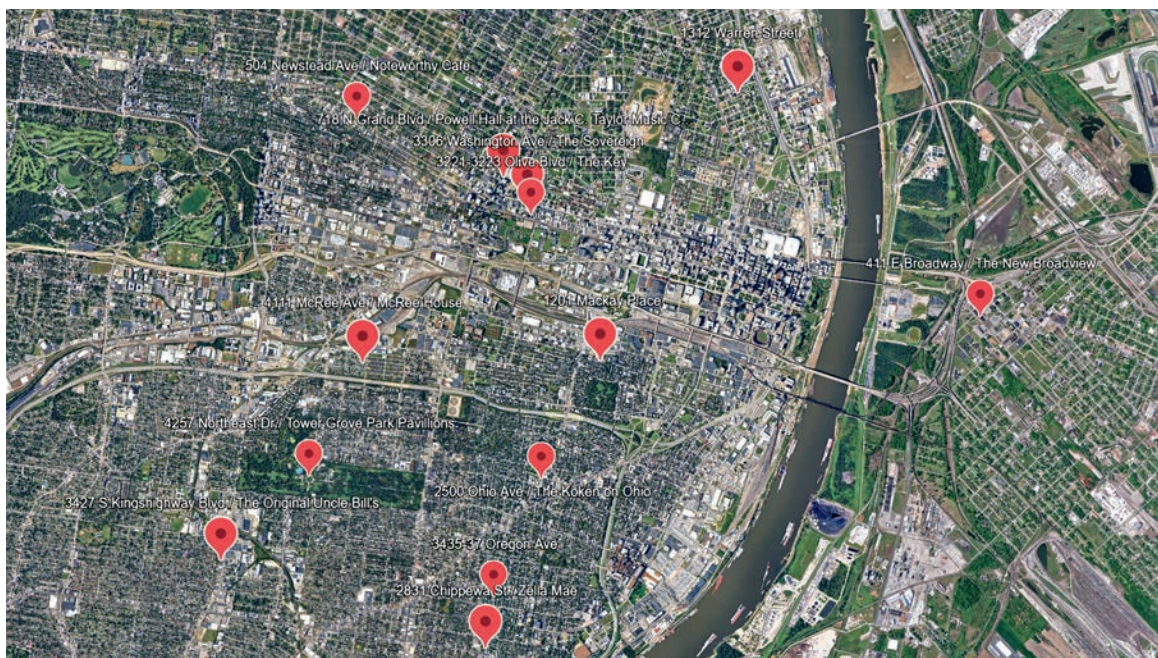
**2500 OHIO AVENUE
THE KOKEN ON OHIO**

The Koken Company occupied this complex beginning in 1892 and became internationally known for manufacturing one of America's earliest hydraulic barber chairs. Today, the historic industrial complex has been adaptively reused as The Koken on Ohio, featuring 65 apartments, 14 artist studios, shared amenities, and a private courtyard, giving new life to an important piece of St. Louis' manufacturing history.



4257 NORTHEAST DRIVE / TOWER GROVE PARK PAVILIONS

Tower Grove Park's National Historic Landmark designation includes the largest collection of Victorian pavilions of its kind in the United States. Following restoration of the Turkish and Old Playground Pavilions, four additional structures—Old Carriage, Lily Pond, Humboldt South, and Cypress South—were rehabilitated. The project stabilized the structures, restored historic details and color schemes, and ensured these beloved park landmarks will continue serving visitors for generations.



Map of the 2026 Most Enhanced Awardees



LANDMARKS
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**MOST ENHANCED AWARDS
CEREMONY**



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APRIL 14, 2026 – JULY 20, 2026

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